

Introduction: New UK Research in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature

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On 1 February 2014, a group of Russianists gathered for a symposium at Darwin College, Cambridge. Academics at all stages of their careers were represented, from senior scholars to those about to embark on postgraduate study. What united all of them was an interest in nineteenth-century Russian literature and, in particular, of entering into a discussion about the current state of the discipline. While British universities have long been known for excellent research in the study of nineteenth-century Russian literature, in recent years the field has shrunk and its visibility has declined.

The February symposium showcased new research into nineteenth-century Russian literature currently emerging in the UK. The range of papers covered the century, from Pushkin to Chekhov. Many highlighted new methodological approaches, showing not only the vibrancy of nineteenth-century Russian literary studies in the UK, but also its range. The three articles mentioned below had their origin at that symposium and were chosen to highlight the work of emerging scholars.

Each article, in addition, forms part of a larger project. Elizabeth Harrison's article on the image of the Jesuit across nineteenth-century Russian literature comes out of her PhD thesis; she received her PhD in Russian Literature and Thought from UCL in 2013. Benjamin Morgan's article on the Russian spa narrative also emerges from his doctoral research; a PhD student in Comparative Literature at UCL, he plans to submit his thesis this year. Muireann Maguire's article represents the first stage of her new research project on childbirth in nineteenth-century Russian literature. Maguire is a Lecturer in Russian at the University of Exeter and has recently published her first monograph, *Stalin's Ghosts: Gothic Themes in Early Soviet Literature* (2012).

At the February symposium, the concluding round table and ensuing discussion advanced a number of ideas for fostering more engagement in our field. One of them was to support and utilise open access publishing models

like *Modern Languages Open*. In publishing these three articles together in this first issue of *MLO*, it is our hope to show that nineteenth-century Russian literary studies in the UK is thriving, in a visible, more open way.

In closing this introduction, I would like to thank Elizabeth Harrison, Benjamin Morgan, and Muireann Maguire for sharing their work for the cluster. The articles benefitted from the careful editorial comments of my symposium co-organiser, Sarah Young, and Claire Whitehead, who also deserve thanks. We are grateful to the Centre for Eastern European Language-Based Area Studies (CEELBAS), who supported the symposium with a Research Network Workshop Grant. And, finally, thank you to all who attended the February symposium, whether as participants or audience members.