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Intertextuality in Exile: the fusion of French and  
Russian language and literature in the works of Gaito  
Gazdanov

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**Melissa Purkiss, Wolfson College, Trinity Term 2018**

**D.PHIL SHORT ABSTRACT**

**Intertextuality in Exile: the fusion of French and Russian language and literature in the works of Gaito Gazdanov**

My thesis considers the works of Gaito Gazdanov (1903-1971) and analyses his engagement with a transnational range of predecessors and contemporaries. In foregrounding Gazdanov's intertextual practice as a crucial element of his creative process, I demonstrate his deliberate cultivation of a (primarily, but not exclusively) Franco-Russian canon as a means of fashioning an identity as an exilic writer. My method draws flexibly on different theories of intertextuality (Kristeva, Barthes, Culler, Taranovskii) and aligns them with Russian Formalist theories of the literary process as unfolding through imitation, struggle and parody. Gazdanov's influences are situated according to four distinct axes: a Russian nineteenth-century tradition, European (principally French) modernism, early Soviet writing, and the works of émigré contemporaries of the younger generation. Each of the four cases articulates a different iteration of intertextuality: typological transpositions of Russian classical novels, the impact of Proust as a cultural institution in interwar Paris, an interest in 'Babel' as a Russian author mediating the non-Russian influence of Maupassant, and a mutual dialogue with Nabokov as a fellow émigré playing with canonical Russian influences. I am interested in intertextuality as a means of understanding how Gazdanov and other émigré writers aligned themselves with established literary canons, and simultaneously struggled against them in search of their own voice. What emerges from my enquiry is literature representing a multilingual, heterotopic form of identity that resists rigidly national canons.

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**D.PHIL LONG ABSTRACT**  
**Intertextuality in Exile: the fusion of French and Russian language and literature in the works of Gaito Gazdanov**

Gaito Gazdanov (1903-1971) is a writer of the younger, so-called “unnoticed” generation of the first-wave of Russian émigrés. Although his works have generally received less attention than those of a contemporary such as Nabokov, they have recently benefitted from a growing interest in the study of Russia Abroad, alongside works of émigré colleagues such as Ianovskii and Berberova and the centenary of the 1917 Revolution. A growing number of translations, as well as a recent article on his “globalism” by Peter Pomerantsev in *The American Interest*, attest to Gazdanov’s current rediscovery, particularly in an anglophone context.

Although there is an expanding field of critical writing on Gazdanov, initiated by László Dienes’ 1982 study of his life and works, criticism has tended to take general themes, such as poetics (Kabaloti, 1998) or existentialism (Kibal’nik, 2011), with literary borrowings generally being noted as secondary to this focus. This does not mean that they have been ignored: several anthologies have sought to uncover individual instances of Gazdanov’s engagement with a combination of Russian and foreign literary influences, although this has resulted in many individual comparative considerations of single works. Certain existing comparative approaches to Gazdanov’s works have taken specific angles, considering overlaps in plot and character (Proskurina, 2009), or indeed parallels with the author’s own life. Whilst such approaches are not invalid, they give a limited and somewhat repetitive impression of Gazdanov’s approach to intertextuality.

The original aim of my thesis, then, lies in its foregrounding of Gazdanov’s intertextual practice as a crucial aspect of his creative process, which must be understood not just on the level of isolated one-on-one source study, but rather in an overarching and flexible

manner. I take a non-chronological approach, instead structuring the discussion according to the four principal branches of “transcultural discourse” I perceive to be coinciding in his works: a Russian nineteenth-century tradition, European (principally French) modernism, early Soviet writing, and the works of younger-generation émigré contemporaries. Through this approach, one gains a clear sense of Gazdanov’s cultivation of a diverse framework of authors and works, whereby certain “strands” unite separate chapters, such as that of the “first love” theme and its various iterations by Gazdanov, Turgenev, Babel’, Nabokov, and Fel’zen.

I am interested in intertextuality as a means of explaining how Gazdanov and émigré writers aligned themselves with existing literary canons and also struggled with them in search of their own complex voice. I also emphasise, where relevant, the function of multilingualism in Gazdanov’s writing. Gazdanov’s hybrid language has often been understood as an expression of his quotidian reality and has not been granted adequate prominence in nascent discussions of his “transculturalism”. I draw attention to the conceptual coherence between Gazdanov’s blending of foreign influences, and other typically problematic processes of transposition such as translation and parody.

Engaging with more recent discussions about the applicability of the discourse of literary transnationalism to the writers of Russian Montparnasse in the process of my own enquiry, I aim to demonstrate that Gazdanov’s case is no less worthy of discussion than a more famous contemporary such as Nabokov, who has received much greater attention, thanks to his migration into English. In this respect, my thesis also engages with and challenges larger debates regarding the power of Paris as an international capital with a cultural cachet, or the power of English as an avenue not only to publishing prospects but to a largescale readership.

In the introduction, I outline my method, and consider the relevance of theories of

“intertextuality” to the particular case of Gazdanov’s conscious engagement with a range of influences. I then focus briefly as an introductory case study on Gazdanov’s most popular work, *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol’fa* (1947) as a response to Pushkin. Pushkin is important because he stands as the progenitor of the Russian tradition, but here is not dealt with singularly, and interacts with non-Russian figures such as Edgar Allen Poe. *Prizrak* thus serves as an extremely good working example of the approach I take throughout the wider thesis. I consider its dialogue with “Vystrel” (which has already been noted), but also move away from this to consider the broader collection of *Povesti Belkina* and its portrayal of narrative as circuitously mediated through multiple linguistic hoops. The discussion of Pushkin here also permits for a discussion of *francophonie* in the Russian tradition, a topic which as I have noted has thus far received very little serious consideration in Gazdanov scholarship.

In the first chapter, I discuss *Polet* (1939) and *Vozvrashchenie buddy* (1949), exploring Gazdanov’s two very different modes of intertextual inscription. In *Polet* I argue that it is a transposition from a prominent nineteenth-century subtext (Turgenev’s *Pervaia liubov’* (1860)), which is inflected with tropes from other Russian classical works such as Tolstoi’s *Anna Karenina* (1877) or Chekhov’s *Chaika* (1895). In my discussion of *Vozvrashchenie buddy* I employ the model of *poligenetichnost’* to consider the novel not as a transposition of a single intertext, but rather as a complex and hybrid intersection of Russian nineteenth-century works mediated and fragmented through coeval émigré works, as well as twentieth-century European literature. I also employ the short story “Kniazhna Meri” to consider Gazdanov’s subversive engagement with Lermontov. The four broad areas of enquiry are adultery and incest plots, the homosocial connotations of *preemstvennost’* or succession, the interaction between gender and language, and the function of the cityscape. This chapter builds on existing discussions of Gazdanov’s engagement with Russian classical

stimuli, but takes a wider approach to his engagement with that tradition in order to avoid text for text comparison.

Like many members of the younger generation, Gazdanov was as influenced by French modernism as by the prerevolutionary Russian tradition. Discussion of his intersection with French letters has thus far largely been confined to readings of *Večer u Kler* (1929) as “Proustian”. In this chapter I build on the work of scholars such as Livak (2003) to assess the influence of Proust’s *Recherche* not in terms of sustained intertextual dialogue or typological plot borrowings, but as an example of the influence of a cultural institution or trend. I consider this question primarily through a reading of *Večer u Kler* to show that where in Proust bilingualism and translation are part of the novel’s discourse on class and society, for Gazdanov this bilingualism is actually situated within the radically different context of emigration. I then read *Nochnye dorogi* (1939-40) with reference to Céline’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932), considering the latter’s significance not just as a social realist writer, but also as an “anti-Proust”, and thus a means of overcoming or circumventing the Proustian categorisation.

In the third chapter, I turn to a well-known critical essay Gazdanov wrote early in his career, “Nekotorye zametki ob Edgare Po, Gogole, i Mopassane”, as a vehicle for understanding his attitude to the literary form that unites all three of its subjects. Gazdanov’s short stories have generally received much less attention than his novels, although they were published and written alongside one another, and one can chart the developments of certain motifs and ideas between them. Here, I use Eikhenbaum’s “O. Genri i teoriia novelly” as a model to consider the side-by-side evolution of certain themes and plots through the oscillation between the novel and short story forms within Gazdanov’s oeuvre. I also seize on the ephemerality of the émigré publishing conditions in order to discuss a hitherto unnoted epigraph (a line taken from an early version of Babel’s “Pervaia liubov”) that was ultimately

removed from later versions of the text), which appeared in the first serialised instalment of Gazdanov's *Nochnaia doroga*, and was itself also removed from the later, unified version of the text, *Nochnye dorogi*. Extrapolating from this minute and fleeting (but fascinating) instance of influence, I consider Babel's complex synthesis of Russian and non-Russian influences within his own works in order to reanimate and refresh what he saw as the stagnation of the Russian tradition.

First-wave émigrés were also engaged in significant self-reflection, as initiatives such as the *Studio franco-russe* indicate. In this chapter I build on existing efforts by scholars such as Rubins (2015) and Livak (2003) to chart intersections between Gazdanov and other members of the *nezamechennoe pokolenie*. My main focus in this chapter is Nabokov, with whom he was frequently compared at the start of their careers, although I also touch upon Iurii Fel'zen and Nina Berberova. Their radically different experiences of exile also anchor the discussion of language in the émigré context. Building on existing discussion of Gazdanov and Nabokov's "coded" literary dialogue by Leving and Kibal'nik, I seek to distinguish the precise layers and shifts involved in that back and forth. Again, I use comparisons of Nabokov and Gazdanov's works to demonstrate that their engagement with one another also provided an outlet for their engagement with a shared Russian canon, showing that Gazdanov in *Večer* builds on *Mashen'ka* not only as an earlier novella voicing a younger generation experience, but also mediating a similar range of nineteenth-century Russian influences. I then consider Nabokov's complex and playful response to Gazdanov's *Polet* (itself, as I have demonstrated, already a transposition of nineteenth- and twentieth-century intertexts). I explore the means by which his own alterations of language and genre have veiled this (and perhaps other) contributions to the dialogue. Finally, I consider the overlaps between the metaphysical and the metaliterary in both of their works.

By exploring the various modes and manifestations of Gazdanov's intertextuality side by side, this study is faithful to the flexible connections that he draws between a diverse range of authors and works. It combines detailed discussion of specific examples from Gazdanov's works with a broader reflection on the relationship between the intertextual and the extratextual. In doing so, my thesis seeks to offer a significant and timely contribution to current critical debates on the first wave, transnationalism, literary bilingualism, intertextuality and exile.



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## Introduction

Gaito Gazdanov (1903-1971) is a fascinating figure within the younger, so-called “unnoticed” generation of the first wave of Russian émigrés.<sup>1</sup> Born in St Petersburg of Ossetian origin, he (and his family) migrated across the Russian Empire for his father’s work as a forester throughout his childhood, spending periods in Siberia and Ukraine. At the age of sixteen Gazdanov fought in the Russian Civil War, on the side of the White Army. He then became one of many Russians who left their homeland in the aftermath of the 1917 Revolution and Civil War and converged on Paris, which from around 1925 became the unofficial cultural capital of the interwar diaspora. His early years there were characterised by severe financial hardship—he worked as a manual labourer and was briefly homeless—but by the late 1920s he began to support his writing as a night-time taxi driver, a career through which he developed an intimate acquaintance with the city’s streets, cafés and parks. He would remain there for the majority of his life. At the onset of World War II, when many displaced individuals fled the advancing Nazi troops by crossing the Atlantic, Gazdanov and his wife chose to stay in occupied France, where they participated in the Résistance effort. Gazdanov documented the experience in his non-fiction work, *Na frantsuzskoi zemle* (1946), and he and his wife received French citizenship in 1947. Whilst he continued to write fiction throughout the 1950s and ’60s, from 1953 onwards he combined his writing career with radio journalism. Gazdanov presented a regular programme on Russian literature—under the pseudonym Georgii Cherkasov—for *Radio Liberty*, a Cold War organ of the U.S. government then based in Munich, whose broadcasts were targeted at the Soviet Union. In 1967, he became the head of the station’s Russian Service. He died of lung cancer in Munich

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Varshavskii coined the term “unnoticed generation” for the younger generation of the first wave of Russian émigrés in his study of the same name: Vladimir Varshavskii, *Nezamechennoe pokolenie* (New York: Chekhov, 1952).

on 5 December 1971, survived by his wife, but having outlived many of his literary contemporaries of the first wave.

Gazdanov's literary style has generally been situated in the context of Western European modernism. Early descriptions from within the émigré press categorised his style as “strange”, pointing to his hybrid language, which mixes French and Russian in a seemingly unordered fashion.<sup>2</sup> Such a view is unsurprising when one considers early works such as his début short story, “Gostinitsa griadushchego” (1926). The surrealist tone, nonstandard typography and reference to dismembered body parts (“губы, как таковые”) in this work are more suggestive of a debt to twentieth-century European avant-garde aesthetics than the Russian classical heritage.<sup>3</sup> Gazdanov has also been read in the light of French modernism, and compared with Marcel Proust in particular since the publication of his first novella, *Večer u Kler* (1929), a fictionalised memoir of a young man's childhood and youth in Russia told through the prism of his first love with the French heroine.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast, the discussion of Gazdanov's engagement with Russian nineteenth-century literature has been more sporadic. Whilst multiple individual articles have tackled particular aspects of the question, few have considered the influence of Russian classical literature on his works in any overarching manner.<sup>5</sup> Currently, the most comprehensive and rich treatment of the topic is by Sergei Kibal'nik, whose monograph on Gazdanov and the

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<sup>2</sup> Discussion of his language often did not go beyond superficial observations of “foreign-ness”. For instance, witness Marc Slonim writing in 1930: “Газданов несомненно находится под очарованием французской литературы, главным образом, современной. Его прельщает ее легкость, лоск, изящество. Неуловимый дух иностранщины веет в его произведениях. Ритм его фразы напоминает французские романы” (Marc Slonim, “Literaturnyi dnevnik. Dva Maiakovskikh. Roman Gazdanova”, *Volia Rossii*, 5-6 (1930), 446-57, p. 446).

<sup>3</sup> Gaito Gazdanov, “Gostinitsa griadushchego”, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5 vols (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2009), I, 493-9 (p. 493).

<sup>4</sup> Leonid Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris: Russian Émigré Literature and French Modernism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), pp. 102-21.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, S. R. Fediakin, “Tolstovskoe nachalo v tvorchestve Gaito Gazdanova”, in T. N. Krasavchenko, M. A. Vasil'eva and F. Kh. Khadonova, eds, *Gaito Gazdanov i “nezamechenoe pokolenie”*: pisatel' na peresechenii traditsii i kul'tur (Moscow: INION RAN, 2005), pp. 96-102, Maria Rubins, “‘Chelovecheskii dokument’ ili literaturnaia parodiia? Siuzhety russkoi klassiki v ‘Nochnykh dorogakh’ Gaito Gazdanova”, *Novyi zhurnal*, 243 (2006), 240-59, Konstantin Mamaev, “Vystrel v Aleksandra Vol'fa”, in A. M. Ushakov, ed., *Gaito Gazdanov v kontekste russkoi i zapadnoevropeiskikh literatur* (Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2008), pp. 124-34.

existential tradition in Russian literature surveys his engagement with a wide range of authors, from Dostoevskii, Chekhov and Tolstoi to Proust, Joyce, Camus and Nabokov.<sup>6</sup> The critical tendency to class Gazdanov as a modernist may in large part be attributed to his youth at the time of his arrival in Paris: first-wave elders, such as Ivan Bunin or Zinaida Gippius, whose literary careers had commenced prior to their departure from Russia, have generally been viewed as protectors of the pre-revolutionary tradition, whilst their juniors have in contrast been located outside of this tradition. Yet a clear-cut dichotomy between tradition and modernity on grounds of age disregards the many instances of Gazdanov's conscious engagement with the canon, through his playful transposition of nineteenth-century Russian works into a modern émigré context, which I discuss in more detail in the first chapter of this thesis. Although Gazdanov's literary works have received comparably less attention than those of a contemporary such as Vladimir Nabokov (with whom he was initially compared), they have also recently benefitted from a growing interest in the study of Russia Abroad, alongside works of émigré colleagues such as Viktor Ianovskii, Iurii Fel'zen and Nina Berberova, not least in the wake of the centenary of the 1917 Revolution. A growing number of translations further attests to Gazdanov's rediscovery outside of Russia, particularly by an anglophone readership.<sup>7</sup>

The field of Gazdanov studies has steadily expanded since its initiation in 1982 by László Dienes, whose monograph on and separate bibliography of Gazdanov's works established a much-needed chronology of his life and literary output, which until then was only available in larger émigré bibliographies.<sup>8</sup> Ol'ga Orlova's more recent *Gazdanov* is

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<sup>6</sup> Sergei Kibal'nik, *Gaito Gazdanov i ekzistentsial'naiia traditsiia v russkoi literature* (St Petersburg: Petropolis, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa* (1947), *Vozvrashchenie buddy* (1949) *Polet* (1939) and selected short stories have recently been translated for an anglophone audience. See Gaito Gazdanov, trans. Bryan Karetnyk, *The Spectre of Alexander Wolf* (London: Pushkin Press, 2013), *The Buddha's Return* (London: Pushkin, 2014), *The Flight* (London: Pushkin, 2016), and *The Beggar and Other Stories* (London: Pushkin, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> László Dienes, *Russian Literature in Exile: The Life and Work of Gajto Gazdanov* (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1982) and *Bibliographie des œuvres de Gaito Gazdanov* (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 1982). Dienes also oversaw the donation of Gazdanov's archive to Harvard University's Houghton Library by his widow, Faina

similarly structured around his biography.<sup>9</sup> Dienes strenuously asserts Gazdanov's status as a "modernist", but his study too readily conflates the author's literary and personal life. For instance, the assertion that there is "little danger" in reading Gazdanov's works as memoir betrays a lack of sensitivity not only to the slipperiness of the memoir form, but also to its modernist renewal, and seemingly disregards Gazdanov's authorial agency in blurring fiction and truth.<sup>10</sup> Critical studies that have not taken a biographical approach have tended to focus on broad themes, such as poetics or existentialism, with Gazdanov's literary borrowings being regarded as secondary. Sergei Kabaloti's *Poetika prozy Gaito Gazdanova 20-30-kh godov*, the first Russian-language monograph devoted to Gazdanov, charts the development of his interwar works from a range of perspectives including character, voice, stylistics and "the image of the author".<sup>11</sup> Kabaloti alludes to the question of influence, contending that Gazdanov "synthesised Russian and Western literary traditions", but his lens is primarily philosophical, with discussion of thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Nikolai Berdiaev, and Henri Bergson orienting comparison towards French authors such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.<sup>12</sup> Iulia Matveeva has challenged the chronology of Camus' influence on Gazdanov, arguing instead for literary affinity, on the basis that interwar works such as *Vecher u Kler* and "Schast'e" exhibit a similar existentialist streak to the post-war novels.<sup>13</sup>

Igor' Kondakov's 2000 anthology, *Gazdanov i mirovaia kul'tura*, is a rare effort to situate Gazdanov's works explicitly at a juncture between Soviet and Western influences.

Whilst its contributors posit parallels with Mikhail Bulgakov, Vsevolod Ivanov and Andrei

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Dmitrievna Gazdanov. The archive comprises an almost complete collection of notebooks and draft versions of his novels and short stories, spanning over forty years of his life, from 1929-71. A less exhaustive bibliography of Gazdanov's output (which for instance does not include translations of his works) is found in Ludmila A. Foster, *Bibliography of Russian Émigré Literature, 1918-1968*, 2 vols (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall & Co., 1970), II, 370-2.

<sup>9</sup> Ol'ga Orlova, *Gazdanov* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Dienes, *Russian Literature in Exile*, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Sergei Kabaloti, *Poetika prozy Gazdanova 20-30-kh godov* (St Petersburg: Peterburgskii pisatel', 1998).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Iulia Matveeva, "*Prevrashchenie v liubimoe*": *khudozhestvennoe myshlenie Gaito Gazdanova* (Ekaterinburg: Izdatel'stvo Ural'skogo universiteta, 2001).

Platonov, there is nonetheless a frustrating lacuna with regard to the Russian classical tradition and its influence over Soviet, émigré and European literature.<sup>14</sup> Elena Proskurina's 2009 monograph considers the development of Gazdanov's authorial persona from what she terms his "Russian novels" (*Večer u Kler, Polet, Nochnye dorogi, Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa* and *Vozvrashchenie buddy*) to his later, post-1949 "French novels" (*Piligrimy, Probuzhdenie* and *Evelina i ee druž'ia*), suggesting that *Vozvrashchenie buddy* is a "crisis novel" marking a turning point in Gazdanov's output.<sup>15</sup> Whilst Proskurina sensitively develops the discussion of certain influences (such as Tolstoi or Proust) on particular works, there is no attempt to consider the question of his engagement with other works in any overarching manner. The opposition between "Russian" and "French" and the decision to structure the study on a novel-by-novel basis moreover impose an over-simplistic narrative of assimilation on to Gazdanov's artistic evolution, which is seemingly at odds with her emphasis elsewhere on the fact that his publication history does not correlate with his creative chronology.<sup>16</sup>

Sergei Kibal'nik's *Gaito Gazdanov i ekzistentsial'naiia traditsiia v russkoi literature* is, to date, the most comprehensive survey of Gazdanov's works. It considers the existentialist streak of Gazdanov's oeuvre, which is situated both within and beyond a Russian tradition. Topics such as "Gazdanov and atheism" and "Gazdanov and Buddhism" sit alongside a range of direct comparisons with authors such as Gogol', Turgenev, Dostoevskii and Tolstoi, and Chekhov, or Proust, Céline and Joyce. Kibal'nik takes a flexible approach to his subject matter, as for instance in his emphasis on the structural significance of reincarnation as a "metatheme" in *Vozvrashchenie buddy*, which builds on Kabaloti's earlier analysis of the same work.<sup>17</sup> The question of language, and linguistic hybridity, in Gazdanov

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<sup>14</sup> Igor' Kondakov, ed., *Gazdanov i mirovaia kul'tura* (Kaliningrad: GP KGT, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Elena Proskurina, *Edinstvo inoskaziia: o narrativnoi poetike romanov Gaito Gazdanova* (Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 293-7.

studies has generally been regarded as secondary (or incidental) to the content and ideas of his novels and short stories. But as his works were being written, linguistic impurity was a critical charge which was frequently brought against him: Boris Zaitsev's description of the experience of reading him as characterised by a strangeness (“впечатление странное производил: иностранец, хорошо пишущий на русском языке”) is one example.<sup>18</sup> Kibal'nik devotes a chapter to what he terms Gazdanov's “transcultural discourse”, although his discussion is primarily anchored in two early novels (*Večer u Kler* and *Nochnye dorogi*). As Kibal'nik underlines, there is urgent need for further expansion on the topic of Gazdanov's transculturalism, not only in terms of the bilingualism in his works, but also in terms of his later prose style, which relays conversations and situations of French characters through Russian language.<sup>19</sup> I consider Gazdanov's bilingualism to be fundamentally intertwined with his intertextuality; as such, my approach to the question of his literary engagement is sensitive to the conceptual coherence between allusion, adaptation and other contentious forms of transposition such as translation and parody. I hope to show that this “transcultural discourse” is not circumstantial, but consciously cultivated, and Gazdanov challenges foreign-native binaries, positioning himself both within, and outside of, a Russian literary heritage.

My thesis foregrounds Gazdanov's intertextual practice as a crucial aspect of his creative process. Taking a non-chronological approach, and instead preferring four chapters devoted to the four lines of “transcultural discourse” that I perceive to be intersecting in his works (dialogue with a Russian nineteenth-century tradition, French literature of the interwar period, and contemporaries both in Soviet Russia and Russia Abroad), I compare and contrast in each case a number of works around a common theme in order to understand how

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<sup>18</sup> Boris Zaitsev, cited in Orlova, *Gazdanov*, p. 175.

<sup>19</sup> Kibal'nik, *Gaito Gazdanov*, pp. 329-66.

Gazdanov developed his own linguistic and aesthetic strategies. As I have noted, I am particularly interested in employing theories of intertextuality to consider the question of Gazdanov's bilingualism. Whilst his prose is predominantly Russian, the frequent insertion of French words, phrases, place names and dialogue as untranslated elements generates a hybridity which, much like his intertextual practice, is neither ordered nor predictable. In this introduction, I discuss the relevance of the term "intertextuality" to the transnational canon that Gazdanov cultivates. I am interested in intertextuality primarily as a means of exploring how émigré writers aligned themselves with existing literary canons and struggled against them in search of their own voice. My method thus draws on various theories of intertextuality (Kristeva, Barthes, Culler, Taranovskii) in a deliberately flexible manner, alongside Russian Formalist theories of the literary process as enacted through imitation, struggle and parody. In employing a method informed by theories of influence my intention is not to compile an exhaustive list of Gazdanov's literary borrowings, which has in any case been attempted in earlier studies, but rather to foreground their heterogeneity.<sup>20</sup> I then read these intertextual borrowings with a deliberate emphasis on their hybrid and multilingual features, in order to emphasise the range of distinct intertextual iterations that emerge across Gazdanov's oeuvre.

In the following four chapters, I move from nineteenth-century classical Russian literature, to French modernism, to early Soviet writing, and finally to Nabokov. In each case, I focus on a distinct iteration of intertextuality, gradually moving closer both in time and space to Gazdanov himself. In the first chapter, I discuss *Polet* and *Vozvrashchenie buddy* as examples of Gazdanov's engagement with a complex and multilayered lineage of canonical Russian nineteenth-century works and consider the historic prevalence of *francophonie* within the Russian classical tradition, demonstrating that Gazdanov deliberately plays on this,

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<sup>20</sup> Dienes, *Russian Literature in Exile*, pp. 20-24.



thus asserting his claim to a Russian literary heritage. In the second chapter, I focus on French modernism (principally Proust and Céline). I consider a slightly more flexible form of intertextual relation, namely the influence of critical reception and cultural institutions in ascribing influence to works, and the means by which Gazdanov's popular reception as a "neo-Proustian" author shaped his subsequent works. These first two chapters address more explicit intertextual relations and borrowings and, as such, conform to conventional explorations of influence through theme and character typologies.

In the last two chapters, I deliberately move towards a more elusive conception of intertextuality, exploring ephemeral parallels and common themes through discussion of Gazdanov's engagement with Isaak Babel' and Vladimir Nabokov. In the third chapter, I consider the development of Gazdanov's prose through the different genres of novels and short stories, alongside his engagement with the early works of Isaak Babel' (which there is evidence that he read in some form). In considering Gazdanov's engagement with Babel', I discuss the extent to which the latter's self-creation as a Russian author voicing a non-canonical perspective might feasibly have appealed to Gazdanov as an émigré writer developing his own voice. In the fourth and final chapter, I examine Gazdanov's engagement with Vladimir Nabokov, with whom he was frequently compared during the interwar era, deliberately moving beyond the interwar period on which the majority of comparative discussion has focused. Unlike my chapter on Babel', which necessarily posits a unidirectional influence, here I expand on existing scholarship that has suggested a "dialogue" between Gazdanov and Nabokov. I analyse the mechanism of this dialogue more closely, demonstrating its development *across* languages and genres, and its playful mediation of Russian classical influences.

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Although the retrospective designation “first wave” is suggestive of a coherent grouping of individuals with common values, scholarship on the White Émigrés has shown that this group encompassed a vast array of Russian citizens of different ethnicities and varying political and religious persuasions, dispersed predominantly (but not exclusively) throughout interwar Europe.<sup>21</sup> Their mass exodus from Russia has been numbered at between 800,000 and 2 million, although exact figures are impossible to verify.<sup>22</sup> Uncertainty arises in part from the chaotic means of departure, as well as a lack of official documentation for refugees until 1921, when the League of Nations introduced Nansen passports in a bid to account for the huge and sudden influx of stateless individuals into its member countries.<sup>23</sup> The majority of the first wave passed through Constantinople into capitals such as Warsaw, Sofia, Prague, Budapest, Berlin and Paris.

Paris has been noted as the unofficial capital of Russia Abroad from about 1925, when many émigrés moved there from their prior haven, Berlin. The *en masse* migration was sparked by a combination of economic and political factors, such as the rising cost of living as a result of post-war hyperinflation, and the creeping encroachment upon civil liberties in the Weimar Republic after 1924.<sup>24</sup> Many Russian émigrés (including Gazdanov) would remain in Paris for the duration of the interwar period, when the Russian-Parisian community

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<sup>21</sup> The diaspora stretched as far as China and South America, and Harbin and Shanghai were popular destinations for officers who had been stationed in Siberia or the Russian Far East. Robert Williams has sought to define the “first wave” as emigration from Russia between 1881 and 1914. The dominant discourse, however, has come to regard the “first wave” as the exodus of Russian citizens immediately before or in the aftermath of 1917. Chadwell nonetheless raises a valid point, to which I return throughout this thesis, namely the centrality of Paris to a Russian cosmopolitan artistic identity long before what we officially class as the “first wave”; see Robert C. Williams, *Culture in Exile: Russian Emigrés in Germany, 1881-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 20. Maria Rubins similarly notes that “about 1.7 million people left Russia during the Tsarist period” (Maria Rubins, “Introduction”, in Maria Rubins, ed., *Twentieth-Century Russian Émigré Writers*, Dictionary of Literary Biography 317 (Detroit: Gale, 2005), p. xv).

<sup>22</sup> The historian Marc Raeff cites multiple figures, from one to two million. Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration 1919-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 24. Maria Rubins does not cite an overall figure, instead noting recorded estimates in the various European capital cities during the 1920s. Rubins, *Twentieth-Century Russian Émigré Writers*, pp. xv-xxx.

<sup>23</sup> Russian citizens, however, were not granted uninhibited travel rights to member nations until 1933; see Boris Raymond and David R. Jones, *Russian Diaspora 1917-1941* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2000), p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Raeff, p. 37.

is estimated to have consisted of more than 45,000 individuals, outnumbering even American expatriates.<sup>25</sup> Scholarly attention to the first wave has frequently reflected the significance of Paris in their self-identification.<sup>26</sup> Dovid Knut's oft-cited statement that Paris was the true capital of Russian literature is supported by the vibrant network of Russian-language schools, Orthodox churches, publishing houses, newspapers and cultural institutions which were established in the city during the 1920s and '30s.<sup>27</sup>

One might fairly assume that the anti-Bolshevik sentiment which had precipitated the large-scale upheaval was shared by all.<sup>28</sup> Zinaida Gippius' unfinished 1939 essay, "Istoriia intelligentskoi emigratsii: skhema 4-kh piatiletok" portrays émigrés' adherence to their own purposeful schema of five-year plans between 1920 and 1940 and asserts that "politicians, writers, and others were closely united against their common enemy, Bolshevism."<sup>29</sup> Despite affirmations to the contrary, the view that the émigré community was unanimously anti-Soviet in its politics is factually inaccurate. This idea has been challenged since the 1980s by numerous scholars who have emphasised the porousness of the boundary between Russia Abroad and Soviet Russia, in particular during the first half of the 1920s. Indeed, whilst many White Émigrés were united in opposition to the changes unfolding back in Soviet Russia, there were still dissenting voices, such as the Eurasianist and Smenovekhovstvo movements, the former touting Russia's exceptionalism from European civilisation, and the latter promoting acceptance of the Soviet regime and October Revolution as a phase in

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<sup>25</sup> Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse: Transnational Writing in Interwar Paris* (London: Palgrave, 2015), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Witness studies such as Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, Zhean-Filippe Zhakard, Annik Morard and Zhervaise Tassis [Jean-Philippe Jaccard, Annick Morard and Gervaise Tassis], eds, *Russkie pisateli v Parizhe: vzgliad na frantsuzskuiu literaturu, 1920-1940* (Moscow: Russkii put', 2005), Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, Gennadii Ozeretskovskii, *Russkii blistatel'nyi Parizh do voiny* (Paris: G. Ozeretskovskii, 1973), Hélène Menegaldo, *Les Russes à Paris, 1919-1939* (Paris: Autrement, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> Dovid Knut, cited in "Zelenaia lampa. Beseda 3.", *Novyi korabl'*, 2 (1927), 39-46 (p. 42).

<sup>28</sup> Paul Robinson's study of Petr Wrangel's White Army for instance emphasises that the military contingent cannot be dissociated from the wider community who shared its anti-Bolshevik sentiment. Paul Robinson, *The White Russian Army in Exile 1920-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Temira Pachmuss, ed., *A Russian Cultural Revival: A Critical Anthology of Émigré Literature before 1939* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), p. 6.

Russia's history, urging its members to return to Russia.<sup>30</sup> During this period, travel between Western Europe and Russia was also not as rigidly monitored, and the difference between residing abroad and being an émigré had not been set in stone. There was, moreover, a mutual interest from both sides, with Soviet surveillance of émigré publications noted during the early 1920s, and discussion of Soviet literature in émigré arenas such as the *Studio franco-russe*.<sup>31</sup> Olga Matich has noted the “ambiguous intermediate position” assumed by prominent writers such as Isaac Babel’ and Evgenii Zamiatin during the 1920s, and conveniently omitted from Gippius’ testimony.<sup>32</sup> Prominent figures such as Maksim Gor’kii, Andrei Belyi, Il’ia Erenburg and Viktor Shklovskii all lived abroad for a period before ultimately returning to the Soviet Union.<sup>33</sup> Maria Rubins has also called attention to clear instances of cooperation between émigré and Soviet writers during the immediate post-revolutionary period, citing the publication of Russian-language texts in Berlin regardless of political orientation as a state of affairs not replicated elsewhere in emigration and “facilitated

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<sup>30</sup> On Eurasianism see L. V. Ponomareva, *Evraziia: istoricheskie vzgliady russkikh emigrantov* (Moscow: RAN, 1992), L. I. Novikova and I. N. Sizemskaia, eds, *Rossiiia mezhdru Evropoi i Aziei: Evraziiskii soblazn* (Moscow: Nauka, 1993) and *Mir Rossii Evraziia* (Moscow: Vysshiaia shkola, 1995), Petr Savitskii, *Kontinent Evraziia* (Moscow: Agraf, 1997), M. G. Vandalkovskaia, *Istoricheskaia nauka rossiiskoi emigratsii* (Moscow: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 1997), S. N. Pushkin, *Istoriiosofiia evraziistva* (St Petersburg: Veche, 1999). On Smenovekhovstvo, see Robert C. Williams, “‘Changing Landmarks’ in Russian Berlin, 1922-1924”, *Slavic Review*, 27/4 (1968), 581-93, Svetlana V. Onegina, “Postrevolutionary Political Movements in the Russian Expatriate Community in the 1920s and the 1930s”, *Russian Studies in History*, 41/1 (2002), 38-65, Zoia Bocharova, “Contemporary Historiography on the Russian Émigré Communities in the 1920s and the 1930s”, *Russian Studies in History*, 41/1 (2002), 66-91, and Claudia Weiss, “Russian Political Parties in Exile”, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 5/1 (2004), 219-32.

<sup>31</sup> Galin Tihanov has noted that as early as April 1921, the VTsIK “decreed that 20 copies of all leading émigré newspapers should be subscribed, so as to be available to party policy makers and highly positioned administrators in Soviet Russia”, as well as evidence of Soviet interest in *Volia Rossii*. Galin Tihanov, “Russian Émigré Literary Criticism and Theory between the World Wars”, in Evgeny Dobrenko and Galin Tihanov, eds, *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), pp. 144-62 (p. 145). See also Marc Slonim, “Volia Rossii”, in N. P. Poltoratzkii, ed., *Russkaia literatura v emigratsii* (Pittsburgh: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures), pp. 291-300 (p. 299).

<sup>32</sup> Olga Matich, “Russian Literature in Emigration: A Historical Perspective on the 1970s”, in Olga Matich and Michael Heim, eds, *The Third Wave: Russian Literature in Emigration* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), pp. 15-23 (p. 16).

<sup>33</sup> Maksim Gor’kii lived abroad, principally in Sorrento, between 1921 and 1928; Andrei Belyi spent time in Berlin from 1921 until 1923; Il’ia Erenburg was permitted as a Soviet journalist to spend a lot of time abroad during the 1920s; Viktor Shklovskii spent time in Berlin from 1922 until 1923, in hiding from threats pertaining to former anti-Bolshevik activities in which he had been involved.

by the friendly relations between the Weimar Republic and Soviet Russia of the NEP period.”<sup>34</sup>

The notion of a schism between older and younger generations is, as I have already mentioned, an established premise of discussion on the cultural production of the first wave.<sup>35</sup> The older generation, who commenced its literary endeavours prior to deracination and conceptualised of the preservation of the nineteenth-century tradition in messianic terms as their “mission”, are generally distinguished from the younger generation, who did not begin to write until they found themselves in exile, and were thus considered more open to foreign influence than their elders.<sup>36</sup> Whilst this tradition-innovation dichotomy is broadly accurate, it exaggerates the distance between old and young (just as the anti-Bolshevik versus Bolshevik dichotomy oversimplifies the divide between Russia Abroad and Soviet Russia) and fails to acknowledge the grey area occupied by those who did not slot neatly into either category. Scholars such as Temira Pachmuss have emphasised that many of those writers belonging to the older generation in age and experience were in fact “very much involved with the Russian ‘Bohemians of Montparnasse’ and urged them to master the Russian language and prosody.”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Marc Slonim, Il’ia Fondaminskii, Vladislav Khodasevich, Georgii Adamovich, Georgii Ivanov, Iurii Terapiano and Zinaida Gippius all took it upon themselves in various ways to grant the younger generation a space in the literary arena, to include their works on the pages of prominent émigré journals and their voices at literary gatherings.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Rubins, *Twentieth-Century Russian Émigré Writers*, p. xviii.

<sup>35</sup> See Varshavskii, *Nezamechennoe pokolenie*, Rubins, *Twentieth-Century Russian Émigré Writers*, David Bethea and Siggy Frank, “Exile and Russian Literature”, in Evgeny Dobrenko and Marina Balina, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 195-213 and Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*.

<sup>36</sup> The slogan most commonly associated with the ethos of the older generation (“Мы не в изгнании, мы в послании”) is often wrongly ascribed to Gippius, when in fact it was coined by Nina Berberova.

<sup>37</sup> Pachmuss, *A Russian Cultural Revival*, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Slonim and Fondaminskii used their positions as editors of *Volia Rossii* and *Sovremennye zapiski* respectively to patronise the younger generation, with Slonim establishing the *Kochev’e* literary circle, which took an interest in contemporary Soviet literature, and of which Gazdanov was a member. Vladislav Khodasevich strongly encouraged the early career of Sirin (the pseudonym under which Vladimir Nabokov wrote during the interwar period). Georgii Adamovich and Georgii Ivanov founded the journal *Chisla*, whose stated aim was to provide a

Marc Slonim's contention that they belonged to a third, "in-between generation" ("промежуточное поколение") challenges conventional narratives of "old versus young" and is worth consideration in any discussion of Gazdanov's openness to foreign influence, which as I shall discuss, is also not clear-cut.<sup>39</sup>

The historian Marc Raeff has contended that "Russian literature in emigration remained as isolated from Western letters as it had been in prerevolutionary Russia, perhaps even more so."<sup>40</sup> As scholarship and bibliographic efforts of the last fifteen years have shown, this is plainly untrue: the émigré community comprised a vast range of artistic tastes and outlooks between 1920 and 1939. In many ways, the unique and unprecedented cultural phenomenon of emigration provided an ideal condition for the broader modernist project of critiquing the canon. Here was a highly-educated class of individuals fleeing persecution and urgently reflecting on its cultural heritage—from which it was now distanced in more ways than one—to decide what, with its limited means, must be preserved. The prolific contribution to twentieth-century art and thought made by first-wave émigrés perhaps lies in the agency that many of them felt they had managed to retain for themselves in exile. Their common self-identification as "émigrés" (эмигранты), as opposed to "refugees" (беженцы), is indicative of a sense of dignified self-determination in the face of adversity. Leonid Livak has published proceedings of the *Studio franco-russe*, a short-lived but fascinating cultural initiative established with the aim of fostering an active interchange between Russian and French writers.<sup>41</sup> But the émigré community could also be an extremely hostile environment, as evidenced in the communal closing of ranks on Marina Tsvetaeva after revelations about

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platform for younger authors. Terapiano founded the *Soiuz molodykh poetov i pisatelei* in Paris in 1925. Zinaida Gippius initiated the Green Lamp Society. Gippius termed the younger generation "adolescent elders" (podstariki) in reference to their diminishing youth. Cited in Roger Hagglund, *A Vision of Unity: Adamovich in Exile* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1985), p. 106.

<sup>39</sup> Marc Slonim, "Molodye pisateli za rubezhom", *Volia Rossii*, 10-11 (1929), 100-18 (pp. 116-7).

<sup>40</sup> Raeff, p. 115.

<sup>41</sup> Leonid Livak, ed., *Le studio franco-russe (1929-31)* (Toronto: *Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, 2005).

her husband Sergei Efron's involvement with the NKVD. Tihanov has described the “painfully closed—and oppressively intimate—mode of literary exchange and [...] relatively small scale of the émigré literary scene”, noting that squabbling and in-fighting often led to biased and unjustified critical denunciations of writers.<sup>42</sup> The scathing critical attacks on V. Sirin—the name under which Vladimir Nabokov published his works during the interwar period—by Georgii Adamovich are an obvious (but by no means isolated) example.

The oppressive environment, and specifically its impact on younger authors, was a popular topic in the émigré press during the 1930s. Gazdanov contributed his own perspective in a 1936 article titled “O molodoi emigrantskoi literature”, published in the thick journal *Sovremennye zapiski*.<sup>43</sup> In it, he decried the lack of a readership for young writers, emphasising the drastic downturn in fortunes experienced by many young émigrés, whose early lives in Russia had been relatively affluent. Iurii Terapiano's 1933 article “Chelovek 30-kh godov” voiced a blend of despair, cynicism and anxiety on behalf of the eponymous “man of the thirties”.<sup>44</sup> Much larger geopolitical events would ultimately put an end to such debates, as the threat of impending war in Europe caused the community of thinkers and writers, already facing mounting hardships, to disperse from the late 1930s onwards.<sup>45</sup> Some, such as Vladimir Nabokov, Marc Chagall, or (later) Nina Berberova, continued their journey west across the Atlantic; others, such as Marina Tsvetaeva, chose to return to Soviet Russia. Iurii Fel'zen perished in Auschwitz, whilst Gazdanov, Terapiano, Dovid Knut and more remained in occupied Paris, where they continued to live well after World War II.

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<sup>42</sup> Galin Tihanov, “Russian Émigré Literary Criticism and Theory between the World Wars”, p. 152.

<sup>43</sup> Gazdanov, “O molodoi emigrantskoi literature”, *Sovremennye zapiski*, 60 (1936), 404-8.

<sup>44</sup> Iurii Terapiano, “Chelovek 30-kh godov”, *Chisla*, 7/8 (1933), 210-12.

<sup>45</sup> On the 1940 Nazi invasion of France and its impact on those Russian émigrés who remained, see Rubins, “Russian Parisians of the First Wave: Fragmented Identity in Exile”, in Philip Ross Bullock et al., eds, *Loyalties, Solidarities and Identities in Russian Society, History and Culture* (London: UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2013), pp. 201-21 (p. 221).

In the last fifteen years, studies by Leonid Livak, Greta Slobin, Maria Rubins, Irina Kaspe and Annick Morard have demonstrated that the artistic production of Russian Montparnasse was not only *not* culturally isolationist, but moreover that it consciously responded to and borrowed from contemporary French literature and European modernism more broadly. Livak has for instance analysed the works of younger generation writers such as Fel'zen, Gazdanov, Poplavskii and Ianovskii through the prism of French modernist literature.<sup>46</sup> Irina Kaspe, in a similar vein, considers the overlap between the émigré “negative identity” and that of the *poète maudit*.<sup>47</sup> Annick Morard underlines the significant contribution of émigrés to European avant-garde art, and proposes a theory of “wilful deracination” amongst certain younger-generation figures in Paris (Valentin Parnakh, Mark Talov and Sergei Sharshun) during the 1920s, arguing that their self-determination was more redolent of cultural cosmopolitanism than hopeless political exile: “Leur départ n’est pas motivé par un rejet absolu des propositions bolchéviques, mais par le désir de vivre un certain temps à Paris, capitale internationale des Arts et des Lettres.”<sup>48</sup>

The notion that certain émigrés benefited from the cultural capital that association with the “denationalised ‘universal’ capital” of Paris provided is certainly convincing when applied to those subjects Morard selects, such as Parnakh and Sharshun, whose cultural production was not confined to literature. (The only poet she considers, Mark Talov, is arguably a unique case, given that he returned to Russia in 1922, before many of the younger generation of the first wave had even arrived in Paris.)<sup>49</sup> The same theory does not apply quite

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<sup>46</sup> Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, pp. 90-134.

<sup>47</sup> Irina Kaspe, *Iskusstvo otsustvovat’: nezamechennoe pokolenie russkoi literatury* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2005), p. 163.

<sup>48</sup> Annick Morard, *De l’émigré au déraciné: La “jeune génération” des émigrés russes entre identité et esthétique (Paris: 1920-1940)* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 2010). Morard harnesses Karl Mannheim’s theory of inter-generational dynamics alongside Jean Bessière and André Karátson’s notion of deracination or “wilful uprootedness”, which they explicated via analysis of the American Lost Generation. André Karátson and Jean Bessière, *Déracinement et littérature* (Lille: Université de Lille, 1982).

<sup>49</sup> I employ the phrase “‘denationalised’ universal capital” in reference to Pascale Casanova’s notion of Paris as a world stage launching marginal individuals to prominence and acclaim. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 108.



so seamlessly to those émigrés whose sole artistic medium was language, such as Gazdanov, Fel'zen or Boris Poplavskii. Indeed, as Dmitrii Tokarev has noted, although avant-garde movements such as Dadaism espoused an ethos of overcoming linguistic borders, there was a fundamental asymmetry in the exchange between their Russian and Western European practitioners, owing to their imbalanced cultural awareness of one another. Whereas Russians had long been exposed to the linguistic and cultural dominance of Western Europe, Western Europeans remained comparably largely ignorant of the Russian language and culture.<sup>50</sup> Morard's contention that French culture posed a counterpoint of distortion enabling the younger generation to self-determine "still and always in opposition to their elders" aptly explicates her theory of wilful deracination for her chosen subjects, but it does not acknowledge the fact that not all of the younger generation were interested in experimenting with avant-garde forms. Gazdanov's own prose is at times highly traditional and plays on the embeddedness of the interchange between Russian and French letters in nineteenth-century Russian works, as I shall discuss. Gazdanov thus poses a challenge to the assumption that younger émigré authors unanimously rejected their elders in favour of Western influence and patronage.

Both Livak and Slobin have advocated a framework of "triangulation" for the study of interwar émigré literature, seeking to account for its mediation between "the lost homeland and pre-revolutionary tradition; the Soviet union, then in process of unprecedented political and cultural transformation; and the European host countries, especially France".<sup>51</sup> Maria Rubins has more recently expanded the triangular model with her emphasis on a fourth

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<sup>50</sup> Dmitrii Tokarev's discussion of avant-garde literary experimentation in the Russian-Parisian context emphasises a void between theory and practice. Dmitrii Tokarev, "The Metamorphoses of Utopian Dreams in the Russian Avant-Garde in Exile (Il'ya Zdanevich, Boris Poplavskii)", in David Ayers and Benedikt Hjartarson, eds, *Utopia: The Avant-Garde, Modernism and (Im)Possible Life*, European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies 4 (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 397-410 (pp. 405-6).

<sup>51</sup> Greta Slobin, *Russians Abroad: Literary and Cultural Politics of Diaspora (1919-1939)* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013), p. 14.

factor: “an ambivalent relationship with the older émigré writers, characterized by admiration and dependence, on the one hand, and by rebellion and dissent, on the other.”<sup>52</sup> The aforementioned “in-between generation” who sought to provide talented younger authors with opportunities, and in some cases harshly critiqued them, certainly supports the need for a more nuanced view of the interactions between younger émigrés and their elders, both in Soviet Russia and Russia Abroad.

Gazdanov’s case is particularly illustrative, given his brief (but meaningful) correspondence with Maksim Gor’kii, which occurred in 1930, and came about thanks to Ilia Fondaminskii, who was friendly with Gor’kii and had sent him a copy of *Večer u Kler*. The correspondence has been republished in various studies, but bears mention here (and elsewhere in my thesis), since from it we gain an insight into Gazdanov’s conflicted feelings on Russia, its language, and the label of “émigré writer”:<sup>53</sup>

Очень благодарен Вам за предложение послать книгу в Россию. Я был бы счастлив, если бы она могла выйти там, потому что здесь у нас нет читателей и вообще нет ничего. С другой стороны, как Вы, может быть, увидели это из книги, я не принадлежу к «эмигрантским авторам», я плохо и мало знаю Россию, т.к. уехал оттуда, когда мне было 16 лет, немного больше; но Россия моя родина, и ни на каком другом языке, кроме русского, я не могу и не буду писать.”<sup>54</sup>

Gazdanov asserts that he does not “belong” to the category of émigré writer. Whilst acknowledging that, having left at such a young age, he is poorly acquainted with Russia and her language, he pledges that he cannot and will not write in a language other than Russian. One cannot help but note the void between theory and practice in Gazdanov’s professed

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<sup>52</sup> Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> Gazdanov, correspondence with Maksim Gor’kii, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 39-45.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

cultural allegiance. In “O molodoi emigrantskoi literature” he wrote of “literature not in its European sense, but in its Russian sense” (“литератур[a], в ее не европейском, а русском понимании”),<sup>55</sup> decried the impoverishment of the Russian literary language in emigration, and even questioned the existence of young émigré literature (“Только чудо могло спасти молодое литературное поколение; и чуда — еще раз — не произошло”), which fuelled rumours of his pro-Soviet leanings.<sup>56</sup> Yet the ambiguous ideal of a purist Russian prose that he critically espoused is categorically not carried through in his works. I thus wish to consider Gazdanov’s mediation between a Russian classical and contemporary (early Soviet) corpus of works, in order to consider how his engagement with both suggests a more nuanced interaction between elders and peers.<sup>57</sup>

Maria Rubins has recently contributed to the debate by drawing on the so-called “Lost Generation” of writers, who claimed Paris as their city whilst retaining their original nationality, and to whom Varshavskii’s coinage “nezamechennoe pokolenie” (in his study of the same name) partially referred.<sup>58</sup> Her monograph integrates a more comprehensive comparison of the cultural interactions between Russian Montparnasse and English, French and German works. She consciously introduces the contemporary critical discourse of transnational theory into the conversation in order to emphasise inconsistencies in the reception of the cultural production of the first wave. She valuably notes, for instance, the contradictory classification of Nabokov (and *not* his lesser-known contemporaries) as a “transnational” or “bilingual” author: “transnationalism was consistently practiced by many other émigrés of Nabokov’s generation, and particularly by those who emerged from Russian

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<sup>55</sup> Gazdanov, “O molodoi emigrantskoi literature”, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 746-52 (p. 750).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 751.

<sup>57</sup> Livak’s observation that within the context of the first-wave emigration, the charge “un-Russian” was levelled at émigré works perceived to be open to foreign influence and Soviet works alike is in this respect significant. Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, pp. 29-30. I address this topic in more detail in the third and fourth chapters.

<sup>58</sup> On Varshavskii’s “nezamechennoe pokolenie”, Rubins has emphasised the term’s double resonance: “By labelling them the ‘unnoticed generation’ he drew a parallel between them and the ‘superfluous men’ of nineteenth-century Russian literature, on the one hand, and the European ‘lost generation’ of the 1920s, on the other hand.” Rubins, *Twentieth-Century Russian Émigré Writers*, p. xxii.

Montparnasse, irrespective of whether they effected a language shift in their writing.”<sup>59</sup>

Rubins devotes an entire chapter to Gazdanov’s best-known novel, *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol’fa* as an “anthologisation” of the “Jazz Age”, but the reappraisal of Gazdanov as a “transnational writer” can and should be extended well beyond this (his most famous) work. As Kibal’nik’s aforementioned emphasis on his “transcultural discourse” demonstrates, there has been a gradual move within Gazdanov studies towards such an analysis of his works, but there remains much more to be said. Conversing with these sources in the process of my own discussion, I will thus situate Gazdanov’s works within a broad field of Franco-Russian cultural production, through both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in order to understand his own conception of his artistic identity.

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In the following section, I discuss the relevance of “intertextuality” as a key term of my thesis, considering its emergence from 1960s French intellectual circles alongside its much earlier origins in Russian Formalism and structuralist linguistics. My interest in intertextuality does not favour its rigid Kristevan definition as a methodological model to be anachronistically applied to Gazdanov’s works. Rather, I employ the term “intertextuality” in self-conscious reference to the transnational origins of the concept and its permutations. I intend to draw on the directions in which it has evolved since—and indeed *from which* it had evolved before—its Kristevan coinage, as a theoretical frame for my discussion of Gazdanov’s works and their rich interactions with other works.

Galin Tihanov has designated 1910 to the mid-1970s as a period during which literary theory was emancipated from grand philosophical narratives.<sup>60</sup> This interlude of autonomy was bookended on the one hand by Russian Formalism, which sought to liberate the literary

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<sup>59</sup> Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>60</sup> Galin Tihanov, “Why did modern literary theory originate in Central and Eastern Europe? (And why is it now dead?)”, *Common Knowledge*, 10/1 (2004), 61-81 (p. 62).

work from social, historical and psychological debates, and on the other by deconstruction, which demoted the literary work to the rank of the non-literary text, as literary theory was eventually subsumed by the more nebulous domain of cultural theory.<sup>61</sup> The rise and demise of literary theory as a discipline in its own right broadly maps on to the beginning and end thresholds of Gazdanov's literary career (1926-71). His artistic emergence from within the Parisian interwar diaspora meant that his works were shaped by his bilingual exilic experience, or what Tihanov elsewhere terms "the productive insecurity of needing to use more than one language and live in more than one culture."<sup>62</sup> Gazdanov's career—unlike those of certain "unnoticed generation" contemporaries—was not confined to the interwar cultural moment. His continued citizenship in France and changing position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union underline the necessity of a flexible approach to his works, informed as much by Formalist ideas about canon formation and influence as by their later circulation and assimilation within a Western critical context.<sup>63</sup>

In *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), Harold Bloom articulates his vision of artistic evolution as an Oedipal conflict occurring between poetic fathers and sons, in which the latter always inevitably find themselves caught between two competing "drives": the urge to imitate the father and, concurrently, the desire to overcome him. The Freudian model of influence Bloom puts forward suggests a perennial navigation between imitation and originality in the unfurling of any literary tradition. This negotiation is predicated on a fundamental tension between the individual and those who have gone before him:

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<sup>61</sup> Iurii Lotman and the Tartu School of theory for instance conceived of literary theory as a semiotic theory of culture.

<sup>62</sup> Tihanov, "Why did modern literary theory originate in Central and Eastern Europe?", p. 68. As my discussion of his private and public statements earlier in this introduction indicates, such an insecurity was undoubtedly felt by Gazdanov, and was moreover highly productive.

<sup>63</sup> I am referring to Gazdanov's unrealised wish to return to the Soviet Union, as expressed in private correspondence during the 1930s. Later, after partaking in the Résistance effort, as a French citizen during the Cold War, his political stance was more overt, as he worked (albeit pseudonymously) for the anti-Soviet *Radio Svoboda*.

Poetic Influence is the sense—amazing, agonizing, delighting—of *other poets* [...] the poet is condemned to learn his profoundest yearnings through an awareness of *other selves*. The poem is *within* him, yet he experiences the shame and splendor of *being found* by poems—great poems—*outside* him.<sup>64</sup>

For Bloom, the process of artistic inheritance requires a reconciliation of the son's voice with those of others, a dialogue of sorts between an internal self and the external self (or selves) he has (both consciously and unconsciously) assimilated. This is somewhat redolent of T. S. Eliot's conception of artistic progression as a tussle between the individual poet and the overarching artistic history that has contributed to his formation.<sup>65</sup> But where for Eliot the individual talent is most fruitfully enriched by its interaction with (and synthesis of) the voices of ancestral "dead poets", Bloom traces a more rigid patrilineal chain of inheritance punctuated by stark and unpredictable "swerves" from father to son. According to this latter model, the only route to genuine originality for the poetic son is through the "clinamen": "The *clinamen* or swerve [...] is necessarily the central working concept of the theory of Poetic Influence, for what divides each poet from his Poetic Father (and so saves, by division) is an instance of creative revisionism."<sup>66</sup>

Although he does not expressly acknowledge it, Bloom's model of canon formation is very clearly in dialogue with contemporary French structuralist ideas about the relational processes between texts. Julia Kristeva's theory of "intertextualité"—the "intéraction textuelle qui se produit à l'intérieure d'un seul texte"—was first articulated in 1966, shortly

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<sup>64</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 25-6. Emphasis in original.

<sup>65</sup> "We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously." T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", *The Egoist*, 6/4 (1919), 54-5 (p. 55).

<sup>66</sup> Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 42.

before Bloom began writing *The Anxiety of Influence*.<sup>67</sup> In line with the structuralist axiom that all elements of culture are understood in terms of the overarching system in which they are situated, Kristeva's theory dictates that no text contains meaning independently. Instead, the meaning of a given text is decipherable only through its perceived difference from (or similarity to) other texts. Following its initial utterance, the idea rapidly gained traction amongst contemporaries of the *Tel Quel* group (such as Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Philippe Sollers) and beyond.<sup>68</sup> Barthes' "The Death of the Author", first published in English translation in 1967, explicitly took up the reader-author axis of Kristeva's vast system of texts, arguing that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author."<sup>69</sup> Barthes' challenge to authorial supremacy might be read against Kristeva's vision of the text as constantly in process or on trial, and errs dangerously towards what Victor Erlich has termed "an invitation to unbridled 'readerly' subjectivity".<sup>70</sup> For Kristeva, the text is not the finite product of a single author's (or reader's) thoughts, but a recapitulation of many different voices, a space in which pre-existing discourses "intersect and neutralise each other" ("se croisent et se neutralisent").<sup>71</sup> For Barthes, the text is similarly "that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away", but his direct challenge to the author ("the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity

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<sup>67</sup> "Intertextualité" was first employed by Kristeva in a 1966 presentation later published under the title "Le mot, le dialogue et le roman". The concept became a central idea of her theoretical output, particularly during the 1970s. The definition of intertextuality as the "textual interaction occurring within a single text" is from a 1968 essay on the topic. Julia Kristeva, "Le mot, le dialogue et le roman", in Kristeva, *Semiotike: recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), pp. 82-112, and Kristeva "Problèmes de la structuration d'un texte", in Michel Foucault, ed., *Tel Quel. Théorie d'ensemble* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968), pp. 297-316 (p. 311).

<sup>68</sup> *Tel Quel* was an avant-garde literary magazine published in Paris from 1960 to 1983, founded by writer and critic Philippe Sollers and writer Jean-Edern Hallier. Sollers frequently declared his intention for *Tel Quel* to provide a site where established literary genres might co-exist; see Danielle Marx-Scouras, *The Cultural Politics of Tel Quel: Literature and the Left in the Wake of Engagement* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), p. 55.

<sup>69</sup> Barthes' essay was first published in English in 1967 and appeared in French the following year. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", trans. Richard Howard, *Aspen*, 5-6 (1967), and Barthes, "La mort de l'auteur", *Mantéia*, 5 (1968), 12-16; cited here from Barthes, *Music Image Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-8 (p. 148).

