

# Spreading Enlightenment



C. L. Ledoux, *Design for the Theatre at Besançon* (1775)



## The Oxford Masters (M.St) in the Enlightenment...

...provides a comprehensive introduction to the comparative and interdisciplinary study of the European Enlightenment.

What was the public sphere? Where do modern concepts of gender and sexuality come from? Is language natural or artificial? Who is civilized and who is savage? What is the power of culture and what is the culture of power? How diverse are the national histories of the Enlightenment movement? What was the relation between religion and secular morality?

These are some of the questions that the team-taught seminar programme addresses through the study of key figures in the history of ideas, including Leibniz, Bayle, Montesquieu, Du Châtelet, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Hume, Smith, Karamzin, Kant, Goethe, Beccaria and Wollstonecraft, and through the close study of literary genres, including works of travel writing, fiction, autobiography, scientific discourse, opera libretti and theatre.

Oxford is home to libraries with remarkable eighteenth-century holdings, and also to the Voltaire Foundation, an important centre for textual research and publication, and its newly established Centre for the Enlightenment.

The programme's unique strength is the range of dedicated experts from all the major languages and traditions, French, German, Italian, Russian and English.

*“God is a comedian playing to an audience that is too afraid to laugh.”*  
VOLTAIRE (1694 - 1778)

For course details and how to apply, see:  
[www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/prospective\\_grad.php](http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/prospective_grad.php)

Our graduate course on the Enlightenment, one of several pathways available within the M.St. in European Literature, is an interdisciplinary initiative which brings together colleagues from numerous different language areas and ties in closely with the work of the Voltaire Foundation and the Besterman Centre for the Enlightenment, whose activities are described later in this newsletter.

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This newsletter will be produced twice a year to keep alumni informed about the activities of the Modern Languages Faculty.

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**From now onwards, it will be distributed electronically. Hard copies will also be available. If you receive hard copy but would prefer an electronic version, please let us know your email address by emailing [editor@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:editor@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk) If you have any comments on the newsletter, please email the editor or write to:**

Faculty of Medieval & Modern Languages,  
41 Wellington Square,  
Oxford OX1 2JF.

01865 270 750

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# Editorial



**When two or three academics are gathered together, they talk about the Research Assessment Exercise, in which the**

**achievements of university departments are evaluated by colleagues and the outcome is used to determine the amount of research funding each department then receives from the government. The strength of the RAE is the central principle of peer review. Given that there has to be a system of allocating funding, one can say of the RAE what Churchill said about democracy – that it is the worst system except for all the others. Academics would far sooner put their trust in the integrity of colleagues than in committees of civil servants or quasi-mathematical devices such as bibliometry.**

The 2008 RAE brought outstanding results for Modern Languages at Oxford. French and German ranked top, and Russian second, in both the Quality Rankings and *Research Fortnightly's* 'research power index'. Iberian and Latin American Languages, and Italian, both came fourth in the UK in the 'research power index'. The Faculty submitted research from over 90 Faculty members. Overall, more than 60% of the Faculty's research was assessed as either 4\* - 'world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour', or 3\* - 'internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour'. Full details can be found via [www.rae.ac.uk](http://www.rae.ac.uk).

Gratifying as these results are, they don't automatically convert into increased or even sustained research funding. Allocation is governed also by other factors, such as a policy

of strengthening the post-1992 universities and the need to support what are called STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Such policies, however commendable in themselves, have worked to our disadvantage and led to an actual reduction in our research funding.

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## “The 2008 RAE brought outstanding results for Modern Languages at Oxford”

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The RAE outcome was in any case overshadowed – as were most things – by the credit crunch and the financial crisis whose effects no-one can entirely escape. After the recent belt-tightening budget, the universities have been told that they must save £180 million in the coming financial year. Oxford University lost a significant proportion of its endowment, and has announced a policy of extreme caution – how extreme, is not yet clear – in the refilling of posts. For the Modern Languages Faculty, this means that we can at best expect one post to be filled next year. The post scheduled for refilling next is the Taylor Chair of German, vacated at Easter 2009 by Professor Manfred Engel.

This situation adds further poignancy to retirements. **Chris Wells**, University Lecturer in Germanic Philology and Medieval German Literature,

and Fellow of St Edmund Hall, has recently retired after many years of dedicated service. He is the author of the comprehensive study *German: A Linguistic History to 1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), which appeared also in German translation. **Professor Tony Hunt**, FBA, Fellow of St Peter's, an internationally leading figure in medieval French literature, is about to retire after a distinguished career spent partly at the University of St Andrews and for the last twenty years at Oxford. Their departure leaves a large gap in the Faculty's provision for medieval teaching. Medieval linguistic and literary studies have traditionally been among our strengths, as the Faculty's full name indicates, and we have recently helped to set up an interdisciplinary Master's course in Medieval Studies.

