Bearing West, Seeking East:
Crisis, Renewal and the Construction of Self in the Fiction of Andreï Makine

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Abstract

Adopting a chronological approach to the oeuvre of contemporary novelist Andreï Makine, this thesis focuses on the East-West presence that punctuates the author's fiction from 1990 through to 2011. Early media and scholarly interest in Makine's work conceives East-West, in its European context, as a dichotomy between a romanticised West, France, and an unsophisticated East, the Soviet Union. Seeking to invigorate current criticism and to build on scholarship that departs from analyses of the early ilk, I propose an original reading where East-West is considered a symbolic structure. I argue that, against a backdrop of twentieth and early twenty-first century Europe, Makine employs East-West as a poetic form to give voice to his literary vision, which is to explore the construction of identity, its crises and resolutions, under various guises: Russian, Soviet, post-Soviet, national, émigré, adolescent and individual.

Chapter One analyses East-West in Makine's early novels *La Fille d'un héros de l'Union soviétique* (1990) and *Confession d'un porte-drapeau déchu* (1992). Although the dominant critical trend suggests that Makine's early fiction celebrates the West, my analysis is more nuanced. Constructed on Cold War foundations, these novels and the Soviet-Russian national identity narratives they convey reveal that Makine is attempting to create cross-cultural understanding between two epistemologically distinct worlds at a major turning point of historical transition in twentieth-century Europe.

Chapter Two analyses *Au temps du fleuve Amour* (1994) and *Le Testament français* (1995) in order to illustrate how Makine develops East-West into a literary construct, a conveyor of the narratives' cultural and identity-related elements. Analysing East and West as symbolic geographies, I demonstrate how two key literary motifs emerge in these works: Siberia and Paris. I contend that in *Amour* Makine transforms Siberia into a cross-cultural space in which his characters' expressions of self shift from national towards universal notions of belonging and unbelonging. In *Testament*, I argue that Paris represents an imagined realm, a sphere in which Makine's protagonist explores the parameters of his self and society.

In Chapter Three *Le Crime d'Olga Arbélina* (1998), *La Musique d'une vie* (2001) and *La Femme qui attendait* (2004) are analysed through the leitmotifs of the journey and anti-journey. Using *Amour* as a model for the analysis, I argue that during this period East-West functions as a symbolic threshold in the novels' increasingly abstracted realities. These texts demonstrate that Makine's interest in his characters' construction of self is expanding to consider the human condition.

In the fourth and final Chapter I analyse, through the themes of homecoming and leave-taking, the émigré identity narratives featured in *La Vie d'un homme inconnu* (2009) and *Le Livre des brèves amours éternelles* (2011). Illustrating how East-West loosens as a structural form in these texts, I posit that its capacity to convey Makine's literary vision is diminishing. Makine's desire to find a new subjective form to encase his shifting literary aims emerges.

East-West is integral to understanding the poetics of Makine's prose; it encompasses an intricate web of meanings, a fusion of metaphorical, socio-historical, cultural and identity-related elements. By employing East-West as a guide to exploring the mythopoetic aesthetic of Makine's oeuvre, this thesis makes an original contribution to current scholarship, providing an innovative analytical framework for considering the author's poetico-philosophical vision.

Publication Declaration

This thesis is my own composition, all sources have been acknowledged and my contribution clearly identified in the thesis.

This thesis does not contain work that I have published, nor work under review for publication.

Acknowledgements

One of the sources I use in this thesis has as its title *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, an expression I have grown attached to, particularly as my doctoral studies come to a close and I appreciate how, in its own way, one “forever” is becoming a “no more”.

The process of arriving at the end-point has not been a one-woman endeavour and I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who have made it possible for what was once a kernel of an idea to grow into the thesis that it is today.

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instilling in me a desire to learn, for your encouragement, and for your belief in my abilities. I would like to thank my mum especially for reading and commenting on endless drafts, but also for teaching me, unconsciously and from a young age, an invaluable skill: writing.

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Ich bedanke mich auch bei der Familie Kühnel, vor allem Monika und Hubert, in Österreich.

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List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used for book titles:

La Fille (FHUS)	*La Fille d'un héros de l'Union soviétique*
Confession (CPDD)	*Confession d'un porte-drapeau déchu*
Amour (ATFA)	*Au temps du fleuve Amour*
Testament (TF)	*Le Testament français*
Le Crime (COA)	*Le Crime d'Olga Arbélina*
La Musique (MV)	*La Musique d'une vie*
La Femme (FQA)	*La Femme qui attendait*
La Vie (VHI)	*La Vie d'un homme inconnu*
Brèves amours (LBAE)	*Le Livre des brèves amours éternelles*

INTRODUCTION

> *On est toujours déçu par la réalité. Pourquoi? Parce que dans ce rêve on a transporté des éléments éternels, des éléments hors du temps, des éléments d'immortalité, des éléments de toujours. [...] Le rêve, c'est déjà une création. [...] [R]êver, c'est une façon d'écriture, c'est une façon de création. [...] C'est une façon de créer un monde éternel.*
>
> – Andrei Makine[1]

> *Reality as we have it in the novel is only one of many realities; it is not inevitable, not arbitrary, it bears within itself other possibilities.*
>
> – Mikhail Bakhtin[2]

> *[Tatarsky] wrote in his notebook when he got home: 'When the subject of eternity disappears, then all of its objects also disappear, and the only subject of eternity is whoever happens to remember about it occasionally.'*
>
> *He didn't write any more poems after that: with the collapse of Soviet power they had simply lost their meaning and value.*
>
> – Viktor Pelevin[3]

> *And it is probably as well to be undeceived.*
>
> – Marilynne Robinson[4]

To dream is to see the fugitive traces of reality transformed in the sempiternal sphere of the imagination: to engage in an act of creation. In the words of author Andreï Makine: "[R]êver c'est une façon d'écriture. [...] C'est une façon de créer un monde éternel." These sentiments, shared by Makine during our 2011 interview, were prompted by his reflections on Aliosha, the young Soviet-Russian protagonist who dreams of Paris in Makine's 1995 award-winning novel, *Le Testament français*[5] (*Testament*). A writer's craft lies at the intersection between dream and creation. To write fiction is to engage in an act of poetic persuasion and render dreams tangible in a novelistic world. When Makine states that Aliosha "n'écrit pas [...]

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[1] Andreï Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*, June 8 2011.

[2] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 37.

[3] Viktor Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*, trans. Andrew Bromfield (New York: Penguin, 2003), 5.

[4] Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 122.

[5] Andreï Makine, *Le Testament français* (Paris: Gallimard, collection Folio, 1997).

il rêve de Paris",[6] the simplicity of his words conceals more than it reveals. As readers opening Makine's *Testament*, for example, we enter the world of Paris. Yet, whose Paris? Aliosha's dream of Paris? Makine's novelistic Paris? The grandmother Charlotte's remembered Paris? Each is essentially an imagined realm. In this study I start by exploring the myriad spatial and temporal threads that coalesce to create specific images of place and geography in Makine's oeuvre, such as the image of Paris in *Testament*. By analysing the distinctive East-West thread of Makine's work as a fusion of metaphorical, socio-historical, cultural and identity-related elements, and exploring the intricate web of meanings that lie beneath the surface of the author's writing, we can start to grasp the connections Makine draws in his fiction between reality, illusion and the act of creation: literary creation as much as self-creation.

Too often, however, the act of creation behind the art of Makine's fiction has been neglected by critics. When, in 1995, Makine became the unprecedented recipient of three French literary awards for *Testament* and was catapulted into the public eye,[7] it was not the concept of his literary vision that caught the media's attention but rather his personal circumstances and the extent to which they were reflected in his fiction. "Raised in tragic Russia but now living in favo[u]red France"[8] wrote one reviewer for the *New York Times*, encapsulating a broader media sentiment: the desire to draw on valorised, binary divisions between the land of Makine's literary success, France, and the land of his birth, the former Soviet Union. In France, Makine's transformation from "poor Russian exile to feted prize-winner"[9] went beyond personal success: a national interest in the author took hold. Hence, France was envisioned as the liberating country of escape for Makine. One French newspaper, *Le Monde*, declared that Makine "a choisi d'écrire en français pour échapper aux ombres tutélaires de sa patrie".[10] Moreover, Makine's command of the French language was interpreted as evidence of an underlying admiration for French culture and values. Makine was cast as the Russian emigrant "épris de notre pays jusqu'à écrire dans un français que nous pouvions lui envier".[11]

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[6] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[7] In 1995 *Testament* was awarded le prix Goncourt, le prix Goncourt des lycéens, and le prix Médicis. The latter was shared with Vassilis Alexakis' novel, *La Langue maternelle*.

[8] Richard Bernstein, "Repairing Damaged Lives From Stalin-Era Horrors," *The New York Times*, 6 December, 2000.

[9] Gabriella Safran, "Andreï Makine's Literary Bilingualism and the Critics," *Comparative Literature* 55, no. 3 (2003): 247. Safran offers an incisive analysis of French, English and Russian responses to Makine's fiction.

[10] "Un Sibérien écrivain aux trois prix," *Le Monde*, 2 December, 1995.

[11] Annie Coppermann, "Exil, amour et folie," *Les Echos*, 26 February, 1998. For a contrasting view of Makine's written language, see Marcel Ferrand, "Le français d'un prix Goncourt vu par un russisant," *La Revue Russe* 20 (2001): 83-97. Ferrand's linguistic analysis of *Testament* considers the extent to which Russian idiosyncrasies mark Makine's French prose.

The media reviews from the early days of Makine's success in the mid-1990s were marked by a conspicuous polarity. Besides being proclaimed as "a devoted Francophile",[12] Makine was praised for his inherent Russianness. Physical descriptions of Makine confirmed that the author was "Russian by birth *and* by his burly, bearded appearance",[13] while his "rich, rolling"[14] accent was seen to provide audible confirmation that "[i]l est vraiment très russe".[15] Lauded as "an archetypal Russian intellectual"[16] in Western European and Anglo-Saxon reviews, Makine and his fiction roused the collective Western imagination.[17] His Russianness was seemingly garnered by the extent to which the echoes of his literary forebears resounded not merely in his work, but in his persona. "Il a les yeux du prince Mychkine. Bleus. Transparents. Comme une eau trop pure",[18] one French reviewer mawkishly declared. The early criticism that followed the honours awarded *Testament* emphasised Makine's liberation from the former-Soviet Union and the weight of its past, and portrayed Makine as besotted by French language and high culture. The popular response indisputably captured the dichotomy between East and West. This polarised portrait of Makine's fiction and personal narrative, which has been promulgated in the media since the mid-1990s, is the initial stimulus for my engagement with the author's oeuvre along the lines of an East-West analysis.

In 1998, in one of the earliest critical analyses of Makine's work, Véronique Porra provided a comprehensive discussion of how French journalistic reviews portrayed Makine's literary success.[19] In exploring the media's eagerness to emphasise Makine's personal biography,[20] and likewise to read his award-winning novel as a celebration of French national identity, Porra draws attention to a crucial oversight: "La réception oublie [...] le schématisme presque caricatural des oppositions: une France onirique de la culture et de la civilisation [...] et une Russie de la froidure, de la cruauté, des steppes désertiques, des massacres, viols et famines."[21] Porra raises a salient issue, which has been similarly overlooked in media responses to Makine beyond France. In its exaggerated oversimplification and rudimentary polarisation of the East-West discourse, the media has neglected to consider the layered meanings within the text. Consequently, a fundamental component of *Testament* and, by extension, Makine's greater literary vision, has been ignored. Disregarded is the fact that the novel's East-West topography is impressionistic: removed from reality, it unfurls from the dreams kindled in the mind of an adolescent boy. The act of literary creation that underpins Makine's work – the intersection between dreams, the imagination and writing – has been overlooked.

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[12] Mary Dejevsky, "Russian in Exile Courts Fame with La Vie Boheme," *The Independent* 29 January, 1996.

[13] Dejevsky, "Russian in Exile," (emphasis added).

[14] Helen Elliott, "Siberia's Sunny Side," *Herald Sun*, 6 June, 1998.

[15] Marion van Renterghem, "Andreï Makine: Goncourt des steppes," *Le Monde*, 2 December, 1995.

[16] Vitali Vitaliev, "Steps to a New Land," *The Guardian*, August 18, 1997.

[17] For critical analyses that consider the Russian media's more negative reception of Makine see, for example, Adrian Wanner, *Out of Russia: Fictions of a New Translingual Diaspora*, Studies in Russian Literature and Theory (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 24-29; Taras Ivassioutine, "Analyse intertextuelle des oeuvres d'Anton Tchekhov et d'Andreï Makine," in *Andreï Makine: Le sentiment poétique*, eds. Parry, Herly, and Scheidhauer, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 125-137; Ruth Louise Diver, "Andreï Makine Disinherited: The Russian Reception of *Le Testament français*" (Masters thesis, University of Auckland, 2003); Safran, "Makine's Literary Bilingualism."

[18] Irina de Chikoff, "Les yeux de l'âme," *Le Figaro*, 13 January, 2003.

[19] Véronique Porra, "Un Russe en Atlantide: Andreï Makine, du discours littéraire à la citoyenneté," in *Français et Francophones: tendances centrifuges et centripètes dans les littératures françaises / francophones d'aujourd'hui*, eds. Riesz and Porra, (Bayreuth: Schultz & Stellmacher 1998), 67-85.

[20] Porra suggests that media interest in Makine's biography was likely the result of approaching *Testament* as autobiographical: a failure to acknowledge that "Je est un autre". See Porra, "Un Russe en Atlantide," 74. For a comprehensive overview of Makine's biography see Nina Nazarova, *Andreï Makine: deux facettes de son oeuvre* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 11-21. Many scholars contend that an amalgam of autobiographical and fictional elements characterise Makine's writing. Andrew Wachtel labels *Testament* a "pseudoautobiography". See Wachtel,

The essentialist approach to Makine's fiction and personal narrative, evident in reviews and popular opinion, has filtered into the critical reception of Makine's work. Since the late-1990s through to the present, critics have stressed the notion that Makine's writing functions on the principle of opposition. The supposed binary relationship of the East-West theme has been variously described as "[une] rencontre,"[22] "[une] scission,"[23] and "[une] problématique".[24] Avoiding the overt stereotyping prevalent in the media, however, and subjecting these divisions to greater interrogation, scholars have offered nuanced reflections on how Makine's literature raises the so-called issue of "la dichotomie Orient/Occident".[25] For instance, Brook La Chance argues in her 1999 analysis of intertextuality in *Testament* that Makine exploits this

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Remaining Relevant after Communisum: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 131. Wachtel's use of the term comes from his earlier study of Russian literary accounts of childhood; it describes "an autobiographically based work that imitates the autobiography in all respects but one: its author and narrator are not the same person". See Wachtel, *The Battle for Childhood: Creation of a Russian Myth* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 16. Both Juliette Petion and Wanner agree that *Testament* meets Wachtel's criteria for a pseudo-autobiography. See Petion, "Un cas de genre littéraire mal compris: *Le Testament français* d'Andreï Makine," in *Andreï Makine*, ed. Clément, (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2009), 142; Wanner, "Russian Hybrids: Identity in the Translingual Writings of Andreï Makine, Wladimir Kaminer, and Gary Shteyngart," *Slavic Review* 67, no. 3 (2008): 664-665.

[21] Porra, "Un Russe en Atlantide," 76.

[22] See Margaret Parry, Marie Louise Scheidhauer and Edward Welch, eds., *Andreï Makine: La Rencontre de l'Est et de l'Ouest*, Association Européenne François Mauriac: Rencontres de la Cerisaie (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 8.

[23] Murielle Lucie Clément, "Andreï Makine. Présence de l'absence: une poétique de l'art (photographie, cinéma, musique)" (Doctoral thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2008), 9.

[24] Marianne Gourg, "La problématique Russie/Occident dans l'œuvre d'Andreï Makine," *Revue des études slaves* 70 (1998): 229.

[25] Brook La Chance, "Intertextualité française et construction d'identité dans *Le Testament français* d'Andreï Makine," *Études de Lettres* 2 (1999): 204.

dichotomy to create a novel in which "[la] vibration féerique de l'origine [...] est séductrice".[26] La Chance posits that the novel's nostalgic aesthetic – its classic French literary references – "conforte le lecteur hexagonal dans ses certitudes identitaires".[27] La Chance's research establishes a tone for future critical enquiry along the lines of an East-West pairing.[28] Thereafter, Makine's representation of France and the West[29] is the subject of vigorous and enthusiastic scholarly analyses, which are predominantly grounded in readings of *Testament*. For instance, Makine's French imagery is recognised for its fairy-tale likeness – its unreality.[30] France is described as "un univers féérique"[31] that "se situe dans l'art",[32] is referred to as "l'Atlantide française"[33] and understood as a "fantastic realm of otherness".[34] Critics additionally recognise the heavy influence of literature and mass culture, such as film,[35] and acknowledge that Makine's France is a world often modelled on the past – "cette France des temps jadis"[36] – specifically, the Belle Époque. Still others consider Makine's France a realm of "love, sensuality and voluptuousness",[37] in short, a "symbol of the beauty that can save the world."[38]

By comparison, the critics' engagement with Makine's Russian imagery and cultural references has been marked by greater ambiguity.[39] Primarily, Russia is understood as a foil to Makine's beguiling France: “l’autre composante d’une identité duelle”.[40] Accordingly, critics emphasise the hardship,[41] misery[42] and violence,[43] in particular the sexual violence, of Makine’s East, or offer variants along these lines.[44] In an extreme example, Russia is described as “le lieu de l’animalité et de la sexualité brute”.[45] David Gillespie suggests that Makine’s Russia is a “sordid moral wasteland”,[46] while Adrian Wanner posits that, in Makine’s depiction of twentieth-century Russia, life is “a story of unabashed suffering”.[47] As Wanner himself acknowledges, these details are largely attributable to the socio-historical context of the Russia Makine depicts: Stalinism, Russia during the Second World War, and the period of late Soviet socialism.[48]

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[26] Chance, "Intertextualité française," 209.

[27] Chance, "Intertextualité française," 209. Ian McCall argues a similar case, suggesting that intertextual references in *Amour* "provide a 'complicité' with the French reader and act like recognizable ingredients in exotic, unfamiliar dishes." See McCall, "French Literature and Film in the USSR and Mao's China: Intertexts in Makine's *Au temps du fleuve Amour* and Dai Sijie's *Balzac et la Petite Tailleuse chinoise*," *Romance Studies* 24, no. 2 (2006): 168.

[28] Hélène Mélat, for instance, commences her analysis of *Testament* by arguing that the novel is marked by dualism. See Mélat, "Andreï Makine: Testament français ou testament russe?," *Revue russe* 21 (2002): 41.

[29] Both Gourg and McCall argue that France and the West are interchangeable in Makine's writing. See Gourg, "Russie/Occident," 232; Ian McCall, "Andreï Makine's France: A Translingual Writer's Portrayal of his 'terre d'accueil'," *French Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2005): 306-307.

[30] See Chapter Two for further discussion of the critics' reception of Makine's French imagery in *Testament*.

[31] Mélat, "Testament français ou testament russe?," 42.

[32] Mélat, "Testament français ou testament russe?," 44.

[33] Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 143-157: 143. Nazarova devotes a chapter of her monograph to "L'Atlantide française de Makine", which she describes as "[un] pays de pure fantaisie, produit de l'imagination enfantine".

[34] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 30.

[35] Gourg emphasises the dual influence of classic and mass French culture. See Gourg, "Russie/Occident," 232. McCall argues that Makine employs French film and literary references in *Amour* to criticise Soviet ideology. See McCall, "French Literature and Film," 160-161. For two valuable comparative analyses of Proust's influence on Makine's fiction see Ian McCall, "Proust's *A la recherche* as Intertext of Makine's *Le Testament français*," *Modern Language Review* 100, no. 4 (2005); Els Jongeneel, "L'Histoire du côté de chez Proust: Andreï Makine, *Le Testament français*," in *Histoire, jeu, science dans l'aire de la littérature*, eds. Houppermans, Smith, and Strien-Chardonneau, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).

[36] Erzsebet Harmath, "Andreï Makine: Géopoétique d'un écrivain mineur" (Doctoral thesis, University of Szeged, 2011), 78.

[37] McCall, "Andreï Makine's France," 306.

[38] David Gillespie, "Border Consciousness in the Fictional Worlds of Andreï Makine," *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities and Social Sciences* 6 (2012): 803.

[39] See Chapter Two for further discussion of the critics' reception of Makine's Russian imagery.

Accompanying this view of Makine’s Russian imagery, however, is the notion that Makine presents a “picturesque and orientalized”[49] portrait of his country of birth: a clichéd vision. The opinion has been formed predominantly in response to “[den] lange[n] lyrische[n] Passagen, in denen der Autor Bilder Sibiriens heraufbeschwört”,[50] such as boundless expanses of forest, snow-covered steppes, and the accompanying remoteness of life therein. The romanticised elements of Makine’s Russian imagery are variously accounted for. Nina Nazarova argues that, like France, Makine’s Russia functions as a fantasy world in its own right: “un pays de rêves de Makine adulte, tout fait de ses souvenirs embellis par le temps”.[51] Other scholars propose that Makine endows his work with an exoticised Russian landscape to appeal to potential French publishers[52] and, by extension, to his predominantly Western readership.[53] Maria Rubins contends that such imagery accords with ideas that the average French person associates with Russia.[54] Wachtel ventures to suggest that Makine's success following *Testament* is wholly attributable to the orientalised Russian vision that the author peppers throughout the novel in "a perfect dose of clichés".[55] Yet, the categorical nature of such an assessment is unconvincing given the growth of Makine's literary output and his ongoing success. Makine's current oeuvre, seventeen works including one play and an essay, indicates that his success and the appeal of his Russian imagery are founded on something more solid than mere pandering to French or Western myths about Russia, or vice-versa.[56] Indeed, Erzsébet Harmath indicates that Makine's writing has become increasingly diversified since 2000, yet notes that critics overlook the changing genres with which he works and which otherwise "transgressent et viennent défaire le portrait habituel de Makine".[57] Harmath's appeal that "il faudrait une fois pour toutes se pencher plus profondément sur ce que devient la rencontre des deux cultures, française et russe, dans les textes"[58] is both apposite and valid. Altogether, these inconsistencies in Makine's representations of Russia and the West, coupled with the critics' vacillating opinions regarding their function, accentuate rather than clarify the complicated relationship between the two and thus demand closer scholarly examination.

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[40] Gourg, “Russie/Occident,” 234.

[41] See Gillespie, “Border Consciousness,” 802. Gillespie argues that “Makine makes it clear that men suffer, are maimed and die in vain”.

[42] In Gourg’s analysis of *La Fille*, Russia is “misérable et cruelle”. See Gourg, “Russie/Occident,” 234.

[43] See, for example, Helena Garnett, “Writing at the Margin: An Introduction to the Exile Novels by Andreï Makine, Milan Kundera and Rodica Iulian,” in *Shifting Frontiers of France and Francophonie*, eds. Rolfe and Rocheron, (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 292; Gourg, “Russie/Occident,” 234.

[44] Ray Taras calls Makine’s Russia “a tormented, once-great empire, the twentieth century’s most pitiful *pays perdu”.* See Taras, “*A la recherche du pays perdu*: Andreï Makine’s Russia,” *East European Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2000): 52 (emphasis in original).

[45] Mélat, “Testament français ou testament russe?,” 42.

[46] Gillespie, “Border Consciousness,” 803.

[47] Wanner, “Russian Hybrids,” 671.

[48] When referring to the eastern facet of the East-West construct in this thesis I predominantly employ the term “Russian” because Makine’s novels straddle diverse historical periods, including the pre-Revolutionary, Soviet and post-Soviet eras. The terms “Soviet” and “Soviet-Russian” are, however, also employed in reference to Makine’s “East”; their use is determined by the socio-historical context of the novels and themes under analysis.

[49] Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant*, 132.

[50] “the long, lyrical sections in which the author evokes Siberian imagery.” (my translation) Maria Rubins, “In fremden Zungen: Milan Kunderas and Andreï Makines französische Prosa,” trans. Andrea Huterer, *Osteuropa: Der Osten im Westen - Importe der Populärkultur* 57, no. 5 (2007): 181.

[51] Nina Nazarova, “L’Atlantide française et l’Atlantide russe d’Andreï Makine,” in *Andreï Makine: La Rencontre de l’Est et de l’Ouest*, eds. Parry, Scheidhauer, and Welch, (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004), 63. Nazarova expands her argument in Chapter Six of her monograph. See Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 159-174: 171.

The early response to the story of Makine's literary triumph is, nevertheless, telling. An orientalist rhetoric, indicative of an underlying cultural rift, influences the binary approach with which Makine, *Testament* and his later works of fiction are considered. My interest in the East-West construct in Makine's contemporary fiction focuses on its application in a European context.[59] To this end, I consider that at the heart of the East-West dichotomy that materialises in the early years of Makine's success lies a fabricated binary between what Larry Wolff, in his influential work *Inventing Eastern Europe*, has called "the presumed backwardness of Eastern Europe" and the "assumed superiority of Western Europe".[60] Accordingly, this study takes as its starting point the early media and scholarly interest in the East-West thread prevalent in Makine's literary fiction and challenges the suggestion that its presence in his oeuvre can be simplified to a series of dichotomous opposites oscillating between the extremes of an "idyllic" West and a "barbaric" East. In seeking to invigorate current critical debate about the role East and West play in Makine's fiction, I propose a reading in which the two are understood not merely as the expression of a socio-political cleavage, but rather as symbolic structures inherent to Makine's narrative design. Taking a chronological approach to Makine's oeuvre in order to evaluate how the East-West thread has evolved over the course of his career, I argue that East-West is a poetic form that Makine employs to give voice to his literary vision, which is to explore the construction of identity, its crises and resolutions, against the backdrop of contemporary Europe in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

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[52] Graham Roberts, "Corps étrangers: la Russie, l'Occident et la problématique de l'identité dans *Au temps du fleuve Amour* d'Andreï Makine," *La Revue Russe* 21 (2002): 31.

[53] Critics who support the notion that Makine writes predominantly for a Western audience include Helena Duffy and David Gillespie. Duffy writes that Makine "[a] adopt[é] le français pour s'adresser principalement au lectorat de son pays d'adoption". See Duffy, "L'écrivain ne se meurt pas ou la Résurrection comme triomphe sur la mélancolie dans l'oeuvre d'Andreï Makine," in *Autour des ecrivains franco-russes*, ed. Clément, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 155. Gillespie proposes that "Makine writes first and foremost for a French readership". In Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch: France and Russia in the Fictional Worlds of Andreï Makine," *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 24, no. 1-2 (2010): 6.

[54] Rubins, "In fremden Zungen," 181.

[55] Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant*, 130.

[56] McCall argues a similar case from the French perspective, suggesting that Makine's ability to flatter the French by incorporating French literary references is not reason enough to account for his success. See McCall, "French Literature and Film," 168.

[57] Harmath, "Géopoétique," 4.

[58] Harmath, "Géopoétique," 24.

[59] For a thought-provoking discussion regarding whether the former-Soviet Union's satellite states can be analysed in postcolonial terms and in a broader socio-historical context, see David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in

East-West in Context: A European Perspective

When Makine's literary career began to flourish at the start of the 1990s, Europe had only recently emerged from the Cold War. The underlying ontological forces of that era had instilled the notions of East and West with political, social and emotional fervour and the mood of the era explains, in part, the critics' response to Makine's fiction. Yet, as Wolff argues, a broad historical perspective is necessary to comprehend the East-West chasm as it relates to a European context. In his analysis of the development of Western European notions of alterity and self, Wolff demonstrates that these structures arose in the era of European Enlightenment, tendentiously weighted along a scale of cultural hierarchy. In Wolff's argument, the concept of Eastern Europe evolved from Western Europe's bold civilising

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Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Towards a Global Postcolonial Critique," *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (2001): 111-128. Prompted by Moore's suggestion, Alison Rice employs a postcolonial framework to compare post-Soviet Francophone writing with Francophone authors from the former French colonies. Rice includes Makine in her analysis. She argues that the political and linguistic experiences that shape the authors' work are significant enough for valuable insights to be gained from exploring the intersection between francophone, post-Soviet and postcolonial studies. See Rice, "Francophone Postcolonialism from Eastern Europe," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 10, no. 3 (2007): 313-328.

[60] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilisation on the Mind of Enlightenment* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 361.

enterprise of the eighteenth century. Discovering in the continent's Eastern sphere an irresistible foil to its cultivating mission of self-development, Western Europe effectively "invented Eastern Europe as its complementary other half".[61] The East became a locus of otherness, of "shadowed lands of backwardness, even barbarism".[62] To adopt Wolff's standpoint is to recognise the historical breadth of Western Europe's experience of imagining the East, and to recognise that the rise of Soviet socialism in Europe's Eastern bloc reinforced, rather than created anew, the East-West distinctions characteristic of the Cold War era, the same period that serves as an historical base in much of Makine's writing.

While Wolff's research is valuable, it would be remiss to consider Makine's fiction through an East-West frame without also taking account of Russia's perception of Western Europe. As Rosalind Marsh argues, Russian ideas about Western Europe have been equally influential to Russia's construction of identity.[63] Moreover, Marsh argues that Russia's position between East (Asia) and West (Europe and the United States)[64] has intensified the historical process of Russian self-definition.[65] For centuries, Russia has dealt with "the perplexing, eternal question[:] 'Russia – East or West'".[66] Marsh's consideration of Russian modes of Western gazing is valuable to an analysis of Makine's fiction, due to her focus on how Western imagery is appropriated in Russian cultural life. Referring to Wolff's theory of an invented Eastern Europe, Marsh asserts that writers of both contemporary and classic Russian literature have "internalized the idea of a 'Russian West' (*russkii Zapad*) – an 'invented West' that forms the counterpart of the West's longstanding representation of an 'invented Eastern Europe' – which has developed into an important aspect of the Russian national consciousness."[67] Effectively, Marsh suggests that regardless of whether Russian writers and cultural figures denounce Western materialism and extol the virtues of Russia's distinctive heritage, or support Western values and lament the loss of Russia's European ties, the use of Western imagery in their writing facilitates explorations of identity at the national and individual level, revealing much about Russian perspectives on identity.[68]

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[61] Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4.

[62] Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4.

[63] Rosalind Marsh, "The Nature of Russia's Identity: The Theme of 'Russia and the West' in Post-Soviet Culture," *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 3 (2007): 555-578.

[64] The literature regarding Russia's position between East and West, and the impact on its sense of national identity, is extensive. For a selection of works on the topic see, for example, Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 1-68, 358-429; Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *La Russie inachevée* (Paris: Fayard, 2000); Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1996); Mark Bassin, "Russia Between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Contruction of Geographical Space," *Slavic Review* 50, no. 1 (1991): 1-17.

[65] Marsh, "Russia and the West," 555.

[66] Marsh, "Russia and the West," 555.

[67] Marsh, "Russia and the West," 556.

As an author of Russian heritage Makine has a similar objective; he employs Western imagery in his fiction in order to explore Russian notions of self. Yet, critics have predominantly approached the East-West concept in Makine's oeuvre from a Western perspective only. Those who have considered the Eastern elements of Makine's fiction have done so predominantly as isolated analyses, emphasising the Russian and Soviet aspects of Makine's fiction.[69] Julie Hansen, for instance, considers the interplay between official and individual modes of historical remembrance in Makine's evocation of Soviet war narratives in two of his novels.[70] The aims of such analyses differ from my own, which is to consider the Eastern elements of Makine's prose through an East-West frame, thereby allowing both Russian and Western European forms of imagining each other to inform my approach to the author's fiction. I am interested in how Makine, a contemporary European author, draws on deeply embedded cultural beliefs and images associated with East and West when creating his fiction, particularly as these images relate to identity narratives in a European context.[71]

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[68] Marsh, "Russia and the West," 570-571. Some of the contemporary Russian and émigré authors and filmmakers Marsh considers include: Alexander Sokurov, Yuri Mamin, Vladimir Makanin, Viktor Erofeyev and Liudmila Ulitskaia.

[69] See, for example, Helena Duffy, "The Jew as Saint Christopher: The Holocaust and the Participation of Soviet Jews in Russia's Great Patriotic War Effort in the *Œuvre* of Andreï Makine," in *Mnemosyne and Mars: Artistic and Cultural Representations of Twentieth-century Europe at War*, eds. Tame, Jeannerod, and Bragança, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013); Julie Hansen, "'La simultanéité du présent': Memory, History, and Narrative in Andreï Makine's Novels *Le Testament français* and *Requiem pour l'Est*," *MLN* 128, no. 4 (2013); Julie Hansen, "Stalingrad Statues and Stories: War Remembrance in Andreï Makine's *The Earth and the Sky of Jacques Dorme*," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/ Revue canadienne des slavistes* 54, no. 3-4 (2012); Helena Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles: The Role and Status of Old People in Lidia Bobrova's *Babousya* and Andreï Makine's Novels," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 47, no. 2 (2011).

[70] Hansen, "La simultanéité du présent," 881-899.

[71] I refer to Makine as a European author in order to broaden the scope for evaluating his work. Makine, a French citizen since 1996, has chosen French as his language of literary expression. Yet, the author's Russian origins are evident in his novels' subject matter. The cultural mood of Makine's fiction, however, is not restricted to French or Russian contexts alone but has relevance to a European cultural context. For this reason I contend that we can refer to Makine as a European author. Notwithstanding my perspective, the tendency amongst scholars when positioning Makine is to emphasise his Russian origins while acknowledging that he writes in French. Makine is rarely referred to as either a French or Russian author alone. Hansen, for instance, calls Makine a "Russian-born Francophone writer". Duffy offers a similar variant, referring to him as a "contemporary Russian-born French-language author". By contrast, Wanner emphasises Makine's Russian origins, calling him a "contemporary Russian translingual writer". When asked by Murielle Clément what term he would use to describe himself, Makine responded: "Écrivain tout court!" See, Hansen, "La simultanéité du présent," 882; Duffy, "The Jew as Saint Christopher," 344; Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 15; Murielle Lucie Clément, "Entretien avec Andreï Makine," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 13, no. 2 (2009): 131.

Writing with prescience in 1994, Wolff posited that the idea of Eastern Europe was "certain to outlive the collapse of Communism, surviving in the public culture and its mental maps."[72] By the same token, Russian ideas about the West are certain to endure in Russian cultural life.[73] The veracity of Wolff's assertion that East-West is "an idea of extraordinary potency"[74] is attested by the distinctive presence of the East-West thread that patterns Makine's fiction, coupled with the felt presence of the dichotomy that surfaces amongst the critics' reactions. Moreover, that it has become increasingly common in a broad range of scholarly fields to speak of Central, East-Central and Eastern Europe,[75] is a strong indication of the saliency of the East-West construct and its symbolic presence and endurance in Europe's public consciousness. Indeed, the basic dichotomy has not disappeared with the end of the Cold War or with the accession of the Central and Eastern European states to the European Union (EU). Rather, Europe's mental maps have been modified: the line demarcating the boundary between Europe and the East has shifted further eastwards.[76] Meanwhile, the dichotomy and all it implies remains. Thus, Milan Kundera's 1983 lament that an expansive and oppressive Soviet political system from the East had "kidnapped" Central Europe from its cultural origins in Western Europe, remains an arresting example – whether one supports his position or not – of the symbolic and ontological boundaries that exist between East and West and that have, moreover, divided the European continent for centuries.[77]

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[72] Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4.

[73] Viktor Pelevin, for instance, is a contemporary Russian author who addresses Russia's relationship to the West in his fiction. See, for example, Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*. Works by Russian émigré authors such as Wladimir Kaminer (Germany) and Gary Shteyngart (America) also illustrate how Russian views about the West are being considered from various external perspectives. See, for example, Kaminer, *Russian Disco*, trans. Michael Hulse (London: Ebury Press, 2002); Shteyngart, *The Russian Debutante's Handbook* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2002).

[74] Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4.

[75] See, for example, Merje Kuus, "Something Old, Something New: Eastness in European Union Enlargement," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 10 (2007): 150-167; Merje Kuus, "Europe's Eastern Expansion and the Reinscription of Otherness in East-Central Europe," *Progress in Human Geography* 28, no. 4 (2004): 472-489; Thomas Diez, "Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17, no. 2 (2004): 319-335; Christopher Browning, "The Region-Building Approach Revisited: The Continued Othering of Russia in Discourses of Region-Building in the European North," *Geopolitics* 8, no. 1 (2003): 45-71; Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: "The East" in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

[76] For a cultural analysis of the effects of the fall of communism and in how shifts in European notions of identity are framed, from a predominantly Central and Eastern European perspective and as reflected in arts such as literature, see, for example, the collected essays in Peter Barta, ed. *The Fall of the Iron Curtain and the Culture of Europe* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2013); Kuus, "Something Old, Something New."; Kuus, "Europe's Eastern Expansion."

[77] When Kundera defines Central Europe in cultural terms he demonstrates a symbolic awareness of geography: "[L]'Europe centrale n'est pas un État, mais une culture ou un destin. Ses frontières sont imaginaires et doivent être tracées et retracées à partir de chaque situation historique nouvelle." See Milan Kundera, "*Un occident kidnappé* ou la tragédie de l'Europe centrale," *Le Débat* 5, no. 27 (1983): 8. A condensed, English translation of Kundera's essay was published one year later. See Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," trans. Edmund White, *The New York Review of Books* 31, no. 7 (1984).

Much has been written about the East-West thread in Makine's work, which raises an important question: Is there value in continuing to assess Makine's fiction along this line of enquiry? The present study argues that the general tendency towards dualistic assessments of Makine's work, coupled with the overwhelming focus on East-West from a French and Western perspective, has oversimplified the essence of the author's literary vision. In her 2008 doctoral thesis Murielle Clément argued that, although East-West is an indispensable aspect of Makine's writing, "il serait tout autant réducteur de la juger uniquement sur cette rencontre Orient-Occident".[78] Indeed, left unchallenged, dualistic assessments occlude analyses that consider whether East-West functions as a single entity rather than as a division. For instance, a striking aspect of scholarly studies is that few have ventured to question the basic premise that Makine's representation of France is favourable. Such is the thrust of the first edited collection of articles dedicated to Makine's work, *Andrei Makine: La Rencontre de l'Est et de l'Ouest*. Editor Margaret Parry suggests that, in Makine's *first* novels, the West represents "tout ce qui est positive".[79] Recognising that the relationship is fashioned increasingly by "des images de choc, de collision, [et] de fracture",[80] Parry proffers that the East-West relationship only becomes more complicated as Makine's oeuvre progresses. Parry's position is problematic. First, it retains the notion that the relationship is inherently dualistic. France is considered positive by virtue of what it stands in opposition to: Russia. Second, Parry ignores a crucial element: the often critical view of the West Makine portrays in his very early novels, *La Fille d'un héros de l'Union soviétique*[81] (*La Fille*, 1990) and *Confession d'un porte-drapeau déchu*[82] (*Confession*, 1992).[83] If *Testament* (1995) and *Au Temps du fleuve Amour*[84] (*Amour*, 1994) are the starting point for the critics' analyses of East-West in Makine's writing, then the omission of

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[78] Clément, "Présence de l'absence," 10. Clément's doctoral thesis was published as a monograph in 2011. See Clément, *Andreï Makine: L'ekphrasis dans son oeuvre*, Collection Monographique Rodopi en Littérature Française Contemporaine (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011).

[79] Margaret Parry, "Introduction," in *Andreï Makine: La Rencontre de l'Est et de l'Ouest*, eds. Parry, Scheidhauer, and Welch, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 9.

[80] Parry, "Introduction," 10.

[81] Andreï Makine, *La Fille d'un héros de l'Union soviétique* (Paris: Gallimard, collection Folio, 1996).

[82] Andreï Makine, *Confession d'un porte-drapeau déchu* (Paris: Gallimard, collection Folio, 1996).

[83] McCall also suggests that Makine's fiction only expresses criticism towards France after *Amour* and *Testament*. For example, McCall cites *La Terre et le ciel de Jacques Dorme* (2003) as illustrative of Makine's criticism of "the destructive yob culture that has taken over French towns". See McCall, "Andreï Makine's France," 316. Edward Welch locates a shift in Makine's tone in the latter stages of *Testament*, arguing that Makine's negativism is related to the question he poses to his audience: "[E]st-ce que la France a en fait gaspillé ou dilapidé l'héritage que le narrateur a été fier de faire sien?" See Welch, "La séduction du voyage dans *Le Testament français*," in *Andreï Makine: La Rencontre de l'Est et de l'Ouest*, eds. Parry, Scheidhauer, and Welch, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 23, 24. Both scholars agree that Makine's French criticism reflects his disquietude at contemporary France's declining cultural heritage.

[84] Andreï Makine, *Au temps du fleuve Amour* (Paris: Gallimard, collection Folio, 1996).

Makine's first published novels is indicative not only of a gap in the current critical literature, but likewise in current evaluations regarding the role East-West plays in Makine's writing.

In a valuable shift away from the dominant critical reception of Makine's work, Helena Duffy contests the proposition of a progressive negativism in Makine's representation of France over the course of his oeuvre.[85] In her 2008 article, Duffy argues that Makine's appraisal of his adopted homeland has never been overtly admiring. She suggests, contra McCall specifically, that literary works such as *Amour* and *Testament* are less explicit in their esteem for France and French culture. Thus, McCall's reading of the novels' "wholly positive image of things French"[86] is countered by Duffy's contention that Makine's protagonists' "encounter with Frenchness [is] potentially destructive".[87] Indeed, by describing the impact of French culture on Makine's three protagonists in *Amour* as "catastrophic",[88] Duffy goes so far as to insinuate that Makine's romanticised French portrait has more pernicious undertones than scholars have thus far recognised. Duffy's research is valuable; it incites fresh debate about Makine's representation of France and about how the East-West construct functions in his fiction.[89]

Adding to the originality of Duffy's thought is her analysis of Makine's representations of France as a veiled parallel of his views on Russia. For example, Duffy argues that Makine's fiction is imbued with his protagonists' nostalgic longing for childhood and home. Referring to Makine's protagonists as "archetypal Russian exiles",[90] Duffy argues that "by retelling their infatuation with France, Makine's narrators seek to return to the Russia of their childhood which, like the imperial France whose beauty and riches they extol, has been eclipsed by irreversible politico-social changes".[91] Duffy inverts the dominant reading of Makine's fiction, contending that the beguiling vision of imperial France that pervades his writing fulfils a specific function – to replace the void left by a disappearing Russia, devoid of Western influence and uncorrupted by social and political upheaval.[92] Consequently, where both McCall and Welch imply that Makine's growing criticism and at times negative portrayal of

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[85] See Helena Duffy, "*La France que j'oublie d'aime*r: The Foreigner's Vision of his *pays d'accueil* in the Works of Andreï Makine," *Essays in French Literature and Culture* 45 (2008): 19-42.

[86] McCall, "Andreï Makine's France," 312.

[87] Duffy, "La France," 25.

[88] Duffy, "La France," 26.

[89] Duffy's analysis includes *La Fille* making her one the first scholars, after Marianne Gourg, to consider Makine's early fiction in a critical discourse regarding East-West.

[90] Duffy, "La France," 22.

[91] Duffy, "La France," 37.

[92] Duffy, "La France," 37. For an extension of this argument see also Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles."

France is due to his felt loss at *France's* declining cultural strength, Duffy argues that Makine's oscillating perceptions of France reflect the author's and his protagonists' regret at *Russia's* decline.[93] Duffy's evaluation of Makine's portrayal of France supports Marsh's contention about the use of western imagery by Russian cultural figures.[94] In this way, Duffy presents a valuable counterview to the early critical reading of Makine's fiction which analysed the author's French cultural references within a predominantly French cultural paradigm.

Duffy's intention, however, is not to analyse Makine's literary fiction for its poetic merit. Framing her analysis in a socio-political consideration of Makine's work, Duffy's contention is that Makine's literature demonstrates that Russia's exposure to Western values has been detrimental to its "national pride and sense of identity".[95] Duffy's consideration of the fictional worlds and characters Makine creates is influenced by her perception of Makine's personal views regarding Russia's exposure to the West. There is value in pursuing a line of enquiry that conceives of Makine's fiction in terms of its direct socio-political relevance to Europe and beyond, aspects that this study likewise addresses.[96] However, my principal focus is the underlying anatomy of the East-West presence as a poetic structure in Makine's literary fiction. Thus, while I agree with Duffy's basic premise that Makine's use of western imagery is closely related to his exploration of Russian and Soviet themes, the overarching direction of my study differs. A symbolic East-West structural form operates at the narrative level of Makine's fiction; it exists on a historical, socio-political level *and* at the symbolic level of Makine's artistic aesthetic.

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I begin by considering the concept of East and West at the macro-level, as expressed in Makine's first novels: *La Fille* (1990) and *Confession* (1992).[97] The paucity of attention critics direct at these novels undermines current theories regarding the role East-West plays in Makine's writing. Seeking to bridge this gap, I argue in Chapter One that Makine's most concrete use of East-West as a socio-political structure grounded in a Cold War reality is in evidence in these works. Both *La Fille* and *Confession* are set in the socio-historical context of Cold War Russia, predominantly during the period of late Soviet socialism.[98] In *Confession*, the unique period of transition entered into at the end of the Cold War forms an additional temporal layer. The Soviet and post-Soviet experiences to which Makine gives voice convey the socio-political reality of the times in which they were published. Indeed, even the circumstances surrounding the novels' publication in France highlight the cultural rifts lingering in 1990s, post-Cold War Europe. For instance, to make his Soviet stories accessible, Makine had to adopt a false identity: successful publication only ensued once Makine altered his original French manuscripts, invented a fictitious translator and claimed they were translations from Russian originals.[99] While critics have posited that the Soviet experiences Makine depicted would have been perceived as "more authentic in a translated work than one written directly for a Western readership",[100] some publishing houses simply had difficulty accepting that a Russian national had composed the novels in French.[101] Taking into consideration the cultural barriers Makine was confronted with in France, I argue in this first chapter that Makine constructs these novels on Cold War foundations in an attempt to render understandable to his predominantly Western European audience the complexity of the late- and post-Soviet period. To this end, a key focal point of my analysis is Makine's exploration of

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[93] Duffy, "La France."

[94] Since Duffy's article, other scholars have pursued similar lines of enquiry. See, for example, Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 19-49.

[95] Duffy, "La France," 37.

[96] These aspects are addressed in Chapter One.

[97] In this study I recognise several different periods in Makine's oeuvre to date, which are marked predominantly by stylistic differences. I refer to *La Fille* and *Confession* as Makine's early period. Published prior to his success following *Testament*, they are more direct and less romantic in tone. *Amour* and *Testament* signal Makine's shift towards more symbolic engagements with narrative; they are foundational texts in his oeuvre. I refer to the novels published between 1998 and 2005 as Makine's symbolic period. A greater experimentation with form and narrative is evident in these texts. In the final chapter, I consider Makine's writing of 2009 and 2011. In these

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novels, Makine departs from symbolic engagements with narrative to instead examine questions of émigré identity in a twenty-first century European context.

[98] Late socialism refers to the final three decades of the Soviet Union's existence, from the mid-1950s through to the mid-1980s. See Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), 4. A brief historical overview of the period is provided in Chapter One.

[99] *La Fille* was originally published as a translation from the Russian by Françoise Bour. *Confession*'s translation was attributed to Albert Lemonnier. After the success of *Testament*, Makine's pseudo-translations were re-issued and sole authorship attributed to Makine. For analyses regarding pseudo-translation and authenticity in Makine's work, see Katrien Lievois, "Pseudo-traduction et image d'auteur: le cas Andreï Makine," *Les Lettres Romanes* 67, no. 3-4 (2013); Ian McCall, "Translating the Pseudotranslated: Andreï Makine's *La Fille d'un héros de l'Union soviétique*," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 42, no. 3 (2006): 286-297; Eden Liddelow, "The French Testament: Andreï Makine and Translation," *Heat* 5 (1997): 161-176.

[100] McCall, "Translating the Pseudotranslated," 291. Details regarding the lengths Makine employed to find publishers for his pseudo-translations are well documented. In addition to the works cited above see also Safran, "Makine's Literary Bilingualism," 246-265; Hector Bianciotti, "Andreï Makine, le transplanté," *Le Monde*, 6 October, 1995.

[101] See Natasha Fairweather, "Interview: Andreï Makine – Through the Iron Curtain to Paris," *The Independent*, 31 January, 1999. Fairweather suggests that after many rejections Makine "conclude[ed] that French publishers were suspicious of a Russian writing in French". Fairweather's proposition is reinforced by Marion van Renterghem's comments in *Le Monde*: "Il est vrai qu'un Russe qui écrit en français, cela fait mauvais genre." See Renterghem, "Andreï Makine: Goncourt des steppes."

Soviet-Russian identity narratives: the breakdown of Soviet identity and the resulting crises in the late Soviet period and the uncertainties of life in the post-Soviet environment.

The first half of Chapter One analyses *La Fille*, demonstrating that Makine's foregrounding of Soviet historical contexts combined with his portrayal of Soviet-Russian protagonists illustrates his early literary desire to explore Russian constructions of self. Drawing on socio-historical and social anthropological sources, I posit, additionally, that rather than reverting to stereotyping, Makine brings the Cold War world to life in order to interrogate the schematic nature of East-West. I extend this notion in the Chapter's second half through an analysis of *Confession*, focusing on how the author confronts the loss of Soviet as a form of identity after the dismantling of the Soviet Union. I argue that in *Confession* Makine is attempting to come to terms with the malaise of uneasy unification writ large across post-Soviet European society of the early 1990s following the dissolution of the Soviet republics.

The analysis of *La Fille* and *Confession* reveals that Makine's initial engagement with East-West is closely related to his desire to explore Russian notions of identity during a crisis-point in national identity construction following the Soviet Union's collapse, when the reconstruction of self from Soviet to post-Soviet had become an issue of major concern.[102] However, despite being lured by positive images and notions about the West, particularly as a model for the renewal and reconstruction of identity, Makine's protagonists are ultimately left disappointed by their Western encounters. Thus, in contrast to the dominant critical trend, I illustrate in this chapter that, far from being besotted with the West, Makine emerges as one of the first Eastern European writers of the post-Soviet period to express a latent disappointment with the West.

To reintegrate *La Fille* and *Confession* into an examination of Makine's use of East-West is to realise that the early novels contain the genesis of a concept that Makine develops and refines in his subsequent writing: East-West evolves into a literary construct in which Makine's poetico-philosophical vision is steeped. In Chapter Two I posit that, from 1994, East and West can be understood as symbolic geographies. Implicit in the notion of symbolic geographies is that landscape functions as a metaphorical realm within the narrative; it is detached from its geographical and socio-political reality. In Makine's oeuvre, the development of East and West from geographical locales into symbolic realms and, ultimately, a cohesive poetic form, assists in conveying the novels' identity narratives. In the symbolic realms of East and West Makine is exploring his characters' psychological development. Using *Amour* (1994) and *Testament* (1995) as examples of Makine's experimentation with a unique mythopoetic aesthetic, I explain how the writer fashions two mutually dependent literary motifs – Paris and Siberia – out of a heady amalgam of French and Siberian imagery. While the dominant critical approach has sought to locate and analyse French cultural influences in these novels, I offer an original contribution to current scholarship by demonstrating that the motifs of Paris and Siberia function within a Russian cultural paradigm.

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[102] For a comprehensive analysis of individual approaches to identity construction and the re-invention of self in the Soviet Union during and immediately following its demise, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

In the first half of Chapter Two I analyse *Amour* as an example of Makine's development of the Siberian motif. I propose that, by situating his characters in Siberia, Makine is following a centuries-old Russian literary tradition, which scholars from multi-disciplinary backgrounds recognise as the mythologising of Siberia and which has meaning in terms of Russian expressions of identity.[103] I contend that Makine deliberately fashions a symbolic Siberian landscape in *Amour* in order to consider, through the psychological development of his young Soviet-Russian protagonist, "man's presence in the world".[104] Arguing that the aim of Makine's protagonist's navigation through Siberia is to seek self-determination, I demonstrate that geography in *Amour* can be considered symbolic. In the second half of Chapter Two I analyse Makine's use of Western imagery in his fourth novel, *Testament*. At the surface level, the text suggests that Makine's characters' social and individual emancipation will be delivered by the West: France and, specifically, Paris. Yet, contrary to the dominant critical approach to *Testament* and, indeed, to the expectation that Makine's Western imagery will align with French constructions of identity, I argue that the Paris motif functions as part of a discourse relevant to Soviet-Russian constructions of youth identity and its renewal in the period of late Soviet socialism.

In 2010, in an edited collection of essays entitled *How They See Us*,[105] Makine wrote about images of the West that permeated his worldview as a Soviet adolescent growing up "behind the Iron Curtain".[106] The West evoked by Makine is specifically concerned with America, yet expresses a sentiment that relates to the West in a broader sense: "As we saw it from behind the Iron Curtain, what America symbolised was this sudden weightlessness [...] this freedom we dreamed of: to break away from an alienated, enslaved self and take flight to a radically new world, a new self, a self free to express itself".[107] Here, Makine speaks of the West in conceptual terms, as a symbolic realm to which his imagination took flight and which was indispensable to the process of identity-construction: the ability to create "a new self" during periods of crisis. The distinction between the West as a political entity and as a literary symbol is crucial to the ideas that inform my analysis of *Testament*, in which I argue that Paris forms part of Makine's symbolic portrayal of geography. To support my argument, I draw on the work of social-anthropologist Alexeï Yurchak,[108] who theorises that "imaginary worlds" were vital elements of Soviet youth culture in the period of late Soviet socialism, the most tenacious being the "Imaginary West".[109] "[K]nowable and unattainable, tangible and abstract, mundane and exotic",[110] these imaginary realms offered an intoxicating mix of the banal and the extraordinary. Moreover, in facilitating the creation of a world distinct and freed from the ubiquity of Soviet reality, the Imaginary West enabled Soviet youth to engage in unique forms of identity-construction in their attempts to establish a solid sense of self. I argue that the French imagery Makine develops in *Testament* fulfils a function similar to the Imaginary West Yurchak describes: it encourages the free-reign of the protagonist's imagination. Through the creation of the Paris motif, Makine thematises the problem of Soviet-Russian cultural and youth identity in the specific context of late Soviet socialism.

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[103] This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two.
[104] Valerii Tiupa, "The Mythologeme of Siberia: On the Concept of a Siberian Motif in Russian Literature," *Orbis Litterarum* 61, no. 6 (2006): 443-460: 443.
[105] James Atlas, ed. *How They See Us: Meditations on America* (New York: Atlas & Co., 2010).

As Makine's literary career progresses his writing grows increasingly symbolic. In Chapter Three, through an analysis of the leitmotif of the journey and its antithesis the anti-journey, I consider how the structural poles of East and West function as thresholds in the increasingly abstracted realities of Makine's literary worlds. The chapter focuses on three novels published between 1998 and 2004 – *Le Crime d'Olga Arbélina*[111] (*Le Crime*, 1998), *La Musique d'une vie*[112] (*La Musique*, 2001), *La Femme qui attendait*[113] (*La Femme*, 2004) – and uses *Amour* as an initial model for the analysis.[114] A unique fusion between past and present, memory and the imagination, time and space is discernible in these works which, due to their distinct lyrical composition, I term *symbolic novels*. Literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin writes in his essay "Epic and Novel" that "[f]rom the very beginning the novel was structured not in the distanced image of the absolute past but in the zone of direct contact with inconclusive present-day reality. At its core lay personal experience and free creative imagination."[115] Bakhtin argues for the indeterminate nature of the novel, an indeterminacy that I discern in Makine's symbolic writing: the intersection in his work between the novels' underlying historico-contemporary sensibility and the inherent innovation of an act of unfettered, poetic creation. The prevailing argument guiding my analysis in Chapter Three is that Makine uses a diverse range of spatio-temporal journeys to explore his characters' individual quests for authenticity and, ultimately, to explore their inner psychology. In so doing, I illustrate how East-West has transmuted into an integral facet of the poetics of Makine's prose, allowing him to create fiction that is deeply imaginative and profoundly concerned with his characters' humanity.

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[106] Andreï Makine, "A Lesson For America," in *How They See Us: Meditations on America*, ed. Atlas, trans. Geoffrey Strachan, (New York: Atlas & Co., 2010), 68-81: 75.
[107] Makine, "A Lesson For America," 75.
[108] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*.
[109] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 159.
[110] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 159.
[111] Andreï Makine, *Le Crime d'Olga Arbélina* (Paris: Gallimard, collection Folio, 2000).
[112] Andreï Makine, *La Musique d'une vie* (Paris: Éditions Points, 2004).
[113] Andreï Makine, *La Femme qui attendait* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004).

In the final chapter, Chapter Four, I analyse *La Vie d'un homme inconnu*[116] (*La Vie*, 2009) and *Le Livre de brèves amours éternelles*[117] (*Brèves amours*, 2011), both of which have received limited critical attention to date.[118] These novels are written after a period in which we see the diversification of Makine's East-West structural form to explore personal identity narratives, indicative of his maturing storytelling mode. In his writing in the period between 2004 and 2009, Makine's exploration of the crises and renewals of his characters' construction of self expands from an interest in Russian and specifically Soviet identity narratives, to incorporate broader perspectives on identity and its construction. For instance, in two works published following the symbolic novels – *L'Amour humain* (2006)[119] and the play *Le Monde selon Gabriel* (2007)[120] – Makine abandons his interest in Russian protagonists and, additionally, in a traditional East-West geography navigated between France and Russia. *L'Amour humain* is narrated by a Russian military-fighter-turned-writer, yet tells the story of the Angolan-born Elias Almeida who, over the course of the narrative, grows increasingly wary of his desire to change the world through recourse to revolutionary means. In *Le Monde selon Gabriel*, Makine presents a dystopian world that has been described as "a quasi-totalitarian future world"[121] in which he "holds forth about human foibles and tragic flaws".[122] These works indicate Makine's growing desire to encompass into his literature a broader range of themes, characters, historical perspectives and geographies. Makine is diversifying his traditional Russian narratives to consider existential questions of identity: in brief, the contemporary human condition.

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[114] To avoid repetition in my analysis I have excluded two novels published during this period, *Requiem pour l'Est* (2000) and *La Terre et le ciel de Jacques Dorme* (2003). The themes and structure of these works share much in common with *Testament*: each of the novels' protagonists come-of-age in Russia under the tutelage of a surrogate French mother-figure and are heavily influenced by French culture and language. In each novel, the protagonists' variegated French encounters unveil nuanced dynamics in Makine's representation of East and West. See Makine, *Requiem pour l'Est* (Paris: Gallimard, collection Folio, 2001); Andreï Makine, *La Terre et le ciel de Jacques Dorme* (Paris: Gallimard, collection Folio, 2004). Critics widely recognise that the three novels – *Testament*, *Requiem pour l'Est* and *La Terre et le ciel de Jacques Dorme* – form what Nazarova calls "[un] trilogie franco-russe". See Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 82. See also Hansen, "La simultanéité du présent," 882; McCall, "Andreï Makine's France," 315; Thierry Gandillot, "Trilogie franco-russe (fin): Une passion française," *L'Express*, 30 January, 2003.

[115] Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 39.

[116] Andreï Makine, *La Vie d'un homme inconnu* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2009).

[117] Andreï Makine, *Le Livre des brèves amours éternelles* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2011).

[118] The situation is changing. For a very recent analysis of *L'homme inconnu* see Helena Duffy, "On connaît la musique: La vie culturelle au temps du siège de Leningrad dans *La Vie d'un homme inconnu* d'Andreï Makine," *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature* 39, no. 1 (2015). See also Gheorghe Derbac, "'Présent passé, passé présent': Écriture et échos de l'histoire dans *Requiem pour l'Est* et *La Vie d'un homme inconnu* d'Andreï Makine," *Etudes romanes de Brno* 33, no. 1 (2012); Gillespie, "Border Consciousness."; Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles." For a scholarly analysis of *Brèves amours* see Mary Theis, "Makine's Postmodern Writing about Exile, Memory and Connection," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 14, no. 5 (2012).

Surprisingly, then, following the publication of *Le Monde selon Gabriel*, Makine returns to the question of Soviet-Russian émigré identity in *La Vie* and *Brèves amours.* How should scholars interpret Makine's return to the question of national and émigré identity in these works? In Chapter Four, I consider the question by analysing these works through the themes of homecoming and leave-taking. Although Makine gives voice in these works to the crisis and renewal of his characters' émigré identities as they unfold in France, for the first time in his career Makine also brings contemporary, post-Soviet Russia to the fore of his narrative. In so doing, his traditional recourse to the East-West structure is reversed: the East is now imagined, while the West has become an everyday reality. I suggest that, in these novels, Makine allows his characters to bid farewell to the overwhelming presence of their Soviet-Russian homelands. At the same time, the analysis of *La Vie* and *Brèves amours* illustrates that the capacity of East-West as a literary form to convey lucidly Makine's literary vision is diminishing. As the overarching dominance of the East-West structural form in his oeuvre loosens, Makine appears to be committing his own act of literary leave-taking: these novels are the strongest indication that Makine is searching for a new subjective form within which to encase his shifting literary aims.

The key principle guiding the present study is that Makine's writing is, above all, concerned with the art of creation, where the entwining of dreams, reality and creative expression craft

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[119] Andreï Makine, *L'Amour humain* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006).

[120] Andreï Makine, *Le Monde selon Gabriel: Mystère de Noël* (Paris: Éditions du Rocher, 2007).

[121] Duffy, "La France," 31.

[122] Theis, "Makine's Postmodern Writing," 6.

"un monde éternel":[123] literary fiction. An examination of the East-West thread that Makine weaves into his narratives, from the early novels of the 1990s through to the more recent works of 2009 and 2011, reveals that the initially loaded structures are steeped in Makine's poetico-philosophical vision. East-West is a theme, structure and spatio-temporal literary construct through which Makine gives voice to the crisis, renewal and construction of his characters' selves in the specific context of contemporary Europe of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As this study demonstrates over the following four chapters, in bearing West, Makine initially seeks through his fiction to come to terms with an Eastern homeland and identity that no longer exists: the Soviet Union. On closer examination, however, an analysis of the underlying anatomy of the East-West presence indicates that it is more complex than critics have acknowledged. Makine incorporates into his literary vision national, émigré, adolescent and, increasingly, individual notions of identity. He demonstrates, through the crises and resolutions of self that afflict his characters, that identity is variegated and plural. Makine's increasingly symbolic recourse to the structural poles of East and West in his narratives is both indicative and reflective of these variations. The waning of the East-West presence in the more recent writing, however, bespeaks a shift in Makine's authorial vision. In the same year as he published *Brèves amours*, Makine posed the following question during our interview: "Quand tout est dit, qu'est-ce qu'il y a derrière l'identité?" This, Makine suggested, is "peut-être le moment le plus intéressant."[124] As this study demonstrates, Makine's increasing focus on the human condition, coupled with his shedding of the reading public's expectations that his writing remain tethered to an East-West frame,[125] suggests that the most interesting moments in his writing may exist, if not beyond East and West, then in the interstices and webs that link these symbolic landscapes, so that an interlacing of time, space, dreams and the quest for self-creation fuse in the art of Makine's unique literary imagining.

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[123] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[124] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[125] In March 2011, Makine revealed that he has been writing under a pseudonym – Gabriel Osmonde; I discuss this in Chapter Four.

– CHAPTER ONE –

"La poétique des contrastes":[126] East-West in *La Fille d'un héros de l'Union soviétique* and *Confession d'un porte drapeau-déchu*

> *Happy times! A blessed era of seeing things in black and white: the wall between East and West was plastered on each side with grimacing monsters. A Red, with a knife gripped between enormous teeth; an American imperialist with his bomb. Yes, it was all reassuringly clear-cut.*
>
> – Andreï Makine[127]

East – West: A Socio-Political Frame

In the early 1990s, when Makine entered the French literary scene, it was no longer feasible to see the world in the "reassuringly clear-cut", black and white terms he ironically recalled in 2010, in the quotation above. Indeed, when Makine's first work of fiction, *La Fille*, was published in 1990, the Soviet Union that the author had left behind in 1987 was nearing its end; most communist governments in the Soviet Union's satellite states had collapsed, and by the following year, 1991, communism in Soviet Russia was formally dissolved. When Makine's second novel, *Confession*, was published in 1992 a major period of European transition to a post-Soviet reality was in train. Nevertheless, in his early fiction Makine returns to that "blessed era of seeing things in black and white". Set predominantly in the socio-historical context of Cold War USSR, both narratives extend from the 1940s and 1950s, prior to Stalin's death, through to the 1980s, during Gorbachev's reforms. Yet in *Confession*, Makine also shifts the narrative time-space to Paris in the early 1990s and considers the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union's end from the vantage point of the West. Although not reflected in scholarly literature, the genesis of East-West as a theme, structure and literary concept, in which Makine's early poetico-philosophical vision is steeped, is located in *La Fille* and *Confession*.

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[126] Makine, *La Fille*, 98.

[127] Makine, "A Lesson For America," 69.

In this chapter I posit that in *La Fille* and *Confession* Makine's overarching literary quest is to explore the crises and resolutions of identity and the construction of self at a national level. By creating in these novels two literary worlds built on concrete, Cold War foundations, Makine establishes an East-West paradigm that foregrounds the centrality to his early literary aim of exploring his characters' construction of self from Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet perspectives. Specifically, in *La Fille* and *Confession* Makine's early authorial focus lies in interrogating the schematic nature of the political Cold War division that had affected his world-view while growing up in the Soviet Union. Ray Taras suggests that "Makine's most direct exposition of the Soviet political system comes in *La Fille*",[128] which he characterises as the author's "most overtly political work".[129] Yet although an exposition of Soviet power play influences Makine's narrative in this text, his literary interest in East-West as an ontological and socio-political reality in twentieth-century Europe has broader implications: it is, additionally, an attempt to come to terms, at the beginning of the 1990s, with the malaise of uneasy unification of post-Soviet European society.

At the time of Makine's writing, during what historian Sheila Fitzpatrick refers to as "[t]he shock of the early '90s",[130] the saliency of the Cold War era in the European and global, collective consciousness had not yet been attenuated by the Soviet Union's dissolution. György Péteri writes of the Cold War that it

> was the unique period when "East" and "West" became the constituting elements of the most important single bipolarity in terms of which various communities and major political and cultural projects and movements tended to define themselves and one another.[131]

While analyses of the pairing are variously constructed depending on the "period, country, and sociocultural milieu"[132] considered, the fact that the East-West binary was crucial to identity construction at various levels – community, political, and cultural – is significant in terms of the individual identity narratives that lie at the core of *La Fille* and *Confession*. Indeed, as that "single bipolarity" dissolved and "'Soviet' suddenly ceased to be a viable identity",[133] Makine was confronted with issues he sought to understand through his fiction. In *La Fille* and

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[128] Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia," 57.

[129] Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia," 53. Taras incorrectly states here that Makine originally wrote *La Fille* in Russian.

[130] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 305.

[131] György Péteri, "Introduction: The Oblique Coordinate Systems of Modern Identity," in *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. Péteri, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 4.

[132] Péteri, "Modern Identity," 4.

[133] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 10.

Confession Makine asks: What was the individual Soviet-Russian experience of the late twentieth century? As the structures of Soviet society deteriorated, were meaningful personal identities sustained? How did Soviet citizens respond when their identity, in national-political terms, was suddenly rendered meaningless?[134] To broach these questions Makine first had to recreate the Cold War world: hence the concrete East-West foundation underpinning his early writing. Second, he confronted the breakdown occurring in his socio-political reality with a corresponding breakdown in his fictional representation of individual Russian identity narratives.