<sup>70</sup> Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History – Doctrine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 13.

<sup>71</sup> Kristeva, "Problèmes de la structuration d'un texte", p. 299.

of the body writing”) skews the power balance in favour of the work’s reception.<sup>72</sup> Kristeva and Barthes are not interested in subjectivity *per se*; rather, they are intrigued by its potential to disrupt or decentre established hierarchies that declare textual meaning fixed and fail to acknowledge the intersubjectivity of future readers or writers.<sup>73</sup>

Bloom may concur with the basic idea that more than one voice collide within a given text, but his insistence on the presence and agency of the author itself constitutes a drastic “swerve” away from Kristeva and Barthes. The Bloomian text is not merely personified, but vividly psychoanalysed: “A poetic ‘text’, as I interpret it, is not a gathering of signs on a page, but is a psychic battlefield upon which authentic forces struggle for the only victory worth winning, the divinating triumph over oblivion.”<sup>74</sup> In reintegrating personal subjectivity (both authorial *and* readerly) into the abstract discursive realm of intertextuality, Bloom transforms it from an infinite system of texts and codes into an Oedipal conflict. Kristeva later referred pejoratively to such applications of her theory as simplistic “source criticism”,<sup>75</sup> arguing that they had trivialised and estranged it from its intended meaning.<sup>76</sup>

But Bloom’s focus on the psychological warfare between particular poetic fathers and their sons is not the only aspect of his argument that might be termed narrow or selective: his

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<sup>72</sup> Barthes, “The Death of the Author”, p. 142.

<sup>73</sup> The question of why intertextuality found such fertile ground in French post-war intellectual and avant-garde circles requires more nuanced discussion than can be granted here, but the theory’s popularity has generally been attributed to a mixture of social malaise, theory and ideology. The events of May 1968 demonstrated that France’s social, political and economic climate had reached a breaking point. Against large-scale anti-authoritarianism and mass strikes, it is logical that a cultural theory challenging stable meaning should appeal. Russian Formalist theories (whose relevance I discuss shortly) had similarly emerged against a backdrop of drastic social upheaval over fifty years earlier.

<sup>74</sup> Bloom, *Poetry and Repression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Kristeva renounced the term “intertextuality” in 1974 (eight years after its coinage), arguing it had become a by-word for the prosaic study of individual cases of influence: “The term intertextuality designates this transposition of one or more systems of signs into another, but since it has often been understood in the banal sense of “source criticism” of a text, we prefer the term transposition, which has the advantage of indicating that the passage from one signifying system to another requires a new articulation of thethetic—of enunciative and denotative positionality”. Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974), p. 60. Kristeva’s renunciation has not deterred from the term’s ubiquity, particularly in cultural studies, ever since.

<sup>76</sup> Critics such as Jonathan Culler argue that the urge to treat intertextuality in focused and manageable terms is fundamentally at odds with the “unmasterable series, lost origins, endless horizons” that the original concept was designed to transcend. Jonathan Culler, “Presupposition and Intertextuality”, in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 100-18 (p. 109).



is an explicitly national account of the literary process, whereas I am keen to explore influence and its overcoming (either through rejection or assimilation) as a fundamentally transnational affair. Bloom conceives of canon formation as a national—or, at the very least, monolingual—enterprise, however this supposition erases the countless cross-cultural encounters that may enrich the development of any one national tradition. Even Eliot, describing the modern author’s creative ventriloquism of “dead poets” more than forty years earlier, had stressed the freight of what he termed an impersonal, collective “mind of Europe” composed of multiple tongues, and the perpetual fluidity of the interchange between the present and the hybrid past.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, even Kristevan intertextuality, whilst envisioning a vast and anonymous structure in which individual subjectivities are levelled out and “equalised”, does not erase the fact of their conversing or “intersecting” with one another first. The theory’s transnational origins, which are by now widely acknowledged, are in this respect also germane. Kristeva appropriated Bakhtinian dialogism, and filtered it through a French critical tradition, pairing it with Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory of the sign.<sup>78</sup> Her own multilingualism inevitably aided the collaging process: of Bulgarian origin, she wrote and published her theory in French, but had accessed Bakhtin’s work in the original Russian. Karine Zbinden contends that the hybrid national identities of both Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov—the other prominent Franco-Bulgarian theorist who translated Bakhtin (and selected works of the Russian Formalists) for a Western audience during the same period<sup>79</sup>—endowed them with a

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<sup>77</sup> Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, p. 55.

<sup>78</sup> See for instance Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, Michael Holquist, “Bakhtin and the Formalists: History as Dialogue” in Robert Louis Jackson and Stephen Rudy, eds, *Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance* (New Haven: Yale, 1985), pp. 82-95, Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 8-61, Andrea Lesic-Thomas, “Behind Bakhtin: Russian Formalism and Kristeva’s Intertextuality”, *Paragraph*, 28/3 (2005), 1-20, Karine Zbinden, *Bakhtin between East and West: Cross-Cultural Transmission* (Oxford: Legenda, 2006), pp. 10-35, Dragan Kujundžić, *The Returns of History: Russian Nietzscheans After Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997). See also Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003) for a useful discussion of how the term has been expanded.

<sup>79</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Théorie de la littérature: textes des formalistes russes* (Paris: Seuil, 1965) and *Mikhail Bakhtine: le principe dialogique* (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

largely uncontested, if somewhat misplaced, authority on the subject and contributed to the perceived exoticism of their source material.<sup>80</sup> Such a view might be supported by Todorov's somewhat anachronistic translation of "dialogism" as "intertextualité" in his 1981 critical study of Bakhtin.<sup>81</sup>

Michael Holquist has observed that the mediation of Bakhtinian dialogism through a French critical tradition was serendipitously in line with the critic's own view (expressed much later in his career) that cultures reveal themselves most profoundly through the lens of other cultures, and that in the realm of culture, "outsiderness" is the "most powerful lever" of understanding:

В области культуры вненаходимость — самый могучий рычаг понимания. Чужая культура только в глазах *другой* культуры раскрывает себя полнее и глубже (но не во всей полноте, потому что придут и другие культуры, которые увидят и поймут еще больше). Один смысл раскрывает свои глубины, встретившись и соприкоснувшись с другим, чужим смыслом: между ними начинается как бы *диалог*, который преодолевает замкнутость и односторонность этих смыслов, этих культур.<sup>82</sup>

In fact, conceptions of literary evolution as a process unfolding crucially *in dialogue* with divergent or even subversive strains of what might typically be termed "literary"—whether in the form of foreign literatures, the works of previously overlooked (i.e. non-canonical) authors, or sub-literary genres—had long been implicit in Russian Formalist thought and its various expressions. Whilst their disapproval of historicist or biographical readings meant

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<sup>80</sup> Zbinden, *Bakhtin between East and West*, pp. 1-2. Elsewhere, Zbinden stresses that Kristeva "spoke more or less in a vacuum with only the echo of her own words for feedback", and that her resultant authority on Bakhtin can ironically be attributed to an "absence of real dialogue." Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>81</sup> "Le terme qu'il [Bakhtine] emploie, pour designer cette relation de chaque énoncé aux autres énoncés, est *dialogisme* ; mais ce terme central est, comme on peut s'y attendre, chargé d'une pluralité de sens parfois embarrassante ; un peu comme j'ai transposé « métalinguistique » en « translinguistique », j'emploierai donc ici de préférence, pour le sens le plus inclusif, le terme d'*intertextualité*, introduit par Julia Kristeva dans sa présentation de Bakhtine". Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtine*, p. 95.

<sup>82</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979), pp. 334-5.

that the Formalists did not theorise explicitly the transnational circulation of ideas or stories *per se*, Formalist criticism frequently exhibited an interest in the transnational or cross-cultural dimension of literature. Translation, adaptation, estrangement, knight's moves, parody: each of these processes indicated the specific potentiality of literature as a form whose basic matter was language, and which thus developed both within and across contained national traditions. Viktor Shklovkii's 1921 pamphlet "*Tristram Shendi*" *Sterna i teoriia romana* for instance turned to a notoriously "formless" foreign novel as a vehicle for critiquing popular judgments of literary works according to banal "extra-literary values" (as opposed to their stylistic devices).<sup>83</sup> Eikhenbaum's 1925 essay "O. Genri i teoriia novelly", in a similar vein, deployed the American short story writer O. Henry to explicate his theory on the interaction between distinct genres—the short story and the novel—within national traditions, with the caveat that the same theory might easily be applied to the Russian case.<sup>84</sup> Eikhenbaum explicitly referred to the time lapse between literatures being read in their original form and accessed in translation, arguing that from 1919 onwards "Russian literature yielded its place, as it were, to world literature."<sup>85</sup> His interest in the interaction between literary forms was thus situated within the context of delayed interactions between distinct national literatures.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> "Формы искусства объясняются своею художественною закономерностью а не бытовой мотивировкой." Viktor Shklovskii, "*Tristram Shendi*" *Sterna i teoriia romana* (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1983), p. 39.

<sup>84</sup> Boris Eikhenbaum, "O. Genri i teoriia novelly" was first published in *Zvezda*, 6 (1925), 291-308. Here cited from Eikhenbaum, "O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story", trans. I. R. Titunik (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1968), p. 4. I discuss this essay in more depth in chapter three of this thesis.

<sup>85</sup> Eikhenbaum, "O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story", p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> If nothing else, it is certainly interesting that the term Kristeva proposed as an alternative to "intertextuality" ("transposition") in 1974 had already been employed by Roman Jakobson in 1959 to outline his model of three different types of translation, with the third denoting the very same interaction between texts for which Kristeva sought to account: "Only creative transposition is possible: either intralingual transposition — from one poetic shape into another, or interlingual transposition — from one language into another, or finally intersemiotic transposition — from one system of signs into another, e.g., from verbal art into music, dance, cinema, or painting." Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", in R. A. Brower, ed., *On Translation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 232-9; cited here from Lawrence Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 126-31 (p. 131).

The members of *Opoiaz* regarded literature in terms of rupture and discontinuity from an immediate past, rather than seamless succession.<sup>87</sup> Formalist critics were less concerned with mere observation of a particular struggle than with understanding its potential range and outcome, or its function within the wider process.<sup>88</sup> They envisioned literary progression as non-linear, full of detours and “leaps” and, to that end, they mechanised the lexicon of heredity (incidentally, far more expansively and flexibly than Bloom’s derivative father-son conflict later would). Tynianov’s own patrilineal chain incorporated the grandfather as a route through whom the son could circumvent his father’s influence: “А между тем скачок уже сделан, и мы скорее напоминаем дедов, чем отцов, которые с дедами боролись.”<sup>89</sup> Shklovskii further skewed the father-son struggle, displacing it on to uncles and nephews: “in the history of art the legacy passes not from father to son, but from uncle to nephew.”<sup>90</sup> In accounting for brotherly bonds, as well as those between more distant relations, the Formalists were thus highly attuned to discontinuities and “side steps” as essential components of the genealogical framework. The family tree conceit moreover indicated that the agency and trajectory of a given author were highly contingent upon his predecessors.<sup>91</sup>

Although neither Shklovskii nor Tynianov expressed it in such terms, their acknowledgment of a wider and more diffuse cast of “relatives” as integral agents of the literary process implicitly expanded the potential range of interactions *between* those agents.

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<sup>87</sup> The Formalist insistence on novelty garnered critiques that its significance to literary progression was overstated, and that it was not a legitimate criterion for aesthetic value.

<sup>88</sup> One might similarly regard Osip Brik’s extreme anti-authorial ethos as a more audacious precursor to Barthes’ *mort de l’auteur*. In his 1923 article, “Т. н. формал’nyi metod”, Brik declared that “there are no poets or literary figures, there is poetry and literature,” and provocatively asserted that if Pushkin had not written *Evgenii Onegin*, someone else would have. Osip Brik, “Т. н. формал’nyi metod”, *LEF*, 1 (1923), 213-5 (p. 213). See also Graham Roberts, *The Last Soviet Avant-Garde: OBERIU – Fact, Fiction, Metafiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 28.

<sup>89</sup> Tynianov, “Promezhutok”, in *Arkhaisty i novatory* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1929), pp. 541-80 (pp. 558-9).

<sup>90</sup> Shklovskii, *Literature and Cinematography*, trans. Irina Masinovsky (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2008), p. 33. Elsewhere in this article, Shklovskii explicitly drew an analogy between the development of new artistic devices and drastic social change, asserting that “[t]he replacement of forms usually occurs in a revolutionary manner.” *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>91</sup> Clare Cavanagh has discussed Formalist ideas of literary genealogy in relation to Osip Mandel’stam’s modernist self-creation (see Clare Cavanagh, *Osip Mandel’stam and the Modernist Creation of Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 10-13).

In opening out the discussion from the narrow lens of parent-child relations, the Formalists paid attention to literatures of cultural traditions once or twice removed from an author's native tradition. Boris Eikhenbaum had for instance emphasised Tolstoi's youthful propensity for eighteenth-century grandfathers of English and French literatures, such as Sterne and Rousseau, which he saw as an "organic and natural phenomenon" ("явление органическое и закономерное"): "английская и французская литература этой эпохи составляет его главное и излюбленное чтение [...] Руссо и Стерн, духовные вожди эпохи Карамзина и Жуковского, оказываются его любимыми писателями".<sup>92</sup> Eikhenbaum's conclusion was informed by a critical perception of literary affinity, as well as a knowledge that Tolstoi himself was extremely interested in Enlightenment and sentimental authors. Elsewhere, considering Lermontov's engagement with foreign authors, he expressed the view that individual cases of influence were never simply an interaction between two creative personae, but were more aptly an encounter between two national traditions. Consequently, the foreign writer did not give rise to a new trend alone:

Говоря о «влияниях», мы забываем, что иностранный автор сам по себе образовать нового «направления» не может, потому что каждая литература развивается по своему, на основе собственных традиций. Входя в чужую литературу, иностранный автор преобразуется и дает ей не то, что у него вообще есть и чем он типичен в своей литературе, а то, чего от него требуют. [...] Никакого «влияния» в настоящем смысле слова и не бывает, потому что иностранный автор прививается на чужой почве не по собственному желанию, а по вызову.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Boris Eikhenbaum, *Molodoi Tolstoi* (Petersburg/Berlin: Izdatel'stvo Z. I. Grzhebina, 1922), pp. 16-17.

<sup>93</sup> Boris Eikhenbaum, *Lermontov* (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1924), p. 28.

For Eikhenbaum, literary influence was an interaction between two separate systems.<sup>94</sup> In order to be successfully assimilated, the foreign influence must adapt to its new surrounding; the process of transcultural influence is thus one of mutation, in which the “foreign” element is not necessarily the attribute for which its author is most lauded within his native context. Or, as Erlich puts it, “the borrowed motif is usually not what the ‘lender’ does best, but what the ‘borrower’ needs most.”<sup>95</sup> Eikhenbaum disputes the notion of the predecessor’s agency in discussions of influence, arguing that when an author is transplanted into foreign soil, he does not step over of his own accord, but is invited, and thus provides what is requested from him within the new (i.e. non-native) sphere.

The Formalists sought to explicate the tension between old and new (or familiar and foreign) at the heart of the literary process, as epitomised in Boris Tomashevskii’s contention that in order for a device to be “perceptible” (“ощутимый”), it must either be very new or very old.<sup>96</sup> To escape one’s immediate influences, it was necessary to reach even further back, or turn in another direction. Erlich has identified the influence of Broder Christiansen’s concept of *Differenzqualität* (divergence from the norm as a positive or productive attribute of the artistic work) upon the critical output of Shklovskii and Tynianov in particular.<sup>97</sup> The criterion of novelty as a factor contributing to artistic worth was thus not entirely novel, and had itself emerged from the traffic of foreign ideas across Russian borders. One may observe the general emphasis on unfamiliar attributes of the literary work in Shklovskii’s equation of automatism with artistic stagnation in “Iskusstvo kak priem”, or in the non-linear “knight’s move” model of literary progression he puts forward in *Khod konia* (1923): “конь не

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<sup>94</sup> This sentiment echoed Shklovskii’s metaphor for the relationship between “art” and “the artist” as Brownian motion, which pre-emptively paraphrased Kristevan intertextuality: “art is not created by a single will, a single genius. The individual creator is only a geometric locus of intersecting lines, of forces born outside himself.” Shklovskii, *Literature and Cinematography*, p. 27.

<sup>95</sup> Erlich, pp. 267-8;

<sup>96</sup> Boris Tomashevskii, *Teoriia literatury* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1931), p. 157.

<sup>97</sup> Erlich, p. 178.

свободен — он ходит в бок потому, что прямая дорога ему запрещена.”<sup>98</sup> Tynianov would later echo this ethos in his argument that after Pushkin, poetry did not move forwards or backwards, but *sideways*, to Lermontov, Tiutchev and Benediktov: “То же мог сказать и Пушкин — поэзия в 30-х годах мимо его ушла не вперед и не назад, а вкось: к сложным образованиям Лермонтова, Тютчева, Бенедиктова.”<sup>99</sup>

Tynianov’s conception of literary progression as a “new restructuring of old elements”, through which parody becomes an act of combat, equally stressed the power of seeing old elements afresh, in an unfamiliar context: “всякая литературная преемственность есть прежде всего борьба, разрушение старого целого и новая стройка старых элементов.”<sup>100</sup> Shklovskii traced the artwork’s march “from birth to death”, or from novelty to automatised familiarity:

Всякая художественная форма проходит путь от рождения к смерти, от видения и чувственного восприятия, когда вещи вылюбовываются и выглядываются в каждом своем перегибе до узнавания, когда вещь, форма делается тупым штучником-эпигоном, по памяти, по традиции, и не видится самым покупателем.”<sup>101</sup>

In Tynianov’s conception, which actively plays on the language of Shklovskii’s “*Iskusstvo kak priem*”, the old, automatised device is not discarded, but transplanted into a new setting, either made “perceptible” or rendered absurd through parody. This is how, according to Tynianov, Dostoevskii was both formed by, and formed himself in opposition to, Gogol’s legacy: in reproducing Gogolian devices to an excessive degree, he exposed their artifice.

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<sup>98</sup> On the same page he ironically states that he is writing “for Russians abroad”: “Я пишу для русских за-границей”; see Shklovskii, *Khod konia* (Berlin: Helikon, 1923), p. 10.

<sup>99</sup> Tynianov, “Pushkin i Tiutchev”, in *Arkhaisty i novatory*, pp. 330-66 (p. 366).

<sup>100</sup> Iurii Tynianov, “Dostoevskii i Gogol’ (k teorii parodii)”, in *Arkhaisty i novatory*, pp. 412–55 (p. 413). Tynianov’s article clearly builds on Shklovskii’s brilliant but underdeveloped ideas from his pamphlet on *Tristram Shandy*.

<sup>101</sup> Shklovskii, *Khod konia*, p. 88. The anti-capitalist subtext of Shklovskii’s wording foreshadows the anti-consumerist tone of Barthes’ and Kristeva’s theories.

The Formalists' enquiries were often grounded in source study, and were thus not unanchored, abstract systems predicated on a tension between macro- and microstructures, instead being explicated through particular examples. Their flexible and often unorthodox readings of canonical authors such as Pushkin and Lermontov moreover emphasised that the author was not a figure of worship, as seen in Tomashevskii's critique of the common blank division of Russian literature into "the Old Testament (before Pushkin) and the New Testament (after Pushkin)."<sup>102</sup>

The appeal of the various motifs of Formalist thought to newly-deracinated artists during the 1920s and '30s is arguably self-evident.<sup>103</sup> It is not hard to imagine why a model of literary evolution as a gradual process of naturalisation and assimilation of foreign or strange components should have appealed to Russian émigrés, who had themselves been more drastically and irrevocably uprooted from their homes. Nor is it difficult to conceive of why the ahistoricism of *Opoiaz*, and particularly their interest in sub-literary genres such as reportage, feuilletons and memoir, might have spoken to émigré artists such as Gazdanov, whose principal avenues for publication now lay in extra-literary fora such as newspapers and journals whose content was partly (but often not exclusively) literary. Formalist ideas of the literary process as non-linear or zig-zagging coincided, moreover, with the broader modernist project of interrogating the canon. This perhaps explains the strong affinity between Eliot's critical stance (which emerged from a distinctly Western cultural context during precisely the same period) and the Formalist emphasis on the tension between the canon and individual

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<sup>102</sup> Boris Tomashevskii, *Pushkin*, p. 74, cited in Erlich, p. 263.

<sup>103</sup> The émigré poet and literary critic Vladislav Khodasevich would appear to be the most obvious exception to this rule: he publicly dissented from Formalism as "a system analogous to Bolshevism in its radical separation of material devices from content" (see John Malmstad, "Khodasevich and Formalism: A Poet's Dissent", in Robert Louis Jackson and Stephen Rudy, eds, *Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance* (New Haven: Yale, 1985), pp. 68-81); Dale Peterson has observed that whilst Vladislav Khodasevich and V. Sirin (Vladimir Nabokov) both polemicised with Shklovskii's "doctrinaire Formalism", the former still chose to analyse Sirin's art in terms consistent with Formalism, emphasising for instance Sirin's use of "device" ("прием") in his 1937 article "O Sirine" (see Dale Peterson, "Knight's Move: Nabokov, Shklovsky and the Afterlife of Sirin", *Nabokov Studies*, 11 (2007-8), 25-37).



artistic contributions to it.<sup>104</sup> The Formalists' emphatic rejection of anachronistic categorisations of certain artistic schools, and their view that the artist does not always seek to emulate what has gone before, legitimised the prospect of carving out one's own path. Eikhenbaum's notion of artistic creation as an historical act of self-awareness ("Творчество (а индивидуальность есть понятие творческой личности), вообще, есть акт осознания себя в потоке истории") would undoubtedly have chimed with first-wave émigrés who regarded their continued cultural production as a mission, but it also emblematised the widespread reappraisal of, and break with, the past ongoing all over Europe (and beyond) during the interwar period.<sup>105</sup> As such, Formalist thought correlates with younger émigrés' struggle against and alignment with both Russian and foreign traditions. These young writers could quite legitimately have conceived of their exilic fates as the symptom of involuntary subordination to an anonymous system from which they could not escape. However, as Gazdanov's case illustrates, they opted to assert both authorial and readerly autonomy by consciously assembling their own networks of influences.

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<sup>104</sup> The affinity between Russian Formalist and Anglo-American New Criticism has been a popular topic of inquiry, especially given their lack of unmediated access to one another until much later, although there are limits to this comparison. Erlich emphasises Eliot and the Formalists' common shift in focus from the *poet* to the *poetry*, contending that the Formalist association with avant-garde forms and modern art meant that they were broadly anti-establishment, whereas many of the American new-critics were conservative intellectuals. Erlich, p. 274-5. See also Ewa W. Thompson, *Russian Formalism and Anglo-American New Criticism: A Comparative Study* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

<sup>105</sup> Eikhenbaum, *Skvoz' literaturu: sbornik statei* (Leningrad: Academia, 1924), p. 236.

*Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa* as a Case Study for Gazdanov's Intertextual Practice

As the preceding discussion of the Formalists indicates, the renewed attention to Pushkin amongst first-wave Russian émigrés reconsidering questions of national identity and culture was not a unique phenomenon. Whether undertaken in Soviet Russia or Russia Abroad, the modernist project by definition entailed an interrogation of the literary canon and its most authoritative figureheads, and Pushkin's legacy as the "first" Russian writer made him a very obvious candidate. Boris Gasparov notes, for instance, that the return to Pushkin in Russia (and the Soviet Union) during the early twentieth century was considered by many of those involved as a sort of second coming of the prophet-poet: "The mythological parallels drawn between the two 'ages'—between Pushkin's era and the Modernist period—led to the perception of the latter epoch as a sort of reincarnation, as a second drawing of the Pushkinian 'sun'."<sup>106</sup> Naturally, this modernist reappraisal was not entirely uncritical, as the Futurists' demand that he be cast overboard the steamship of modernity might attest.<sup>107</sup> In his "Problema poetiki Pushkina", originally delivered orally at an evening devoted to the poet at the Dom Literatorov in 1921, Boris Eikhenbaum contended that Pushkin's towering stature had been debased to a "plaster statuette" whose destruction was long overdue: "He монументом, а гипсовой статуэткой, стал Пушкин."<sup>108</sup> He argued that the distancing effects of recent literary, social and political revolutions had permitted the contemporary 1920s reader to see Pushkin more clearly than before:

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<sup>106</sup> Boris Gasparov, "The 'Golden Age' and its Role in the Cultural Mythology of Russian Modernism", in Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno, eds, *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 1-16 (p. 10).

<sup>107</sup> James Rann has shown that the Futurists' reception of Pushkin's influence was not, as has often been implied, unanimously negative, and that their oft-cited gesture of violence towards him in fact "concealed and overcompensated for an opposite pole of affection for the national poet". See James Rann, "A Stowaway on the Steamship of Modernity" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College London, 2013), p. 13.

<sup>108</sup> Boris Eikhenbaum, "Problema poetiki Pushkina", in *Skvoz' literaturu*, pp. 157-70 (p. 157). The evening was one in a series of events held in June 1921 in order to commemorate Pushkin's life and death.

До сих пор он был близок нам, как близка привычная вещь, которую мы именно благодаря этому не видим. Отдаленность, которую почувствовали мы от Пушкина, пройдя сквозь символизм и вместе с футуризмом очутившись в хаосе революции, есть отдаленность та самая, которая нужна для настоящего восприятия. Так, художник отходит от своей собственной картины, чтобы увидеть ее.<sup>109</sup>

The principal distance to which Eikhenbaum referred was of course temporal, but Russian émigrés were feeling the effects of a rather more empirical distance from their past. This physical dislocation—and the defiant desire to overcome it—was surely a prime factor in the continued veneration of Pushkin’s potent cultural mythology within the various centres of the interwar emigration, but particularly in Paris. Robert Hughes for instance cites the Day of Russian Culture, which became the “national holiday of Russia Abroad”, having been inaugurated by émigrés in Estonia in 1924, and adopted by those in Berlin, Prague and Paris the following year, when its date was altered to coincide with Pushkin’s birthday.<sup>110</sup> The 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth in 1924 and the centenary of his death in 1937 brought with them a flurry of cultural events that in certain instances resulted in collaboration between prominent figures of the Russian émigré and French cultural establishments. Hughes notes for instance that Paul Valéry delivered a speech at a commemorative concert in 1937, and André Gide (by then disillusioned with Soviet Russia, his denunciatory *Retour de l’U.R.S.S.* having been published in 1936) made public statements praising him, whilst Jean Cocteau designed the poster for an exhibition of Pushkiniana held at the Salle Pleyel from March until April of that year.<sup>111</sup> Certain émigrés also seized on the opportunities exile afforded to enrich and expand

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>110</sup> Robert P. Hughes, “Pushkin and Russia Abroad”, in Andrew Kahn, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Pushkin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 174-87 (p. 174).

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 178-9. The exhibition prompted discord when the Soviet ambassador, Potemkin, demanded that he should formally open it on behalf of his government. Its émigré organisers refused, and it was moved at the last minute from the Bibliothèque nationale to the Salle Pleyel, where it attracted over 10,000 visitors (pp. 179-80).

Pushkin's international reputation, with writers such as Nabokov and Tsvetaeva promoting him and his verse (in their own translations) before French audiences to whom he was otherwise not especially well-known.<sup>112</sup> Nabokov's *Dar* (1938), whose heroine he famously proclaimed was Russian literature, pays significant homage to Pushkin, whose immediacy through verse is ironically set against the absence of Fyodor's missing biological father ("Пушкин входил в его кровь. С голосом Пушкина сливался голос отца").<sup>113</sup>

But equally implicit in the modernist reappraisal of Pushkin was the freedom to critique and challenge him openly. Although he was undeniably an historical authority for émigré writers seeking to redefine their cultural perimeters, his primacy was also contested, with one of the most protracted polemics in the émigré press being his frequent juxtaposition with Mikhail Lermontov. The comparison was not novel—Eikhenbaum's 1921 speech had employed Lermontov as a rhetorical counterpoint to Pushkin in order to explicate the notion of literary evolution as contingent on a struggle with one's predecessor(s): "Юноша-Лермонтов идет по его следам как бы только для того, чтобы набраться сил для борьбы с ним же."<sup>114</sup> How apt, then, that the difference of opinion regarding Pushkin and Lermontov in interwar émigré circles should have crystallised along broadly similar lines of old and young. The so-called "Paris note", the grouping of younger-generation émigré writers clustered around Montparnasse, disputed the orthodoxy of Pushkin's unparalleled authority prevalent amongst their émigré elders, however their divergence was not the product of juvenile contrarianism. They openly favoured Lermontov's romantic exploration of spiritual alienation, in which they found not only an appropriate model for their own cultural

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., pp. 184-5. Tsvetaeva read her own French translations of poems such as "Prorok", "Besy" and "Poet" on multiple occasions, including a February 1937 literary festival organised by black Parisians and chaired by the minister of colonies and the Soviet ambassador. Nabokov's essay "Pouchkine ou le Vrai et le vraisemblable", which included several translations of Pushkin's verse, was originally delivered as a lecture before appearing in the *Nouvelle Revue française*, 282 (1937), 362-78. He would later (in 1964) publish a highly controversial English translation of *Evgenii Onegin*.

<sup>113</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, "Dar", in Nabokov, *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda*, 5 vols (St Petersburg: Simpozium, 2000), IV, 188-541 (p. 280).

<sup>114</sup> Eikhenbaum, "Problemy poetiki Pushkina", p. 159.

estrangement, but also a clear resonance with the angst and isolation of contemporary western European letters.<sup>115</sup> The divided loyalties of old and young became more deeply entrenched with the 1930 arrival on the émigré literary scene of *Chisla*, a new journal whose express aim was showcasing the younger generation. Roger Hagglund has discussed the popular image of *Chisla* and those younger writers for whom it was conceived as programmatically “anti-Pushkin”:

Some of the émigrés (especially the *Numbers* group) felt a greater affinity for Lermontov, yearning in his political and metaphysical exile for a distant land; they tended to draw away from Puškin with his formal perfection and solid sense of earthly existence that they could not share.<sup>116</sup>

As Galin Tihanov has observed, the repeated juxtaposition of Pushkin and Lermontov in émigré circles was indicative of an underlying generational shift in opinion regarding the social mission of literature and the public role of the writer.<sup>117</sup> The editors of *Chisla* sought to reflect the prevailing atmosphere of spiritual and social crisis pervasive in interwar Europe as a consequence of war, increased focus on individual psychology and interaction with modern technology.<sup>118</sup> This stated aim elicited critiques of pessimism, or worse, of aestheticising death.<sup>119</sup> But death had been a harsh reality of the conditions of war and urban poverty in

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<sup>115</sup> For a discussion of the frequent juxtaposition of Pushkin and Lermontov and its relevance to wider critical debates of the interwar emigration, see Tihanov, “Russian Émigré Literary Criticism and Theory between the World Wars”, pp. 156-62.

<sup>116</sup> Roger Hagglund, “Numbers and the Russian Émigrés in the 1930s”, *Slavic and East European Journal*, 29/1 (1985), 39-51 (p. 49). Instances of criticism of *Chisla*’s anti-Pushkinism in the émigré press include A. Savel’ev “Chisla. No 2-3.”, *Rul’*, 2837 (1930), 2-3, Alfred Bem, “Pis’ma o literature. ‘Chisla’”, *Rul’*, 3244 (1931) 2-3, and most interestingly an attack in the May 1930 issue of *Krasnaia nov’* “assailing ‘the fascist rabble of bourgeois swine whose forefathers were D’Anthès and the pack that surrounded Nicholas I [...] [who] continue their cannibal dance’ around the corpse of Pushkin”, which elicited a response from the editors: Georgii Adamovich, “Otvét nashim kritikam”, *Chisla*, 7/8 (1933), 230-32.

<sup>117</sup> Tihanov, “Russian Émigré Literary Criticism and Theory between the World Wars”, p. 162.

<sup>118</sup> Iurii Terapiano’s “Chelovek tridsatykh godov” exemplifies this approach. Terapiano, “Chelovek tridsatykh godov”, *Chisla*, 7/8 (1933), 210-12.

<sup>119</sup> Marc Slonim stated that “«Числа» очень много пишут о смерти,” partially responding to Georgii Fedotov’s assertion that the new journal signaled “a surrender to death and a retreat from life”. Marc Slonim, “O Chislakh”, *Novaia gazeta*, 2 (1931), 3; Georgii Fedotov, “O smerti, kul’ture i ‘Chislakh’”, *Chisla*, 4 (1930-31), 143-8.

which many younger-generation authors had matured and begun to be published. It is not so surprising that the spiritual angst of Dostoevskii or Lermontov seemed a more fitting expression of their reality than Pushkinian irony. Lermontov ascended for some as “a better embodiment of the contemporary understanding of literature and the public role of the writer: no longer a “national poet,” but a diasporic voice in a culture subsisting increasingly on adaptation, hybridity, and live interaction with Western literature, art and philosophy.”<sup>120</sup> Iurii Fel’zen (1894-1943) was one member of the younger generation who consciously cultivated an association with Lermontov, and his short story “Neravenstvo” appeared alongside works by, amongst others, Gazdanov, Boris Poplavskii and Sergei Sharshun in the first issue of *Chisla*.<sup>121</sup> Fel’zen’s later novel *Pis’ma o Lermontove* (1935), one in a metafictional trilogy, overtly engaged with and reinterpreted Lermontov through the prism of the modern French psychological novel of Proust.<sup>122</sup>

Gazdanov’s case is more ambiguous than Fel’zen’s, and illustrates that it is far too simplistic to state, as Sigrun Frank has, that the younger generation deliberately “deposed of Pushkin as the father of Russian literature” in a bid to assert their claim to that same heritage.<sup>123</sup> Although two of his short prose works (“Vodianaia tiur’ma” and “Metr Rai”)<sup>124</sup> appeared in *Chisla*, Gazdanov remained conspicuously silent—given his increasing outspokenness on young émigré literature during the 1930s—on the question of Pushkin and Lermontov.<sup>125</sup> He nonetheless refers in a 1929 essay “Mif o Rozanove” to “пушкинианцев,

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<sup>120</sup> Tihanov, “Russian Émigré Literary Criticism and Theory between the World Wars”, p. 162.

<sup>121</sup> Iurii Fel’zen, “Neravenstvo”, *Chisla*, 1 (1930), 95-116.

<sup>122</sup> Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, p. 129. For a fuller discussion of Fel’zen’s recasting of Lermontov and Proust, see *ibid.*, pp. 121-34.

<sup>123</sup> Sigrun Frank, “Publishing: Russian Émigré Literature”, in David Bethea and Sigrun Frank, eds, *Vladimir Nabokov in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 139-49 (p. 141).

<sup>124</sup> Gazdanov, “Vodianaia tiur’ma”, *Chisla*, 1 (1930), 29-47 and “Metr Rai”, *Chisla*, 5 (1931), 64-79.

<sup>125</sup> As Tat’iana Krasavchenko notes, Gazdanov (like Nabokov) did not directly juxtapose them. See T. N. Krasavchenko, “Lermontov, Gazdanov i svoeobrazie ekzistentsializma russkikh mladoemigrantov”, in Krasavchenko, Vasil’eva and Khadonova, eds, *Gaito Gazdanov i “nezamechennoe pokolenie”*, pp. 27-49 (p. 30).

которые только компрометируют Пушкина в глазах незнающих людей”.<sup>126</sup> If his epigraphs are any indication of influence, then Gazdanov categorically did not renounce Pushkin, whose *Evgenii Onegin* is excerpted at the start of *Vecher u Kler* (1929), and lines from whose “Elegiia” form the epigraph to the short story “Товаришчк Брак” (1928).<sup>127</sup> “Elegiia”, incidentally, is ironically life-affirming (“Но не хочу, о други, умирать;/Я жить хочу, чтоб мыслить и страдать”) and rather problematises the notion that young émigré writers were united in an ethos of consuming alienation and morbid resignation.<sup>128</sup> (Its lines are also eerily prophetic, given that Gazdanov would ultimately live “to think and to suffer” well beyond World War II, where many of his “Paris note” contemporaries tragically would not.) For Gazdanov, whose intertextual method deliberately straddles time periods, spaces and linguistic traditions, an interest in Lermontov or contemporary European letters did not necessarily preclude an interest in Pushkin, and vice versa. His post-1945 output confirms that he certainly did not consider Pushkin and Lermontov to be mutually exclusive. *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol’fa* (1947), as I shall now discuss, responds to the former as an enduring “father of Russian literature” far more extensively than an epigraph, while the short story, “Княжна Мери” (1953), which I discuss in my first chapter, also overtly alludes to the latter.<sup>129</sup>

Pushkin’s own exilic experience and multilingual formation (in common with Lermontov, amongst others) situated him as a valid pre-cursor to the productive linguistic insecurity felt by many interwar émigrés, even if Pushkin never actually left the boundaries of the Russian Empire. Although historically held up as Russia’s national poet, Pushkin also

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<sup>126</sup> Gazdanov, “Mif o Rozanove”, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 719-31 (p. 719).

<sup>127</sup> The epigraph of *Vecher u Kler*, which I discuss in the second and third chapters of this thesis, comes from Tat’iana’s letter to Onegin: “Вся жизнь моя была залогом/Свиданья верного с тобой.” The epigraph of “Товаришчк Брак” comes from “Elegiia”: “Но, как вино – печаль минувших дней/В моей душе чем старе, тем сильней.”

<sup>128</sup> Aleksandr Pushkin, “Elegiia”, in Aleksandr Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, 10 vols (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1974), II, 299.

<sup>129</sup> “Княжна Мери” unmistakably and subversively alludes to the title of the fourth chapter of Lermontov’s *Geroi nashego vremeni* (1840).

represented the triumph of gallicism in Russia, and was himself widely read in Russian, French, Italian and English literatures. In her analysis of *Mednyi vsadnik*, Priscilla Meyer has highlighted the significance of another periodical, the *Revue étrangère de la littérature, des sciences et des arts*, founded in St Petersburg in 1832 and published in French for a Russian readership. One hundred years before interwar émigrés were debating his worth in Parisian journals, Pushkin himself subscribed to this journal whose appeal lay in its “lively evocation of the Parisian scene.”<sup>130</sup> Even Dostoevskii’s speech at the 1880 inauguration of his memorial in Moscow, whilst nationalistically claiming him as Russia’s greatest writer, had lauded his ability to distil foreign influences within his Russian tongue:

Пушкин лишь один из всех мировых поэтов обладает свойством  
 перевоплощаться вполне в чужую национальность ... Перечтите “Дон-Жуана”,  
 и если бы не было подписи Пушкина, вы бы никогда не узнали, что это написал  
 не испанец. Какие глубокие, фантастические образы в поэме “Пир во время  
 чумы”! Но в этих фантастических образах слышен гений Англии.<sup>131</sup>

An ability to synthesise foreign influences within one’s national language undoubtedly would have held an allure for Gazdanov, whose continued commitment to his mother tongue was complicated. He refused to write in a language other than Russian, and yet his prose is frequently littered with French (and, to a lesser extent, English) words, phrases, dialogue, literary allusions and place names. For Gazdanov, the continued interaction between French (or indeed English) and Russian, was firmly entrenched in the Russian literary tradition of which Pushkin was a figurehead.

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<sup>130</sup> Priscilla Meyer, *How the Russians Read the French: Lermontov, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), p. 17.

<sup>131</sup> Fedor Dostoevskii, *Rech’ o Pushkine*, cited in A. L. Volynskii, *Dostoevskii i Pushkin: rech’ i stat’ia F. M. Dostoevskogo* (St Petersburg: Parfenon, 1921), pp. 38-51 (p. 48).



*Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa* (hereafter *Prizrak*) is Gazdanov's best-known and best-travelled novel.<sup>132</sup> Written during World War II, it was initially serialised in *Novyi zhurnal* from 1947 to 1948, appearing in English, Italian, French and Spanish translations between 1950 and 1955, although as with many of Gazdanov's novels it would only be published in full in Russian posthumously.<sup>133</sup> The plot centres around the narrator's memory of killing a man whilst fighting in the Civil War on the side of the White Army at the age of sixteen, as laid down in its opening sentence: "Из всех моих воспоминаний, из всего бесконечного количества моей жизни самым тягостным было воспоминание о единственном убийстве, которое я совершил."<sup>134</sup> The memory is relayed in a disjointed prose whose hazy impressionism ("Я не мог бы точно описать то, что было до этого, потому что все проходило в смутных и неверных очертаниях")<sup>135</sup> is sporadically embellished with snatches of detailed description, such as the make of his gun ("это был прекрасный парабеллум")<sup>136</sup> or a close-up image of the victim's foaming mouth as he gasps his final breaths: "Я наклонился над ним и увидел, что он умирает; пузыри розовой пены вскакивали и лопались на его губах."<sup>137</sup> The reader is then abruptly ejected from the flashback into Paris where, an indeterminate "many years later" ("через много лет в Париже"), the narrator now sits at home reading.<sup>138</sup>

Here we learn that the catalyst for this vivid opening sequence has been a collection of three short stories by an unknown English author (named Alexander Wolf, whose name is

<sup>132</sup> Gazdanov, *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa*, *Novyi zhurnal*, 16 (1947), 142-93, 17 (1947), 26-59, and 18 (1948), 26-69. Cited here from Gazdanov, *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, III, 3-136.

<sup>133</sup> Gazdanov, *Le spectre d'Alexandre Wolf*, trans. Jean Sendy (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1951), *The Specter of Alexander Wolf*, trans. Nicholas Wreden (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1950), *El Espectro de Alejandro Wolf*, trans. Miguel Calzada (Barcelona: Luis de Cazalt, 1955), "Contro il destino", *Quattordicinale, Periodici Mondadori*, 25/2 (18 May 1952). See Dienes, *Bibliographie des œuvres de Gaito Gazdanov*, p. 25. The first complete publication of *Prizrak* in Russian was in a 1990 edition prepared by Stanislav Nikonenko. See Gaito Gazdanov, *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa: Romany* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), pp. 138-253.

<sup>134</sup> Gazdanov, *Prizrak*, p. 3.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

transliterated into Cyrillic letters as Aleksandr Vol’f, as in the novel’s title) and now read in English by the Russian émigré narrator, himself also a writer. The third of these stories, “Adventure in the Steppe” (“Приключение в степи”) recounts the events of our narrator’s opening Civil War flashback, but from the perspective of the man whom he believed he had killed. This alternative version bears small but noticeable differences to the flashback we have just read, such as Vol’f’s likening of his horse to one of the horses of the apocalypse, or the estimation that the narrator was “fourteen or fifteen” (“Это был мальчик, наверное, четырнадцати или пятнадцати лет”), when his own version asserted that he was sixteen at the time (“В те времена, когда это происходило, мне было шестнадцать лет”). His conviction that the account is written by his anonymous opponent nonetheless grows, propelling him in search of the mysterious English author: “Для меня почти не оставалось сомнений, что автор рассказа и был тем бледным и неизвестным человеком, в которого я тогда стрелял.”<sup>139</sup> During his quest the narrative self-referentially assumes a range of styles, variously mimicking tropes of detective fiction, film, and reportage.<sup>140</sup> In the novel’s climactic episode, the narrator and Aleksandr Vol’f come face to face, with a more fatal outcome: “С серого ковра, покрывавшего пол этой комнаты, на меня смотрели мертвые глаза Александра Вольфа.”<sup>141</sup>

Reading *Prizrak*, the latency of Pushkin’s “Vystrel”—the first of five short stories in his *Povesti pokojnogo Ivana Petrovicha Belkina* (1831)—is immediately apparent, and has been duly noted by Konstantin Mamaev.<sup>142</sup> Parallels include the recurring exchange of shots uniting the first and second meetings in both works, and the intrusion of a woman between the male opponents in each of the second meetings (in “Vystrel”, the Countess, whose

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>140</sup> An excerpt of *Prizrak* (the boxing match scene, written in reportage style) was published separately under the title “Match” in 1945 (Gazdanov, “Match”, *Vstrecha*, 1 (1945), 17-20).

<sup>141</sup> Gazdanov, *Prizrak*, p. 136.

<sup>142</sup> Mamaev, “Vystrel v Aleksandra Vol’fa”, in Ushakov, ed., *Gaito Gazdanov v kontekste russkoi i zapadnoevropeiskikh literatur*, pp. 124-34.

entrance prompts Silvio to take pity and fire at the painting; in *Prizrak*, Elena Nikolaevna, who is injured in the cross-fire between Vol'f and the narrator). The reader's access to each "side" of the story is in both works strongly contingent upon chance. In "Vystrel", the coincidence of the mutual acquaintance of Silvio, the Count and the narrator comes to light as a result of the narrator's repetition of the anecdote Silvio has relayed to him, which in turn elicits the Count's alternative version of events: "«Нет, — возразил граф, — я все расскажу; он знает, как я обидел его друга: пусть же знает, как Сильвио мне отомстил»".<sup>143</sup> In *Prizrak*, the narrator cannot explain how or why he has acquired Vol'f's book ("мне попал в руки сборник рассказов одного английского автора, имени которого я до сих пор никогда не слышал"),<sup>144</sup> yet he refuses to attribute his *déjà-vu* to coincidence: "Объяснить полное сходство фактов со всеми их характерными особенностями, вплоть до масти и описания лошадей, только рядом совпадений было, мне казалось, невозможно."<sup>145</sup> The plots of "Vystrel" and *Prizrak* each progress through competing acts of retelling ("я все расскажу"; "сборник рассказов"), thus dramatizing the potentially infinite causality between communication (whether oral or written) and reception. Their narrators, and certain peripheral characters, act simultaneously as raconteurs, participants, and reader-listeners in what gradually become complex webs of storytelling. Colonel I.D.P., who has relayed the story to Ivan Belkin, overtly refers to his own "literary imagination", as in his ironic likening of Silvio to "the hero of some mysterious story" he has heard before: "Имея от природы романическое воображение, я всех сильнее прежде сего был привязан к человеку, коего жизнь была загадкою, и который казался мне героем таинственной какой-то повести."<sup>146</sup> In *Prizrak*, the narrator is a protagonist, reader, translator and writer of his own fate. Throughout the novel he repeatedly relates real-life

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<sup>143</sup> Aleksandr Pushkin, *Povesti pokoinogo Ivana Petrovicha Belkina* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1947), p. 23.

<sup>144</sup> Gazdanov, *Prizrak*, p. 9.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>146</sup> Pushkin, *Povesti Belkina*, p. 13.

events to literary clichés, as when he compares his search for the elusive Vol’f to the generic narrative model of a detective novel: “— Это начинает становиться похожим на детективный роман, — сказал я не без некоторой досады.”<sup>147</sup> In calling attention to the banality of certain character types and plot conventions, both Pushkin and Gazdanov inscribe in their works an awareness of the broader literary field within which they are operating. In *Prizrak*, the layering of the narrator’s own *déjà-vu* with the *déjà-entendu* of “Vystrel” compounds the reader’s own creeping *déjà-lu*, contributing to the sense that the novel is haunted by the spectre of another Aleksandr.

The relationship between *Prizrak* and “Vystrel” is, however, more elaborate than a single instance of literary recognition. The narrator of “Vystrel” acts as a physical presence mediating between Silvio and the Count, and this role initially appears to have been elided in *Prizrak*, where the narrator is both reader of and participant in the “duel” of “Adventure in the steppe”. That is, until we recall that he also acts as a mediator between Vol’f and Voznesenskii, who owns a copy of Vol’f’s book—which, not understanding English, he cannot read—and asks the narrator to explain its content: “Вы извините, что я вас так расспрашиваю. По-английски я не знаю, лежит у меня Сашина книга, как рукопись на неизвестном языке.”<sup>148</sup> The narrator does not literally translate, but roughly summarises each story (“Я ему приблизительно рассказал содержание книги”), thereby propagating the divergence of “Adventure in the steppe” even further from the original event that has informed it.<sup>149</sup> The short story’s epigraph, taken from Edgar Allen Poe’s *A Tale of the Ragged Mountains* (1844)—itself an oral narrative within a written narrative—introduces an external referent to the Pushkinian framework: “Но меня поразил третий рассказ: «Приключение в степи». Эпиграфом к нему стояла строка Эдгара По: «Beneath me lay my corpse with

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<sup>147</sup> Gazdanov, *Prizrak*, p. 13.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

the arrow in my temple»”<sup>150</sup> As a writer of macabre short stories, Poe’s presence within a novel constructed around a single macabre short story is fitting, and supports the view that in *Prizrak* Gazdanov is reacting against a tradition of didactic realism.<sup>151</sup> The particular Poe subtext notably contains fragmented instances of prolepsis of “Vystrel” and *Prizrak*, such as the disembodied time travel of the narrator’s enigmatic acquaintance, Augustus Bedloe, or the narrator’s discovery (at the tale’s end) that Bedloe’s obituary has misspelt his surname as “Bedlo”, an inversion of Oldeb, the name of a minor character who had died many years earlier, thereby suggesting that Bedloe might have been Oldeb in reincarnated form. Poe’s coevality with Pushkin (whose *Povesti Belkina* acknowledge their hybrid influences via epigraphs and other citational devices) corroborates a reading of the literary field as fundamentally layered with imports and foreign influences.<sup>152</sup> Whilst Pushkin and Poe were contemporaries, Poe’s works were not published in Russia until 1847, and did not acquire significant renown there until their translation into French by Charles Baudelaire.<sup>153</sup> In his use of the epigraph here, Gazdanov does not merely allude to thematic overlaps between *Prizrak*, “Vystrel” and *A Tale of the Ragged Mountains*. Rather, he constructs a literary space whose boundaries are linguistic as opposed to geographic. In so doing, he consciously situates himself within a nineteenth-century fantastic tradition, but also stands aside from it, thereby enacting a sort of “knight’s move”. This forward-side-step model is again replicated internally in the mutation between the narrator and Vol’f’s competing versions of events.

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>151</sup> At an October 1929 meeting of the *Studio franco-russe*, Gazdanov argued during a discussion on the topic of “L’Inquiétude dans la littérature” that Russian *inquiétude* was attributable to an unquenched thirst for the unfamiliar, citing the influence of both Poe and Gogol’ in Russia. Livak, *Le Studio franco-russe*, p. 60. In his analysis of “Vystrel” alongside *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol’fa*, Konstantin Mamaev argues that it is the space between two parts to which early nineteenth-century writers such as Pushkin and Gogol’ were so attuned, whereas the latter half of the nineteenth century saw a prioritisation of linear continuity as opposed to rupture. Mamaev, p. 124.

<sup>152</sup> In Gazdanov’s archive at the Houghton Library at Harvard University, one of his notebooks contains an unfinished attempt at translating Poe’s 1843 short story, “The Gold-Bug”, into Russian.

<sup>153</sup> Joan Grossman, *Edgar Allen Poe in Russia: A Study in Legend and Literary Influence* (Wurzburg: Jal-Verlag, 1973), pp. 191-3.

Vol’f’s own, on which the narrator interjects (“как писал автор”) as if to remind the reader of his mediating presence, overtly refers to a “стремительный ход коня”:

Белый жеребец продолжал идти своим карьером, приближаясь к тому месту, где с непонятной, как писал автор, неподвижностью, парализованный, быть может, страхом, стоял человек с револьвером в руке. Потом автор задержал стремительный ход коня и приложил винтовку к плечу, но вдруг, не услышав выстрела, почувствовал смертельную боль неизвестно где и горячую тьму в глазах.<sup>154</sup>

The narrator’s paraphrasing of Vol’f’s narrative results in the statement that “the author delayed the horse’s swift advance”. Yet, given that the narrator is reading the story in English many years after the original event, one may also read the clause as a reference to Vol’f’s delayed “knight’s move”. Such a reading is arguably supported by the conflation elsewhere of the pen and the revolver, as when we learn that the narrator keeps the latter safely locked in his writing desk: “Затем я повесил трубку, достал из письменного стола револьвер, проверил, заряжен ли он — он был заряжен, — положил его в карман пиджака и вышел из дому.”<sup>155</sup> This line distils the parallel between the duel and the process of literary succession, suggesting that the pen, like the gun, is necessarily loaded with ammunition before being successfully deployed.

The narrator’s quest to trace Vol’f brings him into contact with a series of external characters, each of whom contributes their voice (and version of events) to the expanding narrative. His efforts to track Vol’f down begin with a letter addressed to his London-based publisher, which goes unanswered. When this avenue fails, he pays a visit in person on his next trip to London, and is there assured by the editor, apparently in fluent French (“Он

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<sup>154</sup> Gazdanov, *Prizrak*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

бегло говорил по-французски”),<sup>156</sup> that Vol’f is an Englishman, his short story is entirely fictional, and this is a case of mistaken identity: “Я понимаю, что ваш интерес к личности мистера Вольфа носит совершенно бескорыстный характер. И вот я должен вам сказать, что мистер Вольф не может быть тем человеком, которого вы имеете в виду.”<sup>157</sup> A month later, a chance encounter with Voznesenskii—a fellow émigré who happens to be holding a copy of the very same book—in a Russian café in Paris, throws up a competing account. According to this conversation, the author of *I’ll Come Tomorrow* is not an Englishman at all, but a Russian émigré named Sasha Vol’f who has eloped with Voznesenskii’s lover, Marina:

— Саша Вольф англичанин! Тогда почему, черт возьми, не японец?

— Вы говорите — Саша Вольф?

— Саша Вольф, Александр Андреевич, если хотите. Такой же англичанин, как мы с вами.<sup>158</sup>

Voznesenskii goes on to explain that Vol’f’s motivation for writing in English is purely financial: “Я ему говорю: отчего, дьявол, по-русски не пишешь? Мы бы почитали. Говорит, нет смысла, по-английски выгоднее, платят лучше.”<sup>159</sup> This detail, alongside the ambiguity as to Vol’f’s nationality, might feasibly be a dig from Gazdanov at an émigré contemporary such as Nabokov, who left Paris just before the war, migrating to America and into the English language.<sup>160</sup> The plausibility of such a jibe is reinforced in the narrator’s speculation that “Vol’f” might easily be a pseudonym: “Я еще раз посмотрел на обложку: «I’ll Come Tomorrow», by Alexander Wolf. Это мог быть, конечно, псевдоним.”<sup>161</sup> In

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>160</sup> Nabokov’s first English-language novel, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, whilst first published in 1941 by the New York publisher New Directions Publishing, had in fact been written during the period that Nabokov spent in Paris, between late 1938 and early 1939.

<sup>161</sup> Gazdanov, *Prizrak*, p. 12.

*Prizrak*, nationality is a means of disguise to be assumed or discarded according to circumstance, and consequently its superficial markers—names and accents—can be deceptive. The disorienting effects of a post-war landscape in which deracination has become ubiquitous are distilled in the narrator’s statement that his Russian acquaintance Elena Nikolaevna’s accent is “neutrally foreign”: “Ваш акцент нейтрально иностранный, если так можно сказать.”<sup>162</sup> Her identity is, as she goes on to explain, a composite of nationalities (Russian, American, French), which stresses the role of narrative in the process of decoding hybridity. Maria Rubins, in her reading of *Prizrak* in dialogue with Hermann Hesse’s *Steppenwolf* (1927), emphasises the orthography of the surname “Vol’f” in Cyrillic as indicating a German (as opposed to English) pronunciation, thus contributing a further layer of unresolved ambiguity in his provenance.<sup>163</sup> In “Vystrel”, Silvio’s foreign (i.e. non-Russian) name compounds the mystery of his past: “Какая-то таинственность окружала его судьбу; он казался русским, а носил иностранное имя.”<sup>164</sup> The linguistic fluidity of Vol’f’s name (Alexander Wolf, Aleksandr Vol’f, Sasha Vol’f), in a similar manner, becomes synonymous with the unsettling obscurity of his history, as well as the threatening unpredictability of a possible future encounter with him, a premonition laid down in the title of his collection (*I’ll Come Tomorrow*), and inscribed as the narrative climax at the end of *Prizrak*.

The threat of a struggle for primacy calls to mind Iurii Tynianov’s theorisation of parody, and his emphasis on the violence of literary succession as a destructive act (“разрушение старого целого и новая стройка старых элементов”).<sup>165</sup> In *Prizrak*, the struggle for primacy is very literally parodied in the boxing match, which we read, once

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>163</sup> Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, p. 262. The stipulation that Vol’f knows German has also been read as a deliberate nod to Sirin (Nabokov), who famously downplayed his German proficiency. See Kibal’nik, *Gaito Gazdanov*, pp. 248-51.

<sup>164</sup> Pushkin, *Povesti Belkina*, p. 10.

<sup>165</sup> Tynianov, “Dostoevskii i Gogol’”, in *Arkhaisty i novatory*, p. 413.



again, via competing accounts: first, through the narrator's "present" description of the event as a spectator in the audience, and second, in his write-up for the newspaper.<sup>166</sup> The match excerpt is thus not only a bathetic version of the duel as combat between separate nationalities ("Один из боксеров был француз, знаменитый Эмиль Дюбуа, другой - американец, Фред Джонсон, который впервые выступал в Европе"),<sup>167</sup> but also mimics newspaper reportage, a "lesser" form of writing than literature:

"Ценность Джонсона, которая до сих пор считалась спорной, вчера проявилась с такой несомненностью, что теперь этот вопрос представляется совершенно разрешенным в самом положительном смысле. Это, впрочем, следовало предполагать, и для некоторых журналистов, располагавших известными сведениями о карьере нового чемпиона мира, исход матча был ясен заранее".<sup>168</sup>

The idea of a foregone conclusion in the fight's outcome echoes the earlier experience of reading Vol'f's story with an awareness of what took place. The narrator's competing identity as a writer both of a novel, and of news, which is referenced repeatedly throughout *Prizrak*, moreover underlines the discontinuity between the obligations of each form, with literature being freer in its representation of reality than journalism. This freedom is for the narrator indicative of literature's superiority, and jarring "out-of-place"-ness (both in the sense of the basic unsuitability of the two forms, and in the sense of a more existential "not belonging") in newspapers: "литература в газетных статьях была действительно неуместна." The self-aware irony of this statement is of course that the only publication avenue for the novel in which it is situated is in serial form in an émigré journal, where different works of literature are excerpted side-by-side, as fragmented narratives whose lines do not join. The short story collection, whilst not explicitly mentioned in this context, is the

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<sup>166</sup> Rubins notes that the boxing match was "a common trope from the current cultural vocabulary" of interwar writers. Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, p. 146.

<sup>167</sup> Gazdanov, *Prizrak*, p. 37.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

obvious literary analogue of the journal's collaborative ethos: in it, one may find disparate narratives whose lines do not connect, and whose characters, settings and codes are often estranged from one another. "Out-of-place"-ness is a feature of "Adventure in the steppe" and the wider anthology in which it is situated, where the other two unrelated stories are of little interest to the narrator.<sup>169</sup> Rubins has spoken about *Prizrak* as an "anthologisation" of the Jazz Age, for its multiple fragmentary and disconnected plots.<sup>170</sup> In *Povesti Belkina*, the disparity between the individual parts reinforces the central parody of the composite whole, with the five stories each told by separate narrators transcribed and placed together, with epigraphs appended and an explanatory foreword justifying and explaining their coexistence:

Выписываем для любопытных изыскателей: «Смотритель» рассказан был ему титулярным советником А. Г. Н., «Выстрел» подполковником И. Л. П., «Гробовщик» приказчиком Б. В., «Метель» и «Барышня» девицею К. И. Т.<sup>171</sup>

The foreignness of these stories (and the individuals who have narrated them) from one another is, of course, the point. In placing individual pastiches of different foreign forms side by side, the collection sends up and challenges the basic conventionality of those forms. This is a short story collection whose very foundations are irony, pastiche, translation, deviation; a formal enactment of the isolated moments of masquerade or mistaken identity that are so central to its individual subplots.