In the light of current realities the Faculty is actively participating in the University's fund-raising campaign. Any reader who would like to consider a possible donation is more than welcome to write to the Chair of the Faculty Board ([chair@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:chair@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk)) or to the University Development Office ([enquiries@devoff.ox.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@devoff.ox.ac.uk)). We are seeking endowment funding for a range of Chairs and other posts.

On a happier note, it is a pleasure to record the achievements of various colleagues and the honours conferred on them. **Aditi Lahiri**, Professor of Linguistics (whose research interests include Germanic philology), has been honoured for her work with a prestigious award, the Prof. Sukumar Sen Memorial Gold Medal, which was conferred on her at the Annual General Meeting of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta.

**Peter Mackridge**, former Professor of Modern Greek and Emeritus Fellow of St Cross, has been awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Athens. The proposal for Professor Mackridge's honorary doctorate was made jointly by the Faculty of Literature and the Faculty of Primary Education for his work on Modern Greek literature and language.

**Richard Parish**, Professor of French and Fellow of St Catherine's, had this year the honour of being asked to deliver the Bampton Lectures. These lectures, now biennial, have

been given regularly since 1780. Their topic is normally an aspect of Christian theology. Previous Bampton Lecturers include many distinguished theologians, such as H.H. Milman, Austin Farrar, and John Habgood. Recently the lectures have been opened also to lay speakers. Professor Parish is an authority on seventeenth-century French literature, particularly the work of Pascal, and his topic was 'Le christianisme est étrange: Christian particularity in writing of the French 17th century'.

We intend to continue with teaching and research in a wide

range of European languages – including those with speakers outside Europe. Thus our thriving Portuguese operation is being strengthened by a new appointment in Brazilian studies (details later in this newsletter). This issue illustrates the range of our teaching and research. But to continue to thrive, we increasingly need the help of our alumni.

*Ritchie Robertson*

## Andrei Zorin

A native Muscovite and graduate of Moscow State University, Andrei Zorin joins Oxford from the Russian State Humanities University, having also held appointments at Harvard and Stanford. Andrei is known primarily for his expertise and publications on literature and politics in the reign of Catherine the Great, but has published widely on a range of topics including contemporary poetry and prose. He has also served on the jury of the Russian Booker Prize. His current research is focused on the history of the representation of the emotions in pre-Romantic Russia, largely through a close study of the diary of the nobleman Andrei Turgenev, but he is also involved in editing the works of the distinguished twentieth-century literary critic and diarist Lidia Ginzburg. His future plans include a study of Tolstoy's philosophy of history, the subject of his inaugural lecture.

*Andrew Kahn*



# The Oxford Enlightenment: Voltaire and beyond



'La Sainte Cène du Patriarche' by Jean Huber  
(Oxford, Voltaire Foundation)

The Voltaire Foundation, a department of the Humanities Division, is publishing the definitive scholarly edition of the complete works of the single most important figure of the Enlightenment: Voltaire. His **Complete Works** runs to 200 volumes; 160 volumes have already been published, with another 40 to appear before 2018. The General Editor, and Director of the Voltaire Foundation, Nicholas Cronk, heads an international team of scholars and editors, working on this extraordinary project, which played a significant role in the French department's recent RAE success. The Voltaire Foundation also recently obtained a major grant from the AHRC to publish the *Essai sur les mœurs*, Voltaire's multi-volumed history of the world, covering all ages, all continents and all religions.

Voltaire also wrote over 20,000 letters, which make up 50 volumes of the *Complete Works* in the critical edition of Theodore Besterman, who founded the Voltaire Foundation and bequeathed it to the University in 1976. This edition is now also available digitally in **Electronic Enlightenment**, which contains letters to and from nearly 6000 other Enlightenment figures. *Electronic Enlightenment* makes use of the very latest technology, pioneered at the Voltaire Foundation by Robert MacNamee, the project's Research and Development director, and very generously funded by grants from the Mellon Foundation totalling nearly \$2 million. Rapidly expanding and marketed throughout the world, the project is now housed at the Bodleian Library. At the post-launch celebration in October 2008, Professor Lisa Jardine of Queen Mary and Director of the Centre for Lives and Letters, described the many ways in which it was already revolutionizing eighteenth-century research.

