

The Myth of Stalingrad in Soviet Literature, 1942-1963

by

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Abstract

This study explores representations of the Battle of Stalingrad in Soviet literature between 1942 and 1963, asking how Stalingrad became central to Russian identity in this period. The work reads Stalingrad's cultural significance within a body of scholarship on Soviet subjectivity and memory of the Second World War.

My analysis begins with a survey of frontline newspaper stories, including material by Konstantin Simonov and previously unstudied stories by Vasily Grossman, which characterized the battle in eschatological terms. I then explore efforts to encode Stalingrad in epic form immediately following the battle and further chart how the story became a vehicle for Stalin's deification in the late 1940s by comparing Il'ia Ehrenburg's novel *The Storm* and minor works. I then show how Grossman's *For a Just Cause* links wartime and Stalinist motifs. Finally, I uncover how Simonov and Grossman rewrote Stalingrad during the Khrushchev period. Simonov's *Not Born Soldiers* suggested Stalingrad was a resurrection that could be repeated in the present; Grossman's *Life and Fate* disrupted the epic wholeness of the Stalingrad myth with polyphony.

Drawing on Frank Kermode's work on myth, I read representations of Stalingrad as being imbued with *kairotic* significance for a Russian nation attached to an historicist view of the world. This sense of *kairos* encouraged readers to sublimate their sense of self with History. The victory's "resurrection" of the nation provided the people and the regime with a new *raison-d'être* in the post-war years. For both, Stalingrad promised to resolve Soviet literature's struggle to illustrate an epic present, and formed a shared identity around memory of the battle.

I use Pierre Nora's work on *lieux de mémoire* as an analytical framework to trace Stalingrad's entry into national memory and the subsequent fluctuations in the battle's representation throughout the wartime, Stalinist and Khrushchev-era presents. The flexibility and externality of the *lieu* as a means to preserve and recycle collective memory overcame contradictions inherent in the idea of experiencing *kairos* in the present. Whether invoked to deify or deconstruct Stalin, Stalingrad was the discursive centre for Soviet discussion of the past.

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1. Introduction: The Dawn of a New Day

“Then hope was born. Stalingrad possessed hearts and minds. It became a word which meant hope, the nearing of a tantalizing goal and the dawn of a new day.” (Vera Panova, *The Fellow Travellers*, 1946)

According to Dominic Lieven, “war is the best breeding ground for the myths and memories around which societies and polities cohere. It provides unparalleled examples of heroism and sacrifice for the community, as well as striking examples of united action against a common external threat.”¹ Great Russian writers—Lomonosov, Derzhavin, Pushkin, Tolstoy—are inextricably linked with the authorship of the nation’s war myths. The story of the Battle of Stalingrad, fought against Nazi Germany in 1942-3 is twentieth century Russia’s great military myth. After a year of catastrophes had nearly led to the Soviet Union’s defeat, German forces, aiming to occupy Soviet oilfields in the Caucasus, rapidly advanced toward Stalingrad. By the early fall of 1942, the Wehrmacht and the Red Army were locked in street-to-street combat in Stalingrad. The city looked certain to be lost, a blow that would likely have led to the USSR’s defeat. An improbable Soviet counterattack launched on November 19, 1942 led to the encirclement of the German 6th Army in Stalingrad. By February 1943, the tattered remnants of the 6th Army surrendered. Within a few months, victory had been snatched from the jaws of defeat. The speed of the change in fortunes was inestimable: Soviet journalists covering the battle from the front described the victory at Stalingrad as a “miracle.”²

Well before the results of the November offensive became clear, though, the Soviet government had begun a campaign to paint Stalingrad as the “great turning point” (*velikii perelom*) that would lead to victory in the war. When the immensity of the strategic about-turn became clear, that “great turning point” acquired more than strategic significance. Its supposed consequence was a resurrection of the nation from the brink of death. Stalingrad was, according

¹ Dominic Lieven, “Tolstoy on War, Russia, and Empire,” in *Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in “War and Peace,”* ed. Donna Tussing Orwin and Rick McPeak (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 20.

² V.S. Grossman, “Zapisnye knizhki,” in *Gody voyny*, ed. E.V. Korotkova-Grossman (Moscow: Pravda, 1989). All translations from Russian are, unless otherwise indicated, my own.

to the Soviet newspapers, a genesis: “Soon a new life will emerge here. The great and glorious town on the Volga will be reborn!”³ The idea of the resurrection, often expressed as the “dawn of a new day”—as in my epigraph, taken from Vera Panova’s 1946 novel *The Fellow Travellers* (*Sputniki*)—dominated the Stalingrad text for the next two decades. The Stalingrad story suggested the possibility of a new beginning to counter the turbulent experiences of the previous decades and, above all, the brutal destruction of the war period. For the regime, Stalingrad provided the justification for its continued rule. For the entire nation, Stalingrad celebrated the overcoming of the Nazis’ threat not just to invade, but also to totally obliterate, the Soviet Union.

Writers, chief amongst them the novelists Konstantin Simonov and Vasily Grossman—relative unknowns at the outbreak of war who became journalists and covered Stalingrad from the front line, and the main figures in this study—strove to convey the story of resurrection in hundreds of short stories, novels and epics. The torrent of work on Stalingrad was far larger than that on other Second World War battles. Moreover, unlike other Soviet war narratives, whose appeal has paled over time, the myth of Stalingrad has a firm hold over the Russian national imagination even today.

Fedor Bondarchuk’s 2013 blockbuster film *Stalingrad*, for example, smashed box office record, while the public had mostly ignored other state-sponsored World War Two blockbusters. The film’s release prompted a wide and visceral public debate about the film’s “truthfulness.”⁴ Stalingrad, uniquely amongst twentieth century memories, has a special and personal appeal for today’s Russian readers and writers. Yet no major study has sought to explore literary representations of the battle: scholars have thoroughly explored the battle’s actual events and

³ E. Kriger, “Otvét Stalingrada,” *Izvestiia*, January 17, 1943.

⁴ The Putin government, which has increasingly emphasised national patriotic history (Elizabeth Wood, “Performing Memory: Vladimir Putin and the Celebration of WWII in Russia,” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, no. 38 [2011]), accorded *Stalingrad* the largest budget in domestic film history and took an active role in scripting and producing film. The film was the most successful domestic production in history (“‘Stalingrad’ ustanovil kassovyi rekord sredi rossiiskikh fil’mov,” *KM.ru*, October 15, 2013, <http://www.km.ru/kino/2013/10/15/kino-v-rossii/722889-stalingrad-ustanovil-kassovyi-rekord-sredi-rossiiskikh-kartin>). Professional critics and the public strenuously argued both for and against the film, basing their arguments on a culturally mediated understanding of what “Stalingrad” meant. One reviewer, for example, pans the movie’s dissimilarity to productions from her childhood. She names the film *Goriachii sneg* (*Hot Snow*, 1972) as a suitable work for imitation. (Marina Suranova, “‘Stalingrad’: Natsional’naia ideia ili pretenziia na ‘Oskar’?,” *Krasnoe Znamia*, accessed March 27, 2014, <http://komikz.ru/news/columnists/?id=11273>).

strategic implications, but mostly neglected its central role in Soviet self-understanding. I aim to fill that gap with this study, which examines the first two decades of Soviet literary representations of the Battle of Stalingrad.

Stalingrad and Soviet Identity

I set out to find out how a literary image of Stalingrad came to be a central part of a Russian identity constructed around a belief in an approaching utopian future. I ask how this was achieved in spite of the battle's links with Stalin's personality cult and the enormous death toll incurred in pursuit of victory. I dedicate chapters to wartime journalism, to a tension between Stalingrad as the people's victory and as Stalin's victory, to Grossman's 1952 novel *For a Just Cause*, and to the de-Stalinizing trends of the Thaw evidenced by the contrasting contents and fates of Simonov's and Grossman's early 1960s Stalingrad novels. Stalingrad, I will argue, was a rare moment in the Soviet period that easily appealed to wide swathes of the population and to the government alike. Accorded eschatological significance, memory of Stalingrad provided a means around which discussion and representation of the past, present and future could coalesce. Russians—my emphasis is on the Russian majority of the Soviet population since, as I will show, Russian motifs and tropes dominated the Stalingrad story—were prompted to read Stalingrad and orient their own life to history in a turbulent and rapidly changing society suffering from the traumas and schisms of revolution, terror, war and dictatorship.

As such, this study fits into a developing reassessment of the Soviet Union's cultural understanding of the war.⁵ It attempts to balance historical and cultural analysis to correct an

⁵ Much work has focused on understanding ordinary participants' view of war (Jochen Hellbeck, *Stalingrad: The City That Defeated the Third Reich*, 2015; Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945* [London: Faber, 2005]). Amir Weiner has suggested that the Second World War was seen as brinking the USSR closer to communism, exploring how ordinary Soviet citizens in Ukraine viewed official narratives of the war. Nina Tumarkin's *The Living & the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994) examines the Brezhnev government's use of the war as a means to justify its continued rule, and the popular reception of war narratives during the Brezhnev period. In *Russia: The Story of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), Gregory Carleton links representation of the war to a longer Russian tradition of national epic built around war. Recent Ph.D. theses have broached the topic include Adrienne Marie Harris, *The Myth of the Woman Warrior and World War II in Soviet Culture* (ProQuest, 2008); J. Brunstedt, "Forging Common Glories: Soviet Remembrance of the Second World War and the Limits of Russian Nationalism, 1960s-1991" (Ph.D., University of Oxford, 2011); Yan Mann, "Contested Memory: Writing the Great Patriotic War's Official

imbalance that has seen Stalingrad heavily studied by historians—especially military historians⁶—but largely ignored by cultural scholars, who have favoured analyses of individual authors' careers and works.⁷

I anticipate that my work, which explores Soviet collective understanding of temporality and history, will complement post-Soviet scholarship that has attempted to explore how Soviet citizens constructed a sense of selfhood.⁸ Jochen Hellbeck's work on diary writing in the 1930s has shown how citizens wanted to align their own experiences with a collective experience, often participating in all parts of the Soviet project in order to do so. Soviets were even willing to reinvent their own subjectivity in line with official norms away from the gaze of the authorities behind closed doors.⁹ Hellbeck's monograph on ordinary soldiers' recollections of Stalingrad demonstrates that this was true too of troops in 1942-3, who as I will show, rapidly began to speak of their own experiences using the language of literary narratives of the battle. Hellbeck notes, however, that Western and Russian scholarship alike still lacks "a clear picture of how Red Army soldiers fought, of the cultural impressions they brought to bear on the war, what

History During Khrushchev's Thaw" (Ph.D., Arizona State University, 2016). Lisa Kirschenbaum's work on Leningrad is perhaps the closest work to my own in them. It serves as a useful complement to the remainder of my work. See Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941-1995: Myth, Memories, and Monuments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁶ For detail on the military-strategic dimensions of the battle, see David M. Glantz, *To the Gates of Stalingrad: April-August 1942* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009); Glantz, *Armageddon in Stalingrad: September-November 1942* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009); Glantz, *Endgame at Stalingrad* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014); John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad: Stalin's War with Germany* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984); Erickson, *The Road to Berlin: Continuing the History of Stalin's War with Germany* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983); Edwin P. Hoyt, *199 Days: The Battle for Stalingrad* (New York: Forge, 1993).

⁷ Scholarly works that include lengthy sections on literary Stalingrad are Prokurova, *Podvig Stalingrad v zhizni i literature*; Prokurova, "K probleme dokumenta i fakta v literature o Stalingrade"; Ellis, *Evolution of a Russian Heretic*; Ellis, *The Damned and the Dead*; Bocharov, *Vasilii Grossman: Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba; Stalingrad erinnern*; Semen Lipkin, *Stalingrad Vasiliia Grossmana* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986).

⁸ For example, François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Oleg Gorbachev, "The Namedni Project and the Evolution of Nostalgia in Post-Soviet Russia," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 57, no. 3-4 (2015).

⁹ Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 4-6.

drove them as they fought [...] and what Stalingrad meant to them.”¹⁰ Fundamental questions about whether Russian or Soviet values motivated efforts during the war remain unanswered.¹¹ My study aims to develop Hellbeck’s and others’ scholarship to explore the considerable mark Stalingrad left on Russian collective memory in the two decades that followed the battle.

My readings of Stalingrad texts suggest that remnants of Russian nineteenth century religious discourse and culture mingled with Soviet conceptions of history and selfhood, which themselves had a Hegelian basis, in the production of the battle as one of the cornerstones of modern Russian identity.¹² Soviet officialdom encouraged its citizens to make sense of their self through a relationship with History, prompting them to conceive of themselves as “living in history”: an era of revolution, change and reformation.¹³ Irina Paperno argues that Russians used literature as a touchpoint to help them do this, a defining feature of nineteenth century Russian culture that continued to flourish even under Soviet control. Ordinary Russians throughout the Soviet period continued to interpret events through comparison with and allusion to landmarks of the literary nineteenth century, such as Alexander Herzen’s Hegelian *My Past and Thoughts*.¹⁴ Paperno explains that in a “culture that conceives of itself historically and eschatologically,” Soviet life stories tended “to derive their claim to significance from the catastrophic quality of personal experience.”¹⁵ This “sacrificial historicism,” as Alexander Etkind terms Paperno’s conception, was present in both high and low culture, and emerged in response to rupture and

¹⁰ Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 15-16.

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

¹² I am not the first to begin exploring how traces of the nineteenth century past continued to exist in the Russian psyche throughout the Soviet period. See, for example, Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

¹³ Rosalind Marsh, *Literature, History and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia, 1991-2006* (Peter Lang, 2007), 183. Soviet subjects felt that they “were living in historical time” (Mark D. Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution, 1905-1921* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017], 5). Jochen Hellbeck’s work on Stalingrad uses ideas adapted from Stephen Kotkin’s work to define self-understanding during the war as a product of Soviet discourse—a “party and society that reinforced each other” (*Stalingrad*, 20). From this starting point, I turn my attention to the specifically Russian elements of the Stalingrad narrative. Nonetheless, I do recognize that the authorities successfully encouraged some non-Russian populations across the USSR to “think of themselves as historical” subjects and engage in a process of Soviet subjectivization (Sigrid Rausing, *History, Memory, and Identity in Post-Soviet Estonia: The End of a Collective Farm* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 125).

¹⁴ Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience*, 14.

¹⁵ Ibid., xii, 160.

loss throughout the Soviet era. Etkind explains that this resembles a “sacrificial religion”: a Marxist Hegelian religion as a replacement for Christianity within the Russian-Soviet population.¹⁶

In spite of the authorities’ attempts to encourage the population to think of itself as “living in history,” the examples of Soviet subjectivity as a successful project to rewrite the self, and the widespread participation in the state’s projects, there were individuals throughout the 1920s and 1930s who interpreted official culture as a “violent reshaping” of the self, rather than a utopian harmonization between the self and History.¹⁷ My work suggests that Stalingrad was a text with profound Hegelian appeal to rival those of the nineteenth century. In spite of the many deaths sustained at Stalingrad, memory of the battle expressed in literature appealed to the Russian to sublimate the self, the Soviet state, and History without the need for “violent reshaping.” Even as the nation was being torn apart in war, Russian culture was surfacing in response to a worthwhile sacrifice—a “just cause,” to borrow the Soviet terminology, which promised to stave off total obliteration at the hands of Hitler’s Wehrmacht¹⁸—that summoned memories of the great turning points of the past. Literary Stalingrad was the centre about which these various memories and understandings of temporality were structured.

Socialist Realist literature was the chief means through which the government encouraged the population to shape their historical sense of self. Beginning with Lenin’s work on propaganda, successive policies placed extraordinary emphasis on developing written propaganda systems and national literacy.¹⁹ Socialist Realist writers were asked to show that

¹⁶ Alexander Etkind, “Review of Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience*,” *Times Literary Supplement*, June 11, 2010. The centrality of sacrifice to Russian narrative is explored in Gregory Carleton, “Victory in Death: Annihilation Narratives in Russia Today,” *History and Memory* 22, no. 1 (April 1, 2010).

¹⁷ For an introduction to those successful projects of self-creation, see Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*. Alexander Etkind elaborates on the limits of this phenomenon in “Soviet Subjectivity: Torture for the Sake of Salvation,” *Kritika*, no. 6.1 (2005).

¹⁸ Etkind, “Review of Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience*.” The Soviets had attempted to adopt a “sacrificial” myth in the rituals surrounding Lenin and the use of Pushkin’s death as an “archetype of national suffering” (Paul Debreczeny, *Social Functions of Literature: Alexander Pushkin and Russian Culture* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997], 48).

¹⁹ V.I. Lenin, “What Is to Be Done?,” in *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is to Be Done? In Context*, trans. Lars T. Lih (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006). For the development of literacy and propaganda, see Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the*

readers were living in a “heroic” or “monumental” present: “The writer of the new Soviet Russia should keep up with the revolution: from its heights he should examine everything around [...] I am not talking about representing only heroes [...] I am talking about the overall assessment of our epoch by the writer.”²⁰ The writer was thus asked to produce work that encouraged the reader to conceive of the present not just in historical, but in specifically *epic* terms. Stalingrad, the improbable, nation-saving turnaround, was an ideal representation of the epic significance of the present. From its earliest representations in the newspapers of 1942, the story was continually linked to a Russian epic national history: to Borodino and *War and Peace*, to the Battle of Kulikovo, to the medieval epic poem *The Lay of Igor’s Campaign*. Readers were asked to view the events of the present—and therefore their own existence—through comparison to these literary-historical turning points. If we use Gregory Nagy’s terms to broadly define the epic as “a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depend the fate of a tribe, or a nation, or [...] the human race,” we can see how the most basic elements of Stalingrad literature—its seriousness, focus on national and historical significance, and quasi-divine emphasis—err towards the epic.²¹

Yet contrarily, Soviet theory also obliged its authors to base their writing on documentary observations. In evidence of a legacy stemming from the avant-garde of the 1920s, Soviet theory suggested that “it was misguided and senseless to retain traditional art forms such as the novel, whose invented world had turned its back on the real one.”²² Authors were encouraged to “participate in the life” of their material by visiting and engaging with their subjects.²³ I will

Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

²⁰ As quoted in Elizabeth A. Papazian, “On the Margins of Literature: Mikhail Zoshchenko, Karel Polacek, and the Short Story” (Ph.D., Yale University, 2000). See also Arthur Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), Chapter 5, or Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 270.

²¹ Gregory Nagy, “Introduction to the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*,” in Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Knopf, 1992), v-xx.

²² Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 68.

²³ *Ibid.*

show how authors at Stalingrad, Grossman and Simonov amongst them, spent much of their time travelling to the city to interview participants for newspaper stories (much as Hellbeck's work shows historians doing the same in the aftermath of the heavier fighting). This documentary material, so incessantly reinvoked that it lost the sheen of the new and acquired the status of purely symbolic referent, provided the foundation for the subsequent Stalingrad story. Authors, both during the battle and after, were asked to blend the epic with the present in their writing, thus creating the sense that the present really was an unprecedented epoch.

Stalingrad would provide the evidence of epic events unfolding in the present. In literary terms, however, this meant that authors were asked to do the impossible: to blend the permanence and distance of the epic with the uncertainty of the novelistic present. The task was only made harder for Stalingrad writers when the outcome of the Second World War remained uncertain.²⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin's classification of the epic, which discusses the issue of epic temporality in detail, shows it as the ideal generic vehicle to describe Stalingrad, since it could affirm the "world-historical significance" of the battle—a tag applied in early Soviet coverage.²⁵ Furthermore, that significance could be conveyed within a literary system that strove to achieve "wholeness" and an "organic fullness."²⁶ The epic according to Bakhtin is monologic, since it lacks irony, disagreement, and subversiveness. Its generic traits are thus capable of repudiating the destructive and chaotic nature of wartime to show the reader a collective, unified life. Moreover, the epic conveys the traits that characterize the idea of Stalingrad as the turning point to herald a new era: "in the epic world view, "beginning," "first," "founder," "ancestor," "that which occurred earlier," and so forth are not merely temporal categories but *valorized* temporal categories, and valorized to an extreme degree."²⁷ The epic conveys a monologic sense of

²⁴ During war, the future typically seems distant or even completely impossible. Catherine McLoughlin, *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 117; Marzena Sokolowska-Paryz, *Reimagining the War Memorial, Reinterpreting the Great War: The Formats of British Commemorative Fiction* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 36.

²⁵ This epithet was widely used in coverage of the battle. See Vera Inber, "Vpered!," *Pravda*, September 30, 1942, 2; "Tovarishchu Stalinu ot boitsov, komandirov i politrabotnikov Stalingradskogo fronta," *Pravda*, November 6, 1942, 1.

²⁶ M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

absolute beginning that could illustrate Stalingrad as a miraculous resurrection with universal significance.

However, as Bakhtin shows, “epic” time is corrupted by “contact with the present”—just the sort of documentary evidence the Soviets required to show that the present really was epic. The present, argues Bakhtin, is the predominant temporality of the novel.²⁸ The epic, on the other hand, is defined by temporal boundedness: “The epic past is absolute and complete. It is as closed as a circle; inside it everything is finished, already over. There is no place in the epic world for any open-endedness, indecision, indeterminacy.”²⁹ The epic past is associated with tradition, with the sacred. Contrarily, the novel “parodies”; it is defined by its “indeterminacy” and “semantic open-endedness.”³⁰ Contact with the present, “in all its open-endedness,” threatens the absolute distance and clarity of the epic style. The undermining, polyphonic properties associated with the novel thus threaten not to build a collective identity, as Soviets wished to do around Stalingrad, but to break it apart by highlighting differences. Soviet writers continually wrestled with these contradictions, attempting to write a Stalingrad that was present, active and full of rejuvenating force, yet also promoted stability. Even in the early days of the battle’s journalistic coverage, authors were asked to show Stalingrad as both epic and in “contact with the present.”

The depiction of Soviet reality’s epic present was thus subject to what Katerina Clark terms a “modal schizophrenia:” the constant temporal contradictions created by simultaneously juxtaposing elements of the novelistic and epic. The writer was asked to simultaneously—impossibly—present “what is” (the novelistic) alongside “what ought to be” (the epic). The reader, meanwhile, ought to have found it impossible to totally sublimate their own experience of the present—their selfhood—with Soviet epic history. This, Clark argues, “was actually built into the definition of what was to be distinctive in Soviet Socialist Realism. It is especially apparent in the instructions Andrei Zhdanov gave writers in 1934 to show “a combination of the

²⁸ Ibid., 11.

²⁹ Ibid., 16.

³⁰ Ibid., 7.

most matter-of-fact, everyday reality, and the most heroic prospects.”³¹ Clark concludes by stating that the “present” was “emasculated by [the] absence of its most dynamic components” in the Socialist Realist form. This suggests that, in Clark’s understanding of Socialist Realism, the present was always subjugated to the epic as its “dynamic components”—open-endedness, irresolution, dialogue—were excised.

By studying literary representation of Stalingrad as a myth, I propose a means by which the qualities associated with representation of the documentary wartime present—open-endedness, irresolution—were able to intersect with epic temporality in Soviet literature. Work about the present, Bakhtin suggests, can be epic, but in reading it we “ignore the presentness of the present and the pastness of the past; ‘we are removing ourselves from the zone of ‘my time’.”³² How did the Soviets manage this when writing Stalingrad, without simply producing a distanced, inaccessible epic dressed up with the colour, but not the aura, of the present? Readers, I will show, were eager to believe that in Stalingrad, the epic and the present really did intersect. This belief stemmed from the battle’s—and Soviet culture’s—mythical underpinnings, and reveals underlying processes in the working of collective memory and identity in the Soviet Union.

The Myth of Stalingrad

The mythic qualities associated with Stalingrad were vital to the battle’s status as an interpretive tool for the Soviet reader eager to align their own self with an epic and heroic history. The resurrection motif associated with Stalingrad expresses, as in many myths, a turning point marking the end of one era and the beginning of another. In turn, that loaded the Stalingrad story with religious connotations, a fact that was particularly poignant when the story was expressed and consumed by Soviet citizens who still conceived of history through a Judeo-Christian lens.

The temporal status of Stalingrad’s turning point is what Frank Kermode in his work on

³¹ Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 37-9.

³² Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 14.

literary myth, which draws on a modern, critical reading of Christian theology, would describe as *kairos*. *Kairos* is “a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end.”³³ Kermode contends that myth strives to make man’s existence concordant with eschatological beginnings and ends. Myth establishes this concordance by assisting the reader to “imagine a significance for themselves [by making] objects in which everything is that exists in concord with everything else.”³⁴ The reader, living in a “waiting time,” *chronos*, finds in literature, and especially in literary myth, “patterns which, by the provision of an end [*kairos*] make possible a satisfying consonance with the origins and the middle.”³⁵ The reader who wishes, especially in response to the turbulence of modernity,³⁶ to connect everyday existence to eschatologically significant moments, would recognize Kermode’s *chronos* and *kairos*. In my case, that meant comprehending Stalingrad as a turning point from darkness to light, death to life.³⁷

Kermode discusses the renewed importance of the biblical *chronos*—*kairos* opposition to a modernity lacking the religiously inflected temporal certainties of previous centuries, suggesting that, “we need, for our obscure cultural ends, to observe distinctions between mere chronicity and times which are concordant and full.”³⁸ Although Kermode applies the terms to literature and myth stretching back into the ancient world, his work is informed by a particular twentieth century desire to impose human order on time that, as the influence of organized religion and its accompanying traditions receded, would otherwise remain unstructured. I link this effect in turn to the Soviet literary project’s ambition to dramatically recreate and restructure the Soviet’s inner

³³ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 47.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁶ Rather than Stephen Kotkin’s sense of “socialist modernity” as an anti-capitalist, anti-individualist antithesis to Western Europe, I mean by “modernity” the technological and societal upheavals experienced by populations in the early twentieth century that led to an uprooting from tradition and familiar ritual. See Michael David-Fox, “Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, no. 54 (2006).

³⁷ My understanding of myth departs from that given by Lisa Kirschenbaum in her work on Leningrad at this point. Like Kirschenbaum, however, I contend that myth is also “meant to suggest the shared narratives that give form and meaning to the recall of past experience,” and that myth is “imaginatively constructed.” Kirschenbaum, *The Siege of Leningrad*, 7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

and outer worlds.³⁹ Kermode's understanding of myth, then, gives me a way to understand how reading time through a modified legacy of Judeo-Christian theology—a Soviet Hegelianism—was a means to impose order on a chaotic experience of modernity. As I will point out throughout this study, Soviet culture consistently turned to religious cultural metaphors and tropes, rather than strict Marxism, to explain the experience of the twentieth century. Soviet readers, in turn, adopted a disparate collection of Orthodox, Hegelian and Marxist ideas to interpret their own experiences and, above all, Stalingrad.

That is particularly significant for Stalingrad's importance to the Soviet reader's experience of the past. Kermode suggests that, for the reader of any literary work willing to read time in those Judeo-Christian terms, *kairos* is more than a static point to which the believer orients their own existence. Suggesting that the resurrection of Christ is the fundamental *kairos*, Kermode argues that *kairos* can "rewrite" the entire past and present with its spirit. Christ "did change [the past], rewrote it, and in a new way fulfilled it. In the same way the End changes all, and produces, in what in relation to it is the past, these seasons, *kairoi*, historical moments of *intemporal* significance. The divine plot is the pattern of *kairoi* in relation to the End."⁴⁰ *Kairos*, then, fills the past with heretofore unforeseen significance: "the *kairos* transforms the past, validates Old Testament types and prophecies, establishes concords with origins as well as ends."⁴¹ The sense of *kairos* attached to Stalingrad is of the utmost significance for my argument, since it provides the means by which the present could be rewritten according to the epic/monumental demands of Soviet theory. Any moment, if meaningfully oriented to the victory at Stalingrad, could be filled with the aura of the *kairotic*: the suffering and arbitrary violence of the entire Soviet period could be read as necessary precursors to victory at Stalingrad; the present was therefore not "subjugated" to the absolute wholeness of epic, but resonant with a fulfilling

³⁹ Boris Groys has described Socialist Realism as a continuation of the modernist avant garde (Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. C. Rougle [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992]); Irina Gutkin sees Socialist Realism as the "culmination of a desire for cultural stability in the aftermath of a protracted revolutionary-period upheaval" (Irina Gutkin, *The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999], 4).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 48.

⁴¹ Ibid.

sense of meaning and futurity. The individual reader could easily locate consonance with the Soviet present and past through accessing the *kairos* of Stalingrad.

The potential for concordance between *chronos* and *kairos*, Kermode writes, makes myths the “agents of stability.”⁴² Soviet representations of Stalingrad thrived on this stability, which seemed to bring order to post-Revolutionary and post-war life. As I turn my attention to texts produced between 1942 and 1963, I note time and again the recurring presence of motifs from the earliest works: the places of fighting in the city, such as the Mamaev kurgan (a strategically significant hill in the city that saw heavy fighting) and the municipal Train Station; the river Volga and the crossing into the city; the dates of August 23, when the Luftwaffe bombed Stalingrad, and November 19, when the counterattack occurred; Tsaritsyn, the city’s former name and the location of a Civil War era victory led by Stalin; battles for individual houses conducted by “ordinary” Soviet heroes. The Stalingrad story endlessly repeats the motifs and tropes first used in 1942 not just because these were the government’s chosen propaganda motifs. Rather, each of these elements links the reading experience in the present to the wartime *kairos* and, therefore, offers to (re)write the reader’s own life with *kairotic* qualities that suggest a victorious and radiant future for the collective.

In spite of its purported atheism, Soviet culture turned on these *kairotic* events. Soviet political culture propelled historical events to the forefront of the national imagination as a means to create a stable national culture in an era of social turmoil. The importance of the “turning point” (*perelom*) was especially heavily emphasized. Official campaigns, newspapers, and literary works continually heralded major events—the Revolution, Civil War, Collectivization and so on—as what we might recognize as *kairotic*. The logic for this can be found in Marxism’s Hegelian roots, and in the Hegelian roots of the Russian population’s understanding of history. For all its opposition to religion, Bolshevism had emerged from religious thinking. Its origins in Hegelian and Marxist thought led it to adopt many of the philosophical and institutional structures of religion, providing a buttress against the loss of the

⁴² Ibid., 39.

sacred in the twentieth century.⁴³ Soviet Marxism, like Christianity, has at its core a messianic goal of transformation.⁴⁴ Hegelian thinking led to the Marxist replacement of God with History in the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ The Marxist rituals of Soviet culture belong to the twentieth century, but the Hegelian replacement of God predates the Revolutionary era. Nonetheless, as in the Christian tradition, a miraculous turning point in history was needed to make utopia possible.⁴⁶ The turning points of the Revolution, the Civil War, and now Stalingrad, were filled with *kairotic* significance for this Hegelian culture. Literary representations of Stalingrad, as I will show, were always loaded with eschatological significance. Readers throughout the period I examine could read Stalingrad as a total break with the past and the harbinger of a utopian future.

Soviet culture, in spite of its modernist and atheistic garb, always remained open toward this Hegelian-inspired, quasi-religious thinking. The Christian mentality of the ordinary Russian had easily been transposed into Hegelianism, and therefore might still have read Stalingrad as *kairotic*. Andrei Sinyavsky recognized that Socialist culture even in the 1960s appealed to the pre-ironic, classical era, rather than the era of the modern novel.⁴⁷ Modern literature and the novel threaten to fragment the individual's relationship from their historical surroundings. Stalingrad's epic, meanwhile, was an object of quasi-religious reverence. That remained true whether its memory invoked by the government or by writers who struggled with officialdom,

⁴³ Klaus-Georg Riegel, "Marxism-Leninism as Political Religion," in *Totalitarianism and Political Religions: Concepts for the Comparison of Dictatorships*, ed. Hans Maier and Michael Schäfer (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007). Hitler's Germany and Bolshevik Russia both employed variations of the fundamental elements of religion: ritual, communion, faith and a "mythical conscience." Jean-Pierre Sironneau, *Secularisation et Religions Politiques* (La Haye: Mouton, 1982), 527, 555.

⁴⁴ Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *Red Apocalypse: The Religious Evolution of Soviet Communism* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 3-4. Raymond Aron notes the "Judeo-Christian origins of the myth of the class elected through suffering for the redemption of humanity," and sees that "the mission of the proletariat, the end of prehistory thanks to the Revolution, the reign of liberty—it is easy to recognize the source of these ideas: the Messiah, the break with the past, the Kingdom of God" (Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, 66). Igal Halfin argues that Marxism directly aped religion (Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* [Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000], 39).

⁴⁵ Donna Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 15-16.

⁴⁶ This "echoes Old Testament concepts [...] regarding salvation through a linear concept" (Klinghoffer, *Red Apocalypse*, 82).

⁴⁷ Andrey Sinyavsky, *On Socialist Realism* (New York: Pantheon, 1960), 71-6.

such as Vasily Grossman, or Viktor Nekrasov, who wrote of the battle in broadly reverential tones even after he was exiled from the USSR in the 1970s.

The effect of the battle's *kairos* was so strong precisely because it was expressed without polyphony or irony. The Stalingrad story promised to stave off the chaos of modernity, the novelistic present, and thus give the individual a means to read turbulent experiences of the present as part of a move toward a brighter future. Claims that Stalingrad was a "time of Biblical miracles," or that the resurrection at Stalingrad was the achievement of "a holy end,"⁴⁸ were not just propagandistic window dressing.⁴⁹ They were an expression of a culture enthusiastically engaging with the theological connotations of mythical *kairos*.

For all that, why was Stalingrad, and not some other battle of the Second World War, the Civil War or the Revolution, so continually salient to Soviet identity in the post-war years? Indeed, official rhetoric of the pre-war era proclaimed that "the key redemptive event," the Revolution, had already taken place.⁵⁰ The present was supposedly, therefore, on the brink of a utopian future. However, the literary desire to colour the present with the utopian tomorrow—to paint the present as epic—inevitably highlighted a divide between reality and promise during the pre-war years.⁵¹ For many ordinary people, Socialist Realist temporality seemed distant and removed.⁵² The Revolution, for many readers, did not transform reality into utopia even though

⁴⁸ A.M. Samsonov, *Stalingradskaia Bitva* (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 487.

⁴⁹ "Goroda-geroi," *Pravda*, November 25, 1942.

⁵⁰ Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*, 9, 17.

⁵¹ I recognize the limits of reading the 1930s as an exclusively traumatic or unwelcome experience. Sheila Fitzpatrick has shown how even those struggling to obtain shelter and food may have looked to Stalin as a "benevolent deity" (Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], 42-3). Nonetheless, the sudden appearance of the "resurrection" at Stalingrad, charged in my reading with *kairotic* significance, promised a textual space within which multiple pasts of suffering, revolutionary fervour, and so on, could coalesce.

⁵² "Official attempts to focus attention on the coming radiant future represented a devaluation not only of the present, but of the past as well" (M. Keith Booker and Juraga Dubravka, *Bakhtin, Stalin, and Modern Russian Fiction: Carnival, Dialogism, and History* [Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995], 20). Literature, in its ritual aspect, lacked "resonance and multivalence of symbolism" (Debreczeny, *Social Functions of Literature*, 236). For more on the lack of appeal in Soviet propaganda forms, see Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*, 11.

many readers, as Hellbeck notes in his work on diary writers, went to extremes in the push towards making both reality and self-image utopian.⁵³

The Second World War was the regime's opportunity to stake its claim to be a national force that had saved the Soviet Union, humanity, and the world from history's greatest villains.⁵⁴ In the Stalingrad myth, Soviet power found a new, appealing event to accompany the memory of the Revolution as the great turning point in history. Stalingrad's *kairotic* qualities promised to rewrite the past as a necessary precursor to the monumental turning point at Stalingrad, and thus provide a new justification for the regime's continued hold on power. Literary Stalingrad created the chance to sublimate Russian and Soviet cultural heritages by looking to a concordant, utopian future. Stalingrad's "resurrection" miracle was a *kairotic* turning point that responded to the turbulence of the pre-war and wartime experiences.

Pierre Nora's work on *lieux de mémoire*, which while conceived as a project studying modern France has been hugely influential to scholarship on myriad national identities over the last three decades, gives me an analytical historiographical framework for exploring why an image of Stalingrad constructed in literature could rapidly become and remain such an important part of Russian identity in the twentieth century. At its most basic level, the *lieu de mémoire* is "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community."⁵⁵ Nora's framework is a means to explore a multiplicity of meanings for the Russian-Soviet community, centred around the "non-material" symbolic image of Stalingrad, to explore not "what actually happened" or "events themselves"—Stalingrad themes well covered by historians of military and political manoeuvres—but the "perpetual reuse" of the Stalingrad

⁵³ Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 2.

⁵⁴ This claim, buttressed by the repeated assertion that victory at Stalingrad was of "world-historical" significance, must also have emerged from the Soviet humanism and anti-fascism movements of the 1930s. Katerina Clark describes how two of the subjects of this study, Vasily Grossman and Il'ia Ehrenburg, pictured the war as "not essentially defined by Soviet space but [by] a more cosmopolitan, or more precisely a European, perspective" (Katerina Clark, "Ehrenburg and Grossman: Two Cosmopolitan Jewish Writers Reflect on Nazi Germany at War," *Kritika*, no. 10.1 [2009], 607).

⁵⁵ Pierre Nora, "From *Lieux de Mémoire* to Realms of Memory," in Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, eds. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press), Vol.1, xvii.

past, which is responsive to the present.⁵⁶ Nora's approach, then, allows me to see how Soviet Russians engaged with Stalingrad, using it to construct their identity, over two rapidly changing decades of post-war life. As a result, I can chart not just developments in the Stalingrad story. I can see how its *kairotic* qualities could respond to sociocultural and political changes and yet still be integrated into ordinary people's lives without the sense of dissonance associated with top-down government propaganda.

Nora argues that, due to social upheaval in the modern era, collective memory is no longer reproduced by "real environments of memory," namely societies that preserve a memory linked to everyday experience through tradition and ritual.⁵⁷ Instead, a "consciousness of a break with the past," of living in history, has replaced traditional rhythms of life.⁵⁸ Driven by the "will to remember," the sense that the past is being lost, memory is thus intently instilled in signs, traces and monumental objects: what Nora terms *lieux de mémoire*.⁵⁹ The *lieux* are vessels to preserve memory, places "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself."⁶⁰ Their function is "to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial."⁶¹ The *lieu de mémoire* thus materially manifests an imaginative, emotional bond that provides an "*a priori* frame of reference" for individual memory and acts for a community as "a unifying principle for the now-fragmented national idea."⁶² I argue that Stalingrad was for Soviet Russians just such a *lieu de mémoire*, and that as in Nora's French case studies, memory of Stalingrad was a means to organize the past in a society characterized by a rapid change. By 1942, the possibility of a Nazi victory threatened Soviet citizens with the total obliteration of culture, memory and the individual alike. If Kermode's ideas on myth provide me with the means to see how individuals might have conceived of the eschatological temporality

⁵⁶ Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989), 8. Here we can see Nora's work as a dialogic response to reading history through Marxist "superstructure" or as "solely a matter of power" (*Rethinking France*, trans. David P. Jordan, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), Vol.1, x).

⁵⁷ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶² *Ibid.*

associated with Stalingrad as a means to impart a retrospective logic to the past, Nora's work tells me how the message was constructed and reconstructed while remaining perpetually relevant.

Nora's work has only sporadically been applied to the Soviet context, and even then only to explore the *lieu de mémoire* as a physical representation of memory, where I consider Stalingrad as a symbolic event conveyed in textual forms.⁶³ Indeed, Nora himself has periodically contested the applicability of *lieux de mémoire* to non-French subjects. However, the desire to immortalize the Battle of Stalingrad, to give material (literary) form to an event not directly experienced by the population, and to make that form the crux of a collective consciousness, is evident throughout the two decade period I study. Indeed, describing *lieux de mémoire* centred on past events, Nora draws attention to those events that are "immediately charged with heavy symbolic meaning and that, at the moment of their occurring, seem like anticipated commemorations of themselves."⁶⁴ The interest from this perspective is not in what happened, but in how the event was presented and represented in memory. Stalingrad, from the very first days of the battle in August 1942, was eagerly memorialized and consumed across the nation as a moment of national unity. This experience, though, was always vicarious. Readers who had not been at the battle constructed their "memory" of the Stalingrad past through literary representations.

Indeed, in work from the 1970s that informed the later *lieux de mémoire* idea, Nora stressed that citizens in the twentieth century no longer engaged with the past through ritual and

⁶³ Scholarship on Nora and Soviet memory has tended to focus on monuments. See, for example, N. Schleifman, "Moscow's Victory Park: A Monumental Change," *History & Memory* 13, no. 2 (2001); Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, "Unraveling the Threads of History: Soviet-Era Monuments and Post-Soviet National Identity in Moscow," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92, no. 3 (2002); Jenelle Davis, "Marking Memory: Ambiguity and Amnesia in the Monument to Soviet Tank Crews in Prague," *Public Art Dialogue* 6, no. 1 (2016); Steven Maddox, "These Monuments Must Be Protected! The Stalinist Turn to the Past and Historic Preservation during the Blockade of Leningrad," *The Russian Review* 70, no. 4 (2011); Roma Sendyka, "Sites That Haunt," *East European Politics & Societies and Cultures* 30, no. 4 (2016). Notable exceptions that have briefly introduced Nora's work to subjects beyond monuments include Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941-1995: Myth, Memories, and Monuments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Dina Khapaeva, "Triumphant Memory of the Perpetrators: Putin's Politics of Re-Stalinization," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 49, no. 1 (2016); Slava Gerovitch, "'Why Are We Telling Lies?' the Creation of Soviet Space History Myths," *The Russian Review* 70, no. 3 (2011).

⁶⁴ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 22.

tradition, but through mass culture. Events, experienced not first-hand but through reading mass media, he writes, became a vital tool “for dealing with [...] mass participation in public life.”⁶⁵ Mass media, Nora argues, “democratize” events by allowing vicarious “participation” in an event “that takes place on an immediately public stage.”⁶⁶ The massive public interest in Stalingrad was less about the actual events than the idea of what was taking, or had taken, place on the “public stage”—that is, in a site external to the reader’s own experience. That lack of direct connection to the lived experience of the battle drove the desire to memorialize a past that might otherwise have disappeared from memory or altogether lost symbolic significance. The way to uncover how the reader understood their historical existence in relation to Stalingrad must be to explore consumption of a narrative constructed even as events were happening, not through historical studies of long-term social change.

Stalingrad is a perfect example of the kind of vicariously experienced, externalized mass media event that Nora describes. Initial public knowledge of the battle was created exclusively through the newspaper (which is the subject of this study’s second chapter). Even as the battle was barely beginning, the reader was told that it was of enormous historical importance. Vasily Grossman’s newspaper sketch *Na Volge* (*On the Volga*)—published on August 21, 1942, two days before the German assault on Stalingrad actually began—culminates in a series of calls to action that ends: “The fate of the *narod* [the people] is in our hands. We must hold out, we must be victorious!”⁶⁷ Even for the usually breathless, rabble rousing quality of Soviet coverage of the war, Grossman’s text is particularly insistent. Stalingrad was born as a mass media event, inviting readers to vicariously participate in its fighting even if they were behind the lines. Within weeks of victory, Stalingrad was already forming perceptions of time and Soviet patriotism: millions of readers rapidly engaged with the myth of Stalingrad where it took decades, for instance, for Borodino to reach the nineteenth century population beyond a small

⁶⁵ Nora, “The Return of the Event,” in *Histories: French Constructions of the Past: Postwar French Thought*, ed. Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt [New York: New Press, 1998], 431.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 429.

⁶⁷ V.S. Grossman, *On the Volga* (“Na Volge”), *Krasnaia zvezda*, August 21, 1942, 3. Note that throughout this study, I leave the Russian term *narod*—which roughly corresponds to “the people” or “the nation,” especially with regards to the Russian people—untranslated. Since *narod* is a term charged with national meaning, but the word *liudi*—simply “people”—is not, this approach leaves authors’ intentional usage of the word *narod* clear.

circle of upper-class readers. Over the following decades, textual treatment of Stalingrad continually urged vicarious participation in the “turning points” of the present as a means to recall this initial burst of memory.

Stalingrad was always of the reader’s “past,” if we understand, as per Bakhtin’s work, the past as a “temporally valorized,” rather than simply long lost, category. In literature, the battle was always coloured by a distant, epic temporality. It was deliberately isolated from the present, yet consistently drawn into that present. In this we see the commemorative aspect of Nora’s *lieux* in operation. Through the pre-war decades, the population experienced social upheavals, mass imprisonments and executions. The government devised concerted but only partially successful efforts to reconstruct identity around Bolshevism and then Stalin. By 1942, an enormous death toll and massive destruction of Russian territory added further turmoil to what was already a chaotic period. The memory and idea of Stalingrad, therefore, was an accessible recentering point to be seized with both hands.

Indeed, some evidence exists that Russians really did interpret their experiences at Stalingrad historically, reading their own lives through the lens of a history provided by official texts. One soldier, for example, used language lifted almost verbatim from the newspapers to describe the meeting of the Don and Stalingrad fronts after the November counterattack as “an unforgettable day,” and described the German surrender on February 2 in terms that stressed its historical importance: “You can consider 2:30pm a historical moment.”⁶⁸ Even direct participants could complement their own experiences by turning to the media representation of the battle. By 1942 the Soviet mass media was able to create a story that was experienced vicariously by the entire population. Later material, such as that I have seen in Simonov’s published correspondence and Grossman’s archived letters, which both cover the two-decade period of this study, suggests that ordinary readers were just as likely as professional writers, or soldiers on the ground in the war, to read their own lives through Stalingrad’s *kairos*.

To produce such a vicariously experienced event, however, created a dilemma for the authorities. As Nora explains, the presentness of an event’s media narrative threatens “a

⁶⁸ Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 345, 351.

disruption of the equilibrium” on which stable societies are based.⁶⁹ The present has a disruptive power that threatens the stability of established rhythms and, therefore, the incumbency of the ruling class. Accordingly, writes Nora, the forces of conservatism try to diminish the “corrosive power of novelty” by incorporating it into ritual.⁷⁰ In a brief comment on the communist world, Nora explains that, “vast regions of the world live under a regime in which the news never contains anything new. [...] No effort is spared to drain the news of anything that might endanger the institution purveying it.”⁷¹ The need for new events—for documentary records of the present, for proof that the Soviet present was historically significant—was thus counterbalanced by the sense that something new was happening. The Soviet newspapers throughout the thirties and during the war were packed with reports of new sociocultural developments. Described in epic terms, though, these occurrences never threatened to make the present unstable or the future unpredictable even though, thanks to the *lieu de mémoire*, they were always accessible in the present.

Nora thus draws our attention back to the basic epic/present paradox of Soviet temporality. In constructing and reconstructing individual subjectivity within the Russian-Soviet population, the regime had struggled to replace references to Herzen, Borodino and other pre-revolutionary histories and events, with those to new—Soviet—objects of comparison. Soviet culture lacked an event with perennial appeal and relevance, even if it had plenty—the Revolution, the Civil War, industrialization and collectivization—that had affected the entire population. However, since Russian identity still retained traces of a pre-twentieth century, religious understanding of history, and since the Soviet regime constructed much of its own Hegelian culture along religious lines, Stalingrad could be read as having *kairotic* qualities. Within the textual site of Stalingrad, the absorption of the present of 1942 into continually reiterated text promised to make the present epic, rather than destroying the epic with notes of the uncertain, disruptive present. Conceiving of Stalingrad as *lieu de mémoire* shows us how memory of the battle offered

⁶⁹ Nora, “The Return of the Event,” 431.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 430.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 431.

the historicist Soviets a means to access and realize a mythical reading of the present.⁷²

The remnants of pre-Soviet culture were thus vital to constructing a new Soviet collective identity around memory of Stalingrad, and in turn reinvigorating official Soviet mythology in the wake of the massive social changes of the 1930s and the trauma of the Second World War. Memories of the 19th century's Hegelianism and a pre-modern Russian messianism, of the people's "sacrificial historicism," of the experience of the present, and of an imagined future, coalesced in literary representations of Stalingrad: the *lieu de mémoire* was, just as in Nora's studies of modern French memory, a materialized gathering point for an anachronistic collection of national and religious tropes and traditions. "Memory" makes no hierarchical distinction between these temporalities. The historian, in Nora's albeit schematic sense of the word, would seek to impose a strict chronological order on them but, as is the case with Kermode's reading of myth, Nora sees time as unstructured until ordered by memory: Kermode's ideas, combined with Paperno's work on Russian historicism, reveal a glimpse of the way in which Soviet texts constructed a mythical representation of time for the ordinary reader. To start from that mythicism is to understand how state and individual narratives were constantly used and reused, structured and restructured, around Stalingrad.

Stalingrad, rather than the Battles of Moscow, Sevastopol, Kursk, the Siege of Leningrad—or any number of other Second World War clashes—became a nexus for historicism, religiosity and memory for a number of reasons.⁷³ Plenty of evidence suggests that the about-turn in November 1942 really did seem like a miracle to the Soviets. Military strategists both in the 1940s and subsequently have described the sheer improbability of the

⁷² Nora describes the birth of a "historiographical consciousness" in France as "perhaps the most tangible sign of the split between history and memory" ("Between Memory and History," 9). On Irina Paperno's evidence, traces of a "historical conscience" were widely present in Russia much earlier. Although I do not wish to digress to discuss the nature of collective memory in nineteenth century Russia, it suffices to point out the importance in Russia of that "sacrificial historicism," the acute awareness of Russia's past in the nation's collective identity, and the desire to organize time around an idea of the nation.

⁷³ The comparison with Leningrad certainly demands further investigation. For now, though, I suggest that while Leningrad was a test of human strength and will—the kinds of transformative, heroic behaviours encouraged of Soviets—Stalingrad was a site of actual fighting. This fact made it a more likely event to bear comparisons to heroic war epics of the past.

victory.⁷⁴ With the apparent spark of Providence at Stalingrad, the Soviet literary mixture of past and present, ritual repetition and new documentary observations, took on a new form. The wartime Soviet papers' steady stream of defeat and retreat was suddenly replaced with stories of a major triumph: within the space of Stalingrad's six months, almost-certain defeat was replaced by almost-certain victory.

Moreover, during this period the experience of the present actually came close to the epic. At the peak of destruction and loss in 1942, the Stalingrad "miracle" presented a means to reorient readers' collective understanding of and relationship to the dizzying events of the war. The desire to memorialize Stalingrad, at least amongst the writers and readers I study, was both more widespread and more united than that relating to other national events had been during the early Soviet decades. Stalingrad, unlike other sites, became a textual space open to the inclusion of memories of the past and present. By reading Stalingrad as *lieu de mémoire*, then, I argue that Stalingrad was a highly effective centerpiece for identity construction in the post-war era.

The ritual repetition of Stalingrad's foundational texts continually reinvigorated the sense that a future full of promise was about to arrive, while also diminishing the sense that the newness of Stalingrad's myriad representations threatened the status quo. Yet simultaneously that process—driven by the desire to write the "Stalingrad epic"—also bounded off the battle in a space that could be perpetually invoked in order to (re)form an understanding of the reader's own position in history. Events, like the epic, are bounded off, isolated in time: they begin and end at a defined time. But when events like Stalingrad are imbued with a sense of *kairos* and crystallized in an accessible, written form, there is no longer a need to literally make the present epic. At the turn of a page, *kairotic* qualities preserved in the text and now vicariously experienced could imbue the reader's own experience and historical understanding with a sense of future-oriented purpose. Stalingrad promised a concordant, complementary alignment of the individual and the collective.

Contrary to the idea that Soviet literature and readings of the past were foisted on an

⁷⁴ For a summary of strategists' opinions on the battle, see Geoffrey Roberts, *Victory at Stalingrad: The Battle that Changed History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), 181-197.

uninterested population, Soviet readers and writers thus turned to the Stalingrad *lieu de mémoire* as a means to supplement, not replace, earlier readings of both tsarist and Soviet historical events. The story's *kairotic* qualities promised not just to gather together and preserve strands of the past, but to rewrite and reconfigure that past. By doing so, what Irina Paperno describes as the "violent" separation of self and regime, of present and epic, could be overcome. The intent to use literary Stalingrad in this way is unmistakable. I will draw attention to a desire on the part of the regime, writers and (where possible) readers to read the self and the past through Stalingrad literature during and after the battle, during the story's Stalinist peak, and throughout the Khrushchev era. Looking to Stalingrad meant looking to align the individual and collective past, present, and future.

The Soviet reader, guided by what Alexander Etkind describes as their sense of sacrificial historicism, was eager to mediate their own relationship with the past—with History. The reader of 1942, however, lacked the direct experience of fighting at Stalingrad. Instead, the literary *lieu de mémoire* provided access to a repository of collective experience. That access involved activation of the reader's culturally transmitted knowledge of the past at the moment of reading. Readers were asked to co-create the Stalingrad text through the recognition of key phrases, tropes and motifs—the Mamaev kurgan, the Train Station, the Volga etc.—as part of the battle's sacred origins.⁷⁵ As they recognized these images, the reader was drawn into a vicarious experience of the past—a link between reader's present and epic past was briefly constructed at the moment of reading, filling the present with the sense of *kairos*. The striking repetition of a key body of motifs first published in the newspapers of 1942-3 thus provided a textual bridge to Stalingrad's *kairos* in later works. An experience of the battle—the mythic, *kairotic* experience—was accessible at any time. But, preserved in the *lieu de mémoire*, that myth was also isolated from the novelistic present's parodying and ironic action.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Nora recognizes the importance of semantic recollection to the moment of memory in the *lieu de mémoire*: "With an incontestable mark of truth, these collections presented their readers with the collective past as if they were living it themselves, *with the savor of the original language*" (Nora, "Memoirs of Men of State: From Commynes to de Gaulle," in *Rethinking France*, Vol.4, 406).

⁷⁶ Along parallel lines, Nora suggests that memory takes refuge in the *lieu de mémoire* from the historian's debunking, analytical process.

Thanks to the *lieu de mémoire*'s externality, the reader was encouraged to negate any contradiction between their biographical experiences, which rarely coincided with the mythic story of Stalingrad, and the narrative's epic qualities. Instead, memory of Stalingrad could be read as complementary and confirmatory. Thus the nurse who had inspired the heroine of Simonov's *Days and Nights (Dni i nochi, 1943)*, Ania Shchepenia/Shchepetia,⁷⁷ wrote to the author that her fictional namesake is true to life even though Simonov had imagined most of the character's words and experiences. Simonov had fictionalized material, but Shchepetia writes that he was "close" to describing her own recollections.⁷⁸ Shchepetia's letter shows how even literal recollection can seamlessly co-exist with the textual memory of Stalingrad.⁷⁹ The Russian reader was able to conceive of the texts I study as part of a collective memory that framed, rather than contradicting or overwriting, their own experience—although, as I will demonstrate in the final chapter of this dissertation, Vasily Grossman came to attack this perspective.

These features eased the tension between the present and epic past although, as I will show in my chapters focusing on post-battle representations, this tension always remained present. The contradictions between representing the documentary present and the Soviet epic present were overcome by appealing to a pre-ironic and religious conception of the world contained in an external, material form. I am not the first to suggest that Soviet culture had a deeper hold on the Russian imagination than has been traditionally imagined, nor the first to suggest that it appealed to pre-twentieth century culture. However, my study is the first to place the Stalingrad story into the context of Soviet belief and subjectivity and twentieth century memory, using Nora's work as a means to understand how that memory was preserved, experienced and reused in a way that did not apply to other Second World War battles.

⁷⁷ The nurse's real name, Shchepetia, was rendered as Shchepenia in Simonov's work due to a frontline telegraph operator's error (K.S. Simonov, *Raznye dni voyny* [Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1975], 156).

⁷⁸ K.S. Simonov, *Pis'ma o voine, 1943-1979* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), 173. Likewise, the author Mikhail Alekseev defended the "truth" of his Stalingrad work by its resemblance to "possible" stories from Stalingrad (Mikhail Alekseev, "Seiatel' i khranitel'," *Nash sovremennik*, no. 9 (1972), 100).

⁷⁹ This also recalls the willingness of British citizens to accept the co-existence of the myth of the Blitz and their own, often contradictory, recollections. See Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), 144.

Data Collection & Chapter Breakdown

By thinking of the Battle of Stalingrad as a *lieu de mémoire*, I am able to approach literary works not as evidence of what happened at Stalingrad but of how Soviets constructed their collective memory of the battle through mass media narratives, and particularly how individuals interacted with that memory in the present. I aim to chart the way that the idea of *kairos* dominated the Stalingrad story's reception, helped to resolve the dilemma between epic and novel, and therefore invited the reader to make sense of—to “rewrite”—the present through memory of Stalingrad. Therefore, I selected works for study on the basis not of literary merit or scholarly reputation, but of cultural prominence.

Indeed, I stress with my choice of material that Nora's focus with the concept of *lieux de mémoire* is not on great events, political figures, or the *longue durée*, but on the ways in which the past interacts with the subjective imagination in the present.⁸⁰ The *lieux de mémoire* are not merely spatial. Rather, the sense of *lieu* is equally figurative, signalling a gathering of temporalities around a singular physical or, as in my analysis, symbolic core. Here, then, the idea serves as an analytical tool to dissect representations and interpretations of *kairos* and *chronos*, and epic and present temporal planes. The meaning the *lieux de mémoire* convey, moreover, is not innate: “contrary to historical objects,” they are “exclusively self-referential signs.”⁸¹ Their meaning thus depends on the reader's cultural expectations and milieu—in this case, their changing attitude to and knowledge of Stalingrad and the Soviet past—and shifts over time.⁸² Nora's study of *lieux de mémoire* is based not on the idea of a single history, but on “countless histories” produced by the subjective context in which a cultural artifact is read, which echoes my interest in the ways that Soviets read their own lives through a mythic narrative of Stalingrad.⁸³

⁸⁰ Nora explains that the historian of the present “consciously brings out the presence of the past in the present rather than unconsciously imposing the present on the past” (Nora, “The Return of the Event,” xxv).

⁸¹ Representations

⁸² Nora explores the shifting of memory over time in a *lieu de mémoire* in his own entry in *Rethinking France*, Vol.1, “Memoirs of Men of State: From Comynnes to de Gaulle.”

⁸³ Jordan, “Introduction,” xxviii.

I thus sought to find a representative group of works that could chart how Stalingrad was imbued with properties that I recognize as *kairotic*, and which motifs, tropes and ideas conveyed those properties most effectively. I began with a comprehensive survey that sought to determine which were the works most likely to have contributed to collective memory of the battle—the most well read and the most published works—alongside an illustrative selection of minor works that would demonstrate the discursive links between literary representations of Stalingrad. This thematic approach is completely novel for tackling Stalingrad as a part of a collective memory.