La Fille and *Confession* offer eastern perspectives on the ambiguities of the Cold War era, which are conveyed via official Soviet rhetoric and the individual reflections of, and crises that beset, Makine's Soviet-Russian characters. In both novels, the last decades of the Soviet Union's existence, which scholars have termed late Soviet socialism[135] or Mature socialism,[136] are brought to life. Due to the overlap with the earlier period of late Stalinism,[137] Makine also integrates into his fiction the immediate post-war years, in particular the end of the cult of Stalin's personality, and comments additionally on the enduring role the Great Patriotic War[138] played in Soviet society. This was a world largely unfamiliar to Makine's target audience: the European West. Perhaps as a result, Ian McCall writes that *La Fille* and *Confession* "are stories essentially about the USSR".[139] Yet McCall fails to take into account that a substantial image of the West, particularly of France, features in both novels.[140] Overt references to the Soviet state's perceptions of the capitalist West infiltrate both texts, where life is depicted as "cruelle et injuste" (*CPDD*, 42). By narrating a Soviet perspective of the Cold War to his western audience, Makine attempts to create cross-cultural understanding between two epistemologically distinct worlds of Europe at a major turning point of historical transition.

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[134] Recent research in the field of post-Soviet studies continues to emphasise identity as a primary category for analysis when examining the Soviet Union's disintegration and subsequent rebirth as a region of multiple nation-states. Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly, the editors of a 2012 collection of essays examining the link between Soviet and post-Soviet identities, suggest that even though "the significance of identity as a political, social and cultural factor" underwent major transformations during perestroika and following the Union's collapse, attempts to understand what took place still prove challenging for researchers today. See Bassin and Kelly, "Introduction: National Subjects," in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, eds. Bassin and Kelly, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3-5. See also the collected essays in Barta, *The Fall of the Iron Curtain*.

[135] The term favoured by social anthropologist Alexeï Yurchak. See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 1-35.

[136] Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 24-29: 26. Fürst prefers Mature socialism, considering it "more daring and assumptive, but [...] more expressive". She discusses her choice of terminology in the introduction to her study.

[137] Late Stalinism commonly refers to the years following the end of World War II, culminating in Stalin's death in 1953. Fürst maintains, however, that it was already in progress at the war's end. See Fürst, "Introduction," in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, ed. Fürst, (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-19. Fürst's edited collection seeks to ignite renewed interest in the period, which she argues Soviet scholars have disregarded.

[138] The term Great Patriotic War (*Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina/ Великая Отечественная война*) refers to the war between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945, following the German invasion on 22 June, 1941. It is used predominantly in Russia and amongst Soviet historians. See, for example, Mark Edele's overview in Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society: 1941 - 1991* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3-20.

[139] McCall, "Andreï Makine's France," 306.

Historian Juliane Fürst has drawn attention to the Soviet socialist project during the post-war years, indicating that its aims were "informed by a [...] conservative mission: the upkeep of revolutionary achievements and the stabilisation of the existing order and society in the face of persistent challenges from the capitalist West".[141] Makine captures the atmosphere of those "persistent challenges", from which considerable narrative conflict arises: is the West as cruel as the Soviet state insists, or is life there more desirable? In *La Fille*, Olia conjures in her mind a romantic image of an English businessman with "un visage à la James Bond, tempes grisonnantes, costume sombre" (*FHUS*, 93) that is a far cry from the West's supposed cruelty. This indicates that the official Party line[142] and the subjective experience of the West entertained by the Soviet individual were misaligned. Yet the transformation of Olia's Western desire into disappointment following her actual encounters with Western businessmen is telling. Taras discerns the disquietude of Makine's personal disappointment with the West, observing that in "[a] rare reference in *La Fille* to the Paris Makine would embrace as his own [...] [w]e can feel the anxiety of the young Russian writer between his long-imagined Paris, conceived in Russia, and his real encounter with it."[143] Yet Makine also portrays characters such as Olia's father, Ivan, who genuinely believe in "[la] marche vers l'horizon radieux" (*CPDD*, 42) on which, as Soviet citizens, they are encouraged to embark: his disappointment arrives when the Soviet project fails. In both cases the debilitating side of Soviet socialism is not obviated from Makine's literary perspective. Much of the narrative interest of these works is derived from the interplay between Soviet political power play, its public condemnation of the West and that effect, conscious or otherwise, on Makine's "average Russians".[144] Fürst stated in 2006 what Makine had already conveyed poetically sixteen years earlier: in the post-war years a system developed in the Soviet East that was "deeply rotten, yet covered by a veil of silence and ideological control."[145] If part of the state's ideological control was to encourage fear and distrust towards the West, then as the inner experience of the protagonists of *La Fille* and *Confession* demonstrates, rather than bolstering state support, elements of doubt regarding both the West and the East instead germinate in their minds.

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[140] McCall overlooks, for instance, the fact that in *Confession* Arkadi's letter is composed in Paris.

[141] Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*, 3.

[142] I employ the term official to refer to what was essentially the Party line. Since it lies beyond the scope of the present thesis, I want to avoid debates regarding the binary of public versus private in Soviet historical discourse. More recently, historical research suggests that the view that Soviet society operated on two parallel levels – public/private – is reductionist. Edele argues, for instance, that different approaches must be integrated: "We cannot understand Soviet history 'with the state left out'; we cannot understand it without *blat*, friendship, religion, ethnicity, gender relations, the black market, or traditional patterns of acting and thinking either." See Edele, "Soviet Society, Social Structure, and Everyday Life: Major Frameworks Reconsidered," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8, no. 2 (2007): 370.

[143] Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia," 56.

In his debut novels Makine thus brings previously silenced aspects of the Soviet state's governance to the surface in his portrayal of Soviet society, which is achieved predominantly through his creation of complex individual characters and an exploration of cross-generational experiences. In the analysis that follows, I focus on the heterogeneity of the individual character portraits created in the novels. In *La Fille*, I analyse how the gradual dissolution of the Soviet Union impacts the ability of Makine's protagonists, the father-daughter pair of Ivan and Olia, to construct meaningful personal identities in the Soviet Union prior to its collapse. In his first novel Makine starts to capture, additionally, the mixed exhilaration experienced as Russia opened its doors to the West, which is a theme he develops further in *Confession*. In my analysis of *Confession*, I consider how the protagonist, Kim, reconstructs his identity from an émigré position in the West in the early 1990s when, as Fitzpatrick describes, "the remaking of self was experienced as liberating but also laborious and sometimes painful."[146] In *Confession* Makine emerges as one of the first writers of the post-Soviet period to give voice to the latent disappointment with the West that is first intimated in *La Fille*.

La Fille d'un héros de l'Union soviétique: An Eternal Present

Midway through *La Fille* Olia, reflecting on her work at the Centre for International Commerce, observes twice that "rien ne changeait" (*FHUS*, 94-95). The phrase is repeated at the start of two successive paragraphs, stressing a greater belief relevant not only to Olia's position in the text, but also to an underlying notion regarding the eternity of the Soviet system. The idea is similarly emphasised by Makine via the novel's linear narrative structure:

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[144] Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia," 63.

[145] Fürst, "Introduction," 16.

[146] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 303.

the Union's collapse was unforeseeable to the general population and the Soviet system operated in a seemingly eternal present. Social anthropologist Alexeï Yurchak expresses this idea in his book *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, in which he makes tenable the proposition that most Soviet citizens had no expectation that Gorbachev's reforms would herald major change. By drawing attention in 2006 to "the profound feeling of the Soviet system's permanence and immutability",[147] Yurchak expresses a notion that Makine illustrates in his 1990 novel. Arguably, the tenuous political state of the Soviet Union in 1990 sparked the narrative thrust of *La Fille*,[148] yet Makine turns his attention to the Great Patriotic War as a starting point from which to interrogate the gradual decline of his former homeland prior to Gorbachev's reforms. The novel commences on the battlefields of World War II along the Soviet-German front, "quelque part dans le cœur déchiré de la Russie" (*FHUS*, 13), and closes in Moscow in 1985, "cette année-là, [quand] Gorbatchev arriva au pouvoir" (*FHUS*, 124). During this time a suite of political leaders reach, and then fall from, the highest ranks of Soviet power:

> L'Histoire s'amusait à se moquer de ceux qui prétendaient la gouverner impunément. Andropov mourut. Tchernienko le suivi. Avec la rapidité inconvenante d'une bande dessinée mourait l'entourage de Brejnev. Et l'on célébrait si souvent des funérailles sur la place Rouge, au son de la *Marche funèbre* de Chopin, que les Moscovites se surprenaient à en siffler l'air comme celui d'une mélodie à la mode. (*FHUS*, 72-73)

The rapid succession of political leaders is conveyed with irony by the novel's omniscient narrator, through whom Makine imparts a more critical view of the corrupt system operating in Soviet society. The narrator's satirical view of Soviet governance depicts Party politics and its leadership as theatre and artifice: "En Russie, il était toujours nécessaire de jouer cette préalable comédie d'humilité, ce qui permettait de grimper sur le trône" (*FHUS*, 125). By allowing only his narrator any prescience of the Union's perfidiousness and impending death, Makine remains true to the realities of the period evoked: "Il y avait *très peu de gens* alors qui devinaient que toute cette mise en scène […] étai[t] réellement de la prestidigitation destinée à endormir la vigilance" (*FHUS*, 124-125, *emphasis added*). The narrator's position facilitates Makine's portrayal of the more sinister underpinnings of the Soviet system that was, at the time of his writing, disintegrating.

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[147] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 1. Despite the unexpectedness of the Union's collapse, Yurchak argues that its disintegration was, in reality, unsurprising to the general public.

[148] Helena Duffy offers a similar interpretation, suggesting that Makine wrote *La Fille* to address the dissolution of the Soviet Union. See Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 163.

By contrast, Makine's typically Soviet protagonists – Ivan and his daughter, Olia – perceive the state in less critical terms. Their position in society is, paradoxically, far from desirable. The veteran Ivan – the Hero of the novel's title – is initially lauded for his contribution to society through his war participation, but must deal with the increasingly diminished importance of his social status over the course of the post-war years. Olia works officially as a state salaried translator, yet her role at the Centre for International Commerce amounts to little more than prostitution.[149] When the first significant changes to the Soviet system are heralded with Gorbachev's introduction of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the rise to power of "ce vif et loquace Gorbatchev" (*FHUS*, 124) ignites little serious interest amongst Makine's protagonists: in Ivan's view, he makes "une étrange impression" (*FHUS*, 124). The general Soviet perceptions of the Party, with which the narrator's view is often inconsistent, are typical of the period: Ivan and Olia silence the doubts to which their inner thoughts give rise, or they express their outright, and genuine, admiration for the state.[150] At one stage Olia cries, "le K.G.B. peut tout!" (*FHUS*, 89). Olia and Ivan operate seemingly naively in the eternal present of a system that is headed for imminent collapse. An examination of how their personal experiences in the lead up to the Soviet Union's dissolution are depicted reveals significant differences in the role the West played in the constructions of identity across two generations: the first and the last Soviet generations.[151]

Le Héros de l'Union soviétique: Ivan Demidov

"How often we sit weeping – / you and I – over the life we lead! / My friends, if you only knew / the darkness of the days ahead!"[152] Alexander Blok penned these words with prescience in 1910, well before the Russian revolution and before the "darkness" of the era of Soviet communism commenced. In *La Fille* Makine illuminates Blok's prophecy of a world where "[l]ies have no ending, nor deceit."[153] The complexities of the Soviet world in which the war Hero Ivan lives and eventually dies[154] are presaged in the novel's opening line, when the narrator states: "Comme tout est fragile et étrange ici-bas" (*FHUS*, 11). In a perceptive analysis of the devastating precariousness of the Russian experience developed by Makine in *La Fille*, at both an historical and an individual level, Catherine Rey writes that "[c]hez le romancier, le tragique de l'histoire personnelle se trouve transféré dans le cadre de la grande histoire. Elle sert de métaphore à la tragédie privée."[155] Rey's emphasis on the tragedy inherent in Makine's narratives precludes the possibility of hope. Indeed, along with his daughter, Ivan is the most despairing of Makine's characters. Yet, there is even less distinction in *La Fille* between private and public tragedy than Rey's analysis implies: the confluence of "la grande histoire" and "l'histoire personnelle" is central to Makine's first work of fiction.[156]

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[149] Olia's work at the Centre involves providing sexual favours to Western businessmen. After spiking her clients' drinks with sleeping tablets, Olia's objective is to procure potentially sensitive Western documents for the KGB.

[150] The narrator plays an intriguing role in the narrative which would be worth exploring in more detail. He is both advocate and criticiser of the Party, on the one hand heightening the message of Soviet propaganda, as in the opening scenes during Ivan's recovery, while on the other offering adversarial commentary about the state of affairs he observes.

[151] The last Soviet generation is a term coined by Yurchak to refer to those who "were born between the 1950s and early 1970s and came of age in the 1970s and 1980s", prior to the Union's collapse. See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 31-32: 31. Yurchak's definition of the generation and its defining features is discussed in Chapter Two.

[152] Alexander Blok, "A Voice from the Chorus," in *The Twelve and Other Poems*, trans. Jon Stallworthy and Peter France, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970), 103.

In the novel's opening section, the narrator offers a romantic account of war that is imbued with glory and expressed in a tone typical of Soviet propaganda. The reader is introduced to a young soldier (Ivan) dying on the Soviet-German front; his body is so damaged that its return to wholeness, and his return to life, seems impossible:

> Il était couché; sa tête, prise dans une petite flaque de sang gelé sous la nuque, faisait avec son corps un angle inimaginable pour un être vivant. Ses coudes étaient si violemment tendus sous son dos qu'il semblait vouloir s'arracher de terre. [...] Mort. Avec une telle blessure, on ne survit pas. (*FHUS*, 12-13)

That the soldier is rescued shortly thereafter is miraculous. In the narrator's account, Ivan's rescue is raised to mythic proportions: a Red Cross nurse, Tatiana, singles out the soldier from amongst a pile of frozen bodies, places a pocket mirror to his mouth, watches as breaths of life fog over its surface and then drags Ivan to safety. The celestial premises of the soldier's rescue are mirrored in the fragment of glass Tatiana holds to Ivan's lips. Revealing only "le bleu du ciel, [...] [u]ne matinée de printemps éclatante [...], le vide ensoleillé et sonore de l'air" (*FHUS*, 14), the mirror reflects a falsified image of the world. It obscures the more devastating environment in which the Hero is physically grounded: "ce champ printanier labouré par les chars, au milieu de centaines de capotes figées pendant la nuit en un monceau glacé" (*FHUS*, 11). Consistent with the Soviet project of the post-war years, the narrator attempts to convey a cleansed portrait of the war and to restore what Fürst calls "the outer trappings of normalcy […] to cover and eradicate inner scars and traumas."[157] Makine's Hero is saved and a victorious memory of the Great Patriotic War activated.[158]

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[153] Blok, "A Voice," 103.

[154] Ivan dies in 1985 on the cusp of Gorbachev's reforms.

[155] Catherine Rey, "La nouvelle Babel: langage, identité et morale dans les oeuvres de Emil Cioran, Milan Kundera et Andreï Makine" (Doctoral thesis, University of Western Australia, 2006), 136.

[156] The confluence between public and private societal domains in *La Fille* accords with Mark Edele's position, outlined above, that Soviet society cannot be understood as operating on separate levels. See Ch. 01, fn. 142; Edele, "Soviet Society," 370.

The Hero's recovery in hospital afterwards is conveyed with a similarly romantic tone to his rescue, yet has a personal rather than official significance. In hospital, Ivan realises "quelque chose de très *simple*. Il pensait qu'il était Héros de l'Union soviétique; il était resté vivant, ses jambes et ses bras étaient intacts" (*FHUS*, 15-16, *emphasis added*). Devoid of grandiose, military significance, the soldier's understanding of himself as a Hero equates initially to a simple summation: he has survived unharmed. With his body unscathed and all scars seemingly erased, a chivalrous desire consumes Ivan: to endear himself to his saviour, Tatiana. Accordingly, Ivan projects himself into the role of his recently recognised Hero's status, but does so in a *literary* as opposed to a *military* sense. In one example, Ivan imagines repeating to Tatiana

> cette phrase entendue un jour dans un spectacle auquel sa classe avait assisté. L'acteur, drapé dans sa cape noire, disait à l'héroïne habillée d'une robe moussante de dentelle claire: 'C'est donc à vous, madame que je suis redevable la vie…'. (*FHUS*, 16)

The noble drama Ivan creates, in which he is a dashing hero, has parallels with the imaginary worlds of fiction and film to which other Makinian protagonists take flight in the author's later works.[159] The significance of the soldier's imaginative capacities in this scene indicates that he can formulate an understanding of self separate from official discourse. Although devoid of pragmatic reasoning, Ivan's *individual* notion of self is consistent with a Soviet Stalinist subject who has remained "an active agent in his self-imagination".[160] The inner agency gleaned by the reader during Ivan's recovery provides the protagonist with a modicum of personal identity that is, nevertheless, lacking in the state's idea of Ivan's collective Soviet identity.

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[157] Fürst, "Introduction," 5-6. Fürst states that "trauma, ambiguity and societal division" were realities of the post-War recovery from which the state sought actively to dissociate itself.

[158] The Great Patriotic War developed cult-like status in the post-war years, principally as a means for the state to legitimate itself and bolster popular opinion in its favour. See Nina Tumarkin, "The Great Patriotic War as Myth and Memory," *European Review* 11, no. 4 (2003): 595-611.

[159] Belmondo's cinematic adventure world in *Amour*, for example.

[160] Anna Krylova, "Identity, Agency, and the 'First Soviet Generation'," in *Generations in Twentieth Century Europe*, ed. Lovell, (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 103.

As a member of the first Soviet generation, Ivan's personal identity aligns closely to the developing ideology of the Soviet state.[161] Anna Krylova emphasises the link from an historical perspective, noting that this cohort was referred to "in pre-war Stalinist ideology [...] as the generation of 'new Soviet people'".[162] S.A. Smith suggests, additionally, that this cohort "may represent the first instance in history in which the state itself endeavoured to transform an age-cohort into a generation by consciously elaborating an identity for it."[163] The new Soviet person's identity was premised on a Soviet-construed world view cultivated "through schooling, propaganda and the mass youth organizations";[164] arguably, the mass mobilisation of youth for war services further facilitated the cultivation of that world-view. Nevertheless, Smith writes that absolute "cultural change" was ultimately ineffectual. In like manner, Fürst recognises that the Party's prescribed identity narratives were neither "coherent" nor "fulfilling".[165] In *La Fille* Makine illustrates the incoherence of state identity narratives through the ambiguous unfolding of Ivan's personal understanding of identity in the novel's early stages.

As Ivan rises through the ranks of Soviet military prestige, however, the narrator's perspective is used to draw the reader actively into the influential web of Soviet national identity narratives. For the first fourteen pages, the narrator carefully avoids naming Ivan,[166] other than with his official title: "Le Héros de l'Union soviétique".[167] George Breslauer contends that during the Stalinist phase "[t]he party defined for you how to rank your many identities and whether there existed any sort of conflict among them."[168] Through repeated reference to Ivan's official title and by creating an image of a quixotic "Soviet person",[169] who has presumably "subordinated all other identities",[170] the narrator reflects the party's aims: he depicts the primacy of the soldier's Soviet military identity above all other alternatives.[171] Indeed, the Hero title bestowed on Ivan constitutes part of a greater myth of collective Soviet identity: the Great Patriotic War. When Ivan receives the highly valued Gold Star medal following his participation in the Battle of Stalingrad, "la plus haute distinction de la Patrie" (*FHUS*, 58), his importance is visible to the rest of society. Unsurprisingly, the state's narrative of heroic triumph valorises the soldiers' *collective* defeat of the advancing German enemy: "ils ont contenu l'avance de l'ennemi dans une direction d'une importance stratégique capitale, ils ont résisté à plus de dix attaques d'un ennemi numériquement supérieur" (*FHUS*, 30). Although the reader is privy to how the state's account misrepresents Ivan's actual war experience,[172] the Hero is encouraged to adopt the national narrative until "il s'habitua à ce mensonge innocent" (*FHUS*, 60). Ivan's crisis – his loss of self – is presaged.

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[161] Ivan was born in 1924. For further discussion of this age-cohort as a generation, see S.A. Smith, "The First Soviet Generation: Children and Religious Belief in Soviet Russia, 1917-1941," in *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Lovell, (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 79-100.

[162] Krylova, "Identity and Agency," 102-103.

[163] Smith, "First Soviet Generation," 81.

[164] Smith, "First Soviet Generation," 81.

[165] See Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*, 16. See also Krylova, "Identity and Agency," 104-111.

[166] Ivan's name is first mentioned on p.24 of the Folio edition.

[167] Repeated reference to Ivan's official title is made by both the narrator and Tatiana. See Makine, *La Fille*, 13, 15, 16, 17, 21.

[168] George Breslauer, "Identities in Transition: An Introduction," ed. Bonnell, *Identities in Transition: Eastern Europe and Russia After the Collapse of Communism* (University of California, Berkeley, 1996), 5 http://escholarship.org/uc/item/22g1z9nw.

[169] Both Krylova and Breslauer discuss the Soviet state's intention, particularly during the Stalin-era, to create a "new Soviet person". Krylova identifies the term's use in conjunction with the creation of the first Soviet generation. See Krylova, "Identity and Agency," 101-121: 103; Breslauer, "Identities in Transition," 5.

[170] Breslauer, "Identities in Transition," 5.

Makine is keen to explore and explain Ivan's ongoing faith in the state. Playing an adversarial role, the narrator suggests that the state's account of the soldier's heroic triumph at Stalingrad is couched in words that "ressembleront peu à ce qu'ils avaient vécu et éprouvé!" (*FHUS*, 30). Still, Ivan remembers the war as *the* formative experience of his life, a case Mark Edele persuasively argues for Soviet veterans of Ivan's age-cohort.[173] Indeed, on the battlefields, Ivan experiences a moment of existential reflection during which his personal identity is uncovered and then swiftly masked. From this moment, Ivan's psychological growth becomes irrevocably dependent on and intertwined with the greater historical theatre of war and its subsequent fabrication by the state into myth.

During the Battle of Stalingrad,[174] after most of his troupe has died, Ivan escapes to a nearby forest. He discovers a trickle of water that leads to a spring from which he drinks, before noticing the watery reflection of his face staring back at him:

> Désaltéré, il releva la tête et perdit son regard dans cette profondeur transparente. Soudain, il aperçut son reflet, ce visage qu'il n'avait pas vu depuis si longtemps – ce jeune visage légèrement bleui par l'ombre de la première barbe, avec des sourcils décolorés par le soleil et des yeux terriblement lointains, étrangers.

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[171] The narrator's initial portrayal is undermined when Ivan is shown entertaining alternative identity narratives while recovering.

[172] Ivan never saw Stalingrad, or the River Volga. See Makine, *La Fille*, 30.

[173] Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, 13.

[174] The Soviet Union's long, drawn-out victory at the Battle of Stalingrad is commonly acknowledged as a major turning point in World War II. See Mie Nakachi, "Population, Politics and Reproduction: Late Stalinism and its Legacy," in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, ed. Fürst, (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 26.

> 'C'est moi… – les mots se formaient lentement dans sa tête – Moi, Ivan Demidov…' Il contempla longuement les traits de ce reflet sombre. Puis il se secoua. (*FHUS*, 29-30)

A critical moment of personal insight for Ivan is actuated in the forest, which is signalled in Makine's word-choice: "soudain". Contemplating his facial features, Ivan sees that despite his youth, the growth of a beard reveals his transition to adulthood. When his eyes are described as "terriblement lointains, étrangers", Ivan's dislocation from the inner psychological change that has transformed him from a teenager into a Soviet war Hero is emphasised. Yet with sudden, existential clarity Ivan sees neither of these personas reflected, only "[m]oi, Ivan Demidov": a scared adult. However, when Ivan attempts to sound out his name, the words echo silently "dans sa tête". Ivan's failure to articulate his name is a metaphor for his inability to penetrate his inner self. Despite later incongruities between Ivan's prescribed public identity as a state Hero and his personal reality as a returned soldier, husband, father and, finally, widowed alcoholic, the brief albeit significant elucidation of his inner self whilst at war forever blurs Ivan's ability to distinguish between personal and state memory and thereby maintain his individual agency.

To demonstrate further the Hero's loss of agency, Makine emphasises the dominance of official symbols of remembrance; when Ivan returns to the USSR, no physical description other than that of his shining medal is mentioned: "Sur sa vareuse brillait l'Étoile d'or" (*FHUS*, 32). Indeed, despite remaining the property of the state, the Gold Star becomes Ivan's most prized *personal* possession, "*son* Étoile d'or" (*FHUS*, 126, *emphasis added*). When Rey suggests that Ivan's Star is "le dernier vestige de son honneur défunt",[175] only the personally significant aspect of his unremitting attachment to the medal is explained. Considered within the cultural context of post-war Russia, however, when the cult surrounding the War allowed "an organised system of symbols and rituals driven by political imperatives"[176] to develop, it is apparent that Ivan's faith in the Star also symbolises his faith, unconscious or otherwise, in Soviet ideology: state and personal significance have coalesced.[177] That the sovereignty of the Gold Star's symbolism is engrained even in collective notions of Soviet identity is manifest when Olia remarks while selecting a suit for her father, "ton Étoile sur un vêtement étranger, cela n'ira pas" (*FHUS*, 138). Consequently, Ivan's Gold Star cannot exist independently of the state, nor will it, as Rey suggests, "subir le même sort dégradant que celui subi par les êtres humains".[178] Rather, the Star must be recognised in the novel as a symbol of the state's insidiousness; its function varies according to the political imperatives of the day. As the war is moulded into a myth of epic proportions Ivan's ability to understand himself as an individual is overshadowed. For so long as Ivan's faith in the Gold Star abides, he forfeits all alternative identity narratives to the state-constructed myth of a collective Soviet identity.

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[175] Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 136.

[176] Tumarkin, "Great Patriotic War," 598.

[177] Murielle Clément considers the Gold Star "la représentation de l'Union soviétique". See Clément, "Idéalisation et désacralisation d'un héros dans *La Fille d'un héros de l'Union soviétique* (1990) d'Andreï Makine," *ROCSIR (Revista Romana de Studii Culturale)*, no. 1 (2005): 26.

When Taras writes that *La Fille* tells the story "of a thoroughly corrupted society",[179] his observation is astute. Often, however, that reality is obscured from Makine's protagonists. Only when Ivan visits his daughter in Moscow and is reacquainted with another veteran, the one-legged Semionov, does he realise that the first Soviet generation "s'est fait avoir" (*FHUS*, 153). Semionov mocks Ivan's hallowed Gold Star and the state: "Tu marches comme un paon avec ton Étoile qui brille. [...] Demain tu vas voir, je vais te montrer ce qu'elle vaut, ton Étoile" (*FHUS*, 153). Semionov subsequently exposes Ivan to a world of international diplomacy and KGB state-run prostitution – Western businessmen and their Soviet escorts – at the Intourist Hotel. Prior to arriving at the hotel, the reader is told that "Ivan comprit que Semionov ne mentait pas" (*FHUS*, 152), but is afraid to believe him. Consequently, when Ivan unexpectedly spies Olia with a German, the shock is paralysing:

> Il sentait quelque chose se serrer affreusement en lui et un goût salé lui crisper les mâchoires. Il comprit qu'*il fallait réagir, bondir, crier, mais il ne put pas.* [...] Ivan tenta de se lever, mais il fut saisit d'un tel tremblement que ses genoux fléchirent. [...] Il n'avait encore jamais ressenti ce douloureux spasme presque physique. Il ne se rendit pas compte que ce qu'il éprouvait là était *une sorte de jalousie*. (*FHUS*, 155-156, *emphasis added*)

Ivan is deprived of physical movement and rendered as speechless as when he saw his reflection in the forest pond. The reader understands that Ivan is experiencing a moment of significant insight. Contrary to his forest encounter, however, Ivan is confronted here with an indelible truth: he is the Hero of a system whose entire belief-structure is rotten to the core.[180]

When critics address Ivan's later death the dominant trend is to confound his downfall with the discovery of Olia's true occupation. Gourg, for instance, contends that the nature of Olia's dalliance with the West brings about Ivan's "déchéance et [s]a mort".[181] Clément agrees, suggesting that Olia's profession is "le catalyseur de cette déchéance définitive".[182] What these interpretations overlook is that Ivan's downfall is presaged from the moment his rescue is voiced in the tones of Soviet propaganda, continues when he is crowned a state Hero, and endures into the post-war years – evidenced by his alcohol abuse. Duffy, however, maintains that Ivan's decline is only "*exacerbated* by his understanding of the true nature of his daughter's job."[183] Instead, Duffy associates Ivan's reaction to the pairing of Olia and the German with his injured pride: Olia's companion is an enemy against whom Ivan fought, which angers him.[184] What Duffy and other critics overlook is the curious emotion – "une sorte de jalousie" (*FHUS*, 156) – that assails Ivan when he sees Olia with the German, which warrants further analysis.

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[178] Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 137.

[179] Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia," 58.

[180] By contrast, Duffy contends that Ivan remains "[o]blivious to the role of the KGB in Olia's demise, [and] blames it solely on the corrupting influence of the West". See Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 163.

[181] Gourg, "Russie/Occident," 230.

The scene in the hotel where East and West fuse is reminiscent of the view of Europe Ivan glimpsed at the war's end: "cette Europe détruite mais toujours policée et confortable" (*FHUS*, 32). The appearance of the Western businessmen reflects this; they are described as "des gens insolites non seulement dans leur langue et leurs vêtements, mais même dans leur manière de se déplacer" (*FHUS*, 154).[185] Meanwhile, their Soviet escorts are "éclatante[s]" and "opulente[s]" (*FHUS*, 154). Makine is drawing a parallel to Ivan's victory marches through liberated towns in the 1940s when "il sentait sur lui les regards admiratifs des jeunes filles" (*FHUS*, 32). The reader also knows that at the war's end Ivan possessed European luxuries that were rarities in the East, "un coupon d'une lourde étoffe moirée, une demi-douzaine de montres-bracelets [...] un grand rouleau d'excellent cuir" (*FHUS*, 32).[186] Forty years later, the only object of luxury Ivan possesses is the Gold Star whose value, as Semionov earlier reasoned, is questionable. When Ivan sees Olia surrounded by Western luxuries in the Soviet hotel, a memory of the ebullience he felt at the war's end is activated.[187] Moreover, Ivan is fascinated as he watches Olia "parl[e] avec son compagnon et lui souri[t], détendue et naturelle" (*FHUS*, 155). Here, Makine emphasises the disparity between the two generations: the aging, ideologically arrested veteran, and the youthful, seemingly emancipated daughter. From Ivan's perspective, Olia operates with a level of freedom beyond his imagination: she articulates herself with ease in a foreign language, whereas throughout the novel he is perpetually thwarted in his attempts to express himself. The hotel scene demonstrates the disparity between the hope Ivan harboured at the war's end and the despondency of his current situation, the magnitude of which he is only now beginning to grasp. For these reasons Ivan is struck by a strange, unrecognisable sensation of jealousy while observing his daughter performing amongst the perceived privileges of a coveted Western world.

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[182] Clément, "Idéalisation et désacralisation d'un héros," 33.

[183] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 163 (emphasis added).

[184] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 164.

[185] The description of the Westerners' movements recalls Kim's description of the Parisian he observes in *Confession*. See Makine, *Confession*, 16.

[186] Makine later draws a parallel between the Western goods Ivan procures at the war's end and the luxury items Olia covets and receives from her Western clients.

[187] Ivan is conflicted at the War's end. Tempted to embark on a new life away from Soviet Russia, he instead fulfils his promise to return and marry Tatiana. Makine, *La Fille*, 31-33.

Ivan's subsequent rage inside the Beriozka store, where he destroys goods and attacks a Japanese tourist, is fuelled by "[l]e douloureux spasme presque physique" (*FHUS*, 156) of jealousy that accompanies his realisation that he has been deceived by the state. Ivan enters the store "[s]ans réfléchir" and "guidé par l'intuition" (*FHUS*, 169) yet Duffy intuits from Ivan's behaviour a stronger element of agency, suggesting that Ivan's recklessness reflects his desire to "punish the treacherous and malevolent West".[188] But, Ivan no longer has control over his actions, and his rage is grossly misplaced. Indeed, the Beriozka is a Soviet symbol of the West, and thus another reflection of the state apparatus. During Ivan's diatribe inside the store, he tragically repeats the Soviet propaganda lies he has subconsciously internalised: "Moi, j'ai versé pour vous des tonnes de sang, salauds! Moi, je vous ai sauvés de la peste brune" (*FHUS*, 171). Noticeably absent is Ivan's memory of the forest. Instead, he repeats the lines uttered by a voice-over in an anniversary documentary of the Battle of Stalingrad for which he was interviewed some years earlier, demonstrating the extent to which he has internalised the Party line.[189] Duffy suggests likewise: Ivan "has internalized the official nation-consolidating discourse according to which Russia continues to be exploited and scorned by the West despite having saved Europe from fascism."[190] Duffy nevertheless maintains that Makine, generally, supports the "equality and communalism officially encouraged by the Soviet state",[191] but Makine's portrayal of the Soviet system in *La Fille* is absolutely despairing. Ivan, confused by a surge of memory that makes painfully apparent the magnitude of his loss in the post-war decades including his youth, his dreams, and his wife, loses control of his actions. By emphasising the complete subordination of Ivan's identity to the state in this scene, Makine simultaneously reveals his despair at the system in which he was raised. Ivan is subsumed by a

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[188] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 164. See also Duffy, "La France," 26.

[189] Earlier, the producer of a documentary prepared for the War's fortieth anniversary celebrations describes Ivan as "ce modeste héros 'qui sauva le monde de la peste brune'". The documentary blatantly attempts to indoctrinate the state's myth of the Great Patriotic War, bolster state pride, and legitimate the state's official version of Soviet history. See Makine, *La Fille*, 73-76: 74.

[190] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 164.

[191] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 168. Duffy is discussing Makine's greater literary view not only that expressed in *La Fille*.

Soviet-construed narrative of his identity, and has become no more than a mouthpiece for the Soviet Union's rotten ideology.

When Ivan is later judged in court, the veteran finally has a forum to give strained voice to his Soviet experience. Yet Makine denies his protagonist an easy exit, offering instead "[la] fin brutale et inattendue" (*FHUS*, 131) that Ivan earlier desired:

> Enfin Ivan se tut brusquement. Il enveloppa la salle d'un regard un peu affolé et, s'adressant on ne savait à qui, cria d'une voix sifflante de vieillard:
>
> - Vous avez fait de ma fille une prostituée!
>
> À ce moment il croisa le regard d'Olia. [...] Il comprenait qu'il venait de se produire quelque chose de monstrueux, face à quoi son ivrognerie et sa bagarre à la Beriozka n'étaient que des bagatelles. Quelqu'un qui sortait lui masqua le visage de sa fille. (*FHUS*, 194-195)

Ivan is finally articulate, yet is refused salvation. Failing to maintain his grasp on reality, Ivan directs his anger first at the West (the Beriozka store), then at the East ("Vous", the state), before finally condemning his daughter and himself ("*ma* fille"/ me). When Ivan "croisa le regard d'Olia" a distorted repetition of the critical moment of insight at the pond, this time symbolised by his daughter's face, occurs. Yet Ivan realises the horror of the life that has passed before him too late. As Olia's face is obscured by a passer-by, "[une] lumière s'amplifia, devint éclatante et douloureuse, et tout à coup [...] vira au noir" (*FHUS*, 195): Ivan dies. Although Ivan has lost all faith in the state, Makine reveals a more devastating truth: by condemning his daughter, Ivan loses the sole person to whom he could offer his love. As Russian filmmaker Andreï Tarkovsky remarked in reference to his film, *Stalker*, "human love is the miracle capable of withstanding any dry theorisation about the hopelessness of the world".[192] In Makine's ending, the final absence of love between father and daughter indicates the absolute "hopelessness of the [Soviet] world" Makine portrays.[193]

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[192] Tarkovsky's view of the tragedy of human development in the Soviet Union finds further expression in the words: "[W]e no longer know how to love". Quoted in David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 245.

[193] Makine's despair at the lack of love between the generations is not echoed by Tarkovsky, whose belief in the capacity of love is demonstrated at the film's ending: the "Guide" chooses to remain with his daughter rather than return to the "Zone".

"[U]ne génération qui n'avait pas connu la guerre":[194] *Olia, A Hero's Child*

Olia's experience in *La Fille* is suspended between youthful hope and the despairing reality and deception of her circumstance. She waits for deliverance from both the West and the higher echelons of Soviet society. Yet, like the child addressed in Blok's poem, she waits in vain:

> You will be waiting child, for spring
> – and spring will fool you.
> You will call for the sun's rising
> – the sun will lie low.
> And your shout, when you start shouting, silence will swallow…[195]

Indeed, the silence that swallows Ivan's consciousness of self is unveiled in his daughter's experience. Set predominantly in Moscow, Olia's story commences prior to Brezhnev's death when "on pouvait encore se permettre d'ouvrir la bouche de temps en temps" (*FHUS*, 71). Although both Taras and Clément maintain that *La Fille* is fundamentally an account of Ivan's life,[196] to overlook the daughter's experience is to disregard the direction towards which her narrative stream leads: the East-West dynamic. Born in 1961,[197] Olia, like Makine, is part of the last Soviet Generation: "une génération qui n'avait pas connu la guerre" (*FHUS*, 57).[198] Makine portrays Olia's identity, both personally and as a Soviet citizen, as dependent on the growing influence in the USSR of the West: a linguistic, visual and tactile realm that renders her "sauvagement heureuse" (*FHUS*, 66). By giving voice to his generation's unique engagement with "cette vie occidentale bariolée" (*FHUS*, 64), Makine depicts an alternative Soviet-Russian experience to that of the veteran. Yet as Olia's euphoria gradually erodes subsequent to her discovery of "l'illusion de la vie occidentale" (*FHUS*, 87), the first indication of the author's latent disappointment with the West arises.

Olia's inaugural encounter with the West occurs linguistically: upon graduating from "l'Institut des langues étrangères Maurice-Thorez" (*FHUS*, 61) she is articulate in French, German, and English.[199] Gourg's assertion that "la rencontre avec l'Occident se fait à l'occasion de l'apprentissage des langues"[200] is accurate. Yet Makine's portrayal of Olia's foreign language acquisition and Western encounter is more nuanced. In the cultural context of late Soviet socialism, Olia's language acquisition is arguably congruent with the state's cultural aims; namely, what Yurchak defines as "the development of an educated and internationalist Soviet person."[201] Accordingly, Olia's multi-lingual consciousness initially signifies her identity as a devout follower of the Soviet agenda. Indeed, her status as the daughter of a Soviet Hero augurs well for her career prospects: prior to passing their exams Olia's friend suggests that "on te recevra rien qu'au vu de ton état civil" (*FHUS*, 61). Yet as Yurchak maintains, the appropriateness of a good internationalist outlook was foiled when international cultural forms deviated into uncritical, bourgeois cosmopolitanism for material gain.[202] Once employed as an interpreter at the Moscow Olympics, Olia develops a cosmopolitan curiosity: she is enamoured of a French Olympian, is invited back to his hotel room, and becomes sexually involved with him. From a state perspective, Olia's romantic impulse is a deviation: foreign linguistics transmute into visual and physical experiences of an uncritical, material nature.[203] Ultimately, this enables Makine to delve into the manipulative effects of both Soviet and Western powers. The state is quick to punish and shame Olia: "Tu fais honte à tout le pays" (*FHUS*, 67), while the revelation of the Frenchman's self-serving interest in Olia prefigures her later exploitation by Western businessmen.[204] Consequently, although more attentive to Makine's characterisation of Olia than either Clément or Taras, Gourg's understanding of the role language acquires in the text is less convincing. By suggesting that "[l]a langue étrangère [...] devient la langue dominante qui fait des soviétiques des esclaves condamnés à copier leurs oppresseurs",[205] Gourg overlooks the troubled relationship between state-defined international cultural forms and their manifestation in Olia's personal understanding.

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[194] Makine, *La Fille*, 57.
[195] Blok, "A Voice," 104.
[196] Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia," 53; Clément, "Idéalisation et désacralisation d'un héros," 33.
[197] In the same year as Olia's birth Yuri Gagarin travelled to space and Khrushchev declared that "[l]e communisme sera édifié dans vingt ans." Makine, *La Fille*, 56.
[198] Viktor Pelevin refers to this cohort as "Generation P" in his 1999 novel *Homo Zapiens*, originally published in Russian as *Generation P*. See Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*, 1.
[199] Makine creates a distinct contrast between the multi-lingual, loquacious Olia, and her inarticulate, silenced father. On the one hand, the contrast emphasises changes to Soviet governance and society over the course of the Cold War years. On the other, Olia's openness towards the West emphasises its importance as a marker of identity in Soviet youth culture, which Makine illustrates in further detail in *Amour* and *Testament*.
[200] Gourg, "Russie/Occident," 230.

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[201] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 176. This is further qualified by Yurchak's contention that "[t]he knowledge of languages implied that it was perfectly congruent with the good Soviet identity to desire to learn more information about the West on one's own as long as one learned about the right information and did so with a critical eye": 169. For further discussion of the ambiguous distinctions between "bad" bourgeois cosmopolitanism and "good" progressive internationalism in the late Soviet context, see Chapter Five of Yurchak's study.

[202] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 169-170.

[203] Yurchak contends that the state's distinctions were unclear. He cites jazz as a cultural influence that was accepted at some levels, yet banned in other contexts. See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 166-167.Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 166-167. For further discussion of foreign culture and its influence on sub-cultures that were attracted to lifestyles deemed inconsistent with Soviet ideology, such as the *stiliagi*, see Mark Edele, "Strange Young Men in Stalin's Moscow: The Birth and Life of the Stiliagi, 1945-1953," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 50, no. 1 (2002).

[204] Olia overhears a conversation and learns that the Frenchman has a fiancée. See Makine, *La Fille*, 70.

[205] Gourg, "Russie/Occident," 230.

As Olia's encounters with the Western symbols that infiltrate her Soviet reality increase, Makine demonstrates that Olia's developing selfhood is as ambiguous and ill-defined as that of her father. Although the reader is aware of the West's nuanced function in the text, Olia recognises only its positive influence. For instance, foreign objects after which Olia lusts, yet of which she has previously only *spoken*, become part of her visual reality; in the hotel room she is "entourée de ces beaux objets convoités qui symbolis[ent] pour elle le monde occidental" (*FHUS*, 65). Even the Frenchman's body is conceived of as an object; his skin, similar to Makine's descriptions of the veteran's Gold Star, "brill[e] aussi d'un reflet noir et luisant" (*FHUS*, 65). Indeed, after Olia engages sexually with the Frenchman and the West becomes tactile, she feels profoundly liberated: "Il sembla à Olia que doucement, comme une construction en mousse synthétique, s'effondrait le plafond" (*FHUS*, 66). The transfiguration of Western linguistic symbols into a visual and tangible presence convinces Olia that her role as an intermediary between East and West will result in a similarly liberating personal metamorphosis, the same metamorphosis the city of Moscow hopes for from the Olympics: "quelque chose d'extraordinaire, une bouffée de vent frais, quelque bouleversement, presque une révolution" (*FHUS*, 63-64).

However, unbeknown to Olia the West that beguiles her is heavily filtered and distorted. Its *un*reality is signalled in the abundance of physical beauty displayed at the Olympics: the athletes' trained bodies, "l'odeur [...] de mâles chairs musclées épuisées par l'effort" (*FHUS*, 64), "ces gladiateurs" (*FHUS*, 64). Olia's encounter with the West is as unreal as the streets of Moscow carefully prepared for foreign consumption until they are "méconnaissable[s]" (*FHUS*, 63): children, citizens from the provinces, and anything the state deems undesirable, are removed. Even following her official reprimand for pursuing "des relations intimes" (*FHUS*, 70) with the Frenchman, after which Olia is inveigled to work as a state interpreter for the KGB, she considers the chance to serve "la Patrie" (*FHUS*, 86) and to work with "des centaines et des milliers d'étrangers" (*FHUS*, 88) an honour. Olia's excitement masks the perfidiousness of the state apparatus to which she is now indebted as a salaried translator/escort.

That Olia associates the West with a form of freedom is demonstrated through her anticipation that "quelque changement miraculeux, une vie toute neuve" (*FHUS*, 94) will ensue following her work with the KGB and engagement with foreign businessmen. For Olia the West is a realm where her imagination is unfettered by the everyday: a space where she hopes to renew her sense of self.[206] The notion of the West as an imaginary "elsewhere" that developed in Soviet society has been theorised by Yurchak for example, who maintains that it developed as "a space that was both internal and external to the Soviet reality":[207] its existence was crucial to the construction of youth identity in the period of late Soviet socialism. Fürst indicates that in 1950s Soviet Russia, too, "the West became a trope to describe a distant utopia".[208] In order to understand Makine's early fictional representation of East-West, therefore, it is important to acknowledge that Olia pursues the freedom Western symbols *appear* to offer in the context of her Soviet reality. Makine consequently underlines a greater tragedy: as Olia actively seeks to understand, within the parameters of an illusory West, her identity at an *individual/personal* level, she fails to recognise that the West she encounters through the KGB at a *national/political* level has more pernicious underpinnings, which will ultimately "briser [son] avenir" (*FHUS*, 69).

To explore Olia's developing selfhood and her deception by the state, Makine focuses his readers' attention on Olia's physical metamorphosis. Initially, Makine has Olia refer to each of her Western clients as an "objet",[209] so that the "beaux objets" (*FHUS*, 65) she coveted in the Frenchman's hotel room are romantically recalled and any emerging disjunction between the dual Western realms depicted dissipates.[210] Later, Western symbols begin to adorn Olia's body and she is physically changed: Olia is assured that her personal transformation is afoot. This occurs, first, during her foreign sexual encounters after which Olia "se sen[t] adulte, indépendante et même un peu agressive" (*FHUS*, 110), and, later, when she wears the Western gifts received in return for her services – "un parfum très cher" (*FHUS*, 96), "une petite montre de femme en or" (*FHUS*, 174), "[un] bracelet aux émeraudes" (*FHUS*, 201). When Ivan sees Olia styled in Western fashion he remarks: "Tu es devenue une vraie occidentale!" (*FHUS*, 136). Olia's physical transformation validates her belief that she is embodying a new identity.

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[206] In a similar fashion, Gourg contends that Olia's knowledge of foreign languages equates to "l'acquisition d'un corps nouveau". See Gourg, "Russie/Occident," 230.

[207] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 161.

[208] Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*, 70. For further discussion of Soviet perceptions of America during late Soviet Stalinism, see Rósa Magnúsdóttir, "Keeping Up Appearances: How the Soviet State Failed to Control Popular Attitudes Toward the United States of America, 1945-1959." (Doctoral thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2006). Magnúsdóttir examines favourable perceptions of America prevalent in Soviet society, noting that people were punished for expressing support for, or even a fascination with, American (i.e. capitalist) ways of life. These actions were deemed "anti-Soviet", a deviation from the state's anti-Western propaganda campaigns. Magnúsdóttir, "Keeping Up Appearances," 67-71.

[209] Olia repeatedly refers to her clients as objects. See Makine, *La Fille*, 94, 95 (twice).

[210] Olia expresses passing reservations about her profession. However, her concern remains "[un] vague sentiment de honte". Makine, *La Fille*, 93-96: 95.

By employing a corporeal metaphor to explore Olia's psychological development, Makine develops a visible means to illustrate the deterioration of her selfhood.[211] In the latter stages of the narrative, doubt clouds Olia's consciousness. When Olia returns from work, the reader is told that "elle constatait avec dépit que son visage était comme couvert d'un masque poisseux. Elle se précipitait à la salle de bains pour s'en libérer" (*FHUS*, 180). The West to which Olia is exposed at the KGB has become increasingly undesirable: it no longer symbolises freedom, or a new self. Instead, Olia hurries to remove all trace of her Soviet-construed Western mask. Olia's faith, similar to Ivan's blind faith in his medal, has been marked by the confounding of personal and state significance in a single object: the West. Makine demonstrates that Olia's personal development is as oppressive as her father's heroism.

Failure in the Meeting between East and West

Towards the novel's end the apogee of "la poétique des contrastes"[212] on which *La Fille* is premised occurs. Makine (briefly) suggests that by recognising her misguided belief in a Soviet-construed West, Olia might surmount her father's fate and fully engage with the freedom she associated with the abstract West she first encountered. Indeed, Olia performs an act of defiance. She transgresses the threshold of her official role, takes active control of her body, and conceives a child after falling in love with a German client.[213] By symbolically transforming her body from a site of decay and male consumption into one of rebirth and renewal, Olia creates her ideal Western object: "une vie toute neuve" (*FHUS*, 94). As she entertains the thought of keeping her unborn child, the crisis afflicting Olia's sense of self is momentarily halted. When Olia envisions how her child's future might unfold, the reader is told: "Tout ce qui leur avait paru un écroulement fatal de leurs projets entrerait dans son esprit enfantin tel un conte, une sorte de légende familiale" (*FHUS*, 188). Olia's growing disillusionment with the West due to her role at the Trade Centre has been woven into a legend that hints at a utopian, shared fusion between East and West – hence the fairy-tale dimension. A corresponding meaning is present in Yurchak's explanation that Western symbols appealed to Soviet youth because they promised "personal creativity and the possibility of creating a vibrant and shared world that was neither Soviet nor foreign but was nevertheless tightly interwoven throughout their Soviet reality."[214] However, Olia's belief in a fully realised shared future, created from the merging of two distinct worlds in which she will reconstruct her self anew, never reaches fruition: after her public condemnation by her father, Olia follows through with an abortion. Makine offers a devastating outlook: Olia is exploited by the East, left disappointed by the West, and sees no other alternative than to destroy the new life she initially desired.

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[211] Other critics who discuss Olia's physical presence in the text primarily analyse her body as a symbol of Makine's critique of capitalism and Western oppression. For example, Rey suggests that in *La Fille* "l'être humain et le lieu de la déchéance"; she contends that "la Russie moderne s'est vendue à l'Ouest. Tout comme Olga, elle s'est prostituée aux valeurs occidentales qu'elle 'sert' en vassale". Gourg argues that foreign language becomes a tool of subjugation. Taras is less poetic, asserting that "by the 1980s, being the daughter of a Hero of the Soviet Union qualified one to become a highly-paid prostitute." See Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 137, 136; Gourg, "Russie/Occident," 230; Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia," 56-57.

[212] Makine, *La Fille*, 98.

[213] Makine, *La Fille*, 185. The reader is told that Olia's pregnancy "ne s'agi[t] pas seulement d'un oubli."

Makine's ending indicates that, at the time, he was incapable of surrendering to the belief in a post-Soviet, unified European reality. That he envisions not even a modicum of hope in either of his characters' lives is apparent in Olia's final decision to return to the Trade Centre and her naive desire to buy back the Gold Star she earlier pawned to pay for Ivan's funeral. By placing her remaining faith in the Gold Star, a portent of the state's insidiousness, Olia repeats her father's earlier mistake. Public and private tragedies again converge: the ongoing cycle of the family's downfall – and Russia's – is presaged. In *La Fille*, Olia initially conceives of the West as a site of freedom and renewal. Although a multi-lingual consciousness grants Olia the power of speech denied her monolingual, eternally silenced father, the West proves no more enlightening than the rotten core of the Eastern, Soviet society Ivan has been unwittingly subsumed by.[215] Makine's latent disappointment with the European West is given preliminary expression through Olia's experience. However, through the novel's linear narrative progression, Makine respects the seemingly eternal present of the Soviet age, and the reader alone realises that the radiant future gloriously envisioned by Makine's characters is a chimera. Consequently, the dynamic between knowing and unknowing, which differentiates between the narrator's and the protagonists' viewpoints at the micro level, but also between the reader's and narrative perspectives at the macro level, makes the experience of approaching the text some twenty years later – after the collapse of Soviet communism and the novel's release – all the more powerful.

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[214] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 197.

[215] Rey argues a similar case, stating that "Olga est définitivement condamnée." See Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 138.

Confession d'un porte-drapeau déchu: The Past as Freedom?

While Makine lays down the socio-political foundations and social conditions of the Soviet and Cold War era in *La Fille*, he abstains from bringing the historical reality of the Soviet period into a fully conscious engagement with the Western environment in which he was by then living. *La Fille* is a precursor to the increased historical consciousness Makine subsequently expresses in *Confession*. In 1991, one year after the publication of *La Fille*, Makine was confronted with a radical social transformation – the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union – that provided an external impetus for his continued, yet more critical and historically-focused, engagement with the East-West structure in *Confession*. In his second novel, Makine interrogates, from amidst the shock of his fully-realised post-Soviet reality, the loss of "Soviet" as a national marker of identity and self-construction.

Written as an epistle, *Confession* tells the story of Kim, a published author and member of the last Soviet generation who has immigrated to Paris, from where he writes to Arkadi, a childhood friend now living in America. Several paragraphs into *Confession* Kim acknowledges that "[m]aintenant on sait tout" (*CPDD*, 12), words through which Makine emphasises the privileged position Kim occupies in the novel: his knowledge of the Soviet past is freely accessible. Indeed, writing from the post-Soviet West, Kim is afforded a more critical view of his Soviet homeland than either of Makine's characters possess in the author's first work, *La Fille*. Nevertheless, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and Kim's physical relocation westwards, his revelation that "nous resterons toujours ces pionniers aux foulards rouges" (*CPDD*, 15) indicates that only scant ontological change has ensued: by continuing to define himself in Cold War terms, Kim inhibits his ability to construct a post-Soviet identity. Although Kim believes the West will offer the individual freedom and renewal of self denied him and his parents in the East, Makine voices a notion that runs contrary to his character's belief: the West is not a locus of freedom. Rather, in *Confession* Makine expresses an undertone of disappointment with the West, which he first voiced in *La Fille*. Although Makine again draws on a Cold-War, East-West structure in *Confession*, he revises the overwhelming despair depicted in his first novel to suggest instead that hope and individual freedom already exist in the East. In *Confession*, Makine asks whether – and how – remembering the Soviet past might assist to repair the broken identity narrative that his protagonist attempts to build anew in the West. In 1992, then, Makine responds to the historical crisis of Soviet communism's end, and the European East-West union that was in train, by experimenting with a retrospective consideration of Soviet history, portrayed through the lens of Kim's Parisian present.

Describing the early 1990s as "the heyday of tumultuous, chaotic social change and anxious individual reinvention",[216] Fitzpatrick contends that as "Soviet identities were cast off [and] new post-Soviet identities invented",[217] it was to Western models – the natural antithesis to a Soviet self – that individuals from the former-USSR were drawn in their self-reinventions.[218] Consistent with Fitzpatrick's argument, Kim attempts to emulate the western model surrounding him in Paris: to rewrite himself into an existing narrative of Western identity. The West Kim describes to Arkadi is aesthetically perfect, indicated by his reference to the Parisian who "se glisse au volant avec la souplesse d'une carte bancaire avalée par un guichet automatique" (*CPDD*, 16). Yet Kim's letter reveals he is sensitive to the inherent flaws of imitation:

> Nous les imiterons. Nous singerons cette souplesse. Nous nous laisserons avaler par les sièges capitonnés avec le même sourire facile. Mais au fond nous resterons toujours ces jeunes barbares aveuglés par la foi dans l'horizon tout proche. Il manquera à nos singeries une chose capitale: savoir en jouir. C'est cela qui nous trahira… (*CPDD*, 16)

Kim realises that superficial attempts to copy the Western world to recover an ordinary life and operate "comme les autres, comme les gens normaux" (*CPDD*, 16) are futile: imitation does not beget cultural integration. The Western model Kim attempts to follow, right down to the perfection of a smile, is a mask rather than a solution to his construction of a post-Soviet self. Neither East nor West seems capable of offering a solution to Kim's – or Makine's – post-Soviet malaise.

Kim's recognition that "nous ne serons jamais des gens normaux" (*CPDD*, 17), is a trigger for Makine to explore alternative means to understand what being Russian in a post-Soviet world encompasses. To broach the crisis of Kim's post-Soviet awakening and his disappointing encounter with Western-framed identity narratives, Makine makes a fundamental temporal change: unlike in *La Fille*, in *Confession* time is no longer linear. The focus of Kim's letter to Arkadi is their Soviet childhood; specifically, two summers of the late 1950s when the boys lived in a communal apartment block (*kommunalka*) in Sestrovsk on Leningrad's outskirts.[219]

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[216] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 304.

[217] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 303.

[218] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 304.

[219] Makine makes no direct reference to dates in the text. During the first summer, however, Kim recalls the launch of "le premier spoutnik", which occurred in 1957. Makine, *Confession*, 60.

Through retrospective narration, which becomes a key structural device in Makine's fiction from *Confession* to *Brèves amours*,[220] Makine finds a form that encapsulates his desire to interrogate the anxiety underpinning the process of Kim's renewal of self. Whereas the action of the novel's narrative *present* takes place in the West, the *historical* action unfolds in the East.

While Kim turns increasingly to his past for answers to his discontentment, Fitzpatrick maintains that a counter-trend was more common, with Soviet individuals eager to "consign the whole seventy-four years of Soviet power to a black hole of forgetfulness":[221] to deny knowledge. Makine, however, does not advocate for a denial of the past through forgetting. Rather, in Makine's view, Kim's ability to remember and write about his Eastern past has the power to ameliorate Soviet misunderstanding in a post-Soviet context, even if the process plagues Kim with "l'étrange et agaçante impression d'avoir trahi" (*CPDD*, 149). Indeed, Kim comes closest to voicing Makine's personal view of the importance of Soviet history, which the author has expressed in forums outside his fiction. In 1995, for example, in an interview conducted for the extreme left-wing French newspaper, *L'Humanité*, Makine voiced concern at the rush to erase from historical memory the seventy year history of Soviet socialist rule:

> Les gens ne connaissent plus leur histoire. Il faut l'assumer en la critiquant, mais là c'est le trou noir. Voilà soixante-dix ans totalement rayés. Cet oubli historique nous prépare de mauvaises surprises à l'avenir.[222]

Makine is concerned about the desire to obliterate the regime from consciousness without learning from the experience, arguing that "[e]n effaçant le régime, on efface les personnes vivantes."[223] He suggests that in the absence of historical judgement, what was of value during the Soviet era – the individual experience – is lost.[224] In the interview Makine expresses the essence of the idea he conveys poetically in his second novel: a conscious forgetting of the Soviet past impedes rather than facilitates the understanding of and transition to a post-Soviet world. That Makine still felt the desire in 1995 to make clear the connection between historical consciousness and the elucidation of the anxieties of his post-Soviet present is indicative of his overwhelming concern to bring the truth of the Soviet period to a broader Western consciousness.

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[220] Makine's play, *Le Monde selon Gabriel: Mystère de Noël*, is an exception. The author has had varying degrees of success experimenting with non-linear narrative structures. In *L'Amour humain*, for example, an unnamed narrator recalls the life-story of the Angolan protagonist and professional revolutionary, Elias Almeida. The narrator's perspective initially guides the story, yet as Elias's voice and perspective gain strength, two alternating streams of the storyline emerge. The fragmentary structure of Makine's narrative mirrors the story of human life it tells, yet is occasionally disorienting for the reader. See Makine, *L'Amour humain*.

[221] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 303.

[222] Edmond Gilles, "Andreï Makine écrit pour suspendre l'instant," *L'Humanité*, 15 November, 1995.

[223] Makine, quoted in Gilles, "Andreï Makine."

[224] Julie Hansen observes that Makine expresses a similar view in his 2003 novel, *La Terre et le ciel de Jacques Dorme*. Hansen argues that Makine privileges individual narratives and forms of remembrance over collective accounts of Soviet war remembrance, the latter having been the prevailing form of historical memory. See Hansen, "Stalingrad Statues and Stories," 341-356.

The Critical Function of Nostalgia

For Makine, historical truth is centred in "[l]es gens" and in "l'humain": in evoking his characters' personal experience of the times through which they have lived.[225] While Makine valorises the individual experience in *Confession*, the form through which that experience is narrated is of equal import. An analysis of *how* Makine revives Kim's Soviet past reveals the value the dual act Kim's writing and remembrance holds for his capacity to surmount the anxiety of post-Soviet transition. In this respect, Helena Duffy's and Katherine Knorr's suggestions that Makine's literary vision is nostalgic are of value.[226] The two critics hold antithetical stances regarding the function nostalgia performs in Makine's writing; where Duffy is critical, Knorr is forgiving. Duffy argues that Makine's work is "underpinned with nostalgia for the past and in particular for Communism which, despite the atrocities committed in its name, was successful in both safeguarding Russia from Western influence and preserving its unique national spirit."[227] Duffy maintains that Makine's nostalgia is an "ideal of solidarity, harmony and traditional values"; she suggests that, in evoking the lost communist past, Makine is seeking a retreat from Western capitalism.[228] I accept that Makine views some values inherent to communism positively; during my 2011 interview with the author he referred to the high education standards, widely available medical services and expressed a belief in the communist system's egalitarian aspects; for instance, the grandson of a serf, Yuri Gagarin, was the first Russian to travel to space.[229] Yet, Duffy finds little balance between Makine's literary evocation of East and West, past and present temporalities. In an overstatement, she suggests that Makine's fiction demonstrates that "the source of all evil is the collapse of the Soviet Union and Russia's concomitant opening to the West."[230] Duffy's contention is, however, countered by the air of depravity that is evident in Kim's outline of his and Arakdi's mothers' Soviet war experiences, well before Russia's "opening to the West".[231]

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[225] Makine, quoted in Gilles, "Andreï Makine."

[226] Duffy, "La France."; Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles."; Katherine Knorr, "Andreï Makine's Poetics of Nostalgia," *New Criterion* 14, no. 7 (1996).

[227] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 158. Duffy presents a similar view of Makine's use of nostalgia in her 2008 article, albeit with different distinctions. As I outlined in the Introduction, she maintains that Makine's imperial French imagery represents his characters' nostalgic longing for an imperial Russia devoid of Western influence. See Introduction, 13-14; Duffy, "La France," 22.

[228] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 168.

[229] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[230] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 158.

By contrast, Knorr focuses on how Makine's nostalgia augments the artistic dimension, as opposed to the authorial outlook, of his fiction. Knorr interprets Makine's nostalgic revival of the past as a "spiritual" element that adds depth and "warmth" to his work.[232] Knorr's recognition of the literary aesthetic of Makine's nostalgic revival of the Soviet era is valuable. Developing Knorr's understanding further to explore the connections Makine draws in *Confession* between nostalgia, history and the present elucidates their collective value to Makine's overarching literary vision. Together, these elements fulfil Makine's desire to cultivate understanding between East and West, past and present. Consequently, rather than retreating to the past, Makine uses nostalgic principles of narration – the dual acts of Kim's remembering and writing – to arrive at an understanding of contemporary Russian-Soviet national development and identity construction from an historical perspective.

The poetics of Makine's nostalgic vision and revival of the past is entwined with a desire to interrogate the nature of post-Soviet identity construction, which is established when Kim recalls his childhood marches as a Young Pioneer. In Kim's initial account of Komsomol marching the ebullience of the memory dominates. His portrayal tends towards a sentimental, one-dimensional account of childhood:

> Le clairon lançait ses cris perçants. Le tambour vibrait. Et vibrait au-dessus de sa peau jaune et racornie le ciel dont nous avalions de grands pans frais et bleus en chantant nos chansons sonores. L'univers entier trépidait dans ce roulement et ces cris. (*CPDD*, 11)

Kim's memory is an easily consumable representation of happy pioneers: a vision Duffy might label "unabashed nostalgia".[233] The character's depiction of the vibrating drum against which the cries of the bugle sing out and to whose beat the boys keep metered march conveys a longing for a lost ideal. With no apparent sense of loss or displacement, the nostalgic emotion on which Makine draws in the scene creates a commodified version of the past.

In a dramatic juxtaposition, however, Makine abandons all sentimentality. Four sentences later Kim recalls how "[l]a moitié du pays était passementée des dentelles noires des barbelés.

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[231] For example, Arkadi's mother, Faïana, survived the Leningrad Blockade by resorting to cannibalism. See Makine, *Confession*, 137-146.

[232] Knorr, "Poetics of Nostalgia."

[233] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 157.

Clouée au sol par les miradors" (*CPDD*, 11). Makine demonstrates that Kim is aware of the sinister societal deception undermining the boys' march towards their communist future. By contrasting the sentimentality of Kim's radiant image of an East bathed in blue skies against his disturbing realisation that he was deceived, Makine develops a unique nostalgic vision in *Confession*. Writing, an act that demands reflection and attention, means Kim's memory filters effectively into his present. Through the multiple perspectives of the past Kim discovers, Makine balances past and present, East and West, memory and its narrated form and thereby creates continuity between the Soviet and post-Soviet eras.

Historian Peter Fritzsche makes a compelling case for the critical function of nostalgia and our connections to the past in *Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile and Modernity*.[234] His work supports my conceptualisation of Makine's nostalgic vision, and how Kim's revival of the past counters his post-Soviet malaise. Fritzsche argues that nostalgia refutes sentimentality and attachment; rather, it is concerned with giving meaning to past events that might otherwise have been lost in the ruptures of historical movement. In the first example, described above, Kim's nostalgic rendition of the past "lack[s] provenance";[235] there is no sense of its difference from the present. Considered from Fritzsche's historical perspective, then, the absence of "historical self-awareness"[236] means any critical meaning in the memory is lost; Kim's account of the past conforms to what Fritzsche terms "nostalgia without melancholy."[237]

Fritzsche, however, conceives of nostalgia as "sightfulness":[238] it illuminates the past in order to give meaning to the present. The value of Fritzsche's analysis of nostalgia, the emergence of which he traces following the aftermath of the French Revolution and the birth of modern historical consciousness, lies in his assertion that, while remnants of the past remain active in the mind, nostalgia always acknowledges "the permanence of their absence."[239] While loss and melancholy are integral components of nostalgia, that the past remains closed and separated from the present is never denied. When Kim distances himself from memory in the second example described above, he is acknowledging the past as "a different place".[240] Accordingly, nostalgia in Makine's literary vision becomes a form of sightfulness. To clarify how nostalgia functions as sightfulness, Fritzsche asserts that "[w]hat the ghostly remains of other pasts recall is the fact of other presents and other possibilities."[241] In Fritzsche's historically focused discussion, nostalgic emotion facilitates our understanding of the historical process of change and thereby impacts our understanding of contemporary society, without ruminating on the absence or loss of earlier eras.[242]

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[234] Peter Fritzsche, "Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile and Modernity," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 5 (2001).
[235] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1618.
[236] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1618.
[237] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1618.
[238] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1617.
[239] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1592.
[240] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1618.

That Makine is familiar with theories of nostalgia is evident from his non-fictional writing. In 1991, one year prior to the publication of *Confession*, Makine completed a doctoral thesis on the function of nostalgia in the literary fiction of Ivan Bunin, Russia's first Nobel Prize winner.[243] Makine expresses a similar notion to Fritzsche's understanding of nostalgia as sightfulness, which is attuned to the nostalgic form of Bunin's literary vision. Stating that nostalgia is "[un] terme usé et banalisé à l'extrême",[244] Makine analyses his compatriot's poetics of nostalgia to demonstrate the critical role it plays in Bunin's literary outlook:

> [L]e choix du passé dans […] [l']aspect historico-mythologique ou biographique [de Bounine] n'est pas simplement le choix du thème du récit, de l'objet à décrire. Le passé revécu, réinventé esthétiquement comme passé nostalgique n'est plus un "sujet", mais une vision poético-philosophique.[245]

Makine argues that Bunin conveys a nostalgic past in order to elevate and clarify the poetic vision of his work. Makine conceives of nostalgia as a literary tool in Bunin's writing; it allows the past to be poetically revived. More than a backdrop of lost ideals against which the narrative develops, the past becomes an integral component of, and actor within, the author's work.

