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Leonid Livak, *Russian Émigrés in the Intellectual and Literary Life of Interwar France: A Bibliographical Essay*. Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010. viii + 542 pp. Notes, bibliographies, appendices, and index. \$125 CDN/ \$125 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-7735-3723-1.

Review by N. Christine Brookes, Central Michigan University.

With the concepts of nation and their borders becoming increasingly blurry, Leonid Livak further obscures these frames of reference with his bibliographical study of Russian emigrant francophone writers in twentieth-century interbellum France. The study—though limited to Russians in exile (self-imposed or forced) who participated in French cultural production in the interwar period—contributes to and illuminates often ignored, yet imminently valuable perspectives to current notions of borders, exile, the nation, and the transnational within European literary and cultural history.

Livak, professor of Russian literature at the University of Toronto, complements his previous research into these French-Russian/Soviet cultural exchanges in *Russian Émigrés*.<sup>[1]</sup> The book is first and foremost an extensive and thorough bibliography of archival resources detailing primary and secondary texts available at European libraries (primarily in American, Belgian, British, French, Israeli, and Swiss archives) which address “scholarly inquiries into the intellectual and literary commerce between the Russian émigré cultural elite and its French hosts” in the 1920s and 1930s (p. 3). In addition to the almost 400-page bibliography (alphabetical, listed by author), researchers will find supplemental bibliographies featuring group declarations and corporate authors of texts. Finally, of highest general interest to cultural historians, is his introductory analytical essay that assesses the role of this and other studies that take into account cross-cultural production and its impact within a specified national frame.

As the title suggests, the aim of this book is to encourage scholarly examination across national lines during a time period in which there is “rich material for the exploration of the processes of cultural cross-fertilization and of many other general problems of comparative literary and cultural studies” (p. 3). In so doing, Livak problematizes Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of a field of cultural production: “Bourdieu developed his sociology of culture using material from nineteenth-century France and, as a result, the salient feature of twentieth-century European history—the expatriation of cultural elites due to social upheavals and totalitarian revolutions—fell outside of his analysis” (p. 3). Bourdieu, according to Livak, does not factor in the specific roles and influence of twentieth-century émigré or exile populations within a nationally-limited field of cultural production. Livak deftly argues, and rightly so, for an assessment of the influence and interactions of an emigrant intelligentsia within a host country, a critical aspect of the exile experience often elided by émigré historians.<sup>[2]</sup>

The introductory essay consequently makes clear that “Russia Abroad” (the term used to describe this set of foreigners) was not a hermetically sealed group living indifferently apart from their peers while in France. Take, for example, Zenaïda Gippius’ work at *Le Mercure de France*, former bastion of the symbolist movement, where she transformed “the review into a headquarters of the émigré intelligentsia and rite of passage for the exiles entering the French field of cultural production,” in turn giving the struggling publication “a new raison d’être in anti-Soviet animus” (p. 13). Or, further, Livak cites the influence of Nikolai Berdiaev on French philosophy and theology or the tensions between Lev Shestov and André Gide about Soviet communism. The historical introduction elucidates more of these, the

specifics of which would be of particular significance to scholars of twentieth-century Franco-Russian/Soviet relations.

Of note to these same researchers, as well as to French cultural and literary studies of the interwar period, is Livak's analysis of the different phases of French-language production of Russian émigrés in the French literary market. The first, 1920-1924, took place during a period "dominated by literary fiction and political journalism," when the French public was intensely fascinated by a transforming Russia (pp. 12-19); the second, during a frenzy of "parlour bolshevism" (and thus, a waning interest in the Russian émigré elite) from 1924 to 1929 (pp. 19-22); next, a point of intensification from 1929 to the early 1930s, which unleashed an editorial fury of sorts (of already-published and contemporary authors) that centered particularly on international politics and the Jewish experience of Russia (pp. 22-28); 1932-1934, a stage marked by a tightening world economy and polarized political stances within French politics, domestic or emigrant (pp. 28-30); and, finally, 1934-1939, the years characterized by an increasing market for things German accompanied by a decline of interest in and willingness to risk publishing Russian émigré authors in the run up to World War II.[3] Livak's exploration of these different phases reveals the complex ties between native-born and foreign-born writers in the French field of literary production, ties which had ramifications beyond France's own borders.

*Russian Émigrés* is an invaluable resource. The book achieves precisely what it sets out to do, in that it "lays the factual foundations for and facilitates a variety of comparative inquiries into the aesthetic and intellectual trajectories of Russian and French writers, critics, philosophers, theologians, scholars, and politicians" (p. 36). The bibliography is admirably comprehensive, providing a thorough list of varying resources (articles, books, dissertations, letters, newspaper, etc.) available in a large array of collections worldwide. It suggests, furthermore, exciting avenues of future research not just in the history of French-Russian/Soviet relations, but also in comparative approaches to literary and cultural history.

Livak's aim here is not without precedent. To wit, several comparative studies attend to the impact of Russians on French intellectual circles and cultural production, though they do not all address the same period or encompass the same parameters as *Russian Émigrés*. [4] This study adds to these works, making cogent arguments for further reflection about the interwar period, ultimately challenging accepted notions about France's connections to and interactions with an influential community of émigrés. As such, the bibliography and introductory essay are powerful tools that enable researchers to chip away at the walls of the national hegemony in cultural production and scholarly inquiry.

## NOTES

[1] See Leonid Livak's other monographs: *How It was Done in Paris: Russian Émigré Literature and French Modernism* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); *Le Studio franco-russe. Textes réunis et présentés par Leonid Livak. Sous la rédaction de Gervaise Tassis* (Toronto: Toronto Slavic Library, 2005); and, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[2] See, for example, Gleb Struve, *Ruskaia literatura v izgnanii* (Paris: YMCA, 1984).

[3] Perhaps the most interesting part of this analysis is Livak's argument that the French intellectual and cultural elite always had contact—whether in published form or not—with "well-informed, and independent Russian sources of news and analysis about Stalinism." He continues, positing that "the present bibliography proves beyond doubt that only by deliberately ignoring the forceful testimony of the exiled Russian intelligentsia could left-leaning French artists and intellectuals maintain their opportunistic vision of Stalin's regime as a rampart of peace and freedom" (p. 34).

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[4] See studies on nineteenth-century Franco-Russian cultural connections by Michel Cadot, *La Russie dans la vie intellectuelle française, 1839-1856* (Paris: Fayard, 1964). See also Charle Corbet, *A l'ère des nationalismes. L'opinion française face à l'inconnue russe (1799-1894)* (Paris: Didier, 1967); Martin Malia, *Russia Under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999); Marie-Pierre Rey, *Le Dilemme russe: La Russie et l'Europe occidentale d'Ivan le Terrible à Boris Eltsine* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002). Finally, see Katherine Foshko, "France's Russian moment: Russian émigrés in interwar Paris and French society," (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2008).

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