The Voltaire Foundation is not just about Voltaire. It also publishes **SVEC**, a monograph series edited by Jonathan Mallinson, and recognised

worldwide as the foremost collection of eighteenth-century research across a broad range of disciplines. Now publishing twelve volumes a year, it will reach its 500th volume in November this year. Other ongoing projects include the publication of the correspondences of other Enlightenment figures, including Voltaire's notorious enemy La Beaumelle. It is this extraordinary publishing activity which caught the attention of this year's French Panel of the RAE, who took the unusual step of singling out the Voltaire Foundation for special praise: 'The value of the Voltaire Foundation, in allowing the publication of editions and scholarly monographs in eighteenth-century studies, becomes ever more apparent'.

The Enlightenment didn't just happen in France, of

course, and Modern Languages at Oxford is developing in increasingly comparative and interdisciplinary ways. Andrew Kahn (Russian) and Kate Tunstall (French) have set up a new **Masters** option on the European Enlightenment, which attracted its first cohort of students this year.

Modern Languages is also playing a major part in another new Enlightenment development in Oxford: the creation of the **Besterman Centre for the Enlightenment**, directed by Nicholas Cronk with the Programme Director, Kate Tunstall. The new Centre brings together academics and students from French, German, Italian, English, History, Classics, Music, Philosophy and Theology within the University, and has a network of international links in the US (Johns Hopkins University), Canada (Laval

University), France (Groupe de Recherches sur l'Histoire du Littéraire at the École des Hautes Études and Paris-III) and Belgium (Université Libre). Professor Marian Hobson FBA inaugurated the Centre in May 2008 with a lecture on Diderot, taking in the extraordinary range of his work as an encyclopedist, philosopher, playwright, art critic, and political thinker. In November 2008, the Centre had its first study day, devoted to 'Eighteenth-Century Quarrels'. As Professor Sir Colin Lucas, former Vice-Chancellor of Oxford and distinguished eighteenth-century historian, observed, this was a particularly good subject, since there was nothing that eighteenth-century writers and modern academics were better at than quarrelling. On the day, there was more lively debate and stimulating discussion than quarrelsomeness, and topics ranged from the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* and the Battle of the Books to the etiquette of quarrelling. The topic proved to be an immensely rich one; more enlightened Quarrels are planned!

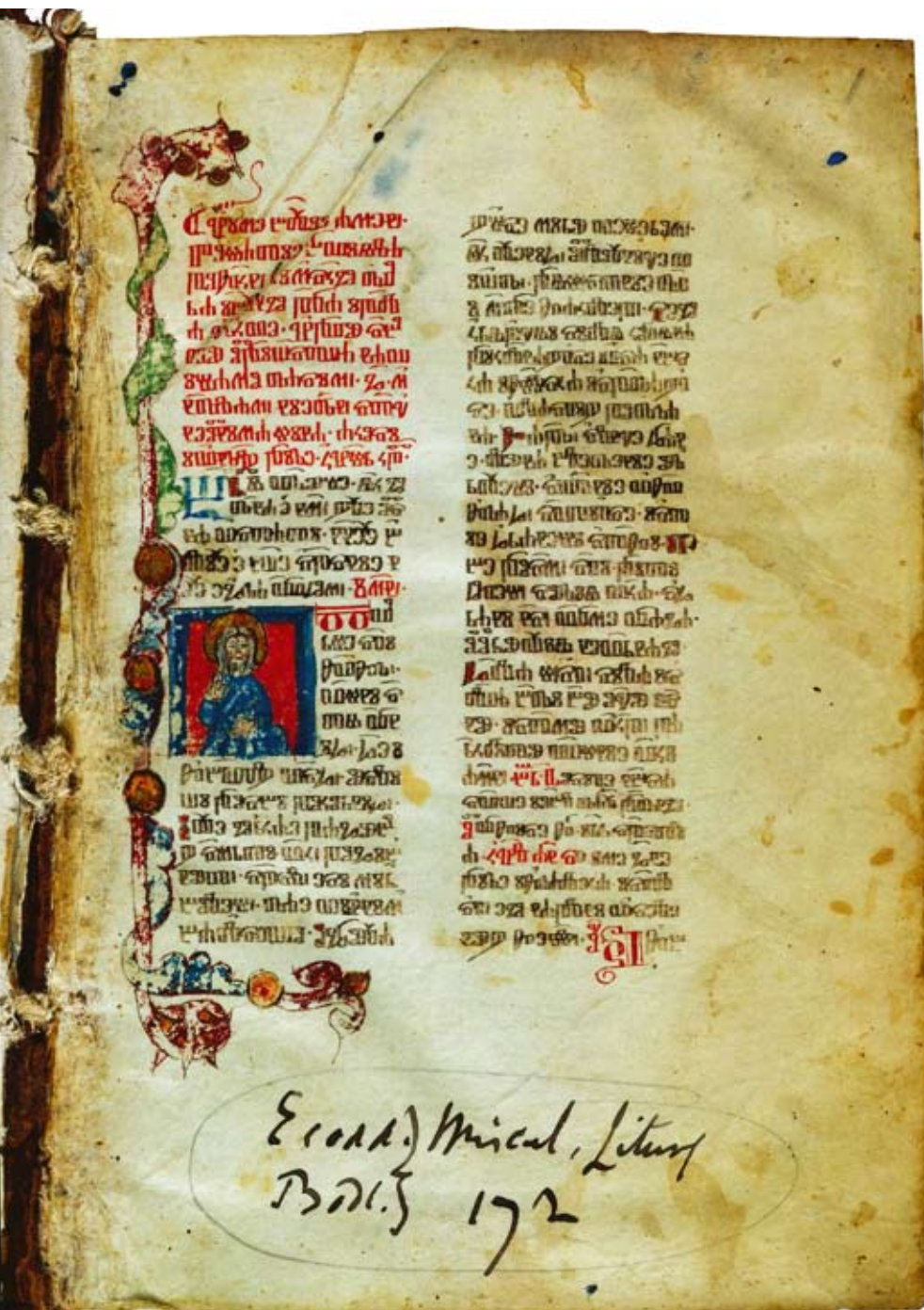
Thanks to a small grant from the John Fell Fund (OUP), the Besterman Centre for the Enlightenment has a website, see [www.voltaire.ox.ac.uk/bestermancentre/](http://www.voltaire.ox.ac.uk/bestermancentre/)

