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Vladislav Rjéoutski and Alexandre Tchoudinov, eds. *Le Précepteur Francophone en Europe XVII^e – XIX^e siècles*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013. pp427 + 26, ISBN :978-2-343-00200-2; EAN 9782343002002

Le Précepteur Francophone en Europe XVIIe – XIXe siècles opens with Roger Chartier's remark that 'in eighteenth century cultural life, the figure of the 'Précepteur'¹ is everywhere', and takes this remark to argue that the formation, evolution and culture of European elites cannot be understood without examining who educated them and how. All employed private tutors, these 'mercenaires de l'éducation'.

The book is a collection of articles all considering the francophone tutor in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Central and Western Europe, and Russia. It is fascinating because it highlights both the necessity for the francophone tutor, and the contradictions his presence entailed. The book is structured in three partly overlapping sections: The first section contains articles examining francophone private tutors in Central and Western Europe: Bohemia, Poland, England and Italy. It closes with Jean Antoine Caravolas's article 'La contribution des précepteurs à l'avancement de la didactique des langues', discussing the contribution of private tutors to the progress of the pedagogy of language teaching. The articles in section II focus on Russia and discuss Francophone tutors in aristocratic and royal families from the eighteenth to the mid nineteenth centuries. The articles in section III focus on eight different Francophone tutors, exploring their specific relations to Russia, in particular their role as cultural intermediaries in the age of Enlightenment.

The position of private tutor was paradoxical in a number of ways. On one hand, he was highly valued because the elites wanted their children to know French, on the other he could be vilified as an educational impostor, and even represented as an enemy of the nation. Elite and wealthy families usually had their sons taught at home by tutors who were in charge of forming their character and their manners as well as their mind. The most erudite were entrusted by parents with the responsibility of accompanying sons on their Grand Tour, which had become an intrinsic part of education in eighteenth-century Russian families.

However, foreign tutors were also disparaged in a variety of ways. At the time nationalist feelings were emerging in various European countries, private tutors could be a conduit for nationalist sentiments and xenophobia. How could foreigners possibly instil love for their country to their young charges, critics asked. In mid-eighteenth century, the Russian government began to be suspicious of private tutors because they were educating the nobility yet it knew nothing about what they taught. The authorities tried to control this teaching, but as private tutors were dispersed through many families, failed. Even though formal teacher training did not yet exist, Francophone tutors could also be vilified for being poorly trained, not

¹ Although private tutor might not translate all that 'Précepteur' means, I choose to use it because 'preceptor' is less used in England, and might convey a narrower meaning than the ones intended by the various articles in the book. All translations from the French are mine.

'professionals' (121). At the same time, paradoxically, whether trained to teach French or not, Francophone preceptors were often expected to teach additional subjects, from writing, spelling, sacred and secular history, mathematics, philosophy, Law, to sciences, architecture and conversation. In fact, most of the tutors discussed in the various chapters were often highly educated, and as Manuela Böhm points out, a number of brilliant eighteenth-century men of letters such as Bayle, Kant and Schlegel started their career as private tutors. Critics also claimed, as did Franz Joseph Count of Kinsky in 1770s Bohemia, that there were more foreign than native tutors. These claims, which could trigger a moral panic, were usually unfounded but they did have consequences. Olga Solodiankina's article 'Les précepteurs français parmi les autres éducateurs étrangers en Russie vers 1820-1850', details how by mid-nineteenth century, francophone tutors in Russia were subjected to increasingly complicated controls and procedures, from needing to produce passports, references, proof from a Russian University of being educated to university level, to signing declarations that they did not and would not belong to secret societies and attract pupils to a different religion. These measures limited access to the profession, eventually leading to a substantial decrease in numbers of private tutors. Yet, what mattered most about tutors was not their competence in teaching language but their character, and their ability to educate boys according to their rank, 'je formerai leur coeur et leur enseignerai l'obéissance. Je leur enseignerai comment doit se comporter un noble'² (129), wrote Maugues Desessart in his contract to tutor Brigadier Ivan Mikhaïlovitch's two sons, in 1765.

