

Literaturnyi avangard russkogo Parizha: Istorii, khronika, antologiya, dokumenty. Ed. Leonid Livak and Andrei Ustinov. Moscow: Ob'edinenoe gumanitarnoe izdatel'stvo, 2014. 990 pp. Notes. Chronology. Illustrations. Photographs. Hard bound.

This important, ambitious, and enormous new book by two leading scholars of twentieth-century Russian literature represents a direct challenge to the traditional view of the literary history of the first Russian emigration. Containing an introductory essay, a detailed chronology of literary life in Russian Paris in the first half of the 1920s, an anthology of poems by a number of understudied émigré avant-gardists, a section of obscure critical, theoretical, and polemical documents by French and Russian writers, and profusely illustrated, *The Literary Avant-Garde of Paris* will be required reading for all students and scholars of the culture and history of the emigration.

The book's core thesis and historical narrative are contained in Leonid Livak's introductory essay, "'Geroicheskie vremena molodoi zarubezhnoi poezii': Literaturnyi avangard russkogo Parizha (1920–1926)." The argument, briefly, is that the traditional division of Russian writers of the 1920s into politically and aesthetically conservative émigrés (Whites) and leftist and experimental Soviets (Reds) ignores the existence of an avant-garde of young Russian poets active in Paris in the first half of the decade who supported the political and artistic goals of the Russian revolution. Strongly influenced by leading European avant-gardists like Francis Picabia, Tristan Tzara, and André Breton, a number of young, mostly bilingual Russian writers tried to introduce the experimental poetics and leftist politics of Dada and surrealism into Russian émigré literature. While the general argument may be familiar to some scholars from Livak's previously published essays and his excellent book *How It Was Done in Paris: Russian Émigré Literature and French Modernism* (2003), this much expanded version of an essay originally published in the journal *Diaspora: Novye materialy* in 2005 deserves to be more broadly known.

The first young Russian in Paris to fall under the spell of French experimentalism was Sergei Sharshun, who served as the initial bridge between the Russian and French avant-gardes. Eventually, other writers, notably Aleksandr Ginger, Dovid Knut, Boris Poplavskii, and Il'ia Zdanevich (Iliazd), allied themselves with this trend, hoping to unite the Russian and European avant-gardes. But changes in Europe's literary and political situation in the mid-1920s (e.g., the decline of Dada, the relocation of a large number of older and more conservative Russian émigré writers from Berlin to Paris, and the turn against experimental writing in the Soviet Union) made it all but impossible for Russian avant-gardists to publish their works. By 1925, they faced a stark choice: they could, like Poplavskii, compromise their aesthetic and political principles in order to see their writing in print or, like Zdanevich, continue writing experimental poems without any hope of publication. While Livak has written about Poplavskii's "surrealist compromise" in a series of important essays, this volume shows that the turn from leftist politics and experimental aesthetics was symptomatic of an entire generation of young Russian writers. The story of the rise and ultimate fall of this avant-garde represents an important and hitherto unappreciated episode in the history of Russian émigré literature.

Thanks to truly prodigious sleuthing in French and Russian archives, newspapers, journals, memoirs, letters, and published and unpublished works of the period, Livak and Andrei Ustinov have created an invaluable resource for scholars. Their chronology of cultural life from 1920 to 1926, for example, provides a remarkably vivid, useful, and informative picture of the literary and cultural life of the Parisian avant-garde. Building on available sources—in particular, Michèle Beyssac, *La vie culturelle de l'émigration russe en France: Chronique (1920–1930)* (1971), and L. A. Mnuhkhin and

T. L. Gladkova, *Russkoe zarubezh'e: Khronika nauchnoi, kul'turnoi i obshchestvennoi zhizni, 1920–1940*, 4 vols. (1995–97)—the authors provide a vivid picture of émigré cultural life, including art exhibits, literary groups, book and journal publications, readings, lectures, and the comings and goings of individual writers. In addition to providing documentary evidence for the arguments advanced in the introduction, the chronology also suggests numerous lines of future scholarly inquiry, the most intriguing of which, at least to this reviewer, is the relationship between avant-garde writers and artists. Without a doubt, future researchers on any topic having to do with the culture of the first emigration will want to consult this chronology.

Perhaps the most challenging part of the book to review are the more than six hundred pages of poems and documents by, and about, the Russian avant-gardists of Paris. The poems are either reprinted from bibliographic rarities or are printed for the first time, while several of the prose documents have been translated ably from French by Livak. Alongside works by relatively well-known émigré writers like Sharshun, Poplavskii, Knut, Ginger, and Zdanevich, the editors include several hundred poems by obscure writers like Valentin Parnakh, Mark Talov, Georgii Evangulov, Boris Bozhnev, and Vladimir Sveshnikov (Kemetskii). While the Zdanevich poems are the most uncompromisingly radical and closest to Russian futurism, most of the other poets sampled are appreciably more traditional in form, versification, and theme (e.g., love, poverty, depression, friendship), although the psychological states they describe and the surprising metaphorical leaps suggest the influence of automatic writing and surrealism.

The critical materials (e.g., letters, excerpts from journals, manifestos, introductions) provide additional fascinating insights into the close relationship between French and Russian avant-gardists in the 1920s. Sharshun's article "Dadaizm," for example, introduces Dada to Russian readers as the rightful heir of futurism and cubism, while Zdanevich provides a similar service for French readers, ascribing the roots of "The New Schools in Russian Poetry" to the traditions of symbolism and futurism. These poems and critical documents call for a general reassessment of Russian poetry of the first emigration. My only regret is that the annotations are inconsistent and that both sections lack an introduction.

ANTHONY ANEMONE
The New School

Political Animals: Representing Dogs in Modern Russian Culture. By Henrietta Mondry. *Studies in Slavic Literature and Poetics*, vol. 59. Leiden: Brill, 2015. xviii, 433 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. €95.00, paper.

At the outset of this 400-page study, Henrietta Mondry states, "The dog is modern Russian culture's most representative and most political animal" (1). The volume that follows attempts to support this contention by exploring a wide range of mostly literary works from the nineteenth century through the post-Soviet era in order to trace the significance of dogs as a recurring cultural preoccupation. From Fedor Dostoevskii's use of borzoi hounds as an emblem of a tsarist nobleman's sadism to cinematic representations of the dogs who guarded the Soviet Union's borders and prison camps, from Nikolai Gogol's epistle-writing canines in "Diary of a Madman" to Viktor Pelevin's parodic representation of Soviet space dogs in *Omon Ra*, Mondry explores Russian culture's appropriation (and misappropriation) of dogs to investigate their centrality in a diverse set of texts and contexts.