

“a striving for immortality” in the form of leaving a legacy of public achievements (249) or, as Weber put it, “salvation-through-good-works” (253). This is what brings the author to call for the reactivation of “secular and enlightened communication to reveal a mortal character whose deeds are worthy of earthly immortality” (253). But this would mean abandoning the deep structures of Orthodox self-identity that have made such a powerful comeback in post-Soviet society. Kharkhordin leaves intriguingly open the question of how long it would take to overcome a thousand-year-old psychological legacy and whether it can be done at all.

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***In Search of Russian Modernism.*** By Leonid Livak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018. ix, 375 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. \$54.95, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2019.262

“Russian modernism,” to borrow a line from Vladimir Nabokov, one of its practitioners, is a phrase that means nothing without quotes. As Leonid Livak shows in this engaging study, even “modernism” itself, without the geographical specifier, is problematic. Although now widely used in scholarship, the term was accepted only hesitantly by Anglo-American writers and only reluctantly applied in France and Germany. In the Russian context its use is further complicated by questions of dates (beginning, end) and geography (the divide between Soviet and émigré communities).

Livak comes to the pursuit of this elusive target well-qualified, having earlier published major studies of Russian émigré literature in the European modernist context, *How It was Done in Paris: Russian Émigré Literature and French Modernism* (2003) and *Russian Émigrés in the Intellectual and Literary Life of Interwar France: A Bibliographical Essay* (2010). The occasion for setting off on this new search is the “Copernican revolution” (2) in our understanding of *fin-de-siècle* and early twentieth-century literature made possible by the opening of archives in the post-Soviet era, and with that the opportunity we now have to depoliticize our discussions of Russian modernism and provide an account which transcends the “pre-Soviet/Soviet/ant-Soviet” paradigm historically dominant in the field (3). Livak’s approach this time is to treat Russian modernism not as a series of canonical works but as a “culture,” which he defines, following Clifford Geertz, as an “evolving system of values, ideas, practices, and conventions. . . suffusing human experience with meaning” (7). What emerges from this perspective is the “story of a self-identified and self-conscious community” (22) united in particular by a “sense of staring into a spiritual, cultural, and social chasm between past and present” (9). In a further revisionist move, Livak treats his object of study as a “cartography” (25), asking not so much “what” was Russian modernism but “where” and “when” it was.

One consequence of herding disparate works and movements into a single culture is to erase otherwise useful boundaries, such as that between “modernism” (which promoted art for its own sake, as a self-sufficient value) and the “avant-garde” (which sought to displace or destroy “art” as an autonomous cultural institution—to use a distinction promoted in Peter Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant-Garde*). Another perspective lost in a synthesizing approach—for which there must at the end of the day exist a unified phenomenon in the midst of the chaos of competing labels and affiliations—is the awareness that there might have existed multiple “modernisms,” each of which had distinctive emphases qualifying it, in effect, as a subspecies (an

example of this contrary view can be found *inter alia* in John Burt Foster, Jr.'s *Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism*, which shows how Nabokov embraced some forms of modernism while distancing himself from others).

Livak's detailed discussion of the varieties of Russian modernism nonetheless coalesces into as precise a conceptual map of the phenomena as we are likely to get. His approach is heavily meta-discursive, dealing primarily in what was *said about* "Russian modernism" and related terms rather than analyzing specific works of art. In an aptly named first chapter ("The Toponymical Labyrinth of Russian Modernist Culture"), Livak traces the convoluted pathways among the variety of terms that contemporaries turned to in their efforts to describe the literature and art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to the elective "-isms" that proliferated among writers themselves (Symbolism, Acmeism, Futurism, Cubo-Futurism, Ego-Futurism. . .), beginning in the 1890s hesitation also appeared in critical reviews among such terms as *novoe iskusstvo*, *sovremennoe iskusstvo*, *dekadentstvo*, and *modernizm*. As a result, one could see "the entire lifespan of Russian modernist culture as an unbroken process of terminological reflection and rivalry" (40). The Bolshevik coup of 1917 further complicated matters, as revived factionalism spawned even more labels (Formalism, LEF, RAPP, New LEF) and Marxist critics sought to dismiss the cultural products of the preceding three decades as so much pre-revolutionary bourgeois decadence. Impressively well-researched as it is, this chapter also shows how the deferred "what" of Russian modernism can come back to haunt the map of "when" and "where": without a transecting concept of essence, the account risks replicating the chaos among the self-definers, whose membership in a single subculture itself remains open to question. There is also a certain confusion over what Livak aims for by revisiting the terminological disputes. Having rejected "modernism" as a period term (39), for example, by the end of the chapter he settles on it as "the least bad option for a generic umbrella term denoting, in shorthand, a Russian cultural formation that existed from the turn of the century until the fall of Paris in 1940" (77).