Using the *ezhegodniki* of works published in Russia, internet bibliographies, online search tools, and a survey of four major journals (*Novyi mir*, *Znamia*, *Druzhba narodov* and *Zvezda*), I gathered publication data for every Stalingrad work I could find from 1942 until 2013. I catalogued books' years of publication and any republications, and size of print run, alongside data for the sum total of all publications each year—a useful yardstick to measure the relative importance of Stalingrad in print culture. I discounted works that contained only a passing mention (or mentions) of the battle.⁸⁴ It would have been almost impossible to find every such work, irreparably skewing the vital comparative aspect of the results.

This approach led to my first significant contributions to scholarship, which can be found in the Appendix of this dissertation: (1) A bibliography of Stalingrad works is the most comprehensive list of Stalingrad publications available in either English or Russian; (2) Charts record the most published Stalingrad works by print run and total number of reprints; (3) Graphs give a broad overview of when the Stalingrad story peaked in terms of publication numbers, and thus both a comparative sense of the story's prominence amongst Soviet literature as a whole and the peaks and troughs of the *lieu de mémoire*'s (re)appearance in the present. The Appendix provides a valuable resource of primary source material and data for further research into Stalingrad.

⁸⁴ I counted this as less than ten mentions of “Stalingrad” or one of its synonyms (“the battle on the Volga,” “the epic on the Volga” etc.)

Although there was occasionally a paucity of data available,⁸⁵ the results give some insight into what readers (and writers) were most likely to have read, and a rough indication of what narratives of Stalingrad the government was trying to promulgate. As such, I was able to select works for detailed study without simply turning to works by those authors that Western and literary scholars recognize as the most talented. Consulting the charts in the Appendix, you can see that the works analyzed in the following chapters include the most popular and influential texts in the two-decade period between 1942 and 1963. The study as a whole, therefore, gives a fair indication of what would have shaped Soviet readers' understanding of Stalingrad.

The results of my survey led me to reassess the relative importance of works such as Grossman's *For a Just Cause* (*Za pravoe delo*, 1952—see Chapter 4), and to uncover the discursive connections between well-known works and forgotten works by famous authors such as Il'ia Ehrenburg. Chapter 3, for example, explores Ehrenburg's much published but almost forgotten *The Storm* (*Buria*, 1947). In turn, I have been able to draw out hitherto unnoticed links between major and minor works. The minor works I analyze—those little published or by complete unknowns, such as Pavel Shebunin's novella *Mamaev kurgan* (1948)—slavishly imitate Grossman and Simonov's foundational stories, demonstrating how the mass media was a vehicle to invoke a textual, and therefore, temporal, connection between the reader's present and Stalingrad's *kairotic* nature. I do not claim that these minor works had any great influence on the myth, but they do reveal links that would otherwise go unseen. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the survey allowed me to make conclusions about major works—Simonov's *Not Born Soldiers* (*Soldatami ne rozhdaitsia*, 1963) and Grossman's *Life and Fate* (*Zhizn' i sud'ba*, 1960)—that would not have been possible without understanding the history and content of the Stalingrad story with which their authors were engaging.

Since I place great emphasis on the Stalingrad story's origins, and considering Nora's evaluation of the event's importance in the mass media era, I also carried out a comprehensive survey of the wartime newspapers that first described the Stalingrad story. I surveyed four major

⁸⁵ For example, the print run data relating to some years in the 1950s and the 1980s was inaccessible. As such, the statistical data and graphs I print in the Appendix are indicative and relative, rather than absolute. Travel to Russia to seek extra information would likely confirm my findings, though at great expense.

daily newspapers (*Krasnaia zvezda*, *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Trud*) from the beginning of August 1942 to the end of March 1943.⁸⁶ During this period the papers spoke of little but Stalingrad, so I have not produced a comprehensive list of every article published during the battle. However, I do include in the Appendix a list of contributions by the major authors—Grossman, Simonov and others—who were at the battle and play a significant role in the remainder of this study. By reading these stories within the newspaper itself, I was able to see the importance of the newspaper as a mass production, synthetic whole in and of itself, and to see how authors' work contextualized government editorials and vice versa. In such a way, I was able to glean in some small way a sense of what the Soviet reader might have made of the Stalingrad story as it was first revealed through the newspapers, and how repetition reified and strengthened the key aspects of the story, inscribing them into an epic time and space even as the fighting was taking place.

The newspaper survey unearthed a vast amount of material that laid the foundation of the Stalingrad myth as we know it today. The images, characters and symbols that Grossman, Simonov and their colleagues at the front and behind the lines used in 1942-3 are consistently repeated throughout my period of study. In spite of the importance of the perpetuated link to the *kairotic* moment of Stalingrad, the journalism I unearthed was either cast aside altogether or republished only in heavily edited form. Some of the works I survey, such as Grossman's sketches, were never republished in their original form. Nor, moreover, have they been studied by academics.

I dedicate the entirety of Chapter 2 to analyzing the context and contents of the journalistic coverage of Stalingrad as it happened in 1942-3. The level of detail given to this period is justified in several ways. Firstly, the wartime coverage shows that Stalingrad is a prototypical mass media event: I will show how even as it was being written, Stalingrad was proclaimed as a turning point of universal importance. Writers made this claim by discarding unappealing Soviet motifs and turning to pre-Revolutionary, Russian motifs. Although writers still adhered to the basic Socialist Realist methods of combining documentary and an epic timeframe, the

⁸⁶ In this period, the newspapers spoke of almost nothing else. As of March 1943, the emphasis on Stalingrad began to ebb away. Nonetheless, the battle did seem to reappear in the press more frequently than other battles.

Russianness of their subjects allowed more space for individual voices to be heard and oriented in the text. By turning my attention in detail to how the narrative unfolded day-by-day in 1942-3, I show how tension between the epic and the present was beginning to be resolved in favour of the epic as victory became more and more certain. Furthermore, my detailed attention to the time period of the battle provides a means of understanding the textual elements that would go on to provide the link to Stalingrad as *kairos* in future texts—by exploring them in depth, I am able to show the newspapers’ influence on all subsequent Stalingrad work.

Chapter 3 explores Stalingrad over the decade that followed the battle as the government and writers equally participated in attempts to iron out the “novelty” of Stalingrad, memorializing it as a *lieu de mémoire* in prose works. Stalingrad’s epic qualities were thus preserved for retrieval in the reader’s present. I explore the decade leading up to Stalin’s death in two ways. The first half of the chapter examines how writers who were at the battle—Grossman, Simonov and the veteran Viktor Nekrasov—rewrote their sketches into longer prose works, which transposed the Stalingrad story out of the presentness and transience of the newspaper form. By turning their sketches into long-form prose, and further isolating Stalingrad from the world of passing time by emphasizing the unique experience and temporality of the besieged city, Grossman and Simonov were able to create texts that encouraged the reader to vicariously access the atmosphere of the battle. Nekrasov, meanwhile, used literary motifs from his peers’ work to orient his own chaotic experiences at Stalingrad, suggesting that even in these early years, links to the battle’s *kairos* were a vital means of sense making for individuals. All three authors emphasized the role of the Russian people at Stalingrad, linking the victory to a history of patriotic triumphs and a sense of hope for a future free of terror. The battle’s representations, therefore, drew so heavily on Russian patriotic themes that it was as much a Russian as a Soviet event.

In the second half of Chapter 3, I explore how the epic Stalingrad became the means to “prove” Stalin’s godliness. By studying Ilia Ehrenburg’s *The Storm* (*Buria*, 1946), I show how rewriting the story to focus on Stalin stripped humans—both those present in 1942 and the reader in the late 1940s—of all historical agency. Readers were asked to orient themselves not toward Stalingrad’s turning point but toward the deified Stalin. Readers’ status as participants in history was stripped away, to be replaced with a passive acceptance of Stalin’s godlike power. By

comparing *The Storm* with the veteran Pavel Shebunin's *Mamaev kurgan* (1948), I show how personal memories too were rewritten in the light of Stalingrad's *kairos* in the late Stalinist period. Shebunin followed the pattern established in works such as *The Storm*, projecting the trends of the late 1940s onto memory of the battle by leaving the fate of the battle in the leader's hands. I wanted to study a minor writer here to show how the reorientation of the story away from Russian patriotic history to Stalin's godliness affected even those who—unlike Grossman, Simonov and Ehrenburg—chose to write about Stalingrad, rather than being prompted to do so by the upper echelons of Soviet power.

Chapter 4 explores Grossman's novel *For a Just Cause* (*Za pravoe delo*, 1952). In spite of the novel's reputation as a Stalinist work, by exploring it in comparison to the works in Chapter 3 and through the lens of *lieu de mémoire*, I show that the novel was actually an important milestone in Stalingrad writing. Grossman attempted to recreate and rebalance the links between the battle, the people and Stalin, drawing on elements from across the many works already studied. In so doing, he tried to affirm Stalingrad's *kairotic* significance by closing off an epic circle around the work, and writing a text that could be accessed in the present of 1952 by Soviet subjects to orient themselves to the sacred beginning of 1942. Although scholars have generally seen it as an inferior precursor to Grossman's *Life and Fate*, my publication data shows that *For a Just Cause* was, in fact, the most heavily published Stalingrad work throughout the 1950s.

The final chapter studies Stalingrad's role in the de-Stalinization efforts of the Khrushchev years. The bulk of the chapter focuses on a comparative analysis of Simonov's *Not Born Soldiers* and Grossman's *Life and Fate*. The two works bear striking similarities. They each attempted to draw a "new" epic circle around Stalingrad, offering a new means to understand the historical event in the present. The authors' reputations and their association with the earliest Stalingrad works might, one would think, have offered a convincing way to create connections with the national victory at Stalingrad without tainting it with Stalin's presence. Simonov's *Not Born Soldiers* demonstrates how Stalingrad itself remained the crucial *lieu de mémoire* of the Soviet era. Simonov openly explored the terror of the 1930s, humanized Stalin's presence in the Stalingrad story, and asked readers to align themselves with victory in the past and, by so doing, look forward to another bright future in the 1960s. In his banned work *Life and Fate*, Grossman summoned the textual memory of Stalingrad before totally subverting its *kairotic* properties by

introducing novelistic elements of polyphony and irony into them. He asked the reader to abandon their orientation to History, suggesting that this could only lead to totalitarian attacks on the individual. Instead, Grossman prompted the reader to reorient their self-understanding toward individuals in the present. The need to show an epic present was, therefore, removed: Grossman's work was, in the Bakhtinian sense, the first Soviet Stalingrad novel.

I end my study in 1963, which saw the last contribution of the writers who covered the front in 1942. The mid-1960s marked a significant turning point in Soviet society's self-understanding. The preceding period was defined by major events—Revolution, War, Stalin's death and the Thaw—that suggested that Soviets were living in an epic present. The Brezhnev era, though, was defined by a sense of stability—perhaps even stagnation.⁸⁷ Its dominant myth of war was predicated on a retrospective conservatism designed to justify the rule of the ageing leadership, rather than looking toward a utopian future. The major events of the decade—the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel and the military suppression of the Prague Spring—seemed only to stoke fears of re-Stalinization. The Soviet public began to lose its faith in the sense of a nearing brighter future, and took part in public ritual with a superficial obeisance.⁸⁸ The literary community responded with alienation and disaffection. By the late 1960s, the emergence of forms of art and discourse that parodied and undermined official culture began to provide evidence of a fundamental ironic break in culture.⁸⁹ As the Thaw turned into the Brezhnev era, the government began to favour publication of memoirs by veterans (the so-called “trench prose”) over fictional epics.⁹⁰ The way that these trends affected the perception and creation of Stalingrad requires further examination than a study of this size can provide for, although my

⁸⁷ Dina Fainberg and Artemy M. Kalinovsky give a thoughtful account of the merits of painting the Brezhnev era as a cultural stagnation in the introduction to their edited volume *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange* (Lanham: Lexington, 2016).

⁸⁸ See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*.

⁸⁹ Alexander Genis, “Postmodernism and Sots-Realism: From Andrei Sinyavsky to Vladimir Sorokin,” in *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture*, ed. Mikhail Epstein and Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover (New York: Berghahn, 1999), 268. See also Andrei Siniavskii, “Anekdot v anekdote,” in *Odna ili dve russkikh literatury?*, ed. Georges Nivat (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1981), 167-179.

⁹⁰ Polly. Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma : Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 174.

extensive survey of Stalingrad works provides the material for this work to be completed in the future.

2. Journalists at Stalingrad: The Genesis of the Myth

Stalingrad filled the pages of the Soviet newspapers through the six months of the battle. Articles, slogans and editorials asserted the unparalleled importance of military events in the present. Thanks to the Kremlin's early insistence that Stalin's city, Stalingrad—the site of the leader's Civil War defence of Tsaritsyn, and of pre-Revolutionary folk narratives—was of vital propaganda and strategic importance, readers were within days of the battle's beginning in August 1942 being assured that Stalingrad was of “world-historical” importance. Masthead slogans, editorials, and apocryphal quotes from foreign newspapers declared Stalingrad the turning point of the war and the most important battle in history: “The whole world is following our battle. Our brothers' voices reach us from every corner of the globe, expressing their delight at our efforts in this battle with unparalleled historical significance.”¹ “To defend Stalingrad is to achieve victory,” announced a *Pravda* masthead in September.² The battle was the equal of the greatest clashes of history fought by Alexander the Great, Wellington and Turenne—Stalingrad would “decide the fate of the world.”³ The names of Stalingrad's heroes, the newspapers claimed, would “live for centuries.”⁴

Before the about-turn in strategic fortunes after November 19, these claims may have read like the strident proclamations with which the Soviet papers had described earlier battles. Nonetheless, as I will show, even in the early period of the battle, the Soviets were able to draw on Russian cultural memories associated with the Volga,

¹ “Tovarishchu Stalinu ot boitsov, komandirov i politrabotnikov Stalingradskego fronta.” Although the word “encirclement” was not permitted until early February 1943 (see D. Ortenberg, *Vremia ne vlastno* [Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1979], 118). For other examples of the claim that Stalingrad was the most important battle in history, see: “Geroicheskii Stalingrad,” *Pravda*, October 5, 1942. 1; “Bitva za Stalingrad: Obzor inostranoi pečati,” *Pravda*, October 27, 1942, 4; or G. Aleksandrov, “Boi za Stalingrad,” *Pravda*, October 31, 1942, 4.

² *Pravda* masthead, September 30, 1942.

³ Boris Solov'ev, “Russkie voiny,” *Krasnyi flot*, October 22, 1943, 3.

⁴ “62-ia armia,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, December 1, 1942, 1.

and recollection of the Civil War past of Stalingrad, in order to suggest that this time the result would be different and victory at Stalingrad was certain to follow on the heels of great Russian victories of the tsarist era.

After the improbably successful counterattack of November 19, which led to the encirclement of the Germany army, assertions of Stalingrad's importance reached a new level of intensity: "In the chronicles of the Great Patriotic War, in the history of humanity, the unfading glory of the epic of Stalingrad will forever remain."⁵ Moreover, readers were told that the battle promised not just victory but resurrection: "The Russian city has arisen from flames and blood," as the journalist Evgenii Kriger put it.⁶ Although readers were teased with the notion that the nation might seize victory from the brink of defeat even as Stalingrad seemed perilously close to falling, now the resurrection themes burst forth with unparalleled clarity. Backed by the evidence that the Soviets were finally winning the war, and charged with *kairotic* power, the entire story of the battle—even the material from the period when the Red Army was still actually retreating and teetered on the brink of defeat—was wrapped into a teleological march toward victory.

Even before it was over, Stalingrad was thus accorded enormous historical significance as an eschatological turning point. The present, the reader was assured, was characterized by unparalleled historical significance. Through the mass media, readers were able to follow progress day-by-day from behind the lines as the battle was inscribed into an eschatological national history. By exploring newspaper coverage of the battle, I show how the "memory" of Stalingrad always belonged to the world of the epic—never to that of the present—and how the newspaper's capacity to rewrite recent news was crucial to establishing Stalingrad as a *lieu de mémoire* filled with *kairotic* significance. Simultaneously, the recycling of old materials would lay the foundation for Stalingrad as *lieu de mémoire* in the following years: disparate narratives and temporalities coalesced around the battle's literary representation and, associated with the *kairotic* nature of the battle, gained new significance. As victory became more certain after the November 19 counterattack,

⁵ "Vpered, za razgrom nemetskikh okkupantov!," *Pravda*, January 28, 1943, 1.

⁶ E. Kriger, "Otvét Stalingrada," *Izvestiia*, January 17, 1943, 3.

writers increasingly began to smooth out the new aspects of Stalingrad's textual representation, thereby cementing its epic qualities. Though distanced from the present as epic elements grew stronger, Stalingrad could theoretically be brought into the present at any time by the reader as they followed the unfolding newspaper story.

In this chapter, I explore how the idea of Stalingrad was constructed over seven months in the Soviet newspapers, which were the government's primary means of communication with the public. I surveyed the four papers *Pravda*, *Krasnaia zvezda*, *Izvestiia* and *Trud* (*Truth*, *The Red Star*, *The News*, and *Labour* respectively) for the duration of the battle, cataloguing and comparing news reports, sketches and agitative works.⁷ The result is an insight into how writers produced their stories and what ordinary readers knew about the battle. I focus on Simonov's four and Grossman's twelve sketches filed for *Krasnaia zvezda*. Neither author's sketches have been extensively analyzed in scholarship. Indeed, my survey uncovered two Grossman sketches—*On the Volga* (*Na Volge*) and *In Stalin's City* (*V gorode Stalina*)—never before explored in scholarship. Grossman's and Simonov's Stalingrad sketches provided the foundation for their own later works, and acted as reference material for others producing Stalingrad works both during the battle and after it. These works provided the semantic and thematic core of the Stalingrad myth I explore in the following chapters.

Authors working for newspapers at the front drew on literary representations of a Russian epic past to assure the reader that Stalingrad would provide a miraculous resurrection. Simultaneously, they emphasized mass participation of real individuals at the front, which had a morale-boosting propaganda benefit. In what was termed a "time of Biblical miracles," writers and readers reacted positively to the narrative of a universally significant, miraculous resurrection.⁸ This was partly the case because,

⁷ Supporting material comes from the leading participants' diaries and memoirs: David Ortenberg (the editor of *Krasnaia zvezda*), Boris Polevoi and Simonov all published such work in the late Soviet era. These memoirs are not perfectly reliable. Diary writing during the war was officially forbidden. Most of the memoirs are post-war reconstructions of events. Polevoi admits his work is only "something like a diary" (Boris Polevoi, *Eti chetyre goda*, vol. 1, 4 vols. [Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1974], 3); Ortenberg's various memoirs even contain minor contradictions. However, most usefully of all, fragmentary portions of Vasily Grossman's frontline notebooks were published in 1989 (V.S. Grossman, *Gody voiny* [Moscow: Pravda, 1989]).

⁸ "Goroda-geroi."

unlike with previous attempts to make the Soviet present epic, contemporary events now really did seem miraculous.

Grossman, for example, was struck by the “the miracle of steadfastness. I don’t understand it, how those who were fleeing became so steadfast.” Amongst “death. People in cellars. Everything incinerated,” Grossman struggled to comprehend the “miraculous” survival of a single building.⁹ Those who had lived through Stalingrad did not need to be persuaded that the battle was a miracle—they had seen it for themselves. The journalists’ task was to convince the reader at home that the miraculous victory would lead to new successes on every front. Stalingrad was so incredible, journalists were to suggest, that it could rewrite the past and make a utopian future possible.

The evidence I have seen suggests that readers were indeed convinced that Stalingrad was a significant turning point. The Stalingrad sketches were an extraordinary success. *Krasnaia zvezda* editor David Ortenberg described Stalingrad as Grossman’s “golden” period. Each of Grossman’s works caused a “sensation” amongst military and civilian readers alike.¹⁰ Il’ia Ehrenburg called Grossman’s sketches “the most convincing and brilliant work of the war years.”¹¹ The writer Viktor Nekrasov, then a sapper at the Stalingrad front, later described his keen consumption of Grossman’s writing.¹² Simonov’s fictional proxy Lopatin in the semi-autobiographical novella *Twenty Days Without War* (*Dvadsat’ dnei bez voiny*, 1957) explains that one captain “had read the Stalingrad sketches. He even cut one out of *Krasnaia zvezda* and carried it with him.”¹³ Critics praised the sketches for their “simple, unembellished truth” and closeness to “reality” both during and after the

⁹ Grossman, “Zapisnye knizhki.”

¹⁰ “Several times we hurried Grossman,” adds Ortenberg, “as we understood with what anticipation the army and people awaited his sketches” (Ortenberg, *Vremia ne vlastno*, 317-8).

¹¹ Ehrenburg, “Pisatel’ na voine.”

¹² Viktor Nekrasov, *V zhizni i pis’makh* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1971), 149.

¹³ Simonov, *Dvadsat’ dnei bez voiny*. The quote also indicates the important effect writing had on morale. The soldier in question carries Simonov’s work as medieval Russian forces had carried icons into battle as a sign of belief.

war.¹⁴ Official favour accompanied popular reaction. Grossman and Simonov's works were even reprinted in *Pravda*, a rare honour during the war.¹⁵ Even Stalin, in spite of his antisemitism, admired Grossman's work.¹⁶ Stalingrad entered the consciousness of a wide range of Soviet readers extraordinarily rapidly.

The Soviets could achieve such a success by 1942 thanks to the journalistic system, growing since 1917 and now both well developed and supplied with plentiful resources during the war.¹⁷ By 1942, the military alone was publishing 465 frontline papers. The following year, daily circulation of the major papers was 13.7m.¹⁸ Journalists were highly trained, dedicated propagandists.¹⁹ Moreover, the masses of publications and literary material, and the deployment of military men and machinery at Stalingrad, were accompanied by a hitherto overlooked convergence of artistic talent.²⁰ Grossman and Simonov were joined by dozens of other professional literary writers, notably the minor writer and native Stalingrader Vasilii Koroteev, who accompanied the two men on many of their trips to the frontlines.²¹ Luminaries such as Il'ia Ehrenburg and Mikhail Sholokhov produced eye-catching stories from behind

¹⁴ See Solov'ev, "Russkie voiny," 3. Similarly, A. Aleksandrov, "Uvazhenie k deistvitel'nosti," *Oktiabr'*, no. 10 (1942); D. Ortenberg, *Sorok tretii* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1991); A. Bocharov, *Vasilii Grossman: Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), 134.

¹⁵ Simonov's *Days and Nights (Dni i nochi)* appeared in *Pravda* on September 25, 1942, and Grossman's *On the Axis of the Main Attack (Napravlenie glavnogo udara)* on November 26, 1942.

¹⁶ Semen Lipkin, *Stalingrad Vasiliia Grossmana* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986), 16.

¹⁷ Systems of oversight were accompanied by growth in technical expertise, training, and organizational capacity (Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*).

¹⁸ Louise McReynolds, "Dateline Stalingrad: Newspaper Correspondents at the Front," in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda During World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

¹⁹ In 1937, Stalin announced that the problem of "mastering of technique" in the newspaper industry had now been solved (Alex Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia: A Study in Mass Persuasion* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958], 37).

²⁰ No specific studies of journalists' work at Stalingrad exist. Russian-language scholarship has virtually ignored the work of journalists at Stalingrad, accepting wartime reports at face value (e.g. Prokurova, "K probleme dokumenta i fakta v literature o Stalingrade." Studies on the major authors present at Stalingrad, meanwhile, have tended to see wartime journalism as only a precursor to major prose works (e.g. see Bocharov, *Vasilii Grossman: Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba* or Ellis, *Evolution of a Russian Heretic*).

²¹ Simonov writes of Koroteev's valuable assistance; and the character of Vanin in Simonov's novel *Days and Nights* is based on Koroteev. Simonov and Koroteev were close, exchanging correspondence after the war. Simonov reserves his most intimate greeting—"milyi"—for Koroteev and Ortenberg alone (Simonov, *Pis'ma o voine*, 27).

the lines.²² From Moscow and on occasional trips to the front, David Ortenberg guided and shaped the story in his role as editor.²³ Authors were enthusiastic participants in the government's newspaper propaganda project.²⁴ Indeed, an exhausted Grossman wrote to his father of his exertions in Stalingrad: "If you've been following my journalism, you'll know that my work and life are getting heated right now."²⁵ The enthusiasm of Soviet editors and writers was now directed toward a single purpose.²⁶

²² The most famous Soviet writers, such as Il'ia Ehrenburg and Mikhail Sholokhov, were kept at a safe distance from the front. Ehrenburg is an important figure in the following chapters of this study as a collaborator with Grossman and an author in his own right. He would go on to collaborate with Grossman on the *Black Book*. Simonov praised him as the best of the wartime journalists (see Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* [New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007], 625).

²³ Ortenberg (b.1904) had fought in the Civil War and worked his way up the ranks of Soviet journalism to become editor of *Krasnaia zvezda* on the outbreak of the war. In September 1943, the Jewish Ortenberg was removed from his position for refusing to oust minor Jewish writers from the paper. He was relegated to a minor position in the 38th Army's *politotdel*, and disappeared from public life. Simonov was barred from even mentioning Ortenberg in a poem of 1946. Ortenberg remained extremely close with Simonov, his favourite correspondent. Ortenberg's numerous memoirs, published before his death in 1998, are an invaluable source of information for scholars of Second World War Soviet propaganda.

²⁴ Grossman even volunteered to join the army before he began his journalistic work (see John Gordon Garrard and Carol Garrard, *The Bones of Berdichev: The Life and Fate of Vasily Grossman* [New York: Free Press, 1996], 138). Authors in the 1920s and 30s too had rushed to participate in Soviet life, travelling to construction sites and engaging in work alongside ordinary people (Mary A. Nicholas, *Writers at Work: Russian Production Novels and the Construction of Soviet Culture* [Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010], 17-30). Grossman, for example, had earlier expressed a belief that "there is no literature outside of life" (V.S. Grossman, "Letter to Semen Osipovich," February 12, 1927, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University) and a desire to write as a way to "take part in life" (Grossman, "Letter to Semen Osipovich," 1929, Box 33, Folder 24, Garrard Collection) went to work at an autoplant in 1934 (V.S. Grossman, "Letter to Glavnaia voennaia prokuratura SSSR," 1956, Box 2, Folder 31, Garrard Collection).

²⁵ V.S. Grossman, "Letter to Semen Osipovich," November 10, 1942, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection. Three days later, Grossman continued: "I've never been in such a place before [...] I'm in such an inferno that I've completely lost track of all 'peacetime' affairs" (V.S. Grossman, "Letter to Semen Osipovich," November 13, 1942, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection).

²⁶ Elena Zubkova describes the effect of the war on national unity: "the war brought a rare opportunity for the spontaneous development among the people of a civic spirit, which for decades had been cultivated only as duties—often impractical and abstract—handed out by the regime" (Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments, 1945-1957*, ed. Hugh Ragdale [London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998], 15).

The Newspaper Form: Documentary and Tradition

The newspaper industry was the vital means of operationalizing national unity because, as Grossman wrote in another letter to his father, “everyone at the front reads it.”²⁷ The paper was not just important because it could be mass-produced. From a literary perspective, the Soviet four-page newspaper had a generic capacity to contain and juxtapose both epic and present temporalities. The papers were filled with editorials, communiqués (*svodki*), photos from the front, short stories, poetry, speeches, lists of decorated heroes, and informative articles for the target audience of each newspaper.

The day’s front-page editorial and communiqués, which were produced by the Kremlin’s news agency, Sovinformbiuro, introduced major themes and strategic developments.²⁸ Sovinformbiuro’s communiqués were the most important way of finding out news about the war, but not the most important means of interpreting that news. This was the newspaper journalist’s task.²⁹ “In the newspapers,” explains one critic, “first we read the communiqué, then articles, sketches, and the *rasskaz* or *povest*’. In this way people are drawn into the reality of war.”³⁰ The close alignment of personal, human stories with a master narrative—the overarching master plot provided by Sovinformbiuro—focused on personal memories, as if the heroes of the sketches were real and known to the reader, creating a link between the reader’s own temporal experience and the epic time of Stalingrad.³¹

Each mode of writing—editorial, story, news update, and poem—monologically reiterated the same points (above all, Stalingrad’s “world-historical” importance) over

²⁷ The population was by now largely literate and consumed newspapers eagerly (Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*, 133).

²⁸ For example, see the announcement of the November 19 counter-attack: “Uspeshnoe nastuplenie nashikh voisk v raione gor. Stalingrada,” *Krasnaia zvezda*; *Pravda*; *Izvestiia*; *Trud*, November 23, 1942.

²⁹ L. Lazarev, writing in 1974, claimed that the communiqués were as well remembered as the names of authors or books (L. Lazarev, *Voennaia proza Konstantina Simonova* [Moscow: Khud. lit., 1974], 6). Verbatim excerpts from the communiqués are included in every work on Stalingrad I have surveyed, from the works of the high Stalinist era of the late 1940s through to Grossman’s *Life and Fate*.

³⁰ Aleksandrov, “Uvazhenie k deistvitel’nosti.”

³¹ The results were effective: “This, the greatest battle in the history of war, left in the life of all of us an indelible mark” (M.S. Shumilov, “Velikoe srazhenie,” *Oktiabr*’, no. 2 [1973], 146).

and again. The newspaper form thus created a synthetic whole capable of expressing the present and past, fiction and fact, sketches and hard news, side by side: already, we see the medium's capacity for incorporating and shaping memory in an achronological way. For example, on January 1, 1943, each major newspaper carried the same leading article, entitled "The Results of the Six-Week Advance of Our Forces Around Stalingrad." It described for the first time the German plan to cut off the Ural and Volga regions from European Russia and the successful Soviet counterattack and encirclement, listed the vast amounts of men and machinery destroyed or captured, and included a large map of progress made by the end of 1942.³² Each modality—pictorial, textual, descriptive, poetic—reiterated Stalingrad's epic importance.

Turning to the third page of the day's *Krasnaia zvezda*, the reader found Grossman's sketch *Today in Stalingrad* (*Segodnia v Stalingrade*), an exegesis of the leading article's content. Grossman's sketch projected the government-sponsored themes from page one onto the natural and human environment, comparing the Soviet advance to the thawing ice floes on the Volga, and inscribing the familiar locations of Spartanovka and the Tractor Factory into the timeless cycle of the seasons: "a block of ice, half a kilometre long, crawled past Spartanovka and past the desecrated Tractor Factory." Grossman eulogized the dead, who "sleep" on the riverbed, as his narrator follows the ice floes' path along the river: "Someday songs will be sung of those who sleep on the riverbed."³³ My analysis considers the sketches as part of this synthetic whole, which caused events from across the centuries to appear to point to Stalingrad's significance in the present. Throughout the battle, from August 1942 to February 1943, traces of a symbolic, national memory were drawn to the surface and linked around the centrifugal textual site of Stalingrad.

As if the conflict's ups and downs were occurring in their own life, readers behind the lines could follow the conflict at Stalingrad day-by-day, experiencing the

³² There were almost no maps shown in the newspapers until the Soviet forces started attacking, so the presence of this map carries more weight than might be evident from a twenty-first century Western perspective.

³³ V.S. Grossman, *Today in Stalingrad* ("Segodnia v Stalingrade"), *Krasnaia zvezda*, January 1, 1943, 3.

battle's unfolding through the multigeneric, multitemporal newspaper representation of the battle. Readers gained vicarious access to the unfolding event, with all its epic connotations, at a more rapid pace than they had during the earlier Soviet period: events were digested and incorporated into memory within days of their occurrence. Drawn into the world of Stalingrad's epic present through eyewitness accounts, the reader was asked to project their own contributions—and sacrifices—into a universal historical framework. The reader was shown both the overwhelming, eschatological importance of the battle, and how human actions were related to it. Epic and present temporalities intersected under the aegis of Stalingrad's *kairotic* significance.

Framing documentary stories within references to ancient, modern, Russian, and European high art and popular culture, writers appealed to the traditions of messianism and “sacrificial historicism.” While the Stalingrad story could be viewed as representative of Soviet visions of the heroic transformation of the individual, overt references to Marx, Engels, or socialist theory, were relegated to second place in the narrative.³⁴ Instead, appealing narrative colour—themes from the classical and European past, from Russian patriotic culture, and from folk narratives—aligned the unique historical experience of Stalingrad with victorious moments from the Russian past.³⁵ While willingness to expand the range of sources in literature to the use of Russian patriotic material had already been present in the 1930s, Russian elements were privileged in the Stalinist story both during and after the war.³⁶ Historical

³⁴ Jochen Hellbeck has described the importance of the “hero cult” to Soviets’ self-understanding at Stalingrad (Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 61). Some scholars have viewed the apparent turn from 1930s control to wartime freedom as a “spontaneous de-Stalinization” (L. Lazarev, “Russian Literature on the War and Historical Truth,” in *World War 2 and the Soviet People*, ed. John Gordon Garrard and Carol Garrard [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993], 32). However, Lazarev’s term is problematic. The idea that Stalin relinquished power during the conflict has been debunked (for example, see Anatoly Pinsky, “The Origins of Post-Stalin Individuality: Aleksandr Tvardovskii and the Evolution of 1930s Soviet Romanticism,” *The Russian Review* 76, no.4 [2017], 461-2; Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 20-1). For the purposes of my argument, though, it is easy to see how a *sense* of freedom might have permeated the front from the perspective of writers on the ground, who saw Gulag inmates now leading parts of the Red Army, and formerly proscribed writers such as Andrei Platonov published in leading papers.

³⁵ This suited writers such as Grossman who never showed a particular interest in slavishly following Soviet literary methods. He had read everything from Tolstoi to Conan Doyle and Hans Christian Andersen before the war (see V.S. Grossman, “Letter to Semen Gekht,” 1938, Box 2, Folder 30, Garrard Collection).

³⁶ The regime had adopted a more flexible approach toward Russian national tropes during the second half of the 1930s. Literary authorities embarked on a “search for a usable past” to find more convincing heroes (David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 29). The

material framed the actions of everyday heroes battling away against a titanic historical enemy. The change of focus away from Sovietism was a way of appealing to the individual's patriotism—their self-understanding as a Russian, rather than a Soviet, subject.

Authors began their work with heavy quotation from Sovinformbiuro material, which served as a guide for appropriate content. Repetition from day to day, as well as within each newspaper, was key to the affirmation of Stalingrad's significance. The use of slogans in Soviet literature was theoretically supposed to transform "lofty speech into everyday speech" and thus "produce the Soviet sublime."³⁷ By weaving the Kremlin's words into reportage, the everyday experience of war was accorded a lofty, epic sheen. Writers could easily frame their works in an epic space and time by quoting from didactic Sovinformbiuro material. Slogans became familiar from every day use: "Every house is a fortress!," "There is no land for us behind the Volga!," "We must defend Stalingrad at any price!," "No step backward," "There'll be a holiday on our street!" There are even examples of text lifted word-for-word from the communiqués. For example, regular *Pravda* correspondents D. Akul'shin and V. Kuprin borrowed the line "individual houses are changing hands several times a day" verbatim from the previous day's communiqué as the basis of a short article.³⁸ Readers were in this way exposed to a constant repetition of a handful of key points. This monologism framed individual articles and slogans in an "organic wholeness" that signaled an epic mode of writing.³⁹

expansion of material was ideologically justified by *narodnost'*. Almost any part of the non-Marxist past could be incorporated into art so long as it was "comprehensible to or created by the masses" (Matthew Cullerne-Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 145). Katerina Clark has discussed at length convergences between European and Soviet cultures, and on the turn towards the neo-Romantic and Imperial Sublime, in the late 1930s. Her work demonstrates that many of the features I will ascribe to Stalingrad first appeared in this period, especially during the Spanish Civil War (Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011]).

³⁷ Leonid Heller, "A World of Prettiness: Socialist Realism and Its Aesthetic Categories," in *Socialist Realism Without Shores*, 69

³⁸ V. Kuprin and D. Akul'shin, "V Stalingrade," *Pravda*, September 26, 1942, 2. The two correspondents regularly filed brief reports from Stalingrad.

³⁹ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 5.

Moreover, authors could easily frame their works in an epic temporality by introducing their sketches using Sovinformbiuro material. Doing so divided events occurring in the sketch's present from the reader's present. Simonov, for example, bookended three of his four Stalingrad sketches with an introduction and conclusion informed by the language of Sovinformbiuro. For instance, *Days and Nights (Dni i nochi)* begins with the assertion that, "Those who were here will never forget it. When in many years we begin to remember, the word 'war' will pass our lips and Stalingrad will arise before our eyes." The sketch ends with the line, "After Stalingrad, we will not forgive them."⁴⁰ The events of the sketch's body, in which the narrator travels to the front, witnesses fighting, and converses with soldiers, are framed by this epic tone. Vasily Koroteev's final sketch contains a whole paragraph of aphoristic sloganeering lifted from the articles announcing Paulus' surrender in February 1943: "Eternal glory to the heroes of Stalingrad who with their blood won victory! Glory to our brave warriors and commanders! Glory to Comrade Stalin!"⁴¹ Even Grossman drew on the temporal language of Sovinformbiuro to describe the "relentless battle" waged "day and night" against enemies who "are tearing towards the Volga." These epithets and slogans linked description of the battle in the present with the sense of Stalingrad's historical importance.

In spite of its prominence, Sovinformbiuro material alone could not achieve any meaningful orientation of the reader's self toward Stalingrad. Sovinformbiuro's editorials described only the most significant, elevated moments of historical meaning—a kind of short-form epic. In this context, tallies of the dead, of victories, of facts and figures, were dry and unappealing. An illustrative example is the triumphal summary of the results of the counterattack that appeared on every paper's front page on January 1, 1943. The summary numbs the reader with sheer weight of numbers, but leaves no space for individual, human achievement:

During the offensive the following enemy divisions were crushed by our forces: the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 9th, 13th, 14th and 15th Romanian infantry

⁴⁰ K.S. Simonov, *Days and Nights* ("Dni i nochi"), *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 24, 1942, 3.

⁴¹ The poet Il'ia Sel'vinskii used the same material as inspiration for the poem "Stalingradu" ("For Stalingrad," *Krasnaia zvezda*, May 2, 1943). See Ortenberg, *Sorok tretii*, 68.

divisions; the Romanian 7th cavalry and 1st armoured divisions; the German 44th, 376th and 384th infantry and 22nd armoured divisions. [...] In these battles our troops destroyed 95,000 soldiers and captured 72,400 soldiers and officers. Our forces seized many trophies, including 134 planes, 1,792 tanks, 2,232 artillery pieces, 7,306 vehicles and an enormous quantity of mortars, machine guns, automatic rifles, anti-tank weapons, military supplies, and other materiel.⁴²

Sovinformbiuro's world of enumeration was impressive but distant. The human was lost amongst triumphal enumeration and declarations of Stalingrad's epic importance. In this context, the word "Stalingrad" connotes victory but bore no relation to the reader's real life. Without the hand of the author to draw it towards the present through documentary work, History seemed to list tangentially away from the reader.

Yet the Soviet newspaper industry managed to produce a story that appealed to the ordinary reader. Interviews with Stalingrad veterans at the time of the battle show them using quotation from the newspaper stories in everyday conversation. Jochen Hellbeck describes how a team of historians sent to Stalingrad as the battle was ending "encountered soldiers who had fully incorporated Soviet notions of heroism and cowardice and were conversant about the battle's political and historical significance."⁴³ Even as the familiar was under brutal attack, new meaning was being created by the constant repetition of Sovinformbiuro's phrases. Even those readers present at the battle understood Stalingrad through the journalistic medium, rather than through first-hand observations and experiences alone. A memory of Stalingrad that drew together the past, present and future, was being forged in real time alongside the battle's actual events.

The newspaper stories were made successful by writing the human into the epic Stalingrad narrative, complementing the communiqués' semantic base. Writers

⁴² "Itogi 6-nedel'nogo nastupleniia nashikh voisk na podstupakh Stalingrada," *Pravda*, January 1, 1943, 1.

⁴³ Jochen Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 45, 68. Brandenberger finds more examples from the wartime period: a soldier who in a letter home invoked Napoleon as a national *bête-noire*; and a visitors' book from a 1943 Moscow exhibition that employs official phraseology borrowed directly from approved material to describe the inspirational quality of tsarist generals (Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 154, 165).

created a link between reader and History by drawing on the specifically Socialist Realist aspects of documentary observation, which called on works to correspond to reality and “order raw facts into a meaningful framework.”⁴⁴ At the front, the journalists gathered vast amounts of material that focused entirely on ordinary people. Traveling across the Stalingrad region and into the city itself, they interviewed soldiers and observed fighting. Sometimes writers selected their own interviewees. At other times, their editors sent them to interview a hero from the communiqués.⁴⁵ Authors inserted their ordinary documentary subjects into a heroic, epic world in which they could reveal their “inborn heroic essence”:⁴⁶ the reader was shown how ordinary Soviets would reach a new stage of historical development—would seemingly reach beyond the bounds of the present into a national patriotic history—through their unprecedented achievements at Stalingrad.

Pre-war Soviet writers had also made documentary observations of the present with the same end in mind, but their observations had then been roughly subjugated to the need to show the present as epic—they were contorted into the shape demanded by official fantasies, rather than negotiating a realistic boundary between the present and the epic.⁴⁷ Through the 1930s, Soviet fiction brimmed with imagined enemies, fictitious conspiracies, and arbitrary production drives, so that the purportedly documentary nature of Socialist Realism did not resemble the reader’s lived experience.⁴⁸ In the case of the Stalingrad story, that was not the case.

⁴⁴ Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 68-70; see also Cullerne-Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 88.

⁴⁵ Grossman was a particularly eager and talented interviewer of frontline soldiers (Ortenberg, *Vremia ne vlastno*, 118, 318).

⁴⁶ Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 28.

⁴⁷ Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 47.

⁴⁸ The appeal of Soviet propaganda albeit varied over time and depending on subject matter (Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*, 133). Elizabeth Papazian’s work on Soviet documentary film has explored, however, how directors of the 1920s and early 1930s attempted to negotiate the boundaries between shaping and reflecting reality. The “documentary mode” of filmmakers promised to objectively relay reality while simultaneously drawing attention to the nearness of a promised utopia for the conscious socialist viewer. While film is beyond the parameters of my study, Papazian’s work does indicate that the divide between utopian future and documentary observation was not so binary as it might seem. See Elizabeth A. Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth: The Documentary Moment in Early Soviet Culture* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009).

An era of fantastic heroes and “fairy tales” come true gave way, within the Stalingrad story, to a time of truly unimaginable events filled with appealing but real military heroes.⁴⁹ These ordinary characters—just like the real soldiers at Stalingrad—occupied a time and space that was incomparably different to anything previously experienced. Journalists no longer had to invent fantastic material when the present provided plentiful stories of incredible bravery. Indeed, one critic in 1942 criticized correspondents who strayed too far from “reality,” calling the “imagining of facts” a “naïve attempt to compete on paper with real military action.”⁵⁰ The “fairy tale” of the 1930s was being replaced with a heavier, albeit not exclusive, emphasis on the documentary. That basis underscored the “extraordinary stature” of the Stalingrad soldiers’ contribution to history, while encouraging the reader at home to picture their own life in relation to the epic events at Stalingrad.⁵¹ The vast strategic sweep of the war, and its “eternal” meaning, seemed to be built from the ground up by ordinary yet heroic people.

Almost every Stalingrad sketch is focused on an ordinary character. Frequently, characters’ pictures were printed alongside the text, or their names appeared in communiqués before being written up into sketches.⁵² A typical example of the ordinary hero is Shkolenko, the protagonist of Simonov’s *The Soldier’s Glory* (*Soldatskaia slava*). Simonov’s sketch begins with a brief portrait of the overall strategic situation—material inspired by Sovinformbiuro that frames the body of the sketch in an epic temporality: “Unknown fields, hillocks and clearings, overgrown with wormwood, have become a place that cannot be surrendered. People fight and

⁴⁹ For the official fairy tales of the 1930s, see Svetlana Boym, “Paradoxes of Unified Culture,” in *Socialist Realism Without Shores*, 133.

⁵⁰ Aleksandrov, “Uvazhenie k deistvitel’nosti,” 113. “Works by K Paustovskii, V. Kaverin, L. Kassil’, and B. Lavrenev were subject to harsh criticism for ‘aestheticisation’ of the war and ‘literary embroidery,’” writes Dar’ia Kling, *Tvorchestvo Vasiliia Grossmana v kontekste literaturnoi kritiki* (Moscow: Dom-muzei Mariny Tsvetaevoi, 2012), 28.

⁵¹ This effect placed Stalingrad in a long literary tradition, further underscoring my argument that the battle’s literary representations represented a centering point for the pre-war turn to non-Soviet literary tropes. Dan Ungurianu, for example, describes the effect of “showing great men not on a solemn pedestal but in an intimate fashion amid the details of everyday life” in his description of Pushkin’s *The Captain’s Daughter* (Dan Ungurianu, *Plotting History: The Russian Historical Novel in the Imperial Age* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 191).

⁵² For example, Grossman’s Chekhov, the protagonist of November 20’s *A Stalingrad Tale* (“Stalingradskaiia byl’,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 20, 1942), was first mentioned in a front-page editorial in October 14’s edition of *Trud*.

die for them, often not knowing the name of the village to the left, or the stream to the right—but knowing that behind them is Stalingrad, and for Stalingrad one must stand firm.”⁵³ Now, Simonov turned to his hero’s impressive but imitable feat of destroying a machine gun emplacement and capturing a German. The deed is described in the most ordinary language:

He braced himself on the pit’s bottom with his left hand, clinging on to the earth so as not to slip. He leaned up and threw the grenade. It fell right in the middle of the Germans. He saw that six lay still, and another who’d been standing by the machine gun continued to stand, staring in surprise at its mutilated barrel. Shkolenko leapt up and, not taking his eyes away from him for a second, made a sign to the German by the machine gun to take off his Luger and throw it to the ground.⁵⁴

Along the way, Shkolenko even makes a major—but understandably human—error. Anticipating that a shortcut on his scouting sortie will take him thirty seconds, Shkolenko is set back ten minutes: “He was displeased with himself [...] He’d wanted to save thirty seconds, and now he’d have to lose ten whole minutes.”⁵⁵ Stalingrad was not a victory of supermen. It was a victory of everyday people, related in terms that the ordinary reader could easily identify with. Only the epic context of events at Stalingrad elevated simple achievements into the realms of the heroic.

Documentary observation at its most effective was thus oriented away from ideology and enumeration towards the minutiae of daily life. In a bunker in Grossman’s *Stalingrad Army (Stalingradskaia armii)*, a sign instructs visitors to “keep the flies out!” Inside, a samovar and mattresses from “destroyed homes” decorate the living space. Encounters with the enemy are retold as jokes: “Telling these stories, people laugh, and it seems funny to you, so you laugh too.”⁵⁶ In the

⁵³ K.S. Simonov, *The Soldier’s Glory* (“Soldatskaia slava”), *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 11, 1942, 3. Note the Biblical symbolism of wormwood, which represents the bitterness during spiritual trials (Marcel de Cleene and Marie Claire Lejeune, *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe: Herbs* [Ghent: Man & Culture, 2003], 389).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

middle of the tense action of Shkolenko's sorties toward the German line, Simonov's narrator lingers on a description of the pleasure of smoking: "He ate the soup and rolled a cigarette. He hadn't smoked all morning. It was wonderful to smoke, especially when you expected that you wouldn't be able to do it again until the evening."⁵⁷ Sovinformbiuro's stories of monumental conflict were reconfigured into human anecdotes. The world of the present was projected onto an epic framework, providing evidence that everyday life during the war really was taking place during an extraordinary epoch. The reader was prompted to see through comparison that their own life was extraordinary—a part of *kairos*—thanks to reading this documentary work and experiencing Stalingrad vicariously as the battle unfolded.

The emphasis on the documentary present even extended to the level of dialogue. The inclusion of verbatim quotes from the journalists' interviews, rather than the "stock phrases" of Socialist Realism, gave voice to the life, language and customs of ordinary people.⁵⁸ For example, Grossman's Gromov, a stoic anti-tank gunner and the hero of *First Contact* (*Pervaia vstrecha*), speaks in a gruff, direct and colloquial manner: "What do I care about the infirmary? [...] There's only one medicine: goin' forward."⁵⁹ The language of the nurse the narrator meets crossing into Stalingrad in Simonov's *Days and Nights* brims with youthful fear and bravado: "Every time [I cross the Volga] it's still a little scary [...] They've already wounded me twice—once pretty heavily—but I still didn't believe I'd die, because I still haven't lived. I haven't seen much of life, so how could I just die?"⁶⁰ The real nurse Simonov had interviewed later praised the author in a private letter for the dialogue's

⁵⁷ Simonov, "Soldatskaia slava."

⁵⁸ David Brandenberger observes that during the war newspapers more widely "dispatched with the traditional vocabulary of stock phrases and ritualized clichés" of Soviet literature in an attempt to "address the readers in their own voices" (Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 150).

⁵⁹ See the interviews with Gromov in Grossman, *Gody voyny*. 375-6. Compare to the speech in V.S. Grossman, "Pervaia vstrecha," *Krasnaia zvezda*, October 15, 1942, 3. Gromov's brief interview, which runs to just a few lines in the notebook, is filled out with extra narrative material but the plot remains exactly as it was told to Grossman. The sniper Chekhov's much lengthier interview is transposed note for note into the sketch on the sniper (Grossman, "Stalingradskaia byl").

⁶⁰ Simonov, "Dni i noch'i."

closeness to reality.⁶¹ Shchepenina was clearly struck by how closely Simonov's literary language captured her own understanding of events.

On the surface, many of the Stalingrad heroes' characteristics were drawn from stock Socialist Realist descriptions. For example, Simonov's Shkolenko, the "stoic," "calm," and "dry" son of a former miner and civil war veteran, bears the hallmarks of the 1930s Soviet worker-hero. Tkalenko, the protagonist of *The Battle on the Outskirts* (*Boi na okraïne*) is compared to Chapaev, the Soviet war hero and subject of the eponymous film. Grossman's Vlasov shares a surname with Pavel Vlasov, the hero of Gorky's canonical novel *Mother* (*Mat'*, 1903). Vlasov goes to war "as if to work," emphasizing the continuity between the production novel and the wartime sketch.⁶² Gromov, meanwhile, was lauded for his worker-like characteristics and background.⁶³ While these elements of the 1930s hero continued to exist in the Stalingrad text, authors had evidently dispensed with tropes that made the heroes overtly fantastic, instead selecting the most appealing, believable—but officially approved—elements from the previous decade's works. By starting from real documentary observation, the heroic essence of Soviet characters was revealed through the extraordinary context of the battle at Stalingrad, rather than by creating unbelievable, inimitable supermen. Nevertheless, those heroes remain poised between Socialist Realist, Russian and real models: they recycle identifiable material from the past to create continuity between representation of Stalingrad and the reader's identity as a Soviet Russian.

⁶¹ K.S. Simonov, *Pis'ma o voïne, 1943-1979* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), 173.

⁶² V. Pertsov, *Pisatel' i novaia deistvitel'nost'* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1958), 208. The worker-like characteristics of heroes are highlighted elsewhere. Koroteev describes his Poliakov in *The Volga Boatman* (*Volgar'*) as if he is on a building site: "Sometimes in battle it seemed to Poliakov that he was on a building site, where the dust billows, the thunder of iron is deafening, and stone crushers and cement mixers shriek. But this is not construction, it is war: a natural phenomenon of destruction, from which we must again rebuild the bright edifice of our life" (V.I. Koroteev, *The Volga Boatman* ("Volgar'"), *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 22, 1942, 3).

⁶³ Solov'ev, "Russkie voïny," 3.

Making Stalingrad Epic

The key to linking the individual and History was to rapidly make Stalingrad an epic, giving historical, patriotic context for these ordinary heroes' actions. Specific conditions of wartime made this task easier. During wartime, the ubiquity of death renders the future distant or out of reach, so that the present seems endless.⁶⁴ The scale of conflict in 1942 led some to believe that war was to be the permanent state of society.⁶⁵ Wartime, therefore, is characterized by a key facet of the epic temporality: a sense of stasis and distance from the present. Authors' treatment of time in the Stalingrad stories ensured that Stalingrad reached beyond the endless present. They achieved this by acknowledging the importance of present actions to winning the battle, while simultaneously suggesting the unfolding miracle had *kairotic* significance.

The rapid enclosure of Stalingrad in an epic time and space separated it from ordinary life. In the wake of the successful counterattack, when victory in the battle seemed certain, authors easily adopted narrative postures that distanced themselves from the present. In imitation of 18th century epics, such as Lomonosov's *Ode on the Capture of Khotin* (*Oda na vziatie Khotina*, 1739), narrators look down from on high, surveying both the battlefield and its significance in history. The poet Evgenii Dolmatovskii, for example, reflected on victory in the poem *The Height* (*Vysota*). Dolmatovskii's narrator seems able to literally see victory from his elevated position:

You could not know before,

What beauty lies around,

If you look through the eyes of victory.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Catherine McLoughlin, *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 117; Marzena Sokolowska-Paryz, *Reimagining the War Memorial, Reinterpreting the Great War: The Formats of British Commemorative Fiction* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 36.

⁶⁵ See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 77-78 on this sensation in the First World War. For the Second World War, see Paul K. Saint-Amour, "On the Partiality of Total War," *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2014).

⁶⁶ "Ty ran'she i vedat' ne vedal,/Kakaia vokrug krasota,/Kol' smotrish' glazami pobedy" (E.A. Dolmatovskii, "Vysota," *Pravda*, December 18, 1942).

In the sketch *Battle for the Heights* (*Boi za vysotu*), Kuprin and Akul'shin transposed a battle for a hill into an epic timeframe by leaving participants “looking downwards from the height,” having conquered the “rabid” Germans through their “iron will.”⁶⁷ The authors thus revealed the historical importance of present actions. Events within Stalingrad thus stretched out towards eschatological beginnings and ends. By collapsing source materials, the past and present, and locations from across Russia and the world into a single moment and place in human time, authors allowed great historical concerns to play out in Stalingrad. At Stalingrad, Simonov wrote, “the value of life and the value of death, the value of all that is worthy, will be defended.”⁶⁸ Destruction was thus harnessed and re-oriented towards the future, towards a moment of sublime meaning.

However, while the battle's outcome was uncertain, many authors struggled to resolve the contradictions in documenting the present and revealing Stalingrad's universal significance. The juxtaposition of present chaos and allusions to Stalingrad's epic significance dragged the reader abruptly from one temporality to the other without resolution. Many of the earlier Stalingrad sketches thus left their characters trapped in the present with no sense of an actual or impending unity with History. Typically, authors asserted the future's closeness in a didactic, Sovinformbiuro-led introduction or conclusion while documentary evidence of the present was restricted to the body of the text. Given that divide, the burden is on the reader of these early sketches to connect present actions with their *kairotic* meaning. For example, the ending of Simonov's *U-2* attempts to create the future by imagining writing it: “Sometime, when writing the history of this war is begun, may the historian remember these people: the brave and modest laborers of aviation.”⁶⁹ The sudden move from the immediate present—“Dawn is breaking. It is time for sleep”—into the retrospective future of an imagined history comes *a propos* of nothing. The future remained uncoupled from the textual, and therefore the reader's, present.

⁶⁷ V. Kuprin and D. Akul'shin, “Boi za vysotu,” *Pravda*, December 18, 1942.

⁶⁸ Simonov, “Soldatskaia slava.”

⁶⁹ K.S. Simonov, *U-2* (“U-2”), *Krasnaia zvezda*, October 9, 1942, 3.

Even the most successful of Simonov's sketches, September's *Days and Nights*, left readers and characters trapped in circularity. The sketch's examination of a 24-hour period in the life of Stalingrad at war injects a natural forward movement to the narrative. The use of single-word sentences—"Morning," "Evening"—emphasizes this progress. Nevertheless, the theme of "days and nights" of battle, which was a popular Sovinformbiuro cliché, accentuates the unceasing conflict.⁷⁰ The narrator finds that time in the city is on hold: "In this house, as in many others, life has been cut off in mid-sentence." The writer fails to finish this "sentence": time remains paused. The narrator imagines a local policeman directing pedestrians "at some time, perhaps." The past is easily summoned, but the word "perhaps" undermines the certainty of history's forward movement. The sketch closes with no quantitative change: "This morning, the Germans are again bombing the city." The sketch's title conveys the monotonous repetition of day and night, rather than any move toward the future.⁷¹

The same limitation marred Simonov's *The Battle on the Outskirts*. For all that its protagonist Tkalenko is heroic, at the end of the sketch "women, children and the elderly have come from burned out villages here to the banks of the Volga, where they shelter under the bluffs and in caves. The shrieks of children resounded as the fatally tired eyes of the women followed us with a long, begging look."⁷² Tkalenko is trapped in the present; his actions have not been able to avert civilian suffering and, therefore, cannot belong to the world of the epic.

Grossman alone succeeded in finding convincing ways of resolving these tensions early in the battle. He played on the ambiguity of the wartime present to draw the experience of the war into an epic time in which the troops of Stalingrad fight for history itself. For example, in *On the Axis of the Main Attack*, time in battle

⁷⁰ Even Grossman used this cliché several times in *The Stalingrad Crossing*, *On the Axis of the Main Attack* and *The Stalingrad Army*. Not until *Today in Stalingrad* did he rethink the way in which it could be used as a bridge toward a peaceful future.

⁷¹ To do Simonov justice it is fair to note that he intended to call the sketch *Den' i noch'*—*Day and Night*. Use of the singular might have better suggested the one-off transformation of darkness into light. David Ortenberg persuaded him to change the title. Sometimes editorial and authorial collaboration may not have had the most beneficial effect.

⁷² Konstantin Simonov, *The Battle on the Outskirts* ("Boi na okraïne"), *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 18, 1942, 3.

appears to be malleable: “He who has experienced the tension of a headlong German air raid lasting ten minutes will understanding what it is like to experience eight hours of intense aerial bombardment.”⁷³ Grossman’s sense of malleable temporality, which drew equally on Tolstoyan experience of battle and on Socialist Realist models⁷⁴ (themselves influenced by Tolstoy), blends the present and the epic. Where this could have seemed like pure fantasy, Grossman connected it to the experience of battle as a timeless chaos that the participant cannot comprehend. The present could be understood in terms of the epic timelessness: the conditions of wartime allowed authors as skilled as Grossman to break down the boundaries of the epic/present temporalities, uniting documentary observation with eternal meaning.

When victory seemed to be certain after the November counterattack, Grossman transposed the present events of Stalingrad into the constant, unchanging time of the natural world.⁷⁵ In *The Stalingrad Offensive* (*Stalingradskoe nastuplenie*), the Volga’s thawing symbolizes the fortunes of the Soviet forces: “Ice flows down the Volga. The blocks crunch and crumble as they collide and slide into one another.”⁷⁶ The sketch repeats the phrase “the sun shines on...” several times, equating the Soviet attack with the coming of dawn. This light penetrates and illuminates a cellar defended by Soviet forces, reaching from the cosmological into the present.⁷⁷ Grossman illustrated the echoes of the epic in the present, and the present in the epic—the two times briefly touch and reflect one another within the bounds of the city.

