



**Andreas Schönle, Andrei Zorin, Alexei Evstratov, eds.** *The Europeanized Elite in Russia, 1762–1825: Public Role and Subjective Self*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. 420 pp. \$45.00, paper, ISBN 978-1-60909-207-8.

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If ever a single work could show the value and effectiveness of the case study as a model for research, the anthology *The Europeanized Elite in Russia, 1762–1825: Public Role and Subjective Self* is that volume. Built around fourteen distinct essays, the text explores the lives of Russia's elite as they negotiated between "the drive to Europeanize and the desire to be loyal to national traditions" (p. 325). The focus throughout is consistently on Russia's elite as a distinct social group, with their own problematic relationship to their identities both individually and as a collective, and a diverse evolution as a result of their often conflicting loyalties.

As an overarching structure, the volume limits itself to a specific, and somewhat unusual, period for study. The years 1762-1825 represent, on one side, the Manifesto on the Freedom of the Nobility, enacted by Tsar Peter III in 1762, and on the other, the Decembrist uprising in 1825. This newfangled periodization, as productive as it proves to be in the volume, clashes to some extent with existing literature. Studies in English of this period in Russian history tend to be organized along three standard systems of chronological demarcation. The most common is simply by general century, usually keeping the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries firmly separate. Volumes utilizing this periodization for the eighteenth century include such no-

table studies as Marc Raeff's *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (1966) and Arcadius Kahan's *The Plow, the Hammer, and the Knout: A Economic History of Eighteenth-Century Russia* (1985). Anthologies also frequently utilize this delineation, as in Wendy Rosslyn's edited volume *Women and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (2003) and A. G. Cross's *Russia and the West in the Eighteenth Century* (1983).

The second primary method for periodization involves works which cluster around the idea of Imperial Russia as an era unto itself. Notable studies in this category include Elise Wirtschafter's *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (1997) and, of course, Richard Wortman's *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Death of Nicholas I* (1995). The final prominent category does entail utilizing specific dates in a similar fashion to the text under review, but the range of periodizations is stark. Several important volumes take 1762 as their starting point,[1]but designate a different end point.[2] Likewise, a number of scholarly studies choose 1825 as their end point, but often begin significantly earlier than 1762 in their assessment.[3] Only two other volumes seem to utilize the rubric for periodization found in *The Europeanized Elite in Russia*, Janet Hartley's *Russia, 1762-1825: Military*

*Power, the State, and the People* (2008) and Thomas Paul Barran's *Russia Reads Rousseau, 1762-1825* (2002).

This periodization alone makes the text unique in that it encourages a general rethinking of Russia's distinctive past, another central theme of the book as a whole. The editors provide an excellent introduction to the volume which delves carefully into the processes of Westernization that so fundamentally marked Russia both before, during, and after the period under study. This introduction also contains a crucial calibration of Europeanization as it occurred in Russia compared to similar phenomena in other, more distinctly non-Western countries such as Japan and Turkey. This introduction also includes a strong justification for the years proposed as thresholds for the project and a careful methodological rationalization for the focus on specific case studies, or "microhistories" (p. 14), as the editors call them. According to the authors, such case studies demonstrate that "the worldview of someone who represents a minority within their social group can be more revealing ... than the behavior of the silent majority" (p. 14). Summoning the case study work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz, the authors then underscore that the key to analyzing "both the norm and its transgression" (p. 14) is contextualization—the individual must be placed in the larger field of social tensions and public pressures for interpretation. In terms of periodization, the editors justify their choice of the years 1762 and 1825 by stating that the years before the Manifesto on the Freedom of the Nobility were characterized by "deliberate social engineering by the autocracy," whereas the decades following showed a new self-fashioning marked by "assimilation and interiorization of European values." This, according to the authors, came to an end in 1825, when the Decembrist uprising "crushed" this "emerging feeling of pride and entitlement" (p. 7).

What follows are the essays of eleven scholars organized into seven chapters. The editors of the

volume each contributed two essays and then also wrote introductions to each chapter to provide contextual background for the themes ahead. The entire volume is also brought together by a conclusion which draws together the partial singularities put forward in each case study. Unfortunately, this leads to something of an unevenness in the volume, as the contributions of the editors compose more than half of the book. This may partly be explained by the nature of the project's origins. The volume was funded by a research grant awarded by the Leverhulme Trust and is merely the first of two books planned. But given how many conferences, seminars, and meetings at which the work was presented in its developmental stages (as expounded in the acknowledgements), one wonders why the editors did not include the work of more authors across various fields. All three of the editors hold advanced degrees in Russian and most of the contributors also hold PhDs in either history or Russian. The weight of these scholars' training shows in the essays which collectively make up the volume. One can only hope that the forthcoming second book will contain more perspectives, especially, perhaps, from the realms of sociology, art history, and sexuality studies.