Chapter Two, "The Errant Compass Rose of Russian Modernist Studies," seeks to undermine the "realist/modernist" dichotomy (79), which casts modernism as a rebellion against nineteenth-century realism. As Livak points out, "realism" itself was a fluid term and the boundaries between the two aesthetic systems are not easily drawn, not least because modernists often claimed that they were representing a higher reality (a posture already anticipated by Fedor Dostoevskii, who referred to himself as a "realist in a higher sense"). At one point Livak suggests that the dichotomy might have arisen in the first place because modernists needed "a strategy of self-positioning in a field of cultural production that prized innovation as a creative principle" (98)—an interesting remark in the spirit of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory of culture, and one amplified in Lada Panova's *Mnimoe sirotstvo: Khlebnikov i Kharms v kontekste evropeiskogo modernizma* (2017), a work which may have appeared too late to be incorporated in Livak's research. Much of this discussion will come as news only to the few scholars who take the terms in an absolute sense, but Livak offers useful commentary on borderline writers like Anton Chekhov, Leonid Andreev, and Isaak Babel', whom we intuitively sense are modernists but whose aesthetic in no way abandons mimesis.

Chapter Three, "Russian Modernism in Time and Space" begins in a debunking discussion of the idea that 1917 ushered in an era of cultural as well as political revolution (the vexed issue in early Soviet culture of the evident lack of a revolutionary culture to follow political events), then unfolds into an intriguing comparison of "late" Russian modernism on both sides of the Soviet/émigré geographical divide. Livak shows how a kind of creative fatigue, arising out of disillusionment with the idea that art might effect an apocalyptic transformation of humanity, settled in among both

émigré and Soviet writers, inducing in the former, at least, a “proto-existentialist mix of pessimistic resignation and stoic defiance” (131)—even as it fostered a neo-traditionalism that yielded among its products such outstanding examples of modernist metafiction as Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Master i Margarita* on the Soviet side (albeit unofficially), and Nabokov’s *Dar* in the emigration.

Arguably the most substantive in the book, Chapter Four (“Navigating Russia’s Culture of Modernity”) begins in an account of the threat modernity posed to the *intelligentsia*, which had long seen itself in messianic terms as a self-sacrificing elite opposed to the tsarist state. Livak offers a fascinating view of the parallels between its two rebellious offspring—Marxist political culture and modernist artistic culture, whose worldviews and intentions overlapped considerably. Both militated against inferior *byt* or everyday reality, and one can even speak of the Nietzschean aspect of “Bolshevik leaders as artist demiurges” (159). For scholars of Soviet culture this is familiar territory—but Livak’s detailed survey of actors and ideas amounts to a far more nuanced account of the intertwining of political and aesthetic aims in Russia’s culture of modernity than, say, Boris Groys’s sketchier, if more provocative, account in *The Total Art of Stalinism* (1992).

Chapter Five, “Russian Modernism in the Cultural Marketplace,” supplements the cultural sociology of Chapter Four with an economical-sociological account of the hard facts of money—press runs, advances, and honoraria paid by this versus that journal. Livak shows that in both the emerging market economy of the late tsarist era, in which the funding formula of thick journals quickly became obsolete, and the developing socialist economy of the Bolshevik state, where the state itself assumed the role of patron, economic factors often played a determining role in what kind of literature was written and what kind of art was produced (consider such phenomena as Vladimir Maiakovskii’s agonizing but remunerative work for ROSTA, the 1924 issue of *LEF* eulogizing Lenin in the guise of Formalist analysis of his verbal style, or the artist Isaak Brodskii and his transformation from modernist painter to court portraitist for the Stalin regime).

As Livak himself confesses, *In Search of Russian Modernism* will not resolve all the conceptual and terminological issues endemic to the study of Russian modernism. But in its thoroughness and remarkable erudition it will remain an essential guide to the topic for a long time to come.

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***Holocaust Public Memory in Postcommunist Romania.*** Ed. Alexandru Florian. Studies in Antisemitism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018. xxxvi, 291 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Tables. \$36.00, paper.  
doi: 10.1017/slr.2019.263

With this new publication dedicated to the Romanian Holocaust, the editor and seven contributors add another brick to what looks more and more like a painstaking, Sisyphus-type process of constructing an adequate public memory of it. For the last thirty years, the public memory of the Holocaust in Romania has been on a roller coaster, with ups and downs that are not always easy to explain, sometimes verging on sheer stupidity, as was the case with some Romanian nuns who celebrated the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a fellow priest by singing a interwar far right song because apparently he had been a member of the Legionary movement in his youth, and posted the clip on YouTube; other times on black humor, irony and sarcasm, as was the case with Radu