⁷³ V.S. Grossman, *On the Axis of the Main Attack* (“Napravlenie glavnogo udara”), *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 25, 1942, 3. Note that while *On the Axis of the Main Attack* was published after the counterattack, it was actually written several weeks before. Grossman’s ability to treat time innovatively, therefore, was not purely a post-counterattack invention. The reader, of course, would have read the work in the context of the Soviet strategic success.

⁷⁴ In Socialist Realism, moments of heightened, transcendental nature were experienced as time that “could not, like the quotidian, be reckoned in facts of medium dimensions—by measures of progressive, incremental, quantitative change (such as how many minutes have elapsed)” (Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 146).

⁷⁵ We can only speculate at what Simonov might have made of the strategic developments had he not left Stalingrad for the Central Front in late September. Some evidence of his thinking might be deduced from his 1943 novel, *Days and Nights*, which I examine in the next chapter.

⁷⁶ V.S. Grossman, *The Stalingrad Offensive* (“Stalingradskoe nastuplenie”), *Krasnaia zvezda*, December 1, 1942, 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

After November 19, the newspapers' constant assertions of impending victory at Stalingrad and an about-turn in Soviet strategic fortunes to follow finally seemed believable. Immediately, Stalingrad could more easily be moved from a battle being fought in the present into the realm of memory. Authors increasingly began to concentrate on showing the epic qualities of the victory. For example, the further away the fighting receded, the more Grossman could establish temporal limits and order. The author transposed the events of Stalingrad into an epic time in which even the smallest action possessed enormous significance. This is Bakhtin's "valorized" epic time:

"Go on, have a smoke, Russkies!" they shout. But the Russians do not answer. The clatter of pickaxes and spades disappears in a thunder of explosions. The Germans want to drown out the Russians' methodical work with grenade blasts. Grenades from our trenches fly back in response. Hardly has the dust settled and the thunder silenced than the Germans again hear the mighty clatter. No, this earth will not save them from death. This earth is death for them. The Russians, conquering the stonehard winter earth, get closer and closer with every hour, with every minute.⁷⁸

This epic Stalingrad is charged with eschatological tensions—the Russians inch closer "with every minute"; the earth itself seems to be ready to swallow up the Germans. The sense of *kairotic* significance in this fraught language offered the reader a means to frame their own experience of the war.

The writers at Stalingrad used references to Russian history and literature, the Classics and canonical Socialist Realism to contextualize the *kairos* at Stalingrad in 1942 within a lineage of patriotic epics that could include both Russian and Soviet models of subjectivity. Writers saw fit to turn to almost any tradition for inspiration, juxtaposing heterogeneous material to illustrate how the soldiers featured in the Stalingrad stories were simply contemporary (and invincible) manifestations of past heroes in the march towards victory. The documented actions of the present, and the

⁷⁸ Grossman, "Stalingradskaia armiiia."

assertion that Stalingrad was an “epic,” therefore, were oriented in a specific and familiar model of sacrificial consciousness through which the reader was encouraged to interpret death in the present as a worthwhile sacrifice, since it was certain that Stalingrad would revitalize the entire nation.

At times, the frantic barrage of literary analogies was either incredibly subtle or made an unlikely comparison. Grossman’s allusion to a time when epic art is produced about the “sleeping” dead of Stalingrad who appear on the brink of returning to the land of the living—“Someday songs will be sung of those who sleep at the bottom of the Volga”—recalls Derzhavin’s epic *Waterfall* (*Vodopad*, 1794).⁷⁹ Surely, though, the average reader would not have picked up on this comparison. Il’ia Ehrenburg’s comparison of Stalingrad’s defenders to the mythical Antaeus must, surely, have gone over the heads of the same readers.⁸⁰ Writers soon began to eliminate explicit references to anything but Russian patriotic classics: *War and Peace*, the *Lay of Igor’s Campaign*, and folk tales. The more they invoked this material, the more certain victory seemed.

The influence of *War and Peace* looms large—more so than the regularly cited names of patriotic figures such as Alexander Suvorov, Dmitry Donskoi and Alexander Nevsky—since Tolstoy’s myth of Russian patriotic victory in 1812 appealed to the sense of historicism that could place Stalingrad within the context of meaningful patriotic sacrifices.⁸¹ Turning to *War and Peace* as a source for military and patriotic inspiration was hardly new. The use of pre-revolutionary patriotic imagery had begun in the mid-1930s with the turn towards Russian Romanticism and

⁷⁹ Grossman, “Segodnia v Stalingrade.” Derzhavin’s poem’s “allegorical promise, the waterfall as the all-consuming vortex of time, is quickly narrowed to a more human dimension: “*Ne zhizn’ li chelovekov nam / Sei vodopad izobrazhaet,*”” explains Harsha Ram (“Russian Poetry and the Imperial Sublime,” in Monika Greenleaf, Stephen Moeller-Sally, eds. *Russian Subjects: Empire, Nation and the Culture of the Golden Age* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998], 35).

⁸⁰ Il’ia Ehrenburg, “Russkii Antei,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 20, 1942. Stalin had also briefly referenced the myth before the war, but it is hard to see that it was widely known. See James Harris, *The Anatomy of Terror: Political Violence under Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 62.

⁸¹ That influence has, though, been stated to the exclusion of study of other influences. Lazarev concludes that Simonov was “totally in thrall to the Tolstoyan tradition” (Lazarev, *Voennaia proza Konstantina Simonova*, 78). Grossman was certainly deeply interested in Tolstoy. He made a pilgrimage to Yasnaya Polyana on the journey to Stalingrad, and read *War and Peace* “during the war I’ve only managed to read through *War and Peace* twice.” He also notes reading Pushkin, Gogol, Nekrasov and Sergei Aksakov (Grossman, *Gody voiny*).

the Imperial Sublime, and the “search for a usable past.” It exploded with the outbreak of war, which was termed the “Great Patriotic War” in imitation of 1812.⁸²

However, now Tolstoy’s emphasis on the leading role of the people in achieving victory over Napoleon, and on a form of mystic nationalism that viewed victory in 1812 as a providential miracle, became especially appealing. Simonov’s *The Soldier’s Glory* ends with the protagonist Shkolenko gazing out onto the steppe: “At one time, the word ‘Borodino’ was known only around Mozhaisk; it was a local word. And then, one day, it became known to the whole nation...” After hearing about Shkolenko’s own feats in the body of the sketch, the reader is drawn into the realm of the Russian epic past, certain that Stalingrad was a new Borodino.⁸³ The reader of 1942 was assured that feats in the present would contribute towards the creation of another epochal turning point.

The frantic search for engaging material from the literary past was not limited to high art, nor to any particular period or style. Authors were as likely to draw on popular and folk motifs as high art. In their co-authored sketch *In Stalin’s City*, Grossman and Koroteev allude to the *bogatyr*’, a Russian folk hero, to assure the reader that the fighters in epic Stalingrad were revealing their internal heroic essence through their actions. Local party chairman Chuianov explains that “for three months, our city has stood firm, like a *bogatyr*’, resisting the enemy’s vicious attacks.”⁸⁴ Soviet writers of the 1930s often used the term to describe exceptional workers, suggesting that Soviet writers were already searching for elements from a “usable

⁸² This phrase was of great political and ideological importance throughout the post-war era. See Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev’s Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 28.

⁸³ The usage here resembles the 1930s era of Marxist heroes standing alongside tsarist heroes, part of the “search for a usable past.” It is clearly an attempt to produce an appealing, patriotic propaganda image.

⁸⁴ Other writers had already done the same. A *Krasnaia zvezda* editorial of 11th September called on the “shadows of *bogatyri*” who defended Tsaritsyn to “inspire our troops” (“Kazhdyi gorod - krepost’ oborony,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 11, 1942, 1); Vladimir Lidin’s poem “Volga” invoked the “Russian, *bogatyr* strength” of the Red Army (Vladimir Lidin, “Volga,” *Izvestiia*, September 16, 1942, 2); Mikhail Ruderman’s poem “Ty—stalingradets” (“You are a Stalingrader”) asserts that Stalingrad was being fought “in the hearts of *bogatyri*” (Mikhail Ruderman, “Ty - stalingradets!,” *Trud*, October 27, 1942, 2). There are several more references in anonymously authored editorials before the publication of Grossman and Koroteev’s sketch.

past” in the years before the war.⁸⁵ By invoking the term in relation to Stalingrad, writers accorded the battle an aura of folkloric wonder, projecting images from the past into a heroic present. The defenders of Stalingrad became mythical heroes and, therefore, capable of epic heroic feats in the present. Their actions belonged both to the world of documented reality, to the archetypal world of Russian past, and to Soviet reality. Each element of the cultural past and the documentary present was thus brought into the reader’s experience, crystallizing around the symbolic textual space of Stalingrad.

That space had the capacity to contain both these Russian patriotic tropes and links to Soviet history. Writers made attempts to link the defence of Stalingrad to the Civil War, and especially to Stalin’s defence of Tsaritsyn. The link was a favoured Sovinformbiuro theme and possibly even Stalin’s own idea.⁸⁶ The reader was thus prompted to think of Stalingrad in terms of a series of Soviet events. For example, *In Stalin’s City* makes a link between the Civil War and the Second World War: “In the stern military crowd of faces and clothes, in the glittering weaponry, in the dense wartime unity of workers, soldiers and mariners sitting shoulder to shoulder, the eternal, invincible strength of the Soviet *narod*, the strength of the Great October Socialist Revolution, has emerged.”⁸⁷ Grossman even penned an entire sketch, *Tsaritsyn—Stalingrad*, linking Stalin’s defence of Tsaritsyn to the present battle. The poet Stepan Shchipachev encapsulated the theme in the lines: “Just like then, we shed our blood/Just like then, we wear armour/That fortune will once again find its peaceful shelter/And joy will come to the cradle.”⁸⁸ The anaphoric construction of the poetry and the comparative aspect (“Just like then...”) emphasizes a repetition of historical events, suggesting that Stalingrad would inevitably end in victory, just like the defence of Tsaritsyn.

⁸⁵ Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 149.

⁸⁶ V.S. Grossman, *Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad* (“Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad”), *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 13, 1942, 3.

⁸⁷ V.S. Grossman and V.I. Koroteev, *In Stalin’s City* (“V gorode Stalina”), *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 10, 1942, 3.

⁸⁸ Stepan Shchipachev, “1917-1942,” *Pravda*, July 11, 1942, 3.

At their most effective, the Stalingrad sketches were able to draw their characters into a temporal space that combined national patriotic and epic qualities, feeding on material from the surrounding newspaper pages for reinforcement. Grossman, for example, based the sketch *First Contact* around an ordinary character, Gromov, who is situated within a temporally ambiguous space. The sketch's first line draws the present into an uncertain time-frame: "an anti-tank rifle recalls an old-fashioned musket." Later, the narrator adds that, "wars in ancient times were fought in this way, with unwieldy muskets." In his notebook, Grossman noted Gromov's date of birth as 1904. In the sketch, he is simply "37." Subtly, but surely, the reader could see that the hero belongs not to the time of 1942 but to a line of victories that stretched from Ancient Greece to Borodino. Gromov's actions and character possess a timeless meaning that allowed the real man to be projected into an eternal landscape. The boundaries between present and epic past are erased. Gromov, in turn, seems to be fighting a battle for History itself. Grossman thus exploited the contextualizing power of the newspaper form to make the link to the Stalingrad of 1942: contact between epic events and the present is only made at the moment of reading the *text*, leaving Stalingrad's distanced temporality and *kairotic* qualities intact.

Epic Space: Home and Hell

The papers of 1942 established the site of the battle as distinct from the world of the present, and in turn, began to define its position in epic time and space. The process of spatial delineation began early in the battle—the title of Simonov's September 18 article *Battle on the Outskirts*, for example, connotes a figuratively distinct location at the edge of human experience. Journalists distilled the entire experience of the war into two spatial planes at Stalingrad: a familiar, human location—the house; and an epic space with eschatological connotations—Stalingrad as Hell. Intertwining these opposing planes and playing on Russian literary traditions of messianism and sacrifice, journalists painted their protagonists as mythical heroes who travelled to the underworld to defy death and win victory for life,

Many of the sketches reduced the space of the battle to the defence of a single house in Stalingrad. This distillation provided the reader with a means to compare their own experience to what was occurring at Stalingrad and established a recurring

motif in material this dissertation examines. The house defence theme spoke directly to the reader's experience of the home under threat from invasion, loss, bombing or evacuation. The house was a purely human, domestic space, in contrast with the eschatological connotations of Stalingrad and the overwhelming scale of Second World War.

The use of the home defence as metaphor for the war as a whole was not new. Simonov had made it the core of the previous year's poem "If Your House is Dear to You" ("Esli dorog tebe tvoi dom"). The theme, however, had new resonance at Stalingrad, where a battle for every home really was happening: as one German soldier wrote, "the front is a corridor between burnt-out rooms."⁸⁹ The battle for single houses became synonymous with the militarization and defence of both the nation and the individual's own home. "Every house at Stalingrad is a fortress!" screamed masthead slogans alongside photographs of destroyed homes, kicking off a period of intense focus on the house as central to Stalingrad.⁹⁰ The narrator of Simonov's *Days and Nights* visits houses in Stalingrad. The houses are "our fortress," from which the narrator observes that "the city lives, it lives—whatever the cost."⁹¹ In Grossman's *A Stalingrad Tale* (*Stalingradskaia byl'*), the sniper Chekhov spends days holed up on the fifth floor of a house littered with the detritus of everyday life—pipes, mattresses, and clothing. From his lookout, Chekhov exerts a growing control over the entire city: "By the eighth day, Chekhov had all the roads to the Germans' houses under control. The Germans had ceased walking and firing, so he had to change his position."⁹² The defence of the nation, Grossman's work suggested, could begin with the individual—the lone sniper—conquering the space around the home.

The house motif connoted not just strategic survival but the fight for life itself. In *Today in Stalingrad*, Grossman drew on the religious connotations of the arrival of light to explore this theme. The narrator explains that in soldiers' bunkers "there is no

⁸⁹ A German infantryman's diary is quoted in Stephen G. Fritz, *Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II* (Louisville: University Press of Kentucky, 2010).

⁹⁰ The idea first appeared on 10th-11th September on mastheads. By late September, the "battle for every house" was the dominant theme of the Sovinformbiuro narrative.

⁹¹ Simonov, "Dni i noch'i."

⁹² Grossman, "Stalingradskaia byl'."

light.” The bunker’s defenders “battled for the sun, battled for the light of day,” as if in a battle for existence itself.⁹³ But the coming of light allows the defenders of the following fortnight’s *The Stalingrad Army* to emerge from their fortified cellar: “A thin sunbeam penetrates the shield which shuts off the window of the basement.”⁹⁴ The home is transformed into a location that has significance even for the overwhelming power of the natural world. Its goal of fighting for houses rather than territory, governments or ideologies, lends the action of Stalingrad in the present a universal applicability—even as the great scale of the war was boiled down into a single, familiar space. Any reader could read the newspaper and picture the defence of their own home. Stalingrad’s epic seemed to be reflected in, and reflect, the reader’s own, domestic life.

Contrarily, the city that surrounded the house was depicted as a hell on earth delineated from the normal world by the Volga’s symbolic boundary. This permitted Stalingrad to function as a pivot where human and sacred worlds and experiences meet—a spatial imitation of the meeting of present and epic temporalities. The past and the present, and Classical and Soviet tropes could be seamlessly intertwined as visions of life and death met, and Soviet soldiers and society underwent a symbolic death and resurrection: Soviet notions of self and social transformation were given form around the idea of Stalingrad.

Fire and smoke covered the real landscape of Stalingrad: “Approaching this place, soldiers used to say: ‘We are entering hell.’ And after spending one or two days here, they said: ‘No, this isn’t hell, this is ten times worse.’”⁹⁵ In his notebooks, Grossman recorded the “burned out, dead city,” “burning houses,” described the city as an “eternal flame,” and witnessed burning oil silos that engulfed parts of the city in sheets of flames: “Oil is streaming across the Command Point toward the Volga. The Volga is lit up with flame.”⁹⁶ Those scenes rapidly appeared in sketches. Simonov in *The Battle on the Outskirts* reiterated images and

⁹³ Grossman, “Segodnia v Stalingrade.”

⁹⁴ Grossman, “Stalingradskaia armiiia.”

⁹⁵ As quoted in Antony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova, *A Writer at War* (London: Harvill, 2005).

⁹⁶ Grossman, *Gody voyny*.

phrases from his first sketches and from Grossman's work to describe "fire and dust, over which flames flicker and ash blows night and day." In a line lifted from the introduction to his own *The Soldier's Glory*, he added that, "At night, a smoky glow engulfs the horizon."⁹⁷ Vasily Koroteev contrasted the vicious, fiery present with the past, in which "there weren't the terrible flames [...] and there were none of the fires that are all around."⁹⁸ The prevalence of fire imagery clearly connoted the eschatological, strengthening the possibility of reading the Stalingrad story as *kairotic*.

It is not hard to imagine how these sights and the vicious fighting were seen as evidence that Stalingrad was a hell on earth. Authors continually used the word "hell" (*ad*) to describe the city. Simonov called Stalingrad an "unlivable hell."⁹⁹ Grossman named it a "smoking" and "wild" hell, and even the "kingdom of death and destruction."¹⁰⁰ For the young generation who had not experienced the First World War or the Civil War, the conflagration at Stalingrad must have been petrifying. Authors constructed Stalingrad within the context of epic and religious literary tradition in order to make sense of and ascribe value to the ongoing conflict, complementing their readings of the battle as personal, domestic and of the present.

The dangerous crossing across the Volga bridged the outside world and Stalingrad's hell.¹⁰¹ Crossing it gave ordinary characters a means to reinvent themselves as Soviet heroes—as examples of a Nietzschean force of humanity to follow Maxim Gorky's exhortation to show the reader "how to be more human than

⁹⁷ Simonov, "Boi na okraïne," 3.

⁹⁸ Koroteev, "Volgar'." Some of these images were even reabsorbed into Sovinformbiuro narrative: one article speaks of a Stalingrad "in the flow of the fires on the steep bank of the great Russian Volga river" ("Tovarishchu Stalīnu ot boitsov, komandirov i politrabotnikov Stalingradskogo fronta," 1).

⁹⁹ Simonov, "Dni i nochī."

¹⁰⁰ V.S. Grossman, *The Battle of Stalingrad* ("Stalingradskaia bitva"), *Krasnaia zvezda*, October 27, 1942; Grossman, "Napravlenie glavnogo udara"; Grossman, "Stalingradskaia armīia." Evgenii Kriger describes it as "devilish" (Kriger, "Otvēt Stalingrada"). The "hell" moniker became popular in texts and as a metaphor for Stalingrad itself.

¹⁰¹ For lengthy periods of the battle, troops were isolated in pockets of the city, on the East bank of the Volga. The perilous river crossing, which only sporadically operated, was the sole means to send reinforcements and materiel—and for journalists to reach their interviewees.

they already were.”¹⁰² Beginning with Grossman’s August 23 sketch *On the Volga*, the river was a constant presence in the Stalingrad story.¹⁰³ The Volga became a modern River Styx, which functioned as a boundary between life and death in classical myth.¹⁰⁴ The boundaries between life and death were erased: as Simonov put it, “one and the same dark, southern night covers those sweating, dusty fighters, exhausted from battle, and those who will never again look on this sky.”¹⁰⁵ Grossman too blurred the distinction between life and death: “The enemy was again seized by a superstitious feeling of terror: were the attackers real men or already dead?”¹⁰⁶ The battle for the house defence within this space therefore acquired a great symbolic and historical scope. Soldiers fought for their homes, for history, and for life itself. Those who crossed the Volga/Styx could, like the heroes of classical myth, expect to save humanity by retrieving it from the jaws of death¹⁰⁷—thus real Soviets in the present could undergo their own journey into an epic time-space by crossing the Volga.

The image of the Volga harks back to nineteenth century portrayals by Nikolai Nekrasov and Nikolai Ostrovsky, which were instantly recognizable to the Russian reader.¹⁰⁸ By invoking it, therefore, writers conjoined a patriotic Russian trope, Soviet ideas of the epic present, and classical representations of hell and resurrection. This cannot be coincidence: Grossman had read at least one Nekrasov poem during the war, and must have been familiar with many more since the poet had been widely read in the 1930s.¹⁰⁹ *The Stalingrad Crossing*’s central character, the mariner Vlasov,

¹⁰² Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 69.

¹⁰³ Grossman, “Na Volge,” 3.

¹⁰⁴ Crossing rivers has often been used as a symbolic border between the worlds of peace and war (Angela Brintlinger, *War and the Russian Literary Hero Across the twentieth century* [Brighton: Academic Studies, 2012], 84).

¹⁰⁵ Simonov, “Soldatskaia slava.”

¹⁰⁶ Grossman, “Napravlenie glavnogo udara.”

¹⁰⁷ Margo Kitts, *Sanctified Violence in Homeric Society: Oath-Making Rituals in the Iliad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 97.

¹⁰⁸ The use of the Volga as a propaganda tool was not new either. For example, Tsar Alexander III had used a trip down the Volga as a means to project his desired public image in the nineteenth century. See Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 269.

¹⁰⁹ Grossman references the poem in question, “Krest’ianskie deti”, in his notebooks (Grossman, *Gody voyny*).

connotes the familiar Russian folk motif of the Volga boatman. He embodies the positive characteristics of the nation: “In him, in this forty-something father of six, a man who has laboured long and hard, the entire anger of our nation seemed to be embodied.”¹¹⁰ By setting the Volga’s historical and literary associations alongside the experience of the present, writers appealed to the Russian reader’s national spirit.¹¹¹ The reader was thus asked to picture Stalingrad’s epic qualities within the scope of Russian patriotic history.

The idyllic pastoral of the Volga’s Russian bank promises utopian life. Grossman’s *On the Volga* paints an elegiac picture of “young birds” singing in concert over the wide Volga, which wends its way through the countryside with a “young maiden’s beauty.”¹¹² In Simonov’s work, the river represents safety and, therefore, life: “Homeless women and children wandering in the streets find shelter in the ravines and bluffs along its banks.”¹¹³ But the river was, above all, a boundary between life and death. Grossman emphasized this by measuring the distance between the left and right banks, emphasizing the latter’s idyllic quality: “One thousand three hundred metres of the Volga’s water separate the meadowy bank’s jetties from Stalingrad.” Simonov’s narrator in *Days and Nights* highlights a change from the historical, Sovinformbiuro mode to the first-person, observational narrator’s perspective with the succinct sentence, “We crossed the Volga.”¹¹⁴ Stalingrad itself is cut off from the reader’s present by the Volga. It is at once accessible and safely delineated from the reader. As the *lieu de mémoire* allows readers to access a repository of memory, so the Stalingrad text encourages them to vicariously imagine themselves crossing the Volga into an epic otherworld.

¹¹⁰ V.S. Grossman, *The Stalingrad Crossing* (“Stalingradskaia pereprava”), *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 4, 1942.

¹¹¹ Every reader would have been familiar with the Volga. Indeed, Grossman’s daughter recalls singing folk songs about the river with her father as a child (Ekaterina Korotkova-Grossman, “Vot umer papa,” n.d., Box 1, Folder 18, Garrard Collection. 5). On a visit in 1927, Grossman was struck by the “splendid, wide but devilish” river (V.S. Grossman, “Letter to Semen Osipovich,” July 9, 1927, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection).

¹¹² Grossman, “Na Volge.”

¹¹³ Simonov, “Boi na okraïne.”

¹¹⁴ Simonov, “Dni i nochì.”

Even before the transformation of the nation's fate in late November, the river in the wartime sketches acted as a catalyst—the border between the present and the future/past epic, as it was in reality the dividing line between victory and defeat—for characters to undergo a personal transformation. By crossing the river, the character's heroic essence could be revealed, just as the nation as a whole was supposed to be discovering its heroism. In *The Stalingrad Crossing*, Grossman's boatman Vlasov saves his craft from sinking. The narrator explains: "At the Volga crossing, Vlasov stood up to his full height." Vlasov dominates the sketch's vertical axis. The human character overcomes the German dominance of the sky, where "rockets fly upwards", and "clouds of planes hang over us."¹¹⁵ An unwinnable battle of technology—"The Germans have set 5,000 mines and fired 8,000 artillery rounds" on the crossing—is suddenly dominated by a human presence. But Grossman, as he had in his pre-war works, drew on themes the reader would understand as patriotically *Russian* rather than Soviet to show this transformation of the self. This theme persisted across Grossman's Stalingrad sketches. Seeing the Volga for the first time, for example, Grossman's Gromov "was seized by the full rage of a man torn away by war from his native fields, from his *izba* and from his wife."¹¹⁶ Grossman's human characters seem equal to the Wehrmacht's mechanized might thanks to their transformation.

Simonov's characters' transformations—which, recall, were all written in September 1942—were internal and personal. Tkalenko's fear of entering Stalingrad is replaced by "a cold feeling of hatred for the Germans" as he crosses. By the sketch's end, "the light of youth no longer shined" in Tkalenko's eyes. As a result of "being certain of his own death," a "calmness and indifference was born in him."¹¹⁷ While Grossman's Vlasov and Simonov's Tkalenko show two different types of transformation, both asserted the importance of crossing into Stalingrad's hell. Each suggests that Stalingrad's human defenders acquired a special status. They were not simply brave troops who watched their comrades die and almost died themselves. They were men who underwent a symbolic transformation thanks to the space of

¹¹⁵ Grossman, "Stalingradskaia pereprava." This recalls the epic heights of Lomonosov's *Ode on the Taking of Khotin*.

¹¹⁶ Grossman, "Pervaiia vstrecha."

¹¹⁷ Simonov, "Boi na okraine."

Stalingrad. The reader too could be transformed into a force to overcome seemingly impossible odds—living up to the Soviet enthusiasm for revealing the people’s heroic essence. Even before the actual November counterattack had taken place, authors were striving to suggest that Stalingrad was a transformative site by collating familiar Soviet, Russian and classical motifs.

Grossman, even well before the “miracle” of November 19, was better able to resolve the tension between the individual’s present and the distant epic by drawing together ideas of epic space and time. Where even Simonov drew on Sovinformbiuro material for his introductions and conclusions, simply sandwiching the documentary experiences of his human characters between enumerative material, Grossman placed his characters at the axis of great historical forces. He projected *kairotic* moments onto his characters, rather than attempting to squeeze their actions outward into an epic narrative. This enabled the author to refer to Sovinformbiuro material while still foregrounding the individual contribution. Soviet critics delighted over Grossman’s characters, even though they are qualitatively little removed from those of his peers, in whom *kairos* seems to be concentrated. The possibility of rewriting the entire nation as a heroic force after Stalingrad’s turning point seemed to be embodied in these characters.¹¹⁸

Grossman’s Stalingrad hero responds to extraordinary situations with simple actions, channeling “the whole force of his being into a single military task.”¹¹⁹ Grossman’s characters are made heroic by their total dedication to the task at hand, rather than through any fantastic achievement. Indeed, their feats are unremarkable. Vlasov, the rather ordinary protagonist—“I’ve never been spoiled, I’ve never swaggered around [...] I did honest work on the *kolkhoz*”—of *The Stalingrad Crossing*, directs his “entire soul [...] at one aim: defending our forces’ crossing point.”¹²⁰ The sketch’s opening paragraph pinpoints a single boat amongst a busy scene on the cold, dark Volga crossing. The battle totally engrosses the reader’s aural and spatial senses as bombs and mines “whizz,” “whistle” and “cry.” Against this

¹¹⁸ Pertsov, *Pisatel’ i novaia deistvitel’nost’*, 209.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 208.

¹²⁰ Solov’ev, “Russkie voyny.”

overwhelming background of battle, Vlasov's actions on board are "miraculous." He plugs a leak in the boat, saving its passengers from certain death. Any reader might be able to imitate Vlasov's actions.¹²¹ But, moreover, Vlasov's "soul," his inner life, is at one with the external—historical—landscape of Stalingrad. His participation in the battle provides a direct means to make his present self "epic" in nature.

Grossman used a similar technique in *First Contact*. The gunner Gromov's destruction of two German tanks is related almost in passing.¹²² The character's feat is made extraordinary by the fact that the sick, exhausted soldier remains resolute while fighting, almost hopelessly, against the massed ranks of the German armies. In *On the Axis of the Main Attack*, Grossman adopted the Sovinformbiuro method of enumeration. The text describes the "entire devilish arsenal of German militarism," listing "countless" guns, mortars, rifles, tanks and men. The repeated phrase "on the axis of the main attack" hammers home the weight of the enemy forces. This acts as a counterpoint to the Soviet defenders, who are "unbending" in their defence and their "obstinate, eternal fire."¹²³ Familiar, human Soviet soldiers find themselves in a "war of motors" alongside their comrades. Soviet readers—under attack, in evacuation, or trapped in grief—were offered a model to imagine themselves at the very centre of the colossal war. Grossman's sketches pared down the enormity of Stalingrad and the war as a whole to find the human lost in conflict, then showed the reader how that lonely individual's resoluteness made them heroic.

After the November 19 counterattack began, Grossman was thus well placed to affirm the epic undertones of Stalingrad while also continually placing the human at the heart of the battle. Grossman continually acknowledged the enormous sacrifices at Stalingrad by writing the individual into the battle's epic time and space. In the opening lines of December 1's *The Stalingrad Offensive*, the frozen corpse of a Russian mariner is retrieved from the Volga:

¹²¹ The work was so effective that Korotееv rewrites it in *Volga Boatman*. His central character is, like Vlasov, "an old Volga boatman, the captain of the boat, in a cap, and with a silver beard," whom the author also met on the Volga crossing. Korotееv, "Volgar'."

¹²² Grossman, "Pervaia vstrecha."

¹²³ Grossman, "Napravlenie glavnogo udara."

Ice is moving down the Volga. Ice fragments creak as they collide, crumble and slide on top of one another. The dry whisper, which sounds like scattered sand, is audible many fathoms from the bank. The river is almost completely covered with ice. Only occasionally can one see spots of water amongst the wide white ribbon floating between the banks. The humble water of the Volga carries tree trunks and logs. On an icy hillock sits a frowning black crow. Yesterday a dead mariner in his navy vest [*tel'niashka*] washed up here. Some sailors from a cargo steamer tried to get him out. He was frozen into the ice, so it was tough going to prise him away. It was as if he didn't want to leave the Volga, where he fought and died.¹²⁴

Grossman here dispensed completely with direct quotation from Sovinformbiuro material. Instead, images of nature and mythical tropes (the crow as the symbol of death) conjure up an epic atmosphere. The narrative seamlessly slips into the more colloquial tone (“it was tough going to prise him away”¹²⁵) before suggesting that the individual is stuck fast—“frozen into”—the epic space of the battle. Only now do we see the content that typically bookended other writers’ sketches. The narrator notes the continuing work of the Volga crossing, which “feeds the offensive,” so that the reader understands that the mariner’s death has kept the crossing working. The mariner’s body has symbolically fused with the Volga, with the collective spirit and with history itself. It has become transcendent. Grossman’s documentary observation of an anonymous soldier’s death seamlessly merges with the eschatological vision of Stalingrad as a turning point in history.¹²⁶ Soviet readers of December 1942, assured that the war had reached a turning point, were offered a way to see how the death of loved ones, colleagues or neighbours merge into the sweeping but abstract vision of Stalingrad as *kairos*.

¹²⁴ Grossman, “Stalingradskoe nastuplenie.”

¹²⁵ The pointed, succinct Russian sentence reads simply: “*Ego s trudom otorvali.*”

¹²⁶ The description is uncannily similar to how Grossman remembered a dead soldier in December 1941, indicating how important revisiting and reworking older material was to creating the Stalingrad story: “He lay on the fresh, newly fallen snow [...] he lay like a little sparrow with a modest, callow smile on his boyish face.” As quoted in F. Levin, “Vstuplenie,” in *Povesti, ocherki, rasskazy*, by V.S. Grossman (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1958), 8.

Contrast Grossman's scene with Simonov's treatment of another drowning death in *Days and Nights*, written two months earlier—before the Soviet counterattack had begun. Simonov's sketch had concluded with the image of a woman floating in the Volga on a log: "On [the log] lies a drowned woman, clutching it with parched, shrivelled fingers. I don't know where the waves have brought her from. Perhaps she's one of those who died on a steamer, or perhaps she died in a fire on the quay. Her face is twisted: her suffering before death must have been unbelievable. The Germans did this."¹²⁷ Placed at the end of the sketch, Simonov's corpse is doomed to oblivion. The Soviet reader, used to looking for meaning in minor changes to canonic forms, could surely not have missed the development from Simonov's drowned woman to Grossman's mariner.¹²⁸ The effect was amplified, since the Stalingrad story, transmitted through the newspaper medium, saw uncertainty around the future give way to news of success at Stalingrad. Through a minor structural alteration, Grossman asserted the value of his mariner's sacrifice. The reader was shown the meaning of strategic progress after the November counterattack for the individual, and thus asked to reimagine material from the past in the light of this new success. Pre-counterattack doubts about the claims that Stalingrad would "live for centuries" were beginning to be replaced with a retrospectively applied logic: earlier sacrifices and retreats seemed to have led inexorably toward the positive turning point.

The Resurrection of Stalingrad

The story presented in 1942-3 culminated by describing Stalingrad as a resurrection through which the world was reborn and the brightest of futures flickered on the horizon, loading the story with the *kairotic* significance that would come to define it in the following years. Journalists had personified the city itself early in the battle, dragging its survival—and therefore epic questions of history—into the world of the human. Simonov was the first to do so, describing Stalingrad as "a soldier city

¹²⁷ Simonov, "Dni i nochi."

¹²⁸ Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 13.

[*gorod-soldat*], scorched in battle.”¹²⁹ Grossman and others soon followed. In *Tsaritsyn—Stalingrad*, “the city has a fate, just like a man.”¹³⁰ The sketch explains how Stalingrad and its Soviet inhabitants developed in unison throughout the 1930s: “Swift was the growth of Stalingrad’s people, swift was the growth of the city itself, during the peaceful years of Soviet life.” Buildings “sprang up”; “tens of thousands of people” live amongst “giants of factories.”¹³¹ In this idealized vision of the pre-war years, the personified city lives in harmony with its inhabitants. Together, they experienced rapid forward movement in History.

In fall 1942, though, the city was symbolically sacrificed along with its defenders. Stalingrad is “a burned out, dead city,” “slain by the Germans.”¹³² Even where it seemed to cling to life, the threat of death was a rallying call—“Is the city dead? No, the city lives!”¹³³ The sniper Chekhov is tortured by the “image of a dead Stalingrad.”¹³⁴ Grossman took the theme to its limits by describing the city as a “wasteland.”¹³⁵ The Russian, *pustyr*, comes from the word *pustoi*—empty. Stalingrad is defined by absence, nothingness. The total destruction of the living and built environment, of history itself, symbolically unified in the death of the personified Stalingrad, threatened Soviet and Russian tradition equally.

However, authors’ work even as early as September 1942 suggested that the death of the city was a necessary precursor to its resurrection. Simonov’s narrator in *The Soldier’s Glory* awaits a symbolic birth stemming from victory at Stalingrad: “The glory of the divisions, the glory of the entire Russian military, has not yet been

¹²⁹ Simonov, “Dni i nochi.” The image was not just used by Simonov and Grossman. Evgenii Kriger writes of the German attempt to “kill the Volga city” and of a Stalingrad which “breathed fire” (Kriger, “Otvét Stalingrada”. 3; E. Kriger, “Stalingrad v boiu,” *Izvestiia*, October 10, 1942, 3). Mikola Bazhan writes that “the heart of these eternal ruins beats yet” (M.P. Bazhan, “Na komandnom punkte,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, May 11, 1942, 3).

¹³⁰ Vasilii Grossman, “Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 13, 1942, 3. Koroteev, meanwhile, described a Stalingrad “raised on the glorious traditions of Stalin’s defence of Tsaritsyn. The city is a warrior” (V.I. Koroteev, “Pod Stalingradom,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 12, 1942, 3).

¹³¹ Grossman, “Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad,” November 13, 1942.

¹³² Grossman, *Gody voiny*; Grossman, “Segodnia v Stalingrade.”

¹³³ Grossman, “Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad.”

¹³⁴ Grossman, “Stalingradskaia byl’.”

¹³⁵ Grossman, “Stalingradskaia armia.”

born on these fields.”¹³⁶ Simonov seemed to reassure the reader of September 1942, at a time when the Soviets’ strategic situation remained dire, that the “glory” of Stalingrad would resurrect the nation. Even humans could be wondrously resurrected: the hero of *The Battle on the Outskirts*, Tkalenko, is imbued with the spirit of Stalingrad’s “time of miracles” and “miraculously” recovers from near fatal injuries; the nurse Shchepenina “returns” to life after becoming a casualty.¹³⁷ By implication, the nation might recover with characters such as this. The Stalingrad journalists thus provided a means through which the population could read and write themselves into the coming resurrection of the city, the nation and the future—well before the actual strategic turnaround occurred, the Soviet reader was asked to think of Stalingrad as eschatologically significant.

When the counterattack did come in November, the reader was thus already primed to read it as a resurrection of humanity. Grossman, writing after November 19, was able to leverage this moment to conjoin construction metaphors from pre-war Soviet literature and the idea of resurrection. The narrator of *The Stalingrad Army* meets the city’s defenders. They engage in building work, beginning from the single house that “still lives” amongst the destruction. This opposes the “kingdom of death and destruction.” Symbolically, the troops move forward “step by step.”¹³⁸ The house defence story was transformed. The house was now the location not for destruction but for construction, not the last line of defence, but the first step towards life. These motifs from the Soviet production novel, incorporated into this *kairotic* logic, suggested not the quixotic construction projects of the 1930s but the construction of a new, post-war life.

Other journalists rapidly adopted Grossman’s rebirth motif, expressing its religious undertones with zeal. M. Ruzov and Taradankin proclaimed in early February that, “soon new life will spring up here. The great and glorious Volga city will be reborn!” Evgenii Kriger wrote that “the Russian city has arisen from flames and blood,” connoting the Bible or the myth of the Phoenix. The resurrection had

¹³⁶ Simonov, “Soldatskaia slava.”

¹³⁷ Simonov, “Boi na okraïne”; Simonov, “Dni i nochi.”

¹³⁸ Grossman, “Stalingradskaia armia.”

acquired religious significance: it was simultaneously belonged to the reader's present, it was "holy," and yet it was also given qualities associated with the pre-1917, Russian past and the pre-war, Soviet past.¹³⁹ The reader could already find a vast range of memories coalescing under the umbrella of Stalingrad's resurrection, an event that they had both anticipated and subsequently vicariously experienced through reading the Soviet newspapers.

By the end of the battle, the Stalingrad story had already been shaped into an event of *kairotic* importance by imbuing it with epic qualities. Contained within the newspaper form, the story invited readers to orient their own experience of war toward that *kairos*. Readers could imitate literary characters' sacrifice and resurrection, and transformation into mythical heroes, by picturing their own life against vitally important events while reading the newspapers. Indeed, Grossman described how troops in a house savour victory, listening to music "as if to a church service, these soldiers who spent three months face to face with death."¹⁴⁰ The reader was invited to engage in a parallel, literary ritual, reading the text to reflect on the event's *kairotic* qualities. The result was that readers might have read Stalingrad's turning point as a moment to rewrite the past—the retreats and catastrophes of the war's first year, the unimaginable death toll at Stalingrad itself—as part of a resurrection of both the individual and the nation.

Transformed into a historical force through which the "character of the nation" was "baptised,"¹⁴¹ the triumph at Stalingrad was accorded meaning for the Russian reader. Shorn of the need to explicitly relate material to Marxist socio-economic processes, writers were able to create propaganda texts that transcended the appeal of even Civil War works. The incomprehensible chaos and stalled temporality of wartime was replaced with a stabilizing and ordered narrative. Few could have had the desire to challenge the nature or meaning of Stalingrad, which enabled the

¹³⁹ The battle was incessantly described as "holy." For example, see Bazhan, "Na komandnom punkte."

¹⁴⁰ Grossman, "Stalingradskaia armia."

¹⁴¹ Boris Solov'ev, "Stalingrad," *Izvestiia*, November 29, 1946, 3.

survival of the nation: it was “the antecedent, the *sine qua non* of present reality,” a mythical, providential moment that promised a new beginning.¹⁴²

Literature had played a vital role in creating Stalingrad for the entire nation. For the first time, Socialist Realist writers achieved the goal of showing “that the past and present political history, without being an actual salvational history [...] was linked with salvational history.”¹⁴³ During the bleak days of 1942, Socialist Realism’s focus on the epic connotations of action in the present was a useful vehicle to persuade the reader that no matter how appalling the present, victory was inevitable: “We have in our hands,” Il’ia Ehrenburg explained, “a weapon made not for anthologies, but for war.”¹⁴⁴ National identity, constructed in the present, was written into the epic past and contained within the pages of the newspaper—literature had provided a means to unite the individual with a new, Soviet nation-building identity.

In spite of the catastrophic human and social experiences of the war, the Stalingrad story thus “provided the Russian Revolution with a means of enriching its universal character.”¹⁴⁵ Now, the regime could justify its own existence not in terms of future Marxist utopia, but in terms of national achievements during the war. War survivors had a “shared formative, myth-building experience [in] their collective identity.”¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, for the government in 1943, the story was also the start of a new epoch of confidence in Stalin’s absolute power. Stalingrad was the story of the people, but the newspapers immediately began to propel Stalin’s role in the victory to the foreground. In his article celebrating the final victory in February 1943, Vasily Koroteev diligently quoted the Stalingrad general Vasily Chuikov to explain that, “Comrade Stalin personally planned the defence of the city.” The story builds to the writer’s climactic genuflection: “Here amongst the ruins of the city we bow to the

¹⁴² Alan Dundes, *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 102.

¹⁴³ Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*, 51.

¹⁴⁴ Il’ia Ehrenburg, “Pisatel’ na voine,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, May 1943.

¹⁴⁵ Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 224.

¹⁴⁶ Jeffrey W. Jones, *Everyday Life and the “Reconstruction” of Soviet Russia During and After the Great Patriotic War, 1943-1948* (Bloomington: Slavica, 2008), 281.

Motherland and to the High Commander, the great Stalin.”¹⁴⁷ For all that Stalingrad resurrected the hope of the mass of the people for a post-war future, it had also given the dictator a means to sanctify himself.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ V.I. Koroteev, “Stalingrad prazduet pobedu,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, February 5, 1943, 3.

¹⁴⁸ Aron, *Opium of the Intellectuals*, 114.

3. After Stalingrad: The People and Stalin

Soviet writers had found in Stalingrad an event around which Russian and Soviet narratives of heroic transformation could be centred. Accordingly, critics and newspaper editorials alike called for a “Stalingrad epic” that would preserve and affirm the meaning of the battle.¹ That call, I reason, revealed a desire to encode the battle in a discrete material form that would both preserve and make accessible its memory. Enclosing the Stalingrad story in long-form prose ensured that its epic qualities—and therefore the wholeness of its *kairotic* significance—would not be open to challenge, parody, or irony. In this chapter, I explore how the documentary qualities of Stalingrad were incorporated further into a stable, consistent story as writers, encouraged by the government, answered the call to produce long prose and epic works about Stalingrad. The creation and memorization of those long-form works circumscribed the battle in a distinctly epic time and space while preserving the sense of the present of 1942-3 by drawing on motifs associated with the journalism studied in the last chapter—and, therefore, associated with the readership’s own vicarious experience of the battle. The result was to confirm Stalingrad’s *kairotic* significance and to permit its perpetual return in the reader’s present. Simultaneously, the epic form limited the threat of the battle to damage the fragile post-war sociopolitical equilibrium.

In each of the works I study in this chapter—prose work by Vasily Grossman, Konstantin Simonov, Il’ia Ehrenburg and the veterans Viktor Nekrasov and Pavel Shebunin—writers drew on the motifs of newspaper journalism. These motifs now connoted not just the recent past but a whole raft of associations with Soviet and Russian patriotic history. Their use, therefore, removed Stalingrad from the present, isolating it within the pages of books.² Furthermore, during

¹ Ehrenburg, “Pisatel’ na voine”; “Goroda-geroi,” *Pravda*, November 25, 1942.

² The motifs associated with the battle now formed part of a Bolshevik language loaded with connotations that immediately signalled the speaker’s alignment with official and collective narratives. This fact neatly links the language produced in the newspapers with Stephen Kotkin’s idea of “speaking Bolshevik,” revealing the semantic depth present in what seems like a homogeneous, monumental literary language. Kotkin introduced the term “speaking Bolshevik” to describe the way in which Soviet citizens were able to use the language of the regime both to express collective belonging and to achieve their own aims (Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995]). Recent scholars have worked both to challenge and

this period, textual representations of the battle became more homogenized, even as authors strove to retain the immediacy of the battle's events.³ These works at once reflected the nation's current jubilant atmosphere of victory, and collated and preserved memories of the distant and recent past. Accordingly, the chaos of war was relegated to the past, and the present was freed of tension.

The book form was thus particularly significant to the Stalingrad story's development. In the newspaper, readers had been slowly exposed to an evolving story that asked them to draw together connections between stories over days and weeks, especially before November 19. There was no certainty that a reader would have consumed each story every day or even, as short as it was, the entire newspaper. In the lengthier works now being published, lingering doubts of what would come next—open-endedness—were replaced with the sense that turning the pages would inevitably lead towards victory—resurrection—at the work's end. Long prose works may have striven towards the epic in its boundedness, but they also provided a means of direct access to the *kairotic* temporality associated with Stalingrad.

As was the case in other countries across Europe, the war story was fundamental to rebuilding the nation as the conflict ended.⁴ The period following Stalingrad was full of hope for the reconstruction of both infrastructure and society. As Vsevolod Vishnevskii imagined in a speech of 1944, “When the war is over, life will become very pleasant [...] There will be much coming and going, and much contact with the West. Everybody will be allowed to read whatever he likes. There will be exchanges of students, and foreign travel for Soviet citizens will be made easy.”⁵ An enthusiastic nation was united across generational and class boundaries in “a shared

develop Kotkin's notions of Soviet subjectivity and modernity (see, for example, Anna Krylova, “Soviet Modernity: Stephen Kotkin and the Bolshevik Predicament,” *Contemporary European History* 23, no.2 [2014]).

³ Nora expects *lieux de mémoire* to become more homogenized (Nora, “Between Memory and History”).

⁴ Ian Buruma, *Year Zero: A History of 1945* (London: Atlantic Books, 2014), 169-171.

⁵ As quoted in K.S. Simonov, *Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia* (Moscow: Novosti, 1989), 434. For more on this mood, see Zubkova, 98). 20; Yekelchik, *Stalin's Citizens*, 33.

community of problems, attitudes, wishes and aspirations.”⁶ Stalingrad’s miracle was central to this “new mentality.” The Stalingrad theme dominated the literature of the decade. In 1943, almost 3% of all published works were about Stalingrad, reflecting a frenzied atmosphere that strove to produce new Stalingrad works as fast as possible.⁷

The government gave unprecedented support to writers working on Stalingrad material. Simonov, for example, was granted several months’ leave to turn his sketches into a more substantial work in April 1943. This unusual privilege indicated the story’s importance to the regime as much as to the enthusiastic Simonov.⁸ The authorities also dedicated scarce publishing resources to the theme. 150,000 copies of Grossman’s *A Stalingrad Tale* (*Stalingradskaia byl’*), for example, were printed in 1943 as a standalone pamphlet to be sent to the front. For their part, the public waited for representations of Stalingrad with anticipation.⁹ Writers of articles eagerly collated information on new Stalingrad material.¹⁰ Simonov received dozens of manuscripts from amateur writers keen to enter the fray.¹¹ Stalingrad was by some way the dominant theme of the mid-1940s for people and government alike.

Shearing the Stalingrad story of its “novelty” was not just something the government forced writers to do (recall Nora’s description of how communist nations struggled to depict the new while stripping it of anything that threatened the status quo). Writers wanted to produce an epic as a reaction to the total chaos of war and to the uncertainties of the pre-war Soviet era. The journalists who had been at the front were seized by the desire to write Stalingrad into a less transitory form. In the days before departing the city in January 1943, Grossman was already

⁶ Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, 22. Viktor Nekrasov was just one such enthusiast. He wrote to his mother with delight of a June 1944 *Pravda* article that described the reconstruction of Stalingrad, plans for a new park in the city, and leisure time spent on the Mamaev kurgan (“Perepiska V. Nekrasova. Frontovye pis’ma: ‘...i vse-taki zhiv ostalsia,’” *nekrassov-viktor.com*, 2016).

⁷ See Appendix graph F., “Stalingrad Works As Percentage Of All Published Fiction Works.”

⁸ Simonov, *Raznye dni voyny*, 256. Such an extended period of leave was extremely unusual, especially for one of the government’s top journalists (Ortenberg, *Vremia ne vlastno*, 240). In the calm of Alma Ata, Simonov wrote quickly—500 pages by mid-June 1943—before being recalled to the front in July 1943 (Ibid., 263).

⁹ Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 221.

¹⁰ “Knigi o Stalingrade,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, February 3, 1945, 1.

¹¹ K.S. Simonov, *Pis’ma o voine, 1943-1979* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1990), 46.

writing privately of his desire to “pen something more solid.”¹² He explicitly described his Stalingrad work as an “epic” in progress updates on his writing and in new texts themselves.¹³ Stalingrad's qualities of miraculous resurrection gave an excited Simonov a framework to explore victory rather than defeat.¹⁴

The turmoil of modernity and the destruction of the wartime period gave way to victory's promise of a brighter future, but only through a process of literary affirmation and reshaping. Writing about Stalingrad gave writers and readers the means to look to the future, rather than just to the past, while simultaneously making sense of a traumatic recent past. The future was now interpreted exclusively through the lens of Stalingrad—the Revolution and the Civil War seemed all but forgotten by writers. However, looking to the future, Grossman, Simonov and Nekrasov imagined that the people, not the Party, would continue to occupy the leading position in the nation.

The early years of the Stalingrad story were dominated by the use of a nineteenth century, pre-Revolutionary myth of Russians national bravery to contextualize Stalingrad in history.¹⁵ This reflected a desire to read “our *War and Peace*,” a lengthy epic deserving of the title of “Stalingrad”.¹⁶ The reference to Tolstoy's novel implies that the Stalingrad story was expected to be a *Russian* patriotic national epic. Only by writing the story into a more concordant, permanent form—a form that, unlike newspapers, was not disposed of daily—that could be accessed at any time and place could authors preserve the sense that victory at Stalingrad really did mean a national renewal of the sort that followed 1812. However, as I will show in the second half of this chapter, writers' productions were easily rewritten and reshaped according to

¹² V.S. Grossman, “Letter to Semen Osipovich,” December 31, 1942, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection; N. John Ellis, “Vasiliy Grossman: The Genesis and Evolution of Heresy” (Ph.D., University of Bristol, 1990), 69.

¹³ Grossman writes of his “epic” of Stalingrad in “O podgotovke knigi o Stalingrade,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, February 3, 1945, 3.

¹⁴ Simonov, *Raznye dni voyny*, 263.

¹⁵ See Lieven, “Tostoy on War, Russia, and Empire,” 13-14. This also ties into nineteenth century myths of the *narod* (see Derek Offord, “The People,” in *A History of Russian Thought*, ed. Derek Offord and William J. Leatherbarrow [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010]). References to non-Russian nationalities—such as the Central Asian character Zholdubaev in Grossman's sketch *In the Gully on the Steppe*—now disappeared from the Stalingrad text as the focus turned to Russian characters and traditions.

¹⁶ A. Leites, “O glavnom i podrobnostiakh,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, December 24, 1944, 3; A. Ignat'ev, “Obraz sovetskogo ofitsera,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, December 24, 1944, 3.

the government's authoritarian desires. Just as Stalingrad promised a new life for the people, it also provided Stalin a means to deify himself.

I. Early Prose Works: Simonov, Grossman and Nekrasov

Simonov, Grossman and other journalists all began work on novels in the early part of 1943.¹⁷ Simonov's *Days and Nights (Dni i nochi)* was released in late 1943 (confusingly, it shares a name—but little else—with one of Simonov's wartime sketches). Anthologies of Grossman's Stalingrad sketches were regularly published between 1943 and 1946. The battle's veterans turned their hand to producing Stalingrad fiction too. Most notably, Viktor Nekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad (V okopakh Stalingrada)* was published in 1946. As well as being the most printed works of the era, these novels are emblematic of the early years' trends: the government's and writers' desires to quickly get to work on the "Stalingrad epic"; the refinement of the newspaper's images; the desire to use Stalingrad to look toward the future; and the sense of Stalingrad as a historical turning point to make sense of the individual's experience of war, whether the reader was a veteran or had worked on the home front. As the battle receded into the past, each of the authors in question strove to assert Stalingrad's place as an epic part of a patriotic Russian past, inscribing it into a line of national works stretching back into the medieval era, and therefore affirming its historic, epic meaning for the Russian reader.

Grossman's Stalingrad anthologies were released to enormous acclaim.¹⁸ In January 1943, a collection of five sketches was published. A second anthology followed in May 1943. Three new sketches were added to the material from *Krasnaia zvezda* for the May edition: *Volga—Stalingrad*, *The Military Council (Voennyi sovet)* and *The Stalingrad Front (Stalingradskii*

¹⁷ Vasily Koroteev, for example, returned to Stalingrad, where he published sketch collections and the documentary fiction *The Stalingrad Komsomol (Komsomol'tsy Stalingrada)*, 1949, with V. Levkin). Koroteev planned a lengthy prose work (Simonov, *Pis'ma o voine*, 47). For reasons I cannot ascertain, the work was either never completed or simply went unpublished.

¹⁸ Garrard and Garrard, *The Bones of Berdichev*, 212-3.

front). These sketches revisit, rewrite and refine the history of Stalingrad, but they are deliberately dated from the period of the battle.¹⁹ Other sketches were removed for the edition.

Scholars have until now studied the sketches first published in May 1943, with no mention that these were different from the sketches produced while Grossman was at the front.²⁰ However, I turn to these works in order to demonstrate how Grossman explores the generic issues implicit in the turn from journalistic coverage to recollection of Stalingrad. By reshaping material from the battle into the sketch anthologies, Grossman creates a narrative that delineates Stalingrad as a temporally and spatially isolated phenomenon. He cements Stalingrad's epic qualities, while affirming its status as the moment of resurrection by imbuing time outside of Stalingrad—the potentially open-ended present—with idyllic qualities. Stalingrad, Grossman suggests, has rendered the present a utopian landscape redolent with epic qualities. By summoning the memory of Stalingrad through the anthology, Grossman allows the reader access to that epic past without needing to literally make the present epic.

Simonov's *Days and Nights* was the first major long-form prose work about Stalingrad.²¹ Published in late 1943, when the war was still not over, it validated ongoing sacrifices, confirmed the importance of Stalingrad as resurrection, and bonded the reader with the battle's epic temporality. The novel was enormously influential: it was awarded the Stalin Prize, personally praised by the leader, turned into a film in 1944 and republished in vast quantities.²² The hero, Captain Saburov, is a former worker whose education at Moscow University is cut short by the outbreak of war. His battalion arrives in Stalingrad as the army is in dire straits in mid-September. It defends a house from enemy attack for several weeks. Saburov meets and

¹⁹ The book edition dates the sketches to during the battle. Although they may have been compiled from material produced at that time, the new sketches could not have been finished before the battle was over. In *The Stalingrad Front*, Grossman made references to the already complete victory, even though it was apparently written in December 1942. The majority of the story may have been produced during the battle, but the closing passage about the “completed” battle does not match the material that was being produced either by Grossman or others at that time. *Volga—Stalingrad* is the clearest example of writing in hindsight. It includes themes that only emerged much later, such as the importance of reconstruction, or the use of the word “epic.”

²⁰ Scholars such as Frank Ellis and A. Bocharov have actually referenced a 1945 collection, *Gody voiny*.

²¹ Excerpts were published throughout spring 1943 before *Days and Nights* was published in full in *Znamia* (9-12) in the autumn.

²² Simonov claims that Stalin himself nominated the work for a Stalin Prize (Simonov, *Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia*, 96).

marries a nurse, Anya, who is later injured. Anya's miraculous recovery from near-fatal injuries occurs in conjunction with the counterattack of November 19. The book ends with the soldiers anticipating victory in the war.

Simonov adopted a slightly different approach to Grossman. He focused on plot, rather than explorations of genre, to resolve the difficulties of memorializing Stalingrad in an epic while still leaving the resulting memory accessible to the reader in the present of 1943. At Stalingrad, Simonov suggested, the individual and History had existed in perfect unison, perfectly tracking one another. In turn, the reader was shown that unity with History was possible. The battle's *kairotic* connotations could, within the figurative memory space of the battle as *lieu de mémoire*, return in the reader's present.

On the surface, Viktor Nekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* seems to totally reject unity, harmony and the idea of *kairos*. It depicts an ordinary soldier's experience of a disintegrating, chaotic reality unresolved by either Stalin or the Party. The protagonist, the sapper Lieutenant Kerzhentsev, finds himself alone, lost and often confused in the chaos of Stalingrad but survives against all odds. This has led scholars to assess the book as a non-ideological, anthropocentric work whose publication was an inexplicable error on the Stalinist authorities' part.²³ However, this reading neglects to consider how the presence of Stalingrad's *kairotic* qualities framed and mediated the individual's experience of war.

Nekrasov's work was the first major contribution to the Stalingrad canon by a non-journalist and a veteran.²⁴ The work is an example of how Soviet veterans eagerly identified

²³ For scholars who believe publication was an error or oversight, see Brintlinger, *War and the Russian Literary Hero*, 116, and Ellis, *The Damned and the Dead*, 156. Some scholars have seen the novel's publication merely as a forerunner to the Thaw, rather than as a last hurrah for the human-centred works of the early 1940s e.g. D. A. Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, eds., *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture During the 1950s and 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013). This fact is further complicated by relatively recent work that has questioned whether the themes of individuality and "sincerity" really belong exclusively to the Thaw, or whether they in fact emerged in the 1930s (see, for example, Katerina Clark, "'Wait for Me and I Shall Return': The Early Thaw as a Reprise of Late Thirties Culture?," in D.A. Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, eds., *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture During the 1950s and 1960s* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013], or Anatoly Pinsky, "The Origins of Post-Soviet Individuality").

²⁴ Nekrasov (b.1911) trained as an architect in Kiev before the war. He fought at Stalingrad as a sapper before working in Chuikov's HQ (Nekrasov, "Frontovye pis'ma."). He would go on to form a close bond with Grossman, regularly visiting and corresponding with his friend. Nekrasov was forced into Parisian exile in 1974. Like Simonov and Grossman, he could not leave Stalingrad behind. Several more prose works treat the battle: such as "V rodnom

with Soviet war myths.²⁵ While Simonov and Grossman each claim that writing helped individuals and society to relate to the recently concluded battle, Nekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* provides evidence that the battle's participants actually did do this. Nekrasov framed his intensely personal, mostly plotless, and seemingly non-ideological text with language from Grossman's and Simonov's wartime journalism. Not having worked directly with Grossman, Simonov and the other professional journalists, Nekrasov looked to literature for a means to frame his eyewitness account of Stalingrad. Nekrasov, in this sense, is an exemplary Soviet subject, since he drew on the Stalingrad story to make sense of his own experience. Nekrasov's novel was the first widely published work to use material to orient the individual's relation to the events at Stalingrad through writing in this way.²⁶ Here, we can see how the *lieu de mémoire* allows different histories to be synthesized into a single, cohesive space. The *lieu de mémoire* complements, rather than overwrites, the individual's subjectivity.