Given the confluence between the nostalgic vision conveyed in *Confession* and Makine's doctoral research on nostalgia, it is likely that the author was working on the novel while preparing his doctoral thesis.[246] The nostalgic aesthetic Makine creates in *Confession* is reliant on shifting temporal dimensions between past and present: their integration. The interconnection between past and present is integral to the novel's East-West structure: only from the present in the West can Kim evaluate the Soviet era – his past in the East – with clarity. Moreover, Makine fashions a protagonist who is eager to engage with the variant versions and knowledge of Soviet history to which he is exposed in the West: Kim is historically self-aware. Yet Makine's nostalgic turn to history and the past rejects nostalgia as attachment. In 1996 Makine stated that "nostalgia is a term that is so overused that it has become an equivalent for passéisme, an attachment to the past. On the contrary nostalgia refuses the past, it says that the past is always present."[247] In *Confession*, Kim never expresses a desire to relive the past, or even to return to his homeland; he does however draw on the past to understand his present. Makine's nostalgic vision aligns with Fritzsche's notion of nostalgia as sightfulness; by creatively reviving the past the author explores the possibilities a nostalgic vision affords his characters' and his readers' understanding of their present. In so doing, Makine revises the devastating depiction of individual experiences and identity construction created in the East-West, Cold War paradigm of *La Fille*. Makine shows that in the chaotic era of post-Soviet transition it was possible to foster meaningful personal identities and renew one's sense of self, without ignoring what Fritzsche calls the "ghostly remains of other pasts".[248]

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[241] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1592.

[242] Further research to explore whether a link exists between Makine's use of nostalgic emotion and the epistle form in *Confession* could offer additional insight into how the author understands memory, history, and the past. Fritzsche states that letter writing increased in the nineteenth century, reflecting a growing trend to create "repositories of memory". In using the epistle form Makine could be acknowledging the nineteenth-century trend. See Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1616.

[243] Andreï Makine, "La prose de I.A.Bounine: la poétique de la nostalgie" (Doctoral thesis, Université Paris-Sorbonne, Paris IV, 1991).

[244] Makine, "I.A.Bounine," 559.

[245] Makine, "I.A.Bounine," 9.

[246] For analyses of Bunin's influence on Makine's writing see, for example, Marco Caratozzolo, "Le concept d'épiphanie dans l'oeuvre de Bounine et de Makine," in *Andreï Makine: Le sentiment poétique*, eds. Parry, Herly, and Scheidhauer, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008); Nina Nazarova, "Makine et Bounine, otages du passé," in *Andreï Makine: Le sentiment poétique*, eds. Parry, Herly, and Scheidhauer, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008); Marie Louise Scheidhauer,

In *Confession*, Makine broadens his use of the East-West, Cold War theme first employed in *La Fille*. Although the East physically represents the Soviet Union, it also aligns with Kim's past. In similar fashion, Makine's West – the freedom-offering democracy his characters desire – signifies an anxiety-ridden post-Soviet present. Makine's more nuanced recourse to the East-West structure, in which a temporal dimension is superimposed over what in *La Fille* is presented as a spatial dimension, reveals a growing maturation in the East-West theme. The increase in metaphorical value assigned to East and West is also accompanied by a greater sense of narrative hope. Indeed, due to the nostalgic aesthetic of his narration, Makine ascribes to the Eastern environment evoked in Kim's past a spatial significance that unveils a surprising truth: Kim and Arkadi were able to function with relative freedom in the East.

"Tchekhov, Bounine, Makine, chantres de la terre russe," in *Andreï Makine: Le sentiment poétique*, eds. Parry, Herly, and Scheidhauer, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008).

[247] Makine, quoted in Knorr, "Poetics of Nostalgia."

[248] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1592.

"[U]n port d'ancrage: notre cour":[249] *The Significance of Eastern Spatial Environments*

Orlando Figes writes that "[t]o be cut off from the place of one's childhood is to watch one's own past vanish into myth."[250] In Kim's desire to avoid letting his and Arkadi's childhood "vanish into myth" or, worse yet, oblivion, he recalls an atypical memory of their Soviet past in which the homely environs of communal apartment-living and family-life feature. After reviving his memory of Komsomol marches, Kim writes that their marching had "un port d'ancrage: notre cour" (*CPDD*, 12), inside of which the hum of homely activity vibrates:

> Grésillement de l'huile sur un réchaud à pétrole, voix rassurante du speaker à la radio, mélodie un peu chuintante d'un disque, vagissement d'un nourrisson dans une chambre au rez-de-chaussée. (*CPDD*, 12-13)

By shifting the nostalgic aesthetic of the narrative focus towards the everyday aspects of communal home-life – cooking, radio sounds, and a baby's cry – Makine displaces the socio-political drive of happily marching Soviet subjects Kim first recalls. The harmony created by the cacophony of everyday noises undercuts the formal, exaggerated hype that accompanies the marching pioneers.[251] Makine valorises the Soviet experience of the everyday and Kim discovers a positive image of childhood with which both he and Arkadi can form a connection.

Through Kim's memory, the reader learns that the boys' passage through the courtyard brings them closer to the radiant horizon than their endless Komsomol marches. Indeed, the courtyard is portrayed as a space where knowledge is free, it "cont[ient] un univers qui [leur est] connu jusqu'à la dernière motte de terre" (*CPDD*, 18). Yet, in the Soviet life Makine portrays in *La Fille*, intimate spatial settings are absent and everything is seemingly unknown. In contrast to *La Fille*, then, Kim's account of courtyard life in *Confession* provides an alternative experience to the Soviet social life operating outside its walls. Within the courtyard, two significant sites dominate: "la Crevasse" and "le Passage". An analysis of the Passage, a single apex of the triangular courtyard, demonstrates that Makine believes the challenges of Kim's post-Soviet malaise can be assuaged through his remembrance of the boys' imaginative capacity to construct meaning in their pasts.[252] Fronting onto the wild fields that lie opposite the city, the Passage opens onto a horizon devoid of the radiance of Soviet propaganda: it provides an alternative way for the boys to interpret their surroundings.

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[249] Makine, *Confession*, 12.

[250] Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 533.

[251] Russian readers could consider Makine's vision of communal apartment living as idealised. The author portrays a relatively peaceful experience that is inconsistent with Katerina Gerasimova's findings from her study of '*kommunalka* living' amongst a cohort of former-Soviet citizens. However, Gerasimova focuses predominantly on interactions that occurred within the apartments. Makine's fictional interactions occur mainly in the apartment's exterior spaces. See Gerasimova, "Public Spaces in the Communal Apartment," in *Sphären von Öffentlichkeit in Gesellschaften sowjetischen Typs/ Public Spheres in Soviet-type Societies*, eds. Rittersporn, Rolf, and Behrends, (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 2003). Although Sheila Fitzpatrick confirms that life in communal apartments was often "extremely stressful", she states that despite the many "horror stories" mutually supportive friendships also developed. Fitzpatrick's findings are based on case studies from the 1930s and indicate that positive memories of communal apartment living were most common amongst children: "children, with less developed private-property instincts than their parents, often liked having other children to play with and found it interesting to observe so many varieties of adult behaviour." See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2006), EBL Library e-book, chap. 02, *Housing*.

> Le ciel ne planait plus, tout plat, parallèlement à la terre. Il se dressait à la verticale. Dans cette masse blanche et rose s'érigeaient des colonnes, s'esquissaient des ogives, s'élançaient des flèches. Les reflets mauves de cette beauté coloraient les visages des joueurs, les pages d'un grand volume sur les genoux de Iacha, les taies et les draps qu'une femme accrochait aux cordes tendues à côté des arbustes de jasmin. (*CPDD*, 42)

The fixity of the northern sky provides a striking contrast to officialdom. "Le ciel [...] vertica[l]" the boys gaze at is immediately distinguished from "l'horizon radieux" towards which they march as pioneers. The Passage's vertical sky is vibrant: white, pink, and violet colours distinguish it from the matt, homogeneous blue sky under which they march. Moreover, the formations that arise in the sky encourage the boys to imagine that a new world is materialising before them. The sky's pinkish reflections modify the courtyard so that the domino players' faces, pages of a book, and laundry hanging by the jasmine tree – all the objects that ground the boys in their everyday reality – are transformed. The metamorphosis of everyday items nurtures the boys' imaginative capacities. When the reader is told that "au-dessus du Passage s'érigeait ce dont nous ne connaissions pas le nom et qui pourtant nous rendait heureux" (*CPDD*, 43) a hint of the new world of freedom that Olia envisages in *La Fille* enters the text. Instead of young boys blinded by their faith in the communist future, however, Kim's account suggests an alternative Soviet experience was fostered at home. Although previously unrecognised by Kim, the everyday experiences enabled the boys to develop meaningful identities and to operate with a level of self-determination distinct from the state-prescribed identity narratives of pioneer youth groups.

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[252] For reasons of space, I limit my discussion to an analysis of "le Passage". For further discussion of "la Crevasse" – "the Pit" in English translation – particularly as a conscious reference to Andreï Platonov's novel, *The Foundation Pit (Kotlovan* /котлован in Russian*)*, which was written between 1929 and 1930 yet banned from publication in the Soviet Union until 1987, see Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 8; Caroline Humphrey, "Ideology in Infrastructure: Architecture and Soviet Imagination," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11, no. 1 (2005): 53. Gillespie suggests that "Makine quite consciously uses his literary precursor to debunk official triumphalism." Humphrey contends that "instead of representing the void of unfulfilled socialist hope, the Pit in Makine's *dvor* is the idyllic site of completed benign sociality [...] where public reconciliation takes place between men who have quarrelled".

Kim's description of the sky onto which the courtyard's Passage opens gives the reader access to a spatial element in the text suggestive of hope that transcends political regimes, a memory that signals the protagonist's renewal of self. Catriona Kelly has highlighted the importance communal courtyards acquired as play spaces for Soviet children, which supports the experience Makine describes poetically in *Confession*. Despite their restrictive sizes, Kelly maintains that playing in communal courtyards stimulated children's imaginations.[253] A similar conclusion regarding Soviet architectural spaces is drawn by anthropologist Caroline Humphrey. Informing her readers that "[t]he task of Soviet construction was to build material foundations that would mould nothing less than a new society", Humphrey indicates that Soviet planners envisioned the courtyard (*dvor*) of a *kommunalka* as a space where Soviet ideology would be strengthened and ideal citizens for the new Soviet society fashioned.[254] In Humphrey's view, ideologically designed architectural spaces such as communal courtyards often failed to fulfil this function. She draws an example from Makine's novel to demonstrate that the courtyard instead functions "like a prism: gathering meanings and scattering them again".[255] Humphrey's research supports my contention that Makine creates an environment in the spatial contours of Kim's intimate memory of home-life that is removed from Soviet ideology, and which consequently gives renewed meaning to aspects of Kim's past that have been lost to the ruptures of time. The courtyard life Makine nostalgically evokes in *Confession* is a receptor in which the ghostly remains of Soviet history resound: it symbolises the possibility of Eastern freedoms, the continued development of that freedom into a post-Soviet future and thus the potential restoration of Kim's broken sense of self.

The past evoked through both Kim's memories and the written account of these memories is transformed in Makine's second novel into an unexpected form of freedom. The West and the Soviet East Makine depicts are unsatisfying for Kim who lives in a post-Soviet realm. Ultimately Kim discovers that it is not his relocation to Western Europe that will liberate him; even in the West he continues to wear a mask of borrowed expression to show that he is normal.[256] Despite the underlying trace of disappointment with the West that Makine voices in *Confession*, he underscores the importance of the past to the creation of a fulfilling identity in the post-Soviet, and Western, present. Full expression of Makine's idea is voiced by Arkadi's mother, when she recalls a Tibetan legend:

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[253] Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 436-440.

[254] Humphrey, "Ideology In Infrastructure," 39. Humphrey considers additional Soviet architectural spaces such as the corridors and stairwells of communal hostels. Despite being public spaces, they provided a necessary element of privacy. See Humphrey, "Ideology In Infrastructure," 48-49.

[255] Humphrey, "Ideology In Infrastructure," 55.

[256] Kim's role as a writer is "[s]a mine d'emprunt. Un stéréotype, l'auteur-émigrant-russe. [S]on uniforme d'homme normal." See Makine, *Confession*, 17.

> Le passé est un dragon qu'on garde au fond d'un souterrain, dans une cage. On ne peut pas penser tout le temps au dragon. On ne vivrait plus, sinon… Mais de temps en temps il faut vérifier si la serrure de la cage est en bon état. Car si elle rouille, le dragon la casse et apparaît, encore plus cruel et insatiable. (*CPDD*, 148)

Makine is suggesting that freedom may never be found in the West if knowledge of the Soviet past is not sustained.[257] Yet he cautions against ensconcing oneself there: "On ne vivrait plus" the author writes. Makine's attempt to understand the chaos of the early 1990s through a nostalgic narration of his protagonist's Soviet past hints at an exploration into the genre of historical fiction.[258] Significantly, Makine demonstrates that the horrors of the same world that destroyed his protagonists in *La Fille* are harmonised in *Confession*. A fragment of hope abides: "cette silencieuse mélodie de la nuit lointaine" (*CPDD*, 159).

In *Confession*, Makine explores the crisis and subsequent renewal of his protagonist's self as it plays out between the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The final memory Kim imparts is of the boys' fathers, both war veterans, cutting grass in an open field.[259] The fathers' hope, "leur cadence" (*CPDD*, 157), is carried through into Kim's letter and written memory of the boys' past. In the final scene, a modicum of hope passes between the generations. The continuity between past and present, East and West, expressed in the shared experience between fathers and sons is the strongest indication that the despair Makine had earlier envisioned for the Soviet-Russian individual in *La Fille* has dissipated. In *La Fille* any love between the generations is annihilated. By contrast, in *Confession* Kim transitions into the post-Soviet era by carrying within him the freedom and love he recognises from his past.

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[257] Hansen offers a perceptive analysis of the role memory plays in two of Makine's novels, *Testament* and *Requiem pour l'Est*. Employing Paul Ricœur's phenomenology of different modes of memory – anamnesis and mneme – Hansen posits that Makine's protagonists "come to revisit the past through memories evoked by aesthetic perception and expressed through narrative." Consistent with the reading of Makine's view of the past that I advocate in this chapter, Hansen contends that Makine's fiction privileges individual memory over the historical record. See Hansen, "La simultanéité du présent," 897.

[258] Further research to explore the historical aspects of Makine's fiction would be worthwhile. In my reading of Makine's early fiction, the author's conscious and pronounced integration of past and present is significant enough for *Confession* to be considered a historical novel, following Georg Lukács' understanding of the genre. *Confession* conforms to several key aspects that Lukács identifies in the genre: namely, the relevance of the past to our understanding of the present; the human, personal character through which that history is conveyed; and, the power the artistic reflection of reality through art has to convey lucidly these elements in intensified form. See Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1962). Other scholars recognise the historical thread in Makine fiction. Clément writes, for example, that "[s]ans être historien, l'auteur présente une fresque historique qui paraît former la trame des romans et modeler la vie des personnages par les tribulations occasionnées." See Clément, "Présence de l'absence," 9.

[259] Makine, *Confession*, 153-159.

"Happy Times"? The Russian Experience in the Early Novels

At a critical time of transition in contemporary European history, when communism had effectively collapsed across Europe's eastern half, Makine quietly entered the French publishing scene. Unsurprisingly, his first two novels are steeped in the socio-historical context of the Cold War era that had shaped Europe's ontological make-up for over forty years. The early fiction is, moreover, constructed around Makine's use of Cold War notions of East and West. In the era of post-Soviet transition, however, fresh challenges to national identity, understanding, and being were thrown up in the European landscape. Consequently, that "most important single bipolarity"[260] was no longer a tenable paradigm through which to explain the world. To what end was it of value to Makine's early fiction? In this chapter I have argued that, in the newly-emergent realm of post-Soviet realities, Makine makes use of the most popular and accessible notion of East-West, built on Cold War foundations, to render understandable to his predominantly Western European audience the complexity of the late Soviet period as he had experienced it. Although not reflected in critical opinion, the genesis of Makine's use of East-West as a motif occurs in the early novels.

Through the prism of two different generational experiences – those of the first and last Soviet generations – and via his exploration of individual Russian identity Makine gives voice to the Russian experience of the Soviet Union's demise. Makine's style is realistic and often despairing. Although the detritus of personal loss haunts the early works, the varied account of the Russian experience depicted coupled with the diversity of the Russian individuals Makine creates, results in a broad, non-homogeneous portrait of Soviet society. Ultimately Makine keeps alive a memory of the past by bringing into fictional existence a world that no longer exists. Where *La Fille* makes vivid the ambiguity of national identity and its construction in Soviet Russia during the Cold War, *Confession* gives expression to how the loss of "Soviet" as a mode of identity was experienced in the period of post-Soviet transition underway at the time of the second novel's publication.

Makine's first novel *La Fille* is, to date, his most despairing for the Russian individual and Russian society. Ivan and Olia operate in an environment in which they are denied hope. Ivan's tragedy is that, unable to function independently of the state, he is finally incapable of love. After publically condemning his daughter, Ivan realises the gravity of his act but dies before he can seek redemption. Olia's tragedy rests in Makine's suggestion that once condemned by her father all possibility of hope is eradicated from her future: the disillusionment of one generation is repeated by each successive generation. The absence of love between father and daughter indicates the absolute hopelessness of the world Makine portrays: Soviet Russia on the cusp of its demise.

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[260] Péteri, "Modern Identity," 4.

In *Confession* Makine experiments with a retrospective narrative form: time and memory become important elements of the text and a level of critical reflection that was impossible in *La Fille* is provided. Although the same era as that depicted in *La Fille* is evoked, Kim, writing from the West in the early 1990s, is privileged with knowledge that Olia and Ivan are denied in the lead up to the Soviet Union's collapse. Makine's portrayal of the experience of the period of post-Soviet transition is more lucid in *Confession*. Although the West remains fundamentally disappointing, a place in which masks of borrowed expression are worn to project a facade of normality, the reader discerns an element of hope in Makine's second novel that is lacking in the earlier text. Kim's understanding of hope does not come from the West in which he now resides; rather, it is located in his memory of the spatial environment of the childhood home. In *Confession* Makine reveals history and the past as unlikely forms of freedom; maintaining contiguity between the past and present is the only means to confront the post-Soviet future.

To reintegrate the early novels into Makine's greater oeuvre is to realise that they contain the essence of a concept – East and West – to which Makine returns over the course of his work. The individual stories created in the early works erode the political dogma of the period and enable Makine to give expression to experiences from the Soviet East that are designed to facilitate understanding between East and West in the post-Soviet European world at a major turning point in history. Through Makine's structural recourse to a Cold War notion of East and West, the concrete reality of life in the Soviet and immediate post-Soviet periods is conveyed. Nevertheless, several of the protagonists' encounters with more abstract concepts of East and West intimate that Makine was considering how the interrelation between structural and metaphorical uses of the East-West pair might further facilitate his telling of the crises and resolutions of identity construction in alternative ways. Olia's relationship to the West, for instance, is imbued with an imaginary dimension divorced from the idea of the West as a political entity, while Kim's relationship to his eastern past is suffused with a spatial significance through which new meaning is overlayed on his initial memory of the Soviet era.

The subtle interplay between the hitherto seemingly concrete East-West foundations on which these novels are built is a prelude to the structural, symbolic, and psychological pairings between the East-West construct to which Makine gives increasing significance in his later literary works. In his two next novels, *Testament* and *Amour*, Makine experiments further with the structural elements of East and West developed in *La Fille* and *Confession*. The geographical entities of East and West are scripted into symbolic landscapes; once they are divorced from their socio-political realities, Makine's foremost literary motifs – Siberia and Paris – are born.

– CHAPTER TWO –

Symbolic Geographies: *Au temps du fleuve Amour* and *Le Testament français*

> *The fascination of the* taiga *lies not in giant trees or in silence, but in the fact that perhaps alone the migratory birds know where it ends. The first day you pay no attention, the second and third day you are astonished, the fourth and fifth you begin to feel that you will never escape from this monster of a forest.*
>
> – Anton Chekhov[261]

> *Paris est tout petit*
> *c'est là sa vraie grandeur*
> *Tout le monde s'y rencontre*
> *les montagnes aussi…*
>
> – Jacques Prévert[262]

East-West and Poetic Form: The Literary Motifs of Siberia and Paris

In his essay "Epic and Novel" Bakhtin writes: "Reality as we have it in the novel is only one of many possible realities; it is not inevitable, not arbitrary, it bears within itself other possibilities."[263] By the mid-1990s Makine was experimenting with form to explore how alternative realities might unfold in his fictional worlds. In the early novels Makine considers his characters' identity in national terms and within a circumscribed understanding of East-West as a socio-political structure, but in *Amour* and *Testament* geography becomes symbolic and time increasingly fluid. And yet, like the early fiction, these novels are set predominantly in the period of late Soviet socialism. What differentiates *Amour* and *Testament* from the early works is Makine's poetic pairing between East and West. The novelist fashions the geographical pair into two mutually dependent, literary motifs – Siberia and Paris – through which he explores the elasticity of novelistic reality that Bakhtin evokes. Indeed, a complex interaction occurs between Paris and Siberia as they become powerful conveyors of the novels' identity narratives. Although the expectation is for the Paris motif to align with French and European constructions of identity, I argue that both motifs are in fact associated with Russian and Soviet constructions of identity. Ultimately, the literary motifs signal Makine's interest in exploring identity from an increasingly existential standpoint. By focusing on spatial symbolism and shifting temporal planes in Makine's coming-of-age dramas, I argue in this chapter that from the mid-1990s the author explores the capacity of East-West to function as a poetic form, and ultimately develops the pair into literary constructs.

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[261] Anton Chekhov, "Across Siberia," in *The Unknown Chekhov: Stories and Other Writings*, trans. Avraham Yarmolinsky, (London: Peter Owen 1959), 305.

[262] Jacques Prévert, *Paris est tout petit* (Paris: le cherche midi, 2009), 21.

[263] Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 37.

Opening with an analysis of Makine's 1994 novel *Amour*, I consider, first, how the author's geographical East, Siberia, is scripted into a symbolic landscape and literary motif. More than a literary backdrop, Makine's Siberia is so stylised and conceptual that it emerges as one of the novel's principal characters. By situating Makine's symbolic development of Siberia as motif within a greater discourse regarding the region's role in the Russian literary imagination, I demonstrate how the identity narrative pursued by Makine in *Amour* is influenced by Russian literary traditions. Yet Makine's innovative expansion of the Siberia motif in a late twentieth century context signals a broadening in the scope of his literary exploration of the crisis and renewal of identity and its construction at a national level. Despite the motif's origins in Russian literary history, the unfolding of Siberia as a symbolic space in *Amour* corresponds to an evolution in Makine's interest in his protagonists' psychological growth and individual identity as adolescents, as opposed to the sense of national belonging/un-belonging that marked his protagonists' experience in *La Fille* and *Confession*.

If *Amour* introduces readers to Makine's eastern motif, Siberia, the poetry of Makine's prose in his 1995 novel, *Testament*, gives birth to the western motif: Paris. In this chapter's second section I argue that despite its evident French cultural base, Makine's Paris is significant to constructions of Soviet-Russian cultural identity. Moreover, with the aid of the Paris motif, a temporal scaffolding encases the novel, bearing within it new possibilities for Makine's exploration of both spatial symbolism and identity. By examining the effect Paris asserts on the protagonist Aliosha's sense of self in Soviet Russia, my analysis of *Testament* engages with a socio-anthropological discourse regarding imaginary realms and their value to the construction of youth identity in late Soviet society. I argue that Paris is an imagined realm through which the protagonist's engagement with the world at large is mediated. Yet in the novel's denouement the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the imagined Paris occurs: Aliosha's reality is unfastened. However, only when the Paris motif and its Siberian counterpart are irretrievably altered can Makine's protagonist transcend the limits of his self. The Paris motif's meaning is redirected, becoming a marker of the renewal of Aliosha's self as he faces an indeterminate post-Soviet future.

A reading of *Amour* and *Testament* together demonstrates that the evolution of East-West into symbolic geographies is instrumental to how Makine structures reality, envisions the future and engages with contemporary identity narratives in his fiction. The two motifs are mutually dependent, yet where Siberia is boundless the Paris motif is defined, acting as an historical lattice that lends a distinctive temporal character to Makine's narrative. Through the structural poles of Siberia and Paris, Makine navigates what Bakhtin terms "the spontaneity of the inconclusive present":[264] fiction's capacity, through its artistic engagement with the world and its ambiguities, to explore manifold realities. Shifting away from the Cold War discourse of the early fiction, in *Amour* and *Testament* Makine creates a base from which to explore in greater depth his protagonists' psychological development, while still engaging with his own "world-in-the-making":[265] post-Soviet Europe.

Au temps du fleuve Amour: Siberia, "la plaine des mille cristaux"[266]

In *Amour,* Makine's imagined, literary Siberia – an environment of both timeless beauty and silent destruction – plays a leading role. Altering the emphasis of East-West in *Amour*, Makine moves away from the Cold War, socio-political focus of the early fiction: Siberia is a literary motif that gives voice to his characters' burgeoning adolescence and, implicitly, conveys their existential position in the world. In *Amour*, geography becomes symbolic. To this end, Makine restricts his portrayal of Siberia predominantly to the seasons of winter and spring, thereby creating a powerful interplay between freezes and thaws in which snow, ice and water dominate the landscape. Iulia Mateiu suggests that "en règle générale, la neige recouvrant le pays est le symbole d'une nature agressive".[267] Although Makine's frozen Siberian environment is often hostile, the author also suggests that snow is protective. For instance, he develops an emotionally evocative connection between snow and his characters' memory. The boys' first experience of nostalgic emotion is anchored in memories safely sheathed in snow, such as "[leurs] longues marches à travers la taïga enneigée" (*ATFA*, 216-217). Indeed, Makine has alluded to an organic relationship that exists between snow and the Russian sensibility in forums outside of his fiction. In a 2009 televised interview, for example, Makine suggested that "pour nous, la neige est quelque chose de magique. La neige peut vous sauver."[268] A similar sentiment was reiterated in my 2011 interview with Makine in which he married snow's alluring and harmful aspects: "La neige est quelque chose de magnifique. Mais aussi, c'est les tempêtes de neiges où on peut perdre sa route".[269] At its most extreme, "on peut mourir demain à cause du froid."[270] Makine postulates that in Russia "on est plus proche de la nature", which has resulted in a stronger development of "[le] côté cosmique de l'homme russe".[271] A corresponding notion is evident in *Amour*: Makine's three young protagonists' experience of self is mediated through their relationship to the Siberian snowscape. Indeed, in *Amour* nature has a formative influence. The protagonists' inner psychology reverberates through the topography of Makine's literary Siberia: a spatial realm whose icy, stagnant qualities belie an inherent vital force.

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[264] Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 27.

[265] Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 30.

[266] Makine, *Amour*, 94.

[267] Iulia Mateiu, "Metamorphoses de l'eau dans *Au temps du fleuve Amour* d'Andreï Makine," in *In Acqua Scribis: Le thème de l'eau dans la littérature*, ed. Mrozowicki, (Gdansk: Wydawnictwo Universytetu Gdanskiego, 2005), 469. Mateiu adds that the snow arriving in springtime differs: it relieves suffering.

Towards the start of the second chapter Mitia, the novel's narrator, describes how the village of Svetlaïa[272] where the boys grow up "se recroquevillait en s'installant dans l'éternité appelée 'hiver'" (*ATFA*, 18) until "un jour, le village ne se réveillait pas" (*ATFA*, 27). Physically, the village has been snowed-in. Although Mitia discovers that "un mur de neige se dressait au seuil de [son] isba" (*ATFA*, 27) effectively trapping him beneath the earth, as he digs a tunnel through the snow his internment is positively transformed:

> Je montais lentement, obligé parfois de m'avancer presque à l'horizontale. [...] L'air commençait à me manquer, je ressentais un étrange vertige, mes mains nues brûlaient, mon cœur battait lourdement dans mes tempes. [...] Inondé de sueur malgré la neige qui m'enveloppait, je m'imaginais dans des entrailles chaudes et protectrices. Mon corps semblait se souvenir de ses nuits prénatales. [...] [M]a tête perçait la croûte de la surface neigeuse! Je fermais les yeux, la lumière m'aveuglait. (*ATFA*, 28)

The scene is at once frightening and fascinating. Initially, it evokes a sense of captivity and advances the notion of snow as harmful. Mitia's hands burn, his body is drenched in sweat, and the encroaching earth deprives him of air. However, as the protagonist transitions from interior to exterior spaces, the reader ascertains Makine's interest in exploring Siberia's heterogeneous qualities. Mitia describes the tunnel as "chaud[e] et protectric[e]": although formed from ice, it is warms and resembles the womb and birth canal. The connection to life is reinforced by the memory Mitia's body recalls of "ses nuits prénatales". Indeed, Mitia's ascent through the subterranean darkness of the icy passage towards the blinding light of the world above simulates an act of birth. Mateiu draws a similar conclusion, describing Mitia's burial and subsequent return to earth as "[une] mort temporaire [...] une sorte de *regressus ad uterum* – retour aux entrailles protectrices, qui le mettront une seconde fois au monde, plus fort, plus confiant".[273] From the novel's opening chapters, then, Makine presents Siberia in a highly stylised manner; more than a landscape, Siberia is an experience.

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[268] Makine, interview by François Busnel, "La Grande Librairie, avec Charles Dantzig, Philippe Labro, Andreï Makine, Virginie Mouzine," (France 5: France Télévisions/ Rosebud Productions, 29 January, 2009).

[269] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[270] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[271] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[272] Svetlaïa is a play on the Russian word, свет/ светлый, meaning light.

That Mitia's internment and passage through the icy tunnel signifies a renewal of life is underscored by its seasonal associations: "[C]ette tempête était le tout premier signe du printemps" (*ATFA*, 29). When Mitia pierces the final layer of ice embedding him below the earth, Makine shifts the narrative emphasis to nature's magnificence above ground: "Le calme infinie régnait sur cette plaine noyée dans le soleil" (*ATFA*, 28). Makine's sundrenched plains are a counterbalance to his earlier illustration of the village closing in on itself under winter's deathly torpor. In contrast to the dark, cold and confining attributes of winter, the qualities of spring – light and sunshine – impart a sense of tranquillity and liberating spaciousness to Makine's snowscape. Mitia's elation, once he is above ground, is an emotion shared by his fellow villagers, who hug each other "en riant" (*ATFA*, 29) as they too emerge from beneath the snow. Here, the positive connotations Makine attributes to the experience of snow are emphasised. Thus, while Mitia describes Svetlaïa/Siberia in the novel's opening pages as "cette contrée austère" (*ATFA*, 17), spring's imminent arrival imbues the landscape with vitality. Rebirth and renewal are necessary counterparts to the sterile unfolding of Siberia's endless winter.

The juxtaposition of winter and spring, coupled with the emphasis on snow's nurturing qualities, strengthens an integral element of the text: life's endurance.[274] Makine's symbolic

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[273] Mateiu, "Metamorphoses de l'eau," 469 (emphasis in original).

[274] Ismail Kadare creates a similar impression in his 1971 novel *Chronicle in Stone*. Kadare's description of the city of Gjirokastër implies it is unfit for human habitation: "It was a strange city, and seemed to have been cast up in the valley one winter's night like some prehistoric creature that was now clawing its way up the mountainside. [...] It was hard to believe that under this powerful carapace the tender flesh of life survived and reproduced. [...] While preserving human life rather awkwardly by means of its tentacles and its stony shell, the city also gave its inhabitants a good deal of trouble [...] it was not easy to be a child in that city." That life persists illustrates the

Siberia is, however, often a deathly and depleting environment. Following Mitia's first sexual encounter with "la femme rousse" (*ATFA*, 72) – the red-headed prostitute – his romantic notion of love as "un toucher brûlant" (*ATFA*, 75) implodes. Mitia's unfulfilling sexual experience challenges his previously unambiguous world-view:[275] he realises that love is also "cet horrible gâchis" (*ATFA*, 76). Disillusioned, Mitia leaves the prostitute's izba where, outside, a snowstorm again rages:

> Je me retrouvai sur le pont avec quelques loques de moi qui se dispersaient dans l'obscurité fouettée par la neige. Le vent était si violent qu'il semblait vider mon corps de toute la chaleur de ma courte touloupe. Je ne sentais plus mes lèvres, ni mes joues recouvertes d'une plaque de cristaux. *Je n'étais plus*. (*ATFA*, 81, *emphasis added*)

In this example, the snowstorm is harmful and destructive. Suddenly cognisant of life's limitations, Mitia is drawn to "l'abîme blanc" (*ATFA*, 76) of the frozen river: a sinister Siberian environment beckons. Indeed, as Mitia contemplates suicide over the River Oleï, death becomes his sole refuge. By bringing the destructive elements of nature to the fore of his Siberian description – lashes of snow, strong winds and sheets of ice – Makine conveys Mitia's inner turmoil pictorially. Although the stretches of Mitia's imagination remain closed, he resists death's temptation. Yet although life persists, Mitia is left spiritually depleted.

The canvas on which Makine's Siberian landscape unfolds develops an increasingly figurative layer as the novel progresses; geography becomes metaphor. Graham Roberts observes that in Siberia Makine's protagonists are confronted with "la fragilité et l'instabilité de l'existence".[276] The notion is exemplified by Mitia's cry, "Je n'étais plus" (*ATFA*, 81) and through Makine's fluctuating depiction of Siberia's capricious climate. When later Mitia returns to the prostitute to seek refuge from the storm, Makine foregrounds his protagonist's post-suicidal despair. As the snow-storm buries the village overnight, the unfolding of nature's winter relapse parallels Mitia's retreat from life. Accordingly, when Mitia tunnels through the snow for a second time, Makine intensifies the experience; a more dangerous undertaking ensues. Yet despite Mitia's desire for what he later calls "ce silence définitif, cette fuite sans retour" (*ATFA*, 98), a galvanising change occurs beneath the snow. Suddenly, Mitia is afraid, "d'avoir perdu la bonne direction, de ne plus avoir le sens du haut et du bas" (*ATFA*, 92): of death. Yet Mitia's reaction is life-affirming: "Je remontais vers la lumière comme un poisson qui s'élance à contre-

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tenacity of human existence both authors advance. See Kadare, *Chronicle in Stone*, trans. Arshi Pipa (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 2008), 1-2.

[275] Earlier, Mitia states, "J'étais habitué à penser la vie très concrètement." See Makine, *Amour*, 62.

[276] Roberts, "Corps étrangers," 35. To illustrate, Roberts argues that Outkine undergoes an existential change after his leg is crushed by an ice-floe.

courant, dans une chute d'eau" (*ATFA*, 92). A thematic connection to Makine's earlier association between light and snow's potentially regenerative qualities re-emerges. Mitia's second passage "vers la lumière" becomes a fight for life on two levels: his physical life and his inner life. Duffy observes that the prostitute – who remains beneath the snow – becomes "a life-giver reminiscent of Dostoyevsky's saintly prostitutes".[277] Mitia is disillusioned by his sexual experience with the prostitute, yet her maternal qualities mirror Makine's earlier association between the icy tunnel and the birth canal. In the second example of Mitia's icy entombment, Makine's earlier intimation of rebirth as one possibility engendered in the Siberian landscape is solidified. When Mitia resurfaces, having recovered what Mateiu terms "le désir de vivre",[278] he is considerably altered; Makine's intention that Siberia's topography chronicle the story of his protagonist's inner development is sounded.

As the extremes of Mitia's experiences through the Siberian environment grow increasingly turbid, Makine's narrative and portrayal of place are suspended between reality and illusion. Many critics such as Roberts,[279] Rubins,[280] and Wachtel[281] consequently argue that Makine perpetuates a clichéd and exoticised image of Russia, with only some recognising the nuances in Makine's stylised depiction of place. Roberts, for example, considers Makine's snow-covered Russia in *Amour* over-stylised:

> [L]a version makinienne de son pays natal est saturée de clichés. On retrouve tout ici – *banias*, *isbas* isolées au fin fond de la taïga [...], vastes forêts qui s'étendent à perte de vue, références incessantes aux tempêtes de neige ou aux dégels.[282]

However, Roberts suggests that Makine is creating a dialectical relationship between Russia and the West. He argues that there is an equally exaggerated West – "un espace purement ludique, carnavalesque"[283] – that lies in opposition to Makine's clichéd East. Maria Rubins identifies in "[n]ahezu alle[n] Texte[n] Makines [...] lange lyrische Passagen, in denen der Autor Bilder Sibiriens heraufbeschwört: dichter Schneefall, endlose Steppen und unendlich lange, märchenhafte Winter zählen zu den von ihm immer wieder bemühten Klischees".[284] She posits that such imagery reflects the Russia with which the French are most familiar.[285] Andrew Wachtel voices a similar opinion, proposing that Makine's Russian imagery is "chosen specifically to give a picturesque and orientalized vision of Russia".[286] Yet, Rubins extends her analysis to investigate the interplay Makine develops between East-West cultural myths; "des russischen Mythos von Frankreich als Land der Kultiviertheit, der Eleganz, des verfeinerten Geschmacks und den französischen Mythos des exotischen, geheimnisvollen Rußland".[287] Wachtel, however, remains cynical; he contends that Makine's success in France is contingent on the author having reduced Russia to "a perfect dose of clichés".[288]

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[277] Helena Duffy, "The Russian Exile's Feeling for Snow: The Maternal Connotations of Aquatic Landscapes in Andreï Makine's Novels," *Essays in French Literature and Culture*, no. 47, Nov (2010): 75.

[278] Mateiu, "Metamorphoses de l'eau," 469.

[279] Roberts, "Corps étrangers."

[280] Rubins, "In fremden Zungen."

[281] Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant*.

[282] Roberts, "Corps étrangers," 31 (emphasis in original).

[283] Roberts, "Corps étrangers," 33.

[284] "nearly all of Makine's texts [...] long, lyrical passages, in which the author evokes Siberian imagery: heavy snowfall, endless steppes and infinitely long, fairytale-like winters are clichés that he consistently revisits." (my translation) Rubins, "In fremden Zungen," 181.

Wachtel's observation that the Siberian imagery Makine draws on is pure cliché is supported by a selection of Russian critics who remonstrate, for instance, "the urgency with which the author picks out things that can impress the European eye: boundless expanses [...] the steppe, the steppe, the steppe and snows without end".[289] However, the fact that only *Testament* has been translated into Russian has excluded many Russian critics within Russia from engaging with and analysing a greater range of Makine's writing.[290] When prominent Russian author and American-based critic, Tatyana Tolstaya, praised Makine in her 1995 English-language review of *Testament* for having created a "quintessentially Russian" novel that contained "wonderful scenes built on allegories",[291] a Russian perspective indicating that greater symbolic depth was at play in Makine's writing emerged. Yet, three years later in a Russian-language review Tolstaya dismissed Makine as a "philological mongrel, a cultural hybrid, a linguistic chimera, [and] a literary basilisk",[292] thereby undermining the value of her earlier critique. If the incongruities of Tolstaya's response, coupled with other critics' perceptions of Makine's

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[285] Rubins, "In fremden Zungen," 181.

[286] Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant*, 132.

[287] "of the Russian myth about France as a country of sophistication, elegance and refined taste, and the French myth of an exotic, mysterious Russia." (my translation) Rubins, "In fremden Zungen," 181.

[288] Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant*, 130. Nazarova expresses a contrary opinion, arguing that Makine's Russia is purposefully contradictory: he truthfully depicts the horrors of Soviet reality *and* conveys a nostalgic portrait of Soviet childhood. Nazarova contends that Makine's aim is to shatter "le préjudice des pays occidentaux envers son pays natal, d'en dire la vérité." See Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 217.

[289] Maia Zlobina, quoted in Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 4. Zlobina's original article was published in *Novyi mir* in 1996. Ivassioutine suggests the Russian criticism is more dynamic: some critics find Makine's portrayal of Russia superficial; others berate Makine for depicting Russian life in French. See Ivassioutine, "Anton Tchekhov et Andreï Makine," 128-129.

[290] A poor translation was published in 1996 in the journal, *Inostrannaia literatura*. See Rubins, "In fremden Zungen," fn. 33, 181.

[291] Tatyana Tolstaya, "Love Story," *The New York Review of Books* 44, no. 18 (1997).

[292] Tatyana Tolstaya, quoted in Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 27. Other scholars draw attention to Tolstaya's inconsistent Russian- and English-language reviews. See Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant*, 146-149. Tolstaya's review was originally published in the Russian literary journal, *Znamia*. See Tolstaya, "Russkii chelovek na rendevu," *Znamia* 6 (1998).

Russian imagery are irresolute, they are nevertheless revealing: the critics unanimously concur that Makine's Russian imagery is highly stylised.

The majority of critics fail to consider, however, whether allegory, symbolism and myth are manifest in Makine's spatial depictions. A closer analysis of Makine's "lyrical" descriptions of place and use of "fairytale-like"[293] imagery, demonstrates that the novel's exoticised Siberian landscape is of significance to Makine's greater literary outlook. Indeed, my contention is that Makine only partially reinscribes a realistic Siberian environment in *Amour*, so as to create a mythologised Eastern landscape. To this end, Adrian Wanner's and Helena Duffy's analyses of Makine's use of romanticised imagery provide a solid starting point for my discussion. For instance, in his analysis of *Testament*, Wanner examines Makine's literary technique, arguing that the author's writing can be clichéd whilst still remaining "artistically engaging".[294] Taking as his point of departure the French language, rather than spatial symbolism, Wanner provides a discerning reading of Makine's Russia. He suggests that "Makine's artistic method [...] consists in presenting purposefully staged images of a poeticized Russian reality through the 'photographic lens' of the French language".[295] I extend Wanner's reading and argue that a similar method is evident in *Amour*: Makine's symbolic Siberia reflects a "poeticized Russian reality". Duffy presents an alternative yet equally perceptive analysis of Makine's Siberian imagery.[296] Acknowledging that Makine's Russia is portrayed predominantly as "a boundless space unified by snow",[297] she suggests that "snow stands both for Russia's fidelity to tradition and resistance to Western-imported values."[298] While the focus of the present study is Siberia's role as a myth, motif, and symbolic eastern geography, Duffy's analysis also draws on the maternal, psychoanalytic connotations of snow in Makine's fiction. She concludes that "snow invariably connotes the exile's return – actual or imaginary – to the maternal fold".[299] Significantly, however, by arguing that such scenery "does not simply add to what may seem a clichéd and simplified portrait of Russia painted by the author for the sake of his Western readers",[300] Duffy challenges Wachtel's 2006 assertion, outlined above. Duffy and Wanner's mutual recognition of the artistic merit of Makine's stylised evocation of Russia is insightful, particularly Wanner's suggestion that Makine's artistic reproduction of Russia allows his audience "to believe that something very valuable and precious is happening" in his fiction.[301]

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[293] Rubins, "In fremden Zungen," 181.
[294] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 28.
[295] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 29.
[296] Duffy, "Aquatic Landscapes."
[297] Duffy, "Aquatic Landscapes," 66.
[298] Duffy, "Aquatic Landscapes," 80-81.
[299] Duffy, "Aquatic Landscapes," 80.
[300] Duffy, "Aquatic Landscapes," 80.

Mythologising Siberia in the Russian Cultural Imagination

In *Amour*, the "something very valuable" that Wanner detects in Makine's writing is evident in Makine's stylised Siberian vision. In his often ambivalent portrayal of Siberia, Makine toys with a concept that has a long cultural history in Russia. Mark Bassin explains that "Russians have traditionally entertained highly contrasting and volatile images of Siberia",[302] while Paul Fryer suggests that these contradictions "indicate Siberia's vital 'space' in the Russian cultural landscape."[303] Indeed, scholarly consensus across various disciplines suggests that myths of Siberia abound in Russian thought and literature. Since the region was first colonised in the sixteenth century, Siberia has been demonised,[304] romanticised[305] admired,[306] and feared.[307]

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[301] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 43.

[302] Mark Bassin, "Inventing Siberia: Visions of the Russian East in the Early Nineteenth Century," *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 3 (1991): 765.

[303] Paul Fryer, "Heaven, Hell, or ... Something in Between? Contrasting Russian Images of Siberia," in *Beyond the Limits: The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Smith, (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1999), 106.

[304] Siberia's physical extremes, harsh climate, its distance from the centres of Moscow and St Petersburg, and its "mean cultural environment" have contributed to its demonisation, particularly amongst Russia's upper classes, until the mid-nineteenth century. See James R. Gibson, "Paradoxical Perceptions of Siberia: Patrician and Plebian Images up to the Mid-1880s," in *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, eds. Diment and Slezkine, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 67. From an imperial perspective Siberia's proximity to Asia proved challenging. The desire to fashion a European identity for Russia was threatened by the backwardness of Russia's Eastern – "Asiatic" – frontier. As Bassin writes, "[t]o the Russians of the early nineteenth century, who still looked unquestioningly on Western Europe as the ultimate model of the advanced and enlightened civilization they desired for themselves, Siberia presented a distinctly disagreeable, even ominous prospect." See Bassin, "Inventing Siberia," 771. Figes suggests, however, that although "[p]olitically, Russia was as imperialist as any Western state [...] culturally there was a deep ambivalence, so that in addition to the usual Western stance of superiority towards the 'Orient' there was an extraordinary fascination and even in some ways an affinity with it." See Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 380.

[305] The romantic view of Siberia is most pervasive in Russian literary history: first, amongst the Decembrists' and, later, amongst the Siberian nationalists. Although often harshly conveyed, Siberia is idealised by the Decembrists for whom it becomes "a stage on which [their] heroic deeds are enacted". For further discussion of the Decembrists' romanticising of Siberia see Harriet Murav, "'Vo Glubine Sibirskikh Rud': Siberia and the Myth of Exile," in *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, ed. Slezkine, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 96, 98. For a discussion of the Siberian nationalists' perception see, for example, Galya Diment, "Valentin Rasputin and Siberian Nationalism," *World Literature Today* 67, no. 1 (1993); John Givens, "Siberia as *Volia*: Vasilii Shukshin's Search for Freedom," in *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, eds. Diment and Slezkine, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); David Gillespie, "A Paradise Lost? Siberia and Its Writers, 1960 to 1990," in *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, eds. Diment and Slezkine, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Galya Diment, "Exiled *from* Siberia: The Construction of Siberian Experience by Early-Nineteenth-Century Irkutsk Writers," in *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, eds. Diment and Slezkine, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

[306] Siberia's abundant natural resources, such as coal, gold, oil and gas, made the region attractive from an economic perspective. A lucrative sable fur trade also developed during the seventeenth century. Bassin suggests that Siberia's attraction as a means of exploitation allowed a "colonial image" of the region to develop. See Bassin, "Inventing Siberia," 767. Gibbon contends that the possibility of finding fortune there and of obtaining a

Moreover, Siberian imagery has pervaded the Russian mindset, embedding itself in the Russian literary imagination. Literary theorist Valerii Tiupa posits that "[t]he unique overlapping of geopolitical, cultural, historical and natural factors resulted in the mythologizing of Siberia",[308] with its distinctive landscape providing "a fertile field for actualization of one of the most archaic cultural models".[309] Literary theorist Galya Diment and historian Yuri Slezkine have gone further, framing their analyses of Siberian imagery in Russian culture as tethered to two experiential extremes: "heaven and hell".[310] In Slezkine's view, "[f]rom the very beginning, Siberia was represented as both the frightening heart of darkness and a fabulous land of plenty."[311] Indeed, Elena Hellberg-Hirn suggests that "among expressions of Russian identity we find a relatively well developed symbolism of space".[312] Expanding her argument, Hellberg-Hirn argues that Siberia is significant to Russian constructions of identity, which has specific importance as a spatial symbol of "freedom", "escape", and "refuge",[313] but also of "unfreedom" and "captivity".[314]

At the core of the Siberian myth is the dichotomous and ambivalent presence that Siberia holds in the Russian imagination and the implications this has had in sculpting a Russian national character. A corresponding pattern marks Makine's literary portrayal of Siberia in *Amour*. By exploring Siberia's symbolic dimensions, Makine positions himself, consciously or otherwise, within an established literary tradition: the mythologising and exoticising of Siberia in the Russian literary imagination.[315] Indeed, in Russian literary history, Siberia is considered a

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"liberated and more prosperous" life meant a positive image of Siberia developed amongst Russia's lower classes. See Gibson, "Paradoxical Perceptions of Siberia," 87.

[307] Paul Fryer calls Siberia "a land of nightmares" and offers several explanations: its remoteness, geographical vastness, impenetrable terrain, climatic extremes, and its use as a site for forced exile, penal colonies, and Stalin's Gulag camps. See Fryer, "Contrasting Russian Images of Siberia," 97-100. Bassin indicates, additionally, that "[f]or many Russians, the primeval aspect of untouched Siberia was frightening." See Bassin, "Inventing Siberia," 771.

[308] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 445.

[309] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 445.

[310] See Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine, eds., *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

[311] Yuri Slezkine, "Introduction: Siberia as History," in *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, eds. Slezkine and Diment, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 2.

[312] Elena Hellberg-Hirn, "Ambivalent Space: Expressions of Russian Identity," in *Beyond the Limits: The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Smith, (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1999), 50.

[313] Hellberg-Hirn, "Ambivalent Space," 53.

[314] Hellberg-Hirn, "Ambivalent Space," 54.

[315] To avoid confusion I do not distinguish between Siberian and Russian literature in this chapter. Rather, when tracing Siberia's development as a literary motif, I refer to its manifestation in "Russian" literature. My definition of Russian literature is consequently broad: it incorporates works produced by Siberia's ethnic population, Russian nationals, and Makine – an author of Russian heritage who writes in French about Siberia. To gain a thorough historical perspective I feel that this is unavoidable, yet substantiated by the fact that my focus is narrow. Moreover, Siberian literature is a complicated and ambiguous term. For example, Diment suggests that

"poetic formula"[316] and "special category".[317] Siberia has been inscribed in Russia's literary works, occupying a "distinct"[318] place as a theme and image. As a concept that has specific relevance to Russian identity, Siberia in Makine's fiction is "mythopoetically"[319] connected to earlier literary uses of Siberia.

Evidence suggests that a Siberian motif was in its embryonic stage of development in the Russian literary tradition during the seventeenth century, from which later Siberian texts were generated.[320] Although Diment states that "like Siberia itself, Siberian literature appears to have no clear borders",[321] she identifies two antithetical expressions of Siberian imagery at this incipient stage. First, Siberia is portrayed in seventeenth century literature as a refuge and "ecological paradise";[322] second, it is depicted as "an exotic place populated by peculiar barbarians".[323] The Archpriest Avvakum Petrovich's 1676 work, *The Life Written by Himself* (*Life*), is significant because, for the first time, these contrary viewpoints coalesced in one text. The Archpriest's work is cited by Diment, Tiupa and Bruce Toll, for example, as one of the earliest literary examples of Siberia's use as a poetic formula: in *Life*, Avvakum's Siberian exile oscillates between heavenly and hellish limits.[324] From the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Siberian myths embedded themselves in "the Russian literary 'psyche'",[325] Siberia matured into a more defined literary concept. Harriet Murav identifies works by the

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"'Siberian literature' often encompasses literature about Siberia as well as literature of Siberian exile, and literature written by Siberian 'insiders,' Russian and non-Russian alike." See Diment, "Siberia as Literature," 7. Bruce Holl, however, defines Siberian literature as "Russian-language literature about Siberia produced by Siberians or by European Russian writers who [...] spent time in Siberia". See Bruce T. Holl, "Avvakum and the Genesis of Siberian Literature," in *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, eds. Slezkine and Diment, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 33.

[316] Bassin, "Inventing Siberia," 772.

[317] Holl, "Avvakum," 33.

[318] Diment, "Siberia as Literature," 7.

[319] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 16.

[320] Diment, "Siberia as Literature," 8-9. Diment contends that three common Siberian visions were generated in the seventeenth century: the insider, the outsider and the exile view. The insider view expresses Siberia's virtuousness and its need for protection. The outsider view exoticises Siberia, emphasising its unfamiliarity. The exile view sits in-between, bridging the two earlier incarnations and offering an outsider's perspective: someone who, against their will, briefly becomes an insider.

[321] Diment, "Siberia as Literature," 7.

[322] In the 1636 work "The Esipov Chronicle" ("Esipovskaia letopis"). See Diment, "Siberia as Literature," 8.

[323] In the fifteenth century work "The Tale about the Unknown People in the Eastern Country" ("Skazanie o chelovetsekh neznaemykh v vostochnoi strane"). See Diment, "Siberia as Literature," 8.

[324] Tiupa regards Avvakum's *Life* as "one of the earliest conceptualizations of Siberia's liminal chronotope in Russian literature", while Holl considers it "the inaugural work in a literary tradition that represents Siberia as both 'hell' [...] and 'heaven'". See Diment, "Siberia as Literature," 8; Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 446; Holl, "Avvakum," 35.

[325] Diment, "Siberia as Literature," 9.

Decembrists,[326] Russian political prisoners and exiles as significant. She cites as examples Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Vladimir Korolenko, for whom Siberia is "a place of punishment",[327] yet indicates that Dostoyevsky's Siberian vision also encompasses "a renunciation from revolutionary thought and the embrace of an idealized primitive state".[328] Chekhov's travelogue, "Across Siberia",[329] adds to the prolific visions of Siberia produced during the nineteenth century. Bassin suggests that motivating factors driving the increasingly dynamic Siberian literary visions, particularly amongst the Russian Romantics, included "Siberia's perceived severe natural conditions – its 'stagnant Asiatic environment'",[330] and its use as a place of exile and imprisonment. If, however, Romantic tendencies propounded the notion of Siberia as "a symbol of loneliness and suffering",[331] where a contrast between the "inhuman natural environment [...] and the exalted nobility and selfless sufferings of a hero-protagonist situated there"[332] was manifest, then a converse trend occurred amongst the lesser known Siberian nationalists, whose literary visions, albeit equally romantic, emphasised Siberia's role "as a threatened 'heaven'".[333]

The literary imagining and re-imagining of Siberia continued into the twentieth century, enduring in Soviet literature of the 1960s through to the 1980s when, in village-prose fiction, Siberia was imbued with paradisiacal symbolism.[334] In this movement, the earliest mythical visions of heavenly Siberia from the seventeenth century were revived, particularly amongst Siberian nationalists such as Valentin Rasputin.[335] Indeed, questions of moral and spiritual value dominated the Siberian texts of the late twentieth century, to the extent that during the post-Brezhnev years "Siberia was evolving in the minds of the Russian nationalistic intelligentsia everywhere into a land of innocence, freedom, and moral superiority – in short, a sacred land".[336] Gillespie proposes that in Soviet Russia's growing climate of moral emptiness Siberian nationalists showcased Siberia as "the last Russian paradise still with a purity of spirit that can offer hope and salvation".[337] The parallel rise in Russian nationalism and in Siberia's perceived purity offers a stark contrast to the region's earlier incarnations as an "isolated and hostile terrain."[338] Indeed, by the 1960s the earlier, "mainstream image of Siberia as 'hell' began to face serious competition with the notion of Siberia as 'heaven.'"[339] The implication of envisioning Siberia as "an earthly refuge",[340] untainted and good, "is that Russia itself will be saved".[341] The poetic reproduction and development of Siberian imagery in Russian literary history illustrates that Siberia is a space, "a blank slate",[342] onto which diverse expressions of Russian identity have been transposed. Over the centuries, fluctuating literary images of Siberia have developed in the Russian imagination and authors in turn have "inscribe[d] [Siberia] with many different visions of themselves and their culture".[343] Makine is no exception. Diverging from tradition, however, Makine develops his concept of Siberia so it expands in scope and relevance and has meaning in Russian but also French cultures, ultimately becoming significant for universally conceived expressions of identity.

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[326] Murav considers Ryleev's writing particularly important for advancing the Decembrist cause. See Murav, "Siberia and the Myth of Exile," 96.

[327] Murav, "Siberia and the Myth of Exile," 95.

[328] Murav, "Siberia and the Myth of Exile," 103.

[329] In 1890 Chekhov travelled from Moscow to Sakhalin, through Siberia, and recorded his experience. See Chekhov, "Across Siberia."

[330] Bassin, "Inventing Siberia," 772.

[331] Diment, "Valentin Rasputin," 70.

[332] Bassin, "Inventing Siberia," 772.

[333] Diment, "Valentin Rasputin," 70.

[334] Village-prose fiction, which emerged in the late 1950s, is notable for rejecting the city-setting and valorising instead provincial/rural environments. Katerina Clark writes of village-prose that, "[a] vogue developed for wild, remote settings, untouched by most aspects of the twentieth-century life" in which "the hero found [...] not so much a primal contact with nature as spiritual regeneration." See Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 240-250: 242.

[335] Gillespie describes Rasputin's Siberia as "a place threatened with awesome moral and spiritual collapse" where "[t]he link between man and nature is broken in new rootless communities", and "the individual is himself torn asunder, coerced and demoralized, his sense of belonging or identity eroded." See Gillespie, "A Paradise Lost?," 263. Diment is cautious of Rasputin's Siberian and Russian nationalism, suggesting that traces of xenophobia are evident in the author's eagerness to attribute blame to others for Siberia's decline. See Diment, "Valentin Rasputin," 71-72. For further discussion of Rasputin's Siberian vision, see also Fryer, "Contrasting Russian Images of Siberia," 102-103; Diment, "Siberia as Literature."

Makine's Siberia: A Mythopoetic Connection?

The Siberian concept that Tiupa identifies as mythopoetically connecting a diverse range of Russian literary texts is evident in Makine's *Amour*. In Tiupa's argument, for instance, the indication is that Siberia is meaningful to Russian literature in terms of the identity narratives it carries. Tiupa grounds his argument in the idea that the Siberian topography was "mythologised in the national perception and became the property of a doxa, a chronotopic image comprehensible to everybody, of a particular expression of man's presence in the world".[344] Accordingly, Tiupa proposes that literary Siberia is more than a theme, but rather a mythopoetic construct common to Russian literary works.[345] Although Makine's writing remains outside the scope of Tiupa's analysis, his research is valuable and relevant to an analysis of Makine's writing. Of particular significance is the interrelation Tiupa draws between Siberia's physical and psychological elements. Makine's poeticised reproduction of Siberia relies heavily on these two developments.

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[336] Diment, "Valentin Rasputin," 70.
[337] Gillespie, "A Paradise Lost?," 271.
[338] Diment, "Valentin Rasputin," 70.
[339] Diment, "Siberia as Literature," 9.
[340] Fryer, "Contrasting Russian Images of Siberia," 103.
[341] Fryer, "Contrasting Russian Images of Siberia," 103.
[342] Murav, "Siberia and the Myth of Exile," 95.
[343] Murav, "Siberia and the Myth of Exile," 95.
[344] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 443.

To begin, Tiupa makes several observations about Siberian landscapes prevalent in classic Russian literature that suggest the romanticised Siberia Makine depicts is physically similar. Tiupa argues that "[t]he chronotopic image of Siberia in Russian classic literature presents it as "the land of cold, winter, night (moon)"[346] and as "the land of uninhabited and infinite (the symbol of cosmic eternity) space".[347] As Makine sculpts Siberia into a poetic landscape in *Amour*, the tradition continues. Makine arranges an image of Siberia as winter, emphasises the region's glacial temperatures, and focuses on the unending terrain separating people and places from the outside world. For example, it takes the boys "[u]ne journée entière de voyage" (*ATFA*, 117) to reach Nerloug, the nearest town. Tiupa, however, expands his analysis, proposing that classic Siberia's wintery traits suggest "death in its mythological understanding":[348] literary Siberia is mythologised as the "land of liminal half-death".[349]

As I outlined above, Mitia actively seeks death in Makine's Siberia. Mythological ties are, however, only implicit in the novel's early narrative outlook. Yet as the novel progresses, Makine's landscape increasingly assumes the traits of a moribund environment and Tiupa's suggestion that Siberia is a site of spiritual, "temporary"[350] death becomes an increasingly likely outcome in *Amour*. Indeed, as Makine focuses increasingly on his protagonists' inner development Siberia gradually transforms into a mythological realm. A greater correspondence between Siberia as a physical environment and Siberia as a metaphysical (spiritual) environment emerges. Consequently, by "establishing the correspondence between the character's state of mind and the state of nature",[351] Makine is following a trend observed in earlier Russian authors' Siberian visions. Indeed, as Makine's Siberian motif matures, it corresponds on another level with Tiupa's understanding of the mythologeme of Siberia: placing a character in Siberia is associated with acts of personal and spiritual awakening. For Tiupa, once Siberia becomes a liminal environment in the author's literary imagination, it is synonymous with "the liminal phase of the initiation rite".[352] To this end, Tiupa suggests that to survive in Siberia is to "com[e] back to life reborn into the new social status of an adult, that is [as] a warrior, hunter, and marriageable man."[353] A second phase in Siberia's literary development is established: the "problematic possibility of personal rebirth in new quality and the corresponding renewal of life."[354]

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[345] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 458. Tiupa analyses a range of Russian authors, including Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Nekrasov, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy and Anton Chekhov.

[346] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 444.

[347] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 444.

[348] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 444.

[349] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 445.

[350] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 445.

[351] Natalia Rogacheva, Svetlana Dracheva and Alexander Medvedev, "Historical Dynamics of Poetic Imagery in the Russian Poetry on Siberia of the XVIII - Beginning of XX Century," *Tyumen State University Herald*, no. 1 (2012): 118. The authors cite Ryleev's work in their example.

In *Amour* the reader understands Mitia's suicidal contemplation before the frozen river as a pivotal moment in his adolescent awakening. When an inner voice in Mitia cries out, "il n'y [a] plus de moi" (*ATFA*, 81), his spiritual death, understood as his loss of youth, is established. Makine intimates that Mitia's rite of passage into adulthood has begun. Consequently, when Mitia later stands before "la plaine des mille cristaux, inondée de soleil, le ciel sans fond répandant sa fraîcheur bleue, l'ombre moirée de la taïga" (*ATFA*, 94) and is awed and invigorated by the unlimited Siberian space extending before him, something akin to what Wanner describes in Makine's writing as "valuable and precious"[355] occurs. Through spatial metaphor and the artistic sculpting of landscape, Makine indicates that Mitia's inner change is imminent. Rather than offering a clichéd panorama of Russia, Makine's illustration of the sun-filled Siberian plains reflects Mitia's adolescent awakening. Indeed, as Tiupa explains, "summer and sun are usually ignored"[356] in literary Siberia *except* when a character's spiritual renewal is presaged.[357] Mitia's reaction is thus revealing: "Soudain, avec une clarté insoutenable je compris: je suis condamné et à cette beauté et à la souffrance qu'elle recèle" (*ATFA*, 94). Drawing explicit attention to the effect Siberia has exerted on Mitia's consciousness, Makine announces Mitia's "renewal of life":[358] his imminent rebirth in the new social status of an adult. Echoing Chekhov in *Across Siberia*, who emphasises Siberia's allure but likewise its hostility,[359] Makine conveys how the duality between beauty and suffering in human life, the border between spiritual death and spiritual awakening, and the shift from adolescence to adulthood, are engendered in the changing dynamics of Siberia's topography. The extremes to which Siberia leads his characters – initially physically and, later, psychologically – sustain Makine's interest in the value Siberia's mythopoetic possibilities offer literary fiction.

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[352] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 445.
[353] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 445.
[354] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 446.
[355] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 43.
[356] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 445.
[357] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 453-454.
[358] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 446.
[359] Chekhov, "Across Siberia," 305.

In *Amour*, then, Siberia is a literary environment where the tangible becomes subjective; it is a symbolic geography through which Makine conveys his characters' inner development and construction of identity as they transition to adulthood. Tiupa's analysis of Siberia's liminal potential and significance for identity narratives is supported by other scholars. Murav, for instance, suggests that navigating through the Siberian terrain often "correspond[s] to an internal transformation"[360] in the protagonist. For Russian scholars Rogacheva, Dracheva, and Medvedev, the link is explicit: "the Siberian text of the Russian lyrics [...] receives a universal artistic and existential meaning",[361] it "becomes a symbolic milestone in the way of formation of personality, Russia and all mankind."[362] Tiupa's initial suggestion of the "problematic possibility of rebirth" in literary Siberia is expanded by these additional perspectives, incorporating not only Russian but universal expressions of identity.[363] However, where Tiupa presents a predominantly axiomatic view of Siberia as a site of initiation resulting in spiritual rebirth, alternative observations are discerned in Makine's more dynamic portrayal of Siberia's poetic function. In *Amour*, Makine's mythologising of Siberia shifts the motif into a contemporary cultural sphere, where new outcomes are observed.[364]

"[L]e désir de dépasser les limites":[365] Initiation

In *Amour* Makine explores his protagonists' individual and, specifically, youth identity: in many respects, *Amour* is a Bildungsroman.[366] Makine's Siberian vision betokens a diversification in the direction of his overarching character development; his characters' navigations through

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[360] Murav, "Siberia and the Myth of Exile," 96.

[361] Rogacheva, Dracheva and Medvedev, "Russian Poetry on Siberia," 114.

[362] Rogacheva, Dracheva and Medvedev, "Russian Poetry on Siberia," 122.

[363] Diment suggests that "Siberia will probably be seen again and again as the last bastion of moral decency – this time not only for Russia but also for the whole world." See Diment, "Siberia as Literature," 10.

[364] For a selection of contemporary engagements with Siberia in film see Slava Ross, *Sibir, Monamur*, (EuropaCorp, 2011); Ivan Vyrpaev, *Euphoria*, (Paradise Distributing Company, 2006).

[365] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[366] Other scholars who note the novel's prominent coming-of-age theme include Claude Gonfond, "*Au temps du fleuve Amour* d'Andreï Makine ou le désir d'ailleurs," in *Problématiques identitaires et discours de l'exil dans les littératures francophones*, ed. Talahite-Moodley, (Ottawa, Ontario: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2007), 260; McCall, "French Literature and Film," 162.

Siberia reflect a greater quest: "le désir de dépasser les limites".[367] The complex interaction that Makine develops between Siberia's physical presence and the growing psychological development of his protagonists is succinctly encapsulated in two Siberian scenes. The first occurs at the crossing of the River Amur on the boys' return-passage from an impromptu train-trip to Vladivostok. The second occurs deep in the Siberian forest. By employing river and forest settings, which Tiupa indicates are "traditional components of an initiation rite",[368] Makine alludes to his characters' potential initiation in these scenes. Moreover, although the boys' varied responses to the Siberian environment are significant for their adolescent awakenings, Makine also contextualises the boys' inner development with their role in Soviet society. As such, Makine portrays two potentially conflicting realities that the Bildungsroman genre aims to fuse: "the conflict between the ideal of *self-determination* and the equally imperious demands of *socialization*."[369] By contextualising the Siberian motif within the Bildungsroman genre, Makine diversifies the outcomes of his characters' Siberian navigations: the protagonists' personal Siberian encounters leads to different conclusions regarding their understanding and construction of self.

In the first example, when the train crosses the River Amur, the immensity of the Siberian landscape attains mythical proportions. Makine's description of the river-crossing, as recalled from Mitia's perspective, is one of the novel's most striking scenes:

> Nous traversions le fleuve Amour. [...] Il paraissait immobile, tant sa gestation nocturne était lente. On voyait une plaine de neige qui s'ouvrait comme de gigantesques paupières. La prunelle noire – l'eau – apparaissait, s'élargissait, devenant un autre ciel, un ciel renversé. C'était un dragon fabuleux qui s'éveillait, en se libérant lentement de son ancienne peau, de ses écailles de glace qu'il arrachait à son corps. Cette peau usée, poreuse, aux fissures verdâtres, formait des plis, se rompait, projetait ses fragments contre les piliers du pont. On entendait le bruit du choc puissant dont l'onde faisait vibrer les parois du wagon. Le dragon lâchait un long sifflement sourd, se frottant au granit des piliers, déchirait de ses griffes la neige lisse des rives. Et le vent apportait les brumes du Pacifique, vers lequel tendait la tête du dragon, et le souffle des steppes glacées où se perdait sa queue. (*ATFA*, 187-188)

Makine brings the Siberian landscape to life: the River Amur metamorphoses into a dragon. Depicted as though awakening from a deep sleep, the river-dragon suggests renewal and rebirth, which is evident in the parallel Makine draws between the breaking ice and the dragon shedding its worn skin. The symbolic connotations of the river crossing – indicative of initiation – lend a spiritual quality to the landscape. Makine provides a counter-experience to Mitia's earlier acts of tunnelling through the snow, where the border between destruction and enlightenment is blurred. Mitia's response to the magnificence and immediacy of the river crossing indicates that the Siberian landscape has become a positive extension of his life.

