Russian Émigré Literature

For literary scholars an excellent library is as necessary as breathing. A senior research fellow at the Institute of World Literature in Moscow, I am lucky to be a visiting scholar at Yale, working for eight months in the wonderful Sterling Memorial Library.

For the past six years, I have been studying the “first wave” or golden age of Russian émigré literature in the 1920s and 1930s. The systematic study of this literature is only now beginning in Russia. It will enable Russians to understand the great literature created in exile as part of their national tradition. During the Soviet era it was difficult to study this subject in Russia. There had and still have rather poor collections of works by Russian émigré authors. Aided by Yale’s collections, I am writing a book on Russian poetry of the “first wave” and am collaborating on a reference work on émigré writers of that period. I will also contribute a chapter on Russian poetry of the 1920s and 1930s to a new history of Russian literature of the twentieth century to be published by the Institute of World Literature.

From ignoring the émigré tradition, Russian literary scholars are moving towards the view of Russian literature held by our Western colleagues. According to this conception, Russian literature after the October Revolution of 1917 consists of two branches, one growing in Russia and the other in exile. My work in the Yale library enables me to refine the relationship between them. Both sprang from the same literary roots and cultural traditions. Russian émigrés saw themselves as the saviors of Russian culture and national traditions which they thought were being destroyed in Soviet Russia. These traditions, however, also continued to develop under Communist rule.

Sometimes the two streams coincided, as I have shown in an article comparing the poems of Vladiisavl Khodasevich, who emigrated to Berlin and then Paris, and Ossip Mandelstam, who lived in Russia and died in Stalin’s camps. Both poets worked in the tradition of Russian post-symbolist poetry and considered themselves defenders of Russian national culture. Both used the theme of Orpheus to raise the issues of creativity and the role of poets in society.

Sterling Library with its enormous collection of émigré literature is a key resource for Russian scholars. The holdings include many works by émigré poets, writers, and literary critics from the 1920s and 1930s whose works are either only partially represented or totally lacking in Russian libraries. My work also benefits greatly from the Beinecke’s collection of Russian materials, proximity to the Bakhmetev Archive at Columbia, and access through inter-library loan to the collections of other great American libraries.

The business-like atmosphere of Sterling Library makes working here a great pleasure. I enjoy being able to “travel” in the stacks myself—an opportunity rarely granted scholars in most of the world—and to appreciate the richness of Yale’s Russian holdings.

The Slavic Reading Room—where all the necessary reference literature is collected, where one can find editions of any Russian classic, and where all the staff are friendly and helpful—functions as my “small motherland” here in this country. —Alexei Chagin
Social Ethics Pamphlet Collection

Magazines and newspapers from a World War II relocation camp for Japanese-Americans in California, virulent Anti-Semitic propaganda, a comic book depicting America's fate under Communism, literature for and against President Truman's National Health Insurance program—these are some of the primary sources available in the Divinity Library's newly organized Liston Pope Social Ethics Pamphlet Collection. Between 1938 and 1973, Dean of the Divinity School and Professor of Social Ethics Liston C. Pope systematically collected primary source material related to social issues in American society and throughout the world. Broadsides, newsletters, brochures, and leaflets document topics such as alcoholism, birth control, immigration, the labor movement, race relations, medical care, and subversive activities. Materials concerning race relations, for example, document organizations such as the Alabama Council on Human Relations, Baltimore Urban League, Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service, Conference to End Discrimination in New Haven, and Southern Conference on Race Relations. Extensive documentation of America's preoccupation with Communist subversive activity during the 1940s and 1950s includes materials from national and local groups such as the American League for Peace and Democracy, Chicago Committee to Defend Democratic Rights, Guardians of American Education, and National Federation for Constitutional Liberties.

The collection is divided into three sections: Corporate Bodies, Topically Arranged Material, and Student Papers. The first contains literature from nearly one thousand organizations. The second comprises material centered around specific events or issues, such as the relocation of Japanese-Americans during World War II. The third includes primary documents, surveys, and interviews which Professor Pope encouraged his students to collect and conduct in connection with their research. The collection is described in a finding aid and database available in Special Collections at the Divinity Library.