However, liberated from the tight reign of pre-war censorship, Nekrasov also summoned nineteenth century myths of Russian indomitability in times of crisis. The focus is on Stalingrad won by the people's faith in their own strength rather than the Party or the leader. The result is that Nekrasov's work is illustrative of the period's developing Stalingrad story. It conveys a balance between Soviet subjectivity and historical understanding, and the use of pre-Revolutionary and Soviet tropes to make sense of the event. The use of appealing historical tropes to orient Stalingrad within a longer span of history explains why the literary and political elite supported *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*'s publication.²⁷ Even Stalin approved, adding the

gorode," *Novyi mir*, no. 10–11 (1954); "Novichok," *Novyi mir*, no. 11 (1963); "Sluchai na Mamaevom kurgane," *Novyi mir*, no. 12 (1965); *Vtoraia noch': rasskazy* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1965). However, Nekrasov was not the first veteran to publish on Stalingrad. The local Stalingrad publishing house had already produced numerous works with smaller print runs. Sources in the Kremlin were keen to have a new, younger generation of writers publish their works (D.L. Babichenko, "*Literaturnyi front*": istoriia politicheskoi tsenzury, 1932-1946gg. *Sbornik dokumentov* [Moscow: Entsiklopediia rossiiskikh dereven', 1994]).

²⁵ As Orlando Figes observes, "identification with the Soviet war myth was a coping mechanism for these veterans, enabling them to live with their painful memories" (*The Whisperers*, 637).

²⁶ Minor publications displayed the same trends. B.B. Panchenko's *Fighter Battalion* (*Istrebitel'nyi batal'on*, 1943), for example, is striking for its use of Grossman's and Simonov's sketches as scaffolding for an eyewitness account.

²⁷ A. Tvardovsky and V. Vishnevsky had had a hand in bringing *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* to print. (Viktor Nekrasov, *V zhizni i pis'makh* [Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1971], 173).

work back to the Stalin Prize list for 1947 after criticism—to which I turn briefly at the end of this section—had forced its removal.²⁸ This was no oversight. It was recognition that Nekrasov's work was an example of how to transpose Stalingrad into terms familiar to ordinary people, and therefore served a useful purpose in the post-war restructuring of Soviet myth.

The Individual and History

Each of the three works stresses the importance of fiction to the individual's understanding of their place in History. Characters in Simonov's *Day and Nights*, for example, use writing to understand their own place in history. Troops at the front imagine how communiqués will describe their actions: "They both knew that what had happened today would be the sort of thing that the communiqués would talk about."²⁹ However, Simonov strove to distance the events of Stalingrad from the reader's present. The third-person narrator's distance from the events of Stalingrad allows him to draw together disparate references into a common experience. Events are described from various textual perspectives. Each of these perspectives, whether personal or epic in tone, monologically reiterates the same points. For example, the narrator uses typical Sovinformbiuro-style language to describe the death of Saburov's subordinate Parfenov: "This man, who perished on the first day of battle [...] was a comrade at arms." Saburov channels this language to describe Parfenov's death when writing to the dead man's widow: "He wrote about how he had served with Parfenov, how Parfenov died heroically in a night-time battle."³⁰ These contrasting modes of writing allow the narrator to combine quotation and allusion to reveal different perspectives on the battle. Each perspective reiterates the heroism of the individuals who fought and died during the battle. Accordingly, the reader was given the sense that Stalingrad could be inclusive of many personal histories, even as they were wrapped into the overarching, epic narrative of national renewal.

Grossman's newly penned sketch *The Military Council* (*Voennyi soviet*) highlighted authorial participation in processing the battle's meaning, noting "how the great defence of

²⁸ Brintlinger, *War and the Russian Literary Hero*, 216.

²⁹ K.S. Simonov, *Dni i nochi* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980), 65, 123.

³⁰ Simonov, *Dni i nochi*. 82.

Stalingrad was achieved, how it was made concrete [*tsementirovalas'*], has been written of many times. It is the glory of our people, the glory of their bravery, patience and their capacity for self-sacrifice.”³¹ The sketch culminates in a list of memories: “I remembered the severe, Avvakum-like soul, of the implacable Vlasov, who had held the crossing. I remembered the sapper Brysin—handsome, tanned, courageous and alien to fear.”³² The quote continues, listing a dozen more names and places: the anaphoric construction insistently writes ordinary people into the epic of the battle.

Remembering was conducted above all by restating familiar elements from newspaper coverage. Images of the Volga and its crossing, burning oil silos, and the Mamaev kurgan are sprinkled throughout Grossman's new material. Other writers in turn borrowed, for example, Grossman's term for the Mamaev kurgan, “dominating height [*gospudstvuiushchaia vysota*].”³³ Simonov, meanwhile, heavily borrows from Grossman's sketches: Grossman's phrase “on the axis of the main attack”; a scene in which troops in a cellar listen to a record is from *Today in Stalingrad*; and the depiction of a German soldier fetching water being shot by sniper fire strongly recalls *A Stalingrad Tale*.³⁴ Lines by the poet Evgenii Dolmatovskii, whom Simonov had encountered at Stalingrad, are recited by troops in *Days and Nights*.³⁵ By reproducing these elements in text, writers were able to conjure up the period of the battle for the reader, and therefore provide a direct link to its *kairos*. The reader was asked to participate in the co-creation of the narrative by recognizing the link to the original story, regardless of a given image's original authorship. The effect is to leave the reader on the brink of the turning point once more. No matter that the battle was now over, the reader could orient themselves towards Stalingrad's *kairos*.

³¹ "Voennyi sovet" in Vasilii Grossman, *Stalingrad. Sentiabr' 1942-ianvar' 1943. Sbornik ocherkov*. (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1943).

³² Grossman, "Voennyi sovet."

³³ My translation of the verb *gospodstvovat'* as “to dominate” misses something of the unique sense of this Russian word, which also conveys reigning, ruling, and whose root comes from the word *gospod'*—“the Lord.”

³⁴ Simonov, *Dni i nochi*, 24, 60, 143.

³⁵ Ibid., 198. 60.

Familiar phrases were even edited into some of the old sketches in Grossman's anthologies, indicating that reprinting did not mean repetition, but was a way to recreate the literary past at the demands of the present. Familiar aphorisms—"Stand to the death!", "The Germans were tearing towards the Volga," and Grossman's own "on the axis of the main offensive"—now crop up everywhere.³⁶ In *The Military Council*, several images from other sketches and times—a quote from *A Stalingrad Tale*,³⁷ snippets of interviews conducted over several months³⁸—are distilled into one location. The past was literally rewritten, drawing the experience of war toward Stalingrad—and thus towards a single, bounded off location—and away from the present. The generic and temporal unboundedness of the newspapers' six-month narrative was thus replaced with a cohesive body of text; the uncertainty, errors and suffering of the pre-Stalingrad period were replaced with the logic of victory.

The process of rewriting history also extended to formal features that framed the text. In Grossman's May 1943 sketch anthology, dates on the sketches were altered to make them fit with a more desirable narrative. *On the Axis of the Main Attack*'s date was moved to November 20, just after the Soviet counterattack had begun. This gives the impression that Grossman was describing the effects of Operation Saturn, rather than battles that had taken place the previous month.³⁹ New material was even inserted into the established chronology. *Volga—Stalingrad* replaced *On the Volga (Na Volge)* as the first sketch, even though it references events that took place after its purported date of creation in September 1942. The sketches now belonged to a chronology that suggests every moment of the war was part of an inevitable march toward victory at Stalingrad. Any mistake, any death, could become part of this mythic chronology. The new chronology, enclosed within the covers of a single edition, was not simply crudely altered; the *kairotic* connotations of Stalingrad promised to impart a mythic logic to these intersecting and rewritten pasts. The journalistic work was being brought into alignment with a desirable

³⁶ Grossman, *Stalingrad*, 19, 27, 35, 36, 38, 51, 69, 75, 115, 128. The Russian phrases are: "Stoiat' nasmert'," "Nemtsy rvanulis' k Volge;" and "na napravlenii glavnogo udara."

³⁷ "Wife, do not offend your husband..." (Ibid., 83).

³⁸ Lengthy excerpts from Grossman's interviews with the leading officers Chuykov, Gurov and Krylov (Grossman, *Gody voyny*).

³⁹ Note, though, that the newspapers had not announced the counterattack until November 23. It is possible some dates reflect the reality of when Grossman wrote the sketches. There seems no other reason that, for example, *A New Day* should be moved from the symbolic date of January 1, 1943 to the new date of December 19, 1942.

narrative; readers in turn were asked to align themselves with the rewritten memory of Stalingrad.

By emphasizing dates, Stalingrad's epic, mythic qualities were plotted against familiar time, allowing the readers to align themselves with the story easily. Any reader could ask where they were on these dates and, in theory, use this edited material to make themselves a part of History. Existing sketches were edited to include dates that would become synonymous with key events. For example, *The Stalingrad Front* looks back through the whole battle from December 1942. It names August 6, when Eremenko was appointed to the Stalingrad front, as a significant turning point. In *Volga—Stalingrad*, Grossman gave a lengthy description—the first in print—of the Luftwaffe's apocalyptic August 23 bombing raid on the city: "The Germans had not yet in the entire war concentrated such an airborne force on one place. The enemy flew thousands of sorties. Its attacks were concentrated on the residential areas, on the beautiful buildings of the city centre. It struck libraries, a children's hospital, more hospitals, schools and other educational institutions. An enormous glow and clouds of smoke rose over Stalingrad."⁴⁰ During the battle, these events were hidden from the public. The deaths of thousands of civilians were now reimagined as part of an inspired plan to entrap the Germans at Stalingrad, reorienting death into the logic of the impending future. Only now that victory at Stalingrad was complete could the catastrophe of the air raid—and the disastrous first year of the war—be written into a linear history that led to triumph.

The emphasis on dates, history and the epic, though, threatened to leave the individual behind by drawing attention to the distance between the realities of the present and the fantastic qualities of the past that marred pre-war Soviet fiction. The means to resolve this dilemma was to draw on the idea that something entirely new—the people's innate heroic essence—had been forged at Stalingrad. Critics asserted that authors ought to show in the Stalingrad epic "the hero of our time," and the "feeling of the new,"⁴¹ that the "secret of victory at Stalingrad" was "the giant capacities of Soviet Man."⁴² This reflected the wider mythical vision of Stalingrad as a

⁴⁰ This was an extremely influential scene: its textual echoes are present in everything from Panchenko's *The Fighter Battalion* to Grossman's *For a Just Cause*, which I explore in the following chapter.

⁴¹ Leites, "O glavnom i podrobnostiakh," 3.

⁴² S. Gerasimov, "Velikii perelom," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, February 23, 1945, 2.

moment that *created* rather than merely destroying.

The idea of the people transformed dominates the early Stalingrad prose texts. As Grossman put it, “Haunted by the battles of Northern Donets, of Oskol and of the Don, the Russian forces stood before the city on the Volga. It became clear that no force on earth could move them. How was that strength created, born?”⁴³ The resurrection did not simply *recreate*; it gave birth to something entirely new within the people. The result was a narrative that emphasized the ordinary Soviet’s contribution to creating the turning point of Stalingrad: “Here the entire might of German technology was met by the Russian foot soldier.” Stalingrad is “a celebration of his bravery, patience, and capacity for self-sacrifice.”⁴⁴ That emphasis on the individual posed a challenge to the ritualization of the story: on the one hand, the “birth” of a new people could easily be incorporated into Soviet ideas of transforming the individual, but on the other, its praise for individualism threatened the boundedness of the story’s epic qualities when read in the present.

To resolve this dilemma, authors drew on nineteenth century and medieval Russian literary representations of the brave *narod*, appealing to the Russian’s sense of national historicism. Lines attesting to the people’s “unconquerable strength of spirit [and] mighty and unceasing spiritual energy”⁴⁵ or that state “no matter how hard the hurricane rages, the defenders of Stalingrad stand unwavering”⁴⁶ could just as easily have come from a nineteenth century patriotic work as from the Soviet canon. Simonov placed special emphasis on historical and literary continuities with Russia’s national past, confirming the textual link between the individual’s perspective on Stalingrad and the epic past. These links were dominated by references to Russian war literature. The epigraph of *Days and Nights* is from Pushkin’s *Poltava*: “[Rus’ took up arms.] And as a hammer/Shatters glass, she forged steel blades.”⁴⁷ The reference to *Poltava* frames *Days and Nights* not just within a history of Russian military triumphs, but also within a lineage of epic national writing—events at Stalingrad appear to belong to the world

⁴³ “Stalingradskii front” in Grossman, *Stalingrad*.

⁴⁴ “Voennyi sovet” in *Ibid*.

⁴⁵ Lazarev, *Voennaia proza Konstantina Simonova*, 90.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴⁷ Alexander Pushkin, “Poltava,” trans. Ivan Eubanks, *Pushkin Review*, no. 11 (2008), 133.

of the Russian epic, not the present. One can even detect much older sources, such as the Russian national epic *The Lay of Igor's Campaign*: Saburov drinks Volga water from his helmet, imitating Igor's intention to "drink a helmetful of the Don."⁴⁸ Stalingrad, even mere months after it had ended, was written into a Russian tradition of sacrifice, pride and renewal.

Turning to pre-revolutionary tropes was a means of ironing out the "newness" of the New Man by absorbing the theme into an older literary tradition. The people's transformation at Stalingrad could invigorate the Soviet governing project by linking it to a familiar, patriotic history of national achievements. The government—"the Stalinist school of strategy"—was portrayed as having merely shepherded the people's immense historical power (a power constructed by literary and cultural sources). The suggestion that the Kremlin dominated the story would, in a period when the nation was still taking its first steps toward tentative recovery from near defeat, have upset the patriotic tone of the story and, worse, implied a return to the uncertainties of the 1930s rather than a move towards a brighter future. For now, the delicate sociocultural conditions of the mid-1940s required the Stalingrad myth to be mobilized softly.

Grossman therefore characterized the victorious Soviet generals as workers rather than uber-Bolsheviks. In *The Stalingrad Front*, the narrator lauds General Eremenko's ordinary qualities. He "toiled" for years before the war, he sees war as "an extension of normal life," and he "looks at a map through glasses, just like a village schoolteacher."⁴⁹ The narrator Eremenko's origins are as a soldier, rather than a trained officer. Representation of the most successful Stalingrad general channels the trope of the resilient Russian nation. The officer class even apparently looked to the rank and file for direction: "General Krylov lived by his faith in the strength of our infantry."⁵⁰ The people, therefore, seemed to have been the actor capable of conquering history and moving into the realm of the "superhistorical": the *kairos* at Stalingrad has the sense of appealing to and empowering ordinary readers, not distant Kremlin functionaries.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Simonov, *Dni i noch'i*, 30; "Igor's Tale," trans. V. Nabokov, Line 114.

⁴⁹ "Stalingradskii front," 141-2.

⁵⁰ "Voennyi sovet" in Grossman, *Stalingrad*.

⁵¹ Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, 114.

The emphasis on the individual's role was emphasized by a continued focus on documentary work. Writers who had been at the front added extra documentary material to their new texts. These additions had the effect of confirming ordinary people's importance in the battle, and allowing the reader to draw more connections between their own life and the temporally and physically inaccessible past of Stalingrad. *Days and Nights* overflows with personal experiences. Simonov explained his writing process: "I wanted to start by writing down what was still fresh in the memory about my trip to Stalingrad, writing down everything I had witnessed."⁵² At times, he even referred to the novel as a "diary" of Stalingrad that contained "almost all" of his experiences.⁵³ Simonov added new characters based on real people and expanded the biographies of characters from the sketches.⁵⁴

However, the process of adding biographical memories did not mean that Stalingrad works were now filled with new and conflicting memories of the recent past (i.e. elements of the open-ended present). Simonov, for example, explained his approach, which based characters on those he had met during the battle: "I did not invent the man's character, only the circumstances in which he is behaving."⁵⁵ Simonov thus revealed that Stalingrad as he himself remembered it was, in *Days and Nights*, mediated in text by the "memory" of the battle produced in the mass media. In the novel form, biographical memory had to be aligned with the narratives produced in the newspapers of 1943. Simonov saw this is not as contradictory but affirmative, since it allowed him to conceive of his own life experience at Stalingrad in relation to the battle. The documentary method thus provided a springboard into a mythic reading of temporality: an acknowledgement that the writing of the war rewrote the deaths of individuals into an epic narrative could thus take on a positive bent. When *Days and Nights*' protagonist Saburov writes

⁵² Simonov, *Raznye dni voyny*. 164. Simonov compulsively returned to Stalingrad again and again, writing a great number of works on the battle *Orel* (1943); *Kafe "Stalingrad"* (1944); *Dym otechestva* (*Smoke of the Fatherland*, 1947); and *Dvadtsat' dnei bez voiny* (1957) and, one of my focuses in Chapter 4, *Not Born Soldiers* (1963).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁴ Saburov is based on a combination of the wartime sketches' Tkalenko and Shkolenko, and a Captain Temin, whom the author had met at Stalingrad. Vanin is based on Koroteev (Simonov, *Pis'ma o voine*.) Ortenberg writes of the work's resemblance to real life: "I read it with interest. I saw the familiar, the unforgettable. El'ton. The crossing over the Volga. The girl on the steamer. Smoking, fighting Stalingrad. The legendary Mamaev kurgan. Tkalenko's battalion. Familiar landscapes. Familiar figures. The Stalingrad *byl'* arose before my eyes as if alive. The book's truthfulness and frankness pleased me" (Ortenberg, *Vremia ne vlastno*, 241).

⁵⁵ Simonov, *Raznye dni voiny*, 248.

that Parfenov died “in Stalingrad (which was true), and how before he was cut down he shot three Germans (which was not true),” the reader of 1943 was shown a way to understand that the epic narrative had an orienting, uniting function—it was not simply mendacious.

Simonov’s work thus consistently emphasized the individual’s relationship with a familiar, textual narrative of history. In the author’s *Krasnaia zvezda* sketches, written in the difficult period of September 1942, the epic and *kairotic* had dwarfed the individual’s contribution. In *Days and Nights*, the experience of—and the victory at—Stalingrad belong exclusively to the realm of the people. Every aspect of the battle is transposed into terms that belong to the world of the individual, reflecting Simonov’s observation that “everything is at the front.”⁵⁶ Saburov, alone in battle except for his comrades, feels as if he is the centre of the entire conflict.⁵⁷ “Saburov had the sensation that the battle was driving at him directly and that everything spilling over, toppling out, moving, running, was directed at exactly where he stood.”⁵⁸ Influenced by Grossman’s sketches—recall how Gromov and Vlasov in Grossman’s sketches felt that the war is bearing down on them—Simonov distilled the war into the experience of a single individual.

Simonov also revisited the house defence story—Saburov’s unit defends a house in Stalingrad—to compress the experience of the entire war into a single location.⁵⁹ The war is reduced to the level of the individual’s private life, as Saburov feels he is defending (my italics) “*his own* house, riddled with and battered by shells.”⁶⁰ In the novel form, Simonov now has space to explore the relationship between defending the house and the nation: “Preparing for the attack, they realize that the house means everything, Russia...we’ll take back this house, we’ll take back the whole of Russia.”⁶¹ Humanizing the entire war in this way put the emphasis on the people’s role in the victory, just as it had made the battle relatable to ordinary readers in fall 1942. Even maps and strategy, which had epitomized the impersonal language of the

⁵⁶ Simonov, *Dni i nochi*, 113, 115.

⁵⁷ Note too how Simonov repeatedly draws attention to the fact that, defending the house, the characters are cut off from help and direction (*Ibid.*, 134).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁵⁹ Lazarev singles this out as the novel’s most important theme, since it sums up Simonov’s focus on the “intimate”: the home, the individual, the family (*Voennaia proza Konstantina Simonova*, 25).

⁶⁰ Simonov, *Dni i nochi*, 212.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Sovinformbiuro narrative in the newspapers, are anthropomorphized. On November 19, “like two arms, the two fronts were on the move, converging on the map, getting ever closer to one another.”⁶² Simonov considered the emphasis on the tiny details of life at war the best way “to reveal the greatness of what happened.”⁶³ He portrayed that “greatness” in *Days and Nights* by transposing the war into the private and domestic life of the individual, allowing the reader in turn to imagine, or relive, the first-hand experience of war.

This method gave Simonov a means to resolve the opposition of the epic and the present on the level of plot. Time in Simonov’s Stalingrad sketches had seemed to be on hold, giving the impression that its soldiers were trapped in an endless—a meaningless—present. In *Days and Nights*, time *outside* of Stalingrad is paused. Saburov is injured and recuperates in Anya’s family *izba*: “This feeling of time being stopped continued for all of the whole ten days that he spent here before his return to Stalingrad.”⁶⁴ Inside Stalingrad, vicious and bloody fighting can happen, but the outside—the *izba* and the reader’s present—is an idyll that now opposes the hellish, fiery Volga. Outside the *izba*, a stream “flows slow, quiet and green.”⁶⁵ The knowledge that Stalingrad is not yet won, though, impinges on Saburov’s idyll. He thinks of Stalingrad “every minute” as his desire to return to battle grows.

Once Saburov returns to Stalingrad, time moves forward so fast that he “cannot remember” how he was even injured.⁶⁶ Inside the besieged city, a perpetual twilight lingers until dawn breaks on the morning of the November 19 counterattack: “It had already begun to get light, but the white veil of the storm still hung on the horizon.”⁶⁷ The delayed rise of the sun evokes the coming future better than the cyclical time of the *Days and Nights* sketch, in which daybreak only heralded more fighting on another identical day. Time inside Stalingrad is thus frenetic, chaotic, and full of movement: the unpredictability and open-endedness of the present is confined to Stalingrad itself. Outside, the *izba* exists in an idealized landscape that harks back to

⁶² Ibid., 222.

⁶³ As quoted in Lazarev, *Voennaia proza Konstantina Simonova*, 85.

⁶⁴ Simonov, *Dni i noch*i, 118.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 111.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 107.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 213

national epic poetry. From their own position outside, readers of 1943 could access a memory of Stalingrad that could not impinge on the present. The dangers of the battle (the possibility of death, and the uncertainty of the future) are accessible, but unthreatening.

The link between ordinary people and the resurrection myth is cemented through Anya's own "resurrection" within Stalingrad's space and time. Anya is injured and seems near death: "Anya lay motionless, her cheek uncomfortably pressed to the edge of the trench."⁶⁸ Occupying a liminal space between life and death, she lies both inside and outside the trench. Anya's experience personifies several eschatological themes. Stalingrad is the "edge of the world," a space where the living and the dead are inseparable, and the decisive moment when the USSR itself hovered between survival and collapse. For the other characters, Anya is in limbo. Their sense of time becomes warped: "'I saw her in the evening, around six. Everything seemed fine,' he repeated with some doubt in his voice, since in the time since he had seen Anya, seven or eight hours had passed. In seven to eight hours anything could happen in Stalingrad."⁶⁹ The uncertainty around Anya's fate encapsulates the unpredictability of time *within* Stalingrad. However, this open-ended sense of doubt does not spill over the Volga, out of the city and into the countryside of the *izba*.

The narrator reveals Anya's survival only as the counterattack starts at the novel's conclusion. As the counter-attack begins, time starts again, beginning to accelerate away from lingering slowness. Saburov remarks, "It's strange how fast time is moving! Tomorrow it's already seventy days since we deployed at Elton..."⁷⁰ Dawn breaks, the troops attack successfully, and the closing lines of the book suggest that Anya will survive: "If her heart holds out, she'll live."⁷¹ As Saburov hears how artillery "beats" (*b'et*) to the west—strategic action imitates the beating of Anya's heart—the reader is certain that, thanks to the heart of soldiers such as Saburov, both Anya and the nation will survive. The individual's experience of

⁶⁸ Ibid., 190.

⁶⁹ Elsewhere, Saburov doubts the possibility of a warless future: "People in war always say, 'we'll meet again after the war.' We won't meet"; he is struck by "the thought that for the others tomorrow will come, but he, Saburov, will no longer be on this earth" (Ibid., 127, 167).

⁷⁰ Ibid., 208.

⁷¹ Ibid., 222.

resurrection is oriented to the epic narrative of national victory by punctuating the passages around the experience with snatches of strategic information, which textually imitate the Sovinformbiuro narrative of the papers.

Now, experience of the present meets a distant, epic time. Reflecting on Anya's survival and the successful counterattack, the narrator comments: "It seemed to Saburov that an eternal amount of time had passed."⁷² Daybreak signals, therefore, a move from the present into the epic, from darkness into light. Anya's experience offers the reader a simple way to understand the sacrifices that they or their family are making during the War in relation to "eternal" time. Unsurprisingly, imitations of this subplot were incredibly popular amongst Stalingrad authors. The suffering and sacrifice of Stalingrad are coloured by the reader's knowledge of the post-battle resurrection. Simonov's theme was incredibly popular, and readily transposed to other situations.⁷³ Just as the writers I study in this passage were guided by their own texts and examples from literature, subsequent writers would turn to these works as templates for making sense of death.

Grossman's *Volga—Stalingrad* (one of the post-battle sketches, dated to September 5, 1942) shows the author using generic and structural devices to distance epic time from the present. Simultaneously, the sketch suggests that the Stalingrad past creates and informs the future. The sketch opens with the narrator's visit to Tolstoy's estate at Yasnaya Polyana. The choice of Yasnaya Polyana is especially significant, since it confirms that the Stalingrad story now belonged to a line of Russian patriotic war texts dominated by Tolstoy's work. Normality has already returned to Yasnaya Polyana, which is described in idyllic, pastoral terms:⁷⁴ "The house is rebuilt, the flowers once again bloom, once again the grave [of Tolstoy] is splendid in its great simplicity."⁷⁵ The German destruction has been and gone, leaving no sense of tension in

⁷² Ibid., 219.

⁷³ Pavel Nilin's *On the Very Volga* (*U samoi Volgi*, 1951) rewrote the theme in the fate of the protagonist's grandfather, who is injured at Stalingrad but survives so that he and his wife can rebuild Stalingrad together. In Iurii Bondarev's *Hot Snow* (*Goriachii sneg*, 1969), a nurse—the hero's love interest—is injured in an artillery battle just outside Stalingrad and, like Anya, appears dead in a trench before recovering.

⁷⁴ The German army had occupied Yasnaya Polyana October 29—December 14, 1941 (N. Puzin, *Dom-muzei L.N. Tolstogo v Iasnoi Poliane* [Yasnaya Polyana: Izdatel'skii dom "Yasnaya Polyana," 1998], 11-12).

⁷⁵ "Volga—Stalingrad" in Grossman, *Stalingrad*.

the present. The present itself is coloured with an idyll that praises the Russian peasant: “Everywhere, in the fields, ploughing, threshing, leading horses, working the plows, at the wheel of trucks [...] toils the Russian woman.”⁷⁶ That description connotes nineteenth century Russian pastoral scenes, and the ancient image of mother Russia.⁷⁷ A sense of the preserved past, national certainty, and peacetime calm pervades the present.

The effect is cemented by alluding to scattered sources that did not immediately relate to the nascent official narrative of Stalingrad: Minister of Foreign Affairs Viacheslav Molotov’s reference to Tolstoy during the war;⁷⁸ and to mid-1930s artistic and cinematic depictions of the Soviet countryside as a “harmonious vision of a nurturing earth in which the human body and nature work together.”⁷⁹ Grossman refutes the destruction of wartime by constructing an idyllic time and space around Yasnaya Polyana. The future promised a period of national unity defined by idyllic calm, meaningful labour, and cultural achievement, while the tensionless present contained elements of both Russian and Soviet pasts.

The tragedy and suffering of Stalingrad in *Volga—Stalingrad*, though, belong to the world of the epic. Those difficult themes are thus enclosed in a distinct time and space. The narrator crosses the Volga, the “river of Russian freedom.” “Here is another time,” the narrator explains, where “the clocks go an hour forward” and “the first page of the Stalingrad epic” is written, that will “be remembered forever.” The sky darkens and the sun appears “angrier.” The entry to Stalingrad upsets the individual’s calm harmony with the world and history: “A feeling of alarm weighs heavily on the heart, hampering one’s breathing.”⁸⁰ The reader is jarringly cast from idyll into Stalingrad, where nature itself is threatening to grow so dark that life and time are crushed.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Images of “Mother Russia” were particularly prominent throughout the war. Elena Baraban, “The Return of Mother Russia: Representations of Women in Soviet Wartime Cinema,” *Aspasia*, no. 4 (2010), 121.

⁷⁸ Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 81.

⁷⁹ Emma Widdis, *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 184-6. The turn to pastoral themes was common across artforms in the post-war period (Cullerne-Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 165). Here, however, the village becomes the site of heroic activity that imitates and perpetuates the heroic transformation at Stalingrad.

⁸⁰ Grossman, “Volga—Stalingrad.”

⁸¹ The breathing motif is one of Grossman’s most frequently used. It appears in both *The Military Council* and *The Stalingrad Front*, where the crushing, smothering feeling of suffocation poses a greater threat than bullets or shells.

Only now does the narrator describe the German bombing raid in August, and the “burnt out house” of a “comrade Stalingrader,” which acts as a counterpoint to the rebuilt house at Yasnaya Polyana. The spectre of Stalingrad attacks time, the landscape, homes and the individual. Grossman, however, temporally and spatially removed the experience of Stalingrad from the tensionless present. It was available to be invoked by the author, but it did not threaten the reader in the present.

Returning to Yasnaya Polyana at the sketch’s conclusion, Grossman’s narrator completes the effect. He notes once more the calm of the present before projecting the achievement of Stalingrad across history. He again remembers: “These people will be deserving of the great past, of the revolution, of those who fell defending red Tsaritsyn from the white guards.” A concord of past, present and future emerges to reintegrate the deathly space of Stalingrad into time itself—but only at the moment of accessing the commemorative textual site of the battle. As soon as the reader concludes the sketch, the tension, suffering and chaos of Stalingrad could be cast once more into its epic enclosure.

Indeed, *Volga—Stalingrad* replaced the August 1942 sketch *On the Volga*—which was never published again—in which the pastoral banks of the Volga had been littered with the “white skulls” of houses, promising only death and battle in the near future. The use of the idyll as a signal for past and future concordance was fast becoming a feature of Stalingrad writing.⁸² Finally, Stalingrad did not just represent death and suffering. The battle inverted an idyllic present—sacrifice at Stalingrad was necessary to ensure peace and harmony. The reader, in the present of 1943, was able to vicariously access the moment of sacrifice, but remained safe from its threat.

In sum, Grossman and Simonov were engaged in trying to separate Stalingrad from the present while leaving it accessible to the reader through textual links to the newspaper narrative. Moreover, they both suggested that Stalingrad did not just “resurrect”—return to life—but created something new. In Grossman’s and Simonov’s work alike, Russian tradition mingled

⁸² Before entering Stalingrad, Nekrasov’s Kerzhentsev enjoys a brief period of relatively peaceful life, living with a Russian family and bathing in the Volga: “Beyond this the Volga—calm, flat, so wide and peaceful—and the curly greenery of the other bank from behind which peeked little houses” (Viktor Nekrasov, *V okopakh Stalingrada* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1946), 68).

with Soviet ideas of the individual's transformation and relation to History. The myth of the brave Russian nation was aligned with Soviet visions of heroic transformation and utopianism, the present with the past, the individual with History. These various temporal planes coalesced around the idea of Stalingrad, continuing the sense that the battle was a site where apparently contrary senses of self and the past could meet harmoniously—a uniting and appealing idea for a nation still at war in 1943.

Writing the Past through the Stalingrad Myth: *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*

Nekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* (*V okopakh Stalingrada*, 1946) was the first major work to actually adopt the tropes of Simonov's and Grossman's works specifically as a device to make sense of the author's own experience of war. On the surface, the work is chaotic, individualized, and totally lacking in ideology. War is presented as so disordered that "everybody's head spins."⁸³ There are no lengthy passages quoting verbatim from Sovinformbiuro-type material to orient or direct the reader. Nor is there material that explains at length the meaning of the battle. Instead, Nekrasov weaved references to Grossman and Simonov's foundational texts through his own, eyewitness observations. The reader was asked to recognize these allusions and thereby resolve their lack of direction by vicariously experiencing the tumult and resolution that the newspapers of 1942-3 had covered during the battle.

By post factum projecting the textual content of Grossman's and Simonov's works onto the time of the battle, mixing past and present, external text and internal memory, Nekrasov attempted to make sense of his own relationship to Stalingrad. Already, we can see how the foundational texts from the newspapers and the major publications released in the months after the battle's end provided a means to frame the individual's relationship to Stalingrad's *kairotic* function. While scholars may question *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*'s credentials as a Soviet work due to its apparent individualism, Nekrasov made a move toward writing the Stalingrad epic, albeit one heavily coloured with Russian historicism and greatly reliant on memory created by and preserved in mass media texts. The references to model Stalingrad texts may not be

⁸³ Even political education is useless. Knowledge of the "correct" interpretation of the war does not help the soldiers, who are mostly confused between official ideology and rumours (e.g. those about Hitler. See Nekrasov, *V okopakh Stalingrada*, 38).

obvious to today's Western scholars, but may well have been obvious for the reader of the mid-1940s who had followed the battle in the newspapers and the creation of its epic representation in Grossman's and Simonov's widely published works.⁸⁴ Those readers who did recognize these elements in the newly released work in 1946 thus had access to a way of conceiving Stalingrad through the lens of the epic qualities ascribed to it by Simonov and Grossman—that is, to actually use the myth to interpret and order their own lived experience.

For Nekrasov's protagonist Kerzhentsev, Stalingrad is total chaos: "They threw us from place to place, put us on the defensive, took us out again, shifted us over, then again put us on defence." The result is that, "we got lost, got confused, and confused others."⁸⁵ The soldiers find themselves "crawling along the frontline all night." Unable to communicate with their superiors by radio, they become lost in the commotion of retreat.⁸⁶ Maps—symbols of strategic planning—are useless. The opening pages of describe how "a fat red line crawls across the whole map from the left to the right, from the West to the East." According to this map, Kerzhentsev's commander makes a plan of movement, which is "in my opinion clear. We attack at 2300 hours": Maksimov's words were precise. Each letter of every word sounded clearly."⁸⁷ The succinct and detailed plan falls apart as soon as it is made. Kerzhentsev's unit lacks ammunition, and its commanding officer asks, "Do you believe in dreams, Kerzhentsev?"⁸⁸ Even the commander lacks faith in his own strategy. The "crawling" line on the map proves totally

⁸⁴ Katerina Clark explains that "the slightest rearrangement or emphasis or shading [of] standard signs and sequences [...] may be barely perceptible to an outsider, but they would be striking to most Soviet readers" of Socialist Realist works. While I cannot state that Soviet readers would *certainly* have recognized references to Stalingrad texts—I do not have access to any primary materials to prove this—the frequency and openness of shared phrases, images and even whole sentences between one text and another is striking.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁸⁶ "'Jupiter...Jupiter...hello...Jupiter...'

I see in his colourless eyes, with their white lashes, that no one is answering.

'Jupiter...Jupiter...It's me, Mars...'

A pause" (Ibid., 200).

⁸⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁸⁸ The theme is repeated later. "The Major speaks slowly, calmly, even a little peevishly [...] he traces his thumb, with its neatly clipped nail, across the map" and explains "the job is simple: to dig in, lay out the cable and some mines and hold on" (143). Even the well turned out Major, associated with positive Socialist Realist traits, dreams up a "simple" plan that turns into a chaotic nightmare for Kerzhentsev and his comrades. Later in this chapter, I explain that when Stalin was at the fore of the Stalingrad story, such neat, calm and methodical planning was always carried out to perfection as a manifestation of his superior will.

misleading: “On the map the village is called Verkhniaia Duvanka. But here they call it Vershilovka.” In the human’s experience, geometry and strategy lead to turmoil, not purposeful action.

This directionless mayhem results in both human and strategic waste. When Captain Abrosimov does manage to directly control some troops, he sends them to their death. Meanwhile, a targeted “defensive emplacement at Oskol is gone. Everything [...] that we spent thirty days and nights working on [...] is now useless.”⁸⁹ Kerzhentsev is unimpressed with his commanders’ abilities: “Everything turned out to be stupid. There was no reason for me to go in to the attack.”⁹⁰ Kerzhentsev’s finest achievement is to make it back to the Russian line after spending nine hours trapped in a foxhole. For the rank and file, war means crawling through dark, claustrophobic expanses without any overarching order. Their superiors’ tactical and strategic directions are senseless and inexplicable.

Kerzhentsev recognizes his own, limited perspective: “He shot at us with a mortar, and we answered. That’s the whole war”; “In war you don’t know anything except what’s happening under your own nose.”⁹¹ Kerzhentsev is “like a mole in its burrow—no eyes, no ears.”⁹² Even technological aids do not help: “I take the binoculars and have a look. The Germans are having a meeting of some sort, but the lenses are wet from the rain and I can’t see well.”⁹³ The overwhelming prominence of the vertical axis in the novel allows Nekrasov to show the German dominance of the upward plane—their planes constantly buzz overhead—while the Russians are always pressed into or beneath the ground, from where they struggle to see anything.⁹⁴ From the individual’s perspective the distinct vertical geometry is warped by “skewed rays of sun,” or

⁸⁹ Ibid., 22.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 202.

⁹¹ Ibid., 12, 13. In a nod to Tolstoy’s depiction of battle in *War and Peace*, the soldiers are constantly “blinded” by explosions, the sun, smoke and darkness. Moments of “total silence” are interspersed with deafening blasts that disorientate the soldier and the reader alike.

⁹² Ibid., 33.

⁹³ Ibid., 188. The image of lens/glasses is also attached to the commanders, suggesting that they too lack clarity of vision: “The major sits in the tiny hut, eating borsch with sour cream right out of the pot. His pince-nez are beside him on the table” (Ibid., 53).

⁹⁴ This is similar to the same motif of German vertical dominance in Grossman’s *Krasnaia zvezda* sketches *A Stalingrad Tale* and *The Stalingrad Crossing*.

Kerzhentsev's comrade "looking askew at me."⁹⁵ Short snatches of action reveal the German enemy springing unexpectedly on the Russians. The enemy are "shadows," "invisible" until they attack.⁹⁶ For the troops on the ground, who do not have access to the externalized media narrative of the battle to aid their understanding, there is no way of conceiving of actions in relation to Stalingrad as a significant event, let alone a *kairotic* one. War is incomprehensible to the participant.

But Nekrasov, the author, is able to impose order. By invoking the bones of the Stalingrad myth, he makes the reader feel the impending moment of *kairos* even when Kerzhentsev does not. Nekrasov started to *use* the myth—drawing on the *kairotic* properties associated with Stalingrad texts to reflect, refine and contextualize his participants' experiences—even as the ink had barely dried on Simonov's and Grossman's pages. Only the author, after the battle is over, has the power to align the individual and history. Even the influence of the newspapers is diminished. Access to them is sporadic, and they are as likely to be used as cigarette rolling paper as to be read.⁹⁷ Where they do appear, they are useless: "Churchill's flying to Moscow. The communiqué is fairly vague. We definitely don't know where the fighting's happening. The communiqués indistinct: "To the North East of Kotel'nikovo," "the bend of the Don"...people are saying that Abganerovo's already in the hands of the Germans."⁹⁸ The people fight Stalingrad on their own with no real understanding of the strategic or cultural implications of the war. It is up to the author to make retrospective sense of what has happened. The suggestion, then, is that the epic and the present did *not* co-exist at Stalingrad. The present is senseless, chaotic, a whirlwind. Only in hindsight can epic qualities be imposed on the past through contextualizing individual memory using established texts.

Grossman's semantic and thematic influence on Nekrasov is unmistakable. Nekrasov borrowed phrases, such as "vests wet with sweat [*mokrye ot pota gimnasterki*]," which comes

⁹⁵ Nekrasov, *V okopakh Stalingrada.*, 136, 137.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 119.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 295.

from Grossman's sketch *In the Gully on the Steppe* (*V stepnom ovrage*),⁹⁹ and "Russ *bul'bul'*," a line from *On the Axis of the Main Attack*.¹⁰⁰ Nekrasov adopts Grossman's constant warping of time: the individual's experience of battle is always "about ten minutes," "some minutes passed." Kerzhentsev's watch even stops.¹⁰¹ Nekrasov's description of the August 23 bombing raids, which shatter the idyllic calm of the soldiers relaxing by the Volga, closely echoes Grossman's: "Pengaunis and Shapiro arrive, pale and covered in dust. The bombing trapped them on the Central Square. They sat it out in a crevice. Bombs fell on the House of the Red Army and the house on the opposite corner where the hospital was. The southern part of the city is on fire. They hit a vehicle carrying armaments. One woman's head was torn clean off. She was coming out of the cinema."¹⁰² As in Grossman, there is a slew of references to nineteenth century Russian and European culture: *Anna Karenina*, *Evgenii Onegin*, *The Queen of Spades*, *La Traviata*, Turgenev, and Tiutchev.

Days and Nights, however, is an equal influence on *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*. The description of the day-to-day experience of war resembles Simonov's prose, which overflows with details of private lives. The teenage Valega, for example, provides Kerzhentsev with domestic companionship and order: "Wherever you get to, in five minutes flat the tent's ready: cosy, comfortable, and lined with fresh grass. His kettle's always shining, good as new. And he never parts with his milk and vodka bottles."¹⁰³ Simonov's generally convivial atmosphere, though (the topsy turvy "town" in Saburov's cellar) is mired in decay. Crumbling houses are still littered with the detritus of civilian life. For example, in the following quote, the description of decay is mirrored by the inaction of the language, which lacks active verbs: "Brass mountains of shells—small ones, medium ones, big ones, with red, blue and yellow tips—glimmer. Boxes with rounds. Sacks. More boxes. A mangled gun without a barrel. A bloated horse carcass covered with flies. The back legs are already cut off."¹⁰⁴ There are many other parallels: *Days*

⁹⁹ Ibid., 189.

¹⁰⁰ The words *bul' bul'* are a bastardization of the Russian *bulochka*—bread roll—mockingly shouted by German forces at their starving opponents. Grossman recorded this usage in his wartime diaries.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰² Ibid., 81.

¹⁰³ Brintlinger, *War and the Russian Literary Hero*, 129.

¹⁰⁴ Nekrasov, *V okopakh Stalingrada*, 147.

and *Nights*’ Babchenko is a commander who does not trust his troops, paralleled here by Abrosimov; Nekrasov’s original title, *On the Edge of the World*, echoes a phrase that appears multiple times in Simonov’s work.¹⁰⁵ Considered together, these parallels prove that Nekrasov deliberately worked material from his predecessors’ texts into *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*.

Above all, Nekrasov seemed to share Simonov’s interest in the ordinary soldier’s everyday experience of war.¹⁰⁶ The work’s “direct, unpretentious style,” which is littered with colloquialisms, reflects this.¹⁰⁷ Using everyday language, the scout Chumak parodies Hitler’s speech declaring Stalingrad captured¹⁰⁸: “Beyond those red ruins there—only the walls still stand, like a sieve—Rodimtsev’s positions started, a strip of 200 hundred metres. Just think, that’s some unfortunate two hundred metres! To cross all of Belorussia, Ukraine, Donbass, the Kalmyk steppe and not manage to cross two hundred yards...ho, ho!”¹⁰⁹ For Nekrasov, “great words” were unnecessary for describing great feats. Everyday language did not need to be made epic: “There’s another type of speech—a passionate but not grandiloquent, truthful, down to earth type of speech—the language of ordinary people who sometimes achieve great things.”¹¹⁰ Instead, ordinary speech is contextualized with reference to epic works from outside of the novel’s pages, pushing high-flown or stolid Soviet rhetoric from the work’s rhetorical centre. A linguistic present familiar to a wide range of readers—especially Russian readers—pervades the battle’s representation. The effect seems aimed at building a bridge for the reader to identify with the characters and events at Stalingrad, and therefore to see how they too fit into the epic narrative established by Grossman and Simonov.

¹⁰⁵ Iurii Vilenskii, “Geroi, kotorogo ne bylo, no kotoryi byl,” *Obozrevatel’ evreiskii*, July 2015, <http://jew-observer.com/zhizn-i-sudba/geroj-kotorogo-ne-bylo-no-kotoryj-by/>.

¹⁰⁶ This would be Nekrasov’s subject in the Stalingrad works to follow. *V rodnom gorode* (*In My Home Town*, 1954), for example, is the story of a veteran who returns to his home town after being demobilized due to injury. Nekrasov’s interest in veterans’ welfare was so great that he even donated the money from his Stalin Prize to a veterans’ organization (Victor Terras, *Handbook of Russian Literature* [Yale University Press, 1985], 305).

¹⁰⁷ Marc Slonim, *Soviet Russian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 270.

¹⁰⁸ Ellis, *The Damned and the Dead*, 159.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. The Russian reads: “A za temi vot krasnymi razvalinami,- tol’ko steny kak resheeto ostalis’,- nachinalis’ pozitsii Rodimtseva – poloska v dvesti metrov shirinoi. Podumat’ to’lko – dvesti metrov, kakikh-nibud’ neschastnykh dvesti metrov! Vsiu Belorussiiu proiti, Ukrainu, Donbass, kalmytskie stepi i ne doiti dvesti metrov...Xo-xo!”

¹¹⁰ Viktor Nekrasov, “Slova ‘velikie’ i ‘prostye,’” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 5 (1959), 61.

Nekrasov's narrator hints at the resurrection myth not just through quotation, but also by aligning his characters' experiences with the dates laid out in the post-battle works. Like Anya in Simonov's *Days and Nights*, Kerzhentsev almost dies and recovers in tandem with Soviet fortunes. Most importantly, Kerzhentsev's name day is November 19, which suggests that his symbolic "birth" occurs in tandem with the nation's resurrection as the counter-attack at Stalingrad began. Adherence to the Soviet narrative, though, is overwhelmed by references to Russian patriotism and the myth of Russian courageousness in war. Indeed, Kerzhentsev makes it clear that the government did not play the leading role at Stalingrad. Stalin's presence is reduced to the documentary observation of a couple of pictures.¹¹¹ Kerzhentsev's difficulty seeing in battle, meanwhile, debunks the impossible expectations placed on commanders who, according to an article the troops read, "must see and command everything."¹¹² Subtly, the Kremlin's importance in achieving victory is diminished.

In place of praising the leadership, Nekrasov adopted wholesale the trope of the brave Russian nation (already familiar, of course, from Simonov's and Grossman's works). War in *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* reveals the inner strength of the Russian soldier. The only motivation Nekrasov's retreating troops have is the mantra that Kerzhentsev repeats to himself: "Somehow we'll get to Stalingrad."¹¹³ The "miracle" victory is attained by their faith, which stems from their understanding of Stalingrad itself. Kerzhentsev explains:

What can I say to that? That war is war, that it's built on unexpected events and ploys, that right now the Germans have more planes and tanks than we do, that they've gone on the rampage, since they're rushing to finish the whole war by winter. We may need to retreat, but retreat isn't defeat. After all, we retreated in '41 and then we chased the Germans out of Moscow. Yes. Yes, I get that, but right now we're still going East, not West, and the East... I have nothing to say to that. I just wave to the East and say: "Bye, granny, see you soon. God willing, see you soon..."

¹¹¹ In one instance, the portrait is accompanied by postcards of the Odessa opera house and an unidentified Repin portrait. In the second, it is cut out of a paper and pinned alongside a picture of Jack London (Nekrasov, *V okopakh Stalingrada*, 94, 161).

¹¹² Ibid., 188.

¹¹³ Ibid., 46, 47, 50.

And I *believe* in that. That's the only thing we've got now: *faith*.¹¹⁴

Faith is the key to victory. Stalingrad is a testing ground for the “warmth of Russian patriotism,” not for Soviet military planning.¹¹⁵ In spite of the total chaos that engulfs the war, the total lack of understanding of the strategic meaning of their actions, the soldiers stand firm thanks to this faith. Kerzhentsev, carrying out an almost impossible plan, explains that, “I’m not counting on any resources, just on a handful of people. Fourteen men will go on the attack.”¹¹⁶ Impossible odds could be overcome by faith alone.

Led by Andrei Platonov, many Soviet critics interpreted the idea of the people’s victory as portrayed by Nekrasov positively: “All of this—the poverty, the losses, the worries, the sacrifices—just strengthens the people even more, as if preparing them to carry out the incomparable feat of the defence of Stalingrad.”¹¹⁷ Nekrasov had found “the true essence of man at the front.”¹¹⁸ His characters had “politically hardened” and “grown up.”¹¹⁹ Critics thus seemed to interpret Nekrasov’s characters as manifestations of a national transformation that promised to lead the Soviet Union into a golden era. Couched by quotation from and allusion to Grossman’s and Simonov’s more obviously didactic works, the individual’s experience is contextualized within a canon of works, rather than within the pages of a single work.

Critics were thus excited to see Soviets apply the lessons of mythical Stalingrad in the post-war present. Nekrasov had “raised the curtain of the present onto the future. That future appears before the reader’s gaze with tangible realness.”¹²⁰ The revelation of the people’s transformation at Stalingrad promised a glorious future, and thus excused the chaos, suffering and retreats that preceded the turning point in November 1942. In this light, *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* is the peak of the representation of the people as the leading light in achieving victory

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 50-1.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 102. Nekrasov explicitly notes that this comes from Tolstoy, establishing his work as part of a series of Russian literary-historical myths that stretched back to the pre-revolutionary era.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 183.

¹¹⁷ T.A. Rogozovskaia, “Pis’mo V.P. Nekrasova k A.P. Platonovu,” *Egypets*, no. 20 (2011).

¹¹⁸ B. Runin, “Pravda perezhitogo,” *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, February 18, 1947.

¹¹⁹ B. Dairedzhiev, “Pravdivaia kniga,” *Trud*, January 27, 1947, 3.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

at Stalingrad. The Russian people alone were responsible for a victory with universal significance. For the time being in the mid-1940s, this suited the government's need to re-establish social, political and economic normality in the wake of the war, and the people's desire to make sense of the loss and trauma of the war.

Nonetheless, even as *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* was published, the political tide was turning. Shortly, Stalin would come to dominate the story. S. Ivanov criticizes Nekrasov's "underdeveloped" characters, an encoded gibe at the lack of Stalinist education and enthusiasm at the front.¹²¹ B. Solov'ev castigated the book as "a chaos of accidental, disorganized events, whose sense and meaning is impossible to discern."¹²² The author had failed to demonstrate how the Party and Stalin, amidst the destruction of the war, exerted order. Referencing Grossman's and Simonov's works, couched in the myth of the Russian's bravery in war, was an insufficient method. S. Nagornyi explicitly couples this criticism to a Stalinist vision of history: "Was it not the case that every soldier of the Soviet Army understood at that time the logic of Stalin's genius strategy?" Nagornyi concludes by explaining that Kerzhentsev should "see further and more widely than his field binoculars allow him."¹²³ By late 1946, critics were claiming that Nekrasov had failed to use the Soviet documentary method to show Stalin's leading role in illuminating history experienced by the individual. Within months of *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*'s release, the Stalingrad story was seized by Stalin, who was able to reconfigure the Stalingrad *lieu de mémoire* into a vehicle for his own deification.

II. Stalin's Stalingrad

By the late 1940s, Stalin's presence dominated the Stalingrad story, which was used as proof of the leader's godlike ability to create miracles. The memory of Stalingrad, therefore, became imperative as the justification for the leader's continued hold on power. In the Stalingrad text, Stalin acquired the status of a God who constructed the sacrifice at Stalingrad in order to enact salvation. Stalin towers over the battle, occupying the epic narratorial position—that from

¹²¹ S. Ivanov, "Zapiski V. Nekrasova," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, February 3, 1947.

¹²² Boris Solov'ev, "Stalingrad," *Izvestiia*, November 29, 1946, 3.

¹²³ S. Nagornyi, "Chelovek na voine," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, December 21, 1946, 3.

which Simonov, Grossman and Nekrasov had been able to textually shape memory and history. From the Kremlin, the leader is able to survey the entire strategic and tactical landscape, speaking to individuals in religiously inflected visions and willing the victory at Stalingrad into reality. Stalin had become omniscient, omnipresent and infallible, “the mouthpiece and the instrument of historical truth.”¹²⁴ He now stood outside of history: Stalin quite simply ““was.” He, and only he, embodied the endpoint of the utopian timeline. As such he was beyond time and place.”¹²⁵ The war’s “time of Biblical miracles” was thus replaced by the notion that all reality was permeated by Stalin’s spirit. All sense of conflict was excised from the past, present and future as the reader was assured that a vigilant Stalin watches over History on their behalf.¹²⁶ The spirit of the leader, not the spirit of the people in battle, saved the nation. The nature of the *lieu de mémoire* both permitted this stark rewriting of the past and assisted the reader in reorienting their own senses of the past—that born from lived experience and that experienced vicariously through reading—toward this new narrative.

The reader was asked to reorient their ritual understanding of the war, and of Stalingrad’s resurrection, towards Stalin. This was realized by exploiting the *lieu de mémoire*’s capacity to act as a meeting place for multiple histories: familiar symbols from the foundational texts were attached to the hitherto untold story of Stalin’s involvement in 1942. New work still activated the *kairotic* past through allusion and symbolic repetition, but the emphasis was moved away from co-creation. The reader was instead asked to observe, to worship, but not to participate in the active construction of history: the *lieu de mémoire* in this Soviet context was a vehicle to access collective, ritual worship, but it was no longer invoked with the intention of catalyzing active, participatory activity. The reorientation of the myth would not have been possible if earlier work had not encoded the events of Stalingrad in epic prose.

The transposition of the Stalingrad myth into Stalin’s personal story was thus indicative of how the battle’s history had become an object of memory. The story was fragmented, reoriented

¹²⁴ Aron, *Opium of the Intellectuals*, 109; Susan Corbesero, “History, Myth, and Memory: A Biography of a Stalin Portrait,” *Russian History*, no. 38 (2011).; Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 59.

¹²⁵ Plamper, *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power*, xv.

¹²⁶ See Cullerne-Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*; Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, 33; Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*; Service, *Stalin: A Biography*.

and remade in order to reflect the Stalinist personality cult's position at the centre of history and culture. Elements from the early Stalingrad story, shorn of their connection to lived experience but leveraged for their link to the sacred, could encourage a faith in Stalin's leadership that was "independent of the realities of the regime."¹²⁷ The epic could be stripped of the sense of temporal uncertainty associated with war to suggest that, thanks to Stalin's omnipotence, victory was never in doubt. A *kairotic* reading of Stalingrad thus dovetails with the rewriting and recycling associated with *lieux de mémoire*: various pasts, in this reading, do not just co-exist; one can rewrite another. The epic and *kairotic* qualities of the Stalingrad story, bound off from the present, were the ideal vehicle for totalitarian culture.¹²⁸

Stalin's seizure of the Stalingrad story did not occur as suddenly as it may seem. The groundwork for his deification had been laid much earlier, so that by the mid-1930s, Stalin was beginning to be accorded the qualities of a living deity.¹²⁹ What the leader lacked, though, was any empirical evidence of his godlike powers. Stalingrad provided that evidence, a fact that the leadership recognized and which meant that it always retained a degree of control over the nature and form of the battle's representation. In a plan to avoid tarring himself with defeats, Stalin had ensured his name and photograph were largely absent from the newspapers during the war's early period.¹³⁰ As well as directing others personally, he wrote and edited some of the communiqués and articles himself.¹³¹ Stalin even fictionalized events himself.¹³² He distributed instructions to editors, who visited the Stavka "almost daily" to receive instructions.¹³³ Key phrases associated with the battle, such as "No step back!", and motifs, such as the link between

¹²⁷ Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 77, 457.

¹²⁸ Bakhtin appears to imply that the epic is a vehicle for totalitarian culture (Kent Puckett, *Narrative Theory: A Critical Introduction* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016], 160).

¹²⁹ Helen Rappoport, *Joseph Stalin: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1999). 59; Service, *Stalin: A Biography*, 548; Klinghoffer, *Red Apocalypse*, 59.

¹³⁰ Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 209.

¹³¹ Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 4; Ortenberg, *Sorok tretii*, 17. Ortenberg records at least one story personally corrected by Stalin, not noting this as exceptional (Ortenberg, *Stalin, Shcherbakov, Mekhlis i drugie*, 120).

¹³² For instance, a message to the Stavka on November 23 reported 90 tanks had been destroyed on the Stalingrad front. The Sovinformbiuro communiqué of the following day, printed in every major newspaper, reports 431 tanks destroyed. Not only does this show a massive inflation in the number—presumably designed to overwhelm the reader with the sheer scale of Soviet success—it is greater than the entire number of tanks the Germans possessed at Stalingrad (see Glantz, *Armageddon in Stalingrad*, 352)

¹³³ Ortenberg, *God 1942*, 451.

Tsaritsyn and Stalingrad, may have been Stalin's own work.¹³⁴ Stalin's role in 1942, which was actually restricted to directing strategy from the Kremlin, was thus semantically amplified more than may be apparent from a cursory reading of the earliest Stalingrad works.

As soon as the November counterattack's success was certain, the leader burst to the foreground of the newspapers' coverage of Stalingrad. Stalin appeared in photographs with the leading generals of Stalingrad. His speeches were printed alongside news of Stalingrad. He took credit for victory by "personally congratulating" the generals and soldiers who had followed his orders.¹³⁵ Stalin began to write himself into the popular victory, suggesting that his foresight had deliberately entrapped the Germans at Stalingrad. By as early as March 1943, pictures of "his gaze into the distance now also signified his visionary premonition of the outcome of the war."¹³⁶ Already, the media were being used to rewrite the early period of the war as a clever strategic ploy to lure in and entrap the Germans at Stalingrad.

A subtle process of deepening association between Stalin and the victory at Stalingrad continued throughout the next years. Stalin's presence—manifested through allusion, metaphor and editing sleight of hand—lurks in the background of Simonov's and Grossman's post-battle texts. Just as with the newspaper form during the battle, central control of publishing gave the regime the opportunity to mould and massage history according to its own needs.

Even as authors were constructing the people's epic of Stalingrad through works like *Days and Nights* and *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*, Stalin's presence became more and more prominent. For example, Grossman's January 1943 sketch collection opens with a foreword by Stalin. By adopting familiar phrases from the newspapers, Stalin draws the story into alignment with his own myth: "The heroic defenders [of Stalingrad] have shown examples of selfless bravery, iron discipline, steadfastness and intelligence to achieve victory. The whole of our Red Army is rising to the level of these heroes."¹³⁷ The leader may accord credit to the people for the

¹³⁴ Ibid, 361.

