

Thomas McLean (2012)

The Other East and Nineteenth-Century British Literature. Imagining Poland and the Russian Empire

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Recommended by PD Dr Markus Krzoska

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History, Cultural Studies, Literary Sciences

English

British Romantic writers imagined the Polish exile as a sympathetic wanderer whose homeland no longer existed and the Russian as barbarous and ravenous. But in the Victorian era both were seen as clever, deceitful citizens of the world. This fascinating book restores the significance of Eastern Europe to nineteenth-century British literature, offering new readings of William Blake's *Europe*, Lord Byron's *Mazeppa*, and George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, and recovering influential works by Jane Porter and Thomas Campbell. This study begins with Catherine the Great and the eighteenth-century partition of Poland, moves through a variety of texts inspired by Polish freedom fighter Tadeusz Kościuszko, and examines the changing stereotypes that appeared as later uprisings failed and new refugees arrived in Britain. Extending recent scholarship on ethnicity, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism, *The Other East* reveals the tropes that shaped British opinion as the idealized Polish exile gradually became the ambiguous Eastern immigrant, and Russia became a serious challenge to the British Empire.

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