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*“Not into exile, but on a mission”:  
Identity and the Literature of Russian Émigrés in Paris (1918–1939)*

**ABSTRACT:** *This article analyzes the Russian émigré authors’ mission movement in Paris during the Interwar period through a social and cultural lens. Using novels, short stories, poetry, diary entries, and international reviews, it analyzes the foundations of the movement as a cultural preservation effort. It begins by defining their mission, then examines generational divides, acknowledges the coping mechanisms used to deal with exile, and finishes with the multifaceted reactions toward the movement as a whole. The author argues that the émigré authors’ image was received as anticipated, however, international perception extended beyond the mission’s goals due to the émigré authors’ transparent grieving.*

**KEYWORDS:** *modern history; Russia; Paris; Zinaida Gippius; Ivan Bunin; Teffi; Alexei Remizov; Nina Berberova; Gaito Gazdanov; transnationalism*

*Introduction*

I say I am not going into exile,  
I don’t seek out earthly paths,  
Not into exile, but on a mission,  
It’s easy for me to live among people.  
And my life – it’s almost simple –  
A double life, and when I’m dying  
In some great city  
I will return to my ancient home,  
To whose doors at times  
I cling, perhaps like  
The leaf to the branch before the storm,  
In order to remain whole, in order to survive.

Nina Berberova (1924–1926)<sup>1</sup>

Desperate for refuge from a country that no longer offered them a home after October 1917, Russian émigrés fled in droves and scattered worldwide.<sup>2</sup> With this diaspora came some of Russian history’s best emotionally driven art. The most prominent subgroup in the deracination were the émigré authors who publicized

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<sup>1</sup> Nina Berberova, “Untitled Poem about Exile,” in Dominique Hoffman, “Without Nostalgia: Nina Berberova’s Short Fiction of the 1930s” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011), 159.

<sup>2</sup> The Bolshevik Revolution began in Russia in October 1917. Led by Vladimir Lenin, it sought to establish a communist system, as opposed to the longstanding Tsarist (or monarchist and aristocratic) system. Communism is a social and political ideology that propagates a classless society and emphasizes community as a priority, leading to private property becoming public and to need-based wages. Those who had benefitted from the Tsarist system (including those of royal blood, the wealthy, and business and political leaders) became targets for robbery, imprisonment, exploitation, and murder. During the subsequent Russian Civil War between the Bolsheviks (Reds) and Monarchists (Whites), the Bolsheviks supported communism while the Monarchists wanted to keep the Tsarist tradition of monarchy in Russia. These events encouraged many Russians to flee over the course of the next five years.

their grieving and hatred toward a group that had not only robbed them of their home, but their identities too—specifically, the identity of simply being Russian since the traditional culture was at risk for extinction in the new Soviet era.<sup>3</sup> In the midst of this grieving, the émigrés were determined to not give up their identity so easily. Inspired by the first wave of Russian emigrants from a couple of decades prior, who had left Russia and gone into exile with the intention of spreading political propaganda and returning victoriously, these new émigrés were hoping for a similar fate.<sup>4</sup> Further fueled by fervent nationalism from World War I and guilt from the results of the Revolution, the émigrés developed a plan to win back their Russia and preserve its memory in the meantime. The second wave emigrants began by developing the title "émigré." Borrowed from the first-wave emigrants, they too wanted to emphasize their self-will toward exile and show that their banishment was not permanent.<sup>5</sup>

Fortunately, the majority of émigré authors found the perfect place to establish this idea in their writing: Paris. However, their journeys were not as fortunate as their destination. Already upset from having to leave a place they loved so dearly, many of the authors were forced to traverse the European continent either west or south. They began in Kyiv but would soon be forced out due to the Ukrainian Independence movement. The journeys west and south were fairly similar, since both led to severely economically destitute cities, namely, either Berlin and Istanbul. Once they understood the impracticality of residing in these cities long term, they pushed further west and arrived in Paris, the cultural capital of the world. Most of the authors arrived in Paris between 1920 and 1922.<sup>6</sup> The French metropolis was attractive because of its economic opportunity, political flexibility, and large cultural output due to the contemporary jazz movement.<sup>7</sup>

The authors analyzed in this article vary in age, political affiliation, gender, popularity, and literature style. They include Zinaida Gippius (1869–1945), Ivan Bunin (1870–1953), Nadezhda Alexandrovna "Teffi" Buchinskaya (1872–1952),<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Soviet era, initially under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, followed the Bolshevik Revolution and the Russian Civil War. It was the first official trial of communism in a government system and lasted from 1922 to 1989. However, under Joseph Stalin, who came to power in 1924, it morphed into a dictatorship. The Soviet era featured policies, such as language revision and censorship, and meted out brutal punishment for not following Soviet policies.

<sup>4</sup> John Slatter, "Bears in the Lion's Den: The Figure of the Russian Revolutionary Emigrant in English Fiction, 1880–1914," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 77, no. 1 (1999): 30–55, here 31.

<sup>5</sup> The first wave of émigrés were mostly political exiles that arrived in London and Paris from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the start of World War I.

<sup>6</sup> Except for Berberova who arrived in 1925. Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (New York: Picador, 2002), 532.

<sup>7</sup> Edythe Haber, *Teffi: A Life of Letters and of Laughter* (London: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2018), 100; Jeffrey H. Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Henceforth, I will refer to her as "Teffi."

Alexei Remizov (1877–1957), Nina Berberova (1901–1993), and Gaito Gazdanov (1903–1971). Based on their age, these authors belong to two distinct generations. To better comprehend the intentions these authors expressed in their literature, a brief history of each individual is necessary.

Taking them from the oldest to the youngest, the first is Zinaida Gippius who was best known for her emotionally and religiously driven poetry and essays.<sup>9</sup> She specialized in the symbolist style and was also a major critic for the émigré press.<sup>10</sup> Ivan Bunin, a close friend of Gippius, was the most popular of the émigré authors. He was a realist author<sup>11</sup> and the most open about his hatred of the Soviet Union and their hatred of him.<sup>12</sup> Teffi was a humorist who, pre-Revolution, had been a popular author as she was admired by the Tsar and Lenin alike, which often caused her to fall victim to nostalgia.<sup>13</sup> Alexi Remizov, the last of this older generation of authors, was a modernist who, despite having a wealthy background, used the Russian peasantry as his subject for most of his work.<sup>14</sup> These four constitute the older generation of authors. Nina Berberova, on the other hand, was part of the younger generation of authors and lived in deep poverty.<sup>15</sup> She had many ties to the literary circles and liked to take an honest view on the reality of the situation in Paris. Gaito Gazdanov is the other member of the second generation. His writing style was modernist, he was politically neutral and very poor, and he worked as a taxicab driver.

