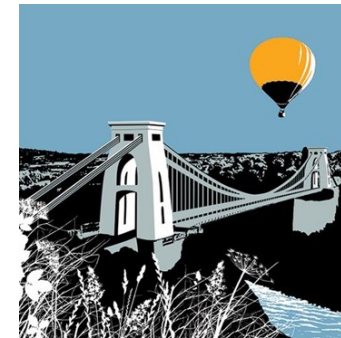


UK-Russia Research Symposium

Friday 19 & Saturday 20 January, 2018

At the George White Suite, The Bristol Hotel,
Prince Street, Bristol, BS1 4QF

Sponsored by the British Academy



The UK-Russia Research Symposium is designed to bring together emerging and experienced researchers in Russian Studies (in disciplines including literature, linguistics, history, film, cultural studies, as well as political and social sciences) alongside academics working inside Russia. The symposium aims to build bridges between scholars in the two countries at a time when international relations have been challenging and some have talked of a 'new Cold War'. The conference provides an opportunity to share research expertise, to examine the challenges and opportunities of transnational collaboration, and to create new networks that may form the basis of shared future projects and grant bids.

We are grateful to the British Academy, who have funded this symposium through an Rising Stars Engagement Award, and to the University of Bristol who have provided operational support.

Symposium Programme

Friday 19 January

12:00 – 12:50

Arrival, registration and lunch (provided)

12:50 – 13:00

Opening remarks

Connor Doak (University of Bristol)

13:00 – 14:00

Academies without Borders: Working Between Cultures

Opening keynote by Catriona Kelly (University of Oxford)

14:15– 15:45

Russian Religious Culture

Words for ‘Sodomy’ in Muscovite and Imperial Russia

Nick Mayhew (University of Cambridge)

Religion and the Poetic Imagination in 1970s Russia

Josephine von Zitzewitz (University of Bristol)

Holy Quarter: Reshaping Urban Landscapes in Post-Secular Russia

Jeanne Kormina (National Research University, Higher School of Economics, St Petersburg)

Discussant: Ruth Coates (University of Bristol)

15:45 – 16:00

Tea and coffee

16:00 – 17:30

Russian Literature and Society

Pin-Up Queer: Cavalry Maiden Durova As A Patriotic Icon

Margarita Vaysman (University of St. Andrews)

Redressing the Balance: Reconsidering the Meaning of Futurist Costume

Jamie Rann (University of Birmingham)

What is Gulag Literature?

Andrea Gullotta (University of Glasgow)

Discussant: Maria Maiofis (School of Advanced Research in the Humanities, RANEPa)

17:45 – 19:15

Reading by Margarita Meklina with accompaniment by Maja Elliott

Margarita Meklina was born in St. Petersburg, Russia and now lives in Dublin, Ireland. She writes in Russian and English. Her work won a number of awards, including the Andrei Bely Prize in 2003 for her short story collection *Battle at St. Petersburg* and the 2008 Russian Prize for *My Criminal Connection to Art*. Her most recent work, *A Sauce Stealer*, came out in 2017 with New York publisher Spuyten Duyvil.

Maja Elliott trained as a concert pianist, composer and singer at the Guildhall School of Music in London. She has composed, played and improvised for documentaries and films, most recently for a short film starring Patrick Bergin called ‘Native.’ With Margarita Meklina, she played and composed music-to-text in Russia, Sweden and Ireland. She has played and toured internationally with David Tibet of ‘Current 93’ and Anohni, who wrote, ‘Maja Elliott’s playing has touched me. She is so expressive, holding notes in fearless witness to subtle emotions.’

19.45

Conference Dinner at the Jetty Restaurant, Harbour Hotel

Saturday 20 January

09:00 – 10:30

Digital Humanities / Digital Cultures Workshop

co-led by Seth Bernstein (Higher School of Economics, Moscow) and Vlad Strukov (University of Leeds)

10:30 – 10:45

Tea and Coffee

10:45 – 12:15

Gender, Sexuality and the Body in Russian Society and Culture

‘Hating War, He Must Spare No Effort to Defend Peace’:

Masculinity, War, and Peace in the Early Cold War Era.