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[367] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[368] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 445.

[369] Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London: Verso, 1987), 15 (emphasis in original). Moretti continues, arguing that the Bildungsroman is "an essential, pivotal point in our history [...] because it has succeeded in representing this fusion with a force of conviction and optimistic clarity that will never be equalled again."

In the river-crossing scene, Makine's writing echoes classic Russian literary representations of Siberia. The author reveals Siberia as a landscape endowed with heavenly qualities, as a site of "great life-sustaining abundance for those who know how to find it."[370] Although not fully comprehensible for Mitia at the time, the river crossing marks his initiation into adulthood. When Mitia crosses the river Makine indicates that Siberia's physical and metaphysical components have merged: "[J]e ne comprenais rien! Je ne comprenais pas où finissait le souffle titanesque du fleuve et où commençait ma respiration, ma vie" (*ATFA*, 188). Indeed, in contrast to the emotive responses – joy, despair, fear, and relief – that characterise Mitia's earlier confrontations with Siberia's physicality, Mitia faces a choice at the river that requires not only his emotional engagement, but also his cognitive and social engagement. He must decide whether to continue towards "les brumes du Pacifique, vers lequel ten[d] la tête du dragon" (*ATFA*, 187) – the West – or to stay beneath "le souffle des steppes glacées où se per[d] sa queue" (*ATFA*, 187) – the East. By employing an Eastern symbol – the dragon – to voice Mitia's awakening, Makine creates a sharp contrast to the narrative's predominantly Western pull, which is symbolised in the character of Belmondo and replicated in the western direction towards which the train travels. Mitia's choice – West – indicates his realisation of the ramifications and limitations of life in the USSR, and is anchored in his dread of what the Chinese man and his interminable saga represent if he remains in the East. Tentatively resolving to continue West, Mitia's decision launches him towards his rebirth as a socially-engaged adult and thus signals his capacity to become a self-determining individual.[371]

Makine's Siberia also leads his characters to much darker extremes. Several imposing elements of the Siberian experience as "hell" are consolidated in Outkine's and Samouraï's passage through the forest on their way to a Belmondo film, where they discover a prisoner's dead body. The prisoner's "visage blanc, recouvert de givre" and "[s]es yeux grand ouverts" are swathed in "l'effrayante fixité de la mort" (*ATFA*, 246). Yet the desolation of this Siberian image stems not from the man's death, nor his imprisonment, but from the inexplicable normality of his life and circumstances. Outkine wants to believe he is "un prisonnier politique évadé" (*ATFA*, 246) or a dissident "[qui] a peut-être écrit des romans antisoviétiques" (*ATFA*, 246), but Samouraï offers a sobering alternative:

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[370] Holl, "Avvakum," 35.

[371] The scene can be understood on several levels. Mitia's sexual awakening is conveyed through his desire for the Western female he observes at the head of the train. By evoking the centuries old debate, "Russia – East or West", the Chinese man's stories also support a political reading of the scene. See Makine, *Amour*, 187.

> Goulag! Tu parles! Le camp qu'on voit de Svetlaïa, c'est un camp *normal* [...] Et il y a là des hommes *normaux*, là-bas. Des mecs *normaux* qui ont juste volé quelque chose ou cassé la gueule à quelqu'un. Et ces mecs *normaux* jouent aux cartes après le boulot, normalement [...]. Et puis ces hommes *normaux* choisissent leur victime [...]. Et ces hommes *normaux* le baisent dans la bouche et dans le cul, à tour de rôle, toute la baraque, à la chaîne! [...] Et pour échapper à ça, une seule voie: se jeter sur les barbelés. [...] C'est ça la vie *normale* [...]. Des mecs qui sortent après dix ans de cette vie et qui vivent parmi nous... Et nous sommes tous comme ça, à peu près. Cette vie *normale*, c'est la nôtre. (*ATFA*, 246-247, *emphasis added*)

Samouraï's wrenching analysis of life in Siberia brings the prisoner's death into the realm of the boys' social reality. His remark – "nous sommes tous comme ça" – indicates the depths to which darkness penetrates not only in Siberia, but likewise within each of the boys. By repeating the adjective "normal" eight times Makine emphasises the distressing banality of the man's death; all illusions and romantic clichés are stripped from Makine's writing as he reveals Siberia at its deathly extreme. The dead prisoner brings Outkine and Samouraï face to face with their own mortality, and the mortality engendered in the Siberian landscape. In Outkine's feeble understanding of Siberia's unforgiving reality, the reader discerns a turning-point of dark origins: "Ce jeune prisonnier ... marquait une limite. [...] La limite de la cruauté, de la douleur. Une frontière" (*ATFA*, 249). In this scene, Makine's Siberia corresponds to its classic association with hell: "a forbidding region where physical hardship is endemic for all residents."[372]

The two passages outlined above stem from the same Siberian environment; both intimate that the boys have reached a limit of different extremes. In the forest, Outkine and Samouraï are confronted with death in all its banality, whereas Mitia's encounter with the river is life-affirming. Experience in Makine's Siberia becomes a passage between "heaven and hell",[373] where Siberia's physical limits convey the difference between the boys' spiritual life and death. However, in these examples the novel's underlying notion of existential choice is unveiled. Makine intimates that to be confronted by Siberia's infinite space, and impenetrable forests, is to face the question of one's existential position in the world.

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[372] Holl, "Avvakum," 35.

[373] Diment and Slezkine's original term. See Diment and Slezkine, *Between Heaven and Hell*.

As the river-dragon sheds its scales, Mitia sheds himself of Russia's Asiatic fatalism, "où la mort [et] la douleur [sont] acceptées avec la résignation et l'indifférence de l'herbe des steppes" (*ATFA*, 189). Mitia's transformation is born of the realisation that he cannot remain in the East – "il fallait partir" (*ATFA*, 239). He travels West, first studying in Leningrad and later moving to France. Samouraï's position, by contrast, negates the possibility of transformation through initiation. The only way Samouraï envisions surmounting Siberia's deathly stagnation is to recognise its normality and work within the borders of an Eastern rationality: he later dies in Central America fighting for the communist cause.[374] Outkine, however, clutches to the romantic hope that the dead prisoner is a writer who fought with words for a better life. His uncertainty places him between the two extremes adopted by Samouraï and Mitia: later he becomes a published author in America, not of high literature as he once dreamed, but of erotic adult graphic novels. By establishing a unique position for each character's existential stance, Makine refuses any uniform outcome to their navigations through Siberia.

Makine demonstrates, then, that placing a character in Siberia is a matter congruent with their existential position in the world. In this respect, his use of the Siberian motif diverges from the classic Russian tradition, which is primarily associated with a character's personal and spiritual awakening. Tiupa observes that Dostoyevsky's and Tolstoy's Siberian motifs result in a single outcome: the "spiritual transformation of the fallen character".[375] Murav suggests likewise: for Dostoyevsky, "Siberia is a place of moral rebirth, understood as the rediscovery of his union with the simple people".[376] However, in Chekhov's writing the Siberian motif expands, and Makine's use of the motif is similar. Although Chekhov "absorbed all the liminal Siberian motifs that were established by his predecessors",[377] and repeated "the conventional descriptions of Siberia",[378] his distinguishing difference was to alter them and thereby "undermine their force."[379] Focusing on Chekhov's vacillating depictions of Siberia, Murav suggests that "[n]o overarching authorial vision unifies Siberia into a single topography":[380] it is contradictory in essence. Tiupa's assessment of Chekhov's story, "In Exile", proffers a similar conclusion:

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[374] See Makine, *Amour*, 244, 253-254.
[375] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 453.
[376] Murav, "Siberia and the Myth of Exile," 103.
[377] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 455.
[378] Murav, "Siberia and the Myth of Exile," 107.
[379] Murav, "Siberia and the Myth of Exile," 107.
[380] Murav, "Siberia and the Myth of Exile," 108.

> The ideological argument in the story is whether people "live" (in darkness and dampness, like in a grave) or do not "live" in Siberia. […] Chekhov claims there is no one mythopoetic universal answer: it depends on one's existential position.[381]

Makine's use of the Siberian motif follows the philosophical indeterminacy initiated by Chekhov, where individual outcomes are as ambivalent as the Siberian landscape itself. In *Amour* when the physical, geographical and tangible become incomprehensible and fragile, experience itself is rendered subjective and metaphorical: "une tout autre dimension" (*ATFA*, 149).

Makine mythologises Siberia in *Amour*, shifting the Russian literary motif towards a twenty-first century literary context and into a new cultural sphere. That Makine is aware of the mythopoetic potential of Siberia is evident from comments he made in our interview, during which he spoke of Siberia's unbounded character and intimated his opinion that, in the Russian imagination, Siberia represents "l'image de l'infinie".[382] Shifting his consideration to the effect the immeasurability of such space exerts on the mind, Makine continued: "La Sibérie, c'est quelque chose où il n'y a pas de limites. […] [Q]uand on se retrouve en face de quelque chose qui est illimité, c'est une source d'inspiration fantastique."[383] Makine's relationship to Siberia is underpinned by a persuasive notion of spatial symbolism: a philosophical awareness of how space – our physical environment – mediates thought, arouses the imagination, and forms identity. Although expressed seventeen years after his third novel's publication, Makine's philosophical understanding of spatial symbolism is already discernible in *Amour*. More than a physical landscape, Siberia functions as a literary motif that conveys, primarily, Makine's adolescent protagonists' burgeoning adulthood, yet implicitly gives voice to their existential position in the world. In this respect, geography in *Amour* must be understood as symbolic: Makine is shifting away from the Cold War structural poles of East and West that defined the narratives of his early fiction.

Belmondo: Expanding the Motif

Makine further distinguishes and expands the Siberia motif from its classic form by introducing the western filmic world of French film star Jean-Paul Belmondo into the narrative. After an entire day's journey of thirty-two kilometres through the Siberian forest to see the films, the boys arrive at the Red October Cinema, in Nerloug. Their arrival is symbolically conveyed through the physical transformation of Siberia's terrain from snow to sunlight:

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[381] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 457.
[382] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.
[383] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

> Les profondeurs de la taïga s'ouvraient et *notre chemin neigeux* nous portait déjà vers la promenade *au bord de mer*, au milieu de la foule bronzée des extraterrestres occidentaux. (*ATFA*, 117-118, *emphasis added*)

The forest's snowy depths open onto a fictional landscape of sun and sea. In classic Russian literary uses of Siberia the sun's appearance can symbolise spiritual renewal.[384] In this scene, then, Makine absorbs the traditional balance between winter's eternal presence and summer's rarity, yet rather than containing his narrative within the physical limits of Siberia, Makine creates a counter-world: "la foule bronzée" of Belmondo's sun-drenched West.

Considered in the context of Makine's symbolic portrayal of geography, the West generated by Belmondo and his filmic world is meaningful in the text as an ancillary strain to the Siberia motif. Mitia describes the experience of watching the Belmondo films as "[n]os premiers pas en Occident" (*ATFA*, 113). However, like the symbolic Siberia Makine brings into existence in the novel, the West to which the protagonist refers is an abstract sphere: "C'était [...] engendré *in vitro* [...] dans notre imagination vierge. Dans la pureté cristalline de l'air de la taïga." (*ATFA*, 113, *emphasis in original*) The West that captivates Mitia is divorced from its socio-political and geographical reality. Makine indicates that Belmondo's West, conceived in the purity of Siberia's clear forest air, is indeed a product of Siberia. Mitia's recognition that Belmondo's West is fantastical, however, does not diminish its significance for the boys' construction of identity. On the contrary, the Siberian-cultivated West of Belmondo's world, which Mitia describes as "[d]ivinement bête! Absolument invraisemblable! Superbement fou!" (*ATFA*, 104), encourages the development of the boys' imaginations. Moreover, as a strain of the Siberian motif, Belmondo's West bears the same mythopoetic potential; it functions as a valuable source of inspiration that assists the boys as they transition to adulthood. Belmondo and his Western adventure world are not foreign to, but rather an element of Siberia. Constituting a Soviet-construed elsewhere similar to the imagined elsewhere which, as I outlined in my analysis of *La Fille* in Chapter One, was "both internal and external to the Soviet reality",[385] Belmondo's West is an imagined realm that is vital to Makine's protagonists' expressions of self and identity within their Soviet, Siberian environment.

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[384] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 454.

[385] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 161.

Through the intermediary of Belmondo the boys arrive in a new realm suggestive of initiation. Belmondo becomes a model for each of the boys' inner desires: the lover, the warrior and the poet.[386] Belmondo's world of adventure and art lies in stark opposition to the boys' lives in Svetlaïa, where "la vie du village s'est limitée peu à peu à trois matières essentielles: le bois, l'or, l'ombre froide du camp" (*ATFA*, 25). Yet faced with Belmondo's filmic wonders, the boys are encouraged to embark on an individual search for self-discovery, to project themselves into a future that is otherwise inconceivable in their Soviet context. Through Belmondo, Makine demonstrates that the boys' transition to adulthood is approaching. Claude Gonfond suggests that Belmondo symbolises "l'inconnu". For the boys, the Western world Belmondo represents "ne signifie que par défaut: c'est tout ce qu'ils ne sont pas."[387] However, in revealing life's pleasures – "séduction, désir, conquête, sexe, érotisme, passion" (*ATFA*, 133) – Belmondo unlocks the boys' untapped potential. Moreover, by rendering their reality strange and uncertain, Belmondo causes the boys to question their place in Soviet society. When Ian McCall suggests that "the protagonists' discovery of a different view of sexuality in French texts is accompanied by a perception of alternate views of the individual's place in society",[388] he grasps a motivating factor for Belmondo's inclusion in the novel: Belmondo enhances the themes of adolescent awakening and existential instability that Makine develops in *Amour*.

Offering more than a mere carnivalesque diversion from the novel's Soviet context, Belmondo embodies an authentic, albeit aesthetic, form of freedom that is lacking in the boys' lives. The notion of freedom Belmondo's character brings to the text has significance for the boys' entry into adult life and self-discovery, and for their engagement with world-views that depart from Soviet ideology. By incorporating the symbolic Western element of Belmondo's world – a fantastical, imagined and, significantly, Soviet-construed idea of the West – into the novel's Siberian setting, Makine expands his use of the Siberia motif. Belmondo and his West supplement the Siberian motif by bringing new life to the Siberian landscape and infecting Makine's characters with renewed energy. In *Amour*, Makine reinvigorates and broadens Siberia's literary potential for a twentieth and twenty-first century audience. The problematic possibility of the boys' spiritual, emotional and existential awakening, which the author charts over the course of the novel, is mediated across the planes of a mythopoetic Siberia: a symbolic geography that is enriched by the values of freedom and authenticity that are embodied in the imagined western element of Belmondo's adventure world.

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[386] See Makine, *Amour*, 178. "Nous étions nos doubles de rêve: Amant, Guerrier, Poète."
[387] Gonfond, "Le désir d'ailleurs," 264.
[388] McCall, "French Literature and Film," 162.

Le Testament français: Paris, "la genèse du monde fabuleux"[389]

When Makine introduces Belmondo's West to Siberia, he is in the early stages of developing "[un] nouvel univers" (*ATFA*, 110): the Imagined West. The author gives full expression to the new, imagined realm – Paris – in *Testament,* published one year after *Amour* in 1995. Like Siberia, Paris is a symbolic geography. Conceptually abstract, Paris is, paradoxically, aligned with expressions of Russian cultural identity. An analysis of *Testament* reveals that neither Paris nor Siberia functions independently of the other: like Belmondo's West in *Amour* Makine's new world in *Testament* owes its genesis to Siberia. Paris' function is, however, distinct from the visual, tangible form of the Siberia motif. Where the Siberia motif arises out of Makine's characters' corporeal engagement with landscape and has relevance to their inner, psychological development, Paris is a visceral appreciation of and engagement with an externalised cultural form. Through the Paris motif, Makine illustrates how Aliosha is exploring the parameters of his self and society.

In *Testament* Paris is pieced together from fragments of French historical and cultural life. It is formed from French poetry and prose, from the French grandmother Charlotte's living memories, from the French objects and photographs that fill Charlotte's Siberian suitcase. Significantly, however, it grows from Aliosha's realisation of the transformative possibilities cached not only in the power of a foreign – French – language, but in the power of the imagination. Moreover, at the structural level of narrative Paris operates as a temporal scaffold, giving renewed shape and vigour to the Soviet Russian world described in the text. Ultimately, Paris gives expression to Soviet youth identity in the period of late Soviet socialism. The symbolic western geography of Makine's Paris draws Aliosha outside his inner self, and his closed society, towards a lifestyle of freedom and self-determination that counters the reality of his everyday life.[390] As Makine's Western imagery weaves its way through the fabric of his protagonist and storyteller's imagination,[391] Paris asserts its role in Makine's oeuvre as a core literary motif. Ultimately, the imagined realm of Paris that materialises in *Testament* must be recognised as an extension of the possibilities of life that the conditions of late Soviet socialism fostered.

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[389] Makine, *Testament*, 23.

[390] For further analyses of France and the French language as sites of freedom, see Sharon Lubkemann Allen, "Makine's *Testament*: Transposition, Translation, Translingualism, and the Transformation of the Novel," *Ri.L.Un.E.* 4 (2006); McCall, "Andreï Makine's France," 305-320.

In *Testament*, Paris is a realm that rapidly envelops the narrative space. In critical analyses of the novel, however, the formative role Siberia plays in the development of Paris is not explicit.[392] Yet, over the course of the novel, Makine focuses on Aliosha's struggle to reconcile the anxiety born of his double heritage, demonstrating that both Aliosha's Soviet upbringing *and* his mythical French heritage are equally important to the text.[393] In *Amour*, Siberia is "une source d'inspiration fantastique",[394] qualities that are carried through into the Siberia portrayed in *Testament.* Saranza, Charlotte's home on the edge of Siberia, is a distinct realm within the novel's symbolic geography. A dilapidated and simple village, Saranza's spatial qualities are typical to the Siberia motif, which is discernible from the ever-present steppe and the infinite expanses of space surrounding it. The village, for instance, is described as "figée à la bordure des steppes dans un étonnement profond devant l'infini qui s'ouvrait à ses portes" (*TF*, 37-38). A significant difference, however, individuates the Siberian motif that appears in *Testament*[395] from its portrayal in *Amour*.[396] In *Testament*, Makine frames the narrative "sous le soleil des steppes" (*TF*, 23).[397] Devoid of snow and ice, the "[g]loomy Siberia"[398] of classic literary portrayal is transformed, symbolising a much rarer, "sunny life".[399] Tiupa maintains that summer and sun are rare in literary Siberia,[400] yet in *Testament* Makine inverts the classic Siberia motif, making sunny Siberia its foundation. He thus unveils an extended facet of Siberia's literary potential which inspires the genesis of the Paris motif. From the novel's opening chapters, Makine indicates that *Testament* is the story of Aliosha's *renewal* of and engagement with life as he transitions to adulthood.

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[391] For analyses of Charlotte's role in *Testament* see, for example, Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 44-57; Olga Ozolina, "Aux prises avec un univers de fantômes: une lecture culturelle du *Testament français*," in *Andreï Makine: La Rencontre de l'Est et de l'Ouest*, eds. Parry, Scheidhauer, and Welch, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 47-48; Tolstaya, "Love Story," 4-6.

[392] Critical analyses that briefly consider *Testament*'s Siberian setting include Allen, "Makine's *Testament*."; Welch, "Le voyage."; Hansen, "La simultanéité du présent," 885.

[393] Clément discusses the significance of Aliosha's dual French-Russian identity to his process of self-discovery in Clément, "Aléas identitaires dans *Le Testament français* d'Andreï Makine," *Dalhousie French Studies* 74-75 (2006).

[394] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[395] Makine, *Testament*.

[396] Makine, *Amour*.

[397] Makine's references to Saranza's sunny aspects continue: "[u]n soleil de cuivre brûlant frôla l'horizon"; "la monotonie ensoleillée de la steppe". These descriptions encourage the reader to associate Saranza/Siberia with light, heat and drowsy warmth. See Makine, *Testament*, 27, 264.

[398] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 453.

[399] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 453.

[400] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 444.

As Makine explores Siberia's sun-drenched potential while it transmutes towards its Parisian form, other nuanced, temporal variations further differentiate the author's depiction of the emerging Paris motif from that of Siberia. Sharon L. Allen focuses on Saranza's architectural composition, suggesting that the village "represents both modern and mythical dimensions of memory, both ruptured and cyclical time, contradictions legible in architectural and linguistic eclecticism".[401] Edward Welch's description of Saranza as "[une] petite ville calme et presque hors du temps [qui] devient le lieu de vastes voyages d'exploration"[402] is less heterogeneous than Allen's, yet both critics are sensitive to Saranza's essence: its temporal incertitude, its un-rootedness, and its potential as a site of encounter. That Saranza is timeless, a site temporally abstracted from chronological time, connotes its function as a palimpsest on which other histories are written.[403] When Aliosha describes the village as "idéale pour vivre des journées semblables les unes aux autres" (*TF*, 37), Makine emphasises the ease with which Charlotte's Parisian past occupies the realm of her Soviet present, "comme vécue d'hier" (*TF*, 37). In Makine's literary outlook, Siberia allows other worlds to live uninterrupted in its realm, paving the way for the Paris motif's development.

Salient aspects of Makine's narrative in *Testament* include abstracted notions of historical time, which are recalled through memory and can be read into the surrounding cultural remnants of the past. Although the Paris motif owes its genesis to the Siberian soil on which Charlotte creates her tales, Makine's Paris is born not of landscape, but of the author's focus on concrete images and objects tethered in historical time. The architectural features of Charlotte's apartment, for instance, are a contrast to Siberia's endless steppes. It is these historical details to which Aliosha pays particular attention when bringing Saranza and his first encounter with Charlotte's Paris to life:

> La maison de ma grand-mère se trouvait à la limite de la ville dans le lieu-dit 'la Clairière d'Ouest': une telle coïncidence (Ouest-Europe-France) nous amusait beaucoup. Cet immeuble de trois étages construit dans les années dix devait inaugurer, selon le projet d'un gouverneur ambitieux, toute une avenue portant l'empreinte du style moderne. Oui, *l'immeuble était une réplique lointaine de cette mode du début du siècle*. On aurait dit que toutes les sinuosités, galbes et courbes de cette

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[401] Allen, "Makine's *Testament*," 172.

[402] Welch, "Le voyage," 18.

[403] When considering the role memory plays in *Testament*, Allen refers to the Siberian steppe as a "palimpsest and a portal". See Allen, "Makine's *Testament*," 173.

> architecture avaient ruisselé en découlant de sa source européenne et, affaiblies, à moitié effacées, étaient parvenues jusqu'aux profondeurs de la Russie. Et sous le vent glacé des steppes, ce ruissellement s'était figé en un immeuble aux étranges œils-de-bœuf ovales, aux tiges de rosiers décoratifs entourant les entrées… Le projet du gouverneur éclairé avait échoué. La révolution d'Octobre coupa court à toutes ces tendances décadentes de l'art bourgeois. Et cet immeuble – une tranche étroite de l'avenue rêvée – était resté unique en son genre. (*TF*, 38, *emphasis added*)

Despite its now faded appearance, Charlotte's apartment is a remnant of the town's architectural aspirations. Moreover, it is a vestige of pre-revolutionary Russia and its Western (European) ties: historical time is entering the narrative.[404] Although the most extravagant excesses of its architectural flourishes have since been removed, Aliosha reads from the remaining relics – "les sinuosités, galbes et courbes de cette architecture"; "[les] tiges de rosiers décoratifs" – a history linked to Western Europe that might otherwise have remained inaccessible to him in Soviet Russia. In so doing, Makine ensures that the narrative is bookmarked, not only by the myth and legend of Charlotte's tales, but also by time and history.

Through the encumbering of Siberia's otherwise limitless expanses with its historico-cultural origins – pre-revolutionary, revolutionary, and Soviet – an added dimension enters *Testament*: an historical lattice that gives cultural form to the Siberian landscape's unbridled elements to which the reader has been introduced in *Amour*. Aliosha's architectural reading *anticipates* the later explosion of Paris during the Belle Époque portrayed in Charlotte's tales. Indeed, in the example above, Aliosha's allusion to European influences trickling like a stream towards pre-Revolutionary Russia parallels Charlotte's tales; likewise, they drift through time and space until "affaiblies [et] à moitié effacées" (*TF*, 38) by memory they resurface in Saranza. Although both the Belle Époque and the European West are spatially distant from the Siberian steppe on whose edge the village sits, Makine draws the two realms together by fixing them in a mutually shared historical base: "cette mode du début du siècle" (*TF*, 38). The Eastern character with which the Western European influences are endowed "aux profondeurs de la Russie" (*TF*, 38) and "sous le vent glacé des steppes" (*TF*, 38) indicates the transformative role East-West relations play in Makine's storytelling. To Siberia's spatial symbolism, the Paris motif is a temporal scaffold; it shapes the reader's understanding of Siberia and the text in new ways. The indication is that Charlotte's Parisian tales, once dispersed through space and time, will be similarly transformed. Indeed, reconceptualised by Aliosha, Paris is understood in a new socio-cultural context: late Soviet Russia.

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[404] Later, Makine describes an old wooden building that abuts Charlotte's apartment. The contrasting architectural pair enables Makine to evoke another period of Russian history that alludes to its folkloric past. Makine, *Testament*, 39-40. The architectural contrast was first elucidated by Allen. See Allen, "Makine's *Testament*," 172.

Layering Time: Paris Remembered, Paris Imagined

The French heritage Charlotte bequeaths to Aliosha enchants, imbuing the narrative with a mythical quality. Charlotte's storytelling evenings assert her role as the novel's Parisian guide and story-teller. Her stories of French culture and history set Aliosha's imagination alight, introducing him to a strangeness that is mystifying because of its difference from his Soviet reality. Nazarova refers to the image of France in *Testament* as "l'Atlantide française",[405] which she defines as "[un] pays de pure fantaisie, produit de l'imagination enfantine, construit de rêves, d'histoires, d'anecdotes et de faits disparates";[406] Nazarova grasps the imaginary, fanciful elements of which Makine's French world is composed. Indeed, that the emergence of Charlotte's Paris is in Aliosha's mind analogous to "[u]ne étonnante galaxie en gestation qui esquissait ses contours encore flous devant notre regard fasciné" (*TF*, 23) imparts the idea that the protagonist is entering a new world, which he himself names "une Atlantide brumeuse" (*TF*, 29). Accordingly, although physical objects,[407] books[408] and newspaper clippings[409] stored in Charlotte's old leather bag "marqu[ent] [...] la genèse du monde fabuleux" (*TF*, 23), Makine suggests that the influence the Paris stories exert on his protagonist's imagination are of equal, if not greater, importance than the nature of the stories themselves.

In time, when Charlotte retreats into memory the Paris motif comes to life, blossoming before Aliosha's eyes and mutating into a new form: a Paris essentially shaped by Aliosha's mind. The grandmother's storytelling sessions mirror the flight of a magic carpet, marking Aliosha's entrance into the imaginary dimensions of this world. On several occasions Aliosha describes how Charlotte's balcony detaches from the apartment building, "se met[s] à planer" (*TF*, 28), until "une étonnante transmutation du passé" (*TF*, 46) occurs: "l'éternité silencieuse des steppes" (*TF*, 46) is transmogrified into "ce miroitement pâle [...] des paillettes de petites vagues sur la surface d'une rivière [...], une étendue d'eau sombre (*TF*, 29). Aliosha watches the magic of the sea engulf the steppe; his grandmother's past enters his present. While this validates Adrian Wanner's view that "[t]he France of his grandmother's youth becomes a sort of magic kingdom, a sunken Atlantis",[410] his subsequent suggestion that Aliosha "is irretrievably removed both geographically and historically"[411] from this world overlooks the flight into the imagination that occurs. Aliosha exclaims: "Nous voyions maintenant sortir de cette marée fantastique les conglomérats noirs des immeubles, les flèches des cathédrales, les poteaux des réverbères – une ville! Géante, harmonieuse malgré les eaux qui inondaient ses avenues, *une ville fantôme* émergeait sous notre regard" (*TF*, 29, *emphasis added*). Aliosha's imagination transforms the Siberian steppe into a bustling city, propelling him towards rather than distancing him from the magic of Charlotte's emerging Paris.[412]

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[405] See Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 143; Nazarova, "L'Atlantide française et l'Atlantide russe."

[406] Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 143.

[407] For instance, the pebbles Aliosha and his sister play with during the first summer. See Makine, *Testament*, 21-22.

[408] Charlotte reads from the works of various French authors and poets, including Gérard de Nerval and Charles Baudelaire. See Makine, *Testament*, 110, 284.

[409] Charlotte's uncle was a journalist for *L'Excelsior* in Paris; his reports of the 1910 floods mark Aliosha's first encounter with Paris. See Makine, *Testament*, 30-31.

Aliosha's first glimpse at the new world solidifies Paris' role as a motif of historical, temporal significance: an architectural, built environment frames Aliosha's entrance to Paris:

> L'Élysée apparaissait dans l'éclat des lustres et le miroitement des glaces. L'Opéra éblouissait de la nudité des épaules féminines, nous enivrait du parfum qu'exhalaient les splendides coiffures. Notre-Dame fut pour nous une sensation de pierre froide sous un ciel tumultueux. Oui, nous touchions presque ces murs rêches, poreux – un gigantesque rocher, modelé, nous semblait-il, par une ingénieuse érosion des siècles. (*TF*, 50)

The magic of the city's public edifices takes centre stage during Charlotte's haphazardly guided tour; Aliosha is dazzled by Paris' sights, sounds and smells. Indeed, his sensibility for the architectural beauty of Charlotte's apartment building in Saranza extends to her description of Paris: Aliosha can almost touch the city's architectural contours. When Makine suggested during our interview that "en Occident tout est parlant, chaque lieu a un substrat historique",[413] he reiterated a notion that is articulated poetically in *Testament*: as Charlotte's words lead Aliosha past the city's famous landmarks, she effectively guides him through the temporal substrata that unify the Soviet Russian world he has left behind and the magical Paris he has entered. Indeed, that Charlotte's tales commence during Paris' 1910 floods subtly references the construction date of her apartment building in Saranza, built "dans les années dix" (*TF*, 38). Accordingly, in *Testament* the Paris motif's initial function is to weave through the layers of history that Makine deposits beneath the narrative's surface.

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[410] Adrian Wanner, "Gained in Translation: Andreï Makine's Novel *Le Testament français*," *Literary Imagination* 4, no. 1 (2002): 112.

[411] Wanner, "Gained in Translation," 112.

[412] Welch describes the process as "un voyage spatio-temporal". See Welch, "Le voyage," 18.

[413] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

Aliosha's description of Paris is telling on another level; it emphasises the unreality of the world metamorphosing before him. Paris is "une ville fantôme" (*TF*, 29). By alerting the reader to the fairy-tale, spectral nature of the Parisian tales that originate in Siberia's midst, Makine announces his readers' own need to dispense with reality as they enter the narrative.[414] Throughout the text, then, Makine reminds the reader of the Parisian tales' lack of chronological and factual consistency.[415] During the first summer, for instance, two key figures – the French president Felix Faure and Tsar Nicholas II – supposedly lead Aliosha and his sister through Paris: "C'est le couple impérial entouré de l'élite de la République qui nous guida à travers Paris" (*TF*, 45). Yet, Aliosha's first image of the French president, who as a result of the 1910 floods has been "réduits aux repas froids" (*TF*, 30), is not the same "maître de l'Atlantide émergée" (*TF*, 45) who according to Charlotte's chronology later hosts the imperial couple at Cherbourg: Felix Faure actually welcomed Tsar Nicholas and Alexandra in 1896, and had passed away before the Paris floods.

Thus the question arises: Is greater interest elicited from the contrasts generated by Charlotte's subjective story-choice than from their strict adherence to absolute truths? For instance, the notion of a President being served cold meals, albeit surprising, is familiar enough in Aliosha's social context to be comprehensible: he conjures an image of "un vieillard à la barbe chenue, assis devant une table tristement éclairée par une bougie" (*TF*, 30). Yet when the story is juxtaposed with an exquisite list of food prepared for the President's royal banquet at Cherbourg, Aliosha is at a loss. Charlotte employs words for which there are no equivalents in Russian: "*Bartavelles et ortolans! Cailles de vignes à la Lucullus*!" (*TF*, 46, *emphasis in original*). Aliosha has neither a visual nor a linguistic reference to comprehend the scene. Yet, "en évoquant les denrées, très rudimentaires" (*TF*, 46-47) Charlotte's talent for language reveals its power and Aliosha gains entry into the unfamiliar world described: "[r]avis, nous goûtions ces plats imaginaires" (*TF*, 47). Irrespective of the factual and chronological inconsistencies of Charlotte's tales, then, their power to inspire belies an authenticity of a different nature. Charlotte's juxtaposition of different forms of reality, through story-choice, prompts Aliosha to consider the discrepancies present in his lived reality. For instance, upon returning to school following the first summer, Aliosha discovers that Charlotte's *tsar* – the emperor who gallivants around Paris evoking "cet air inimitable" (*TF*, 66) – is strikingly different from the Russian "*царь*" spoken of in his history textbooks: "un bourreau mythique" (*TF*, 64), "un tyran cruel" (*TF*, 66). Aliosha's polarised pair – *tsar*:*царь* – exists simultaneously. Although Wanner suggests that this double-image signifies "two mutually conflicting realities",[416] curiosity rather than conflict defines Aliosha's confrontation with their difference. The dissimilitude of Charlotte's stories encourages Aliosha's unique engagement with the world at large, and discloses a surprising truth: "je voyais autrement!" (*TF*, 66).

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[414] Some critics tend towards mythical interpretations of Makine's France, including Welch who calls Aliosha's France "un lieu mythique". See Welch, "Le voyage," 23. Porra examines French nationalistic sentiments in *Testament* and suggests that the Atlantis myth has specific relevance to French national identity, functioning as a leitmotif "[qui] va innerver l'ouvrage et bercer les rêves d'une nation idéale". See Porra, "Un Russe en Atlantide," 77-78. See also Nazarova, "L'Atlantide française et l'Atlantide russe," 55; Mélat, "Testament français ou testament russe?" 42.

[415] These reminders are generally gleaned from Aliosha's asides. See Makine, *Testament*, 45, 117, 118. When approaching his own French research, Aliosha conducts "une étude systématique" (*TF*, 153) that counters Charlotte's impressionistic storytelling style.

"Dreams of France are an old Russian tradition"[417]

Through the prism of French imagery, Makine conveys aspects of Russian and Soviet cultural identity – an aspect of the author's poetic form that few critics recognise. Common approaches to Makine's literary evocations of France focus instead on French language, French intertexts and cultural references in *Testament*.[418] Some critics read *Testament* as autobiographical[419] and also pseudo-autobiographical.[420] Moreover, that Makine's portrayal of France is positive is rarely questioned.[421] Undeniably, Makine's West finds its voice via the language, sounds and imagery of France. Yet Makine's France, whether understood as an imagined realm, a socio-political entity, a cultural image or as language, is richer and more complex than merely "fabuleux".[422] Rubins convincingly argues that Russian authors who have migrated to other areas of Europe, for instance, often "introduce original, perhaps slightly exotic, voices into the polyphony of contemporary Russian writing",[423] effectively deterritorialising their literature. This is the case for Makine. Through a "slightly exotic", innovative French frame, the author dissociates his French-language fiction from a mono-cultural French base and gives voice to Russian and Soviet experiences.

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[416] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 30.

[417] Tolstaya, "Love Story."

[418] See, for instance, Ionna Chatzidimitriou, "Situating Silence: Makine's *Le Testament français* and Alexakis's *La Langue maternelle*," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 11, no. 4 (2007); McCall, "Proust as Intertext."; McCall, "Andreï Makine's France."; Safran, "Makine's Literary Bilingualism."; Mélat, "Testament français ou testament russe?."; Jongeneel, "L'Histoire du côté de chez Proust: Andreï Makine, *Le Testament français*."; Gourg, "Russie/Occident."; Porra, "Un Russe en Atlantide."

[419] See, for example, Katya von Knorring, "A la recherche d'Andreï Makine, ou un humanisme de la frontière: *Confession d'un porte-drapeau déchu*," in *Andreï Makine: La Rencontre de l'Est et de l'Ouest*, eds. Parry, Scheidhauer, and Welch, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 26. Hansen and Knorr consider *Testament* "partly" and "semi-" autobiographical. See Hansen, "La simultanéité du présent," 883; Knorr, "Poetics of Nostalgia." For a detailed analysis of the autobiographical elements in *Testament* and other works by Makine, see Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 11-85.

[420] The term was first used in relation to Makine by American scholar Andrew Wachtel. See Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant*, 131. Other scholars who consider *Testament* pseudo-autobiographical include: Wanner, "Russian Hybrids," 664; Petion, "Un cas de genre littéraire mal compris," 136-137.

[421] Mélat, for instance, describes Makine's France as "un univers féérique". See Mélat, "Testament français ou testament russe?," 42. McCall claims that in both *Testament* and *Amour* Makine "has created a wholly positive image of things French". See McCall, "Andreï Makine's France," 312. By contrast, Duffy adopts an original stance, arguing that Makine's France is less positive than critics assume. See Duffy, "La France."

[422] Mélat, "Testament français ou testament russe?," 42.

Tatyana Tolstaya suggests in a review of *Testament* that "[d]reams of France are an old Russian tradition".[424] A small number of Makine's critics recognise Tolstaya's allusion to Russian dreams about France, initiating a novel research approach to his fiction. Nazarova refers to idealised Russian visions of France,[425] noting that in Russia, "[p]endant des siècles, la philosophie et la littérature françaises ont inspiré les poètes et les artistes russes".[426] Building on Tolstaya's review, Nazarova adds that "pendant le dix-neuvième siècle, la langue française a été celle de l'éducation en Russie, une marque de l'appartenance à la haute société";[427] she suggests that today French culture is still idealised in Russia.[428] Allen reiterates Tolstaya and Nazarova's words, observing that "Makine's novels reprise the long Russian obsession with French high culture".[429] Moreover, Allen posits that "[Makine's] central characters defin[e] their own Russian cultural identity partly by alternating between gallomania and francophobia",[430] a sentiment that recalls Makine's personal opinion that France has, historically, played an integral role in the process of Russian national self-definition. For instance, in his essay *Cette France qu'on oublie d'aimer*,[431] originally published in 2006, Makine acknowledges the Russian-French historical ties, arguing that during the time of Peter the Great "[l]a francité devint, pour les Russes, ce miroir intellectuel, cette altérité de jugement dont toute nation a besoin pour s'affirmer".[432] Crucially, Makine observes that the reflected image was more often artful than credible.[433] Makine's insight can be extended to the aesthetically alluring French imagery he employs in *Testament*. Appearance and authenticity are only subjectively aligned, and hence the critical need to approach Makine's French imagery from a more symbolic standpoint: to delve beneath the aesthetic. Accordingly, when Allen suggests that *Testament* has been "widely (mis)read as uncritical embrace of French as universal literary language",[434] she grasps the nuanced undertones of *Testament*'s *francité*. Fresh critical inroads into Makine's use of French imagery in *Testament* are established.

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[423] Maria Rubins, "Neither East nor West: Polyphony and Deterritorialization in Contemporary European Fiction," in *The Fall of the Iron Curtain and the Culture of Europe*, ed. Barta, (2013), 94.
[424] Tolstaya, "Love Story."
[425] Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 144.
[426] Nazarova, "L'Atlantide française et l'Atlantide russe," 55.
[427] Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 145.
[428] Nazarova, "L'Atlantide française et l'Atlantide russe," 145-146.
[429] Allen, "Makine's *Testament*," 169.
[430] Allen, "Makine's *Testament*," 169.
[431] Andreï Makine, *Cette France qu'on oublie d'aimer* (Paris: Éditions Points, 2010).
[432] Makine, *Cette France*, 25.
[433] Makine, *Cette France*, 25.

The critical view that Makine communicates aspects of Russian cultural identity through French imagery is valuable to my analysis of Paris in *Testament*. Yet, I am more interested in twentieth-century Soviet-Russian interests in French and Western cultural imagery than in those of imperial Russia. To this end, Wanner's proposal that *Testament* should not be read as a realist work of fiction is indispensible:[435] it encourages symbolic analyses of the worlds portrayed in *Testament* that resist approaching Makine's France as an absolute socio-political reality. In Wanner's view "France is a mere linguistic and literary construct",[436] wherein the French language invigorates the novel's Russian context.[437] Although Wanner's overriding interest in *Testament* is to explore how translation and bilingualism feed into greater questions regarding identity, his views, along with those of Nazarova and Allen discussed above, offer compelling starting points. Yet, while these scholars maintain that Makine's French imagery is suffused with Russian stereotypes, they do not squarely address *why* Makine perpetuates these stereotypes.[438] In the following section I build on current scholarly advances that explore the Russian roots of Makine's French imagery by engaging with Yurchak's socio-anthropological research. In particular, I consider his valuable proposition that Soviet youth often appropriated Western cultural forms as their own in order to construct meaningful identities during late Soviet socialism.[439] I offer an original contribution to current scholarship by illustrating how, through the prism of the novel's French imagery, Makine thematises the problem of Soviet-Russian cultural identity in the specific context of late Soviet socialism.

In *Testament* the Paris motif initially serves as an historical lattice that, by giving cultural form to Siberia's boundless planes, links the seemingly abstracted worlds of Soviet Russia and Western Europe. As the novel progresses, the significance of Paris' imaginary dimensions expands. Indeed, by engaging with the exterior, alternative reality of an imagined world, Aliosha is drawn out of the interiority of his late Soviet socialist environment, of which, paradoxically, Paris is a product. While listening to Charlotte recite a French poem, for instance, Aliosha realises that he is seeing the world "de l'extérieur, de loin, comme si [il] ne lui appart[ient] plus" (*TF*, 57). The poem concerns Russia, a detail that is not immediately apparent to Aliosha. However, subsequent to his realisation, a defining moment in his adolescence ensues: "Je voyais la Russie en français! J'étais ailleurs. En dehors de ma vie russe. Et ce déchirement était si aigu et en même temps si exaltant que je dus fermer les yeux. (*TF*, 57-58). Externalised from Russian reality as he knows it, Aliosha is *elsewhere*. The resultant rift in his sense of self is both painful and exhilarating: Paris is now asserting its role as a marker of Aliosha's identity.

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[434] Allen, "Makine's *Testament*," 168.
[435] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 28.
[436] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 30.
[437] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 31.
[438] Wanner suggests only that "Makine's undeniable use of clichés is tempered by an awareness of their artifice". Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 49.
[439] See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*.

Accordingly, the fact that *Testament* is narrated by Aliosha some twenty-five years after the events recalled is significant. Firstly, it bestows on the protagonist the role of Soviet story-teller in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse. Makine is alerting the reader to the significance of his protagonist's youth and evolving consciousness of self, which develop in conjunction with Charlotte's Paris. Secondly, it grounds the novel in an historical reality. Structurally, Aliosha's outlook avoids the complete abandonment of the narrative to myth or legend, which might otherwise result from Charlotte's stories alone. By creating two story-tellers, Charlotte and Aliosha, and by employing memory as a framing device,[440] Makine's narrative emphasis is multidimensional and dialogic:[441] the narrative's East-West, Siberia-Paris, past-present, real and imagined realms coalesce to create new meaning. Makine's storytelling process effectively mimics the novel's internal contrasts.

Diffused through the Parisian-infused milieu of Aliosha's imagined world, *Testament* chronicles the intricacies of a Soviet youth that is bookended by Stalin's death and the demise of the Soviet Union. Like Mitia, Outkine and Samouraï of *Amour*, Aliosha is a member of what Yurchak has termed the Last Soviet Generation.[442] As briefly outlined in Chapter One, a core consideration of Yurchak's study *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More* is the formation of

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[440] For an insightful analysis of the theme of memory in *Testament* and *Requiem pour l'Est* using Paul Ricœur's phenomenology of memory as a guide, see Hansen, "La simultanéité du présent."

[441] I use the term dialogic here in conscious reference to Bakhtin's theory regarding dialogism and, by extension, heteroglossia, as a foundation of novelistic style. See Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays,* ed. Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 41-83; Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 259-422.

[442] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 31. Juliane Fürst refers to this generation as "Stalin's Last Generation". See Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*. Makine also forms part of this generation, as do many of his characters such as Olia (*La Fille*), Arkadi and Kim (*Confession*), whom I discuss in Chapter One.

Soviet youth identities in the period of late Soviet socialism: the thirty-odd years following Stalin's death, culminating in the onset of the reforms of perestroika, "when the [Soviet] system was still being experienced as eternal".[443] As Yurchak asserts, the period was unique in lacking any defining event around which the last Soviet generation could develop a common, shared sense of identity. Instead, their shared experience was to come of age in "the normalized, ubiquitous, and immutable authoritative discourse of the Brezhnev's (sic) years".[444] *Testament*'s protagonist comes of age in this social context.

Only when Aliosha leaves Saranza is the reader apprised of the gulf separating Charlotte's sumptuous Parisian world, including the creative possibilities to which it gives rise, from the oppression of Aliosha's everyday life. Aliosha's unnamed home city, situated on the Volga River, epitomises the interiority of the everyday Soviet experience:

> [A]vec son million et demi d'habitants, ses usines d'armement, ses larges avenues aux grands immeubles de style stalinien, [la ville] incarnait la puissance de l'empire. [...] [N]otre ville, à cause de ses usines, était interdite aux étrangers...Oui, c'était une ville où l'on sentait très bien le pouls de l'empire. (*TF*, 63)

Physically enclosed and sheltered from foreign influences, Aliosha's city is an alien and historically-barren counterpart to Charlotte's life in Saranza. Here, the cultural disparity of the two worlds Aliosha inhabits in the text is manifest. Prior to Aliosha's initiation into his assumed French heritage, however, the monotony of his concrete world with its abundance of munitions factories, austere architectural presence and an absence of foreigners, encapsulates the reality of his Soviet youth.

Through the Paris motif, Makine demonstrates how his protagonist circumvents many of the Soviet system's restraints. Indeed, the Imagined Paris is an extension of the possibilities of life that Aliosha experiences in the context of late socialist Russia. The proposition is supported by considering Yurchak's approach to the period of late Soviet socialism. Yurchak theorises that the last Soviet generation generally upheld a belief in specific values inherent to socialism including "equality, community, selflessness, altruism, friendship",[445] yet construed the system's socialist principles in a manner that sidestepped the state's otherwise controlling limitations. In so doing, the last Soviet generation "became actively engaged in creating various new pursuits, identities, and forms of living that were enabled by authoritative discourse, but not necessarily defined by it".[446] Yurchak cites various examples. For instance, following the development of tape recorder technology it became increasingly possible to obtain copies of Western jazz and rock music. The distribution of foreign recorded music was poorly controlled and, as a result, Western music infiltrated Soviet youth culture where it was re-appropriated and became meaningful at a local level.[447] In like manner, symbols such as clothes, objects or packaging direct from the West offered individual forms of self-expression. A plastic bag inscribed with English text, for instance, was a meaningful symbol: it created a material link to a physically inaccessible place.[448] In creating lives that were alternatively and creatively meaningful this generation effectively bypassed much of the un-freedom prevalent in the system's ideology.[449] Yurchak argues that the development of "imaginary worlds"[450] was vital to this generation's process of self-development. Makine's motive for constructing the Paris motif, which is also an imaginary realm, is arguably grounded in a similar belief: the Paris motif's essence lies not in its French cultural ties, but in its ability to give voice to a distinctively Soviet experience.

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[443] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 4.

[444] Yurchak later clarifies this notion by evoking the "predictability" and "standardization" of life during this period. Slogans, for instance, lost their meaning; they were so ubiquitous and commonplace as to become imperceptible. See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 32, 37.

[445] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 8.

In *Testament*, the Paris motif heralds Aliosha's first steps towards the construction of his identity. In addition to disencumbering Aliosha from "le pouls de l'empire" (*TF*, 63), Paris encourages the free reign of his imagination. The description of Aliosha's home city, for instance, attests to the fact that his socialist reality is a world "vivant au nom d'un avenir radieux, ne souciant guère […] des ridicules vestiges du passé" (*TF*, 63). By contrast, Aliosha's Parisian encounter impregnates his everyday landscape with an alternative, historically-infused atmosphere. When Aliosha returns from his second summer in Saranza, "tel un jeune explorateur avec mille et une trouvailles dans [s]es bagages" (*TF*, 153), he becomes "un maniaque d'érudition" (*TF*, 153) for whom French history and the relics of the past are treasures. In this process of self-creation, Aliosha subtly defies the state's overriding interests. Upon discovering the limitations of his library's French history collection, the predominant focus of which is France's communist history, Aliosha turns to French fiction, announcing:

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[446] Yurchak borrows the term "authoritative discourse" from Mikhail Bakhtin to illustrate his theory "that during late socialism the newly normalized Soviet ideological discourse no longer functioned at the level of meaning as a kind of ideology in the usual sense of the word". See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 32, 15.

[447] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 185-190.

[448] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 193-195.

[449] For example, finding employment in menial jobs – a boiler room technician, for instance – with fewer but longer shifts gave individuals more free-time to engage in their real interests: writing, musicianship, linguistics. See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 8-9, 153.

[450] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 160.

"[J]e sus déjouer cette manipulation historique" (*TF*, 156). Although Aliosha is far from engaging in dissident activities he identifies with a life removed from party policy, officialdom and "la respiration neigeuse de [leur] patrie" (*TF*, 64). Makine conveys poetically an experience that, ten years later, Yurchak evaluates from a socio-anthropological perspective: Soviet youth did not necessarily react *actively* against the system's authoritative modes, but their expressed forms of living often ran counter to official interpretations of how life under socialism should unfold.

Mundane and Exotic: Paris as Zagranitsa

That the Paris motif functions as an integral component of Aliosha's late Soviet reality is elucidated by considering Makine's Parisian vision through the framework of *zagranitsa* (*за грани́цей*). The concept, of which Makine expressed awareness during our interview,[451] literally signifies "beyond the border",[452] and is employed by Yurchak whose interest lies in the term's practical application: "that which is abroad".[453] As Yurchak asserts, *zagranitsa* was a late Soviet-construction that "came to reflect the peculiar combination of insularity and worldliness in Soviet culture".[454] For the majority of Soviet citizens it was impossible to travel outside the Soviet Union, yet this did not prevent them from learning more, or fantasising about the worlds that lay beyond their reach. In Yurchak's overview:

> *Zagranitsa* lay at the intersection of these two attitudes toward the wider world, signifying an imaginary place that was simultaneously knowable and unattainable, tangible and abstract, mundane and exotic. The concept was disconnected from any 'real' abroad and located in some unspecified place – over there (*tam*), with them (*u nikh*), as opposed to with us (*u nas*).[455]

Zagranitsa is founded on a notion of alterity. Although effectively unfixed in space, it was typically associated with an image of the West.[456] Accordingly, Yurchak refers to the imaginary realms to which *zagranitsa* gave rise as the "Imaginary West",[457] which "was produced locally and existed only at the time when the real West could not be encountered".[458] In *Testament* elements of *zagranitsa* are evident in Aliosha's initial response to seeing Russia through the lens of French poetry: the intoxicating and the everyday intermingle.

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[451] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.
[452] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 158.
[453] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 158.
[454] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 158.
[455] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 159.
[456] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 159. Although numerous imaginary worlds existed, Yurchak insists that the Imaginary West was the most significant.
[457] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 159.
[458] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 159.

Yurchak is not alone in his view of how Soviet citizens perceived the outside world. Vladislav Zubok examines the same period in Soviet history and, although he explores it through the lens of Soviet intellectual and artistic life, Zubok educes a similar sentiment.[459] For instance, Zubok speaks of "worlds *outside* the Soviet Union".[460] He maintains that these worlds "remained unattainable frontiers", existed somewhere "over there",[461] and were largely impenetrable. The language used by both authors to describe the indeterminate realm abroad is strikingly similar. Particularly salient is the authors' interest in the effect these "unattainable frontiers" had on everyday life. When Zubok writes of their "quasi-mythical quality and powerful effect on the imagination",[462] he echoes Yurchak's understanding of *zagranitsa*/the Imaginary West as a "Soviet imaginary 'elsewhere' that was not necessarily about any real place".[463] Rather, in Yurchak's view, a "promise of personal creativity and the possibility of creating a vibrant and shared world"[464] lay at the core of the imaginary realms' appeal.

That imagined realms, dreams and altered realities were conditions of Soviet society is further supported by Fürst, who stresses that late Stalinist society placed a heavy emphasis on "[an] imagined tomorrow, [...] utopian dreams and [the] belief that reality is as much what it ought to be as what it is".[465] If the parameters within which reality was understood were abstruse, then Yurchak's perception of late socialism as "a particular discursive formation within which the Imaginary West emerged as an indivisible and constitutive element of Soviet reality"[466] is tenable. He maintains that the Imaginary West surfaced during late socialism because:

> Western cultural influences were both criticised for bourgeois values and celebrated for internationalism, circulated through unauthorised networks and official state channels, transported from abroad and invented locally. It was within this dispersed discursive milieu between the 1950s and the 1980s that the entity of the Imaginary West emerged as an internal 'elsewhere' of late Soviet culture and imagination.[467]

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[459] Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009). See Chapter Nine, "The Long Decline: 1968-1985".

[460] Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 328 (emphasis added).

[461] Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 328.

[462] Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 328.

[463] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 159.

[464] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 197.

[465] Fürst, "Introduction," 11.

[466] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 161.

[467] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 162.

Ultimately, the border between what the state perceived to be acceptable or unacceptable was pliable. Western cultural influences penetrated the East's porous cultural boundaries until they became a constitutive element of Soviet cultural reality. In *Testament*, the power of Aliosha's imagination to recreate what he cannot see, touch or experience in a tangible form fuels the creation of his own "quasi-mythical" world, which exists "over there": the imagined elsewhere of Paris.

When considering the Paris motif's recurrence in *Testament*, and across Makine's oeuvre, I borrow from the meaning implicit in Yurchak's term the Imaginary West. Yet, in re-contextualising Yurchak's terminology in a literary context I recognise prevailing nuances in the function of Makine's imaginary realms. Rather than wanting to signify only the locally produced, *imaginary* world of which Yurchak speaks, I modify Yurchak's original term and speak of an "*Imagined* West". To this end, I focus on the *act* of imagining that accompanies Aliosha's discovery of Paris, rather than the idea of a collectively imagined realm that Yurchak's term evokes. Accordingly, the term "imagined" more accurately describes Aliosha's individual *process of discovery* and engagement with the West. Similar to Yurchak's overview of *zagranitsa*, the Imagined West in *Testament* is "simultaneously knowable and unattainable, tangible and abstract, mundane and exotic".[468] Aliosha's contact with French cultural products – literature, language and history – enables him to form a mental image of France and thereby engage with an Imagined West.

Although Aliosha's Imagined West is intangible, its influence is expansive. Paris takes hold of Aliosha's desires, initiating a process of self-determination that is predominantly mediated through language. When Yurchak describes the Imaginary West as an internal elsewhere, a "space that was both internal and external to the Soviet reality",[469] he hints at its transformative potential.[470] In *Testament,* the link is explicit: Makine's narrative interest extends beyond the socio-political and explores the boundaries of the mind. Earlier, I referred to the destabilising effect elicited when, through an engagement with poetry, Aliosha sees Russia in French. Yet Aliosha's sense of alterity is further magnified when, at this moment, his established notion of self becomes unhinged: "J'eus peur de ne plus pouvoir revenir à moi, de rester dans ce soir parisien" (*TF*, 58). Here, Aliosha is alienated not merely from Russia, but from himself ("moi"). Through the pervasiveness of language, Makine demonstrates that internally Aliosha is *elsewhere*.

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[468] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 159.

[469] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 161.

[470] Yurchak suggests that during late socialism the meaning of "truth" became displaced. Soviet individuals could live "outside" authoritative discourse and in accordance with their own values, a condition Yurchak calls being *vnye*: "being simultaneously inside and outside of some context – such as, being within a context while remaining oblivious to it, imagining yourself elsewhere, or being inside your own mind." See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 130; 127-128.

That language has the potential to uncover multiple realities in Aliosha's self is evident in his wonderment that "[c]ette langue qui modelait les hommes, sculptait les objets, ruisselait en vers [...] elle palpitait en nous, telle une greffe fabuleuse dans nos cœurs, couverte déjà de feuilles et de fleurs, portant en elle le fruit de toute une civilisation" (*TF*, 56). Indeed, Allen aptly suggests that "languages leak across boundaries and cross-fertilize the plains of the narrator's imagination".[471] Wanner, too, recognises that Aliosha's emergent bilingual consciousness creates a "stereoscopic vision, an enriched and fuller perspective than the one accessible to the monolingual native speaker".[472] Yet language also facilitates Aliosha's confrontation with difference. In the example above, "toute une civilisation" is transplanted from its external origins to become part of Aliosha's identity: real and imagined. Consequently, if the abiding question presiding over Mitia's self-evolution in *Amour* is "Who am I?" then Makine extends his line of questioning in *Testament*: Aliosha asks, "Who and what am I in relation to the diverse realities surrounding me?" Aliosha's reality is undeniably incongruous: his Soviet life is simultaneously perverse[473] and harmonious.[474] Yet an abiding, vital essence accompanies the Paris motif, encouraging Aliosha to create "une langue inédite" (*TF*, 69) that will facilitate an authentic engagement with the world. Accordingly, through the Imagined West, Makine thematises the experience of Aliosha's shifting selfhood in the context of late Soviet socialism as he gradually transcends the frontiers of his self.

Makine is not alone in his artistic exploration of both hopeful and disillusioning dream-like realms in the Soviet cultural imagination. Yurchak refers to two creative examples: the science-fiction novel *Roadside Picnic*[475] written by the brothers Arkadi and Boris Strugatsky in 1972, and Andreï Tarkovsky's film version of the novel *Stalker*[476] produced seven years later in

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[471] Allen, "Makine's *Testament*," 180.

[472] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 33.

[473] For example, the scene where Aliosha and his sister are forced out of the food queue. See Makine, *Testament*, 66-69.

[474] In theory, Soviet reality promised to deliver a socialist utopia.

[475] Boris Strugatsky and Arkadi Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic: Tale of the Troika*, trans. Antonia W. Bouis (New York: Mamcillan, 1977).

[476] Andrei Tarkovsky, *The Stalker*, (Russia: London: Connoisseur Video, 1979).

1979.[477] Both involve an imaginary realm known as the Zone (*зона*) that bears the characteristics of Yurchak's Imaginary West: fantastical, mysterious, and elusive. In *Stalker* Tarkovsky's Zone is a dangerous and highly guarded wasteland on the city's outskirts. Its origins are unknown, yet rumour has it that a Room exists in its depths wherein one's inner-most desires are granted. A guide, known as Stalker, leads two curious, albeit disillusioned intellectuals – the Writer and the Scientist – through the Zone in search of the Room. Although the promise of a "renewal of sapped faith and vigor"[478] motivates the characters' actions, Tarkovsky focuses on the arduousness of their journey, which is both physically and mentally challenging. Indeed, when the characters reach and enter the Room, the outcome is dispiriting: the Room is "sterile".[479] However, by emphasising his characters' inner struggles, rather than the journey's outcome, Tarkovsky explores the inner limitations of human nature and the lengths his characters' employ to transcend these limits. Ultimately, despite entering an elusive space, Tarkovsky's protagonists cannot dispense entirely with reality. As a result their hope, like the Zone, remains illusory.

Yuri Mamin's humorous film *Window to Paris*[480] explores a similar phenomenon, yet with a light-hearted spirit. The main character, music teacher Nicolai, discovers that his room in a communal apartment in St Petersburg contains a portal to Paris. Nightly escapades to the West ensue. Mamin's Paris appears romantic and clichéd. The film's essence, however, lies in the contrasts elicited between life in St Petersburg and the Imagined West, and thus in the characters' ability to surrender to the magic of dreams. Mamin essentially explores Russian fantasies about France, and the desire to infiltrate the world beyond the USSR's closed borders. The artistic examples discussed here indicate that expressions of Soviet-Russian cultural identity have been thematised through the motif of the imagined and the surreal. In their own way, each example indicates that Soviet reality's greatest limits were those etched in the mind. Consequently, Slavoj Žižek's description of Tarkovsky's Zone as a "void which sustains desire"[481] is valuable to an analysis of all three artistic creations. Although each is effectively empty, Tarkovsky's wasteland, Mamin's portal, and Makine's Imagined Paris nevertheless all carry the same potential: they are zones of contact in which hope and desire fuse.[482] The value of these imagined spaces is ultimately determined by the individual who enters the zone.

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[477] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 160-161.

[478] Michael Dempsey, "Lost Harmony: Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* and *The Stalker*," *Film Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1981): 16.

[479] Dempsey, "Lost Harmony," 17.

[480] Yuri Mamin, *Window to Paris (Окно в Париж)*, (Russia: Newvision International, Australia, 1995).

[481] Slavoj Žižek, "The Thing From Inner Space," *ArtMargins Online* (1999), www.artmargins.com/index.php/archive/457-the-thing-from-inner-space.

When I questioned Makine about the role played by imagination in Soviet society, he indicated that the creative possibilities generated by dreaming were formative to the Soviet individual's developing self:

> Quand tout est trop disponible, quand vous pouvez prendre un billet [et] partir à Paris quand vous voulez, vous ne rêvez plus de Paris. Vous arrivez, vous voyez… Tandis que la possibilité de fantasmer, c'est magnifique […] cela développe l'intellect […] [Les Russes] ne pouvaient pas aller en Occident, mais ils pouvaient en rêver. Parfois, c'est plus utile pour l'intelligence.[483]

By associating the act of dreaming with an individual's personal development, Makine's comments illuminate the intricacies of the evolving imaginative spaces in *Testament*. Makine elaborated, explaining that Aliosha's dreams of Paris are "une façon de créer un monde éternel".[484] Although language has become a constitutive and creative element of Aliosha's self, it is not yet his creative medium for self-expression: dreams are. However, one must ask, despite Makine's indication in *Testament* that hope germinates in the interstices between the real and the imagined, does Aliosha's desire to create something everlasting contribute to or, rather, impede his development? As *Testament* progresses, it becomes apparent that, in addition to its emotionally enriching and promising aspects, Paris presents its own dangers, disappointments, and disillusionments, which are often only perceptible once the real Paris is encountered and that will cause irreversible damage to Aliosha's carefully constructed Imagined West.

The Myth Destroyed

When the Soviet Union collapses and "[l]'empire enneigé se réveill[e], s'ouvrant au reste du monde" (*TF*, 297), real and imagined collide in an explosive denouement. Borders are opened, Paris is suddenly accessible. In the novel's final section, Makine draws the narrative into a direct engagement with his and his readers' contemporary present. Now living in Paris in the 1990s, Aliosha recognises in the city the hallmarks of Charlotte's stories, such as a plaque on a wall identifying the water level of the 1910 floods.[485] Yet Aliosha also discovers that "on pouvait traverser ces rues sans entendre un mot de français" (*TF*, 322). The disjunction between Aliosha's Imagined West and his physical encounter with Paris is disorienting. Yurchak's research confirms that Aliosha's experience of surprise and disappointment following real contact with the West was widespread.[486] In *Testament*, Makine symbolically conveys Aliosha's emotional loss in a surreal sequence during which the city physically dissolves before him: "Je restai debout, sans forces, en m'appuyant contre un mur. Le monde se désagrégeait, le mur cédait sous ma paume, les fenêtres dégoulinaient sur les façades blêmes des maisons" (*TF*, 306-307).[487] The temporal scaffolding and heady materiality of the Paris motif's architectural presence, until now a foil to the novel's late Soviet setting, disintegrates. As the historical dimensions of Paris' physicality dissolve, the temporal continuity between Paris and Aliosha's Soviet youth is ruptured. Similarly, its literary dimensions and linguistic capacity for discovery evaporate. Aliosha's hope is shattered when he learns that "la vraie littérature […] cette magie dont un mot, une strophe, un verset nous transportaient dans un éternel instant de beauté […] cette littérature-là était morte en France" (*TF*, 324). By charting the Paris motif's disintegration, Makine indicates the inevitable: following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Imagined West must likewise perish.

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[482] It is unlikely that Makine consciously sought to reference either the film or novel. The similarities reflect the authors' common experience of late-Soviet reality. As Yurchak maintains, the Imaginary West was "a coherent and shared object of imagination". Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 161.

[483] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[484] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

In Paris, Aliosha has transcended the boundaries of the USSR, of the Imagined West and thus of *zagranitsa*: he is no longer *elsewhere*. However, despite his success as a published author, Aliosha struggles to forge an identity commensurate with his new environment. Initially, the parallel demise of both forms of Aliosha's reality leads to the regression of his developing self. Aliosha redecorates his apartment in the image of Charlotte's France, hopeful that he can bring his grandmother to Paris and maintain his link to the Imagined West. Unwittingly, Aliosha creates "[un] musée désaffecté dont [il] [est] l'inutile conservateur" (*TF*, 333). Cognisant that "[il] redev[ient] adolescent" (*TF*, 324), Aliosha realises that the Imagined West is as illusory as the radiant future espoused by Soviet socialism: both are figments of the imagination. Nevertheless, Makine equips Aliosha with the necessary tools to overcome his circumstances and restore his lost faith: news, in the form of a letter from the dying Charlotte, arrives. In her closing lines Charlotte reveals an unexpected truth: Aliosha's biological mother was a Russian prisoner, "[une] fille d'un koulak", "l'un de ces destins tragiques du temps de Staline" (*TF*,

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[485] Makine, *Testament*, 307-308.

[486] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 202-206.

[487] For a perceptive comparative analysis of Aliosha's experience in Paris and Proust's protagonist, Marcel's, encounter with the city, see McCall, "Proust as Intertext," 972-974.

337). The truth of Aliosha's Russian heritage releases him from the imagined landscape of memory and from his liminal position between East and West. By removing two key reasons for maintaining an idealised West – his maternal French lineage and the desired arrival of Charlotte in Paris – Makine allows Aliosha to return to the essence of his identity: an undeceived individual, free to determine the course of the future that is unfolding before him in Paris.

In a final displacement between East and West, Makine plunges Aliosha into a reworked vision of his first childhood memory:

> [J]e retrouvais dans ma mémoire l'image que j'avais toujours crue une sorte de réminiscence prénatale me venant des mes ancêtres français [...]. Je comprenais maintenant que ce bois était, en fait, une taïga infinie [...]. Avec ma mère, je me promenais sur le territoire du 'camp de femmes' ... C'était mon tout premier souvenir d'enfance. (*TF*, 340)

In this example, Makine transposes the Paris and Siberia motifs. Temporally, Aliosha returns to Siberia. Spatially, however, by accepting the finality of a world he thought was eternal, Aliosha crosses the border into a real, contemporary Paris. Later, when Aliosha remembers Charlotte he sees her, not in Paris, but "au milieu d'une large clairière" (*TF*, 341) surrounded by a modest grape plantation on Saranza's outskirts. The reader understands that to see Charlotte in Paris would be incongruent to Makine's story: she is part of the text's Siberian geography. The French vineyard flourishing in Siberia – "une vigne, une vraie" (*TF*, 341) – is a reminder that, in the text, the Paris motif owes its genesis to the Siberian soil where Charlotte's stories first blossom. Crucially, however, Makine implies that Aliosha's future, rather than Charlotte's past, can now unfold in Paris. Indeed, several paragraphs earlier Makine indicates that Aliosha is already re-envisioning Paris in a new form; he leaves his apartment and, with it, the museum created in Charlotte's honour: "Les rues étaient désertes, embuées de sommeil. Leurs perspectives semblaient se composer à mesure que j'avançais vers elles" (*TF*, 341). For the first time, Paris is under Aliosha's sole direction: he has become the novel's Soviet *and* Parisian storyteller. That Paris will have meaning for Aliosha's post-Soviet future through the potential inherent in its linguistic aspects is implicit in the novel's final line: "Seuls me manquaient encore les mots qui pouvaient le dire" (*TF*, 343).