Despite their differences in age, gender, political beliefs, wealth, and literary style, these authors formed a community. While they shared a common nationality and aristocratic backgrounds in Russia, the émigrés became something new in France. Looking back to the introductory poem by Berberova, the émigré authors decided to take advantage of their publicity and combat their denationalization—or loss of physical nationality—by establishing a mission movement within the émigré community.<sup>16</sup> Berberova's poem was "transformed into a rallying cry" for

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<sup>9</sup> Temira Pachmuss, "Ivan Bunin through the Eyes of Zinaida Gippius," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 44, no. 103 (1966): 337–350, here 343–344.

<sup>10</sup> Zinaida Gippius, *Between Paris and St. Petersburg: Selected Diaries of Zinaida Hippius*, trans. Temira Pachmuss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 3; Pachmuss, "Ivan Bunin," 337.

<sup>11</sup> Haber, *Teffi*, 95.

<sup>12</sup> Ivan Bunin, *From the Other Shore, 1920–1933: A Portrait from Letters, Diaries, and Fiction*, trans. Thomas Gaiton Marullo (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995), 59.

<sup>13</sup> Haber, *Teffi*, 125; Natalia Starostina, "On Nostalgia and Courage: Russian Émigré Experience in Interwar Paris through the Eyes of Nadezhda Teffi," *Diasporas* 22 (2013): 38–53, here 38.

<sup>14</sup> Alexei Remizov, *Selected Prose*, ed. Sona Aronian (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1985), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Nina Berberova, *The Italics Are Mine*, trans. Philippe Radley (New York: Knopf, 1992; first published 1969), 268; Hoffman, "Without Nostalgia," 164.

<sup>16</sup> Ekaterina Shvagruckova and Elena Novikova, "The Russian Language as a Mode of Self-Identity Cultivation in the Russian Émigré Community," *SHS Web of Conferences* 28, no. 01095 (2016): 1–5, here 3.

the émigrés.<sup>17</sup> It provided comfort and purpose to those who thought they had lost everything: they had their cultural history to preserve. It is important to note that Berberova fiercely rejected nostalgia as contradictory to the integrity of the mission, however, returned with new attitudes for the future. In short, the mission started as an anti-assimilation effort that sought to preserve Imperial Russian culture and evolved into a partial acceptance of the surrounding culture while still holding true to the integrity of a collective past.<sup>18</sup>

Ivan Bunin proclaimed that they were "not exiles but precisely emigrés," and he introduced the question of what it meant to be an émigré.<sup>19</sup> While this was fluid for each person who claimed the moniker, it represented, generally speaking, a collective Russian people – not immigrants, not Soviets, but Russians. There was a sense of righteousness that came with being an exile since they were resurrecting an image that was being eviscerated by the communists back home. To be an émigré meant, first and foremost, to reflect royal or aristocratic splendor abroad.<sup>20</sup> Many of the ex-royals continued this idea even in deep poverty, as they expected the Soviet government to be a "temporary phenomenon" and expecting their return home in, at most, a year.<sup>21</sup> Others did not care for the monarchy, but wished for safety and comfort within their own cultural heritage.<sup>22</sup> The émigré identity ebbed and flowed from each individual's memory of Russia with a consistent embrace of traditional Russian art, music, dance, fashion, literature, and religion.<sup>23</sup>

Most scholarly explorations on these second-wave émigrés are author-specific case studies, including works by Thomas Gaiton Marullo (on Bunin), Temira Pachmuss (on Gippius), Edyth Haber and Natalia Starostina (on Teffi), Sona Aonian (on Remizov), Dominique Hoffman (on Berberova), and László Dienes (on Gazdanov). Beyond this, there are some studies that are more broadly conceived, such as Orlando Figes's monograph, *Natasha's Dance* (2002), which looks at each element of the mission movement through a comparative political lens of émigré messaging in their work versus Soviet messaging after a general description of Russian political and cultural history.<sup>24</sup> Both *Russian Montparnasse* (2015) by Maria Rubins and *Russians Abroad* (2013) by Greta Slobin offer more specific

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<sup>17</sup> Hoffman, "Without Nostalgia," 5.

<sup>18</sup> Assimilation is the "process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society." Shvagrjukova and Novikova, "Russian Language as a Mode of Self-Identity Cultivation," 2. Imperial Russia is in reference to the Tsarist era.

<sup>19</sup> Ivan Bunin, "The Mission of the Russian Emigration Lecture from February 16, 1924," in Bunin, *From the Other Shore*, 125.

<sup>20</sup> Bunin, *From the Other Shore*, 59.

<sup>21</sup> Helen Rappaport, *After the Romanovs: Russian Exiles in Paris from the Belle Époque through Revolution and War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2022), 98.

<sup>22</sup> Rappaport, *After the Romanovs*, 89.

<sup>23</sup> Rappaport, *After the Romanovs*, 22 (art), 32 (music and dance), 127 (fashion), 157 (literature), and 190 (religion).

<sup>24</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.

understandings of the émigré movement: Rubins presents a case study on the modernist aesthetic and its interaction with realism,<sup>25</sup> while Slobin shares a diverse overview of the topic, with specific chapters covering themes similar to the ones addressed in this article, but fails to look beyond the community in question.<sup>26</sup> The most holistic explanation of émigré culture in Paris is *After the Romanovs* (2022) by Helen Rappaport. Rappaport looks at both the first and second wave of émigrés and has a particular fascination with royalty, fashion, dance, and literature.<sup>27</sup> All of these scholars are successful in their detailed descriptions of émigré cultural and social history. However, they are limited when it comes to the concept of the mission movement. This is what I intend to address.<sup>28</sup>

By analyzing the émigré authors' projected and perceived identities both within and beyond their community, this article assesses how these varied identities played out in literary works.<sup>29</sup> The external opinion on their identities is garnered from English and French mainstream press as England and France were the two leading western European nations during the Interwar period, thus making them the most influential. In this social and cultural analysis of the Russian émigrés' mission, I argue that the reception of the émigrés' mission mentality to preserve their Russian national identity was in line with their goals and proved successful. However, these reactions exceeded their goals in both England and France as the émigrés' uncontrolled reactions fell through the cracks.