Claire McCallum (University of Exeter)

‘I just don’t want to connect my life with this occupation’: Working-class young men, manual labour, and social mobility in contemporary Russia

Charlie Walker (University of Southampton)

The Sexual History of Russian Migration

Philippa Hetherington (UCL School for Slavonic and East European Studies)

12:15 – 13:00

The Concept of Domestication: New Tools for the Analysis of Soviet Children's Culture

Lunchtime keynote by Professor Maria Maiofis, School of Advanced Research in the Humanities, RANEPa

13:00 – 14:00

Lunch (provided)

14:00 – 15:30

Soviet History and Culture

The politics of national history: Russia and the centenary of 1917

James Ryan, University of Cardiff

Soviet Deafness across the Iron Curtain: Identity and Ideology in the World Federation of the Deaf

Claire Shaw, University of Warwick

Inventing Soviet rock stardom during stagnation

Polly McMichael, University of Nottingham

Discussant: Pavel Vasilyev (Max Planck Institute)

15:30 – 15:45

Tea and coffee

15:45 – 16:45

Film History in Russia: Archives, Libraries, People

Petr Bagrov (Writer and film historian)

16:50 – 17:50

The French Language in Imperial Russia: A Transnational Project

Closing keynote by Derek Offord (University of Bristol) and Gesine Argent (University of Edinburgh)

17:50 – 18:00

Closing Remarks

Connor Doak (University of Bristol) and Claire Shaw (University of Warwick)

Abstracts are available on the pages that follow

Abstracts

Academies without Borders: Working Between Cultures

Catriona Kelly (University of Oxford)

Opening Keynote (Friday 1-2pm)

This keynote address, based on experience of working in (and between) academic cultures in Russia and the UK over many years, considers the challenges and rewards of attempting to build genuine collaboration that does not assume the necessary superiority of either side. As the geopolitical weather worsens, such partnerships become all the more important, and I hope to discuss how we can avoid returning to the parallelism and non-dialogue of the Cold War even as political exchanges start to resemble those of the past..

Words for ‘Sodomy’ in Muscovite and Imperial Russia

Nick Mayhew (University of Cambridge)

Russian Religious Culture (Friday 2.15 – 3.45 pm)

Historians of gender and sexuality in the Latinate Kingdoms have problematised the idea that ‘sodomite’ functioned as a synonym for ‘homosexual’, showing that ‘sodomy’ connoted a broad range of sexual sins. In the Russian context, by contrast, words now typically translated as ‘sodomy’—variations on *sodmskii grekh* and *muzhelozhstvo*—have been understood to refer unambiguously to same-sex activity. This view has been supported by the Russian Orthodox Church and put forward by conservative politicians as proof of a longstanding Russian ‘tradition’ of homophobia. This paper explores how terms for ‘sodomy’ were used in Muscovite canon law and anti-sodomy tracts, and then in Imperial law. It suggests that unambiguous readings of ‘sodomy’ as ‘homosexuality’ stem from contemporary prejudice, and that neither *sodmskii grekh* nor *muzhelozhstvo* had a fixed meaning.

Religion and the Poetic Imagination in 1970s Russia

Josephine von Zitzewitz (University of Bristol)

Russian Religious Culture (Friday 2.15 – 3.45 pm)

Much of 1970s Russian samizdat poetry, especially poetry written in Leningrad, featured religious imagery, most of it recognisably Christian. It is easy to ascribe the proliferation of Biblical references to the new-found fascination with Orthodoxy in unofficial intellectual circles, evident from numerous 'kruzhki' devoted to aspects of Russia's religious heritage. While individual poets' faith journeys certainly influenced their writing, such a reading is simplistic and belittles the literary dimension of the phenomenon.

In his 1961 poem 'Christmas Romance', Joseph Brodsky described his generation as experiencing an 'inexplicable longing' that was essentially metaphysical and at the same time a 'longing for world culture' beyond the spatial confines of the Soviet Union and the present time period. Their quest to still this longing led the young poets towards the Russian literary tradition of the Silver Age and beyond.

Holy Quarter: Reshaping Urban Landscapes in Post-Secular Russia

Jeanne Kormina (HSE St Petersburg)

Russian Religious Culture (Friday 2.15 – 3.45 pm)

'We know how to deal with the Tsars' – this formula of the 'cultural brand' of the city of Yekaterinburg was semi-jokingly suggested at the meeting devoted to the tourist development of the city. Although none of the participants (city authorities, tourist operators and local mass-media representatives) took this idea seriously, all of them knew that this particular story of killing the last Russian Emperor Nicholas II, his wife, five kids and several servants by Bolsheviks in July, 1918 made this city attractive for both international tourists and Russian pilgrims. The former were looking for the place where the first episode of Great Russian terror happened; the latter were coming to the holy place keeping these recently canonized Orthodox Saints' 'presence'. Indeed, according to the tripadvisor forum, the most visited touristic place in Yekaterinburg is the Church on Blood built on the place of a house where the murder happened. Located in the very center of this industrial and business 'capital' of the Ural federal region, the church was built in 2000-2003 with financial support of the local government and businesses. A couple of years later the part of the city, where the church was erected, has been officially renamed into 'Holy Quarter'. The paper will discuss strategies of representation of Yekaterinburg in touristic/pilgrimage discourses – advertisements, booklets, etc. – promoted by various agents and via various media (museums, exhibitions, excursions, films, rituals). It will focus on the process of conversion of the tragic episode of the Soviet history into undisputable cultural heritage.

