

**Title:** Literature and the Construction of Memory: Nina Berberova's *Roquenal*  
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In the literary life of Russian Paris of the 1930s, debates surrounding national identity became increasingly heated as conditions deteriorated in Europe. Literary critics and writers debated about the development of literature in exile. In her novella *Roquenal*, Nina Berberova depicts one young émigré's attempts to construct a sense of memory and identity through the tropes of Russian literature. Her young protagonist Boris projects images culled from Russian literature onto the background of a decaying French country estate.

In *Mif dvorianskogo gnezda*, Vasilii Shchukin explores a generalized and idealized image of the gentry estate which permeated Russian literary culture. This obsession with the doomed estate was particularly intense in late 19th century and early 20th century memoirs (Shchukin 141). The estate text, and its overtones of paradise lost, took on renewed significance for Russia Abroad. In the fictional memoir of *Roquenal*, Berberova provides a lyrical-polemical response to the accursed question of the proper role of Russian literature and memory in the development of a literature in exile. Boris longs for a homeland he knows only through literature. Through Boris, Berberova explores the émigré longing for Russia as a misrecognized longing for the past. The exile longs for the past and conflates that longing with his former home. This fundamentally backward-looking and nostalgic orientation dominates Boris's relationship to the chateau and the family. A rich web of literary references explores the relationship between literature and life, memory and the passage of time. The novella is a record of Boris's ultimately unsuccessful attempts to unite his literary homeland with his French reality.

Shchukin, Vasilii. *Mif dvorianskogo gnezda: geokul'turologicheskoe issledovanie po russkoi klassicheskoi literature*. Krakow: Wydawnictwo uniwersytetu jagiellońskiego, 1997.

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