

The Future in the Margin: The National and the International in the Russian Émigré Poetry from the Far East

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This paper investigates the interplay of nationalism and internationalism in three generations of Russian émigré poets from the Far East: Nikolai Matveev, Venedikt Mart, and Ivan Elagin who, in contrast to the cosmopolitanism of his forefathers, emphasises nostalgia for Russia, considering the Russian language as paternal heritage and deleting his Jewish descent.

Keywords: Russian literature / diaspora / emigrant poetry / national identity / Judaism / cosmopolitanism / Matveev, Nikolaj / Mart, Venedikt / Elagin, Ivan

In the back cover of the Japanese version of *Lone Planet Russia*, there is an ad of a tourist agent, which makes one smile. It says, “Visit Vladivostok: Europe at its closest from Japan.” No one would seriously consider Vladivostok part of Europe, especially these days when one third of the city’s population is estimated to consist of Chinese merchants and the illegal North Korean workers.

Vladivostok is an ambiguous place. Bordering China, Korea, and Japan, it is, all the same, part of Russia, but it has not yet quite shed its character as an internal colony, as it were. It was not part of the “Old World” conquered by the Western colonisers either, as the area had always been sparsely populated.¹ Within the territory of the Soviet Union it was the city where the struggle between the White and the Red Armies continued till the last.

This paper investigates the interplay between nationalism, internationalism, and regionalism with reference to literary texts originating in this hybrid, twilight zone. I will be focusing on three generations of the poets from Vladivostok/Kharbin: Nikolai Matveev, Venedikt Mart, and Ivan Elagin.

Journalistic and literary discourses of Far East Russia were curiously marked by a general, cosmopolitan bent. Apparently, geographical and political distance from the cultural centres was instrumental in creating such an atmosphere. A versatile intellectual, Nikolai Matveev, journalist, writer, poet, politician, social activist, historian, and ethnographer, was representative, with his call for the study of East Asian cultures, including aboriginal cultures, and with his idealistic programme of establishing a community of the nations on the Pacific Rim.²

In 1906 he started his own journal, *The Nature and the People of Primorye (the Coastal Region)*. On the front cover of the first issue of the journal is an illustration showing the nations on the Pacific Rim with their national flags. On the first page, he publishes a manifesto announcing the purpose of the journal: namely, to mitigate the socio-political tensions in the area by developing deeper and more exact knowledge of the cultures of its peoples and by promoting mutual understanding. In the advertisements that appeared in the newspaper *Vladivostok* prior to the publication of the magazine, he announced: “The main idea of the journal is to bring together all the peoples living here on an equal footing, and to relinquish everything that causes mutual mistrust and hostility and that threatens to produce a fresh torrent of blood in future.”

His knowledge of East Asian cultures seems to have been profound. He was versed in Chinese and Japanese, was a central member of the Imperial Geographical Society, and wrote many stories and essays about the lives of other peoples in the Far East.

His multiculturalist spirit was taken over by his son Venedikt Mart, futurist poet, active in Vladivostok, Kharbin, and, eventually in Kiev, where he was executed. Venedikt, just like his father, was knowledgeable about Chinese and Japanese languages and cultures, wrote a collection of stories on Chinese motifs, and translated Japanese poetry. He was especially interested in the short poetic forms of Japan, *tanka* and *haiku* (*hokku*). In a rare and happy case of literary contact, this futurist poet acquainted himself with Japanese concise forms of poetry. Let us take a look at one *haiku* (*hokku*) that Venedikt composed.

Khokku... khokku... kap...

Trenstokovaia reka

Zazhurchit v veka

(Mart n.p.)³

Hokku... hokku... kap

A three-lined river

Begins to babble into eternity

This experimental piece is in line with futuristic principles. One of the leading theorists of futurism, Aleksei E. Kruchenykh in ‘The Declaration of the Word as Such’, asserts: “[T]he artist is free to express himself (...)

in a language which does not have any definite meaning (not frozen), a translational language. Common language binds, free language allows for fuller expression. (Example: go osneg kaid etc.) (qtd. in Lawton 67). “kap” is such an invented word, “transrational,” perhaps, without any definite meaning.⁴ And so is “hokku.” The entire first line is in accordance with the futurist principle of a word-sequence based on sound, but not on meaning. To quote Kruchenykh again: “a verse presents (unconsciously) several series of vowels and consonants. THESE SERIES CANNOT BE ALTERED. It is better to replace a word with one close in sound than with one close in meaning.” (Lawton 68)⁵