To attain this goal, tutors were expected to devote their life to their pupils and spend all their time with them. The constant attendance of the tutor fostered the development of deep emotional relationships. Some pupils were very fond of their tutors. One of the best example is the relationship between Frédéric-César de La Harpe and his pupil the Grand Duke Alexander, future Alexander Ist of Russia, described in Marie-Pierre Rey's article, 'La Harpe éducateur du futur Alexandre I^{er}'. During the ten years of his tenure, La Harpe sought to instruct the child in principles of the highest morality as well as knowledge. He aimed to shape the future ruler into an 'honnête homme' and an enlightened citizen (263). Hired to teach Alexander French, La Harpe extended the curriculum to include especially ancient history and classical authors and inculcate a virtuous practice of power respecting law and morality. Certain aspects of this education displeased Alexander's grandmother Catherine II who had originally hired La Harpe, and she dismissed him. Rey includes a letter Alexander wrote his mother, showing his distress at the loss of his tutor, and one he wrote directly to La Harpe addressing him as 'cher ami' (268). (Once on the throne, Alexander put in place measures such as the abolition of torture, which are directly influenced by the education his tutor imparted. Other pupils, Leon Tolstoy for example, felt not love but profound dislike and resented the tutor's constant presence experiencing it as surveillance. Tolstoy's description of the partly fictionalised tutor in *Adolescence* conveys the repulsion he feels for him. Yet, Prosper Saint Thomas, Tolstoy's real tutor, a well educated man with a degree in the teaching of French, had taught Tolstoy so well that he later obtained the highest grade in French at the University of Kazan.

² I will cultivate their heart and will teach them to obey. I will teach them how to behave as noblemen.

Despite young Tolstoy's resistance to learning, Saint Thomas had also noticed his potential, saying about him that '*ce petit a une tête. C'est un petit Molière*'³ (230). Tolstoy is not unique. Home educated Alexander Pushkin and Ivan Turgenev also wrote about private education, Pushkin to denounce it virulently as 'inadequate and immoral' (154) and Turgenev to satirize the Rousseau-influenced education he received from his tutor. These writings by great authors provide unique insights into the relationship between tutor and pupil. That they chose to write about their tutors in later life also shows how lasting the influence or image of the tutor could be. One of the most interesting aspects of the book is that it discusses not just the position of francophone tutors in Europe, but their pedagogical philosophies, curricula, and their methods – often innovative – for teaching language. In chapter I.5, Caravolas argues that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *précepteurs* and language teachers instigated enormous changes in methods, textbooks and training of language teachers, enriching the didactic of language teaching. A number of subsequent chapters illustrate this comment. Jacques Égide du Han de Jandun was nominated as tutor to Frederic II by his father, Frederic I of Prussia. Böhm describes the breadth of this education in her chapter 'Huguenots Précepteurs du Prince Frédéric – Frédéric II *praeceptor Germaniae*'. It included reading the classics in French as well as the French philosophers Descartes, Bayle, Malebranche, Fénelon. Frederic even wrote variations on Horace in French in order to develop his style. Once on the throne, he developed a state system of education where he introduced key elements of Du Han's intellectual education. Such was the relationship between Du Han and Frederic that Frederic himself wrote the eulogy that was to be read at Du Han's death. The sophisticated method for teaching reading Jean Baptiste Mandru developed is described in detail in Kriajeva's chapter 'Jean Baptiste Mandru, partisan ordinaire de la grammaire générale et de la pédagogie des Lumières'. Mandru had a remarkably modern approach to teaching reading, based on '*la nature même des sons*' (409), that is on phonetics. Mandru's system was noticed by Catherine II who ordered his books to be used in Russian educational institutions. The chapters discussing various tutors' biographies show that the francophone tutors were deeply engaged not just with their pupils but with Russia itself. For example, Nicolas-Gabriel Le Clerc, in Vladimir Somov's article, 'Nicolas-Gabriel Le Clerc, le héraut des réformes pédagogiques de Catherine II', is discussed not for his activities as a tutor so much as for his dissemination to the wider world of the pedagogic reforms introduced by Catherine II, thereby presenting a flattering image of an Empress desirous to 'civilise' her country. He also wrote a major 25 part treatise about educational establishments in Russia, where he explains in much detail the education of young nobles from the age of five to eighteen. Trained as a physician, he was elected foreign member of the Imperial Academy of sciences. Contrary to the literature on private teaching in England, where governesses have been the subject of much scholarly work, there is little in this book about francophone governesses, especially in the eighteenth century. This is attributable, the editors argue, to the slow development of girls' education in Russia. However, although women constituted up to 50% of foreign tutors in the 1840s (14), apart

³ This kid has a good head. He is a little Molière.

from mentions in Olga Solodiankina and Alla Polossina's articles, the book's main focus is on male tutors.

That said, this book is a rich study which makes a significant contribution to knowledge about Russia as well as teaching French in geographical areas about which lack of linguistic knowledge often means lack of access to fascinating sources, especially family archives in Russian or German. The book is an excellent resource for historians as well as language teachers and historians of education. It also points to the need for systematic and comprehensive studies of private tutors to boys in elite British and French families in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.