¹³⁵ "Velichaiushchaia pobeda v nyseshnei voine," *Pravda*, February 3, 1943. See front-page editorials in every paper of January 2 1943, and the picture of Stalin with Rokossovskii and other Stalingrad generals published February 2 1943.

¹³⁶ Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 53

¹³⁷ V.S. Grossman, *Stalingradskaia bitva* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1943), 1.

victory, but his foregrounded presence frames the events within the sketches themselves. In addition, the editors of Grossman's sketch collection rearranged the sketches' chronology to hail Stalin's contributions. *Tsaritsyn—Stalingrad*, for example, was clearly linked to Stalin's defence of the city during the Civil War. The Stalin-Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad connection was not lost on ordinary Soviet readers at the front.¹³⁸ Even though Grossman's sketch was written in November 1942, it opens the January 1943 anthology, highlighting Stalin's prominent role by ordering the value of events around his persona rather than in terms of chronology. Stalin's presence did not encroach on the sketches' events in this early work, but his presence subtly contextualized the people's contribution that Grossman hails.

While Stalin's name was not in the sketches written during the battle, in the May edition of Grossman's sketches, it was inserted into *Volga—Stalingrad* (which was appearing for the first time). Stalin appears as a historically encoded presence in a historical artifact within the body of the sketch itself, as if his physical absence were excused by his presence as a part of history: "Marble memorial plates are built into many of the buildings: 'Stalin spoke here in 1919,' 'The headquarters of the defence of Tsaritsyn were located here'."¹³⁹ Grossman thus centred the text on Stalin's Civil War past, rather than just the Russian pre-revolutionary past. Readers were asked to recognize the historical continuity between two Soviet events, the Civil War and Stalingrad, and thus to draw themselves not into a Stalinist vision of history. Post factum editing wrote Stalin into a prominent position alongside, but without impinging on, the stories from the front that preserved the reader's link to Stalingrad's *kairos*. While the war continued, this balanced narrative preserved the fragile national unity of the Stalingrad story, which presumably was intended to aid the war effort.

Simonov recognized the changing political winds, subtly inserting Stalin's leading presence into 1943's *Days and Nights*. Stalin's presence bursts into the foreground of the novel in a short—but in hindsight striking—passage that would dominate the Stalingrad text until the leader's death in 1953. Soldiers at the front listen to Stalin's radio speech of November 6,

¹³⁸ Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 28.

¹³⁹ "Volga—Stalingrad" in Grossman, *Stalingrad*. The effect is compounded by the insertion of unsubtle Soviet clichés that connote Stalin's presence: *Tsaritsyn--Stalingrad* now ends with the line "Long live Stalingrad!" This echoes the incitement, "Long live Stalin!" (Ibid., 75). I cannot tell whether Grossman or his editor A. Stupniker inserted the phrase.

1942.¹⁴⁰ Except for the first line—“I appeal to you, my friends!”—there is no direct quotation of Stalin’s speech. Regardless, hearing the leader’s voice has a mystical effect on Saburov, who “felt that the speaker’s heart was overflowing with blood.”¹⁴¹ He remembers Stalin’s speech “in moments of mortal danger,” recalling “not the words, not the phrases but the voice, how [the speech] was said,” for example, “when he was next to Maslennikov in the hellish thunder of battle.”¹⁴² Other troops imitate Stalin. Protsenko, for instance, finds himself spontaneously copying the leader: “He looked at the map with new interest. Both his hands traced across the map, following the movement of the Military Council member’s hands.”¹⁴³ The reader, it is suggested, might imitate not just ordinary heroes but the leader himself. Even if they did not see or hear him, the reader was prompted to imagine that Stalin was a leading inspiration for historical actors in the Civil War, in the Revolution, and at Stalingrad. Stalin was thus written into collective memory.

Stalin’s position as transcendental, godlike architect of victory at Stalingrad was cemented by the end of the 1940s. Criticism of Nekrasov’s *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* was just the public confirmation of a long process. Stalin’s return to prominence accelerated rapidly in 1946, when a public cultural crackdown occurred.¹⁴⁴ Hope for social transformation was rapidly extinguished.¹⁴⁵ Publishing of earlier Stalingrad works all but ceased. There would be no more isolated soldiers such as Nekrasov’s Kerzhentsev. The government recognized that “giving credit to [a large scale cult of fallen heroes] could undermine the official discourse of victory as yet another of Stalin’s “gifts” to the Soviet people.”¹⁴⁶ People were “supposed to be thankful to

¹⁴⁰ The speech had already been codified in a collection of Stalin’s wartime speeches and would play an important role in pushing Stalin’s role from the periphery into the centre of events. It also appears in Grossman’s *For a Just Cause* and *Life and Fate*, Nekrasov’s work, and Ehrenburg’s *The Storm*.

¹⁴¹ Simonov, *Dni i noch*, 136.

¹⁴² Ibid., 135.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 201.

¹⁴⁴ See N. Maslin, “O literaturnom zhurnale Zvezda,” *Kul’tura i zhizn’*, August 10, 1946. 3. The original Kremlin discussion (‘Postanovlenie TsK VKP 14 avgusta 1946g.’) is included in Babichenko, *Literaturnyi front*. Agitprop was cracking down on “perceived cultural excesses” through 1945 (Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 185). See also Merridale, *Ivan’s War*, 164.

¹⁴⁵ Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, 84.

¹⁴⁶ Yekelchik, *Stalin’s Citizens*, 62. For information on victory as a “gift” to the people, see Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!*, 159.

Stalin, rather than the Red Army, certain regiments or individual soldiers.”¹⁴⁷ Stalin, the living God, created Stalingrad alone—and the reader could not be left to fend for themselves to re-experience the turmoil of Stalingrad followed by its resolution, as in Nekrasov’s work.

Scholars have suggested that by the mid-to-late 1940s the regime was no longer interested in celebrating the war.¹⁴⁸ Museums closed their doors, planners tore up designs for memorials, Victory Day was no longer a national holiday, and the flow of works dedicated to the war dried up.¹⁴⁹ However, public and state interest in Stalingrad remained undimmed. Authors were still bombarded with manuscripts and requests for work, and readers and viewers were still excited about new releases.¹⁵⁰ Emphasis on Stalin’s supposed feat at Stalingrad, meanwhile, continued to provide the impetus to produce works about the battle.

My survey of Stalingrad works indicates that the flood of new Stalingrad works was drying up, and that overall print runs for dedicated Stalingrad works were falling.¹⁵¹ However, the battle remained central to Soviet post-war identity. It appeared in passing but significant mentions in major works such as Boris Polevoi’s *Tale of a Real Man* (*Povest’ o nastoiashchem cheloveke*, 1947). In this story, the fighter pilot Mares’ev loses both legs after a crash.¹⁵² Inspired by Stalingrad, which word “was on everyone’s lips,” Mares’ev returns to flying.¹⁵³ When the recovering pilot hears the word “Stalingrad,” his craving to fight again “grew into wrenching anguish, and the forced inactivity of the hospital became unbearable.” In Polevoi’s work, which is dominated by Stalin, Stalingrad itself remains the focal point of the individual’s activity. Moreover, the late 1940s were punctuated by the publication of a handful of major works designed as Stalinist epic alongside a raft of smaller, regional publications that sought to orient

¹⁴⁷ Yekelchik, *Stalin’s Citizens*, 105.

¹⁴⁸ Patrick Finney, “Vasily Grossman and the Myths of the Great Patriotic War,” *Journal of European Studies* 43, no. 4 (2013): 315; Garrard and Garrard, *The Bones of Berdichev*, 215.

¹⁴⁹ There was a sharp drop in Stalingrad works published between 1943 and 1946, both the number of published works per year and as a percentage of all published works.

¹⁵⁰ Simonov, *Pis’ma o voine*, 46; Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 215.

¹⁵¹ See Appendix, graph D., “Total Items Printed or Reprinted Per Year.”

¹⁵² One of the most published works in the Soviet Union, a Stalin Prize winner (1947) and the source for a Prokof’ev opera and a 1948 film.

¹⁵³ Boris Polevoi, *Povest’ o nastoiashchem cheloveke* (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1947), Chapter 5.

the individual towards Stalin. The ritual focused not on monumentalization of the battle itself, but on using and shaping the memory of the war around the figure of Stalin.

Stalinist Stalingrad: *The Storm* and *Mamaev kurgan*

I choose two works as representative of Stalin's dominance of the Stalingrad story: Il'ia Ehrenburg's mass production epic *The Storm* (*Buria*, 1947), and Pavel Shebunin's minor work *Mamaev kurgan* (1948). In each, Stalin is depicted as a God whose interventions at Stalingrad shape the course of History for a thankful soldiery. Ehrenburg's *The Storm* was the first substantial attempt at a *War and Peace* for Stalingrad.¹⁵⁴ Its vast canvas spans dozens of characters and places stretching from 1930s Paris to the last days of Nazi Berlin. All the events of *The Storm*, whether ordinary lives in the 1930s or strategic events in 1942, turn about the axis of Stalingrad. The novel is all but forgotten today, but it was nominated for a Stalin Prize and regularly reissued between 1947 and 1968.¹⁵⁵ In fact, it is one of the most published of all Stalingrad books.¹⁵⁶ Ehrenburg was inspired to write the book by both his own wartime journalism, in which he discussed Stalingrad regularly, and by his own description of Grossman's sketch collection as "material for tomorrow, for a real novel."¹⁵⁷ Ehrenburg's work therefore exemplifies the desire to make Stalingrad epic and link it to the coming future, and, given the prominence accorded to Stalin, reveals the responsiveness of the Stalingrad story to a changing political atmosphere.

Shebunin and Ehrenburg both credit the omnipotent Stalin with every part of the victory at Stalingrad. The subordination of Stalingrad to the Stalin Cult was not purely a Kremlin invention, but a redirection of faith away from the Red Army and its leaders—and from the

¹⁵⁴ The work was published in *Novyi mir*, 4-8. Excerpts had appeared in *Sovetskaia zhenshchina* (1946, 3, 1947, 2), *Ogonek* (1946, 20, 22, 1947, 20), *Kazakhskaiia pravda* (147, 29 June), *Smena* (1947, 12) and *Sovetskaia Belorussiaia* (1947, 2 July).

¹⁵⁵ It was even discussed as part of university syllabi (L. Lazarev, *Zapiski pozhilogo cheloveka: kniga vospominanii* [Moscow: Vremia, 2005], 149). However, it has not been republished in Russian since 1968. Some brief interest, likely because of Ehrenburg's work recording the Holocaust, has been shown with a few Yiddish publication runs in recent years.

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix chart B., "Works Sorted by Total Print Run."

¹⁵⁷ Ehrenburg, "Glazami Vasiliia Grossmana."

authorial power to invoke and inscribe meaning into pre-Soviet and wartime material—back toward Stalin. One contemporary Soviet writer observed that Stalin really was perceived as godlike by some: “He was talking so persuasively, clearly and simply, that many of us at that moment felt as if comrade Stalin had been with us not for one month, but for many years, that we had already heard those words a long time ago and that they had taken deep roots in our consciousness.”¹⁵⁸ Both *The Storm* and *Mamaev kurgan* are representative of a period in which Soviet subjects were asked to reimagine themselves as principally *Stalinist* subjects. The careful manipulation and representation of Stalingrad’s textual past was essential to this reimagination.

The Storm cements and affirms the Stalingrad story’s epic qualities while reorienting them to Stalin’s new central position. In fact, the epic qualities grow more prominent. Ehrenburg imitates the vast temporal span and innumerable characters of works like *War and Peace* and *The Odyssey*. Like *War and Peace*, the book is centred on several major families. The Lanciers are a family of French industrialists. The son Louis joins the Free French Army before dying in a dogfight at Stalingrad. The daughter Mado joins the French Resistance. She is in love with Sergei Vlahov, a Russian engineer who fights at Stalingrad before being killed in Yugoslavia. His family and acquaintances are typical communist workers and soldiers spread across the USSR from Moscow to Ukraine. Amongst them is Osip Al’per, a Kievan who fights with his wife Raya at Kiev. Raya is killed and her Jewish family murdered by the Germans. Osip’s brother, Leo, has emigrated to France with their mother as a child. He is acquainted with the Lanciers, but his connections do not save him from deportation to Auschwitz. On the German side several officers, soldiers and their families constantly cross paths with the Russian and French circles across Europe. Here, *The Storm* attempts to make the Stalingrad epic more than national. It is turned into a universal European story that suggests that Stalin’s power knew no geographical or historical limits.

Ehrenburg deliberately drew on references to the foundational journalism. By preserving the connections to the journalism through quotation and allusion, he imbued the text with the link to the *kairotic* time of 1942 and the memory of the battle experienced through the newspaper narrative in 1942-3. While Ehrenburg claimed the book was based on personal recollections,

¹⁵⁸ Natalia Skradol, “Remembering Stalin: Mythopoetic Elements in Memories of the Soviet Dictator,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, no. 1 (March 2009), 23.

almost all of the Russian scenes are strongly coloured by material from elsewhere. For example, the line “the Volga boils, the city burns” is already familiar from countless other works. The Russian landscape outside of the war is, as for Nekrasov, Grossman and Simonov, “paradise.”¹⁵⁹ The Stalingrad *kairos* was thus by now transposable into almost any context—in this case, into the context of the late Stalinist personality cult.

The purpose of the Stalingrad work was still to align the individual with History. The Soviets in *The Storm* find themselves reborn thanks to Stalin’s victory at Stalingrad. After the loss of her daughter, the young Soviet Raya “lived to kill.” Formerly, “she had loved Chopin, would sigh over *Veshnie vody*, and was disappointed when Osip didn’t notice her new hairstyle. [...] Now she lived for one thing: not to miss her 29th [kill].”¹⁶⁰ But Ehrenburg also highlights the post-war return to normality for his reader: “Two women...but one heart. When the war finishes (is it ever to finish?), Sergeant Raisa Al’per will once more become Raya.” Raya is born anew, but reduced to playing a single role in Stalin’s machine. In another example, the aspiring actress Valia plays the lead in *The Girl From Staritsa* at the start of the war. The play is a clumsy piece of agitation that embarrasses the viewers with its “naivety.” By the end of the war, Valia becomes a fine actress who no longer “play acts [*igraet kak rebenok*].”¹⁶¹ Thanks to Stalingrad, these characters are transformed into Soviet heroes who seamlessly slip into new roles in the collective life of the nation.

However, in *The Storm*, the means to effect this change is through Stalin, rather than Stalingrad. Without Stalin’s leadership, the French in Ehrenburg’s *The Storm* tear themselves

¹⁵⁹ (Il’ia Ehrenburg, *The Storm*, trans. J. Fineberg [New York: Gaer, 1949], 254). Ehrenburg is the first major contributor to the Stalingrad canon who had not actually visited the city during the battle, so it is unsurprising that the few battle scenes in *Buria* are entirely based on others’ descriptions (see Il’ia Ehrenburg, *Liudi. Gody. Zhizn’*, vol. 2 [Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1990]. 232). Once again, Grossman’s influence looms large. The two authors had been working together on the *Black Book*, a Holocaust memorial, which had been published abroad in 1946 but remained shelved in the USSR until the 1980s. *The Storm* is the first work to link Stalingrad and the Holocaust: the death of the elderly Hannah and her granddaughter Alia at Babii Yar foreshadows the gas chamber death of Sofia Levinton and the Jewish boy David in Grossman’s *Life and Fate*. For more on the *Black Book*, see Il’ia Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman, *The Complete Black Book of Russian Jewry* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002). Note that in places, I have slightly edited Fineberg’s translation to make it consistent with my terminology and to include details omitted in the 1949 edition.

¹⁶⁰ Ehrenburg, *The Storm*, 247.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 450. The characters’ pre-turning point lives and behaviour are frequently characterized by the words “naïve,” “naivety” and “like a child.”

apart. The novel's French protagonist, Mado, experiences a literal breakdown of her psyche, personality and physical body. She is forced to play many different personalities, wandering from place to place, acting as "a foolish country girl, a woman of easy morals, a young lady interested in smart clothes; she could be sophisticated, mincing, simple, weep and say that her father was dying and chatter about the latest fashions."¹⁶² She literally has several identities: her given name "Mado," codename "France," and married name "Mrs. Berty." The exhausted Mado is close to breaking apart completely until the dawn of Stalingrad rebirths the French resistance. As Mado explains, "What children we were before the war!" Stalingrad makes them "grow up."¹⁶³ However, since Stalingrad is produced by Stalin, not by the people, the object of reverence for the reader is ultimately Stalin.

The Stalingrad myth was used by Ehrenburg to support Stalin's power, rather than to unify the nation. Stalin appears in *The Storm* in person and as a transcendental, superhistorical force with the power to mould both the characters' personal lives and history. No previous Stalingrad work had been so closely and explicitly associated with an expression of the leader's power. The intertwining of ordinary experience of the war with Stalingrad as turning point is so heavy-handed that even the most stubborn of readers could not misunderstand what they were being asked to do: reorient their self away from reading History through events and, instead, view Stalin as the creator of miracles and, therefore, the mediator between the individual and history.

Pavel Shebunin's *Mamaev kurgan* is a minor work, published in *Novyi mir* (1948 2-3) under Konstantin Simonov's editorial auspices. Shebunin had fought at Stalingrad, and wrote short pieces for divisional and army newspapers while at the front. A minor writing career followed.¹⁶⁴ *Mamaev kurgan* relates the experience of a division fighting for the title's strategic location, the "key to Stalingrad," from mid-September until early February.¹⁶⁵ The plot is unoriginal. All the usual landmarks and people appear in descriptive terms heavily influenced by

¹⁶² Ibid., 288.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 500.

¹⁶⁴ Shebunin published two more works: "Dom Pavlova," in *Frontovye ocherki o Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1957); and *Prostye dela: rasskazy* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1957). For more on Shebunin's career, see Anna Frumkina, "Segodnia. Zavtra. Vchera," *Novyi mir*, no. 6 (2001).

¹⁶⁵ Pavel Shebunin, "Mamaev kurgan. Povest'," *Novyi mir*, no. 2-3 (1948), 44.

Shebunin's predecessors, preserving the presence of the foundational story.¹⁶⁶ Shebunin, however, slavishly adheres to the Stalin-as-victor theme. The rank and file functions as a conduit for Stalin's power with no historical agency of its own.

Mamaev kurgan is a particularly fine example of the rewriting of Stalingrad around Stalin's personality since, like Nekrasov, Shebunin was a veteran of the battle. *Mamaev kurgan* reveals that the memory of veterans was every bit as responsive to the changing needs of Soviet power as that of the corpus of elite authors. Like Nekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*, the work was nominated for a Stalin Prize. However, the two veterans could not have produced more differing interpretations of Stalingrad. Shebunin reimagines his own experiences through the lens of the present trends. Stalin is the sole active historical agent at Stalingrad. The people look to him for leadership, allowing themselves to be filled with his spirit and power in order to win the battle. In turn, *Mamaev kurgan* shapes an understanding of late 1940s present: Stalin's rule appears to be justified by the rewritten past.

In these works, Stalingrad remains the most important event of the war and of the Soviet era. In *The Storm*, it heralds the coming of a new day linked to the birth of a new generation: "They went to the window. Day was breaking. The houses were growing light. [...] And suddenly both started: someone was laughing merrily—little Vas'ka had awoken."¹⁶⁷ The fiery hell of Stalingrad gives way to a paradisiacal future: "The heavy rains gave way to dazzling brightness. It seemed to Minaev he had never seen so many flowers. This is Paradise—he thought, and the thought made him laugh—a nice sort of Paradise."¹⁶⁸ Now, though, the resurrection extends beyond Russia. The French Resistance and the entire Western Front are safe after Stalingrad. Louis Charpentier sees this historical moment as the new dawn: "I think I can see a patch of blue sky, the sun over France. They think I'm drunk...I haven't touched a drop of vodka, but I'm drunk!"¹⁶⁹ Partisans are miraculously oriented and emboldened: before the battle,

¹⁶⁶ Grossman's influence is especially clear. Shebunin, for example, uses Grossman's term "dominating height" for the Mamaev kurgan several times.

¹⁶⁷ Ehrenburg, *The Storm*, 500.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 327.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 295.

“we fought as if we were dazed; now we fight calmly and accurately.”¹⁷⁰ The French Resistance chalk the word “Stalingrad” all over Paris as a means to recapture the city.¹⁷¹ Under torture, the Czech communist Anna Roth is able to invoke the power of Stalingrad to steady herself: “When she felt her strength ebbing she shouted: ‘Sta-lin-grad! Sta-lin-grad!’”¹⁷² Every character understands their life and role in the war through Stalingrad, but use of the word “Stalingrad” as a rallying mantra for unity and inner strength projects the post-battle epicization of the battle into the wartime past. Ehrenburg’s work suggests that Stalingrad defines not just post-war Russian history—it seems to play the same role for the entirety of Europe.

Stalin is at the heart of this transformation. He is characterized in *The Storm* by the markers of epic time, appearing only in a distant Kremlin office unaffected by events in the present of 1942. By placing the action of most consequence in Stalin’s office, and making Stalin a permanent, ahistorical feature of History, the author removes the agency of earthbound people. Their actions resemble those of ancient Greek mythical heroes, who are bound by a fate decided by the gods—the Socialist Realist positive hero is thus drawn into epic time by Stalin’s intervention. The contradictions inherent in simultaneously experiencing epic and present times are negated since human heroes—and human time—exist solely as a vessel for God’s spirit. It does not matter that the reader’s present is polyphonic, open-ended, and does not match up to the utopian promise of Stalingrad’s resurrection. Nor does it matter that Stalin was absent from the newspapers of 1942. The reader is assured that Stalin, removed from human time, is capable of creating another miracle, just as he created Stalingrad—no matter how improbable that might have seemed to the reader of *The Storm* or *Mamaev kurgan*.

The contribution of ordinary individuals, which is limited to following Stalin’s orders, reflects the sense of passivity. In *Mamaev kurgan*, troops in the city place absolute trust in Stalin: “We’re waiting for Comrade Stalin’s order [...] if the Stavka orders it, it must be a good idea!”¹⁷³ History is made in a distant, epic space accessible only to the omnipotent Stalin.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 328.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 275, 272, 310.

¹⁷² Ibid., 267.

¹⁷³ Shebunin, “Mamaev kurgan,” 11.

Ordinary soldiers, like the reader, are merely passive observers of Stalin's triumph. The real battle in *Mamaev kurgan* is fought not between the Red Army and the Wehrmacht, but on a cosmological plane between Stalin and Death, who "stalks the ruined Stalingrad."¹⁷⁴ In both *The Storm* and *Mamaev kurgan*, an omniscient Stalin pores over maps and reports alone, overseeing every element of the battle from the Kremlin: as Shebunin explains, "Stalin can see it all!"¹⁷⁵ In *The Storm*, Ehrenburg credits the tireless Stalin with the ability to transcend history, to "foresee the impossible." Far in advance, a Stalin who "knew this land by heart" maps out the entire course of the battle at Stalingrad. In his character, the narrator marries elements of the Russian pastoral text and religiosity:

Stalin, his pupils dilated from lack of sleep, focused on the map. Before him arose steppes and kurgans. He knew this land by heart. He had to foresee that which it was impossible to foresee: that our tanks would be met by enemy planes at Tatsinskaia [...], that some German generals would support a timely retreat and others would oppose it, that Mannstein would have a large number of tanks but would turn out at the last possible moment to be a pedant. He had to foresee the opponent's skill, but also the possibility for him to make mistakes, to foresee everything, right up to the last rains and the first frosts, to the influence of the moon, to the possibility of errors and chance.¹⁷⁶

This clarity of vision enables Stalin to oversee every minute detail of the war. Contrast this passage with the invocation of Russian bravery to clear up Kerzhentsev's confusion in *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*. Historical understanding mediated through references to Russian history is replaced by the reader's alignment with the leader. It no longer mattered that, as in Nekrasov's novel, troops cannot see. Stalin simply sees for them, watching over the people and History alike. Here, readers were not asked to relive the blindness experienced in battle, then find themselves oriented in history as the author guides the narrative. Instead, readers were prompted to function, like Shebunin's troops, as mere witnesses to Stalin's actions. Readers were asked,

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 64.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁷⁶ Ehrenburg, *The Storm*, 291.

therefore, to relate to Stalin, who offers to make the past *kairotic* through producing miracles such as Stalingrad, not to Stalingrad's *kairotic* temporality itself.

The confusion in battle experienced by ordinary soldiers—such as Nekrasov's Kerzhentsev—is no longer important. Shebunin illustrates Stalin's ability to resolve all the troops' difficulties through the theme of maps. Shebunin's soldier explains: "Our lot, the 45th, are on the slope of the Mamaev kurgan. And that's marked on the map. Here, on the railway tracks, there's a little red thread before the salient."¹⁷⁷ As the battle comes to a close, the troops stand on the Kurgan and see how "thin lines traced the roads around the woods behind the Volga and, like arrows, went all the way to Sredniaia Akhtuba."¹⁷⁸ Changes Stalin makes to the map occur in reality—the entire experience of the past and present is produced from the Kremlin. Where the map had earlier been symbolic of confusion, now the people can place blind faith in it as a reflection of Stalin's will: "If we don't stand firm, then Comrade Stalin will have to move the flags around and the thread back. And how will that feel for us? It'll be a whole lot harder for him, because he answers for the entire world. We only answer for this dugout."¹⁷⁹ If people just diligently do their duty on the ground, Shebunin's text seems to imply, Stalin will produce a *kairotic* moment.

The written word provides the means by which the individual character can summon Stalin's spirit from the distant Kremlin into the present. In *Mamaev kurgan*, a dying man in a hospital bed "prays" to Stalin, hoping that he would visit the front lines, and reads Stalin's works as if they were religious scripture: "My bedside book is Comrade Stalin's orders and speeches. You read them and you can see the war's entire course, from its start to Stalingrad, and from Stalingrad to our victory."¹⁸⁰ Reading Stalin's words provides more than clarity. It actively draws the epic qualities of the leader into the present. For example, on the eve of battle, Sergeant Shchukin reads one of Stalin's orders:

"So you've been getting the papers?" Batalov asked the sergeant.

¹⁷⁷ Shebunin, "Mamaev kurgan."

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 214.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 53, 42.

“We get them...”

“Did you read Comrade Stalin’s order?”

“We did...”

“And what’s the main point of it?”

The sergeant hopped from one leg to the other and smiled.

“There’ll be a celebration on our street too! A crushing attack is coming!”¹⁸¹

This begins a chain in which the phrase “There’ll be a celebration on our street too!” is repeated by the troops and narrator alike until victory is won.¹⁸² *Mamaev kurgan* closes with the assertion that Stalin’s words created victory: “‘Well then, the celebration’s come to our street!’ said Nikiforov, ‘It happened, just like Comrade Stalin said!’”¹⁸³ The war ends because Stalin said it should be so: the troops repeat Stalin’s promise that “We’ll be on the advance soon!” as if it were ordained fact rather than a promise.¹⁸⁴ By invoking Stalin’s power through reading his words, the individual is able to vicariously take part in history. However, the effect here reveals an achronological rewriting of the past within the space of the *lieu de mémoire*: in reality, the phrase “There’ll be a celebration on our street too!” was printed in the newspapers only after the November 1942 counterattack. In hindsight, Shebunin was able to project Stalin’s semantic presence into both the story of the battle and the lives of its participants: Stalin, as Jan Plamper notes, seemed to have always been there.¹⁸⁵

Thus in *The Storm*, the act of reading is no longer necessary to invoke Stalin’s presence. Instead, he simply appears in transcendental, religiously inflected visions. The most significant moments in *The Storm* are those where the characters come closest to Stalin, not to Stalingrad. The leader is able to heal rifts between the individual and history, and the wounds of war,

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 51.

¹⁸² Ibid., 52, 85, 136.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 136.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 18.

¹⁸⁵ Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, xv.

spontaneously. Ehrenburg's soldier Lukutin has a transcendental vision of Stalin in the pre-Stalingrad retreat that strongly resembles Biblical scripture, especially the story of Christ's appearance on the road to Emmaus:¹⁸⁶

He went out to get a breath of fresh morning air. The street was still empty. Two workers and a truck carrying troops passed by. An old lady puffed away carrying a large bundle. Suddenly Lukutin heard a familiar voice: Stalin was speaking. The intimate sincerity of this voice shook Lukutin. It simultaneously conveyed alarm and confidence and the feeling of spiritual strength that a man has when he knows his righteousness during the moments of the most terrible trials. It seemed to Lukutin that Stalin was addressing him personally, that it was *he* Stalin was calling "friend." How many times in the past had Lukutin been tormented by the question—am I different? And on that July morning, he understood how strongly he was linked to every house, every word, and every passerby.¹⁸⁷

In spite of Stalin's concern for the vast historical sweep of the war, he speaks directly to individuals. His voice appears out of the ether to resolve Lukutin's "torment."¹⁸⁸ It transforms and dominates his sense of self. Later, as he marches, Lukutin realizes that Stalin's spirit has replaced his Christian upbringing: "Why have all distinctions disappeared now? When I heard Stalin, I knew he was speaking for us all. [...] I may have criticized, I may have doubted, but now I see that I cannot live without this."¹⁸⁹ The whole experience of the war is subject to the centripetal force of Stalin's *logos*, which spreads from the Kremlin to permeate time and space. The reader's passivity is amplified further: reading is not the way to bring Stalin down from the

¹⁸⁶ The disciples "asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'" (Luke 24:32, NIV). Note also the importance of the road as the location for intersecting temporal and spatial motifs in the novel, a place where "the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another." As such, it represents a place where novelistic and epic times might meet: "time, as it were, fuses together with space and flows into it" (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 243-4).

¹⁸⁷ Ehrenburg, *The Storm*, 150.

¹⁸⁸ By 1948, Stalin was frequently represented as a disembodied voice. For example, see Pavel Sokolov-Skalia's painting *The Voice of the Leader* (sometimes *Molodogvardeitsy* or *Krasnodontsy*), in which listeners gather attentively around a radio to listen to the leader's words. Light appears to emanate from the receiver, illuminating the faces of the listeners (Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 43).

¹⁸⁹ Ehrenburg, *The Storm*, 152.

epic heights, as in Shebunin. Instead, to read these Stalingrad stories is to witness Stalin's godliness, transcendental spirit, which seems to exist at all times and in all places.

As a result, the chaos of death is replaced by total spiritual and social unity. The war may seem senseless, but Lukutin is symbolically bonded to "every house, every word, every passerby," and to Stalin himself. His transformation—the transformation of the people at large—is not effected by patriotism, or by experience of war. Stalin's spirit alone transforms Lukutin. Thanks to his faith in the leader, Lukutin becomes a brilliant soldier who is decorated after his first contact with the enemy.¹⁹⁰ His eventual death is pointedly unheroic: "The attack was stopped right there in the wood. There was no let up. A fresh unit, only arrived yesterday, was sent to counterattack. That was what all the commotion was in the night, thought Lukutin. He wanted to shout this to Misha, but he didn't manage it. He fell face-first into the snow." His death goes almost unnoticed: "A few soldiers saw the dead Lukutin, walked up to him and stood silently for a moment. Each thought of his nearest and dearest. Then they ran off to catch up with their comrades."¹⁹¹ Lukutin's death is made heroic by the knowledge that he was one of Simonov's men who "died with Stalin's name on their lips," not by its relation to Stalingrad's resurrection. The justification of sacrifice during the war is not achieved through Russian patriotic motifs, as in Grossman, Simonov and Nekrasov's works. The individual's private world is entirely subsumed by the deified Stalin.

In a similar incident from *The Storm*, Sergei Vlahov hears Stalin speak: "Wet snow was falling. It was a gray, foggy day. [...] On Red Square, he saw Stalin, standing in just a greatcoat and cap even though it was cold. He was calm. He calmly said: 'Germany will collapse'".¹⁹² Sergei has been tortured by a "feverish anxiety." Stalin's calm pronouncement of certain victory has a miraculous effect: "Sergei remembered how he had been torn by anxiety and felt ashamed. France? Yes, everybody there had fled. From the President of the Republic to the commanders, the threads were pulled apart. But Stalin is at his post." In an exaggerated echo of *Days and Nights*' Saburov's interest in the leader's intonation rather than his actual words, the simple fact

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 153.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 192.

¹⁹² Ibid., 176.

of encountering Stalin is enough to remake the “torn” Sergei. The implication is that an encounter with Stalin’s textual presence in Stalingrad fiction, or perhaps in collections of wartime speeches, is enough for *kairos* to rewrite the *chronos* experience of the present.

Stalin’s words to Sergei cascade through the text—though Sergei has invoked them not through an active process of seeking out and reading the leader’s writing, but by experiencing a transcendental vision of Stalin that he has passively stumbled into through “foggy” thoughts and surroundings. Sergei preaches Stalin’s words, which have the same effect on every listener: “Dozens of times he explained at the front: ‘Yes, yes, he stood on the platform! You can feel the confidence in every word. Moscow’s at war. Cannonades. Bombing. But it’s enough that Stalin’s there. They’ll never take Moscow, never!’” Subsequently, the power of these words leaps across the continent to France, indicating the transcendental power of Stalin’s speech. Robert, an injured French resistance fighter, echoes Stalin: “They’ll never take Moscow!”¹⁹³ Where the theme of the symbolic meeting with Stalin was inchoate in Simonov’s novel, now it is at the fore. Sergei is invited to reform his psyche—a central part of his identity—around an encounter with Stalin’s canonized speech. “Stalin” has replaced the word “Stalingrad” as history’s centre of gravity, as the site that could gather and organize numerous readings of the past, present and future.

The result is to reform the importance of Stalingrad’s *kairos*. There is never a sense of tension, of the possibility that the USSR might be defeated or that individuals may even suffer, since Stalin’s watchful gaze and demiurgic power ensure that victory is certain. *Mamaev kurgan*’s conclusion promises that Stalin’s power to manipulate time and space knows no bounds: “Time stopped as if to celebrate a victory the likes of which the world had never known.”¹⁹⁴ This, read in the late 1940s, could spill out into the reader’s understanding of their own life: any tension or conflict in the present is certain to end imminently, since Stalin can simply create a victory that would “stop time.” No matter how bleak the present, it was illuminated by Stalin’s ability to create *kairos* at will.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Shebunin, “Mamaev kurgan,” 238.

Conclusion: Writing the Stalinist Self

Authors were willing participants in realigning their selves with the new vision of Stalinist identity, at the centre of which lay Stalingrad's "proof" of the leader's abilities. Indeed, Il'ia Ehrenburg was a prime example of one of the many writers who fell under the leader's spell: "We had long lost sight of the fact that Stalin was mortal. He had become an all-powerful and remote deity."¹⁹⁵ Simonov explained his life in 1948, when the words "Stalin, Stalingrad and Russia" were "the most important and powerful things" in his life.¹⁹⁶ What is most striking about the post-battle decade is neither the abruptly and blatantly reimagined story of Stalingrad, nor the consistent enthusiasm for exploring and commemorating the battle, but the ease with which each version of the Stalingrad story was used to construct and reconstruct the individual's own identity. The contrasting texts by the veterans Viktor Nekrasov and Pavel Shebunin, neither of whom were part of a literary elite under pressure to conform to model texts, are testament to this process.

A passage from the frontline journalist Vasilii Koroteev's sketch *Ten Years Later* (*Desiat' let spust'ia*, 1953) encapsulates the tendency to rewrite identity and history with Stalin at its centre. Koroteev, a native Stalingrader, had covered the battle for *Krasnaia zvezda*, and kept up a correspondence with David Ortenberg and Konstantin Simonov. In *Ten Years Later*, Koroteev's narrator flies back to Stalingrad to take a tour of the sights of the battle and the reconstruction work that has "raised Stalingrad from the ashes."¹⁹⁷ In the city centre lies the newly constructed Stalin Museum: "Our holy relics have been gathered in this museum: photographs, letters and documents. Thousands of pilgrims come to Stalingrad from every corner of the country and from abroad. When they leave, many take a pinch of Stalingrad's holy soil."¹⁹⁸ Koroteev concludes the sketch with an ode to the city and Stalin, who is embodied in a towering statue over the Volga: "And over this giant of a town, over the waters of the Volga and the Volga-Don, over the wide expanse of the plains around the river and against the background of the blue Stalingrad sky, there on a granite pedestal rises up a monument to the great man whose name has been

¹⁹⁵ Ehrenburg, *Liudi. Gody. Zhizn'*.

¹⁹⁶ Simonov, *Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia*, 88.

¹⁹⁷ V. Koroteev, *Stalingradskie ocherki* (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1954), 161.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

given to this glorious town.”¹⁹⁹ The narrator explains: “The monument to our leader personifies the triumph of our great national victories on the bank of the Volga and at the walls of Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad.” Finally, he links this to a mythical vision of nature and an “eternal hymn”: “The sun washes the bronze of the monument with light. The waves, lapping against the bank, sing an eternal hymn to Stalingrad’s feat.”²⁰⁰ The wartime sketches’ focus on the Russian patriotic tradition is gone. In its place is a panegyric to a monumental, depersonalized vision of Stalingrad. Stalin, the demiurgic creator embodied in granite and bronze and shorn of human form, is transcendent.

Koroteev revisits the past, reorienting his memory of the war towards Stalin’s monumental presence. By “visiting” in text those invocations of the *lieu de mémoire* that attest to Stalin’s construction of victory, Koroteev’s narrator aligns his narratorial persona with not just with a new history, but with the demands of the Stalinist present. The authorial self is rewritten to fit into the dominant narratives of that present. Koroteev does not just subjugate himself to Stalinist power; he activates a powerful way to make sense of the sociopolitical present through rewriting.

Revisiting the battle thus did not mean simply remembering the tropes of 1942-3, but actively reconstructing the past in the light of the present by exploiting the way in which Stalingrad was a memorial site for various temporal planes to intersect. Just as Stalingrad in the war had been a site for pre-Soviet and Soviet material to coalesce, now material from the wartime past—both that from the front and from the early post-battle period—could serve as a centering point for a new, Stalinist identity. As I will show in the following chapters, the *kairotic* qualities associated with Stalingrad were of crucial importance as Soviet society rethought both present identity and past events in the late and post-Stalinist periods. Indeed, the fate of the works I have studied in this chapter is indicative of attempts to reconstruct memory and identity. Ehrenburg’s and Shebunin’s novels disappeared from the cultural landscape within months of Stalin’s death: neither were much published in the remaining years of Soviet rule, nor are they read today. With Stalin’s death, Grossman’s, Nekrasov’s and Simonov’s works, which are seen

¹⁹⁹ Koroteev sees the newly constructed monument to Stalin on the Volgo-Don Canal, a 54m high goliath that rose over Stalingrad. This summons the powerful literary image of the construction of St. Petersburg. For example, in the introduction to Pushkin’s *Bronze Horseman*, a “granite” city miraculously springs out of nothingness at Peter the Great’s behest.

²⁰⁰ Koroteev, *Stalingradskie ocherki*, 174-5.

as the “genuine” and uncensored memory of Stalingrad, once again became central to the Stalingrad story. We can thus see how memory of the battle expanded and contracted to accommodate a fluctuating sociocultural milieu.

4. “The Greatest Event of Our Time”: Grossman’s *For a Just Cause*

Vasily Grossman’s *For a Just Cause* (*Za pravoe delo*, 1952) was the only major Stalingrad work to be published for the first time in the last half decade of Stalin’s rule.¹ In spite of the lack of major new works, the Stalingrad theme’s purported global historical significance continued to be of great importance to the regime. Critics stressed the importance of the “special” Stalingrad theme, which addressed “the greatest event of our time.” A novel named *Stalingrad*—the title Grossman had originally proposed for the work—had to be “special,” because it would be read “not just by our readers. Those from every country will throw themselves at it.”² Authors touching on any aspect of the Stalingrad theme were open to severe criticism if they did not follow official models. Even Konstantin Simonov came under attack for his novella *Smoke of the Fatherland* (*Dym otechestva*, 1947).³ The theme was so important that the uppermost echelons of the Soviet hierarchy—even Stalin himself—scrutinized new publications for ideological soundness.⁴

Grossman spent half a decade working on *For a Just Cause* before struggling for almost four years to have it published. Despite the enormous public and critical thirst to read Grossman’s work—a novel that “would deal with the legendary epic of the hero city in all its

¹ Elsewhere, publishers focused on reprinting ideologically sound works, rather than seeking out new illustrations of the battle—creating new texts was replaced by reiterating the same points about the deified Stalin. The list of reprints is extensive: Ehrenburg’s *The Storm* (1950, 1953), Grossman’s *Povesti* (1950), Nekrasov’s *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* (1949, 1951, 1952, 1953), V. Panova’s *Fellow Travellers* (*Sputniki*, 1949, 1952, 1953), B. Polevoi’s *Tale of a Real Man* (*Povest’ o nastoiashchem cheloveke*, 1949, 1951, 1952, 1953), Simonov’s *Days and Nights* (1949, 1950, 1952, 1953).

² “Stenogramma soveshchaniia redaktsionnoi kollegii zhurnala Novyi mir,” April 24, 1950, Box 3, Folder 47, Garrard Collection, 24.

³ N. Maslin attacked the work as “underdeveloped, [with] many mistakes.” Its “ideological depiction” of the Soviet people “has ended up in a total tangle” (as quoted in Lazarev, *Voennaia proza Konstantina Simonova*, 133). Even an established work like *Days and Nights*, which had been published in great quantities, and adapted for film and stage, was subject to heavy editing (Simonov, *Pis’mo o voine*, 51).

⁴ Literary and propaganda leaders such as Aleksei Surkov, Mikhail Suslov, Stalin’s secretary Aleksandr Poskrebyshchev and possibly even the leader himself read early drafts of *For a Just Cause* (Bocharov, *Grossman: Zhizn’, tvorchestvo, sud’ba*, 168; Garrard and Garrard, *The Bones of Berdichev*, 223).

greatness”⁵—the Soviet press subjected *For a Just Cause* to a barrage of vitriolic criticism after its release. Western scholarship has painted the work as a Stalinist dud, a butchered forerunner to *Life and Fate* that was unloved by the public, heavily criticized by the authorities and rapidly forgotten: “an ordinary novel of the Stalinist epoch on a par with Bubennov’s *White Birch*.”⁶ In spite of the early official criticism, *For a Just Cause* became the most significant and most published Stalingrad work since Simonov’s 1943 novel *Days and Nights*. Grossman’s novel encouraged the Soviet reader to actively engage in constructing their relationship with the past through Stalingrad—quite a contrast from the passive and Stalinist experience of reading *The Storm* or *Mamaev kurgan*. Here, we see how the Stalingrad *lieu de mémoire* was again drawn into an active role in the present; *For a Just Cause* seems to have been designed to heal the divide in literary representation of the battle between the nation and its leader by conjoining early and Stalinist material from Stalingrad works.

For a Just Cause follows a cast of characters connected to the Shaposhnikov family, who live in Stalingrad, in the months up to October 1942. *For a Just Cause* therefore prominently displays its links to *War and Peace*, just like *The Storm* had. We can see, then, that Grossman retains his interest in showing the vagaries of the war through the eyes of individuals: he “wants to show an ordinary Soviet family with all its ordinary affairs, fates and links.”⁷ The novel’s centre of gravity thus moved away from Stalin as the active force in history. *For a Just Cause* introduces the commissar Krymov and the physicist Shtrum—the Shaposhnikov daughters’ husbands—who would become the protagonists of *Life and Fate*. Vavilov, a provincial *kolkhoznik* who is conscripted and sent to fight at Stalingrad, is foremost amongst a legion of supporting characters. His death in battle at the city’s train station is framed as an eschatological story of individual sacrifice that leads to national resurrection and a Socialist Realist ending to the novel that promises harmony and unity: the effects of Stalingrad’s *kairos* spread to each of the novel’s characters and landscapes.

⁵ The people “have waited a long time for a book which would deal with the legendary epic of the hero city in all its greatness,” writes M. Bubennov (“O romane V. Grossmana ‘Za pravoe delo,’” *Pravda*, February 13, 1953, 3). Aleksandr Tvardovsky had written to Grossman in 1944 to ask him to produce a novel about Stalingrad (Bocharov, *Grossman: Zhizn’, tvorchestvo, sud’ba*, 194).

⁶ Quoted in Ellis, *Grossman: The Evolution of a Heretic*, 23.

⁷ Levin, “Vstuplenie,” in *Povesti, ocherki, rasskazy*, 14.

Unlike his contemporaries, Grossman did not simply parrot the Stalinist story described in the previous chapter. While Stalinist motifs and cosmology still play an important role in *For a Just Cause*, the most significant moments of the novel are those in which ordinary individuals experience—and bring about—monumental turning points. Grossman thought late Stalinist interpretations of Stalingrad had lost a connection to ordinary readers—the very thing that had made the story so effective in bridging the divide between the present and the epic past during and just after the battle had ended: “When facts become slogans, they lose verisimilitude, and reality unites with and acquires the attributes of a poster. The purpose of that poster is to make things simplified and schematic.”⁸ Grossman’s protagonist Shtrum finds official material more confusing than elucidating:

Then every day in the communiqué a new sector would appear. At home, in the street and in the institute, people were saying, “There’s another new sector today.” Shtrum, making comparisons, would pointedly think, “What does it mean that battle is ongoing in the Vil’no area—is that to the East or the West of Vil’no?” He would scrutinize the map, then the page of the newspaper... [...] It was reported in the communiqué that in three days, the Soviet air force had lost 374 planes, but the enemy had lost 381...again, he scrutinized these figures, trying to squeeze out of them the mystery of the coming events of the war.⁹

The actual experiences of war in *For a Just Cause* do not resemble what people read in government sources: “These events were no longer in the communiqués, in newspaper articles, or in tales brought from afar. Today, they were life and death.”¹⁰ Grossman’s narrator furthermore criticizes the tendency to make Stalingraders into fantastic superheroes: “Many years later, when people look back on this great and terrible time [...] they’ll start to think that only titans, heroes and giants of spirit lived. However, there is no truth in such a well-meaning

⁸ Kling, *Tvorchestvo Vasilii Grossmana*, 46.

⁹ V.S. Grossman, “Za pravoe delo,” *Novyi mir*, no. 7–10 (1952), Issue 7, 89. Note that I refer to the *Novyi mir* journal publication. As I note at the end of this chapter and the beginning of the following chapter, book editions of *For a Just Cause*—beginning with the first, published after Stalin’s death, in 1954—cut out many of the references to Stalin and begin with a brief passage, absent from the journal edition, in which Hitler and Mussolini discuss the war.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Issue 9, 90.

but naïve view of the past.”¹¹ Characters’ transformations resemble those of the wartime journalism, when experience replaced youth: “Kovalev had already ceased to resemble that mop-headed, bright-eyed boy who two days prior has been re-reading poems jotted down in his notebook, and the captions of photos. His own mother would not see her little boy, her son, in this hoarse man with bloodshot eyes and grey hair plastered to his forehead.”¹² At the front, Tolya Shaposhnikov struggles to imagine his former life, but his “spiritual world was not destroyed, it did not collapse, but continued to exist, it held out.”¹³

Grossman elaborated on the task he had set himself, stating that “made-up” books cause readers to believe that “this is all unique, complicated, difficult and incomprehensible. [...] Flimsy art inserts itself between man and the world [...] like a jagged iron railing.” “But,” he continues, “there are books that people read and say to themselves: ‘I thought that, I felt and feel that, since I lived through it. This art does not separate man from the world, this art connects him with life, with the world, with people.’”¹⁴ Grossman’s intent was to reconnect the late Stalinist reader with Stalingrad’s *kairos* by revisiting and recreating the textual world of 1942 alongside the contemporary, Stalinist story.

In *For a Just Cause*, Grossman attempted to write the individual as an active presence in history back into the Stalingrad narrative as a means to allow readers to recognize their own subjectivity in relation to the myth. Characters are biographical individuals, rather than empty vessels for Stalin’s will, who understand their lives through their relation to patriotic history—and above all, of course, to Stalingrad itself. The reader, in turn, could read the novel, including its Stalinist elements, within the context of wartime unity and spontaneous patriotism. The Soviet author Valentin Kataev, commenting on an early manuscript, described *For a Just Cause* as the best work about Stalingrad yet written, arguing that it captured “the spirit of the [wartime] epoch.”¹⁵ The best and most effective Stalingrad writing, even in the Stalinist era, could summon

¹¹ Ibid., Issue 8, 205.

¹² Ibid., Issue 10, 174.

¹³ Ibid., Issue 8, 178.

¹⁴ Ibid., Issue 8, 130.

¹⁵ “Stenogramma redkollegii,” 21.

the spirit of 1942 for the reader, thus providing a link to *kairos* and creating the opportunity of rewriting the *chronos* present.

Unlike the narrators of the late 1940s works I examined in the last chapter, who simply reiterated Stalinist tropes, Grossman's narrator possesses the power to gather and shape disparate source materials. From an epic distance, the narrator is able to draw on Russian, Soviet and Stalinist motifs to frame characters' experiences. Key events are reexamined from different perspectives, each of which provides evidence of Stalingrad's *kairotic* nature. What at first glance appears to be an abundance of polyphonic voicing actually monologically reiterates the same point time and again, coaxing the reader to align their own viewpoint with the idea of Stalingrad as *kairos*. That *kairos*, catalyzed by Vavilov's Christlike sacrifice, calms the tension of the multiplicity of voices and promises a stable, peaceful future. The open-endedness of Stalingrad's present—and the tedium of Stalinist repetitiveness that threatened to completely suppress the battle's significance for the individual—thus coalesces in a textual and historical harmony. In principle, Stalinists and Russian patriots alike could find a path to Stalingrad's resurrection in *For a Just Cause*. Grossman thus used the textual heritage of the Stalingrad canon to draw a new epic circle around Stalingrad while simultaneously accommodating every type of reader. The result is a textual space in which individual and historical memory could be crystallized.

Grossman seems to have been utterly determined to achieve this result. He pursued the publication of *For a Just Cause* so tenaciously that at times, as his acquaintance Boris Iampol'skii explained, he “acted suicidally. He wrote what and how he wanted, and had no desire to delve into the feculent [*mutnyi*] or common way of doing things.”¹⁶ Even though his personal life was in turmoil in the wake of his mother's death in the Holocaust,¹⁷ and he found writing difficult after the traumas of Stalingrad,¹⁸ the exhausted author used every moment of spare time from mid-1943 on to see the novel published.¹⁹ Grossman was gripped by anxiety

¹⁶ B. Iampol'skii, “Posledniaia vstrecha s Vasiliem Grossmanom,” *Kontinent*, no. 8 (1976), 147.

¹⁷ V.S. Grossman, “Letter to Semen Osipovich,” 1944, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection.

¹⁸ V.S. Grossman, “Letter to Semen Osipovich,” April 4, 1943, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection.

¹⁹ V.S. Grossman, “Letter to Semen Osipovich,” 1945/6, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection; V.S. Grossman, “Letter to Semen Osipovich,” 1947, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection.

about the novel's future: "It's clear I haven't coped well with the ever-growing, torturous pressure of two years of waiting."²⁰ Grossman was so desperate to see *For a Just Cause* in print that he even wrote to Stalin to beg for his intercession in the drawn-out publication process: "*Stalingrad*," as the novel was then called, "is the most important work of my life."²¹ Grossman's desire to have the novel published eventually led him to agree to numerous changes in the manuscript that saw Stalin's role inflated—changes which contextualized the novel more deeply within the Stalinist story of Stalingrad than, perhaps, Grossman had initially intended.²²

Grossman's earnest belief in the centrality of Stalingrad to Soviet identity is striking. He really did seem to believe that connecting the reader to Stalingrad was vital. He did not want to totally reinvent the battle's meaning: "I was not aiming at the temple of glory, but wanted (and will always want) to serve the Soviet people with this unpublished book."²³ The intention was not to question Stalingrad's *kairotic* connotations (as he would in *Life and Fate*, the subject of the next chapter in this study), but to reaffirm and make them accessible to a wide range of the population. Indeed, while writing *For a Just Cause*, Grossman had suggested that "the ruins of Stalingrad, torn apart by the terrible force of the German artillery," were emblematic of the "ruins and ashes" of the many other destroyed cities he had visited.²⁴ Later, he would defend the novel by drawing attention to the prominence of Stalingrad as turning point within the text: "The Stalingrad theme for me is the focal point at which many roads and many paths of our Soviet people and society intersected."²⁵ Grossman set about reaffirming Stalingrad's importance by reinvigorating the reader's connection to and participation in the myth, not questioning its value.

²⁰ "Ia ne metil v khram slavy. O nelegkoi sud'be romana 'Stalingrad' ('Za pravoe delo') rasskazyvaiut dokumenty i pis'ma," *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, no. 262 (November 13, 1988). See also Grossman's letters to his father, July to August 1950 (Garrard Collection, Box 2, Folder 33); and V.S. Grossman, "Letter to Stalin," December 1950, Box 2, Folder 37, Garrard Collection.

²¹ See Grossman, "Letter to Stalin," And M. Gol'denberg, "Biografiia romana 'Stalingrad' ('Za pravoe delo') v pis'makh," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, January 27, 1990, 4.

²² Bocharov, *Grossman: Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*, 164.

²³ "Ia ne metil v khram slavy."

²⁴ V.S. Grossman, "Pamiati pavshikh," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, June 1946, 3.

²⁵ "Stenogramma redkollegii," 34.

Stalingrad and Unity

In *For a Just Cause*, Grossman invoked and recalibrated existing motifs and tropes of the Stalingrad story. However, this meant replacing a monotonous emphasis on Stalin with a focus on the people's role at Stalingrad. As he had in the war, Grossman imagined a Stalingrad in which people and leadership worked in unison to achieve victory—just as in the texts produced in the aftermath of the battle. Indeed, a list of contributors to victory notably lacks Stalin himself: “The Party, its Central Committee, the divisional and unit commissars, the company and platoon political educators, rank and file communists organized the fighting and moral strength of the Red Army.”²⁶ Grossman produced a work that would “relate to human fates and experiences,”²⁷ supporting the claim that “people [*liudi*] decided the fate of Stalingrad.”²⁸ Thus we find that the narrator's gaze most frequently falls on the experience of ordinary people.

In *For a Just Cause*, characters experience Stalingrad in every part of their life. The battle's effects seep out from the geographical location of Stalingrad into every element of the characters' experience, recalling the sense of nationwide, vicarious participation in the battle that had characterized Grossman's and Simonov's wartime journalism. One character finds that she cannot escape the conflict even in a bathhouse: “Varvara Alexandra thought she might forget—even if just for half an hour—the imminent evacuation and her sadness in the bathhouse. But in the bath everything reminded her of the war and her worry did not recede even for a minute.”²⁹ The phrase “red glow,” symbolic of the fires on the Volga and now indelibly associated with Stalingrad works, is ever present. Krymov sees the eyes of a young widow “illuminated by a distant glow.”³⁰ Behind the lines, “the sky shone with a glow.”³¹ Later, traveling to Stalingrad, a soldier is greeted with the “mute glow of a fire.”³² Stalingrad is thus worked into every aspect of

²⁶ Ibid., Issue 7, 76.

²⁷ As quoted in “Ia ne metil v khram slavy.”

²⁸ V.S. Grossman, “Budushchie knigi,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, February 3, 1945.

²⁹ Grossman, “Za pravoe delo,” Issue 8, 145. In a similar incident, the accoutrements of daily life in the home are replaced with symbols of the war: “On the office's walls, where tables and diagrams of tractor and steel output usually hung, there was now a big map of the war.” (Ibid., Issue 8, 152).

³⁰ Grossman, “Za pravoe delo,” Issue 8, 118.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., Issue 8, 121.

life—the experience of 1942 is, in retrospect, flooded with the idea of the battle. The memory of the battle contained in the text imitates the reader’s experience of reading the newspapers in 1942. Grossman makes it *seem* like Stalingrad had been experienced by every Soviet citizen, reiterating Stalingrad’s centrality in the popular consciousness. Stalingrad, Grossman’s text asserts, was a universal experience that healed traumas opened up by the war. By implication, the rifts between the different versions of the Stalingrad story that existed, and any sense of disappointment around the direction of the Stalinist present, might too be made positive.

Everyday life seems to be fracturing at the start of *For a Just Cause*. Introducing the Shaposhnikovs, the narrator stresses the imminent possibility of death affecting the family: “The relatives and friends understood that this, perhaps, was the last family gathering. Who knew if they would get to meet again someday?”³³ The possibility of this fracturing is echoed as the Shaposhnikovs have a heated argument about whether the Germans will reach the Don. The first “battle” of the novel occurs in the family home, into which has crept “the tension of war.”³⁴ Family life is breaking apart under the pressure of the war. That fact is further reflected in the many moments of personal conflict throughout the book: Krymov and Zhenya Shaposhnikova divorce; Krymov is dressed down by his superior; Spiridonov has a bitter disagreement with a colleague; Maria and Zhenya Shaposhnikova constantly argue; the Shaposhnikovs’ house manager criticizes them and their speculator neighbour Meshcheriakov; fights break out on the Volga crossing as citizens try to escape German bombing.³⁵ Grossman, then, challenges the tensionless narrative of works like *The Storm*. Ordinary life—the individual’s experience of the present—is riven with the consequences of the war.

Stalingrad, rather than simply providing evidence of Stalin’s inspired plan for victory, is the turning point that heals these fractures, reiterating in 1952 the significance of the battle’s *kairotic* nature. Strategic tensions and individuals’ disputes alike are resolved at Stalingrad thanks to the Russians’ unity, which only emerges during the battle—not at Stalin’s behest from

³³ Ibid., Issue 7, 9.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., Issue 8, 209-11, 226-7. Note that Grossman was forced to remove some elements of conflict from the book, for example a disagreement between Vavilov and the *kolkhoz* manager, which is re-inserted into the 1956 edited book version (see K.S. Simonov, “Stenogramma zamechanii po rukopisi V. Grossmana ‘Stalingrad,’” September 22, 1948, Box 3, Folder 48, Garrard Collection.)

an office in the Kremlin: “Suddenly a miraculous strength of spirit awoke in the silent, the quiet, the unnoticed: those who were sometimes considered second-rate workers or of little use.”³⁶ Spiridonov and his erstwhile opponent Priakhin now greet each other warmly: “Today we’re all Stalingraders.”³⁷ Krymov explains to his troops that, “we are stronger together: the Germans’ main goal is to separate us.”³⁸ Maria Shaposhnikova believes that together, “No, we cannot be beaten; we are such a selfless, such a work-loving people.”³⁹

The reader is shown at first hand the power of the united nation during the bombing raid of August 23. When Stalingrad appears to be in the most perilous danger, soldiers, firefighters, police, mariners and civilians tenaciously do their duty, perishing together at the “moment of catastrophe and the greatest test of moral strength.” Ordinary people “spontaneously” build city defences. Their heroic essence is portrayed, as it had been in Grossman’s wartime sketches, to stem from within a Russian literary tradition: “And while the old man talked, the girls clung onto his jacket and looked at him as if he were a *bogatyr*’.”⁴⁰ Even the most isolated of figures—those considered “of little use,” as Grossman put it—could contribute to victory. The narrator concludes that, “the measure of man was ascertained on the streets of the smouldering Stalingrad.”⁴¹ The passive human characters of *The Storm* and *Mamaev kurgan* are replaced by heroic humans who work together. *For a Just Cause* thus harks back to the wartime stories of Soviet man’s heroic essence and to the post-war myth of the *narod*’s sacrifice in order to rewrite individuals and the Russian nation into the Stalingrad story. The suggestion that this collective effort emerged as a response to Stalingrad suggests to the reader that the invocation of *kairos* might create similar unities at any point in the present.