—MLS

Books of Islam

More than a hundred Arabic and Persian manuscripts are on display at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Entitled Books of Islam, the exhibition includes works on law, history, literature, medicine, science, and religion. The manuscripts were selected and annotated by Nancy Seybold, a doctoral candidate in Medieval Studies at Yale.

Soon after its inception in the seventh century, Islam expanded into Persian, Roman, and Byzantine lands. Arabian tribes swiftly established political and military control over areas from India to Spain, bringing with them the Arabic language and the Koran. As the Islamic empire developed, it absorbed the diverse cultures it encompassed, and although the empire began to fragment politically in the tenth century, the civilization created during its hegemony continued to flourish.

The earliest items exhibited are papyrus documents from Egypt, business letters, animal fables, and medical prescriptions dating from the eighth century through the tenth. The most recent item is an early nineteenth-century Koran, copied and decorated by hand.

Because printing was essentially forbidden in much of the Islamic world until the eighteenth century, the manuscript tradition is especially rich. The exhibit includes, for instance, chronicles by Muslim historians, written by
Landberg MS 581, on display at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, contains muwashshab poems dating from 1761 C.E. (1174 A.H.). Originating in Muslim Spain around the 10th century C.E., muwashshab is one of the most distinctive types of Arabic poetry. Here the verses by Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Durrimi are written in the shape of trees and geometric patterns.

The manuscripts, which include the collection formed by Professor Edward E. Salisbury, who was appointed in 1841 to teach Arabic and Sanskrit at Yale; the collection assembled by Count Landberg of Munich, acquired by Yale in 1900; and manuscripts from the German scholar Oskar Rescher, acquired in the 1970s. -CAS

![Behind the Exhibit Cases](image)

The unsung heroes of many library exhibits are the staff of the Library’s Conservation Program. For the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library’s *Books of Islam* exhibit, five of them spent nearly 400 hours in December and January restoring six books and one scroll. Each item was severely deteriorated in one way or another: lost or discolored paper, worm holes, weakened paper sizing, damaged or missing spines, loose or fragile bindings, and embrittled leather covers.

The exhibition was particularly challenging for Chief Conservator Gisela Noack and her staff because the paper in many of the items is highly burnished and requires special skill to clean and repair; paper repairs could take place only after the staff had dyed very thin tissue to match the color of the original book paper. Similarly, the restoration of certain leather bindings, once they have deteriorated badly, requires painstaking effort to attach new leather spines to still-perfect lacquer boards.

Among her contributions to the exhibition, Gisela restored “The Story of Layla and Majnun” (Persian ms +93) by repairing the book’s beautiful lacquer boards.

Gisela Noack, Lesley Santora, and Alexis Hagadorn of the Library’s Conservation Program in the conservation studio.
and rebacking the spine with new leather dyed to match the old. Conservation technicians Cindy Ostroff, Lesley Santora, and Joan Ziemann disbound other volumes, washed the pages, repaired paper losses, and then rebacked them. A good example of their work is the painted leather binding of Persian ms 159, for which a new red leather spine was skillfully attached to the 150-year-old binding. Collections Conservator Alexis Hagadorn undid decades-old repair work on a small scroll, “Amulet for a Mother of Boys” (Arabic ms 341), before cleaning and mending it.

The Beinecke Library exhibition is not intended to highlight conservation techniques, for restoration work should be too subtle to note. Books of Islam, however, is an opportunity to appreciate how craftsmanship and conservation make Yale collections more accessible. —PLC

Library Develops Internet Tool
The Yale University Library is creating a “Library Web” to improve access to both local and remote electronic resources. This effort unites Yale with the World Wide Web (WWW or Web, for short), the fastest growing tool for navigating the Internet. A fairly new tool, the Web was developed at the CERN—the European Laboratory for Particle Physics—in the early 1990s. The Web is an attempt to organize information on the Internet via hypertext links. These links, usually indicated on the screen by underlining or a change of color, allow the user by clicking a mouse to connect to the linked item. An example may be helpful. A scholar, sitting at her computer, is reading a paper published on the Web and wants to check a source cited by the author. The title of the work cited appears on the screen in a different color—it is a hypertext link; she clicks her mouse on the title, and the text of the cited work appears on her screen. She finds the cited work so interesting that with a few keystrokes, she downloads a copy onto her own computer and goes back to reading the original paper.