Following from this, and as in many anthologies, the essays vary in quality and effectiveness. The first chapter, on "Zealous Servicemen and Curious Noblemen," contains two essays which explore the period from Peter the Great up to 1762, providing background on the development of a service ethos among elites. This section begins with an essay by Igor Fedyukin on shifting understandings of human nature and their effects on political thinking from the time of Peter to Elizabeth. Fedyukin focuses on balloting practices for promotion to commissioned ranks and correlates these procedures with understandings of human motives as either fundamentally self-interested or driven by honor and concern for the public good. In order to flesh out the topic, Fedyukin conducts deep archival research, another characteristic of the volume as a whole, which brings much new

data to light. Fedyukin's investigation is followed by Alexander Iosad's essay on attempts to instill scientific curiosity in the minds of the elite. Iosad explores the *Kunstkamera*, *emblemata*, and strange phenomena such as eclipses for how they were used to arouse a sense of curious wonder in members of the Russian court. He then shifts gears to explore the specific case of Georg Richman, who was killed after being struck by lightning while conducting an experiment in 1753. While the essay as a whole provides valuable insights into the growth of a "culture of curiosity" (p. 62), it is the first instance, among several in the book, in which works of art are used for merely illustrative purposes. Much more could have been said about the painting by Boris Sukhodol'skii and its relation to the larger functions of Western art among Russia's elite. Likewise, material culture seems a general oversight in the volume as a whole. Consumption of foreign goods on the part of the elite is mentioned in several essays, as is architecture and collecting practices, but the fact that material culture experienced enormous Europeanization in this moment is not pursued in great depth by any of the authors.

The second chapter, on "Cuckolded Husbands and Lonely Wives," is the first to delve deeply into the core period under study and provides some fascinating discoveries regarding marital relationships in the period. Both essays in this section shed light on an understudied topic, seeking to flesh out how the service obligations of the nobility caused strife in elite Russian families. The first piece in this section is an absolute model for effective case study research. Alexei Evstratov focuses his essay entirely on the marital conflict which arose between Baron Aleksandr Sergeevich Stroganov and his wife, Countess Anna Mikhailovna (née Vorontsova) in the mid-1760s. As Evstratov points out, "matrimonial troubles were obviously not a novelty in Russian court society" (p. 74), but exploring what lurked beneath this particular instance of discord lends fascinating insight into how domestic conflicts played out on both a public

scale and along more private (and pragmatic) lines. The next essay, Michelle Lamarche Marrese's "Performing Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Russia," stands out from the volume not only as an example of a supremely effective case study, but for the depth of archival research the author conducted to bring it about. Marrese has long been a force in the field, known particularly for the intensity of her work in the archive. This essay is no exception. Marrese analyzes the letters of Ekaterina Rumiantseva and Dar'ia Saltykova to offer an extraordinary glimpse into the inner lives of Russian noblewomen, exposing the "self-conscious performance of marriage and motherhood" (p. 93) as well as the strength of character they possessed. This essay also serves to continue Marrese's work questioning the validity of Iurii Lotman's theory of the "theatricality" of the Russian nobility as they publically adopted Western behavior.[4] In fact, this is a strong theme throughout the volume—the editors mention Lotman critically in both the introduction and conclusion, and both Evstratov and Schönle also contend with Lotman's central premise, which has (perhaps too long) been an influential paradigm in studies of the period. Yet again, however, both essays make use of painted portraits of the key figures within their case studies, but without any devoted analysis to the paintings themselves and their function for the social actors they represent.

The third chapter delves into "The Domestic Economy" with two essays on personal finance and country estate design, respectively. The first text, by Elena Korchmina, is a succinct assessment of the nobility's relationship to debt in an evolving financial environment. Again, the archival work here is what makes the essay exceptional. Korchmina's careful evaluation of books of revenue and expenditure and the changing terminology found in these documents recalibrates our understanding of what was previously seen merely as debt, which was "a consequence of irrational behavior" (p. 133). Andreas Schönle's first contribution follows next and explores the various designs and im-

provements made by Ivan Bariatinskii to his country estate. This essay shifts the focus away from the urban nobility and offers new insights into the mentality of the elite residing away from the court. The focus in this vivid account remains on how Bariatinskii forged a new identity for himself, one that centered on a notion of service to the nation through his experimentation with country life and the agricultural improvements which resulted.