Pin-Up Queer: Cavalry Maiden Durova As A Patriotic Icon

Margarita Vaysman (University of St Andrews)

Russian Literature and Society (Friday 4.00 – 5.30pm)

The celebrated memoirs of Nadezhda Durova, a female cavalry officer who served in the Russian Army during the Napoleonic wars, have been popular with the readers since the moment of their publication in 1836. Published by Pushkin in *Sovremennik*, Durova's *Zapiski* propelled her to fame and made her a welcome guest in the St Petersburg literary salons. Later on, in the twentieth century, with the inclusion of *Zapiski* into the school curriculum, the image of a brave female officer was used by the Soviet authorities to promote values of patriotism and service to the homeland. The 1962 Soviet musical *Gussarskaia ballada*, featuring the character of Porutchik Rzhveskii, one of the most popular heroes of Soviet anecdotes, transformed the narrative of Durova's military adventures into a love story and glossed over any controversial issues of gender normatively raised in Durova's original text. Thanks to the lasting popularity of the film, Durova remains a familiar character to the contemporary Russian audiences but recently there has been a surge of renewed interest in Durova's literary and material legacy, due to the recent militarisation of public discourse in contemporary Russia. This paper will discuss the most recent instances of revising Durova's autobiographical narrative in Russia, including the re-publication of her texts, museum exhibitions and commemorative events (the dedication of new monuments, issue of commemorative coins, etc.). Combining an analysis of recent local history studies texts from Elabuga, the home of Durova's literary museum, with an exploration of commercial use of Durova's image by the Russian tourist and food industry, this paper will approach the problem of the reception Durova's legacy from the point of view of queer theory and celebrity studies.

Redressing the Balance: Reconsidering the Meaning of Futurist Costume

Jamie Rann (University of Birmingham)

Russian Literature and Society (Friday 4.00 – 5.30pm)

Scholars have long acknowledged the contribution of the Russian Futurists to the development of performance art and drawn attention to the parallels between the Futurists' linguistic challenge to preconceived notions of sense and good order, notably in the non-semantic poetry *zaum'*, and their use of stunts and outlandish clothes to challenge contemporary mores. However, this equation, while undoubtedly justified, frequently overlooks the complexities of both *zaum'* and the semiotics of Futurist costume. In this paper, I present a more nuanced view of the purposes and the meaning of Futurist dressing up and explore its relationship to *zaum'*. I argue that, just as the neologistic strategies of Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh reflect different attitudes to sign and signifier, so Futurist costume, in their performances and in their poetry, embodies two different attitudes to form and content – the more prominent 'Kruchenykhian' approach that embodies an urge to iconicity, abstraction and estrangement, and a 'Khlebnikovian' tendency to seek structure and harmony.

What is Gulag Literature?

Andrea Gullotta (University of Glasgow)

Russian Literature and Society (Friday 4.00 – 5.30pm)

Regardless of the importance of the Gulag in Russian culture and literature and regardless of the many publications on authors who wrote about the Gulag (the most studied authors being Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Varlam Shalamov), it is impossible to speak of ‘Gulag literature’ as a defined object or as a fully defined research topic. Apart from Leona Toker’s *Return from the Archipelago*, Gulag literature has never been studied as a united body of texts. As a result, research on Gulag literature is particularly fragmented, to the point that it is even difficult to say exactly what is Gulag literature (literature on the Gulag? literature by former prisoners only? are memoirs part of Gulag literature, or are they to be considered documents?). This paper is based on my ongoing research on the development of a new framework which could help define and assess Russian Gulag literature. I will discuss my new systematization of the corpus, comprised of different types of texts which share common stylistic and narrative features, and then will highlight some features of each body of texts and a few critical concepts drawn from Auto/biography and Trauma studies that are of key importance for the study of the corpus.