However, *hokku* is a Japanese word, more or less equivalent of *haiku*, and has a definite meaning, not like Kruchenykh’s “go osneg kaid.” One could be justified in considering this an instance of Orientalism, i.e. a Western representation (and appropriation) of a Japanese poetic form. Mart’s “Orientalism,” though, is largely compromised by his deep commitment to Eastern cultures and his profound knowledge of Japanese literature and its stylistic devices. “Hokku” for him is not some empty signifier, whose meaning is unknown to him and whose sound only interests and amuses him.⁶ This becomes clearer if one compares Mart’s “Orientalism” with Roland Barthes’ *Empire of Signs*. For Barthes, the Japanese cultural assets are texts whose meaning is inaccessible to him and which, precisely because of that, allows him to engage in an Orientalistic play with signifiers, allowing him to read Japan as a text to be read in his own way and to his own purpose. Hence his characterisation of the genre of “haiku”: “[w]hile being quite intelligible, the haiku means nothing, and it is by this double condition that it seems open to meaning in a particularly available, serviceable way . . . the haiku’s ‘absence’ suggests subordination, a breach, in short the major covetness, that of meaning” (69–70).

Mart, perfectly knowing the meaning of the “Oriental” text, chooses to turn it into an empty signifier according to the futuristic principle. Barthes, in contrast, being ignorant of the meaning of the “*haiku*”—both as a genre and as a work—, turns it into a falsely empty signifier. It is precisely a feature of universalist cosmopolitanism to deprive the Oriental text of meaning and to read it as a sign, with an ostensibly universal, but actually subjective, meaning, projected by the (Occidental) reader. It appears to me that Barthes’ poststructuralist exegetic strategy is paradoxically converted into such cosmopolitan Orientalism. Mart’s futurism is exempt from such a universalism, precisely because it is endorsed by the parochial knowledge—the knowledge of Far Eastern cultures.

Compared to such sense of purpose on the part of Nikolai Matveev and Venedikt Mart in Asia, the interest in Eastern cultures on the part of

Nikolai's grandson, i.e., Venedikt's son, Ivan Elagin, is conspicuous by its absence. In contrast to the active involvement of his forefathers, and to his own biographical connection with the Far East, Ivan hardly ever referred to the "Orient" in his literary production, except in one of his later poems, in which he exclaims: "China Town! Exotical!" (2:43).⁷

Of course, the decisive physical factor is the simple fact that Ivan Elagin did not stay in the Far East for very long. He left it for European Russia at the age of four or five.⁸ However, the father, Venedikt Mart, seems to have been eager to instill love for Asian civilisations in Ivan. Venedikt sent his son hundreds of letters from Kiev to Moscow or St. Petersburg, many of which he concluded with a Chinese greeting: "Let *dao* of peace and love save you."⁹ Venedikt often drew attention to East Asian cultural traditions. All this was flatly lost in Ivan Elagin.

As if to compensate for this lack of interest, Ivan developed highly patriotic sentiments. His poems are full of nostalgia for Russia: "O, Russia – small darkness... (...) Did we really forget all?" (1:58); "My Homeland! We have seen each other so little./ And we separated. (...) We will return, if we live up to it,/ If the Lord leads us home" (1:136); "[The Russian window] is always in my memory, returning/ when darkness in my soul begins to toss:/ There is that window in the twilight, burning,/ A window flashing out, framed, one big cross" (Markov, *Modern Russian Poetry* 493)

Ironically, in terms of personal life history, Ivan was the most diasporic of the three. The grandfather, Nikolai, was born in Japan, spent a good part of his life in Vladivostok, and, eventually, immigrated back to Japan in 1918. The father, Venedikt, was born in Vladivostok, lived in various "Russian" towns, including Kharbin, Saratov, and died in Kiev. Ivan was born in Vladivostok, moved to Kharbin, lived in St Petersburg, Moscow, Saratov, and Kiev. He fled to Germany, spent years in the "DP" camps in Berlin and Munich, and, fearing deportation back to the Soviet Union, faked a Serbian identity under the false name of Elagin. He managed to immigrate to the United States, where after various hardships in New York, he received professorship at the University of Pittsburgh.