The fourth chapter is devoted to military service and contains essays exploring officers as managers and thinkers. Stanslav Andrianen's contribution investigates the lives of officers when they were not engaged in battle, showing starkly the economic scarcity and mismanagement from above which shaped the worldview of officers throughout the period. Mikhail Velizhev's essay explores a different aspect of elite military life through analysis of the diary and letters of Major General Vasilii Viazemskii. All previously unpublished, the documents translated by Velizhev allow us to understand the universality of central categories of military life, from patriotism, duty to the monarch, and honorable service to discontent, barbarism, and criticism of the fatherland. Chapter 5 continues this focus on the lives of men by exploring institutions which arose outside the court, namely the Masonic lodge and the Moscow English Club, both of which provided "patterns and models of modern sociability" (p. 197). In the first essay, Andrei Zorin finds new pockets for exploration within the well-trodden territory of the history of Russian Masonic lodges. Likewise, Mikhail Velizhev's contribution on noble clubs sheds new light on the emergence of a public sphere in Imperial Russia. His recalibration of Jürgen Habermas's framework for public opinion is especially fruitful.[5]

The final two chapters deal with different kinds of outliers and "others" who in some way violated norms for the nobility at the time. Evstratov's second essay in the volume tells the story of a violent conflict between Prince N. G. Shcherbatov

and a noble foreigner, which ultimately resulted in a duel that caused the latter's death. John Randolph's contribution explores interactions between the elite and the coachmen they relied on for transport and correspondence. This essay suffers slightly by avoiding discussion of the sexual commerce that also inhered in these relationships, a topic explored in Dan Healey's pathbreaking study of homosexual desire in Russia.[6] Likewise, this chapter as a whole, entitled "Experiencing the Other," feels like a missed opportunity to truly explore various "others" in Russian society. A case study on the nobility's interaction with their serfs and servants would have been welcome here, as would a study devoted to the nobility's relationship to multiethnic internal "others" such as Poles, Tatars, or Balts, all of whom "were assimilated into the nobility in this moment" (p. 240). The last two essays continue to explore discontent in the experience of the elite. Schönle's second essay, exploring the life writing of Aleksandr Kurakin and Nikolai Turgenev, lends insight into the multiple ways nobles fashioned themselves, as well as the plurality that sometimes constituted identity and its formation. The final essay, by Andre Zorin, investigates the complex religious and cultural identity of Varvara Sokovnina, who fled her family to take monastic vows and become Mother Serafima. This return to an investigation of the complexity of noblewomen's lives, as fascinating as it may be, highlights how few of the contributions in the volume explore this perspective. Only two essays are deeply devoted to examining women's experience, comprising a mere 10 percent of the volume as a whole.

So what *did* Europeanization mean for Russia's elites at the end of the eighteenth and in the early nineteenth century? Midway through the book, Schönle asks this very question, and in the end, it is an important question for the volume as a whole. Each case study contained in the book provides a different permutation of the answer. All in all, the essays taken together lend tremendous insight into the "existential complexity" (p. 152) at

the heart of life for Russian Europeans. The answer, as *The Europeanized Elite in Russia* makes abundantly clear, can be found by looking at various individual's lives—their desires, their struggles, their letters, their diaries, even their bank accounts. Each case study shows that the lives of individuals are like threads in a densely woven fabric, the warp and weft of which is the everyday life ultimately constituting history itself.

#### Notes

[1]. Roger Bartlett, *Human Capital: The Settlement of Foreigners in Russia 1762-1804* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[2]. Robert Jones, *The Emancipation of the Russian Nobility: 1762-1785* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973).

[3]. Janet Hartley, *A Social History of the Russian Empire 1650-1825* (London: Longman, 1999); and Simon Dixon, *The Modernisation of Russia, 1676-1825* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[4]. Michelle Lamarche Marrese, “The Poetics of Everyday Behavior’ Revisited: Lotman, Gender, and the Evolution of Russian Noble Identity,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 11, no. 4 (2010): 701-739; and Iurii Lotman, “The Theatre and Theatricality as Components of Early Nineteenth-Century Culture” in *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, ed. Ju. M. Lotman and B. A. Uspenskij (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Contributions, 1984).

[5]. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).

[6]. Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

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