*Nicholas Cronk*  
*Jonathan Mallinson*  
*Kate Tunstall*



*Dr Kate Tunstall,  
 Programme Director,  
 The Besterman Centre  
 for the Enlightenment*

# Slavonic languages at Oxford



*Glagolitic MS Canon Liturg 172 fol. 1R from the Bodleian Library*

SLAVONIC IS ONE of the large language families of Europe and beyond. At Oxford, the beginnings of Slavonic studies are connected with the introduction of modern European languages as a proper academic subject more generally. The University's Taylor Institution was founded in the wake of rapid advances in comparative philology since the late 18th century. There were political implications too, for example the continued rise of Russia as a major power and Polish opposition in the November Rising of 1830/31. It was thus already the first 'Professor of Modern European Languages on Sir Taylor's Foundation', Francis Henry Triven, who also offered the first lecture course on Russian language and literature at Oxford from November 1849.

A few years later, the 4th Earl of Ilchester, a diplomat with knowledge of Russia and Poland, left the University a fund for the study of Slavonic languages. The first Ilchester lectures were given by William Richard Morfill in 1870. Eventually, in 1889, Morfill became Oxford's first Reader and, later, Professor of Russian and other Slavonic languages. Under his auspices, Russian was first introduced as a full degree subject in 1904. Other Slavonic languages continued to be studied as well. They were firmly established as a curricular subject after World War II. On the initiative of Morfill's second successor, Sergey Konovalov, the University introduced a postgraduate Diploma in Slavonic Studies in 1950.

The Diploma is now a one-year M.St. or a two-year M.Phil. These courses allow students of one Slavonic language, usually Russian, to learn at least one more, and to choose from a range of philological, literary and historical options. Graduate students can currently choose from nine languages, in addition to Russian, and learn about their history and structure: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Polish, Serbian, Slovak, Slovene, Sorbian, and Ukrainian. There are also options in Comparative Slavonic Philology, where we compare all the different Slavonic languages in order to reconstruct their common ancestor and to gain a better understanding of their history, and in the medieval literary language, Old Church Slavonic. Oxford is the only place in the U.K. which offers a graduate course of this kind, enabling students with knowledge of one Slavonic language to become real Slavists, i.e. specialists in the wider Slavonic speaking world. Over the years, there has been a small, but steady group of M.St. students at Oxford.

Between 1953 and 1981, the University had a Chair of Comparative Slavonic Philology whose incumbents were the distinguished Slavists Boris Unbegaun, Robert Auty and Anne Pennington. Library holdings were systematically developed from 1949 in particular, when John Simmons occupied the post of first Slavonic librarian (serving until 1969, when he became Reader in Russian and Slavonic Bibliography). Today, the Bodleian has Cyrillic manuscript holdings rivalled in the UK only

by the British Library, and our Glagolitic manuscript holdings are the best in Western Europe (and were specially displayed to the Croatian Prime Minister when he visited Oxford in 2007). The Bodleian also houses a unique collection of 'Libri polonici', purchased already in the middle of the 19th century. Oxford's exceptionally fine Slavonic library resources based in the Taylorian attract students and scholars from across the country and overseas. They are now also used by new circles of graduates beyond Slavonic studies proper who take an interest in Slavonic languages and literature. Slavonic options have been made available under other graduate courses, such as the M.St. and M.Phil. in Medieval and Modern Languages, in General Linguistics and Comparative Philology and in Byzantine Studies.