### *I. The Mission: Providing Purpose to Exile*

The émigré authors faced the idea of exile by giving themselves a purpose through their mission mentality. This mentality bonded the émigrés who otherwise had nothing in common except "for one reason or another did not accept what was being done in [their] homeland."<sup>30</sup> The introduction to Teffi's short story "Que Faire?" (1923) describes the experience most émigrés had when they arrived in Paris. An old White Army officer looked around the Place de Concorde and asked, "All of this is well and good...but what is to be done?"<sup>31</sup> The mission mentality

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<sup>25</sup> Maria Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse: Transnational Writing in Interwar Paris* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> Greta N. Slobin, *Russians Abroad: Literary and Cultural Politics of Diaspora (1919-1939)* (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> Rappaport, *After the Romanovs*.

<sup>28</sup> Jeffrey Jackson, *Making Jazz French*, inspired me to explore a different facet of the cultural explosion in 1920s Paris. His analysis of how jazz influenced the interaction between black and white individuals in Paris served as a blueprint for me as I analyzed the interaction between French and Russian individuals.

<sup>29</sup> For this concept of identity, see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1-47, here 15.

<sup>30</sup> Berberova, *Italics Are Mine*, 278.

<sup>31</sup> The Place de Concorde is a major public square in Paris. Teffi, "Que Faire?" in Teffi, *Subtly Worded and Other Stories*, trans. Robert Chandler et al. (London: Pushkin Press, 2021), 139-143.

sought to correct this through a series of preservation efforts ranging in categories from language and anti-Bolshevism to nostalgia and anti-assimilation.

The primary use of cultural preservation was through the Russian language itself. However, there was a conflict between maintaining the purity of the Russian language and incorporating the surrounding European languages into their dialect, forming a specific émigré variation. This issue arose due to the loss of the émigré authors' Russian audience, due to Soviet censorship: their remaining Russian audience were other émigrés worldwide (up to three million individuals).<sup>32</sup> This caused émigré authors to rely heavily on translated releases of their works, and they anxiously awaited these releases, as seen in a letter from Teffi to her publisher: "Do you remember you said that my stories would be translated into Czech? Yes? Will they? Truly?"<sup>33</sup> The purist émigré authors argued that speaking Russian was the chief symbol of their lost nation, and it was therefore the most important aspect of cultivating their self-identity.<sup>34</sup> They even went so far as to try to preserve variations of the specific imperial dialect. The result of only speaking Russian in France was cultural isolation. However, some authors could not help but isolate themselves and masked their monolingualism with this effort. For the older generation, the French they had learned in primary school was no longer current, whereas younger authors like Gazdanov boasted of his French fluency; yet he refused to write any of his stories in French.<sup>35</sup> Gazdanov did not endorse the idea that the Russian language needed to be preserved as an artifact but, rather, posited that it should merge with the surrounding language. A wonderful example of this can be found in his novel, *An Evening with Claire* (1930), where his characters, in their dialogues, switch between French and Russian since the main character, Claire, is French.<sup>36</sup> Gazdanov proved the other side of the coin, namely, that one could retain one's Russian identity while also enriching one's language through bilingualism.<sup>37</sup>

Another topic that Gazdanov and older authors, like Bunin, disagreed on was politics. Anti-Bolshevism was a major component of émigré compositions as a means of exercising their freedom and separating their writings from censored Soviet literature. Among the authors, there was a shared contempt of the Bolsheviks who were viewed as having stolen everything from the émigrés.<sup>38</sup> Gippius summarizes it best in her poem "So It Is" (1918) by using the repetitive

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<sup>32</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 546.

<sup>33</sup> Haber, *Teffi*, 113.

<sup>34</sup> Shvagruckova and Novikova, "Russian Language as a Mode of Self-Identity Cultivation," 2.

<sup>35</sup> Shvagruckova and Novikova, "Russian Language as a Mode of Self-Identity Cultivation," 3; László Dienes, *Russian Literature in Exile: The Life and Work of Gajto Gazdanov* (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1982), 79.

<sup>36</sup> Gaito Gazdanov, *An Evening with Claire*, trans. Jodi Daynard (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1988).

<sup>37</sup> Slobin, *Russians Abroad*, 183.

<sup>38</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 549.

phrasing of "if, then" to show the progression of her thoughts as the events of the Revolution unfold. She states, "If a man is a beast—I hate him and scorn/If he's worse than beasts—I kill him laughing."<sup>39</sup> She concludes that, despite all this, "If my Russia is over—I die and mourn."<sup>40</sup> Gippius's poem expresses helplessness as she can both hate and kill, yet not prevent Russia's death. The last line also signifies that her identity is with Russia, and when Russia dies, she dies along with it. While the Bolsheviks are beasts whom she hates and would "kill...laughing," there is a juxtaposition with her depressing reality, which reflects the theme of lacking control that Gippius uses frequently in her poetry.

Another example is Bunin, of whom it was said in 1925 that there was "no more uncompromising opponent" to Bolshevik Russia.<sup>41</sup> In his short story "Sempiternal Spring" (1923), Bunin depicts Russia's return to its barbaric ways and touches on the nostalgic memories of large houses that have since been pillaged and emptied. One of Bunin's favored literary techniques is word play. To him, word plays are like strokes of paint that build up his masterpiece: each word is intentional. Quotes such as "every variety of unbridled lawlessness," "unsufferable," and "repulsive" are ammunition Bunin uses to describe the Bolsheviks.<sup>42</sup> Bunin's attacks communicated to his audience that the Russia of old had entered the barbaric state of "every man for himself." This justified the émigré authors' exodus, but it also called for a return to the better ways of Russian life.

Teffi's anti-Bolshevik prose emerges in her tragically satirical piece "Subtly Worded" (1920), in which she and a friend receive a letter from a family member in the U.S.S.R. with confusing messages that celebrate death and claims that many individuals are leading "secluded lives."<sup>43</sup> After having their letter in response corrected, it is revealed that the two have to read and write between the lines to assist in the relative's survival in the highly oppressive Bolshevik society. Teffi used this piece to shed light on the insanity of the Bolshevik government and poke fun at its repressive ways.