Both *Povesti Belkina* and *Prizrak* are preoccupied with the possibility of speaking or narrating from beyond death (or else, in physical absence). Friends and acquaintances speak on behalf of the "true" authors, providing character testimonials, as in the foreword to

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<sup>169</sup> Whilst I do not suggest that the narrator (or Gazdanov) is here implying that the short story is a "lesser" form than the novel, I do contend that Gazdanov is in *Prizrak* and elsewhere concerned with the basic relationship between written forms, and the way this might shape their circulation and reception. I take up this question (and its treatment by the Formalists) in the third chapter of this thesis.

<sup>170</sup> Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, pp. 145-61.

<sup>171</sup> Pushkin, *Povesti Belkina*, p. 7.

*Povesti Belkina*, where an anonymous friend accounts for the life story and good nature of the deceased Belkin:

Вот, милостивый государь мой, всё, что мог я припомнить касательно образа жизни, занятий, нрава и наружности покойного соседа и приятеля моего. Но в случае, если заблагорассудите сделать из сего моего письма какое-либо употребление, всепокорнейше прошу никак имени моего не упоминать; ибо хотя я весьма уважаю и люблю сочинителей, но в сие звание вступить полагаю излишним и в мои лета неприличным. С истинным моим почтением и проч.  
1830 году Ноября 26.

Село Ненарадово<sup>172</sup>

The materiality of the written word or work of art thus acquires a heightened significance, becoming a monument or artefact of the interchange(s) it narrates. In “Vystrel”, the Count’s painting with shot-holes is a physical relic of the duel (“простреленная картина есть памятник последней нашей встречи...”),<sup>173</sup> and in the book within the book of *Prizrak*, Vol’f’s story is a relic not only of their combat, but also of a competing narration thereof. In *Prizrak* the relationship between plot and its medium is extrapolated out from the book within the book, such that the very text we are holding comes to be the final word on Vol’f’s death, in contrast to “Adventure in the steppe”, which reaffirmed his existence. Indeed, although the narrator of *Prizrak* pronounces Vol’f dead in the novel’s final sentence, an objective version of events remains elusive. If we recall that the narrator has already wrongly pronounced his opponent dead once before in the opening version of events, then the cycle might feasibly recur indefinitely.

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

Where Pushkin's *Povesti Belkina* implies a sort of life after death in the transmission and evolution of stories through different narrators, in Gazdanov's novel this optimistic justification for storytelling is tinged with the lingering uncertainty and cynicism of lived experience. When Voznesenskii fantasises that he might one day be immortalised in the commercially successful (foreign) writing of Sasha Vol'f, he unknowingly articulates the plight of the émigré author who refuses to migrate into a "major" language:

Я всю свою жизнь ухлопал на ерунду, а о Саше потом будут писать статьи и, может быть, даже книги. И нас, может быть, вспомнят, если он о нас напишет, и через пятьдесят лет какие-нибудь английские гимназисты будут о нас читать, и, таким образом, все, что было, не пройдет даром.<sup>174</sup>

The plight of artistic oblivion, of existing as a marginal and unknown author, out of place and "without readers", in *Prizrak* emerges as a fate *worse* than death, or a "death before death".

The only routes to survival are translating one's works or having them translated by another.

Exile thus emerges in *Prizrak* as a cruel joke that confines the émigré author to a spectral half-life, known always and only through the words of others, and not by his own

countrymen. Gazdanov's defiant response to that joke is the conscious and thoroughly modern reanimation of works whose authors may long be dead, but whose readers, crucially, are not.

Pushkin's transplantation into post-war Paris might be seen as a sort of revival or, in Gasparov's terms, a "reincarnation". In *Prizrak*, he is not cited as a stagnant, dead stimulus, but is animated, thrown into lively dialogue with multiple works, genres, and cultures. The circuitous linguistic hoops through which the story (and various subplots) of *Prizrak* pass enact the process of storytelling as a metamorphosis through distinct languages, raconteurs, and spaces, just as Pushkin's *Povesti Belkina* itself parodies, excerpts and overlays an

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<sup>174</sup> Gazdanov, *Prizrak*, p. 33.

assortment of clichéd foreign literary forms. Narrative is mobile, non-linear, at once oral and written, and constitutes a series of geographic displacements, abrasive interactions with competing versions, translations, retellings and hauntings. The intertextual relationship between *Prizrak* and *Povesti Belkina* is intriguing not on the basic level of individual echoes (masquerade, mistaken identity, chance meetings, eerie doublings and hallucinatory dreams) between their intertwined plots, but rather, for the amalgamation of such links. This narrative layering underlines the fundamentally hybrid nature of linguistic and literary heritage for the émigré writer, who in his flexible appropriation and “translation” of canonical works, plots and authors, deliberately situates himself at the juncture of distinct (yet eerily familiar) cultural heritages.

## Chapter One: Negotiating Classical Russian Literature

My preceding discussion of *Prizrak* was based on a well-attested dialogue with Pushkin. In this opening chapter I explore in greater detail Gazdanov's relationship with nineteenth-century classical literature, which, although studied, has been less strenuously asserted than his engagement with a foreign "modernism".<sup>1</sup> S. R. Fediakin has contested the emphasis placed on modern Western precursors, arguing that Gogol', Chekhov and Tolstoi are earlier sources.<sup>2</sup> Sergei Kibal'nik's monograph on Gazdanov and existentialism seeks to address the common typological comparison with Camus and demonstrate that "для выявления литературных и философских основ экзистенциального сознания Газданова в первую очередь оказываются важны русские параллели", such as Tolstoi, Turgenev, Dostoevskii and Chekhov.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, at stake for Gazdanov in such a relationship was not only the prospect of coming to terms with a powerful literary tradition that had shaped the emigration, but also of finding his own unique voice through engagement, parody and overcoming.

I have chosen to anchor my discussion of Gazdanov's engagement with nineteenth-century Russian literature in two novels from distinct periods in his career: *Polet* (written during the interwar period) and *Vozvrashchenie buddy* (written during World War II and the

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst many articles have tackled an aspect of the question of Gazdanov's engagement with Russian classical literature, there has been little effort to analyse the influence of the Russian tradition on his works in any overarching manner. See T. N. Krasavchenko, "Lermontov, Gazdanov i svoeobrazie ekzistentsializma russkikh mladoemigrantov", in T. N. Krasavchenko, M. A. Vasil'eva, and F. Kh. Khadonova, eds, *Gaito Gazdanov i "nezamechennoe pokolenie": pisatel' na peresechenii traditsii i kul'tur* (Moscow: INION RAN, 2005), pp. 27-49, Maria Rubins, "'Chelovecheskii dokument' ili literaturnaia parodiia? Siuzhety russkoi klassiki v 'Nochnykh dorogakh' Gaito Gazdanova", *Novyi zhurnal*, 243 (2006), 240-59, Konstantin Mamaev, "Vystrel v Aleksandra Vol'fa", in A. M. Ushakov, ed., *Gaito Gazdanov v kontekste russkoi i zapadnoevropeiskikh literatur* (Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2008), pp. 124-34. Igor' Kondakov's anthology *Gazdanov i mirovaia kul'tura* features a range of articles situating him in relation to both Russian twentieth-century literature and "Western literature" (Nietzsche, Poe, Baudelaire), but makes no mention of nineteenth-century Russian literature. Igor' Kondakov, ed., *Gazdanov i mirovaia kul'tura* (Kaliningrad: GP KGT, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> S. R. Fediakin "Tolstovskoe nachalo v tvorchestve Gaito Gazdanova", in Krasavchenko, Vasil'eva, and Khadonova, eds, *Gaito Gazdanov i "nezamechennoe pokolenie"*, pp. 96-102

<sup>3</sup> Sergei Kibal'nik, *Gaito Gazdanov i ekzistentsial'naia traditsiia v russkoi literature* (St Petersburg: Petropolis, 2011), p. 14.

immediate postwar period). These works have had very different reception histories. *Polet* was partially published in *Russkie zapiski* in 1939, although the war prevented the publication of its fourth and final instalment.<sup>4</sup> Publication was not resumed after the war ended, and the text did not appear in full until 1992, over twenty years after Gazdanov's death.

*Vozvrashchenie buddy* was serialised in *Novyi zhurnal* in 1949 and 1950 and is one of the few amongst Gazdanov's novels that was published in its entirety (albeit in an English translation) during his lifetime.<sup>5</sup> In this chapter I consider the various kinds of affiliation in both novels as evidence of Gazdanov's engagement with the Russian classical tradition. In the case of *Polet*, I consider the family drama, the love triangle, and the trope of (particularly female) adulterous love, arguing that these hail in particular from Turgenev's *Pervaia liubov'* (1860), but are equally found elsewhere in nineteenth-century Russian literature. I explore the means by which these tropes are transported into the exilic topos, before moving on to a discussion of bilingualism and incest, which is read doubly as a product of the pre-existing Frenchness of the Russian classical novel, and equally of the émigré context. In the case of *Vozvrashchenie buddy*, I discuss a far more diffuse set of intertextual borrowings, which I read through the prism of the cityscape and patrilineal inheritance, alongside a consideration of the potentially homosocial connotations of literary *preemstvennost'*.<sup>6</sup>

Ivan Turgenev was in many ways a logical progenitor for first-wave Russian émigré writers residing in Paris. He had spent much time in the French capital (where he lived on and off for thirty-six years, between 1847 and his death in 1883) and the provinces, maintaining close friendships with prominent French writers such as the Goncourt brothers,

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<sup>4</sup> Three of four instalments of *Polet* were published in *Russkie zapiski*, 18, 19 and 20/21 (1939).

<sup>5</sup> *Vozvrashchenie buddy* was serialised in *Novyi zhurnal* from 1949 to 1950. An English translation by Nicholas Wreden was published in New York by E. P. Dutton in 1951 (Dienes, *Bibliographie des oeuvres de Gaïto Gazdanov* (Paris: Institut d'études slaves, 1982), pp. 21-5).

<sup>6</sup> I employ *preemstvennost'* in reference to Tynianov's conception of it as a struggle (and not a seamless succession). See Tynianov, "Dostoevskii i Gogol' (k teorii parodii)", in *Arkhaisty i novatory* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1929), pp. 412–55 (p. 412).

Victor Hugo and Gustave Flaubert. He even corresponded in French with his mistress, Pauline Viardot.<sup>7</sup> Unlike Pushkin, who could not travel outside of Russia, or Tolstoi who wrote from his Russian estate, Turgenev led a cosmopolitan existence, simultaneously asserting a complex form of Russian national identity whilst situating himself as a “trait d’union” between the West and his homeland.<sup>8</sup> His extended stays outside of Russia fuelled vehement criticism against him, particularly during the 1860s; such a state of affairs was of course uncomfortably recognisable for the exilic community of Russia Abroad, who could not even come and go as they pleased, and whose primary access to the Russian landscape now lay in lyrical depictions such as his.<sup>9</sup> Turgenev’s name was moreover associated with the preservation of a Russian cultural heritage in exile. The most sacred and popular Russian library in Paris, whose collection, in the estimation of Mark Aldanov, rivalled those of even the most well-stocked private libraries back in Russia, owed its name and continued existence to Turgenev’s original financial backing.<sup>10</sup> The library’s fiftieth anniversary in 1925 was marked with great fanfare. Iakov Iudelevskii noted the sacred status of the Russian book in exile as a crucial link to the lost homeland: “Для русских, живущих за границею, русская книга является настоятельной потребностью. Она русского человека связывает духовно с родиною.”<sup>11</sup> Liudmila Sheinis-Chekhova, who worked in the library throughout the interwar period, recounts her first interaction with Gazdanov:

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<sup>7</sup> See Ely Halpérine-Kaminsky, ed., *Tourguéneff and his French circle*, trans. by E. M. Arnold (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898).

<sup>8</sup> Kirill Zaitsev, cited in Leonid Livak, *Le Studio franco-russe (1929-1931)* (Toronto: *Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, 2005), pp. 82-3. Turgenev’s legacy was noted at the meetings of the *Studio franco-russe* between 1929 and 1931, particularly during the second meeting, devoted to the mutual influence of Russian and French classical literatures on modern French and Russian writers respectively (pp. 63-91).

<sup>9</sup> Marc Raeff attributes Turgenev’s popularity in Russia Abroad to “his nostalgic descriptions of the Russian countryside, if not of the provincial noble life styles of the past century.” Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 97.

<sup>10</sup> See Mark Aldanov, “Iubilei Turgenevskoi biblioteki”, *Dni*, 859 (1925), republished in T. Gladkova, and T. Osorgina, eds, *Russkaia obshchestvennaia biblioteka imeni I. S. Turgeneva: sotrudniki, druž’ia, pochitateli: sbornik statei* (Paris: Institut d’études slaves, 1987), p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> Iakov Iudelevskii (under pseudonym Iu. Delevskii), “Turgenevskaiia biblioteka v Parizhe”, *Vremennik Obshchestva družei russkoi knigi*, I (1925), 78-80, republished in Gladkova and Osorgina, pp. 32-4 (p. 32).



Когда авторы жертвовали свои книги библиотеке, мы всегда просили сделать надпись, и они писали: «Тургеневской библиотеке от автора» или что-нибудь подобное. Но Газданова мы не могли уговорить надписать принесенную им его книгу *Вечер у Клэр*. Он отказывался, говоря, что он «не Тургенев». А неделю спустя мы получили по почте книгу Зданевича *Восхищение*, написанную не «заумным», а понятным языком, и на книге надпись: «Тургеневской библиотеке от нового Тургенева».<sup>12</sup>

This anecdote is indicative of Turgenev's mixed significance for members of the younger generation, and of their varied approaches (ranging from polite objection to adversarial provocation) to asserting their difference from him. Greta Slobin has charted the changing significance of Turgenev's legacy in Russia Abroad between 1919 and 1939, dwelling on the examples of Vladimir Nabokov and Ivan Bunin to consider his literary influence on émigré writers of the younger and older generations in practice.<sup>13</sup> Slobin situates the height of Turgenev's influence in 1933, the same year that Bunin was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for his continuation of the Russian tradition in exile. In particular, she cites the 1934 issue of *Sovremennye zapiski* devoted to the joint celebration of Turgenev and Bunin, in which Pavel Miliukov stated his belief that the former would help émigrés to “renew contact with European culture, to render the torn ends and lead the Russian intelligentsia onward”.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Turgenev's significance was being recognised from as early as 1921, when Konstantin Bal'mont named him as Pushkin's closest heir in Russian prose. For Bal'mont, Turgenev was not merely Pushkin's student, but a “blood brother”:

<sup>12</sup> Liudmila Sheinis-Chekhova, “Turgenevskaja biblioteka”, *Novyi zhurnal*, 94 (1969), 41-57 (p. 53).

<sup>13</sup> Greta Slobin, *Russians Abroad: Literary and Cultural Politics of Diaspora (1919-1939)* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2013), pp. 136-64. I will discuss a connection between Turgenev, Gazdanov and Nabokov in chapter four of this thesis.

<sup>14</sup> Pavel Miliukov, *Sovremennye zapiski*, 54 (1934), p. 280. Cited in Slobin, p. 162.

*если создатель русского стиха Пушкин был первым поэтом, превратившим русские слова в крылья бабочек и крылья птиц и заставившим размерные русские строки сверкать золотом и звенеть серебром, Тургенев был первым поэтом русской прозы, равного которому доньше еще не было, [...] он был не только учеником Пушкина, но и его родным братом, его равноправным наследником...*<sup>15</sup>

Pushkin's status as a figure of quasi-worship for many in the interwar emigration meant that editions of his works were widely republished and discussed, as I have noted.<sup>16</sup> In the approach of the fifty-year anniversary of his death in 1933, Turgenev was on the agenda (albeit rather more modestly) in émigré literary circles during the early 1930s. A new edition of his collected works was published in Riga in 1929, and his Parisian manuscripts were also published (under the editorship of French Slavist André Mazon) for the very first time in 1930.<sup>17</sup> Mark Aldanov's review of the former in *Sovremennye zapiski* in 1931 cast Turgenev as an imperfect author, more approachable than Tolstoi (and, one presumes, Pushkin too), but nonetheless a "truly classic" writer in whom Russia should take pride: "Перечитываешь книги Тургенева и думаешь «да, с недостатками был писатель, но какой превосходный, истинно-классический писатель»."<sup>18</sup> Boris Zaitsev's *Zhizn' Turgeneva* was also excerpted in *Sovremennye zapiski* in 1930-31, and was published in Paris the following year as a standalone work.<sup>19</sup> Turgenev's legacy in Russia Abroad, like that of Pushkin, whose Europeanism the former had personally stressed in his commemoration speech of 1880, was

<sup>15</sup> Konstantin Bal'mont, "Mysli o tvorchestve", *Sovremennye zapiski*, 4 (1921), 285-96 (p. 288). Emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup> For a more focused study of Pushkin's reception in the first-wave emigration, see Mikhail Filin, "*V kraiu chuzhom...'*": *zarubezhnaia Rossiia i Pushkin: stat'i, ocherki, rechi* (Moscow: Russkii mir, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> Ivan Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie khudozhestvennykh proizvedenii*, 10 vols (Riga: Zhizn' i kul'tura, 1929-30). The first and second émigré editions had been published in 1919-1920 and 1921-1923, both in Berlin. André Mazon, *Manuscrits parisiens d'Ivan Tourguénev. Notices et Extraits*. (Paris: Champion, 1930). See Nicholas G. Žekulin, *Turgenev: a bibliography of books, 1843-1982, by and about Ivan Turgenev* (Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 1985), pp. 54-5.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Aldanov, "Turgenev, I. S., *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*", *Sovremennye zapiski*, 46 (1931), 508-10 (p. 509).

<sup>19</sup> Boris Zaitsev, *Zhizn' Turgeneva* (Paris: YMCA, 1932).

rooted in a critical discourse which cast the author in a patrilineal chain of descent, with the national canon as his heirloom. As such, it is not hard to see why first-wave émigrés might have turned to him in their efforts to assert a Russian-European identity, and indeed, as I shall now discuss, Gazdanov turned to him very explicitly in *Polet*.

The narrative of *Polet* is composed of multiple divergent subplots and contains peripheral characters whose paths do not converge until its final dramatic scenes. The central plotline consists of a love affair between a young man and his mother's younger sister, who is also (unbeknownst to him) his father's former mistress. For the purposes of my argument here, I focus on this central plotline and exclude the various subplots and parallel plots. The action unfolds between England and France, with the characters dividing their time between homes in London, Paris, Nice and other European holiday resorts, including the Italian coast and the Swiss Alps. In the introduction to the first full edition of the novel, László Dienes, in accordance with the critical trend already noted, stated that the risqué plot, predominantly French setting and "relatively explicit treatment of love in both its emotional and physical aspects" all made *Polet* "un-Russian" and indicated its debt to a French novelistic tradition.<sup>20</sup> Such a reading fails to acknowledge its sustained borrowings from Russian literary antecedents including *Anna Karenina* (1877) and *Pervaia liubov'*. The former provides much of the basic detail of plot and character, with parallels such as the wife's sexual betrayal of the husband, her elopement to Italy with her lover, a perplexed son named Serezha, a cuckolded husband more at home in business matters than questions of family, and a narrative oscillating between twin metropolises and a rural counterpoint. The latter, as the Russian locus classicus for a young man's affair with his father's mistress, is the most prominent intertextual borrowing in *Polet* and will form the main strand of my argument in this section. Sergei Kibal'nik has read *Polet* as a "hypertext" of *Pervaia liubov'* and

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<sup>20</sup> László Dienes, "Introduction", in Gaito Gazdanov, *Polet* (The Hague: Leuxenhoff, 1992), pp. vii-xx (p. xiv).

*Dvorianskoe gnezdo* (1859), although his broader consideration of the existential theme orients the comparison towards questions of fate.<sup>21</sup> Elena Proskurina has argued that nineteenth-century culture was “почв[а] для разносторонней творческой игры” for younger émigrés, however her analysis of *Polet* consists of a close character comparison with *Anna Karenina*, with the contradictory suggestion that Serezha and his father are “representatives of the author”.<sup>22</sup> Building on these enquiries, I shall undertake a more focussed mapping of intertextual links between *Polet* and *Pervaia liubov'* to demonstrate the heightened significance of spatial representation and its relation to language in the exilic context. I am interested in Gazdanov's playful reception of Turgenev and Tolstoi as a transposition of plot and character from nineteenth-century Russia to twentieth-century Russia Abroad, which crucially builds on their existing interplay. My focus is thus the process of “transcultural discourse”, which, as Kibal'nik notes elsewhere, urgently requires further consideration.<sup>23</sup>

In *Polet* Gazdanov remaps the dacha colony and its location as a third point outside of Moscow and St Petersburg on to the triangular configuration of the French Riviera villa as a counterpoint to Paris and London. The characters' oscillations between these locations reflect their personal interactions with one another and generate a narrative in which movement between and communication across spaces becomes as significant as isolated settings.<sup>24</sup> Whilst Serezha's physical attraction to his aunt is first indicated in a scene in his bedroom at the family apartment in Paris, their affair commences during the summer months they spend together at the family villa in Nice, away from either of his parents. A parallel is drawn

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<sup>21</sup> Kibal'nik, pp. 117-45.

<sup>22</sup> Elena Proskurina, *Edinstvo inoskazaniia: o narrativnoi poetike romanov Gaito Gazdanova* (Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2009), pp. 175-6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 329-66.

<sup>24</sup> I have in mind here Franco Moretti's stipulation that geography is illuminating for the geometry it constructs between spaces and individuals. Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: abstract models for a literary history* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 56.

between the topoi of the Riviera villa and the Russian dacha early in the text in the description of the affair between Serezha's father and aunt, itself initiated in the Crimea thirteen years earlier:

Лиза ... приехала в Крым, когда Сереже было три года, — это было на второй год войны, — к Сергею Сергеевичу на дачу погостить [...] Она сразу поняла, что отношения между Сергеем Сергеевичем и Ольгой Александровной не были уже такими, какими должны были быть [...] То, что должно было случиться, случилось в отсутствии Ольги Александровны, уехавшей на несколько дней по делам.<sup>25</sup>

The elliptical reference to the sexual betrayal as “то, что должно было случиться” signals a mutual acknowledgement of the clichéd nature of such a plotline in such a setting by the characters, the fluid narrative voice and also, implicitly, by the reader.<sup>26</sup> The mention of numbers such as Serezha's three years of age or the second year of the civil war also foreshadows the tension between pairings and triangles that will ultimately characterise the novel, and to which I shall later return. The euphemistic reference to Ol'ga Aleksandrovna's absence from the dacha “по делам” also hints at her own adultery.

Stephen Lovell has noted the symbolic significance of the dacha as “a place that undermines traditional forms of social intercourse: first, by bringing together a larger and more socially diverse set of characters; second, by allowing this expanded cast greater freedom of action (notably, the freedom to transgress marital boundaries).”<sup>27</sup> In *Pervaia liubov'*, the Zasekins' arrival at the rented wing of the dacha accounts for the broader social

<sup>25</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2009), I, 293-490 (pp. 349-50).

<sup>26</sup> In Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina*, the first time that Anna and Vronskii sleep together is also narrated without words (through the ellipses that abruptly end Part II Chapter X). The reader's suspicions are confirmed by the euphemistic refrain of “то, что...” at the start of the next chapter: “То, что почти целый год для Вронского составляло исключительно одно желанье его жизни, заменившее ему все прежние желания; то, что для Анны было невозможно, ужасною и тем более обворожительною мечтою счастья, — это желание было удовлетворено.” Lev Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina*, 2 vols (Moscow: Pravda, 1964), I, 167.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Lovell, *Summerfolk: A History of the Dacha, 1710 - 2000* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 24.

intersection that Lovell pinpoints as integral for the transgression of social and moral codes.

Vladimir's mother's anxiety regarding the Zasekins' social standing rests on material signifiers, such as furniture and the dilapidated state of the wing they have rented:

“Действительно, княгиня Засекина не могла быть богатой женщиной: нанятый ею флигелек был так ветх, и мал, и низок, что люди, хотя несколько зажиточные, не согласились бы поселиться в нем.”<sup>28</sup> Interaction between social classes who would not normally intersect is evident at the Riviera villa in *Polet* through the staff and local people, a combination of other émigrés, native French characters, the Italian maid and the Ukrainian, Nil. The French language serves as a point of contact for these individuals who would otherwise not be able to communicate. Witness, for instance, Nil's thickly accented and grammatically incorrect dialogue “в котором глаголы имели во всех случаях только одну форму, неопределенное наклонение”,<sup>29</sup> which Gazdanov transliterates into Cyrillic letters (“ву па савуар атрапе гро пуасон, ву савуар атрапе пети пуасон?”),<sup>30</sup> overtly contrasting it with the more fluid dialogue of other non-French characters (“On saurait bien l'avoir, — отвечала итальянка, — s'il y en avait là dedans”).<sup>31</sup> For all of these individuals, whether French or not, Paris is a “unified concept”, a city which they might have visited but which ultimately is not their home:

— Et bien, comment ça va à Paris?

Сережа не мог не засмеяться. В представлении «шефа» Париж был хотя и большим городом, но, в сущности, каким-то однородным понятием, и достаточно было жить в Париже, чтобы определить безошибочно, как в нем вообще идут дела.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ivan Turgenev, *Pervaiia liubov'* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1996), p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 362.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 362-3.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 363-4.

In *Pervaiia liubov'* the dacha is portrayed as a space simultaneously contiguous with and distinct from the twin Russian metropolises. The split narrative perspective, through which the older Vladimir (“человек лет сорока, черноволосый, с проседью”)<sup>33</sup> recalls the events of 1833 emphasises the transience of this youthful phase in his broader transition from innocence to experience. At the point of introduction to the sixteen-year-old Vladimir, we learn he will soon be leaving his childhood home in Moscow to attend university in St Petersburg:

Дело происходило летом 1833 года.

Я жил в Москве у моих родителей. Они нанимали дачу около Калужской заставы, против Нескучного. Я готовился в университет, но работал очень мало и не торопясь.

Никто не стеснял моей свободы.<sup>34</sup>

In *Polet* the transient summer dacha experience is relocated to the south of France, with September's approach signaling sixteen-year-old Serezha's departure for England to attend university in Oxford, in an explicit echo of Vladimir's impending departure.

Aside from associations with the dacha, the summer vacation in Nice, itself a popular seaside resort for the European elite throughout the nineteenth century, recalls the ubiquity of the spa town as a counterpoint to Moscow and St Petersburg in nineteenth-century Russian literature. Joe Andrew, for instance, has considered the transgressive quality of what he terms the “spa chronotope” in works such as Turgenev's *Dym* (1867) and Tolstoi's *Semeinoe schast'e* (1859).<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Morgan similarly notes that there is something “more than a little euphemistic about the claim to be taking a cure” in the Russian nineteenth-century novel.<sup>36</sup> In

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<sup>33</sup> Turgenev, *Pervaiia liubov'*, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Joe Andrew, *Narrative, Space and Gender in Russian Fiction: 1846-1903* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> Benjamin D. Morgan, “Topographic Transmissions and How to Talk about Them: The Case of the Southern Spa in Nineteenth-Century Russian Fiction”, *Modern Languages Open* 1, accessed at <<https://www.modernlanguagesopen.org/articles/10.3828/mlo.v0i1.37/>> on 24/09/18, 1-15 (p. 3).

*Polet* Gazdanov exploits this symbolic fluidity between the water cure and the sexual act, as when Sergei Sergeevich insists that Serezha must see that his aunt “sits in the waters” in the south of France:

— Не могу, не могу, не могу! — закричала Лиза и, поднявшись из-за стола, ушла к себе. Сергей Сергеевич и Сережа остались вдвоем. Сергей Сергеевич начал медленно насвистывать серенаду, сам прислушиваясь к точному свисту; досвистел до конца и сказал:

— Там, на юге, ты тетке посоветуй, как можно больше в воде сидеть, это ее нервы успокоит.<sup>37</sup>

Whilst nothing untoward has occurred between Serezha and Liza at this point, its possibility has already been strongly implied. This particular interchange also directly (and presumably not without irony) precedes a scene in which Ol’ga Aleksandrovna paddles off the Italian coast with her own lover.

The elopement to Italy is not an isolated echo of *Anna Karenina* in *Polet*; one may also note parallels with the archetypal unhappy family on the level of characterisation. Indeed, despite the esteem in which others hold him as an arbiter of “семейное счастье”,<sup>38</sup> Sergei Sergeevich’s cold detachment when faced with his wife’s infidelity and proposal of divorce strongly echoes Tolstoi’s portrayal of Aleksei Aleksandrovich Karenin. Both men are depicted as inhuman and mechanical in their interactions. Compare, for instance, Liza’s frequent descriptions of Sergei Sergeevich as machine-like (“который, в конце концов, был, действительно, не человеком, а именно машиной”)<sup>39</sup> with Anna’s reference to Karenin as “an evil machine”:

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<sup>37</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 319.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 408.



Это не человек, а машина, и злая машина, когда рассердится, — прибавила она, вспоминая при этом Алексея Александровича со всеми подробностями его фигуры, манеры говорить и его характера и в вину ставя ему все, что только могла она найти в нем нехорошего...<sup>40</sup>

Он исковеркал жизнь Ольги, он почти исковеркал ее, Лизу, он еще не успел погубить Сережу, — и этого ему не удастся сделать. Но он не должен ничего знать, иначе, эта машина придет в действие и ее нельзя будет остановить.<sup>41</sup>

Sergei Sergeevich is described by his friend, Sletov, as corpse-like, resembling a wax figure: “Знаешь, Сережа, у тебя в лице есть что-то мертвое [...] вот эта твоя всегдашняя улыбка, точно ты постоянно чему-то рад, — это как в музее восковых фигур.”<sup>42</sup> At one point, Liza even muses that “real human blood” could not possibly flow in the veins of her brother-in-law.<sup>43</sup> This foreboding association with death is paradoxically combined with references to Sergei Sergeevich’s physical strength and financial power, and the fact that his emotional connections are unanimously founded on some form of financial dependency. The affair with Liza is mentally compartmentalised through its confinement to the secret Parisian apartment he has purchased for their rendezvous. The artist Egorkin’s obedience is purchased through patronage, although his art is by all accounts abominable. Liudmila, the jilted wife of his own wife’s lover, who like Anna Karenina is depicted synecdochically via her handbag, is also successful in extracting some form of remuneration from him. Even the individual who feels the strongest attachment to him, his hapless friend Fedor Borisovich Sletov, relies on him to find employment, and to rescue him when he commits adultery with the wife of his

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<sup>40</sup> Lev Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina*, I, 212.

<sup>41</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 416.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 413.

boss. When Sletov threatens to throw himself in front of a Metro train in the immediate aftermath of the affair's exposure, the symbolic significance of this particular Tolstoian reference is comically deflated in Sergei Sergeevich's unfazed response:

Слетов собирался застрелиться и броситься под поезд метро. — Не стоит, Федя, — сказал ему Сергей Сергеевич, — я убежден, что ты найдешь еще что-нибудь неповторимое и ты увидишь, что я был прав. Это было нетрудно предвидеть; и, действительно, через две недели Слетов познакомился с какой-то чрезвычайно элегантной дамой...<sup>44</sup>

Sergei Sergeevich is more fatherly to his friend than his son, whose own suicide attempt progresses much further than assertion. Serezha's botched shot echoes Konstantin's failed suicide between Acts II and III in Chekhov's *Chaika* (1895). But where Konstantin's action is the product of his oedipal jealousy of his mother Arkadina's attention to Trigorin, Serezha's is the product of the inverse scenario: his oedipal jealousy of his biological father and his maternal aunt and lover.<sup>45</sup>

In both *Polet* and *Pervaia liubov'*, the filial relationship is simultaneously one of rebellion and fearful admiration.<sup>46</sup> Whilst in Turgenev's novel the distance between father and son is conveyed through Vladimir's externalised perception of his father, and his passive observation of his interactions, in *Polet* the distance is very literally mapped on to the English Channel which lies between father and son, because of Ol'ga Aleksandrovna's decision to take Serezha from London to Paris. This distance is also inscribed in the telephonic

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 341.

<sup>45</sup> Suicide attempts and deaths are another strand between *Polet*, *Pervaia liubov'* and *Anna Karenina*; see Shishkina's observation on the polyvalency of the word "полет" in Gazdanov's novel, and her emphasis on the chronotope of the aircrash (A. S. Shishkina, "Dinamicheskii kharakter prozy Gaito Gazdanova (na materiale romanov 'Polet' i 'Nochnye dorogi')", in Ushakov, ed., pp. 169-81). The deaths of the father and surrogate mother are a further thread between *Polet* and *Pervaia liubov'* (in the former through the airplane crash, and in the latter through illness and childbirth respectively).

<sup>46</sup> This calls to mind Rubins' emphasis on the relationship between elder and younger generation first-wave émigrés as "characterized by admiration and dependence, on the one hand, and by rebellion and dissent, on the other." Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, p. 5.

interactions between Serezha and Sergei Sergeevich, in which Sergei Sergeevich's voice is laughable or ridiculous (“смешной”), or indeed in the faux-diplomatic interchange in which they engage halfway through the novel: “Говори, скажем по-французски, а я тебе буду отвечать, как представитель форен-офиса, то есть, тоже по-французски, но ты должен будешь извинить акцент.”<sup>47</sup> Sergei Sergeevich's insistence that Serezha speaks French in the role of a native, whilst he will speak French in an English accent signifies their separation from the Russian mother tongue they both in fact share:

Je me permets de rappeler à Monsieur le Président, — сказал Сергей Сергеевич с честным английским акцентом — que c'est bien l'aveugle et criminelle politique de l'Allemagne qui a provoqué la guerre.<sup>48</sup>

Here, the intergenerational conflict which has not yet come to the fore is foreshadowed as a conversation between statesmen on the the more immediate and brutal conflict of war which at the time was only too familiar in Europe. The alignment of father-son relations with a form of discursive diplomacy implies that Serezha's ultimate decision to shoot himself at his father's London home will be an act of incitement to a deathlier form of combat.

The central pairings of women in *Pervaia liubov'* and *Polet* drive the father-son conflicts and embody jostling maternal and erotic bonds. In *Polet* the sea once again indicates an ebb and flow of distance and proximity between characters, although it does not serve the divisive function I have just described between father and son. In both novels, the conventional oedipal triangle is expanded to a quartet, and sexual desire is displaced on to the fourth point of a younger, unmarried woman who is neither biological mother nor lawful wife. In *Pervaia liubov'*, Zina's encroachment on Vladimir's family unit is likened to a form of incest when she casts herself as an imagined fourth family member, such as an aunt or

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<sup>47</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 396.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

elder sister. Although she is an unrelated outsider erring towards the maternal, she remains in an ambiguous space suspended between mother and child:

— Будемте друзьями — вот как! — Зинаида дала мне понюхать розу. —  
Послушайте, ведь я гораздо старше вас — я могла бы быть вашей тетушкой,  
право; ну, не тетушкой, старшей сестрой. А вы...  
— Я для вас ребенок, — перебил я ее.<sup>49</sup>

This notion of assuming given roles might be tied to Zina's broader performative roleplay with suitors in *Pervaia liubov'*, of which Vladimir is a passive observer. In *Polet Lida's* own fluidity suggests that she is at once child, mother, sister, aunt and wife, depending on the circumstances and with whom she is interacting at a given moment. Sergei Sergeevich at one point refers to her as a daughter, by bracketing her with Serezha in his reference to “my children” (“дети мои”).<sup>50</sup>

In her reading of *Pervaia liubov'* as an early manifestation of the impending fin-de-siècle sexual malaise, Emma Lieber has emphasised a certain fluidity in family relations as a crucial component of the displacement of erotic desire on to a “stand-in” maternal figure such as a governess or a nurse:

The notion of “first love” emerges all the more salaciously through its relation to earlier patterns, the early infantile attachments that shape the child's first romantic foray. As another guest in the story's outer frame says, “I didn't have a first love... but started straight off with my second,” since, “strictly speaking, I fell in love for the first and last time at the age of six” —though in his accounting it was with his nurse.

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<sup>49</sup> Turgenev, *Pervaia liubov'*, p. 48.

<sup>50</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 317.

Repetitions have a way of multiplying, such that firsts are always seconds and seconds thirds.<sup>51</sup>

In *Polet* firsts, seconds and thirds manifest to the power of two. The number three is quite literally squared, with the central quartet (of Sergei Sergeevich, Serezha, Liza and Ol'ga Aleksandrovna) generating three distinct triangles: from the family unit of mother, father and son, to the *menage à trois* between wife, husband and wife's sister, to the oedipal triangle between Serezha, Liza and Sergei Sergeevich. The fluidity of familial and sexual bonds is literalised in the frequent depiction of bathing as a sexual and a maternal act. In preceding discussion of the spa trope, I have observed the euphemistic reference to Ol'ga Aleksandrovna's bathing with Arkadii Aleksandrovich on an Italian beach. When on the beach in Nice with Liza, Serezha recalls her bathing him as a child:

Так и теперь из-за Лизы было видно то, что до сих пор отделяло его от нее, —  
мама, отец, ощущение теплой воды в ванне, - давно, когда он был маленьким и  
когда смуглые руки Лизы вынимали его оттуда и особенный ее голос говорил,  
— а теперь, Сереженька, спа-а-ать.<sup>52</sup>

The fluidity between the sexual act and Serezha's recollection of a childhood bathtime ritual highlights the more fundamental fluidity of relations which permits his love affair with Liza. In this way, water symbolises both the sexual act, and the amniotic fluid of the maternal bond, an association further anchored in the homophony between “la mer” and “la mère”.

The multiple linguistic codes (French, Russian and English) between which the characters of *Polet* perpetually switch inscribes a further interplay between firsts, seconds and thirds into the text. Whilst the spa might have functioned as an “anti-home” in the nineteenth-century tradition, in Gazdanov's exilic topos, there is a more fundamental instability in the

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<sup>51</sup> Emma Lieber, ““Mister Russian Beast”: Civilization's discontents in Turgenev”, in Katherine Bowers and Ani Kokobobo, eds, *Russian Writers and the Fin de Siècle: The Twilight of Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 89-106 (p. 99).

<sup>52</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 393.

relationship between language and the spaces it denotes.<sup>53</sup> All places are *not home*, and thus the very meaning of “home” becomes problematic. The perpetual state of deracination between multiple spaces generates a setup in which Russian is always simultaneously the foreign language and the familiar one. Serezha’s navigation between different potential meanings of “дома” articulates this instability:

Со времени раннего своего детства Сережа привык к тому, что слово “дома” могло значить одновременно очень разные вещи. “Дома” могло значить — Лондон, тихая улица возле Grove End Gardens в Hampstead’е, бобби на углу, старая церковь, каменные набережные реки Темзы во время ежедневных прогулок; “дома” могло значить — Париж, близость Булонского леса, Триумфальная арка, памятник Виктора Гюго на давно знакомой площади; “дома”, наконец, могло значить — хрустящий песок под колесами Лизиного автомобиля, аллея за железными воротами и невысокий дом в неподвижном саду, непосредственно на берегу точно застывшего залива, который иногда казался синим, иногда зеленым, но в общем не был ни синим, ни зеленым, а был того цвета, для которого на человеческом языке не существует названия.<sup>54</sup>

This passage recalls Nabokov’s comments on the opening of *Anna Karenina*, where he observes that the repetition of “дом” in its various shades of meaning sounds a note of impending doom at the novel’s threshold:

In the Russian text, the word *dom* (house, household, home) is repeated eight times in the course of six sentences. This ponderous and solemn repetition, *dom, dom, dom*, tolling as it does for doomed family life (one of the main themes of the book), is a deliberate device on Tolstoy’s part.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Iurii Lotman, cited in Andrew, p. 96.

<sup>54</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 356.

<sup>55</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature*, ed. Fredson Bowers (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), p. 210.

In *Polet*, the co-existence of multiple homes is similarly a precursor to impending doom, but this is because it provides a narrative condition for Serezha's personal dilemma of linguistic unhousedness, which leaves its mark very distinctly on the text in the fluid oscillation between languages.<sup>56</sup> For Serezha, the cosmopolitan split domicile setup in which he grows up is problematic for its presentation of multiple linguistic options.

Serezha's language acquisition as he matures echoes his gradual process of decoding his family's true relations, culminating in the overheard conversation between his father and aunt in the novel's final scenes. Literal code switching thus comes to signify the characters' transgression of moral and social codes. The sense that as a young child Serezha has not fully grasped the transgressive nature of his family relations is directly equated with his inadequate mastery of non-native (i.e. neither Russian, nor French) languages, and with his inability to differentiate between them. When his parents wish to discuss his mother's adultery, they resort to German, locking Serezha (and readers) from their conversation until Russian is uttered: "Он посмотрел на свою жену и быстро заговорил по-немецки. Сережа ничего не понимал, пока отец не сказал по-русски; неужели, Оля, тебе это не надоело? - и опять, спохватившись, стал говорить по-немецки."<sup>57</sup> The opening pages of *Polet* thus read like an unmediated version of Serezha's confusion in *Anna Karenina*:

«Что же это значит? Кто он такой? Как надо любить его? Если я не понимаю, я виноват, или я глупый, или дурной мальчик», — думал ребенок; и от этого происходило его испытующее, вопросительное, отчасти неприязненное выражение, и робость, и неровность, которые так стесняли Вронский....

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<sup>56</sup> Linguistic homelessness is a concern elsewhere in Gazdanov's oeuvre, for instance in the short story "Nishchii" (1962), whose protagonist is a French beggar, Gustave Verdier, whose lack of domicile is aligned with a disintegration of linguistic meaning: "Уже много лет, с тех пор как он стал нищим, одной из особенностей его существования было то, что он почти перестал говорить ... Слова, и их значение, так же давно потеряли для него свой прежний смысл, как все то, что предшествовало его теперешней жизни." Gazdanov, "Nishchii", in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, III, 566-82 (p. 567).

<sup>57</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 294.

Ребенок этот с своим наивным взглядом на жизнь был компас, который показывал им степень их отклонения от того, что они знали, но не хотели знать.<sup>58</sup>

Whereas Tolstoi's Serezha serves principally as a symbolic counterpoint to Anna's relationship with Vronskii, a "compass" demonstrating the extent to which they have erred, Gazdanov's Serezha is himself in need of a compass. The childlike confusion at adult relations in *Polet* manifests as a more fundamental linguistic confusion. Where Serezha is privy to his mother's extra-marital affairs, conducted in a combination of French and Russian, even his familiarity with French is mediated through Russian, as conveyed in the transliteration of the French term of endearment, "chéri", into "шери":

Потом мать звонила по телефону, Сережа слышал, лежа на полу, как она сказала, — Impossible ce soir, mon chéri, — потом: Si je le regrette? je le crois bien, chéri, — и Сережа понял, что Шери сегодня не придет и был очень доволен, так как не любил этого человека, которого вслед за матерью тоже называл Шери, думая, что это его имя... Шери больше никогда потом не появлялся. Был другой, немного похожий на него человек, говоривший тоже с акцентом, все равно по-русски или по-французски.<sup>59</sup>

The phonetic transposition of French via the Cyrillic alphabet here and elsewhere in the novel playfully inverts the convention of French loan-words littering the Russian language, a phenomenon which had emerged during the Enlightenment period, when, as Wladimir Berelowitch argues, the French language "detached itself, upto a point, from its country of origin."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina*, I, 207-8.

<sup>59</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, pp. 294-5.

<sup>60</sup> Wladimir Berelowitch, "Francophonie in Russia under Catherine II: General Reflections and Individual Cases", *Russian Review*, 74/1 (2015), 41-56 (p. 42).



But bilingualism in *Polet* is not confined to characters literally and metaphorically “unhoused”. Bilingualism also underpins the predominantly Russian prose, such that events and conversations occurring (ostensibly) in France and in French are relayed to the reader through Russian. It is arguably significant in this respect that bilingualism in the Russian literary context has historically been associated with forbidden or deceitful love. Iurii Lotman for instance notes the deceitful function of Franco-Russian diglossia with reference to Pushkin’s “Metel” (1831), written over one hundred years earlier.<sup>61</sup> The climactic conversation between Maria and Burmin is mediated to readers in Russian, despite the reference to Rousseau’s “Première lettre de Saint-Preux” from *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), which, as Lotman contends, indicates that Burmin is actually citing verbatim from Rousseau’s original French: “«Я поступил неосторожно, предаваясь милой привычке, привычке видеть и слышать вас ежедневно...» (Марья Гавриловна вспомнила первое письмо St.-Preux.)”<sup>62</sup> Subsequent studies of Russian *francophonie* have concurred with Lotman’s view that it would have been unthinkable for a conversation of this sort to occur in Russian, because French was the default language for romantic interactions of the Russian nobility during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>63</sup> Witness, for instance, the wry statement at the opening of “Metel” that Maria was raised on French novels and consequently, was in love: “Марья Гавриловна была воспитана на французских романах, и, следственно, была влюблена.”<sup>64</sup> The latency of the sentimental topos of incest in the Rousseau subtext is also significant when we consider the nature of overt and underlying verbal and matrimonial relations in this particular story. Multilingualism is thus tied to

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<sup>61</sup> Iurii Lotman, *Russkaia literatura na frantsuzskom iazyke* (Vienna: Gesellschaft zur Förderung slawistischer Studien, 1994), p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> Aleksandr Pushkin, *Povesti pokoinogo Ivana Petrovicha Belkina* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1947), p. 42.

<sup>63</sup> See Gesine Argent et al., *French and Russian in Imperial Russia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

<sup>64</sup> Pushkin, *Povesti Belkina*, p. 28. This is similar to Lola’s reading in *Polet*, which is sharply satirised, for instance in her love of Alexandre Dumas’ *La dame aux Camélias* (1848). Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 311.

intertextuality and holds the potential to mask or reveal relations between texts. Gazdanov diverges from nineteenth-century Russian subtexts, in which French is a language in which characters feel “at home”.

Franco-Russian bilingualism is evident in very many Russian nineteenth-century works, the most frequently-cited instance being Tolstoi’s *Voina i mir* (1869). In *Evgenii Onegin*, the narrator confesses to having translated Tat’iana’s letter (itself a confection of phrases borrowed from French sentimental novels) from French into Russian.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, in *Pervaia liubov’*, Vladimir’s mother comments that Zina’s family are “люди не comme il faut”, and Vladimir discovers the details of his parent’s quarrel through the testimony of a Russian lackey, who has been informed by a maid who happens to understand French perfectly.<sup>66</sup> Whereas in classical works French is present because members of the Russian nobility live in Russia but also happen to feel “at home” in French, for Gazdanov multilingualism signals a more fundamental instability in the country or city of residence, and reflects his exilic status. *Polet* thus has a double affiliation, both to a Russian literary language embellished with *francophonie* inherited from Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoi and others, and also (arguably more urgently) to the lived experience of émigré life in Paris and the question of linguistic infidelity, or even potentially incest, that writing in Russian, or a hybrid prose composed of Russian and French, entailed. In aligning father-son relations with those between nations, and problematising the very binaries by which we distinguish between nationalities, Gazdanov emphasises their hidden consanguinity.

For Gazdanov, then, it is not merely a question of recapitulating Turgenev and Tolstoi. Whilst incestuous relations are heavily implied in the father-son shared mistress plotline, neither Turgenev, nor indeed Tolstoi, crosses the line of actual incest. This is not to

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<sup>65</sup> Nabokov identifies the borrowings, which range from Rousseau, to Constant, to Byron, in the commentary to his translation of the poem. See Vladimir Nabokov, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), II, 386-94.

<sup>66</sup> Turgenev, *Pervaia liubov’*, p. 62.

say that incest is a particularly drastic departure from the more familiar adultery trope. Tony Tanner has argued that for Tolstoi, the nineteenth-century trope of adultery is subliminally entangled with the taboo of incest.<sup>67</sup> He explicates this idea through *Kreitserova sonata* (1889), noting in particular Pozdnyshv's desire to revert to "pure and brotherly relations" with women: "Блудник может воздерживаться, бороться; но простого, ясного, чистого отношения к женщине, братского, у него уже никогда не будет".<sup>68</sup> The induction to the sexual act as an occasion initiated and enabled by a more senior family member (in Pozdnyshv's case, an elder brother who orchestrates a meeting with a prostitute on his behalf) might also serve as evidence, although Tolstoi's inclusion of this detail seems to align more readily with his broader critique of the means by which sexual rites and their commodification have corrupted society and defiled the family unit, rather than with any approval of such a status quo.<sup>69</sup> Tanner ultimately concludes that incest represents an alternative route to that of the conventional adultery plot: "(t)his desire to replace the problematical contract of man and wife with the intrafamilial union of brother and sister reveals a latent, if faint, yearning for an incestuous relationship to avoid an adulterous one".<sup>70</sup> A further whiff of incest in *Polet* arises in Ol'ga Aleksandrovna's affair with Arkadii Aleksandrovich, a man who shares the same patronymic as her, which might be read as both adulterous *and* incestuous. This is redolent of "Starosvetskie pomeschchiki" in Gogol's *Mirgorod* cycle, in which Afanasii Ivanovich and Pul'kheriia Ivanovna—the sexless and

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<sup>67</sup> Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 75.

<sup>68</sup> Tolstoi, *Kreitserova sonata* (New York: Maizelia, 1919), p. 16.

<sup>69</sup> Further parallels may be noted elsewhere in Tolstoi's oeuvre, for instance in the implied incestuous relationship between H el ene Kuragina and her brother Anatole in *Voina i mir*. Tatiana Kuzmic, reading *Anna Karenina* as an allegory of Russia's imperial politics, notes that Countess Lidiia Ivanovna (who acts as quasi-wife and mother to Karenin and Serezha after Anna's departure) appeared in earlier manuscripts of the novel as Karenin's biological sister, Katerina Aleksandrovna, "which allowed her to move in with him after Anna moved out, but prohibited the possibility of her infatuation." Kuzmic also contends that Kitty and Levin's relationship "borders on the incestuous, since the Shcherbatskiis are the only family Levin has ever known." Tatiana Kuzmic, "«Serbia—Vronskii's Last Love»: Reading *Anna Karenina* in the Context of Empire", *Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, 43 (2013), 40-66 (pp. 60 and 64).

<sup>70</sup> Tanner, p. 75.

childless husband and wife—share a patronymic, which has also led some to posit a sibling relationship.<sup>71</sup>

Gazdanov's attachment to his mother tongue was complex: he wrote to Gor'kii in 1930 that in spite of his poor knowledge of the place and its language, he could not and would not write in anything other than Russian, yet as we have observed, this claim is not strictly reflected in his prose.<sup>72</sup> One might similarly read Gazdanov's recourse to a Russian classical tradition as a defensive attempt to avoid linguistic "infidelity" with French contemporary literature, in whose thrall early reviews of his writing had proclaimed him to be. Claude Lévi-Strauss argues that incest is neither a purely natural nor a purely cultural phenomenon, but one whose character is inherently double, at once natural *and* cultural: "even if the incest prohibition has its roots in nature it is only in the way it affects us as a social rule that it can be fully grasped."<sup>73</sup> It is this doubleness, or suspension, between both natural and cultural causes that forms the literary and linguistic infidelities in *Polet*. Franco-Russian bilingualism is a product both of the existing condition of a Russian intelligentsia literate in both languages, and of the more recent cultural shift that had emerged in Russia Abroad, and through which Russians now found themselves living in Paris and communicating on a daily basis in a combination of both languages. For Gazdanov, then, it is simultaneously a means of asserting consanguinity with a national tradition, as well as with a distinct émigré identity. In collapsing sexual and familial relations, and simultaneously collapsing native and foreign binaries (as in the roleplaying League of Nations meeting

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<sup>71</sup> Hugh Mclean, "Gogol's Retreat from Love: Toward an Interpretation of *Mirgorod*", in *American Contributions to the Fourth International Congress of Slavists* (The Hague: Mouton, 1959), pp. 225-43 (p. 239), cited in Robert Peace, "Gogol's Old World Landowners", *Slavonic and East European Review*, 53/133 (1975), 504-20 (p. 509).

<sup>72</sup> Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 39-45 (p. 41). His notebooks, held at the Houghton Library at Harvard University, contain several abandoned translations between Russian, French and English and demonstrate at the very least an interest in the creative potential of translation. Dienes also notes that Gazdanov attempted to have *Polet* published in French whilst he was alive (see Dienes, "Introduction", in Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. xviii).

<sup>73</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris, 1949), p. 35.

between father and son), Gazdanov underlines the fact that the French and Russian traditions have already commingled.<sup>74</sup> As such, it is hard to say whether linguistic hybridity represents a form of affiliation with an external party, or incest.<sup>75</sup> In *Polet*, Gazdanov thus resorts to the nineteenth century very literally as “почв[а] для разносторонней творческой игры”.<sup>76</sup> By displacing familial and extra-familial bonds across the landmass of Western Europe, he demonstrates that Sergei Sergeevich’s deluded idea of “Одна семья, одна кровь”<sup>77</sup> is founded on far more than a single country, language, tradition, or even novel.

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*Vozvrashchenie buddy* (1949-50, hereafter *Vozvrashchenie*) differs radically from *Polet*’s cosmopolitan family intrigue both in subject matter and style. The central storyline during the first half of the novel focusses on the relationship between the unnamed first-person narrator and an elder Russian émigré counterpart, Pavel Aleksandrovich Shcherbakov, whom he comes to regard admiringly as his mentor. After Pavel’s murder, *Vozvrashchenie* abruptly takes a different path from what might have appeared to resemble a *Bildungsroman* towards something more akin to a detective fiction in which the narrator finds himself disturbingly implicated.<sup>78</sup> This sudden genre shift is emblematic of the intertextual process at

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<sup>74</sup> Priscilla Meyer suggests that *Anna Karenina* emerged entirely from Tolstoi’s dialogue with French eighteenth- and nineteenth-century subtexts, such as *La nouvelle Héloïse*, Laclos’ *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782), Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856), Zola’s *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) and Dumas’ *La femme de Claude* (1873). Priscilla Meyer, *How the Russians Read the French: Lermontov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), p. 153.

<sup>75</sup> Nabokov’s *Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* (1969) similarly proposes a notion of literary genealogy as incestuous. The novel explicitly references its Russian nineteenth-century ancestry through the epigraph, a mistranslation of the opening line of *Anna Karenina*. *Ada* possesses compelling similarities with *Polet*, such as a death (in Nabokov’s novel, of only the father) in an airplane crash, the mer/mère equation of the twin mothers, named Aqua and Marina, and an oscillation between French, Russian and English. Donald Barton Johnson reads *Ada* as a triangular synthesis of three nineteenth-century predecessors who, he argues, employ the literary trope of (specifically brother-sister) incest: Chateaubriand, Byron and Pushkin. George Steiner saw Nabokov’s employment of incest as a means of articulating his own well-documented anxiety of corrupting his precious Russian language with foreign influence. D. Barton Johnson, “The Labyrinth of Incest in Nabokov’s *Ada*”, *Comparative Literature*, 38/3 (1986), 224-55, and George Steiner, “Extraterritorial”, in Alfred Appel and Charles Newman, eds, *Nabokov: Criticism, reminiscences, translations and tributes* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 119-27.

<sup>76</sup> Proskurina, *Edinstvo inoskazaniia*, pp. 175-6.

<sup>77</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 349.

<sup>78</sup> Gleb Struve noted this heterogeneity as a distinct feature of Gazdanov’s novels in 1956: “В романах Газданова много разнородных элементов: элементы психологического романа соседствуют с

play in the novel. *Vozvrashchenie* does not possess clear, sustained intertexts; rather, it amalgamates a montage of ephemeral references, images, and set pieces whose combined intertextual polyvalence point to its roots in a long and multilayered Russian nineteenth-century tradition. Whereas my reading of *Polet* has argued that it is at heart a complex transposition of two canonical Russian works, the intertextual layering in *Vozvrashchenie* creates an intricate and fragmented collage of Russian nineteenth-century subtexts. I propose here to employ Kiril Taranovskii's theorisation of text, context and subtext, first advanced in his study of Mandel'shtam, in order to consider Gazdanov's intertextual method in *Vozvrashchenie* not as a transposition of a single story or two, but as a combination of disparate borrowings from the Russian nineteenth-century tradition.<sup>79</sup> The development of Taranovskii's ideas by representatives of the Moscow-Tartu school gave rise to the term *poligenetichnost'*, which emphasises the notion of the split affinities between a given text and its multiple literary progenitors, as opposed to a single, unified lineage of subtexts.<sup>80</sup> This approach upholds the view that intertextuality in the modernist period was a self-conscious means of dealing with and overcoming the various literary models of the past.<sup>81</sup> One possible reason for the uneven attention to Gazdanov's debt to Russian nineteenth-century works is the fact that it is often fragmented and dispersed. In this section I argue that the narrator's ostensible lack of roots might map on to Gazdanov's own unease with his literary genealogy as fundamentally fragmented and polygenetic. First, I consider twentieth-century subtexts for

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элементами романа полицейского, авантюрный роман сплетается со светским [...] и тут же длинные и часто малоудачные философские рассуждения." Gleb Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii* (New York: Chekhov, 1956), pp. 293-4.

<sup>79</sup> "If we define the context as a set of texts which contain the same or a similar image, the subtext may be defined as an already existing text (or texts) reflected in a new one." Kiril Taranovsky, *Essays on Mandel'shtam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 18.

<sup>80</sup> I.e. Z. G. Mints, *Tipologiia literaturnykh vzaimodeistvii* (Tartu: Tartuskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1983).

<sup>81</sup> David Bethea and Sigrun Frank for instance refer to Russian literature's "intricate system of cross- and self-referencing, a peculiar national intertextuality, in which writers have integrated the words of their predecessors and contemporaries into their own work" (David Bethea and Sigrun Frank, "Exile and Russian Literature", in Marina Balina and Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.195-213, p. 211).

the substantial early dream section of *Vozvrashchenie*, before exploring the corpus of nineteenth-century Russian texts that lies behind them. I then consider the legacy of the Petersburg text and its transposition on to the Parisian topos alongside a discussion of the narrator's adopted father figure, Pavel Aleksandrovich, whom I posit as a key to *Vozvrashchenie*'s polyvalent genealogy.