While there are a few speculations concerning the significance of his invented name Elagin, which do not concern us directly now, there are also conflicting views about his first name, which deserve attention.

That his original "Christian" name was "Zangwil't" is proposed by Ivan's friend and poet herself, Tat'iana Fesenko: "His mother, who is long been dead, was a Jew, and out of her affection for the Anglo-Jewish writer, I. Zangwill, named the son after him" (Fesenko 10. Qtd. in Vitkovskii 8-9). This idea, however, is refuted by Vitkovskii, who wrote in the introduction to Elagin's *Collection of Works* that "this version, alas, is legendary.

It is unlikely that Sima Lesokhina, the poet's mother, had even once heard the name Israel Zangwill. His phrase 'the melting pot' was well known in the United States, but not in Vladivostok"(9).¹⁰ I do not intend to judge these competing versions. Contrary to Vitkovskii's opinion, however, there is no reason to believe that Zangwill could *not* have been known in Vladivostok at the time Ivan was born. In fact, the four-volume collection of Zangwill's works in Russian had been published in 1910–11, several years before the birth of Ivan.¹¹ In any case, even if Vitkovskii may be correct in refuting the Jewish origin of Ivan's name Zangvil'd, he does not offer any alternative explanation of the origin of this name.

Conversely, Tat'iana Fesenko's explanation is very clear: Ivan Elagin was part Jewish. She writes that she was horrified when Ivan showed her a poem mocking Stalin since "[she] considered Zalik (he was called by that name at the time) a Jew, a hundred percent (he is fifty-fifty)" (Vitkovskii 8) and she feared for his safety.

There is circumstantial evidence regarding Ivan's Jewishness, or at least of the strong commitment on the part of the Matveevs to the Jewish question. Nikolai often wrote about *pogrom* in his journal. This would make it more plausible that he was aware of Zangwill, the writer (Zangwill's play *Melting Pot* features a Jew who flees to the United States after the pogrom in Kishinev). In one of the letters addressed to Ivan, Venedikt, too, related his childhood impressions watching the pogrom scenes in Semen Iushkevich's play *The Jews* (Jan 20, 1929).¹² In one of his collections of poems, Venedikt printed a story of a Japanese maiden, which was supposed to have been translated from Hebrew.

Given this, Ivan's complete silence on his Jewish connection is puzzling. Any reference to Jewish culture, and his own personal relationship with it (if there was one), is absent from Ivan's writings. He ascribed his supposedly Jewish name, Zangwild, to his father: in one of the interviews he says that his *father's* penname was Zangwilt Mart, which surely was never the case (Svetlova 8).¹³

Interestingly, the erasure of Jewish identity, it seems to me, parallels the erasure of the maternal. To the best of my knowledge, surprisingly, his Jewish mother is hardly ever mentioned by Ivan in his writings. The only instances that have come to my attention so far are found in his doctoral dissertation which he dedicates: "To my mother and the memory of my father" and in lines in his autobiographical poem "Memory (*Pamiat'*): "Then [after the arrest of Venedikt] my mother went mad from sorrow,/ And she wandered two weeks/ In frenzy around Moscow" (Elagin 2:201).¹⁴

Conversely, the yearning for the father is one of the most conspicuous literary themes of Elagin's works. Needless to say, the tragic death of the

father must have been consequential in giving Ivan this almost obsessive, posthumous attachment to his father.. Letters from Venedikt to Ivan are affectionate, filled with expressions like “I dreamed of you today and am much concerned about you. Do not walk alone on the streets. Be very careful, especially, when you cross streets” (Dec. 26, 1928), “I kiss your cute little eyes, little nose, little mouths, little forehead, and everything and everything” (Dec. 28, 1928) and so on. It was Ivan’s daily business to take his father sundries when he was in prison in Kiev and Ivan continued his daily ministrations for a year after Venedikt’s death, for the child did not understand the meaning of the notice he received about his father’s sentencing to strict confinement of ten years, which was euphemism for execution (Vitkovskii 11).