Reading by Margarita Meklina, accompanied by Maja Elliott (Friday 5.45 – 7.15pm)

MARGARITA MEKLINA was born in St. Petersburg, Russia and now lives in Dublin, Ireland. In Russia, she received the 2003 Andrei Bely Prize (Russia’s first independent literary prize, which enjoys a special reputation for honouring dissident and nonconformist writing) for her short story collection *Battle at St. Petersburg* (Moscow, NLO, 2003) and the 2008 Russian Prize, awarded by the Yeltsin Center Foundation, for her manuscript *My Criminal Connection to Art* (later published by ‘Russkii Gulliver’, 2012). In 2013 and in 2016, she was a finalist for the ‘Nonconformism’ prize given by *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* for her novellas *Cervix* and *Slony Gannibala*, and in 2014 she was short-listed for ‘NOS’, a prize given by the fund of Mikhail Prokhorov for ‘new social trends’ in literature, for her book *Vmeste so vseimi* (Moscow, EKSMO, 2014). She co-authored the epistolary novel *God na pravo perepiski* with poet Arkadii Dragomoschenko and completed a novel *The Little Gaucho Who Loved Don Quixote* (Black Wolf Edition & Publishing, Scotland, 2016). Translated into French and Swedish, two of her novellas are available as chapbooks *Poussière d’étoiles* (Etoiles, Paris, 2016) and *Linea Nigra* (Ars Interpres, Stockholm, 2017). Her new prose collection, *A Sauce Stealer*, was just published by NY Publisher Spuyten Duyvil. In Spain, her two novellas were also included in *El Armario de Acero* (Dos Bigotes, 2014), an anthology of queer writing translated from Russian. In Russia she participated in many queer-themed literary anthologies published by KVIR (Moscow), and is currently assembling, with the American translator Annie Fisher, a portfolio from LGBT writers from Russia (to be translated to English). She writes in Russian and English.

MAJA ELLIOTT trained as a concert pianist, composer and singer at the Guildhall School of Music in London. She has composed, played and improvised for documentaries and films, most recently for a short film starring Patrick Bergin called ‘Native.’ She has performed and toured worldwide. With Margarita Meklina, she played and composed music-to-text in Russia, Sweden and Ireland. For ten years, she played and toured internationally with performance poet David Tibet of ‘Current 93’ and also Anohni, who wrote, ‘Maja Elliott’s playing has touched me. She is so expressive, holding notes in fearless witness to subtle emotions.’

**Digital Cultures & Digital Humanities in Russia Workshop
(Saturday 9.00 – 10.30am)**

Is there a Russian DH?

Seth Bernstein (HSE Moscow)

In the past ten years, Russian academia has become more internationalized. Compared to humanities departments in Anglo-American academia, however, Russian universities have only recently shown interest in digital humanities (DH) as so-called *tsifrovye gumanitarnye nauki*. Even at the start of 2018, only a handful of Russian universities will house DH centers. The absence of an institutional DH footprint in Russia, though, belies alternative forms and genealogies of digital work in academia and in para-academic settings. Exploring the development of Russian digital humanities work can reveal broader divides between Anglo-American and Russian academic cultures, and present opportunities for international cooperation.

Digital Contexts, or speaking in favour of a new project of resistance

Vlad Strukov (University of Leeds)

The project of digital cultures is linked – in name and purpose – to the project of cultural studies and its preoccupation with the question of power and the question of resistance. I argue that to read digital contexts is to resist the dominance of ‘big data’. To be precise, the notion of big data has been used to impose certain forms of culture, social conditions and political regimes, all conceptualised through and with the help of the language of hegemony understood in Gramscian (2011) and neo-Gramscian terms (see, for example, Apeldoorn 2004; Cohn 2010; Williams 2014). The workshop will include a discussion of this new project of resistance and a demonstration of some case studies.

**‘Hating War, He Must Spare No Effort to Defend Peace’:
Masculinity, War, and Peace in the Early Cold War Era.**

Claire McCallum (University of Exeter)

**Gender, Sexuality and the Body in Russian Society and Culture (Sat
10.45 – 12.15pm)**

In January 1968, the popular women’s magazine *Sovetskaia zhenshchina* opened the proverbial can of worms when it launched its survey of what constituted the ‘Ideal Man’. The survey prompted more than 500 people from around the world to write to the magazine with their thoughts on the subject. From the selection that appeared in the magazine over the course of the next 12 months there was one striking quality that was singled out time and again: alongside being a hard worker, a loving father, and a caring husband, the ideal man was now someone who was completely committed to and actively working towards world peace.