Whereas in *Polet* exile is portrayed as a state of literal and linguistic unhousedness, in *Vozvrashchenie* it emerges unambiguously as an incurable ontological illness. The narrative is anchored to an unnamed first-person narrator, a Russian émigré residing in Paris who suffers from successive hallucinatory episodes through which he experiences the deaths of complete strangers: “эт[а] непрекращающ[ая]ся смен[а] видений, которые преследовали меня.”<sup>82</sup> The narrator's disturbing condition is explicitly aligned with his exilic status from the novel's opening sentence: “я умер в июне месяце, ночью, в одно из первых лет моего пребывания за границей”.<sup>83</sup> Our unmediated access to his mental dislocation from reality creates a narrative in which descriptions of individuals and events commingle with surreal, dream-like digressions, such that the two narrative modes become difficult to distinguish:

Я чувствовал теперь во всех обстоятельствах необыкновенную призрачность моей собственной жизни, многослойную и непременною, независимо от того, касалось ли это проектов и предположений или непосредственных и материальных условий существования, которые могли совершенно измениться на расстоянии нескольких дней или нескольких часов [...] Мир состоял для меня из вещей и ощущений, которые я узнавал, — так, как если бы я когда-то давным-давно уже испытал их и теперь они возвращались ко мне точно из потерявшегося во времени сна.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie buddy*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, III, 137-294 (p. 147).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

The narrator's spectral transparency, along with his disoriented familiarity for sensations and objects, returning "as if from a dream lost in time" foreshadows the reader's own impression whilst reading *Vozvrashchenie*: that it is composed of eerily familiar but disparate elements, and subject to a perpetually shifting narrative pace. For instance, the reader is disoriented very early on by a major digression involving a street fight, incarceration for an unexplained murder, interrogation and a verdict of mistaken identity. The narrator's dream-like sojourn in the "Tsentral'noe Gosudarstvo", which quite literally springs from a dark alleyway during his night-time wandering, constitutes an unsettling intrusion of surreal liminality on to what has up until this point been the identifiable space of Paris, charted through its landmarks and street names. The narrator is arrested for a murder he has not committed and detained in a cell that calls to mind Tsintsinnat's theatrical imprisonment in Nabokov's *Priglasenie na kazn'* (1938), as in its description as "lacking a fourth wall": "Четвертой стены не было: на ее месте сиял огромный световой прорез".<sup>85</sup> The cell is situated in the ominously titled "Tsentral'noe gosudarstvo", which echoes the "Edinoe gosudarstvo" of Evgenii Zamiatin's *My* (1920).<sup>86</sup> This dream-like, theatrical sequence is for the narrator characterised by its heightened actuality: "Но в том, что происходило тогда, уже было нечто реальное и несомненное, была действительность, а не неотразимая абстракция".<sup>87</sup> The relevance of Kafka, as with *Priglasenie na kazn'*, has also been widely noted.<sup>88</sup> For instance, the incarceration for an unexplained crime poses evident parallels with novels such as *Der*

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>86</sup> *My* was not published in Russian until considerably later, but it appeared in an English translation in 1924 and in a French translation in 1929. See *We*, trans. Gregory Zilboorg (New York: Dutton, 1924) and *Nous autres*, trans. B. Cauvert-Duhamel (Paris: Gallimard, 1929).

<sup>87</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie*, p. 156.

<sup>88</sup> Dostoevskii is a significant thread between text and subtexts. See e.g. W. J. Dodd, *Kafka and Dostoevsky* (London: Macmillan, 1992); Gavriel Shapiro, *Delicate Markers: Subtexts in Vladimir Nabokov's Invitation to a Beheading* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); Pekka Tammi, *Russian Subtexts in Nabokov's Fiction: Four Essays* (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 1999); V. A. Boiarskii, "Vozvrashchenie idiota: 'Idiot' F. M. Dostoevskogo i 'Vozvrashchenie buddy' G. Gazdanova", *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 5/25 (2013), 61-74.



*Prozess* (1925) and *Das Schloss* (1926).<sup>89</sup> The Kafkaesque tone of the imprisonment digression also lays down the subtext of *Die Verwandlung* (1915) that emerges later in the description of Pavel Aleksandrovich's drastic *prevrashchenie*, and which reverberates structurally in the drastic genre shifts throughout *Vozvrashchenie*. The digression is significant not for any single identifiable subtext that takes primacy, but rather for the struggle between the knot of subtexts entangled within it (and within one another), especially if we consider the verdict of mistaken identity (“вы стали жертвами чудовищной ошибки”) that ultimately emerges as its (perhaps intentionally) unsatisfying conclusion.<sup>90</sup>

L. N. Dar'ialova has noted the intriguing parallel between Gazdanov's *Vozvrashchenie buddy* and a novella of exactly the same name written by Vsevolod Ivanov and first published in Berlin in 1923.<sup>91</sup> Ivanov's novella tells the story of Safonov, a professor of world literature at the Central Pedagogical Institute in St Petersburg, ordered by authorities to oversee the return of a giant golden statue of the Buddha to its country of origin, Mongolia. Russia's situation at a juncture between Europe and Asia is a central motif of the story, and is exaggerated by the Europeanised Safonov's foreign gaze on the culture he encounters in Mongolia.<sup>92</sup>

Профессор Сафонов — европеец. Он знает: чтобы не думать, нужно занимать тело и разум движением. Двигаясь все время, не размышляя о смысле

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<sup>89</sup> It is likely that Gazdanov was familiar with Kafka's work. Vasilii Ianovskii's review of the French translation of *Das Schloss* was published on the same page of a 1939 edition of *Russkie zapiski* as Vladimir Weidle's review of Gazdanov's *Istoriia odnogo puteshestviia*—with thanks to Bryan Karenyk for this observation. See Vasilii Ianovskii, “F. Kafka. Le Château”, *Russkie zapiski*, 14 (1939), 201-2 (p. 202). Ianovskii interestingly draws a parallel between the posthumous translation of Kafka's works and his impending ascent to popularity: “При жизни он почти ничего не печатал; после смерти «объективные» условия не благоприятствовали его книгам: уроженец Праги, не-ариец, писавши по-немецки. А между тем время его — придет!”

<sup>90</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie*, p. 170.

<sup>91</sup> Vsevolod Ivanov, “Vozvrashchenie buddy”, *Nashi dni*, 3 (1923), 35-98 (see L. N. Dar'ialova, “‘Vozvrashchenie buddy’ Gazdanova i ‘Vozvrashchenie buddy’ Vs. Ivanova: opyt khudozhestvennoi interpretatsii”, in Kondakov, ed., *Gazdanov i mirovaia kul'tura*, pp. 175-87).

<sup>92</sup> Valentina Brougher notes that the novella was also republished several times in the latter half of the 1920s, “when the Soviet Union was still courting the non-Orthodox nationalities of Mongolia, Tibet, and Central Asia” (see Valentina Brougher, “Introduction”, Vsevolod Ivanov, *Fertility and other stories*, trans. by Valentina Brougher and Frank J. Miller (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), p. xv).

движения, Европа пришла в тьму. Восток неподвижен, и не даром символ его — лотосоподобный Будда.<sup>93</sup>

The novella questions the nature of human will through its emphasis on the underlying tension between man's spiritual and physical needs. Safonov's mission to deliver the Buddha statue intact is in the end thwarted by Kirghiz horsemen who hack at it, hoping to find hidden treasure. As Valentina Brougher has emphasised, the philosophical juxtaposition of spiritual and physical underpins both eastern mysticism, and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, which entered Russian popular consciousness through the works of Dostoevskii.<sup>94</sup> In Gazdanov's *Vozvrashchenie buddy*, the tension between East and West manifests itself in Shcherbakov's gradual rejection of Europeanism and increasingly outspoken objection to its crimes against non-European cultures: "Все, что нам принадлежит, все, что мы знаем, все, что мы чувствуем, мы это получили во временное пользование от умерших людей".<sup>95</sup> Dar'ialova has argued that Gazdanov and Ivanov variously "expose the contradictions" between Eastern and Western civilisations, whilst emphasising the role played by Russia in their synthesis. The similar trajectories of Safonov and the Russian émigrés, from the physical and intellectual comfort of the homeland to the opposite poles of East and West, culminate in (literal and metaphorical) death:

А разве судьбы русских эмигрантов, героев романа, не повторяют пути профессора Сафонова и статуи Будды из повести Вс. Иванова — уход, пусть и вынужденный, из родительского дома, скитания, невольное заточение и в прямом, и в переносном смысле, стремление к душевному покою, которое оказалось иллюзией?<sup>96</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Vsevolod Ivanov, "Vozvrashchenie buddy", in Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 8 vols (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1973), I, 531-97 (p. 586).

<sup>94</sup> Brougher, p. xxvi.

<sup>95</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie*, p. 215.

<sup>96</sup> Dar'ialova, "'Vozvrashchenie buddy' Gazdanova i 'Vozvrashchenie buddy' Vs. Ivanova", pp. 184-5.

In Gazdanov's novel, written over twenty years after Ivanov's novella, the fundamental contradictions between Eastern and Western civilisations persist; so, too, does the search for illusory spiritual peace. Exile is again portrayed as a death sentence, but in the emergent Cold War climate the possibility of resolution seems even more elusive. In Gazdanov's novel, the Buddha recurs in miniaturised form, no longer a giant statue, but an antique statuette whose original has been plundered long before: "Это была статуэтка Будды, из литого золота. Вместо пупка у Будды был довольно крупный овальный рубин".<sup>97</sup> There is also no question of the statue's return to a spiritual homeland; like the narrator and Pavel Aleksandrovich, it is exiled. It is also stolen and, before its retrieval, passes through the hands of Parisian prostitutes and criminals, being devalued and mistaken for bronze. For the narrator, the Buddha statuette is a captivating and beautiful object, but its appeal is notably characterised by its interaction with and validation through a Christian cosmology. He repeatedly emphasises its resemblance to depictions of Saint Jerome in religious ecstasy ("напомнил мне некоторые луврские видения, и в частности, восторженное лицо святого Иеронима"),<sup>98</sup> reinforcing the fundamental tension between these distinct religious worldviews and their respective aesthetic articulations.

In Gazdanov's *Vozvrashchenie buddy*, there is thus a layering of various early twentieth-century subtexts, many of which (as with Ivanov's "Vozvrashchenie buddy") had been published outside of Soviet Russia, or even (in the case of Zamiatin's *My*) in translation. The indiscernibility of the language in which the narrator's own interrogation has been conducted reinforces the linguistic hybridity of influences:

Все, что происходило потом, я помнил совершенно отчетливо, за исключением одной подробности, которой не могли восстановить никакие усилия моей

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<sup>97</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie*, p. 220.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

памяти: я не помнил, на каком языке мы говорили, сначала он и я, затем все остальные. Мне казалось, что некоторые фразы были сказаны по-русски, другие по-французски, третьи по-английски или по-немецки.<sup>99</sup>

The notion of a conversation recalled in the utmost clarity on all *but* the question of the particular language in which it was conducted suggests that the significance of a given event or text lies in its dissemination, regardless of language. Just as German and Russian subtexts intermingle in this digression, those subtexts themselves were during this point frequently being accessed in a language or country other than the original. This interlude moreover dominates a significant portion of the narrative, especially if we consider the two-year time lapse that has been contained within the novel's opening few pages. The contraction and expansion of narrative time in such a manner reinforces an impression of linguistic rootlessness, as well as indicating that we are reading a collage of selected highlights, rather than a comprehensive chronological history. The reader is forced to submit to random oscillations of tone, tempo, language and subtext. The narrator's escape from the death sentence signals a further shift from the surreal amalgamation of deaths which have preceded into the single murder mystery to which the reader is abruptly ejected.

Behind the dystopian twentieth-century incarceration narratives that merge in the "Tsentral'noe gosudarstvo" digression, there lie various nineteenth-century Russian texts dealing with themes of mental illness, persecution mania and the macabre. The fact that readers are aware of the narrator's affliction whilst other characters remain oblivious illustrates his fear that he will be taken for mad if he voices his malady. Mental illness as an expression of existential alienation has very obvious Russian forebears, such as Poprishchin in Gogol's *Zapiski sumasshedshego* (1835) or Dostoevskii's *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* (1864). The rootedness of such characters via first-person narratives and the impression of writing as

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

a physical embodiment of the mental state suggests a tension between materiality and incorporeality, between real and surreal space. Nineteenth-century subtexts may even be noted within the dream-like digression itself, for instance in the bullet aimed directly above the narrator's head during his interrogation, which again recalls Silvio's parting shot in "Vystrel": "пуля вошла в стену метра на полтора выше моей головы".<sup>100</sup>

Yet the narrator's dysphoric suspension between life and death is not merely a bridge between reality and fantasy or sanity and madness; it also signals his navigation between the present and the past. He is plagued with amnesia regarding his own personal history and identity, with his spectral translucence epitomised in the teasing absence of any name by which to identify him: "Моя фамилия — я назвал свою фамилию — такая-то, я живу в Париже и учусь в университете, на историко-филологическом факультете."<sup>101</sup>

Throughout *Vozvrashchenie*, readers are denied this most basic linguistic identifier taken for granted as a marker of one's origins. (The lack of a first name and moreover a patronymic is, as we shall see, highly significant in the broader context of the father-son relationship that the narrator seeks out with Pavel Aleksandrovich.) The narrator therefore possesses no discernible links to the past, although he engages with a conceptual Russian past through his study of history at the Sorbonne, and readily muses on the present political situation in Europe with reference to historic events: "Мне казалось, что девятнадцатый век не знал тех варварских и насильственных форм государственности, которые были характерны для истории некоторых стран именно в двадцатом столетии."<sup>102</sup> The comparison between repressive regimes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is followed by musings on Ivan's "Velikii Inkvizitor" in Dostoevskii's *Brat'ia Karamazovy* (1880). What is intriguing about the narrator's engagement with nineteenth-century history, then, is its frequent mediation via

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

literary referents, as opposed to historic events. Just as his relationship to the present is mediated through his own writing, his relationship to his lost homeland is mediated through textuality and his own situation as a reader.

Themes of madness are of course closely linked to the Petersburg topos, which Gazdanov interestingly conflates with the Parisian text. In *Polet*, Gazdanov presents a triangular mode of relation between the alternate metropolises of London and Paris and the third space of the French Riviera villa which, as I have argued, takes up the relationship between Moscow, St Petersburg and the dacha colony in the Russian classical tradition and replants it in the Western European context. One might apply a similar interpretive process to *Vozvrashchenie* as a transposition of the Petersburg text on to the already extremely fertile literary site of Paris.<sup>103</sup> The heritage of Petersburg textuality and metatextuality, and the tension between the fantastic and the real upon which it is grounded, as articulated by Vladimir Toporov, are in this respect significant. The “Petersburg text” is not a mimetic representation or setting, but a device, a character in its own right: “Петербургский текст, представляющий собой не просто усиливающее эффект зеркало города, но устройство, с помощью которого и совершается переход *а realibus ad realiora*”.<sup>104</sup> The repeated attempts to decipher and define Petersburg textuality attest to the city’s own complex *poligenetichnost’* as a product of fiction and history. Julie Buckler similarly underlines the need to consider it polygenetically, as “a cultural network that cannot be reduced to a single

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<sup>103</sup> Kabaloti and Rubins have noted this parallel in *Nochnye dorogi*; see Sergei Kabaloti, *Poetika prozy Gaito Gazdanova* (St Petersburg: Peterburgskii pisatel’, 1998), p. 313, or Rubins, “‘Chelovecheskii dokument’ ili literaturnaia parodiia?”, p. 246. The question is more complex than a straightforward transposition from one space to another; there exists an underlying interaction between Petersburg and Paris texts during the nineteenth century as well. This has been analysed by Priscilla Meyer with reference to Pushkin, Lermontov, Balzac, Dostoevskii, Flaubert, Tolstoi. One might easily include Zola on this list.

<sup>104</sup> Vladimir Toporov, *Petrburgskii tekst russkoi literatury: izbrannye trudy* (St Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 2003), p. 7.

textual structure, as a body of texts that collectively provides a structural analogue for the material city.”<sup>105</sup>

In *Vozvrashchenie buddy*, prerevolutionary Petersburg is invoked through the “device” of Pavel Aleksandrovich. He informs the narrator that he used to study history at the Imperial University (like the narrator, who is studying history in Paris):

За очень короткое время он успел сообщить мне некоторые сведения о себе, которые показались мне не менее фантастическими, чем его вид, — там фигурировало туманное здание Петербургского университета, который он некогда кончил, историко-филологический факультет и какие-то неточные и уклончивые упоминания об огромном богатстве, которое он не то потерял, не то должен был получить.<sup>106</sup>

Paris thus serves as a backdrop not only for the immediate action of the novel, but also for the lost past of the émigré characters who now haunt the public parks and coffee shops of Montparnasse. This past is symbolised by the lingering image of Petersburg, which is shimmeringly overlaid on to the here-and-now space of Paris. One might note such an approach elsewhere, for instance in the short story, “Kniazhna Meri”, published in 1953 (which I consider in more detail shortly). In this story, the narrator walks through Paris in the snow, forgetting entirely where he is: “Я шел пешком из одного конца города в другой и, как это уже неоднократно со мной бывало, потерял точное представление о том, где я нахожусь и когда это происходит.”<sup>107</sup> Paris becomes a faceless city, devoid of its most identifiable landmarks, with the narrator’s recollection of Blok’s “Ночь, улица, фонарь, аптека” introducing a Petersburg filter. These words (“эти магические слова”)<sup>108</sup> are not the

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<sup>105</sup> Julie Buckler, *Mapping St Petersburg: Imperial Text and Cityshape* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie*, pp. 146-7.

<sup>107</sup> Gazdanov “Kniazhna Meri”, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, III, 498-508 (pp. 501-2).

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 502.

narrator's own, and this is precisely their power. In invoking a literary depiction of Petersburg, another's image of the city ("чьи-то чужие и далекие воспоминания о Перепбурге"),<sup>109</sup> the story is suspended between distinct spaces and voices.

In *Vozvrashchenie*, Parisian public space repeatedly facilitates the narrator's chance encounters with other characters. The territory charted is, as is typical in Gazdanov's works, the area immediately surrounding the Sorbonne known as the Latin Quarter (itself significantly a space in which students like the narrator historically spoke a language other than French). The émigré characters' principal domain, which we might term the "Russian Quarter", is located in the south-western segment of Paris; the narrator and his acquaintances oscillate predominantly between the sixth, fourteenth and fifteenth arrondissements of the city.<sup>110</sup> The most significant chance encounters in *Vozvrashchenie* are the twin first meetings between Pavel Aleksandrovich and the narrator, which occur early in the novel. The first takes place in the Jardin du Luxembourg, the second two years later, outside a café on the Boulevard de Montparnasse. This doubling of "first meetings", as I shall now discuss, introduces the notion that the first-wave emigration crucially was not the first instance of encounter between Petersburg and Paris.

The first "first meeting" between the narrator and Pavel Aleksandrovich begins with what the former notes as the latter's "unnaturally correct French", suggesting that his interlocutor might somehow be *more French* than the French ("неестественно правильный французский язык").<sup>111</sup> This conversation locates both men within a social hierarchy, because Pavel Aleksandrovich asks the narrator for money: "Excusez-moi de vous déranger. Vous ne pourriez pas m'avancer un peu d'argent?"<sup>112</sup> Upon noting that the narrator is reading

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Nina Berberova's *Беланкурские праздники*, which I discuss in chapter four, similarly map this part of the city, and also play with the hybrid language of Russian-Parisians.

<sup>111</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie*, p. 146.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.



Karamzin's *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika* (1789), Pavel Aleksandrovich swiftly switches to a “very pure and correct” Russian, littered with archaic turns of phrase:

Это происходило в конце апреля в Люксембургском саду; я сидел на скамейке и читал заметки о путешествии Карамзина. Он быстро посмотрел на книгу и заговорил по-русски — очень чистым и правильным языком, в котором, однако, преобладали несколько архаические обороты: “счел бы своим долгом”, “соблаговолите принять во внимание”.<sup>113</sup>

The reference to Karamzin—the first author of a comprehensive history of the Russian state, whose Gallic-inflected Russian strongly influenced Pushkin—is significant in the context of Pavel Aleksandrovich's sudden code switch. The presence of Karamzin helps explain not just Gazdanov's linguistic hybridity, but his debt to a whole century of Russian writers whose writings had established a hybrid heritage. As well as writing the first history of the Russian state, Karamzin produced many translations of writers such as Marmontel and Madame de Staël and edited journals such as *Vestnik Evropy* and *Panteon inostrannoi slovesnosti*, the latter of which, according to Andrew Kahn, demonstrated “the importance he ascribed to [...] the formation of a native canon based on foreign models.”<sup>114</sup> Karamzin's role in the gallicisation of the Russian language and “advocacy of an elegant Russian unmarred by old-fashioned Slavonicisms and distinguished by a more fluent syntax” was a significant step in the development of a Russian literary language.<sup>115</sup> Kahn also emphasises Karamzin's legendary status in the eyes of Pushkin:

Pushkin, perhaps more than most of his generation, held Karamzin personally in great reverence, seeing his work as a literary and historical touchstone: Pushkin's own

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Andrew Kahn, ed., *Nikolai Karamzin: Letters of a Russian Traveller: a translation, with an essay on Karamzin's discourses of Enlightenment* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

creative and historical works repeatedly interrogate and respond to Karamzin's philosophical assumptions and historical conclusions.<sup>116</sup>

Like Pushkin, whose reverence for Karamzin aligned him with a certain kind of literary language, the unnamed narrator will later revere his elder mentor, whom he comes to view as a father figure. However, where for Pushkin, Karamzin is a logical and immediate national forefather, the narrator is initially drawn to Pavel for his association with a national history and a rootedness in the past that he personally does not possess.

Between the first and second "first meetings", Pavel Aleksandrovich undergoes a dramatic metamorphosis, having inherited a fortune from his brother. The conventional nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* configuration, in which a young *ingénu* learns from an older, wiser mentor in order to progress socially and make his fortune, is thus inverted. Whereas previously, the narrator had expressed an uneasy attitude regarding the beggar's apparent superiority to him ("Никакой бродяга или нищий не должен был, не имел ни возможности, ни права говорить таким голосом."),<sup>117</sup> the tables are turned, with the narrator suddenly relegated below him in the social order. The narrator's disbelief is apparent in his repeated suggestion that time has gone backwards:

Два года тому назад этот человек существовал только как напоминание, теперь это напоминание почти чудесным образом вернулось к тому, кто ему некогда предшествовал и чье исчезновение должно было быть безвозрастным. Я не мог прийти в себя от искреннего изумления.<sup>118</sup>

In both encounters, Pavel Aleksandrovich's social status is indicated through reference to his clothing. Whilst in the Jardin du Luxembourg, he wears shabby clothing and battered shoes, in the second, these too have undergone a transformation, and he wears a suit, smart shoes,

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie*, p. 146.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

and a gold watch: “И тогда, не веря самому себе, я узнал человека, которому я дал десять франков в Люксембургском саду... Я никогда не думал, что платье может так изменить человека.”<sup>119</sup> As they part ways, the narrator significantly notices his acquaintance’s new overgarment:

Он шел по широкому проходу между столиками и медленно исчезал в мягком электрическом свете, в новом тугом пальто и новой шляпе, и теперь уверенность его походки не могла бы никому показаться неуместной, даже мне, которого она так поразила при нашей первой встрече.<sup>120</sup>

The reference to Pavel’s vanishing in a new “fitted overcoat and new hat”, when combined with the narrator’s own social anxiety and inferiority complex, notably alludes to Gogol’s portrayals of a distinctive form of Petersburg alienation in such tales as *Nos* (1836), *Nevskii Prospekt* (1835) and *Shinel’* (1842). These dual first meetings lay down a lineage of Petersburg textuality, as well as one of Russian travellers in Europe, thus indicating that the interaction between Paris and Petersburg texts has a layered past long predating 1917. Through these scattered literary references, Pavel Aleksandrovich is situated as an agent of Petersburg, but also of the novel’s *preemstvennost’*.

Thus far I have noted Pavel Aleksandrovich’s association with St Petersburg, and its projection on to the recognisable landmarks of the Paris topos via allusions to Russian literary forebears. However, the unexpected murder of the narrator’s adopted father figure presents us with a further nineteenth-century genealogy: that of the crime novel. In *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (1866), Raskolnikov delineates between a theoretical perfect crime informed by the Nietzschean *Übermensch* construct, and the actual act of committing murder. As in the early “Tsentral’noe gosudarstvo” digression, the narrator has not actually

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

committed the murder of which he is accused, and for which he is arrested and questioned. He has, nonetheless, entertained the theoretical possibility of Pavel Aleksandrovich's death as a potentially positive turn of events. Although the hypothesis is initially presented as a harmless observation, his internal response to it elevates the thought to the status of a crime: "Почему в каком-то умозрительном пространстве я осуждаю на смерть или на близость к нирване Паца? [...] Почему я совершаю это теоретическое преступление?"<sup>121</sup>

Gazdanov's narrator conflates the very thought of Pavel Aleksandrovich's death with an act of murder, or, if we regard Pavel as an adopted father, an act of parricide. This is counter to Raskolnikov's conflation of the real act of murder with a theoretical principle subsequent to having actually killed and robbed Alena Ivanovna. Pavel Aleksandrovich is killed by a blow to the back of the head, his golden buddha stolen. The parallels between the murders in *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* and *Vozvrashchenie* are evident and have been duly noted by critics and scholars alike.<sup>122</sup>

Raskolnikov also lacks a father and idolises the historical (and eventually exilic) figure of Napoleon. But his curious relationship with Porfirii Petrovich and its oscillating power dynamic are equally significant. These are refracted in the curious anti-interrogation between the narrator and the inspector investigating Pavel's murder:

Я действую сейчас, может быть, не так, как должен был бы действовать [...]

Если бы я вас не видел и не говорил с вами, а мне бы рассказали об этом, я бы сказал, что тратить времени на следствие не стоит. Но я постараюсь вам помочь.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>122</sup> I.e. M. S. Novikov "A view to a kill: ot Rodiona Raskol'nikova k Vinsentu Vege: Kriminal'nyi geroi u Gazdanova" in M. A. Vasil'eva, ed., *Vozvrashchenie Gaito Gazdanova* (Moscow: Russkii put', 2000), pp. 137-43. See also Girard's thesis of triangular desire, which dictates that desire, whether for an object, ideal or individual, is always inspired and crucially mediated via a third party. René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: self and other in literary structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), and *Resurrection from the Underground: Feodor Dostoevsky*, trans. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad, 1997).

ВЫ ВСПОМНИЛИ, О ЧЕМ ВЫ ГОВОРИЛИ СО ЩЕРБАКОВЫМ В ЭТОТ ПОСЛЕДНИЙ ВЕЧЕР ЕГО ЖИЗНИ?<sup>123</sup>

Gazdanov's narrator, devoid of any form of positive social example, let alone a clear idea of his roots, first fixes on Pavel Aleksandrovich, before seeking a second mentor in the unlikely guise of his interrogator. Parricide is also the explicit topic of *Brat'ia Karamazovy* (1879-80) where there is moreover a key distinction between the *actual* murder, and the suggestion that the three brothers are guilty, if only by wishing their father's death. Dostoevskii is thus laid down as a forebear whose œuvre develops through recurrent themes and scenarios. At the third meeting of the *Studio franco-russe* in December of 1929, devoted to the topic of Dostoevskii, Gazdanov had objected to Kirill Zaitsev's "modish" view of the author as a "prophet of the revolution" and, responding to René Lalou, had stressed Dostoevskii's universality: "Le plus grand mérite de Dostoïevski est d'avoir su trouver, bien qu'étant un homme très peu instruit, des paroles capables de bouleverser le monde littéraire dans tous les pays."<sup>124</sup> This universality was attested to by the literary (and non-literary) works it had produced: Freud, for instance, had written explicitly about parricide and Dostoevskii in an introductory article ("Dostojewski und die Vätertötung") to a scholarly edition of *Brat'ia Karamazovy* published in 1928, which may potentially have been in the back of Gazdanov's mind. The depiction of fatherhood and mentorship in terms of criminality and transgression is further underlined in *Vozvrashchenie* in the narrator's reading aloud of a false extract from the exiled revolutionary Viktor Chernov's memoir right after Pavel Aleksandrovich's discovery of a real-life theft.<sup>125</sup> The implication would appear to be that the novel's

<sup>123</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie*, pp. 237-8.

<sup>124</sup> Livak, *Le Studio franco-russe (1929-1931)*, p. 118. In this meeting Gazdanov also argued that the Russian Revolution was no different to other revolutions, which garnered criticism: "Il me semble que M. Zaitsev s'arrête trop sur la révolution russe qu'il considère comme la plus grande et comme unique dans l'histoire de l'humanité. Mais, après chaque révolution, on disait la même chose, et on avait les mêmes raisons de le faire. [...] La révolution russe est un fait d'une importance locale." Ibid., pp. 118-9.

<sup>125</sup> Gazdanov would appear to be engaging in some ludic mystification: the work attributed to Viktor Chernov is here named *Pered grozoi* but was published as *Pered burei* in 1952. The passage cited in *Vozvrashchenie* is not

fragmented father-son relations are not merely innocent or random adoptive borrowings, but are also at times counterfeits, falsifications and corruptions of their supposed originals.<sup>126</sup>

In this sense, *Vozvrashchenie*, like *Polet*, employs models of family relation in order to probe questions of literary *preemstvennost'*. However, where *Polet* employs the oedipal triangle, *Vozvrashchenie* employs homosocial desire, and plays on amalgamations of first and seconds (first and second encounters, first and second father figures). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of homosociality, as articulated specifically in the triangular relationship between two men and one woman, takes up Lévi-Strauss' view that "(t)he total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman, but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners."<sup>127</sup> She then recasts the question in terms of sexuality: "like Freud's 'heterosexual' [...] Lévi-Strauss's normative man uses a woman as a 'conduit of a relationship' in which the true *partner* is a man."<sup>128</sup> Whilst Sedgwick explicates her theory through English literature, we may observe similar configurations in many nineteenth-century Russian works, from Raskolnikov's perceived power over his sister's marital status to Lermontov's *Geroi nashego vremeni*, in which at least *Bela* and *Kniazhna Meri* are structured in this way. In *Pervaia liubov'* Vladimir's host also informs his guests that his own first love developed out of the initial agreement between his own father and his wife's father:

В моей первой любви тоже не много занимательного; я ни в кого не влюблялся до знакомства с Анной Ивановной, моей теперешней женой, — и все у нас шло

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present in Chernov's memoir, and it would appear quite likely that it is fabricated, given that the memoir had not been published at the point at which *Vozvrashchenie* was written.

<sup>126</sup> In the French modernist context, there are interesting parallels with Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (1925), which also signals its debt to Dostoevskii, although they exceed the bounds of the present discussion. See Catherine A. Barry, "Some Transpositions of Dostoevsky in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*", *French Review*, 45/3 (1972), 580-7 and Robert K. Martin, "Authority, Paternity and Currency in André Gide's 'Les faux-monnayeurs'", *Modern Language Studies*, 21/3 (1991), 10-16.

<sup>127</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon, 1969), p. 115, cited in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 26.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

как по маслу: отцы нас сосватали, мы очень скоро полюбились друг другу и вступили в брак не мешкая.<sup>129</sup>

In light of a view of male-female relations as always fundamentally predicated on an underlying contract *between men*, the triangular configuration between Lida, Pavel Aleksandrovich, and the narrator might be viewed as a homosocial bond in which Lida, the woman they both ostensibly desire, is merely a conduit. The narrator wants to be Pavel Aleksandrovich's son, but the presence of Lida in the equation indicates that he might also want to be his lover:

— Мы сегодня будем обедать втроем, — сказал Павел Александрович, - если вы ничего не имеете против этого.

— Наоборот, наоборот, — поспешно сказал я.<sup>130</sup>

Sedgwick's notion of "homosexual panic" as a post-Romantic phenomenon culminating in "first, the acute *manipulability*, through the fear of one's own 'homosexuality,' of acculturated men; and second, a reservoir of potential for *violence*" is also applicable in light of Pavel Aleksandrovich's murder.<sup>131</sup> Because desire remains in the mental realm, even the narrator's "thought crime" constitutes an act of violence—or, at least, an articulation of the potential for violence—against the true object of his desire, from whom he stands to inherit a fortune. In this sense, the murder accusation levelled at the narrator resembles Freudian wish-fulfilment.

It is significant that Lida should embody the homosocial struggle in *Vozvrashchenie*, given the fact that she herself is a polygenetic character, whose mother has married a Frenchman and whose hybridity is repeatedly emphasised. Lida's language perpetually jumps back and forth between Parisian *argot* and Russian ("Она переходила все время с

<sup>129</sup> Turgenev, *Pervaia liubov'*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>130</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie*, p. 188.

<sup>131</sup> Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 186.

французского на русский и с русского на французский”)<sup>132</sup> and she has spent four years in Tunisia by way of Marseilles. Lida’s prostitution might allude to Sonia’s prostitution in *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*, or indeed any number of nineteenth-century naturalist novels where, as Lévi-Strauss notes, it is predicated on a financial transaction ultimately taking place between men. But Lida’s wilful mobility disrupts any notion that she is not in charge: “Денег на билет у нее не было, но она платила за все ‘иначе’, как она сказала.”<sup>133</sup> Her bilingualism, and the jostling attraction-repulsion she induces in the narrator reinforce his dilemma between heterosexual and homosocial impulses: “Мне нужны были необыкновенные усилия, чтобы победить охватившее меня отвращение к Лиде и к себе самому.”<sup>134</sup> *Prizrak*, with which *Vozvrashchenie* has frequently been compared, contains a similar configuration of male desire as mediated through the conduit of the female. The climactic gunshot at the end of *Prizrak* might be seen as the delayed fulfilment of another type of contract: that of the duel which was never “consummated”, and through which Elena Nikolaevna Armstrong, herself a hybrid Russian-American character speaking in a “neutrally foreign accent”, has been the mediating figure between the unnamed Russian émigré narrator and Aleksandr Vol’f.

Lida is not the only female character in Gazdanov’s works whose fluidity is threatening to men and the relationships between men. In *Polet*, Liudmila (the jilted wife of Arkadii Aleksandrovich, with whom Ol’ga Aleksandrovna is having an affair) also deploys language as a vehicle for manipulating the homosocial code to her own advantage. In an early comic scene that openly alludes to French as a language of manners associated with artifice and performance, Liudmila extorts money from Sergei Sergeevich:

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<sup>132</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie*, p. 198.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.



— Вы знаете все? — медленно сказала Людмила, подняв на него глаза. — И вам не жаль меня?

Это было сказано так искренне, голосом, столь далеким от какой бы то ни было искусственности или комедии, что Сергей Сергеевич пришел в восторг.

— Это прекрасно, — сказал он. — Ça c'est réussi, mes hommages, madame.

Лицо Людмилы осталось неподвижным, только в глазах промелькнула беглая и почти откровенная улыбка. Сергей Сергеевич в это время быстро написал чек. Людмила, не посмотрев на сумму, положила его в сумку, сказала прерывающимся голосом: — Простите меня, Сергей Сергеевич. Прощайте, — Сергей Сергеевич низко поклонился, — и ушла.<sup>135</sup>

Later, she meets an Englishman, Macfarlane, through an Italian acquaintance and sees an escape route from the loveless and impoverished marriage in which she is trapped. A skilful seduction in three languages (her native Russian, French and English) ensues. It pleases Macfarlane that Liudmila is “at home” (“как дома”)<sup>136</sup> in English, and she downplays her Russian when she feels it will detract from her perceived exoticism. Liudmila’s seduction is, like her extortion of money from Sergei Sergeevich, a well-rehearsed performance:

“Людмила поняла, что ей нужно было “переключиться” на *coup de foudre*, как она подумала, — иначе она рисковала оказаться не на высоте положения.”<sup>137</sup> Liudmila refines her English idiolect through heavy borrowings from the language of her target’s favourite literature:

Но так или иначе, у них очень быстро установился с Макфарленом условный язык, основные понятия которого были заимствованы из Киплинга и Диккенса, любимых его авторов; Людмила в одном из первых разговоров сказала

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<sup>135</sup> Gazdanov, *Polet*, p. 338.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 374.

Макфарлену, что она выросла и воспиталась на английской литературе.

Макфарлена удивлял — как все остальное — ее беглый английский язык; он не мог знать того, что это было совершенно необходимо Людмиле для ее работы и, стало быть, теряло самостоятельную ценность, хотя и свидетельствовало о несомненных лингвистических ее способностях.<sup>138</sup>

Here, Liudmila comes across as automaton-like and emotionless as Sergei Sergeevich. The mention of her “work” underscores the fact that for her the marriage is fundamentally a business transaction, a means to securing financial independence from her first husband. Gazdanov’s women characters disrupt homosocial order and bonds, manipulating them to their advantage. Their sexual liberation is supported by their “linguistic abilities”, which permit them to assume certain demeanours, according to circumstance.

Previous discussion of *Vozvrashchenie* has demonstrated that firsts, seconds and thirds manifest in *Vozvrashchenie* as a means of establishing and disrupting bonds: first and second meetings cement male friendships, whilst women are often situated as third points, who introduce rivalry into the previously peaceful dynamic. In this way, women function as secondary agents of *preemstvennost’*, insofar as they introduce rupture and discontinuity into the relationships between men. I wish in conclusion to return to “Kniazhna Meri” as a final example of the means by which gender and language often underpin the complex visions of *preemstvennost’* in Gazdanov’s works. Earlier in this chapter I discussed “Kniazhna Meri” as an instantiation of Gazdanov’s construction of a Paris text overtly inflected with and even effaced by distinctive tropes of the Petersburg text (although the action of Lermontov’s “Kniazhna Meri”, from which it is partially drawn, takes place in the Caucasus). Petersburg is invoked through poetic language as a flickering echo of Paris that is nonetheless charged with its own distinct literary freight: this layering of topoi suspends the work between multiple

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 382.

literary traditions. Yet, at least on first appearances, “Kniazhna Meri” appears to be engaging directly and exclusively with a Russian tradition. The story’s title, which very obviously alludes to the fourth chapter of Lermontov’s *Geroi nashego vremeni* (1840), is however misleading. Aside from his solitary wandering, our narrator is not an émigré Pechorin, as the narrator of *Nochnye dorogi* or Fel’zen’s Volodia have frequently been read.<sup>139</sup> Rather, as I shall now discuss, “Kniazhna Meri” is an intriguing contribution to the Lermontov trend amongst younger émigrés for its deliberate subversion (both through gender *and* language) of details of Lermontov’s text.

The narrator becomes intrigued by a group of four individuals—a woman and three men—who play cards in the café he frequents. One of them, a man who goes by the woman’s name “Maria” and is purported to be a well-known Russian writer (“О человеке с женским именем гарсон сказал вещь, которая мне показалась явно неправдоподобной: мужчина, по имени Мария, был известным русским писателем”),<sup>140</sup> draws his attention more than his counterparts, thanks to his Russian-accented French: “в отличие от своих партнеров, говорил по-французски неправильно и с сильным русским акцентом”.<sup>141</sup> After a two-year time lapse, the narrator encounters Maria once again. This time they discuss literature, and Maria claims that he is a contributor to one of the most widely read Russian periodicals (“сотрудник одного из самых распространенных русских журналов”).<sup>142</sup> The narrator observes that his interlocutor has a deep-rooted persecution complex, and is labouring under delusions about the quality of his own literary efforts:

Он страдал, как мне показалось, особенной формой мании преследования, впрочем, довольно распространенной: он был жертвой зависти, интриг и безмолвного литературного заговора, в котором участвовали самые разные

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<sup>139</sup> Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, p. 176.

<sup>140</sup> Gazdanov, “Kniazhna Meri”, p. 501.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 500.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 503.

люди. Одни из них завидовали его таланту, другие боялись его конкуренции, и поэтому, как он сказал, его нигде не печатали. По его словам, он печатался в прежнее время, в России, где у него был большой успех. [...] — Другие, помоложе, эти самые модернисты, они из кожи лезут вон, чтобы выдумать что-нибудь необыкновенное. А я художник. Я пишу о том, что вижу, больше ничего. И это есть настоящая литература.<sup>143</sup>

The sardonic critique of “younger modernists” who do not appreciate true art situates Maria starkly as an “elder” whose blind arrogance and superiority are risible to the narrator. Later, when Maria dies suddenly, he bequeaths his manuscripts to the narrator—a detail that alludes to how Pechorin’s manuscripts fall into the hands of the narrator of *Geroi*—and we learn that his “regular contribution” to a Russian émigré periodical was in fact a society advice column he wrote for the Russian magazine *Parizhskaia nedelia*, under the alias of “Княжна Мери”. The pseudonym is notably transliterated differently from Lermontov’s “Княжна Мери”, with Maria writing as “Княжна Мэри”.

As the narrator begins to read the many weekly columns, replete with sartorial advice and etiquette for society ladies, vast disparities emerge between the unglamorous poverty of this man’s real life and the vividness of his imagined social world, between his conviction of his literary “gift”, and the petty society column that he actually wrote. One might read Maria, in fact, as a composite of characters in *Geroi nashego vremeni* (1840), depending on which “persona” we choose to foreground. His name, pseudonym and weekly column all point to his being a Russian princess Mary, but one might equally regard him as an émigré Maksim Maksimovich, especially given his recurrent café meetings with the narrator, or indeed his bequeathal of a written document (his manuscripts, as opposed to a diary). His advice column, in which he responded to readers’ letters, also bathetically deflates the classical trope

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., pp. 503-4.

of the letter as an inserted subgenre within the prose work. But the combination of Maria's arrogance regarding his own literary talent and his misanthropic persecution complex might equally allude to Pechorin. Indeed, this bizarre synthesis of distinctive traits of various Lermontovian types calls to mind Lermontov's own clarification that Pechorin was a composite portrait of the vices that flourished amongst his generation: "Герой нашего времени, милостивые государи мои, точно, портрет, но не одного человека: это портрет, составленный из пороков нашего поколения, в полном их развитии."<sup>144</sup>

Gazdanov harnesses Lermontov, then, in order to subversively critique those émigrés who are so delusionally attached to a time and place that no longer exist (and in truth, never have) that they fail to live in the real world. Maria is only able to overcome his superfluity by constructing a subversive mask (and an entirely different gender identity), notably through written language, in order to gain access to those circles he otherwise cannot. His attachment to an era and social set that no longer truly exists thus emerge as the target of satire. Through Maria, notably a Russian version of "Mary", Gazdanov parodies those Russians who are hopelessly attached to the past, harnessing the cliché of the melancholic romantic hero who insistently broods on the futility of existence. The fluidity in periodisation serves to reinforce the idea that such delusion is eternal: the narrator is initially struck by the group's apparent timelessness, viewing them, for instance, as perpetually lit "in a Rembrandtesque twilight" ("мне показалось, что они возникают в почти рембрандтовских сумерках, из неопределимого прошлого").<sup>145</sup>

Я подумал о том, что в них всех были какие-то элементы вечности: с тех пор, как существовали люди, во всех странах и во все времена, существовало и то, что определяло жизнь каждого из них, вино, карты и нищета; и их профессии —

<sup>144</sup> Mikhail Lermontov, "Predislovie", *Geroi nashogo vremeni* (Letchworth: Bradda Books, 1969), pp. 25-6 (p. 25).

<sup>145</sup> Gazdanov, "Kniazhna Meri", p. 502.

портниха, актер, боксер или гладиатор и, наконец, писатель. И вдруг мне показалось, что я совершенно отчетливо услышал чей-то далекий голос, который сказал по-французски эту фразу:

— Mais ils ne sont sortis de l'éternité que pour s'y perdre de nouveau.<sup>146</sup>

The intrusion of a disembodied (French) voice and its assertion that these individuals have emerged from eternity merely “to lose themselves once again” resonates very clearly with the spiritual angst commonly associated with the “Paris note”, and also draws a parallel with the Blok citation, described anonymously as “чьи-то воспоминания о Петербурге”. These disparate intrusions of unattributed voices in both French and Russian expand the story’s engagement with a romantic stimulus, suggesting a bilingual genealogy of spiritual angst stretching all the way from Lermontov’s spa topos, through Blok’s Petersburg, to modern-day Paris.

Although Gazdanov’s works build on Russian romantic and realist traditions, they sabotage the possibility of a single straightforward intertext or reading, hence the images of death, violence, murder, theft, incest, corruption and affiliation. *Polet* commingles and conflates recognisable details from two distinct nineteenth-century novels, in order to demonstrate the complex and hybrid national heritage from which they are descended. “Kniazhna Meri”, whilst alluding very clearly to a single intertext, contains anachronistic references to other works, and frustrates a parallel reading through a polyvalent character who assumes multiple recognisable personae, and appears to epitomise Lermontov’s own later clarifications of the original work. This sense of flux—between a work and its reception, or between a work and those later works it engenders—is also evident in *Vozvrashchenie*, which has its own unique and complex plot, and thus does not map seamlessly on to one or two works. Whilst it fleetingly recalls very many nineteenth-century tropes and characters, it

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

is difficult to situate as a response to a single Russian nineteenth-century lineage. It is in fact closer to a fairground mirror of that tradition. “First meetings” happen twice, and in more than one language; events that never took place are narrated in intricate detail. Time lapses, flashbacks and digressions undermine narrative progression (at one point even positing that time has gone backwards), and competing, disparate intertexts reinforce the notion of struggle and discontinuity between works. In this way, Gazdanov parodically responds to a nineteenth-century Russian tradition and, equally, to its ongoing reinterpretation and interrogation in a twentieth-century context.

## Chapter Two: Overcoming Proust

The characterisation of Gazdanov as a neo-Proustian author has featured prominently in discussion of his works since the publication of his debut novella, *Vecher u Kler* (hereafter: *Vecher*), in December 1929.<sup>1</sup> Nikolai Otsup, reviewing the novel in the first issue of *Chisla* in February 1930, first articulated what was ultimately to become a commonplace comparison with *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27):

Книга Газданова, главная муза которой — память Мнемозина, — не могла не попасть в русло величайшей поэмы о творческом припоминании — я говорю о поэме Пруста “В поисках утраченного времени” [...] Как у Пруста, у него [Газданова] главное место действия не тот или иной город, не та или иная комната, а душа автора, память его, пытающаяся разыскать в прошлом все то, что привело к настоящему, и делающая по дороге открытия и сопоставления, достаточно горестные.<sup>2</sup>

Otsup identified “the author’s soul and memory” as the principal setting of *Vecher*, yet as Gazdanov saw it, this was a fictional work. The novel’s narrator, Nikolai Sosedov, sits in the bedroom of the Parisian apartment of his lover Kler and recounts the events which have led up to the present day, from his childhood in pre-revolutionary Russia, via his first encounter with Kler in Kislovodsk and his time fighting in the White Army, before eventually following her path to France. Memory thus serves as a device that structures the circular narrative and blurs the line between autobiography and fiction.

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<sup>1</sup> The first edition of *Vecher u Kler* was published in December 1929 by the Parisian publisher Povolotskii.

<sup>2</sup> Nikolai Otsup, “Gaito Gazdanov. *Vecher u Kler*”, first published in *Chisla*, 1 (1930), 232-3, republished in Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5 vols (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2009), V, 368-370 (p. 368).



Questions of autobiographical provenance have similarly plagued the *Recherche*, with frequent conflation of the popular image of Proust with the writer-narrator of his novel. Despite the fact that, as Roger Shattuck notes: “he [Proust] insists that his book be read as a self-contained story and not as autobiography masquerading as fiction”,<sup>3</sup> innumerable critics have aligned Marcel the author with “Marcel” the narrator. Gérard Genette for example suggests that the *Recherche* is a long series of digressions from the basic plotline of “Marcel devient écrivain”, referring to “le narrateur extradiégétique, qui ne porte pas de nom (mais qui est une première hypostase du héros que nous voyons dans des situations attribuées plus tard à Marcel)”.<sup>4</sup> Autobiographical interpretations have generally been prompted by the open suggestion that the two may hypothetically share a name, which appears in the fifth volume, *La Prisonnière* (1923):

Dès qu’elle retrouvait la parole elle disait : « Mon » ou « Mon chéri » suivis l’un ou l’autre de mon nom de baptême, ce qui, en donnant au narrateur le même nom qu’à l’auteur de ce livre, eût fait : « Mon Marcel », « Mon chéri Marcel ».<sup>5</sup>

In *Vecher* there is no such nominal ambiguity: rather than his real or his adopted name (Georgii and Gaito), Gazdanov christens his narrator Nikolai Sosedov. The desire to read the novel autobiographically has nonetheless persisted. Aleksandr Bakhrakh, reflecting on Gazdanov’s debut novella just after his death in 1971, contended that an émigré readership’s familiarity with many of the events it relayed had captured the collective imagination and thus prompted an overwhelmingly autobiographical reading. He attributed such a tendency to the novel’s (predominantly) localised Russian-Parisian émigré readership, many of whom, including himself, had fought in Wrangel’s White Army and taken the same route as Nikolai via Constantinople to Paris, their new home. The desire to read the text autobiographically

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<sup>3</sup> Roger Shattuck, *Proust* (London: Fontana, 1974), p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1972), p. 246.

<sup>5</sup> Marcel Proust, *La Prisonnière* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997) p. 67.

was not because the details of Gazdanov's life prior to his arrival in Paris were widely known, but rather because those experiences which he narrated, and the style in which he did so, seemed so plausibly to echo the experiences and memories shared by many of the novel's Russian émigré readers. The readership, according to Bakhrakh, projected its life story back on to Gazdanov's text, thereby imbuing it with autobiographical significance. His surname, Sosedov, formed from the Russian word for "neighbour" ("сосед") would appear for many of those readers to have reinforced the relatability of Nikolai's path from St Petersburg to Paris:

многие страницы «Вечера» задевали меня за живое и как бы напоминали мне что-то мной самим пережитое. Мне были близки не только переживания того «я», от лица которого велось повествование, но и та несколько затрудненная фактура письма, проходившая через всю книгу.<sup>6</sup>

This was not so much a narrative *about* memory, then, as one that recalled and aptly voiced a traumatic collective dislocation which for many Russian émigrés was still acutely felt, and which had moreover been obsessively recapitulated in both fiction and memoir, but whose adequate or complete articulation was in many ways unattainable.

Whilst he does not elaborate further, Bakhrakh is surely correct to point to Gazdanov's curious prose style, observing the obstructiveness of the writing ("затрудненная фактура письма"). The use of "затрудненная" indicates the influence of Russian Formalist thought, where "затруднение" was a key means of producing the desired effect of *ostranenie*, as coined by Shklovskii in 1917: "приемом искусства является прием «остранения» вещей и прием затрудненной формы, увеличивающий трудность и долготу восприятия, так как воспринимательный процесс в искусстве самоцелен и должен быть продлен."<sup>7</sup> That those aspects of the writing generating *ostranenie* should

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<sup>6</sup> A. Bakhrakh, "Gazdanych", first published in *Russkaia mysl'* (24 Jan 1980), republished in Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* V, 433-7 (p. 433).

<sup>7</sup> Viktor Shklovskii, "Iskusstvo kak priem", in *O teorii prozy* (Moscow: Zentralantiquariat DDR, 1977), pp. 7-23 (p. 13).

themselves be as familiar as the experiences relayed, as Bakhrakh suggests, emphasises the seeming implausibility of authentically replicating memory. The proliferation of memoir narratives throughout the 1920s had moreover generated a tension between memory and its representation in the minds of Russian émigrés. In this sense, it is arguably unsurprising that the autobiographical aspects of *Vecher* were so heavily emphasised, and that, in the French context, parallels should be sought with the most famous contemporary literary analysis of the experience and functioning of memory. In this chapter, I read *Vecher* in the light of the *Recherche*, not in accordance with the critical categorisation of the former as a “neo-Proustian” work, but *against* it. My reading of Gazdanov’s début novella alongside Proust consciously moves away from the preceding approaches I have taken in chapter one. Here, instead of direct typological comparison of character, setting and theme (as in my reading of *Polet*), or a more diffuse intertextual model (as in my reading of *Vozvrashchenie buddy* as a layered *mélange* of influences), I turn more explicitly to a consideration of milieu, language and genre, and the means by which these might shape both the work and its popular reception.

The centrality of memory to the narrative and the blurred line between autobiography and fiction are in one respect unremarkable similarities between Proust’s and Gazdanov’s works, which might be said to abound in many novels that emerged from this period. In the Russian émigré context, one may note works such as Ivan Bunin’s five-part autobiographical novel, *Zhizn’ Arsenieva* (1927-30), or *Apollon Bezobrazov* (1930-32), Boris Poplavskii’s surrealist semi-autobiographical novel about the lives of émigré bohemians in Paris during the 1920s, written between 1926 and 1932. Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), although not published in Paris, primarily addressed the time that she and her lover had spent in the French capital, and reinterpreted the autobiographical genre in fictional terms. In Paris, Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932) was hugely

successful amongst both French and Russian émigré readers. Whilst Céline was reacting against what he saw as the elitist literary style of Proust's *Recherche*, the nihilistic antihero of his novel, Bardamu, is, like his author, a writer-doctor who has returned to Paris from military service in World War I.<sup>8</sup> In the Soviet context, ostensibly autobiographical novels dealing with the Civil War from the Bolshevik perspective included Isaak Babel's *Konarmii* (1926) and Nikolai Ostrovskii's *Kak zakalialas' stal'* (1932-4). Aside from their autobiographical function these, too, were all metapoetic works conceptualising the emergence of the writer.

In spite of the widespread proliferation of such narratives during the interwar period, the critical categorisation of *Vecher* as specifically a neo-Proustian work and its author as a disciple of Proust proved to be quite unshakeable, such that Jodi Daynard, translating the novel into English for the first time as late as 1988, expressed frustration at the enduring persistence of the label, describing it as “a link that has been especially hard to break”.<sup>9</sup> The majority of contemporary reviews notably concurred with Otsup's comparison with Proust, and none of the aforementioned works was even mentioned in relation to *Vecher*. Kirill Zaitsev, for instance, declared that *Vecher* was “написан под прямым и непосредственным влиянием Пруста”.<sup>10</sup> Mikhail Gorlin also pointed to Proust's influence.<sup>11</sup> Marc Slonim argued in his review of the novella that Gazdanov was undoubtedly “in thrall” (“под очарованием”) to French literature.<sup>12</sup> Even twenty years later, Georgii Aronson would recall the Proustian link in his review of *Vozvrashchenie buddy* (1949) as an early indication of Dostoevskii's influence on Gazdanov, and the theme of illness as a strand uniting all three

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<sup>8</sup> I address the impact of Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* in the second half of this chapter.

<sup>9</sup> Jodi Daynard, “Introduction”, in Gaito Gazdanov, *An Evening with Claire*, trans. Jodi Daynard (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1988), pp. 7-16 (p. 12).

<sup>10</sup> K. Zaitsev, “‘Vecher u Kler' Gaito Gazdanova’”, *Rossii i slaviansstvo*, 69 (1930), 3, republished in Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 382-4 (p. 382).

<sup>11</sup> M. Gorlin, “Pokhval'noe slovo Gaito Gazdanovu’”, *Rul'*, 2841 (1930), 8, republished in Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 387-8 (p. 388).

<sup>12</sup> Marc Slonim, “Literaturnyi dnevnik: Dva Maiakovskikh. Roman Gazdanova’”, *Volia Rossii*, 5-6 (1930), 446-57, republished in Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 374-7.

authors.<sup>13</sup> References such as these were however generally made in passing in short articles and reviews that rarely extended beyond the level of assertion. Zaitsev's tantalising observation that Gazdanov's novel equates to a "pastiche" of Proust's *Recherche*, for instance, remains frustratingly unsubstantiated:

автор не только пользуется техническими приемами Пруста, но пытается взять общий тон Пруста, влезть, так сказать, в его кожу... получается некий «пастиш» — книга, написанная «под Пруста», некая имитация, подделка, фальсификация.<sup>14</sup>

This apparent "falsification" of Proust would appear to equate in Zaitsev's estimation to a failed attempt to adopt a tone and style which ultimately do not "belong" to Gazdanov and thus are not *his* to assume. This critical trend has persisted well beyond the immediate response of Gazdanov's émigré contemporaries; many obituaries written after his death in 1971 cited the Proustian début as fact, albeit with the concession that this was not a definitive influence. In her study of the Russian emigration, published in 1982, Temira Pachmuss referred to Gazdanov cursorily as "another writer of the Proustian school".<sup>15</sup>

Whilst the preceding discussion has focussed on a context of reception, both critical and readerly, I shall now turn to the question of Gazdanov's potential debt to Proust as he himself saw it. In light of an overwhelming critical response that cast his novel as a response to Proust (and the implied threat of "un-Russian" influences, a point to which I shall later return) it is perhaps unsurprising that Gazdanov maintained that he had not read Proust until after World War II.<sup>16</sup> This protestation is however compromised by passing references to

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<sup>13</sup> G. Aronson, "Novyi zhurnal: Kniga 22: Literatura", *Novoe russkoe slovo* (12 Feb 1950), republished in Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 398-9 (p. 398).

<sup>14</sup> Zaitsev, "'Vecher u Kler' Gaito Gazdanova", in Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 383.

<sup>15</sup> Temira Pachmuss, *A Russian Cultural Revival* (Tennessee: Tennessee University Press, 1982), p. 312.

<sup>16</sup> Cited without reference by both Dienes and Orlova, and appears to have been repeated by others, including Livak who takes it from an anecdote in Vasilii Ianovskii's *Polia Eliseiskie* (1983). Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, p. 103.

Proust in both a 1929 essay and a 1930 notebook, which not only indicate a degree of familiarity with his writing, but a certain respect for its artistic worth. For instance, in “Nekotorye zametki ob Edgare Po, Gogole i Mopassane”, Gazdanov cites Proust alongside Dostoevskii and Maupassant as instances of writers whose popular renown justifiably equals their talent, noting that “в тех случаях, когда известность достается настоящему, творческому таланту, это объясняется недоразумением: таковы примеры Марселя Пруста, Достоевского, Мопассана.”<sup>17</sup> In an unpublished notebook estimated by Dienes to have been written around 1930, he also directly equates the miscomprehension of Proust by French people during his lifetime with that of the Russian émigré satirist, Don-Aminado, by a contemporary émigré readership:

Невежественные читатели, имевшие наивность считать Дон-Аминадо фельетонистом и комиком, теперь будут знать, что они ошибались – и прозевали крупнейшие события современной литературы. Так французы в свое время неправильно поняли Марселя Пруста.<sup>18</sup>

One presumes that the mention of “naivety” of readers in Proust’s case is an allusion to the infamous rejection of the manuscript of *Du côté de chez Swann* (1913) by numerous publishers, including the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Proust’s subsequent decision to fund the novel’s publication himself with Grasset culminated in its enormous success. Consequently, those who had initially turned down the manuscript apologised profusely; André Gide informed Proust that his rejection of the novel was “one of the most stinging and remorseful regrets” of his life: “le refus de ce livre restera la plus grave erreur de la NRF, et (car j’ai

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<sup>17</sup> Gazdanov, “Zametki ob Edgare Po, Gogole, i Mopassane”, *Volia Rossii*, 5-6 (1929), 96-107, cited from *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 705-18 (p. 706).

<sup>18</sup> Gazdanov, “Bor’ba za pravdu”, unpublished notebook (1930); first published in Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 777-81 (p. 777).

cette honte d'en être beaucoup responsable) l'un des regrets, des remords les plus cuisants de ma vie."<sup>19</sup>

And yet, as Leonid Livak suggests, the basic fact of Gazdanov's proven reading (or not) of Proust's *Recherche* is of limited importance.<sup>20</sup> By the late 1920s the mention of Proust's name was so ubiquitous, and his position in the French literary pantheon so firm, that it became a valuable means of asserting cultural capital. Proust's status as a cultural institution in interwar Paris was so enormous and widely-felt amongst French belletrists and Russian émigrés alike that regardless of his personal reading, Gazdanov could not *but* have been aware on some level of his works, as his comments in essays and notebooks of the period indicate. Indeed, discussion in émigré journals and meetings such as those of the short-lived *Studio franco-russe* demonstrate that Proust was frequently held up as a figurehead of modern French literature within émigré circles.<sup>21</sup> Nor, in fact, was the Proustian connection attributed exclusively to Gazdanov; the comparison was quite commonplace because of the magnitude of Proust's impact. Indeed, in his discussion of Proust's significance, Livak contends that Iurii Fel'zen's dialogue with Proust was "both more direct than in Gazdanov's case and more fruitful."<sup>22</sup> The earliest publication of *Chisla*, in which Otsup's original review also appeared, made numerous references to Proust, from the editorial note through to a survey about his influence. Stylistic features held up as "Proustian", such as his long sentences composed of multiple sub-clauses (which younger French writers such as Céline rejected), were a counterpoint to the perceived simplicity (in Russian émigré circles) of Soviet prose, and were hailed as a "renewal of Russian stylistic traditions".<sup>23</sup> Indeed, as Kibal'nik argues in his discussion of Gazdanov and Proust, a

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<sup>19</sup> Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust: A Life*, trans. Euan Cameron (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2000), p. 611.