Love for his father is thus, a recurrent theme in Ivan’s poems. His elegy, “Amnesty” is possibly one of the best-known.

Амнистия

Amnesty (tr. by Bertram D. Wolfe)

Еще жив человек,
Расстрелявший отца моего
Летом в Киеве, в тридцать восьмом.

The man is still alive
Who shot my father
In Kiev in the Summer of '38.

Вероятно, на пенсию вышел.
Живет на покое
И дело привычное бросил.

Probably, he’s pensioned now,
Lives quietly
And has given up his old job.

Ну, а если он умер, –
Наверное, жив человек,
Что пред самым расстрелом
Толстой
Проволокою
Закручивал
Руки
Отцу моему
За спиной.

And if has died,
Probably that one is still alive
Who just before the shooting
With a stout wire
Bound his arms
Behind his back.

Верно, тоже на пенсию вышел.

Probably, he too is pensioned off.

А если он умер,
То, наверное, жив человек,
Что пытал на допросах отца.
Этот, верно, на очень хорошую
пенсию вышел.
Может быть, конвоир еще жив,
Что отца выводил на расстрел.

And if he is dead,
Then probably
The one who questioned him still lives.
And that one no doubt
Has an extra good pension.
Perhaps the guard
Who took my father to be shot
Is still alive.

Если б я захотел,
Я на родину мог бы вернуться.
Я слышал,
Что все эти люди
Простили меня.
(Elagin 2:391–92)

If I should want now,
I could return to my native land.
For I have been told
That all these people
Have actually pardoned me.
(Glad, *Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry* 294)

The yearning for the Father, for Ivan, is, at the same time, the yearning for the (lost) fatherland in this poem.

Ivan consistently showed a strong yearning for Russia. This developed into a nationalistic idea. In the following interview with Professor Glad of New York University, for instance, Ivan gives clear precedence to the national over the international:

John Glad: With whom (out of the three waves of Russian immigrants [and literati]) do you relate yourself?

Ivan Elagin: What do you mean, “with whom”? With Russian literature in exile, to which I belong, I hope.

JG: So, it is Russian literature “in exile,” right?

IE: (...) I believe deeply that it is, after all, part of Russian literature and I think that time will come when these two trends will conflate. But this is not émigré literature. (...)

JG: Don’t you think you would write differently if you had remained in Russia?

IE: I guess so. ...

JG: Do you agree that a role of a writer-immigrant lies partly in uniting Russian literature again to the world literature?

IE: You see, concerning the world literature... You cannot become international unless you are national. No one can jump over it and begin from the universal. This is especially important for literature, which has to do with the national basis of the language. (...)

JG: I have the feeling that many Western (West-European and American) writers depart from the national culture, mutually relying on one another. And the geographic borders have come to play less important role.

IE: Oh, I don’t know about that. Take this century. Take the most significant writers and look, where their roots are, in the international or in the national. (...) The most significant artists of this century were all very national and precisely because of this they became international. Only he interests the world who has embodied and brought his own to the entire world. (Glad, *Besedy v izgnanii* 67).

What exactly is meant when Ivan insists that one has to start with the national? What is implied by his notion of the national? Before we answer that question, let us start with what he renounces: the legal/political dimensions of the national. In the following poem, he mocks registration as a guarantee of one’s nationality.

5 Прописка

Registration

(...)

(...)

Пустьяшное дело – прописка,
Да нет без прописки житья,
А вот на холмах Сан-Франциско

What a bulshit – registration!
Still I can't live without one.
But here I am on the hill of San
Francisco;

Живу непрописанным я.

I live unregistered.

Пишу о холмах Сан-Франциско,
Где пальмы качают верхи,
И ходят без всякой прописки
По белому свету стихи

I write about the hills of San Francisco,
Where palms sway their branches
And walk about without any registration
In this world of poetry.

Сегодня как будто бы лишний
С моею судьбой кочевой,
Я все ж современникам слышный,
Как слышен в трубе домово́й.

I am, as it were, superfluous
With my nomadic fate.
I am listened to by my contemporaries
Just like *domovoi* in the chimney is heard.

Россия, твой сын непутевый
Вовек не вернется домой.
Не надо, чтоб в книге домово́й
(*domovoi*) agreement
Записанным был домово́й.