Berberova recalls the careless attitudes in Bolshevik society in her novella "The Ladies from St. Petersburg" (1927). She uses the main character's mother dying and a revolt burning down her funeral to comment on the harsh realities of the peasantry and their selfish needs, even during suffering and loss. One notable quote is "'How crude people have become'...'Not for long. Everything will fall

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<sup>39</sup> Zinaida Gippius, "So It Is" (February 1918), trans. Yevgeny Bonver, lines 2-3, *RuVerses*, [online](#).

<sup>40</sup> Gippius, "So It Is," line 4.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen Graham, "Russian Writers In Exile: Ivan Bunin," *Times*, April 3, 1925, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Ivan Bunin, "Sempiternal Spring," in Ivan Bunin, *Night of Denial: Stories and Novellas*, trans. Robert Lee Bowie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 295.

<sup>43</sup> Teffi, "Subtly Worded," in Teffi, *Subtly Worded and Other Stories*, 144-148.

back into place again."<sup>44</sup> Berberova suggests that it is not the people themselves who make these decisions, but the collective group mentality. Her hope does not stem from bringing down the government, but from changing people's minds.

In the midst of all this literary output, Gazdanov remained politically neutral. This stance resulted from his war years when he had only joined the White Army to experience what war was like, and he alludes to this in his autobiographically inspired novel, *An Evening with Claire*.<sup>45</sup> Gazdanov utilizes irony as he spends the entire novel reminiscing about his former life in Russia. Yet at this moment in time, he had yet to care about leaving his home because he was so focused on seeing the woman he loved in Paris.<sup>46</sup> After the release of his novel, he even went so far as to openly converse with Maxim Gorky, asking for feedback as well as requesting assistance to get back to Russia to see his mother.<sup>47</sup> Gorky, in return for Gazdanov's admiration, offered to send *An Evening with Claire* to the Russian press.<sup>48</sup> This isolated Gazdanov even more from the other émigré authors, as he continually refused to cooperate with the mission mentality.

The only area in which Gazdanov did somewhat cooperate was the preservation of Russian memories through nostalgic writing. Nostalgia was used as a means of preserving social status and traditions. Through the use of nostalgia, authors were able to alter memories by removing anything that might cause tension within the émigré community, such as the nobility's oppression of the poor.<sup>49</sup> They ignored the latter and focused on the glories of the aristocracy to convince themselves that their status was available despite living abroad. Ivan Bunin practiced this to deliberately put people in their place. He constantly mocked the peasantry through his use of nostalgia and described them with lofty language to emphasize who his intended audience was and, as a result, continued the tradition of social hierarchy. In his story "Indulgent Participation" (1929), Bunin uses high-minded vocabulary like "impecunious matriculants" or "indulgent participation" (in the title itself), making it almost impossible for a barely literate citizen to consume it.<sup>50</sup> Bunin's use of vocabulary shows him as controlling a message. Bunin had once claimed in an interview, "[Y]ou will never see people reading my books in railway carriages," whereupon the interviewer

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<sup>44</sup> Nina Berberova, "The Ladies from St. Petersburg," in Nina Berberova, *The Ladies from St. Petersburg: Three Novellas*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New York: New Directions, 1998), 31.

<sup>45</sup> Gazdanov fled Russia because of his decision to fight for the White Army.

<sup>46</sup> Gazdanov, *Evening with Claire*, 92.

<sup>47</sup> Maxim Gorky was the most popular Soviet author who was in constant competition with émigré literature, specifically Ivan Bunin.

<sup>48</sup> Dienes, *Russian Literature in Exile*, 79.

<sup>49</sup> Natalia Starostina, "The Construction of a New Émigré Self in 20th-Century Russian Paris in Short Stories by Nadezhda Teffi," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 42, no. 1 (2015): 81-93, here 82.

<sup>50</sup> Ivan Bunin, "Indulgent Participation," in Bunin, *Night of Denial*, 333.



had called him a "writer's writer."<sup>51</sup> While Bunin helped lead the mission, he also wanted to retain the status, both socially and occupationally, that he had enjoyed back home in Russia.

There was an issue with nostalgia, since not everyone could participate. Younger authors like Berberova and Gazdanov had arrived in Paris when they were twenty-one and seventeen. Neither of them had witnessed the life or shared the memories of the older generation, so how could they possibly devote all their literature to this component of the mission? Similar to the idea of bilingualism, these authors wanted to merge their memory of Russia with the cosmopolitan culture in which they now resided. Berberova viewed this issue not as a setback but, rather, as a gift. She claimed that nostalgia was limiting their literary growth, questioning their ability to evolve stylistically without moving out of times past.<sup>52</sup>

The main idea in each of these categories is a conflict with assimilation. While none of the émigré authors ever considered fully assimilating into French culture, some did value the importance of at least accepting aspects of the culture to reflect the new lives they were leading. Others were held back by the fear of a split identity since they felt they did not belong in the French culture, nor did they have the option to fit into the Soviet mold. The only identity they could fathom to connect with was the Russian identity that had died with the Revolution.<sup>53</sup>

## II. Generational Divides: Issues with the Mission

The generational divides within the émigré community centered around a combined skepticism and physical incapability toward the mission movement. This was caused by logistical errors in executing the mission mentality, which led to problems since their Russian nationality was their main commonality. The older generation expected the younger generation to help preserve the characteristics of classical Russian literature, as opposed to incorporating the contemporary French styles into their prose.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the older generation was generally better off economically, socially, and intellectually compared to the younger generation. Berberova once described the "second generation" as a "unique generation of deprived, broken, silenced, stripped, homeless, destitute, disenfranchised and therefore half-educated poets."<sup>55</sup> Many of the authors in the second generation were displaced at a young age, thus struggled to establish their careers and popularity, and were unable to complete their education in Russia. This disadvantage caused underlying hostility within the émigré community that contributed to a subtle undermining of the mission effort. In short, the younger generation felt excluded, and they wanted to do things their own way.

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<sup>51</sup> Graham, "Russian Writers in Exile: Ivan Bunin," 17.

<sup>52</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 545–546.

<sup>53</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 551.

<sup>54</sup> Slobin, *Russians Abroad*, 181.

<sup>55</sup> Berberova, *Italics Are Mine*, 268.