<sup>20</sup> Livak, *How it was done in Paris*, pp. 90-121.

<sup>21</sup> Livak, ed., *Le Studio franco-russe (1929-1931)* (Toronto: *Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, p. 134.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

significant classical influence whose relevance to *Večer* has been underplayed is that of Tolstoi, and in particular his trilogy *Detstvo, Otrochestvo, Iunost'* (1852). The idea that Proust was mediating the Russian classical tradition in the eyes of first-wave émigrés is perhaps corroborated by Gazdanov's novel's epigraph, taken from Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* (1832), a point to which I shall return later in this chapter.

Reappraising lines of influence, Kibal'nik argues that stylistic qualities are not necessarily confined to either French *or* Russian schools, as the critical discourse on influence in the younger generation has often implied. He demonstrates that elements that have traditionally been perceived as “Proustian”—such as the use of autobiographical elements or a foregrounding of psychological introspection over actual plot—are also potentially “Tolstoian”: in Formalist terms, Tolstoi's own autobiographical trilogy and wider oeuvre locate him as a Russian classical “uncle” to Proust. So where an émigré critic such as Zaitsev had stressed Proust's artistic innovation, arguing that he had opened up “a whole new creative method” (“открыл новый метод литературного творчества”), this selectively disregarded the extent to which Marcel's quest to become a writer was in itself not particularly *new* or distinct from nineteenth-century *Künstlerroman* predecessors.<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note that whilst émigré critics such as Zaitsev chose to view Proust as a divergence not only from Soviet letters but from the pre-modernist artistic mode, critics in Soviet Russia were actually underlining Proust's alignment with a pre-existing (bourgeois) Russian tradition. Aleksandr Voronskii, for instance, writing during the 1920s, noted that Proust was a writer “almost entirely unknown to the Russian reader” (“почти неизвестный русскому читателю”),<sup>25</sup> but suggested an artistic coherence with the works of Andrei Belyi

<sup>24</sup> It is important moreover not to disregard French pre-modernist intertexts in Proust's writing, in which Gazdanov was well-versed, such as Balzac, Flaubert, Baudelaire and Maupassant (see Dienes, *Russian Literature in Exile*, p. 10, and Elena Proskurina, *Edinstvo inoskazaniia: o narrativnoi poetike romanov Gaito Gazdanova* (Moscow: Novyi Khronograf, 2009), p. 79).

<sup>25</sup> Aleksandr Voronskii, *Iskusstvo videt' mir* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1987), p. 348.



and observed traces of Dostoevskian psychologism. Years later, at the Soviet Writers' Congress of 1934, Gor'kii critiqued Proust, and also "prustiansy" ("у Марселя Пруста и его последователей"), for their "bourgeois romanticising of individualism" and obsession with the "magic of language":

Буржуазный романтизм индивидуализма с его склонностью к фантастике и мистике не возбуждает воображение, не изощряет мысль. Оторванный, отвлеченный от действительности, он строится не на убедительности образа, а почти исключительно на "магии слова", как это мы видим у Марселя Пруста и его последователей.<sup>26</sup>

That Proust was being discussed in Soviet Russia throughout this particular period is evidence of the extent to which the *Recherche* was held up as a model modern European novel, and one connected with a variety of literary traditions, both national and stylistic.

It does not matter, then, whether or not Gazdanov had actually read Proust, because Proust was *everywhere* during this period, and thus any consideration of his influence on *Vecher* must not necessarily aspire to a direct study of text and source text, but rather to a literary sociology wherein not just the source text, but also its popular reception and response are equally influential, if not in fact more so. The *Recherche* is thus significant not for any direct intertextual interaction of typological borrowings in Gazdanov's novel, but through the prism of *milieu*. It is well-documented that the popular perception of Proust was actually rarely based on a close reading of the entirety of the *Recherche* per se, even amongst a contemporary French readership; Benjamin Crémieux for instance noted that over fifty percent of those who read the first volume of the *Recherche* did not read its subsequent volumes.<sup>27</sup> In the Russian émigré context, Vasilii Ianovskii similarly expressed the view that

<sup>26</sup> Maksim Gor'kii, "Sovetskaia literatura", in Gor'kii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols (Moscow: GIKhL, 1953), XXVII, 298-333 (p. 312).

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin Crémieux, "Où en est Marcel Proust", *XX-ème siècle*, 96, 3. Cited in Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, p. 96.

Proust was discussed far more than his works were in fact read during the latter half of the 1920s: “Вообще о Прусте в конце 20-х годов слагались легенды, но читали его немногие.”<sup>28</sup> Reference to Proust in 1920s and '30s Paris (even amongst members of the French literary establishment) was thus not necessarily based on a comprehensive reading of his works, or indeed even a thoughtful understanding of them, but a set of connotations classed as “Proustian”: his association with broader themes such as psychological introspection, memoir writing, and questions of artistic authenticity generated a popular awareness that extended far beyond a genuine and loyal readership of his works. It is for this reason that the Proust connection is fruitful in considering Gazdanov’s interaction with French modernist literature. In particular, I shall employ existing discussion of linguistic hybridity (primarily between French and English) in the *Recherche* as indicative of different forms of social relation, to demonstrate that in Gazdanov’s case, these concerns are harnessed toward the expression of a more fundamental exilic dislocation.

Basic structural parallels such as the memoir form and a blurred line between narrator and author have, as noted, often been cited as evidence of Gazdanov’s Proustianism. One might add to the above certain thematic overlaps between *Večer* and the *Recherche*, which may also be said to be characteristic of European modernist aesthetics more broadly: consciousness, or the point between sleeping and waking, psychological introspection, a preoccupation with literature and “literariness”, and a digressive style and structure. One may note a further parallel in the experiences of unrequited love and delayed sexual fulfilment shared by Nikolai and Proust’s narrator. Yet on closer examination, it becomes apparent that to regard Gazdanov’s novel as merely a Russian pretender to the *Recherche* is to ignore its inversion of certain themes and motifs of Proust’s novel. Structurally, whereas *Du côté de chez Swann* begins from childhood and *Le Temps retrouvé* (1927) ends in the present,

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<sup>28</sup> Vasilii Ianovskii, *Polia Eliseiskie: kniga pamiati* (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 1993), p. 34.

Gazdanov's own recollection commences at the present day in Kler's apartment in Paris, before launching back into Nikolai's childhood, and ultimately ending just prior to the narrator's anticipated reunion with Kler, on his way to Paris by sea. Moreover, where in Proust's text there is a split-focalisation of younger experiences through an older narrator who now interprets them differently, in Gazdanov's text this split-focalisation exists across time, space and, crucially, across languages. Nikolai's anxiety centres not only on physical separation from his mother, but also on separation from his mother tongue.

A comparison of the opening scenes of each novel articulates their basic but significant differences. Proust's narrator launches the reader immediately into a memory of the past with a recollection of the so-called "drame du coucher".<sup>29</sup> Here, the state of drifting into sleep is conveyed via a fluidity between the present and the past ("Longtemps je me suis couché"), as well as between the subjective "je" and its various transmutations. Abstract references to metempsychosis, existence and the literary subject to whom the narrator may choose to apply himself (or not) eventually shift into the realm of more tangible metaphor, such as that of a bird singing in a forest or of a train passing from station to station:

Je me demandais quelle heure il pouvait être ; j'entendais le sifflement des trains qui, plus ou moins éloigné, comme le chant d'un oiseau dans une forêt, relevant les distances, me décrivait l'étendue de la campagne déserte où le voyageur se hâte vers la station prochaine ; et le petit chemin qu'il suit va être gravé dans son souvenir par l'excitation qu'il doit à des lieux nouveaux, à des actes inaccoutumés, à la causerie récente et aux adieux sous la lampe étrangère qui le suivent encore dans le silence de la nuit, à la douceur prochaine du retour.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), p. 351.

<sup>30</sup> Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), p. 11.

The next paragraph explains that the particular “drama” in question sees the narrator cast as a patient suffering from an unknown illness. As readers discover, the particular affliction central to the “drame du coucher” is the younger narrator’s severe separation anxiety from his mother, with the potential remedy being her presence at his bedside, a theme that will also structure *À l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleur* (1919).<sup>31</sup> One may speculate that the narrator’s obligation to “go on a journey and sleep in an unknown place” would have resonated quite strongly for the thousands of uprooted individuals across Europe during the interwar period, particularly given that this was not a dream from which they could simply awaken. Indeed, comparing this opening passage with that of *Večer*, an actualisation of Proust’s metaphors is apparent: they no longer function as metaphors, and have instead been literalised.

Gazdanov’s novel similarly conflates the perfect past tense and the imperfect past tense in the transition from the title, which suggests a single evening spent at Kler’s apartment (“Вечер у Клэр”), to the opening sentence, where we learn that the narrator has repeatedly been spending evenings at her home (“я просиживал у нее целые вечера”). We then observe Nikolai on his journey from the “unknown room” in which Kler sleeps across Paris to his own similarly unfamiliar and unwelcoming lodgings:

Клэр была больна; я просиживал у нее целые вечера и, уходя, всякий раз неизменно опаздывал к последнему поезду метрополитена и шел потом пешком с улицы Raynouard на площадь St. Michel, возле которой я жил. Я проходил мимо конюшен École Militaire; оттуда слышался звон цепей, на которых были привязаны лошади, и густой конский запах, столь необычный для Парижа; потом я шагал по длинной и узкой улице Babylone, и в конце этой улицы в витрине фотографий, в неверном свете далеких фонарей на меня глядело лицо

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<sup>31</sup> The bedtime scene will also structure Gazdanov’s next novel, *Polet* (1939-40), which opens with Serezha’s mother waking him from sleep in order to take him away with her and ends with her rushing to his bedside.

знаменитого писателя, все составленное из наклонных плоскостей; всезнающие глаза под роговыми европейскими очками провожали меня полквартала – до тех пор, пока я не пересекал черную сверкающую полосу бульвара Raspail.<sup>32</sup>

Nikolai misses the last Metro, and thus the metaphorical train journey at the opening of the *Recherche* is transposed into a walk, through night-time Paris. Nikolai's arrival in Paris is already the culmination of a long journey across Europe. Proust's narrator, conversely, will pine for Venice until he is finally well enough to visit the city in *Albertine disparue* (1925). In *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur* (1919) he visits the fictional resort town of Balbec, where he first encounters Albertine; Nikolai meets Kler for the first time in the real resort of Kislovodsk. And where in Proust's narrative the metaphorical "sickness" from which the narrator must suffer all night is a displacement of his anxiety, in Gazdanov's opening sentence, sickness features more literally, although it has been transposed on to Kler. If, in Proust's text the "sickness" stands for a latent fear of separation, in Gazdanov's the fear of separation at the narrative's core (that between Nikolai and Kler) has already to some extent passed, and sickness has followed, with the result being Nikolai's increased time ("я просиживал у нее целые вечера") spent in Kler's presence. There is moreover an obvious class difference between Gazdanov and Proust. The Russian émigré reader might have regarded the pre-war luxury of the *Recherche* nostalgically, but they would also have related to the squalor of Gazdanov's interwar Paris, which in the *Recherche* does not become apparent until *Le Temps retrouvé*.

A principal preoccupation of Proust's novel is the metaphorical interaction between language, time and memory. Adam Watt has saliently noted the centrality of translation to the function of reading and remembering (or rereading) in the *Recherche*. Employing Walter Benjamin's term, Watt views translation as the principal "mode" of Proust's novel:

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<sup>32</sup> Gazdanov, *Vecher u Kler*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 37-162 (p. 39).

“translation of sensation into impression; emotion into action; impression into expression. Proust’s novel is one in which messages are emitted and interpreted with seemingly endless energy.”<sup>33</sup> This more diffuse notion of translation as a form of transposition occurring between expression and impression echoes Jakobson’s description of translation as a kind of “creative transposition” occurring between different artforms, both on the level of creation and reception.<sup>34</sup> Alongside the many occasions of literal translation in the *Recherche*, we also observe countless instances of “creative transposition” or metaphorical translation between source-text and its ekphrastic manifestation, as seen for instance in the narrator’s frequent reference to “thème” and “version”, or in his composite quotations of John Ruskin, whose works on cathedral architecture Proust had translated from English into French (an exercise that strongly formed his own views on art).<sup>35</sup> In *Du côté de chez Swann*, the narrator’s idealised image of the Duchesse de Guermantes is informed by his fascination with her portrait on a stained-glass window in the church at Combray: “Elle provenait de ce que je n'avais jamais pris garde quand je pensais à Mme de Guermantes, que je me la représentais avec les couleurs d'une tapisserie ou d'un vitrail, dans un autre siècle, d'une autre matière que le reste des personnes vivantes.”<sup>36</sup> An ethereal composite image of Mme de Guermantes emerges from these jostling representations gathered from real life and “another century”, thus articulating memory’s creative impulse.

In *Proust et les signes* (1964), Gilles Deleuze expressed the idea that the focus of the *Recherche* was not, as had commonly been stated, the past, but rather the narrator’s learning

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<sup>33</sup> Adam Watt, *Reading in Proust’s A la Recherche: Le délire de la lecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 155.

<sup>34</sup> Roman Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation”, in Lawrence Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 126-31 (p. 131).

<sup>35</sup> On Ruskin’s influence on Proust, and the latter’s creative transposition of the former, see Jean Autret, *L’Influence de Ruskin sur la vie, les idées et l’œuvre de Marcel Proust* (Geneva: Droz, 1955), Barbara Bucknall, *The Religion of Art in Proust* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969), Jean-Yves Tadié, *Proust et le roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986) and Peter Collier, *Proust and Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 42-54.

<sup>36</sup> Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann*, p. 235

the use of “signs” to understand and communicate an ultimate reality, and his consequent evolution into an artist.<sup>37</sup> In *Vecher*, memory is directly equated with a code that is either accessible or not, as seen in Nikolai’s recollection of a childhood episode in which he teeters on the edge of a windowsill high above the street: “Этот случай запомнился мне чрезвычайно [...] и оба эти воспоминания сразу возвращают меня в детство, в тот период времени, понимание которого мне теперь уже недоступно.”<sup>38</sup> In his consideration of translation as central to the *Recherche*, Watt has noted its parallels with memory, in that both are relational processes predicated on some form of temporal delay, whether between original and translation, or event and memory.<sup>39</sup> In particular, he employs Steiner’s notion of translation as possible within a single language, and thus resembling a form of “receptive interpretation”.

Translation is the vehicle in the narrator’s metaphor of the creative process [...]

Reading and writing *together* are creation, and at the same time they are both intrinsically concerned with that which is “absent” and “radically other”. The act of literary creation for Proust functions as a dual essence, a rich solution of reading and writing, whose individual components are indissociably combined.<sup>40</sup>

In this respect, the function of involuntary memory, of which so much has been made in discussion of the *Recherche*, might be expanded to encompass translation, which thanks to the novel’s bilingualism, becomes an involuntary aspect of the reading process.

The view of translation as a mode of reading is highly applicable to the *Recherche*, where English, although ostensibly a foreign language, is so frequently interspersed into discourse that it is provided without elucidation, as for instance in conversation at the

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<sup>37</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Proust et les signes* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971).

<sup>38</sup> Gazdanov, *Vecher*, pp. 50-1.

<sup>39</sup> The conceptual coherence between memory and translation is also a central concern expressed in Azade Seyhan’s *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>40</sup> Watt, p. 156.

Verdurin household, such as Odette's disingenuous statement to Madame Verdurin: "Vous savez que je ne suis pas *fishing for compliments*."<sup>41</sup> Daniel Karlin has argued that the import of English in the *Recherche* extends far beyond the basic depiction of *Anglomanie* and its trappings: "the use of 'marked' English words, and especially phrases, carries a pejorative implication, exposing the vanity, the pretentiousness or the banality of the speaker."<sup>42</sup> Karlin goes on to demonstrate that English characters such as Swann are far more difficult to "read" socially, both for the young narrator and his elder relatives.<sup>43</sup> In the opening pages of *Du côté de chez Swann*, we are for instance introduced to the idea that foreignness might result in misreading. Proust's narrator describes what he terms the "incognito" of Swann's name and its unfamiliarity to his family:

Pendant bien des années, où pourtant, surtout avant son mariage, M. Swann, le fils, vint souvent les voir à Combray, ma grand-tante et mes grands-parents ne soupçonnèrent pas qu'il ne vivait plus du tout dans la société qu'avait fréquentée sa famille et que sous l'espèce d'incognito que lui faisait chez nous ce nom de Swann, ils hébergeaient — avec la parfaite innocence d'honnêtes hôteliers qui ont chez eux, sans le savoir, un célèbre brigand — un des membres les plus élégants du Jockey-Club, ami préféré du comte de Paris et du Prince de Galles, un des hommes les plus choyés de la haute société du faubourg Saint-Germain.<sup>44</sup>

This passage is layered with the perspectives of the oblivious younger narrator, his elder relatives who are equally ignorant, and the elder narrator, who has by this point developed a social awareness and the benefit of hindsight with which to recognise this "incognito" as such. In *Vechev* the familiarity of French within the Russian literary context is similarly evident, with French words and dialogue frequently overlaid on to the Russian prose. The

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<sup>41</sup> Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann*, p. 259

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Karlin, *Proust's English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 48.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>44</sup> Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann*, p. 28.



novel's title is a good example of the coexistence of the two languages. For Nikolai, the elusive figure of Kler embodies the tension between abstraction and concrete sensory perception; her image is often clearer in memory than in the present. Kler is at once ethereal *and* corporeal, lying still before him in her boudoir, where the wallpaper animates itself. The name "Kler", or "Клэр" as it appears in the text, conveys the French name "Claire" (derived ironically from the female form of the adjective meaning "clear") in Cyrillic script. Kler's name thus quite literally constitutes a linguistic obfuscation of clarity, in the same manner, one might venture, as her inconstant character eschews straightforward readings.

In Proust, bilingualism and translation are part of the novel's social fabric of class and the preserve of the free-floating world of the upper bourgeoisie and aristocracy. For Gazdanov, bilingualism functions within the radically different context of emigration and thus conveys the experience of living in exile, suspended between one's native and adoptive cultures. For émigrés, bilingualism is a basic fact, as opposed to a privilege: just as Proust's metaphors of sickness and voyaging are in *Večer* literalised, bilingualism acquires a more functional than aesthetic role. Where for Proust memory is a link to the past, or "time lost", for émigrés, it is a link both to a time and place that have been lost. Marcel can and does return to Balbec or Combray, but Nikolai has no such agency. Both novels moreover contain instances of social interactions which resist clear translation. In *Večer* the language of the peasants is a code that Nikolai is unable to master. When his friend Ivan attempts to show him how to buy a pig from local peasants by way of compliments and general conversation, Nikolai refuses to abide by the code, despite his linguistic awareness and prowess: "И всегда бывало так, что там, где мне приходилось иметь дело с крестьянами, у меня ничего не выходило; они даже плохо понимали меня, так как я не умел говорить языком простонародья, хотя искренне этого хотел."<sup>45</sup> Nikolai is sharply aware of his social

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<sup>45</sup> Gazdanov, *Večer*, pp. 112-3.

difference from the peasants, and consequently, of his inability to interact with them. He sees only an oxymoronic “Russian foreignness” in their eyes: “вообще в их глазах был каким-то русским иностранцем”.<sup>46</sup> Conversely, in the *Recherche*, the narrator yearns to engage in a nonstandard form of French, namely the patois spoken by Françoise. Over time, through exposure to Françoise’s conversations with her daughter, his familiarity and fascination with this “foreign” code evolves, as expressed in *A l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*:

L’influence de sa fille commençait à altérer un peu le vocabulaire de Françoise. Ainsi perdent leur pureté toutes les langues par l’adjonction de termes nouveaux. Cette décadence du parler de Françoise, que j’avais connu à ses belles époques, j’en étais, du reste, indirectement responsable. La fille de Françoise n’aurait pas fait dégénérer jusqu’au plus bas jargon le langage classique de sa mère, si elle s’était contentée de parler patois avec elle. Elle ne s’en était jamais privée, et quand elles étaient toutes deux auprès de moi, si elles avaient des choses secrètes à se dire, au lieu d’aller s’enfermer dans la cuisine elles se faisaient, en plein milieu de ma chambre, une protection plus infranchissable que la porte la mieux fermée, en parlant patois. Je supposais seulement que la mère et la fille ne vivaient pas toujours en très bonne intelligence, si j’en jugeais par la fréquence avec laquelle revenait le seul mot que je pusse distinguer : m’exasperate (à moins que l’objet de cette exaspération ne fût moi).<sup>47</sup>

The indecipherability of their shared patois permits Françoise and her daughter to lock the young narrator out (to a certain extent) of their conversations, with his speculation that he may be the source of their mutual exasperation expressed comically as a brief afterthought. Proust’s narrator’s ignorance stands in sharp contrast to Nikolai’s own hyper-awareness

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>47</sup> Proust, *A l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleur* (Paris : Gallimard, 1988), pp. 139-40.

thanks to his bilingualism. In a similar scene, he is privy to an interaction between Kler and her mother, in which the latter, thinking he does not speak French, refers to him pejoratively:

— *Je ne sais pas, pourquoi tu invites toujours des jeunes gens, comme celui-là, qui a sa sale chemise déboutonnée et qui ne sait même pas se tenir.*

Клэр побледнела.

— *Ce jeune homme comprend bien le français,* — сказала она.

Мать ее посмотрела на меня с упреком, точно я был в чем-нибудь виноват.<sup>48</sup>

Here, the Russian prose is disrupted, and readers are launched into a recollection in which French and Russian jostle side by side, with both elements comprehensible not only to Nikolai, but also, implicitly, to the reader. Proust's emphasis on translation as occurring both between languages and between past and present is in Gazdanov's case transposed on to the very real and physical rupture between past and present, home and exile, native language and foreign language. Where in Proust we observe a form of *dépaysement* within the same linguistic code through class-related snobbery, as in the instances of English alongside French at the Verdurin household, in *Vecher* this *dépaysement* is divided across multiple languages, countries and social spaces. The interaction between Kler and her mother exposes Kler's mother's misreading, and Nikolai's hidden ability to read. The French dialogue is interspersed with more functional Russian description ("Клэр побледнела", "Мать ее посмотрела"), demonstrating that the act of remembering and relaying this event in writing is itself a form of translation and mediation between different codes. Translation thus functions in *Vecher* not solely as a metaphor or an expression of social angst, but as a concrete manifestation of the central tension in Nikolai's life, and the writing and reading process. Eikhenbaum's notion that the "borrowing" at stake in questions of influence is not always the lender's finest achievement, and more often corresponds to what the borrower

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<sup>48</sup> Gazdanov, *Vecher*, p. 78.

needs most is thus highly applicable to Gazdanov's transposition of a Proustian sociolinguistic angst on to the rather more urgent linguistic disorientation wrought by exile.

Nikolai speaks French fluently, but France and the French language are most relentlessly associated with Kler throughout *Vecher*. Foreign (usually French) women often serve as the focus of desire in Gazdanov's novels, and this tendency may be read psychoanalytically as a fascination for otherness, or as I have discussed in the previous chapter as a threatening disruption of relations between men.<sup>49</sup> In *Vecher* Nikolai acknowledges that Kler's confusing magnetism arises from her foreignness: "Может быть, мое чувство к Клэр отчасти возникло и потому, что она была француженкой и иностранкой... И французский язык ее был исполнен для моего вслуха неведомой и чудесной прелести."<sup>50</sup> Although statements like this imply that Kler always speaks in French, her dialogue is often mediated via the narrator, and thus paraphrased in Russian. Her unedited words appear in the text only when they are scornful or provocative:

— Запишите по-французски, — услышал я голос Клэр, и я секунду вспоминал, кто это говорит со мной, — *Claire n'était plus vierge*. — Хорошо, — сказал я: — *Claire n'était plus vierge*.<sup>51</sup>

But Kler's foreignness is not confined to her language; it manifests in Nikolai's confusion regarding her sexuality. Kler is both an object of Nikolai's desire and an unapologetic agent of her own desires. The carpet in her bedroom features the figures of Leda and the Swan, alluding to the Greek myth in which Leda is either seduced or raped by Zeus in the form of a swan. This crucial ambiguity as to who is the agent and object of the desire foreshadows the uncertainty of the nature of Nikolai and Kler's relationship.

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<sup>49</sup> I have discussed the bilingualism of female characters (such as Liudmila in *Polet* and Lida in *Vozvrashchenie buddy*) whose use of language is disorienting to male characters in the preceding chapter.

<sup>50</sup> Gazdanov, *Vecher*, p. 100.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

Nikolai is both drawn to and unsettled by Kler's impulsive agency; one of the earliest insights that we gain into her family home is his statement that she and her sister both came and went as they pleased (“Дочери их были предоставлены самим себе [...] в доме их не было никаких правил, никаких установленных часов для еды”).<sup>52</sup> This echoes Nikolai's own mention several pages earlier of his new-found freedom in the aftermath of his father and sister's deaths, which leave only him and his mother in the family unit: “Она жила довольно уединенно; я был предоставлен самому себе, и рос на свободе.”<sup>53</sup> Despite their changed family dynamic, Nikolai remains in thrall to his mother and cares deeply about her opinion of him, as demonstrated in his fear that his reading will be scrutinised:

Она любила литературу так сильно, что это становилось странным. Она читала часто и много; [...] Она знала наизусть множество стихов, всего Демона, всего Евгения Онегина, с первой до последней строчки [...] Никогда у нас в доме я не видел модных романов — Вербицкой или Арцыбашева; кажется, и отец и мать сходились в единодушном к ним презрении. Первую такую книгу принес я; отца в то время не было уже в живых, а я был учеником четвертого класса, и книга, которую я случайно оставил в столовой, называлась «Женщина, стоящая посреди». Мать ее случайно увидела — и когда я вернулся домой вечером, она спросила меня, брезгливо приподняв заглавный лист книги двумя пальцами:

— Это ты читаешь? Хороший у тебя вкус.

Мне стало стыдно до слез; и всегда потом воспоминание о том, что мать знала мое кратковременное пристрастие к порнографическим и глупым романам, — было для меня самым унижительным воспоминанием; и если-бы

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

она могла сказать это моему отцу, мне кажется, я не пережил бы такого несчастья.<sup>54</sup>

The fact that Nikolai brings home a “fashionable” novel by Mikhail Artsybashev, the author of *Sanin* (1907), a novel about young people discovering their own sexuality, gestures towards his evolution from innocence to experience. His literal separation from his mother and *motherland*, and gravitation towards Kler and France articulates this trajectory from childhood to adulthood. Emily Eells has argued that those English novels which so captivated Proust, such as Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895), “are all concerned with questions of entangled gender.”<sup>55</sup>

In the *Recherche*, the young narrator retreats into the private space of his bedroom, where he lies on his bed and voraciously reads English works. In *Vecher* Nikolai speaks of his craving for the unknown and its potential to open up “new possibilities and new lands” (“новые возможности и новые страны”), which he frequently links to art, comparing his relationship with Kler to crusades of imaginary knights and lovers. He firmly associates his mother with classical literature and feels genuine shame at the thought of her reading his cheap romantic novels, whereas Kler resembles a character in one of those novels. Nikolai’s naively idealistic desire for Kler in spite of her scorn is reminiscent of Proust’s narrator’s split attraction-repulsion towards the tasteless Odette, or the cruel Albertine.

Existing scholarship on the *Recherche* has made much of androgyny as a means of decoding the various relations between the narrator and the womanly objects of his desire, prompted in part by an awareness of Proust’s homosexuality.<sup>56</sup> Justin O’Brien, for instance,

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-9.

<sup>55</sup> Emily Eells, *Proust’s Cup of Tea: Homoeroticism and Victorian Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), p. 62.

<sup>56</sup> See for instance Justin O’Brien, “Albertine the Ambiguous: Notes on Proust’s Transposition of the Sexes”, *PMLA*, 64/5 (December 1949), 933-52, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 213-54, or Elizabeth Ladenson, *Proust’s Lesbianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

argued as early as 1949 for a “transposition theory”, according to which the narrator’s ostensibly female lovers (Albertine, Gilberte and Andrée) ought in fact to be read as “male” owing to their linguistic function as female versions of male names (Albert, Gilbert, André). As Ladenson and Sedgwick have shown, the proposition that female characters in the novel are simply masked men is reductive and undersells the extent to which female characters might encompass *both* male and female attributes. The narrator’s famous description of Odette at the end of *Un amour de Swann* sums up the possibility, by that point dispelled, that she might have been a woman to his “taste” or of his “gender”, owing to the bivalency of the French “genre”: “Dire que j’ai gâché des années de ma vie, que j’ai voulu mourir, que j’ai eu mon plus grand amour, pour une femme qui ne me plaisait pas, qui n’était pas mon genre !”<sup>57</sup> Richard Goodkin contends that both potential readings of this “tautological phrase” might apply to Odette.<sup>58</sup>

The notion of “entangled gender” is a useful lens for deciphering hybridity not only in the *Recherche*, but also in *Vecher*. Kler’s persistent indecipherability is, as I have noted, reinforced by her foreignness, but it is also reflected in her own self-consciously cultivated gender ambiguity:

Мне очень нравились портреты Клэр — их у нее было множество потому что она очень любила себя, — но не только то нематериальное и личное, что любят в себе все люди, но и свое тело, голос, руки, глаза. Клэр была весела и насмешлива и, пожалуй, слишком много знала для своих восемнадцати лет. Со мной она шутила: заставляла меня читать вслух юмористические рассказы, одевалась в мужской костюм, рисовала себе усики жженой пробкой, говорила низким голосом и показывала, как должен вести себя «приличный подросток».

<sup>57</sup> Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann*, p. 219.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Goodkin, *Around Proust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 79.

Kler's chosen apparel of masculine suits is juxtaposed with her feminine physicality, the latter of which is far more frequently the focus of Nikolai's lingering perspective. Kler's body is often described in terms of those attributes that denote her sex, such as her breasts, hips, and shapely legs; even her voice is described in their first conversation as "pure" and "feminine" ("чистый женский голос").<sup>59</sup> Her name in its original French form (Claire) also conveys femininity through the "e" ending, but when transcribed into Cyrillic script—"Клэр", as it is throughout the entirety of *Vecher*—her name is a feminine noun with a masculine form and consequently does not decline, thus further embedding her disorienting hybridity within the linguistic fabric of the novel.

Kler's androgyny coexists with the indecipherability of her words, and her entangled gender thus reinforces the novel's question of entangled language: "и тогда разговор принимал особый оборот — и самые невинные фразы, казалось, таили в себе двусмысленность".<sup>60</sup> But the epigraph of *Vecher*, which hails from Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* (1825-32), one of those classical Russian works that Nikolai firmly associates with his mother, intriguingly encapsulates this gender and language fluidity:

Вся жизнь моя была залогом

Верного свидания с тобой.<sup>61</sup>

These lines are from Tat'iana Larina's letter to Evgenii (itself a pastiche of French sentimental novels), which Pushkin's narrator emphasises he has translated from French into Russian for the reader.<sup>62</sup> The epigraph also hints at a model of sexual inversion: if we read these lines in relation to the narrative which follows, then we are forced to read Nikolai as

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<sup>59</sup> Gazdanov, *Vecher*, p. 79.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> "Кто ей внушал и эту нежность,/И слов любезную небрежность?/Кто ей внушал умильный вздор,/Безумный сердца разговор,/И увлекательный и вредный?/Я не могу понять. Но вот/Неполный, слабый перевод,/С живой картины список бледный/Или разыгранный Фрейшиц/Перстами робких учениц". Aleksandr Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo detskoi literatury, 1947), p. 91.



Tat'iana and Kler as Onegin, thus reversing the gender dynamics of the love story. This inversion is reinforced throughout *Večer* by the aforementioned insistence on Kler's playful attitude to her gender representation. In this way, Kler poses a challenge to rigid oppositions: just as her name defies a binary distinction between French and Russian, so too does her "entangled gender" defy a straightforward reading of the novel's sexual dynamics.

Cynthia Gamble has intriguingly suggested a similar, if less developed, alignment of "entangled gender" with what we might here term "entangled culture" in the *Recherche*, in her observation that the Ballets russes encapsulated the contemporary cultural fascination with gender fluidity in pre-war Paris. Gamble suggests that "[t]he uncertain sexual identity, characteristic of the Ballets russes, and the transvestism of the Paris Music Hall" influenced Proust's construction of Odette.<sup>63</sup> References to the Ballets russes abound in the *Recherche*, for instance in Madame Verdurin's zealously expressed appreciation, or in oblique references to ongoing performances as part of the cultural backdrop of pre-war Paris. The Ballets russes epitomise the French fascination for Russia as an "exotic" but friendly culture, although the same cannot be said of the émigré impression of the French. French influence (both linguistic and cultural) was treated as indicative of artistic naïveté, as evidenced for instance in Slonim's admonition that Gazdanov's flirtation with an elusive "foreignness" was a danger which ought to be curbed:

Неуловимый дух иностранщины веет в его произведениях. Ритм его фразы напоминает французские романы. Это естественно для писателя, выросшего в эмиграции, это даже придает некую экзотическую ноту произведениям Газданова, но в этом может оказаться и большая опасность, которую ему надо преодолеть.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Cynthia Gamble, "From Belle Epoque to First World War", in Richard Bales, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Proust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 7-24 (p. 11).

<sup>64</sup> Marc Slonim, "Literaturnyi dnevnik. Dva Maiakovskikh. Roman Gazdanova", *Volia Rossii*, 5-6 (1930), 446-57 (p. 446).

The observation of an ill-defined “foreignness” in this sense became a means of policing younger-generation works, and the categorisation of *Vecher* as “Proustian” neatly concurred with that agenda. It is striking that whilst contemporary reviews of the novel relentlessly noted the debt to Proust, the Pushkinian debt that was openly acknowledged on the very first page was not once mentioned.

It is true that the majority of contemporary critical responses to *Vecher* observed its “foreignness”, but it is worth noting that this was not unanimously viewed as a negative attribute. The equation of “un-Russianness” with a threat arose largely from a sense (generally amongst so-called elders) that émigré authors must preserve their ties to a pre-revolutionary Russian heritage (as discussed in the previous chapter).<sup>65</sup> Tihanov has argued that the publication difficulties facing literary critics in Russia Abroad engendered a culturally protectionist attitude that favoured the Russian nineteenth-century tradition and held it up as a model to be emulated, citing the example of Zaitsev, who edited a collection titled *Shedevry russkoi literaturnoi kritiki* in 1941 composed exclusively (and astoundingly) of nineteenth-century critical essays, a decision he justified by “the need to foreground that which had stood the test of time”.<sup>66</sup> But Bakhrakh, born one year later than Gazdanov, and thus a representative of the younger generation, had seen in *Vecher* a novel which spoke aptly to the concerns of the time, rather than a bygone era. Instead of regarding Gazdanov’s gallicised or “strange” written style as dangerous, his response emphasised its powerful evocation of the collective experience of many Russian émigrés now similarly living in Paris.

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<sup>65</sup> The notion that younger writers were blissfully unaware of the impact of living in a foreign country and speaking and hearing a language other than Russian on a daily basis disregards the fact that younger writers were painfully aware of their reduced ties to Russian and to Russia, and frequently explored their cultural and linguistic dislocation in their creative output. I discuss this question in more detail in chapter four.

<sup>66</sup> Galin Tihanov, “Russian Émigré Literary Criticism and Theory between the World Wars”, in Evgeny Dobrenko and Galin Tihanov, eds, *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), pp. 144-62 (p. 147).

And Nikolai Otsup, whilst stressing the Proustian connection, had also emphasised the great achievement of the work as one of the best to have been written in the emigration.<sup>67</sup>

My reading of *Vecher* in the light of Proust demonstrates that influence is never merely a case of an author's selective engagement with an intertext and is shaped equally (if not more so) by circumstantial factors such as milieu. Whilst the ubiquity of the *Recherche* in late-1920s Paris might feasibly have informed certain aspects of Gazdanov's début novella, the disparity between the experiences of their respective narrators surely indicates that *Vecher* was never wholeheartedly engaging with the *Recherche*. Moreover, the question of whether it was or was not is beside the point. Rather, the distinct representations of memory, language and identity that emerge from each (and the implications these have for what people have chosen to read in them) demonstrate the power of external factors to influence not only the creation of the work, but also its reception. Proust's genteel drawing rooms and high society might have seemed worlds apart from Russian émigrés' experiences of France, yet as *Vecher* elucidates, his apparent "foreignness" in fact belied some intriguing and unexpected overlaps in experience. As I shall now discuss, the critical delineation of "foreign" and "native" took an interesting turn when it came to Céline, who whilst not Russian, offered a model that was not entirely unfamiliar to Russian émigrés residing in the French capital. This was in part due to the coincidence of his appearance on the literary scene with the precise moment at which the younger generation of émigrés' common identity as such was most consciously being formed.

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Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (hereafter *Voyage*) was, as noted above, another semi-autobiographical war narrative which emerged from the reality of war

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<sup>67</sup> Whilst not strictly speaking a representative of the "younger generation", Otsup edited *Chisla* and worked very hard to grant younger writers greater prominence, and in this sense belonged to what Slonim identified as an "in-between generation" ("промежуточное поколение"). See Marc Slonim, "Molodye pisateli za rubezhom", *Volia Rossii*, 10-11 (1929), 100-18 (pp. 116-7).

during which many writers of the 1920s had come of age. It was, moreover, wildly successful during the 1930s. The novel, first published on October 15, 1932, brought its then little-known author Louis-Ferdinand Auguste Destouches almost immediate renown and found itself the subject of heated controversy when it failed to win the Prix Goncourt in the same year.<sup>68</sup> As its title indicated, *Voyage* was written largely during sleeping hours, after Céline finished his working day as a doctor in Paris.<sup>69</sup> In spite of the novel's near overnight success, Céline continued to work as a doctor alongside his writing career throughout the 1930s, and consciously strove to maintain a distance between his medical and literary professional personae. The parallels between Céline and his nihilistic antihero Bardamu proved, nonetheless, to be a popular source of interest in the novel's reception. *Voyage* follows Bardamu, who serves as a military doctor in World War I and colonial Africa, as well as working in post-war USA and eventually settling to practice medicine in a run-down fictional Parisian arrondissement (this trajectory strongly echoed Céline's own). The novel is characterised by its liberal usage of non-literary French, alongside frequent crude and grotesque depictions of war, poverty, sex, illness and death. *Voyage* has been credited with changing the course of French modernist writing and is commonly cited as a precursor to French existentialist works such as Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938) or Albert Camus' *La Peste* (1947). But the figure of Bardamu was as eagerly taken on as a figurehead by Russian émigrés in Paris as by French authors in the capital. In this section I shall consider *Voyage* as a significant mediating point in Gazdanov's evolution from *Večer* to *Nochnaia doroga*, which he wrote alongside his work as a night-time taxi driver during the 1930s. *Nochnaia doroga* was partially serialised in *Sovremennye zapiski* in 1939 and 1940, but was not published as a full text until 1952, when it appeared under the title of *Nochnye dorogi*.<sup>70</sup> The

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<sup>68</sup> *Voyage* lost out on the prize to Guy Mazeline's *Les Loups* (see Eugène Saccomano, *Goncourt 32* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999)).

<sup>69</sup> Philip H. Solomon, *Night Voyager: A Reading of Céline* (Birmingham: Summa, 1988), p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> *Nochnye dorogi* was first published in full in 1952 by Chekhov Publishing House in New York.

novel recounts the writer-narrator's nocturnal perambulations of Paris in his taxi, and the bizarre scenarios into which they lead him. The shift in style and emphasis between *Vecher* and *Nochnye dorogi* may in part be attributed to a general turn of interest from Proust to Céline.

Céline was extremely popular amongst Russian émigré authors of the younger generation. Maria Rubins has argued that *Voyage* was the first instantiation of what was to become a literary cliché of the 1930s, naming it “arguably the most important contemporary Western intertext for Russian Montparnasse.”<sup>71</sup> On December 7, 1933, an evening dedicated to a discussion of *Voyage* was organised by the literary group Kochev'e. Gazdanov delivered a speech, which was followed by a discussion between Georgii Adamovich, Iurii Fel'zen, Vladimir Veidle, Vladimir Varshavskii and Marc Slonim.<sup>72</sup> Iurii Terapiano, reviewing *Voyage* in *Chisla* in 1934, asserted that the novel spoke to the reality of the younger generation of first-wave émigrés now dwelling in the French capital:

Замечательная книга Селина своим названием: «Путешествие в глубь ночи» как бы очерчивает пределы того порочного круга, в котором, волей — неволей, должны жить послевоенные поколения. [...] Путешествие в глубь ночи — наш путь. Быть может, гонимому жизнью существу мир только кажется таким безблагодатным — однако немногим бы разнилась от книги Селина современная русская книга, если бы она была написана. Такой русской книги еще нет; нет, вероятно, потому, что сознание новых русских писателей еще не окончательно утвердилось в настоящем. Но в статьях, в стихах и особенно в высказываниях с глазу на глаз, в разговорах, многих наших молодых авторов

<sup>71</sup> Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse: Transnational Writing in Interwar Paris* (London: Palgrave, 2015), p. 25.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26. Kochev'e was established by Marc Slonim in 1928 as a venue for younger émigré writers to read and critique their own works, as well as Soviet literature.

даны все составные элементы того чувства, которое делает героя Селина —  
 Бардаму, если не героем, то демоном нашего времени.<sup>73</sup>

In his acknowledgement of the vicious cycle in which Russian émigrés were destined to live, and the appraisal of Bardamu as “if not a hero, then a demon of our time”, Terapiano articulated the common association of Céline’s protagonist as a Parisian Pechorin. He also observed a tension between the literal impoverishment of many first-wave émigrés on the one hand, and their steadfast rejection of cultural impoverishment, on the other. The assertion that Céline’s novel would not differ vastly from the contemporary Russian novel, “were it to have been written”, nonetheless indicates a certain stagnation of Russian literature within its present exilic conditions. Elsewhere, Petr Bitsilli observed a similarity between Céline and Sirin, comparing Bardamu’s “double”, Robinson, to the character of Hermann, the protagonist of *Otchaianie*.<sup>74</sup> Nabokov, responding to this evaluation many years later in the foreword to the 1965 English translation of the novel, coyly ventured that he would be interested to know if anyone recognised in “my Hermann ‘the father of existentialism’.”<sup>75</sup> In that same foreword, and with what might be read as a classically Nabokovian contrarianism, he also took issue with Sartre’s 1939 review of *Otchaianie* for its conclusion that “both the author and the main character are the victims of the war and the emigration”.<sup>76</sup> Nabokov may have rejected the notion that “victimhood” united Hermann and Bardamu, yet many readers and writers (Terapiano included) evidently did perceive a parallel between Bardamu’s helplessness as a member of the French wartime generation and the irrevocable misfortune that had befallen first-wave émigrés.

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<sup>73</sup> Iurii Terapiano, “Puteshestvie v glub’ nochi”, *Chisla*, 10 (1934), 210-11 (p. 210).

<sup>74</sup> Petr Bitsilli, “Vozrozhdenie allegorii”, *Sovremennye zapiski*, 61 (1936), 200.

<sup>75</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, “Foreword” to *Despair* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965), pp. 7-10 (p. 9). This comment nodded to the fact that the French existentialist prototype had drawn on the superfluous men of nineteenth-century Russian letters, such as Turgenev’s Bazarov or Dostoevskii’s Underground Man.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

Whilst it is acknowledged and documented, then, that Céline was a popular point of discussion in émigré circles, there is little actual analysis of the impact of *Voyage* on the writing of first-wave émigrés. Amongst the younger generation, Vasiliï Ianovskii has thus far been the most obvious point of comparison with Céline and has been addressed by scholars such as Livak.<sup>77</sup> Like Céline, Ianovskii held a medical degree and practised as a doctor whilst living in Paris. However, as Rubins has argued, Ianovskii diverges from Céline in that his own preoccupation with physiology and gruesome depictions of illness is a vehicle for an overriding call for transcendence of the physical in a quest for spiritualism.<sup>78</sup> Céline was also friends with French surrealist poet Louis Aragon and his wife, Elsa Triolet—herself a first-wave émigrée, née Ella Kagan in Moscow in 1896—who translated *Voyage* into Russian in 1934. The two-way traffic between (French-speaking) Russians in Paris and French people in Paris was not, of course, a new development: the *Recherche*, as mentioned, makes frequent references to an exotic Russian culture as part of the landscape of post-war Paris.<sup>79</sup> Frédéric Vitoux, Céline’s preeminent biographer, notes that Triolet’s translation was “edited, corrected and expurgated in Moscow by an obscure and zealous bureaucrat in the Ministry of Culture”, and published in 1934 in the Soviet Union, where it was viewed as an indictment of bourgeois capitalist society and “enjoyed heavy distribution, in successive runs of 6,000, 15,000 and 40,000 copies.”<sup>80</sup> Because his royalties from this edition of *Voyage* could only be

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<sup>77</sup> Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, pp. 135-63.

<sup>78</sup> Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, p. 27.

<sup>79</sup> Diaghilev’s *Ballets russes* are illustrative of a pre-1917 Russian presence (and popularity) in Western Europe. The *Ballets russes* also attest to the idea, expressed in my introduction, that those Russian émigrés whose principal artistic medium was *not* linguistic were well situated to manipulate the French *fin-de-siècle* fascination for Russia as an “exotic” and perhaps “barbaric”, but fundamentally friendly culture, which, as Katherine Foshko notes, was based on a “three-century-old tradition of accounts by French travelers”, but was reinforced by the more recent 1891 Franco-Russian Alliance and French post-war anti-Bolshevism. See Katherine Foshko, “France’s Russian Moment: Russian Émigrés in Interwar Paris and French Society” (unpublished doctoral thesis, Yale University, 2008), pp. 31 and 86.

<sup>80</sup> Frédéric Vitoux, *Céline: A Biography*, trans. Jesse Browner (New York: Paragon, 1992), p. 295.

spent in the Soviet Union, Céline himself travelled there in 1936.<sup>81</sup> His invitation to visit the U.S.S.R. contrasts with the aforementioned harsh critique of Proust as an emblem of bourgeois literature at the Soviet Writers' Congress during the same year.

*Voyage* warrants attention in a consideration of Gazdanov's engagement with the French literary milieu, and in particular his output of the 1930s, because it demonstrates an evolution of his written style and an experimentation with form. Moreover, in openly referencing *Voyage* in the title of *Nochnaia doroga* (which would later be published as *Nochnye dorogi*), Gazdanov was surely not ignorant of its author's anti-Proustian reputation. Reference to Céline thus served as a potential means of overcoming the Proustian lens through which his debut novella had been read. This is a triangulation of influence, then, not in the way that Greta Slobin has articulated it, that is, as a tripartite tug between three broad schools (a pre-1917 Russian tradition, early Soviet writing, and contemporary Western literature). Rather, this model of triangulation operates on the level of individual authors, with Gazdanov as a third point to the distinct literary styles of Proust and Céline. Where in the preceding section of this chapter I have demonstrated that the prominence of Proust in the early (and even later) critical responses to Gazdanov's writing has downplayed the significance of his Russian classical engagement, here I posit Céline as an antidote to this categorisation. Céline did not simply provide an escape route from the Proust ascription, a trade-off of one association for another; rather, he became a principal engine for overthrowing Proust's literary dominance and was understood in such terms both within the French literary establishment and the Soviet Union.

The question of Céline's significance as an antidote to Proust would appear to have been a popular point of discussion from very early after the initial publication of *Voyage*.

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<sup>81</sup> Solomon notes that the good treatment he received there did not stop him from publishing *Mea culpa* (1937), a denunciation of Russian communism "for its lies about the nature of the human condition and its materialism" (Solomon, p. 5).



Georgii Adamovich, reviewing the novel in *Poslednie novosti* in 1933, emphasised its response to Émile Zola's literary legacy, as mediated through the prism of Proust: "The appearance of Céline's book signified something like Zola's vengeance against Proust [...] only this is no longer the same Zola [...] but Zola poisoned by Proust, who has learned and understood much and lost his former faith and zeal."<sup>82</sup> Livak has broadly concurred with Adamovich's view of Céline's significance as "an anti-Proust who 'liberated his generation from Proustian introspection' and reignited an interest in the *document humain*, the naturalistic writing style of Zola, whose depiction of 'the filth of life' Proust himself had strongly criticised as outlandish."<sup>83</sup> The comparison with nineteenth-century naturalism indicates a process of literary evolution in which Proust has acted as a mediating point. Céline's twentieth-century incarnation of the *document humain* combined the first-person narrative voice of Proust's narrative with the social conscience of its nineteenth-century naturalist predecessor, through an emphasis on testimony and questions of human existence.<sup>84</sup> As early as 1965 David Hayman argued the case for a coherence between Proust and Céline, in the face of the established consensus that the latter had staunchly opposed the former's literary legacy. Whilst Hayman's claim that Céline "stands next to Proust as the painter of a moribund society"<sup>85</sup> may be true when it comes to their depictions of wartime and interwar France, the milieux from which they and their narrators painted were categorically distinct from one another. Bardamu was appealing to Russian émigrés because

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<sup>82</sup> Georgii Adamovich, "Puteshestvie v glub' nochi", *Poslednie novosti*, 4418 (1933), p. 3, cited in Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, p. 26.

<sup>83</sup> Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, p. 136.

<sup>84</sup> The term "document humain" was first coined by Edmond de Goncourt in his diary of 1875, although its roots may be noted in the earlier foreword to the Goncourt brothers' 1865 novel, *Germinie Lacerteux*, in which they denigrate "les livres qui font semblant d'aller dans le monde", defiantly proclaiming their own novel to be an artefact from the streets of Paris: "ce livre vient de la rue". See Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Germinie Lacerteux* (Paris: Charpentier, 1875), pp. v-viii (p. v). The document humain was in part a response to the clinical distance cultivated by nineteenth-century realist novels in their voyeuristic and condescending analysis of the Parisian working classes for salacious purposes. The Goncourts were themselves heavily criticised for the very condescension and voyeurism that they claimed to despise.

<sup>85</sup> David Hayman, *Louis-Ferdinand Céline* (New York: Columbia University Pamphlet, 1965), p. 46.

the impoverished Paris that he inhabited, and his marginalisation from the artistic establishment, resonated extremely strongly with them, in the same way, perhaps, that Nikolai Sosedov's recollections had spoken to their experiences of war and dislocation. Bardamu was far more of an "émigré" than Proust's narrator. Sally Silk has argued that a central tension of *Voyage* is Bardamu's displacement and alienation from the "the ways of life and structures of feeling of bourgeois France during the Third Republic."<sup>86</sup> Silk notes that this alienation is not confined to the level of plot, and instead permeates the language of the novel, such that "the text itself is a highly charged manifestation of Bardamu's 'homelessness.'"<sup>87</sup>

Céline's own "social realism" thus posed an apt model for capturing the sordid reality of Parisian life for Russian émigrés, who found themselves caught between a Proustian nostalgia for the luxury of the past and a horror at the precariousness of the present. The propensity for depicting vice and "the filth of life" is far less condescending in the Célinian model, owing to the narrator's own situation within the very poverty he depicts. Indeed, where nineteenth-century naturalist works such as Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* novels consider social questions from an impassive third-person perspective, Bardamu's embeddedness within the squalor that he narrates, along with his misanthropy, situates the reader in a position of empathy which is simultaneously mediated through him and permits us to stand slightly to one side of him. Céline's insertion of vulgar speech and street slang into the novel was the result of a genuine familiarity with such language. Despite his own middle-class upbringing and high level of education, Céline was not leading a privileged existence prior to the commercial success of *Voyage*. Solomon notes that his "lack of (financial) success was the result of his reluctance to collect his fees."<sup>88</sup> As such, he was unable to maintain a private

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<sup>86</sup> Sally Silk, "Céline's "Voyage au bout de la nuit": The Nation Constructed Through Storytelling", *Romantic Review*, 87/3 (1996), 391-403 (p. 391).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>88</sup> Solomon, p. 4.

practice, and closed it to begin work at a public dispensary in 1931. The fact of his having genuinely worked as a doctor within the desperate settings he depicted, such as an impoverished Parisian neighbourhood or on the front line of World War I, endowed his fictionalised testimony with a perceived authenticity.

*Voyage* was thus eagerly held up as a model by younger generation émigrés, whose own all-too-real homelessness had left them well-placed to sympathise with its aesthetics of decay and to identify with the impoverished Bardamu, working in a run-down Parisian *quartier*. Many émigrés had led affluent middle- and upper-class lives before they fled Russia. Consequently, the privileged lifestyle and country houses found in a work such as the *Recherche* did not resemble anything *but* memory. Although Proustian nostalgia might have captured the essence of the 1920s for many Russian émigrés on their initial arrival in Paris, any hopes of an imminent return to their homeland had by the 1930s waned. As such, the younger generation arguably outgrew the Proustian rapture at memory's power to invoke the past. Proust's metaphors of translation and memory, which had for obvious reasons initially appeared tempting and productive for the purposes of émigré authors, began to seem inadequate as a means of expressing their present everyday reality. Céline's realism was more decisive and aligned more readily with their own *bytovizm*. Interestingly, then, a shift that occurred in 1930s French letters, quite independently of the Russian context, was mirrored in the first-wave emigration.

This shift from high modernism à la Proust towards a grittier social realism à la Céline was highly necessary for Gazdanov, particularly if we pay attention to his non-fictional output of the 1930s. For instance, in "Literaturnye priznaniia", which was published in the short-lived Parisian émigré journal *Vstrechi* in 1934, Gazdanov equated the impoverishment of first-wave émigrés with what he saw as the impoverishment of their language, complaining that "девяносто девять процентов наших беллетристов пишут

чрезвычайно бедным, условным языком с несколькими галлицизмами и печальной трафаретностью выражений”.<sup>89</sup> Where Céline’s insertion of a staunchly non-literary language into the French novel was heralded as ground-breaking, many Russian émigrés perceived the insertion of gallicisms and clichés into their literature as a marker of its reduced quality and tenuous status as neither Russian, nor French. The fact that Gazdanov went on to write a work such as *Nochnye dorogi* in which Parisian *argot* sits alongside the Russian language would appear to signal an evolution in his style and taste during the mid-1930s.

In “O molodoi emigrantskoi literature”, which was published in *Sovremennye zapiski* two year later, his protestations regarding the social position of émigrés had become more militant. Gazdanov added his voice to the ongoing polemic on the younger generation of émigré writers, decrying the disadvantageous situation of formerly professional émigrés, who were now required to undertake manual labour in order to make ends meet, and thus could not devote adequate time or energy to writing.<sup>90</sup> The parallel he draws between the *de facto* impoverishment of émigrés and the corresponding impoverishment of their language itself might also indicate a rationale for the proliferation of street slang in *Nochnye dorogi*. Gazdanov in particular underlines the mismatch between the professional qualifications held by many White émigrés, and the jobs to which they actually have access abroad, and establishes a causal link between this downward social mobility and their overwhelming pessimism and disenchantment.<sup>91</sup> In *Nochnye dorogi*, this outlook is articulated in the character of the taxi-driver whom the narrator encounters outside Passy:

В России он готовился к профессуре, во время войны работал в министерстве иностранных дел, так как знал несколько иностранных языков, и всю свою

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<sup>89</sup> Gazdanov, “Literaturnye priznaniia”, *Vstrechi* (1934), cited from *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 735-9 (p. 735).

<sup>90</sup> Gazdanov, “O molodoi emigrantskoi literature”, *Sovremennye zapiski*, 60 (1936), 404-8.

<sup>91</sup> Marc Raeff has noted that many Russian émigrés who had trained as lawyers, accountants, or doctors, were negatively affected by regressive employment laws in France which left them no choice but to engage in manual labour (see Raeff, *Russia Abroad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 49).

жизнь, до отъезда за границу, учился. У него была прекрасная память и исключительные, почти энциклопедические познания [...] Он ездил на автомобиле, как и другие его товарищи по несчастью, русские интеллигенты, и оставался совершенно чужд этому делу, которого он, в сущности, не понимал и в котором участвовал только механически.<sup>92</sup>

The narrator's reference to this taxi-driver and his friends as "товарищи по несчастью, русские интеллигенты"<sup>93</sup> clearly lays down the root of this "tragedy" as the loss of dignity for an educated individual to be living in such circumstances, erring towards the condescending implications of earlier incarnations of the *document humain*. The irony that this educated man who speaks multiple languages once actually abroad finds himself unable to deploy his education in the manner he had hoped is portrayed as woeful, but arguably no less so than the experiences of the novel's French characters. The usage of words such as "чужд" and "механически" articulates the estrangement of these individuals from the lives they had hitherto led and the functionality to which their cerebral capacities have been reduced. Nabokov may have taken issue with Sartre's view that he and Hermann were "the victims of the war and the emigration", yet Gazdanov clearly *did* concur with the notion of exile as narrowing one's opportunities.

Having established the broader context in which Céline was being read, I now wish to consider a number of particular points of contact between *Voyage* and *Nochnye dorogi*. Unlike *Voyage* within Céline's oeuvre, *Nochnye dorogi* has not been granted extensive attention in scholarship on Gazdanov's writing. This may be a function of its generic indecisiveness, or of the meandering and digressive nature of the prose, and the leisurely back and forth between the lives of others whose role is acknowledged as minor and the

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<sup>92</sup> Gazdanov, *Nochnye dorogi*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, II, 3-214 (p. 126).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

narrator's own personal experiences. It is hard to find a coherent thread through which to orient oneself in the narrative. In *Nochnye dorogi*, Gazdanov's narrator emphasises the truth of the events and characters relayed: "Но людей я помнил всех и всегда, хотя громадное большинство их не играло в моей жизни важной роли."<sup>94</sup> This self-consciously autobiographical aspect of the work has been broadly discussed, however there is also a playfulness regarding its generic categorisation, which has not been adequately acknowledged. This playfulness may be seen in the opening assertion, attributed to "the author", that "all characters in this book are fictional": "Все действующие лица этой книги вымышлены — АВТОР."<sup>95</sup> In *Nochnye dorogi*, it is not just separate languages, but separate identities that converge: Gazdanov's Russian tongue and the French *argot* against which it is now set, his work as both a prose writer and a taxi driver. In this respect, the roads Gazdanov's narrator is actually navigating in his writing are those between these split identities. This divided persona echoes that of Celine's doctor-narrator, albeit in a more detached fashion. Céline's narrator's medical profession situates him appropriately to clinically analyse the disintegration of society during the post-war period: "je ne peux m'empêcher de mettre en doute qu'il existe d'autres véritables réalisations de nos profonds tempéraments que la guerre et la maladie, ces deux infinis du cauchemar".<sup>96</sup> Conversely, in *Nochnye dorogi* Gazdanov's *geroi-rasskazchik-taksist* quite literally acts as a vehicle for analysis: he is the chronicler of ills, as opposed to the doctor actively partaking in or contributing to their betterment.

In both novels, the narrator's double persona maps on to the divide between night and day, as Rubins has observed: "nighttime situations, encounters, codes of behaviour and

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>95</sup> Gazdanov, *Nochnye dorogi* (New York: Chekhov, 1952), p. 2. This interestingly foreshadows the disclaimer at the opening of Nabokov's *Pnin*, which states: "All of the characters in this book are fictitious, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental." Nabokov, *Pnin* (New York: Anchor, 1984), p. 4.