Often thought of as a ‘women’s issue’, this paper will present some preliminary thoughts on the significance of peace to the conceptualisation of Soviet masculinity in the two decades following 1945. It will explore the relationship between the ideal of world peace and the shifting model of the New Soviet Man in the aftermath of the Great Patriotic War, examining how the fight for peace shaped not only the vision of the military hero presented in contemporary culture, but how it impacted upon other male identities as well, especially that of the father.

‘I just don’t want to connect my life with this occupation’: Working-class young men, manual labour, and social mobility in contemporary Russia

Charlie Walker (University of Southampton)

Gender, Sexuality and the Body in Russian Society and Culture (Sat 10.45 – 12.15pm)

A key strand in the Western literature on working-class masculinities focuses on whether young men are capable of the feminized performances apparently required of them in new service economies. However, the wider literature on processes of neoliberalization – emphasizing the ‘hollowing out’ of labour markets, the cultural devaluation of lower-skilled forms of employment, and the pathologization of working-class lives – would suggest that it is as much a classed as a gendered transformation that is demanded of young men leaving school with few qualifications. This dimension of neoliberalization is highlighted by ethnographic data exploring the experiences and subjectivities of young workers in St. Petersburg, Russia, where traditional forms of manual labour have not given way to ‘feminized’ work, but have become materially and symbolically impoverished, and are perceived as incapable of supporting the wider transition into adult independence. In this context, young workers attempt to emulate new forms of ‘successful masculinity’ connected with novel service sector professions and the emergent higher education system, despite the unlikelihood of overcoming a range of structural and cultural barriers. These acquiescent, individualized responses indicate that, while ways of being a man are apparently being liberated from old constraints amongst the more privileged, neoliberalization narrows the range of subject positions available to working-class young men.

The Sexual History of Russian Migration

Philippa Hetherington (UCL-SSEES)

Gender, Sexuality and the Body in Russian Society and Culture (Sat 10.45 – 12.15pm)

In recent years, scholars of contemporary migration and historians of migration in the British Empire and the Americas have examined the ways in which discourses of sexual ‘deviance’ were used historically to bolster regimes immigration restriction and to manage and channel migration flows in particular and nationally contingent ways. However, thus far this scholarship has not touched on Russia, or the sexual histories of Russian migration. This paper will examine some of the ways in which particular ideas about (in)appropriate sexuality framed and infused efforts to securitise the Russian border and prevent mass emigration in the late imperial period. It will draw in particular on research from my forthcoming book *Circulating Subjects: The Traffic in Women and the Russian Construction of an International Crime*, but it will also look beyond attempts to prevent trafficking to think more broadly about regimes of migratory prostitution, cross-border marriage, and the sexualisation of the male migrant to interrogate the relationship between sex and migration management in Russian history.

The Concept of Domestication: New Tools for the Analysis of Soviet Children's Culture

Lunchtime Keynote (Saturday 12.15 – 1pm)

Maria Maiofis (School of Advanced Research in the Humanities, RANEPa)

The concept of domestication is commonly interpreted according to its two basic meanings: 1) as a synonym of 'taming' when we describe how wild animals and plants were (and still are) domesticated by humans; 2) (in media studies) as a synonym of adapting and adjusting to the structure and interface of new digital devices. These two meanings and their semantic contexts can serve as descriptions of two Soviet strategies of cultural interaction with 'strange,' 'new,' 'unknown,' 'foreign' phenomena. The first approach implied thorough work of the author (translator, journalist, film director, actor, etc.) and, as its direct consequence, quick perception and adaptation of the 'strange' and 'foreign' elements by the audience. The second was not so widespread, it was presumed that the 'strange' and the 'other' would be discerned and represented in a penetrating image, no matter how 'unknown,' 'uncomfortable' or 'uncanny' it was. The presentation will be focused on the special traits of the first and the second approaches, on the strong connection of the first approach with the collective emotion of 'Soviet nostalgia', and, last but not least, on the significant shift made by Russian culture of the 2000s and 2010s towards the second strategy of adapting and adjusting. We can suggest that in recent years Russian children's culture has undergone an essential transformation, as the latter strategy demands thorough inner work not only from the author but also from the audience.