The Imagined Paris of Makine's narrative must be understood primarily as an extension of the possibilities of life engendered in the context of late socialist Russia. When the two worlds collapse, reality as Aliosha understands it is irretrievably altered. In 2011, Makine conveyed to me an unequivocal view of his protagonist's disillusionment: "On est toujours déçu par la réalité. Pourquoi? Parce que dans ce rêve on a transporté des éléments éternels, des éléments hors du temps, des éléments d'immortalité, des éléments de toujours".[488] Although the emotional loss of seeing both his homeland and his zone of hope perish is destabilising, Aliosha transcends the limits of his self, resolving to construct a new Paris, through language and literary creation,[489] which will correspond to his post-Soviet identity. In Makine's ending, Paris retains its value as a literary motif. However, when Paris and Siberia are reunited in Aliosha's restructured childhood memory, Makine indicates that the parameters of Aliosha's identity have shifted and that the Paris motif's meaning has been redirected. Two key functions of the motif nevertheless remain: first, to serve as a temporal and historical scaffold in which Siberia's unbounded elements are contained and, second, to act as a marker of identity. In its new guise, Paris as a literary motif becomes a marker not of Aliosha's Soviet past, but of his as-yet-unknown post-Soviet future.

Paris and Siberia: Towards a Spatio-Temporal Literary Form

In *Testament* and *Amour* Makine develops a symbiotic relationship between the Siberia and Paris motifs. Through their reliance on one another Makine thematises his characters' adolescent experience in the context of late Soviet society. In *Amour*, Makine's Siberia is dynamic; it shifts beyond the physical limits of either Russia or the USSR and becomes meaningful across Europe's borders. In Russian scholarship it has been proposed that "Siberia is not just visioned – it becomes a form of vision, a way of perception, a formula of reading historical and geographical facts."[490] By employing the Siberia motif in *Amour*, Makine creates an eastern poetic form from which he continues to draw inspiration in later literary works. Yet, if historically Siberia has been a literary space for specifically Russian modes of self-representation, in *Amour* and his subsequent fiction Makine transforms Siberia into a cross-cultural space where his characters' expressions of self move away from national frames of identity to encompass "man's [universal] presence in the world".[491]

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[488] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[489] A detailed discussion of language's role in *Testament* is beyond the scope of the present analysis. Nevertheless, several compelling linguistic aspects are associated with the development of the Paris motif that would be worth pursuing. For current discussions of the role of language in *Testament* see, for example, Safran, "Makine's Literary Bilingualism."; Wanner, "Gained in Translation."; Allen, "Makine's *Testament*."

[490] Rogacheva, Dracheva and Medvedev, "Russian Poetry on Siberia," 122.

[491] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 443.

To realise his characters' universal expressions of identity, Makine expands the Siberia motif's parameters to include a Western dimension. In *Testament* Siberia's sun-filled potential is fully explored through the intermediary of the Paris motif. Makine creates a new poetic formula: an imagined realm that arises out of the Siberian steppes and within which Aliosha explores the parameters of his self and society. Additionally, Paris provides *Testament* with a temporal structure so that historical time shapes the protagonist's development. Makine carries the Paris motif through into his later novels, yet the specific French vision conveyed in *Testament* is not a prototype of Makine's greater literary vision of the West, imagined or otherwise. On the contrary, the picture of France developed in *Testament* is subject to more striking interpretations in Makine's later works; this is particularly evident in the moribund émigré community located on Paris' outskirts depicted in Makine's next novel, *Le Crime*, published in 1998, which is analysed in Chapter Three.

Ultimately, the Paris and Siberia motifs developed by Makine in *Amour* and *Testament* are spatio-temporal structures. Moreover, they are significant to Makine's evolving identity narratives. Where the Siberia motif is concerned with the spatial aspects of narrative and Makine's characters' internal engagements with the self, the Paris motif is concerned with the temporal aspects of narrative and Makine's characters' external engagements with their self and society. In both novels Makine portrays his protagonists – Mitia and Aliosha – as individuals with interests beyond their national, historical circumstances. Indeed, in *Testament*'s ending, when Aliosha is relieved of the pain of his dual heritage, Makine similarly relinquishes his previously unmistakeable authorial desire to trace the repercussions and effects of the Soviet Union's demise. In *Amour* and *Testament*, then, Makine establishes the critical function of Paris and Siberia as literary motifs. Conceived as such, Paris and Siberia afford Makine greater creative freedom to explore, through his fiction, reality in all its myriad forms, the "many possible realities"[492] of which Bakhtin speaks. Makine carries the motifs' distinct narrative potential into his later novels, where his experimentations with the fluidity of novelistic reality – the imagined realms depicted in *Amour* and *Testament* – are subject to even greater, at times abstract, revisions. In the next chapter, I consider the often surreal personal journeys Makine's characters undertake between the symbolic realms of East and West, including Siberia and Paris, in the author's most symbolic novels: *Amour*, *Le Crime*, *La Musique*, and *La Femme*. In these novels, Makine examines his characters' identity from an expanded dimension that shifts into the realm of their adult, spiritual and psychological development in Europe during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Makine's choice to feature Russian protagonists in all four novels attests to his ongoing interest in Russian constructions of identity. Nevertheless, a shift in the author's literary outlook is discernible: an underlying interest in exploring the human condition informs Makine's symbolic works.

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[492] Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 37.

– CHAPTER THREE –

"[L]e fuseau soyeux":[493] Journeys, Border-crossings and the Construction of Identity in *Au temps du fleuve Amour, Le Crime d'Olga Arbélina, La Musique d'une vie, La Femme qui attendait*

> *Everything that falls upon the eye is apparition, a sheet dropped over the world's true workings. The nerves and the brains are tricked, and one is left with dreams that these spectres loose their hands from ours and walk away, the curve of the back and the swing of the coat so familiar as to imply that they should be permanent fixtures of the world, when in fact nothing is more perishable.*
>
> – Marilynne Robinson[494]

> *On the banks of the Yenisei life began with a moan, but it will end with such prowess as we haven't even dreamed of.*
>
> – Anton Chekhov[495]

In her 1981 novel *Housekeeping* Marilynne Robinson writes, through the words of her protagonist Ruth, that "[e]verything that falls upon the eye is apparition, a sheet dropped over the world's true workings."[496] The abstracted realities in which we as individuals operate, coupled with the implications each individual's unique "apparition" of the world and its boundaries have for self-understanding pervade the middle period of Makine's writing. When in *Housekeeping* Ruth says "I simply let the darkness in the sky become coextensive with the darkness in my skull and bowels and bones",[497] the borders between self and world are crossed. Ruth's engagement with and journey into her world has an unexpected tranquillity that lends authenticity to her self-constructed identity. In this chapter, I consider how Makine explores the relationship between identity and authenticity. Arguing that his characters' process of self-construction is shaped by the desire to create an authentic self, I examine the crises and resolutions that hinder or support their efforts. To this end, I take as my starting point the leitmotif of the journey and its antithesis, the anti-journey, which I analyse in four of Makine's novels: *Amour*, *Le Crime*, *La Musique*, and *La Femme*. In each of these works I consider how the journey, a physical act of moving from one place to another becomes a metaphorical expression of Makine's characters' movements through various states of self in their quest for authenticity. Quietude and unrest are key elements of these works, antithetical forces that through their dynamism allow Makine to probe the "apparitions" that suffuse his characters' inner-worlds. By lifting the sheets that hang before his protagonists' eyes, Makine reveals how his characters construct their identities at, across and inside the boundaries within which their lives are contained. The East-West axis continues to hold appeal for Makine as a structural form, yet in these novels it functions chiefly as a threshold to a character's authentic self. Journeys across the symbolic geographies of East and West reflect Makine's growing exploration of the interiority, inner psychology and spiritual development of his Russian protagonists.

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[493] Makine, *Amour*, 90.

[494] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 116.

[495] Chekhov, "Across Siberia," 304.

[496] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 116.

[497] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 116.

I have chosen this group of novels for their unique lyrical composition and symbolism, and employ the term *symbolic novels* to refer to the texts.[498] The novels have not been grouped together in this manner previously, although some scholars draw attention to the lyricism of the individual works that I discuss comparatively.[499] In 2005, Nazarova opined that, despite recognition amongst scholars of the symbolic quality present in Makine's writing, few analyses explore these elements further.[500] Arguing that Makine's writing "est riche en symboles et allégories qui forment le spécifique de son style",[501] Nazarova's analysis of Makine's literary symbolism is directed at his oeuvre as a whole. The novels selected for analysis in this chapter are symbolically distinct from other novels in Makine's corpus. The most tropological works to date, the symbolic texts are governed by motion and repose; their narratives are "assez mouvementée[s]".[502] Moreover, the modes of journeying are diverse, involving journeys into mythical, corporeal and metaphysical realms. Of interest to my analysis is how Makine maps out his characters' movements not merely across a geographical and historical spectrum, but across an experiential spectrum at the extremes of which freedom and alienation, discovery and disillusionment, enchantment and despair prevail. I argue that navigating through these various states of being is the driving force guiding Makine's characters towards an understanding of their sense of self and place in the changing cultural environments in which their stories are situated. At the core of my analysis in this chapter is an exploration of how the making and unmaking of the Makinian protagonist's authentic self is metaphorised through the leitmotif of the journey.

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[498] For reasons explained in the Introduction, I exclude from my analysis two additional novels published during the same period: *Requiem pour l'Est* (2001) and *La Terre et le ciel de Jacques Dorme* (2003). See Introduction, fn. 114, 18.

[499] Scheidhauer refers to *La Femme* as "un hymne à la beauté, à l'amour, à la terre-mère". Ollivier suggests that Makine's representation of nature in *La Femme* is both aesthetically beautiful and spiritually evocative. See Scheidhauer, "Tchekhov, Bounine, Makine," 49; Sophie Ollivier, "Regards sur la nature russe chez Makine et Bounine: *La Femme qui attendait* et *La Vie d'Arséniev*," in *Andreï Makine: Le sentiment poétique*, eds. Parry, Herly, and Scheidhauer, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 64.

[500] Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 89.

[501] Nazarova, *Andreï Makine*, 89.

[502] Welch, "Le voyage," 17.

Symbolic Geographies, Boundaries and the Construction of Identity: From the Socio-Political to the Literary

My understanding of how journeys in Makine's symbolic texts function as markers of identity is informed, at the macro level, by discussions of symbolic geographies in a Cold War European context. Binary perceptions prolific in Russian and European thought shaped Cold War politics on both sides of the East/West debate, leaving an almost indelible mark on the European landscape. Yet, Iver Neumann suggests that the dichotomy between a totalitarian/communist East and a capitalist/democratic West masks more persistent, underlying tensions, such as "civilized/barbarian and European/Asian",[503] which are related to further dichotomies: "free/unfree, market/plan, West/East, defensive/offensive".[504] In a separate consideration of how the politics of identity construction evolved in the former communist states of Eastern and Central Europe during the Cold War period, Péteri identifies the same divisions.[505] Emphasising their hierarchical dimension, however, Péteri's list includes the additional dichotomies of "traditional/modern" and "backwardness/development".[506]

Péteri probes the significance of the East/West division further, endeavouring to understand how subjective perceptions of self filter into identity politics. To this end, he stresses the importance of mental mapping to the formation of identity, arguing that

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[503] Iver B. Neumann, "Encompassing Russia: North or East of Central?," in *Identity Dynamics and the Construction of Boundaries*, eds. Petersson and Clark, (Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press, 2003), 28.

[504] Neumann, "Encompassing Russia," 28.

[505] See Péteri, "Modern Identity," 1-12. Péteri's introductory chapter is a revision of a 2008 article. See György Péteri, "The Occident Within - or the Drive for Exceptionalism and Modernity," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 4 (2008): 929-937.

[506] Péteri, "Modern Identity," 3.

> [s]ymbolic geographies reveal how human agents, in particular historical and cultural contexts, define themselves by locating themselves spatially as well as temporally, drawing the boundaries of social spaces where they are *within*, and relating themselves and their spaces to *others* and to what lies, in their discursively constructed spatial/temporal order, *without*, *behind*, and *ahead*. What makes these socially and historically situated processes really important is their intimate relationship to the formation of identities and, indeed, to identity politics.[507]

Implicit in Péteri's notion of symbolic geographies is a paradigm of identity-construction that is meaningful from the state to the individual level. How do European individuals understand themselves and engage with others in the historico-cultural environments – the social spaces – to which they belong or from which they are excluded? Spatio-temporal markers and symbolic geographies – mental maps – are significant components of the process. In the specific context of state socialism, Péteri indicates that meaningful existences are created via the Eastern European individual's relation to their immediate social space by considering what is *within* and *ahead* of the parameters of their socio-political environment: for instance, a socialist, Eastern European state transitioning towards the promised communist future.[508] Inseparable from this process is the individual's relation to external spaces – to *others*, to what is, temporally and developmentally, *behind*. In Péteri's example, this is the East's perception of a capitalist, backwards, "profit-seeking" West.[509] External interactions can, arguably, both strengthen and dilute understandings of self. Péteri later suggests that "the Occident was also part of the self; it asserted itself *within*, and appeared to be *ahead* rather than *behind*",[510] thereby muddying understandings of self and complicating the process of identity-construction. Accordingly, the interplay between boundaries, self and other, intersected by historical time, is the force out of which identity, in its myriad evolving shapes, is formulated and constructed.

Although Péteri adopts the notion of symbolic geographies to comprehend the "images, perceptions, and mentalities"[511] through which a systemic identity was formulated under state socialism, his theory regarding the interrelation between symbolic geographies and modes of identity construction is apposite to a literary study of Makine's fiction. Péteri's formulation elucidates how the psychic, social and spatial interactions that occur in Makine's symbolic writing contribute to the author's characters' understanding of self in a specific historico-political environment: Russia's relationship to Europe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[512] Indeed, a striking aspect of Makine's symbolic works is the broadening out of the author's historical base from the Cold War environment that typifies his earlier writing. Makine incorporates a mythical-legendary past (*Amour* and *La Femme*), a pre-Revolutionary past (*Le Crime*), and a pre-World War Two past (*La Musique*). The symbolic expansion of the East-West structure bespeaks a shift in the underlying literary direction of Makine's writing. Through the theme of the journey, Makine exposes the porous nature of boundaries and their symbiotic relationship to identity construction: Makine is exploring his protagonists' individual psyches. Accordingly, an analysis of the corporeal, metaphysical, and psychic borders that Makine's characters negotiate in the symbolic works provides a deeper understanding of how identities are constructed in the Makinian world.[513]

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[507] Péteri, "Modern Identity," 2 (emphasis in original).

[508] In his discussion, Péteri acknowledges "the supreme impact of the Marxist-Leninist view on the social universe of the modern and late modern era in prevalent discourses of identity throughout the career of the state socialist project." See Péteri, "Modern Identity," 5.

[509] Péteri, "Modern Identity," 7.

[510] Péteri, "Modern Identity," 11 (emphasis in original).

[511] Péteri, "Modern Identity," 1.

That Makine maintains a connection to the Cold War period in each of the symbolic novels is nevertheless telling; its reverberations profoundly impact the author's literary consciousness. State socialism, with its aim of an onward progression towards the communist ideal, as envisaged by Marx and Engels,[514] failed. When Makine's writing first emerged following the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union, the author had to come to terms, privately, with the fact that a new Russia, "enclosed by borders it had never had, with a political regime and economic system it had never experienced",[515] had been born in his absence. The boundaries of the social space within which Russians had previously belonged were being redrawn. Geography, as a symbolic marker of belonging, identity, and difference, was being redefined. If the symbolic geographies that Péteri describes as an integral component of identity politics were shifting, then the Russian self-concept necessarily altered in response. When Andrei Zorin posits that, in the early post-Soviet years, Russia lacked a "coherent vision of its own past, present or future",[516] an indication of the disquietude that former Soviet citizens were experiencing individually, in newly defined social spaces and in terms of their identity – past, present and future – is imparted.

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[512] This is not to the exclusion of other theories of identity formation. Psychoanalysis and psychology have played major roles in theorizing how individuals form a sense of self; their importance cannot be dismissed. See, for example, Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*, trans. John Reddick (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2003); Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1968). A dedicated psychoanalytic reading of Makine's texts lies beyond the scope of this chapter.

[513] Eric Clark and Bo Petersson's edited collection, which analyses the relationship between boundaries and identity construction, is a valuable critical accompaniment to this concept. I draw on their work later in this Chapter. See Clark and Petersson, eds., *Identity Dynamics and the Construction of Boundaries* (Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press, 2003).

[514] See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1985).

[515] Andrei Zorin, "In Search of a New Identity: Visions of the Past and Present in Post-Communist Russia," in *Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community: Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond*, ed. Stråth, (Brussels; New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 321.

[516] Zorin, "In Search of a New Identity," 321.

Makine was part of the process of post-Soviet incertitude: the fracturing of individual notions of self following the grand scale dissolution of the state. Attempting to overcome the loss of his homeland and to find belonging in a new community, Makine sought out French citizenship: it was not granted until 1996.[517] Bo Stråth maintains that "it is generally only in periods of identity crisis that we look for new identity and social community".[518] Arguably it is this identity and sense of community that, following the demise of state socialism and his own at times uneasy resettlement in France, Makine seeks to create in his symbolic works. Shifting beyond an exploration of the immediate crises sparked by the dissolution of his former homeland, however, Makine turns his gaze to consider what unfolds "*without*, *behind*, and *ahead*"[519] of his characters' experiences. This includes an Imagined West, the thing that his characters are "without". It involves collective and personal memories and myths from the past: what lies "behind" and "within". It explores the promise or, indeed, horror in the case of *Le Crime*, of what their futures hold: what lies "ahead". For the first time, Makine considers what Russian identity at a predominantly private level might mean beyond the parameters of communism's seventy-year reign. In the process, Makine explores not solely what it means to be Russian, but also what it means to be human.

Au temps du fleuve Amour: The Journey as Leitmotif

Amour is a prototype for the leitmotif of the journey in the author's symbolic texts. In the following analysis, I explore how in the novel's symbolic geography – a snowbound Siberia – Mitia and his friends relate to their past, present and future: essentially, to what lies *behind*, *without* and *ahead*. In this key text, Makine melds the metaphysical aspects of identity construction with the journey by building three fundamental symbolic components into his narrative: the Kharg-racine,[520] which initially serves as a link to the mythical past; trains, which facilitate dynamic spatio-temporal movements across the narrative; and the dream-sequence, which projects the protagonist Mitia's understanding of self towards the future. Each component has its distinct spatio-temporal configurations; together, they shape Mitia's movements through various states of self. Facets of these symbols recur in the subsequent texts discussed, effectively serving as connective threads that bind my analysis of the journey and its significance to identity-construction and the quest for authenticity to all four of Makine's symbolic novels discussed here.

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[517] Makine arrived in France in 1987. In 1991 his request for citizenship was denied. Following the accolades awarded *Testament* in 1995, that decision was overturned. These facts are well-known see, for example, Porra, "Un Russe en Atlantide," 82-83.

[518] Bo Stråth, "Introduction. Myth, Memory and History in the Construction of Community," in *Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community: Historical Patterns in Europe*, ed. Stråth, (Bruxelles; New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 21.

[519] Péteri, "Modern Identity," 2 (emphasis in original).

[520] I have kept the term "Kharg-racine" (Kharg-root) in its original French throughout my analysis.

Behind: The Cossack Legend – The Kharg-racine – "ce passé mythique"[521]

Through the introduction of myth, Makine sets the theme of journeying in *Amour* in motion. Early in the novel, the narrator recalls the legend of the Cossacks, their expedition across Russia's eastern frontier in the late sixteenth century:[522]

> Leur but était toujours cet Extrême-Orient improbable, avec la promesse exaltante du bout de la terre: ce grand néant brumeux, cher à leurs âmes détestant les contraintes, les limites, les frontières. À l'ouest, l'Europe avait marqué des bornes infranchissables en rejetant pour toujours la Moscovie barbare. Ils s'étaient donc rués vers l'est. En espérant rejoindre l'Occident par l'autre bout? (*ATFA*, 20)

By introducing the Cossack myth, Makine draws on an East-West geography that is removed from a Cold War context. Yet a similar tension reigns in the Cossack myth: the West has rejected the so-called primitive East; boundary lines delimit spaces of inclusion and exclusion. Undeterred, the Cossacks travel further East hoping to reach the West from behind. During the Cossacks' journey, the boys' fictional village of Svetlaïa is founded. The legend thus brings the temporally distant history of the boys' forbears into the unique spatial environment where their destinies are unfolding in the present: the Siberian East. The Cossack myth is a founding narrative that gives meaning to the boys' sense of self and belonging in 1970s Soviet Russia.

Various parallels exist between the Cossack legend and the boys' reality, which is initially evident in their shared emotional response to Siberia. For both the Cossacks and the boys, Siberia's limitless expanse suggests possibility and freedom: it is "cher à leurs âmes" (*ATFA*, 20). Equally, its inhospitable terrain, where "[l]e froid [est] tout autre qu'en Russie" (*ATFA*, 19), elicits "dépit" and "désespoir" (*ATFA*, 19) from the Cossacks.[523] The parallels continue beyond Siberia's physicality. For Mitia and his friends, travel beyond the Soviet Union's borders is impossible. Three centuries earlier, the Cossacks faced similar constraints. Yet the Cossacks are explorers: "ils [sont] des aventuriers de ce néant brumeux" (*ATFA*, 20). They dare to catch the West from behind. Mitia and his friends share the Cossacks' adventurous spirit: a desire to travel beyond the limits of the Soviet Union. In the example of the Cossack legend, then, Makine reveals the historicity of East-West as a symbolic geography: its relevance to a shared mythical past. Indeed, Makine suggests continuity in Mitia's and his friends' development with that of their forbears. The first stirrings of Mitia's collective-cultural identity are sounded in the Cossack legend and anchored in the symbolic realm of Siberia.

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[521] Makine, *Amour*, 21.

[522] For an historical overview of the Cossacks' Siberian expedition see Mark Bassin, "Asia," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, ed. Rzhevsky, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 62-64.

[523] For a discussion of Mitia's emotional response to Siberia see Ch. 02, 60-64.

When Mitia announces "[n]ous, de ce passé mythique, nous n'avions hérité qu'une lointaine légende. Un écho assourdi par la rumeur confuse des siècles" (*ATFA*, 21), Makine indicates that only the most enduring elements of the boys' collective past are sustained over time. The euphonious echo that most captivates the boys' imaginations is "la fameuse Kharg-racine" (*ATFA*, 21). A Siberian ginseng root,[524] the mythical Kharg-racine of the Cossack legend is a life-giving force. Mitia imagines the Cossacks – "une poignée d'hommes écrasés par la fatigue de leur folle équipée au fond de la taïga infinie" (*ATFA*, 18) – drinking "[une] infusion visqueuse et brunâtre – le sang de la Kharg-racine" (*ATFA*, 20). Rendering the Cossacks impervious to "la morsure du froid" (*ATFA*, 20), the Kharg-racine's semi-mystical properties purportedly "déverse[nt] dans les veines la puissance de tous vos ancêtres" (*ATFA*, 20). By sustaining the Cossacks across Siberia during their journey to reach "[le] bout de la terre" (*ATFA*, 20), the Kharg-racine plays a crucial role in the boys' appropriation and reproduction of the legend of their historical past. Firstly, it imbues the Cossack legend with the glory of survival against all likelihood. Secondly, it fosters the boys' sense of belonging to the community of Svetlaïa. Lastly, it allows the boys to imagine their own glorious adventures of Siberian survival. In its first manifestation in *Amour* then, the symbolic Kharg-racine bears within it the collective force of cultural heritage and the powerful pull of ancestral origins. It connects the boys to what lies "behind": a shared historical past.

The Cossack myth is one way in which the community of Svetlaïa "establish[es] and determine[s] the foundations of [its] own bein[g], [its] own systems of morality and values".[525] As Schöpflin argues, myth plays an important role in the maintenance of cultural memory and collective identity; it establishes boundaries within which the shared characteristics and mindset of communities and their individual members are located.[526] Even if myth is primarily "about perceptions rather than historically validated truths (in so far as these exist at all), about the ways in which communities regard certain propositions as normal and natural and others as perverse and alien",[527] its significance lies in differentiating between communities whose world views differ. The legend of the Cossacks' journey enables the boys and their community to delineate, spatially and temporally, a common identity that is meaningful in the context of their late Soviet reality.

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[524] Although the Kharg-racine has a symbolic role in *Amour* it is not, as Makine explained during our interview, a fabrication. Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[525] George Schöpflin, "The Function of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths," in *Myths and Nationhood*, eds. Hosking and Schöpflin, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 19.

In *Amour*, however, Makine plays with the concept of myth, questioning its underpinnings and its role in the creation of identity and community. Schöpflin suggests that

> [m]yth creates an intellectual and cognitive monopoly in that it seeks to establish the sole way of ordering the world and defining world-views. For the community to exist as a community, this monopoly is vital, and the individual members of that community must broadly accept the myth.[528]

In *Amour*, the boys accept most aspects of the Cossack myth. They consider "normal and natural"[529] the purportedly mystical properties of the Kharg-racine and, consequently, seek out the plant for their own use. However, the boys' understanding of the Kharg-racine's role in the Cossack myth is complicated when they explore elements of the legend that challenge the world view and values upheld by their community. Their interpretation of the Cossack legend shifts; rather than solidifying their sense of belonging in the Soviet Union, it emphasises what is lacking in their lives.

Makine's striking foregrounding of the absence of romantic love in the boys' lives illustrates one of the limitations to life in Svetlaïa. In both the Cossack legend and their Soviet reality "[a]imer pour aimer a été [...] oublié" (*ATFA*, 17). Mitia states that Svetlaïa "n'était pas conçu pour abriter l'amour" (*ATFA*, 18), an idea that the legend reinforces. The Cossacks' lovemaking is depicted as a utilitarian, desperate fusion carried out with the local Yakut women: "ces amantes silencieuses" (*ATFA*, 19). Performed after having drunk from the Kharg-racine, the Cossacks' lovemaking lacks sensuality: "[i]l fallait, pour les retenir, enrouler autour de son poignet les longues tresses luisantes, noires et rêches comme la crinière d'un cheval" (*ATFA*, 19). Yet, new life is born of this coarse union. In effect, the child's birth expands the

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[526] See Schöpflin, "The Function of Myth," 19-22.
[527] Schöpflin, "The Function of Myth," 19.
[528] Schöpflin, "The Function of Myth," 19.
[529] Schöpflin, "The Function of Myth," 19.

Kharg-racine's symbolic significance by emphasising two extremes of the typical Siberian characteristics outlined in Chapter Two: heaven and hell. Despair, for instance, is evident in the child's abandonment "au fond de la taïga encore hivernale" (*ATFA*, 20) long after the Cossacks' departure. Yet, "l'éclat d'un or sombre" (*ATFA*, 20) that glistens in the newborn's hair signifies hope. The child represents human values that are a counter to the values of economic production the boys have grown accustomed to. Through the child's image, an impression of "love for love's sake", which has long been forgotten in the community of Svetlaïa, starts to crystallise in the boys' minds.

By lingering over the details of the child's birth, Makine demonstrates the Kharg-racine's dynamic symbolic value: its potential to alter how meaning is extracted from the Cossack legend over time and across generations. Makine is shifting the narrative focus away from a national quest for authenticity, towards his characters' quest for *individual* authenticity. In his examination of how national identities are perpetuated based on shared memories of the Golden Age, Anthony Smith stresses the significance of authenticity to the nation.[530] The quest to uncover a community's "authentic identity"[531] Smith argues, is established in two ways: through origin and through difference.[532] The concept of establishing authenticity at a national level is evident in the Cossack legend. The mythical Kharg-racine enables the Cossacks to conquer Siberia with courage and determination, which becomes the community's foundation myth.[533] An authentic Russian/Eastern identity is established, first, via the community's identification with Siberia and, second, in opposition to Western Europe. In Smith's view, the quest for authenticity can likewise motivate individuals amongst whom nation-building projects hold little interest.[534] In the Cossack legend, when Makine focuses on the image of "la jeune mère [...] [qui] contempl[e] silencieusement ce nouveau Sibérien" (*ATFA*, 21), a personal narrative, with nurturing and growth at its core, unfolds. By emphasising the image of mother and child, Makine shows that variant identity narratives are generated by the Cossack legend; these allow for the co-existence of national and individual trajectories within a single storyline.

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[530] Broadly defined, the Golden Age is a key period in a community's distant past that offers "a standard of heroism, glory and creativity which subsequent ages failed to match, but which can spur modern ages to emulation." The Cossack legend fulfils this function in *Amour*. See Anthony Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal," in *Myths and Nationhood*, eds. Hosking and Schöpflin, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 36-59:42.)

[531] Smith, "Golden Age," 47-48.

[532] Smith, "Golden Age," 49.

[533] See Schöpflin, "The Function of Myth," 33.

[534] Smith, "Golden Age," 48-49.

Mitia's realisation of alternative modes of relating to and narrating the past marks the beginning of his and his friends' journey away from the cultural monopoly of their Soviet reality. It heralds the boys' quest to attain a new order of authentic self-consciousness. This is an onerous undertaking: Makine is directing his characters away from the communal based understanding of authenticity that is common to nation-building projects. However, despite having a highly developed sense of their origins that anchors them in the physical environs of Siberia, Makine's young characters' awareness of their individuality and difference from others as self-determining individuals, is ambiguously defined.

The Kharg-racine, a carrier of the Cossack myth and the most complex symbol in *Amour*, exposes the boys to difference in their social space. Yet its symbolic value is ambiguous. The boys' identify two identity narratives in the myth the plant carries, which compromises their faithful reproduction of the community's cultural historical memory. However, uncertainty regarding the Kharg-racine also solidifies the metaphorical significance of the journey to Makine's storytelling. Questioning the foundations on which their cultural identity is premised and the role the Kharg-racine plays in shaping that identity enables the boys to pursue alternative storylines in order to understand their authentic selves. To this end, Makine deepens the symbolic significance of the Kharg-racine and the mythical image of the newborn child. Combined, they redefine the boys' notions of self-understanding and consequently function as integral facets of the boys' progression towards attaining individual authenticity.

When the narrative's temporal journey moves from the boys' legendary past to their present reality, late Soviet socialism, Makine focuses on the boys' personal discovery of the mystical "bulbe d'amour" (*ATFA*, 32). A modification in Makine's representation of the plant's symbolic value accompanies the temporal change from the historical past to the present as the author focuses on the plant's physicality: "Sans nous l'avouer, nous sentîmes qu'il y avait quelque chose de féminin dans sa forme. C'était en fait une sorte de grosse poire sombre à l'écorce de daim légèrement craquelée, recouverte dans sa partie inférieure d'un duvet violacé" (*ATFA*, 31). The plant's physical properties are visceral; its "contours sensuels" (*ATFA*, 31) are "très agréable au toucher", its skin "sembl[e] répondre au contact des doigts" (*ATFA*, 31). In the altered temporal context of the boys' Soviet present, the Kharg-racine is sensual and feminine, a signal to the reader that Makine is extracting alternative identity narratives from the Cossack legend. Indeed, in the boys' Soviet present the Kharg-racine's sexual significance is re-imagined; it encompasses a romantic element that the Cossack legend lacks.

If the plant's feminine properties counter the lack of sensuality depicted in the legend, such as the description of the Yakut women's strange bodies, it also contradicts the descriptive accounts of women in Svetlaïa, whose "féminité s'était épuisée depuis longtemps" (*ATFA*, 32). Diverging from both the Cossack legend and the reality of their present social space, the boys' personal encounter with the Kharg-racine indicates an authentic turn in their journey towards adulthood: their burgeoning sexuality.

When Mitia scratches the bulb's surface "[u]n liquide rouge comme le sang emplit l'égratignure" (*ATFA*, 31). The liquid evokes "[l']infusion visqueuse et brunâtre" (*ATFA*, 20) drunk by the Cossacks. As Samouraï cuts the bulb, the boys are captivated by the Kharg-racine's exposed interior:

> Dans un giron rosâtre, pulpeux, nous vîmes une longue feuille pâle. Elle était pliée avec cette émouvante délicatesse que nous rencontrions souvent dans la nature. Et qui provoquait chez nous des sentiments mitigés: détruire, rompre cette harmonie inutile ou… (*ATFA*, 31-32).

Delicate and intimating new life, the exposed plant mirrors the boys' sexual awakening. Yet the Kharg-racine's beauty is "inattendue" and "déroutante" (*ATFA*, 32). In Svetlaïa "la beauté [est] la moindre des préoccupations" (*ATFA*, 17) and "l'amour aussi s'enracin[e] mal" (*ATFA*, 17): love exists "sous une seule forme, celle de l'amour-péché" (*ATFA*, 17). Consequently, the Kharg-racine's exposed beauty makes tangible the deficiencies in the boys' lives and "ren[d] cette réalité éclatante" (*ATFA*, 32). A foreboding sense of the unknown prevails in this scene and is reflected in the boys' uneasy response. Do they destroy the harmony of the plant's beauty because it is "inutile", or do they accept its beauty for beauty's sake?

Once the Kharg-racine is opened, Mitia and his friends are compelled to re-consider the type of reality to which they are exposed in Svetlaïa and the Soviet Union, to question *how* they view the world and how they are *encouraged* to view the world. Comparable to "la magnifique inutilité" (*ATFA*, 129) of Belmondo's adventure-world, the senseless harmony of the plant's fleshy interior is revelatory: the boys realise that beauty can exist "en-soi" (*ATFA*, 129). The discord between the utilitarianism of the boys' Soviet world and this new realisation is overwhelming. At the novel's start the reader learns that the boys' future is mapped out from birth. In Svetlaïa, "la vie […] s'est limitée peu à peu à trois matières essentielles: le bois, l'or, l'ombre froide du camp" (*ATFA*, 25). Mitia admits that "nous n'imaginions même pas que notre avenir pourrait se déployer au-delà de ces trois éléments premiers" (*ATFA*, 25). Yet, breaking open the "bulbe d'amour" exposes the boys to possibilities inherent beyond their community's cultural historical memory of the past, and outside the reality of their present temporal state in the Soviet Union.

If the boys destroy the plant, alternative world views to those that Svetlaïa and the greater community of the Soviet Union espouse are negated. They choose preservation over destruction. Studying the delicate leaf curled inside the plant, the boys are reminded of "la transparence et la fragilité des ailes d'un papillon sortant de son cocon" (*ATFA*, 32). The butterfly emerging from the cocoon is an image of transformation. Here, Makine demonstrates that the boys have extracted from their historico-cultural memory the echo of hope signalled in the infant's birth, rather than the Cossacks' steadfast determination to reach the ends of the earth at all costs. The boys' partiality for the Kharg-racine's harmonious beauty is the greatest indication of their growing divergence from both their cultural ancestors and the community of Svetlaïa. Departing from their community's shared values and the "cognitive monopoly"[535] that myth holds over them in the Soviet Union, the boys gravitate towards the legend's aspects that most appeal to their individual quest for an authentic self: love and beauty for its own sake.

When Smith writes about shared myths of antiquity, he emphasises the process of constant renewal and reinterpretation to which myth is subjected. Rather than being static, Smith argues that "the communal past is malleable".[536] He suggests that each generation will alter their past accordingly, "providing new selections of, and interpretations for, what it considers significant".[537] In *Amour*, Makine's protagonists re-interpret their communal past. Although the Kharg-racine retains symbolic value, providing access to collective memories of their historical past, it has a new focal point onto which the boys' burgeoning adolescent and sexual identities – their new selves – are projected. The boys' reinterpretation of the Cossack legend provides the necessary inspiration to imagine a "glorious destiny":[538] a future, and thus a new temporal sphere, in which their authenticity as individuals can be realised.[539]

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[535] Schöpflin, "The Function of Myth," 19.

[536] Smith, "Golden Age," 38.

[537] Smith, "Golden Age," 38.

[538] Smith, "Golden Age," 51.

[539] Schöpflin contends that foundation myths carry with them a "special act" – starting points imbued with the necessary qualities to enable communities to "point to the future". In *Amour*, the Kharg-racine's connection to both the Cossacks' survival and the child's birth serves this function: it inspires the boys to re-imagine their futures. See Schöpflin, "The Function of Myth," 33.

Without: Other Spaces – The Train – "un fantôme, un rêve, un extra-terrestre"[540]

In addition to historical and cultural processes – the temporal indicators that contribute to identity-formation – spatial indicators play an equally significant role in *Amour*. The recurring image of a train – predominantly the Trans-Siberian[541] – enables new spatial environments to enter the narrative. Makine establishes the train-image as an important textual symbol that intensifies his elaboration of the journey as leitmotif. By virtue of the origins of the train's foreign passengers, "les Occidentaux" (*ATFA*, 60), "[le] vieux Chinois" (*ATFA*, 183), and the intimation of spaces from where, and towards which, it travels – "Baïkal, Oural, Volga, Moscou" (*ATFA*, 60) – the train extends the boys' understanding of self beyond the borders of their Soviet reality and the historical force of cultural belonging. For Mitia, the train – "un fantôme, un rêve, un extraterrestre" (*ATFA*, 57) – gives free reign to his imagination. Operating as an instrument through which Makine's typical locales of East and West, past and present merge, the train reveals the existence of other worlds. By bringing new narrative spaces into the text, the train-image becomes a significant symbolic form through which Makine explores Mitia's growing independence.

Mitia is first seen observing the passing trains at the switchman's izba where his aunt works. A small station-of-sorts, the izba exists beyond the periphery and cadence of everyday life: "[p]our s'y rendre, il fa[ut] marcher trois bonnes heures" (*ATFA*, 57). Hidden in the forests, the izba's comfort is minimal and has "ce je-ne-sais-quoi d'éphémère qu'on trouve toujours dans les habitations où l'on n'est pas vraiment chez soi" (*ATFA*, 57). The izba occupies a distinctive spatial setting, which is a stimulus for change and hope. In his analysis of the house myth in Russian literature, Joost van Baak argues that trains/train-stations are "a metaphor for life, fate and especially 'progress'".[542] He suggests that, equally, they can function as anti-houses: "improper houses, partial and defective substitutes for the domestic qualities of the house in the proper sense".[543] In *Amour*, and in each of Makine's symbolic texts, the train is a symbol interwoven with fantasy, hope and the imagination.[544] At the izba, "une pendule ronde" (*ATFA*,

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[540] Makine, *Amour*, 57.

[541] Although not the sole train featured in the text, the Trans-Siberian is the most prominent. For ease of comprehension, I refer to the "Trans-Siberian" when analysing the function of trains in *Amour*.

[542] Van Baak supports his analysis of trains and train stations in Russian literature with a close reading of Venedict Erofeev's novel *Moskva-Petrushki*. See Baak, *The House in Russian Literature: A Mythopoetic Exploration* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2009), 445-457: 449.

[543] Baak, *The House in Russian Literature*, 449.

[544] Mitia's environment is transformed by the movement of the approaching Trans-Siberian, an experience Makine recreates in *Testament* when Aliosha listens to Charlotte's French tales and feels the balcony detach itself from the apartment building.

58) affixed to its interior wall measures "tous les horaires et retards" (*ATFA*, 58) of the passing trains. Here, Makine directs narrative attention away from the everyday to emphasise, instead, new contact zones. The izba effectively foreshadows the alternative realms to which Mitia is later exposed in life. Thus, rather than offering a substitute for the nurturing qualities of home, the intermediary zones that the izba and train occupy allude to new terrains that both disturb and allure the protagonist. At the izba, Makine demonstrates Mitia's growing interest in probing the boundaries of his social space, in travelling rather than dwelling.

Mitia's growing curiosity, his self-exploration, is encouraged at the switchman's izba. Here spatial boundaries extend, ordinary time ceases at its threshold. Moreover, the altered spatio-temporal definitions Makine introduces through the train-image create narrative motion. Combined, these facets shape the outcome of the narrative's underlying theme: Mitia's quest for authenticity. In his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel", Mikhail Bakhtin suggests that fictional images of the literary individual are sewn from the spatial and temporal contextual threads within which the protagonist's narrative history is contained.[545] Bakhtin's theory of the dynamics of the *chronotope*, "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature",[546] guides my understanding of how identity is expressed in Makine's symbolic novels.[547] The spatio-temporal dimensions in *Amour* reflect Bakhtin's outline of the chronotope:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.[548]

Bakhtin posits that "[t]he chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic."[549] The Makinian protagonists' inner worlds are only fully realised when "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole".[550] An exploration of the chronotopic dimensions and permutations in Makine's symbolic texts illuminates how the making and un-making of the Makinian protagonist's experience of self is executed.

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[545] Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84-258.

[546] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 84.

[547] In Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope the temporal and spatial elements of narrative are considered inseparable. Of these, Bakhtin argues that time is the "primary category". See Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 85. In much literary and film theory, place and space are increasingly popular means through which to read texts and the notions of identity expressed therein. Yet, the significance of time as a category is often overlooked. I find Bakhtin's model the most apposite and encompassing theory for illuminating Makine's symbolic texts. For additional spatial theories see Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1974); Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 19, no. 1 (1986).

[548] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 84.

[549] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 85.

In *Amour*, the train is a symbol that solidifies the chronotopic dimensions of Makine's narrative, the interconnectedness and fusion between history, time, space and his protagonists' development. When the Trans-Siberian forges through the Siberian plains, the silent isolation of the izba's forest setting is transformed. Space is suddenly "charged":[551]

> [D]ans le silence du soir nous l'entendions approcher. D'abord, une lointaine rumeur qui surgissait, semblait-il, des profondeurs de la terre. Ensuite, le bruit mat d'une chapka de neige tombant du sommet d'un sapin. Enfin, un tambourinement de plus en plus sonore, de plus en plus insistant. (*ATFA*, 59)

Makine's description of the approaching train is articulated through the movements, noises and changes its arrival projects on the surrounding landscape. Spatial indicators – nature's stirrings, such as snow falling from a fir-tree – measure the train's passage. In turn, the passing trains meter the day's elapsing hours so that, far removed from the tracing of time on a clock, "[l]e temps qui coul[e] paisiblement dans la maisonnette d'aiguilleur calqu[e] ses rythmes sur son fulgurant passage" (*ATFA*, 57). Time "thickens" at the izba as temporal indicators – the passing trains – visibly intrude on the landscape, which shifts and transmutes in response. Similar to the faraway echo of the Cossack legend, which travels through time signalling the narrative's diverse temporal spaces, the vibrations that ripple underground as the Trans-Siberian approaches signal the transposition of textual space in *Amour*.

As the narrative's spatio-temporal elements shift, chronotopic interactions in the novel commence. Mitia's manoeuvring of the boundaries of his self at the switchman's izba propels him on a journey towards an imagined dream-space, similar to the Imagined West outlined in Chapter Two. As the narrative's chronotopic dimensions expand, Mitia evolves as a character. Inside the dislocated spatial realm of the train's carriages, for instance, Mitia imagines the lives of the enigmatic Westerners, of whom he catches brief glimpses behind the train's windows, unfolding: "une silhouette féminine, un couple assis derrière une petite table avec deux verres de thé" (*ATFA*, 59). Thinking of the lives inside the train frees Mitia's imagination from the enclosed space of the Soviet Empire and delivers him, metaphorically, from an otherwise lonely death in Siberia.[552] Through his imagination, Mitia draws elements of the West, an exclusion zone that exists beyond the politically and ideologically prescribed borders of the Soviet Union, into his own social sphere.

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[550] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 84.
[551] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 84.

That Mitia allows variance to pervade his world view is deftly illustrated by Makine through the protagonist's imagined encounter with "la belle Occidentale" (*ATFA*, 88):[553]

> J'imaginais une femme qui occupait son compartiment déjà depuis un jour [...]. Comme j'aurais voulu être à côté de cette voyageuse inconnue! Me retrouver dans l'espace chaleureux et exigu du compartiment où l'on est assis si près l'un de l'autre que chaque geste, chaque regard acquiert, surtout à l'approche de la nuit, une signification amoureuse. (*ATFA*, 60)

Mitia's imagined Western woman is derived from a stylised notion of beauty and romantic love. Yet her materialisation demonstrates Mitia's capacity to create meaning from matter that is vastly different from his immediate social space. "[U]n étrange univers sans femmes" (*ATFA*, 32), Mitia's Soviet environment harbours "la solitude, [...] l'absence de tout changement prévisible" (*ATFA*, 32). However, the Western woman's alluring physicality, suggested through Mitia's later, elaborate descriptions of "l'invisible aura dont était nimbée toute sa personne" (*ATFA*, 185), "[un] genou fragile", "une cuisse élancée [...] et la fine dorure de sa peau veloutée" (*ATFA*, 186), mirror the soft contours and femininity of the Kharg-racine. On separate occasions Makine even repeats the same phrase to describe the Kharg-racine and the belle Occidentale: "[s]a peau veloutée" (*ATFA*, 31, 186). Makine recalls the Kharg-racine in this scene to draw on its temporal significance and transformative potential. Earlier, I demonstrated that Mitia's exposure to the Kharg-racine broadens his ability to envisage a future markedly different from Svetlaïa's limited offerings. He also discovers a new relationship to beauty and sensuality. Through the Kharg-racine, Mitia perceives his world differently. By using the same language to describe Mitia's imagined Western woman, then, Makine draws a link between the two objects and demonstrates his protagonist's capacity to use the knowledge from his encounter with the Kharg-racine, a temporal indicator, to redraw and revitalise the boundaries of his spatial environment: Soviet Russia. By reimagining his spatio-temporal condition, Mitia accesses a world he is not only without, but denied.[554]

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[552] Death is here symbolic, as opposed to final; the liminal half-death that Tiupa analyses in Siberian passages in Russian literature, which I outlined in Chapter Two. See Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 445-450.

[553] Images of "la belle Occidentale" recur over the course of the narrative. In the opening chapter, when Mitia describes a scene from his adult sex-life, the Western female is recognisable as the imagined Westerner of his adolescence. See Makine, *Amour*, 13-15.

[554] Mitia is only granted access to fragmentary images of the West, such as Belmondo's filmic Western world. In piecing these fragments together, Mitia's impression of the West is necessarily distorted. The Imagined West is nevertheless a powerful marker of his identity.

Makine's transposition of the narrative's chronotopic markers shifts the boundaries of Mitia's social sphere and releases him temporally from the stagnation of his present reality. Mentally Mitia edges closer towards the West even if, physically, he is prevented from leaving the borders of the East. Yet, a conundrum exists: Mitia's imagined realms are, paradoxically, enclosed by "[l]e confort calfeutré" (*ATFA*, 59) of the train's carriages. Although the parameters of Mitia's understanding of self have been enlarged, borders still separate Mitia's present reality from that to which he aspires to belong. When Mitia's romantic reveries are erased by "la bourrasque de neige" (*ATFA*, 60) left behind in the train's passing wake, all that remains visible are "deux feux rouges qui s'estomp[ent] à vue d'œil" (*ATFA*, 60). The lights recall the earlier image of "une large étoile rouge" (*ATFA*, 59) blazoned across the train and evoke, through their colour, the self-imposed power of the Soviet Empire. In this image, Makine illustrates the difficulty involved in Mitia's attempt to liberate himself from the Empire and his cultural origins in order to attain authenticity. That the lights are nevertheless shown fading into the distance suggests the state's diminishing significance in Mitia's sense of self. Consequently, despite the transience of Mitia's imagined experience, his continued engagement with difference – facilitated through an Imagined West – is assured. Indeed, the train's passage in *Amour* is regular: it returns "[c]haque soir" (*ATFA*, 57).

Ahead: Activating the Journey – The Dream – "ce fuseau soyeux"[555]

Consistent with twentieth and twenty-first century conceptions of identity, Makine challenges the notion that identity is static in *Amour*. To reveal the transmutations to which identity is subjected, Makine draws together the narrative's symbolic elements – the Kharg-racine, the train and the Western woman – in the chronotopic sphere of the dream, a key representational field in the novel that is temporally and spatially disconnected from Mitia's everyday reality. In Mitia's dream, which takes place inside the inner compartment of a train,[556] narrative barriers are dismantled. Temporal threads – Mitia's past, present and future – materialise in the train's spatial contours, and the leitmotif of the journey is fused into a symbolic whole. Rather than resembling a carriage, the train-compartment in Mitia's dream "reprodui[t], en plus petit encore, l'intérieur de l'isba d'aiguilleur" (*ATFA*, 89). By dislodging the izba – a stimulus for change – from its isolated Siberian post and integrating it into the sphere of the train, Makine activates the journey: rather than tracing the train's passage, the izba travels with the train. Inside the carriage/izba, Mitia notices that "[u]ne femme [est] assise à la tablette sous la fenêtre" (*ATFA*, 90): she resembles "la belle Occidentale". That the Western woman is displaced from the confined comforts of the Trans-Siberian to the un-homely sphere of the izba is telling: through a subtle transposition of textual space, Makine fuses East and West. Borders dissolve. In the unfamiliar space of the dream Mitia is no longer at the precipice *between* his cultural past and his present anxieties, but travels with the Western woman, ahead: metaphorically, he is travelling towards an authentic realm of his own making.

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[555] Makine, *Amour*, 90.
[556] See Makine, *Amour*, 89-91.

The dream's dynamic spatial elements, in which the izba and Trans-Siberian become one entity, allow the dream's temporal dimensions to thicken and "take on flesh". For instance, Mitia approaches the woman and sees before her a bulb. "[É]tonnant, charnu, coupé en deux" (*ATFA*, 90), it displays all the properties of the mythical Kharg-racine: "À l'intérieur, on voyait une sorte de cocon composé de feuilles à demi transparentes, délicatement repliées les unes sur les autres. Cela ressemblait à un nourrisson soigneusement emmailloté" (*ATFA*, 90). The cocoon nestled inside the plant recalls, first, the gentle stirrings of the butterfly's wings that the boys first observed upon opening the plant. Yet, in the dream-sphere, Makine expands the metaphor: the cocoon's physical resemblance to "un nourrisson soigneusement emmailloté" (*ATFA*, 90) is a reminder of the infant's birth in the Cossack myth. By placing the Kharg-racine in the dream, Makine merges Mitia's cultural-historical memory of the past with the boys' personal encounter with the plant in late Soviet Russia, their present. However, in contrast to the boys' uncertainty regarding whether to destroy or preserve the plant, Mitia's dream-actions are marked by a clarity that hitherto has eluded him: "Je devais, je ne savais pas pourquoi, déployer ses feuilles fragiles, sans attirer l'attention de la passagère silencieuse. Avec mes doigts gourds, malhabiles, je maniais ce cocon, ce fuseau soyeux" (*ATFA*, 90). As Mitia unfurls the delicate leaves, the image of the swaddled infant that he uncovers gains heightened symbolic meaning: a corresponding uncovering of the new life that lies ahead for Mitia, in a new temporal realm, unfolds.

The cocoon, "[un] fuseaux soyeux" (*ATFA*, 90), is the silk spindle from which journeys in Makine's oeuvre are threaded: with its unravelling, Makine launches Mitia towards his personal awakening. In *Amour*, then, Makine's arresting fusion of temporal and spatial markers in the chronotopic sphere of the dream generates a new chronotope in the narrative: this is what Bakhtin terms "the chronotope of the *threshold*".[557] Considered by Bakhtin to indicate "the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life",[558] the threshold of Makine's literary making in *Amour* is crossed when Mitia unravels the silk spindle:

> J'allais voir quelque chose de vivant dont ma curiosité compromettait la naissance, mais dont on ne pouvait constater la vie qu'en arrachant les feuilles. Je tuais *ça* en ouvrant le bulbe, mais *ça* n'aurait pas existé si je n'avais pas osé éventrer le cocon." (*ATFA*, 90, *emphasis in original*).

The living thing that Mitia fears exposing is his authentic self. Yet, Makine indicates that Mitia's ability to relate to what lies ahead – to step metaphorically towards the new spatio-temporal realm of his developing adulthood, authenticity and future – entails the difficult process of extinguishing part of his Soviet and adolescent identity: without doing so, he cannot live.

Aware that the adults closest to him are bound to "[l]e destin de cet énorme Empire qui les avait broyés, mutilés, meurtris" (*ATFA*, 239), Mitia wants to avoid a similar fate: he seeks to alter his destiny by creating an alternative future. Makine gives expression to the difficulty of Mitia's decision in the dream-sequence when he is confronted with the Kharg-racine and its silken spindle. Mitia understands "la portée tragique de [son] geste" (*ATFA*, 90); his anguish is expressed through the release of a slow cry: "[u]n cri qui remont[e] vers [s]on gorge – un cri sec, étranglé" (*ATFA*, 90). Nevertheless, following Mitia's cry the Western woman is stirred into action, "[elle] se mit, à ce moment, à tourner lentement la tête dans ma direction" (*ATFA*, 90-91). The unravelling of the silk spindle and the new life to which it gives birth creates dynamism in the dream-sequence: it launches Mitia on a new trajectory that will lead him towards a new spatio-temporal sphere in the West. By daring to question his origins, social space, and Soviet identity, Mitia crosses the threshold to authenticity and embarks on a renewed path towards self-determination.

To read *Amour* as a prototype for the leitmotif of the journey in the symbolic texts is to enter into an exploration of Makine's attempt to give texture to a wider Russian, and human, experience: attaining selfhood. Makine overwhelmingly suggests in *Amour* that his characters' ability to realise their authenticity as individuals is achievable only at the limits of their social spaces: through the journeys that take them across the threshold of the seemingly impossible. In his analysis of Makine's next novel, *Testament*, Edward Welch detects a similar significance in Makine's use of the journey as motif.[559] Journeys, Welch explains, have traditionally been viewed in terms of their exotic, seductive qualities, which promise discovery, enrichment and liberation.[560] It is predominantly through this lens that Welch evaluates journeys in Makine's fiction.[561] Yet Welch also recognises that journeys can be "forcés" and "ardus".[562] He posits, nonetheless, that to understand Aliosha's relationship to France in *Testament* one must envisage his journey as allurement, transformation and disorientation.[563] Although Welch considers that the associated disorientation ("dépaysement") Aliosha's journey through Charlotte's France elicits is at once liberating and alienating,[564] his argument focuses on Aliosha's journey as deliverance. Indeed, Welch considers alienation to be strangely relieving:[565] a form of salvation, even.[566]

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[557] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 248 (emphasis in original).

[558] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 248.

Although elements of Welch's argument sit comfortably in a contained analysis of *Testament*, they form only part of a complete picture. The present analysis, by considering the function ascribed to journeys across Makine's symbolic novels, engages in more encompassing considerations of Makine's use of the motif. A broader reading of Makine's novels reveals that the threshold between enlightenment and despair, liberation and alienation, between the rational and the incomprehensible, is finely navigated in the Makinian world. At one stage in *Amour* Mitia awakens from his dream to discover the red-headed prostitute, with whom he has just shared his first sexual experience, stroking his head. A benevolent, saintly image accompanies Mitia's description of her: "Je vis le halo d'une bougie et le visage de la femme rousse – un ovale calme, effacé" (*ATFA*, 91). Mitia's perception of the prostitute counters his earlier sexual desire for her and their awkward love-making.[567] Now, she plays the role of mother. Here, Makine blurs the distinction between the maternal and the sexual. Boundaries overlap and a disconcerting strain pervades Makine's narrative. The discomfit elicited from the scene is not, however, arbitrary. The juxtaposition between mother-lover is a notion Makine signals earlier in the narrative through the Kharg-racine: its sensual attributes are sexual, while its intimation of new life is maternal. Two potential possibilities stem from a single symbol.

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[559] Welch, "Le voyage."
[560] Welch, "Le voyage," 18.
[561] Welch's analysis is limited to *Testament*, therefore his extrapolation of the journey to Makine's oeuvre as a whole is misleading. See Welch, "Le voyage," 17.
[562] Welch cites Charlotte's travels through the Soviet Union during part of her Red Cross mission as a journey without any allure. Welch, "Le voyage," 18.
[563] Welch, "Le voyage," 19.
[564] Welch, "Le voyage," 20.
[565] Welch, "Le voyage," 22.
[566] Welch posits that Aliosha's dual sense of self ('l'identité double") facilitates feelings of both freedom and imprisonment. See Welch, "Le voyage," 22, 24. M. Conlon pursues a similar line of research in her Masters dissertation, see Conlon, "L'emprisonnement et la libération comme forme de roman: l'interrelation libératrice et opprimante dans *Le Testament français* et *La Femme qui attendait* d'Andreï Makine." (Masters thesis, Carleton University, 2006).
[567] See Makine, *Amour*, 74-76.

Le Crime d'Olga Arbélina: The Journey as Alienation

Makine's dual positioning of the female as both mother-lover in *Amour* is indicative of more serious transgressions: journeys that tend towards alienation. The notion permeates Makine's later symbolic writing, notably his 1998 novel, *Le Crime*. Here, Makine probes the psychological depths to which his protagonist, Olga, falls following her emigration from Russia to France after the Russian Revolution. Olga's crisis stems from an inability to integrate her past with her present. Having lived a privileged life in a bourgeois cultural milieu under the yoke of the Russian Empire, Olga's identity as a Russian émigré living on Paris' eastern outskirts in the 1940s is ill-defined. Her response to her shifting cultural roots is met by an oscillating yet ultimately condemnatory view of herself, evidenced by the persistency with which "cette petite voix venimeuse qui siffl[e] en elle" (*COA*, 73) pervades her thoughts throughout the narrative. To explore the finely wrought limits of Olga's identity, Makine employs bodily boundaries to convey her journey between enlightenment and despair, mother and lover, sorrow and madness. Across a corporeal landscape, sexual taboos are transgressed and moral principles challenged. In the following analysis of *Le Crime*, I consider how Olga's transgression of her corporeal limits symbolically conveys her psychological journey and, eventually, her psychic disintegration. In *Le Crime*, the journey – physical as much as psychic – offers little salvation. Rather, Olga is plunged into deep confusion over the state of her identity and sense of belonging in twentieth-century Europe. Alienation, rather than liberation, is the guiding principle of *Le Crime*.

In the novel's second section, Makine's incongruous narrative setting foretells the portentous denouement of Olga's journey. The date is August 25, 1946. In Paris "[les] cris festifs" (*COA*, 57) announce the city's celebrations of its second anniversary since liberation. Described as "[une] ville à la fois animée et ensommeillée" (*COA*, 58), Paris is basking beneath "[l]e soleil d'août" (*COA*, 56). Olga, however, is cloistered behind drawn curtains "dans une chambre isolée du monde" (*COA*, 58) with her childhood friend, Li. The friends are united by "le travail silencieux que l'une d'elles effectu[e] sur le corps de l'autre" (*COA*, 55-56), as Olga attempts to dull the pain "physique comme morale" (*COA*, 55) instigated by an illegal abortion. The reader's first glimpse into Olga's world reveals a gloomy, claustrophobic space where sorrow prevails. The close proximity of Paris' revelry to Olga's suffering is literally rendered in the few centimetres of wall-space separating Olga from the echoes of celebratory cries, and slices of conversation, heard on the footpath outside the apartment. In this novel, then, Makine's first distinction between freedom and alienation is spatial: the open festivities that animate Paris' sunny streets are contrasted against the enclosed space of the apartment to which Olga has withdrawn.

To enhance the spatial boundaries in the abortion scene, Makine uses corporeal distinctions to voice the limits between enlightenment and despair. For instance, human life bustles beyond Olga's room. "[Q]uelques cris scandés" (*COA*, 57) ring out, "[u]ne bribe musicale s'y tisse" (*COA*, 57), even "le martèlement d'un tramway" (*COA*, 56) speaks of a world where human life is celebrating and growing. Makine's Paris – as a physical entity – is a flourishing city of life. By contrast, stillness and loss pervade Makine's description of Olga's physical presence in the apartment. Her abortion is described as "[une] minuscule mort opérée dans son corps" (*COA*, 64). Makine defines Olga's body through its diminishing substance: it is "ce corps qu'on venait d'amputer d'une minuscule vie éclose en lui" (*COA*, 58). In this scene, Olga is dispossessed of human life and, in the process, loses a part of her identity.

Olga's abortion is an early indication of Makine's questioning of her Russian identity and its construction. Although Olga naively expects that "dès le lendemain [son corps] allait se fondre dans la foule d'autres corps, indistinct de leur masse" (*COA*, 58), disharmony pervades her world. In many respects, Olga's journey towards authenticity is the antithesis of Mitia's journey in *Amour*. Yet, in both works Makine maintains symbolic continuity: Olga's foetus is a mirror to the symbolic Kharg-racine and its silken cocoon. Significantly, the silken cocoon – an instigator of journeys – elicits antithetical reactions in *Amour*. Thus, Mitia asks upon opening the plant, "détruire, rompre cette harmonie inutile ou" (*ATFA*, 31-32)? Makine focuses on the plant's harmony and suggestion of new life in *Amour*. For Mitia, the silken spindle opens the door to alternative modes of being, to his personal awakening. In *Le Crime*, however, Makine employs referential terms of death to describe Olga's foetus: "la petite vie détruite dans son ventre" (*COA*, 59), "un petit meurtre" (*COA*, 64). Disquiet pervades Makine's imagery, which is accentuated by the gradual disintegration of Olga's bodily presence and by Makine's intimation of the crime attached to Olga's loss. Hopefulness is absent. In *Le Crime* Makine examines what transpires when the cocoon's unnecessary harmony is destroyed.

Makine's objective in focusing on the disparity between the murdered foetus/destroyed cocoon and the city's festivities is twofold. Firstly, the author suggests that Olga's quest for authenticity has met with devastating results. By aborting her foetus – the silken cocoon – Olga symbolically destroys her chance to realise her sense of self through a greater engagement with the world. Two days later when Olga re-enters the streets of Paris, she is offered neither salvation nor relief: "[l]a rue ne la libéra pas comme elle l'avait espéré" (*COA*, 71). Olga is barred from returning to the world of life and creation that she had entered prior to the abortion. Secondly, the image foregrounds Olga's complicity in the incestuous relationship that later unravels between mother and son: a perversion of their familial bond that is as yet unknown to the reader. By aborting the child that is undoubtedly the product of their affair,[568] Olga remains in denial of the perilous threshold across which the pair's relationship has crossed.

Effectively, then, Olga's abortion is a distortion of the traditional myth of renewal. Unlike the Cossack myth in *Amour*, where the infant's birth in the midst of Siberia offers a new narrative stream from which the boys draw inspiration to progress towards a future of their own making, in *Le Crime* Olga is denied that opportunity. Indeed, if myths of renewal and rebirth intimate at "a new start, in which the awfulness of the past can be forgotten"[569] then Makine posits, from the novel's start, that Olga is unable to extract her past from her present and progress towards her future. Rather than new life, the overriding image attached to the symbolic silken cocoon in *Le Crime* is death. The destroyed cocoon/foetus signals to the reader that this is the tale of Olga's fractured identity: her failed quest to attain authenticity and the extreme interiority and alienation that ensues as a result.

Temporal Expansions, Spatial Contractions

Olga's understanding of her Russian cultural identity is marked by huge shifts in the political, social and geographical spheres through which her life passes. After witnessing the fall of the Russian Empire and fleeing the subsequent implementation of Soviet socialism, Olga's pan-

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[568] Olga trys to convince herself that her lover, LM, is the child's father, yet struggles to match the dates of their affair with her pregnancy. See Makine, *Le Crime*, 62.

[569] Schöpflin, "The Function of Myth," 32-33.

European peregrinations lead her, at the turn of the twentieth century, across Russia to France. During the 1920s and 30s, Olga's movements are centred in Paris. Yet, the narrative is primarily set in the post-war years of 1946-47. During this period, Olga moves between Paris and Villiers-la-Forêt on the city's eastern outskirts, where she has settled with her haemophilic son. Eventually, Olga's movements diminish further when winter encloses her at La Horde d'or, Villiers-la-Forêt's original Russian settlement. Finally, Olga seeks refuge in her pre-Revolutionary memories, signalling the definitive closure of her social space. Accordingly, an East-West axis provides structural scaffolding for Makine's narrative layout. At the macro-level, Olga's extensive physical journeys lead her from Russia (East) to France (West), and are simulated, at the micro-level, in Makine's tracing of Olga's journeys within France, between Villiers-la-Forêt (East) and Paris (West). Yet, if East-West is a directional movement typically associated with positive connotations for many Makinian characters, such as Mitia and Aliosha, the opposite is true for Olga. In the West, Olga struggles to come to terms with her identity.

Makine's interest lies predominantly in the residual effects Olga's migrational movements exert on her psychic development.[570] In *Le Crime*, which is set almost exclusively in the West,[571] Makine's portrayal of France is two-fold. The early, festive descriptions of Paris epitomise the positive connotations often associated with the West in his writing: on the surface "[t]out [est] si radieux" (*COA*, 32). Yet, as the narrative progresses, Makine abandons his glowing portrait. The landscape against which Olga's story is set is "traversée d'averses froides qui vitrifi[ent] l'air éteint" (*COA*, 179), pierced by "[l]a clarté perlée de la neige" (*COA*, 181), while the encroaching winter brings with it "[un] froid [...] intenable" (*COA*, 248). Makine's West in this novel thus oscillates between a space of beauty and brutality that, although a familiar binary trope in Makine's writing, is one more commonly associated with Siberia. In *Le Crime* Makine transforms the West. Suddenly, France bears a striking resemblance to the symbolic Siberian geography characteristic of the author's literary East, albeit stripped of its awe-inspiring and often endearing qualities. The snowy, dark landscape into which the narrative of *Le Crime* settles is significant: as Olga's unworldly West transmutes into a symbolic East, Makine discloses the trauma – the symbolic Siberian "hell" – of her psychological journey.[572]

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[570] "Psychic" in this sense is understood as "relating to the soul or mind". See "psychic," in *Oxford Dictionary of English*, ed. Stevenson (Oxford University Press, 2010).

[571] In 2008 Duffy wrote that *Le Crime* is "le seul roman de Makine dont l'action se passe en France". This is correct only so far as the *majority* of its action unfolds in France. Significant portions of *La Terre et le ciel de Jacques Dorme*, published in 2003, are also located in France. Following Duffy's article, Makine has since published *La Vie* (2009), which commences in contemporary France. See Duffy, "L'ecrivain ne se meurt pas," 163.

By inverting his use of textual space in *Le Crime*, Makine transforms France into a symbolic geography against which Olga's mental state – her inner journey – grows more pronounced.[573] For instance, Olga revels in the snowy and immeasurable stillness that winter bestows upon Villiers-la-Forêt:

> Derrière le branchage des saules, la rivière avait une consistance d'encre. Et avec une joie ancienne, Olga reconnut cet instant d'attente, le souffle suspendu de la nature qui annonçait, dans son enfance, l'ondoiement de la neige. [...] Le pré, enneigé, paraissait plus vaste et ce vide pénétrait, à chaque inspiration, dans la poitrine avec une fraîcheur piquant et amère. Et aussi très ancienne dans sa mémoire. (*COA*, 180-181)

The interaction between Olga's thoughts, her physical environment, and her response to that environment, is significant. Makine demonstrates that the physical landscape Olga's observes is an apparition shaped by her inner-world. First, the earth is "glacée" (*COA*, 179); the river is dark and inky (*COA*, 180). Shortly afterwards, the scenery loosens and grows calmer as Olga's surroundings are transformed by the fresh snowfall. As the inky black of the river dissipates, her world becomes "à moitié blanche" (*COA*, 180). The snow-covered, Western meadow over which Olga looks announces the kindling of her Russian past and memories. The scenery augments the narrative's psychic elements so that "[la] joie ancienne" (*COA*, 180) with which Olga is suffused speaks of her longing for an Eastern sphere: the Russian homeland of her childhood. As the vastness of the snowy, Western surroundings penetrates Olga's chest and body, her psychic retreat into the space of her Eastern past is set in motion.