<sup>96</sup> Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 442.

human relationships, crimes, and even language are inconceivable during the day.”<sup>97</sup> Gazdanov’s narrator’s split identity is reflected in the divide between his night and daytime personas and manifests itself most clearly in the text via the perpetual code switching between standard language and street language. This question of language is central to the comparison between Céline’s novel and *Nochnye dorogi*. The two extracts of *Nochnaia doroga* originally published in *Sovremennye zapiski* in 1939 and 1940 included large chunks of untranslated *argot* alongside Russian without attempts to familiarise either to the reader; evidently the localised Russian émigré readership served by an émigré journal such as *Sovremennye zapiski* was a safe group in which to presume a working knowledge of all three codes. When the text was published in its entirety in 1952, however, all dialogue appeared in Russian, with the occasional out-of-place French word or phrase translated in footnotes at the bottom of each page. Gazdanov’s prose is more verbose than Céline’s short, sharp sentences, yet its deliberate inclusion of “street” language shares much with the French author. Simone de Beauvoir famously proclaimed that Céline had created a new instrument, namely “l’écriture aussi vivante que la parole.”<sup>98</sup> Céline rejected the French literary language through his deployment of the polyglossia of his own language, or what a critic such as Ian Noble has referred to as an “infinite interplay of discourses”.<sup>99</sup> In reference to the novel’s opening sentence (“Ça a débuté comme ça.”),<sup>100</sup> he remarks:

“Voilà comment ça a commencé” would have the same “meaning”, but the sentence the narrator in fact uses seems to yearn for simplicity and brevity, stripping language to its essentials, reducing it to a minuscule, non-problematic circularity close to

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<sup>97</sup> Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse*, p. 25.

<sup>98</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *La force de l’âge* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1960), p. 142.

<sup>99</sup> Ian Noble, *Language and Narration in Céline’s Writings: The Challenge of Disorder* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p. 47.

<sup>100</sup> Céline, p. 7.

silence [...] The narrator's words have opened a breach to be invaded by question marks.<sup>101</sup>

But the opening of a breach is not evidenced solely in the interaction between colloquial and more formal discourses in the text; we also observe the invasion of a second language, English, when the narrator gives lessons to Aimée, the daughter of his neighbour, Baryton. Baryton's apparent eagerness for his daughter to learn a useful language such as English is undercut by his suspicion of Parapine as a Russian:

Il n'avait jamais été avec Parapine entièrement à son aise. «Parapine... Voyez-vous Ferdinand, me fit-il un jour en confidence, c'est un Russe !» Le fait d'être russe pour Baryton, c'était quelque chose d'aussi descriptif, morphologique, irrémédiable, que «diabétique»<sup>102</sup>

*Voyage* thus articulates a hierarchy of foreignness which dictates the interactions between its characters. Baryton insists that he observes his daughter's English lessons, and swiftly monopolises them with his own questions: “«*How do you say “impossible” en english, Ferdinand ?...*»”.<sup>103</sup> The visual delineation between English and French via typographical alteration between roman characters and italics only serves to underline the irony that “impossible” is the very same word in English as it is in French.

But English does not alter Baryton's world simply by renaming it. It also exercises its influence over him via its literature: “Au moment où nous abordâmes les poètes élisabéthains de grands changements immatériels survinrent dans sa personne.”<sup>104</sup> After their reading of Macaulay's *History of England*, the transformation is complete: “Depuis ce moment, je peux bien le dire, il ne fut plus des nôtres”,<sup>105</sup> and Baryton leaves France for England. Where

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<sup>101</sup> Noble, p. 31.

<sup>102</sup> Céline, p. 417.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 435.

<sup>104</sup> Céline, p. 425.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 427.



Céline's narrator stresses the familiarity between French and English, and the influence of English literature over a character such as Baryton, Gazdanov's narrator observes the inverse attitude to foreign languages amongst the émigrés who frequent the same cabarets and bars as him. For instance, the ridiculous character of Mr Martini, so-called for his propensity for the cocktail, teaches many languages and reads Schiller's "Der Handschuh" (1797) to pimps and tramps who have no idea what it means and merely laugh at the fact that the German words sound strange to them:

Он был преподавателем греческого, латинского, немецкого, испанского и английского языков [...] В два часа ночи он излагал философские теории своим слушателям, обычно сутенерам или бродягам и ожесточенно с ними спорил; они смеялись над ним, помню, что они особенно хохотали, когда он наизусть читал им Шиллерскую «Перчатку» по-немецки, их забавляло, конечно, не содержание, о котором они не могли догадаться, а то, как смешно звучит немецкий язык.<sup>106</sup>

Just as the narrator views Paris and its inhabitants as "foreign" or "strange", so too do the passers-by who hear these German words and categorise them in blanket terms as "foreign". The notion that the language sounds "funny" ("смешно")—significantly Martini's favourite word, which he repeats "like a parrot" ("как попугай")—further underlines the cultural and social voids between the nocturnal inhabitants of Paris. Céline's existential nihilism would appear in *Nochnye dorogi* to manifest both as an ontological lack of meaning or direction, and a rather more literal absence of meaning by way of a far less surmountable linguistic void. The narrator notes that he will only perceive the city and its inhabitants differently with time and distance; the same may be said of the literary work, which is viewed in new lights

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<sup>106</sup> Gazdanov, *Nochnye dorogi*, p. 14.

depending on a temporal lapse, a change in style, or, indeed, the cultural context in which it is accessed.

Gazdanov evidently sought to echo the thematic strand of voyaging in Céline's title in his own choice of title. But in *Nochnye dorogi* and *Voyage*, physical movement is for both narrators equated with existential wandering and exile. Urban exploration of the French capital of course had roots in Charles Baudelaire's *flâneur*, "a disengaged and cynical voyeur on the one hand, and man of the people who enters into the lives of his subjects on the other":<sup>107</sup>

La foule est son domaine, comme l'air est celui de l'oiseau, comme l'eau celui du poisson. Sa passion et sa profession, c'est d'épouser la foule. Pour le parfait flâneur, pour l'observateur passionné, c'est une immense jouissance que d'élire domicile dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant, dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et l'infini. Être hors de chez soi, et pourtant se sentir partout chez soi ; voir le monde, être au centre du monde et rester caché au monde, tels sont quelques-uns des moindres plaisirs de ces esprits indépendants, passionnés, impartiaux, que la langue ne peut que maladroitement définir.<sup>108</sup>

In the context of exile, the description of the *flâneur* as an individual "hors de chez soi" but nonetheless capable of feeling "partout chez soi" acquires far greater weight. Similarly, Gazdanov's situation in Paris, at that time, by most accounts, a city "au centre du monde", did not prevent him (and many other émigré writers) from remaining "caché(s) au monde".<sup>109</sup>

Where Gazdanov depicts the poverty and distress of émigré reality, his description of the actual detail of the squalor remains quite elliptical in comparison to Céline's language.

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<sup>107</sup> David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 14.

<sup>108</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "Le peintre de la vie moderne", in Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques: L'art romantique et autres œuvres critiques* (Paris: Garnier, 1962), pp. 453-502 (p. 463).

<sup>109</sup> I have in mind Pascale Casanova's notion of Paris as a "denationalised literary capital" capable of launching peripheral artists to international visibility. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Instead of grotesque and crude description, the narrator delivers a montage-like portrayal of repeated scenes of nocturnal drives through Paris: prostitutes are seen on the roadside, but the interaction often does not go beyond observation. One point of comparison might be the taxi incident in *Voyage* which leads to Madelon's shooting of Robinson: whilst robberies or indiscreet liaisons occur in the back of the narrator's taxi in *Nochnye dorogi*, nothing quite so violent or catastrophic takes place. In fact, one of the most grotesque images occurs at the very end of the novel, and *outside* the taxi, as Fedorchenko's purple and bloated corpse is discovered after he has committed suicide by hanging himself at home. In this regard, Walter Benjamin's emphasis on the aestheticising role of the *flâneur*'s gaze is significantly reinforced by Gazdanov's narrator's tendency to view Paris as "strange" or "fantastic" in the face of evidence that suggests it is hopeless, hellish and fundamentally squalid and vice-ridden.<sup>110</sup>

For Baudelaire's *flâneur*, unhousedness and invisibility are virtues permitting him simultaneously to be in the city and to stand aside from it. Conversely, for Gazdanov's taxi-driving *flâneur* invisibility and rootlessness are afflictions and, moreover, the source of that social malaise which he observes and depicts. Proust depicts the genteel world of Parisian salons, Balbec and the bourgeois spaces of the city such as the Champs Élysées or the Faubourg St Germain; Céline conveys a grittier and seemingly more authentic image of the urban which in turn recalls Baudelaire's depictions of the vice of modernity.<sup>111</sup>

Baudelaire's *flâneur* does not just walk the streets of Paris, but often does so at night, In "A une passante", part of the *Tableaux parisiens* section of his 1868 *Les Fleurs du mal*, he

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<sup>110</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>111</sup> There are parallels between Céline's vision of Paris and the image of post-war Paris portrayed in *Le Temps retrouvé*; for instance in Marcel's description of the moon over Paris "il y avait certes, maintenant comme alors, la splendeur antique inchangée d'une lune cruellement, mystérieusement sereine, qui versait aux monuments encore intacts l'inutile beauté de sa lumière". Note here the ascription of Maupassant's phrase "l'inutile beauté", originally employed in reference to an infertile woman, to the moon. Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*, p. 108.

delivers an ode not to a lover, or mistress, but to a prostitute, traditionally defined with the epithet of “night”.<sup>112</sup> Gazdanov’s narrator similarly navigates the city mostly at night. Rubins argues that night-time was a source of inspiration for both the younger generation of émigré authors and French writers alike, noting contemporaneous works to Céline’s *Voyage*, such as Soupault’s *Les Dernières nuits de Paris* (1928) or Dovid Knut’s *Parizhskie nochi* (1932). Night-time, like war, was a prolific theme of the period; this trope was thus mobilised by the younger generation in order to articulate their own vision and experience of the city. In the context of French literature, night-time Paris had long been a popular setting for works dealing with the insalubrious elements of the city and modernity. The experimental silent film *Rien que les heures* (1926), which documented twenty-four hours in Paris, and is largely viewed as a prototype for the city symphony genre, similarly portrayed nocturnal Paris as an uncertain time, pronounced by the appearance of the words “mystère” and “inquiétude” on the screen.<sup>113</sup> But whereas for Baudelaire, the night-time topos served as an artistic conceit for engaging with the abject aspects of urban life, for Gazdanov, these interactions were the result of his longstanding career as a taxi driver.

To claim that Céline was Gazdanov’s sole influence in a work such as *Nochnye dorogi* would of course be reductive. What is evident is that the disengaged voice of Céline’s narrator, and his searing portrayal of Paris as a city whose poverty was rotting it from within, spoke to a Russian émigré perception of Paris far more directly than romantic or antiquated depictions of its wealthier arrondissements. In this way, Céline provided the prototype that aided Gazdanov through the overwhelming nostalgia of the Proustian model. *Voyage* put forward a kind of “realism” on which Gazdanov seized in *Nochnye dorogi*, but which would ultimately find expression in a much later work such as *Vozvrashchenie buddy*.

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<sup>112</sup> Blok’s “Neznakomka” (1906) recasts Baudelaire’s poem in a Russian setting: “И каждый вечер, в час назначенный/(Иль это только снится мне?)/Девичий стан, шелками схваченный,/В туманном движется окне.”

<sup>113</sup> *Rien que les heures* was directed by Brazilian director Alberto Cavalcanti in 1926.

### Chapter Three: Babel' as Mediator

Alongside the serial publication of novels such as *Polet* and *Nochnye dorogi*, Gazdanov's short story output was proportionally very high during the interwar period, especially in comparison with his postwar career. Before the onset of World War II he had published no less than thirty-one short stories in a range of émigré journals including *Volia Rossii*, *Chisla* and *Sovremennye zapiski*. After the war, his short fiction output significantly waned, with only ten further short stories published between 1949 and 1966. Dienes has asserted that Gazdanov's apparent interest in the short form during the interwar years was fueled at least in part by financial expediency, with the short stories providing a steady stream of income to supplement his work as a night-time taxi driver throughout the 1930s, a period of change in which he married and began to take an annual holiday in the south of France with his wife.<sup>1</sup> The postwar decline in short stories was also arguably a function of the altered publishing landscape after 1945. The vibrant (if precarious) journal and periodical culture of interwar Russia Abroad which had clustered around European metropolitan centres such as Berlin, Prague and Paris was highly felicitous for the short prose form, with contributions from older and younger émigrés alike. But after the war, the vast majority of journals in which Gazdanov (and his fellow émigrés) had often published their short stories ceased to exist. This is reflected in Gazdanov's move to publish what new material he did write after 1945 in the New York-based *Novyi zhurnal*, the postwar incarnation of the previously Paris-based *Sovremennye zapiski*.

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<sup>1</sup> László Dienes, *Russian Literature in Exile: The Life and Works of Gajto Gazdanov* (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1982), pp. 48-9.

This chapter will not seek to undertake a survey of the various typologies, characters or themes to be found in Gazdanov's corpus of short stories. Rather, my primary concern here will be the symbiotic evolution of Gazdanov's short fiction works alongside his novelistic practice, and the extent to which this two-way flow might be said to echo the parallel development of those two genres within the broader literary field. As such, this chapter makes a claim for a certain type of intertextuality: that between two genres within a single literary tradition. Readings of Gazdanov's short works in conjunction with his novels call attention to shared motifs or scenarios across both: reading "Zheleznyi lord" or "Oshibka" one observes a certain prolepsis of the adulterous plot of *Polet*, which would remain unpublished in full until after Gazdanov's death. "Oshibka", published in *Sovremennye zapiski* in 1938, makes a particularly interesting point of comparison with the blended perspectives that *Polet* seamlessly interweaves for its polyphonic narration that flickers between mother, father and son. Opening on the perspective of the young son, Vasili Vasil'evich, and passing through his father, the narrative ultimately settles upon his unfaithful mother. Elsewhere, the narrators of stories such as "Gavaiskie gitary" or "Vodianaiia tiur'ma" might call to mind *Večer u Kler's* Nikolai Sosedov for their apparent aimlessness in Paris. And we may observe in short stories such as "Shpion" or "Metr Rai" hints of the absurd doppelgänger and arrest scenarios that will feature in *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa* and *Vozvrashchenie buddy*. This theme receives a variation in "Prevrashchenie", whose plot builds on the cliché of exile as an "afterlife" in which a character the narrator had known as a child before emigration who was believed to be dead in fact turns out to be alive, and living next-door to him in Paris. *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa* itself is a novel whose entire plot centres on one memory, recapitulated from an alternative perspective in his reading of a short story. This self-referential interplay between long and short forms constitutes a type of intertextual relation distinct from but coexistent with the more conventional typological

borrowings from classical nineteenth-century works that I have discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.

Just as there is and has long been a discourse between French and Russian letters, so too within the confines of any singular national literature is there an interchange between the competing prose forms of novel and short story. In the context of Russian Formalism, the concurrence between these genres has been understood as a vital element in the historical development of the national literary canon. In his 1925 essay, “O. Genri i teoriia novelly”, Boris Eikhenbaum stresses the essential difference between long and short prose forms, which he defines respectively as “syncretic” and “fundamental, elementary”, arguing that they are “not only different in kind but also inherently *at odds* [внутренно-враждебные], and for that reason are never found being developed simultaneously and with equal intensity in any one literature”.<sup>2</sup> The notion of a perpetual status quo of conflict between warring factions and a succession of literary forms punctuated by the individual advances and retreats of each side recalls the vision of literary progression as a struggle for primacy expressed by both Iurii Tynianov and Viktor Shklovskii, to which I shall return. Eikhenbaum goes on to explicate his theorem of mutual exclusivity through the national model of nineteenth-century American literature, in which the short story initially attained prominence as a “high” art form practiced by proponents such as Edgar Allan Poe, Bret Harte and Henry James, whilst the novel retreated to the background. The American short story and novel are “at odds”, he explains, precisely because of their fundamental difference of approach to plot, setting and time: “It is no wonder that Poe so vehemently attacked the novel—the principle of structural unity serving as his point of departure discredits big form in which different centers and parallel lines are inevitably constructed and descriptive material brought to the fore...”<sup>3</sup> This

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<sup>2</sup> Boris Eikhenbaum, “O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story”, trans. I. R. Titunik (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1968), p. 4. Emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

essential tension between “structural unity” and “parallel lines” is, of course, hardly a phenomenon unique to American prose, and indeed elsewhere Eikhenbaum illustrates the same point through the examples of Tolstoi’s *Anna Karenina* and Pushkin’s *Povesti Belkina*. Whereas tales such as “Metel” or “Grobovshchik” “expressly aim at making the end of the story coincide with the high point of the plot and at creating the effect of a surprise denouement”, Anna’s death would have been an insufficient and untenable ending point for Tolstoi’s novel: “Tolstoj could not end *Anna Karenina* with Anna’s death [...] Otherwise the novel would have had the appearance of a drawn-out story rigged with completely superfluous characters and episodes. The logic of the form required a continuation.”<sup>4</sup>

But the assertion of a basic divide between the respective narrative “logics” of short or long forms (perhaps best summed up in Poe’s theory of unity of effect as the defining feature of the short story)<sup>5</sup> becomes something of a stepping stone to the question of the corresponding rise and fall of each over time. Crucially for Eikhenbaum, as for Tynianov and Shklovskii, “(s)tages in the evolution of every genre can be observed when the genre, once utilized as an entirely serious or “high” one, undergoes regeneration, coming out in parodic or comic form.”<sup>6</sup> Eikhenbaum thus charts the evolution of the American short story, from a serious, “high” form to an anecdotal, comic (and, by implication, “light”) form employed from the 1880s onwards by writers such as Mark Twain and later by O. Henry in the early twentieth century. This gradual shift in tone constituted a parodic mutation of the form and its “logic” with time. Conventional narrative devices such as the surprise ending recurred to the extent that they became playfully commonplace, their intended effect altered: instead of to shock, they were now deployed to mock. Again, although Eikhenbaum uses the prism of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, “Review of Twice-Told Tales”, *Graham’s Lady’s and Gentlemen’s Magazine* (May 1842), 298-300.

<sup>6</sup> Eikhenbaum, “O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story”, p. 7.



American literature, the emphasis on the discontinuity of literary traditions might easily apply to numerous national contexts.

The view of literary succession as a chaotic and violent process characterised by differentiation and displacement, in which the outgoing form is somehow harmed was not unique to Eikhenbaum's vision. In his earliest essay in 1921, Iurii Tynianov had argued that parody functioned as a catalyst of artistic evolution through the example of Gogol' and Dostoevskii, stressing that literary succession was a "violent" process that rearranged former structures: "всякая литературная преемственность есть прежде всего борьба, разрушение старого целого и новая стройка старых элементов."<sup>7</sup> Similarly, for Viktor Shklovskii, the tussle between genres was cast as a chess battle, through the lexicon of the "knight's move". Instead of developing in straight lines, literature in Shklovskii's conception moved forwards *and* to one side, and the vanquished line was not destroyed, but merely lay in wait until its opportunity to rise up came again: "Побежденная «линия» не уничтожается, не перестает существовать. Она только сбивается с гребня, уходит вниз гулять под паром и снова может воскреснуть, являясь вечным претендентом на престол."<sup>8</sup> This perennial ebb and flow in the authority of genres was born out in the shifts between novel and short story in the Russian context: whereas the short story had been a prominent form during the early nineteenth century, it was gradually effaced by the novel as the most popular form. The novel was itself effaced during the *fin-de-siècle* period as narratives by Silver Age authors such as Chekhov, Bunin and Belyi foregrounded literary style and prioritised *nastroenie* (mood or atmosphere) over *byt* (the intricate details of quotidian life). Stylistically, the short story is well suited to the distillation and fragmentation of novel plots; it can also serve as the kernel of a later novel. What I am interested in, then, is the interaction between short and long forms, how this might

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<sup>7</sup> Iurii Tynianov, "Dostoevskii i Gogol' (k teorii parodii)", in *Arkhaisty i novatory* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1929), pp. 412–55 (p. 413).

<sup>8</sup> Viktor Shklovskii, "Rožanov", in Shklovskii, *Gamburgskii schet. Stat'i. Vospominaniia. Esse.* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), pp. 120–39 (p. 121).

usefully be theorised as a generative process, and the extent to which Gazdanov's navigation between these two forms throughout his career is a dialogue with Lermontov, Pushkin, Tolstoi, Chekhov and others.

Scholars such as Victor Terras and Lyudmila Parts have noted that this ebb and flow is contingent on its environment, insofar as it reflects the social and political context in which it occurs. Terras discusses the broader shift in the fundamental concerns and aims of prose writers as well as poets at the turn of the century, such that the short story ascended in popularity and prevalence, whilst the novel declined:

The novel of the nineteenth century had been a hybrid art form, open to intrusions of didactic, polemical, and moral subtexts. The major authors of the Silver Age, less concerned with fulfilling a "social commission" or propounding a "moral message" than with creating a work of art, gravitated toward the short story or short novel, forms more apt to be free of serious artistic flaws than was the conventional novel.<sup>9</sup>

Parts further develops this notion of contingency, concordantly defining the novel as a genre of stability, and the short story, conversely, as "the genre of cultural transitions",<sup>10</sup> and arguing that "the short story rises to prominence during periods of cultural and political transition when literary conventions and ideologies lose some or most of their authority" and "experience itself becomes fragmented, individualized to the point of dissociation."<sup>11</sup> The first wave of Russia Abroad was undeniably a society in cultural transition, and this fact is arguably reflected in its numerous internal divisions.

By the early 1930s, when even Russian émigrés had accepted that their exile was not as temporary as they had previously anticipated, there was a mounting urgency, particularly amongst younger generation writers, to discuss this social shift. Gazdanov's "O molodoi

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<sup>9</sup> Victor Terras, *A History of Russian literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 450.

<sup>10</sup> Lyudmila Parts, "Introduction", in *The Russian Twentieth-Century Short Story: A Critical Companion* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2010), pp. xiii-xxxii (p. xix).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

emigrantskoi literature” is one instance of this ongoing public debate. If we subscribe to Parts’ view of the short prose form as a genre of cultural transition, then it was not just that the fact of serial publication necessitated by émigré journal culture was highly felicitous for the output of shorter works, but also that the interrelation between short and long works reflected the continuing evolution of Russia Abroad. Eikhenbaum, although discussing the entirely different national context of nineteenth-century American literature, had similarly, observed that “(t)he consolidation of the short-story genre was associated with, not engendered by, the propagation of magazines.”<sup>12</sup> Publishing practices thus also reflected and responded to the prevailing “cultural transition”, as well as further permitting and encouraging the propagation of a transitional form.

But there is moreover a supranational dimension to the evolution of genre, and the short story is no exception, particularly insofar as Gazdanov himself would appear to have conceived of the form. In the article “Zametki ob Edgare Po, Gogole i Mopassane”, published in *Volia Rossii* in 1929, Gazdanov drew a comparison between Edgar Allan Poe, Nikolai Gogol’ and Guy de Maupassant, three writers arguably best known for their short story practice. For the purposes of my discussion here, the article itself does not yield a huge amount; its content is quite digressive and largely pertains to the macabre aesthetics of the works of all three (who are on the whole discussed in frustrating isolation from one another) and there is curiously no mention of their common predilection for the short story form. The most germane comparison becomes apparent when Gazdanov eventually refers to their shared experience as writers whose art finds itself “outside of classically rational perception”:

Писателя, искусство которого находится вне классически рационального восприятия, неизменно постигает трагедия постоянного духовного одиночества. Он живет в особенном, им самим создаваемом мире — и состояние полного

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<sup>12</sup> Eikhenbaum, “O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story”, p. 5.

отчуждения от других людей бывает под силу лишь немногим, одаренным исключительной сопротивляемостью. Мы знаем, что большинство его не выдерживает. Мы знаем также, что обостренное сознание неминуемого приближения смертельной опасности делает этих людей, с нашей точки зрения, почти сумасшедшими: вспомните Паскаля, всегда видевшего бездну рядом со своим стулом.<sup>13</sup>

It is arguably unsurprising that Gazdanov should identify feelings of solitude (“одинокость”) and outsider-ness as crucial attributes in the works of each of these three authors: these were, after all, the very same sentiments that he and many other younger generation émigrés would go on to express as the question of precisely *who* they were writing for became more pressing during the early 1930s.<sup>14</sup> Russian émigrés were themselves inhabiting a “special, self-created world”. The refrain of “Мы знаем” is based on actual familiarity with that malaise and mental detachment. Perhaps, then, what the article does fruitfully yield—even if by omission—is a question: *why* these three authors from distinct but entangled national traditions? Was it a knowledge that Poe’s works had first entered into French (and Russian) culture through the translations of Charles Baudelaire?<sup>15</sup> Or an awareness of Gogol’s blending of German romantic influences, such as the short stories of ETA Hoffmann, with elements of Ukrainian folklore?<sup>16</sup> Was it Maupassant’s attested esteem amongst illustrious Russian writers from Turgenev to Chekhov, or the fact that even Tolstoi’s

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<sup>13</sup> Gazdanov, “Zametki ob Edgare Po, Gogole i Mopassane”, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5 vols (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2009), I, 705-18 (p. 708).

<sup>14</sup> See Georgii Ivanov, “Bez chitatelia”, *Chisla*, 5 (1931), 148-52, and Gazdanov, “O molodoi emigrantskoi literature”, *Sovremennye zapiski*, 60 (1936), 404-8.

<sup>15</sup> Joan Grossman has argued that Baudelaire’s translations led to the eager reception of Poe’s writing not only in France, but also in Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both Baudelaire and Poe were acknowledged as significant progenitors of Russian Symbolism. Grossman argues that there was even a degree of “unconscious assimilation” of the mood and spirit of Poe’s works by Russians, resulting in a cross-fertilisation between English, French and Russian traditions. See Joan Grossman, *Edgar Allan Poe in Russia: A Study in Legend and Literary Influence* (Würzburg: Jal-Verlag, 1973).

<sup>16</sup> Donald Fanger, amongst others, has argued that Gogol capitalised on his situation as a mediator between Petersburg and Ukraine: “by embracing his Ukrainian heritage, he became a Russian writer.” Donald Fanger, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 87-8.

critique of the French author's novels had been qualified with a laudatory appraisal of his short stories?:

если бы Мопассан оставил нам только свои романы, то он был бы только поразительным образцом того, как может погибнуть блестящее дарование вследствие той ложной среды, в которой оно развивалось, и тех ложных теорий об искусстве, которые придумываются людьми, не любящими и потому не понимающими его. Но, к счастью, Мопассан писал мелкие рассказы, в которых он не подчинился ложной, принятой им теории, и писал не *quelque chose de beau*, а то, что умиляло или возмущало его нравственное чувство. И по этим рассказам, не по всем, но по лучшим из них, видно, как росло это нравственное чувство в авторе.<sup>17</sup>

Even aside from their common ground in form, it is striking that each of these three authors that Gazdanov chooses as subjects had attained readerships and significant acclaim outside the confines of his native language. In this respect, the case of Gogol' as a Ukrainian author who chose to write in a Russian nonetheless inflected with Ukrainian is admittedly quite distinct from that of Maupassant, whose own language coincided with the European literary language of the period.

Gazdanov's essay thus posits—by its very juxtaposition of these three authors—the transnationality of the short story genre and its evolution. Although he does not seek to theorise the precise nature of this interchange, he elsewhere self-consciously locates his own stories and novels within a transnational space of sorts through the device of epigraphic citation. Epigraphs generally serve as intertextual markers indicating loose parallels in plot or style with the source work, as in “Vodianaiia tiur'ma”, which appeared in the first issue of

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<sup>17</sup> Lev Tolstoi, “Predislovie k sochineniiam Giui de Mopassana”, in Tolstoi, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 20 vols (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1964), XV, 247-71 (p. 265). This article was written in 1894 to serve as a preface to a Russian edition of Maupassant's stories.

*Chisla* shortly after the publication of “Zametki ob Edgare Po, Gogole i Mopassane”. This short story follows the mental wanderings of the narrator, whose solitary nomadism between Parisian guesthouses gradually sends him mad and culminates in a hallucination that he and Paris are entirely submerged beneath water. It opens with a citation from Maupassant’s 1887 short story “Le horla”: “Quand nous sommes seuls longtemps, nous peuplons le vide de fantômes.”<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere, Gazdanov’s epigraphs can serve a dual function, guiding the reader’s perception and intimating an external narrative subtext. Renate Lachmann, writing on the subject of intertextuality in Russian modernism, has spoken of the “irreducible polyvalence” of the paratextual framework generated by devices such as the epigraph.<sup>19</sup> “Rasskazy o svobodnom vremeni” (1927) takes the diffusion of subplots and epigraphs to an extreme degree, with each of the three individual sub-stories, “Bunt”, “Slaboe serdtse” and “Smert’ pingvina” being prefixed with their own epigraphs from Balzac’s *La Peau de chagrin*, an uncited source and Gogol’s *Mertvye dushi* respectively. These subsections are also prefaced with a long unifying epigraph, attributed to an unpublished work by an unnamed “ascetic”, and said to be unpublished, but written in Moscow in 1926 (the same year that Gazdanov’s first short story was published). The epigraph raises far more questions than it answers; its aim would appear to be to obfuscate rather than elucidate:

Аскет. Теория авантюризма. Том первый. Опыт схематизации. Москва, 1926 год  
(не издано). Страницы 58-я и 71-я. Единственный рукописный экземпляр,  
принадлежащий автору.....<sup>20</sup>

Elsewhere, the third section, “Smert’ pingvina”, opens with a reference from Gogol’s *Mertvye dushi*: “Итак, ограничься поверхностью, будем продолжать.” This short citation might serve as straightforward counsel to the reader concerning the absurd narrative that will

<sup>18</sup> Gazdanov, “Vodianaiia tiur’ma”, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 639-59 (p. 639).

<sup>19</sup> Renate Lachmann, *Memory and Literature: Intertextuality in Russian Modernism* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Gazdanov, “Rasskazy o svobodnom vremeni”, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 522-45 (p. 523).

follow (the unexplained appearance of a penguin in 1920s Paris would seem an apt justification for limiting oneself to the surface of events). But the sentence in question hails significantly from Part I of *Mertvye dushi*, just after the narrator has mockingly described the ironic “refinement” of the Russian language by the women of the town of N through their frequent recourse to French words:

Чтоб еще более облагородить русский язык, половина почти слов была выброшена вовсе из разговора, и потому весьма часто было нужно прибегать к французскому языку, зато уж там, по-французски, другое дело: там позволялись такие слова, которые были гораздо пожестче упомянутых.<sup>21</sup>

The diffusion of plot through subsections, epigraphs, and the intertextual links that these raise all actively build on the idea of an “irreducible polyvalence” within the compact form of a “short story”. One might observe a similar interaction between “complex” and “simple” plots in the later novel, *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa*. The plot of this novel is essentially drawn from its opening pages, in which the narrator himself reads a short story that voices a personal memory of the civil war from the opposite viewpoint (of the person he believed he had killed). The epigraph featured in the short story within the novel hails from Poe’s “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains”: “Beneath me lay my corpse, with the arrow in my temple.” Poe’s own espoused aim of “unity of effect” is inverted in the narrator’s confrontation with his own rehearsed memory from the alternate perspective. One might thereby read “Zametki ob Edgare Po, Gogole i Mopassane” in conjunction with Gazdanov’s scattered epigraphs from Poe, Maupassant or Gogol’ (and other authors), as an open acknowledgment of influence. The wider canon that Gazdanov plots through his epigraphic practice is on the whole rooted in a nineteenth-century Franco-Russian tradition, comprising citations from the works of Pushkin, Baudelaire, Balzac and Blok and embeds an awareness of the interplay between

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<sup>21</sup> Nikolai Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978), p. 202.

long and short forms throughout the period within his works. Gazdanov's points of reference, as revealed through his epigraphs, are largely unsurprising for a member of the first-wave emigration: classical Russian literature (to indicate his linguistic bearings and primary literary formation) sit alongside major works of what might be termed "world literature" to represent his sense of belonging to a wider literary community. There is, however, one very notable exception which paints rather a different picture of his intertextual engagement.

This exception may be found in the earliest instalment of *Nochnaia doroga*, which was published in the July 1939 issue of *Sovremennye zapiski*, and prefaced with the following epigraph, attributed to Isaak Babel':

И вспоминая эти годы, я нахожу в них начала недугов, терзающих меня, и причины раннего, ужасного моего увядания.<sup>22</sup>

These words, which hail from the earliest published version of Babel's autobiographical short story "Pervaia liubov'" (1925), might be read through several lenses, from nineteenth-century realism or naturalism to Babel's distinctive brand of "abject modernism".

Tormenting disease, premature and terrible withering: these were amongst the insalubrious leitmotifs of "anti-Proustian" works such as Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* that had so vividly captured the imagination of younger émigrés in Paris. But this epigraph demonstrates that Gazdanov was during the interwar period both aware of and interested in contemporary writing from the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup>

"Pervaia liubov'" belongs to Babel's *Odesskie rasskazy*, which he wrote alongside the Civil War narrative *Konarmii* (1921), and published individually in literary magazines

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<sup>22</sup> Gazdanov, "Nochnaia doroga", *Sovremennye zapiski*, 69 (1939), 170-203 (p. 170). This epigraph was cut from the unified 1952 edition of the text.

<sup>23</sup> For discussion of Gazdanov's engagement with other early Soviet writers, see Igor' Kondakov, ed., *Gazdanov i mirovaia kul'tura* (Kaliningrad: GP KGT, 2000).



between 1923 and 1925 before the cycle appeared in its entirety in 1931.<sup>24</sup> Unfolding during the final days of the Russian empire, the *Odesskie rasskazy* largely follow the exploits of Benia Krik and his gang, living in the Moldavanka. Elsewhere, in the so-called “childhood cycle” of the tales, certain stories are relayed via a ten-year-old narrator whose family lives in the southern city of Nikolaev and who, as with Liutov in *Konarmii* (and indeed many of Gazdanov’s narrators), has frequently been read as an autobiographical prototype for the author himself.<sup>25</sup> Belonging to this latter childhood strand, “Pervaia liubov” is a story of lost innocence that reworks and distorts Turgenev’s 1860 novella of the same name within the distinct context of the wave of pogroms erupting throughout the Russian Empire during 1905.<sup>26</sup> Events unfold against a backdrop of violence and disarray, unlike the genteel countryside dacha setting of Turgenev’s novella. We enter into the story where the preceding “Istoriia moei golubiatni” (1925) has left off, as the doves the young narrator has just purchased have been smashed in his face by Kuz’ma, and his grandfather Shoyl has been brutally murdered by hired killers. The narrator describes his jealousy whilst watching his eponymous “first love”—the family’s Russian neighbour, Galina—through her window with her officer husband, recently returned from the Japanese War:

Из моего окна я видел эти поцелуи. Они причиняли мне страдания, но об этом не стоит рассказывать, потому что любовь и ревность десятилетних мальчиков во всем похожи на любовь и ревность взрослых мужчин.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> “Pervaia liubov” was first published in the Leningrad journal *Krasnaia gazeta* on May 24 and 25, 1925. It also appeared in *Krasnaia nov’* in June of the same year. Gregory Freidin ed., *Isaac Babel’s Selected Writings: Norton Critical Edition* (New York: Norton, 2010), p. 355, note 1.

<sup>25</sup> Rebecca Stanton argues that alongside “Istoriia moei golubiatni” (1925), “Pervaia liubov” (1925), “V podvale” (1931), “Probuzhdenie” (1931) and “Detstvo. U babushka” (1915) should all be included in this cycle. Rebecca Jane Stanton, *Isaac Babel and the self-invention of Odessan Modernism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2012), p. 74.

<sup>26</sup> As I have already discussed in the first chapter, Gazdanov undertook a transposition of the very same Turgenev source-work in his novel *Polet*, which he was writing alongside *Nochnye dorogi* during the latter half of the 1930s. The Turgenev novella was evidently on Gazdanov’s mind during the 1930s, but it is interesting to observe that so too, already, was this more recent versioning of it by Babel’.

<sup>27</sup> Isaak Babel’, “Pervaia liubov”, in Babel’, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2 vols (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Literatura”/“Al’d”, 2002), I, 135-41 (p. 136).

This “love story” is however soon overshadowed by the traumatic events of the pogrom, and the young narrator later watches through another window (this time, from within Galina’s house looking outwards) as his father kneels in the mud before a patrol of Cossack soldiers on horseback, desperately entreating them to stop the looters from smashing through his store. Overt but distorted echoes of Turgenev’s *Pervaia liubov’* such as these are littered throughout Babel’s “Pervaia liubov’”. The story closes with the young narrator’s departure from Nikolaev to Odessa, where he has been advised by the doctor to await the warmer climate and the possibility of bathing in the sea:

Через несколько дней я выехал с матерью в Одессу к деду Лейви-Иццоку и к дяде Симону. Мы выехали утром на пароходе, и уже к полдню бурные воды Буга сменились тяжелой зеленой волной моря. Передо мною открывалась жизнь у безумного деда Лейви-Иццока, и я навсегда простился с Николаевом, где прошли десять лет моего детства. [И вспоминая эти годы, я нахожу в них начала недугов, терзающих меня, и причины раннего, ужасного моего увядания.]<sup>28</sup>

In the earlier versions of “Pervaia liubov’” published in May and June of 1925, the final sentence included here within square parentheses—which Gazdanov took as his epigraph to *Nochnaia doroga*—was present. The sentence was however ultimately expurgated from the version of the story that appeared in the 1931 complete edition of the *Odesskie rasskazy*.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that Gazdanov cites from the earlier redaction proves that he had access in some form to either the 1925 *Krasnaia gazeta* or *Krasnaia nov’* version of the short story in Paris at some point between 1925 and 1939. Circulation figures of Soviet journals in Russia

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 141. Sentence in square brackets removed in this edition.

<sup>29</sup> Efraim Sicher attributes the removal of this final sentence to the Soviet censor: “the original ending of ‘My First Love’ (‘Pervaia liubov’) looked back to Tsarist pogroms as one cause of the boy’s neuroses and the narrator’s present-day ‘waning’ (*Detstvo*, 57), something quite unacceptable to the Soviet doctrine that the Revolution had solved all Jewish troubles and put an end to anti-Semitism” (cf. Efraim Sicher, “Text, Intertext, Context: Babel, Bialik, and Others”, in Gregory Freidin, ed. *The Enigma of Isaac Babel: Biography, History, Context* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 194-211, p. 194).

Abroad are unsurprisingly difficult to chart. Aside from circumstantial evidence such as the epigraph, it is clear that even within the removed cultural milieu of Paris, Russian émigré writers retained a keen interest in developments in the Soviet literary sphere. A November 1930 session of the *Studio franco-russe* (conceived by Vsevolod Fokht as a forum for conversation between French and Russian writers) was also devoted to the subject of Soviet literature, with speeches by André Beucler and Iulia Sazanova.<sup>30</sup> Beucler referred to Babel' at the end of his speech, observing that on a 1927 trip to the Soviet Union he had learned that: "Pilniak et Ivanov sont explosifs, Babel est plus recherché, Gladkov est plus classique."<sup>31</sup> Marc Slonim's *Kochev'e* circle, established in 1928 as an arena for younger generation authors (and of which Gazdanov was an active member during the 1930s), read and debated émigré works and early Soviet works by the Serapion Brothers, Zamiatin, Olesha and Babel'. Babel' was also certainly being discussed in certain organs of the émigré press.<sup>32</sup>

There was clearly a dialogue of sorts unfolding between Western Europe and the Soviet Union as late as the early 1930s. Nikolai Otsup made the introduction of Gazdanov to Gor'kii that led to their correspondence, Zamiatin and Maiakovskii both spent time in Europe, and Babel' himself was travelling back and forth between Paris and the Soviet Union until the early 1930s because of his wife Evgeniia's 1925 emigration to France with their daughter, Nathalie. It is unknown if Babel' and Gazdanov encountered one another in person during the former's trips to Paris, but Babel' had certainly heard of Gazdanov: Tat'iana

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<sup>30</sup> Livak, *Le Studio franco-russe (1929-1931)*, pp. 285-326.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>32</sup> Babel' was discussed in articles and reviews by Iurii Annenkov, Alfred Bem, Nadezhda Mel'nikova-Papouchkova, D. S. Mirskii, Leonid Rzhevskii and Marc Slonim between 1918 and 1968. See Ludmila A. Foster, ed., *Bibliography of Russian Émigré Literature, 1918-68*, 2 vols (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall & Co., 1970), II, 1285. Of note during the 1920s and '30s are Slonim's review of Babel's *Rasskazy* in *Volia Rossii*, 12 (1925), 154-60; Mirskii's review of Babel's *Rasskazy* in *Sovremennye zapiski*, 26 (1925), 485-8; Mel'nikova-Papouchkova's review of Babel's *Konarmia*, "Babel', I, "Konarmia", *Volia Rossii*, 8/9 (1926), 234-6; Bem's review of Babel' and other Soviet writers, "Sovremennaia russkaia proza: E. Zamiatin, L. Leonov, K. Fedin, I. Babel'", *B'lgarska misl'*, 5 (1930) 314-26 and 395-407.

Krasavchenko has observed Iurii Annenkov's recollection of a conversation between himself and Babel' in Paris in 1932, in which Babel' refers to "the heroic Gaito Gazdanov":<sup>33</sup>

У меня — семья: жена, дочь, — говорил Бабель, — я люблю их и должен кормить их. Но я не хочу ни в каком случае, чтобы они вернулись в советчину. Они должны жить здесь на свободе. А я? Остаться тоже здесь и стать шофером такси, как героический Гайто Газданов? [...] Здешний таксист гораздо свободнее, чем советский ректор университета... Шофером или нет, но свободным гражданином я стану...<sup>34</sup>

Gazdanov is here employed as a counterpoint to Babel's own precarious navigation between the Soviet Union and Paris. Babel' had explored the concept of freedom in exile in the short story "Sud", first published in 1931. "Sud" tells the story of a Russian émigré in Paris, Ivan Nedachin, who seduces a sixty-one-year-old French woman and steals her stocks and jewellery. When the crime is reported by Madame Blanchard's daughter, he is imprisoned and put on trial "как вытаскивали когда-то Урса на арену цирка".<sup>35</sup> In the courtroom, the French judge narrates the events of Ivan's life, and draws a causal link between his inability to pass his taxi-driving qualification and his crime: "В Париже, мой друг, экзамен на шофера такси оказался крепостью, которой вы не смогли владеть... Тогда вы отдали запас неизрасходованных сил отсутствующей в заседании мадам Бланшар..."<sup>36</sup> Ivan is eventually sentenced to ten years and taken to his cell, with the sentence, first relayed in Russian, spitefully repeated in French by a guard. The story reflects uneasily on the relative "freedoms" of exile; it builds on a naturalist tradition associated with the French capital (albeit with a contemporary émigré inflection), in its suggestion that the urban poverty in

<sup>33</sup> Tat'iana Krasavchenko, "Gaito Gazdanov: traditsiia i tvorcheskaia individual'nost'", in Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, IV, 653-72 (p. 662).

<sup>34</sup> Iurii Annenkov, "Isaak Babel'", in Annenkov, *Dnevnik moikh vstrech: tsikl tragedii*, 2 vols (New York: Mezhdunarodnoe literaturnoe sodruzhestvo, 1966), I, 298-308 (pp. 305-6).

<sup>35</sup> Babel', "Sud", in *Sobranie sochinenii*, I, 223-5 (p. 223).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

which many Russians are living is in some ways as confining, given the options it presents, as outright imprisonment.

Whilst traces such as these make the precise nature of their interchange ambiguous, it is in some sense unsurprising that Babel's earlier versioning of this Turgenev story should have caught Gazdanov's attention, given his own attested interest in it during this period. But the Babel' intertext is not simply another retelling. Rather, it is a compelling component of Gazdanov's wider network of influences, and all the more so for the emphasis it places upon a departure from the childhood home as concurrent with a loss of innocence.<sup>37</sup> It is significant that Gazdanov should have alighted on this particular final line; for Babel' these words concern an irrevocable turning point from childhood to adulthood (a central theme throughout his oeuvre), whereas for Gazdanov they are overlaid on to the literal turn from Russia to Russia Abroad. What is in Babel's story a conclusive sentence attributing the narrator's "premature and horrific withering" to the distressing events of the 1905 anti-Jewish pogroms is in *Nochnaia doroga* recast as a starting point for the narrator's recollections, with the resultant implication that his own personal "withering" has been effected by the seismic events that have led to his present life in exile. If one reads the citation as a bridge from the end of one story to the beginning of another, then one might also view it as a line drawn beneath *Večer u Kler*, the "first love" novella which had preceded *Nochnaia doroga* within the sequence of Gazdanov's own oeuvre and had charted the move from Kislovodsk to Paris.

Taken at its most basic level, the "Pervaia liubov'" epigraph attests on Gazdanov's part to a knowledge of, and interest in, at least one of Babel's short stories. The citation's provenance from an earlier, uncensored version furthermore indicates the possibility that Gazdanov had read the story in isolation from the wider cycle within which it was conceived.

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<sup>37</sup> This is a further diversion from Turgenev's novella, which unfolds already in the "home away from home" of the dacha in the summer before the narrator departs to study at university.

To be sure, the intertextual referents between Gazdanov and Babel' are undeniably thin. By July 1939 when the first instalment of *Nochnaia doroga* was published, Babel' had already been arrested, and Gazdanov would certainly have been unaware of his subsequent execution. Born on either side of 1900 (Babel' in 1894 and Gazdanov in 1903) both authors had fought in the Russian Civil War where again they were located on opposite sides of the divide: Babel' was attached as a journalist to Budennyi's First Cavalry Army, whereas Gazdanov served in Wrangel's White Army. During the 1920s and '30s, their fates would continue to diverge further, as the chasm between Soviet Russia and Western Europe gradually took shape. Despite fundamental differences in experience such as these, there are nonetheless striking commonalities between the writings of Babel' and Gazdanov. Both would go on to publish works reflecting on the period of civil war participation, deliberately straddling the modes of autobiography and fiction and emerging as authors who were unafraid to pose questions about the ethics of bearing witness to and voicing experience of contentious events. A degree of personal uncertainty as to the wholesale righteousness of either the Red or White factions would appear to have been shared by both authors, with each dramatising this internal conflict through a semi-autobiographical narrator. In *Konarmia*, Babel''s account of his time as a journalist assigned to the First Cavalry Army during the Polish-Soviet War, the narrator Liutov's perspective blends with that of his author, "a leftist Jewish intellectual vacillating between Marxism, a Nietzschean cult of power and beauty and reverence for the gentle pacifism of Hasidic sages."<sup>38</sup> His loyalties are torn between the squadron to which he officially belongs and those very individuals whom they ruthlessly pillage and oppress.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Terras, p. 573.

<sup>39</sup> *Konarmia* was serialised from 1922 but was not published in full until 1926. It is not known how readily available Babel''s works were to Russian émigrés, but as noted, we can deduce that Gazdanov had certainly had some exposure to them, because of the epigraph taken from the early version of Babel''s "Pervaia liubov'" in the earliest published excerpt of *Nochnye dorogi* in 1939.

Repulsed on the one hand by the ease and extremity of their brutality, he tacitly seeks their approval on the other.

In *Večer u Kler*, Nikolai Sosedov's recollections focus on the period before the war during which he first encountered and fell in love with Kler in Kislovodsk. As a result, the Civil War is subordinated in narrative terms as the event that has precipitated their separation. Although Sosedov's account of the war itself is far less detailed in its descriptions of actual violence or horrors experienced, he nonetheless emphasises the arbitrariness of his allegiance to the White Army from early on in the novel, observing that he might just as easily have fought for the opposite side, had the circumstances dictated that he do so. Both Babel's and Gazdanov's works might moreover be characterised by a strong social conscience, and a degree of self-consciousness regarding the peripherality of their respective claims to a Russian heritage: as I shall shortly discuss, Babel sought where possible to foreground his Odessan roots, whilst Gazdanov assumed the pen-name "Gaito" instead of his actual given name, Georgii, presumably in order to emphasise his own Ossetian origins.

In the second half of this chapter I thus propose to entertain a thought experiment: triggered in the first instance by the knowledge that Gazdanov read at least one of Babel's stories, and in the second by an awareness of certain coinciding experiences and artistic influences, I propose to place Gazdanov and Babel side by side in order to consider their eccentric and multifaceted handling of the short story. Building on Formalist ideas on the role of the short story within the emergence and evolution of literary canons, I do not wish to argue that there is a direct intertextual link or migration between the works of Babel and Gazdanov *per se*. Rather, I wish to seize the amorphous nature of the potential influence in order to highlight the striking similarities in their handling of the short story as an inherently transitional, migratory genre. The Formalists' model of literary development is necessarily diachronic; here, however, I adapt this aspect of Formalist thought in order to model

something more synchronic, in line with the spatiotemporal discontinuity of exile. I also consider the intrinsic significance of setting as a component of that relationship: Babel blends the canonical Petersburg text into his own Odessan influences, and does so via the mediating figure of Maupassant. Gazdanov is similarly responding to a Russian cultural tradition, but arguably does so in his formation of a “Paris text” that is nonetheless filled with echoes of a deliberately transnational cast of authors, encompassing Poe, Gogol’, Maupassant, and many others.

In order to consider Babel’s contribution to the Russian tradition of which he considered himself an heir, it is first and foremost necessary to acknowledge the significant influence of a non-Russian writer, Guy de Maupassant, on his artistic self-invention. Babel was unequivocal about the French author’s impact on his writing; his fusion of Odessa to the long established cultural mythologies of Moscow or St Petersburg—an aim that Gregory Freidin has termed his “lifelong literary project”—was contingent on the influence of Maupassant.<sup>40</sup> This interaction is posited in his early essay, “Odessa”, first published in 1916, in which he articulated the need for “new blood” in the Russian tradition, arguing that the fulfilment of such an aim was realisable only in turning towards the nation’s previously underappreciated southern reaches. This particular assertion of Odessa’s cultural worth was arguably all the more compelling for its expression by a writer who had been born and grown up there, and was consequently able to retain an affection for it even whilst referring to it plainly as a “horrible town” (“скверный город”):

Кроме джентльменов, приносящих немного солнца и много сардин в оригинальной упаковке, думается мне, что должно прийти, и скоро, плодотворное, животворящее влияние русского юга, русской Одессы, может

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<sup>40</sup> Freidin, ed., *Isaac Babel’s Selected Writings*, p. 21.



быть (*qui sait?*), единственного в России города, где может родиться так нужный нам, наш национальный Мопассан.<sup>41</sup>

Through his deliberate inclusion of non-Russian influences such as Maupassant in the conversation, Babel' sought to expand and renew the cultural field. The argument that Odessa would be the place to provide Russians with their "very own, much needed, homegrown Maupassant" rhetorically unified those readers from elsewhere in Russia alongside Odessans through the persistent use of the first-person plural pronoun. Invoking Maupassant, Babel' stressed and swiftly undercut the Russian national context, at once acknowledging its authority and questioning the singularity of its representation ("Если вдуматься, то не окажется ли, что в русской литературе еще не было настоящего радостного, ясного описания солнца?").<sup>42</sup> The resultant implication of this reference to Maupassant—that Russian letters have not yet acceded to the heights of French literature—is explained in his subsequent discussion of the Russian classical tradition:

Тургенев воспел росистое утро, покой ночи. У Достоевского можно почувствовать неровную и серую мостовую, по которой Карамазов идет к трактиру, таинственный и тяжелый туман Петербурга. Серые дороги и покров тумана придушили людей, придушивши – забавно и ужасно исковеркали, породили чад и смрад страстей, заставили метаться в столь обычной человеческой суете. Помните ли вы плодородящее яркое солнце у Гоголя, человека, пришедшего из Украины? Если такие описания есть – то они эпизод. Но не эпизод – Нос, Шинель, Портрет и Записки Сумасшедшего. Петербург победил Полтавшину, Акакий Акакиевич скромненько, но с ужасающей властностью затер Грицко, а отец Матвей кончил дело, начатое Тарасом.

<sup>41</sup> Babel', "Odessa", in *Sobranie sochinenii*, I, 67-72 (pp. 67-8).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

Первым человеком, заговорившим в русской книге о солнце, заговорившим восторженно и страстно, — был Горький. Но именно потому, что он говорит восторженно и страстно, это еще не совсем настоящее.<sup>43</sup>

Through the enumeration of examples of predecessors including Turgenev, Dostoevskii and Gogol', Babel' underlines the centrality of Petersburg to the development of the national tradition. He underlines Gogol''s Ukrainian heritage, before stressing that the cold and miserable St Petersburg is responsible for “overcoming” (победил) those characters associated with his earlier “Poltava” style, resulting in disproportionate attention to the *Peterburgskie povesti*. He goes on to declare that even the shift away from Petersburg towards provincial settings has become old and tired. The essay culminates in the provocative assertion that Russia's “Literary Messiah” will issue from Odessa, thereby strongly suggesting that this Messiah will be him. This posturing is a clear instance of what Rebecca Jane Stanton regards as Babel''s contribution to the “self-invention” of Odessan literary modernism, or his proposition of Odessa as a tripartite spatial world of memory and language, synthesising and warping a range of influences, a “looking-glass world”<sup>44</sup> that is simultaneously canonical *and* subversive:

If Moscow and Petersburg represented, respectively, a Russian gaze directed inward toward its own traditions and a Russian gaze directed outward toward western Europe and modernity, Odessa represented a layering of many gazes, a kind of Cubist *mélange* of perspectives in which the terms “self” and “other” had no fixed referents but occupied a constantly shifting semiotic space.<sup>45</sup>

Babel''s rhetoric deliberately draws attention to Odessa's location at a cultural intersection between Russia and the wider Europe in which it was situated, or what Sicher, underlining

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Stanton, p. 17.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

the centrality of Jewish culture to Babel's personal artistic identity, has termed a "meeting point of Jewish, Ukrainian and Russian cultures, mixed with heavy French, Italian and Greek influences".<sup>46</sup> Cynthia Ozick has underlined the fact that this linguistic plurality is reflected in Babel's personal linguistic and literary formation, arguing that the range of his social exposure made him a mediator for individuals from different nations, religions, social classes, political beliefs and periods of life.<sup>47</sup>

But Maupassant did not simply function as a symbolically "sunny" counterpoint to the "gloom" of the Petersburg text, for his own works contained their fair share of pessimism. Rather, as Aleksandr Zholkovskii has argued, he was also a significant mediator for the oppressive influence of Tolstoi, who is conspicuously *not* mentioned in Babel's rhetorical roll-call of Russian classical authors in "Odessa".<sup>48</sup> Zholkovskii has read Tolstoi's 1894 preface to the Russian edition of Maupassant's works (excerpted above in my preceding discussion of Gazdanov's 1929 essay) as crucial textual evidence of the overlap between Tolstoi and Maupassant in Babel's conception of tradition, and as a likely influence on his 1932 short story, "Giui de Mopassan":<sup>49</sup> "Пристрастное внимание Бабеля к обоим авторам практически исключает его незнакомство с «Предисловием»."<sup>50</sup> In "Giui de Mopassan", the young narrator is hired by a wealthy Petersburg woman as an editor of her poor translations of three of the French author's short stories. Translation as a process on the level

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<sup>46</sup> Sicher, p. 197.

<sup>47</sup> Cynthia Ozick, "Introduction", in *The Complete Works of Isaac Babel*, ed. Nathalie Babel' and Peter Constantine (London: Picador, 2002), p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> At the *Studio franco-russe* discussion of Soviet writing on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1930, Beucler had emphasised its common roots in a Russian classical tradition: "la littérature soviétique n'est pas toute la littérature russe contemporaine, et l'on ne saurait en faire une chose à part, vide de traditions, sans origines et sans trace d'influences. On retrouverait facilement chez certains écrivains postérieurs à 1917 la persistance d'une forme de pensée et les signes d'une sensibilité infinie qui remontent jusqu'à Gogol et passent par Remizov" (quoted in Livak, *Le Studio franco-russe (1929-1931)*, pp. 298-9).

<sup>49</sup> Charles Rougle has termed this short story "the most 'literary' of his works" for its allusions to many other writers in its seven short pages. Charles Rougle, "Art and the Artist in Babel's 'Guy de Maupassant'", *Russian Review*, 48/2 (April 1989), 171-80 (p. 171).

<sup>50</sup> Aleksandr Zholkovskii, *Poltora rasskaza Babelia: "Giui de Mopassan" i "Spravka/Gonorar"* (Moscow: KomKniga, 2006), p. 30.

of plot is echoed in the meta-literary awareness of a corresponding ongoing “translation” between life and art. For Zholkovskii, Babel’ was ultimately able to digest and overcome the stifling legacy of Tolstoi by “translating” his style through the external (but no less influential) prism of Maupassant:

Романиста Толстого занимает длительная духовная работа, новеллиста Бабеля — мгновенная импровизация. У Толстого нахождение себя означает уход от лжи, общества, искусства, брака и секса и возвращение к истине, природе, детской невинности и Богу — подлинное воскресение. У Бабеля личность обретает себя, лишь прибегнув к эстетическому и эротическому контакту, культуре, искусству, выдумке, вплоть до преднамеренного извращения образа детства и сознательного артистического конструирования «братства». Да и конечная цель бабелевского квеста не духовная — достичь воскресения, а артистическая — «пережить забвение».<sup>51</sup>

In adopting the short story as opposed to the novel, Babel’ could embrace Tolstoi’s influence upon his own written style whilst subverting his messianic moralism, which was categorically incompatible with the former’s personal views on art and its function. The short story is well suited to the fragmentation and distillation of the novel, as I have noted in earlier discussion. In 1899, when he had turned away from Tolstoi’s philosophical moralism, Chekhov similarly overcame the legendary status and influence of his predecessor by condensing the sprawling plot of *Anna Karenina* into “Dama s sobachkoi”. Babel’’s self-invention is contingent upon “new blood” (in the form of his aspiration to a non-Russian literary predecessor) and articulates the notion that genres develop in opposition to competing genres, but also that national literatures develop in opposition to competing national literatures. Both of these

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

competing processes articulate Formalist models of literary progression as a non-linear movement, or a mingling of bloodlines.

One might observe a similar phenomenon in the trajectory of Gazdanov's works: at the start of his career, as I have noted in previous chapters, he was writing novels that were potentially anxious about perceived debts to Proust, Tolstoi and Turgenev: a novel such as *Polet* conflates and distils the plots of not just one, but two canonical Russian novels. Gazdanov's response to this anxiety in his shorter works would appear to be a deliberate and playful acknowledgment and signposting of these debts to the reader. For instance, "Povest' o trekh neudachakh" (1927) formally echoes Tolstoi's tripartite short work "Tri smerti", but transposes the structure into the context of civil war in southern Russia. Elsewhere, in "Zheleznyi lord" (1934) the narrative launches from present-day Paris to the narrator's childhood in a large, unnamed southern Russian city. The memory arises abruptly, provoked by the smell of roses as the narrator passes the flower market at Les Halles ("мне бросились в глаза бесчисленные розы, расставленные на земле")<sup>52</sup> and might thus be read as a deliberate provocation to critics, in the form of a nod to Proust's *mémoire involontaire*: "И я подумал, что уже видел однажды очень много роз; и все то, что предшествовало их появлению, вдруг сразу возникло в моей памяти — так же свежо и сильно, как этот запах цветов."<sup>53</sup> Gazdanov's narrator's likening of the memory of his past life to the scent of dead roses strewn on a Paris pavement instils a thematic maturation into the work via the disruptive backward glance to the nurturing warmth of childhood and its juxtaposition with the hackneyed image of death and loss of innocence of the discarded rose petals.