The unity of the people is reflected in *For a Just Cause*’s narrative and structural features. Grossman juxtaposed dozens of voices and historical modes in *For a Just Cause*, allowing the reader to see ordinary people, and experiences of the present, alongside material from official

³⁶ Grossman, “Za pravoe delo,” Issue 7, 57.

³⁷ Ibid., Issue 8, 151.

³⁸ Ibid., Issue 7, 120.

³⁹ Ibid., Issue 7, 42.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Issue 8, 210.

⁴¹ Ibid., Issue 10, 164.

histories and Stalin's speeches. Unlike in *The Storm* or *Mamaev kurgan*, where the narrative was epic in tone and viewed only from Stalin's deified perspective, all manner of voices spring forth from *For a Just Cause*.

Grossman spent years gathering material from witnesses and official sources, which gave him the means to draw heterogeneous experiences into the new epic.⁴² Semen Lipkin aptly summarizes the swift exposition of perspectives: "Grossman organized *For a Just Cause* the same way that a commander organizes his forces. We see rapid renditions of the heroes, lightning-quick concentrations of separate *fabulas*, manoeuvres and breakthroughs on the flanks; the speed of motorized weaponry is in the phrases and pictures."⁴³ As Grossman himself explained, "The selection of materials must be of two types: a) documents which recreate the course of wartime events b) documents that are the personal memories of the participants, the simple, human and sincere recording of their feelings, thoughts and experiences."⁴⁴ Grossman's emphasis in compiling material aimed to synthesize the individual's "personal memories" and officialdom's representation of wartime events, creating a memory of Stalingrad that could eliminate the divisiveness of late Stalinist literary culture.

Grossman's approach, which may seem to contradict the uber-Stalinist narrative of Ehrenburg and his peers, actually reflected the canonical Soviet method of making the present epic. Maxim Gorky in 1932 had encouraged the novice Grossman to "show more pictures" in his prose, since an individual impression is only a "moment in time" and therefore only "true" for an instant.⁴⁵ Gorky was prompting Grossman to produce a montage of multiple impressions of the same phenomenon. Together they show it in a more positive light. Grossman in *For a Just Cause* was attempting to convey, through layering heterogeneous war experiences, the harmonizing quality of the Stalingrad *kairos*. However, by now, the Stalinist consensus would have every picture in Grossman's mosaic bathed in the light of the leader. While Grossman's approach was

⁴² Grossman deliberately emulated Tolstoy in this approach to gathering material for his war epic (Semen Lipkin, *Stalingrad Vasiliia Grossmana* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986), 25).

⁴³ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁴ "Ja ne metil v khram slavy."

⁴⁵ M. Gorky, "Letter to V.S. Grossman," 1932, Box 2, Folder 32, Garrard Collection.

anathema to those who conducted the critical campaign against the novel in 1953, Soviet critics subsequently praised the approach.⁴⁶

Grossman gave voice to ordinary people by describing a range of political and private lives, and writing his own life onto the Stalingrad story. *For a Just Cause*'s characters come from every walk of life: Bolshevik believers, incompetent officers, brilliant generals, callous Germans, sensitive youths, brave workers, and peasants at war populate the work's pages. The wide range of backgrounds reflects Grossman's desire to appeal to many different kinds of reader. The intense focus on everyday lives at war is also reflected in the amount of material from Grossman's own biography: like Grossman, Krymov visits Yasnaya Polyana on the way to Stalingrad; like Grossman, Alexandra Shaposhnikova is a trained chemist.⁴⁷ Indeed, the author sought to portray a triumph achieved by real people and not, as Zhenya Shaposhnikova calls the characters of certain newspaper stories, the offspring "of a newspaper editor, not of a real mother."⁴⁸ Grossman, then, recalled the vitality of the documentary method used in the best newspaper sketches from the wartime, presumably viewing it as effective in bringing the distant *kairos* close to the individual reader.

For a Just Cause is just as diffuse in its use of textual modes, exploiting the novel medium to recall the juxtaposed poems, stories, news articles and editorials of the newspapers of 1942-3. Grossman combined material from the wartime sketches and his notebooks, from Soviet history books, from Stalin's publications and others' fiction. He borrowed and adapted passages from sketches published before, during and after Stalingrad.⁴⁹ The key locations of Stalingrad in *For a Just Cause* would have been familiar to the reader of 1942 and 1952 alike: StalGRES, the Mamaev kurgan, the house defence, and the commander's bunker were all places Grossman and

⁴⁶ For example, writing in 1958, V. Pertsov praised Grossman's depiction of a "war of characters" (Pertsov, *Pisatel' i novaia deiatel'nost'*, 207). The same year, I. Vishnevskii lauded Grossman's "epic canvas," which showed the "typical characteristics of Soviet man in the defence of his Motherland" (Vishnevskii, *Etikh let ne smolknet slava*, 46). Praise disappeared from public view—along with *For a Just Cause* itself—after Grossman became *personan non grata* in the wake of his failure to publish *Life and Fate*.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Issue 7, 126, 14.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Issue 7, 14.

⁴⁹ The opening of *For a Just Cause*, for example, bears a striking resemblance to the opening of the 1942 sketch *The Worldly-Wise Warrior* (*Byvalyi boets*, [*Krasnaia zvezda*, March 7 1942]) (Bocharov, *Grossman: Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*, 266).

his peers had previously written about.⁵⁰ The use of light as a signifier of military success closely resembles the theme in the wartime sketch *A New Day* (*Novyi den*): “That’s our Stepan Fedorovich, mama, I’m sure it’s him giving us light from StalGRES...how I wish that Marusia and Vera [Shaposhnikova] could know that he gave us light at the most terrible of moments! They shan’t break us, mama, our people cannot be broken!”⁵¹ Grossman even uses his own term “dominating height” to describe the Mamaev Kurgan, as he had done ten years previously.⁵² To this Grossman added material from his wartime notebooks.⁵³ In this sense, Grossman revisited the pre-1946 interest in mediating Stalingrad through familiar material. He drew together disparate sources, spanning the wartime journalism, the post-battle era and the Stalinist Stalingrad novel, into a cohesive textual space, providing a means to enclose and convey equally disparate opinions and memories—but with neither the transience of the multigeneric newspaper form nor the relentless focus on Stalin of works like *The Storm* and *Mamaev kurgan*.

Grossman did not, however, simply splice earlier material together at random. Elements that emphasize the people’s sacrifice are greatly inflated in importance and couched in historicism, thus diminishing Stalin’s centrality to the story. The German bombing raid on Stalingrad on August 23—absent from the newspaper sketches but written into his 1943 sketch anthologies—that leaves Maria Shaposhnikova dead is described at length over several chapters.⁵⁴ The conflation of the bombing raid with material from the pre-Stalingrad tale *The People Immortal* (*Narod bessmertn*, 1942), in which there is another substantial description of a bombing raid, is indicative of how Grossman reordered events in order to give prominence to Stalingrad as the most significant event of the war.

The textual world of the war era is reformed, assuring the reader that the characters’ lives and the epic national past are inextricably linked. For example, consider the following passage

⁵⁰ While writing *For a Just Cause*, Grossman even stated outright that these were the most important locations of the battle (“Ia ne metil v khram slavy”).

⁵¹ Grossman, “Za pravoe delo,” Issue 8, 221.

⁵² Ibid., Issue 9, 120.

⁵³ The line “My sons! I am already in the afterlife!” and a military report from a Lieutenant Fedoseev are both in Grossman’s wartime notebooks, but not in any of the sketches. Grossman describes the coverage of Stalingrad by the New York Times, as the Soviet press had done during the battle (Ibid., Issue 8, 78).

⁵⁴ Ibid., Part 2, Chapters 34-39.

describing Maria Shaposhnikova's death on the Volga crossing: "The bombing caught up with Maria Nikolaevna on the embankment. As bombs struck the ground, it seemed to her that Khol'zunov, his bronze eyes gazing into the sky, shook, and stepped off his granite pedestal." The allusion to Pushkin's *Bronze Horseman*, transposed onto the statue of Soviet Civil War hero Khol'zunov that was located on the Volga's bank, conjoins the Stalingrad story, Soviet folklore and the Russian literary past. Maria dies at a moment in which all of history seems to be drawn into a single point. Her death is not simply lost in the grand sweep of the war as a whole. For Grossman, Stalingrad remained the site where memory of the entire war, and of Russian history, could be deposited and ordered.

Grossman, indeed, did not leave the official canon behind completely, but attempted instead to draw it into that more representative textual space. Official history was thus integrated into a more comprehensible, human story. *For a Just Cause* includes a large amount of historical research based on Soviet history books. Descriptions of events such as the August Bombing Raid borrow heavily from Soviet sources.⁵⁵ The novel's characters read the wartime communiqués for their information on the war: "A man's voice asked, "Have you read the communiqué? The Germans are getting close to Stalingrad"."⁵⁶ The characters absorb and reiterate the government's language. Mostovskoi's wife, for example, tells him that: "It's a good communiqué...82 tanks destroyed, two infantry battalions, seven oil tanks burned."⁵⁷ Paragraphs later, Mostovskoi reiterates the same words in conversation with Gagarov to argue that the war is going according to the government's plan. Krymov does the same, reading Order No.227 in Part 1 and recalling it later in battle to inspire the troops.⁵⁸ However, unlike in Ehrenburg and Shebunin's works, official material complements, rather than creates, ordinary people's experiences of the war and pre-war pasts.

⁵⁵ For example, see I.V. Anisimov and G.V. Kuz'min, *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina Sovetskogo Soiuz, 1941-1945 gg.: kratkii istoricheskii ocherk* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1947) or A. Chuianov, *Stalingrad vozrozhdaetsia* (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1944). Solzhenitsyn notes the preponderance of verbatim quotes from Soviet history books, especially Stalin's speeches (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Dilogiia Vasiliiia Grossmana," *Novyi Mir*, no. 8 [2003], http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/2003/8/solzkh.html).

⁵⁶ Grossman, "Za pravoe delo," Issue 7, 85.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Issue 8, 90.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Issue 8, 121.

Where one might expect the presence of multiple voices to create a polyphonic present, each voice is in fact carefully oriented to Stalingrad's *kairos*. Grossman achieved this by monologically reiterating the same point about the battle's significance for ordinary lives and the nation alike. The impersonal, third person narrator stands above the fray, traversing history and literature to gather up the threads of Grossman's extensive research. By pulling those threads together, the narrator guides the reader through historical and personal rupture, towards Stalingrad's turning point, and on to a harmonious conclusion. *For a Just Cause* is an epic—but an epic that, if we see it in the sense of the Stalingrad *lieu de mémoire*, could draw the reader into an experience of the recent past, opening up a space for lived experience and for the present to interact with a distant epic temporality.

The portrayal of single events from several perspectives demonstrates this effect. The narrator typically first draws on official histories, then shows us how ordinary people experienced the event. For example, the start of the war is depicted in a passage that borrows from Molotov's radio speech of June 22 1941, then through the eyes of Zhenya Shaposhnikova's lover Novikov, and finally again through Shtrum's experience. Each passage points out the same qualities and experiences. Molotov explains that victory is certain: "Our cause is just, victory will be ours!" Novikov senses a turning point in his personal life: "a great change, a new life and a new time." Shtrum leaves the claustrophobic Moscow for the freedom of his *dacha*.⁵⁹ The result is not a conflicting series of different interpretations, but a layering of voices that will ultimately repeat the idea that Stalingrad was the turning point in the war and, therefore, both in individual lives and world history. The reader is asked to recognize elements from the texts of the previous decade, which helps locate them within a space that incorporates the lives of individuals and the nation, and diverse textual sources and perspectives. In this way, individual memory was reinscribed into the memory of Stalingrad alongside the Stalinist story of the post-war years. Even at the height of the Stalinist personality cult, when the story was being rewritten by the regime, ordinary writers such as Grossman were interested in reusing and recycling memories of Stalingrad in order to continually make sense of a post-war present that did not live up to the promise of the years that immediately followed the battle.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Issue 7, 51-65, 87.

Stalin and History

How, though, did Grossman manage to publish this anthropocentric reading of Stalingrad in a period when authors seemed obliged to laud Stalin's role at the battle? Those who commented on the early manuscripts recommended foregrounding Stalin's presence. At the *Novyi mir* editorial meeting to discuss the *For a Just Cause* manuscript in 1950, Valentin Kataev, for example, explained that only after including more material on Stalin "can the novel be called *Stalingrad*. If this is Stalingrad, then without question we have to show all of Iosif Vissarionovich's actions in taking the weight of responsibility on his shoulders."⁶⁰ Grossman acquiesced to these demands by introducing a Stalin figure straight from the pages of canonized texts.

For a Just Cause's Stalin gives speeches—by now well known to the reader from collected volumes of his wartime pronouncements—before receding into the background of the text. Stalin appears, then, as just one mode of textuality amongst many others. The real man and the godlike Stalin of contemporary fiction are replaced by a figure that speaks in familiar historical texts—Stalin remains a historical image removed from ordinary life, but he possesses no omnipotent characteristics. This reconfiguration of Stalin's character suggests that the leader's role was just one of many official sources that orient the individual. Grossman's characters use Stalin's speeches as a means to make sense of their environment and place within history, but there is no indication that Stalin is a godlike figure who creates history in his own right. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn explains, Grossman took on the task of fortifying the "weak spine" of Stalin's speeches.⁶¹ Grossman in response to Valentin Kataev explained his intention to show "how Stalin penetrated events in life and the war. That's to say that just when the question about the fate of the war arises, people would talk about Stalin, and in their recollections of the first period of the war, about Comrade Stalin's speeches and orders."⁶² In this sense, Grossman returns to his

⁶⁰ "Stenogramma redkollegii," 20. Sergei Smirnov, himself the author of a book of Stalingrad sketches ("Stalingrad na Dnepre," *Novyi mir*, no. 2–3 [1954]), suggested increasing the prominence of brief excerpts from Stalin's speeches to achieve this ("Stenogramma redkollegii," 25).

⁶¹ Solzhenitsyn, "Dilogiia Vasiliia Grossmana."

⁶² "Stenogramma redkollegii," 36.

wartime method: official sources are merely a springboard for the exploration of the individual in war and therefore a pivot between the epic and the present. The author's measured approach could not have been more different to the slavish acquiescence of the works discussed in the preceding chapter.⁶³

Fundamentally, Stalin's words have a structural function in the narrative. They retroactively create links between individuals' experiences at and around Stalingrad by revisiting information not accessible or proscribed in 1942-3. For example, Part 2 begins with Stalin's words: "On August 9, Stalin gave an order to the commanders of the fronts: 'The defence of Stalingrad and defeat of the enemy, advancing Stalingrad from the West and the South, is of decisive meaning for the entire Soviet front. The High Commander calls on you not to show any mercy and not to spare any sacrifice to defend Stalingrad and defeat the enemy.'"⁶⁴ Having prefaced the text with this command, Grossman's narrator shows the experiences of the characters—their defence of Stalingrad, their sacrifices—as the German advance on Stalingrad culminates in the August 23 bombing raid. The quote from Stalin's order would not have been available in 1942, since Stalingrad did not appear in the newspapers until late August.⁶⁵ Grossman looked to Stalin as the explainer and even the predictor—but never the creator—of history.

As the action at Stalingrad intensifies, the narrator alludes to Stalin's ability to foretell the future: "The hour of Stalingrad was the hour of a great celebratory victory, foretold by Stalin to the people and army."⁶⁶ Stalin also "foretells the death of the Hitlerite state."⁶⁷ But his words do not literally define history; they are simply an inspiration for Soviet listeners and readers:

⁶³ Tvardovsky at the *Novyi mir* editorial meeting actually praised Grossman's portrayal of the speeches ("Stenogramma redkollegii," 29).

⁶⁴ Grossman, "Za pravoe delo." The text of Stalin's order can be found in I.V. Stalin, *O Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine Sovetskogo Soiuza* (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1944), 45-6.

⁶⁵ See also Part 1, Chapter 48 (Issue 7, 75-78), which explains the reasons for retreat in 1941-2, indulging in didactic post factum explanation: the German army was fully mobilized at the start of the war, while the peace-loving Soviets were under-equipped with planes and tanks; the Germans broke the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact; the Allies refused to open a second front. For a history from the period that relates these explanations, see S.Z. Golikov, *Vydaiushchiesia pobedy sovetskoi armii v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1952), 43.

⁶⁶ Grossman, "Za pravoe delo," Issue 8, 129.

⁶⁷ By contrast, the reader knows that Hitler's orders will not be fulfilled, even though the claim that "Führer hat gesagt: Stalingrad muss fallen!" is repeated twice. (Ibid., Issue 7, 187; Issue 10, 145).

These simply intoned words helped to see into the future through the thick dust raised by millions of fascist soldiers' boots that had encroached on the Soviet Union. And in their conviction there was not just an understanding of military science, not just disdain for the callous man who had thought fit to block the path of human history—in their conviction was a faith in the strength of the people's desire for freedom, and in the military and industrial strength which would define the future of the world.⁶⁸

Highlighting Stalin's foresight draws attention to his ability to guide and lead the nation: "The High Commander knew about these changes, knew about the superiority of Soviet forces [...] which was not yet known to the people." Stalingrad's sacrifices appear to be a necessary step toward fulfilling Stalin's master plan. All tension is removed from the world-historical plane of the story; the interest for the reader persists in experiencing the tensions, traumas and struggles of the many characters revealed by the novel's heteroglossia.⁶⁹ By reading about those personal difficulties, the reader was invited to feel certain that the imperfect present of 1952 must still have been governed by the same sense of certainty thanks to Stalin's continued rule. As a result of the invocation and combination of Stalingrad motifs, the reader's present is acknowledged as full of imperfection, but rendered tensionless, just like the epic temporality of the myth.

Two key events demonstrate this calming effect. Shtrum and Krymov each hear a wartime speech made by Stalin, a speech now canonized in official publications. Through the characters' reactions, the reader is able to observe the effect of Stalin's words on the individual's internal world—and thus of the meeting between epic and present temporalities. Both Krymov and Shtrum are experiencing personal turmoil—reflective of the polyphonic chaos of the wartime present—which is replaced by calm certainty through contact with Stalin's speech. Both men experience a personal turning point that imitates the historical turning point at Stalingrad,

⁶⁸ Ibid., Issue 7, 91.

⁶⁹ The frequent chapters that consist almost entirely of Sovinformbiuro material also demonstrate this effect. For example Part 2, Chapter 19 begins with "strategic" updates about Stalingrad in August. The narrative explains how trenches were built and the Germans moved towards them. Then the narrator introduces us to the personal view of Tolya Shaposhnikov, who clambers through muddy trenches and foxholes at the front (Grossman, "Za pravoe delo," Issue 8, 174-5).

providing the reader with a model to resolve their own internal concerns and tensions through accessing official texts.

Before he hears Stalin's speech in July 1941, Shtrum is anxious for his mother in Ukraine, confused by the communiqués in the newspapers, and terrified about his own fate. Stalin seems to belong to the world of the distant epic: he speaks "slowly", "quietly" and "clearly;" his voice emanates from the radio, entering the character's present without the speaker's physical presence. As in *The Storm*, Stalin's radio speech is carried through the radio to inspire the protagonist (recall the experience of Lukutin, the soldier who hears Stalin speak and is inspired to great bravery). The effect on Shtrum is enormous: hearing Stalin's voice is an "extraordinary" event that focuses and directs the individual's attention. Indeed, Stalin appears to speak directly to Shtrum (as he did to Saburov in *Days and Nights* and to Lukutin in *The Storm*), since he anticipates a question that Shtrum has posed to himself "hundreds of times." Shtrum, in turn, instantly recognizes Stalin's voice, as if he were an acquaintance. By punctuating familiar quotes from Stalin's speech with Shtrum's human reactions, Grossman replaces the distant formulaicism of the late Stalinist text with a direct address to the individual reader:

He entered the room and immediately heard a slow voice. From the first word he knew it was Stalin speaking.

"Comrades! Citizens! Brothers and sisters! Fighters of our army and navy!"

The voice was even, quiet, but hardly placid. In its quiet, even and restrained unhurriedness, one could hear the higher concern of a brave and strong man.

"I turn to you, my friends!" said Stalin. It suddenly became quiet. There was a tension in this silence the likes of which Russia had never known in its entire history. One could clearly hear how Stalin poured water into a glass.

Stalin began to speak.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Ibid., Issue 7, 87.

Shtrum now reflects on his doubts about the war's progress: "He had never believed in the power of fascism. But these ten awful days, those columns of men and artillery advancing ever westward, the enormous forces thrown at the enemy, and still, the loss of Lithuania, of whole provinces, districts, of hundreds of towns and villages...surely the Germans are stronger, surely they're invincible?" Stalin answers: "Of course not!" Stalin is able to "draw together" ten days of wartime chaos. Shtrum's doubts and inability to understand the war are replaced by certainty. As a result, Shtrum "drew closer to the speaker." Stalin's impersonal speech is drawn into the world of the individual. Shtrum and Stalin are enmeshed in symbolic unity, a process mediated by the radio broadcast. Shtrum accordingly realizes he is not alone. He observes that people on the street share the feeling that Stalin's words were "absolutely essential" for them.⁷¹ Thanks not so much to the content of Stalin's words as the certainty of their epic timbre, Shtrum gains faith in the certainty of a coming turning point in the war.

The result of Grossman's textual and social unity inspires Shtrum as Stalingrad looms: "Now, a year later, Shtrum sat at the window of the express train and remembered that morning. Over the year he had endured much—depression, anxiety, mental anguish. But after Stalin's speech he had not once experienced the spiritual turmoil of the first ten days of the war."⁷² Later, Shtrum experiences the effect yet again. A colleague prompts him to "remember what Stalin said in November last year: modern war is a war of motors." Shtrum is inspired to enact a sacrifice of sorts: "I feel like I would give everything to work where the workers are producing steel for tanks and building motors."⁷³ Stalin's speeches are invoked for their epic modality, rather than for their content. The leader still appears to play a significant role in victory at Stalingrad, but one that is centred on inspiration produced by his speeches' historical modality, rather than deific creation.

Krymov witnesses Stalin speak on the anniversary of the Revolution in 1941. The speech was heavily referenced in late Stalinist culture to convey Soviet steadfastness in a period of

⁷¹ Ibid., Issue 7, 88.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., Issue 7, 99.

military losses.⁷⁴ Indeed, in this scene, Grossman seems to directly rewrite Sergei Vlahov's encounter with Stalin in *The Storm*. Shtrum was crippled by anxiety before hearing Stalin; Krymov wanders Moscow in a daze. The "foggy, hazy" morning reflects the lack of clarity in his personal life.⁷⁵ As he sees Stalin rise to the podium on Red Square, Krymov is struck by light, connoting the beginning of a quasi-religious vision. Krymov can barely make out the leader's face, highlighting Stalin's epic status: "From afar Krymov could just about see his face, but the fog and morning darkness hindered his vision."⁷⁶ Stalin appears on high, accompanied by dazzling light, and yet remains obscured. Indeed, Krymov cannot quite make out Stalin's face, as if the leader exists in an epic time-space that only fleetingly comes into contact with the ordinary individual's experience of time. Stalin's entrance concentrates attention on this "single point," drawing together the "hubbub" of voices—and Krymov's internal turmoil—and seeming to pause time. The reader, like Krymov, is able to comprehend the touching point between present and epic temporalities:

A hubbub of voices spread through the stands. Every head turned. All eyes looked at a single point. Stalin was slowly ascending the steps of the Mausoleum. He walked along the Mausoleum's platform and, leaning forward a little, stopped. A long military command rang out over the square. Budennyi, who had overseen the parade, started to circle and greet the troops. Having finished the inspection, Budennyi rapidly ascended the Mausoleum. Everything froze in silence. Stalin looked over the assembled troops, toward the Kremlin's tall towers, and into the dark sky.

Stalin approached the microphone and began to speak. From afar it was hard for Krymov to see Stalin's face. The fog and morning darkness hindered him. But Stalin's unhurried words made it to him quite plainly.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ N. Danilova, *The Politics of War Commemoration in the UK and Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 7.3.1.

⁷⁵ It also directly imitates the "gray, foggy day" of Sergei Vlahov's encounter with Stalin (Grossman, "Za pravoe delo," Issue 7, 129).

⁷⁶ Ibid., Issue 7, 130.

⁷⁷ Ibid., Issue 7, 130.

Krymov's encounter with Stalin's speech was read as one of the most important moments in *For a Just Cause*. Boris Galanov explained that the words of Stalin are "like a projector illuminating the picture of the giant battle."⁷⁸ Grossman must deliberately have been referring to Ehrenburg's *The Storm*; Sergei Vlahov in that novel had heard the same speech and undergone an almost identically worded transformation from "feverish" to calm. This passage in *For a Just Cause* thus draws together a well-known moment from Stalin's wartime work, a scene from Stalingrad fiction, and Grossman's own observations. This collation of heterogeneous materials is emblematic of Grossman's attempt to resolve the tensions between the various strands of the Stalingrad story. The effect on Krymov thus addresses not just the resolution of wartime chaos, but the harmonious coalescing of temporal contradictions stretching into the past and future.

The sight of the Kremlin and Red Square sends Krymov into an ecstatic state that breaks down the barriers between the human and his environment. The buildings are "alive," the Kremlin the "breathing chest of Russia." Krymov's gaze is launched toward the stars and the sun. In this symbolic heaven, he catches the briefest glimpse of Stalin, who descends as if to decide the fate of man. Yet even as space-time breaks apart, Krymov experiences a unity with the distant Stalin. Stalin's words "came to him clearly," as if he, like Shtrum, were being singled out. Krymov's doubts disappear: "Krymov was not hearing Stalin for the first time, but now it seemed that he especially clearly understood why Stalin spoke simply, without any rhetorical tricks." Stalin's speech and presence cause the simultaneous disintegration and reintegration of history and the individual, functioning as a turning point that resolves doubt and clarifies history. In turn, this foreshadows the turning point that occurs at Stalingrad itself. Here, we see how Grossman resolved the contradictions between the people's Stalingrad and Stalin's Stalingrad: the encounter between the individual and history occurs not through the battle alone, but through contact with Stalin's codified speeches.

By hearing Stalin's words, characters are guided and oriented by an encounter with the epic temporal plane. Grossman was able to rewrite the wartime absence of Stalin *and* the contemporary idea of the deified Stalin within the textual space of the novel. Readers were allowed to come into contact with History, with the epic. The text thus showed the readers how

⁷⁸ B. Galanov, "Epoieia narodnoi bor'by," *Molodoi kommunist*, no. 1 (1953), 121.

to order and make sense of their own, individual wartime memory within the scope of the distant Stalinist story of Stalingrad. However, Stalin's presence is restricted to events outside Stalingrad. While his speeches "illuminate" the entire novel,⁷⁹ they are absent in the most significant segment of the novel, which deals with the soldier Vavilov's death at Stalingrad. The narrator implies links between Stalin's actions and the turning point at Stalingrad, but at this crucial juncture does not make them explicit. Readers of 1952, used to being a passive observer of Stalin's miraculous deeds in texts such as *The Storm* and *Mamaev kurgan*, were asked once more to take an active role in constructing the battle's narrative.

Vavilov: The Return of the Hero

Russian national messianic and sacrificial consciousness is embodied in Vavilov's death in battle at Stalingrad's train station as *For a Just Cause*'s resurrection narrative culminates. However, literary scholars have paid little heed to the scene.⁸⁰ Although Vavilov takes up little space in the book (he is the focus of the first and last chapters of Part 1, returns briefly in Part 2 and fights his dying battle over a handful of pages in Part 3), his story is central to showing the heroic individual's role in the mythical narrative of Stalingrad. Indeed, Soviet critics agreed that Vavilov's sacrificial battle was the best part of *For a Just Cause*, since the scene transposes the ordinary soldier's experience onto the epic plane (that is, it resolved some of the contradictions between showing the present and epic inherent in Soviet literary method).⁸¹

Vavilov, an ordinary soldier, reveals his "heroic essence" in battle, sacrificing himself at Stalingrad and thus saving history. Before Vavilov's martyring, Stalingrad has once again been symbolically killed: "The enormous town was dead, destroyed."⁸² But the narrator suggests that

⁷⁹ Solzhenitsyn, "Dilogiia Vasiliia Grossmana."

⁸⁰ Where scholars have examined this scene, analysis stops at painting the scene as a battle between good and evil. See, for example, Bocharov, *Grossman: Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*, 266.

⁸¹ F. Guber, "Pamiat' i pis'ma," *Daugava* 11, no. 161 (1990).; A. Fadeev, "Nekotorye voprosy raboty Sovetskogo soiuza," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, March 28, 1953.; "Stenogramma redkollegii." 7; Bubennov, "O romane V. Grossmana 'Za pravoe delo.'"

⁸² Grossman, "Za pravoe delo," Issue 10, 142. See also the description of the Germans' bombing raid in August 1942: "The bombs reached the earth and tore into the city. People and houses alike were dying" (*Ibid.*, Issue 8, 207).

the spirit of the people is capable of overcoming this death: “There is a force which can raise great cities from the ashes.”⁸³ Through Vavilov’s human sacrifice, the city, and the nation, are resurrected. Vavilov’s death thus serves as a Christlike sacrifice in a resurrection narrative that restores harmony and unity to the world.⁸⁴ The actions of the individual in the present, not those of Stalin in the Kremlin, create the *kairotic* turning point at Stalingrad.

The extensive biographical detail about Vavilov, related in the book's opening chapter, gives the character a fleshed out sense of real existence in 1940s provincial Russia. We learn of his work on the *kolkhoz*, of his nickname “Uncle Petr,” of his “fourteen year old, simultaneously sharp and dim son Vania, whom Vavilov called “samovar,”” and of his daughter Nastya, who “was already employed on the *kolkhoz* and had saved enough of her own money to buy a dress.” The apprehension Vavilov feels when he receives his call-up—“Vavilov remembered that there were no young men left in the neighbouring house, and old men don’t get call-ups”⁸⁵—and, eventually, his sacrifice, seem familiar and close to the reader. Here is an ordinary Soviet citizen full of vitality, unlike the barely fleshed-out characters of *The Storm* or *Mamaev kurgan*. The opening of the book asks the reader to empathize not with a distant Stalin but with a seemingly real individual.

Simultaneously, Vavilov's is also a generalized experience that unites literary and historical source material. Recognizable models from existing texts are used to help orient the character—and therefore the reader—toward Stalingrad’s *kairos*. Vavilov’s literary origins are to be found in Grossman’s workmanlike wartime sketch characters Vlasov and Gromov.⁸⁶ Like them, Vavilov is a stoic and tireless worker who approaches battle as if going to work: “How much he worked here! With his fellow villagers he built a dam and a windmill, he made brick for the tool

⁸³ Grossman, “Za pravoe delo,” Issue 8, 207. Grossman does not, though, posit the possibility of a literal resurrection of the people. The sentence continues: “But there is no force in the world that can open up the delicate eyelashes of a dead child.”

⁸⁴ Grossman was likely aware of the comparison. His late novel *Everything Flows* (*Vse techet*, 1961) includes a chapter that reflects the Passion story in which Soviet “Judases” are questioned (see Ekaterina Shulga, “Memory, History, Testimony: The Representation of Trauma in Iurii Dombrovskii’s and Vasilii Grossman’s Writing” [Ph.D., University College London, 2013], 44-5).

⁸⁵ Grossman, “Za pravoe delo,” Issue 7, 8.

⁸⁶ Bocharov, *Grossman: Zhizn’, tvorchestvo, sud’ba*, 266.

shed and the cattle yard, he brought wood for a new school, he dug a foundation pit”.⁸⁷ Unprompted, Vavilov identifies himself as an “activist *kolkhoznik*”—spontaneously revealing his socialist inclinations yet refusing to answer “in the army style” by using his rank. Vavilov’s sense of subjectivity originates in his rural, Russian origins—rather than from ambition or the Kremlin.

Yet Vavilov combines this Russianness with knowledge of Soviet history. For instance, Vavilov instinctively links key events, to the amazement of his Soviet-educated comrades, with significant dates from the patriotic Russian and Soviet past: “He knew about Romania, about Hungary, when Magnitka was started, and who led the defence of Sevastopol in 1855. He told them about the war of 1812, and he surprised everyone when he corrected the accountant Zaichenkov: “Hindenburg wasn’t the war minister, he was Wilhelm’s field marshal”.⁸⁸ Vavilov’s knowledge of the past would resemble any Soviet reader’s. That reader is given a means to picture their own experiences—life on a *kolkhoz*, anxiety about a family member’s fate—in relation to Vavilov’s experience as an apparently real individual and a product of both Russian and Soviet literary-historical heritage.

The connection between the individual Vavilov and History is cemented as Vavilov is martyred. He seems destined to play out this role from the start of the novel. Receiving his call-up at the very start of the novel, he mutters the words “that’s it, that’s it” for “the domestic, family life that was ending, which had been rent asunder at that moment.”⁸⁹ Later, the narrator informs us that Vavilov’s unit is “fated to die” at Stalingrad.⁹⁰ Entering the battle at the train station, one of his comrades whispers that, “we are entering a fatal battle.”⁹¹ The reader does not doubt that Vavilov will perish, imbuing the text with a sense of sacrificial historicism and Russian messianism. But the fact that Vavilov is understood—and understands himself—as part of a lineage of Russian military victories suggests that his sacrifice is both necessary and worthy.

⁸⁷ Grossman, “Za pravoe delo,” Issue 7, 4-5. Vavilov compares army life and the battle at the train station to agricultural work (Ibid., Issue 8, 124, Issue 10, 183).

⁸⁸ Ibid., Issue 8, 124-5.

⁸⁹ Ibid., Issue 7, 3.

⁹⁰ Ibid., Issue 8, 207.

⁹¹ Ibid., Issue 9, 121.

As Vavilov enters the hell of Stalingrad, the narrator stresses the idea of the city as bounded off, epic location. This has been telegraphed from the novel's start by channelling the familiar idea of Stalingrad as hell when Vavilov leaves his kolkhoz: "But he did not look back, he did not stop. He went to meet the red dawn rising over the edge of the ploughed earth."⁹² As he crosses the Volga, Vavilov is carried beyond the present. The soldier loses his sense of time and place—his sense of presentness. Space loses its integrity as the narrator repeats the phrase "the road stretched out ever further," and Stalingrad's "blinding" light seems ever more distant. Over Vavilov's head stretches a "heavenly expanse": distance ceases to be stable. The effect intensifies as the fighting peaks. The outside world recedes and the fighters' "heads spin":⁹³ "The even line which separates the sky from the ground began to break, to lose its straightness; the ground was flooded with darkness."⁹⁴ Concurrently, time too ceases to be chronological as Vavilov is visited by memories of his family and deaths he has witnessed. Grossman reminds the reader of the significance of Stalingrad as *kairos* but, more importantly, of how (re)visiting Stalingrad allows the reader to vicariously re-experience the tensions and resolutions of the past. If the *kairotic* temporality of Stalingrad had seemed distant from the reader, and *chronos* tensionless, in *The Storm* and *Mamaev kurgan*, it does not here.

Within the hellish isolation of Stalingrad, Vavilov finds himself at the centre of historical forces—at the intersection of two roads, "like a fairy tale from one's childhood,"⁹⁵ and in a limbo between life and death that recalls the earliest Stalingrad sketches: "People who raised their heads for a second looked around and saw the static bodies of their comrade: dead or alive?"⁹⁶ Like Grossman's wartime characters Vlasov and Gromov, Vavilov is measured against the overwhelming forces of history at a turning point: Vavilov "felt that here in Stalingrad the key to his native land, to his very house, to all that was holy and dear to man, was falling into his

⁹² Ibid., Issue 7, 9.

⁹³ This recalls the line from Nekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*, providing more evidence that Grossman was using pre-existing texts as a way to orient and make sense of war's chaos.

⁹⁴ Grossman, "Za pravoe delo," Issue 10, 182.

⁹⁵ Ibid., Issue 9, 122. Grossman here references the familiar idea of a crossroads in a fairy tale. Vavilov seems to be leaving his "real" documented existence and entering a world of literary schema coalescing around Stalingrad.

⁹⁶ Ibid., Issue 10, 164.

hands.”⁹⁷ Vavilov is utterly alone,⁹⁸ “as if there was nothing in the world besides sprinting grey figures and the rasp of tanks.”⁹⁹ Even as the fight is focused on the individual, it leaves behind the present of 1942. Vavilov fights not the Germans but death itself: “Death moved forth, threatening all Soviet people, and the fighter battled it one on one.”¹⁰⁰ Pavel Shebunin’s *Mamaev kurgan* had pitted Stalin in a battle against Death. Now Vavilov fights that battle alone. Stalin is distanced as the reader actively reconstructs a memory of 1942, couched in allusions to patriotic history and the wartime journalism: passive reading of a tensionless *fait accompli* is replaced with human engagement in the epic.

The moment of Vavilov’s death reveals the individual’s heroic essence at Stalingrad: “Vavilov became someone no less mighty than the commander of an army.”¹⁰¹ The hero enacts an epic feat to resurrect the nation through his sacrifice. The battle at the train station reverberates with Judeo-Christian imagery, playing to the reader’s knowledge of Russian religious traditions. My italics highlight the return of light to a world of darkness: “Over the dark pit, an aging man with sunken cheeks covered in black bristles arose, *lit by a beam of sunlight*, raised a grenade and cast a *bright*, attentive glance backward.”¹⁰² Vavilov enacts a resurrection that draws on the Biblical Genesis’ birth of light (note how this recalls wartime sketches such as *A New Day* and the breaking dawn that ends Simonov’s *Days and Nights*): “They desperately, proudly and anxiously watched as, in the silence and darkness that filled the sky and earth, light was born.”¹⁰³ The Stalingrad victory is encapsulated in a typically Russian sacrifice and an allusion to religious imagery.

⁹⁷ Ibid., Issue 9, 122.

⁹⁸ Grossman stresses the lack of strategic control over events at the Train Station. Eremenko, leaning over his map, curses the Germans for attacking at the exact moment when he can do nothing: ““Listen up! Get me Filiashkin this instant, this instant!” The telephone operator in a quiet voice answered: “There’s no connection. It’s impossible to talk”” (Ibid., Issue 10, 161).

⁹⁹ Ibid., Issue 10, 175.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Issue 10, 167.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., Issue 10, 178.

¹⁰² Grossman, “Za pravoe delo,” Issue 10, 182.

¹⁰³ Ibid., Issue 10, 183.

Moreover, the biographical Vavilov, “thirstily” cut down by gunfire, is not simply killed. He dissolves into history: “He did not collapse into a dead, bloody pile, but dissolved in a dusty, milky yellow nebula, swirling and glowing in the sun’s morning rays.” Although his corporeal form still exists—the German troops see Vavilov’s body, crumpled and face torn, in the following chapter—Vavilov’s present is conjoined with the universal, historical significance of Stalingrad. The divide between individual subject and History is eliminated. Vavilov’s death, like the early Stalingrad stories, appeals to the religious thinking of the Hegelian mind, not to the Stalinist cult’s emphasis on the individual as a passive receptacle for the leader’s deified power.

Grossman’s novel is nonetheless not a bleak comment on the loss of hope for a better future after Stalin had seized control over the Stalingrad story. Grossman gives the reader, through the recognition of key tropes and motifs, a means to vicariously re-experience the *kairotic* moment of Stalingrad through reading *For a Just Cause*. Characters throughout the novel had struggled to imagine a warless future: as Sofia Levinton asks Mostovskoi, “You just look at these ruins. What kind of faith in the future can there be?”¹⁰⁴ However, Vavilov’s sacrifice leads to the birth of a new generation—a resurrection for ordinary people, not just for Stalinist power. Vera Shaposhnikova announces to her father that she is pregnant. Now Vera’s father commits to certain action in the coming future: “Don’t be afraid, we’ll not let the little one fall by the wayside.”¹⁰⁵ Vera’s pregnancy reasserts the integrity of the Shaposhnikov family after its argument in Part 1, after Krymov and Zhenya’s divorce, and after Tolya Shaposhnikov’s death on the outskirts of Stalingrad. It confirms that sacrifice at Stalingrad has *created* life and that all subsequent time could be written according to Stalingrad’s *kairos*. The reader’s own, *chronos* time in 1952 could thus be meaningfully oriented towards Stalingrad.

The novel’s conclusion reiterates this temporal harmony by calming the multiplicity of voices and perspectives. The rapid accumulation of perspectives in the narrative is replaced by anaphoric paragraph openings, which introduce stable rhythm to the text. Even as the strategic tension of the battle is introduced—the novel ends in October 1942, well before the following

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Issue 9, 17. For evacuees “it was hard to think of the future” (Ibid., Issue 8, 141). For the narrator, the future “was covered with a veil of frontline smoke and dust. It was drowning in the rasping and clanking of the battle on the Volga” (Ibid., Issue 9, 25).

¹⁰⁵ Grossman, “Za pravoe delo,” Issue 10, 197.

month's strategic turning point—the underlying sense is of resolution as the present action is teased out into a comparison to mythical time:

The tension of the battle was felt by turners, by fitters, by engineers in military supply factories, by railway loaders, by dispatchers, by miners, by furnace operators, and by steelmakers. [...]

The tension of the battle was felt by millions of people in Europe, China, and America. It dominated the thoughts of diplomats and politicians in Tokyo and Ankara, it dominated the secret conversations of Churchill and his advisors, it dominated the resolutions and orders, signed by Roosevelt, which came from the White House.

The tension of the battle was felt by Soviet, Polish and French partisans, POWs in terrible German camps, Jews in the Warsaw and Bialystok ghettos—the flame of Stalingrad was for millions of people akin to that of Prometheus.

Soviet workers, political figures, and a range of the oppressed are drawn into a single point in time by the idea of Stalingrad. Even as tension reigns, the battle's *kairos* resolves the polyphonic chaos of the present within the space of the novel.¹⁰⁶

Grossman emphasizes Krymov's experience to show an easing of temporal tensions in the life of the individual. As the novel ends, Krymov crosses into Stalingrad. In spite of his personal turmoil, he finds himself united with and calmed by the epic landscape he enters. The narrator recalls semantic and thematic material from the newspapers of 1942 as Krymov enters not just a physical Stalingrad but the site of textually mediated Stalingrad. His unity with the environment spreads from the motorboat he rides on into history and the starry universe beyond the Volga. As

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., Issue 10, 199. Grossman also quotes lines from the end of the *Odyssey* as his own work draws to a close: "Tell us also why you are made unhappy on hearing about the return of the Argive Danaans from Troy. The gods arranged all this, and sent them their misfortunes in order that future generations might have something to sing about" (Ibid., Issue 10, 202).

Vavilov dissolves into history, so Krymov finds his own subjectivity drawn out beyond the present¹⁰⁷:

And there was something in this striking picture that made it not only majestic and harsh, but also beautiful and touching: the fact that the nighttime battle's ragged fire and thunder could not extinguish the colours of the moonlit autumn night, could not drown out the white wheat which swayed and shimmered around the Volga, could not crush the tall sky's brooding silence and the stars' gentle, graceful sadness. [...]

Krymov remembered the girls who had danced in the glow of Stalingrad's conflagration yesterday, remembered the agitation he had felt looking at them. Yesterday's events for some reason were connected in his memory with another, distant recollection of the day when he had told Zhenya of his love and she had looked silently into his eyes for a long time...but now these thoughts no longer made him sad. [...]

But now new and strong feelings seized Krymov. He was walking on the ground of Stalingrad.¹⁰⁸

Entering Stalingrad ought to mean trepidation or fear stemming from the possibility of death. But as soon as he touches the "ground of Stalingrad," Krymov is able to align his past and present memories, his physical presence on the earth and his position in the universe, and to leave fear behind. The physical entry to Stalingrad is not the only means of accessing its *kairotic* capacity to integrate the individual subject and History. The narrator assures us that "Stalingrad has become part of the life of every person on Earth. The thought of Stalingrad was woven into the fabric of life, into everyday existence, into children's school lessons, into working families' household budgets, into the budget for potatoes and trousers, into the comprehension of today and tomorrow, into the comprehension of the future without which an intelligent man cannot live." Grossman, then, closes by recognizing Stalingrad's transformation from historical event

¹⁰⁷ This follows the ideal resolution of the Socialist Realist novel, in which man achieves "harmony" with nature and, therefore, history (Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 111). Vera Shaposhnikova too feels like she belongs to both the world "of stars" and that "of men" (Shulga, "Memory, History, Testimony").

¹⁰⁸ Grossman, "Za pravoe delo," Issue 8, 333.

into the crux by which post-war society understood and oriented itself: he recognizes the ability of the text to continuously (re)connect the individual to historical events.

Conclusion

When *For a Just Cause* was finally published in 1952, it was received warmly. Critics hailed its emphasis on familiar aspects of the Stalingrad story from the war period: its “great revolutionary ideas,” depiction of “the iron will and brave spirit of the Soviet nation.” Grossman’s use of Stalin’s speeches to catechize the meaning of a “just war of freedom” was lauded.¹⁰⁹ However, the tables were rapidly turned in February 1953. With Stalin’s approval, the critic Mikhail Bubennov published in *Pravda* an attack that kicked off a slew of frenzied criticism.¹¹⁰ Bubennov, a slavish Stalinist who relished his leading role in the antisemitic campaigns of the early 1950s, laid into the novel with vigour.¹¹¹ Bubennov attacked the work’s failure to show “the triumph of the military genius of Stalin.”¹¹² Critics rapidly echoed Bubennov’s attacks.¹¹³ Characters such as Krymov, who divorced, or Novikov, who questioned military authority, were attacked as “detached” from the war, “deprived of ideological purpose and close links with the masses.”¹¹⁴ Grossman’s narratorial digressions, meant to couch official history within accounts of individual lives, were seen as dangerously individualistic.¹¹⁵ The

¹⁰⁹ Galanov, “Epoieia narodnoi bor’by,” 117-8. In October 1952, Nekrasov wrote to Grossman that he believed the book ought to be awarded a Stalin Prize (Guber, “Pamiat’ i pis’ma”). Semen Lipkin’s acquaintances, amongst them Andrei Platonov, were delighted with the novel (Lipkin, *Stalingrad Vasiliia Grossmana*, 119). Even authors outside of Grossman’s circle were impressed: Boris Pasternak recalled enjoying it, even if he was critical of the work’s Soviet ending (Boris Pasternak, “Novootrkytye pis’ma k Ariadne Efron,” *Znamia*, no. 11 [2003], 169-70).

¹¹⁰ Bubennov, “O romane V. Grossmana ‘Za pravoe delo,’” 3-4.

¹¹¹ Bubennov had attacked the lack of Stalin’s leading presence, adding that Krymov “only knows that he’s running from the Germans. Why does he go to Moscow where he gets sick?” (“Stenogramma redkollegii,” 23.). Bubennov would later be expelled from the Party for his antisemitic views (Jamil Hasanli, *Khrushchev’s Thaw and National Identity in Soviet Azerbaijan, 1954-1959* [Lanham: Lexington, 2014], 25).

¹¹² Bubennov, “O romane V. Grossmana ‘Za pravoe delo.’”

¹¹³ For example, see the editorial “Na lozhnom puti,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, February 21, 1953, or N. Dobrotvorskii, “Eto ne geroi Stalingrada,” *Zvezda*, no. 5 (1953).

¹¹⁴ A.K. Tarasnikov had voiced this criticism at the editorial meeting in 1950, questioning Shtrum, who appears to “judge a sinful world” from the outside (“Stenogramma redkollegii,” 4). Now the judgement appeared in Iu. Morokhovskii, “Nechemu učit’sia u takikh geroev,” *Znamia*, no. 5 (1953) and “Na lozhnom puti.”

¹¹⁵ See “Na lozhnom puti” and Fadeev, “Nekotorye voprosy.”

individual's contribution, whether in battle or Christlike sacrifice, was irrelevant when Stalin alone ought to illuminate the present with the light of the sacred.

A *Novyi mir* retraction published in March accepted these criticisms, further questioning the novel's "feeling of sacrificialness and fatedness."¹¹⁶ Unlike in 1942, Stalingrad had to be written into an entirely positive, varnished past with no suffering, repression, tragedy or impending defeat—it should be tensionless. Grossman's effort to turn slogans and clichés back into lively, human language inserted into a world that seemed to be fracturing before Stalingrad's turning point was not welcome. Grossman, simply, recognized that myth has an active function—it must unite the individual in the *chronos* present with an epic, *kairotic* time—rather than a merely passive one, as in the works of Shebunin and Ehrenburg. *For a Just Cause* had to show ordinary people experiencing their own turning point at Stalingrad, rather than simply being cast by Stalin into a brighter future. As I have shown, this did not necessarily mean destroying the epic temporal walls around Stalingrad and leaving the representation of the event open to the challenge of a chaotic, polyphonic present. Within the space of the novel, Grossman could draw different perspectives, and familiar source materials, into a temporal and literary unity. A space for the individual's subjectivity is thus carved into the Stalinist story.

Within weeks of Stalin's death, criticism of *For a Just Cause* vanished from journals and newspapers. Mere months later in 1954, a series of apologies and retractions were published.¹¹⁷ The flood of positivity toward the novel culminated in Surkov giving Grossman and Voenizdat a free hand in *For a Just Cause*'s publication as a book. Grossman was even asked if he wanted to add any material.¹¹⁸ The following year, Grossman was fêted with an award from the Writers' Union.¹¹⁹ Freed from the yoke of Stalin's personality cult, Grossman's novel would become the

¹¹⁶ Bubennov, "O romane V. Grossmana 'Za pravoe delo.'"

¹¹⁷ Fadeev, previously an outspoken critic, now recommended *For a Just Cause* for publication, calling the attacks on it "unobjective." He praised Grossman's depiction of the "people at war" and the ordinary soldier "in his greatcoat" (A. Fadeev, "Otzyv na pervuiu knigu romana V. Grossmana 'Za pravoe delo,'" March 30, 1954, Box 3, Folder 46, Garrard Collection). Fadeev even publicly apologised to Grossman at the Writers' Union meeting that year (Lipkin, *Stalingrad Vasiliia Grossmana*, 45; Evgeniia Taratuta, "Chestnaia zhizn' i tiazhelaia sud'ba: vospominaniia o V. Grossmane," *Ogonek*, no. 40 [1987], 23).

¹¹⁸ Gol'denberg, "Biografiia romana 'Stalingrad'"; "Ia ne metil v khram slavy."

¹¹⁹ Levin, "Vstuplenie," 5-6.

most published Stalingrad work of the decade.¹²⁰ A testament to the power of Soviet ideals, the power of the people, and their stunning collaborative victory at Stalingrad, the anthropocentric novel provided a means to unite national patriotic and Stalinist tropes. Contrary to scholarly opinion, *For a Just Cause* is not merely an ordinary Stalinist work that recycles tropes in an act of creativity as passive as the characters in *The Storm* and *Mamaev kurgan*: Grossman's work uses textual memories of Stalingrad's *kairos* in an effort to negotiate the dissonance between individual memory and Stalinist conformity.

¹²⁰ *For a Just Cause* was reissued in six large, separate print runs in book form between 1954 and 1959.

5. The Thaw: Debating the Stalinist Past

Stalin's death in 1953 catalyzed a period of debate about how to interpret a past coloured by terror as much as military success: how could the Party come to terms with the crimes of the thirties without undermining the justification for its own continued hold on power? Rethinking and rewriting the Stalingrad myth played a crucial role in resolving this challenge. Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" at the 20th Party Congress in 1956 openly attacked the Stalin cult's "semantic dominance" of the war story, naming Stalingrad as particularly significant:

When one looks at many of our novels, films and historical 'scientific studies,' the role of Stalin in the Patriotic War appears to be entirely improbable. Stalin had foreseen everything. The Soviet Army, on the basis of a strategic plan prepared by Stalin long before, used the tactics of so-called 'active defence,' i.e., tactics which, as we know, allowed the Germans to come up to Moscow and Stalingrad. Using such tactics, the Soviet Army, supposedly thanks only to Stalin's genius, turned to the offensive and crushed the enemy.¹

A period of "persistent instability" in official discourse followed Khrushchev's speech.² The "diversification of culture [...] undermined the outward semblance of stability, uniformity and coherence that had existed under Stalin."³ Revelations of terror and repression, following the unexpected death of the deified Stalin, "radically changed the boundaries and forms of public opinion."⁴ One would expect that in a time characterized by uncertainty of debate about the nature of the Stalinist past—by polyphonic public discourse—the idea of an "epic present"

¹ As quoted in Nina Tumarkin, *The Living & the Dead*, 107.

² Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 11; Jones, "Socialist Worlds of Dissent and Discontent After Stalinism," *Kritika*, no. 15.3, Summer 2014, 7; Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 177; Katerina Clark, "'Wait for Me and I Shall Return,'" 101-2.

³ D. A. Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, "Introduction," in Kozlov and Gilburd, eds., *The Thaw*, 3.

⁴ Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 5.

should have been undermined. The appeal of the Stalingrad myth, which was associated with Stalin's leadership, should surely have diminished as a result. However, the capacity for flexibility and responsiveness to the present we have already observed in the Stalingrad story meant that it did not. Instead, Stalingrad continued to play a central role in shaping Russians' understanding of the past.

Frequently, the dilemma of inserting the present debates about Stalinism into the Stalingrad story was simply glossed over. The most literal of de-Stalinizations was applied to existing and new Stalingrad stories. Stalin's semantic presence was simply wiped from the surface of the story. In historical and literary works, the battle was retitled "The Battle on the Volga."⁵ Authors of republished novels and stories were asked to remove Stalin's name from their work.⁶ In the 1956 Voenizdat edition of *For a Just Cause*, for example, Stalin's speeches are all but gone, moving the book's centre of gravity away from the leader and towards Vavilov's sacrifice. In new works, Stalin's name simply disappeared. Ivan Semin's otherwise unnotable *Stalingrad Tales* (*Stalingradskie byli*, 1956) is a striking example of semantic de-Stalinization: beyond the title it does not contain a single example of the words "Stalin" or "Stalingrad."⁷ Avoiding deeper questions about the relationship of the myth to the present—and of Stalin's influence over the story even in the early 1940s—the majority authors simply reiterated familiar stories about Stalingrad as a means to assert the positive connotations of the battle.

Readings of two major works from the period—Simonov's *Not Born Soldiers* (*Soldatami ne rozhdaitsia*, 1963) and Grossman's *Life and Fate* (*Zhizn' i sud'ba*, 1960)—show how memory of the battle was not consigned to the past even after Stalin's death. The myth of Stalingrad continued to play an active role in the debates of the present: both Simonov's and Grossman's works reflect contemporary public interest in "raking over the Stalinist past."⁸ For Simonov, Stalingrad was a lynchpin around which to reconstruct a sense of Soviet self that left

⁵ For example, Aleksandr Samsonov's book *Stalingradskaia bitva* (Moscow: Nauka, 1960)—"The Battle of Stalingrad"—was retitled *Velikaia bitva na Volge*, "The Great Battle on the Volga," for a 1963 edition.

⁶ Simonov refused a request to remove the words "Stalin" and "Voroshilov" from work in the early 1960s (Simonov, *Pis'ma o voine*).

⁷ Ivan Andreevich Semin, *Stalingradskie byli* (Voronezh: Kn.izd-vo., 1956).

⁸ Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 2.

behind the terrors of the Stalinist era. His work relies on the myth to force debates about Stalinism into an epic space around Stalingrad, asserting that the USSR once more stood on the brink of a brighter future in 1963. Contrarily, Grossman attempted in *Life and Fate* to wholly undermine totalitarian control of the Stalingrad narrative. He introduced polyphony, irony and doubt into the Stalingrad story to produce the first Soviet novel (in Bakhtin's sense of the novel) about Stalingrad. By doing so, Grossman broke apart the myth, prompting readers to cease reading their own subjectivity through the lens of historicism, which he saw as an integral part of state violence against the individual.

Significantly, the works also bookended each writer's career: the direct authorial connection to the Stalingrad journalism, and therefore to the *kairotic* sense of the earliest texts, was lost after these works' publication. Simonov's novel was his last major contribution to the Stalingrad story. It would become one of the most popular books of the era. A print run of over a million in 1964 made it the most heavily published Stalingrad work to date. On the other hand, Grossman's book was banned and remained unpublished in the Soviet Union until the late 1980s. Unlike the torturous publication of *For a Just Cause*, this time there would be no drawn-out process of manuscript revision. Grossman submitted the work to *Znamia*, whose editors summarily rejected and reported it to the authorities. After top-level interference, the KGB "arrested" the manuscript and almost all of the copies. This marked the end of Grossman's contribution to the Stalingrad story and of his literary career in the USSR.

Superficially, much of the two novels' content is similar. In each work, Stalingrad remains the centre of attention and retains its status as a historical turning point. Each work inserts themes from the early 1940s back into the story, replacing Stalin with the people as the central force at Stalingrad. The focus is on a group of characters linked by family, not Party, connections. Society is scarred by the loss of spouses and children at the front and in hospitals. Each novel considers the relation of the Holocaust to Stalingrad and the wider Soviet victory. Finally, the works openly broach the subject of Stalin's culpability in the crimes of the 1930s, which were now being discussed widely and, often, in public.

Given these similarities, how could Simonov's work become a roaring success while Grossman's was considered so dangerous that it had to be proscribed, and even destroyed? While Simonov struggled with the joint traumas of the war and the Stalinist terror, he affirmed

Stalingrad's *kairotic* importance to post-war Soviet culture. Even if the future, Simonov suggested, would be scarred by the personal losses of friends and family, the Soviet Union was moving toward a brighter future thanks to Stalingrad. Simonov offered readers caught up in the debates of the early 1960s a means to align themselves with that future, and thus to reintegrate the present self with the Stalinist past using Stalingrad's *kairos*. Simonov took advantage of Stalingrad's boundedness in epic time and space—Stalingrad is a one-off event in the past, so it was easier for Simonov to disassociate it from Stalin and, in turn, to disassociate the terrors of the past and the leadership of the present.