Russia, your prodigal son
Will not return home for a long time.
There's no need for the rental
Domovoi is registered.

Никто не заметит пропажи,
Но знаю: сегодня уже
Прописан я в русской пейзаже,
Прописан я в русской душе.

No one will discover my absence
But I know: Today already am I
Registered in the Russian landscape,
Registered in the Russian soul.

(...)

С милицией, с прокуратурой,
С правительством – я не в ладу,
Я в русскую литературу
Без их разрешенья войду.

With the police, with the prosecutions,
With the government I do not get along.
Into Russian literature I enter
Without their permission.

Не в темном хлеву на соломе,
Не где-нибудь на чердаке, –
Как в отчем наследственном доме
Я в русском живу языке.
(Elagin 2: 100-101)

Not in a dark stable on the straw
Not somewhere in the attic,
As if in a house, bequeathed by my father
I live in the Russian language.

Legislative grounds for nationality thus refuted, Ivan turns to the land and to the language. Russia as the land, its physical topos, its landscape, guaranteed Russianness. He never thought, as the above-cited interview

shows, that Russian literature in exile could be literature of its own. It had to be someday annexed back to Russian literature in the Fatherland. For him, Russian literature could only find its place in Russia.

Further, it was the language (and literature) that vouchsafed one's national identity. For Ivan, however, this was not some kind of linguistic relativism. Russian language was the source of Russian identity, but still, it had to be connected with the land. Ivan was skeptical of the Russian language outside of Russia. Asked in an interview: "Do you feel, being abroad, you lose the capability to express yourself in Russian, or even lose the feeling of closeness to the homeland?" he answered that the Russian language spoken outside Russia was indeed poor although much depended on the talent of an individual author and that an émigré, "living far from Russia," had to read contemporary literature and be acquainted with recent verbal changes and literary achievements in Russia (Svetlova 8). Once again, the national could be complete only given the specific locus.

The nationalistic texts of Ivan Elagin show his patriotic sentiment towards Russia as being largely related to the paternal. I would like to quote from the poem "Registration" once more: "As if in a house, bequeathed by my father, I live in the Russian language." The Russian language, and the Russia that it constitutes, is represented as a comfortable house, handed down from the father.

This could also be viewed in terms of a Marxist-feminist problematic. In Engels' rather crude formulation, the development of the means of production creates private property, the transmission of which requires patrilinearity, the patriarchal family, and a patriarchal nation. Matriarchy, in contrast, is related to communist ideals. While we may not endorse such a naïve version of materialistic dialectics, we may recuperate some of its significance for purposes of our present discussion.

Contemporary Marxists-feminists are, it seems, willing to do so. A prolific Marxist historian, Michael Löwy published a book entitled *Fatherland or Mother Earth?: Essays on the National Question*. He implies that the ideology of the nation-state was complicit with patriarchal ideologies and that internationalism tended to be related to matriarchy. I repeat that too schematic understanding of the problem should be avoided. However, the writings of Nikolai, Venedikt, and Ivan Matveevs establish a clear association of nationalism with the paternal; conversely, the devaluation of internationalism coincides with the erasure of the maternal, or more concretely, in the case of Ivan Elagin, the dismissal of the Jewish mother.

Such binaries (patriarchal/nationalistic versus matriarchal/international) are prone to collapse. In conclusion, I will point to two such deconstructive instances in Ivan Elagin's formulation of a national culture.

The first one arises from the fact that ‘Fatherland’ for Ivan is always expressed by the term *rodina*, the native land, or the country that begets one (just like the word root – nat – also suggests); in that respect *rodina* is a motherland, not the Fatherland. Modern nationalism, based on patriarchal ideologies is, thus, never free from matriarchal conceptions.

Secondly, the notion of land as origin of the national is frequently subverted in the process of adducing alternative landscapes to represent it. In more concrete terms, Russian landscapes for Ivan were often surreptitiously replaced by non-Russian landscapes, destined thereby to lose their meaning as instances of a specific, valorized topos. For instance, Ivan describes his native region of the Far East Russia thus:

(...)