"Giui de Mopassan" articulates the question of transmission via its persistent emphasis on language and, moreover, translation. It is significant that this story belongs to

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<sup>52</sup> Gazdanov "Zheleznyi lord", in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, II, 392-412 (p. 392).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.

Babel's own cycle of tales set in Petersburg, with the Benderskiis, for whom the young narrator works, originally hailing from Odessa, like himself. A tension is thus established from the outset between the idea of Petersburg as a city that generates and is central to grand narratives, and the notion of it as an "elsewhere" into which foreign or provincial stories are merely imported. The penniless narrator is hired to help the wife of Kazantsev's boss in her poor attempts to translate Maupassant: "В переводе ее не осталось и следа от фразы Мопассана, свободной, текучей, с длинным дыханием страсти, Бендерская писала утомительно правильно, безжизненно и развязно — так, как писали раньше евреи на русском языке."<sup>54</sup> The stipulation that she writes Russian as "Jews used to" nods to the linguistic multiplicity within the Russian language which Babel had so emphasised in "Odessa" and in the *Odesskie rasskazy*, and to which he himself was no stranger. The narrator's friend Kazantsev, who has never visited Spain, but knows its landscape and history intricately, is a translator of Spanish works in order to supplement his own income: "Счастливее нас был все же Казанцев. У него была родина — Испания."<sup>55</sup> The narrator later ironically seduces his mistress as they translate Maupassant's own tale of coercive seduction, "L'aveu", and leaves her house singing in a language he has just invented ("распевая на только что выдуманном мною языке").<sup>56</sup>

It is not, however, until he returns home and reads Maupassant's biography and learns of his abject fate in a mental asylum that the narrator has his true epiphany: "Я дочитал книгу до конца и встал с постели. Туман подошел к окну и скрыл вселенную. Сердце мое сжалось. Предвестие истины коснулось меня."<sup>57</sup> The story is founded on a further tension between art and reality, or what Rougle has termed "the symbolic opposition between "the wan, chilly world of St Petersburg and the leather-bound "grave" of books, on the one

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<sup>54</sup> Babel, "Giui de Mopassan" in *Sobranie sochinenii*, I, 198-204 (pp. 199-200).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

hand, and the sun-drenched, sensual vibrancy permeating Maupassant's art, on the other."<sup>58</sup> This is the very same sun-drenched vibrancy with which Babel' had claimed he would reignite Russian literature, but his narrator's epiphany would seem to suggest that as long as Petersburg remains central to the narrative, then this will "forever have to contend with the dark St. Petersburg fogs of anxiety and guilt that pervade the literary tradition".<sup>59</sup> Babel''s Petersburg, in spite of its inflection with "elsewheres" in this respect still conforms to the cultural mythology of Petersburg as a gateway to Europe to be found in Tolstoi, Dostoevskii, Turgenev and many more.

On the other hand, in deliberately locating certain works *outside* of the canonical settings of Moscow or St Petersburg, Babel' simultaneously asserts his own peripheral roots and the need for a shift in precisely which spaces were depicted in Russian letters, which had so relentlessly gravitated towards and revolved around these two cities as cultural capitals. The city had also frequently served as a retrospective means of *recueil*: Gogol''s *Peterburgskie povesti* were never actually intended to be published as such by their author, and in fact first appeared in print as individual stories, albeit in other collections.<sup>60</sup> On the contrary, Babel' in his *Odesskie rasskazy* or his projected cycle of *Parizhskie rasskazy* (and Gazdanov in *Nochnaia doroga* and his short stories) knowingly deployed the non-canonical city setting as a unifying category, in order to subvert its associated tropes.

Both Gazdanov and Babel' wrote about spaces that diverged from the canonical focal points of Moscow and St Petersburg in pre-revolutionary works. "Gostinitsa griadushchego" operates according to a non-realist mode, depicting a Paris in which certain elements might be recognisable, but others are provocatively estranged. The story opens with a deliberately

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<sup>58</sup> Rogle, p. 176.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>60</sup> Gogol''s *Peterburgskie povesti* were not published as a collection under this title in Russian until 1924: Gogol', *Peterburgskie povesti*, ed. K. Khalabaev and B. Eikhenbaum (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1924); cf. Philip E. Frantz, *Gogol: a Bibliography* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1989), p. 12.

jarring image of a Parisian street, which asserts from the first three words the reader's anticipated ability to envisage the scene. The scene itself, however, contrarily does not conform to what one might term "typical" depictions of Paris, and arguably shares more with the surrealists than with Proust: "Можете себе представить — парижская улица. В орнаменте строгого асфальта, ровных стен и домов, где пол гладок: как брюхо ящерицы, и швейцары медлительны, как крокодилы."<sup>61</sup> As the "action" unfolds, seemingly contrary descriptions ("Ульрих был молод, как может быть молод старинный портрет юноши"),<sup>62</sup> and illogical associations ("Губы как лохмотья красоты, как материал для парфюмерных изысканий, как незаживающий шрам любви, вооруженной ножом")<sup>63</sup> predominate, with "как" becoming a landmark of the jarring images and similes that litter the text. The narrative emphasis on phonetic aspects of characters' conversations and names, such as М-г Си, or those of the four brothers ("В следующих этажах живут братья Дюжарье. Их четверо, четыре Жи. В самом деле: старшего зовут Жозефом, средних Жаном и Жаком. Имя младшего — Жакоб."),<sup>64</sup> might also bring about a comparison with Russian Futurist poetry and its preservation of sound and syllable over logical sense.

"Rasskazy o svobodnom vremeni" similarly exhibits an attention to the aesthetic layout of words across the page redolent of Russian Futurist poetry. Its first story, "Bunt", contains prose that is frequently interrupted with isolated typography, as in the first half of this excerpt, where it distinguishes between the two personae of Alesha, or in the latter instance, where the staggered layout of the words mimics their content, affecting the image of a translucent cloud of smoke:

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<sup>61</sup> Gazdanov, "Gostinitsa griadushchego", in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 493-9 (p. 493).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 497.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 494.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*



Было, строго говоря, два Алеши:

Алеша с сигарой

и Алеша без сигары.<sup>65</sup>

И сквозь

синий

табачный

туман

фигура Алеши – с огнем в зубах и безупречно белыми пятнами перчаток –  
подходила к стойке Екатерины Борисовны.<sup>66</sup>

Elsewhere, words are deliberately jarring, as in “Горела зима”. The “contents” of the narrator’s life are distilled into a miscellaneous series of events, sounds, and individuals:

медленный ритм

Туп-

Тап,

сигары Алеши,

треснувшие губы Люси,

шляпа и перчатки Розы Шмидт,

пейзаж севера и революция

и

затихший

грохот

России.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Gazdanov, “Rasskazy o svobodnom vremeni”, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 522-45 (p. 526).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 529.

Here the immediate setting of Paris is inflected with the image of a “northern landscape and revolution/and/the hushed/rumble/of Russia”. For Gazdanov, as we have seen in the first chapter, Paris and Petersburg are distinct entities, but the dynamics of their literary interaction are complicated by the fact that both cities have already interacted with one another in the context of their respective national traditions. In writing Paris, Gazdanov does not do so ignorant of its existing literary freight within both the Russian and French traditions. He demonstrates an awareness of its pre-existing familiarity to many Russian readers, but also seeks to exploit and subvert this, playfully overlaying distinct images upon one another.

Gazdanov’s short story practice relies on a heterogeneous approach to influence which acknowledges and underlines the fundamentally transnational nature of the short story as a form that has evolved *across* distinct traditions, thriving on translation and transposition. Although Gazdanov’s critical writing explicitly acknowledges a core triad of Poe, Gogol’ and Maupassant, his use of epigraphs, citation, and his depiction of setting within his works expands the field of reference far beyond each of these three authors. It is in their outward-looking turn away from the fallacy of a “pure” Russian tradition, and their acknowledgment of the underlying interactions which have hitherto shaped that lineage, that both Babel’ and Gazdanov identify an alternative route for Russian prose during the 1920s and beyond. In the same way that Céline had acted as a mediator for Proust’s impact upon émigré letters, Babel’ too acted as a counterpoint to the idea of the national tradition as entirely a nineteenth-century phenomenon, and as a crucial component in Gazdanov’s irreducible “transcultural discourse”, mediating the secondary influence of Maupassant. Although they had experienced the traumatic events of the civil war from opposite perspectives, their supranational approach to the question of a Russian tradition was remarkably similar, and they were both struggling to overcome the legacy of canonical forebears such as Tolstoi and

Turgenev. Babel's advocacy of a hybrid, translingual, transcultural Russian, even within Soviet Russia, was surely appealing.

#### Chapter Four: Dialogue with Nabokov

Comparisons of Gazdanov to Vladimir Nabokov have recurred since the initial wave of critical writing on their earliest published works, which broadly cast both young authors—for better or worse—as representatives of their generation of émigré writers. Gleb Struve’s 1934 summative review of contemporary Russian literature singled out Nina Berberova and Iurii Fel’zen alongside Gazdanov and Nabokov as “young (prose) writers of promise” within what later became known as the first wave.<sup>1</sup> Ivan Bunin is similarly said to have identified Nabokov, Gazdanov and Berberova as the most outstanding young prose writers of the emigration in a 1937 interview for the Belgrade newspaper *Pravda*.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally, they were overtly contrasted with one another, as in Georgii Ivanov’s excoriating 1930 review of *Mashen’ka, Korol’, dama, valet, Zashchita Luzhina* and “Vozvrashchenie Chorba”—published in the first issue of *Chisla* and sharing a page with Nikolai Otsup’s review of *Vecher u Kler*—which cited Gazdanov and Fel’zen as the antithesis of Nabokov (then writing as Sirin).<sup>3</sup> For Ivanov, Gazdanov and Fel’zen apparently represented an “organic” communion of émigré letters and French literature; Sirin’s, on the other hand, was contrived.<sup>4</sup>

Their exemplary status within the younger generation, particularly during the 1930s, meant that discussions of their works sometimes became conduits for larger conversations

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<sup>1</sup> Gleb Struve, “Current Russian Literature: II. Vladimir Sirin”, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 12/35 (1934), 436-44 (p. 436).

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Bunin cited from an interview with Lava Gović Zaharova for *Pravda* during his 1937 trip to Belgrade. See Zorislav Paunković, “Recenzija Lava Zaharova na roman *Let Gajta Gazdanova*”, *Academia.edu*, accessed at <[https://www.academia.edu/34398950/RECENZIJA\\_LAVA\\_ZAHAROVA\\_NA\\_ROMAN\\_LET\\_GAJTA\\_GA\\_ZDANOVA](https://www.academia.edu/34398950/RECENZIJA_LAVA_ZAHAROVA_NA_ROMAN_LET_GAJTA_GA_ZDANOVA)> on 09/06/2018, 1-7 (p. 2).

<sup>3</sup> Nikolai Otsup, “Gaito Gazdanov. *Vecher u Kler*.”, *Chisla*, 1 (1930), 232-3.

<sup>4</sup> Georgii Ivanov, “V. Sirin. *Mashen’ka. Korol’, dama, valet. Zashchita Luzhina. Vozvrashchenie Chorba*.”, *Chisla*, 1 (1930), 233-6 (p. 235). Ivanov’s polemic with Nabokov as a representative of the Berlin émigré scene intensified during the 1930s. Nabokov satirised Ivanov in the short story “Vesna v Fial’te” (1938). Their feud, in which Georgii Adamovich and Vladislav Khodasevich also became embroiled (the former on Ivanov’s side, the latter on Sirin’s), is well-documented, for instance in Bryan Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 369-71.

then taking place within émigré circles. The broad division of older and younger generations along lines of “Russian” and “un-Russian”, respectively, was one such conversation. One may for instance note a generalised (and generalising) critical insistence on “foreign-ness” or “strange-ness” in the early style of Gazdanov and Nabokov, respectively. Paul Morris has argued that the polarised critical response to Sirin during the 1920s and ’30s can in part be attributed to the ongoing polemic on the positive and negative attributes of susceptibility to foreign influence.<sup>5</sup> Nabokov himself would much later reflect on the “acute and morbid interest” Sirin’s works had garnered, adding that even his admirers had “made much, perhaps too much, of his unusual style”.<sup>6</sup> As I have demonstrated in the second chapter of this thesis, a similar tendency to overemphasise so-called “foreign” qualities (whether as a positive or negative feature) is evident in the critical response to Gazdanov’s works during the 1920s and ’30s. Reviewing *Večer u Kler* in 1930, Marc Slonim asserted that “the elusive spirit of foreign influence waft[ed] from” Gazdanov’s works:

Неуловимый дух иностранщины веет в его произведениях. Ритм его фразы напоминает французские романы. Это естественно для писателя, выросшего в эмиграции, это даже придает некую экзотическую ноту произведениям Газданова, но в этом может оказаться и большая опасность, которую ему надо преодолеть.<sup>7</sup>

So pervasive was the discourse of “foreign-ness” in the émigré press that those critics who espoused the merits of a “pure” Russian literature miraculously untouched by contemporary European influences—and indeed those, like Slonim, who did not—readily resorted to

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Morris, *Vladimir Nabokov: Poetry and the Lyric Voice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 7. Ivanov’s aforementioned review argued that Sirin’s prose was only original for its skilful imitation of existing French and German trends: “«Так по-русски еще не писали». Совершенно верно, — но по-французски и по-немецки так пишут почти все...” Ivanov, “V. Sirin”, p. 234. In the same year, Mikhail Tsetlin asserted that *Korol’, dama, valet* and *Zashchita Luzhina* were “настолько вне большого русла русской литературы, так чужды русских литературных влияний, что критики невольно ищут влияний иностранных.” Mikhail Tsetlin, “V. Sirin. Vozvrashchenie Chorba. Rasskazy i stikhi.”, *Sovremennye zapiski*, 42 (1930), 530-1 (p. 530).

<sup>6</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1951), p. 215.

<sup>7</sup> Marc Slonim, “Literaturnyi dnevnik. Roman Gazdanova”, *Volia Rossii*, 5-6 (1930), 446-57 (p. 446).

nebulous terms such as “иностранина” as an oblique means of policing certain junior authors’ claims to a Russian literary heritage. This expression of a foreign-native binary in critical appraisals of literary works produced in emigration lent a veneer of objectivity to what were ultimately subjective responses driven by personal tastes and allegiances. Or, as Siggy Frank puts it, “an essentially aesthetic debate became couched in the rhetoric of national betrayal.”<sup>8</sup> The rhetorical distinction between “native” and “foreign” became something of a sticking point for younger authors whose works deliberately eschewed either category, and perched instead between both. As I shall discuss in the following section, Gazdanov and Nabokov continued to subvert oppositions of “foreign” and “native” or “home” and “abroad” long after their respective naturalisations in France and the United States.<sup>9</sup>

The comparison between Gazdanov and Nabokov has endured in recent scholarship on the first wave, although the topic is more prevalent within Gazdanov studies, where enquiries have often taken the form of one-off articles or chapters.<sup>10</sup> This critical imbalance is partly indicative of Nabokov’s artistic outgrowth of the “unnoticed generation” whence he originally emerged, a question to which I shall return later in this chapter.<sup>11</sup> The most

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<sup>8</sup> Siggy Frank, “Publishing: Russian Émigré Literature” in David Bethea and Siggy Frank, eds, *Vladimir Nabokov in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 139-49 (p. 141). Livak has observed that the charge of “un-Russian” was equally frequently levelled at Soviet literature by émigrés: “Modeling exilic experience as “true” Russian culture, many émigrés marked Soviet experience as both non-cultural and un-Russian.” Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris: Russian Émigré Literature and French Modernism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), pp. 29-30.

<sup>9</sup> Gazdanov acquired French citizenship in 1947 and Nabokov became a naturalised citizen of the United States in 1945.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, V. B. Zemskov, “Pisateli tsivilizatsionnogo ‘promezhutka’: Gazdanov, Nabokov i drugie”, in T. N. Krasavchenko, M. A. Vasil’eva and F. Kh. Khadonova, eds, *Gaito Gazdanov i “nezamechennoe pokolenie”’: pisatel’ na peresechenii traditsii i kul’tur* (Moscow: INION RAN, 2005), pp. 7-15, and M. Shul’man, “Gazdanov i Nabokov”, in M. A. Vasil’eva, ed., *Vozvrashchenie Gaito Gazdanova* (Moscow: Russkii put’, 2000), pp. 15-24.

<sup>11</sup> The notion of Nabokov’s exceptionalism within his generation of émigrés is well-established in larger narratives of literary history, from testimony by peers to scholarship on the first wave. Ettore Lo Gatto for instance speculates in the chapter of his *Storia della letteratura russa* devoted to émigré literature that Nabokov presided over a cast of young authors, each of whom aspired to his primacy: “Il n’est pas facile de dire s’il y eut, pendant la période que nous pouvons appeler « de Sirin », un écrivain désireux de lui contester le premier rang. Tous les jeunes prosateurs de sa génération y ont probablement aspiré, ceux-là surtout qui ne se laissaient distraire ni par des prétentions lyriques, ni par des problèmes de forme trop accentués : un Gazdanov, par

comprehensive comparison of their works thus far is found in Sergei Kibal'nik's monograph on Gazdanov and European existentialism, which devotes a chapter to Gazdanov and Nabokov.<sup>12</sup> Kibal'nik considers their mutual engagement with the Russian existentialist philosopher Lev Shestov alongside smaller instances of interaction, such as Nabokov's inclusion of *Vecher u Kler* alongside *Zashchita Luzhina* on the protagonist's bookshelf in his 1934 short story, "Tiazhelyi dym". He analyses Nabokov's first English-language novel, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1938) as an early instantiation of his "transculturalism" likely influenced by Gazdanov's *Istoriia odnogo puteshestviia* and posits that *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol'fa* and *Lolita* contain evidence of the continued literary dialogue between the two writers. Kibal'nik's analysis is impressive in its scope, although empirical evidence for a dialogue is occasionally quite speculative, for instance the suggestion that the surname "Vol'f" constitutes a foreshortening of Nabokov's name (**Vladimir Nabokoff**), or that the taxi driver Maksimovich for whom Valeria leaves Humbert at the start of *Lolita* is a parodic depiction of Gazdanov himself.<sup>13</sup>

Similarities between their prose are certainly most apparent in works hailing from the interwar period, and these have accordingly been the focus of several articles, as well as a doctoral thesis by Julia Dolinnaya.<sup>14</sup> Evgenii Trofimov and Iurii Leving have noted that *Dar* (1937-8) contains many allusions to *Vecher u Kler* (such as the deaths of the narrators' fathers, or the descriptions of their families, and the structuring significance of memory).<sup>15</sup> Leving refers to a "взаимн[ый] процесс скрытого цитирования" between the authors, which he goes on to explicate through a comparison of the 1932 works *Kamera obskura*,

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exemple, un Janovskij, un Fel'zen." Ettore Lo Gatto, *Histoire de la littérature russe: des origines à nos jours*, trans. Anna Maria Cabrini (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965), p. 876.

<sup>12</sup> Sergei Kibal'nik, *Gaito Gazdanov i ekzstentsial'naia traditsiia v russkoi literature* (St Petersburg: Petropolis, 2011), pp. 233-76.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 243-4.

<sup>14</sup> Julia Dolinnaya, "The Dreamworld of Gajto Gazdanov in the context of European modernism" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> E. A. Trofimov, "'Ushedshaia Rossiia' v romanakh Nabokova 'Dar' i Gazdanova 'Vecher u Kler'", in Igor' Kondakov, ed., *Gazdanov i mirovaia kul'tura* (Kaliningrad: GP KGT, 2000), pp. 140-7.

“Schast’e” and “Sovershenstvo”.<sup>16</sup> Vladislav Rusakov and Igor’ Sukikh have observed certain structural and thematic overlaps between their début novellas *Mashen’ka* (1926) and *Vecher u Kler*, both depicting émigré protagonists transfixed in a backward glance to a pre-exilic love affair.<sup>17</sup> More recently, Yulia Pushkarevskaya Naughton has advanced the notion of “exilic irony” as a stylistic intersection between *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* and *Nochnye dorogi*.<sup>18</sup> Naughton’s analysis of narrative voice as a motor of irony is illuminating and might apply to later works of both, but her treatment of nationality and language is reductive, with Gazdanov neatly termed a “Russian-French” author to Nabokov’s “Russian-American”. These equalising categories may seek to emphasise their overlapping exilic identities, but they also ignore the considerable disparity in how Nabokov’s and Gazdanov’s respective “transnationalisms” shaped their readerships.

As these studies indicate, consideration of Gazdanov’s post-war works alongside those of Nabokov has been scant.<sup>19</sup> For two first-wave émigrés whose lives and literary careers spanned the late imperial period and October Revolution, as well as the Second World War and Cold War, the emphasis placed on their coeval emergence during the ephemeral cultural moment of the interwar period is limiting. A further-reaching comparison of their oeuvres might also be instructive for a consideration of the “shift of artistic modernity” away from Paris during the twentieth century, when, as Patrice Higonnet has contended, the French capital’s prestige as “the mythological focal point of the present and the capital of the future” was fading in favour of alternatives such as New York and

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<sup>16</sup> Iurii Leving, “Tainy literaturnykh adresatov V. V. Nabokova: Gaito Gazdanov”, in V. P. Stark, ed., *Nabokovskii vestnik: iubileinyi*, 6 vols (St Petersburg: Dorn, 1999), IV, 75-90 (p. 86).

<sup>17</sup> V. G. Rusakov, “Kontsept schast’ia v romanakh ‘Mashen’ka’ Nabokova i ‘Vecher u Kler’ Gazdanova”, in Kondakov, *Gazdanov i mirovaia kul’tura*, pp. 117-34 and Igor’ Sukikh, “Kler, Mashen’ka, nostal’giia”, *Zvezda*, 4 (2003), 218-27.

<sup>18</sup> Yulia Pushkarevskaya Naughton, “‘Diaphonous Irony’: Ironic Masquerade and Breakdown in Vladimir Nabokov’s *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* and Gaito Gazdanov’s *Night Roads*”, *Comparative Literature Studies*, 53/3 (2014), 466-90.

<sup>19</sup> Kibal’nik’s contribution is the main exception to this rule.



London.<sup>20</sup> In this section I consider a combination of their early interwar works (*Mashen'ka* and *Vecher u Kler*) alongside late post-war novels (*Ada or Ardor* and *Evelina i ee druz'ia*) in order to explore the changing nature of their interchange and of their attitudes to the label of “émigré writer” during a period when the boundaries of Russia Abroad were drastically shifting. I first consider the parallels between their debut novellas, and the extent to which their “literary dialogue” is actually a conversation with interlocutors from a Russian nineteenth-century tradition. I then consider the role of multilingualism in their works, and its impact on their intertextual dialogue. Finally, I posit *potustoronnost'* as a lens through which to view their respective intertextual practices and consider the extent to which these have been shaped by their radically different exilic trajectories.

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When his first novella *Mashen'ka* was published by Slovo in Berlin in 1926, Nabokov's name—or more accurately, his pseudonym, V. Sirin—was unknown within émigré circles.<sup>21</sup> So, too, was Gazdanov's. The latter made his own literary debut the same year, with the short story “Gostinitsa griadushchego”, published in the Prague-based *Svoimi putiami*.<sup>22</sup> Both *Mashen'ka* and “Gostinitsa griadushchego” depict the transient boarding-house existence of scores of first-wave émigrés scattered amongst European capital cities during the 1920s through the conceit of a single “пансион” or “гостиница”, although their prose styles differ vastly. “Gostinitsa griadushchego” is structured in two chapters (one signifying “day”, the other “night”), with minimal character or plot development between

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<sup>20</sup> Patrice Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002), pp. 431 and 434.

<sup>21</sup> Prior to *Mashen'ka* Nabokov had published several poetry collections and translations under “V. Sirin”. His real surname was already well-known because his father, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov, had served in the Russian provisional government in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution. When the family settled in Berlin in 1920, he established the émigré newspaper *Rul'*. In March 1922, he was shot fatally by a Russian monarchist during a failed assassination of Pavel Miliukov, President of the Constitutional Democratic Party.

<sup>22</sup> Gazdanov, “Gostinitsa griadushchego”, *Svoimi putiami*, 12/13 (1926) 7-9. Here cited from Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5 vols (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2009), I, 493-9.

them. Unfolding across five storeys of the fictional “hotel of the future” in Paris, it is part prose, part verse, and part dramatic dialogue:

Братья в «грядущем»: постоянный свист. Некто входит в гостиницу.

Когда его подметка стукнет по медным скобкам лестницы: — сразу открываются четыре двери. Со второго этажа на него смотрит Жозеф, с третьего — Жан, с четвертого — Жак и с пятого — Жакоб.

Жозеф говорит: — Держи.

Жан: — Смотри.	А некто
	}
Жак: — Вот этот?	поднимается по
Жакоб: — Наплевать.	лестнице.

Внизу же стоит русский матрос Сережа, заменяющий отсутствующего хозяина.

Сережа весь день поет песню:

Я на экваторе  
 На легком катере  
 К... матери  
 Свой путь держу.<sup>23</sup>

The detachment of characters occupying separate rooms and floors of the hotel is formally reinforced in their visual demarcation (above, of the four brothers and their words, and the Russian sailor Serezha and his verse) on the page. Individuals are referenced metonymically, via their most prominent features or possessions (“Четыре комнаты третьего этажа — наполнены: галстуками, перчатками, женскими туфлями, вращающимся зеркалом Ренэ и шумной улыбкой Армана”),<sup>24</sup> which has generated comparisons with the grotesquerie of

<sup>23</sup> Gazdanov, “Gostinitsa griadushchego”, p. 494.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 495.

Gogol's "Nos".<sup>25</sup> Names, in a similar vein, are distilled to their first letters: "В следующих этажах живут братья Дюжарье. Их четверо, четыре Жи. В самом деле: старшего зовут Жозефом, средних Жаном и Жаком. Имя младшего — Жакоб".<sup>26</sup> The second part, "Krov' krestonostsev", introduces Ul'rich, who asserts that the "blood of Crusaders" flows in his veins, and totes a yellow suitcase filled with "Eastern figures", books, and an enormous mirror. Ul'rich's arrival at the hotel of the future situates him as a physical relic of an historic moment obstinately rooted in the present: "Он жил, остановившись, и календари были бессильны против его упорства. [...] Ульрих был молод, как может быть молод старинный портрет юноши. Эта глава написана в прошедшем времени потому, что крестоносцев давно не существует."<sup>27</sup> He is received with general bemusement, but a Russian guest staying on the same floor of the hotel is less tolerant:

Это, конечно, очень трогательно. Но цивилизованным современникам, не сохранившим воспоминания ни о раскаленном воздухе Палестины, ни о прохладной могиле Барбароссы, — совершенно безразличен состав жидкости в ваших жилах — будь это нефть или кровь крестоносцев. Я не понимаю вашего фрака, ваших реплик, звучащих анахронизмами, ваших песен на полуварварском языке.<sup>28</sup>

The Russian's response belies a cultural relativism based on lazy associations of modernity with civilisation, a prejudice, ironically, that Russians themselves certainly encountered within the supposedly progressive artistic circles of Western Europe.<sup>29</sup> Ul'rich may invoke a far more distant past than that which first-wave Russians sought to preserve, but this closing

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<sup>25</sup> Denis Kurlov and Zulfia Zinnatullina, "Grotesknoe nachalo v rannei proze Gaito Gazdanova (na primere rasskaza 'Gostinitsa griadushchego')", *Philology and Culture*, 2/44 (2016), 254-9.

<sup>26</sup> Gazdanov "Gostinitsa griadushchego", p. 494.

<sup>27</sup> Gaito Gazdanov, "Gostinitsa griadushchego", p. 497.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 499.

<sup>29</sup> Dmitrii Tokarev, "The Metamorphoses of Utopian Dreams in the Russian Avant-Garde in Exile (Il'ya Zdanevich, Boris Poplavskii)", in David Ayers and Benedikt Hjartarson, eds, *Utopia: The Avant-Garde, Modernism and (Im)Possible Life*, European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies 4 (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 397-410 (pp. 405-6).

interaction (and particularly the reference to his “semi-barbaric language”) introduces an unsettling tone to the previously upbeat narrative, somewhat undermining the utopian optimism of “housing the future”.

The boarding house of *Mashen'ka*, by contrast, is an enclave of Russia situated in Berlin: “Пансион был русский и притом неприятный”.<sup>30</sup> It resolutely houses not the future, but the past, although this does not mean it is without conflict. The protagonist, Ganin, recalls his first love (the eponymous heroine) after discovering that he is now lodging next-door to her husband, Alferov. Ganin plots to elope with Mashen'ka on her impending arrival but ultimately decides against this plan and, as the novel draws to a close, he departs for the south of France alone. Reviewing *Mashen'ka* in *Sovremennye zapiski*, Mikhail Osorgin praised its intricate depiction of life's trifles (“мелочи быта”) and hailed its author as the long-awaited *bytopisatel'* of his generation of émigrés.<sup>31</sup> Gleb Struve, emphasising the somewhat improbable role of chance in the novel, later described its sequence of events as “one that without being unreal is not natural and ordinary.”<sup>32</sup> But compared with “Gostinitsa griadushchego”, the plot of *Mashen'ka* is conventional in the extreme. The ostensibly realist narrative voice presents the pension and its cast of tenants in intricate detail. The forced separation wrought upon families, lovers and friends in exile is reflected in assorted abject belongings, now arbitrarily dispersed between the separate rooms of the guesthouse, severed and orphaned from one another “like the bones of a disassembled skeleton”:

Столы, стулья, скрипучие шкафы и ухабистые кушетки разбрелись по комнатам, которые она собралась сдавать и, разлучившись таким образом друг с другом, сразу поблекли, приняли унылый и нелепый вид, как кости

<sup>30</sup> Nabokov, *Mashen'ka*, in Nabokov, *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda*, 5 vols (St Petersburg: Simpozium, 2000), II, 42-127 (p. 47).

<sup>31</sup> Mikhail Osorgin, “Mashen'ka”, *Sovremennye zapiski*, 28 (1926) 474-6. Osorgin reflected in his 1928 review of *Korol', dama, valet* that this prediction had been proven wrong (Mikhail Osorgin, “Korol', dama, valet.”, *Poslednie novosti* (4 October 1928), 3).

<sup>32</sup> Struve, “Current Russian Literature: II. Vladimir Sirin”, p. 438.

разобранного скелета. Письменный стол покойника, дубовая громада с железной чернильницей в виде жабы и с глубоким, как трюм, средним ящиком, оказался в первом номере, где жил Алферов, а вертящийся табурет, некогда приобретенный со столом этим вместе, сиротливо отошел к танцорам, жившим в комнате шестой. Чета зеленых кресел тоже разделилась: одно скучало у Ганина, в другом сживала сама хозяйка или ее старая такса, черная, толстая сучка с седою мордочкой и висячими ушами, бархатными на концах, как бахрома бабочки. А на полке, в комнате у Клары, стояло ради украшения несколько первых томов энциклопедии, меж тем как остальные тома попали к Подтягину.<sup>33</sup>

There is in *Mashen'ka* a persistent blurring between the immediate physical setting and an abstract “elsewhere”, as when we learn that even the stagnant pension seems to be “slowly on the move”, thanks to its proximity to the train station (“день-деньской и добрую часть ночи слышны были поезда городской железной дороги, и оттого казалось, что весь дом медленно едет куда-то”).<sup>34</sup> Ganin’s frequent depiction on thresholds, perching on windowsills, or, as in the opening, stuck inside a faulty lift, all emphasise the transient precarity of his life in Berlin.<sup>35</sup>

Tension between presence and absence is evident in the preoccupation with the past, which is literally imprinted on to the physical space that the characters inhabit, for instance in the torn out numbered pages of an old calendar that label the doors of separate rooms, or in Ganin’s remembrance of his first love, prompted by a photograph of her shown to him by

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<sup>33</sup> Nabokov, *Mashen'ka*, pp. 48-9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>35</sup> Other works written by Nabokov during this period exhibit an interest in liminal spaces. In the play *Chelovek iz SSSR*, first produced in 1926 and published in *Rul'* in 1927, the first act unfolds in a basement tavern. Stage directions describe a window across the back showing only the legs of passersby on the pavement outside, a stark visual reminder that the émigré characters onstage are literally out-of-step with the daily rhythms of the city in which they are dwelling (see Nabokov, *Chelovek iz SSSR* in Nabokov, *Tragediia gospodina Morna. P'esy. Lektsii o drame*, Andrei Babikov and Dmitry Nabokov, eds (St Petersburg: Azbuka-klassika, 2008), p. 315).

Alferov. This visual artefact of Mashen'ka contrasts with Ganin's hazy recollection of his prior sexual relationship with her: "Он, странно сказать, не помнил, когда именно увидел ее в первый раз. [...] Ганин теперь напрасно напрягал память: первую, самую первую встречу он представить себе не мог."<sup>36</sup> Ganin's paradoxical and self-defeating desire for Mashen'ka is synaesthetically underscored in the disparity between the drab and jaundiced present world of Berlin ("знал желтую темноту того раннего часа, когда едешь на фабрику")<sup>37</sup> and the oversaturated, rose-tinted mental image of a long-lost Russia:

В небольших ромбах белых оконниц были разноцветные стекла: глядишь, бывало, сквозь синее,— и мир кажется застывшим в лунном обмороке,— сквозь желтое,— и все весело чрезвычайно,— сквозь красное,— и небо розово, а листва, как бургундское вино.<sup>38</sup>

Eric Laursen has argued that the sustained imagery of fog and mist ("дым") in the novella encapsulates the indecision between absence and presence at the novel's core: "Ganin only truly loves Mary when she is absent, when there is no corporeal woman to conflict with the image that he has created in his mind."<sup>39</sup> Julian Connolly has similarly observed that whilst "physical intimacy with Mary proves disillusioning to Ganin, physical separation from her rekindles his desire."<sup>40</sup>

Three years later, Gazdanov's own debut novella, *Vecher u Kler* (hereafter *Vecher*), was published in Paris by Povolotskii. As I have discussed, *Vecher* was overwhelmingly received as a "neo-Proustian" work, but in fact, it shared much with *Mashen'ka*. Sosedov, like Ganin, is dwelling in temporary accommodation—a Parisian hotel—and frozen in a backward glance to his eponymous first love in Russia prior to the Civil War and exile.

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<sup>36</sup> Nabokov, *Mashen'ka*, p. 77.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>39</sup> Eric Laursen, "Memory in Nabokov's *Mary*", *Russian Review*, 55/1 (1996), 55-64 (p. 61).

<sup>40</sup> Julian Connolly, *Nabokov's Early Fiction: Patterns of Self and Other* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 36.

Existing criticism has traced typological parallels between the two novellas, and noted their shared interest in memory as an expression of both personal and communal loss.<sup>41</sup> Yet whilst they ostensibly narrate distinct “first love” accounts, their chosen intertexts set the “original” material against a shared backdrop of nineteenth-century Russian literature. As Igor’ Sukikh has noted, the epigraphs of both novels hail from Pushkin’s *Evgenii Onegin*, whose basic “love triangle” motif they also borrow.<sup>42</sup> Gazdanov and Nabokov thus inscribe their respective narratives of lost love in a Russian literary history which has also, in some sense, been left behind, with the implication that young love and its coda are as ubiquitous and necessary an experience as the young writer’s aspiration to and assimilation (or rejection) of his predecessors.

In Gazdanov’s case, distortion is perhaps more apt than outright assimilation or rejection. Where Pushkin’s Tat’iana and Nabokov’s Mashen’ka are closely associated with a pastoral idyll of the Russian countryside, Kler’s emphatic foreignness disrupts the intertextual premonition laid down in the epigraph and reinforced by a familiarity with *Mashen’ka*.<sup>43</sup> Kler is French, an outsider in Kislovodsk, where she and Nikolai first meet:

Чистый женский голос сказал надо мной: — Товарищ гимнаст, не спите, пожалуйста. — Я открыл глаза и увидел Клэр, имени которой я тогда не знал. — Я не сплю, — ответил я. — Вы меня знаете? — продолжала Клэр. — Нет, вчера

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<sup>41</sup> Elena Ukhova has expanded the discussion of memory as a point of contact in the works of Gazdanov and Nabokov, considering works such as *Pnin*, *Podvig* and *Prizrak* alongside the usual pairing of *Mashen’ka* and *Vecher u Kler*. Elena Ukhova, “Znachenie pamiati u Gazdanova i Nabokova”, in *Gaito Gazdanov v kontekste russkoi i zapadnoevropeiskikh literatur*, ed. A. M. Ushakov (Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2008) pp. 109-15.

<sup>42</sup> See Sukikh, “Kler, Mashen’ka, nostal’giia”, p. 223. Gazdanov and Nabokov would continue to rework the love triangle motif in works such as *Polet*, *Kamera obskura*, *Korol’, dama, valet*, *Vozvrashchenie buddy*, *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol’fa*, and *Ada*.

<sup>43</sup> I have noted in chapter two that the epigraph of *Vecher u Kler*, a line from Tat’iana’s letter to Onegin (which Pushkin’s narrator translates from French), inverts the gender dynamic of Pushkin’s novel, such that Evgenii and Tat’iana correspond to Kler and Nikolai respectively. Kler’s own “foreign-ness” and Nikolai’s attachment to Russia would support such a reading.

вечером я увидел вас в первый раз. Как ваше имя? — Клэр. — А, вы француженка, — сказал я, обрадовавшись неизвестно почему.<sup>44</sup>

And unlike Alferov, Kler's husband, although often mentioned, remains an obscure, unnamed shadow in the novel's hinterland. Kler, conversely, is so central to the plot that she sporadically interjects on its narration (incidentally foreshadowing both Ada in Nabokov's *Ada or Ardor* (1969) and Evelina in Gazdanov's *Evelina i ee druž'ia* (1968-71), as I shall discuss later). Her intrusions via dialogue are frequent and provocative: “— Запишите по-французски, — услышал я голос Клэр, и я секунду вспоминал, кто это говорит со мной. — Claire n'était plus vierge.”<sup>45</sup> Unlike Mashen'ka, whose silent absence from the narrative (save for Alferov's words or Ganin's memories) conforms to conventional images of submissive female sexuality, Kler is intimidating precisely *for* her sexual agency, which is further grounded in the text via her narrative agency. Gazdanov thus consciously adapts *Mashen'ka*—as an earlier émigré text voicing a younger-generation experience and mediating Pushkin's monumental influence—through a repeated cultivation and disruption of intertextual premonitions.

Nikolai's desire for Kler, like Ganin's for Mashen'ka, is depicted in a bleary fog of absence and presence. Imagery of smoke and mist recurs, variously uniting and separating the pair, for instance in the name of the armoured train that takes Nikolai away to fight for the White Army: “А через два дня путешествия я был уже в Синельникове, где стоял бронированный поезд ‘Дым’, на который я был принят в качестве солдата артиллерийской команды”.<sup>46</sup> Kler is often clearer to Nikolai in her absence; her frustrating elusiveness is, as I have previously discussed, encapsulated in the transliteration of her name

<sup>44</sup> Gazdanov, *Večer u Kler*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 37-162 (p. 87).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99. This foreshadows Nabokov's *Ada or Ardor* (1969), where the eponymous heroine edits Van Veen's manuscript, or indeed Gazdanov's *Evelina i ee druž'ia* (1968-71), in which Evelina repeatedly instructs the narrator to write a novel about her.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.



into Cyrillic script, a visual “hazing” of the French “Claire”, ironically meaning “clear”. Such hazing might echo the “fog” of *Mashen’ka* identified by Laursen, but it also indicates a second common intertext: Turgenev’s *Dym* (1867). Turgenev’s novel tells the story of a young Russian man, Grigorii Litvinov and his first love, Irina (now married to a Russian general, Ratmirov), who meet again in the German resort town of Baden-Baden ten years after their affair. The novel contains very many intertwined subplots and was also a vehicle for Turgenev’s critique of Russia during the 1860s. Nabokov and Gazdanov both isolate the central love story and the resultant split-focalisation between present (foreign) and past (Russian) settings. Whilst Litvinov eventually returns to Russia, having asked Irina to elope and been rejected by her, the trajectories of Nikolai and Ganin, as first-wave émigrés in interwar Europe, evidently cannot be the same. *Dym* is thus introduced and subverted: Ganin leaves *Mashen’ka* forever in his past as he departs Berlin for France, whilst Sosedov is at the end of *Vecher* only just leaving for France, “the country of Kler”, with the Place de la Concorde serving as a topographic emblem of their impending union: “Я увидел Францию, страну Клэр, и Париж, и площадь Согласия”.<sup>47</sup>

Livak has contended that Fel’zen’s short story “Kompozitsiia” (1939) builds on (and undercuts) both *Mashen’ka* and *Vecher*, but it also arguably engages with *Dym* as a building block of all three. The protagonist Volodia recalls a pre-exilic love affair with Tonia at a Russian holiday resort, whom he meets again years later in Berlin. He notes the triteness of their encounter, even likening it to the plot of a novel.<sup>48</sup> Leaving Berlin, Volodia receives flowers, in a clear echo of the episode of Litvinov receiving flowers from Irina in *Dym*. Unlike Litvinov, Volodia knows they are not from Tonia. He reflects that he *could* conclude otherwise, so as to end the tale “impressively and elegantly” like “a ready-made story with

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>48</sup> Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, p. 128.

stock vocabulary”;<sup>49</sup> but his artistic truthfulness ultimately prevents him from succumbing to such a clichéd resolution. Fel’zen thus reacts against hackneyed dénouements by mimicking and subverting both Russian classical and émigré precursors, just as Gazdanov had responded against Nabokov, Turgenev and Pushkin in the creeping deflation of Nikolai’s rose-tinted image of Kler. Tracing typologies from a more distant nineteenth-century heritage of “Russians abroad” through the prism of twentieth-century Russian émigré precursors, younger generation authors thus situated themselves in response to their elders, and also—crucially—to their peers.

As I have noted, Leving posits a “взаимн[ый] процесс скрытого цитирования” between Gazdanov and Nabokov during the early 1930s, yet as his overt response to *Mashen’ka* (and its intertexts) indicates, Gazdanov was not particularly secretive about his own part in that dialogue. He publicly acknowledged the esteem in which he held Sirin during the 1930s, for instance naming him “единственный талантливый писатель «молодого поколения»” in his 1934 article “Literaturnye priznaniia”.<sup>50</sup> Two years later, in “O molodoi emigrantskoi literature”, he again singled out Sirin as the only prose writer representing any real hope for the future of Russian writing abroad.<sup>51</sup> The laudatory statement was followed with the caveat that, aside from his being outstanding amongst the ranks of young émigrés, Sirin actually had “nothing to do” with young émigré literature: “к молодой эмигрантской литературе Сирин не имеет никакого отношения.”<sup>52</sup> This statement is curious, not least for its occurrence in an article whose very subject *is* young émigré writing. That is, perhaps, until we recall that Gazdanov had spoken along very similar lines when expressing his own estrangement from émigré literature to Gor’kii in 1930. He asserted his

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<sup>49</sup> Fel’zen, cited in Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Gazdanov, “Literaturnye priznaniia”, *Vstrechi*, 6 (1934), 259-62, cited from *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 735-9 (p. 737).

<sup>51</sup> Gazdanov, “O molodoi emigrantskoi literature”, *Sovremennye zapiski*, 60 (1936), 404-8, cited from Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 746-52 (p. 746).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 750.

status as a “Russian writer”, but rejected the category of “émigré author” to which he felt he had been negatively confined: “я не принадлежу к «эмигрантским писателям»”.<sup>53</sup> Might his open appraisal of Sirin, with whom he had by then frequently been compared, thus be taken as a tacit self-justification of his own claims to an artistic identity that went beyond his present circumstances? The combination of Gazdanov’s private and public affirmations that he and Sirin were somehow exempt from the classification of young émigré literature would appear to betray a certain exceptionalism from that very issue on which he situates himself as an arbiter.

But the esteem was not to last. In a 1960 letter to the second-wave émigré Leonid Rzhetskii, Gazdanov observed that “рассказы у него [Набокова] замечательны, романы хуже, а теперь, под конец жизни он впал в какой-то глупейший снобизм дурного вкуса—к чему, впрочем, у него была склонность и раньше.”<sup>54</sup> In a 1967 letter to Georgii Adamovich—significantly a close friend of Ivanov, and his ally in the fierce critical attacks on Sirin and the Berlin school during the 1930s—Gazdanov scornfully asserted that “в одной пятке Достоевского больше ума и понимания, чем во всех произведениях Набокова, вместе взятых.”<sup>55</sup> This allegation arguably suggests a degree of familiarity with his contemporary’s works and career progression during the intervening period. Their paths had diverged considerably by the 1960s: whilst Gazdanov remained in Paris long after its status as the capital of Russia Abroad had waned, Nabokov had migrated to the United States with his family at the onset of World War II, simultaneously migrating into English as his preferred language of composition. Nabokov had categorically exceeded the (geographic and linguistic) boundaries of young émigré literature. Gazdanov’s vitriol might well be

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<sup>53</sup> Gazdanov, correspondence with Maksim Gor’kii, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 39-45 (p. 41).

<sup>54</sup> Gazdanov, 1960 letter to Leonid Rzhetskii, cited in Kibal’nik, *Gaito Gazdanov*, p. 274.

<sup>55</sup> Gazdanov, letter to Georgii Adamovich dated 28 September 1967, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 156-63 (p. 157).

exaggerated by an awareness of his one-man audience, however his statement indicates that, in his eyes at least, Nabokov had failed to adequately live up to the bright promise of Sirin.

Discussion thus far has focussed on Gazdanov's literary (and non-literary) responses to Sirin (and later negative appraisals of Nabokov). Nabokov does not openly appraise Gazdanov's works in the same manner, and one might interpret this (surely conscious) silence as a total absence of engagement, but this would be wrong. Just as Gazdanov engages with *Mashen'ka* as a vehicle for asserting his claim to a Russian classical heritage, Nabokov seizes on Gazdanov's engagement with canonical precursors, although as I shall now discuss, his fluid approach to language and genre ludically masks his stimulus. By writing in English rather than Russian, or by transposing fictional typologies on to autobiographical accounts, Nabokov cryptically obscures his response to Gazdanov as a mediator of a shared Russian heritage.

Nabokov's autobiographical versioning of the "first love" theme, a short story of the same name, was written in English whilst he was living in Boston in 1948 and published as "Colette" in *The New Yorker* in July of the same year.<sup>56</sup> Three years later, "First Love" would appear as the seventh chapter of *Speak, Memory* (1951). The story recalls a meeting with Colette, a young Parisian girl aged nine (to the narrator's ten) on the beach during a family vacation in Biarritz in the summer of 1909. The narrative is peppered with French, and words like "plage" or "baigneur" remain untranslated, unlike Russian: "'*Ne budet-li, ti ved' ustal* [Haven't you had enough, aren't you tired]?' my mother would ask, and then would be lost in thought as she slowly shuffled the cards."<sup>57</sup> Colette speaks "in birdlike bursts of rapid twitter, mixing governess English and Parisian French,"<sup>58</sup> but her parents are described dismissively

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<sup>56</sup> Originally published as "Colette" in *The New Yorker* (July 31 1948), 19-22, and later in Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 98-108. Citations here will be taken from Nabokov, "First Love", *Nabokov's Dozen: Thirteen Stories* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 35-43.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

by another adult as “*des bourgeois de Paris*”, echoing Vladimir’s mother’s disapproval of Zina’s family on the grounds of their inferior social class (“они люди не комильфо”) in Turgenev’s *Pervaia liubov*.<sup>59</sup> In Nabokov’s “First Love”, this parental disapproval is the result of a supranational social hierarchy, temporarily suspended in the French seaside resort, in which the bourgeois Parisian is inferior to the aristocratic Russian. As I have discussed in the first chapter, Gazdanov transposed Turgenev’s *Pervaia liubov* in his 1939 novel, *Polet*, and as I have discussed in chapter three, he also appears to have been aware of Babel’s post-1917 autobiographical reworking of Turgenev’s novella. It is unlikely that he knew of Nabokov’s English versioning of the transient summer holiday love story, although certain details of the story indicate that Nabokov was familiar with *Polet*. For instance, one cannot help but note the significant mention of Blériot’s pilot journey from Calais to Dover “with a little additional loop when he lost his bearings”, or of Chaliapin’s performance in Paris (there is repeated mention of Chaliapin in *Polet*):

In April of that year, Peary had reached the North Pole. In May, Chaliapin had sung in Paris. In June, the United States War Department had told reporters of plans for an aerial Navy. In July, Blériot had flown from Calais to Dover (with a little additional loop when he lost his bearings. It was late August now.<sup>60</sup>

Elsewhere, the narrator’s late-night mental planning of his and Colette’s elopement is referred to as their “flight”: “I lay awake listening to the recurrent thud of the ocean and planning our flight.”<sup>61</sup>

Yet Nabokov’s “First Love” differs from Turgenev’s *Pervaia liubov*, Babel’s “*Pervaia liubov*” and indeed Gazdanov’s *Polet*, because the titular love story is situated in the context not of a father-son struggle, but of a struggle between *peers*. The narrator recalls

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

tussling with another young boy on the beach for Colette's honour: "I could not destroy the mosquitoes that had left their bites on her frail neck, but I could, and did, have a successful fist fight with a red-haired boy who had been rude to her."<sup>62</sup> A hovering and uneasy threat lingers throughout the short story in the form of the narrator's younger brother (their two sisters have conveniently been "left at home with nurses and aunts"<sup>63</sup>), who happens to be nine, the same age as Colette. Despite their proximity in age, the narrator and his brother are never depicted playing, or even conversing, with one another. Though he does not acknowledge his younger sibling, the narrator is acutely aware of his presence, as seen, for instance, when he lies in bed wondering at his silence: "From my bed under my brother's bunk (Was he asleep? Was he there at all?)"<sup>64</sup> And when he is discovered on an illicit cinema trip with Colette, it is his brother's bespectacled gaze of which he is most conscious ("peers at me with awed curiosity, like a little owl").<sup>65</sup> Even in the final chaperoned farewell meeting between the narrator and Colette in a Parisian park, the unnamed younger brother is a taciturn physical presence *between* him and her: "She took from her governess and slipped into my brother's hand a farewell present, a box of sugar-coated almonds, meant, I knew, solely for me".<sup>66</sup>

One might read the wordless and unresolved tension between the narrator and his brother in the light of Nabokov's own public silence on Gazdanov (save for a few inconclusive references in his works). As the ambiguous overlaps between the plots of *Polet* and "First Love" indicate, there is little point in arguing for a direct or singular case of influence between the two authors. Their own limited and confusing references to one another mean that one can at most posit an ongoing literary dialogue, as Kibal'nik and others

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

have done. This dialogue is in part the product of a mutual preoccupation with similar themes and questions (in the case of *Polet* and “First Love”, incestuous liaisons or triangular relationships, but equally elsewhere, doppelgänger themes, the story within the story, or the line between autobiography and fiction), but may also be attributed to their definite awareness of each other, thanks to their coeval emergence as representatives of their generation.<sup>67</sup> It is thus far too simplistic to state, as Adamovich did in 1935, that this was a unidirectional case of influence, from the early Sirin to Gazdanov.<sup>68</sup> Nabokov’s ludically veiled response to Gazdanov’s “first love” versioning demonstrates, on the contrary, that he was engaging with his contemporary well beyond the 1930s.

The fact that the chaperoned goodbye meeting between Colette and the narrator of “First Love” occurs in a Parisian park intriguingly situates this response to Gazdanov in the very city where their paths had fleetingly overlapped. Gazdanov arrived in Paris in 1923, and was to remain there for the majority of his life. Nabokov, on the other hand, opted to stay in Berlin until 1937, well after its status as the capital of Russia Abroad had waned in favour of Paris. John Burt Foster posits several possible personal reasons for his fraught relationship with the city:

the biggest crisis in his marriage came from a Parisian love affair, and the periods between October 1938 and May 1940 that he and his family lived there were difficult.

[...] Nabokov’s brother Sergei, who had not managed to flee Paris before the

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<sup>67</sup> The kernel of “pseudo-incest” or of circuitous access to one family member through another, which would reach fuller expression in *Lolita* or *Ada* was initially conceived during Nabokov’s time in Paris, where he wrote *Volshchnik* (his so-called “pre-Lolita”) in Russian.

<sup>68</sup> “Мне кажется, кое в чем Сирина на Газданова повлиял, — хотя и не подлинный Сирина, не тот, каким мы видим его теперь, а скорее другой, пытавшийся найти какие-то пути к жизни, подружиться с ней, сговориться с ней, Сирина, написавший сравнительно бледный «Подвиг», и «Соглядатая», и занимательно пустоватую «Камеру обскуру», все то вообще, что появилось между «Защитой Лужина» и «Отчаянием.» Georgii Adamovich, “Sovremennye zapiski, No. 58. Chast’ literaturnaiia”, *Poslednie novosti*, 5215 (1935), 3.

Germans arrived in 1940, eventually perished in a concentration camp. The author, when free to choose francophone places to live, preferred the Riviera.<sup>69</sup>

Nabokov's preference for the Riviera over Paris is echoed by his fictional protagonists as well. In *Mashen'ka*, written long before any of the potential explanations Foster cites for Nabokov's aversion, Ganin notably bypasses the French capital in favour of its southern coast. The old Russian poet Podtiagin, who is also lodging in the boarding house, perpetually chatters about his intention to go to Paris to join his nephew ("Дай Бог только в Париж попасть"; "Меня в Париже давно ждут"; "Хорошо будет в Париже")<sup>70</sup> in a manner that recalls the refrain of "В Москву!" in Chekhov's *Tri sestry*. But Podtiagin keeps failing to make it there, and seemingly never will: "Ему захотелось сказать многое,— что в Париж он уже не попадет, что родины он и подавно не увидит, что вся жизнь его была нелепа и бесплодна и что он не ведает, почему он жил, почему умирает."<sup>71</sup> The fact that an apparent aversion to the transition from Berlin to Paris is evident in a novel published as early as 1926 implies that Nabokov's reasons for eschewing the French capital until 1937 were grounded in premonitory concerns about the realities of life there, which were in hindsight confirmed by his family's experiences.

Later in *Speak, Memory* (1951), Nabokov reflects on his keen desire to protect his Russian from French interference during the interwar period, implicitly attributing his decision to stay in Germany to the paucity of his German: "My fear of losing or corrupting, through alien influence, the only thing I had salvaged from Russia—her language—became positively morbid."<sup>72</sup> The explanation seems strange, especially given his outspokenness (in his autobiographies and elsewhere) on his early fluency in English and French, or his

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<sup>69</sup> John Burt Foster, "Paris", in Bethea and Frank, *Nabokov in Context*, pp. 94-101 (p. 94).

<sup>70</sup> Nabokov, *Mashen'ka*, pp. 85, 91, and 104.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>72</sup> Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 195.



provocative assertion that he “might have been a great French writer.”<sup>73</sup> Why was foreign influence such a pressing anxiety in France, but not in America?<sup>74</sup> John Burt Foster has argued that Nabokov experienced a “language crisis” during his time in Paris (which extended from 1937 until May 1940). Elizabeth Beaujour has classed those works originally composed in French during the 1930s as largely incidental to the question of Nabokov’s bilingualism, stating that although he “dabble[d] in French”, the decision to write his first English novel, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941), far outweighs them.<sup>75</sup> Such a view fails to acknowledge the role of French and the Paris period as a fertile threshold between Nabokov’s Russian and English careers. Foster notes that two of the few French-language works Nabokov produced during the late 1930s went on to inspire two of his major English non-fiction projects: *Mademoiselle O* (1936), a short memoir about his Swiss-French governess as a starting point for the later *Speak, Memory* (1951) and “Le vrai et le vraisemblable”, an essay to mark the centenary of Pushkin’s death published in the *Nouvelle revue française* in 1937, as a precursor to his controversial 1964 translation of *Eugene Onegin*.<sup>76</sup>

Another (perhaps more convincing) explanation for Nabokov’s transition to English was commercial. Patrice Higonnet has argued that during the twentieth century the lustre of Paris as an artistic capital was fading in favour of anglophone metropolitan centres such as New York or London. This narrative would appear to have suited Nabokov, who after his anglophone turn styled himself as always having been “aloof” from Paris and its literary scene.<sup>77</sup> It is certainly true that (like Gazdanov) he did not seamlessly align with the “Paris

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<sup>73</sup> Cited in Andrew Field, *Nabokov: His Life in Part* (New York: Penguin, 1978), p. 141.

<sup>74</sup> Nabokov stated that *Lolita* was about his love affair with the English language (Nabokov, “On a book entitled *Lolita*”, in *Lolita* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1955), pp. 313-9, p. 318).

<sup>75</sup> Elizabeth Beaujour, *Alien Tongues: Bilingual Russian Writer of the “First” Emigration* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 88.

<sup>76</sup> Foster, “Paris”, p. 96.

<sup>77</sup> In a 1964 interview in *Playboy*, Nabokov stated that “There were other critics who could not forgive me for keeping aloof from literary “movements,” for not airing the “angoisse” that they wanted poets to feel, and for not belonging to any of those groups of poets that held sessions of common inspiration in the back rooms of

note”, and its interest in the *document humain* as a confessional form.<sup>78</sup> Yet Nabokov would ultimately still *need* Paris (and Olympia Press specifically) to launch his most famous English-language work, *Lolita*, after American publishers unanimously rejected the manuscript. Tokarev has argued that whilst Paris undeniably functioned as a world stage for authors writing in English (such as Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway and Samuel Beckett), the same cannot be said of those writing in Russian.<sup>79</sup> Gazdanov and Nabokov’s distinct cases serve as compelling evidence of this theorem. The historical hospitality of Paris to dissident writing, and its longstanding status as “a ‘denationalised’ universal capital” worked to Nabokov’s advantage precisely because he migrated into English.<sup>80</sup>

Nabokov’s professed desire to preserve the “authenticity” of his Russian outside of Russia was certainly not unique. Linguistic fidelity was a widespread concern amongst émigrés in interwar Europe, and was fuelled on the one hand by a sense of French or German interference, and on the other by a keen interest in how the language was changing back in the Soviet Union. Many émigré publishing houses and journals refused to acknowledge the 1917 spelling reforms and continued to publish new works using the pre-revolutionary orthography well into the post-war period. Teffi had playfully satirised the prevalent anxieties regarding language interference as early as 1920 in her short story “Ke fer?”, which appeared in the very first issue of *Poslednie novosti*.<sup>81</sup> Its title—a French translation of the Russian phrase “Что делать?”, also the name of the famous novel by revolutionary author Nikolai Chernyshevskii—indicates the ironic tone with which the question would be treated.

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Parisian cafés.” (Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p. 39). Sigrun Frank, amongst others, has disputed the notion that Nabokov was quite as “aloof” as he retrospectively claimed. (Frank, “Publishing: Russian Émigré Literature”, pp. 143-4).

<sup>78</sup> Morard has argued that Nabokov “was neither on the side of those who felt they would always be duty-bound to the fatherland, nor with those who saw France as a new literary homeland” (Morard, “Switzerland”, in Bethea and Frank, *Nabokov in Context*, p. 116).

<sup>79</sup> Tokarev, “The Metamorphoses of Utopian Dreams in the Russian Avant-Garde in Exile (Il’ya Zdanevich, Boris Poplavskii)”, pp. 405-6.

<sup>80</sup> Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 108.