The politics of national history: Russia and the centenary of 1917 James Ryan (University of Cardiff)

Soviet History and Culture (Saturday 2.00pm – 3.30pm)

The focus of this paper will be the approach of the Russian state to the challenges of commemorating the centenary of the Russian revolutions of 1917, at precisely a time when the Russian state has been acting as a bulwark against revolutionary situations in Ukraine and Syria, and has been attempting to undercut the bases for upheaval at home in Russia itself. The central questions that I want to address are the following: What do we learn about the mindset of Russia's ruling elite through examination of their approach to the centenary? (And) How does their representation of their country's past reflect the concerns and policies of the state today? We will see that it is possible to identify a particular, statist approach of the Russian elite to the centenary, based primarily on stressing the dangers of revolution, the idea of the historic continuity of the Russian state through modern Russian history, and the importance of a strong Russian state. We will also see that the state has avoided attempts to silence more pluralistic voices, and indeed that it appears committed to respect the independence of professional historians. However, the approach of the state is not without tensions and contradictions.

Soviet Deafness across the Iron Curtain: Identity and Ideology in the World Federation of the Deaf

Claire Shaw (University of Warwick)

Soviet History and Culture (Saturday 2.00pm – 3.30pm)

This paper explores the dissemination and reception of Soviet visions of deafness in the World Federation of the Deaf, a global advocacy body formed after the end of the Second World War. The WFD was conceived as a forum in which a globalised and unified understanding of deafness – and of the social support needed by deaf people – could be conceived and advertised to the world at large. In the context of the Cold War, however, the WFD became a battle ground on which competing notions of welfare, utility and deaf identity played out. As the USSR advertised itself as the most ‘humane’ place in the world to be deaf, its fear of consumerist and technology-driven models of the Western deaf self led to the denigration of some of the fundamental tenets of Soviet deaf identity.

This paper thus explores how a supposedly ‘neutral’ global forum fostered and amplified ideological divisions, and led to fundamental misunderstandings of Soviet deafness on the world stage. The paper will also consider the legacy of this international deaf miscommunication, for Russian deaf people today, and for those who seek to write their history.

Inventing Soviet rock stardom during stagnation

Polly McMichael (University of Nottingham)

Soviet History and Culture (Saturday 2.00pm – 3.30pm)

This paper examines Soviet rock musicians’ sense of themselves as musicians and as public figures during stagnation. In lyrics, writings and performances Moscow and Leningrad musicians represented themselves as followers a form that transcended material and social concerns (rock music as ideal, or as essential drive). Going against the grain of this quasi-spiritual interpretation of involvement in rock music, though, is a curiously prominent evocation of the notion of fame, and particularly its ‘dark side’ – the pressures of commercial success, the trappings of wealth, etc. I argue that such discussion should be interpreted partly as a mimetic/parodic reflection on the figure of the rock star in the West (informed by a characteristically Soviet view of popular music and its dangers) and partly as a response to social pressures as rock music began to transcend narrow social circles. The imagined figure of the rock musician that emerges from meditations on fame and stardom in rock culture is very different from the image constructed of rock musicians as public figures during perestroika, but its influence can be traced in rock culture up to the end of the Soviet era and beyond.

The French Language in Imperial Russia: A Transnational Project

Derek Offord (University of Bristol) and Gesine Argent (University of Edinburgh)

Closing Keynote (Saturday 4.50 – 5.50pm)

This project, funded by the AHRC from 2011 to 2015, will come to an end with the publication in 2018 of an overarching book co-authored by Derek Offord, Vladislav Rjéoutski and Gesine Argent. The project itself has been transnational, involving publication of outputs from over 40 scholars from more than a dozen countries and other multinational collaboration. Its subject-matter has been transnational in the sense that it investigates the integration of the Russian court, nobility, literary community and intelligentsia into the European political, social and cultural landscape from the early eighteenth century to the revolutions of 1917, focusing on the role of language use – especially Franco-Russian bilingualism but also broader knowledge of foreign languages – in this process. We have examined the attention paid in pre-revolutionary Russia to the teaching and learning of French, the use of French at court and its functions in high society, the diplomatic service and other branches of administration. Next, we have surveyed both the large corpus of Russian writing in French, which extends from nobles' personal correspondence, through many forms of ego-writing to women's prose fiction, and Russians' use of French as an international language of cultural propaganda, historiosophical speculation and political polemic. We have considered language attitudes, especially the prolonged debate from the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth about language choice. We also discuss the treatment of Russian francophonie in the classical Russian novel. This presentation will end with reference to flaws which our findings expose in influential narratives about language use in pre-revolutionary Russia and about the history of Russian culture, especially narratives about Russian exceptionalism and about the supposed 'binary oppositions' detected between 'Russia' and 'Europe' and between Russia's own constituent parts.