For the younger generation, the first sign of exclusion was their socioeconomic status. The older authors had a better chance of being well off in Paris, with many of them already enjoying established connections, status, or prearranged housing. Gippius, one of the most notable privileged types, loved to flaunt it. When she came to Paris, she arrived in their "old apartment which ha[d] been miraculously preserved."<sup>56</sup> Not many others were quite so lucky. Gippius's housing security provided her with more energy to focus on the mission effort because she did not have to worry as much about surviving. Bunin, on the other hand, may have been homeless at first, but due to his fame and connections with author Mikhail Tsetlin, he was able to stay in Tsetlin's flat and have security until he could find an apartment of his own. Gazdanov, of the younger generation, was one who did not experience the same ease of life. As Berberova recalled, "Those who left at sixteen...took almost nothing with them."<sup>57</sup> Gazdanov lived in poverty in Paris but refused to ask for help.<sup>58</sup> This caused him to have a harder time to publish his literary works on a regular basis because he was so mentally exhausted from trying to get by in general. However, due to his homelessness and lack of wealth, he frequently interacted with the Bohemian crowd in Paris which, in turn, influenced his writing. He cited his interaction with this crowd as credibility to comment on them in his work without feeling guilty.<sup>59</sup>

Another source of tension within the émigré community were the respective aesthetics each authors chose to use. Understanding their main aesthetics helps us to realize how their audience was intended to interpret their work. Symbolism and realism were used to preserve the past. Symbolist writers, like Gippius, were known for using symbols to represent actual events, yet symbols can also convolute the meaning behind a work. An example of this can be seen in her poem "The Hour of Victory" (1918), where she meets an unidentifiable figure that sees her dreams in the midst of an ongoing battle. He threatens to "forge [her] rings of iron and of steel/ And permanently solder [her] inside them," but fails when she slaps him with his own glove, and he is revealed to just be a corpse.<sup>60</sup> The key symbol in this poem are the rings made of strong metals that represent permanence in captivity, while the unidentifiable figure represents the fears that threaten to trap her. The poem's turning point is the slap when power returns to her. This piece reflects her slow acceptance of her fate and revisits the idea that she feels best when she is in control. While this poem is not impossible to understand, it does take more critical thinking than a straightforward realist piece.

Alternatively, realism was another aesthetic used by the older generation of émigrés. Since realism originated in the nineteenth century, its use further

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<sup>56</sup> Gippius, *Between Paris and St. Petersburg*, 191.

<sup>57</sup> Berberova, *Italics Are Mine*, 270.

<sup>58</sup> Dienes, *Russian Literature in Exile*, 34.

<sup>59</sup> Dienes, *Russian Literature in Exile*, 38.

<sup>60</sup> Zinaida Gippius, "The Hour of Victory" (1918), trans. Simon Karlinsky, *RuVerses*, [online](#).

emphasized the desire to remain in and preserve the past. It is then fitting that Ivan Bunin was a major exponent of realist literature as he used it to stress honesty through the depiction of mundane events. For example, in his short story "The Calf's Head" (1930), Bunin sketches the perspective of a young boy going with his mother into a butcher's shop to buy half a calf's head for dinner.<sup>61</sup> Bunin uses disturbingly realistic descriptions of the calf's head being cut in two, as juxtaposed with the innocence of the boy's grand imagery of a dinner table, to depict the reality of the situation from two different perspectives. One complaint that the younger authors had against émigré realism was how a realist writer, such as Bunin, could write using themes of nostalgia when referring to a country that no longer existed.<sup>62</sup> It is then ironic that Bunin, who prided himself for his honesty, would deny so much of reality and remain stuck in the past.

In response to this, modernism was climbing in popularity during the Interwar period, supposedly leaving realism behind in the nineteenth century. Modernism's main goal was to break away from traditional aesthetics, like realism. This could range from an extreme of more abstract pieces altogether to first-person narratives that were still honest but did not focus on an entire landscape. They were, rather, a single-perspective portrayal. Within the émigré community, the main figures representing modernism were Remizov and Gazdanov. It is fitting that they were the ones involved, since the modernist movement emphasized individual freedom, and Gazdanov especially strove to be unique in every way; when *An Evening with Claire* was published, Gazdanov was even compared to Proust. The novel was praised because Gazdanov did not emphasize the stories he told but, rather, focused on how they affected the narrator and the narrator's reactions to them.<sup>63</sup> This was a nuanced concept that, once again, set Gazdanov apart within the émigré community.

Remizov practiced his modernist individuality by writing for himself.<sup>64</sup> Remizov may have been criticized for this idea, but that was a common effect of the modernist style. In his story "Russia in the Whirlwind" (1927), Remizov manifests his off-center writing through an ape constitution and manifesto of the *Obezvelvolpal*, or the "simian-grand-and-free-order." Closely resembling the communist documents back in Russia, this abstract piece utilizes Remizov's political freedom from censorship through lines like "poisoners who claim to be answering an altruistic call" cannot tolerate those who struggle with the new order in the "frank and bold simian kingdom."<sup>65</sup> He uses apes to show the primal ideologies prevalent in Soviet society, one example being their ironic lack of tolerance for those who oppose change, considering the ape's selfless motives.

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<sup>61</sup> Ivan Bunin, "The Calf's Head," in Bunin, *Night of Denial*, 328–239.

<sup>62</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 542.

<sup>63</sup> Dienes, *Russian Literature in Exile*, 74.

<sup>64</sup> Slobin, *Russians Abroad*, 185.

<sup>65</sup> Alexei Remizov, "Russia in the Whirlwind," in Remizov, *Selected Prose*, 136.

The generational divide seemed to form a deep chasm, with different writing styles appealing to different audiences, and money issues that appeared to be never ending, but this was just what the movement needed. For members of the older generation not to undermine themselves, they needed their younger colleagues' ideas and flavors. Modernism brought new attention to the émigrés, and poverty bonded them with other émigrés who were forced to be seamstresses and taxi drivers. Other exiles looked to the authors as examples of how to deal with the hardships they were facing while blending these feelings with the mission.

### *III. Coping with Loss through Literature*

Through analyzing their literature, one can detect underlying and variable aspects of the émigrés' comportment that they were unable to control, such as insecurity and fear. This is best seen through an analysis of their grieving process, as displayed in their writing. It has been noted in mental health research on diaspora that migration tends to aggravate pre-existing identity problems, meaning that whatever had caused the émigrés insecurity before was heightened now.<sup>66</sup> This called for different coping mechanisms to come into play to help the authors deal with the immense grieving they were experiencing, such as religion, philosophy of death, remembrance, and humor. These characteristics of the émigrés' literature were not part of the mission, but they deeply influenced the perceptions of émigrés that will be discussed later in this article.