Всё снега, да снега, да метели,	Just snow, snow, and blizzard,
Нелюдимый скалистый простор.	Inhuman, steep space.
В горностаевых мантиях ели,	In ermine mantles firs
Как монархи, спускаются с гор.	Like the nuns, step down from the mountain

И олени пугливое стадо	And the frightened herd of deer
От дороги уходит в снега.	Divert from the road into the snow.
Вот какое оно – Колорадо,	That’s how it is – Colorado,
И такая ж, наверно, тайга.	And, probably, so is taiga.

(Elagin 2:223)

The Taiga on the banks of the Ussuri River, of which his grandfather boasted of knowing every part, can be depicted by Ivan only as Colorado now.

If the Taiga may not appear as typically Russian landscape, here is another poem:

(...)

Про эту скрипучую	About this squeaky
Березу в саду	Fir in the garden
Слова наилучшие	The better words
Я не найду	I do not find.
Тут не до лексики	No need for lexicon.
Благоговей!	Just revere!
Всё золото Мексики	All Mexican gold
Виснет с ветвей	Hangs from the branches.

И в Пенсильвании
Лист колдовской
Кружит, позванивая
Русской тоской.
(Elagin 2:225)

And in Pennsylvania
Magic leaves
Twirl, jingling
With Russian melancholy.

Traditionally, *toska*, Russian melancholy, has been recognized as a nationalistic, typically Russian sentiment ever since Pushkin. But Ivan allows Pennsylvania to stand in for it.

The cited poems are Ivan's last. Apparently, Ivan started to transform and hybridize his national identity. Unfortunately, however, he died before taking cognizance of Jewish elements in his personal life and poetic career.

NOTES

¹ "The whole of the Amur basin and much of Siberia was, in reality, a no-man's-land" (Lattimore 106); "In point of fact most of these (Manchuria) territories, up to the Treaty of Nerchinsk, could not validly be assigned to any owners except scattered nomadic tribes which claimed 'ownership' in the nomadic sense of freedom to move, not in the elaborate civilized sense of theoretical group ownership superimposed on subdivided individual ownership" (*ibid.* 111; the politically problematic terminology availed by Lattimore can be attributed to its publication date of 1932 and, naturally, in no way approved by the author of the given article).

² Cosmopolitanism is essentially an urban, upper-class ideology which Nikolai, probably, did not endorse. I will use this term in a rather general sense, but it has to be born in mind that, to explain the position of Nikolai, a qualifier such as "multiculturalism" may be more appropriate, although he was also an assimilationist.

³ The translation of Russian texts is mine unless otherwise noted.

⁴ It does offer some associations. For instance, perhaps, with the word "kapat" (to drip). But the association remains conditional and speculative.

⁵ It may be problematic to quote Kruchenykh here since, as Markov notes, "[t]he majority of the provincial imitations of the eventually fashionable futurism were written in the ego-futurist (and not Khlebnikovian [Kruchenykhian] futurist) vein" (62). If Markov is correct, Mart may well have been a follower of ego-futurism. Yet, the source of futuristic inspiration for Mart is unknown.

⁶ That he is calling the genre "*bokku*," but not "*haiku*" is itself telling. Unbeknown to many lay admirers of Japanese literature, "*haiku*" is a modern literary genre. "*Hokku*" was the first line of the serial poetry, "*haikai*," and it was sometimes appreciated independently, separate from the subsequent lines. It was largely owing to the Meiji poet-master, Masaoka Shiki, that "*bokku*" was given a completely independent status, to be read as it was, and was conferred a name "*haiku*" as a new genre toward the end of the nineteenth century. See my "Masaoka Shiki: Making of the Myth of Haiku." Venedikt Mart was aware of this historical change. That is why his "*bokku*" is specifically dedicated to Matuo Basho (1644-94).

⁷ Or I should refer to his poem, "Mne deviat' let," in which Ivan relates of his childhood experience: the father points at the railroad in the suburbs of Moscow, telling the son that it was the way, along which the Tartars came to Russia, to the bewilderment of

Ivan. The documentation refers to the volume number and the pagination, corresponding to Elagin's Collection of Works in two volumes.

⁸ In the biographical essay by a Chinese student who studied with him at the University of Pittsburgh: "[Elagin] used to tell me that he once lived in China, in Harbin, when he was still a little boy, but he hardly remembers anything now" (Wilt 276).

