

Doctoral Student: Jakhan Pirhulyieva

Title of Project: *Reconsidering Space in Polar Exploration: Ships and Ice Realms in Romantic Fiction*

This project is situated within the field of Anglo-American Romanticism, eighteenth-century aesthetic theory and contemporary literary scholarship on space. The body of primary literature consists of two novels by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe which are central to this field, and a much less known and to date underresearched novel series by Robert Pearse Gillies. Polar exploration was well under way in the first half of the nineteenth century among British and American explorers. Ice and ships embody recognisable elements of polar exploration. Ships are self-contained spaces which provide protection to humans, and are employed as a tool of exploration. Ice is a natural site that can hinder the exploratory projects and endanger human lives. The two elements thus stand in opposition both on the pragmatic (the voyage) and the narrative levels. The focus of this project is on the manner in which these two spaces interact with one another and their functional role in the depiction of polar exploration. The main hypothesis of my project is as follows: polar ice and ships in the novels interact with one another in a complex fashion and embody distinct spaces both experienced and imagined by the characters. I argue that the two spaces possess a **creative** and **subversive potential** in the production of meaning in the narrative. In order to consolidate my hypothesis, I will apply Henry Lefebvre's concept of **absolute space** together with Edmund Burke's and Immanuel Kant's concepts of the **sublime** in the analysis of polar ice in the novels; and Lefebvre's concept of **social space** with Michel Foucault's concept of **heterotopia** in the investigation of ship spaces. By **reconceptualising** the functional use of the two spaces, the PhD project aims to set out new social and spatial perspectives on the polar exploration addressed in the primary texts. Ultimately, with this project, I hope to fashion a revised understanding of the interaction between a natural site and human agents in Romantic literature in which broader cultural implications of this interaction can be (re-)considered.