Religion, specifically Russian Orthodoxy, was used by many émigrés as a mediator to help them understand their unbelievable circumstances, but also as a means of skepticism toward a faith that could not protect them from loss. Gippius was the most prominent believer among the émigré authors, and this shows frequently throughout her writing. God was the arbiter between her and the Bolsheviks, as seen in her poem "I'll not go from the door..." (1926), where she pleads with God to bring Russia back to her. This refers to a verse from the Gospel of St. Matthew where Jesus tells the people "keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you...And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."<sup>67</sup> In response, Gippius begs for Russia to be resurrected with such a passion that when she knocks "the hinges shake." She is determined to "knock until Thou [i.e., God] givest answer."<sup>68</sup> Gippius uses scripture to console herself; her passion and desperation honor the respect she has for God and her hope in the restoration of her Russian life. Even though God does not seem to answer, she has full faith that he will provide what she asks.

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<sup>66</sup> Moritz E. Wigand, Hauke F. Wiegand, Ertan Altintas, Markus Jäger, and Thomas Becker, "Migration, Identity, and Threatened Mental Health: Examples from Contemporary Fiction," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 56, no. 5 (2019): 1076–1093, here 1080.

<sup>67</sup> Matthew 7:7-8 (New International Version).

<sup>68</sup> Zinaida Gippius, "I'll Not Go from the Door" (1926), trans. Simon Karlinsky, lines 4–8, *RuVerses*, [online](#).

Other authors use religious themes in the opposite way and show how they resent the authority of God; in fact, after the Revolution they trust no one. Remizov's "Zga-Divine Judgement" (1925) follows a monk, Father Ilarion, who meets a young man with a predicament: whether to marry the woman to whom he is betrothed or to stay with the woman he has a child with.<sup>69</sup> Father Ilarion instinctively tells him to stay with his child but is soon compelled to tell the man to consult with God above all else. They follow the supposed sign that God gives them, and the man leaves to go marry his fiancée instead. Father Ilarion is then racked with guilt, feeling like the man should have gone with his original advice. The monk finally goes insane and abandons his faith to wander in the wilderness. This story suggests that Remizov viewed God's guidance as untrustworthy and struggled with his faith after the Revolution.<sup>70</sup>

As the authors were beginning to accept their relocation, they had to understand the reality and meaning of the death of their home. Many of them processed this through their literature, for example by directly mourning the death of Russia itself. Teffi poetically announced her mourning in her piece "Before a Map of Russia" (1920). This poem depicts a portrait of Russia as a "strange house, in a far-away land."<sup>71</sup> Teffi further confronts her sorrow for Russia and compares its death to that of a close relative. Russia has been a part of her, and now, in her grieving, she fears forgetting it, yet she cannot help but continue the process.

Personifying the death of Russia was also common, as authors would make sense of its demise through the passing of individuals in their stories and novels. Berberova's *The Book of Happiness* (1936) and Gazdanov's short story "Black Swans" (1930), for example, each present different philosophies on how to approach death. *The Book of Happiness* depicts how happiness evolves through the death of past happiness. Berberova shows this through the main character, Vera, who experiences three different kinds of romantic pursuits in life. The first is a childhood love that passes away, representing the naïve expectation of life dying as one enters adulthood. The second is a disabled husband who dies and sets her free from never-ending responsibility, showing the flow of hardships in life soon coming to an end. The final love is real and brings her true happiness, unlike the first, superficial one and the second that had trapped her. In this final love, one can see Berberova's faith in and acceptance of her fate based on hope for something better to come.<sup>72</sup> Pavlov, the main character in Gazdanov's "Black Swans," holds

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<sup>69</sup> Alexei Remizov, "Zga-Divine Judgement," in Remizov, *Selected Prose*, 121–133.

<sup>70</sup> See also Ivan Bunin, "Mad Artist," in Bunin, *Night of Denial: Stories and Novellas*, 283–294. This apocalyptic piece shows that Bunin was in constant anticipation for something worse to come.

<sup>71</sup> Teffi, "Before a Map of Russia," trans. Robert Chandler, *RuVerses*, [online](#).

<sup>72</sup> Nina Berberova, *The Book of Happiness*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New York: New Directions, 1999).

a pessimist view of life in an optimist format.<sup>73</sup> Everything in his life has led him to the point of suicide, even though he is an objectively good and fulfilled person. This is different from *The Book of Happiness*, where each moment leads Vera to true happiness. Pavlov simply claims that he has thought a lot about how this is his fate, and that he must fulfill it. What "Black Swans" shows is the control associated with suicide. Similar to Gippius, other émigrés struggled with their apparent lack of control, and the character of Pavlov is no different. Where the *Book of Happiness* embraces the spontaneity of death and its ushering in of new beginnings, "Black Swans" takes death into its own hands and controls the end of the narrative.

Ivan Bunin shares his understanding of death in his story "On the Night Sea" (1923), which looks at a conversation between two individuals who discuss the death of a common lover they each knew at different times.<sup>74</sup> They conclude that they only mourn the idea of who the woman was when they knew her, not who she was when she died. This suggests how fervent Bunin was in remembering Russia strictly for what it had been, and how he would always mourn Russia's death accordingly.

Opposed to mourning the death of their national identity, some authors denied Russia's death by revitalizing it through nostalgia.<sup>75</sup> Teffi comments on this form of denial in her aforementioned piece "Que Faire?" (1923). She discusses the compulsive efforts of the "sellers" and "saviors" of Russia. The "sellers" are those attempting to keep the memory alive through Russian dinners and pursuing elitist lives abroad. The "saviors" are those who are adamant about solving the problem and going back to Russia. Both are in denial, but in different ways, and the imperative need for nostalgia is the only thing that keeps them going.

Teffi infuses her nostalgic literature with humor and irony. As mental health experts have claimed, the ability to invoke humor in light of one's circumstances indicates an effective coping mechanism.<sup>76</sup> For Teffi to be able to not just indicate and voice her emotional trauma, but to also humorize the situation, shows that she is progressing in a healthy manner.<sup>77</sup> This is best seen in her short story "My First Tolstoy" (1920), in which she recalls a time in her childhood when she visited the famous Leo Tolstoy to convince him to change the ending of her favorite book, *War and Peace*. She unfortunately fumbles over her words before she even makes her request and asks him to "pwease sign [his] photogwaph" first.<sup>78</sup> Because of this mortifying moment, she decides to accept the novel's ending and to no longer

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<sup>73</sup> Gaito Gazdanov, "Black Swans," trans. Bryan Karetnyk, *Cardinal Points Literary Journal* 6 (2016): 30-46.