⁹ Mart's letters are found in the Matveev archive at the Region Study Museum of Khabarovsk.

¹⁰ Zangwill won recognition by his series of "Getto tragedies," appearing in the late 1880s. In 1890s he visited the United States, after which he wrote the play *Melting Pot*. The theory of America being "The Melting Pot" took on and became well-known.

¹¹ To be sure, from a Moscow publisher (Ateneum). I have not been able to ascertain, whether this edition was available in Vladivostok or not.

¹² In the letter, he commended Ivan for having visited the theater to see the play *So It Was* [*Tak bylo*; I have not been able to identify the play] and relates his own experience of having seen a play on pogrom: "Your papa was such a vulnerable, weird boy that, when the pogrom started on the stage, he began to shout to the whole theater, 'Police!!!' and, of course, they led out your papa as a child in tears."

¹³ Svetlova's interview, however, contains some simple errors, which somewhat put the credibility of it in question. For instance, she footnotes an "American university" where Ivan teaches as "The University of Pittsburgh in *the State of Philadelphia*." Such biographical uncertainties and inaccuracies are quite common in the writings about the poet, making the task of reconstructing his life difficult. For instance, in another interview, which similarly begins with remarks about the family background, Ivan refers to his father as "Benedikt (not, Venedikt) Mart" (Glad, *Besedy v izgnanii* 62).

¹⁴ Incidentally, it is significant that the mother is invariably evoked by the mention of the name of the father.

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Prihodnost na obrobju: nacionalno in internacionalno v ruski izseljenski poeziji z Daljnega vzhoda

Ključne besede: ruska književnost / diaspora / emigrantska poezija / nacionalna identiteta / judovstvo / kozmopolitizem / Matvejev, Nikolaj / Mart, Venedikt / Elagin, Ivan

Rodbina Matvejev sodi v širšo skupino intelektualcev iz ruskega Daljnega vzhoda, ki je bila najbolj dejavna v drugi polovici 19. in prvi polovici 20. stoletja. Njen utemeljitelj Nikolaj Matvejev (1866–1941) je bil državnik, pesnik, novinar in zgodovinar, ki je poznal jezike in kulture azijskih civilizacij. Bil je utopični mislec, sanjal je o svetovljanski medrasni skupnosti na Daljnem vzhodu; bil je napreden in svobodomiseln razumnik in se je navduševal za svetovljanske ideale. Njegov sin Venedikt Mart (1896–1937) je bil futuristični pesnik in pisatelj, in tudi on je bil poznavalec vzhodnih kultur. Ivan Elagin (1918–1987), njegov sin, je bil pesnik, ki je po vrsti težav v Kijevu in po življenju v taborišču za pregnancye v Münchenu nazadnje emigriral v Združene države. Elaginova poezija se ukvarja s tremi temami: s tragično očetovo smrtjo, z domotožjem po izgubljeni očetnjavi in z nalogami pesnikov. Izgubo Rusije je poskušal nadomestiti tako, da jo je ponovno vpeljal kot jezik. Pomembno pri tem je, da je imel Elagin rusko kulturo in ruski jezik za očetovo dediščino, in zdi se, da je ta ideja tesno povezana s prepričanjem, da mora imeti nacionalno prednost pred internacionalnim.

V nasprotju s svetovljanstvom deda Nikolaja in očeta Marta Elagin skorajda ni kazal zanimanja za vzhodne kulture, kar se ujema z njegovim nacionalizmom. Prav tako je – v izrazitem nasprotju z ljubečim hrepenenjem po očetu – v njegovi literarni produkciji podoba matere domala nevidna. Razprava nakazuje, da je ta odsotnost morda povezana z dejstvom, da je bila Elaginova mati Judinja in da je pesnik očitno želel izbrisati ta element svoje identitete.

Proti koncu delovanja je Elagin razgradil svoj ideal patriarhalne Rusije tako, da je ameriško krajino oblikoval kot rusko. Vse do smrti v njegovem pisanju niso prišla na površje ne znamenja o judovstvu in ne o materi. Razprava želi prikazati nedvomno medsebojno delovanje nacionalizma, svetovljanstva, patriarhalnosti, jezika in judovstva v življenju in delu treh rodov ruskih pesnikov v diaspori.

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