<sup>81</sup> Teffi, “Ke fer”, in N. A. Teffi, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 5 vols (Moscow: Lakom, 1998), III, 126-9.

Russified French persists throughout, as in the comic transliteration of the French term for a group of Russians (“les russes”) into Cyrillic letters (“лерюсс”), such that one Russian is equivalent to the French plural:

Живем мы, так называемые лерюссы, самой странной, на другие жизни не похожей жизнью. Держимся вместе не взаимопритяжением, как, например, планетная система, а — вопреки законам физическим — взаимоотталкиванием. Каждый лерюсс ненавидит всех остальных столь же определенно, сколь все остальные ненавидят его.<sup>82</sup>

The resultant implication is that Russians have so readily assimilated to life in the French capital, which had traditionally been a “home from home” for Russian expatriates, that they now even refer to themselves from an external (French) perspective. In the later “Razgovor” (1927), Teffi once again mocked the fear of the decline of Russian in exile through the conceit of an imagined conversation between émigrés, filled with a mixture of French and German words:<sup>83</sup>

— А в каком бецирке дешевле?

— Что?

— Я спрашиваю, в каком бецирке...

— Господи, да вы совсем по-русски говорить разучились. Ну, кто же говорит "в бецирке"!

— А как же по-русски?

— По-русски это называется арондисман.

Teffi here sends up the use of the German “Bezirk” or the French “arrondissement” over the Russian equivalent, “район”, but the effects of foreign interference were often documented

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>83</sup> Teffi, “Razgovor”, in Teffi, *Sobranie sochinenii*, III, 173-6 (p. 173).

unironically—i.e. as merely a fact of émigré *byt*—in the works of younger generation writers, such as Gazdanov’s *Nochnye dorogi* (1939-40), which as I have discussed switched back and forth between Parisian *argot* and Russian without translation.<sup>84</sup> Again, its 1952 publication as a full text by Chekhov Publishing in New York was behind the linguistic “levelling out” of the text, with translations provided in footnotes. Nabokov might have been concerned about not sullyng his Russian, but his ability to sidestep the question permitted him to speak in abstract terms, whereas Gazdanov and other members of the younger generation arguably did not have that luxury.

Nina Berberova’s *Biiankurskie prazdniki* (1928-40), which depicted émigré life in the industrial Parisian suburb of Billancourt, is another significant example of a hybrid text by a younger generation author.<sup>85</sup> Berberova playfully emphasises the transnational identity of her fictional Billancourt émigrés through wordplay and code-switching, as encapsulated in the short story “Fotozhenikh” (1929), whose title is a portmanteau of the French “photogénique” and the Russian “zhenikh”, in ironic reference to the main character, Gerasim Gavrilovich, whose exilic disorientation is tied to his lack of a job.<sup>86</sup> Gerasim’s friend, Grisha, refers to him by the French “manoeuvre” (denoting an unskilled labourer), which is given in the Russian calque “manevr”. Elsewhere, in the opening lines of “Zdes’ plachut” (1929), the adjective “national”, whilst recurring in Russian, is implicitly aligned with France, thanks to the mention of Bastille Day: “Был Национальный праздник на Национальной площади. Был вечер 14 июля сего года.”<sup>87</sup> Judith Kalb has characterised the speech of Berberova’s Billancourt Russians as a sort of transnational *skaz* formed of Soviet slogans and French

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<sup>84</sup> Teffi treated the subject more seriously in a 1926 article, “O russkom iazyke”, where she urged that the language must have the freedom to evolve in exile, as in the Soviet Union. Teffi, “O russkom iazyke”, *Vozrozhdenie*, 565 (1926), 2-3.

<sup>85</sup> Berberova’s *Biiankurskie rasskazy* were published in *Poslednie novosti* from 1928 to 1940.

<sup>86</sup> Nina Berberova, “Fotozhenikh”, in *Biiankurskie prazdniki: Rasskazy v izgnanii* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo im. Sabashnikovoykh, 1997), pp. 22-8.

<sup>87</sup> Berberova, “Zdes’ plachut”, in *Biiankurskie prazdniki*, pp. 29-38 (p. 29).

loan-words.<sup>88</sup> Reflecting on the cycle in her autobiography, Berberova asserted that her own brand of *skaz* differed from Zoshchenko's, from which it was drawn (and who was in turn building on a rich nineteenth-century tradition instigated by Gogol' and Leskov), thanks to the inclusion of French:

Самые ранние из «Биянкурских праздников» не могут не напомнить читателю Зоценко (и в меньшей степени Бабеля и Гоголя), и не только потому, что я по молодости и неопытности училась у него, но и потому, что мои герои — провинциалы, полуинтеллигенты поколения, выросшего в десятых и двадцатых годах, *говорили языком героев Зоценко*, потому что все эти рабочие завода Рено, шоферы такси и другие *читали Зоценко каждую неделю в эмигрантской прессе*, перепечатававшей каждый новый рассказ его в парижских газетах в двадцатых и тридцатых годах, на радость своим читателям.<sup>89</sup>

Berberova emphasised the ease with which Zoshchenko's stories could be read in the émigré press during the 1920s and early 1930s (where they were often republished without his permission), a fact which caused him many problems back in the Soviet Union as criticism of him and his work escalated, as Gregory Carleton has noted: “At worst, his writing was seen as dangerous, anti-Soviet propaganda—an impression not helped by the fact that émigré presses published his stories with that exact intent.”<sup>90</sup> Zoshchenko's critical reception in the USSR during the 1920s was largely negative; Gorbachev (and many others) accused him of using the inherent anonymity of the *skaz* narrative style in order to depict Soviet life in a bad light without repercussions for himself.<sup>91</sup> Such an association was of course intrinsically

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<sup>88</sup> Judith E. Kalb, “Nina Berberova”, in Maria Rubins, ed., *Twentieth-century Russian Émigré Writers*, Dictionary of Literary Biography 317 (Detroit: Gale, 2005), pp. 38-49.

<sup>89</sup> Berberova, “Predislovie”, in *Biiankurskie prazdniki*, pp. 8-13 (p. 11).

<sup>90</sup> Gregory Carleton, “Mikhail Mikhailovich Zoshchenko”, in Christine Rydel, ed., *Russian Prose Writers Between the World Wars*, Dictionary of Literary Biography 272 (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003), pp. 475-96 (p. 481).

<sup>91</sup> Viktor Vinogradov has for instance argued that at times Zoshchenko's narrators were simply a “pronoun”, in whom varied linguistic registers, mindsets and opinions could intermingle, resulting in a highly protean narrative mask (Vinogradov, cited in *ibid.*, p. 481).

positive to émigré editors who for obvious reasons favoured negative representations of Soviet life.<sup>92</sup> Marietta Chudakova has however argued that the seismic shifts within almost every sphere of Soviet Russia during the 1920s (social, economic and cultural) resulted in a state of extreme linguistic disorientation from which no new standard had yet prevailed, such that Zoshchenko could *not* write in an authoritative tongue, because there was at that point still none to be had.<sup>93</sup>

In *Russia Abroad*, the inverse scenario was true: there were very many authoritative tongues, with strong opinions, the freedom to air them, and a wealth of fora in which to pass judgment on those less established, as demonstrated in the polarised responses to younger-generation authors, either through policing, or efforts to open up a space for them. In her discussion of bilingualism amongst first-wave writers, Elizabeth Beaujour mentions the case of Gazdanov quite cursorily, stating that although he “never became a bilingual writer, the first part of his *Večer u Kler* contains a good deal of French.”<sup>94</sup> This appraisal confusingly discounts almost every other work he wrote, the significant majority of which equally contain “a good deal of French”. Indeed, even before the publication of *Večer*, Gazdanov had been no stranger to critical accusations of linguistic infidelity. Georgii Adamovich, writing in 1928 (by which point Gazdanov had only published a handful of short stories) singled him out in a discussion of young prose writers for his frequent French calques and grammatical inaccuracies and his signature “mixture of French with a Nizhny Novgorod dialect, of ultra-Parisian influences combined with Soviet ones”:

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<sup>92</sup> A clipping from the Resistance newspaper, *Combat de la Résistance à la Révolution*, with an article titled “Ecrivains poursuivis en U.R.S.S.” and a French translation of a Zoshchenko short story “Monter” (1927), translated as “La Mécanique Théâtrale” below, is amongst Gazdanov’s personal papers in his archive at the Houghton Library (Item 79).

<sup>93</sup> “Писатель выбрал себе особую задачу — построение стиля в «бесстилевой» ситуации” (Marietta Chudakova, *Poetika Mikhaila Zoshchenko* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), p. 97).

<sup>94</sup> Beaujour, *Alien Tongues*, p. 238.

У него много задора и есть уже «своя» техника. Рассказ Газданова можно узнать среди других. Неприятна в нем смесь «французского с нижегородским» — влияний ультрапарижских с советскими, — но можно ли здесь молодого писателя за это упрекать? Это естественно, почти неизбежно, а главное — неопасно.<sup>95</sup>

The mention of “Soviet” influences was to develop into a more serious charge during the 1930s, as the combination of Gazdanov’s private and public statements gradually raised suspicion within émigré circles of his pro-Soviet leanings.<sup>96</sup> His 1934 article, “Literaturnye priznaniia”, for instance decried the fact that “девяносто девять процентов наших беллетристов пишут чрезвычайно бедным, условным языком с несколькими галлицизмами и печальной трафаретностью выражений”.<sup>97</sup> Livak even notes that Nabokov wrote to Zinaida Shakhovskaia (who was married to his cousin): “Read Gazdanov’s contentious [literally — “prancing”] article and remember, as you read, that he is soon returning to Russia.”<sup>98</sup> In 1936, Khodasevich publicly condemned Gazdanov, stating that he would do better both “ideologically and practically” by renouncing European culture as capitalist, “because at least then he would find some kind of firm ground”:

Идеологически и практически для него было бы удобно и, может быть, выгодно осудить европейскую культуру как капиталистическую, а от эмиграции отвернуться как от врага Советского Союза. Это было бы для него в известном смысле спасительно, ибо тут он обрел бы новых друзей и некую почву под ногами. Но и этого нет. С марксистской и советской точки зрения его

<sup>95</sup> Georgii Adamovich, “Literaturnye besedy”, *Zveno*, 5 (1928), cited from Adamovich, *Literaturnye besedy: “Zveno”*, 2 vols (St Petersburg: Aleteiia, 1998), II, 341.

<sup>96</sup> Gazdanov, correspondence with Gor’kii, republished in Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 39-45.

<sup>97</sup> Gazdanov, “Literaturnye priznaniia”, *Vstrechi*, 6 (1934), cited from Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 735-40 (p. 735).

<sup>98</sup> Nabokov, correspondence with Zinaida Shakhovskaia, Nabokov Archives, The Library of Congress, letter no. 19, undated, cited in Leonid Livak, “Russian émigré literature in the context of French modernism: a study in the cultural mechanisms of exile” (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999), p. 64.

выступление есть яркое доказательство неврастенического нигилизма, возникающего как результат предельного буржуазного разложения.<sup>99</sup>

Gazdanov's tongue was not "authoritative" because of what Adamovich identified as its "mixture" of multiple distinct strands. Whilst many émigrés were keen to preserve the authenticity of their pre-revolutionary language, Gazdanov commingled both foreign and Soviet corruptions.

Elsa Triolet complained that her migration into a second language (a decision undertaken by both Nabokov and Berberova as well) had confined her to a "half-destiny".<sup>100</sup> But one might easily use the same term to describe Gazdanov's own dilemma, as woefully articulated in his 1930 statement to Gor'kii: "я плохо и мало знаю Россию, т. к. уехал оттуда, когда мне было 16 лет, немногим больше; но Россия моя родина, и ни на каком другом языке кроме русского я не могу и не буду писать."<sup>101</sup> On the one hand, he had left Russia at a young age, and the precision of his language was influenced by this migration; on the other, he refused to transition to another writing language, or to fashion himself as a bilingual writer. His own "half-destiny" thus arose from his continued commitment to a language whose mass readership was inaccessible to him, with those novels that garnered the greatest interest during his lifetime unsurprisingly being those published in translation, such as *Prizrak* and *Vozvrashchenie buddy*. Whereas the authenticity of Gazdanov's Russian was disputed by émigré contemporaries such as Adamovich during his lifetime, it is ironic that posthumous criticism has equally disputed the authenticity of his bilingualism (as evidenced in Beaujour's assertion that he never "became" a bilingual writer). Whilst Gazdanov never consciously chose to write in another language, there is archival evidence indicating that he

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<sup>99</sup> Vladislav Khodasevich, "Knigi i liudi. Sovremennie zapiski 60", *Vozrozhdenie*, 3935 (12 March, 1936), 3-4. (p. 3).

<sup>100</sup> Elsa Triolet, *La mise en mots* (Geneva: Skira, 1969), p. 8.

<sup>101</sup> Gazdanov, letter to Maksim Gor'kii, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 41.



considered it.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, one might argue that much of what Beaujour clumsily terms the process of “becoming a bilingual writer” was in Nabokov’s case down to a great deal of self-styling as such.

Valentin Korovin has rightly observed that even the decidedly chastising and traditionalist tone of Gazdanov’s later appraisals of Nabokov do not permit us to place him seamlessly within the same bracket as elder émigré writers such as Ivan Shmelev or Boris Zaitsev, who were so firmly wed to a pre-revolutionary literary past that their own works stubbornly evoked a Russia that no longer existed.<sup>103</sup> According to those criteria, Gazdanov was by no means a literary conservative. His works, as I have discussed elsewhere, deliberately blur the lines between Petersburg and Paris texts, forcing the reader to confront the cultural transference upon which the Russian tradition had in the first place been founded. Much of Nabokov’s interwar output, but perhaps *Dar* most explicitly, toes a similar line between conservatism and challenge to a nineteenth-century tradition.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, he had by 1967 so successfully asserted his own artistic cosmopolitanism and adapted to his chosen home country and literary milieu that he had almost entirely shed any popular association with the liminal period of the interwar emigration.<sup>105</sup> This self-conscious artistic reinvention is evident in his post-1939 works, as well as comments, such as the oft-cited and characteristically slippery response to a journalist’s questions regarding his nationality and

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<sup>102</sup> In the late 1930s, Gazdanov pitched an excerpt of *Polet* (the plane-crash scene) to a French publisher in his own French translation. See Dienes, “Introduction”, in Gazdanov, *Polet* (The Hague: Leuxenhoff, 1992), p. xviii. A draft of the letter is now held in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, along with other evidence that he considered translating his works, such as a translation into French of the opening of *Večer u Kler* (Item 17 and Item 5, ff.19-25).

<sup>103</sup> Valentin Korovin, *Istoriia russkoi literatury XX – nachala XXI veka*, 3 vols (Moscow: VLADOS, 2014), III, 928.

<sup>104</sup> Nabokov termed Russian literature the “heroine” of *Dar*. The novel nonetheless provoked a minor scandal in Paris when its fourth chapter, a mocking biography of the nineteenth-century writer and critic Nikolai Chernyshevskii, was denied publication by the “left-leaning but non-communist” editors of *Sovremennye zapiski*. (see Foster, “Paris”, p. 95).

<sup>105</sup> After World War II, much of the social and economic infrastructure of the interwar diaspora had either ceased to exist. Many émigrés had similarly either moved on from Paris, or else, like Iurii Fel’zen, who perished in a Nazi concentration camp, did not survive the war. Gazdanov is atypical for remaining in the French capital for so long.

citizenship just a year earlier: “I am as American as April in Arizona.”<sup>106</sup> The popular elision of Nabokov’s European period is reinforced, too, in critical responses to his oeuvre, such as Italian Slavist Ettore Lo Gatto’s description of him as “American literature’s gain, Russian literature’s loss”, or indeed Brian Boyd’s 1991 twin biographies, sanctioned by Nabokov himself, and respectively subtitled *The Russian Years* and *The American Years*.<sup>107</sup> Such insistence on a clear dichotomy between Russia and America imposed a schismatic narrative on to his trajectory that crucially deemphasised his authorial emergence from within the émigré literary circles, publishing houses and cultural journals of Berlin, Prague and Paris. One needn’t speculate too far to envisage how such a reinvention might have been perceived by other émigrés who remained embedded within such circles. Alexander Dolinin notes that Nabokov’s linguistic transition from Russian to English was regarded as an “act of cultural betrayal”, a condemnation that reluctantly acknowledges his vast contribution to émigré letters.<sup>108</sup> Nabokov migrated for a second time, confirming Gazdanov’s premonition that he was a separate case who necessitated a separate discussion. Gazdanov, conversely, did not eschew the label he had in 1930 so emphatically rejected, and remained first and foremost a Russian émigré writer.

Even those testimonials that *did* reemphasise Nabokov’s emergence from the interwar emigration still stressed his status as a special case within that sphere. One very clear example may be noted in Berberova’s recollection of reading *Zashchita Luzhina* for the first time in her autobiography, *Kursiv moi*:

Я села читать эти главы, прочла их два раза. Огромный, зрелый, сложный  
современный писатель был передо мной, огромный русский писатель, как

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<sup>106</sup> Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1974), p. 98. Beaujour has argued that such statements from him mean it is “hopelessly silly to try to attribute Nabokov to a single country, a single culture, or even a dominant language” (Beaujour, *Alien Tongues*, pp. 81-2).

<sup>107</sup> Lo Gatto, p. 879.

<sup>108</sup> Alexander Dolinin, “The Gift”, in Vladimir E. Alexandrov, ed., *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 135-68 (p. 137).

Феникс, родился из огня и пепла революции и изгнания. Наше существование отныне получало смысл. Все мое поколение было оправдано.<sup>109</sup>

Berberova's assertion that Nabokov's arrival was for her akin to "a phoenix rising from the flames of revolution and exile" was perhaps exaggerated by the retrospective stance from which it was recalled.<sup>110</sup> Berberova's appraisal of her peer through the metaphor of the death-defying process of reincarnation (a theme that had often been latent in earlier works, but would become increasingly prominent in English-language novels such as *Pale Fire* or *Ada*) is compelling, not least for the parallel it would appear to draw between supranationalism and immortality, which I shall now consider through a discussion of Gazdanov and Nabokov's competing conceptions of life, death and authorship.<sup>111</sup>

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In an oft-cited introduction to the 1979 posthumous publication of Nabokov's Russian poems, Véra Nabokov stated that the theme of *potustoronnost'* ("the otherworld" or "the beyond") had not been adequately explored in existing studies of his works: "Она, кажется, не была никем отмечена, а между тем ею пропитано все, что он писал; она, как некий водяной знак, символизирует все его творчество."<sup>112</sup> Her comment has inspired many studies devoted to instances of *potustoronnost'* in Nabokov's oeuvre, the most systematic of which is Vladimir Alexandrov's *Nabokov's Otherworld*.<sup>113</sup> Nabokov's works are indeed replete with "otherworlds", such as Kinbote's lost kingdom of Zembla in *Pale Fire* (1962),

<sup>109</sup> Nina Berberova, *Kursiv moi* (Moscow: Soglasie, 1996), pp. 370-1.

<sup>110</sup> It might have been influenced by Nabokov's positive reviews of her early writing: Berberova is, according to Maxim Shrayer, the recipient of the sole clearly positive evaluation of a woman's prose in all Nabokov's literary criticism. (Maxim Shrayer, "Pochemu Nabokov ne liubil pisatel'nits", trans. Vera Polishchuk, *Druzhba narodov*, 11 (2000), 197-204); see also Dominique Hoffmann, "Without Nostalgia: Nina Berberova's Short Fiction of the 1930s" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011), p. 9.

<sup>111</sup> It also recalls Nabokov's description of Sirin in *Speak, Memory*: "Across the dark sky of exile, Sirin passed, to use a simile of a more conservative nature, like a meteor, and disappeared, leaving nothing much else behind him than a vague sense of uneasiness." Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 215.

<sup>112</sup> Véra Nabokov, "Predislovie", *Stikhi* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1979), pp. 3-4 (p. 3).

<sup>113</sup> Vladimir E. Alexandrov, *Nabokov's Otherworld* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

the dystopian city of Padukgrad in *Bend Sinister* (1947), or Zoorland, the egalitarian state dreamt up by the young protagonist Martin Edelweiss and his unrequited love Sonia in *Podvig* (1932):

«Как мы ее назовем?» [...] «Что-нибудь такое – северное, – ответила Соня [...] «Например – Зоорландия, – сказал Мартын. – О ней упоминают норманны». – «Ну конечно, – Зоорландия», – подхватила Соня, и он широко улыбнулся, несколько потрясенный неожиданно открывшейся в ней способностью мечтать.<sup>114</sup>

Martin's excitement at realising he has awakened in Sonia an ability to dream articulates a basic creative impulse to create new worlds and horizons for consumption, crucially, by others. What may begin as a form of metaphysical solipsism is validated and enriched by its interaction with the outside world. In *Priglasenie na kazn'* (1935-6), Tsintsinnat's imprisonment inside the Fortress shuts him off from the outside world (in this case, an unnamed totalitarian state) to such an extent that all physical matter, including his own body, begins to disintegrate: “Он встал, снял халат, ермолку, туфли. Снял полотняные штаны и рубашку. Снял, как парик, голову, снял ключицы, как ремни, снял грудную клетку, как кольчугу.”<sup>115</sup> The death sentence whispered in the novel's opening launches Tsintsinnat into a liminal “beyond” somewhere between earthly life and death. He writes, asserting his existence, in a pencil which, like his time, is rapidly dwindling (“карандашом, укоротившимся более чем на треть”<sup>116</sup>). The totality of the world during his final days is reduced to the stage-like cell in which he is held, with the unattainable Tamara Gardens acquiring the alluring significance of an abstract *tam* (there, somewhere that is not here).<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Nabokov, *Podvig* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis/McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 170.

<sup>115</sup> Nabokov, *Priglasenie na kazn'*, in *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda*, IV, 44-187 (p. 61).

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>117</sup> Donald Barton Johnson has argued that *Priglasenie na kazn'* posits a thematic polarity between the immediate world of the novel (tut/here) and the ideal world which Cincinnatus intuits or sees in privileged

There is for both Gazdanov and Nabokov a strong link between the metaphysical and the metafictional.<sup>118</sup> The episode of the narrator's imprisonment in *Vozvrashchenie buddy* is one example. As I have discussed in the first chapter, this digression is the site of multiple intersecting intertexts, one of which is *Priglasenie na kazn'*. Whilst I do not intend to recapitulate them all in detail here, I wish to consider the means by which we might read Gazdanov's own *potustoronnost'* as a gateway to his intertextual practice. Alexandrov has identified the tension "between sleep and earthly life on the one hand, and wakefulness and a transcendent world on the other" as a unifying feature of Nabokov's art.<sup>119</sup> One may note its occurrence in early works, such as *Priglasenie*, whose epigraph is attributed to a fictional French author named Delalande: "Comme un fou se croit Dieu/Nous nous croyons mortels. —Delalande, *Discours sur les ombres*."<sup>120</sup> In *Vozvrashchenie*, the narrator conceptualises of his own curious malady as a physical movement back and forth between earthly and transcendental worlds:

Я давно привык к припадкам моей душевной болезни, и в том, что у меня оставалось от моего собственного сознания, в этом небольшом и смутном пространстве, которое временами почти переставало существовать, но в котором все-таки заключалась моя последняя надежда на возвращение в реальный мир, не омраченный хроническим безумием, — я старался стоически переносить эти уходы и провалы в чужое или воображаемое бытие. И все-таки каждый раз, когда я оттуда возвращался, меня охватывало отчаяние.<sup>121</sup>

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moments of perception (tara/there); see D. Barton Johnson, "Spatial Modeling and Deixis: Nabokov's Invitation to a Beheading", *Poetics Today*, 3/1 (1982), 81-98.

<sup>118</sup> This idea is well-established in Nabokov criticism (see Sergej Davydov, "Invitation to a Beheading", in Alexandrov, ed., *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, p. 191).

<sup>119</sup> Alexandrov, *Nabokov's Otherworld*, p. 35. Nabokov was privately preoccupied with the question of the overlap between sleep and consciousness to such an extent that he undertook his own dream diary experiment in 1964. See also Gennady Barabtarlo, *Insomniac Dreams: Experiments with Time by Vladimir Nabokov* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>120</sup> Nabokov, *Priglasenie na kazn'*, p. 47.

<sup>121</sup> Gazdanov, *Vozvrashchenie* in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, III, 137-294 (p. 171-2).

His recurring seizures deny him a firm rootedness in the tangible space of the real world, and his illness is repeatedly conflated with the limbo of exile. The fluidity between here and elsewhere is imprinted on the real world too: the narrator's aimless wandering in Paris enacts a sort of "haunting" of certain landmarks, such as the Seine or the Tuileries. There is both a spatial fluidity (between here and elsewhere) and a temporal flux (between past and present): this is the shifting ground on which the narrator's nocturnal *flânerie* down a dark and narrow alleyway suddenly cuts to the surreal scene of his imprisonment: "бродя без цели по улицам незнакомой мне части города, свернул в узкий проход между домами."<sup>122</sup> What follows is a winding digression laced with various allusions which contribute to the novel's disjointed intertextuality, and undermine the primacy of any single intertext.<sup>123</sup> There is a ghostly, absent engagement with Kafka, whose "Der Prozess" is latent in the narrator's unexplained imprisonment, and whose "Die Verwandlung" has already been implicit in his repeated metamorphosis. The unspoken (and thus unconfirmed) nature of the Kafka intertext introduces an element of doubt for the reader, who suspects they have decoded the allusion, but are forced to reassess when it is left unresolved, and other potential allusions are noted. Whereas Nabokov strongly (perhaps too strongly) denied any familiarity with Kafka or his works whilst writing *Priglasenie*, Gazdanov neither confirms nor denies the connection, content instead to occupy a liminal zone of suggestive silence. The narrator of *Vozvrashchenie* does not get to decode his mental hallucinations; why, then, should the reader be permitted to decode the novel's tangled allusions?

Yet, as Alexandrov is at pains to point out, the imaginary worlds, continents, states and towns of Nabokov's oeuvre elsewhere draw heavily from our own, and consequently appear to readers as tacit refractions of real-world counterparts. For all that they push the

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., pp. 156-70.

boundaries of what is “real”, these alternate versions of the world bend the logic of verisimilitude far less than, say, the fact of a bronze horseman moving or a nose acquiring a separate identity and rank to its owner.<sup>124</sup> Kinbote’s Zembla constitutes “a plausible fictional construct that has a number of analogues in ‘real’ twentieth-century European history.”<sup>125</sup> This particular breed of “otherworld” —the fictional place drawn from a real one (or ones)— is arguably the most common within Nabokov’s oeuvre. There is the made up Riviera resort of Fial’ta in “Vesna v Fial’te” (1938), informed by his own vacations in the south of France. Or Waindell College in *Pnin* (1957), inspired by his experience of campus life at Wellesley College and Cornell University, where he taught during the 1940s and ’50s. The landscape of *Lolita* (1955) is a curious blend of real and unreal: Humbert, born in Paris, migrates to the United States where he settles for a time in the fictitious New England town of Ramsdale. In *Ada or Ardor* (1969), the upside-down world of Antiterra functions as a fictive counterpoint to the more recognisable “Terra” that the reader inhabits, and with which it shares certain features, albeit along with some fundamental differences. On Antiterra, the landmass we recognise as North America is connected to “Estoty”, a version of pre-revolutionary Russia in which peasants and aristocrats still coexist. “Tartary” which occupies northern Eurasia and is situated behind a euphemistic “Golden Veil”, is synonymous with the Soviet Union:

*Ved’* (“it is, isn’t it”) sidesplitting to imagine that “Russia,” instead of being a quaint synonym of Estoty, the American province extending from the Arctic no-longer-vicious Circle to the United States proper, was on Terra the name of a country, transferred as if by some sleight of *land* across the ha-ha of a doubled ocean to the opposite hemisphere where it sprawled over all of today’s Tartary, from Kurland to the Kuriles!<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Alexandrov, *Nabokov’s Otherworld*, p. 191.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Nabokov, *Ada or Ardor: a family chronicle* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1970), p. 24.

This “sleight of *land*” justifies the novel’s hybrid, macaronic language (a collage of English, French and Russian), permitting Nabokov to fictionalise, warp and fuse intertexts spanning all three artistic traditions, and, in an echo of the incest between characters, to intimate the intellectual and linguistic consanguinity between them. This has prompted readings of *Ada* as a love letter to Nabokov’s cosmopolitan, transnational identity.<sup>127</sup> Or, as Rachel Trousdale has argued, “Splitting our world’s Russia in two means there is no question of exile in the novel—or rather, that Van’s narrative of exile and reclamation is the quest for a lost childhood rather than a lost homeland.”<sup>128</sup> But whilst the trauma of exile may be conveniently elided in the concocted “Amerussia”, the linguistic divide is not so easily surmountable. Russian words can be transliterated from Cyrillic letters into Latin ones, but still require further elucidation, as illustrated above in Van’s parenthetical translation of “Ved” for the reader. Unlike French, which often sits untranslated alongside English in *Ada*, the reader’s comprehension of Russian cannot be presumed, and the necessity of its clarification thus constitutes a real-world intrusion into the novel’s artificial polyglot universe.<sup>129</sup>

Gazdanov’s works often engage with notions of an “otherworld” or “beyond”, although they arguably never do so in as intricate or outlandish a manner as *Ada*. His fictional settings for the most part remain closely tethered to a recognisable real-world environment (usually Paris). Where improbable events occur, they are generally predicated on a suspension of disbelief, via chance encounters (as in *Prizrak* or “Shpion”), or dream sequences (as in *Istoriia odnogo puteshestviia* or *Vozvrashchenie buddy*). Whiffs of

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<sup>127</sup> For instance, Douglas Fowler writes that the artificial world of Antiterra is “simply the happily ever-after portion of Nabokov’s lifelong attempt to create out of his art a fairy-tale, and the only villain that survives is time itself.” Douglas Fowler, *Reading Nabokov* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 182.

<sup>128</sup> Rachel Trousdale, *Nabokov, Rushdie, and the Transnational Imagination: novels of exile and alternate worlds* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 60.

<sup>129</sup> “The linguistic smorgasbord of *Ada*, in fact, acts to situate us in the linguistically, temporally and geographically amorphous space of Nabokov’s fictional world.” Rita Safariants, “Literary Bilingualism and Codeswitching in Vladimir Nabokov’s ‘Ada’”, *Urbandus Review*, 10 (2007), 191-211 (p. 194). Whilst this might be true, even this space cannot avoid real-world practicalities. Indeed, it is ironic that one of the few real contexts in which this blend of languages could co-exist without elucidation was the interwar emigration from which Nabokov maintained he was so “aloof”.



“otherworldliness”, as Mikhail Shul’man notes, often arise fleetingly through interactions with modern devices, such as telephones, airplanes, and television screens, or tangible objects somehow prompting reflection, whether of the literal or metaphorical kind: mirrors, books, art, and so on.<sup>130</sup> In his essay on Gogol’, Gazdanov asserted that every writer “creates their own world”: “Каждый писатель создает свой собственный мир, а не воспроизводит действительность, и вне этого подлинного творчества литература, настоящая литература, не существует.”<sup>131</sup> Gazdanov’s own works abide by this rule, seeking not to reflect an objective ‘reality’, but rather to creatively construct the world, through the combination of existing depictions in art and literature with his own unique perspective. Allusion is for both Gazdanov and Nabokov a tool of shorthand reference to “another world”, in the sense of a place that is now distant, whether in space, time, or both, or indeed in the sense of those fictional worlds already created by others. In the context of exile, allusion acts as a figurative gateway to the all-too-real environment and cultural heritage that have been lost. For instance, in *Vecher*, Nikolai alludes to the folkloric city of Kitezh (in anticipatory reference to the lost homeland) as he travels by boat across the Black Sea, towards Istanbul:

Мы плыли в морском сумраке к невидимому городу...и во влажной тишине  
этого путешествия изредка звонил колокол - и звук, неизменно нас  
сопровождавший, только звук колокола соединял в медленной стеклянной  
своей прозрачности огненные края и воду, отделявшие меня от России, с  
лепечущим и сбывающимся, с прекрасным сном о Клэр...<sup>132</sup>

The references to an “invisible city” and the sound of a “ringing bell” clearly invoke Kitezh, the legendary city said either to have become invisible or been submerged in Lake Svetloyar, (a real lake located in the Nizhny Novgorod Oblast’ of Russia), in order to be saved from

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<sup>130</sup> Mikhail Shul’man, “Gazdanov i Nabokov”, in Vasil’eva, ed., *Vozvrashchenie Gaito Gazdanova*, pp. 15-24 (p. 18).

<sup>131</sup> Gazdanov, “O Gogole” in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, III, 635-51 (p. 636).

<sup>132</sup> Gazdanov, *Vecher*, p. 162.

contamination by surrounding evil. As Lisa Woodson has argued, the legend was often referenced in relation to lost love throughout the nineteenth century, but Gazdanov's geographic transplantation of it *outside* of Russia constituted a distinctly exilic variation on that theme: "the placement of Kitezkh outside of the geographical territory of Russia is a stunning innovation on a legend that was once rooted to a specific Russian lake and had in recent years come to represent Russia itself."<sup>133</sup> The exilic community of Russia Abroad was arguably an apt locus for Kitezkh's displacement: "Emigration, in effect, became Kitezkh, a repository of pre-revolutionary Russia cut off from contemporary Russia, irrelevant and virtually invisible to those around it."<sup>134</sup> What is distinct about Gazdanov's own "otherworlds" then, is that they often do not infringe on a real world setting. Whilst both Gazdanov and Nabokov invoke pre-revolutionary Russia through reference to "otherworlds", Gazdanov's collaging of a wide range of subtexts (in *Vecher*, from Russian folk legend, to Greek myth, to Russian nineteenth-century and contemporary émigré fiction) contrasts with the more ostentatious remapping of *Ada*, *Pale Fire* or *Bend Sinister*. Gazdanov's narrators consciously refract and manipulate existing fictional spaces in their perception of the real world. Nabokov's narrators conversely disrupt the very boundaries between "real" and "fictional". In *Pale Fire*, the fact of Kinbote's unreliability generates a more fundamental uncertainty as to whether Zembla, an entirely "new" creation, is a real place in the world of the novel, or a figment of his imagination.

Thus far the discussion has focussed on the various ways in which Nabokov and Gazdanov conceive of exile as a condition of sickness, death, purgatorial detachment, or displacement, whether from the familiar and comforting narrative of one's childhood, or from the present foreign surrounding. In so doing, they both harness the potential of the

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<sup>133</sup> Lisa Woodson, "The Legend of Kitezkh in Russian Literature" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2014), pp. 183-4.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184. Gazdanov was not the only émigré to play with the legend of the invisible city, as evidenced in Bunin's 1925 essay "Inoniia i Kitezkh", published on the fifty-year anniversary of A. K. Tolstoi's death.

“otherworld” and the “otherwork” (the artistic work by an author other than themselves) as a fictional analogue for ideas or circumstances that are difficult to articulate. But their works also contain “otherworks” that are as fictional as their characters and settings: John Shade’s poem in *Pale Fire*, Aleksandr Vol’f’s *I’ll Come Tomorrow* in *Prizrak*, V.’s biography of his half-brother Sebastian Knight in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941), Lola Aînée’s untruthful biography in *Polet*. Indeed, as the various “knight’s moves” of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* and *Prizrak* indicate, the state of being bilingual is integral to the ideas of rebirth and movement beyond with which they are preoccupied. The “otherworks” that they create enrich their metaphysical discourses as much as those real ones that they collage, pastiche or overlay. The remainder of this discussion will thus focus on late works engaging variously with questions of authorship, life and death—*Ada* (1969) and *Evelina i ee druz’ia* (1968-71)—in order to consider how their radically different artistic and exilic trajectories influenced their respective conceptions of their roles in “creating” the world.

*Evelina i ee druz’ia* (hereafter *Evelina*) was first serialised in *Novyi zhurnal* between 1968 and 1971, although the novel was never published in full during Gazdanov’s lifetime.<sup>135</sup> Early drafts nonetheless indicate that he had begun to conceive of it in some form or another from as early as 1951.<sup>136</sup> At first glance, there does not appear to be much common ground between the world of *Evelina*, whose poles extend from Paris to the French Riviera, and the science-fictional universe of *Ada*, which, as I have already discussed, nonchalantly remaps the entire course of world history and geography. And yet these novels, both published at a point when any comparison between their respective authors had long faded, are arguably the most allusive works produced by either.<sup>137</sup> They are the most elusive too, in the sense that their

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<sup>135</sup> Gaito Gazdanov, *Evelina i ee druz’ia*, in *Novyi zhurnal*, 92 (1968), 94-97 (1969), 98-101 (1970), 102, 104-5 (1971). First published in full in Gazdanov, *Prizrak Aleksandra Vol’fa: romany* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia proza, 1990), pp. 504-700. Citations from the novel will be taken from *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, IV, 137-356.

<sup>136</sup> Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, IV, 680.

<sup>137</sup> For more in-depth discussion of allusion in *Ada* see D. Barton Johnson, “The Labyrinth of Incest in Nabokov’s *Ada*”, *Comparative Literature*, 38/3 (1986), 224-55.

tangled plotlines are hard to pin down, their hyper-referentiality making their potential meanings difficult to grasp. Their metafiction is twofold: each is littered with endless, often extraneous and ostentatious references to a pan-European corpus of literature and visual art, and each also tells the story of its own composition. Each is named after the female object of the male narrator's desire. *Ada* is the story of Van Veen's illicit love for Ada, whom he believed to be his cousin but discovers is his sister; and *Evelina* tells of the unnamed narrator's longing for his longstanding friend, Evelina. But *Evelina*, like *Ada*, is in many ways not about its heroine (as is evident from the extended versions of their titles): the novel follows the criss-crossing lives of a small group of friends (Evelina, Artur, Andrei, Merville and the narrator) as they navigate dramatic events and episodes, whilst Van's memoir purports to be a "family chronicle" in the style of the nineteenth-century novel, complete with a detailed family tree on its first pages. We are informed that their writing, too, has been a laborious and collaborative process. Van's memoir has been composed by him, transcribed by his secretary Violet, edited by Ada, and prepared for publication by Ronald Oranger. Whilst the narrator of *Evelina* is far more ambiguous about the process of writing the novel (presumably the one we are now reading), there are certain moments at which Evelina's voice intrudes into the narrative in order to "foretell" certain details, as when she informs him that writing a book about her will "rid him of the need to think up heroes and heroines":

И тогда я предложу тебе написать обо мне книгу. Это избавит тебя от необходимости писать о выдуманных героях и героинях. Ты напишешь о том, как мутнеют мои глаза от охватившего меня чувства. Ты напишешь, как я сижу и плачу и мое лицо становится некрасным от слез, потому что я думаю, что мой возлюбленный меня забыл. Ты напишешь, как мы медленно идем с ним ночью, под дождем, и он держит меня за талию, и мои мокрые волосы свисают на

плечи. Что ты напишешь еще?<sup>138</sup>

Evelina's intrusions are more sustained than Kler's, but it is intriguing that such a parallel should exist between Gazdanov's first and last complete novels, both of which end with a premonition of the book we are now reading. In the closing scene of *Vecher*, we find ourselves on the cusp of the book's opening, as the narrator makes his way from Russia to France, via Istanbul. In the final lines of *Evelina*, the narrator explains to Evelina that he will one day write a book about her: "Она проснулась, открыла глаза и, встретив мой взгляд, сказала: — Почему ты так пристально смотришь на меня? О чем ты думаешь? — О том, что я когда-нибудь напишу о тебе книгу, — сказал я."<sup>139</sup> The cyclical narrative of *Evelina* formally echoes Evelina's belief in metempsychosis, or reincarnation, as well as the characters' perennial back and forth between Paris and other parts of the world (Sicily, Nice, New York, Argentina).

A key difference between *Ada* and *Evelina* is the nature of the "otherworlds" they seek to represent, and correspondingly, the vision of art (and the artist) that they put forward. The *potustoronnost'* of the former is evident in its fantastic estrangement of the real world, such that temporal markers are anachronistically intermingled, and familiar twentieth-century objects estranged: "Sonorola" is the new name for radio, and Van and Ada speak via the science-fiction "dorophone" (a hydro-powered telephone). Gazdanov's own *potustoronnost'*, as I have already noted, here observes the basic logic of realism, with more surreal elements intermittently intruding to reinforce the narrator's mental detachment. The narrator of *Evelina* does not speak on an imaginary telephone but wonders at the curiosity of the real thing: "Далекий женский голос спросил по-английски, но с резким иностранным акцентом, я ли такой-то. После моего утвердительного ответа женщина сказала: — С вами сейчас

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<sup>138</sup> Gazdanov, *Evelina*, p. 262.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.

будут говорить.”<sup>140</sup> In *Evelina*, the narrator muses on the elision of space and time through the telephone, whereas in *Ada*, the more fundamental collapsing of space-time (and the resultant anachronism of temporal referents) are not acknowledged as strange to anyone but the reader.<sup>141</sup> Different modulations of disembodied communication across space and time strongly inform the vision of art put forward in each. In *Ada*, the authorial control exerted by Van, and the editing process generate a tightly structured work in five parts. In *Evelina*, the narrator is conscious of the means by which the literary work fulfils a similar function to a conversation *through* time, as expressed in the association between metempsychosis (the transmigration of the soul at death into a new body) and the literary work: the various intrusions from multiple individuals along the way generate a work that is episodic, but without any overarching structure (of chapters or parts). Divisions exist in the form of undifferentiated ellipses, which make the work, its various subplots and digressions, impossible to distil.

It is notable that almost every single character in *Evelina* exhibits a propensity to relate their life to scenes from literature, poetry or art. This frustrating tendency stands in contrast to their apparent inability to empathise with one another. Arthur’s private “artistic world” is an escape from the real world he occupies: “артистический мир, где он мог снова заняться комментариями поэзии Клоделя или пространными рассуждениями о «Коридоне» Андрея Жида.”<sup>142</sup> *Evelina* describes Merville as “a Dostoevskian hero”: “Он бывал либо мрачен, либо находился в состоянии судорожного восторга, — как герой Достоевского, — сказала о нем Эвелина”.<sup>143</sup> Merville envies Georges’ “необыкновенный

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>141</sup> Gerard de Vries has noted the significance of voices in Nabokov’s *Dar* and *Priglasenie*, where his family members’ voices intrude on Tsintsinnat’s isolation (Gerard de Vries, *Silent Love: The Annotation and Interpretation of Nabokov’s The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016), p. 170).

<sup>142</sup> Gazdanov, *Evelina*, p. 186.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

дар” (his perfect command of English), because it permits him to understand the poetry of Keats.<sup>144</sup> Elsewhere, Merville’s unprompted and melodramatic recitation of lines from Baudelaire’s *Le Voyage* whilst reminiscing about a lost love (“Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l’encre, / Nos coeurs que tu connais sont remplis de rayons!”)<sup>145</sup> contrasts with his lack of empathy for the narrator’s own failed relationship: “Это похоже на финал какой-то пьесы дурного вкуса.”<sup>146</sup> The narrator compares his gradually waning desire to read to the eponymous *peau de chagrin* of Balzac’s novel (“круг моего чтения все время суживался, как шагреновая кожа”),<sup>147</sup> and elsewhere seemingly alludes to Gide’s *Les faux-monnayeurs* (1925) in his reference to a peripheral character: “он был любителем искусства не меньше, чем фальшивомонетчик, с той разницей, что он предпочитал литературу всему остальному.”<sup>148</sup> As these examples indicate, the many allusions scattered throughout the novel play more readily to a reader familiar with the modern French canon than Gazdanov’s earlier novels, which are comparably far more insistent on a hybrid artistic heritage. The allusion to Gide’s *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (1925), in which the plotline of fraudulent banknotes (one of many intersecting plots within the novel) is reinforced through enumerated pastiches and citations from other works, raises the question of whether citation, reference and allusion are a means of paying homage, or more aptly a form of fraudulence.<sup>149</sup> Julian Connolly has argued that the highly allusive nature of *Otchaianie* is closely connected to Hermann’s drive “to be in control of his own destiny”, which finds its outlet in his own

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 192. The final lines of Baudelaire’s “Le Voyage”, (“Nous voulons . . . / Plonger . . . / Au fond de l’Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau”) are ambiguous: as the final lines of the collection, they either launch its reader on a new course from that set up in “Au lecteur”, and thus potentially concluding *Les Fleurs du mal* on a note of optimism, or they end its quest in death.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>149</sup> Livak has considered Nabokov’s *Dar* alongside Gide’s *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, pp. 164-204.

creative instinct, or his urge to bend the truth.<sup>150</sup> The concept of the intertextual impulse as a form of dishonesty to or divergence from the authenticity of an original is, as I have discussed, a useful description of the wider referential practice of younger émigrés, which, as we have seen, often sought not simply to reflect but to refract or distort earlier works. One might similarly read the characters of *Evelina* as seeking to assert some form of order over their lives in their recourse to pre-existing narratives. The narrator is perhaps the only individual who does not do so, and the novel he produces consequently frustrates plot-driven expectations. Where in *Ada*, the characters' cosmopolitanism maps on to its intertextual process, in *Evelina*, the emphasis on fate as a guiding force to a certain extent renounces authorial responsibility.

The emphasis on French precursors (as opposed to the French, English and Russian range of romantic precursors in *Ada*: Chateaubriand, Byron, Pushkin) contributes to the novel's caricatured image of Paris, which recreates the seedy underworld we have already encountered in the much earlier *Nochnye dorogi*, only without the narrator's emotional involvement. The narrator of *Evelina* maintains a greater distance from the vagrant population he observes: for instance, his relative wealth is evident in the parallel he draws between Parisian tramps, and those one might find in any other large metropolis, such as the Bowery district of New York ("Всегда были эти одинокие прогулки — в России, во Франции, в Германии, в Италии, в Америке, всюду, куда заносила меня судьба").<sup>151</sup>

Она точно всплывала передо мной с парижского дна, из этого мира людей, давно погружившихся в пьяное небытие, ночных бродяг, странников и нищих, — мира, который я видел в Париже и потом в Нью-Йорке, на улицах Баури, где я обходил тела в лохмотьях, лежавшие на мостовой или на тротуаре, не зная —

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<sup>150</sup> Julian Connolly, "The Function of Literary Allusion in Nabokov's *Despair*", *Slavic and East European Journal*, 26/3 (1982), 302-13 (p. 307).

<sup>151</sup> Gazdanov, *Evelina*, p. 265.



трупы это или спящие, где на растрескавшейся двери убогой гостиницы была надпись "Только для мужчин".<sup>152</sup>

In what would appear to be a knowing inversion of the *document humain* genre with which the writers of the “Paris note” were preoccupied, whilst the narrator maintains a comfortable distance from the real-life poverty he observes, he is entirely incapable of dissociating his personal life from those of his fictional characters, such that the former is devoid of meaning for him:

Вместе с тем я привык к мучительным усилиям воображения, которых требовала моя литературная работа. Но я столько раз заставлял себя переживать чувства моих героев, что под конец у меня не хватало сил для самого главного — преобразования моей собственной жизни. И та пустота, в которой я находился теперь, была, в сущности, непосредственным результатом именно этого порядка вещей.<sup>153</sup>

There is thus a tension between the fictional “heroes” of the narrator’s previous compositions, (or indeed, of the novel he persistently informs us he should be writing), and the novel we are reading, which is drawn from his own life. Such a tension is redolent of Nabokov’s *Otchaianie*, or French interwar works such as Sartre’s *La Nausée* (1938), in which Roquentin’s intended biography of a historical figure gradually devolves into his increasingly incoherent diary, which we only realise is the ‘novel’ we are reading at the end. The narrator of *Evelina* also shares Roquentin’s “nausea”. In fact, in *Evelina*, it is no longer being in exile that is equated with sickness (as it is in *Vozvrashchenie buddy*), but being a writer: “Милый друг, быть писателем — это не профессия, это болезнь.”<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 284.

A further instantiation of the tension between fiction and truth in *Evelina* emerges in the conspiratorial “falsification” of Langlois’ memoir undertaken by Arthur (whom Langlois has commissioned to ghost-write it) and encouraged by the narrator. This fictionalisation is prompted by Arthur’s concern that Langlois’ unedited recollections are not sufficiently interesting or erudite:

Из старого человека с уголовным прошлым ты делаешь юного романтика и любителя искусств. Ты перемеляешь его в мир, которого он не знал и не мог знать, и мне кажется, что за это он должен быть тебе благодарен. А то, что это фальсификация — разве это имеет такое значение?<sup>155</sup>

“Falsification” was exactly the charge levelled at Gazdanov by Zaitsev in his appraisal of the former’s reception of Proust: “получается некий «пастиш» — книга, написанная «под Пруста», некая имитация, подделка, фальсификация.”<sup>156</sup> In *Evelina*, it reaches its parodic apotheosis in Arthur’s closing statement at the end of the book he is writing (ironically a ghost-written memoir) that he will now die, having “conquered death”: “Но я умру, зная, что мне в какой-то степени удалось победить смерть. Моя книга — это борьба против власти забвения, на которое я обречен.”<sup>157</sup> Here, Arthur’s projected death ironically alludes to the pun of Roland Barthes’ famous 1967 essay, “La mort de l’auteur”, which argued that the text was “that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.”<sup>158</sup> Arthur’s chosen literary form—the ghost-written memoir of a petty criminal—deflates

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>156</sup> K. Zaitsev, “‘Vecher u Kler’ Gaito Gazdanova”, *Rossia i slavianstvo*, 69 (1930), p. 3, cited from Gazdanov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V, 382-4 (p. 383).

<sup>157</sup> Gazdanov, *Evelina*, p. 333.

<sup>158</sup> Roland Barthes, “La mort de l’auteur”, in *Music Image Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 142-8 (p. 142). The title of Barthes’ essay contained a deliberate play on the wording of Mallory’s “Le morte d’Arthur”.

concerns about the tyrannical author-centric nature of literary production.<sup>159</sup> The process of writing becomes an exaggerated means of asserting one's identity, just as the characters of *Evelina* live a life whose events are likened to artistic works. Arthur's self-satisfied conviction that he will have beaten death, a view not quite endorsed by the narrator, is undercut not only via the wordplay, but also in the absence of any detail of the narrator's own life story, including, for instance, his name.<sup>160</sup> In *Ada*, this tension manifests rather less comically in Part 5 of the novel, where Van and Ada declare their intention to commit a joint suicide and "die into the finished book", with their names no longer given separately (instead grotesquely amalgamated as "Vaniada", "Dava or Vada", "Vanda and Anda") although the ambiguity of whether or not they do echoes Tsintsinnat's ambiguous climactic gravitation towards anonymous "beings like himself" ("существа, подобные ему")<sup>161</sup> in *Priglasenie*.

For Gazdanov and Nabokov, the tension between transcendental and real worlds is as present a concern as the tension between other works of art and their own. From their earliest novellas, to their much later works, they would continue to interrogate questions of life and death in terms of both art and the individual who creates it. But in the intervening periods they had also experienced radically different trajectories of exile, with varying impacts on their language and readership. Although they emerged from the same ephemeral society of the interwar European emigration, and initially drew on a similar canon of referents, their frameworks had by the 1960s drastically diverged – and the modern Parisian corpus which for Gazdanov was now arguably as relevant as a Russian heritage, was for Nabokov objectionable, and overly ideological (as exemplified in his scathing appraisal of Sartre's

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<sup>159</sup> As I have noted in the introduction, Barthes regarded the supremacy of the author as a negative phenomenon resulting from a society whose capitalist ideology had held up the author's personhood to such an extent that the writer's image assumed priority above what actually remained after they were gone.

<sup>160</sup> Gazdanov's authorial identity had not eclipsed his works, unlike Nabokov, who was a willing participant in the author-centred readership that Barthes critiqued, and whose literary persona had by 1969 overshadowed his works.

<sup>161</sup> Nabokov, *Priglasenie na kazn'*, p. 187.

review of *Otchaianie*). But Nabokov was in a position of privilege, having migrated from France to the USA before the onset of World War II. There, he could perhaps remain opposed to “engaged” literature in a way that Gazdanov, who had remained in the battleground between opposing sides during the 1940s and beyond, could not. Their different journeys and artistic developments demonstrate that it is not just a question of “intertextuality in exile” that is at stake in their comparison, but rather a question of *where* that exile is situated, and the cultural, institutional and linguistic factors which have shaped, fostered or hindered it. *Evelina* and *Ada* both reflect on the prospect of an afterlife or “beyond” through their emphasis on the metaphysical potential of art, whether in an escapist or realist mode. The worlds that they depict are vastly different, but so too were the particular worlds that Gazdanov and Nabokov inhabited by the early 1970s. Whilst the former’s horizons had expanded from Paris to Munich, where he pseudonymously presented a programme on Russian literature for *Radio Svoboda* from 1953 until his death, his name remained tied to an “unnoticed generation” of writers, and the majority of his novels remained unpublished in full in their original language. Nabokov, conversely, had migrated for a second time, successfully inscribing his own name within both Russian *and* English literary history. He was anything but unnoticed, but he also did not associate himself with peers, and preferred instead to align his works with the canonical English and Russian authors of the past. Gazdanov, on the other hand, enters a more collaborative and, ultimately, politically engaged world, whilst practising writing alongside. From their early depictions of the localised interwar communities of Berlin and Paris, both relentlessly drew a parallel between exile and the notion of an afterlife, with the implication that to be an émigré is always to some extent to navigate between presence and absence, past and present, life and death, reality and fiction. The distinct modulations of language and identity that emerge across their careers attest to their ongoing literary dialogue with one another, and a wide range of others.

### Conclusion

Gazdanov's works have been read as artistic reflections—if not representations—of the varied scenes of émigré existence, from the Russian Civil War, to the night-time streets of Paris, as seen through the eyes of an impoverished taxi-driver, to the multilingual *beau-monde* as it flits between Paris, Nice and London. At the same time, however, this emphasis on mimesis runs alongside, and even counter to, interest in the stylistic experimentation of his works and his contribution to literary modernism. Reviewing *Istoriia odnogo puteshestviia* in 1938, Georgii Adamovich dismissively stated that Gazdanov knew how to write, but did not know what to write about.<sup>1</sup> Critical responses such as this were the product of rigid, traditionalist criteria that were in the first place quite mismatched to Gazdanov's style, but the insistence on Gazdanov's "modernism" has all too often reasserted the centrality of content, theme, plot and character (if only of a different sort) to his literary output.

Far less attention has been granted to the raw materials of which the content of his works is composed: his literary sources and his language(s). These latter aspects of his artistic production have often been regarded as secondary to the action—or indeed, the lack thereof—in his stories. His linguistic hybridity, where referenced, has been understood as a circumstantial by-product of his Russian Parisian experience, a manifestation of his daily *byt*. Whilst the rich transnational range of literary sources on which he draws has received comparably much more attention, his literary affiliations have either been seen as illustrative of broader philosophical concerns, or else explained as an "artistic game",<sup>2</sup> with little discussion of its praxis, other than parallel "source study".

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<sup>1</sup> "Газданов писать умеет, но о чем писать – не знает" (see Georgii Adamovich, "Russkie zapiski. Chast' literaturnaia", *Poslednie novosti*, 6297 (1938), p. 3).

<sup>2</sup> Elena Proskurina, *Edinstvo inoskazaniia: o narrativnoi poetike romanov Gaito Gazdanova* (Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2009).

My thesis has sought to address, challenge and even correct this imbalance in how Gazdanov's works have been read. Inverting the classic approach of reading for representational content, plot and even autobiographical detail, and instead foregrounding his linguistic hybridity and his intertextual practice, I have shown that these factors are neither secondary, nor circumstantial, but are in fact central to his artistic production. They account not only for *how* Gazdanov writes, and *what* he writes, but also for how he conceptualises his exile, how he relates to the past, as well as the present, and how he enters into the literary marketplace in Paris and beyond. In considering his modernism through the lenses of multilingualism and transnationalism, I have dwelt on a series of individual cases of influence to demonstrate that these are less illuminating in isolation from one another than in combination. The interplay between languages and individual literary sources in his works is fascinating, but in taking a broader approach to the evolution of that interplay across his career, I focus on his self-conscious placement between distinct national traditions, as well as his emphasis on the underlying interchanges which have contributed to their earlier formation. Reading Gazdanov's works in the light of his own multilingualism demonstrates the power of language as a conceptual category for the exilic author, even when they do not renounce their native language.

In taking a flexible approach to language and literary allusion, through lenses of typology, hybridity and milieu, it becomes clear that Gazdanov's literary engagements frequently operate via mediation. Influences are never simply transposed from one work on to his own; even in the most conventional example of intertextual inscription I consider, in my analysis of *Polet* in chapter one, there is a clear and sustained manipulation of multiple chosen source works, with their content tailored to create an exilic collage of "classical" influences. In the case of Proust, I build on Eikhenbaum's notion that the "borrowed" elements in cases of foreign influence often betray the needs of the "borrower" as opposed to

the achievements of the “lender” in the native context. My discussion of milieu expands on this idea, demonstrating that the designation of “borrower” might extend to a given work’s readership, with the author not always wilfully cultivating his own influences, as the typological model might suggest. In the latter two chapters, I seize on the ephemeral nature of publication opportunities in exile to consider the means by which the émigré author’s engagement with certain contemporaries (both at home and abroad) might result in a more abstracted form of intertextuality, in which artistic allusion serves as a heterotopic mediator between past and present, native and foreign, fiction and truth. In the final chapter, I turn to Vladimir Nabokov, who has long been paradigmatic of a romanticised vision of exile as a liberation from linguistic or material constraints. I employ *potustoronnost’* as a lens through which to read their intertextual practices and consider their respective mediations of Russian classical models through deliberate language and genre shifts. This approach of mediation is in many ways symptomatic of a broader modernist preoccupation with canons, textuality, paratextual networks, and the device of language itself. However, on an individual level, it articulates a bold model of exilic self-creation that moves both forward *and* to one side.

As well as contributing to the field of Gazdanov studies, my work offers a more nuanced and situational reading of a single exilic author’s intertextual practice that might consequently be expanded and applied to other writers. In employing a method informed not only by theories of intertextuality, but also by their similarly hybrid, transnational origins, I discuss a range of iterations of what might be understood as “intertextuality”, first considering two more conventional instances of “source study”, followed by a parallel pairing of more nebulous models of influence (both in a single direction, and as a dialogue). As we have seen in the third chapter, one might also consider intertextuality in the alternative sense of a referentiality (within a single national tradition) between different genres. My approach deliberately moves between the specific and the abstract, in the process outlining

several distinct models of intertextuality (typological, milieu-based, conceptual and polemic). The evolution of the “first love” trope and its various adaptations from Turgenev through Babel’, Gazdanov and Nabokov for instance illustrates that the modernist author’s self-creation is always to some extent a navigation between the personal and the canonical, between formative experiences and the “universal” knowledge they instil. These efforts to explore a variety of intertextual models might contribute further to ongoing discourses on literary transnationalism and could be particularly valuable in those cases where (like Gazdanov) the author has not necessarily enacted a linguistic migration.

My work also asserts the significance of external factors, emphasising that an author’s intertextual range bears imprints of the extratextual context in which the work has been written, transmitted, and received. Intertextuality is not just a case of speaking to “dead poets”; it is, as Nabokov suggests in his emphasis on “the good reader”, a means of curating one’s audience, of aligning oneself with or situating oneself against certain forebears before contemporary and future witnesses. In exploring the function of intertextuality in its different forms with a sensitivity to extraliterary factors (such as locale, artistic networks, publication, circulation and reception), I demonstrate that Gazdanov’s self-creation is not a contained process, but one that develops in conversation with his creation by others.



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