Grossman, however, seized textual control of the myth of Stalingrad. In *Life and Fate*, Stalingrad itself is the height of freedom. For Grossman, the victory in 1943 only enabled Stalin's totalitarian state to recommence its terrorizing of the population. Not only did Soviet society fail to move forward after Stalingrad, it had nothing to look forward to now. By engaging in a discourse with his own representations of Stalingrad, Grossman tore down the epic boundaries erected around Stalingrad, drawing it into the world of the polyphonic novel and opening it up to contestation in the Thaw era's debates. Ultimately, Grossman urged the Thaw-era reader to orient their self-understanding not towards eschatological historical events but towards other people in the present—an ethical stance that was incompatible with Soviet culture's emphasis on the monologic epic, and led to the proscription of *Life and Fate*.

Not Born Soldiers: Loss and the Future

Simonov's *Not Born Soldiers* was the second part of a war trilogy that began with *The Living and the Dead* (*Zhivye i mertvye*, 1959). The authorities facilitated wide access to Simonov's novel. By 1966, almost one and a half million copies had been printed, making it one of the most published Stalingrad works yet.⁹ The total print run for *Not Born Soldiers* through the 1960s accounts for almost a quarter of the total Stalingrad works published in the period. Compare these figures to a seminal work such as Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (*Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*, 1962), which was produced in a run of just 100,000

⁹ *Not Born Soldiers* is the second most printed Stalingrad work of all time. See Appendix, chart B., "Works Sorted by Total Print Run."

copies in 1963 (though perhaps not for want of public interest). Simonov's novel, though, was not simply foisted on an uninterested population. Polly Jones' study of letters to Simonov and *Znamia* show that readers widely used *Not Born Soldiers* "to make sense of their recent past, as well as to reflect on the current state of Soviet public memory."¹⁰ *Not Born Soldiers* is a prominent example of how Soviet and Russian subjects in the Thaw turned to Stalingrad to reassess their past and present, in spite of the battle's recent incarnation as a tool of the Stalinist personality cult. Instead of forgetting the battle altogether, readers and writers continued to use the battle's literary representations as a gathering point for myriad memories from the Russian and Soviet past. In Simonov's novel, the battle's *kairotic* connotations seem to be able to smooth out contrary and often violent pasts.

For Simonov, the memory of 1937—of state-sponsored terror, internecine conflict, and the Purges—was "unavoidable."¹¹ *Not Born Soldiers* dealt with the Stalinist past openly, expanding the range of themes associated with Stalingrad to include victims and perpetrators of state terror. Simonov even used Stalingrad to discuss the Holocaust, drawing parallels between Stalingrad's "hell" and the "hell" of German concentration camps.¹² Simonov questioned the decisions taken in the first 18 months of the war, attacking the idea that the retreats of the period were part of Stalin's strategic master plan—and thereby, seemingly, questioning the idea that Stalingrad represented a justification for the disasters of this period.¹³ On the surface, indeed, Simonov might seem to have broken open the epic of Stalingrad and left it exposed to the polyphony of the novel form. In fact, Simonov used the text to draw in, rewrite and realign the heated arguments of the 1960s within the "closed circle" of epic Stalingrad. As Grossman had in *For a Just Cause*, Simonov absorbed current arguments into a monologic narrative.

Simonov used Stalingrad's *kairotic* qualities, therefore, to wipe the historical slate clean once again. Although acknowledged surprisingly openly, Stalinist excesses in *Not Born Soldiers* seem, like Stalingrad, to belong to the epic time-space, colouring the terror with the sense that it

¹⁰ Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 174.

¹¹ Denis Kozlov, "Remembering and Explaining the Terror During the Thaw," in *The Thaw*. 183; Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 158.

¹² Konstantin Simonov, *Soldatami ne rozhdaitsia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1964), Chapter 29.

¹³ L. Lazarev, "The War Novels of Konstantin Simonov," *Soviet Studies in Literature* 1, no. 3 (1965), 62.

was part of a teleological march toward a *kairotic* turning point. Unusually, this is conveyed through a focus on the post-November period of the battle, rather than on the pre-counterattack street fighting and defence: Simonov explores the consequences of Stalingrad, not the struggle to achieve it, asking how ordinary people were to live in a victorious but traumatized post-war—and post-Stalin—society. Simonov used the myth of Stalingrad to guide people through the challenges of the present by rewriting the past to suggest that Stalingrad righted the wrongs of 1937 and created a more just future both in 1943 and in the present. Simonov invoked the idea of Stalingrad as a stabilizing turning point in order to project epic certainty onto a present that was full of discursive and political turmoil.

Stalingrad is at the semantic heart of *Not Born Soldiers*. The battle draws characters with opposing backgrounds and views on the Stalinist past into a common experience: it always seems “close.”¹⁴ Characters “shudder with excitement” at hearing its name,¹⁵ and Simonov accords it prime place in the nation's psyche: “Then, in October, what were people talking about? ‘Stalingrad, Stalingrad, Stalingrad... Let’s go to Stalingrad!’”¹⁶ Stalingrad retains its place as the site—whether geographical or semantic—at which all characters orient themselves within the chaos of the war. Even the most cursory reading of *Not Born Soldiers* shows that elements of debate and argument about the past did not extend to challenging the central narrative of Stalingrad as an eschatological turning point for the nation and its citizens.

Not Born Soldiers openly de-Stalinizes the events of the war by emphasizing ordinary people’s active role at the front, replacing the distanced epic narratorial stance with one that seems to come from within the people. In the first chapter, for example, the narrator draws our attention to the time and place of the fighting: “Stalingrad, which the Germans had failed to seize, lay ahead. Our siege had already lasted six weeks.” The reader, familiar with the battle’s narrative, would immediately place the action in early 1943, but the narrator’s tone is personal (“our siege”) compared to the declamatory style familiar from Stalingrad works. The narrator, indeed, approaches events from his protagonist Serpilin’s perspective: “Serpilin could easily

¹⁴ Simonov, *Soldatami ne rozhdaitsia*, 252.

¹⁵ Ibid., 351.

¹⁶ Ibid., 405.

imagine what awaited people in encirclement: our attack, relief, the order to break out, a miracle, death. All of it together.”¹⁷ Here, history is mediated through the experience of an ordinary soldier, rather than from a distanced, epic perspective. Simonov thus gave the reader a means to draw closer to a direct memory of Stalingrad by removing verbatim quotation from official texts, which had served as an intermediary. The absence of the epic tone and of direct quotation in these opening pages is striking compared to earlier Stalingrad works. The reader could now draw close to the battle in ways that would have been unthinkable a decade earlier.

Simonov inscribed the individual back into the war narrative by including documentary material from interviews and correspondence with veterans.¹⁸ He must also been influenced by the flood of memoirs beginning to arrive on Soviet bookshelves.¹⁹ Simonov was able to go as far as including in *Not Born Soldiers* victims of the terror as leading officers, portraying those who had been accused of cowardice and treachery (notably, a traitorous scout had been edited out of *Days and Nights* in 1943),²⁰ and criticizing xenophobic rules and attitudes targeting Soviets of German descent during the war (“Under no circumstances were Volga Germans to be permitted at the front”—but the Volga German Gofman receives a medal for bravery).²¹ Simonov’s characters do not slavishly acquiesce to central power. They exercise great agency, acting spontaneously and, occasionally, even contradictory to direct orders: “He said ‘Understood,’ but he didn’t carry out the order. He did give the order to prepare the artillery, and at first scheduled the attack for one o’clock. But then he changed it, choosing a later time when it would be dark already and fewer losses would be incurred.”²² While this return to the documentary method

¹⁷ Ibid., 8.

¹⁸ For information on interviews, see Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 177. Much of Simonov’s correspondence with veterans is published in Simonov, *Pis’ma o voine*.

¹⁹ Lazarev, “The War Novels of Konstantin Simonov,” 49.

²⁰ For example, Tanya’s ex-husband, or Krotov, a character who tries to shoot himself in order to leave the front and is accused of treason (Simonov, *Soldatami ne rozhdaitsia*, 22-24).

²¹ A scout, Hoffmann, is almost tried due to his German origins in spite of his heroism (Ibid., 495).

²² For other examples: Chugunov is an independent-minded captain with his own sense of justice; shown when he attempts to court martial a captured German soldier (Ibid., 274-5). Tanya’s cowardly ex-husband is forced to the front by his peers (Ibid., 407-9). This independence resembles other Thaw works about the frontline. For example, in the films *Ballad of a Soldier* (*Ballada o soldate*, 1956) and *Ivan’s Childhood* (*Ivanovo detstvo*, 1962), representatives of Soviet power are all but absent from the front. *Not Born Soldiers* is part of a trend of rethinking the war from the individual, rather than Party, perspective.

recalled the participatory atmosphere of the wartime sketches and cast light back onto ordinary people, it also awoke the dangers associated with “novelty” and presentness that Simonov and Grossman had striven to resolve in the immediate aftermath of the battle. Debate around xenophobia, treachery and poor strategic decisions might threaten to spill out into the reader’s present and, therefore, to challenge Soviet authority.

Individual passages suggest that Simonov had indeed introduced a de-stabilizing polyphony into the novel. For example, Stalin’s role in 1937 and at Stalingrad is presented from two polarized, unresolved perspectives. Some characters strongly support Stalin, even asking for his intercession on difficult matters: “Can’t you just ask Stalin to release you back to your family?”²³ Others perceive Stalin as the nation’s defender in the face of Churchillian mendacity: the troops mistakenly believe that “Churchill has promised to keep his word to Comrade Stalin” that the Allies would open a second front in 1943.²⁴ The reader of 1963, of course, would have known that Churchill’s alleged promise was not kept. The narrator even gives Stalin credit for the purportedly inspirational message of Order No.227 (the command “No step backward!” of July 1942): “Order 227 looked truth in the eye, plain and simple. [Stalin] posed the question squarely: stop or die. If this carries on any longer, Russia will be lost!”²⁵ For the faithful Kashirin, meeting Stalin is an encounter that resembles texts from the late 1940s: Stalin “said nothing,” slowly “moves around the table” and “waves his hand” to make Kashirin “ready to give up everything.”²⁶ Familiar elements from the epic narratives of the late forties that hymned Stalin are present throughout the novel.

²³ Simonov, *Soldatami ne rozhdaitsia*, 175.

²⁴ Ibid., 25. This resembles the narrative of Pospelov’s official history (for more on the context and importance of that multi-volume work, see Mann, “Contested Memory”).

²⁵ Ibid., 223. While Order No.227 threatened Soviets who retreated with punishment, it also made clear to troops the seriousness of the Soviets’ strategic situation. For a discussion of the order’s effects on morale, see Alexander Hill, *The Red Army and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 353-360. Writers of Stalingrad and the war as a whole frequently suggested that the order’s key phrase (“No step backward!”) had a vital effect on inspiring troops to defend Stalingrad (see S.M. Isachenko, *Gody, otlitye v stroke* [Moscow: Voenizdat, 1973], 77-8). The reality, of course, may have been that the order was less inspirational and more fear-inducing. Indeed, Solzhenitsyn questions why Grossman did not in *For a Just Cause* quote more of Stalin’s order so as to show the influence of fear at the front (“Dilogiia Vasiliia Grossmana”). GOOD!

²⁶ Ibid., 170-1.

On the other hand, in the eyes of Simonov's protagonist Serpilin, a former GULAG convict who commands troops at Stalingrad, the July 1941 radio speech does not produce the miraculous effect it had on Shtrum in *For a Just Cause*. Instead, Stalin is humanized: "What struck them was not what they heard, but how Stalin suddenly began to speak differently, like a human being."²⁷ Serpilin even meets Stalin. He notices how the leader "limps a little." In a knowingly ironic nod to classic depictions of the leader, Serpilin "confuses Stalin with a portrait": Simonov exposes the cognitive dissonance resulting from the conflict between the well-known representations of Stalin and his actual humanity.²⁸ Serpilin leaves his meeting with Stalin just as confused as he entered it: "the sense of shock in which Serpilin left Stalin remained with him until he arrived home."²⁹ There is no sense of the harmonious resolution that Krymov and Shtrum experienced in *For a Just Cause*. Simonov recognized that simply removing Stalin's name from Stalingrad works would leave a gaping hole in the reader's understanding of the past. Instead, he acknowledged the ambiguity of the Stalinist past and the breadth of opinion on the subject, so that Kashirin's devotion (and the semantic echo of the Stalinist text) and Serpilin's confusion are each undercut with a sense of uncertainty. Discussions of Stalin are couched in irony and open-endedness, and thus acknowledged as a site for debate and disagreement. However, these novelistic elements are rapidly contained.

The idea of Stalingrad as a turning point produces an overall sense of calm—the narrative briefly acknowledges irony and polyphony inherent in discussions of Stalin before using the epic, mythic associations of Stalingrad to contain them. Serpilin, a veteran of Tsaritsyn, finds that new encounters with the remains of the Stalingrad past replace the idea of a godlike Stalin with the image of an unexceptional man. The humanized Stalin sits alongside other, ordinary soldiers, and is limited by the same lack of supplies as they are:

Now, twenty five years later, standing over the snaking trail of snow that was all that was left of the Tsaritsyn-era trench, Serpilin remembered it all: where they lit the fire, and who sat where while they drank tea. On the edge the quiet one in the

²⁷ Ibid., 683.

²⁸ Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 182.

²⁹ Simonov, *Soldatami ne rozhdaitsia*, 681.

leather jacket, then Stalin and Grin'ko next to him, then he and Ivan Alekseevich together facing Stalin. The sugar was broken up into the tiniest of pieces. When they'd finished and Stalin had stood up and left, the quiet one in the leather jacket took the lid of the kettle and poured the remaining sugar back into the newspaper.³⁰

Compare the clarity of this memory—"Serpilin remembered it all"—to Krymov's difficulty perceiving Stalin's face in person on Red Square in *For a Just Cause*.³¹ Simonov was able to diminish Stalin's hold over the Stalingrad story by bringing him into the same time and space as ordinary characters. Stalin becomes beholden to Serpilin's human memory, while Stalingrad retains its historical significance. The memory of Stalingrad's past was able, used in this way, to nullify and contain present questions over the Stalinist past.

Loss and the Epic

Simonov furthermore carved space into the Stalingrad story for the traumatic losses experienced by the reader in the war. Serpilin and the other protagonists lose family members before and during the war. The narrator of *Not Born Soldiers* frequently dwells on the human features of the dead, drawing attention to the traumatic nature of victory at Stalingrad. Sintsov, for example, observes his comrade Lunin's corpse: "the clean-shaven, spotless, head of Lunin on the snow, and his hat, knocked clean off, lying next to it; his face with open eyes, one cheek in the snow and the high—above the ears—shaved temple."³² Sintsov also sees a dead woman: "When she was alive, he had only seen her from behind, but now he saw her face in the snow: dead, lip bitten, with open eyes."³³ These incidents openly describing the facial features of the dead are not followed, as was the case in *Days and Nights* and the wartime sketches, with an immediate attempt to link their deaths to an epic, *kairotic* time. Instead, they simply serve a witnessing function.

³⁰ Ibid., 652-3.

³¹ Recall the line from *For a Just Cause*: "From afar Krymov could just about see [Stalin's] face, but the fog and morning darkness hindered his vision."

³² Ibid., 300.

³³ Ibid.

The novel also seems to openly interrogate the capacity of official discourse to fairly depict the dead. Serpilin receives a telegram announcing that his adoptive son has “died the death of the brave.” He asks whether the death really was “brave” when this stock epithet was applied to almost every soldier killed during the war.³⁴ The commander Barabanov, meanwhile, “preferred to die than to explain” a son’s death to a mother.³⁵ Recall the line from *Days and Nights* in which the hero Saburov accepts that inflating the heroism of his comrade’s death was necessary. Simonov’s characters now attempt to respond to the enumerating, inhuman character of the Stalinist narrative by focusing on the human losses that enabled victory. Human loss moves from the story’s periphery to its centre, giving the reader a space to grieve that had previously been almost totally absent from the triumphal Stalingrad text.

Simonov recognized the feelings of veterans who struggled to acclimatize to post-war life, which in *Not Born Soldiers* is coloured by the experience of war and the memory of loss. The doctor Tanya cannot get used to the connectedness of civilian urban life after time as a partisan: “Even after two months on the mainland, she still couldn’t get used to how there was sometimes a telephone in an apartment, how there was a letterbox on every door, and how people would send each letters and telegrams.”³⁶ Similarly, Serpilin is at first tortured by the memory of how his wife suffered as she slowly died from illness: “Why had she screamed like that? She didn’t like to, she didn’t know how to, scream. Even on the night when they’d taken him and searched the apartment for seven hours straight, she didn’t say a word [...] But this time she had screamed.”³⁷ As the novel draws to a close, the narrator explains how Tanya describes the lethally mined Stalingrad: “Yes, judging by her tale, the city of Stalingrad looks pretty bad now. Rusty old death traps lie in wait amongst its ruins. They brought in three more yesterday. Close to death. Even though the war was already six hundred kilometres away. Rostov had been taken the day before, and now the radio was saying Kharkov was theirs too...”³⁸ Although Sintsov is able to imagine a future of “foolish” love with Tanya thanks to Stalingrad, the battle—along with

³⁴ Ibid., 580.

³⁵ Ibid., 43.

³⁶ Ibid., 212.

³⁷ Ibid., 94.

³⁸ Ibid., 700.

the war as a whole, and the thirties' terror—colours the present with the memory of death. The idea of resurrection at Stalingrad no longer represents so clean a turn from death to life as the reader might have expected.

Nonetheless, Simonov does explain that Stalingrad marked a resurrection. A teenaged Soviet scout at the front makes a miraculous recovery that imitates Anya Shchepenia's near-death in *Days and Nights*: Sintsov "continued to look at the boy, presuming him dead," then "saw how first one arm, thrown forward, started to stir, then the other."³⁹ However, the resurrection miracle is now repurposed in order to mark a divide between an undesirable past—in the novel, that of the 1930s; in the present, that of the entire Stalinist period—and a promising future. Stalingrad marks a turning point between two distinct lives, providing the means to resolve the tensions of loss and the Stalinist past. Pre-war life—"old, pre-military, life, now struck out"—is irretrievable by early 1943.⁴⁰ The Volga crossing separates an existence bounded off in an epic Stalingrad from ordinary life. Artem'ev has been tortured by the death of his sister and wife. The journey into Stalingrad allows him to accept this loss: "When they took him, wounded, across the wintery Volga," Artem'ev's wife "ceased to be. When he thought on that night about whether she was alive or dead, she ceased to be. She had not existed for a long time, for two years already..."⁴¹ Now Artem'ev can turn his attention to the future, announcing to Tanya that, "I'll find you. [...] Afterward, when we're done with all of this."⁴² The past is wiped away through contact with Stalingrad, which acts as a turning point in history and in private lives alike.

Stalingrad therefore offers the chance for the Stalinist past, encoded in the phrase "pre-war life," to be erased. For Serpilin, imprisoned in the 1930s, and Sintsov, accused of a crime for minor tactical errors in the war, Stalingrad offers a means for "sins" to be "washed away": Sintsov imagines "for the first time" that he will live and thrive after the war.⁴³ In line with the Soviet salvational narrative, the sacrifice at Stalingrad remains necessary to enable the future

³⁹ Ibid., 311.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 156.

⁴¹ Ibid., 469.

⁴² Ibid., 468.

⁴³ Ibid., 38, 288, 700.

(highlighted by my italics), but it now has the added function of erasing the past: “There, ahead, Germans were dying. They died, and *they had to die*, because they came here, they did not accept the chance to surrender yesterday, because there had to be an end to this at some point—in Stalingrad...”⁴⁴ Simonov reassures his readers that their sacrifices were not in vain. Death and sacrifice were necessary in order to defeat evil and ensure the advent of peace. Once again, Stalingrad is invoked as a way to rewrite the past and thus explain the present, providing the reader a means to look forward to a brighter future rather than backward to a traumatic past.

The future, Simonov suggests, belongs to the people. He recalls the idea that Stalingrad allowed the people to discover their inner heroic essence through sacrifice. In the war, the Soviets have “become different people. But when we think what things will be like when the war ends, we imagine ourselves just the same as we always were.”⁴⁵ The sense of loss is mitigated by the hope that the characters at Stalingrad feel. Simonov uses production/reconstruction tropes from the early 1950s to focus on the existence of enthusiastic workers who will rebuild the city's living space.⁴⁶ Although the 1960s present is coloured by losses and veterans' memories, rewriting Stalingrad in *Not Born Soldiers* promises a post-war life free of difficulties: a new era that includes Soviet and Russian past, and that acknowledges individuals' trauma and successes.

Each character in *Not Born Soldiers* has the same experience of and perspective on Stalingrad as a *kairos* that resurrects the nation—the myth is invoked to reduce the risks associated with the debate and polyphony that is present in the work. *Not Born Soldiers* collates multiple perspectives that agree on the importance of Stalingrad to the war and to the Soviet nation—the method is strikingly similar to that of *For a Just Cause*, perhaps indicating an influence hitherto unacknowledged—creating a harmonious narrative of a move towards a more positive future that softens the characters' losses. The wartime communiqués, for example, continue to guide the characters' understanding of their role in the war, but are now accompanied by personal perspectives. The doctor and former partisan Tania Ovsianikova, for example, learns of news from the front: “His entire story about the Don Front, the Germans trapped in

⁴⁴ Ibid., 286.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 289.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 375-6.

encirclement with nowhere to hide, and the fact that we're shooting down about thirty of their Junkers every day...that was all familiar from the communiqués. But to hear it from someone who'd just flown in from there made it seem new and surprising."⁴⁷ The official story is reiterated on a human level, but this does not create dissonance. Every experience and perspective is drawn into the overarching narrative of Stalingrad's transformative power. As in *For a Just Cause*, the effect is to use Stalingrad's *kairotic* qualities to calm tensions and disagreements, writing meaning into the traumas of wartime and Stalinist pasts alike.

Simonov thus provided a means for the reader of 1963 to reinterpret their past and present through the lens of shared grief around the idea of Stalingrad as turning point. The narrator focuses on orienting the individual toward the war, which dominates the characters' world: "No job on earth consumes the individual as completely as the job of war."⁴⁸ This allows Serpilin to imagine his wife's and son's deaths during the war as part of a worthy cause—one not tarnished by the criminality of 1930s Stalinism—that unites the nation in grief. After his wife's death, Serpilin had recognized that he must "live alone and get used to his loneliness."⁴⁹ Serpilin, as the novel draws to a close, finds that he and even Stalin are now bonded by loss. He notes that Stalin "is linked with all of them in shared grief."⁵⁰ The terror, meanwhile, is part of an ephemeral "pre-war life." Serpilin's wife, "utterly dedicated to Stalin," has passed away naturally.⁵¹ Symbolically, her time inevitably passes—as Stalin's time had passed by 1963—while Stalingrad retains its fixed, epic certainty, which can in 1963 be invoked to orient the reader's present. Having lost his roles as father and husband, Serpilin is thus able to construct a sense of self around his role in the war and at Stalingrad, providing a model for the reader of 1963 to do the same, free of anxiety that to do so meant either justifying Stalinist terror or threatening the status quo.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 418-9.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 683.

⁵¹ Ibid., 124.

Thus in *Not Born Soldiers*, Simonov penned a novel that worked to shore up official memories of the war and question—but not destroy—the events leading up to Stalingrad.⁵² Instead, the Stalingrad myth provided for Simonov a space to think through the recent past in a manner that did not threaten either the Soviet regime's hold on power or the justification for the enormous sacrifices made during the war. The individual reader of 1963 was encouraged to sense in the present the *kairos* of Stalingrad, which is bound up with the actions and sacrifices of ordinary people. If the present of 1963 was no longer to be made epic, the sense of an epic future, a utopia, to follow Stalingrad, at least seems to be possible.

In this sense, *Not Born Soldiers* is a reflection of Simonov's ambiguous role as an “ordinary” Stalinist and Soviet citizen. He followed the changing winds of Soviet demands on history and memory, occasionally pushing but never breaking the boundaries of the permissible, while writing novels that focused on the everyday realities of his characters. *Not Born Soldiers* was a runaway success because it provided a means for both individuals and the government to resolve the tensions of the past: the achievements and sacrifices of the war, and the crimes of the Stalinist age. Complicity could be washed away thanks to a shared sense of purpose stemming from Stalingrad. Polly Jones notes that readers were shocked by *Not Born Soldiers*' realism and open discussion of Stalin's shortcomings, which catalyzed a frank public debate about the terrors of the thirties.⁵³ My exploration of how literary Stalingrad functioned as a commemorative site that both catalyzed and resolved tensions around the Stalinist past confirms and develops Jones' conclusions.

A Stalingrad Novel: Grossman's *Life and Fate*

Grossman began work on *Life and Fate* as soon as *For a Just Cause* had been published in 1952.⁵⁴ In spite of years of work, and the interest of readers in the follow-up to *For a Just*

⁵² See Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 86.

⁵³ Ibid., 174-180.

⁵⁴ Taratuta, “*Chestnaia zhizn' i tiazhelaia sud'ba*,” 23.

Cause, Grossman's novel never came close to publication during the author's lifetime.⁵⁵ D.A. Polikarpov, the head of the Communist Party Cultural Department, attacked the book's "falsity" and "harmfulness."⁵⁶ The authorities considered the book so dangerous that it was "arrested" in a KGB raid on Grossman's apartment in February 1961.⁵⁷ Grossman's literary career was effectively ended, and the author fell into a deep depression that lasted until his death in 1964.⁵⁸ A version of the novel, albeit shorn of its more pointed criticisms of Lenin's influence and state antisemitism, was published in the Soviet Union only in 1988.⁵⁹

Unlike Simonov, Grossman by the late 1950s had come to believe that engaging the reader's historicism to align them with a mythic national memory was a totalitarian act. As the novel's narrator asks, "Does human nature undergo a true change in the cauldron of totalitarian violence?"⁶⁰ Reading the individual's life through myth, Grossman suggested in *Life and Fate*, was equated with a totalitarian, violent disintegration of the individual's unique subjectivity: "Totalitarianism cannot renounce violence."⁶¹

I turn to Claude Lefort's work to explain in brief Grossman's understanding of totalitarianism. Lefort understands democracy in terms of incompleteness and individualism characterized by "plurality and division."⁶² Totalitarianism, on the other hand, is characterized

⁵⁵ L. Lazarev, *Zapiski pozhilogo cheloveka*, 161. Some excerpts were printed in journals. For a list, see Iurii Bit-Iunan, "Retseptiia proizvedenii V.S.Grossmana v sovetskoi zhurnalistike 1930-x - 1960-x gg." (Ph.D., Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet, 2011).

⁵⁶ Semen Lipkin, "Iz sekretnykh arkhivov: Zhizn' i sud'ba," *Trud*, October 3, 1992, 2. The editors of *Znamia*, to whom Grossman submitted the work, pointedly told him that *Life and Fate* could not be published for "ideological-political" reasons ("Correspondence with Znamia," 1962, Box 2, Folder 38, Garrard Collection).

⁵⁷ The record of the search of Grossman's home is available in the Harvard archive ("Record of the Search of Home of Vasilii Grossman by Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti," February 1961, Box 2, Folder 55, Garrard Collection).

⁵⁸ Garrard and Garrard, *The Bones of Berdichev*, 263.

⁵⁹ Efim Etkind explores the cuts in detail: the line "Your Lenin didn't inherit Russian freedom—he destroyed it," was considered too pointed to include even in the era of *glasnost*. The entirety of Part 2, Chapter 31, which deals with the links between totalitarianism and the Holocaust, is also absent (Etkind "Net dvukh pravd," *Strana i mir*, no. 6 [1988]).

⁶⁰ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 200.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Claude Lefort, *Complications: Communism and the Dilemmas of Democracy*, trans. Julian Bourg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 14.

by “disincorporation and reincorporation” of the individual.⁶³ The result is “a society without divisions” to which, to quote Lefort’s translator, “individuals surrendered and abnegated themselves.”⁶⁴ Lefort explains that totalitarianism depended on breaking apart individual freedoms and “the capacity of citizens to connect to one another by mutually recognizing one another as equals.” The individual could then be “absorbed” into a state-controlled unity, a “collective organ on which all institutions and bonds among individuals and groups depended.”⁶⁵

In this sense, totalitarianism rests not on mere authoritarian control, but on a breaking down and remoulding of the individual subject.⁶⁶ Adherence to a monocultural group, in Lefort’s understanding, is central to the perpetuation of totalitarian power; discursive conflict with that group rendered the individual subject illegitimate.⁶⁷ As Lefort puts it, under totalitarian rule, “access to a language allowing each person to name the distance separating himself from others” is “blocked.” Differences, the “Other,” are either remoulded or effaced.”⁶⁸ In *Life and Fate*, Grossman suggested that rewriting the story of Stalingrad in monologic, epic terms had been a central tool for the Stalinist and post-Stalinist regimes alike to break down and rewrite the individual’s past in order to exercise totalitarian control over the population by “blocking” access to a language that might have expressed sociocultural differences.

While other scholars have noted the fact that Grossman classified the Soviet and Nazi regimes as two equally destructive forms of totalitarianism, I specifically address how Grossman attempts to exploit the generic qualities of the novel (in the Bakhtinian sense) in order to open up the Stalingrad myth to contact with the present, inserting polyphony and irony into the story and

⁶³ Ibid., 139.

⁶⁴ Julian Bourg, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Lefort, *Complications*, 13.

⁶⁵ Lefort, *Complications*, 83-4, 139, 169-171.

⁶⁶ Recent work on Soviet subjectivity in the post-war period, for example Anatoly Pinsky’s study of how subjects self-consciously strove to weigh their own lives against an ideal form understood through discourse, might pose questions about this top-down understanding of Soviets’ identity formation in the period. However, I stress here that Lefort’s dissection of totalitarianism seems to closely equate to Grossman’s understanding as presented in *Life and Fate*. See Anatoly Pinsky, “The Diaristic Form and Subjectivity under Khrushchev,” *Russian Review* 73, no.4 (2014).

⁶⁷ Carlos de la Torre, *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 43.

⁶⁸ Lefort, *Complications*, 140-1.

thereby making possible a range of individual readings, perspectives and selfhoods. For Grossman, I will show, the epic was a totalitarian form, while the novel was democratic and individualist. Making the present epic, or orienting the self toward a regime-produced discourse of Stalingrad as myth was, therefore, an act that either perpetuated or acquiesced to the state.

In *Life and Fate*, there is no resurrection, and no sense by which the individual can hope to enact their own “Stalingrad” in the present. Instead, the turning point of Stalingrad produces winners and losers: those who can dominate and create discourse—Stalin, the commissar Getmanov—flourish; those who are squeezed out of that discourse—Krymov, Shtrum, Jews—are crushed. Grossman still revered the miracle produced by troops on the ground at Stalingrad in 1942, but only at the moment of its occurrence. It could neither be experienced vicariously in 1942-3 through reading the newspapers, nor could it be brought back, reexperienced, through reading literary prose afterward. By juxtaposing familiar Stalingrad tropes alongside dozens of conflicting voices, Grossman seized back control of the narrative from Soviet regimes past and present by relieving them of the right to produce “their own ideological accounts of themselves.”⁶⁹

Life and Fate revisits the characters of *For a Just Cause*. This time, the physicist Shtrum and commissar Krymov are the chief protagonists. Shtrum, evacuated from Stalingrad, struggles with his work and the fate of his mother, who has been killed in the Holocaust. His son-in-law Tolya is killed at Stalingrad. After the victory at Stalingrad, Shtrum is the victim of an antisemitic campaign that almost sees his career ended. However, Stalin's interest in his work on atomic physics saves him. Shtrum is forced to sign a letter denouncing a Jewish doctors' plot in return for his life.⁷⁰ Krymov, meanwhile, visits House 6/1, which holds out in Stalingrad. Under the command of the insubordinate Captain Grekov, House 6/1 epitomizes wartime freedom and the people's spirit. Krymov's faith is shaken by Grekov's anti-Soviet views and social and military success in running the house as a separate “kingdom.” Returning to the mainland, he is arrested and sent to the Lubyanka in Moscow, where his interrogators force him into signing a confession of counterrevolutionary activities. This brief overview illustrates how Grossman, like

⁶⁹ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 386.

⁷⁰ This imitates the antisemitic Jewish Doctors' Plot that almost ensnared Grossman in 1952-3.

Simonov, used the Stalingrad text to discuss events in the recent past. Events from across time—the antisemitic campaigns of the late Stalinist era, the demotions of military leaders after the war, the demands for authors to rewrite history according to official demands—are asynchronously brought into the reader’s present, coalescing around the discursive site of Stalingrad.

Grossman did not use the sense of *kairos* implied by Stalingrad to wipe away or justify these events. Repentant of his own complicity in propagandizing for the state during and after the war, Grossman used his novel to deconstruct the state’s hold over individual lives by tearing apart the government’s Stalingrad myth. In place of constructing a discursive world using the terms of official discourse—what Stephen Kotkin terms “speaking Bolshevik”—through imitative invocation of the Stalingrad myth’s tropes, Grossman attempted to construct a counter-narrative filled with the apparently “real” memory, untouched by state narratives, of those who fought, suffered and died at the hands of totalitarianism in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany alike.⁷¹ By reasserting their voices and lives in text, Grossman attempts to seize back control of the Stalingrad story from both the Stalinist and Khrushchev regimes.

Recalling Stalingrad

Grossman revisited his own and other’s Stalingrad works, alluding to and quoting them verbatim in order to summon and then undermine the reader’s expectation of a monologic epic. By relegating the Soviet-controlled narrative to one of many stories, Grossman did more than write people back into the Stalingrad story. He undermined the stability of the repeated Stalingrad myth through its recontextualization in a polyphonic novel. Here, Grossman’s work radically departed from all earlier Stalingrad texts.

At first glance, material drawn from sources stretching back to 1942 seems to suggest that *Life and Fate* will be a note-for-note rendition of the familiar Stalingrad story. Indeed, there is

⁷¹ I acknowledge the challenge of historians who might assert that there is no difference between an *a priori* reality and the discursive experience of reality constructed by Soviet subjects (for a brief discussion of the debates, see Katharina Uhl, “‘Oppressed and Brainwashed Soviet Subject’ or ‘Prisoners of the Soviet Self,’” *Bylye gody*, no.23 [2013]). However, in invoking this opposition between discourse and reality, I seek to draw out the implications of Grossman’s text: that the Soviet narrative of Stalingrad has constructed a false and deleterious reality, which the author now attempts to deconstruct.

much that would have been familiar to the reader of 1960 in *Life and Fate*. The introduction to the battle, which is placed at the very start of the work, is full of phrases that closely resemble the wartime sketches: on the “slopes of the Mamaev kurgan, the earth whirled into the air like smoke,” with “the dust rising into the sky”; the burning oil silos and the “red glow” of Stalingrad are introduced here in preparation for their appearance throughout the text.⁷² The narrator mimics the Sovinformbiuro-tinged narrative digressions of *For a Just Cause*: “This was the beginning of the most difficult period for the defenders of Stalingrad. In the confusion of the street-fighting, of the different attacks and counter-attacks, of the struggle for the ‘House of Specialists’, for the mill, for the State Bank—and for each square, courtyard and cellar—the superiority of the German forces was indisputable.”⁷³ Early passages recall others’ work too: the description of “placards” and a homely life at the front semantically imitate passages from both Simonov’s *Days and Nights* and Viktor Nekrasov’s *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*;⁷⁴ the treatment of soldiers flummoxed by the difference between maps and reality and the regular appearance of Stalin’s portrait recalls Nekrasov’s novel;⁷⁵ references to figures such as the Spaniard Ruben Ibaruri allude to a wide reading list of officially approved works.⁷⁶

Most significantly, Grossman made use of the idea of Stalingrad as hell on earth, grounding the early passages of the novel in the eschatological tropes that the reader would have recognized as belonging to the earliest Stalingrad stories: “Fire flows like water and the Volga’s burning.”⁷⁷ Stalingrad is cut off from the normal world: “the river itself was on fire and there was no way of reaching them.”⁷⁸ The theme includes allusions to the idea of Stalingrad as dead city. Wagons “looked like a herd of animals huddled around the body of their dead leader—a locomotive that was lying on its side. Still further away one could see the skeletons of ruined

⁷² Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 19, 22-23. Recall the “red glow” that connotes Stalingrad’s appearance across the Soviet Union in *For a Just Cause*. Shtrum’s stove is later “filled with flames” when Nadya tosses her notebook into it, signalling the proximity of the characters to events in the battle (Ibid., 58).

⁷³ Ibid., 21.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 20, 44.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 21, 94.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 91. Ibaruri’s death was already regularly discussed. Its position in the Stalingrad myth would later be cemented by P. Severov’s *Tale of Ruben* (*Povest’ o Rubene*, 1968).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 26.

buildings.”⁷⁹ The invocation of these tropes primed the reader to expect that resurrection would follow.

Indeed, characters in the novel link success at Stalingrad with the idea of resurrection. Shtrum, for example, perceives the successful November 19 counterattack at Stalingrad as the “beginning of spring.”⁸⁰ The battle’s “spring” should herald a move from icy, wintry darkness to a period of light and new life, familiar from everything from Grossman’s wartime sketches—recall images of the melting Volga and the arrival of sunlight in the city—to *Not Born Soldiers*—the forward-looking hopes of Sintsov and Tanya to have children. Every part of the description of Stalingrad in *Life and Fate* suggests that the resurrection of the city, the people and the nation will follow obliteration. It does not. Grossman used the tropes I have studied in the previous chapters to lull the reader into a sense of familiar expectation that traumas and suffering would be resolved.

The effect is persuasive. Even some scholars have suggested that Grossman merely repeats the official narrative of Stalingrad. Mark Lipovetsky criticizes the passages that describe the battle at Stalingrad as the novel’s “weakest,” Solzhenitsyn questions the abundant use of Soviet clichés, and Patrick Finney argues that Grossman’s “repudiation of the official myth was in fact less total.”⁸¹ But to hold this view is to read *Life and Fate* without any sense of the expectations around the myth of Stalingrad that had been established by two decades of repetition. In fact, Grossman in *Life and Fate* looked beyond the “idea of the people’s war as a slogan, as a declaration, as a dogmatic, forceful [...] idea,” developing the wide-ranging source material and suspicion of sloganeering familiar from *For a Just Cause* into a dissonant clash of materials and perspectives.⁸² Grossman summons the cache of tropes, symbols and phrases associated with the battle as a means to engage in a polyphonic discourse with them, thereby pulling the myth of Stalingrad from the realm of the epic into that of the novel. By doing so, he challenges

⁷⁹ Ibid., 43. This harks back to Grossman’s *Krasnaia zvezda* sketch *A Stalingrad Tale*, which describes beds as “carcasses” and pipes as the “bones” of the city.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 339.

⁸¹ M. Lipovetsky, “Edinoborstvo,” in *Zhizn’ i sud’ba Vasiliia Grossmana s raznykh toчек zreniia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1991), 315; Solzhenitsyn, “Priemy epopei,” 178; Finney, “Grossman and the Myths of the Great Patriotic War,” 314.

⁸² Kulish and Oskotskii, “Epos voyny narodnoi,” 41.

totalitarian control of memory of Stalingrad and permits the reader to imagine a new context for their subjectivity.

Grossman's narrator conspicuously distances himself from official language—from “speaking Bolshevik.” Unlike the narrator of *For a Just Cause*, who absorbed Stalin's words into the body of the novel's text, Grossman's narrator refrains from using clichés for as long as Stalingrad holds out. The phrase “stand to the death” is replaced by close but not identical synonyms: people are “going to their death,” “fated to die” or “sent to their death.” Characters absorb official language through deference to their superiors—and therefore the totalitarian state—rather than through a transcendent power (as in those late 1940s works where Stalin's spirit could leap across physical boundaries). For example, General Rodimtsev's use of the phrase “you must stop the enemy yourselves, *at whatever cost*”—which the reader would instantly recognize as a slogan taken from wartime propaganda and associated with Stalingrad—is immediately reiterated by his subordinate.⁸³ Loudspeakers, rather than ordinary people, announce that, “This is the people's war, a sacred war.”⁸⁴ The result is that official discourse appears at odds, or at least distant from, the experience of ordinary characters. The contrast grounds the novel in a sense of polyphony by adding a layer of double voicing to the text: every allusion or quote is bathed in a contradictory, distanced perspective. By moving away from the regime's monologism, Grossman challenged the fundamental validity of its hold over memory of Stalingrad.

The narrative reveals instead that official discourse is spoken for various purposes, drawing attention both to a process of sympathetic identification with official discourse and simultaneously undermining it. The enthusiastic old Bolshevik Mostovskoi uses the official story of Stalingrad to justify his own complicity in Stalinist excesses of the past: “Stalingrad is still holding out [...] now even a blind man can see that the end justifies the means.”⁸⁵ But material from familiar stories is equally spoken by those who wish to navigate or even cheat the system. The Russian-German Jenny Genrikhovna “shrewdly declared herself an anti-Fascist and called

⁸³ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 30.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

the Fuhrer a cannibal” to distract from her German origins.⁸⁶ The *politruk* (military political instructor) Berman invokes Soviet language to hide his Jewish origins: “The ideals he spoke about so excitedly were those of democracy and the Revolution. But Berman’s strength at times like this lay in the way he made us of an ideal rather than serving it, the way he subordinated it to his own – often questionable – needs of the moment.”⁸⁷ Barkhatov, a violent criminal in the Gulag, uses the term “Fascist criminals” to assert his superiority over the camp’s political prisoners.⁸⁸ Chauvinist banter in Stalingrad is classed as “an outmoded, pre-revolutionary point of view”—a jarringly absurd misapplication of official terminology.⁸⁹ Association with deception and irony brings the language of the regime into the realm of the novelistic present. The Soviet reader is invited to recognize the multiplicity of meanings that emerge from statements with supposedly fixed meaning.

Material from the official narrative is thus not simply repeated verbatim in *Life and Fate*. It is “brought low,” to use Bakhtin’s term, becoming just one part of the novel’s polyphonic fabric. Grossman’s invocation of Stalingrad motifs can thus be read within the context of the striking presence of contradictory meanings. *Life and Fate* is inimical to the monologic and imitative Socialist Realist approach to Stalingrad. Its chorus of voices, opposing perspectives, and linguistic juxtapositions creates “a knot [...] made up of other novels, woven together.”⁹⁰ This drives an immovable wedge between the present—the reality of 1960 and the Khrushchev-era’s uncertain discourse about the past and present—and the image of Stalingrad bounded off in epic time. Challenging the meaning and authority of familiar Stalingrad motifs through polyphonic techniques, Grossman also challenges the reader to ask how they can possibly understand and interpret a memory of Stalingrad that rejects finality. In turn, we can conclude, Grossman argues that the turning point of Stalingrad cannot have had an identical effect in every context and for every Soviet citizen.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 101.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 153.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 161.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 235.

⁹⁰ Heinrich Böll, “Sposobnost’ skorbet’: o romane V. Grossmana ‘Zhizn’ i sud’ba,’” *Novoe vremia*, no. 24 (June 1998), 38.

Resurrecting the Individual

Lengthy sections of *Life and Fate* simply witness and record the lives of victims of both totalitarian states and the war. Grossman invoked a multiplicity of witnessing perspectives not just to carve open a place in the text for the ordinary person's experience of suffering—although there is much of that in *Life and Fate*—as Simonov did, but to assert that a totalitarian discourse of Stalingrad had been the only real national mode of communication prior to the novel's writing. Indeed, Grossman stressed the work's subjective nature in a letter to Khrushchev. Grossman wrote that *Life and Fate* reflected an “inner world” of his feelings that had formerly been absent from the Stalingrad text, one that he felt obliged to express “in my own way” (*po-svoemu*).⁹¹ By doing so, Grossman went far beyond Simonov's reflections on Stalinist crimes in *Not Born Soldiers*.

By the late 1950s, Grossman had come to understand the people not as a homogenous mass—seeing them as such was to legitimize the totalitarian subsumation of the individual as Lefort describes it—but as a heterogeneous group of individuals. A single experience that tracks the progress of the myth in its orientation to *kairos*—Vavilov's *kairotic* destiny of conscription, journey to the front and sacrifice in battle—is replaced with a multiplicity of historical experiences. A polyphonic chorus of voices portraying multiple perspectives with different readings of Stalingrad jostles for attention, reflecting the distinction between the totalitarian mass and the individual's experience of the past.

In *For a Just Cause*, multiple voices had simply confirmed Stalingrad's unitary meaning. Now, Grossman's personal experiences and the major events of the twentieth century are reflected in the vast array of characters and their disparate fates. By writing and rewriting his characters' lives outside of the state's terms, Grossman asserted the “uniqueness” of the individual's lived experience of the past. It is clear from the following narratorial digression that that uniqueness is, in Grossman's eyes, central to an individual's humanity: “What constitutes freedom, the soul of an individual life, is its uniqueness [...] life only becomes happiness, is only

⁹¹ V.S. Grossman, “Letter to N.S. Khrushchev,” 1962, Box 2, Folder 35, Garrard Collection.

endowed with freedom and meaning when someone exists as a whole world that has never been repeated in all eternity.”⁹² The collated experiences of totalitarian suffering allow the victims to speak for themselves, acting as a counterbalance to the state’s power to mediate its victims’ pasts.⁹³

The gallery of characters described in the novel was based on people Grossman knew. He now tried to retrieve their narratives from the clutches of death and the government. Grossman’s line of thought seems to have originated in relation to his mother, who was killed by the Germans in Berdichev.⁹⁴ Even two decades after her death, he wrote letters to her, believing that the letter enabled a special, personal and emotional connection: “I cry over your letters, because you are contained within them.”⁹⁵ By writing his testimony on the losses of the war, Grossman believed that his mother would “still live on in this book.”⁹⁶ Thus the work is filled with reams of other “real” characters. Of those whose origin I have been able to track down, the characters Koroteev, Kolomeitsev and Nedzel’sky all bear the unusual names of Stalingrad journalists, which cannot be a coincidence. Grossman knew a Shtrum in the 1920s and a Grekov at Stalingrad. Even the doctor who tells Lyudmila Shaposhnikova of her son Tolya’s death is based on a real person.⁹⁷

Much of the witnessing is based on Grossman's experience as a Jew, as the child of a Holocaust victim, as a frontline propagandist, and as the husband of a suspect individual in the 1930s.⁹⁸ These different roles seem to remain unresolved as the narrative almost scatologically

⁹² Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 539. It is particularly significant that this passage follows a chapter describing Jews murdered at Auschwitz, which symbolizes the peak of totalitarianism.

⁹³ This reflects the approach of Western Holocaust writers. Documenting the voices of survivors has been crucial to the history of writing the Holocaust (Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004]), 16-32.

⁹⁴ Grossman was deeply troubled by his mother’s death in the ghetto in Berdichev. See V.S. Grossman, “Letter to Semen Osipovich,” 1944, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection.

⁹⁵ F. Guber, “Pis’ma k materi,” *Nedelia*, no. 41 (October 16, 1988).

⁹⁶ As quoted in F. Guber, “Ty budesh’ zhit’ v toi knige, kotorui ia posvitiat tebe,” *Voprosy literatury*, no. 3 (2005), 60.

⁹⁷ Ekaterina Korotkova-Grossman, “Correspondence with Garrards,” 1989-1993, Box 2, Folder 42, Garrard Collection; Ortenberg, *Vremia ne vlastno*, 124; Korotkova-Grossman, “Vot umer papa.”

⁹⁸ See Guber, “Pis’ma k materi.”

leaps between perspectives, moving so rapidly from one to the other that the reader struggles to keep track of where and with whom the action is taking place. Grossman, like Simonov, added interviews and archival research to his biographical experiences.⁹⁹ However, Grossman took a further step toward witnessing, adding the experiences of imagined victims—those of the dead, who could not speak for themselves—as testimony against totalitarianism. The suffering of national minorities, and even Germans, sits alongside accounts of Soviet sacrifice.¹⁰⁰ No nationality is excluded from the text, repudiating the Stalingrad story’s heavy emphasis on Russians and use of Russian literary tradition.¹⁰¹

The technique is encapsulated in the use of letters and of short biographies in the narrative. The inclusion of letters from the war dead in *Life and Fate*—for example, Tolya’s letter to his mother Lyudmila—resurrects the memory of the dead: “In some incomprehensible manner, hardly reading the words, but somehow absorbing, almost breathing in, line after line of the red handwriting of some undereducated clerk, she understood: he’s alive, he’s alive!”¹⁰² The letter resists government control, since it addresses only the relationship between the writer and recipient, rather than orienting itself toward a state-controlled narrative of history.¹⁰³

The individual letter, though, is corrupted at the end of the novel when Shtrum signs the Jewish Doctors’ Plot denunciation. Now totalitarian control extends even into this personal medium as the state seizes control of individual narratives. Grossman’s narrator also juxtaposes numerous series of biographical sketches of characters, giving them life without comment or mediation. This is best evident as the narrator describes passengers on the train to the concentration camp, and the soldiers in House 6/1 at Stalingrad. Moving from eyewitness to eyewitness, Grossman recounts the stories of the lost. These passages do nothing to drive the plot

⁹⁹ Bocharov, *Grossman: Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*.

¹⁰⁰ A. Bocharov, “Vera i prozorlivost’,” in *S raznykh tocek zreniia*.

¹⁰¹ The Russocentric nature of Soviet post-war narratives did not mean that national minorities rejected or did not construct subjectivity around those stories. Amir Weiner has shown, for example, how Ukrainian veterans used the emerging myth of the war in the years following 1945 as “an autobiographical point of reference and a point of departure” (Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 640). Grossman’s inclusion of multiple nationalities, though, strongly emphasizes the skewed emphasis of earlier representations of Stalingrad.

¹⁰² Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 80.

¹⁰³ See also Shtrum’s reading of his mother’s letter from the Berdichev ghetto (Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 64).

forward, and bear no relation to the arc of progress made at Stalingrad. They are completely decoupled from the sense of *kairos* at Stalingrad, disrupting the mythic hold over history and individual lives. Instead, they simply witness, standing in opposition to the stories of individual lives coopted into the official myth of Stalingrad.¹⁰⁴

The emphasis on the individual's experience of the past culminates in replacing the state-centric narratives of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia with individual human experiences—those that belong to the present, to the temporality of the novel. Contrasting totalitarian political visions are embodied in the forms of the camp commandant Liss and the Bolshevik believer Mostovskoi. The clash of great nations is reduced to a face-to-face encounter between two ordinary men. “Do you really not recognize yourselves in us—yourselves and the strength of your will? Isn't it true that for you too the world *is* your will? Is there anything that can make you waver?” asks Liss.¹⁰⁵ Couched in the narrative as a whole, Liss' questions seems to query the totalitarian, demiurgic drive for absolute creative and human control. The personified encounter is repeated at Stalingrad, when a German and a Soviet soldier find themselves side-by-side in a crater. Recognizing that they are trapped by the totalitarian force that has thrown them into war, and thus recognizing their shared humanity, they cannot kill each other. Note Grossman's emphasis on the act of *seeing*—of witnessing:

They looked at one another in silence, two inhabitants of the war. The perfect, faultless, automatic reflex they both possessed – the instinct to kill – failed to function.

Polyakov, a little further away, was also gazing at the stubble-covered face of the German. He didn't say anything either – though he usually found it difficult to keep his mouth shut. [...] As though coming to an unspoken agreement, they began to climb to the surface.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ This was not an entirely new approach for Grossman. Recall his joint Holocaust documentary project with Il'ia Ehrenburg, *The Black Book*.

¹⁰⁵ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 379. Critics have recognized the importance of this scene, which closely resembles Dostoevsky's account of the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* (I. Zolotusskii, “Voina i svoboda,” in *S raznykh tochek zreniia*. 255; Grigorii Pomerants, “Chto skazat' Iovu?,” *Strana i mir*, no. 6 [1988], 141).

¹⁰⁶ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 420-1.

The emphasis on witnessing human encounters rather than mediating them through the language of the official narrative in didactic historical digressions renders history as a fleeting experience between individuals, rather than an epic, certain memory that can be invoked at any time. Freed from the yoke of mythical narrative structure, Grossman's characters exert no tangible influence over history. Even though the use of tropes such as the house defence story primes the reader to expect it, there is no moment at which history coalesces around a heroic individual (as had occurred with Vavilov in *For a Just Cause*). The narrative simply observes the details of ordinary lives that were excluded from prior texts about Stalingrad. Alexander Tvardovsky's statement that *Life and Fate* "resembles a conversation, sincere to the utmost, with a person dear to you" is telling.¹⁰⁷ Characters' experiences in the novel exist outside the state's vision of *kairos*. There is no Olympian Kremlin office to which they are addressed or to which they acquiesce. Mostovskoi is killed shortly after the conversation with Liss without fulfilling any historical mission or acting on the information he has learned. The *kairotic* moment of Stalingrad is displaced from the text by encounters between ordinary people. Distanced from the Stalingrad model of epic and myth, Grossman's work denies the state power of representation of the individual.

Couched in a morass of textual and historical modes, the monologic hold on the narrative is lost altogether. Grossman incorporated material from his notebooks and sketches, adding biographical detail where possible.¹⁰⁸ Philosophical, historical, religious, and epistolary passages, telegrams, and military orders jostle for position alongside the bones of the Soviet text. At a time when Soviets were turning to a wider range of material to help explain the events of Stalin's rule,¹⁰⁹ Grossman referenced a panoply of international writers in order to contextualize the Stalingrad experience in a textual world that the regime could not dominate.¹¹⁰ Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Pushkin, Chekhov, Turgenev, Apuleius, Russian medieval writing, Heine

¹⁰⁷ As quoted in Denis Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir: Coming to Terms with the Stalinist Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 169.

¹⁰⁸ For instance, Lyudmila's visit to Tolya's grave may well be based on a visit to a cemetery that haunted Grossman: "There's no one to cry over him. Not his mother, not his grandmother," he wrote to his father (V.S. Grossman, "Letter to Semen Osipovich," December 31, 1942, Box 2, Folder 33, Garrard Collection).

¹⁰⁹ Kozlov, "Remembering and Explaining the Terror During the Thaw," 194.

¹¹⁰ Kulish and Oskotskii, "Epos voiny narodnoi," 30; Arkadii El'iashevich, "Priglasenie k razgovoru: sotsialisticheskii realizm vchera, segodnia...i zavtra," *Zvezda*, no. 1 (1989), 177.

and Shakespeare are all present.¹¹¹ The result is to drown Sovinformbiuro and official material in a sea of alternative viewpoints. *Life and Fate* is not just polyphonic, it is at times cacophonous: disorienting, uneven, and unresolvable.

Reinventing the Epic Space/Time

Grossman does not contest the value or importance of Stalingrad as an extraordinary event in *Life and Fate*. Stalingrad is still described as a moment of positivity and hope, albeit one that was ephemeral and has now been lost: “There was something good about the relations between people here. There was a true sense of dignity and equality on this clay slope where so much blood had been spilt.”¹¹² As the narrator explains, “the soul of wartime Stalingrad was freedom.”¹¹³ Grossman’s model of freedom can be understood through examination of the treatment of House 6/1, which holds out against German attack in Stalingrad. By undermining official language and constructing biographical tableaux of diverse individuals around Stalingrad, the narrator disrupts the epic and, therefore, shows how freedom can be created at any time and in any place. Breaking down the expectations of epic space and time attached to familiar Stalingrad motifs, Grossman’s narrative does not harmonize a universal history with the individual, but deliberately seeks to separate them.

Scholars have called House 6/1 the novel’s “geographical and philosophical centre.”¹¹⁴ The epic significance of this fact is enormous. The house is cut off from the mainland, recalling the house defence story familiar from the wartime sketches and subsequent works such as *Days and Nights*. Grossman summons his own wartime terminology to reinforce the centrality of the

¹¹¹ These were the writers that Grossman believed “depicted Russians’ love for the truth, freedom and goodness” (Grossman, “Letter to N.S. Khrushchev”). For Tolstoy, see *Life and Fate*’s status as a “twentieth century *War and Peace*” (Ellis, *The Evolution of a Heretic*). For Dostoevsky: Grossman references *The Devils* and rewrites Ivolgin’s story of a soldier returned from the dead in *The Idiot* (see *Life and Fate*, 265, 604). Grossman juxtaposes quotes from Pushkin’s *Elegy* and the *Tale of Igor’s Campaign* (230). For Gogol, see the allusion to *The Government Inspector* (262). For Turgenev, see 486.

¹¹² Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 215.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 781.

¹¹⁴ Zolotusskii, “Voina i svoboda,” 249. See also Fredric Jameson, “On Re-Reading *Life and Fate*,” *New Left Review*, no. 95 (October 2015) and Ellis, *Evolution of a Heretic*, 89, for similar arguments.

house: “House 6/1 appeared to lie on the very axis of this offensive.”¹¹⁵ To this extent, Grossman drew on familiar themes from epic representations of Stalingrad. However, while the reader expects the house to distill the entire nation's fight to save the Soviet Union, the narrator paints it as a separate “kingdom,” which suggests that it is free of Stalin’s rule.¹¹⁶ This, Grossman seems to have suggested, is the true freedom of Stalingrad: a location cut off from totalitarian power. The epic boundaries around the Stalingrad house are further broken down by transposing the spirit of House 6/1 into isolated spaces throughout the novel. Wherever the characters are able to slam the door on Stalinist power in apartments, laboratories, offices, dining rooms, even ghettos, the spirit of the battle emerges in what I term “Stalingrad spaces”: for Grossman, it was not Stalingrad itself—or the media portrayal of it—that was miraculously transformative, but the absence of state power at Stalingrad in 1942.

Within the house the regime lacks control, so the commissar Krymov is sent to reassert order. The lack of control is reflected in linguistic themes. In House 6/1, “speaking Bolshevik” is not just undermined with double-meaning; it becomes completely useless. Even Krymov quickly abandons his politicized language, knowing that “this kind of thinking was unhelpful.”¹¹⁷ The teenaged Katya Vengrova now sees her Soviet upbringing as a “fairy tale” and reconciles herself with a new “reality”: “Life in House 6/1 had blotted out everything that had gone before. Improbable though this life was, it now seemed the only reality; it was as if everything before was imaginary.”¹¹⁸ Grekov, meanwhile, decides to go by the title *upravdom* (house manager) rather than “captain,” rejecting the state’s ability to define his role: contrast this with Vavilov’s eagerness to define himself in the state’s terms as a *kolkhoznik* in *For a Just Cause*.

Unyoked from the fear of Soviet power, people across the “Stalingrad spaces” speak freely and, therefore, undercut official language. The apparatchik Getmanov, for example, toasts Stalin at a dinner party, but “in a rather bluff, free and easy tone of voice. The implication was that they

¹¹⁵ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 235.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 220.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 239.

all understood Stalin's greatness very well, but were drinking to him now as a human being."¹¹⁹ Freedom, though, is not always used positively. One building resident in Berdichev openly expresses her antisemitism: "Well, that's the end of the Jews. Thank God for that!" This antisemitic view contrasts with the multiethnic make-up of House 6/1—note the roots of the surnames *Grekov* (*grek* – Greek) and *Vengrova* (*vengr* – Hungarian). The effect is that monologic totalitarian representation of an epic Stalingrad is once more disrupted by disagreement and loss of centralized control through which individuals are able to cease viewing their own lives through the lens of government-mediated, nationalistic narratives.