<sup>74</sup> Ivan Bunin, "On the Night Sea," in Bunin, *Night of Denial*, 29-38.

<sup>75</sup> Teffi, "Que Faire?" 141.

<sup>76</sup> Wigand et al., "Migration, Identity, and Threatened Mental Health," 1081.

<sup>77</sup> This is ironic because Teffi's grieving for Russia was so great that she struggled with chronic respiratory health issues for the majority of the 1920s. Haber, *Teffi*, 114.

<sup>78</sup> Teffi, "My First Tolstoy," in Teffi, *Subtly Worded and Other Stories*, 163.

protest its conclusion. The irony rests in her initial passion for the novel—she would read it once a week with zealous desperation for the plot to change—followed by a juvenile indiscretion stealing all of her youthful joy and maturing her opinion on the ending of the book. At the same time, the story highlights the epitome of modern Russian literary culture, Leo Tolstoy, and shows how Teffi combines the controlled perception of nostalgia with the emotional side of grieving to create a style that is distinctly her own.

These coping mechanisms brought humanity to the émigrés' writing. They were not alone in their focus on suffering, as a post-World War I society ushered in conversation topics like death and nostalgia to both French and English culture. This dichotomy of humanity displayed in the émigrés pieces is just what connected them with their international readers and brought them popularity.

#### IV. Attitudes toward the Literature

To assess the success of the émigré mission, it is helpful to consider public attitudes toward their literature from both the émigrés themselves, as well as from the French and the English. The émigrés' freedom and honesty was not confined to their published literature. In their memoirs, diaries, literary criticisms, and interviews, they openly shared their opinions of their fellow authors' works. Gippius was a major émigré critic during this time, and as she was close with Bunin, she also "critiqued" his work. Both Bunin and Gippius were seriously invested in the mission mentality, so Gippius praised Bunin's work to draw the focus away from more contemporary writers. She claimed that Bunin's obsession with nostalgia was merely him "transforming it into graphic representations of contemporary life," merging it with the present times.<sup>79</sup> In other reviews, Gippius came off as harsh and domineering, putting everyone in their place—except when it came to Bunin. This reflects the social hierarchy within the émigré community that was based on popularity, aesthetic favoritism, and devotion to the mission.

Internationally, there were still assumptions from the first wave of emigration that Russians were barbaric and unable to govern themselves, however second-wave émigré literature came to change that.<sup>80</sup> Due to the language barrier in émigré writing, individuals who were not Russian-literate were only exposed to émigré literature once it had been translated to their own languages. The most popular and beloved pieces from the émigré community were usually the ones selected for translation. As a result of these translated works, the French were able to catch on, and a reviewer in the *Gazette de Lausanne* respected Remizov for assisting in the French understanding of the Russian spirit; in fact, the reviewer claimed that "one cannot deny, of course, the influence of the Russian novel on the

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<sup>79</sup> Pachmuss, "Ivan Bunin," 349.

<sup>80</sup> Carol Peaker, "We are not Barbarians: Literature and the Russian Émigré Press in England, 1890-1905," *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 19, no. 3 (2006): 1-18, here 1.

contemporary French novel."<sup>81</sup> As Remizov was a modernist in the cultural capital of the world, where modernism was thriving, this was high praise for his work, showing that combining Russian and contemporary culture was received well.

An English journal, *The Nineteenth Century Review and After*, also discussed this Russian spirit: C. Hagberg Wright's 1921 essay, "The Spirit of Russia," reflects on what it meant to be Russian after the Revolution—specifically for those abroad, looks into the communities that the émigrés formed, and notes their social structures as they were headed by elites. Hagberg Wright states that "Russian literature" is the "voice of Russian suffering," that "their faith in [a better] future is unshaken," and that "they show themselves convinced that the present miseries are but trials which should prepare the Russian people for it."<sup>82</sup> This essay shows that other nations also recognized the mission's basic assumption that exile was not permanent. The essay's title references the spirit that is discussed throughout, specifically, the Russian identity. While the essay merely acknowledges the émigrés' suffering, the empathy provided throughout is helpful, considering that, according to Gippius, England had been "giving aid to the Bolsheviks" around the same time this essay was published.<sup>83</sup>

In the London *Times*, journalist Stephen Graham highlighted the émigré literature by publishing a short series on "Russian Writers in Exile," including interviews with Alexei Remizov and Ivan Bunin. In Remizov's interview, Graham comments on the author's use of language, arguing that his works are "almost impossible to translate" because he uses the peasantry's language in his folkloric depictions of Russia. Graham's piece notes Remizov's artistic individuality when it describes the decorations in his house as resembling the depths of the sea. Remizov's response that "he liked to feel at the bottom of the ocean when he wrote,"<sup>84</sup> exhibits the abstract nature that can be detected in his writing, as well as his dedication to the Russian peasantry. Through his interests Remizov showed that, despite his generational identity, he chose to combine his interests in modernist literature with his devotion to preserving Russian language, as he was one of the few members of the older generation who accepted partial assimilation.

In Bunin's interview, Graham discussed the concept of an émigré's ability to write Russian literature abroad. Bunin argued that "one can write as well in exile as at home."<sup>85</sup> Similar to Gippius's comment earlier, Bunin addressed the contradictory English bias toward the new Soviet government, showing that while

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<sup>81</sup> Emmanuel Buenzod, "Alexi Remizov," *Gazette de Lausanne*, December 29, 1929: "On ne peut pas nier, certes, l'influence du roman russe sur le roman français contemporain." Unless otherwise noted, all French-to-English translations are provided by myself.

<sup>82</sup> C. Hagberg Wright, "The Spirit of Russia," *The Nineteenth Century and After* 90, no. 538 (1921): 1052-1062, here 1060.

<sup>83</sup> Gippius, *Between Paris and St. Petersburg*, 203.

<sup>84</sup> Stephen Graham, "Russian Writers in Exile: Alexey Remizof," *Times*, April 28, 1925, 17.