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[572] Similarly, the Tuscan setting of Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Nostalgia* (1983) bears a closer resemblance to the protagonist's memory of his Russian homeland than to Italy. See Tarkovsky, *Nostalgia*, (Italy: Radiotelevisione Italiana, 1992).

[573] Although not a modernist author, Makine's portrayal of Olga's psychological response to her physical environment is comparable to how cities have been imagined in modernist literature. James Donald has examined modernist texts, such as Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, to analyse how a character's inner state is reflected onto the cityscape. His work appears in the edited collection *Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory*, along side that of scholars from disciplines including literature, cultural geography and sociology. There is scope, although there is no space here, to explore the link further in Makine's writing. Allen's analysis of *Testament* shifts towards this direction. She examines how Aliosha and Charlotte navigate their lived environments: Paris and the Russian steppe. However, Allen's primary consideration is the function language plays, as opposed to the characters' psychological states. See Donald, "This, Here, Now: Imagining the Modern City," in *Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory*, ed. Westwood and Williams (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 179-199; Allen, "Urban/e Forms of Narrative Consciousness: Concentric Memory, Eccentric Madness and the Making of the Modern Novel" (Doctoral thesis, Princeton University, 2004), 660-686.

In Bakhtin's terminology, Olga's social space has "becom[e] charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history",[574] and to the movements of her inner journey. The bitter emptiness of the scene outlined above voices the void within Olga, who perceives her present surroundings through a sheet of falling snow, a white layer of memory. With striking rapidity Olga's social space contracts, resulting in her absolute isolation from the world and herself. Makine matches the novel's environmental conditions with the narrative's psychological thrust: physical space is a manifestation of the *psychic* space Makine explores.[575] Notwithstanding, Makine stated during our interview that in *Le Crime* he merely remains true to historical and meteorological fact: France was gripped by a particularly cold winter in 1946-1947.[576] Nevertheless, Makine's decision to frame his story in this period is conscious. Both Stéphanie Bellemare-Page and Duffy argue similar cases. Bellemare-Page draws attention to the "Nordic universe" Makine evokes in his fiction, suggesting that there is nothing insignificant about Makine setting *Le Crime* in the midst of winter.[577] Duffy's view is less explicit, yet her sentiment is similar; she suggests that Olga "remodel[s] her surroundings in the image of the recently obliterated Tsarist Russia":[578] her past. The individual trajectory of Olga's quest for authenticity is adumbrated in the narrative's chronotopic dimensions – the intersection between spatial and temporal indicators. Their fusion determines the image of Olga that Makine presents to the reader. Spatially, then, Olga's identity is delineated through her physical retreat to an environment that recalls a symbolic Siberia. Temporally, Olga anchors herself in her Russian memories of childhood. As temporal and spatial elements fuse, an image of Olga crystallises that suggests her psychic retreat from reality. In giving voice to Olga's disintegrating self in *Le Crime*, Makine achieves the most poignant interaction between time and space in his writing to date.

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[574] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 84.

[575] Donald makes a distinction between psychic and physical space when discussing *Mrs Dalloway*. He perceptively refers to Woolf's portrayal of London as a "modernist impressionism". See Donald, "Imagining the Modern City," 187.

[576] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*. The winter of 1946-47 was particularly severe in France, and across Continental Europe and the United Kingdom. Freezing temperatures commenced in France in December, 1946 and continued through to March 10, 1947. The average winter temperature in Paris was 0.7° Celsius. During this period, Paris' minimum temperature fell below -5° Celsius for 28 days. See Joseph Sanson, "Les principales anomalies météorologiques de l'année 1947 en France," *Annales de Géographie* 54, no. 306 (1948): 178. For further information see, for example, C. A. Jones, S. J. Davies and N. Macdonald, "Examining the Social Consequences of Extreme Weather: The Outcomes of the 1946/1647 Winter in Upland Wales, UK," *Climate Change* 113, no. 1 (2012); Jerome Namias, "Characteristics of the General Circulation over the Northern Hemisphere during the Abnormal Winter 1946-47," *Monthly Weather Review* 75, no. 8 (1947).

[577] Stephanie Bellemare-Page, "Formes et expressions d'un imaginaire nordique chez Andreï Makine. Récurrences chez Bounine et Tchekhov" in *Andreï Makine: Le sentiment poétique*, eds. Parry, Herly, and Scheidhauer, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 120-121.

[578] Helena Duffy, "The Veteran's Wounded Body Before the Mirror: The Dialectic of Wholeness and Disintegration in Andreï Makine's Prose," *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 1, no. 2 (2008): 186.

Behind: Olga's Past, "[u]n endroit protégé"?[579]

That Olga lives at the site of the original Russian émigré community at Villiers-la-Forêt – la Horde d'or – is telling. In the 1920s la Horde d'or was "le premier point d'ancrage pour une petite communauté russe échouée à Villiers-la-Forêt" (*COA*, 173). Described as "[un] endroit protégé" (*COA*, 174), la Horde d'Or initially symbolised hope: the newly arrived immigrants believed they could cultivate "quelque nouvelle forme d'existence humaine – fraternelle, juste et presque familiale. Vieux rêve russe" (*COA*, 174). Although the majority of Russian immigrants have since departed, seeking out more comfortable abodes "dans les ruelles de la ville basse ou, mieux encore, dans le quartier de la mairie, ou enfin à Paris" (*COA*, 174), Olga remains. Her home in the red-brick lean-to attached to the old beer factory is "l'étrange maison où elle seule avait accepté d'habiter" (*COA*, 44). In the isolated environs of la Horde d'or, Olga creates "sa place ici-bas" (*COA*, 78).

Yet, Olga's resolution to stay is more complex. First, by enclosing herself within the boundaries of "cette étrange forteresse qui se vid[e] chaque année davantage" (*COA*, 179) Olga ostensibly attempts to sustain the Old Russian dream of communal belonging that so many immigrants before her harboured. Early in the novel, the reader learns that Olga "appartenait à l'une des familles les plus illustres de la Russie et portait le nom de son mari, un certain prince géorgien qui venait de la quitter en la laissant seule, sans moyens, un jeune enfant sur les bras" (*COA*, 42). Having left her homeland and subsequently overcome the shock of losing her nuclear family in France, Olga attempts to refashion her identity at Villiers-la-Forêt. Eric Clark and Bo Petersson argue that "[i]n times of trouble and upheaval there is a strong tendency for individuals to seek security in ingrained communities of identity, where one experiences our 'roots', the strength of numbers, and a stabilizing 'we'".[580] When Olga sheds her distinguished airs, assumes the role of librarian and mixes with the town's Russian émigrés, she attempts to counter the upheaval of her journeying. Ultimately, Olga's attachment to the émigré community of la Horde d'or reflects her desire to "seek security" in the familiarity of her past.

Despite the established links to Russia that life at Villiers-la-Forêt affords, Olga experiences little reprieve from her inner unease. Her interior monologue is revealing. Rather than providing solace, the library's Russian patrons "la no[ient] sous leurs paroles" (*COA*, 97), "[l]'ont chassée de [s]a propre vie" (*COA*, 97). Moreover, Olga believes that the community perceives her as a "bibliothécaire à vie, femme abandonnée par son mari et en rupture avec sa caste, mère d'un enfant condamné" (*COA*, 98). Her externalised self-portrait is a desolate summation of a perpetually broken woman. Indeed, Olga's self-image, weakened by her migrational movements, negates any potential for the renewal of her identity. Ambiguity thus surrounds Olga's decision to stay at La Horde d'or: so little of the community's enticing dream of solidarity remains.

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[579] Makine, *Le Crime*, 174.

[580] Eric Clark and Bo Petersson, "Boundary Dynamics and the Construction of Identities," in *Identity Dynamics and the Construction of Boundaries*, eds. Clark and Petersson, (Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press, 2003), 9.

Olga's reclusion at La Horde d'or is, however, an additional spatial marker that Makine employs to disclose her increasing psychic interiority. Physically, Olga harbours little desire to return to Russia; mentally, however, her longing abides. In response, Olga fashions an imagined boundary within her *actual* social space (France-West) to delineate cognitively her *desired* social space (Russia-East). By settling at La Horde d'or and attempting to recapture "[l]e grand rêve initial" (*COA*, 174) upon which the community was originally established, Olga clings to what lies behind: her past. Makine indicates that journeying has diminished Olga's ability to preserve her identity: it has lead to her alienation.

Olga's inner crisis is illuminated when considered from a psychoanalytic perspective. To this end, Léon and Rebeca Grinberg's research into the effect migrational movement exerts on an individual's psychic development and identity formation is valuable.[581] The authors describe how the process of migration generates stressors within individuals. Besides the natural changes in self that occur over an individual's life cycle, migration and exile can challenge and weaken identity, sometimes to the point of fragmentation.[582] Yet Grinberg and Grinberg assert that "[i]t is widely recognized that an individual's capacity to remain himself during periods of change is fundamental to his sense of identity, which he experiences emotionally".[583] Unable to "remain [her]self" in France, Olga experiences the fragmentation of her identity. Disparate slices of her self – former princess, Russian émigré, abandoned wife, librarian, mother, and lover – fail to form a complete whole. Grinberg and Grinberg suggest, moreover, that three components are essential to the successful integration and construction of identity: spatial, temporal and social. Following migration, a disturbance of one element may upset the integration of all three; "[i]n extreme cases the person feels alienated from himself, as if he cannot meld the different pieces of his identity".[584] Only when Olga is alone, once the library is closed and depleted of human life, does she "re[vient] dans sa vie" (*COA*, 97). Here, Makine demonstrates that Olga's identity has become fixed in a reclusiveness that shuns a concerted engagement with her surroundings: all three components of her identity – spatial, temporal and social – are disturbed. Consequently, following migration Olga is internally fractured and "alienated from [her]self"[585], a deep interiorisation of her emotional well-being ensues. Accordingly, the symbolic boundary within which La Horde d'or sits is a unique spatio-temporal sphere: it protects Olga from her growing psychological confusion, the reality of her incestuous relationship with her son, and the horror that she thereafter imagines her future beholds.

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[581] Léon Grinberg and Rebeca Grinberg, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1989). See Chapters 13 and 14: "Migration and Identity", "Migration and Psychosis", 129-145

[582] Grinberg and Grinberg, *Migration and Exile*, 129-133.

[583] Grinberg and Grinberg, *Migration and Exile*, 129.

Without: Transgressing Corporeal Limits – "La malheur et aussi la folie ont leur propre logique"[586]

During my interview with Makine, whilst discussing both *Testament* and *Le Crime*, the notion of limits was raised, of going beyond natural limits. Makine suggested that "le désir de dépasser les limites" could be conceived of as "[une] expérience métaphysique".[587] He continued: "Jusqu'où je peux aller dans le mal et dans le bien? Tout Dostoïevski c'est ça. Est-ce que il y a des limites? Qu'est-ce qu'il y a au-delà des limites humaines?"[588] Makine broaches these questions in *Le Crime*. Paradoxically, he employs a corporeal landscape – Olga's body – to explore the incorporeal: what lies "au-delà". By probing the limits of Olga's physical boundaries, Makine propels his protagonist towards a metaphysical experience. Two key elements prevail in Makine's corporeal exploration of Olga's inner development or, rather, its stagnation. First, her gradual awakening to her physical sensuality. Second, her muted response to the sexual relationship that she discovers her son is pursuing with her.

To convey Olga's growing alienation from herself, Makine figuratively dissects Olga's corporeal image. Before leaving Paris, Li lends Olga a camera – "[l]'appareil espion" (*COA*, 87) – which Olga sets up in her bedroom one evening whilst seized by "une gaieté un peu nerveuse" (*COA*, 87). The resultant set of nocturnal photographs unsettles Olga, "la vision de son propre corps [...] comprima sa respiration" (*COA*, 88). The unexpected "beauté" (*COA*, 90) and "jeunesse" (*COA*, 90) of the body reflected back at Olga is unrecognisable, so that "[c]ette femme nue devant la fenêtre ouverte lui para[ît] très différente d'elle-même, étrangère à elle" (*COA*, 90). To emphasise further the estrangement between Olga's two selves, Makine has his protagonist address her photographed image in the third person: "[c]ette femme nue" (*COA*, 90), "cette inconnue" (*COA*, 94), "[e]lle" (*COA*, 95). Accordingly, Makine presents the reader with two split images of Olga – two potential identities: the fascinated observer the reader already knows as Olga, and the youthful beauty of "la femme photographiée" (*COA*, 94).

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[584] Grinberg and Grinberg, *Migration and Exile*, 132.
[585] Grinberg and Grinberg, *Migration and Exile*, 132.
[586] Makine, *Amour*, 82.
[587] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.
[588] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

Viewing her photographed image compels Olga to push the boundaries of her constructed self and briefly to redefine her identity. Gradually, Olga recognises traits in the photographs that belong to her, such as "ces chevilles" and "la fragilité des clavicules trop légères [...] pour supporter l'arrondi des seins pleins" (*COA*, 94). Yet, her body as a whole coupled with her demeanour remain a mystery: "Elle est totalement... comment dire? Méconnaissable? autre? Enfin, *moi*, j'étais autre à cet instant" (*COA*, 95, *emphasis added*). Olga's nocturnal body belies the fragmented self-image she otherwise maintains: she falters before acknowledging the stranger's body as her own. To understand the unworldly otherness of her photographed image, Olga is temporally transported to the night in question:

> Personne ne savait que la femme était là, en pleine nuit, dans la fraîcheur qui montait de la rivière. [...] Elle se dit que la femme photographiée aurait pu sortir par la porte-fenêtre, faire quelques pas sur le pré qui descendait ver le courant... Cette liberté la grisa. Une femme nue qui marche dans l'herbe, dans la nuit sans lune et qui n'est plus ni bibliothécaire, ni épouse abandonnée, ni une certaine princesse Arbélina. (*COA*, 99)

Once Olga mentally enters the photograph, Makine implies that the photograph's strangeness arises from the fact that freedom infuses Olga's nocturnal self at the moment she is captured on film. When Olga recognises the "liberté" of her nocturnal stirrings, she is drawn closer to her photographed self. Disrobed, naked and alone, Olga is caught on the threshold of traversing the confinements of her émigré life, to embracing the enticing independence the exterior world offers.

By splitting Olga's corporeal image, Makine dissolves his protagonist's bodily boundaries. In so doing, he conveys Olga's latent potential to embody an authentic identity; hence, her ability to enter her photographed self's psyche. Makine's brief insertion of the chronotope of the threshold[589] indicates the significance of the scene: "the breaking point of [Olga's] life".[590] Yet, the prospect of authenticity remains unrealised. Although Olga is awakened to her sexual identity, she is often discomfited by both the visual and tactile beauty of the body she now accepts as her own. For instance, after showering, Olga remarks that "le bien-être de son corps [...] [est] angoissant"; equally, "[e]lle sen[t] presque avec terreur le poids souple de ses seins, la tiédeur humidifiée de sa peau" (*COA*, 137). Later, "[e]lle ne sen[t] aucun lien avec ce corps féminin" (*COA*, 212), "la souplesse de ses propres mouvements l'étonn[e]" (*COA*, 260). If, in *Amour,* Mitia's growing sexuality is conveyed via a union with his physical self, implicit in which is the suggestion of his obtaining authenticity, then the converse is true of Olga's awakening to her sexuality. In *Le Crime*, Olga's fear of, and subsequent dissociation from, her newly discovered sensuousness and physicality results in the strengthening of internal borders and an increased alienation from herself. Although bodily boundaries are momentarily dissolved, any potential reunion of Olga's fragmented identity is impossible. The corporeal and the cognitive now act as dissociated components of Olga's self; a further deterioration in her psychic development ensues.

Paradoxically, Olga's recognition of her identity as a sexual being coincides with the point at which her body is routinely wounded by her son's acts of sexual violation. Initially, Olga is unaware of the extent to which she has become desensitised to her son's routine drugging of her nightly tea so that he can slip unnoticed into her bedroom and her body. Eventually, however, Olga becomes complicit in her son's actions. Awaiting, "comme une condamnée, le déferlement du sommeil" (*COA*, 137), Olga feigns a metaphorical death before her son's nightly arrivals: she condones the sexual transgressions that occur between mother and son. In transgressing the bounds of familial kinship, Olga challenges her physical, moral and psychological limits. Yet, despite wanting to understand "pourquoi ce qui lui arriv[e] [est] devenu possible" (*COA*, 138) Olga's cursory concerns are effaced since she allows the comfort of her past to infiltrate her present, which "en brefs faisceaux de lumières et de bruits, la frapp[e] aux yeux, au visage" (*COA*, 138). The traumas sustained by Olga's body, her silence and her inability to react otherwise are strains Olga endures and even sanctions: combined, they push her "au-delà des limites humaines".[591]

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[589] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 248.
[590] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 248.
[591] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

Duffy analyses the proliferation of wounded bodies in Makine's novels, predominantly focusing on those novels set during the Second World War.[592] Duffy's psychoanalytic and Foucauldian reading of how bodies in the Makinian world function as sites onto which history is written, offers a constructive avenue for considering how Olga's body functions in *Le Crime*. Following Michel Foucault, Duffy reads the body as "a space inscribed and effectively ruined by history".[593] She argues that while recovering in hospital, Ivan, of *La Fille*, recognises himself "as a historical construct, a body bearing the imprint of its origins".[594] Olga is not wounded in the same manner as Makine's maimed veterans, nor is she consciously aware of herself as a body in space defined by her historical origins. Yet, the imprint of the historical period through which Olga lives is borne across her body. She is raped by a soldier in Russia during the Civil War,[595] after migrating to France amongst the first wave of Russian emigration[596] she reconnects with and marries "l'homme qui a tué son violeur" (*COA*, 168), yet he later abandons her and their child. Finally, as a carrier of the haemophilia gene, Olga lives with "l'ingénieuse cruauté de la vie" (*COA*, 171): the guilt of having infected her son with a fatal genetic disorder.[597] Duffy's interpretation of Makine's use of the bodily image as a "trope for Russia's disintegration"[598] resonates in Olga's experience of terror, relief, despair and guilt as a Civil War émigré. Olga's personal journey mirrors Russia's historical progression from Imperialism to Soviet socialism.

Duffy's logic is supported by Taras who finds evidence of a similar individual and historical confluence in *Le Crime*.[599] He draws a parallel between Olga's life and the history of the twentieth century, arguing that Olga "embodie[s] its history: a youth brought to an abrupt end by war, a hasty flight from Russia on the penultimate boat leaving from a Black Sea port for Constantinople, wanderings through different lands, a schizophrenic, incomplete integration into a new host society."[600] Yet Taras expands the historical association regarding Russia's disintegration, contending that "[t]he most explicit symbol of a suffering Russia is [...] the haemophilia of Olga's son."[601] While both Taras and Duffy offer insightful analyses that emphasise how the individual and the corporeal are metaphors for the national in Makine's writing – how Olga's suffering reflects Russia's suffering – more compelling in *Le Crime* is how Olga's body functions as a trope for her psychological disintegration.

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[592] See Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body."

[593] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 176.

[594] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 186.

[595] See Makine, *Le Crime*, 162-164.

[596] Robert Johnston speaks of three significant waves of Russian emigration from 1918. See Johnston, *'New Mecca, New Babylon': Paris and the Russian Exiles, 1920-1945* (Kingston, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 3-8.

[597] The son's haemophilia is a reminder of Olga's aristocratic roots and of Russia's pre-Revolutionary past: the genetic disorder affected the Russian imperial family and, early in *Le Crime*, Makine intimates that Olga's cousin suffers from the disorder. See Makine, *Le Crime*, 149-150.

[598] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 186.

[599] Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia."

[600] Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia," 71.

My consideration of Makine's use of the bodily image in *Le Crime* thus differs from both Duffy's and Taras'.[602] In *Le Crime*, Makine's primary interest is the individual rather than the national. Olga's attempted transformation from a Russian princess into an individual seeking out a collective community of belonging is an unrealised dream. However, in her desire to become someone new, Olga grows increasingly alienated from herself, an illustration of her "[in]capacity to remain [her]self during periods of change".[603] Olga's self-alienation occasions the disintegration of her psychic well-being, an emotional loss that Makine voices through Olga's dissociated relationship to her body and its boundaries. Initially, this manifests as Olga's inability to recognise the beauty of her body and mind as a cohesive whole, as I outlined above. As Olga's cognitive self is dissociated from her physical self, her bodily boundaries dissolve further. In the resultant boundless confusion, Olga's capacity to express her love lucidly and openly is damaged. Indeed, the bonds of familial love are challenged when Olga transgresses her bodily thresholds, allowing the sexual union between mother and son to take place. Accordingly, the corporeal image that Makine explores in *Le Crime* is a metaphor onto which his character's emotional grief is written. Makine moulds his literary bodies into expressions of the wounded and the restored, the vulnerable and the majestic elements of which an individual life is constructed. When Olga's wounded body disintegrates, Makine is voicing Olga's personal loss: of romantic love, communal belonging and, ultimately, her identity.

Ahead: Beyond the Limits, Olga's Descent

Scholars and reviewers note that *Le Crime* is one of Makine's most psychological novels. Very recently, Duffy has argued that it is Makine's "most complex" work.[604] Parallels have also been drawn between *Le Crime* and Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.[605] Agata Sylwestrak-Wszelaki, for instance, detects similarities in the extent to which Olga and Raskolnikov isolate themselves from society.[606] She emphasises, however, that despite the intensity of the characters' psychic development, each author resolves their narratives through distinctly different outcomes.[607] Duffy detects echoes of Dostoyevskian concepts in Makine's writing, arguing that by portraying Russia as "both saviour and martyr" Makine continues "the long-standing tradition of messianism […] most famously developed by Dostoyevsky".[608] As a point of contrast, Taras heralds *Le Crime* as "[t]he most Chekhovian of Makine's novels".[609] Certainly, the nature of Olga's ruptured identity lends the text a psychological depth that is intensified when Makine broaches the theme of incest.

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[601] Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia," 73.

[602] Duffy briefly mentions *Le Crime* in her article, suggesting that Olga "gradually metamorphoses from a castratrix into a phallic mother", which is consistent with Duffy's psychoanalytic reading of much of Makine's writing. See Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 186.

[603] Grinberg and Grinberg, *Migration and Exile*, 129.

[604] Helena Duffy, "In Search of Carnivalesque Anomie: The Disavowal of the Liberation in Andreï Makine's *The Crime of Olga Arbyelina*," *Journal of War and Cultural Studies* 8, no. 3 (2015): 240.

Equally, Makine challenges his audiences' viewpoints regarding moral principles in *Le Crime*. In an interview with Shusha Guppy Makine suggested that the novel "is about absolute love".[610] He continued:

> Olga is an extreme character living an extreme situation, on the thin line between madness and sanity, between God and the Devil. She is like Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, but while Raskolnikov has his mother and sister, Sonia (the woman who loves him), the Prosecutor who is determined to save him by making him confess, and finally his faith in God, Olga has nobody and nothing. She experiences her inferno entirely alone, without God or society. […] There is no redemption for her. […] Should He condemn Olga for what she has done, or forgive her for having loved so completely and selflessly?[611]

By pushing Olga beyond the limits of social convention, Makine asks where the line between madness and sanity, morality and immorality lies. Moreover, by stating that Olga is "entirely alone" in her journey, with "nobody and nothing", Makine implies that Olga's subsequent psychological deterioration is a natural outcome: she has no-one and no community to prevent her downfall. In the absence of communal fraternity, Olga descends into a psychic interiority and Makine compels his reader to ask where the lines of human love are drawn.

To convey the depths of Olga's psychological unrest – the end-point of her journey – Makine emphasises spatial metaphors and obscures temporal indicators: he distorts the narrative layout. First, all narrative movement ceases. Persistent rain causes the water levels of the nearby river to rise:

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[605] For a brief summary of Dostoyevsky's Christian outlook regarding Russia's role in relation to Europe see Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, 63-65.

[606] Agata Sylwestrak-Wszelaki, *Andreï Makine: L'identité problématique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010).

[607] Sylwestrak-Wszelaki, *Andreï Makine: L'identité problématique*, 80.

[608] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 182.

[609] Taras, "Andreï Makine's Russia," 71.

[610] Shusha Guppy, "A Siberian in Paris," *The Independent*, 24 July, 1999.

[611] Guppy, "A Siberian in Paris."

> Au soir, la Horde tout entière deviendrait une île et leur maison, un petit promontoire au-dessus de l'étendue calme et brumeuse des eaux. [...] Les jours étaient brumeux, tièdes et semblaient ne pas exister mais remonter d'un passé très ancien où même la douleur était effacée. (*COA*, 276)

As Olga's home is transformed into an island, the calm waters deliver a false sense of security to her and her son, and Olga is lured back to her past. Indeed, similar to the pair's earlier nocturnal love scenes, memories of Olga's past erase the sorrows of her present. Effectively, "[l]e calme et le froid [...] d'hiver [qui] encercl[e] leur maison de même qu'eût fait une immense forêt de sapins enneigée" (*COA*, 260), traps Olga in a symbolic Siberia. Besides her son, Olga's contact with the world – the émigré community, the main town – is severed. She is alone.

In the isolation of Makine's symbolic Siberia, the unspeakable becomes permissible. Olga gives herself freely to her son:

> [Olga] lui laissa de nouveau son corps, ce corps qui insensiblement, d'une nuit à l'autre, avait conquis une liberté secrète, inaccessible dans l'amour éveillé. Un corps qui, de sa mort si vivante, répondait aux caresses, sculptait le désir. Un corps d'amante endormie. Le corps né au fond d'un rêve que cet adolescent pouvait revivre indéfiniment. (*COA*, 277)

Here, the despairing reality of Olga's distorted desire to demonstrate love to her son is amplified. Olga's motive, Makine suggests, is maternalistic: she hopes to preserve her son's life. Indeed, having transferred to her son the haemophilia gene that will cause his early death, Olga is plagued by guilt. Her "living death" becomes an act of atonement. For the first time, Olga is consciously aware that she is transgressing her role as mother to become her son's "sleeping lover".

In the later stages of the narrative, Makine suspends Olga between illusion and reality, past and present; she operates in an unspecified spatio-temporal context. Makine is echoing Olga's flight beyond her psychological limits. Olga's growing psychological retreat transforms her physical environment into a living memory, making it difficult for the reader to place her in a specific context. Earlier in the text Olga finds pleasure in the memory of "une grande maison silencieuse entourée d'arbres enneigés" (*COA*, 262). The image is Olga's childhood home: "la maison d'Ostrov" (*COA*, 162). Yet, the striking similarity between Olga's memory and her wintry abode in France illustrates how her social space has become a palimpsest beneath which her Russian memories lay: France and Russia have metamorphosed into symbolic Siberias.

Margaret Parry recognises the resemblance when she draws a linguistic connection between Olga's dwellings in Russia and France: "Ostrov", from the Russian "*остров*", is a signifier for "island".[612] Finally, Olga's mental disrepair and descent into psychosis is written into her physical transformation from "une femme d'une beauté [...] qui faisai[t] mal aux yeux" (*COA*, 33) to "cette femme blême, immobile, privée de langage" (*COA*, 333).[613] Committed to what the reader assumes is a psychiatric hospital, Olga wanders through its cavernous rooms and labyrinthine corridors as though passing through the memories of her youth.

Olga's discovery of a small attic room at the hospital marks her final act of inner withdrawal and brings her journey to a close: "En haut d'un vieil escalier en bois, aux marches hautes et à la rampe usée par les mains, s'ouvrit cette porte derrière laquelle il ne pouvait y avoir que la minuscule pièce avec la fenêtre donnant sur une forêt enneigée" (*COA*, 340). The attic mirrors Olga's memory of her childhood refuge, "cette chambrette sous le toit [...], un réduit sentant la résine du bois brûlé, éclairée d'une veilleuse allumée devant l'icône et dont l'étroite fenêtre semblaient toujours donner, quelle que fût la saison, sur une nuit de neige" (*COA*, 157). Accordingly, Olga's physical refuge in the asylum's attic symbolically fuses both her physical and her psychic interiority, her past and her present. From the window, Olga looks out over a snow-covered forest: "[l]e sol [est] [...] tout blanc et le monde au-delà de la clôture para[ît] à moitié effacé sous les filaments neigeux" (*COA*, 341). The landscape is a mirror to the white blanket of snow and memory that accompanies Olga's journey over the course of the narrative. By the novel's end Olga is unable to transcend the limits of Makine's symbolic East, her refuge negates the possibility of her advancing towards an authentic future and her journey figuratively ends where it began: in the chronotope of Makine's snowy Siberia.

La Musique d'une vie: The Journey as Rebirth

In his 2001 novel, *La Musique*, Makine abandons the confronting sexual aspects explored in *Le Crime* and returns to territory more familiar to his readers: first, the Soviet Union during the unfolding of War II and, second, the Soviet Union of the 1980s. Makine's exploration of the intersection between boundaries and his characters' journeys towards an authentic self continues. Moreover, his interest in corporeal landscapes, which the author experiments with in *Le Crime* through the parallel demise of Olga's psychic and physical wellbeing, matures. Although in *La Musique* corporeal landscapes are primarily employed by Makine to convey the tension between the flexibility and rigidity of his protagonists' identities, it is an additional avenue through which Makine considers his characters' spiritual development.

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[612] Margaret Parry, "La poésie du 'domaine déserte' dans l'oeuvre de Bounine et de Makine: *Soukhodol* et *Le Crime d'Olga Arbélina*," in *Andreï Makine: Le sentiment poétique*, eds. Parry, Herly, and Scheidhauer, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 182.

[613] In some cases of schizophrenia psychotic episodes can lead to the fragmentation of language. See Grinberg and Grinberg, *Migration and Exile*, 139.

Structured around a single Siberian train journey, *La Musique* features two key characters: the novel's nameless narrator, and the older pianist, Alexeï Berg. The physical journey upon which the pair embarks is uni-directional: they travel through Siberia (East) to Moscow (West) by train in 1980s Soviet Russia. Their journey is limited to a time-span of approximately twenty-four hours, yet it also serves as a portal. A second journey, in the opposite direction, materialises as Alexeï's memories of his past transport the reader and narrator to the Soviet Union of the 1940s: a journey from Moscow (West) to Siberia (East), through the devastation before, during and after the Great Patriotic War. Conceptually, the theme of the journey in *La Musique* builds on the notion of authenticity that Makine explores in *Amour*. However, rather than examining his two mature protagonists' desire to *establish* an authentic self, in *La Musique* Makine explores their struggle to *maintain* authenticity.

Without: Homo sovieticus and the Homogeneity of Identity

Spatially, *La Musique* commences at the boundary between East and West: the Ural Mountains. Marooned in a train station "quelque part au milieu de l'Oural" (*MV*, 10) due to a snow-storm, the narrator is seeking an elusive exit from his liminal placement between Siberia and Europe, from "l'infini sibérien, l'infini de cet enfer de neige" (*MV*, 17). That the narrator's journey is not merely threatened by snowfall, but by a metaphorical Siberian death,[614] is implicit in his desire to surmount "[la] stagnation humaine" (*MV*, 23) of sleeping bodies that, like the snow, threatens to enclose him. Fighting against the apathy of his fellow travellers, the narrator also fears the loss of his identity to a broad philosophical concept. In the opening paragraph, the reader learns that the events occur in the same year that

> ce philosophe célèbre [...] proposa une définition devenue vite à la mode, un terme que les penseurs, les politiciens et même les simples mortels allaient utiliser pendant au moins une bonne décennie, et cela dans le monde entière. [...] [E]n deux mots latins le philosophe avait réussi à décrire la vie des deux cent quarante-millions d'êtres

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[614] For further discussion of Siberia as a site of transient death in the Russian literary imagination see Ch. 02, 72-75.

> humains qui peuplaient, à l'époque, le pays où je suis né. Femmes, hommes, enfants et adultes [...]. Tous commençaient à exister sous un nom générique. (*MV*, 9-10)

The generic term is *Homo sovieticus*. Coined in exile by the Russian philosopher Alexander Zinoviev,[615] the term haunts the narrator and provokes "[s]a colère philosophique" (*MV*, 25). Having grown up in the environment of Soviet cultural heritage critiqued in Zinoviev's philosophy, the narrator wants to defend his individuality, to maintain his conviction in his authenticity.

The narrator concedes, nevertheless, that the Latin words aptly describe, if only superficially, "ce conglomérat de corps" (*MV*, 15) enclosed within the station: a mass of sleeping Soviet bodies "qui dégage une odeur de manteaux mouillés, de corps las, d'alcool cuvé et de conserves tièdes" (*MV*, 22). In the opening scene, Makine experiments with the point at which physical and metaphysical borders intersect. The snow-storm is a physical barrier that draws together a mass of individuals in a single space: the train station. Yet, concomitantly, it becomes a definition. To be trapped by the storm inside the station is to become part of "[un] amas opaque d[e] vies" (*MV*, 23): an homogeneous ensemble. Although the narrator fights against the listless submission to Soviet progress and ideology the philosopher's term encompasses, his observations gradually tend towards the general. Individual portraits, such as "ce vieillard qui [...] s'allonge, le dos contre le mur" (*MV*, 15) and "cette jeune mère inclinée vers le cocon de son bébé" (*MV*, 16), fade into "[un] tout anonyme" (*MV*, 16) and "une seule masse" (*MV*, 17) eventually becoming "[un] magma humain qui respire comme un seul être" (*MV*, 21). Accordingly, a shared physical barrier metamorphoses into a shared linguistic boundary and becomes a shared identity – *Homo sovieticus* – a definition that, nevertheless, "englob[e] la vie des personnes les plus variées" (*MV*, 11).

The narrator's passage through Siberia hinges on his ability to "sauver de ce tout anonyme quelques silhouettes individuelles" (*MV*, 16). Consistent with the symbolic function Siberia has as a motif in Makine's work, the narrator must psychologically surmount the vision of symbolic death he foresees: "[u]n cauchemar très vraisemblable" (*MV*, 21) of human resignation. When the narrator determines that "[j]e suis comme eux, certes, mais je peux nommer notre condition humaine et, par conséquent, y échapper" (*MV*, 24) he recognises the limits of the philosopher's term. By naming his condition the narrator pushes the borders – physical and metaphysical – that enclose and define him against his will.

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[615] Alexander Zinoviev, *Homo Sovieticus*, trans. Charles Janson (London: Victor Gollanz Ltd, 1985).

Only by probing the limits of his snowy Siberian 'hell' can the narrator enter a new sphere of identity production and recover his authentic self. The physical-corporeal and imagined-metaphorical boundaries that Makine explores in *La Musique* are figurative limits; they articulate the protagonist's progression towards retaining his authenticity. Research investigating the interplay between boundaries and the construction of identity beyond the realm of fiction, from social, cultural and political perspectives, has burgeoned since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when Europe's borders were recast. Clark and Petersson's edited collection, *Identity Dynamics and the Construction of Boundaries*,[616] adopts a people approach to border studies.[617] With the aim of "analy[sing] the social construction of boundaries and spatial identities",[618] the authors take as their starting point the convergence between the social and the geographical. Their research complements how the borders Makine's characters confront affect their construction of an authentic self.

My interest in Clark and Petersson's research lies, initially, in the authors' acknowledgement that boundaries are a necessary building block for establishing identity:

> The corporeal and semiotic construction of identities and boundaries are intrinsically intertwined. Identification involves defining oneself, commonly as one among a group or set with common characteristics, tastes, styles, preferences, beliefs or the like, in contradistinction to others who do not share these characteristics. Finis is Latin for boundary. Identities build on boundaries.[619]

By distinguishing between the "semiotic/metaphorical" and "corporeal/grounding"[620] elements of which boundaries and identities are comprised, the authors untangle some of the complexities involved in identity formation. Additionally, the authors posit that

> while definitions can commonly stay within the confines of clean abstraction, identities are constructed through practices that connect the intersubjective production of meaningful distinctions with time-space-material corporeality. Important social boundaries, metaphorical boundaries that make a difference, are not just texts or abstract categorizations we can form and mold at will [...] they contribute to the maintenance and reproduction of identities by encouraging some experiences and limiting others.[621]

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[616] Clark and Petersson, *Identity Dynamics and Boundaries*. The authors speak of a "revived" interest in border studies and identity politics since the 1990s, yet acknowledge that the historical origins extend further back. The collection incorporates research perspectives from varied disciplines, including Political Science, Human and Social Geography, and Linguistics.

[617] Clark and Petersson, *Identity Dynamics and Boundaries*, 13. The authors distinguish between people and flow approaches to border studies, yet acknowledge that the categories are not mutually exclusive.

[618] Clark and Petersson, *Identity Dynamics and Boundaries*, 14.

[619] Clark and Petersson, *Identity Dynamics and Boundaries*, 12-13 (emphasis in original).

[620] Clark and Petersson, *Identity Dynamics and Boundaries*, 12.

[621] Clark and Petersson, *Identity Dynamics and Boundaries*, 12-13.

Time and space are instrumental in constructing identity, yet the interplay between the material and metaphorical is, in Clark and Petersson's view, the most commanding aspect of how identities and boundaries interact. To clarify, identities are performed within limits: social, symbolic, material. They develop across time. However, the porous nature of boundaries allows interactions to occur at the limits of different spheres of identity-production. When this happens, identities evolve. Subject to metaphorical and material boundaries, then, identity is fluid.

Clark and Petersson's research resonates, albeit not consciously, with both Péteri's notion of symbolic geographies, outlined earlier,[622] and Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope and to how identity, as conveyed through literature, is dependent on its relevant positioning along time-space axes. Through the theme of the journey, Makine voices a similar, poetic notion regarding the fluidity of identity. In *La Musique* the author implicitly suggests in the scene at the snowed-in station that his protagonist's constructed identity is inextricable from the boundary of the symbolic Siberian-Eastern geography inside which it has developed. However, Makine aligns the narrator's desire to reconstruct the parameters of his fading sense of self with his physical need to exit Siberia's borders. Interactions start to occur in the novel at the junction between different spheres of identity-production, at the frontier between the symbolic geographies of East (Siberia) and West (Moscow). This is first evident when a few notes of heavenly music echo through the train station "comme un fil de soie à la sortie du chas" (*MV*, 24-25). The music functions, firstly, to arouse the narrator from his torpor. Yet its impact runs deeper. That the music penetrates the snow-storm's borders is the first indication that Makine's symbolic Siberian boundaries are shifting. With the music's arrival, new meaning enters the text: borders meet, merge and transmute. Identities evolve.

Although persuaded that the music is a figment of his imagination, the narrator goes in pursuit of the chords' hopeful whisper. Following the music leads the narrator through darkened staircases and winding passages. Arriving at a disused section of the station,[623] he discovers the music's creator: Alexeï. The neglected room where Alexeï sits is a sharp contrast to the overcrowded station. Indeed, spatial disparities allow Makine to blur the distinction between real and imagined worlds: the narrator "[s]'avance avec l'impression de rattraper le bout d'un songe et de [s]'y installer" (*MV*, 26). Observing the pianist, the narrator descries, hovering above a grand piano, his misshapen hands: "[Ils] n'ont rien à voir avec les doigts d'un musicien. De grosses phalanges rudes, bosselées, couvertes de rides brunies" (*MV*, 27). Alexeï's fingers belie the beauty of the silken chords the narrator hears. His physical appearance is indistinguishable from the sheath of human bodies below. Moreover, he is crying. Alexeï is an unlikely musician. At this point, Makine creates a threshold for his narrator that has life-changing potential: to cross into Alexeï's world. Uncertain, the narrator "recule à pas inégaux" (*MV*, 27). Yet, Alexeï's music, coupled with his tears, constitutes a point of difference. The pianist eludes the indiscriminate definition of *Homo sovieticus*. An unexpected image of authenticity, Alexeï is the individual figure the narrator hopes to salvage from the growing mass of homogeneity below. He enters the room.

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[622] See Ch. 03, 109-110.

[623] Disused sections of train stations feature in other Makinian novels, often leading to unexpected, dream-like events. In *Amour*, for example, the boys sleep in unused train carriages at Nerloug's main station after watching the Belmondo films. One evening, they awake to discover they are unexpectedly moving. An impromptu adventure to Vladivostok ensues. See Makine, *Amour*, Chapter 13: 169-191.

The narrator's willingness to be transported by Alexeï's music, a counter to "[l]e fatalisme" (*MV*, 22) that pervades the station, affords him access to otherwise bounded spheres. When the train arrives and the mass of bodies surges to secure a seat onboard, the narrator's attempts to board are barred at every opening. On one occasion "[u]n contrôleur coupe [son] élan dès le marchepied de la voiture" (*MV*, 29), while "[l]a porte de la suivante est verrouillée" (*MV*, 30). Physical obstacles prevent access to the train at the border where entry should be possible. Suddenly the narrator hears music across the platform: "[C]e sifflement. Non pas le sifflet du train. Un bref sifflement de voyous, un appel perçant, autoritaire et destiné à un complice" (*MV*, 30-31). The loutish hoot is a musical reference to the silk-like whistle of the piano chords, it sings out in harmony with "l'écho des dernières notes [...] de brefs éveils de clavier" (*MV*, 24-25) that earlier roused the narrator from his deathly sleep. When the narrator recognises Alexeï's call, hope enters his world and access to the train is granted. Music serves as both a bridge and threshold: it creates the necessary opening that allows the narrator to board the train and provides a path out of Siberia. Moreover, music is a marker that sets in motion the characters' psychological and spiritual journeys.[624] As the narrator remarks, "[e]lle marque tout simplement une frontière, esquisse un autre ordre des choses" (*MV*, 25). For readers familiar with Makine's writing, the narrator's early description of the musical chords' silken quality – "un fil de soie à la sortie du chas" (*MV*, 24-25) – alludes to the relationship that binds Makine's symbolic works: the symbolic imagery of the Kharg-racine's silken cocoon introduced in *Amour*. In *La Musique*, the silken threads of music herald key shifts in the narrative's spatio-temporal configurations. Following the narrator's pursuit of Alexeï's musical notes, chronotopic dimensions shift. The narrator escapes "la bousculade" (*MV*, 29) of bodies fighting on the platform and exits the stagnating realm of the station.

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[624] I approach music as a structural and thematic component of Makine's narrative that supports the umbrella theme of the journey. For a more penetrating analysis of music and musical ekphrasis in Makine's work see Clément's doctoral dissertation/monograph: Clément, "Présence de l'absence."; Clément, *Andreï Makine: L'ekphrasis dans son oeuvre*. Clément describes musical ekphrasis as a verbal description of music or a musical scene. She approaches the musical aspects of Makine's oeuvre from three perspectives: instrumental, vocal and as represented through the figure of the musician.

The Train: Temporal Conduit, Spatial Refuge

When the narrator enters "[une] voiture archaïque de troisième" (*MV*, 32) where "[i]l y a beaucoup de place libre" (*MV*, 32), the narrative moves into a new chronotopic realm: the train. By establishing Siberia as the "land of cold, winter, night",[625] however, Makine reminds his readers that the threat of spiritual death remains, a fact reinforced by Alexeï's affirmation once onboard that "[o]n n'aura pas chaud" (*MV*, 31). The narrator's passage through Siberia is only beginning. Accordingly, by heightening the symbolism and surreality of the train experience, Makine aligns the pair's Siberian passage with the classic notion of a liminal journey towards symbolic rebirth, which was prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth century Russian literary imagination. To this end, Makine again reprises the master symbol of the Kharg-racine and its cocoon. As evening falls onboard the train the reader's attention is drawn to the packaging encasing Alexeï's half-loaf of bread: "des feuilles froissées de vieilles partitions" (*MV*, 34). As Alexeï unwraps the crumpled musical score, Makine creates a mirror to Mitia's unfurling of the leaves curled inside the Kharg-racine in *Amour*. Alexeï's and Mitia's gentle attempts to handle and unfold their packages are both met with awkward, heavy-handed movements: an indication of the burden their actions entail. In Alexeï's case, "le rude tranchant de sa main" (*MV*, 34) contrasts with the fineness of the musical score; for Mitia, "[s]es doigts gourds, malhabiles" (*ATFA*, 90) betray his angst before the plant's fragile beauty. Further similarities ensue: the boys' tactile discovery of the Kharg-racine in *Amour* rouses their cultural-historical memory of the past, while Alexeï's unravelling of the musical score in *La Musique* projects him to the memory-space of his youth. Accordingly, with the unravelling of Alexeï's musical score in *La Musique*, a mirror to the Kharg-racine's silken cocoon is created: renewed life is implicit.

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[625] Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 444.

If music is the catalyst that leads the characters in this novel through the labyrinthine spaces of past and present, real and imagined, then the train acts as a temporal conduit to facilitate this passage. Inside the train, past, present and future realities are mediated. Devoid of fixed bearings, the train travels through space and, within it, multiple temporal periods merge. Bakhtin argues that chronotopes of various configurations can exist simultaneously in a single text: "Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships."[626] The chronotope of the train in *La Musique* initially replaces the stagnant, icy chronotope of the snowbound Siberian station. The train's nurturing, spacious, and fantastical layout facilitates an interchange between the protagonists' separate life experiences, which was impossible to cultivate inside the station. Indeed, the train's dream-like interior encourages Alexeï's introspective wanderings through his Russian past. After unravelling his package, Alexeï starts speaking of Moscow "avec une précision inattendue" (*MV*, 32-33). However, his Moscow "est une ville bien étrange, avec des lacunes évidentes" (*MV*, 33): the pianist "se promène dans une ville qui n'existe plus" (*MV*, 33).[627] As Alexeï speaks, "le sommeil de la planète blanche" (*MV*, 32) of Makine's Siberian snowscape is overlaid with the ethereal cityscape of 1930s Moscow: "[Un] lacis des ruelles que [Alexeï] conna[ît] par cœur. Légère et fluide dans ses pensées" (*MV*, 36). The narrative is effectively transitioning from the intermediary chronotope of the train towards a new chronotope: the realm of Alexeï's past.

As Alexeï's memory of his past strengthens it becomes another thread in the narrative's storyline. Effectively, two temporally distinct spheres in Soviet history, the narrator's 1980s experience and Alexeï's 1940s experience, converge in a single narrative realm: the train. In *La Musique* the chronotope of the train that Makine creates assists his exploration of what is, and has been, specific to Russian identity and the Russian experience in the twentieth century. The train's function in *La Musique* thus evolves from the space of discovery, self-expansion and encounter that Makine depicts in *Amour*. Instead, in *La Musique,* the train is a realm of reflection and potential renewal, a site of communion. Yet, the notion of stability I advocate is countered by Joost van Baak's research; he posits that in Russian literary fiction "[t]he train as a space with walls, windows and places to sit, providing a form of shelter somewhat reminiscent of a house, is nevertheless a mockery of domestic space and the stability that is essential to the house."[628] However, in *La Musique*, domestic space is a concept destroyed by the onset of war and the implementation of Soviet socialism. The peregrinations of both the narrator and pianist have resulted in experiences that are devoid of stability. Consequently, the third-class carriage the pair travels in offers an *unexpected* form of shelter and refuge.[629] The train carriage is neither a mockery nor a replication of the domestic sphere; rather, it contains traces of domestic characteristics, such as protection. Inside the protective contours of the train, then, Makine explores the intersection between two generations of Russians: one which experienced the beginnings of Soviet socialism, and one which will soon witness its end.

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[626] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 252.

[627] In this respect, Alexeï's Moscow recalls Charlotte's Paris in *Testament*: it exists in the storyteller's memory.

Behind: Alexeï's Loss of Self

As the narrative's new journey unfolds, the pitch and tone of Alexeï's words change. No longer the musings of "un promeneur sentimental" (*MV*, 34), Alexei's account simulates Mitia's harrowing cry as he opens the Kharg-racine in *Amour*.[630] Both characters are aware that what follows "ser[a] pénible à voir" (*ATFA*, 90). The story of Alexeï's youth details the slow demise of his self: his transformation from an aspiring twenty-one year old Muscovite musician, on the cusp of adulthood, into an impassive Soviet soldier. On the eve of Alexeï's first piano concert, his parents, both active in the field of performing arts, are arrested. Unable to return to the family's home, Alexeï is subsequently driven away from his Moscow life. The pianist's spiralling flight through Moscow's endless streets and, later, through the Soviet Union, is foretold in the imagery Makine uses to describe Alexeï's escape from his apartment building: "Tour après tour, dans une course affolée, il suivait les zigzags des rampes qui se prolongeaient interminablement comme par une illusion d'optique. [...] Il ne courait pas, il chutait" (*MV*, 54-55). The reference to falling is the first indication of the rupturing of Alexeï's identity. Forced out of the Moscow cityscape, "un monde presque magique [...] d'où il venait d'être chassé" (*MV*, 55), Alexei's downward spiral continues: to avoid arrest, deportation and death, he enters the frontline of war.

To convey the story of Alexeï's lost youth and abrupt transition into adulthood, Makine traces the process of the pianist's physical metamorphosis and the eventual deterioration of his corporeal limits. Congruent with his telling of Olga's journey in *Le Crime*, then, Makine reprises a corporeal landscape. However, in *La Musique* Alexeï's desire to preserve his life paradoxically occasions his physical and spiritual demise. Amidst an undercurrent of desperation after having escaped Moscow, Alexeï becomes obsessed with "l'idée d'un vol d'identité" (*MV*, 66), an idea that forms while observing the sleeping body of a drunken man. Peacefully resigned to "cette mort temporaire" (*MV*, 66), the drunken man's "corps affalé" (*MV*, 66) invites comparison with the mass of sleeping bodies that the narrator observes at the Siberian station. Yet, the protagonists' contrasting responses to the bodily images indicate the markedly different trajectories of their journeys. The narrator expresses dismay at the station, whereas the sleeping man fills Alexeï with "une violente jalousie" (*MV*, 66); he is transfixed by "[le] tel oubli de sa personne" (*MV*, 66). Rather than fight the image of listless submission and drunken slumber, Alexeï mistakenly believes that by possessing another person's name, body and identity, he can "revenir à la vie sous [un] nom volé" (*MV*, 66).

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[628] Baak, *The House in Russian Literature*, 449.

[629] Unlike the attic where Olga seeks refuge in *Le Crime* – a sign of her interiorisation – the train carriage in *La Musique* encourages the externalisation of individual experience. It is a space Alexeï and the narrator share.

[630] See Makine, *Amour*, 90.

When Alexeï reaches a riverbank and discovers the remains of "un champ de bataille" (*MV*, 69) – Soviet soldiers commingled in their common death – the opportunity arises to "trouver son homme, son donneur d'identité" (*MV*, 68). As Alexeï searches the dead men for his double, Makine emphasises the physical devastation of the soldier's mutilated bodies. Their deathly poses are "tantôt très banales [...] tantôt pathétiques" (*MV*, 69). Meanwhile, their faces are cast in "une simplicité sans défense" (*MV*, 69). Despite the soldiers' aura of apparent vulnerability, the permanence ("fixité") of their death is disconcerting. In contrast to the temporary death Alexeï fantasised about earlier, his search through the soldiers' watery grave unveils a darker reality: death's strange admixture of banality and ruthlessness. For instance, when confronted with one potential identity-giver, Alexeï's courage wanes; he recoils at the sight of "l'oreille gauche du soldat [qui est] déchiquetée par une balle" (*MV*, 70). Nevertheless, the overwhelming anxiety occasioned by Alexeï's loss of stability – his family, self and home – proves the more powerful emotion. Thrust into "une torpeur d'automate" (*MV*, 69), Alexeï resumes his search, convinced that he can restore his life by assuming a dead man's identity.

Acknowledging that wounded bodies are "inseparable from the socio-historical landscape of Makine's novels",[631] Duffy suggests that Makine has a "quasi-obsessive interest in amputations, wounds and scars".[632] She interprets Makine's "obsession" as an expression of "his narrators' sense of loss issuing from the disintegration and eclipse of an empire, be it Tsarist or Soviet".[633] Moreover, she preserves the view that Makine's "political agenda"[634] dictates how he uses the body "to rewrite Russia's past for the sake of his Western readers".[635] Ultimately, Duffy suggests that Makine's fiction advances a nationalist agenda, which aligns "with a self-eulogizing and self-pitying discourse very much *de rigueur* in post-Soviet Russia".[636] Gillespie also observes that "gruesome descriptions of the aftermath of combat" abound in much of Makine's fiction.[637] Rather than contextualising these descriptive inclusions from the vantage point of Makine's post-Soviet experience, however, Gillespie considers them to be a necessary outcome of the author's Soviet upbringing: such imagery was commonplace in Soviet literature of the 1960s and 1970s, by which Makine was undoubtedly influenced.[638] Gillespie indicates that, without advocating the heroism of the war effort as his Soviet literary forbears did, Makine's insistence on the futile destruction of human life is nevertheless "based on very clear fact."[639]

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[631] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 176.
[632] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 176.

Although Alexeï's confrontation with the soldiers' remains at the riverbank exacerbates his growing loss in *La Musique*, I question whether that loss stems from the dissolution of an empire. Rather, Makine's humanist sensibility prevails: the wounded bodies are an extension of Makine's desire to employ the corporeal image as a metaphorical boundary across which Alexeï's inner conflict is written. In the moribund sphere of the riverbank the image of collective death establishes, first, a unique narrative mood. Here, death prevails; it is atrophying. The disfigured and destroyed bodies anticipate the symbolic death of Alexeï's authentic self. Indeed, since Alexeï's search amongst the dead bodies occasions his anxiety and psychological confusion, Makine is establishing the gradual impoverishment of Alexeï's inner growth, which he achieves through corporeal metaphor. To illustrate this, as Alexeï wanders amongst the dead bodies, death enters his own: "Il était vidé de lui-même, contaminé par la mort, chassé de son corps par tous ces morts qu'il mettait dans ses habits, se glissant dans les leurs" (*MV*, 71). Death has become a metaphorical poison that corrodes Alexeï's corporeal boundaries, enters his psyche and extirpates his individuality. Caught in the social limits of wartime Soviet Russia, Alexeï attempts to recast himself as a soldier and to reproduce an identity that will ensure his survival. To this end, he casts off the creative elements of self that impede this process: music. A fleeting musical reference to Alexeï's former life as a pianist is recognised when he starts talking to himself, "en rythmant ses pas, voulant s'emplir de ce qu'il avait été avant" (*MV*, 71). Yet, music offers no salvation. Loss, death and war are contaminants that spread and metastasise throughout Alexeï's body: chased from the city of his birth, Alexeï is subsequently chased from his body.

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[633] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 176.
[634] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 180.
[635] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 176.
[636] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 180.
[637] Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 7. Gillespie published a near identical article in 2012. See Gillespie, "Border Consciousness."
[638] Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 7.
[639] Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 8.

As symbolic, corporeal boundaries meet, merge and mutate, Makine demonstrates how new identities are cultivated within the limits of newly established borders. When Alexeï finds "[c]elui qu'il avait cherché" (*MV*, 71), the soldier whom he most resembles, the pianist's desired transformation into someone else is possible. As Alexeï assumes the name, clothes and identity of his double, Makine gives visual expression to the un-making of Alexeï's authentic self. As Alexeï undresses the dead man to clothe himself in the soldier's uniform his body movements alter. In embracing the bodily limits of his double, Alexeï uses "des gestes qui appart[iennent] à quelqu'un d'autre, des gestes un peu rudes, efficaces" (*MV*, 71). Alexeï is assuming the traits of a soldier. In the midst of his transformation, he pauses: "[i]l ne se ren[d] pas compte que depuis un moment il pleur[e] et parl[e] avec quelqu'un et même cro[it] entendre des réponses" (*MV*, 72). In a quiet moment of reflection, two identities – the dead soldier and the lost pianist – are merged. It is a final moment of authenticity. Thereafter, Alexeï crosses the corporeal threshold between his and the soldier's body, between authenticity and abandonment. In concert with the philosopher Zinoviev's words, prefaced at the novel's beginning, as Alexeï penetrates and embraces the newly established bodily limits of a Soviet soldier, he is recast as "un homme parmi des milliers de ses semblables" (*MV*, 73-74): the faceless image of a *Homo sovieticus*.

Ahead: A Siberian Vision Across Generations?

The nexus between Alexeï's journey and the narrator's is established when Makine places the musician in a symbolic Siberia. When Alexeï is seriously wounded and spends two weeks in hospital, he is confronted for the first time with the magnitude of his physical transformation. Spying his face in a mirror, Alexeï sees "un crâne nu, sans âge, et une cicatrice qui descen[d] en biais de la ligne des cheveux vers la tempe" (*MV*, 81). The scar is a permanent marker of his stolen identity. It is also a boundary, a limit that potentially can be surpassed. Interpreting the scene from a Lacanian perspective, Duffy reads the imagery in terms of Alexeï's "symbolic return to infancy":[640] his reunification with the self. Indeed, in Duffy's view Alexeï's scar is a marker of his "split identity",[641] which the mirror restores since the image it reflects "has the power to gather the bits and pieces that constitute the infant's pre-mirror-stage body image into a unified entity".[642] My reading of the scene, although not approached from a Lacanian perspective, concurs with aspects of Duffy's analysis; namely, that by suturing the misplaced pieces of Alexeï's fragmented self, the scar intimates the potential restoration of his fractured identity. Indeed, the multiple identities that are now permanently etched into the fabric of Alexeï's skin symbolise the potential for new life, in a new form, to emerge.

New life, Makine suggests, is only possible after Alexeï has successfully passed through the threshold of Siberia. The essence of Alexeï's journey is condensed in the Siberian chronotope and occurs in three stages. First, Alexeï is discharged from hospital and advised to spend "un mois dans [s]on village" (*MV*, 81). With no family or home to return to, Alexeï "n'[a] nulle part où aller" (*MV*, 81). Like Olga in *Le Crime*, he is completely alone. As Alexeï wanders through the devastated landscape of the Soviet Union, Makine draws him into a liminal Siberian environment, a transition that is implicit in the classic Siberian imagery Makine recreates. The roads on which he travels are "couvertes de glace" (*MV*, 81), there is "peu de soleil" (*MV*, 81), and Alexeï finds himself "au milieu des champs déserts et blancs" (*MV*, 82). The icy, dark and infinite landscape magnifies Alexeï's inner struggle and foretells the start of his Siberian passage. Under the guise of a homeward return, Alexeï's Siberian wanderings track his attempt to regain authenticity.

Once fully immersed in a symbolic Siberia, the second stage of Alexeï's passage occurs. Death closes in on the pianist, evidenced by his emaciated body through which "les brûlures du vent" (*MV*, 82) pass without his realisation. Yet, despite Alexeï's failing physicality, his olfactory and visual sensations prevail. Here, the "abstract elements" of Makine's narrative "take on flesh and blood, permitting the imagining power of art to do its work".[643] Accordingly, Alexeï's wounded body diminishes in significance as the sights and sounds of nature are accentuated: "ce souffle faiblement printanier" (*MV*, 82), "ce reflet aérien et brumeux de soleil" (*MV*, 82), "l'odeur de ces eaux qui s'éveill[ent] sous la glace" (*MV*, 82). The hint of a spring breeze, hazy sunshine and water stirring, counter the classic wintry traits associated with a mythologised

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[640] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 186.
[641] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 186.
[642] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 185.
[643] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 250.

Siberian death. By relying on nature's life-sustaining elements, Alexeï maintains his grasp on life. As I outlined in Chapter Two, when using the Siberian motif in his writing, Makine seeks to establish a link between the physical topography of the Siberian setting and his characters' inner development: a convergence between the physical and the metaphysical. Consequently, Alexeï's ability to recognise nature's abundance as opposed to its wintry stagnation suggests his defiance of death's arrival. As Alexeï's Siberian surrounding thaws, its deathly traits are relinquished. In like manner, Alexeï's wounded and contaminated body dissolves and Makine tentatively announces Alexeï's spiritual awakening.

Since inhabiting the body of a generic soldier Alexeï has shunned authentic social engagements with the world. Now, in Siberia, he is offered the chance to reengage with society. As he passes through a pine forest that is "renfermé et alourdi par la neige" (*MV*, 82), he sees a woman "tirant derrière elle une luge [...], [u]n petit cercueil" (MV, 83). He follows her to a snow-covered cemetery that "ressembl[e] à une clairière" (*MV*, 83). In Alexeï's passage from the wooded forest to the cemetery, Makine emphasises Siberia's heavenly elements: the passage leads Alexeï from the dark, deathly forest to a clear, light opening. The opposition between the wood and the field (*лес – поле*) is traditional in Russian cultural history and folklore;[644] the juxtaposition "is analogous to those of nature-culture, and periphery-centre".[645] Makine thus works with these elements to shift the boundaries within which Alexeï's identity is understood. Indeed, in choosing to follow the woman, Alexeï escapes the peripheral sphere of a dehumanising Siberia and re-establishes human connections. Alexeï is no longer alone. His encounter with the mother-figure is thus a human life-line that, like the natural elements he recognises at the start of his Siberian passage, draws him out of his stolen body so that he can return, in altered form, to the limits of a renewed corporeal self.

The third stage and apex of Alexeï's spiritual rebirth occurs when he relinquishes his stolen body in the cemetery. Two key elements precede the event. First, a musical prelude is discerned when the mother lowers her child's coffin into a shallow grave that is "toute saupoudrée de flocons" (*MV*, 83). As the woman fills the hole with frozen earth and the soil makes contact with the coffin, "une sonorité très vivante" (*MV*, 83) rings out. The musical reference stirs Alexeï's dormant identity and he bends over "pour poser sur le monticule les dernières mottes de terre" (*MV*, 83). Alexeï's hands are brought to life so that the clumps of earth his fingers cradle and throw over the coffin respond in musical kind to the lively tones created by the woman's actions. However, the sudden musical resurgence is overwhelming. Alexeï falls into unconsciousness and collapses beside the child's grave: "[Il] sentait que rien ne lui appartenait, ni l'ombre transie qu'était ce corps, ni ce que ses yeux voyaient, ni ce qu'on voyait de lui. Il ne restait rien de lui" (*MV*, 84). The final disintegration of Alexeï's physical borders is announced.

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[644] Baak, *The House in Russian Literature*, 465.
[645] Baak, *The House in Russian Literature*, 465-466.

Alexeï's collapse runs parallel to the movement of the coffin's descent into the shallow grave. The imagery Makine employs is telling, announcing the second key element that foreshadows Alexeï's spiritual rebirth. Covered in drifts of falling snowflakes, the coffin's shape and form simulates the silk spindle of the Kharg-racine's cocoon. Recalling the image of "[le] nourrisson soigneusement emmailloté" (*ATFA*, 90) that Aliosha identifies inside the Kharg-racine, the buried child symbolises the death of Alexeï's young, innocent self. As the boundaries of Alexeï's body, which are not more than a shadow, are traversed, he is emptied of his diseased and stolen identity. All borders – bodily, earthly and spiritual – dissolve so that spiritual rebirth in new form is possible. Immediately afterwards the woman drags Alexeï from the forest, feeds him pine nuts – "les 'dons de la forêt'" (*MV*, 85) – and gives life back to his disintegrating self. Alexeï is returned to life in a process of positive rebirth.

Duffy contends that Alexeï's recovery "is marked by his alienation from himself, his environment and, finally, his maternal lover".[646] She suggests that a schism between the pianist and the world is created, but by referring to the woman who saves Alexeï as his "maternal lover", Duffy overlooks the silent space of common humanity in which Alexeï and the woman "se regard[ent] longuement, immobile, silencieux, comprenant tout" (*MV*, 84). Here, a border is crossed: "Avec étonnement, il se sentait de plus en plus distinct du vent, de la terre, du froid dans lesquels il avait failli se fondre" (*MV*, 85). Through an act of protection and nourishment, the woman draws Alexeï across a new border towards his re-engagement with humanity. That border is "la ligne tiède où le corps de la femme touchait le sien, la nuit" (*MV*, 85) and is "une frontière douce, vivante, plus solide qu'aucune autre vérité de ce monde" (*MV*, 85). The redefinition of the borders within which Alexeï's life is contained following his Siberian passage, in conjunction with the stabilising presence of another human, marks the start of Alexeï's *reintegration* with the world. As Alexeï passes beyond the Siberian threshold and returns to his body "il se reconna[ît] à peine" (*MV*, 85): he is reborn as "un autre" (*MV*, 85). By recognising "la simplicité avec laquelle deux êtres [peuvent] se donner non pas l'amour, non, mais cette paix, ce répit, cet oubli qui [tient] dans la seule chaleur d'une main" (*MV*, 86), the pianist is later able to extend the same warmth to the narrator.

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[646] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 186.

Demonstrating Bakhtin's proposition that "[t]he chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied",[647] the Siberian chronotopes through which Makine's protagonists pass in *La Musique* bring continuity to the Russian experience Makine draws on: a shared quest between a member of the last Soviet generation and a veteran of the Great Patriotic War to maintain authenticity. As the narrative gives way to a multi-directional journey through time and space, both protagonists are exposed to what lies without and behind. Yet, the journey on which the pair embarks is, ultimately, always focused on what lies ahead: their future. Indeed, the hope inherent in the silken threads of music that traverse the narrative assists this transition. First, music allows the narrator to break through "cet enfer de neige" (*MV*, 17) of his stagnating Siberian passage. Second, when Alexeï plays the piano after years of silence he is afforded "l'irrémédiable brisure du passé" (*MV*, 122) required to complete the process of his spiritual rebirth. In surrendering to "his inner need for self-expression"[648] Alexeï protects his authentic self. In *La Musique*, Makine demonstrates his intent not to focus on a single episode in the history of his homeland, but to examine the construction of identity across multiple generations. In so doing, the novel becomes Makine's most poetic response to the trauma of Soviet ideology and its affect on the citizens of the Soviet Union.

La Femme qui attendait: The Anti-Journey

Véra, the woman who ostensibly waits in Makine's 2004 novel *La Femme*, is unlike any of the protagonists featured in *Amour*, *La Musique* or *Le Crime*: her story is marked by stasis. Initially Véra's inaction, Makine's positioning of her in a forest setting, the absence of excessive narrative movement and the spatial claustrophobia of the setting, the focal point of which is the fictional village of Mirnoïé in the Arkhangelsk region in Russia's far North, imply a regression in Véra's constructed self. The novel's Arkhangelsk setting displays many characteristics typical of Makine's literary Siberian East: its peripheral location, remoteness, extreme temperatures, and abundance of snow. In *La Femme* Makine transforms the geographical Russian North – Mirnoïé and its surrounding – into a symbolic Siberian realm. Although Makine appears to be mirroring the interiority of self that he aligns with Olga's symbolic Siberian refuge in *Le Crime*, the connection is erroneous. The lack of movement in *La Femme* is an antithesis to the journey. Rather than indicating an absence of character development, the retrogression of Véra's self to a state of solitary introspection, or her rejection of the world, in the recreated quietude of Makine's symbolic eastern realm, Véra's authenticity and self-equilibrium, paradoxically, prevail.

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[647] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 250.
[648] Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 9.