The Web and the software tools people use for navigating it greatly simplify use of the Internet. In addition to supporting hypertext links, the Web enables the use of many types of material, including still images, sound, and motion picture images. Using browsers such as Mosaic or Netscape, a student can view digitized images of maps or works of art, watch a digitized film clip, or listen to a digitized sound recording. Another example illustrates. Reading Hamlet on the Web, a student notices a link to images of famous actors playing Hamlet; a click retrieves photos of Edwin Booth, John Barrymore, and Laurence Olivier in this role. As he continues to read,
additional links connect to a sound recording of Richard Burton playing Hamlet and a film clip from Olivier's Hamlet.

While retrieving this type of material has long been possible, the Web has facilitated the procedure. Previously, different software tools were needed to connect to a remote computer, to transfer a file, and to view or listen to graphic or sound files. Most Web browsers incorporate all these tools into one easy-to-use software package.

Still under development, the Library Web currently allows users to connect to Orbis and other databases, to read a hypertext guide to the Yale Libraries, to search and view the selector's directory, and to connect to library catalogs around the world. For those with Web browsers, the URL (Uniform Resource Locator, a system for identifying resources on the Web akin to a call number) is http://www.library.yale.edu. For further information on the Web, consult one of the many guides to the Internet, or contact a reference librarian. —PJC

Kline Tests Public Workstations
The growth of electronic information available over the Internet appears to surpass that of paper-based information. Because the expansion of the Internet makes it easy to place information in the public domain, people increasingly need ways to navigate through the available resources.

The Yale libraries are seeking to make this navigation easier. As the library moves from single-purpose terminals to more powerful computers, Kline Science Library is testing a variety of multi-purpose workstations with many advantages over the previous terminals. For instance, the new workstations can connect to an almost unlimited number of information sources. Simultaneous connections will allow users to compare two or more online sources at once. They also allow for state-of-the-art image display as well as hypertext and icon (point-and-click) navigational techniques. In addition, users can transfer information from the screen to printers or into files for later analysis.

These powerful workstations will run advanced software applications. User-friendly screens or interfaces can present data in easy-to-understand images and also explain unknown terminology. These computers can store shortcuts created by librarians to help users find the most appropriate sources for their information needs. The software can also handle behind-the-scenes operations so that a user need only point to a desired item and the connections will be established and passwords entered automatically. Users may not know (or care) whether they are searching data on their machine or at another university located in another state.

Kline's first test terminals were introduced in late January. These six IBM and six Macintosh machines have a variety of user interfaces, each with a slightly different approach to helping users locate the best available print or electronic resources. The interface packages will include: (1) Netmenu, a menu system developed at Yale's medical campus; (2) a graphical user interface (GUI) developed by the library that uses icons (pictures) and short captions as starting points; (3) a Home Page developed for this project and linked to the Library's World Wide Web server using Netscape software; (4) another Home Page created by the Science Library which uses both Netscape and Mosaic software and includes an expert system component for science resources. In response to a search, expert systems supply librarians' techniques for identifying appropriate resources.

The ultimate goal of these experimental interfaces is to develop one or more "scholar workstations" that will provide a comprehensive and easy-to-use port of entry into available resources. With help from users, librarians will revise and improve the initial screen designs for use throughout the library system. —DS

Nota Bene is published during the academic year to acquaint the Yale community and others interested with the resources of the Yale Libraries. Please direct comments and questions to Susanne Roberts, Editor, Bibliography Department, Sterling Memorial Library (phone: 432-1762, e-mail: roberts@yalevm.cis.yale.edu).

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