At undergraduate level, Russian has seen a renewed growth since a beginners' course was introduced in 2004 alongside the post-A-level course. Russian at Oxford offers the study of a distinctive set of philological and linguistic options, including the history of the Russian language, descriptive analysis of modern Russian and the history of Church Slavonic. There is an average of around eight students per year taking up these options. Oxford is also one of the few UK institutions which offer a degree course in Czech (with Slovak) and, since 2004, in combination with other degree languages, a subsidiary degree course in Polish. The current degree course in Czech (with Slovak) has attracted up to around eight undergraduates per

year since its introduction in 1989. In addition to mainline subjects, undergraduates can also choose from a range of special subject options in Slavonic studies. Among them are Comparative Slavonic Philology, Old Church Slavonic and the structure and history of various other Slavonic languages (see the list above). There has been an unforeseen expansion in their uptake since the introduction of the beginners' course in Russian. In each year, there are now at least one or two undergraduates who, after successfully tackling Russian from scratch at Oxford, have the linguistic flair and interest, and acquire the confidence, to launch themselves on another Slavonic language. This summer there will be nine students in the Final Honour School (out of twenty-six candidates for Russian) offering Slavonic languages other than Russian and Czech (with Slovak).

In a wider context, the unprecedented political changes since the 1980s have firmly put Slavonic speaking countries back on the European map. What was once considered the 'Eastern bloc' is now again recognized as a diverse area of many different cultural, literary and linguistic traditions which spark interest among students and applicants. Almost 140 years ago these traditions encouraged the Earl of Ilchester to create his generous fund for the study of Slavonic languages at Oxford. The lectures named after him continue to be a regular and popular event.

*Jan Fellerer*

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A fuller history of Slavonic Studies at Oxford is now online, at:  
[www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/russian/slavonic\\_studies.pdf](http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/russian/slavonic_studies.pdf)

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# Facing the Future

**IN MAY 2008 the University launched the 'Oxford Thinking' Campaign, which aims to raise £1.25 billion for the collegiate University. This is an integrated campaign by both colleges and the University, to pursue agreed strategic goals. The Campaign seeks funding for student bursaries and scholarships, academic posts and programmes, as well as infrastructure and buildings. The latter includes the planned development of a new Humanities centre on the site of the Radcliffe Infirmary, which will offer the Faculty of Modern Languages, along with other faculties in the Humanities Division, a new purpose-built home, providing exciting opportunities for interdisciplinary and collaborative work.**

The University and colleges have received support from alumni and others in the UK, the USA and across the world and to date, £664 million has been raised, but there is a long way to go. We need this campaign to ensure that Oxford retains its position as a global leader in teaching and research.

As well as seeking funding to enable the Faculty of Modern Languages to move to the Radcliffe Infirmary site in Phase Two of the development, we are also seeking to secure endowments for existing posts. We aim to provide scholarships for graduate students, and to fund academic posts so that with colleges we can fill gaps in teaching to help preserve our highly valued tutorial system. This will represent new investment in the intellectual capital of Oxford, allowing the

Faculty and colleges to advance their role in engaging with the most important issues of our age.

We hope our alumni recognize the worth of what we do, and will want to support the Faculty and the colleges in delivering first-rate undergraduate teaching, graduate training, and the best research and writing. If you would like to find out more about the Oxford Thinking Campaign, please contact Luke Purser, Head of Development for the Humanities Division, at the Development Office, University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD.

Tel: +44 (0) 1865 611543. Email: [luke.purser@humanities.ox.ac.uk](mailto:luke.purser@humanities.ox.ac.uk)

**Oxford Thinking**  
The Campaign for the University of Oxford



## The Fred Hodcroft Prize

**AS A TRIBUTE to Mr Fred Hodcroft, Spanish tutor at Exeter for many years, the University in 2008 established a fund to promote the study of the history of the Spanish language by awarding an annual Fred Hodcroft Prize for the best Finals performance in this area. A reception to honour Fred Hodcroft and mark the establishment of the fund was held on 6 November 2008 and was attended by many of the original donors. The photo shows Fred Hodcroft returning thanks.**