Situated in the historico-cultural context of Soviet Russia in the mid-1970s, when "[l]e rideau de fer avait l'air de devoir durer éternellement" (*FQA*, 32), Véra's story unfolds through the nameless male narrator's memory of his meeting with her. Aged twenty-six at the time, the narrator is an idealistic university student from Leningrad who arrives in Mirnoïé to compile and write "une série de textes sur les us et coutumes locaux" (*FQA*, 46). A member of the last Soviet Generation, the narrator's social world is a motley assemblage of students, artists and youthfully energetic dissidents whose sense of self is articulated through their identification with an Imagined West: "l'Occident rêvé" (*FQA*, 30). Located beyond the reality of their immediate Soviet social sphere, the West – its languages, literature and thought – animates "[leurs] nuits de beuverie et de déclamations" (*FQA*, 32). Like Yurchak's description of Soviet citizens living in a state of eternity,[649] the narrator recalls how he was part of a generation "qui trouvaient notre temps trop lent" (*FQA*, 27), "ne supportions plus d'attendre" (*FQA*, 32). They felt indefinitely bound to "[le] règne millénaire" (*FQA*, 32) of a world that "étouffait l'éclosion des talents, l'expression de la liberté, l'amour sans entrave, les voyages à l'étranger, en fait, tout" (*FQA*, 29). The narrator is restless for change; seeking an exit, he arrives in Mirnoïé.

Juxtaposed against the narrator's agitated impatience is Véra's seeming acquiescence. Véra, twenty years the narrator's senior, harbours little interest in the West, imagined or otherwise. Her social space is constricted to Mirnoïé, "un village au milieu des forêts qui s'étendent jusqu'à la mer Blanche" (*FQA*, 10), which is predominantly populated by "des expatriées, ces vieilles femmes chassées de chez elles par la solitude, les maladies, l'indifférence des proches" (*FQA*, 52). Nearing the end of their lives and "viv[ant] déjà un peu au-delà de la vie" (*FQA*, 99), the elderly women pass from life to death with Véra's assistance, "[elle] leur ten[d] la main par-dessus la frontière" (*FQA*, 99). Véra's attention is also focused on Mirnoïé's youngest members; professionally, she works as the local school teacher. Conscious that, for the younger generation, "le seul avenir possible est le départ" (*FQA*, 109), Vera assists their transition towards adulthood, hopeful that from their youth in Mirnoïé "quelque chose leur restera quand même de ces forêts. Et de nos leçons. [...] [M]algré la crasse des villes où il[s] v[ont] plonger bientôt. Malgré tout" (*FQA*, 110). In contrast to the narrator, Véra's identity is located *within* the borders of her social space in Soviet Russia. Far from authenticating a parochial outlook, however, Véra's engagement with the diverse members of her community attests to her liberal convictions. Indeed, she avoids the insularity that the provincial Russian locale she occupies otherwise insinuates.

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[649] See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*.

Without?: Siberian Stasis, "Elle attend! Encore et toujours"[650]

The borders delineating spaces of exclusion and inclusion are strikingly absent from Véra's world. Consequently, the significance of her story lies in the dearth of narrative movement: the lack of her need to negotiate the boundaries of conflicting social spaces. Yet, a conundrum exists. The act which defines external perceptions of Véra, and the presumed reason that Véra remains in Mirnoïé, is her eternal wait. Separated from her first love at the age of sixteen when in 1945 he is sent to fight in the Second World War, Véra has presumably been keeping a vigil for her lover's unlikely return ever since; hence, the titular reference to her as "the woman who waited". When the infuriated Georgian, Otar, cries, "Sacré Véra! Elle attend! Elle attend! Encore et toujours... Elle a fichu sa vie en l'air avec cette attente!" (*FQA*, 20), Véra's wait is equated to an inability to extricate herself from the memory of her past and to engage with her present. Although Otar's words intimate that Véra is imprisoned in her past, Makine is in fact questioning whether the act of Véra's waiting effaces the notion of her authentic consciousness of action or not.

That Véra's story is filtered through the frame of the narrator's perspective must, then, be considered. Having arrived in Mirnoïé "à cause d'une de ces femmes qui ne savent pas attendre" (*FQA*, 25) and also because "[il] cherche à échapper plutôt à [lui]-même" (*FQA*, 27), the young narrator's often pretentious perception of Véra is frequently tainted by his own inner anxieties.[651] Early in the text he surmises that Véra's life is "douloureusement simple [...]. La vie d'une femme qui attendait celui qu'elle aimait. Aucun autre mystère" (*FQA*, 11-12). Accordingly, the narrator's initially concrete summations of Véra portray a woman who has chosen "la solitude, la fidélité envers un absent, le refus d'aimer" (*FQA*, 9). Yet, despite declaring that there is no deeper mystery to Véra's life, the narrator's account, contrarily, is framed by his attempts to "apprivois[er]" (*FQA*, 10) the enigma that is Véra. Is she "[u]ne fiancée immolée sur le bûcher de la fidélité" (*FQA*, 96), "[u]ne idole en bois", "[u]ne victime propitiatoire offerte à l'Histoire" (*FQA*, 97)? Has she been "cruellement happée par une époque" (*FQA*, 88)? Or, is Véra "parfaitement libre" (*FQA*, 88)? In the opening chapter the narrator – his older, reflective self – openly admits how at that time, "[j]'éprouvais l'agréable orgueil d'avoir deviné la vie cachée d'une femme qui avait l'âge d'être ma mère, d'avoir formulé son destin dans quelques phrases bien tournées" (*FQA*, 10). Ultimately, Véra eludes the narrator's attempts to understand her. Yet, his partiality for voicing the supposed simplicity of Véra's experience through poetic formulas paradoxically exposes the authenticity of Véra's choice.

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[650] Makine, *La Femme*, 20.

Forewarning the reader of the narrator's unreliability from the novel's start, Makine indicates that more nuanced undertones constitute Véra's identity and, consequently, account for her act of waiting. Over the course of the novel, the reader ascertains that a wealth of experiences – cultural, social and spiritual – shaped Véra's decision to remain in Mirnoïé. The narrator is surprised to learn that Véra spent eight years in Leningrad, "la capitale intellectuelle du pays" (*FQA*, 62). During the sixties, she studied for a doctoral degree in linguistics, "une thèse sur toutes ces finasseries étymologiques" (*FQA*, 111), which she later abandoned. The narrator's perception of Véra's "vie gâchée" (*FQA*, 96) and assumption that "l'unique grand voyage de sa vie" entailed completing her teacher's education "dans quelque bourgade du voisinage" (*FQA*, 97) are exposed as fallacies. Implicit in Makine's narrative design is that responsibility lies with the reader to create meaning in the space left between the narrator's memory and Véra's textual presence.

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[651] My analysis of *La Femme* focuses on Véra's character as considered through the parameters of an anti-journey. Since the narrator is still establishing his identity, his narrative stream could be approached through the theme of a journey.

When, at last, Véra's voice enters the narrative space, it transpires that her return was preceded by her mother's death[652] and marked by her unease in Leningrad.[653] Rather than having "forsaken [...] her personal happiness",[654] Véra's return is motivated by a desire to lead a more truthful existence. When recalling her student years, Véra remembers: "Je discutais, lisais des dissidents recopiés sur papier carbone, faisais mes recherches sur la typologie de l'ancien suédois et du russe. Mais je ne vivais pas" (*FQA*, 115). From Véra's perspective, a lack of authenticity prevailed during "ces années du dégel" (*FQA*, 114), "quelque chose de très artificiel [...], quelque chose d'hypocrite" (*FQA*, 114). When Véra explains that "après la chute d'un culte les gens s'accrochaient aux dernières idoles qui restaient" (*FQA*, 114) she draws a parallel with the narrator's student experience and dissident evenings in Leningrad. Indeed, earlier the narrator recalls how his social circle venerated a visiting American journalist as "l'incarnation suprême de l'Occident" (*FQA*, 30). When the narrator experiences "l'étrange sensation d'entendre non pas le récit des espoirs démocratiques des années soixante mais celui de la décennie suivante, de ces années soixante-dix de [son] jeunesse contestataire" (*FQA*, 115), the intimation is that little has changed in the intervening decade. If Véra's return to the provincial village of Mirnoïé marks the point at which "[elle] recommenc[e] à vivre" (*FQA*, 116), then her act of waiting must necessarily be re-evaluated.

Motivated by factors more intricate than the romantic patina lost love suggests, Véra's anti-journey indicates her unconditional love for "[d]es êtres humaines" and, particularly, for those "qui s'apprêt[ent] à mourir dans la solitude" (*FQA*, 117). Yet, if Véra's stasis hints at her emancipation, it is a view other scholars are hesitant to pursue. Duffy, for instance, regards Véra's role as emblematic: Véra is "an icon of purity" and "a maternal figure".[655] In Duffy's view Véra lacks agency: she supports rather than acts within the narrative. Gillespie discerns an "inner strength and sense of duty"[656] in Véra's character, yet concludes that she is "a spiritual being"[657] whose inner life "remain[s] a mystery".[658] Indeed, suggesting that Makine is "not interested in the inner lives of his female characters",[659] Gillespie contends that since Véra and other women in the Makinian world are depicted from the perspective of male narrators

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[652] See Makine, *La Femme*, 116.
[653] See Makine, *La Femme*, 111-113.
[654] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 160.
[655] Duffy, "Aquatic Landscapes," 71.
[656] Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 11.
[657] Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 11.
[658] Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 12.
[659] Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 12.

"who desire and possess them",[660] they remain "object[s]".[661] That the narrator desires Véra is clear: a desire that Conlon suggests verges towards obsession.[662] Yet, the narrator never possesses Véra. Indeed, Conlon argues that he cannot since Véra desires someone else.[663] Gillespie's analysis does not differentiate between the narrator's often faulty perception of Véra – his unreliability – and Makine's manoeuvring of the narrative and its characters. By understanding Véra as an icon, a mystery and an object, Gillespie and Duffy iterate the narrator's point of view and underestimate the value of Véra's role in *La Femme*.

Although possessed of a quietude that is uncommon in the Makinian world, Véra is an active agent in the text. Her character solicits greater depth of analysis. When Rey therefore suggests that, "[c]ondamnée à errer entre deux mondes, Véra est prisonnière des limbes dont elle ne veut ou ne peut pas sortir"[664] she affords Véra's character greater attention than either Duffy or Gillespie. Although I question whether Véra is in a state of uncertainty, Rey's suggestion that Véra embodies a world that the narrator must choose to enter or reject is valuable: it highlights Véra's significance in the novel. Ultimately, Rey finds the narrator's character the more dynamic. She asks: "Entre Véra dont la vie est faite de renoncement et qui assiste une civilisation en voie de disparition, et un intellectuel qui vit à Leningrad et raille le passé russe, où se trouve le véritable engagement?"[665] Despite describing the narrator's final act of leave-taking as cowardly, Rey considers it significant since it ensures his survival: he has to leave "s'il veut renaître".[666] Conversely, Rey implies that Véra languishes in an ethereal, other-worldly state.[667] I take as my point of departure the notion that Véra's wait bespeaks the broader expression of her individual freedom and survival. A choice entered into of her own volition, Véra's anti-journey signals her fidelity to her cultural roots and to Russia itself, which includes not only its past and present but equally its future.

Within: Mirnoïé, The Idyll

Véra's authenticity is marked by Makine's dedicated balancing of two key elements: the portrayal of Mirnoïé as an earthly paradise and Véra's abiding corporeal presence in that environment. In contradistinction to Makine's earlier depictions of symbolic Siberian Eastern settings as places of isolated refuge[668] and flight,[669] in *La Femme* Makine's recreated East is a site of repose that invites quiet contemplation: Mirnoïé is as peaceful as its name suggests.[670] Still, the geographical significance of the region as a symbolic eastern realm where Makine's characters' identities are negotiated abides. When Véra first appears in the text through the forest scrub, Makine threads her corporeal presence into her physical surroundings:

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[660] Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 12.
[661] Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 12.
[662] Conlon, "L'emprisonnement et la libération," 101-103.
[663] Conlon, "L'emprisonnement et la libération," 99-100.
[664] Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 185.
[665] Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 184.
[666] Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 185.
[667] Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 185.

> Dans la broussaille qui envahissait les rives du lac, j'aperçus l'éclat très blanc d'une hanche, le galbe d'un torse tendue par l'effort, j'entendis une respiration essoufflée. La soirée restait claire mais le soleil rasant et d'un rouge écorché striait la vue d'ombre et de feu, embrassait les feuilles des saules. Du fond de ce papillotement, un visage de femme surgit. (*FQA*, 13)

The narrator and reader descry the line of Véra's body and face through the play of evening light and shadow. The line of undergrowth that follows and engulfs the slope of the riverbank is mirrored in the curve of Véra's chest, while the breathlessness of her inhalation echoes the clarity of the evening air. The totalising capacity of the image is suggested through the projection of blazing rays of sunlight that expose the scene in an all-embracing unity. Nature and humankind have become "coextensive".[671]

That an organic symbiosis between Véra and her environment exists denotes a shift in Makine's envisioning of the Siberian chronotope in the symbolic texts. The making of Véra's character unfolds in a chronotope that resembles Bakhtin's description of the idyll, a key feature of which is "the conjoining of human life with the life of nature".[672] In the chronotope of the idyll, Bakhtin reasons, life is inseparable from the limited spatial sphere in which it plays out.[673] Only via continuity amongst the generations who dwell in the idyll are spatial and temporal threads married. Bakhtin thus proposes that the "unity of place in the life of generations weakens and renders less distinct all the temporal boundaries between individual lives and between various phases of one and the same life":[674] since temporal layers dissolve easily, the chronotope's integrity is strengthened. As I outlined above, Véra assists each generation in Mirnoïé as they transition through life. The sense of community Véra's actions foster imbues her spatial sphere with a temporal wholeness that is absent from other Siberian chronotopes analysed in this chapter. Indeed, Duffy suggests that Mirnoïé "fulfils the dream of communal living".[675] Tellingly, the narrator considers that time in Mirnoïé "[est] tout simplement absent" (*FQA*, 55), "planant" and "suspendu" (*FQA*, 58), an observation that supports the notion of a temporal coherence in the text between past, present and future realities. The harmonious idyll Makine creates, where space and time coalesce in organic unity, is the greatest indication of the balance with which Véra's constructed self is suffused.

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[668] Olga's experience in *Le Crime*.

[669] Mitia's experience in *Amour*; the narrator's and Alexeï's experience in *La Musique*.

[670] Mirnoïé, in Russian *мирный*, means "peaceful". Duffy comments that "mir" was used in Imperial Russia to denote "a self-governing community of peasant households". See Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 159. Gillespie also recognises the linguistic association between Mirnoïé and a peaceful community. See Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 13.

[671] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 116. Vera's experience is congruent with Robinson's protagonist, outlined at the chapter's beginning.

[672] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 224-236; 226.

[673] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 225.

[674] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 225.

The narrator's arduous attempts to traverse the forests through which Véra walks with ease are a foil for her symbolic Siberian quietude. Keen to see the White Sea, the narrator is assured that the journey will take half a day. But, he quickly loses his way and is forced to abandon his attempt. On his return to Mirnoïé the narrator becomes disoriented. Nightfall approaches and his fear rises. Lacking the totality of Véra's Siberian presence, the narrator is caught by the forest's deathly unpredictability. When Mirnoïé unexpectedly appears in the distance he describes the vision as "un rêve" (*FQA*, 24). On exiting the forest, the narrator is depleted and exhausted: "[L]a fatigue afflua, effaçant même l'agacement d'avoir raté le but. Je me sentais vidé, absent comme s'il n'était resté de moi que ce regard lent qui, sans peser, glissait sur le monde" (*FQA*, 24). The narrator's forest passage is marked by dissonance: his need to escape. His experience underscores the tranquillity of Véra's relationship with nature. Véra allows the boundaries of her world and self to be overrun. In her eyes the narrator detects "le reflet des champs aux herbes éteintes" (*FQA*, 115). Indeed, the narrator only traverses the forest successfully when accompanied by Véra.[676] The distinction Makine draws between Véra's and the narrator's individual experiences in the symbolically recreated East into which Mirnoïé is transformed – one an anti-journey, the other a journey – attests to the different stages of development each has attained. Véra's anti-journey – her alliance with her physical setting – suggests a balanced symbiosis between the psychic, social and spatio-temporal threads from which her identity is sewn.

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[675] Duffy, "Aquatic Landscapes," 70.

[676] See Makine, *La Femme*, 119-127.

Ahead: Siberia, Future Paradise or Historical Oblivion?

An unspoiled image of Siberia as "a golden Eden"[677] has appeared throughout Russian cultural history and resurfaces in *La Femme*. Makine transforms the novel's far Northern European geography into a symbolic Siberian realm that bears the imprint of a paradisiacal aesthetic and resonates with Siberian imagery common to Soviet literature of the 1960s and onwards: the village prose movement.[678] *La Femme* is considered "a celebration and a dissection of the 'village prose' trope"[679] where, in contrast to the city, village-life is "harmonious"[680] and "solid values based on tradition and history"[681] are perpetuated. The unity of Véra's life, outlined above, attests to Makine's celebration of nature. Equally, when focusing on Véra's eternal wait, Makine anchors the text in traditional elements of Russian cultural history: he aligns Véra's wait with the myths, legends and rituals associated with Mirnoïé's collective past.

Consistent with Schöpflin's outline of myth's function, Makine demonstrates how the legends of Mirnoïé's extended past create "coherence" in the community, and across the text.[682] The nuptial song the elderly women perform for the narrator, which recounts the story of a fiancé travelling from beyond the White Sea to reach his bride, provides a three-tiered illustration. First, the emotional harmony of the women's voices intimates wholeness: they "résonn[ent] d'une sincérité et d'une douceur désarmantes" (*FQA*, 165). The effect is that "[la] distance entre le jeu du rituel et la vérité des voix devint douloureuse" (*FQA*, 165). Second, the lyric's subtext solidifies the relationship between the mythical past and the women's personal experience in Mirnoïé. When the women sing, "[i]l viendra malgré les brouillards et les neiges, pour t'aimer" (*FQA*, 166), an enduring faith in the fiancé's arrival and love prevails. Barriers across time dissolve as myth bears its imprint on the women's present: the lost husbands, lovers and sons for whom they each wait. Finally, the repetition, six times, of the words "il viendra" (*FQA*, 166-167) emphasises the notion of arrival and return, a cyclical conception of time that evokes the communal past yet retains meaning for the community's present and is projected into the future.

In *La Femme*, myth functions like light diffracted through an expanding aperture: it exposes the text's confined setting, fades the boundaries of distant, temporal layers and bolsters the unity

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[677] Fryer, "Contrasting Russian Images of Siberia," 100.

[678] For further discussion of heavenly portrayals of Siberia in the Russian cultural imagination, see Ch. 02, 70-72.

[679] Gillespie cites the narrator's desire to abandon the city for the provinces as evidence that Makine is working within the conventions of village prose. He suggests that Makine deconstructs the genre by incorporating sexual overtones into his narrative. See Gillespie, "Bartavels, Ortolans and Borshch," 13.

[680] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 162.

[681] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 162.

[682] Schöpflin, "The Function of Myth," 35.

Makine associates with the novel's symbolic Siberian geography. Nevertheless, it is a view the narrator opposes. He considers that Mirnoïé's sole remaining myth is the Great Patriotic War and contextualises Véra's wait within the immediate legend of "[l]e retour d'un soldat" (*FQA*, 195), surmising that war has "effacé du souvenir populaire toutes les autres légendes" (*FQA*, 52) and created an "oubli du passé" (*FQA*, 52). Yet the strength of Makine's idyllic imagery, coupled with his ability to draw on Siberia's expansive historical ties, overwhelms the narrator's viewpoint. Smith's articulation of the communal past and collective memory as evolving from a "layering of collective experiences"[683] is apposite here: in Makine's view the memory of war is another layer in the stratification of local myth. Indeed, continuity resonates between the image of the returned soldier and the fiancé's imminent arrival. Although the narrator recognises the myth of the soldier's return, he fails to see how it belongs to the continuity of historical experience in Mirnoïé. By drawing inspiration from the continuity of myth, Makine suggests that Véra has found an authentic way of living in an otherwise artificial existence in the Soviet Union: one that is directed at Russia's past, present *and* future.

Through the prism of Véra's anti-journey, then, Makine proposes a vision where Russia's future, its "glorious destiny",[684] and his protagonist's authenticity are grounded in a romantic return to nature. If historically "salvation lies in [Siberia's] very natural environment which lends authentic meaning to the Russian existence",[685] then Makine captures that authenticity through Véra's story. The sentiment finds preliminary expression in the narrator's realisation that, rather than collecting fading legends and customs, he has been wandering "à travers une sorte de prémonition futuriste" (*FQA*, 56): "Les marques de l'Histoire s'étaient effacées. Restaient les lamelles dorées des feuilles de saule sur la surface noire du lac, les premières neiges [...] le silence de la mer Blanche [...]. Restait l'essentiel" (*FQA*, 56). Here, nature is not only idealised, but valorised; in it, the future resounds.

Is Véra's anti-journey indicative of Makine's romantic Russian nationalist leanings? Or, is something more complex at play in *La Femme*? Wanner recognises "an underlying nationalist agenda in Makine's attitude",[686] while Duffy argues that Makine wants to "re-presen[t] his homeland as innocent victim and heroic saviour".[687] Certainly, the idyll Makine creates in *La*

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[683] Smith, "Golden Age," 50.
[684] Smith, "Golden Age," 51.
[685] Fryer, "Contrasting Russian Images of Siberia," 103.
[686] Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 41.
[687] Duffy, "Veteran's Wounded Body," 176.

Femme relies on the mythologising of Siberia and, by extension, Russia. Nationalist undertones are evident in Véra's enduring feminine presence in Mirnoïé, which suggests a belief in the Russian nation as motherland, morally good and protective. Yet, therein lies the crux of Makine's creative expression in *La Femme*. In the narrator's narrative stream, as in Makine's earlier symbolic texts, the symbolic Siberian environment retains its value as a liminal passage: a poetic sphere for envisioning universal expressions of identity. Just as Mitia leaves Svetlaïa in *Amour* the narrator of *La Femme* leaves Mirnoïé, despite the difficulty his departure entails: "Cet air, je le sens, peut de nouveau me droguer, me faire oublier mon départ… Il faut partir le plus vite possible" (*FQA*, 205). The interplay between the two narrative streams in *La Femme* is significant. Whereas in *La Musique* Makine sought to explore the continuity of the Russian experience across the generations, in *La Femme* unity in the two protagonists' experiences is torn asunder. The two divergent outcomes are the greatest indication of Makine's authorial attempt to confront his own insecurities regarding his Russianness: an émigré identity constructed within and beyond the borders of the homeland.[688] The anti-journey in *La Femme* betrays a personal motive: an author coming to terms with the disquieting reality that, like his narrator, he left Russia despite "[l]a peur de ne pas pouvoir s'arracher à cette beauté" (*FQA*, 206).

Remembering the Motherland: Makine's Struggle with Home

In *Across Siberia* Chekhov is awed by the Siberian taiga whose forests extend for miles beyond the limits of what the human eye alone can see. Beyond the natural boundary formed by the Yenisei River, Chekhov divined that "beautiful original Nature begins".[689] Confronted by nature's beauty, Chekhov penned the following words: "On the banks of the Yenisei life began with a moan, but it will end with such prowess as we haven't even dreamed of".[690] In Chekhov's writing, all the elements with which Makine works in the symbolic texts coalesce in a Siberian sphere: borders, identity, time and space. Tracing the development of the theme of the journey, and anti-journey, in Makine's symbolic works likewise begins with a moan: a suggestion of life and identity struggling to stay afloat in the powerful political, social and cultural structures evoked in the author's portrayal of his characters' navigations through Russia and the Soviet Union in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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[688] Similarly, Rey associates the narrator's departure with Makine's personal guilt: "C'est certainement le *mea culpa* d'un auteur déchiré entre son devoir et sa survie." See Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 185 (emphasis in original).

[689] Chekhov, "Across Siberia," 303.

[690] Chekhov, "Across Siberia," 304. Also quoted in Tiupa, "Mythologeme," 446.

Although at the time of his writing contemporary Russia was growing increasingly unfamiliar to Makine, its people, landscape and stories remain at the forefront of his literary vision. The psychic, social and spatio-temporal journeys that occur in the symbolic texts tell the story of his Russian protagonists' attempts – successful and otherwise – to create coherent and authentic visions of their identities across time. Via the theme of the journey and the anti-journey, and by employing a style rich in lyricism, Makine's narratives are freed from the rigorous portrayals of life under the ideology of Soviet socialism that shapes his early writing. Penned in response to the rapidly changing nature of the Russian homeland he left in 1987 where the homogeneity of experience prevailed, Makine's symbolic texts explore the dynamics of his characters' quest for authenticity. The constructs of East and West retain their force as symbolic geographies. Yet Makine depicts a Russian experience removed from the confines of a Cold War and East-West duality. Instead Makine's characters' peregrinations through the symbolic spheres of East and West express the plurality of individual identity as Makine conceives of it in Russian and Soviet history. Makine's increasing emphasis on Siberian locales conveys, as Chekhov so eloquently expressed, a fascination with the prowess and distress with which human life starts and ends, but additionally, with which it endures.

Although journeys dominate the symbolic texts, departure is not an obligation for every character. Instead, Makine is at pains to demonstrate that the making and un-making of each character's self – their authenticity – is actualised through various acts: Mitia's departure, Alexeï's betrayal, Olga's refuge. Finally, Makine demonstrates through the prism of an anti-journey that Véra's authenticity is delivered through harmonic unity in the homeland – through stasis. Analysing the themes of journeying and stasis in the symbolic novels reveals a basic, albeit latent tension in this period of Makine's writing: between dwelling and departing, homecoming and leave-taking. It is increasingly apparent that, by tracing the Russian experience over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Makine is coming to terms with his decision to leave Russia. In attempting to understand a world that no longer exists, Makine considers how his departure impacted on his identity vis-à-vis those who remained behind. Accordingly, a fresh concern and motivation in Makine's literary outlook is unveiled: the author's need to re-engage with contemporary Russia. In 2009 and 2011, with the publication of *La Vie* and *Brèves amours*, Makine takes his first tentative steps towards a literary homecoming.

– CHAPTER FOUR –

An Impossible Return, A Loving Farewell? Homecoming and Leave-taking in *La Vie d'un homme inconnu* and *Le Livre de brèves amours éternelles*

For why do our thoughts turn to some gesture of a hand, the fall of a sleeve, some corner of a room on a particular anonymous afternoon, even when we are asleep, and even when we are so old that our thoughts have abandoned other business? What are all these fragments for, if not to be knit up finally?

– Marilynne Robinson[691]

I didn't leave Russia, Russia left me.

– Andreï Makine[692]

The past was a very fine thing, in its place.

– Marilynne Robinson[693]

Makine has, characteristically, kept contemporary, post-Soviet Russia at a critical remove from his literary imagination. In 1999, twelve years following his Russian departure, Makine disclosed the reasoning behind his personal and literary reluctance to return:

> For me, Russia is like an old lover. I have an image of her, of the way she used to be and what she used to mean to me, in my head and I am frightened of destroying my internal Russia, which I still need to draw on in my writing, by revisiting the country and replacing my precious old memories with new ones.[694]

Admitting that he feared destroying his Russian memories, the essence and wellspring of his literary creation, Makine allowed his "internal Russia" to shape the literary sketching of his homeland for the next ten years. Yet, with the publication in 2009 of *La Vie*, Makine's homecoming – his literary confrontation with his "old lover" – was announced. Makine's engagement with contemporary Russia betrays a key, if subtle, directional shift in his literary vision that carries through to his 2011 novel *Brèves amours*: a desire to let "all these fragments" from the past "be knit up"[695] and, in so doing, to allow new memories and stories to influence his fiction.

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[691] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 92.

[692] Fairweather, "Interview: Andreï Makine."

[693] Marilynne Robinson, *Home* (London: Virago Press, 2008), 8.

[694] Fairweather, "Interview: Andreï Makine."

In this chapter, I analyse *La Vie* and *Brèves amours* through the double motifs of homecoming and leave-taking. In Makine's early fiction, and in many of the symbolic texts, his characters are faced with dispersal from a crumbling homeland – predominantly the Soviet Union – and are thrust into the uncertain future of their subsequent (Western) migrations. Acting as self-determining individuals in the assumed freedoms of the West is an unexpectedly onerous undertaking, as Kim's experience in *Confession* attests. Yet, the lasting effects of being uprooted and of attempting to establish a second home elsewhere are issues only fully broached by Makine in *La Vie* and *Brèves amours*. How, if at all, do his protagonists surmount their varying feelings of estrangement and unhomeliness following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the shedding of their Soviet identities? Have they managed "de maîtriser cette vie moderne" (*LBAE*, 183)? Through the acts of homecoming and leave-taking Makine gives voice in these novels to the crisis and renewal of his characters' émigré identities as they unfold in France.

Makine's literary homecoming is, paradoxically, a point of departure: firstly, from the dynamics of the East-West structure that has hitherto shaped his oeuvre and, secondly, from the Soviet motherland and the author's "precious old memories"[696] of home. In both *La Vie* and *Brèves amours* the structural and symbolic roles attributed to East and West are reversed: the West is now an everyday reality for Makine's protagonists, whereas the East has become an elsewhere: desired, imagined, remembered. With the reversal of structural form, Makine intimates that the pre-eminence of East-West is attenuating. As East-West diminishes in significance, a shift from Makine's singular portrayal of the Russian experience towards the depiction of the human condition emerges. The evolving expressiveness evinced in Makine's recent writing has resulted in his need to find a new subjective form to encase his shifting literary aims. In his recent fiction Makine commits an act of literary leave-taking that is hinted at in *La Vie* and made explicit in *Brèves amours*. He bids farewell to the dominance of the East-West construct and, with it, the enduring presence of the Soviet motherland. The essence of this chapter, then, is an examination of how the displaced, former-Soviet protagonists of each text – and their author, Makine – respond to the plaintive, yet ultimately liberating cry released by the unnamed narrator of *Brèves amours* upon realising that "il ne reste plus rien de tout cela!" (*LBAE*, 50)

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[695] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 92.

[696] Fairweather, "Interview: Andreï Makine."

La Vie d'un homme inconnu: Homecoming, A Happy Reunion?

> 'Tu n'as pas eu le temps de te changer?
> - Non… […]
> - Ah bon…'
> La musique efface leurs paroles. Il sourit, penaud, en empoignant les revers de sa veste. Des poches bouffies, une couleur délavée […]. Les mots qui frémissent en lui sont trop faibles, oui, affaiblis par la distance des années, pour percer le bruit. […] Plus que la musique c'est ce manque langagier qui rend la compréhension difficile. […][Q]ui est-il? Un Russe? […] Un étranger? […] La gêne qu'il devinait chez Iana lui paraît claire: il est inclassable. (*VHI*, 87-89)

Reprising the structural frame of East-West, albeit in altered form, Makine commences *La Vie* within the boundaries of contemporary France (Paris), before shifting to the carnivalesque atmosphere of St Petersburg in the midst of the city's 2003 tercentennial celebrations. The scene quoted above unfolds in St Petersburg. Choutov, a published author and Russian émigré now living in Paris, has returned to Russia for the first time since his departure twenty years earlier. He sits in a restaurant opposite Iana, his first love interest. Iana's memory– "une fragile silhouette, un reflet de voix" (*VHI*, 14) – has survived throughout Choutov's émigré years, becoming highly evocative: Iana is remembered as "[u]ne silhouette tracée par le soleil d'automne sur la dorure des feuilles" (*VHI*, 61). An equally romantic image of Russia has imprinted itself in Choutov's mind. Bathed in "l'or transparent de l'automne" (*VHI*, 14), his former homeland survives as a restored image of the past. Both lover and motherland converge in Choutov's nostalgic longing for the lost object of his first home and first love.

Yet Choutov's belated homecoming is neither a renewed confirmation of the émigré's sense of self nor the expected happy reunion with the object of his nostalgic desire. In the restaurant scene outlined above, Makine comments implicitly on the arrested development of Choutov's selfhood as a result of the émigré experience. The expression finds sentiment in the clipped note of incomprehension and veiled surprise Iana's voice betrays in her seemingly innocuous reference to Choutov's outfit. Choutov's unchanged, outmoded attire – "[d]es poches bouffies, une couleur délavée" – is a metaphor for the greater current of change that, despite sweeping through "la Russie nouvelle" (*VHI*, 87), has bypassed the émigré. Even Iana, reincarnated as a new Russian, is barely recognisable as the young girl Choutov remembers from his student years in what was then Leningrad. Moreover, "cette femme mince, aux cheveux d'un blond ocré, à l'allure juvénile" (*VHI*, 69) bears an uncanny resemblance to Choutov's French lover, Léa, who has recently left him for a younger man. An unsettling confluence between past and present, East and West occurs in the restaurant. Choutov's homecoming exposes his deep-seated desire to bring back to life, "ranimer" (*VHI*, 61), the antiquated world of his past: "[t]out un monde caduc" (*VHI*, 61). Yet, the world brought to life in St Petersburg is so disconcertingly different from the re-imagined Eastern home Choutov has cultivated in France, that his very notion of home and belonging comes unhinged.

Choutov's "manque langagier" (*VHI*, 88) further accentuates his alienation: the cacophony of new tones and rhythms with which Choutov's native language is composed escapes his full comprehension. If, as Susan Suleiman argues, unhomeliness entails being "at a distance from one's native tongue",[697] then Makine demonstrates in the restaurant scene the unhomely state of Choutov's homecoming. Unable to penetrate the new rhythms of his mother-tongue, Choutov's connection with Russia is interrupted. Meanwhile, his ability to be understood is, in turn, hindered. In the banality of Choutov's reunion with Iana "[i]l fau[t] crier pour s'entendre" (*VHI*, 87); rather than speaking "cœur à cœur" (*VHI*, 82) they instead "hurlent en gesticulant" (*VHI*, 87). Here, the essence of Makine's notion of homecoming and return as a disquieting realisation of non-belonging and loss is captured.[698] Rapidly forced to "traduire cette nouvelle réalité" (*VHI*, 70), to merge memory with an increasingly disorienting reality, Choutov is left wondering: "[Q]ui est il?" (*VHI*, 89). In Makine's vision, homecoming is a chaotic and incomprehensible onslaught of misunderstandings in which Choutov's sense of identity is denied all form of classification.

The significance of homecoming and leave-taking to Makine's recent literary vision invites discussion of what beliefs are subsumed in the broader idea of home. What does Makine's notion of home encompass? Does it differ from that of his protagonists? What do his characters' relationships to home suggest about their sense of belonging in a twenty-first century, European context? Arguably, home concerns one's affinity with and sense of belonging in the world; in its absence, one is said to experience "homesickness".[699] Rosemary Marangoly George proposes that:

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[697] Susan Rubin Suleiman, "Introduction," in *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*, ed. Suleiman, (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1998), 1.

[698] Svetlana Boym argues for more recognition of the sorrows of homecoming, suggesting that "it is time to do justice to the stories of non-return and the reluctant praise of exile." See Boym, "Nostalgia and its Discontents," *The Hedgehog Review* 9, no. 2 (2007): 16.

> As imagined in fiction, "home" is a desire that is fulfilled or denied in varying measure to the subjects (both the fictional characters and the readers) constructed by the narrative. As such, "home" moves along several axes, and yet it is usually represented as fixed, rooted, stable – the very antithesis of travel.[700]

George's idea of home as a "desire that is fulfilled or denied" skirts around the discourse pertaining to nostalgia and resonates with Choutov's experience in *La Vie*. Yet, the additional aspects of "shelter, comfort, nurture and protection"[701] that George connects to home indicate a degree of intimacy with one's lived environment that is lacking in Choutov's homecoming. Once Choutov disembarks in St Petersburg, his fixed memory of home's comforts is shattered.

Choutov's mistake, Makine implies, is to believe in the existence of a home frozen at the moment of his expulsion from the Soviet Union and unaffected by the passage of time. Sustained by the imagination, Choutov's idea of home is "fixed, rooted [and] stable":[702] overlooked is the reality that it has disappeared politically. The depth of Choutov's longing for home, however, is imbued with a level of nostalgic emotion that masks the reality of his situation; his homecoming is fuelled by "the seductive pleasures of belonging".[703] While George's analysis of home, outlined above, is only suggestive of its nostalgic connections, Susan Vromen makes the link explicit. Vromen posits that:

> Thinking of home – more specifically yearning for it – is an essential aspect of the human condition, one that has come to be called nostalgia. The idea of "going home" is thus emotionally evocative, and the nostalgic response is meaningful as one of the ways in which human beings subjectively experience themselves.[704]

Vromen's connections between home, nostalgia, longing and the construction of self are valuable when considering Makine's writing in *La Vie*. Choutov's idyllic image of home is sustained by a nostalgic desire that distorts his perception of homecoming, ultimately accounting for the loss of self he experiences when his imagined home fails to materialise in St Petersburg. That Vromen considers the nostalgic response to home significant is telling: it invites comparison with Fritzsche's view of nostalgia's critical function as "sightfulness",[705] which I analysed in Chapter One.[706] Yet Choutov's relationship to home lacks the necessary melancholic aspect that Fritzsche argues is vital in order to lend critical meaning to our connections with the past.[707] Unable to distantiate Soviet Russia from contemporary Russia, then from now, Choutov allows an idyllic past to flood his present. The consequence is a diminishment in his sense of self.

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[699] See Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 175.

[700] George analyses "home" as a structure and ideology based on its representation in twentieth century English-language literary texts. See George, *The Politics of Home*, 2.

[701] George, *The Politics of Home*, 1.

[702] George, *The Politics of Home*, 2.

[703] George, *The Politics of Home*, 200.

[704] Susan Vromen, "The Ambiguities of Nostalgia," *YIVO Annual* 21 (1993): 69.

Makine illustrates in *La Vie*, then, that home and "the idea of going home"[708] are problematic. Rather than a stable space of nurturing and belonging, home in *La Vie* is initially depicted as "a place to escape to and a place to escape from".[709] The underlying cause of Choutov's return to Russia is his desire to escape the mundane familiarity that he associates with his second home in France: the vacuousness of its literary culture and a failed relationship that has left him feeling "terriblement vieux et désabusé" (*VHI*, 57). Duffy describes Choutov's return explicitly as an escape from "a culture that fetishizes youth and has commodified literature".[710] Yet, if "[t]he abiding motif of Makine's writing is that of escape",[711] then in *La Vie* Makine counters Choutov's flight from France by disordering his protagonist's notion of home and effectively rendering him homeless.

The sense of anchorage with which George conceives of home, then, contradicts Makine's fictional evocation and exploration of home in *La Vie*. George proposes that even when imaginatively constructed, home is "readily *fixed* in a mental landscape".[712] Yet, as the restaurant scene attests, the mental image of home that Choutov harbours comes unstuck following his physical return. Contrary to his expectations, Choutov is propelled into a void of confusion and loss. Writing of home in her monograph, *The Future of Nostalgia*,[713] Svetlana Boym suggests that:

> When we are at home, we don't need to talk about it. "To be at home" – *byt' doma* – is a slightly ungrammatical expression in many languages. [...]. To feel at home is to know that things are in their places and so are you: it is a state of mind that doesn't

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[705] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1617.

[706] See Ch. 01, 49.

[707] See Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1618.

[708] Vromen, "The Ambiguities of Nostalgia," 69.

[709] George, *The Politics of Home*, 9.

[710] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 165.

[711] Gillespie, "Border Consciousness," 799.

[712] George, *The Politics of Home*, 11 (emphasis added).

[713] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). Boym's analysis of home, nostalgia and exile originates from an earlier publication. See Boym, "On Diasporic Intimacy: Ilya Kabokov's Installations and Immigrant Homes," *Critical Enquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998).

> depend on an actual location. The object of longing, then, is not really a place called home but this sense of intimacy with the world.[714]

Rather than considering home from the perspective of a mental *landscape*, Boym takes as her point of departure the idea that home is an internal *experience*. Choutov's chaotic Russian homecoming suggests that his sense of homelessness arises from his lack of "intimacy with the world" in both France and Russia and that it is part of his subjective experience of self. When Choutov wonders "qui est-il?" (*VHI*, 89) it elicits a single response: "inclassable" (*VHI*, 89). Unable to identify as a Russian or a foreigner, Choutov is not "at home" physically or psychically.

Between Homelessness and Temporary Belonging

Choutov is not alone in his experience of loss. The new, post-Soviet world to which citizens of the USSR had to adapt in the 1990s entailed an often difficult and painful invention of new identities. Fitzpatrick has recognised this as a "self-conscious process [...] in which individuals struggled to empty their consciousness of Soviet morality, purge their language of Sovietisms, and thus fit themselves to be citizens of the post-Soviet world".[715] What distinguishes Choutov's experience of loss from that of Soviet citizens who remained behind, such as Iana, is that the collective process of "self-transformation"[716] to which Fitzpatrick refers is denied Choutov by virtue of his Western resettlement. Choutov struggles to liberate himself from a "Soviet morality", confessing at one stage: "Je ne suis pas russe, Léa. Je suis soviétique. Donc sale, bête et méchant" (*VHI*, 53). Exile has stalled his evolving selfhood so that, unable to fashion a post-Soviet consciousness, Choutov is excluded from belonging in "la Russie nouvelle" (*VHI*, 87). Likewise, Choutov's anchorage in a Soviet consciousness marks him as different in the West, thereby excluding him from belonging in France. An unsettled citizen in a post-Soviet world, Choutov locates his identity in the past and longs for a home that is non-existent.

For Choutov, home is not a place. Rather, the "object of [his] longing"[717] evolves from memory and is predominantly a literary, imagined construct recreated from his reading of Russian literary classics. Makine mimics the process of Choutov's longing in the novel's structural lay-out. Denied any initial knowledge of the novel's contemporaneousness with the present, the reader is transported in the opening lines to a typical Siberian setting that is characteristic of Makine's fiction:

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[714] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 251.
[715] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 303.
[716] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 304.
[717] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 251.

> Un soir, installés dans une luge, ils jouèrent à dévaler une colline enneigée. *Le froid les fouetta* au visage, le poudroiement du *givre brouilla la vue* et, au moment le plus exaltant de la descente, le jeune homme assis à l'arrière chuchota: 'Je vous aime, Nadenka.' Mêlé au *sifflement du vent*, au *crissement sonore des patins*, ce murmure fut à peine audible. Un aveu? Le souffle de *la bourrasque*? Haletants, le cœur à vif, ils remontèrent le talus, s'élancèrent dans une nouvelle glissade et le chuchotement, plus discret, redit *cet amour* vite emporté par *la tourmente blanche*. Je vous aime, Nadenka... (*VHI*, 9, *emphasis added*)

The snowy hill down which the two lovers slide recalls Makine's Siberian East. Here, all the elements of a symbolic Siberia – heavenly and hostile – coalesce. The cold is lashing, while sight and vision are obscured by the frost. The strength of the wind, gusts of the air, and "[le] crissement sonore" of the sledge's runners suggests disharmony. Yet, in the midst of "la tourmente blanche" and despite everything that is typically merciless in Makine's Siberia, something intimate abides: "[u]n aveu", "[l']amour". With an overriding intimation of love, Makine immerses his reader in what *appears* to be a homely Siberian idyll.

The Siberian prose is not, however, Makine's. Immediately following the opening paragraph the abrupt interruption of Choutov's drunken cry "Sacré Tchékhov!" (*VHI*, 9) drags Makine's audience into the contemporary Parisian West that has been Choutov's adopted home for twenty years. The opening paragraph is a reconstructed literary home, created by Choutov's (mis)remembered paraphrasing of Chekhov's novella *Shutochka* (*The Little Joke*).[718] The initial narrative rupture between the spatio-temporal locations of Siberia and Paris, between past and present, is a stylistic device Makine employs. It mirrors the discord that marks Choutov's relationship to his self and surroundings, and the awkwardly negotiated process of his transition from a Soviet to a post-Soviet mentality that has trapped him between the ill-sutured lines of an East-West fissure that is seemingly outmoded in the contemporary Europe he inhabits.

Choutov's idea of home, then, is an idyll located in an Eastern past: a foil to the cityscape of his contemporary home, Paris. Indeed, stripped of the beguiling qualities that Aliosha treasures in *Testament*, Choutov's Paris is "une ville de solitaires" (*VHI*, 10): alienating and un-homely. The reader recognises an evident beauty in Makine's description of the play of evening moonlight reflecting off the rooftops beyond Choutov's apartment. Choutov, by contrast, fails to translate "l'empilement fantaisiste des vieilles façades sur la pente de Ménilmontant" (*VHI*, 12) into "une évidence poétique" (*VHI*, 12). Instead, the pearly ("nacré") white of the moonlight reminds Choutov of snow and thus reinforces, along with his indulgent reading of Chekhov, his longing for an Eastern home. Conceding defeat, Choutov laments "à quoi bon chercher une belle épithète?" (*VHI*, 12). Explicitly, Choutov's poetic defeat reflects his inability to grasp the beauty of his physical reality. Implicitly, the indication is that Choutov's attempt to be at home in France has failed.

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[718] Anton Chekhov, "The Little Joke," in *The Early Stories: 1883-88*, trans. Patrick Miles and Harvey Pitcher, (London: John Murray, 1982), 102-105.

Choutov's Parisian home is a city and space that, ultimately, nurtures his forgetting and despondency. Recently deserted by his younger lover, Léa, Choutov is introduced to the reader in an inebriated state of self-pitying sorrow. Although a modicum of homeliness is evident in the description of Choutov's attic apartment as "[le] seul endroit où sa vie gardait un semblant de sens" (*VHI*, 56), his sense of belonging there is contingent on Léa's presence. Her departure transforms that space into "un appartement où vit désormais une absente" (*VHI*, 10) indicating that all semblance of meaning in Choutov's Western reality is similarly lost. With the aid of literature, "ce vol plané à travers le temps" (*VHI*, 10), Choutov is transported elsewhere, to a remembered Eastern home. The enticing satisfaction Choutov obtains from his literary belonging clouds and softens the tension derived from his lack of intimacy in contemporary Paris.

The friction between East and West with which *La Vie* opens, then, is a preface to "the dream and dread of home"[719] that has, effectively, eroded Choutov's experience of self. As a former Soviet dissident "banni d'un pays qui avait été, depuis, effacés de toutes les cartes géographiques" (*VHI*, 37-38), Choutov's experience of non-belonging in Paris is part of a wider experience of dislocation specific to his times, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: "an age of unprecedented transnational mobility and global exchange".[720] Suleiman posits that over the past century exile has become "a major historical phenomenon",[721] which Fritzsche similarly recognises when he notes the increased scholarly attention afforded "the conditions of exile and homelessness".[722] If, as Fritzsche posits, these conditions "are taken to be as constitutive of social formations as ties to place and home",[723] then Makine's equal concern to explore the condition of exile in his recent fiction, as it relates to home and homelessness across geographical and spiritual terrains, offers insightful reflections into the human condition, beyond that of the post-Soviet crisis of estrangement that Makine narrates through Choutov's individual case in *La Vie*.

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[719] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 251.
[720] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1603.
[721] Suleiman, "Introduction," 2.
[722] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1603.
[723] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1603.

To this end, Suleiman's reflections on exile as "a state of being 'not home'"[724] offers a useful analytical guide for considering its effect on the individual, including the protagonists in both *La Vie* and *Brèves amours*:

> Émigrés, exiles, expatriates, refugees, nomads, cosmopolitans – the meanings of these words vary, as do their connotations. Expatriates can go home any time they like, while exiles cannot. Cosmopolitan can be a term of self-affirmation, straight or postmodernly ironic, or else an anti-Semitic slur. Over and above their fine distinctions, however, these words all designate a state of being "not home" (or of being "everywhere at home," the flip side of the same coin), which means, in most cases, at a distance from one's native tongue.[725]

In *La Vie*, Choutov's experience of being "not home" stimulates his desire to find a new state of belonging: first within France, later in Russia. Yet, in contrast to Suleiman's suggestion, Choutov's exilic state is never accompanied by the feeling of being "everywhere at home".[726] Rather, Makine's adumbration of Choutov's response to exile indicates that a wealth of different experiences is generated, ranging from further loss and un-homeliness, to temporary states of belonging such as he experiences in Léa's presence.

Boym has explored in greater depth the idea that temporary belonging forms part of the exile experience. Through the theoretical prism of nostalgia, Boym considers how Vladimir Nabokov's and Joseph Brodsky's exile experiences affected their imagining of home. When Boym posits that the artists' "referent for the word *home* is hardly stable",[727] the discourse surrounding home that I have explored thus far shifts. George's sense of fixity and Suleiman's notion of being nowhere and everywhere at home converge in Boym's intermediary position, where the impermanence of home is highlighted. Boym's description resonates most strongly with Makine's writing in *La Vie* and *Brèves amours*. She suggests that, in the exile experience, home "is a moving target, home and abroad often appear as mirror images of one another, or even as a double-exposure."[728] Boym's articulation of home as a double exposure calls to mind a palimpsest. Both are repeatedly exposed – one to light, the other to text – so that complete clarity is obscured from the viewer or reader by the layering of either images or words. Yet, if the implication of these analogies is that the condition of exile negates belonging, because it is a state where absolute meaning is nebulous, then Boym suggests otherwise: an exile can "lear[n] to inhabit exile"[729] and "build a home away from home".[730] In this state, which Boym terms "diasporic intimacy",[731] an estranged state of affectionate belonging away from the homeland is achieved: alienation is transformed into a new freedom.

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[724] Suleiman, "Introduction," 2.

[725] Suleiman, "Introduction," 2.

[726] As such, I question Suleiman's contention that the natural concomitant of being "not home" is to be "everywhere at home".

[727] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 288 (emphasis in original).

[728] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 288.

Cerebral and Corporeal Homecoming

Makine's opening portrait of Choutov indicates that his protagonist is struggling to inhabit an intimate state of belonging in France. To stave off his alienation – his encroaching solitude and his discontent with the state of contemporary French literature – Choutov immerses himself, first, in the pleasurable refuge of reading Russian literary classics and, second, in incessant rumination about his Russian homeland and possible return. In the adumbration of Choutov's flight from his western reality, Makine guides his protagonist through two different types of homecoming: cerebral and corporeal. The homecoming experiences I consider in *La Vie* draw on Orlando Figes' analysis of the Russian exile experience, outlined in his cultural history of Russia, *Natasha's Dance*,[732] and resonate with Boym's notion of home as a double-exposure.

Figes' reading of the exiled poet Marina Tsvetaeva's poem "Homesickness"[733] provides an eloquent distinction between two concepts of home/homecoming as a psychic and a physical desire. From Tsvetaeva's verse – a lament for Russia that the poet attempts to veil behind apathy[734] – Figes infers that a homesick exile "constitutes a homeland in his mind".[735] He asserts that Tsvetaeva's cerebral homeland was her father's house in Moscow. Initially, Figes' association between home and the image cultivated in an exile's mind recalls George's theory of home as a "mental landscape".[736] Yet Figes develops the concept further when he draws attention to the poem's ending in which Tsvetaeva unleashes her sorrow for the remembered object of a rowanberry tree. Figes interprets the tree as "a symbol of her solitude"[737] and a reminder of her childhood. He proposes that Tsvetaeva's reference to the rowanberry tree is "the one native 'birthmark' that she could neither disguise nor bury between th[e] lines of feigned indifference to her native land".[738] In effect, the physical, tangible presence of the tree discloses the poet's need for the physicality of her homeland. Here, the cerebral understanding of home Tsvetaeva cultivates fuses with her corporeal desire for it: "[l]ike an absent lover, she ached for its physical presence."[739]

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[729] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 336.
[730] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 334.
[731] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 252.
[732] Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.
[733] See Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 526-528. Figes uses Elaine Feinstein's translation of "Homesickness" from Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Albert Todd and Max Hayward, eds., *Twentieth-century Russian Poetry* (London: Fourth Estate, 1993).
[734] Tsvetaeva's repetition and variation of the line "it's all the same" is an expression of her apathy.
[735] Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 527.
[736] George, *The Politics of Home*, 11.

The dual concepts of home evident in Tsvetaeva's poem are used by Figes to illustrate how the Russian native land was crystallised in exilic consciousness:

> The first was the Russia that 'remains inside yourself': the written language, the literature, the cultural tradition of which all Russian poets felt themselves a part. This interior Russia was a country that was not confined to any territory. [...] The other Russia was the land itself – the place that still contained memories of home. [...] [T]he open landscape, the sound of Russian speech, [...] this visceral web of associations [...].[740]

Figes' elaboration of the exile's relation to home is contingent on an external and internal experience, which is echoed in Suleiman's articulation that to leave home is "a matter not only of physical displacement but of interior experience".[741] A corresponding expression exists in Makine's depiction of Choutov's double-homecoming in *La Vie*. Firstly, the Russia that "remains inside" Choutov is embedded in his intimacy with classic Russian literature and its "cultural tradition". Secondly, a prevailing longing for "the land itself" – evident in the Russian memories Choutov fosters – precipitates his physical need to return. Both experiences – Choutov's cerebral and corporeal homecomings – yield different outcomes. Only when they merge to create a double-exposure does Choutov gain greater personal insight so that he might learn to accept a state of distantiated belonging and intimacy in Paris and to inhabit exile.

Choutov's cerebral homecoming is expressed through his nostalgic longing for a home tethered to the lines of prose composed by classic Russian authors. It is an expression of his displacement in France and the restlessness of his exilic state: his modern identity crisis. Although he is "[un] écrivain à audience modeste" (*VHI*, 24), Choutov is contemptuous of the vacuousness of contemporary French literature, which he considers “inutile” (*VHI*, 57), “[r]épugnant” (*VHI*, 11), “[d]es petites dissertations de psychologie que les Français appellent ‘romans’” (*VHI*, 57). Choutov deplores the fact that “[d]e nos jours, il faut écrire autrement” (*VHI*, 11). He instead idealises an earlier age, “ce bon vieux temps” (*VHI*, 10), during which Chekhov wrote unhindered about “ces deux amoureux timides” (*VHI*, 9). How is Makine’s reader encouraged to contextualise Choutov’s rambling diatribe against the paucity of truth and integrity that he sees in the French literary establishment? On the one hand, Choutov’s fulminations against “la misère de la littérature actuelle” (*VHI*, 15) appear to articulate Makine’s personal undertone of disappointment with the West. On the other, Makine has consciously created a protagonist of diminished personal insight. For instance, an evident irony exists in Choutov’s critique of the contemporary literary hero who “doit être névrosé, cynique, pressé d’étaler devant nous ses miasmes” (*VHI*, 11): this aptly describes Makine’s characterisation of Choutov’s neurotic ego-centrism. Makine’s implication is that Choutov possesses no greater depth than the literature he derides and, moreover, intimates that his literary rage betrays a deeper discontent.

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[737] Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 527.
[738] Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 527.
[739] Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 528.
[740] Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 528.
[741] Suleiman, "Introduction," 5-6.

Choutov’s criticism of French literature is, indeed, a ruse. It enables the disgruntled émigré to take flight from the actuality of his every-day Western reality into a literary home that is stabilised in the past. Choutov’s cerebral homecoming is evident in his enthusiasm for Chekhov’s prose, discussed earlier. Additionally, his interest in the particularities of the Russian writerly craft extends to authors such as Nabokov and Tolstoy.[742] By cultivating a specific image of Russia in his mind through literary associations, Choutov sustains his belief in the continued existence of a homeland that no longer exists: “Cette Russie […] où se poursuivait, croyait-il, une vie bercée par les strophes aimées. Un parc sous la dorure des feuilles, une femme qui marche en silence, telle l’héroïne d’un poème” (*VHI*, 39). Accordingly, Choutov locates his identity and sense of belonging in the traditions of the past,[743] such as his Russian view of the writer’s role as the bearer of truth and his belief that “an act of creation invariably entails an act of prophecy”.[744] To this end, Choutov immerses himself in the pleasures of belonging afforded by “la littérature de sa patrie” (*VHI*, 29), a literary culture "[s]ans Freud, sans post-modernisme, sans sexe à tout bout de phrase" (*VHI*, 10), that he finds lacking in his French home.

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[742] Choutov’s attitude towards Russian authors/literature emerges during his discussions with Léa. See Makine, *La Vie*, 29-31.

[743] Choutov’s relationship to home and the past resembles Boym’s definition of a “restorative”, as opposed to a “reflective”, nostalgic. He wants to “rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps” and is often depicted defending his home – classic Russian literature – which he believes is “constantly under siege” from new, post-modern literary trends. See Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41-45.

[744] Duffy, “Grandmothers and Uncles,” 165.

Although Choutov finds a refuge in Russian literary texts, Makine does not support his protagonist's solution. Gillespie proposes, however, that in *La Vie* Makine "suggest[s] that immersion in literature now remains the safest refuge".[745] Considering Makine's oeuvre in totality, Gillespie elaborates his position, arguing that, in Makine's literary vision, literature is not only a refuge but "the only 'real' reality".[746] My argument diverges from Gillespie's. Makine is suggesting the contrary: Choutov *avoids* reality by cocooning himself in the remembered Russia of his literary imagining – "cette Russie qu'il n'[a] pas revue depuis vingt ans" (*VHI*, 38). By anchoring a cerebral sense of belonging in "cette patrie retrouvée dans les livres" (*VHI*, 29) Choutov maintains a false sense of intimacy with the world.

That Makine seeks to emphasise the disparity between the reality and illusion of Choutov's attempts at homecoming is explicit in his framing of Choutov's story through Chekhov's novella, *The Little Joke*. In particular, Makine aligns Choutov's character with Chekhov's unreliable narrator and concerns himself with similar objectives to Chekhov's: the existential question of the human condition at the juncture between truth and reality.[747] Consequently, that Choutov misremembers the ending of Chekhov's novella is telling: it heightens the illusion his literary homecoming allows him to sustain. Choutov believes that, twenty years after their separation, Chekhov's fictional lovers "se retrouvent dans le même parc et, en riant, montent dans une luge. Et tout se répète" (*VHI*, 10). Yet memory is fallible. In the final line of Chekhov's novella, the protagonist is, in fact, alone and still unable to understand why he jested with Nadenka.[748] Choutov's false recall of the pair's happy reunion is the clearest indication that Makine is wary of Choutov's literary refuge. Choutov's attempt to "reconstruct the narrative of [his] roots"[749] via a cerebral, literary connection exposes his resistance to engaging with reality and moving forward. Complete immersion in a literary home, which Choutov achieves through the cerebral pleasures of reading, fosters his false belief in a Russia that no longer exists. For so long as Choutov maintains his literary homecoming, he is unable to develop personally, or reconcile himself to a state of diasporic intimacy.

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[745] Gillespie, "Border Consciousness," 807.

[746] Gillespie, "Border Consciousness," 807.

[747] A lack of space prevents an extended analysis of the interconnections between Makine's *L'homme inconnu* and Chekhov's *The Little Joke*. It would, nevertheless, be a fruitful undertaking. Gillespie acknowledges in passing that Chekhov's novella is "a framing device for the working of human memory and a statement on the transience of the human experience", yet does not develop his argument, therefore encouraging continued analysis. See Gillespie, "Border Consciousness," 808. Evident similarities between Makine and Chekhov's protagonists exist: both entertain false, idealised memories of the past, have limited personal insight, and are lonely individuals. Similarities between Makine's and Chekhov's authorial intent are also evident: both authors explore the fallibility of memory and the tenuous relationship between fact and fantasy. For analyses of Chekhov's novella see, for example, Harai Golomb, "'No Joking Matter': (Day)Dreaming, Reality and Fictionality in Chekhov's *A Little Joke* [«Шуточка»] (1886/1899)," *The Bulletin of the North American Chekhov Society* 18 (2012); Robert Louis Jackson, "Russian Man at the Rendezvous: The Narrator of Chekhov's *A Little Joke*," in *Die Wirklichkeit der Kunst und das Abenteuer der Interpretation: Festschrift für Horst-Jürgen Gerigk*, eds. Manger and Gerigk, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999).

[748] See Chekhov, "The Little Joke," 105.

Despite having perpetually deferred his physical return to Russia,[750] Choutov's corporeal homecoming is set in motion when he eventually boards a plane for St Petersburg, emboldened by the certainty that his imagined home, "ce pays sous l'or des feuilles[,] exist[e] toujours" (*VHI*, 56). In *The Little Joke*, prior to the two lovers' descent down the snowy hill, the narrator's love-interest wonders: "[W]hatever will it be like if she dares to fly down into the abyss! She will die, she will go mad."[751] Choutov's corporeal return, lacking the steady assurance of his cerebral home, kindles similar, dizzying emotions: "[l]a sensation d'un vide dans lequel il va se jeter" (*VHI*, 63). Even before leaving, a disconcerting realisation surfaces: "[S]on exil l'avait banni de la chronologie des humains. Ses amis vivaient, se mariaient, s'entouraient d'enfants et de petits-enfants pendant qu'il se transformait en fantôme sans âge" (*VHI*, 62-63). Choutov is suddenly cognisant of an objective truth that has hitherto evaded him: life in the East has continued, during and despite his absence. The first indication that Choutov recognises the chimerical quality of his literary idea of home emerges. Yet, if the disquiet that subsequently invades Choutov's thoughts provokes the question "Alors pourquoi venir?" (*VHI*, 66), his physical desire to return to Russian soil proves the stronger emotion. Subjectively, then, Choutov perceives his physical homecoming as an occasion to restore memory, the past and himself. Yet, the vague stirring of Choutov's objective consciousness indicates that fulfilling his corporeal desire for belonging will entail stepping into the abyss of an unknown.

Choutov's expectations of home are indeed shattered following his arrival in St Petersburg. The city is awash with the excitement of its tercentenary celebrations, where subjective truth and historical forgetting commingle in a spectacular display of theatre and artifice: "[Choutov] ne remarque pas à quel moment ce qu'il voit glisse vers une fantasmagorie" (*VHI*, 106). "[U]ne procession de sosies de Pierre le Grand" (*VHI*, 83) merges with "une escouade de 'danseuses brésiliennes' presque nues" (*VHI*, 83) while a strange party of Russian historical figures gathers behind the Winter Palace for "un 'Portrait de famille'" (*VHI*, 86): Peter the Great, Nicholas II, Stalin, Lenin, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev are all united. As he wanders the city streets, Choutov's beliefs about history, memory, reality and illusion are challenged. Choutov is overcome by feelings of personal loss and confusion, which he also experiences following his reunion with Iana, analysed earlier. Moreover, as Choutov compares himself to his post-Soviet compatriots, who are "habillés comme dans les rues d'une ville occidentale" (*VHI*, 70-71) the émigré realises that "il n'[est] pas loin de passer pour un clochard" (*VHI*, 71). In drawing a parallel between Choutov as a vagrant and a wanderer in the city of his origins, Makine provides an astute analysis of the émigré's predicament as he navigates the unhomely void of homecoming: exile has made Choutov an outsider in the city of his birth.

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[749] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 336.

[750] "[T]outes les deux semaines [Choutov] préparait une valise, réservait un billet. Et ne partait pas." See Makine, *La Vie*, 56.

[751] Chekhov, "The Little Joke," 102.

George suggests that home is founded on the premises of inclusion or exclusion, and is a means of delineating difference.[752] For Choutov, homecoming exacerbates his feelings of exclusion. Russia has been transformed during his absence, a change that causes him to feel overwhelmingly "dépassé" (*VHI*, 79). Realising that he is excluded from the home-site to which he believes he belongs, Choutov resolves, in the short-term, to penetrate the carnival and become part of "[la] masse humaine" (*VHI*, 76). He gives himself over physically to the temptations the city enticingly offers: "[l]a gravitation de la ville en fête l'aspire, le pousse vers une vie *où il sera de nouveau lui-même*, parlant la langue de son enfance, noyé dans une masse humaine à laquelle il appartient par ses origines" (*VHI*, 76, *emphasis added*). The carnival atmosphere is intoxicating, infectious, "un euphorisant" (*VHI*, 82). Choutov is quickly seduced by the false belief that submerging himself in the carnival spirit will ensure his homely re-inclusion.

It is Choutov's physical need to belong – to the city's "landscape", Russian "speech" and to the cultural heritage of his past that the carnival's "visceral web of associations"[753] recalls – that motivates him to join the festivities. Yet despite the festival's intoxicating energy, it bears empty promises. The belonging he seeks in his homeland is artificial. Choutov makes three separate attempts to enter the carnival. On the first occasion, Choutov is immediately rejected. Despite the tantalisingly close proximity of the festival sounds, as Choutov draws himself closer to their source, he is quickly trapped in a maze of streets from which he can find no exit:

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[752] George argues that homes, like nations, are "not neutral places" and contends that "[i]magining a home is as political an act as is imagining a nation." See George, *The Politics of Home*, 1-6: 6. It is not my intention to evaluate the political act implicit in Choutov's imagining of home. However, Duffy examines Makine's representation of Russia as an example of "the 'narodnism' championed by Slavophiles". See Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 168.

[753] Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 528.

> Il fait un détour et retombe sur une rue fermée. Se dirige vers le quai du Palais et se voit refoulé dans la rue Millonnaïa. Il essaye de négocier puis, naïvement, demande des explications [...]. La fête bat son plein, si proche, à quelques pâtés d'immeubles, et inaccessible comme dans une marche tortueuse à travers un mauvais songe. (*VHI*, 77)

Choutov's inability to navigate the streets of St Petersburg and thus enter the carnival is an indication of how dissociated he is from his native land. Trapped in streets he should know, Choutov "avance encore, guidé par des repères de plus en plus vagues" (*VHI*, 77), until he is forced to ask for directions. The act of adopting the role of a tourist solidifies Choutov's feelings of exclusion and exacerbates his concern that his established notion of home is disintegrating. Choutov's first attempt to reconnect physically with his home denies him the pleasures that his literary homecoming affords. As his search for an entry-point ends in vain, Choutov returns to Iana's apartment where, upon discovering a volume of Chekhov's stories in the bookshelf, he seeks comfort instead in the story of Chekhov's lovers:[754] in his cerebral home.

Choutov's second attempt at group belonging is more successful. He allows himself to grow increasingly intoxicated by "[l]'énergie de cette nouvelle vie" (*VHI*, 82). In so doing his outsider status shifts to that of an insider. Rather than asking for directions, it is Choutov who now "indique le chemin à deux jeunes touristes égarées" (*VHI*, 82). He is suddenly revitalised. Like a child he "s'élance pour rattraper le ballon qu'un enfant laisse échapper" (*VHI*, 82) and "[s]'achète une glace" (*VHI*, 82). If, earlier, Choutov longed for the language and times of his childhood, then the spirit of the city that suffuses his physical being renders this possible. Following these acts Choutov edges closer to entering the carnival. On his third attempt, Choutov is successful: he is granted entrance into the carnival's core. "[P]arvenu sur la Nevski, [il] atteste le miracle: tout entier il appartient à la foule du carnaval qui se dirige vers le Palais d'Hiver, et *c'est une appartenance charnelle, une adhésion physique*" (*VHI*, 82, *emphasis added*). That Choutov finally experiences the physical sensation of belonging he earlier craved intensifies his enthusiasm: he is now part of "le miracle" (*VHI*, 82). Here, Makine illustrates the intoxicating pleasure Choutov's visceral experience of physical belonging elicits as a form of homecoming.

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[754] See Makine, *La Vie*, 80.

However, despite Choutov being invigorated by the city's carnival spirit, the false patina of belonging it offers becomes immediately apparent to the reader when he describes the experience of corporeal kinship:

> C'est une… greffe de visage! L'image est violente mais elle exprime bien ce qu'il vit. La peau de son nouveau faciès est régénérée par ces regards qui se posent sur lui dans un flot de sourires, de cris, d'étreintes. […] Ils sourient à cet homme qui n'est pas moi. J'ai donc de nouveau le droit de vivre parmi eux. (*VHI*, 82-83)

Choutov has the right to belong amongst the imagined Russian community of his homeland because he now wears the masked expression of "cet homme qui n'est pas moi" (*VHI*, 83). The implication is that, to communicate with the world he has infiltrated and in which he believes he can be himself again, Choutov must, ironically, become someone he is not. Whilst the mask enables Choutov to shed his inhibitions, it also demands that he participate in "[l'e]xorcisme collectif" (*VHI*, 86). Choutov must wipe from memory the era in which he grew up: "annuler des décennies de terreur, laver le sang des révolutions réelles, s'assourdir du bruit des pétards pour oublier celui des bombes" (*VHI*, 86). Intoxicated by the carnival spirit and the fantasy of illusion that accompanies his corporeal homecoming, however, Choutov recognises that "[c]et oubli est rafraîchissant" (*VHI*, 84): he gives his cerebral being over to his corporeal desire.