<sup>85</sup> Graham, "Russian Writers in Exile: Ivan Bunin," 17.



they sympathized with the émigrés and praised their works, the English refused to fully support the émigré cause. Fortunately, Bunin's snarky remarks went unnoticed compared to the popularity of his translated works, particularly "The Gentleman from San Francisco," which was originally published in Russian in 1915. The *Times* raved over the translated work for its comic wit and honest portrayal of human behavior, which was true to Bunin's realist style.<sup>86</sup>

Other ways in which the international community shared their views on émigrés was through characterizations in mainstream literary press outlets. In 1922, a review on a French pamphlet for the Russian Revolution was published in *La Revue de Paris* under the title "La Révolution Russe, Essais d'Analyse." Its main point was, "whether or not they take sides in the quarrels between Russians who were also exiled, the French public cannot fail to read with interest the account of these events whose influence was so significant."<sup>87</sup> Despite French indifference—due to fatigue from an overload of news on world events, the review's author requests compassion for their common suffering, comments on the interest the French have for the exiled Russians, and calls for the exposure of the truths of their deracination through this pamphlet.

In the early 1920s, *The London Magazine* published its own interpretations of the Russians in exile in John Buchan's series "Huntingtower." An excerpt that best reflects the English interpretation of these Russians features the interaction between an exiled Russian princess, Saskia, and a nobleman, Sir Archie. Sir Archie asks Saskia for her opinions on Bolshevism so he can better understand it, but she replies that she "cannot make anyone understand—except a Russian."<sup>88</sup> Throughout the series, Saskia is described in terms of a mystery that needs to be explored, which Buchan chooses to do romantically. Prior to this encounter, the main characters, Dickinson and McCunn, have heard "someone in Huntingtower" singing, and McCunn declares that he is going to search for the singer as it is the "voice of the girl I saw in Rome, and it is singing her song."<sup>89</sup> This scene's language is important: it objectifies Saskia to a voice since they never say her name; they just describe aspects of her. The argument that one cannot understand without being Russian acknowledges the émigrés' practiced exclusivity, yet romanticizing the princess removes any potential empathy since it takes advantage of her exoticism instead, making this, once again, only a partial win.

In addition to such casual acknowledgements of the émigrés' mission efforts, formal international recognition played a significant role in determining the success of the émigrés' endeavors, as evidenced by Ivan Bunin receiving the Nobel

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<sup>86</sup> "Ivan Bunin" *Times*, May 17, 1922, 16.

<sup>87</sup> "La Révolution Russe, Essais d'Analyse," *La Revue de Paris* 173, no. 21 (1922): 1: "Qu'il prenne ou non parti dans les querelles entre Russes également exilés, le public français ne peut manquer de lire avec intérêt le récit de ces événements dont l'influence a été si considérable."

<sup>88</sup> John Buchan, "Huntingtower," *The London Magazine* 48 (1922): 195.

<sup>89</sup> John Buchan, "Huntingtower," *The London Magazine* 47 (1921-1922): 503.

Prize in Literature in 1933. This event was publicized everywhere and brought the émigré community much attention. In the French press, the *Journal de Genève* stated that "Ivan Bunin is certainly the best of the contemporary Russian writers."<sup>90</sup> The *Times* also announced it, showing that this was popular and exciting news.<sup>91</sup> The importance of this win harkens back to the Interwar period's divide in Russian publications between émigré and Soviet authors. Bunin's win was crucial because it affirmed that the projected émigré identity, best exemplified through his work, was endorsed internationally as opposed to the Soviet one. Bunin received praise in émigré newspaper reviews that celebrated their pride in being Russian, specifically, "exiled" Russian.<sup>92</sup> Bunin's win gave the émigré community hope in the preservation of Russian culture for when they would return because of the affirmation abroad of their mission efforts. The examination of international and communal attitudes shows that external communities were able to acknowledge the difference between controlled and uncontrolled projections of Russian literature, and the latter were, undoubtedly, a success.

### *Conclusion*

When they had first arrived in Paris, the exiles had asked themselves what it meant to be an émigré. On the eve of World War II, they realized that it was exactly what the younger generation had projected it to be. Their split identity of not belonging to any one place geographically but, rather, as a conglomerate of different cultures and memories established their identity as a *mélange*. However, as has been discussed, some authors accepted this reality sooner than others.

It is this merged identity – between the projected mission and the understood exile – that was conveyed to the public. Thus, while the émigrés' mission was successful, there were elements of their perception that were beyond their control and came naturally with grieving and other aspects of humanity. Whether it was their obsessive nostalgia or their dark themes of death and mourning, the émigrés wore their hearts on their sleeves. Even Gazdanov, who was known for his stoicism and aloofness in the émigré community, showed his grieving – whether intentionally or unintentionally – in his writings.

Learning about the partial assimilation of a culture that has sought shelter continues to be relevant today. Over the past two decades, the world has witnessed numerous incidents of migration and immigration, such as Latin Americans fleeing to the United States and the Ukrainian refugee crisis, and the receiving countries need to understand what is at stake for these individuals.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> "Echos: Ivan Bounine, prix Nobel de littérature," *Journal de Genève*, November 14, 1933: "Ivan Bounine est certainement le plus grand de écrivans russes contemporains."

<sup>91</sup> From Our Stockholm Correspondent, "Nobel Prize in Physics," *Times*, November 10, 1933, 13.

<sup>92</sup> Bunin, *From the Other Shore*, 283.

<sup>93</sup> The Ukrainian refugee crisis started when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and peaked again in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine. It has led many Ukrainians to flee to nearby countries, some

These immigrants may not be trying to preserve their national identity quite as strictly as the Russians were, but their culture is still a large part of who they are, and the receiving countries need to understand the consequences of forced assimilation.

As the older generation of Russian émigré authors in Paris passed on, there was sorrow within the community as it made their relocation feel more permanent. Bunin's wife, Vera, recalled a feeling that they were "burying old Russia" with each passing.<sup>94</sup> Fortunately, the end of the Soviet era allowed historians to revisit Russian history more comfortably, literature and all, and preserve it through archives and museums. While most émigrés were never able to return to their homeland, they did manage to keep their culture alive through memory and publications. One may not be able to visit now and see the traditional Russia they knew and fought so fiercely to remember, but that is true of any society. Generations die off while their stories live on. What makes each story unique is the means by which humans preserve even the tiniest facets of their culture and how they maintain these facets even while living abroad. It really verifies the cliché that home is not a place, it is a people.

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as far as the United States. The migration from Latin America to the United States started in the 1980s when local governments grew increasingly corrupt. Some of these governments still have corrupt police forces with a history of murder, exploitation, and civilian disappearances. Other causes of this migration are unemployment and immense poverty.

<sup>94</sup> Rappaport, *After the Romanovs*, 208.