

Title: Learning to Sing in a Strange Land: Disillusionment and the Remapping of Memory in Gaito Gazdanov's *An Evening with Claire*

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This paper will focus on the problem of reinterpreting memory in emigration as found in Russian émigré writer Gaito Gazdanov's novel *An Evening with Claire* (1930). Drawing on M. N. Sharubova's interpretation of *An Evening with Claire* as Gazdanov's attempt to come to terms with his own past and the collective experience of his generation, this paper suggests that the book is a metafictional novel about the process of writing a memoir.

The book has often been understood as a love story that attempts – successfully or unsuccessfully – to connect a series of tragic and chaotic life events. The view taken in this paper, however, is that the love story is discredited at the beginning of the book, and the ensuing narrative is actually the narrator's attempt to compose a new life story that is not centered on his naïve obsession with the heroine. While the book's storyline (*fabula*) comprises the story of the narrator's infatuation with the heroine, its plot (*sjuzhet*) chronicles the narrator's effort to compose a meaningful life story for himself after he discovers the hollowness of his obsession. The narrator proposes that life will seem significant and meaningful only if it can be described as a coherent story rather than a sequence of chaotic and essentially unrelated events. When unforeseen events discredit the life-narrative a person has used to make his or her life feel meaningful, a person must reinterpret his or her past, a process identified in the book with the metaphor of gluing together the shards of a broken map.

Works cited:

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