Duffy aptly observes that during the carnival, "sharing in the general unbridled excitement, Choutov himself feels empowered, joyous and, most significantly, rejuvenated. This temporary sense of belonging is nevertheless illusory".[755] The fantasy of collective belonging is only apparent to Choutov, however, when he returns to the festivities in the evening. Filled with "le sentiment de jouer son va-tout" (*VHI*, 104) he wanders through the Hermitage Museum and walks along the Neva to witness "un spectacle son et lumière" (*VHI*, 104). Yet, the crowd's energy is lacking. If Choutov hopes to reignite "la chaleur tribale" (*VHI*, 104) he experienced earlier during the carnival, he is mistaken. Apathy reigns at the museum. Moreover, the scene is reminiscent of the narrator's description of the snowed-in Siberian station in *La Musique*: "Dès les premiers pas, à l'intérieur, [Choutov] se fige, interdit. L'ambiance fait penser à un hall de gare. Les gens sont assis sur le parquet, les dos contre le mur, certains dorment. D'autres, installés sur les appuis des fenêtres, scrutent le ciel" (*VHI*, 104). The state of indifference amongst the museum crowd alerts Choutov to the temporariness of his homecoming, while Makine's focus on the mix of foreigners gathered there – a tourist speaking loudly in German, "[u]n groupe d'Asiatiques" (*VHI*, 105) – is a reminder of the disparate elements that have merged to create the false impression of unity.

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[755] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 166.

Eventually, the carnival's intoxicating effects dissipate: "la foule est trop fatiguée" (*VHI*, 105). When Choutov re-enters the streets, the crowd is aimless: "[elle] se porte d'un endroit à l'autre, à la recherche des dernières flammèches de la fête (*VHI*, 106). The crowd's aimless wandering reflects the confusion and emptiness of Choutov's state of non-belonging, and his desperate search for material relief to assuage the anxiety of his exilic state. As it starts to rain, the crowd disperses. The spell of the city is broken. "[C]e qui le sauve c'est l'accord final de sa fantasmagorie nocturne: on commence à lever les ponts sur la Neva et il est obligé de courir, de faire de long détours pour déjouer le piège des îles désunies" (*VHI*, 107). As the city splits into disparate islands, Choutov flees from its nucleus and, metaphorically, from the physical pleasures of his artificial belonging. The chimerical veil and illusion occasioned by Choutov's homecoming has been lifted.

As his corporeal union with the homeland in Russia is broken, Choutov's descent into an abyss of spiritual emptiness seems complete. Yet Makine indicates, on the contrary, that only now is the awakening of Choutov's consciousness possible. Curiously, the image of "un homme greffé" (*VHI*, 82) provides an apt illustration of Choutov's reawakening. The notion of a facial transplant evokes Boym's description of the exile's experience of home as a double-exposure: of two identities layered one over the other. Choutov's mask allows him to penetrate and participate in the energy of his first home as an insider. Behind the mask, however, Choutov retains the privilege of viewing that homely image from the position of exile, as an outsider. Makine's dual positioning of Choutov's transparent awareness as an insider-outsider is the literary equivalent of Boym's photographic metaphor of the exilic experience of home as a double-exposure. In effect, the corporeal and cerebral homes that Choutov has created merge. It is not until Choutov perceives the transformed image created in the fusion of their layering, that he can re-evaluate, first, the potential homeliness of his exilic state and, second, his notion of self.

Exile as Elsewhere: "un départ libérateur"?[756]

In developing her notion of "diasporic intimacy", Boym argues that "when the illusion of complete belonging"[757] is broken, the alternative possibilities of exilic homeliness are unlocked. Boym suggests that diasporic intimacy "thrives on the hope of the possibilities of human understanding and survival, of unpredictable chance encounters".[758] Moreover, "the tenderness of exile"[759] exists in the recognition that life survives, despite the void of apparent emptiness. After the opening of the bridges and the dispersal of the festival crowd, Choutov is suddenly cognisant that "complete belonging" is a fantasy. Not yet having progressed beyond the first stage of loss, however, Choutov experiences the broken fantasy of his homecoming as complete rejection. The sentiment is compounded when, upon returning to Iana's apartment, he is asked to keep watch over the aging war veteran Volski: "[i]l a cherché à comprendre ce nouveau pays et on le rejette parmi les vieilleries soviétiques, à côté d'un sourd-muet grabataire dont il va vider le pot de chambre" (*VHI*, 111). Yet, the evening spent with Volski, whom it transpires is neither deaf nor mute, occasions a profound transformation: the beginning of Choutov's renewed hope. Effectively, Volski's "récit nocturne" (*VHI*, 275) – the tale of his lost love, his war experience during the Siege of Leningrad, and his post-war life – opens Choutov's consciousness to new ways of engaging with home. Like the "unexpected chance encounters"[760] of which Boym speaks, an intimate connection occurs during the pair's auspicious evening: Volski's story of survival is shared and Choutov experiences the intimacy his homecoming has previously lacked.

The encounter between Volski and Choutov, a key turning point in *La Vie*, enables Makine to introduce to the narrative historical truths centred on individual stories of survival.[761] The overwhelming sentiment of the carnival suggests such stories have been effaced in the new, ahistorical Russia. Additionally, Volski's tale of survival engages Choutov in a more authentic dialogue with the Soviet past than his nostalgic notions of home and Russia have hitherto allowed. Consequently, the evening drags Choutov from the despondency provoked by his exilic state. Upon his return to France Choutov makes the following discovery:

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[756] Milan Kundera, "L'exil libérateur selon Vera Linhartova," in *Une rencontre*, (Paris: Gallimard, collection Folio, 2009), 146.

[757] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 255.

[758] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 252-253.

[759] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 254.

[760] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 252.

[761] As I outlined in Chapter One, Makine's literary vision has, since the early novels, been attuned to how the individual experiences history.

> Dans l'avion, pour la première fois de sa vie, il a l'impression d'aller de nulle part vers nulle part, ou plutôt de voyager sans destination véritable. Et pourtant, jamais encore il n'a aussi intensément ressenti son appartenance à une terre natale. Sauf que cette patrie coïncide non pas avec un territoire mais avec une époque. [...] Cette monstrueuse époque soviétique qui fut le seul temps que Choutov a vécu en Russie. (*VHI*, 285)

By imagining himself travelling "sans destination véritable", Choutov is henceforth capable of living in a contemporary Parisian home, without dwelling in the false image of his past. He is now capable of inhabiting exile. Indeed, when Choutov experiences intimacy through time and space with the aging veteran Volski, Makine grants his protagonist the belonging he craved, but was denied, in his corporeal and cerebral homecomings. Choutov finally understands what has hitherto evaded him: "avec une clarté aveuglante, le jugement tombent: il ne saura jamais exister dans cette nouvelle vie" (*VHI*, 285). Choutov's exclusion from the motherland is, paradoxically, transformed into an act of deliverance.

Scholarly analyses of exile and emigration bear witness to the indelible impact the physical displacement of leaving home exerts on individuals, from the creative to the psychological.[762] As Milan Kundera suggests, the dominant trend has been to consider exile within a discourse of suffering and sympathy; less prominent are analyses that broach the potential virtues and joys of the exilic experience.[763] Kundera considers the problem in his short essay "L'exil libérateur selon Vera Linhartova":[764]

> La seconde moitié du siècle passé a rendu tout le monde extrêmement sensible au destin des gens chassés de leur pays. Cette sensibilité compatissante a embrumé le problème de l'exil d'un moralisme larmoyant et a occulté le caractère concret de la vie de l'exilé qui, selon Linhartova, a su souvent transformer son bannissement en un départ libérateur 'vers un ailleurs, inconnu par définition, ouvert à toutes les possibilités'.[765]

In Kundera's explanation, to speak of exile as a process of discovery and liberation runs counter to the established conventions with which exile has been appraised in the late twentieth century.[766] Kundera finds in Linhartova's words a refreshingly inspirational take on the condition of exile, particularly as it transpires amongst writers and creative artists. For instance, Linhartova confesses: "J'ai donc choisi le lieu où je voulais vivre mais j'ai aussi choisi la langue que je voulais parler."[767] Here, Linhartova indicates the complete freedom exile enables her to embody. A life in France, a literary life in another tongue and, ultimately, the freedom to fulfil "son vœu le plus cher: vivre ailleurs."[768]

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[762] See, for example, John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Töröl, eds., *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe: A Compendium* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009); Suleiman, ed. *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1998); Boym, "On Diasporic Intimacy: Ilya Kabokov's Installations and Immigrant Homes."; Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (London: Minerva, 1991).

[763] See Kundera, "L'exil libérateur".

[764] Linhartova, a poet, began her career in Czechoslovakia, immigrated to France in 1968, and now writes and publishes in French.

[765] Kundera, "L'exil libérateur" 145-146.

[766] Echoes of Kundera's sentiment are evident in Rubin's discussion of exile/migration as a form of liberation within Russian literature and amongst translingual authors. In her view, an author's free decision to choose a new language of literary expression often signals their disentanglement from the restrictions imposed by previous identities. See Rubins, "Neither East nor West," 96-100.

Kundera is not alone in drawing attention to the liberating qualities exile-as-elsewhere entails. Boym, for instance, posits that exile and the émigré experience create a unique situation in which an "[i]nability to return home is both a personal tragedy and an enabling force".[769] Boym recognises that negotiating the tribulations of exile can occasion further suffering, yet emphasises the potential freedoms it similarly elicits. Accordingly, Boym proposes recasting the conventional perception of exile: "instead of a poetics of exile, one should speak of the art of survival."[770] Andrey Gritsman reiterates Boym's sentiment of exile as survival when considering the specific situation of authors who left the Soviet Union in the third wave of immigration, which incorporates the period from "1970-2000 and on".[771] Gritsman suggests that the "transfer into a state of diaspora" necessitates "creat[ing] a place to live and not necessarily to suffer",[772] while Christine Brooke-Rose illuminates exile's potential not merely for survival, but for rebirth and growth. Brooke-Rose suggests that exile is a rejuvenating experience, "an immense force for liberation, for extra distance, for automatically developing contrasting structures in one's head, not just syntactic and lexical, but social and psychological."[773] Beyond the demands of broaching linguistic differences, in Brooke-Rose's view exile occasions personal development. Indeed, negotiating new social conventions requires mediating new experiences of self and other in order to evaluate the world from a broadened perspective unknown in the non-exilic experience. Common to these scholarly reflections is their mutual consideration of exile as a form of survival and, moreover, potential creativity. Far from "a falling away from some original wholeness", exile might also be, as Suleiman intimates, "a cause for optimism".[774]

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[767] Vera Linhartova, quoted in Kundera, "L'exil libérateur" 146-147.
[768] Kundera, "L'exil libérateur" 147.
[769] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 252.
[770] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 256.
[771] Andrey Gritsman, "Invisible Empire: Contemporary Russian Literature in Diaspora," *Landfall*, no. 213 (2007): 141.
[772] Gritsman, "Invisible Empire," 141.
[773] Christine Brooke-Rose, "Exsul," in *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*, ed. Suleiman, (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1998), 19.
[774] Suleiman, "Introduction," 1.

The undefined "ailleurs" of exile is, indeed, the key to its capacity to develop into a liberating force. In the adumbration of Choutov's Parisian experience, Makine illustrates that the elsewhere of exile can be alienating. Only in the novel's denouement does Makine suggest that it is also liberating. When Choutov appreciates that he is travelling "de nulle part vers nulle part" (*VHI*, 285), he experiences the liberating elsewhere of exile that Kundera evokes. Indeed, with Choutov's insight established, the protagonist's nostalgic homecoming is transformed into an act of leave-taking. In Makine's literary vision, Choutov's leave-taking entails farewelling the stifling endurance the Eastern homeland holds over his consciousness. Tellingly, then, upon returning to France, Choutov discovers the fallibility of memory. Rereading Chekhov's novella "[il] découvre que son souvenir a beaucoup modifié l'intrigue" (*VHI*, 289). By leaving Russia Choutov gains the necessary perspective to re-evaluate his exilic state, his notion of home and, ultimately, himself.

In the novel's denouement Makine indicates that Choutov's release from the haunting grasp of false homes and his subsequent transition into future freedoms will be realised through the creative act of writing. Having returned to Russia on a second occasion after learning of Volski's death, Choutov wanders through the cemetery in which the veteran is buried. He is astonished that so many headstones bear only a single marker of identity: "tantôt 'f.i', tantôt 'h.i'" (*VHI*, 291), designating either "'[f]emme inconnu' [ou] 'homme inconnu'" (*VHI*, 291). Troubled by the extent of unknown lives, Choutov resolves to return, "pour mettre sur la tombe de Volski une stèle avec son nom complet, la date de sa naissance et celle de sa mort" (*VHI*, 292). Yet, Choutov's realisation that this commemorative act cannot appropriately encapsulate "une existence humaine" (*VHI*, 292) finds poetic expression in his final decision to incorporate these untold lives into his fiction: "[c]e qu'il faudra écrire, c'est juste cela: ces 'femmes inconnus' et ces 'hommes inconnus' qui s'aimaient et dont la parole est restée muette" (*VHI*, 292). That Makine envisions this act as having restorative potential for Choutov's broken self is evident when, afterwards, Choutov glances towards the sky: "[I]l aperçoit la ligne légèrement brumeuse du golfe de Finlande. Il n'a jamais encore vu, d'un seul regard, tant de ciel" (*VHI*, 293). The sky is a symbol of hope in Makine's fiction. For readers familiar with Makine's early writing, the image recalls the future freedom Makine evokes through the same symbol in his 1991 novel, *Confession*: the vertical sky towards which Kim and Arkadi look beyond the courtyard's Passage and which "[les] rend[ent] heureux" (*CPDD*, 43). Accordingly, by offering Choutov this celestial vision of hope, in which his spatial, temporal, corporeal and cerebral homes fuse in the distant horizon, Makine indicates that his protagonist has discovered a new space of belonging, beyond the confines of either East or West.

A shift in Makine's overarching literary vision is detected in *La Vie*. Choutov's intention to encapsulate a human life that extends beyond Russian and Soviet stories reinforces that shift. For instance, Choutov envisions writing about the Frenchman Henri, "[le] vieil homme du Café de la Gare" (*VHI*, 34), whom he meets in Léa's hometown at the novel's start.[775] Indeed, a humanistic turn, grounded in ephemeral understandings of home, belonging and the human condition, characterises Makine's recent writing. Yet, Duffy overlooks this aspect when she proposes that Choutov "leaves Russia with a renewed sense of duty to save *the Soviet Union* from misrepresentation and oblivion."[776] It is human life, rather than a disintegrated political entity that Choutov and, by extension, Makine, seeks to salvage. Indeed, five years later, in 2014, Makine pursues his protagonist's resolve by publishing *Le pays du lieutenant Schreiber*,[777] an account of French-Jewish war veteran Jean-Claude Servan Schreiber's life. In *La Vie*, then, Makine foreshadows his authorial resolve to narrate, through a creative work of art, no longer the Russian condition, but indeed the human condition.

Le Livre de brèves amours éternelles: Leave-taking

In *La Vie* Makine explores the notion of home and belonging primarily through the motif of homecoming, yet in *Brèves amours*, published two years later in 2011, he pursues his interest in his characters' construction of home through the motif of leave-taking. At the same time, leave-taking is a starting point for Makine to pursue new directions in narrative form. The first indications of Makine's personal act of literary leave-taking are evident already in *La Vie*, in its departure, primarily, from the powerful structuring element of East-West and, more discreetly, from the influence Soviet stories have held over his literary vision. In *Brèves amours*, Makine's leave-taking from the Soviet past is more explicit. Still writing within an East-West framework, where the narrative unfolds against the backdrop of a disintegrating empire, Makine experiments with the commingling and near-dissolution of the fundamental structural aspects of East-West to narrate a new story. Rather than continuing to explore the Russian condition as told through a Western frame, Makine illustrates how a human life might be captured through the bias of its loves and losses. Although Makine's transition from Russia's Soviet past as the locus of the unnamed narrator's belonging is subtle, the shifting emphasis of his prevailing literary resolve is pervasive: to consider the human condition and the human capacity for love.

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[775] See Makine, *La Vie*, 32-35.

[776] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 168 (emphasis added).

[777] Andreï Makine, *Le Pays du lieutenant Schreiber* (Paris: Éditions Points, 2014).

In the vision of home that Makine develops in *Brèves amours*, he emphasises the ephemeral aspects that constitute the essence of belonging. The novel's narrative focus coupled with its non-linear structural lay-out reinforce the idea that brief, passing moments of pleasure, as opposed to a fixed location of belonging, constitute the core of Makine's understanding of home. The unnamed narrator writes:

> Notre erreur fatale est de chercher des paradis pérennes. Des plaisirs qui ne s'usent pas, des attachements persistants [...]. Cette obsession de la durée nous fait manquer tant de paradis fugaces, les seuls que nous puissions approcher au cours de notre fulgurant trajet de mortels. Leurs éblouissements surgissent dans des lieux souvent si humbles et éphémères que nous refusons de nous y attarder. Nous préférons bâtir nos rêves avec les blocs granitiques des décennies. Nous nous croyons destinés à une longévité de statues. (*LBAE*, 81)

Through his narrator's concern regarding the human desire "de chercher des paradis pérennes" and "[d]es plaisirs qui ne s'usent pas" Makine suggests that the essence of home and belonging exists, paradoxically, in its impermanence and transience. That the novel consists of eight episodic fragments, each recalling a significant event in the narrator's life, mirrors this sentiment: each section is "[un] paradis fugac[e]" safeguarded in memory.

From the novel's opening line, memory, in the form of a Soviet past, suffuses the narrator's Western present. The narrator writes: "[d]epuis ma jeunesse, le souvenir de cette coïncidence revient, à la fois insistant et évasif, telle une énigme dont on ne désespère pas de trouver le mot" (*LBAE*, 11). Memory transports the narrator and reader to "cette ville, dans le Nord russe" (*LBAE*, 11) in the period of late Soviet socialism. The Eastern – Soviet Russian – presence that is retained in *Brèves amours* is, on the surface, consistent with Makine's earlier writing. So too is the narrator's physical location in the West, France. Yet, to interpret the superimposition of an Eastern past onto a Western present as a sign of Makine's continued concern to explore, in *Brèves amours*, the Russian experience through a Western frame is erroneous. "Voici *les faits*" (*LBAE*, 11, *emphasis added*) the narrator stresses in the novel's second paragraph, before proceeding to list the background components and setting of his memory: a Russian village, a small park, springtime. As the narrator configures the elements that form the backdrop to memory, Makine discloses that the East-West construct is also merely one facet of the narrative detail, rather than constitutive of its essence. In *Brèves amours*, the East-West geography becomes a descriptive detail rather than a symbolic indicator.

The most vital aspect of the opening section of *Brèves amours* lies in the detail of the remembered incident, a passing encounter between the poet, philosopher and activist, Dmitri Ress and the only woman he would ever love. That Ress' unrequited love, as opposed to either the physical or symbolic setting, is key to the ensuing narrative is foretold, first, in the narrator's emphasis on "[l]a coïncidence – [l]a fuyante bizarrerie" (*LBAE*, 12) of the event, and second, in the fact that the encounter "s'inscrit incidemment en [lui] […] tout au long de [s]a vie" (*LBAE*, 12). Although the narrator's memory is elusive, it persists, repeatedly resurfacing over the course of his lifetime. Both of these aspects of memory are telling in that they foreshadow the notion of fleeting paradises that lies at the heart of Makine's narrative. Indeed, towards the end of the first section, the narrator admits that a succession of memories "revivent dans ma mémoire grâce à Ress […]. [I]l s'agit d'instants de tendresse très anciennement vécus, des instants d'amour que lui n'a pas eu le temps de vivre" (*LBAE*, 24-25). Ress' Soviet story, then, is evocative. It is an entry-point into the narrator's personal memory and past, without being symbolic of East-West tensions. A careful reading of the novel's opening section reveals that at the fore of Makine's literary vision in *Brèves amours* is the juxtaposition between love's ephemeral nature and its enduring presence over the course of a lifetime.

"[I]l ne reste plus rien de tout cela!":[778] *Inhabiting an Unbounded Present*

Brèves amours is essentially a narrative about leave-taking, implying a breakthrough or release from an impasse. Yet, memory and the past, which Makine attempts to overcome, play key roles. The manner by which Makine evokes these elements is what differentiates *Brèves amours* from his earlier novels. Rey suggests that in much of Makine's previous fiction memory and the past are "malade[s]".[779] In her analysis of Makine's work, it is suggested that "[l]'excès d'un passé malade dévore le présent. Car de roman en roman, jamais l'apaisement d'un travail de deuil qui permettrait de se délivrer de l'héritage de la haine et de se délier du passé."[780] Completed in 2006, Rey's analysis is based on a reading of Makine's oeuvre that extends only to *La Femme*. Her view is convincing: up to this point, Makine has been unable to shift beyond the process of grieving for the loss of the original homeland. Indeed, as I argue in Chapter One, Makine's characters are often unable to distance themselves from the past and its influence, and Rey notes that the first stirring of Makine's release from an all-consuming past only emerges following the publication of *La Femme*.[781] What renders *Brèves amours* so striking, then, is that for the first time in Makine's writing the past is no longer an affliction: it does not haunt the narrative.

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[778] Makine, *Brèves amours*, 50.

[779] Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 182.

[780] Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 182.

If Makine has overcome the sickness of memory, he still sees value in its role as part of the leave-taking process. When Suleiman writes about home, leave-taking and exile, she suggests that, regardless of how successfully émigrés manage to inhabit a second home, they will "occasionally cast backward glances at what they left behind".[782] Suleiman's sentiment calls to mind the convergence in *Brèves amours* between the novel's structural and formal aspects. Essentially, the novel is constructed around the unnamed émigré narrator's backward glances. Yet *Brèves amours* is not a narrative of loss or longing. The narrator does not dwell in the fleeting paradises of his past. Instead, in *Brèves amours*, Makine's overwhelming suggestion is that in the process of stitching together the transient paradises inhabited over the course of a lifetime, a site of homely belonging and intimacy is unearthed.

In *Brèves amours*, Makine's relationship to the past has matured. A temporal distancing occurs that allows Makine and his protagonist to bid farewell to the enduring presence of the Soviet motherland whilst still acknowledging its importance. Essentially, Makine illustrates that his protagonist is at a critical remove from his past:

> Le monde… Je me rappelle les cages d'acier où je m'étais débattu, enfant, sous les tribunes du défilé. Et les hiérarques mornes saluant la foule. Et les guerres, et les révolutions, et les promesses de liberté et de bonheur planétaires qu'on clamait d'Est en Ouest. L'idée me plonge dans un ébahissement sans bornes: *il ne reste plus rien de tout cela*!" (*LBAE*, 50, *emphasis added*)

The lines above, in which the narrator recognises the past as "a different place",[783] convey the level of autonomy he has attained in his present. Although the narrator struggled in "les cages d'acier" beneath the stands of a military parade – a greater metaphor for the communist regime – and despite believing in false promises of freedom and fraternal communality in a utopian future shaped by communist ideology, the pain of these memories does not inundate the narrator's recall. Instead, the most salient sentiment conveyed is the narrator's discovery –

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[781] Rey, "La nouvelle Babel," 185.
[782] Suleiman, "Introduction," 5.
[783] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1618.

and arguably Makine's – that "il ne reste plus rien de tout cela". If the remembered homeland has perished, rather than plunging the narrator into grief or bitterness – as is Choutov's initial response in *La Vie* – the recognition of its loss is at once startling and relieving. *Brèves amours*, Makine indicates, is about the narrator's spiritual rebirth as an individual untethered from, and no longer swallowed up by, an East-West, Cold War mentality or by the disintegration of the political entity in which his individual growth took place. The loss of the homeland, and the narrator's recognition of its loss, is devoid of pain.

Although the unnamed narrator's sense of belonging and identity is removed from the displacement occasioned by the loss of his Eastern past, a conundrum exists in that the narrative is composed almost entirely of episodes from his Soviet life. However, an essential element of the leave-taking process is Makine's acknowledgement that the subjective and the objective have broken form. In other words, Makine illustrates in *Brèves amours* that the protagonist's identity and belonging – his subjective experience of self – are no longer tied to the Soviet world in which that identity was originally sculpted, which includes the objective boundaries and structures of the socio-political paradigm of a Soviet morality. To demonstrate that the past is no longer consuming, however, it first needs to be evoked. To this end, Makine differentiates between how the past and present are narrated.

To achieve this, Makine's revival of the past is detailed and thorough. Each individual who has contributed to the narrator's formative years is assiduously described, located and briefly brought to life. First, each individual is named: Dmitri Ress, Maïa and her grandmother Alexandra Guerdt, Vitka and her mother Elsa, Léonora, Jorka, Kira and, finally, Piotr Glébov.[784] Second, each is linked to a specific time and space. These locations include various hamlets "dans ces régions de la Volga moyenne" (*LBAE*, 30) of the narrator's orphaned childhood and adolescence, the seaside resort "de la mer Noire" (*LBAE*, 105), Moscow and its outskirts, and Afghanistan. The attention Makine affords these aspects of the past suggests continuity between *Brèves amours* and *La Vie*: Makine's narrator is mirroring Choutov's resolve to "résumer une vie humaine" (*VHI*, 292). Moreover, the narrator's past and his stories are, like Fritzsche's conception of how nostalgia arranges the past, "bounded in time",[785] which is echoed in the novel's narrative lay-out: eight episodic fragments of memory contained within eight brief chapters. However, in *Brèves amours*, by anchoring the characters of the narrator's memory firmly in time and space, Makine indicates that his protagonist recognises "the permanence of their absence":[786] the narrator's memories are commemorative rather than evasive.

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[784] Dmitri Ress appears in the novel's first section, "L'infime minorité" (*LBAE*, 11-25: 12). Maïa and her grandmother are remembered in Part Three, "La femme qui a vu Lénine" (*LBAE*, 53-77: 68, 69). Vitka and her mother feature in Part Four, "Une doctrine éternellement vivante" (*LBAE*, 81-103: 88, 95). Léonora is the female protagonist of Part Five, "Les amants dans un vent nocturne" (*LBAE*, 105-127: 106). Jorka features in Part Six, "Un don de Dieu" (*LBAE*, 131-150: 134). Kira appears in Part Seven, "Les prisonniers de l'Éden" (*LBAE*, 153-178:159). She is also the young girl nicknamed "Chaperon Rouge" in the novel's second section, "Celle qui me libéra des symboles" (*LBAE*, 29-50). Piotr Glébov, with whom the narrator fought in Afghanistan, appears in the final section, "Le poète qui aida Dieu à aimer" (*LBAE*, 181-195: 183).

In contrast to his past, however, the narrator's present is unbounded. Makine keeps the particulars of the narrative present to a minimum: details of the narrator's identity – name, location, occupation – are sparse. Moreover, in the renegotiated East-West structural form of *Brèves amours* Makine also avoids anchoring the narrator's sense of belonging to the West.[787] Instead, Makine renders vague the story of the unnamed narrator's contemporary situation. For instance, when interviewed by a reporter from Berlin who writes for both Western and Russian papers,[788] neither the reason for the interview nor any further indication of the narrator's contemporary life are disclosed. Additionally, the narrator's movements are only fleetingly affixed to any single location. At one stage, the narrator states that he is in "[u]ne ville varoise, que je parcours, entre deux trains, en marchant un peu à l'aventure" (*LBAE*, 48). Alighting in the south of France, the narrator roams the streets of a French village where the lightness of his being is conveyed through the fact that he goes in search of adventure. The narrator exists primarily in a narrative present that by virtue of its immediacy negates deeper analysis: in the narrative's suspended present, East and West exist without symbolic significance.

In his description of the nineteenth-century awareness of time, Fritzsche evokes a poetic image of "strangers stranded in the present".[789] To this, Fritzsche adds the image of modernity extending "empathy" to these stranded strangers.[790] Despite the temporal gap, the temptation to see continuity between Fritzsche's modern, stranded stranger and Makine's unbounded, nameless narrator is strong. This is particularly so because Fritzsche extends his analysis of modernity, exile, nostalgia and the dislocated modern individual beyond the nineteenth century to "migrants, refugees and other twentieth-century travelers".[791] It is significant, then, that the narrator's passage through his past is always temporary: he never dwells in the spaces to which his memories return him. Not only does this emphasise that he has laid roots in the present, it illustrates that he has attained a level of historical self-awareness absent in many of Makine's previous characters. Thus, in *Brèves amours*, Makine has surmounted "the conflicts of his past",[792] an achievement evident in his ability to remove the narrator's identity and belonging from the conflicts of the Soviet era. Accordingly, the past assumes new meaning in *Brèves amours*. As Makine releases his protagonist into the present, the past becomes relevant primarily as a repository of intimate, if fleeting, experiences.

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[785] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1592.

[786] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1592.

[787] Although the symbolic geography of *Brèves amours* is barely perceptible, a subtle contrast between North and South emerges over the course of the narrative. The Russian episodes, for instance, take place predominantly in the North. In the French episodes, the narrator travels South. The novel's shifting geographical orientation finds its potential precursor in the harmonious Siberian idyll Makine creates in the far Northern Arkhangelsk region of European Russia in *La Femme*, analysed in Chapter Three. In Mirnoïé (a potential symbolic North), space and time coalesce in organic unity to illustrate the balanced quietude of Véra's constructed self.

[788] See Makine, *Brèves amours*, 174-175.

[789] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1592.

[790] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1592.

Makine's reorientation of the past in *Brèves amours*, from a sickness to a blessing, is significant to my interpretation of the novel as a narrative of leave-taking, and an indication of Makine's desire to tell new stories about the human condition rather than stories about the Russian experience. Going to great lengths to distance his narrator from disillusioned and fractured markers of identity, Makine is at his most serene in *Brèves amours*.[793] In *Confession* Kim despairs that "nous ne serons jamais des gens normaux" (*CPDD*, 17) and in *La Vie* Choutov is described by Léa as "une déflagration qui n'arrive pas à se faire entendre" (*VHI*, 13). In these examples from Makine's recent and early writing, the protagonists' contemporary experience of self with regard to their desired identity is marked by a tension that is primarily the result of the East-West conflict that Makine maintains within these novels. Yet, in *Brèves amours*, that same tension is lacking. Freeing his writing from the East-West tension enables Makine to focus on the harmonising elements of the narrator's life, "d[es] instants de tendresse très anciennement vécus, des instants d'amour" (*LBAE*, 25). Moreover, through the words of the character Ress, Makine suggests:

> Il y a aussi ceux qui ont la sagesse de s'arrêter dans une ruelle […] et de regarder la neige tomber, de voir une lampe qui s'est allumée dans une fenêtre, de humer la senteur du bois qui brûle. Cette sagesse, seule une infime minorité parmi nous sait la vivre. (*LBAE*, 23)

The narrator's unburdened remembering of his life's trajectory and his unhindered existence in the present is an example of such wisdom: he dwells in the time and space that he inhabits physically and psychologically. Yet, Ress' words also underscore Makine's authorial desire to seek out life's simple wisdoms and beauty through his writing.

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[791] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1603.

[792] Theis, "Makine's Postmodern Writing," 8.

[793] One reviewer suggests that in *Brèves amours* "Makine, apaisé, revient au meilleur de son art." See Frédérique Brehaut, "Makine en état de grâce," *Presse Océan*, 14 January, 2011.

Renewing Artistic Form: Leave-taking as a Creative Function

In *Brèves amours*, rather than creating scattered selves projected onto a relatively consistent symbolic geography, Makine works in reverse. His narrator's inner stability is juxtaposed against the disjointed elements of the narrative – the fragmented recall of memory – with the reader unable to anchor the narrator to a permanent location. The discontinuities in narrative structure simulate the discontinuities between past and present, a gap Makine emphasises to reinforce the theme of leave-taking. Moreover, as a consequence of detaching his protagonist from the past and denying him the opportunity to dwell in the false security of past spaces of belonging, Makine impels the narrator to act autonomously in the present. That the narrator is acting autonomously, outside the bounds of an East-West structural tension, calls to mind one of the most compelling discussions of leave-taking in a creative work: the Kretschmar lectures on musical theory and history in Thomas Mann's novel *Dr Faustus*.[794]

In the lecture Kretschmar gives on the Arietta theme in Beethoven's Piano Sonata Opus 111, the overriding suggestion is that the sonata form is no longer capable of encompassing within its objective boundaries the composer's expressive needs. The tension between the objective and the subjective forms of the piece slackens and, as the rift between the two widens in the second movement, the piece becomes an expression of leave-taking.[795] In his exposition, Kretschmar directs his listeners to the three-note motif in the sonata's second movement. The motif drifts above the extreme gulf between "bass and treble, between the right and the left hand",[796] freeing itself of the objective restrictions of the sonata form. In her astute analysis of Mann's novel, Evelyn Cobley interprets the dissonance between the subjective and objective forms Kretschmar evokes as part of Beethoven's underlying aspiration to create greater "subjective autonomy"[797] in the piece. Yet, as Kretschmar explains in *Dr Faustus*, the outcome is alienating: "the poor little motif seems to hover alone forsaken above a giddy yawning abyss [...] to which then succeeds a distressful making-of-itself small, a start of fear as it were, that such a thing could happen."[798] Once autonomy is achieved, Beethoven's lone motif suddenly realises that it has entered an unhomely sphere of abandonment. Cobley posits that "[a]t the moment when subjective autonomy seems to triumph in Beethoven's late style, sonata opus 111 tragically attests to the isolated composer's unacknowledged yearning for community."[799] That the moment is tragic lies in the fact that, despite the disquieting impact occasioned by the motif's departure, the gap between the subjective and objective elements is too great to be bridged. Beethoven abandons any attempt to unite them in a third and final movement and, following the completion of the second movement, the sonata ends. The "eternal farewell"[800] Kretschmar identifies in the denouement of Beethoven's sonata is the ultimate expression of leave-taking.

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[794] Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*, trans. Helene Lowe-Porter (London: Penguin, 1968).

[795] In the context of Mann's novel, Kretschmar's lecture foreshadows the need to take musical form to new levels. Primarily, it foreshadows the need for Adrian Leverkühn to achieve a musical breakthrough that will overcome the artistic shortcomings of his age, during the rise of German nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century, when musical composition has reached an impasse and traditional musical forms no longer beget meaningful works.

[796] Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, 56.

[797] Evelyn Cobley, "Avant-Garde Aesthetics and Fascist Politics: Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus and Theodor W. Adorno's 'Philosophy of Modern Music'," *New German Critique* 86 (2002): 59.

The parallel between what Makine attempts to overcome in *Brèves amours* and the act of leave-taking in Beethoven's piano sonata conveyed by the fictional Kretschmar in *Dr Faustus* is compelling. From the position of the subjective, expressive elements of Makine's narrative, the experience of his twenty-first century nameless narrator echoes the expressive tendencies of Beethoven's stranded motif. Both are free to act autonomously once liberated from formal structures of belonging: the motif from the sonata form, Makine's narrator from the socio-political structures of Soviet morality. Yet, a significant aspect distinguishes the two. Upon realising that his release from the structures of belonging has been accomplished, Makine's narrator suffers none of the anxiety that afflicts Beethoven's "poor little motif".[801] Additionally, rather than stimulating the longing for community that Cobley suggests Beethoven was seeking, Makine's narrator surmounts the staggering realisation that "il ne reste plus rien de tout cela" (*LBAE*, 50) primarily because his repository of intimate yet brief memories of love and life enables him to imagine alternative, future outcomes. Now able to imagine the "other presents and other possibilities"[802] that Fritzsche considers essential components of nostalgia's critical function, the narrator engages with new understandings of home, community and belonging. In *Brèves amours* Makine has created a character whose historical self-awareness imbues his relationship to the unbounded freedoms of his present with equanimity and security.

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[798] Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, 56.
[799] Cobley, "Avant-Garde Aesthetics," 59.
[800] Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, 57.
[801] Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, 56.
[802] See Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1592.

The narrator has mastered the art of what Fritzsche terms the “melancholy of nostalgia”.[803] Aware of the inconsistencies, disturbances and fissures, but also the joys, that constitute his past, the narrator is prepared to confront the admixture of uneasiness and freedom, and the new spheres of community, that will undoubtedly mark his present and his future. Having alighted from the train in the south of France, the narrator enters a cemetery where, “à l’abri du vent, il est possible de revenir à soi” (*LBAE*, 49). Inside, he observes a woman with “[u]n jeune visage, des yeux irisé de larmes” (*LBAE*, 49). Her face triggers the narrator’s recall of another woman from his past.[804] The confluence between the two female portraits, past and present, both of which express “[c]e reflet de douleur et de sérénité” (*LBAE*, 50), evinces the narrator’s empathy: “Je comprends qu’il s’agit d’un moment très fugace, et pourtant essentiel, dans la vie d’un être meurtri. Toute la peine est encore là, mais l’amour s’en libère déjà et vit, brièvement, dans sa vérité absolue” (*LBAE*, 50). Rather than emphasising the protagonist’s pain, Makine here demonstrates how his protagonist now recognises pain and love in another human. The extension of love beyond the bounds of the self is part of Makine’s desire to expand his fiction beyond an examination of the Russian experience into an exploration of the human condition. Thus he illustrates his characters’ capacity not only to experience pain, loss and desperation, but to recognise it amongst the strangers of their present and so share the trials of the twenty-first century human condition. It is significant therefore that, as she leaves the cemetery, “la femme [lui] sourit faiblement” (*LBAE*, 49). An intimate moment resonates between the two strangers. A burden is shared. By releasing his protagonist into the strangeness of a contemporary present where empathy nevertheless vibrates, Makine suggests that the limitations of the self and the temptation to withdraw into false securities of the past, or to drift anxiously in the present, can be overcome.

In *Brèves amours* Makine develops a new relationship to the stories he narrates and the characters he brings to life. This is evident in the lightness of the narrator’s sense of self, the shifting focus of Makine’s narrative outlook on the human condition, and the lack of narrative tension. None of the angst that afflicts Mitia’s progression towards adulthood in *Amour* exists in *Brèves amours*.[805] Indeed, *Brèves amours* is exceptional in the context of Makine's oeuvre because the fundamental question guiding the protagonist's passage through the narrative alters. Rather than asking what have I lost and where am I going, Makine's protagonist asks what have I gained and how did I arrive at where I am today? Astrid de Larminat suggests that by focusing on key moments in one man's life, Makine gives voice to his protagonist's spiritual development.[806] Her sentiment aligns with my understanding of Makine's maturing literary vision in *Brèves amours*. Having recovered from beneath the buried ashes of his past "de[s] paradis fugaces" (*LBAE,* 81) and "des instants d'amour (*LBAE,* 25), the narrator of *Brèves amours* realises that his belonging resonates in the intimate, divine fragments of life to which his thoughts turn. Home, Makine suggests in *Brèves amours*, is a spiritual concept.

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[803] Fritzsche, “Specters of History,” 1587.

[804] Early in the novel the narrator encounters a woman who has recently learned of her lover’s death. See Makine, *Brèves amours*, 42-45.

An Alternative Utopia beyond East and West? Writing Makine into Osmonde

Anna Funder recently wrote in a review of Australian author Jessica Anderson's 1978 novel *Tirra Lirra by the River* that Anderson believed "truly terrible subjects become bearable to us in art, because the art itself – the beauty of form – offers a kind of consolation."[807] For most of Makine's career the "truly terrible" subject of the Soviet experience has been made bearable because of the beauty of Makine's prose and the sensitivity with which he approaches his subject. In *Brèves amours*, the narrator considers that "[il] devrai[t] vomir ce passé, persifler les gens qui ont eu le malheur de le vivre" (*LBAE*, 167). Yet, despite acknowledging the awfulness of the Soviet system, he cannot ignore the fact that "dans le passé de ce pays qui s'en va pour toujours, il y a aussi notre enfance" (*LBAE*, 167). Makine suggests that to focus solely on the disordered reasoning that fuelled the development of the Soviet system, is to ignore the modicum of beauty that abides in the face of these perverse realities: from the intimacy of the narrator's memories of his loves and losses, to the undeniable beauty of the sterile apple orchard whose existence is senseless.[808] In *Brèves amours*, Makine farewells the "terrible" subject of the Soviet era, turning his focus instead to the beauty of the human condition and the human capacity for love. Scholar Mary Theis recognises that, in *Brèves amours*, Makine's "poetic vision [...] has blossomed".[809] She suggests that "Makine's desire to understand and somehow bridge the contradictions of a world based on hate, destruction, and death has led him to ground himself in the importance of love".[810] My analysis of Makine's recent fiction – *La Vie* and *Brèves amours* – accords with Theis' view and extends it further. If Makine's maturing literary vision is evident in his emphasis on love's capacity to bring quietude to an otherwise chaotic twenty-first century experience, so too does the dissipation of the East-West tension in *Brèves amours* attest to the stylistic evolution of Makine's prose.

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[805] A relatively recent publication, *Brèves amours* has received little scholarly attention. Amongst book reviewers, few recognise the novel as an act of leave-taking. Brehaut and Adrien Gombeaud, for example, both read the novel as a coming-of-age drama. Moreover, they maintain the default reading of Makine's fiction as built on a Cold-War, primarily Soviet-centred, tension that mirrors the protagonist's inner development. See Brehaut, "Makine en état de grâce."; Gombeaud, "Le dégel des sentiments," *Les Echos*, 8 February, 2011.

[806] Astrid de Larminat, "Quelques instances de grâce," *Le Figaro*, 17 February, 2011.

[807] Anna Funder, "Rooms of their Own: Anna Funder on Tirra Lirra by the River," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 17, 2015.

A lingering question nevertheless surfaces: does Makine's artistic composition convincingly convey his maturing literary vision? If the foundation of Makine's evolving literary vision is love, as opposed to "Soviet exploitation and repression",[811] then the form Makine works with is at times unsatisfying. For example, after recalling the story of "La femme qui a vu Lénine",[812] the narrator insists that "[t]out au long de ma vie, me souvenant d'Alexandra Guerdt, je ne pouvais pas l'imaginer malheureuse" (*LBAE*, 77). The narrator's memory slips towards subjectivity and the narrative is encumbered by overly sentimental prose:

> [U]ne profonde joie, calme et patiente, entourait ces lointains jours d'été, dans un village perdu où elle continuait à exister pour moi. À ce point que l'expression même du bonheur sur cette terre a fini par s'incarner dans une journée éteinte de juin, l'étendue pâle d'une vaste vallée aux herbes hautes et la course éperdue d'une toute jeune fille vers une femme âgée qui commençait à sourire doucement. (*LBAE*, 77)

Here, Makine's expression of love and happiness is associated with a pastoral paradise that is not entirely credible. Bathed in the fading light of a summer evening, "[le] village perdu" recalls Makine's earlier evocations of isolated hamlets of utopian serenity that exist in his symbolic Siberia, such as Katerina's abandoned village in *La Femme*, which is described as "la dernière frontière qui séparait l'existence humaine et le cosmos" (*FQA*, 123).[813] Yet, Makine's earlier recourse to symbolic geographies, which convincingly render his novelistic reality elastic, is diminished in *Brèves amours* because the narrative lacks the structural support of a well-defined symbolic geography. Consequently, in this scene, the narrator's memory is loosed and tends towards the type of nostalgia Susan Stewart calls "the desire for desire":[814] a utopian-centred nostalgia that is directed at "a past which has only ideological reality."[815] The tension between spatial symbolism and temporal planes necessary to convey convincingly the tenderness of the image is lacking and the vision of love Makine seeks to transmit is lost.

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[808] The sterile apple orchard on the outskirts of Moscow serves as the setting for Part Seven, "Les prisonniers de l'Éden". See Makine, *Brèves amours*, 153-178.
[809] Theis, "Makine's Postmodern Writing," 8.
[810] Theis, "Makine's Postmodern Writing," 8.
[811] Theis, "Makine's Postmodern Writing," 8.
[812] See Makine, *Brèves amours*, 53-77.
[813] See Makine, *La Femme*, 119-130.

Makine struggles in *Brèves amours* to find the appropriate form to relay his interest in narrating new stories. As a complete creative work of art, *Brèves amours* is unsuccessful because the subjective form of East-West that Makine continues to employ has become extraneous to the text's meaning: it is no longer capable of adapting to the demands of Makine's maturing literary aims. Arguably, Makine maintains his grasp on the East-West form to avoid alienating readers who have grown to expect a specific novel from him.[816] Despite its limitations, *Brèves amours*' significance, in the context of Makine's oeuvre, lies in its shifting subject matter. When Duffy proposed in 2011 that, in Makine's writing, the "peasant village is not only a past Arcadia but also a *future Utopia*"[817] she offered a perceptive analysis of how pastoral images, such as the one described in the passage above, potentially correlate to Makine's broader literary vision. In Duffy's view, the image demonstrates that Makine's literary vision is projected towards the future, away from the Soviet past and Soviet narratives. Yet, despite suggesting that Makine's pastoral image is "[i]mmune to Western-born ideologies, whether Communism or capitalism",[818] Duffy still anchors it in a Russian narrative. She proposes that Makine's past Arcadia/future Utopia "can offer a third way for *Russia*, one away from modernity, economic growth and military invasions, but ordered by organic morality, spirituality and respect for tradition."[819] Duffy's analysis is valuable, yet my view of Makine's recent writing diverges slightly. *Brèves amours* is a work of literary leave-taking. Accordingly, Makine's literary objective is pervaded by a growing desire to explore existential questions of what it means to be human, *removed* from his previous focus on the Russian question. Makine's more recent writing indicates that he is suggesting a third way, not for Russia but for humankind.

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[814] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore; London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 23.

[815] Stewart, *On Longing*, 23.

[816] In his earlier novel *L'Amour humain* (2006), which is set predominantly in Angola, Makine departs from the European setting characteristic of his narratives. However, *L'Amour humain* is notably absent from scholarly reviews of Makine's writing, suggesting that it failed to resonate with readers. A lack of thematic consistency with the overarching aim of this thesis prevents a comparative analysis of *L'Amour human* and *Brèves amours*. Nevertheless, both novels follow similar thematic lines and attest to Makine's shifting literary vision. See Makine, *L'Amour humain*.

[817] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 168 (emphasis added).

[818] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 168.

[819] Duffy, "Grandmothers and Uncles," 168 (emphasis added).

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the utopian elements that Makine hints at in *La Vie* and incorporates in *Brèves amours* are anchored in his humanist vision, freed from the socio-political undercurrents of Soviet history on which his writing has hitherto hinged. Through the motifs of homecoming and leave-taking, Makine guides his readers through his and his protagonists' attempts "de maîtriser cette vie moderne, de ne pas s'y sentir dépassé" (*LBAE*, 183). If, for the majority of Makine's literary career, his protagonists are "malmené[s] par l'effondrement de l'URSS" (*LBAE*, 183) then, in his recent writing, Makine's protagonists cast off the shadows and injustices of their past: they seek belonging in the present. Significantly, Makine announced shortly after the publication of *Brèves amours* that, since 2001, he has been writing under a pseudonym: Gabriel Osmonde.[820] The question voiced by Makine's unnamed protagonist in *Brèves amours* – "Quel genre de société? Oui, quelle façon d'exister?" (*LBAE*, 168) – finds its potential answer in Makine's shedding of his East-West, Russian moniker. It is evident in Makine's belief, along with that of his narrator, that "[la] vie peut être radicalement différente" (*LBAE*, 168), which he voices through his writing as Osmonde.[821]

During our 2011 interview, Makine opined that in France he is often considered "l'écrivain français le plus russe".[822] He admitted that writing under the name of Osmonde allowed him "de ne pas être enfermé [...] d'aller beaucoup plus loin".[823] By experimenting with new artistic forms under a pseudonym Makine has been free to explore novel modes of narrating, structuring and expressing his literary vision. Gradually, he has allowed elements of his pseudonymous works and outlook to infiltrate his writing under the name of Makine. The acts of homecoming and leave-taking that mark out the singularity of *La Vie* and *Brèves amours* attest to a shift in Makine's literary form and structure. Indeed, by allowing his treasured memories of the past to be imbued with the vitality of new stories, Makine explores the limits of his established literary boundaries and of his reading public's expectations. Like Osmonde, Makine is now daring to go beyond ("au-delà") his creative limits.

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[820] See, for example, Astrid de Larminat, "Osmonde sort de l'ombre" *Le Figaro*, 31 March, 2011; Maïa de la Baume, "Who is Gabriel Osmonde? A French Literary Mystery is Solved," *The New York Times*, 1 April, 2011.

[821] Osmonde's most recent publication, *Alternaissance* (2011), set in the Western Australian desert, showcases the author's increasing concern to explore the metaphysical. The utopian society of the Diggers Foundation described therein allows Osmonde to engage directly with the utopian vision of communality that emerges in small enclaves of Makine's fiction. To date, Osmonde's publications include: *Alternaissance* (Paris: Pygmalion, 2011); *L'Œuvre de l'amour* (Paris: Pygmalion, 2006); *Les 20 000 femmes de la vie d'un homme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2004); *Le Voyage d'une femme qui n'avait plus peur de vieillir* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001). The new literary directions in Makine's writing evident in both the more recent novels that have been discussed in this chapter and in the works published under the pseudonym of Osmonde indicate that additional scholarly research is needed in order to address these turning points in Makine's career. Future research paths could be charted to consider some of the following questions: why did Makine choose to write under a pseudonym and what was he hoping to achieve in doing so? What are the guiding motifs of Osmonde's work and how do they differ, or coincide, with those of Makine's? In order to consider the major points of discrepancy and convergence between the two parallel bodies of work a fuller analysis of Makine's writing under Osmonde is necessary, which lies beyond the scope of the present discussion of East-West in Makine's oeuvre.

[822] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

[823] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

CONCLUSION

Makine's fiction is a testament to the power symbolic geographies hold as a mode of story-telling, allowing the solidity of landscape to be infused with the ephemeral matter of dreams and the imagination. From his first novels of the early 1990s through to his more recent fiction of 2011, Makine has fused real and imagined realms through recourse to the structural poles of East and West. He has traced his characters' quests for authenticity – their journey towards self-creation – across the plains of a symbolic geography. The art of Makine's literary fiction is such that over the course of his oeuvre, East-West has become intimately entwined in the spatial and temporal threads of narrative so that, to borrow from Bakhtin, time "thickens, takes on flesh" and space "becomes charged".[824] Increasingly, East-West assumes a mercurial density and fluidity in Makine's oeuvre, its iridescence reveals, in all its complexity and variegations, the crises and resolutions of a character's sense of self. East-West in Makine's fiction conveys more than the sum of its geographical bearings: it is a poetico-philosophical vision through which Makine's exploration of identity and its construction in Europe at the turn of the twenty-first century is conveyed.

In the early novels, *La Fille* and *Confession*, East-West functions as the most concrete expression of a socio-political reality in Makine's fiction. It is anchored in the historical reality of the closing stages of Europe's Cold War era. Yet, Makine challenges Cold War stereotypes associated with East and West, drawing the East – Soviet Russia – out of its image as a "shadowed lan[d] of backwardness"[825] and, likewise, dispelling the myth of the West's promised freedoms. In *Confession* Kim realises in Paris that believing he can become post-Soviet by re-fashioning himself as "Western and modern"[826] is an illusion: "[un] uniforme d'homme normal" (*CPDD*, 17) that offers little in the way of genuine change. Accordingly, and as I demonstrated in Chapter One, the identity narratives that Makine features in these works are generated by the novels' socio-political atmosphere: Makine's characters' crises of self are embedded in their confrontations with the sinews of Soviet socialism and the reality of its demise. This is evident in the characters' negotiations between individual notions of what it means to be Soviet and the state's prescribed directives (*La Fille*), and in their navigations through the murky transition from Soviet to post-Soviet understandings of self (*Confession*).

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[824] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 84.
[825] Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4.
[826] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 310.

In *La Fille*, Makine presents a devastating outlook for the state of his characters' identities at the confluence between family and national ties. The protagonists face crises for which Makine offers no resolution and no redemption. The sorrows of the impoverished father, Ivan, once lauded as a Soviet Hero, are transferred to the daughter, Olia, whose guileless, cosmopolitan curiosity for the West presages her later downfall. Through Ivan and Olia's individual stories, Makine depicts a cycle of desolation in which the tragedy of the Soviet experiment resounds. By contrast, in *Confession* Kim rediscovers, through memory and writing, and thus through the flesh-like thickness of time, the "ghostly remains"[827] of an eastern form of hope that survives in the spatial contours of his childhood home. When Kim realises that familial bonds are a stronger carrier of identity than the broken bonds of the Soviet state, he carries this knowledge into his Parisian present. In *Confession* Makine illustrates how the past can become, in Peter Fritzsche's terms, a form of "sightfulness":[828] a way of illuminating and enriching the present. Makine suggests that, rather than denying or attempting to forget the Soviet past, by recognising the continuity between past and present Kim may be able to remove the mask of borrowed expression that has become his Western, post-Soviet, and ultimately disillusioned, self.

Makine's initial engagement with the East-West structure reveals an author stumbling through the strangeness of a post-Soviet world, a portrait that is far removed from that of an author beguiled by the beauties of the West and of French culture and language as initially depicted by the media. Instead, the undertone of disappointment with the West that punctuates *La Fille* and *Confession*, and that persists in *Amour* and *Testament*, is an expression of Makine's and his characters' realisations that the West could never live up to the image that was fabricated in the Soviet imagination. When Makine thus fashions two mutually dependent literary motifs – Siberia and Paris – from the spatial terrains of East and West in *Amour* and *Testament*, he is seeking to understand the recently abolished Soviet world in greater depth. Through his characters' subtle resistance to official interpretations of socialist living, Makine considers how they create meaningful lives in an otherwise restrictive environment. As the experiences of Mitia (*Amour*) and Aliosha (*Testament*) demonstrate, to bear West in Makine's fiction becomes, paradoxically, a matter of seeking out and understanding themselves in light of their Soviet, Eastern reality. In effect, Makine uses the West to convey a specifically Soviet experience: it is a prism through which his protagonists' personal visions of and encounters with life inside their Eastern reality are refracted.

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[827] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1592.
[828] Fritzsche, "Specters of History," 1617.

If Makine views Russia and the East through a Western frame, he employs two interrelated approaches to convey the layering of his visual perspective. In *Amour*, he explores the essence of Mitia's identity and place in the world through recourse to Siberia's role as a poetic formula and literary motif in Russian cultural and literary history. Mitia is a Soviet adolescent on the cusp of adulthood whose eastern navigations through the poetic, romanticised landscape of Makine's snow-covered, symbolic Siberia charts his passage, literally, to the West and, metaphorically, towards adulthood and selfhood. In *Amour*, then, space and identity are fused into an all encompassing whole so that Siberia's physical presence echoes the psychological development of Makine's protagonist. For Makine, placing a character in Siberia is a matter congruent, at the micro-level, with how they envision their place within the structures of Soviet reality and, at the macro-level, with their existential position in the world. Makine's literary development of Siberia as a motif is underpinned by a persuasive notion of spatial symbolism: a philosophical awareness of how space mediates thought, arouses the imagination, and thereby forms identity.

In *Testament*, Makine continues to develop his spatial symbolism. Yet, the expansion of the Siberia motif into its Parisian form allows him to add historical breadth to Aliosha's story. Unlike Siberia, Paris is born not of landscape but of the cultural remnants of the past: the residual traces of historical time. The West Makine creates in *Testament* is an imagined realm, fashioned from the textual fabric of classic French prose and from foreign words that bring the beauty of Paris' architectural grandeur to life in Siberia's boundless expanse. That Paris' roots are grounded in the Siberian steppes where the grandmother's French tales unravel is a reminder that the essence of the Paris motif lies in its ability to give voice to a distinctively Soviet experience. Through the creation of an Imagined West Makine demonstrates how Aliosha explores, as was the case for many Soviet adolescents, the parameters of his self and society during late Soviet socialism. In *Testament*, Paris is a poetic formula that must be understood primarily as an extension of the possibilities of life engendered in the context of late socialist Russia.

The symbolic geography that underpins Makine's recourse to East-West as a literary structure and motif bolsters the individual character portraits to which the reader is exposed. In Makine's symbolic texts – *Amour*, *Le Crime*, *La Musique* and *La Femme* – East-West loses its dependency on socio-historical structures and Makine's writing grows increasingly metaphorical. As I argued in Chapter Three, past and present, time and space, real and imagined realms are subsumed into the East-West structure, which becomes a symbolic axis and psychological threshold. As Makine steers his characters towards the limits of their social spaces, movement across the East-West axis becomes a means for the author to convey a character's progression towards selfhood and authenticity. In the symbolic texts, Makine's characters embark on journeys that take them across the threshold of the seemingly impossible. East-West becomes a vehicle for Makine to explore his characters' individual psyches: to consider existential notions of identity.

Thus, in *Le Crime*, the East is a memory of pre-revolutionary Russia that is layered over the narrative's West, a secluded émigré pocket on Paris' eastern outskirts. Through Olga's transgression of bodily boundaries and family bonds, Makine explores her psychic deterioration. As the influx of Olga's memories of her past and her resultant symbolic Siberian impasse stall her personal development, her journey from East to West becomes an expression of her complete alienation: her failure to attain selfhood. In *La Musique*, however, a journey through Makine's mythopoetic Siberia becomes an act of rebirth for both Alexeï and the narrator, each of whom represents a different Soviet generation. Together, these characters transgress the limits of the symbolic Siberia in which Makine places them and, in contrast to Olga, leave having attained authenticity. In *La Femme*, a novel remarkable for its lack of movement, Makine expresses Véra's sense of self through the notion of stasis: the anti-journey. Yet, far from having created an introspective, stagnating character, Makine demonstrates how Véra's inner-equilibrium and quietude express an authentic life that is grounded in an idyllic East. Contrary to Olga's experience in Paris, Véra's notion of self is not overwhelmed and subsumed by her ties to the past, nor by her secluded pocket of life in Siberia's northern reaches. Instead, the organic unity with nature that marks Véra's Siberian stasis is indicative of her emancipation. In each of the symbolic novels, then, Makine explores different outcomes following his characters' journeys – in Véra's case her anti-journey – across the threshold of an East-West axis. In these texts, Makine's characters' navigations through a figurative East-West sphere express the plurality of the author's conception of individual identity and its construction. In refusing to allow either East or West to denote a fixed referent regarding the identity narratives explored, Makine reveals the variations and complexities that accompany his characters', and implicitly the human, quest for selfhood.

While Makine explores existential notions of identity in the symbolic texts, broadening his literary outlook to consider the human condition generally, as opposed to the prominent Russian and Soviet identity narratives of his earlier writing, his 2009 and 2011 novels are grounded in a more tangible recourse to the East-West structure and its cultural and identity-related elements. In *La Vie* and *Brèves amours* the heady symbolism of works such as *Le Crime*, *La Musique* and *La Femme* is subdued. Correspondingly, Makine desists from intense explorations of his characters' inner-worlds and, as I demonstrated in Chapter Four, experiments instead with the East-West structure. In *La Vie* Makine reverses the roles attributed to East and West. Choutov's former homeland, Soviet Russia, is now a re-imagined realm – a window onto the East that illuminates his fractured émigré identity in Paris. *La Vie* is in many respects a belated reply to Kim's concerns in *Confession* regarding his ability to settle into "le future incertain de [sa] vie cahoté[e]" (*CPDD*, 152) in the West. Makine's initial portrait of Choutov suggests that Kim's hope for his Western, post-Soviet future, where past and present would be reconciled, was fruitless: twenty years after leaving Soviet Russia Choutov is subsumed by his misplaced longing for an Eastern world that no longer exists. Yet, when Makine relocates his protagonist to contemporary Russia, reality and the imagination collide. Choutov must confront the idealised, inexistent source of his longing and learn how to live in his contemporary Parisian present. When he realises that he can bring past and present, East and West, together through the written word, Choutov's Russian homecoming is transformed into an act of leave-taking. No longer encumbered by dreams of an idealised East, he leaves contemporary Russia having been relieved of his Eastern longing and, undeceived, makes a westward journey home.

Makine also commits an act of leave-taking from his traditional story-telling process in *La Vie*: for the first time contemporary, post-Soviet Russia enters the pages of his fiction. In so doing, the tension that holds the East-West structure together in Makine's writing starts to wane. The slackening in structural form corresponds with Makine's intimation at the novel's end that he wants to imbue his fiction with new stories: to gently loosen his grip on the "precious old memories" of his "internal Russia",[829] which have hitherto informed his fiction. The notion finds continued expression in *Brèves amours* in which only a faint East-West outline guides the narrative. Indeed, Makine breaks form in *Brèves amours*: he bids farewell to the structural dominance of East-West. Although less successful in terms of Makine's portrayal of identity and its construction, the novel's significance to a study of Makine's oeuvre lies in its intimation that Makine's literary vision is evolving. As Makine's nameless narrator roams freely from North to South in contemporary France, snippets of his former Soviet life filter into his present. The ease with which the past is threaded into the narrator's present is at variance with its earlier role in Makine's novels as a source of anxiety, conflict, sentimental longing and attachment. In *Brèves amours*, a change in Makine's literary outlook arises. The author's earlier dependence on Soviet and Russian narratives wanes as his focus shifts to his character's contemporary condition in Europe, which is accompanied by newly emergent sources of anxiety. The intimation in *Brèves amours* is that Makine's literary vision will be shaped increasingly by the unbridled, albeit uncertain, freedoms of his characters' twenty-first century lives.

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[829] Fairweather, "Interview: Andreï Makine."

More recently in Makine's fiction, then, the significance of East-West to the stories he narrates at the level of character development has diminished. Yet, its role in influencing how the structural threads that tie Makine's narratives together – the layering of diverse temporal referents across an expansive spatial realm – remains unchanged. In short, the chronotopic dimensions through which Makine relays his stories, and that he has spent the past two decades refining predominantly through recourse to the East-West structure, have become integral to his fiction and for conveying his literary vision. In his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope of the Novel", Bakhtin argues that the literary artistic chronotope

> emerges as a centre for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. All the novel's abstract elements – philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect – gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imagining power of art to do its work.[830]

My examination of Makine's oeuvre has demonstrated how the "abstract elements" of Makine's writing have been enriched through the sharpening of his novels' chronotopic elements. Indeed, East-West is a conveyor of the novels' distinct chronotope that in turn renders tangible Makine's artistic sensibility and poetico-philosophical vision. The many permutations of the East-West structure ensure that the ideas informing and shaping Makine's art are faithfully conveyed; the modifications East-West has undergone over time thus reflect the evolution and maturation of Makine's literary vision.

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[830] Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 250.

Early in Makine's oeuvre, traces of a shift towards a more orchestrated confluence between spatial and temporal layering are in evidence. As I demonstrated in Chapter One, the flattened spatio-temporal layout of *La Fille*, which contains the most basic East-West structure in Makine's work, grows denser and richer in *Confession*, where Makine ascribes an increased metaphorical value to East-West. Accordingly, the spatio-temporal passage in *Confession* between 1990s Paris and 1970s Soviet Russia provides Makine with greater depth of material to explore his protagonist Kim's anxieties and freedoms, past and present states. Almost a decade later, in the symbolic novels, Makine's writing develops to such an extent that the novels' spatio-temporal elements register his characters' inner psyches. In *Le Crime* Olga's Parisian (Western) enclave metamorphoses into a symbolic Siberian (Eastern) impasse that discloses her alienation and loss of identity and, finally, conveys her psychic interiority and complete withdrawal from society. Over the course of his oeuvre, Makine has gradually been pushing the boundaries of East-West. Yet, he continues to draw on its original potential, which is to give form to the chronotopic dimensions of his narratives. For instance, in *Brèves amours*, and in the 2013 novel *Une Femme aimée*,[831] the suggestion is that Makine's poetico-philosophical vision is gravitating towards a shifting spatio-temporal axis that is no longer tethered between East and West, but between North and South. A carrier of Makine's storylines, East-West has been refashioned over time in order to expand into newly oriented geographical realms and spatio-temporal structures. As East-West expands and the chronotopic dimensions of Makine's fiction respond in kind, richer and more complex elements pervade Makine's writing, strengthening the aesthetics and philosophy of Makine's creative work.

The chronotopic dimensions of Makine's fiction are further enhanced by the notion of movement that is imparted through the East-West structure. Indeed, narrative movement is indispensable to Makine's ability to render corporeal and tactile his characters' stories of individual development: their past, present and future lives. In *La Fille* there is little chronotopic movement and East-West is a largely static entity. As a result, the characters live in a seemingly never-ending present: they cannot envision the ending of the Soviet structures that govern their lives. In *Testament*, by contrast, Makine bolsters the chronotopic aspects of his narrative, employs an increasingly metaphorical use of East-West and allows his protagonist to travel, metaphorically and literally, between Russia and France. The result is that Aliosha is enriched with an historical self-awareness. He starts to grasp how the past – his own and Charlotte's – defines his present and will accompany him into the uncertainties of an unknown future in Paris. The sense of movement between the past, present and future realities that the East-West structure imparts to Makine's fictional worlds, and the resultant expression of identity that movement conveys, offers distinctive insights into human nature, society and its development. Makine does not approach this passage as an historian, but as a writer and creator, constantly aware that he is considering his characters' and, by extension, the human condition within the parameters of imagined realms, where movement between time and space, past and present amplify the richness of every-day reality. Through the imaginative possibilities that literary fiction affords and in its uninterrupted realms, Makine has been able to draw on East-West to transform the fleeting and kaleidoscopic aspects of reality so as to explore the alternative, often unrealised potentials of a human life.

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[831] Andreï Makine, *Une Femme aimée* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2013).

In the Introduction to this study, I drew attention to Makine's musings on the art of literary fiction. According to the author, the singularity of literary creation lies in its ability to fuse dreams and the unbounded potential of the imagination in order to "créer un monde éternel".[832] Speaking more extensively about the creative process during our interview Makine suggested, additionally, that "être écrivain, être rêveur, être créateur, c'est toujours se battre contre les limites".[833] My analysis of the East-West thread in Makine's fiction has demonstrated that, since his early novels, Makine has sought to push the limits of his creative potential. Over time, East-West has come to represent more than the socio-political aspects of a Cold-War European world at the crossroads of its transition from a Soviet to a post-Soviet consciousness (*La Fille*, *Confession*). In equal measure, East-West has conveyed the crises of his characters' transitions from adolescence to adulthood (*Testament*, *Amour*), has signalled a character's complete loss of identity followed by his rebirth in new form (*La Musique*) and, in its waning, has seen Makine's characters' relieved of their post-Soviet anxieties and loosed into the unbounded freedoms of a still vaguely sketched twenty-first century life (*Brèves amours*).

The essence of East-West in Makine's oeuvre, then, lies in the richness and possibilities of life that it allows Makine to convey, even as the tension between the spatial and temporal planes it signifies wanes, mutates and is transformed. "Comment dépasser ce qu'on est?"[834] Makine asked during our interview, and how can literature broach this subject? An examination of East-West as a poetic form through which Makine conveys his literary vision is a solid starting point, for it lies at the threshold of real and imagined worlds; it has developed into a symbolic geography across which Makine charts his characters' search for self. The variegated forms East-West assumes in Makine's fiction have infused its structure with an elasticity that, in its tightening and slackening, has the capacity to explore that moment of "dépassement" that Makine was compelled to speak about during our interview. The East-West form conveys realities that elude the natural world, capturing and enriching Makine's, his characters' and the reader's imaginative capacities. Understood as a poetic formula, East-West in Makine's literary fiction charts a movement towards, and at times beyond, the limits of self, space and time.

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[832] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.
[833] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.
[834] Makine, *Interview by Ann Morgan*.

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