People in this fashion turn "that nameless thing called the government [...] back into a ragtag population of individuals of all classes"¹²⁰: the homogeneous totalitarian group is broken into its constituent, human parts. Motivated by human desires, rather than ideological demands, individuals find themselves capable of acts of insubordination and self-questioning. Sergei Shaposhnikov, who has left House 6/1 and wants to return to his paramour Katya, is struck by the novelty of simple thoughts: "He looked at the door of the bunker. Why had he never thought before of simply getting up, just like that, and leaving? Seryozha got up, opened the door, and left."¹²¹ Sergei sees Stalingrad not as the hell familiar from the myth, but as "paradise."¹²² Characters begin to notice non-Soviet aspects of their character. For example, Shtrum, cut off from power in his apartment and laboratory, becomes conscious of his Jewishness.¹²³ Freedom begets hope. Krymov remembers "the air of the first days of the Revolution" before Stalin's terrors.¹²⁴ Enthusiasm for the future sweeps every "Stalingrad space." For example, Major Yershov's abortive rebellion in the concentration camp is "inspired by a great vision" of Stalingrad. Yershov believes that victory will lead to "a free Russia," that it would be "a victory over the death camps where his father, his mother and sisters had perished."¹²⁵ Shtrum,

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹²⁰ Jameson, "On Re-Reading Life and Fate."

¹²¹ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 245.

¹²² Ibid., 402.

¹²³ E. Danilova, "Znak body? Nad stranitsami 'Zhizni i sud'by' V. Grossmana," *Voprosy literatury*, no. 3 (1993), 38-9.

¹²⁴ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 220.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 288, 297.

meanwhile, is able to suddenly solve his complex theoretical problems in the pages immediately following the narrator's discussions of Stalingrad's real freedom: the solution "had arisen in absolute freedom; it had sprung from his own head."¹²⁶ The "kingdom of death" that Grossman described in the wartime sketch *The Battle of Stalingrad* (*Stalingradskaia bitva*)—a dead, hellish Stalingrad that the individual must leave to be resurrected—has been turned on its head. Stalingrad represents not death but life, not a hellish underworld but paradise, not a Soviet victory, but a victory over Soviet totalitarianism.

The Soviet reader would expect House 6/1 to hold out against the odds. At first, the house miraculously survives the Wehrmacht's technological might: "The Germans had tried to destroy the building from the air and torpedo-bombs had been dropped on it three times. One whole corner had collapsed. But beneath the ruins the cellar remained intact."¹²⁷ The reader might expect the house's survival to coincide with the nation's resurrection—recall this common story from the newspapers of 1942 and works such as *Days and Nights*—but the house is instead destroyed. The survivors are overcome by the loss of their comrades, rather than full of hope for the future: "'The house has gone. It's been razed to the ground,' said Klimov in a frightened voice as Polyakov hurried after him. 'My brothers, have you all been killed?'"¹²⁸ This is the first hint that the turning point at Stalingrad will not be experienced as a national resurrection, and thus a major step to destroying the state's hold over the battle's mythical representation.

As soon as House 6/1 falls, Stalin starts to reassert his power over the "Stalingrad space" and to rewrite the narrative of the war. Beginning with Grekov, who is posthumously made a hero, the authorities embark on a process through which "the birthmarks of Russian social democracy were finally erased" in favour of a jingoistic "history of Russian national glory." The narrator explicitly links the rise of a monological patriotic narrative, which had bubbled under the surface of the Stalinist 1930s, with the fall of Stalingrad: "This process finally became manifest at a time when Stalingrad was the only beacon of freedom in a kingdom of

¹²⁶ Ibid., 332.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 48.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 421.

darkness.”¹²⁹ In this context, there could be no rewriting of the Stalingrad myth that carves out a joint space for Soviet power, the collective and the individual, as Simonov would attempt in *Not Born Soldiers*. According to my reading of *Life and Fate*, the Stalingrad myth served only to buttress a totalitarian power inimical to the individual freedom of wartime. To bring it into contact with the present, to break down the epic, was to reject the state’s hold over history and the individual.

The fall of House 6/1 thus symbolizes not resurrection but oblivion. Stalingrad remains a turning point of sorts—each character undergoes significant personal changes as soon as House 6/1 falls¹³⁰—but the universally positive post-Stalingrad resurrection, which the reader familiar with the Stalingrad myth must expect, never comes. The slain Stalingrad remains a husk: “The capital of the war against the Fascists was now no more than icy ruins.”¹³¹ For all the celebrations that sweep Stalingrad itself when victory is achieved, “the city felt dead.”¹³² Crossing the Volga, which should lead to a resurrection and therefore herald the coming future, ends without the expected result. During Lyudmila’s river crossing to visit her son Tolya’s grave, darkness and howling wind recall descriptions of the crossing from the wartime sketches, from *Days and Nights*, and from *For a Just Cause*: “Black waves lapped noisily against the sides of the boat. A fierce wind blew from downstream, howling and flinging up spray from the river.”¹³³ But the crossing causes only death. As Lyudmila reaches the opposite bank, “a thick mist swayed over the Volga and everything living seemed to have drowned.”¹³⁴ Unlike in the treatment of drowned civilians and mariners from Grossman and Simonov’s wartime sketches, there is no symbolic resurrection. Tolya’s death is instead amplified into a torrent of grief that symbolically destroys all life, perpetuating on an individual level the destruction of the German invasion, supposedly ended at Stalingrad: “Everything living—her mother, Nadya, Viktor’s eyes, the

¹²⁹ Ibid., 649.

¹³⁰ Grossman liberally sprinkles the term “turning point” (*perelom*) throughout the novel: “The encirclement of Paulus’ army was a turning point in the course of the war”; Krymov “had reached an important turning point!” (Ibid., 406).

¹³¹ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 782.

¹³² Ibid., 780.

¹³³ Ibid., 83.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 121.

bulletins about the course of the war—had ceased to exist.”¹³⁵ Just as the space of House 6/1 was repeated across the Stalingrad spaces, the crossing theme is repeated in the fatal journey of a transport train bound for the German concentration camp. In the gas chamber after the train journey, people are stripped of their place in time as their physical and temporal realities are erased: “Sofya Levinton had no future, only a past.”¹³⁶ Totalitarian rule is cemented in both Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. After Stalingrad, the individual’s future is destroyed—just as the story of the Holocaust was squeezed out of Soviet literature by triumphalist war narratives.

Grossman revisited a familiar moment from Stalingrad work to conclusively reject the idea of Stalingrad as possessing *kairotic* significance. Beginning with the wartime sketch *A New Day* (*Novyi den*’), victory at Stalingrad had been represented with the breaking of dawn and the rising of the sun. Grossman now revisits the key date—recall the importance of dates to the official narrative constructed in the aftermath of the battle—of the German army’s surrender at Stalingrad: “The morning of February 2, 1943 was very misty. The mist rose up from the holes pierced in the ice and from the few patches of unfrozen water. The sun rose, as harsh now in the winter winds as during the blazing heat of August.”¹³⁷ The symbolic new day is “harsh,” cold, and full of “blazing heat” simultaneously. Russian soldiers at Stalingrad are simultaneously freezing as they cross the Volga, inverting the expectation of spring’s thaw and of returning to life by leaving Stalingrad:

Their coats whipped by the wind, they huddled together and tried to avoid touching the icy metal. They drew in their legs under the bench and beat out a mournful tap-dance with their heels. When the wind got up, they just sat there and froze; they no longer had the strength to wipe their noses, to blow on their fingers, or to clap their sides.¹³⁸

This is hardly the gently reassuring warmth of the “spring” that Shtrum—and the reader of *Life and Fate*—had imagined that Stalingrad would bring. Grossman suggests that the resurrection

¹³⁵ Ibid., 136-7.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 527-8.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 779.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 498-9.

after Stalingrad did not occur for vast sections of the population Alexandra Shaposhnikova, for example, thinks, “Life was so bare, so harsh! It wasn’t standing in a queue that was difficult. It was worse when the shop was empty and there was no queue. It was worse when she went home and lay down in her cold, damp bed without lighting the stove, without preparing anything to eat. Everyone around her was suffering.”¹³⁹ *Life and Fate* fundamentally rejects Stalingrad as a universally positive turning point in history, suggesting that the shared experience of grief that Simonov would outline in *Not Born Soldiers* is illusory. The nation was split into winners and losers: those who can control narratives of the past, and those who are controlled by them.¹⁴⁰ What seemed to be a harmonious synthesis between past, present and future in the Stalingrad texts I have studied until now was thus transformed into a tool designed for what Grossman saw as totalitarian disincorporation.

Controlling the Past, Controlling the Individual

As soon as victory at Stalingrad is achieved, Stalin—and a host of willing Soviet *apparatchiki*—are able to increase their power over the individual and the nation through text. Stalin, depicted at first-hand for the first time in the novel, seizes control of writing through a renewed connection to the entire nation. As Soviet tanks go on the attack, Stalin “picked up his pencil and glanced at the silent telephone.”¹⁴¹ The unused telephone and the idle pencil suggest that Stalin has played no part in organizing the victory, and therefore in what Grossman lauds about Stalingrad. The pencil—the symbol of Stalin’s power familiar from late Stalinist works and from *Not Born Soldiers*—is now placed back in the leader’s hands: “He wanted very much to mark the movement of the southern claw of the pincer on his map.” Symbolically, the reader understands that the possibility of free expression has been taken away from the individual in the Stalingrad space. The telephone provides Stalin direct access to the “Stalingrad spaces.” Stalin

¹³⁹ Ibid., 707. For Andreev, the dedicated worker from *For a Just Cause*, personal loss extinguishes any hope of a positive future. The dead city motif is a symbol of personal destruction: “It was as though the buildings destroyed by bombs and shells, the central courtyard ploughed up by the war—full of mounds of earth, heaps of twisted metal, damp acrid smoke and the yellow reptilian flames of slowly-burning insulators—represented what was left to him of his own life” (Ibid., 246).

¹⁴⁰ Clark, *The Soviet Novel*.

¹⁴¹ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 628.

makes a phone call from the Kremlin. A series of further calls are made from generals to officers, resulting in a direct order to the tank colonel Novikov, who has until now been able to act according to his own initiative.¹⁴² Grossman's narrator verbatim quotes material from *For a Just Cause* without irony or double-voiced comment to suggest Stalin's victory: "This was [Stalin's] hour of triumph: he had not only defeated his current enemy; he had defeated the past."¹⁴³ The narrator's ability to distance himself from the Stalinist narrative is ended; Stalin's power to write the past is assured.

In tandem, linguistic control over the Stalingrad story is exerted through the newspapers' narrative of Stalingrad as resurrection. Grossman draws attention to the Sovinformbiuro report from January 1, 1943, "A Summary of the Past Six Weeks of the Stalingrad Offensive," which I described in Chapter 2: "This finally announced the encirclement of the German armies in Stalingrad. A change in popular consciousness was about to become manifest. [...] Soviet Russians began to think of themselves differently, to adopt a different manner towards other nationalities."¹⁴⁴ This signals the turn from an outward war—a genuine and necessary feat against a real enemy—to an inward one that, by necessity, excluded much of the non-Russian Soviet population. The Jews from Shtrum's institute are left behind before Shtrum himself almost falls foul of official antisemitism. The family hosting the refugee Alexandra Shaposhnikova "pitied and despised" her as a burden, and try to swindle her.¹⁴⁵ Priakhin refuses to support Spiridonov at Stalingrad, where in *For a Just Cause* they had set aside their differences.¹⁴⁶ The result is not simply social disunity. A violent war is once more waged as the totalitarian state demands sacrifices: Shtrum's physics institute is asked to "amputate the decaying limbs from a healthy collective" by excluding Shtrum.¹⁴⁷ The story of Stalingrad, according to Grossman, only enabled the regime to conduct a campaign of violence that inevitably accompanied the monologic conformity and exclusion of the totalitarian myth.

¹⁴² Ibid., 630-1.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 639.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 647.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 707-8.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 832.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 738.

However, passages in the novel suggest that the return of Stalinist control is not effected through top-down coercion. Ordinary people are complicit in creating and propagating official history. By invoking the state's narrative of Stalingrad, Shtrum invites Stalinist discourse into his apartment in an argument with his daughter, Nadya: "If we still live and breathe, it's because of Stalin and the Red Army. First learn to wipe your nose properly, then criticize Stalin—the man who's halted the fascists at Stalingrad."¹⁴⁸ A propaganda broadcast of a Sovinformbiuro update immediately sounds over the radio: "A booming voice suddenly filled the room: 'During the day our troops have engaged the enemy in the regions of Stalingrad, north-eastern Tuapse and Nalchik. On the other Fronts there has been no change.'¹⁴⁹ People, Grossman suggests, perpetuate power by using the violence of the regime's language for their own ends. By welcoming official discourse into his "Stalingrad space," Shtrum therefore acquiesces to totalitarian dominance. Shortly afterward, he will receive a phone call from Stalin that saves him from an antisemitic campaign at the physics institute where he works. By drawing on the strength of the Stalingrad myth in everyday discourse, Shtrum's subjectivity is conflated with totalitarian narrative. He leaves himself defenceless against the whims of state power.

Grossman makes it clear that state myths are indeed founded on the willingness of the population to participate in their propagation. In a reprise of the pre-turning point dinner party at which they freely discussed politics, Shtrum's physicist colleagues meet at the institute. Attempts to divine the meaning of rumours emerging from the halls of power replace uncensored conversation: "Apparently the Party was now principally concerned with the development of physics, mathematics and chemistry." The physicists begin to picture their lives not in relation to Stalingrad but in relation to the dictator: "Apparently [Stalin] had walked up and down the hall, pipe in hand, stopping now and then with a pensive look on his face."¹⁵⁰ The use of the image of Stalin with pipe in hand recalls not the real man, but the figure depicted in film, books and paintings. The polyphonic nature of Grossman's work reveals that Stalin's power is a socio-

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 350.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 352.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 440.

cultural construct sustained through participation in Soviet discourse.¹⁵¹ Ordinary people imbue Soviet language—and Stalin—with a special power, so that “‘It needed only one word from Stalin for vast buildings to rise up, for columns of people to march out into the taiga and fell trees, for hundreds of thousands of men and women to dig canals, build towns and lay down roads.’”¹⁵² Rewriting the memory of Stalingrad as a national resurrection by excluding individuals and entire groups from society, Stalin has acquired an indomitable power of creation.

This leads me to ask questions about the relationship between the Stalingrad and Stalinist pasts and the present of 1960. Narratively, the constant switching of perspectives between the narrator, different characters, reading letters presented out of sync with the book's *fabula* (Lyudmila's lengthy wait for news of Tolya is repeatedly mentioned) and emphasizing the distorted time of battle wreaks havoc on the forward temporal movement of Soviet history, undermining the stability of a smooth transition from chaos into harmony after Stalingrad.¹⁵³ Indeed, the narrator stresses that the post-Stalingrad Soviet Union is trapped in an atavistic temporal chaos. In the Lubyanka, “reality and delirium, past and future, were wrestling with each other.”¹⁵⁴ At Stalingrad, “the present was turning into the past, and there was no future”¹⁵⁵; thanks to Stalin's emergence as the victor of Stalingrad, and therefore the creator of history, Stalingrad catalyzes only a return to a 1930s past defined by terror. Denunciations, suspicion and collusion in arbitrary violence once more become the norm. The experience of time around Stalingrad, therefore, turns from a smooth, collectively experienced movement into the future into a violent backwards movement.

Characters choose, in moments of personal turning point, whether to belong to the totalitarian whole or to suffer exclusion or even death as the state turns against them. A coterie of lieutenants eager to seize power choose the former. The commissar Getmanov, for example,

¹⁵¹ Other scholars have made a similar argument about the ways that Stalin took hold of power. See, for example, Karen L. Ryan, *Stalin in Russian Satire, 1917-1991* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 7.

¹⁵² Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 750.

¹⁵³ For distortions of time during battle, see Krymov's contact at Stalingrad: “every day was the same”; “One second can stretch out for eternity, and long hours can crumple together”; “And as for hand-to-hand fighting—that takes place *quite outside time*” (Ibid., 31-33).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 606.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 727.

returns to his privileged 1930s position, when he was able to make “cruel” decisions since “the power of his word lay in the fact that the Party had entrusted him with its own interests.”¹⁵⁶ Now, he threatens to report Novikov for insubordination.¹⁵⁷ The victors of Stalingrad are those who control its written representation, not those who made wise tactical decisions like Novikov. Those who do not acquiesce to state control, such as the rebellious Major Yershov—like Simonov’s Serpilin, incarcerated during the terror of the thirties—are killed. A faithful Stalinist “slipped Yershov’s card into the pile for Buchenwald. He was put on the list automatically.”¹⁵⁸ Totalitarian power, both Nazi and Soviet, works in tandem to assert control over the individual. Those who were free to speak their mind in the Stalingrad spaces, to act ethically, are no longer able to do so. The state’s power rushes back into the Stalingrad spaces to divide, rather than heal, the nation.

Moreover, the Stalingrad that arises from the ashes, the city whose resurrection had been painted as a testament to national rebirth, is a vehicle for the apparatus of 1930s style incarceration: “Here, ten years later, was constructed a vast dam, one of the largest hydro-electric power stations in the world—the product of the forced labour of thousands of prisoners.”¹⁵⁹ The narrator makes no moral distinction between using German POWs as forced labour and the incarceration of Krymov. In this reading, the Soviet Union had returned to an earlier era of forced labour, terror and Gulags, immediately after Stalingrad. In *Not Born Soldiers*, Simonov had presented a vision of a de-Stalinized present in which people and power once more worked toward a common goal. In *Life and Fate*, the resurrection of state power after Stalingrad could only lead to suffering for the individual as the government rebuilt the instruments of oppression.

Individuals, unlike the ascendant Stalin, experience in *Life and Fate* a constant repetition of the events of the past—including a return to repression—rather than a move into the future. Thus Grossman’s characters find themselves trapped again in the 1930s. The accusatory and denunciatory implications of the decade of terror once more infects ordinary discourse:

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 87.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 796.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 514.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 782.

“Whatever they said about Viktor [Shtrum] evoked the shade of his mother Anna Semyonovna; Dmitry and his wife, who had both died in camps, loomed behind any mention of their son Seryozha.”¹⁶⁰ Characters are drawn time and again to the same locations, fated to repeat the same thankless and impossible tasks: Zhenya, for example, repeatedly returns to the Lubyanka to try to give a parcel to Krymov. Ordinary Soviets are mired in the past thanks to the memory of losses in the war. Lyudmila keeps Tolya's room as it had been before he left: ““Can you see, Tolya?” she was murmuring. ‘I’ve managed to clean everything now. Little one, to look at your room now, no one would think there’d ever been a war.’”¹⁶¹ The death of Lyudmila’s child, Tolya, embodies the senselessness of a sacrifice that, for Grossman, meant only a return to the past. By association, *Life and Fate* implies that using the Stalingrad myth as a way to reconstitute the past—to flood it in hindsight with a sense of *kairos*, as Simonov does in *Not Born Soldiers*—is equally damaging. It does not heal traumas. It perpetuates them.

In one of the novel's most significant moments, Shtrum becomes aware of the government's control over the written word as he struggles to describe his biography in line with official categories on an official questionnaire. Shtrum experiences cognitive dissonance between his own sense of selfhood and the government’s reinterpretation of his essence. Unlike Simonov’s Serpilin, who reforges his sense of self around the memory of his role in the war, the result of Shtrum is entirely negative. His subjectivity is entirely wiped away and replaced by “doubt”—an absence of specificity that repudiates any ability to read the self through text:

Reading the questionnaire, Viktor began to doubt himself: was he really someone reliable?

1. Surname, name and patronymic...Who was he, who was this man filling in a questionnaire at the dead of night? Shtrum, Viktor Pavlovich? His mother and father had never been properly married, they had separated when Viktor was only two; and on his father’s papers he had seen the name Pinkhus—not Pavel. So why was he Viktor *Pavlovich*? Did he know himself? Perhaps he was someone quite different—

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 659.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 433.

Goldman...or Sagaydachny? Or was he the Frenchman Desforges, alias Dubrovsky?¹⁶²

The names listed here reveal Shtrum's inability to articulate the divide between his own subjectivity, cultural expressions of Russian culture, and his Jewish heritage. Shtrum is now neither the Jewish "Goldman" or "Pinkhus," nor the Russianized "Pavel." Shtrum may not be Russian at all, but the Ukrainian "Sagaydachny." Shtrum even considers whether he is in fact fictional, or an imposter: Dubrovsky/Desforges presumably refers to Pushkin's novel *Dubrovsky* (1833).¹⁶³ Shtrum is likewise unable to describe his date and place of birth or gender. His biography, and even the most fundamental functions of his biology, are thus cast into doubt. In the wake of Stalingrad, the state's assertion of control squeezes out minorities—individuals who do not fit in restrictive categories for questionnaires of this sort—who find themselves either crushed or subjugated to totalitarian power. The result of this is a complete loss of subjectivity for Shtrum, who no longer seems able to identify any facets of his own present or past. Shtrum can hardly read his life in the light of Stalingrad's *kairotic* properties when temporality fragments in this way.

Numerous passages in the novel suggest that writing encourages the population's silence or active participation in totalitarian violence, which must necessarily absorb or exclude subjects like Shtrum. The system's power over the individual's perception of reality is so strong that Shtrum believes "I really am absolutely free," even though he has just given in to a demand to baselessly denounce fellow Jews.¹⁶⁴ As the moment of Stalingrad recedes, and Stalin's power increases, the narrator too struggles to resist, reiterating Shtrum's erroneous claim in free indirect discourse: "He himself was quite free."¹⁶⁵ The narrator has earlier explained how the Soviet regime had primed the population to carry out genocidal and terroristic campaigns:

¹⁶² Ibid., 560-1.

¹⁶³ Note Shtrum's total confusion: in Pushkin's novel, the Russian aristocrat Dubrovsky masquerades as a French tutor, Desforges. Shtrum has it the other way round.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 804.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 813.

When people are to be slaughtered en masse, the local population is not immediately gripped by a bloodthirsty hatred of the old men, women and children who are to be destroyed. It is necessary to prepare the population by means of a special campaign. Stalin himself had mobilized the fury of the masses, whipping it up to the point of frenzy during the campaigns to liquidate the kulaks as a class and using the extermination of Trotskyist-Bukharinite degenerates and saboteurs.¹⁶⁶

Now, then, we see this campaign—which would lead to the late 1940s’ anti-Semitic campaigns—beginning again. By controlling the Stalingrad story, the state was able to rewrite both history and individual lives. As soon as the victory at Stalingrad occurs, the government’s control over writing, both in official channels and in people’s personal lives, is made complete. Captain Grekov, who is suspected of being a traitor and refuses to cooperate with his superiors, is posthumously turned into a war hero: Krymov’s interrogator calls him “a true patriot.”¹⁶⁷ On signing a letter attacking the Jewish doctors, Shtrum immediately begins to “feel sick. [...] Once again, millions of tons of granite were about to come down on his shoulders.”¹⁶⁸ Shtrum physically suffers the state’s violence due to his complicity in writing the letter.

The effect on the individual of state control of writing after Stalingrad, however, is most evident in the fate of Krymov, whose personal fate moves inversely to Stalin’s. While Stalin regains his power after Stalingrad, Krymov’s association with House 6/1 turns him from wielder into victim of state power. The juxtaposition of the official version of Stalingrad and the reality of the terrors enacted in its name are part of the novel’s polyphony: the monologic reiteration of the myth is countered by a story with the opposite trajectory.

As Krymov leaves House 6/1, he finds his life—and psyche—broken in two. Krymov perceives the written word’s complicity in violence, noting that today’s leaders, “had come to the fore only in 1937—by writing denunciations.” Krymov finds that he cannot describe events at Stalingrad in a report for his superiors: “The most difficult part was house 6/1 [...] How had it happened?” Grossman revisits the occasion of his wartime sketch *In Stalin’s City* (*V gorode*

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 197.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 771.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 817.

Stalina)—the 25th Anniversary of the Revolution—to show Krymov’s cognitive dissonance. Krymov notes the “glaring disparity” between the speech of a secretary and his own thoughts and feelings: “‘What on earth does that mean?’ wondered Krymov.”¹⁶⁹ The repetitive language of officialdom—and, by association, the raft of clichés in most Stalingrad stories—is incapable of portraying what occurred at Stalingrad. The reader is left uncertain as to whether the official narrative has any meaning at all, while Krymov is conflicted between his pre-Stalingrad, “official” desire to write the report and the recognition that he has no means to do this.

Krymov himself is abruptly arrested due to another denunciation, so that his present self undergoes the experience of those purged in the 1930s.¹⁷⁰ Krymov imagines that there has been a mistake and that Stalin will free him: he thinks of Abarchuk, who in 1937 “had gone to be interrogated, anxious to clear up an absurd understanding...”¹⁷¹ Yet the disintegrating pressure of totalitarianism tears him apart before reconstituting his life on its own terms. Here we see Lefort’s “disincorporation and reintegration” in practice. Under interrogation in a cell Krymov’s sense of Soviet subjectivity is erased. He “was no longer Krymov.”¹⁷² The interrogation dehumanizes him such that “his whole life shattered,” representing the climax of a theme on which individuals in contact with Soviet power experience feelings of crushing, shattering and suffocating.¹⁷³ Krymov’s pre-Stalingrad, Soviet self is not only erased, but beyond comprehension: “Sometimes Krymov himself began to doubt. Why did he turn hot and cold, why

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 502.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 495. Note the barbed jab at the role of Krushchev, one of “today’s leaders” in Stalingrad, in the 1930s.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 612.

¹⁷² Ibid., 607.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 772. The theme of shattering and crushing the individual as totalitarian power expands is repeated throughout the novel. Magar, Abarchuk’s dying, repentant Bolshevik tutor laments that, “We didn’t understand freedom. We crushed it” (175). Stahlgang, the concentration camp architect, has difficulty breathing when he visits the construction site (457). Krymov himself is “choked with anger” (495) when House 6/1 falls. Shtrum, under attack, has a “fear of the State’s anger, fear of being a victim of this anger that could crush a man and grind him to dust” (553). The more he is entrapped by the system, the more he feels “an invisible force [...] crushing him” (656) until, when he signs the denunciation letter, “the cumulative forces of dozens of pushes and blows, dozens of fierce struggles, seemed to have bent his ribs, to be unstitching the bones of his skull” (678). Early critics of the novel noted the centrality of the theme of “taking the individual apart” (El’iashevich, “Priglasenie k razgovoru.” 179). The reader familiar with Grossman’s sketches might recall the theme of suffocation from *Stalingradskii front*: “Sometimes it seemed like there was no oxygen in that burning air which they caught at with dry lips, like they would suffocate in the dry, grey dust” (“Stalingradskii front” in Grossman, *Stalingrad. Sbornik ocherkov* [Sovetskii pisatel’, 1943]).

did he break out in a sweat as he composed a letter to Stalin?”¹⁷⁴ The monologic surety of orientation to the state’s myths gives way to a dizzying temporal confusion: “Reality and delirium, past and future, were wrestling with each other. He had lost his sense of identity...”¹⁷⁵

Krymov’s inquisitor, now with total control, is able to rewrite his life with “different colours of ink, single and double-spaced typescript and occasional appended notes in red and blue crayon and ordinary pencil.”¹⁷⁶ Note the red crayon, the symbol of Stalin’s victory at Stalingrad. A broken Krymov confirms his own willingness to rewrite his personal history by signing a false confession under torture:

Yes. He had informed...Yes, all the information about him in this file – this file that was to be kept in perpetuity – had been gathered from comrades of his who had also no doubt wished to be sincere. [...] He could remember very well his happy, greedy feeling when the investigator had said to him: ‘Just a minute, comrade Krymov, let me sign your pass for you.’ He himself had helped to pull the noose round Hacken’s neck.¹⁷⁷

His former life “suddenly ceased to exist.” Krymov’s personal history is reshaped at the state’s behest into a stable—but false—history. My italics highlight the echo of the Stalingrad myth’s monologic function: “Our witnesses and documents *all say the same thing*. You tried to weaken the political consciousness of the soldiers in the surrounded house 6/1. You incited Grekov, a true patriot, to treachery: you tried to make him go over to the enemy.”¹⁷⁸ The Stalingrad space, confined and claustrophobic, is now governed by a destructive regime that exerts violent control over history and the individual through writing and rewriting.

Stalingrad has provided the state with the means to break apart and reconstitute individuals at its own, violent whim. Constructing a historicist sense of self around the idea of Stalingrad’s

¹⁷⁴ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 612.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 606.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 756.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 765-6. Hacken is a former comrade in whose baseless prosecution Krymov had participated before the war.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 771.

kairos is to give in to, even to perpetuate, Stalinist violence—not to look forward to a brighter future. Grossman, though, permits the reader to sense the dissonance between what they have read in *Life and Fate* and what the government writes: the idea that Grekov is a Soviet patriot is absurd; Shtrum clearly has almost no choice but to sign the denunciation letter; Krymov's confession is evidently false. Crucially, in each case, the character is stripped of all agency in constructing or understanding their life through narrative. *Life and Fate* undermines state control over writing by openly contradicting official narratives: the novel's polyphonic nature fragments, rather than harmonizes, the relationship between the individual and a unitary experience of temporality.

Je dirai non: An Alternative to Sacrificial Historicism

Grossman presents an alternative to complicity in spreading the narrative of Stalingrad and aligning the self with the state's myth. Amongst a textual world of complicit individuals, the narrator lauds Ikonnikov, a concentration camp inmate "treated with a mixture of disgust and pity," as an exemplar of non-complicity.¹⁷⁹ Ikonnikov refuses to participate in building gas chambers, even though he knows he will be killed as a result: "I *am* free! I'm building a *Vernichtungslager*; I have to answer to the people who'll be gassed here. I can say "No." There's nothing that can stop me—as long as I can find the strength to face my destruction. I *will* say "No!" *Je dirai non, mio padre, je dirai non!*"¹⁸⁰ While he cannot choose whether to die or not—he will be killed in the gas chambers anyway—Ikonnikov can choose to die without guilt. Faced with an apparently hopeless situation, Ikonnikov expresses his freedom through a mixture of Russian, French and Italian. This international concoction defies categorization, since it undermines the monologism of discourse and, therefore, totalitarian linguistic control.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 10. Alex Danchev notes that Ikonnikov is the work's most significant character since he 'voices Grossman's ethics'. Alex Danchev, "Ethics After Auschwitz: Vasily Grossman and Senseless Kindness," *Journal of European Studies* 43, no. 4 (2013), 359. The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas believes the passages on Ikonnikov to be 'central' to the work (see Michael L. Morgan, *Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 22).

¹⁸⁰ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 287.

Ikonnikov's phrase “*je dirai non*” represents a response to the Soviet state’s emphasis on participation in reading mythical narratives as a way to flood *chronos* time with a sense of *kairos*. He rejects, as Grossman now did, any possibility of an overarching ideological or religious solution to the ethical crisis of the mid-twentieth century. He must therefore reject the creation of a mythic Stalingrad as a turning point of *kairotic* significance. Ikonnikov questions the Bolsheviks' religious zeal, explaining to Mostovskoi: “Collectivization was carried out in the name of Good. I don’t believe in your ‘Good.’ I believe in human kindness.”¹⁸¹ His “scribblings”—a rambling religious testament—are printed in full, functioning as a polyphonic, dialogic pole to the Soviet myth of Stalingrad. The “scribblings” classify the twentieth century idea of “progress,” embodied in collectivization and fascism, as a return to the age-old terrors of the inquisition, Avvakum and Nikon, and colonists wiping out natives.¹⁸² The rejection of “Good” and the very idea of “progress” is a distinct challenge to the possibility of a *kairotic* turning point and Marxism's linear history. In turn, the Soviet reader would likely have questioned the worth of sacrifices justified by their relation to the victory at Stalingrad.

Grossman suggests that the alternative was for the individual to understand their own existence and morality only through interactions between themselves and other individuals in the present. Throughout *Life and Fate*, he praises the “private kindness of one individual towards another; a petty, thoughtless kindness; an unwitnessed kindness. Something we would call senseless [*bessmyslennyi*] kindness.”¹⁸³ Grossman thus argues that humanity sustains itself not through great sacrifices in the name of Good (or God, or Stalin), but through small acts of goodness “outside of any theoretical consideration.”¹⁸⁴ The state’s ability to interpret and evaluate morality and history is thus nullified. The individual has no need of a state-controlled myth to mediate morality: goodness exists only in the present, not in epic, time; it cannot be preserved, or reproduced. Grossman explains that, “the powerlessness of kindness, of senseless

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁸² Ibid., 389-91.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 392.

¹⁸⁴ Giovanni Maddalena, *The Philosophy of Gesture: Completing Pragmatists’ Incomplete Revolution* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 124-5. Grossman also quotes Chekhov to cement his interest in people: “Let’s begin with man; let’s be kind and attentive to the individual man” (266). The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas highlighted the “senseless act of kindness” as *Life and Fate*’s most important message (Morgan, *Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas*, 16).

kindness, is the secret of its immortality. It can never be conquered. The more stupid, the more senseless it may seem, the vaster it is.”¹⁸⁵ Thus a “senseless” act, such as Ikonnikov's refusal to be complicit in building the gas chambers, or the many other examples of seemingly illogical behaviour in *Life and Fate*, confirms “what is most truly human in a human being. It is what sets man apart, the highest achievement of his soul. No, it says, life is not evil!”¹⁸⁶ Here, then, we see that it is precisely in its presentness that “senseless kindness” can face down totalitarian power. By understanding the historicist expectations around reading Stalingrad in the Soviet period, we can see why Grossman's position was considered so controversial.

Grossman recognized his own role in constructing the Stalingrad narrative by refusing, like Shtrum, to say no to spreading the state's discourse: “they're not writing about us, everything's about Rodimtsev. Judging by the papers, he's the only one fighting in Stalingrad.” “They,” of course, means Grossman and his journalist colleagues. Even complicity through silence, Grossman argues, leads to totalitarian terror. The narrator of *Life and Fate* acknowledges the widespread direct and indirect participation and complicity in the events of the 1930s: “And it wasn't merely tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands, but hundreds of millions of people who were the obedient witnesses of this slaughter of the innocent. Nor were they merely obedient witnesses: when ordered to, they gave their support to this slaughter, voting in favour of it amid a hubbub of voices.”¹⁸⁷ Thus most importantly of all, Grossman examined his own complicity through silence, his own inability to “say no.” At a time in the post-Stalinist era when “we were appalled, and yet we kept silent,” as one editor put it, and “references to the terror were brief, elusive and aching incomplete,”¹⁸⁸ Grossman declared that, “I cannot keep silent.”¹⁸⁹ In

¹⁸⁵ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 410.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 393. For other examples of “kindness”: Sofia Levinton refuses to escape death in the gas chamber by answering the German call for doctors, although she has no means to comprehend the “exaltation” that results from this act of non-complicity: “She didn't want to admit why she hadn't answered when they had called for doctors and surgeons, why she had been seized at that moment by a feeling of exaltation” (529); a peasant woman helps Semenov even though it might lead to her own death (540). Grossman saw this as one of the most important chapters of the work (Lazarev, *Zapiski pozhilogo cheloveka*, 163).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 198.

¹⁸⁸ Kozlov, “Remembering and Explaining the Terror During the Thaw,” 178, 180. Kozlov is writing about Ehrenburg's memoir *Liudi. Gody. Zhizn'*. Lazarev describes how carefully Ehrenburg's work was written and edited in order not to probe too deeply into the subject of the Stalinist terror (Lazarev, *Zapiski pozhilogo cheloveka*, 163).

¹⁸⁹ Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 683.

Life and Fate, he seems to be frankly discussing his own silence about the 1930s terror—“a wild, terrible lie”¹⁹⁰—the behaviour of the current leadership during the war, and official silence on the Holocaust.¹⁹¹

Perhaps Grossman, by exploring his own complicity, actually oriented *Life and Fate* to a new level of individuality. Although scholars have tended to portray him as shocked by the failure to publish *Life and Fate*, it seems likely that he knew the work was unpublishable even under Khrushchev.¹⁹² Grossman thus strove—albeit with little hope of practical success—to eliminate the state’s power to mediate between the individual and history. *Life and Fate* is an address from the author both to himself and to hoped-for future readers: a model of his human-focused ethics that rejects the historicist and nationalist, state-mediated standards of the Stalingrad myth. Indeed, Grossman refused requests to edit chapters submitted for journal publication.¹⁹³ His written testament was enough to satisfy his stance of non-complicity, such that his refusal to make any changes to *Life and Fate* made his peers think Grossman was as deranged as the holy fool Ikonnikov.¹⁹⁴ By viewing *Life and Fate* as Grossman’s dialogue with his past, as an act of self-other ethics, we can see that the book tears at those epic qualities of Stalingrad made it useful to the regime in constructing Soviet subjectivity. *Life and Fate* is a novel in Bakhtin’s sense—the first Soviet novel about Stalingrad.

If then editor of *Novyi mir* Alexander Tvardovsky's reaction to the manuscript is anything to go by, then the effect of *Life and Fate* on those Soviets who did read the work was significant:

You feel [...] that something serious has happened to you and within you, that this is a milestone in the development of your consciousness, that you will never be able to

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 120.

¹⁹¹ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 371.

¹⁹² Grossman's translator Robert Chandler argues that “Grossman probably knew very well that he might be arrested, that he was simply tired of prevaricating, tired of trying to protect himself and to accommodate himself to the authorities’ capricious demands” (Robert Chandler, “Email to John and Carol Garrard,” 2006, Box 2, Folder 28, Garrard Collection). For the view that Grossman was shocked, see R.F. Tibaldeo, “Hans Jonas and Vasily Grossman: Reflections on the Human Condition after Auschwitz,” *Ethics in Progress* 5, no. 2 (2014); Taratuta, “Chestnaia zhizn’,” 23.

¹⁹³ Lazarev, *Zapiski pozhilogo cheloveka*, 163.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 164.

think apart from it...about anything else, including your own life. It is a joyful and liberating impression, which reveals to you a new (and not quite new but rather concealed, conventionally forbidden) vision of the most important matters in life—the impression that instantly removes, reduces to zero, the oppressing uniformity and conventionality of contemporary novels and other writings, with their ephemeral “correctness” and lifelessness.¹⁹⁵

By reading *Life and Fate*, Tvardovsky underwent a “liberating” process from “lifelessness.” We might read this as Tvardovsky’s breaking away from the epic unity of the Stalingrad myth, and reexperiencing his own past in a way that diminished the influence of the collective hold over the individual. Tvardovsky literally seems to be “freed” from the totalitarian, epic hold over memory of the past—Grossman has reintroduced novelty into his reading of Stalingrad by emphasizing the temporal uniqueness of both history and the individual. *Life and Fate*, filled with a sense of unpredictability, open-endedness and uncertainty, threatened the stable, monologic discourse of the Soviet regime in a way that Stalingrad, even as the outcome of the battle remained uncertain in 1942 and authors struggled to convince the reader that the “resurrection” really would happen, had never done before.

Conclusion: Stalingrad as Epic, Stalingrad as Novel

In spite of the various liberalizing trends during the Thaw, the regime remained “fearful of unleashing the floodgates of historical revisionism.”¹⁹⁶ Simonov’s novel used Stalingrad as a means of containing the flood of revisionism within a space dominated by Stalingrad’s *kairos*. Debates about the past could be written away under the banner of the epic achievement of a united people and Party in 1942. It is unsurprising that the Soviet population, still apparently eager to consume works free of irony and to interpret the world through the lens of sacrificial historicism and Hegelianism, read *Not Born Soldiers* with such eagerness. Polly Jones’ study of

¹⁹⁵ As quoted in Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir*, 167-8.

¹⁹⁶ Markwick, “Thaws and Freezes.”

letters to Simonov show that readers really did believe in Stalingrad as a turning point, and really did use *Not Born Soldiers* to make sense of their past, Stalinist selves.

Contrarily, Mikhail Suslov, Party secretary for ideology, compared *Life and Fate* to an atomic bomb, a weapon so powerful that it could destroy society.¹⁹⁷ Even after his death, Grossman remained “terrifying” to the authorities, which closely followed *samizdat* circulation of *Life and Fate*.¹⁹⁸ While the novel’s thematic scope and selection of Stalingrad tropes hardly deviate from *Not Born Soldiers*, Grossman’s determination to bring those epic tropes into contact with the polyphonic present was, as Viktor Nekrasov put it, “deadly” to a totalitarian regime.¹⁹⁹ Grossman was not engaged in revisionism—superficial de-Stalinization—but a radical reorienting of the historical narrative away from ritual, myth and history, and towards individual subjectivity. Similarly bold artistic works were banned in even the most liberal periods of Khrushchev’s rule.²⁰⁰ My reading of *Life and Fate*, which is contextualized in understanding of the mythic function Stalingrad had for Soviet officialdom and readers alike, has shown that the turn to the novelistic represented a real challenge to official control even in the relatively open Thaw era. Grossman clearly understood Stalingrad as an important event from the past, one with relevance to the present—indeed, he used it to structure and orient his work—but, in the final analysis, rejected the battle’s *kairotic* ability to rewrite the past.

Life and Fate’s own publication history provides a lesson in the importance of context for the *lieu de mémoire*. When the novel finally appeared in the Soviet Union in 1988, it was met by an audience far more receptive to challenging Soviet norms of identity creation. Critics instantly grouped the novel with others released after gathering dust for decades while the Soviet Union slowly burnt itself out, reading it in the context of works that appeared to challenge Soviet

¹⁹⁷ L. Kolodnyi, “Roman kak atomnaia bomba,” *Moskovskii komsomolets*, May 26, 2009; David Caute, *Politics and the Novel During the Cold War* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2010), 174-6.

¹⁹⁸ Lipkin, “Iz sekretnykh arkhivov.”

¹⁹⁹ Viktor Nekrasov, “Sobor nashego vremeni (‘Zhizn’ i sud’ba’ Vas. Grossmana),” *Novoe russkoe slovo*, August 1, 1982, 5.

²⁰⁰ Poets who equated the war and the 1930s terrors went unpublished. Katharine Hodgson, “‘Russia Is Reading Us Once More’: The Rehabilitation of Poetry, 1953-64,” in *Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 139, 142; Pomerants, “Chto skazat’ Iovu?” 144.

authority.²⁰¹ Critics and ordinary readers used *Life and Fate* as a springboard into discussions of the 1930s that bore an at best tangential relation to the novel itself. In a roundtable discussion, for example, a group of Russian critics depart from *Life and Fate*'s text to discuss the relation of the present to the tsarist past, to antisemitism, and to Stalin's role in the war.²⁰² The work's novelistic properties made it a useful touchpoint for memory—an expression of *lieu de mémoire* that suited the spirit of the age—but new memories were now being crystallized around *Life and Fate*, rather than the novel really portraying an account of a distant historical past. *Life and Fate*, as I have shown, continued to project multiple temporalities, multiple pasts, onto the memory of Stalingrad: by approaching the novel with the intent to seek out and chart these intersections as they were manifested in text, I have demonstrated how the Stalingrad *lieu de mémoire* was recycled and reused by anti-Soviet, as well as pro-Soviet, writers in the Khrushchev era.

²⁰¹ El'iashevich, "Priglasenie k razgovoru," 168. Irina Murav'eva, "Sniatye s polok. Eto nasha zhizn' 'dvadtsat' let spustia...,'" *Grani*, no. 149 (1988).

²⁰² See Iudkovskaia, "Preodolenie: roman V. Grossmana 'Zhizn' i sud'ba' i ego kritika" and Introduction to Grossman, *Life and Fate*. This was wrapped into a period of enthusiastic rediscovery and rewriting of the 1930s and 40s. The same year as *Life and Fate* appeared, for example, A. German's film *My Friend Ivan Lapshin* (*Moi drug Ivan Lapshin*) and Marina Goldovskaia's documentary *Solovki Power* (*Vlast' solovetskaia*) were released.

6. Conclusion: Confusion, Twilight and Stability

Grossman's and Simonov's final contributions to the Stalingrad story marked the end of the direct connection between new Stalingrad texts and the writers who had written for the newspapers during the war. However, *Life and Fate's* and *Not Born Soldiers'* divergent stances on Stalingrad indicate how the representation of the battle had little connection with history—in Pierre Nora's sense of the "reconstruction [...] of what no longer exists."¹ Instead, each work focused now entirely on memory, which displays a constant and evolving interaction with the present, in order to engage with the sociocultural conditions of the post-Stalin era. Whether it was encoded in an epic in Simonov's work, or debunked in a novel like Grossman's, the memory of Stalingrad was instantly recognizable with even the briefest of invocations, and could provide an axis about which to discuss contemporary experience. The focus was not on what actually happened at Stalingrad but on discussion of the present need to come to terms with the Stalinist past and plot a course for collective self-understanding in the coming years. Stalingrad's importance as a nexus for discussion of the past, present and future remained undiminished. Soviets continued to use literary representations of Stalingrad to organize and align their own biographical experiences with or against collective experiences.²

Over the remaining Soviet decades, as dissident art subverted official forms, and the government shored up official narratives through the rituals of the Cult of the Great Patriotic War, the Stalingrad myth must have been subject to great pressure. Yet the battle retained its *kairotic* importance to Russian culture even as turbulence through the 1990s ate away at Soviet cultural norms. An article in the conservative journal *Our Contemporary* (*Nash sovremennik*) marking the battle's 50th anniversary summoned the battle's memory as a metaphor for the post-Soviet chaos engulfing Russia. "The battle continues," wrote the author, as if memory of

¹ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7.

² Orlando Figes shows evidence that Russians—even those who had been falsely imprisoned in the Gulag—used the state's texts to relate their own experiences throughout the period I have studied (*The Whisperers*, 634).

Stalingrad were playing an active role in the present.³ Even if no more monuments were built, no more military parades were held on Red Square, and no more schoolchildren were brought up on Konstantin Simonov's novels, Stalingrad remained central to post-Soviet identity. Memory may be endlessly contestable, especially during moments of sociopolitical tension, but the Stalingrad myth remains fundamentally intact. Encoded in the collective consciousness as a *lieu de mémoire*, but thanks to its epic qualities always at a remove from cultural turbulence even as it intersects with the present, the *kairotic* sense of Stalingrad as turning point or resurrection has a strong hold over the Russian imagination.

Indeed, treatment of Stalingrad in recent years has veered toward the epic and the *kairotic*. Director Sergei Ursuliak and screenwriter Eduard Volodarskii's 2012 adaptation of *Life and Fate* for the major television channel *Rossiia* (*Russia*) endowed the novel with familiar Soviet Stalingrad motifs. The resurrection of individuals through written biographies, the gas chambers and the prison camps is neither shown nor mentioned. Instead, the producers turned to familiar Soviet devices to wrap Stalingrad into a history of Russian patriotic military success: to "epicize" Grossman's polyphonic novel. Katya Vengrova is symbolically sacrificed, not liberated, by Grekov, so that she now belongs to the line of protagonists—*Days and Nights*' Anya Shchepenia and *For a Just Cause*'s Vavilov—who are killed so that the nation can be resurrected and save time itself from the Wehrmacht. While Krymov's interrogation is depicted in graphic detail, the Stalin that phones Shtrum is paternal and avuncular. This is the Stalin of *Not Born Soldiers*, the victim of a shared grief with his subjects and the blameless leader of an oppression caused by violent subordinates. Having totally eliminated Grossman's polyphony—the presence of the present in the work—Volodarskii and Ursuliak brought *Life and Fate* into line with epic, *kairotic* heritage established during the Soviet period. As was the case for the audience of Bondarchuk's film I described in the introduction to this thesis, viewers preferred to mediate their own viewing through a monologic, epic vision of Stalingrad. Ursuliak's production was widely praised for expressing the "national idea" of Stalingrad, which "unites the nation."⁴ There is no better tool than Stalingrad to promise the Russian reader (or viewer) that turmoil in the present is certain to

³ Sergei Vikulov, "Svidetel'stvuiu," *Nash sovremennik*, No.2, 1993.

⁴ Dmitrii Cheremnov, "Kto ubivaet nas sil'nei," *gazeta.ru*, October 12, 2012, https://www.gazeta.ru/culture/2012/10/12/a_4809709.shtml. According to *kinopoisk.ru*, ten of twelve reviews in major publications were positive ("Zhizn' i sud'ba," *KinoPoisk*, n.d., <https://www.kinopoisk.ru/film/644788/>).

lead to a brighter future. Russians are still encouraged to see themselves to anchor their individuality within the collective's place in history, but the nature of that historicism still draws heavily on a mythic reading of temporality.⁵

Summary of Conclusions

This dissertation asked why Stalingrad came to have such a prominent place in Soviet identity, exploring its representations over two decades' worth of literature. The theoretical underpinnings of my work tackle a problem faced across Europe in the twentieth century: the desire to give structure to an individual's experience of time that seemed to have rapidly shifted as religion lost its luster and rural society's natural pace came under attack. For the Soviet population, that experience was particularly acute. Total sociocultural upheaval accompanied enormous economic and political changes. The pace of change for Soviets peaked in the Second World War. History's most cataclysmic conflict saw not just territorial changes and death on the battlefield, but the threat of the end of existence itself as the Germans laid waste to the Soviet population.

At Stalingrad, intense street battles, fiery conflagrations and perilous crossings of the Volga seemed to boil a vast conflict down into a battle to end all battles. Unsurprisingly, the battle's literary representation in mass media, through which the population experienced the battle at first remove, was immediately imbued with eschatological—what I have interpreted as *kairotic*—properties. Equally unsurprisingly, as imminent death suddenly turned into future life in November 1942, the national desire to memorialize the battle saw it become a lynchpin for reconstructing Russian and Soviet identities. As sociocultural upheaval continued in the late Stalinist and post-Stalinist period, turning back to Stalingrad was a means to acknowledge the battle as the *sine qua non* of present reality. A mythical understanding of temporality could bring meaning to an era that saw enormous physical, cultural, and emotional turmoil for most Soviets.

⁵ Russian-sponsored media, for example, have called for pro-Russian rebels in Eastern Ukraine to turn both Debal'tsevo and Donetsk into the "new Stalingrad" ("Opolchentsy soglasny na prekrashchenie ognia, no gotovy prevratit' Donetsk v Stalingrad," *mk.ru*, August 9, 2014, <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2014/08/09/opolchency-soglasny-na-prekrashhenie-ognia-no-gotovy-prevratit-doneck-v-stalingrad.html>; "Debal'tsevo - eto donetskii Stalingrad," *stockinfofocus.ru*, February 24, 2015, <http://stockinfofocus.ru/2015/02/24/debalcevo-eto-doneckij-stalingrad/>).

Underlying my argument has been the idea that mass-produced literature could have been a primary means for Soviet readers to make sense of their place in history. I have challenged both the notion that state-produced literature was forced on an unwilling nation from above and the idea that sometime dissident writers, such as Vasily Grossman, were unwilling to participate in the state's propagation of history, while "official" writers, like Konstantin Simonov, were unthinking Stalinists. Soviets turned to Stalingrad to mediate their relationship with time in a turbulent era, willingly engaging with official discourse when it was attached to a historical event that promised a turn towards a more positive future.

Nonetheless, that official discourse is capable of surprising depth. Using Pierre Nora's idea of *lieux de mémoire* has allowed me to capture the interplay between literature and history, and past and present, and to recognize the multiplicity and flexibility of meaning that Stalingrad seems to possess—Nora's "history in multiple voices"—a task that would be beyond the tools of a historian interested only in finding a single, static reading of past events. This study, then, outlines a reading of the Stalingrad story linked with a constant reinterpretation and recycling of the past for the present and future. Stalingrad's capacity for metamorphosis is perhaps surprising when so much of the literature I have studied—from newspaper journalism to works by Ehrenburg, Shebunin and Simonov—has been associated, by scholars at least, with authoritarian Soviet production methods. These conclusions complement recent scholarly work on the multifaceted complexity of Soviet citizens' engagement with official culture.

I have suggested that the *kairotic* qualities of this modern myth provided the means to resolve a theoretical dilemma in representing temporality—Katerina Clark's idea of "modal schizophrenia"—that seemed to exclude ordinary citizens from participating in the Soviet utopian project. Soviet citizens sought a means to participate in the history that seemed to be unfolding around them in the post-revolutionary era. Stalingrad gave the Soviet government and population a means to read their own lives as belonging to an era of epic events, and to reinvent the uncertain experiences of the pre-war and post-war years as necessary in order to achieve the resurrection associated with Stalingrad. Still motivated by the Hegelian and religious qualities of the pre-revolutionary past, as Irina Paperno shows, Soviets may have been particularly receptive to *kairotic* moments about which to orient the self. In this unironic enthusiasm for reading lives historically, I observe that the traces of pre-revolutionary Russian culture were just as important as new, Soviet ideas in constructing citizens' understanding of temporality. While the *lieux de*

mémoire that Nora studied might seem to be founded on modern means of communication and emerge from a post-rural society, the contents of the Stalingrad story that I have uncovered suggest that memories of the pre-Soviet past were easily drawn to the surface of the collective consciousness, crystallizing around the myth of Stalingrad.

Mass media participation in readership of the wartime story—I have shown throughout that Stalingrad was always a myth of the twentieth century, created through mass distribution and sharing of texts—laid the groundwork for the rapid emergence of an appealing myth that gave Soviets a means to read their own lives through *kairos*. Stalingrad offered a way to resolve tensions between the individual and the collective, and to reform Soviets’ identity without “violently reshaping” it. The epic form was an appropriate means to achieve this resolution. Grossman’s *Life and Fate* might have held fleeting appeal during the 1980s, when Soviet society was undergoing rapid change, but its polyphonic, novelistic qualities meant it could not appeal to the average Russian reader, who still sought to read History in Hegelian terms, in the way a monologic epic like *Not Born Soldiers*, which used Stalingrad’s *kairos* to resolve tensions between the Stalinist past and the present, could.

I have tried to show how writers and readers were excited to participate in a process of shaping the Stalingrad myth at breakneck speed both during and after the war, when the threat of total defeat by Nazi Germany had long receded. The mass media narrative of the battle encouraged the Soviet population to participate vicariously in the battle, experiencing its *kairotic* turning point through daily reading, while appealing motifs from the past assured the reader that Stalingrad was of vital historical importance even as it was happening. I have shown that, once a stable narrative of Stalingrad couched in epic time and space emerged, writers were able to use memory of the battle to structure debates about the present—the Stalinist heritage, for example—without threatening the foundations of a society that had experienced unparalleled socioeconomic turmoil through the early Soviet decades.

At times, this led to the release of seemingly non-conformist works, such as Viktor Nekrasov’s *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* or Grossman’s *For a Just Cause*, whose publication has baffled some scholars. However, I have shown that, contrarily, even during the heavily authoritarian final years of Stalinism, ordinary writers like Pavel Shebunin were willing to rewrite their own past according to the demands of the present. Even Grossman, who mere years

later would take an uncompromisingly anti-Soviet position in *Life and Fate*, produced a novel that attempted to draw the most egregious aspects of Stalin's rule into an epic of Stalingrad, *For a Just Cause*. Unusually, the government gave writers great leeway in producing Stalingrad even as writers showed enthusiasm for narratives emanating from the Kremlin.

Collective memory of the battle had a vital role to play throughout the period I have studied. The myth's ability to expand, to respond to events of the present—the ongoing and recently ended war, the Stalinization of culture, the 1950s' debates around the Stalinist past and Soviet future—while retaining a fundamental sense of *kairos* through a textual links to the foundational newspaper stories, made it perennially relevant. Simonov's biography provides a salient example of how a Soviet could shape and reshape their own life through orientation to Stalingrad. After Khrushchev's Secret Speech, Simonov struggled to resolve his love for Stalin and the Soviet project with his guilt.⁶ Yet he never backed away from the idea that Stalingrad was an essentially *kairotic*, vital moment for Russia: his "Stalinist self" and "post-Stalinist self" could co-exist using the Stalingrad *lieu de mémoire* as a pivot to draw in and organize these apparently contradictory pasts. Expanding my work to include study of Soviets' diaries or letters might provide further examples of this process in operation.

To make my conclusions on the nature of Soviet myth and memory would have been impossible without producing an extensive overview of the Stalingrad story. To what was previously an almost untouched theme in literary scholarship, I offer a comprehensive overview of the major themes and importance of Stalingrad—not to mention the discovery of work that previously appeared to be lost or forgotten. My survey of Stalingrad works and analysis of their contents has allowed me to demonstrate unequivocally the centrality of Stalingrad to Soviet literature: the battle was more published about and more frequently rewritten than any other war theme in the two decades I have studied.

Through my survey of works, and my focus on how memory complemented and informed individual authorship, rather than on literary quality, I have shown that the Stalingrad myth extended beyond the bounds of any single text. It was a memory production relying on the

⁶ Simonov conducted an unusually frank self-examination of his own participation in Stalinism in his 1979 memoir, *Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia*.

reader's knowledge of a canon of texts to function: the fundamentally imitative nature of Socialist Realism transformed into an active vessel for collective memory. This observation allowed me to make conclusions that would otherwise have been impossible. My reading of *Life and Fate*, for example, relied on knowledge of Stalingrad texts that would have been obvious to the Soviet reader of 1960, but perhaps not to the Western literary scholar of 2017. Armed with this knowledge, I had the means to interpret the novel in a completely new way.

The reader of this dissertation now too has the tools to interpret references to Stalingrad in other works, or to dissect the major works of the 1970s and 1980s that I have not examined. Indeed, I have not completed my picture of the story presented through official channels, let alone *samizdat* or unpublished works. During the Brezhnev era, an interest in aviation, rather than infantry, dominated the Stalingrad story. This linked the retrospective Cult of the Great Patriotic War with the early Soviet interest in flight, the ongoing space race, and Stalingrad's eschatological undertones.⁷ The works are frequently titled as “documentary tale” (*dokumental'naia povest'*), indicating a juxtaposition of observation and imagination that recalls the journalism of 1942-3 and the theoretical problems inherent in representing an epic present.⁸ Moreover, my understanding of readers' reception of the Stalingrad story beyond writers themselves has been informed almost wholly by references found in secondary sources. Archival work to uncover vernacular reactions to Stalingrad might confirm my observations and occasional speculations about reader reaction on a wider scale.⁹

⁷ The flight theme was relatively rare before the 1970s. Notable earlier examples include Polevoi's *Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke*; Vsevolod Ivanov, “Russkoe pole,” *Izvestiia*, January 16, 1943; B.B. Panchenko, *Istrebitel'nyi batal'on* (Stalingrad: Knizhnoe izd-vo, 1943); Sergei Koldunov, *Ogni pobedy: rasskazy* (Moscow: Sov. pisatel', 1946); Iu. Zhukov, “Odin Mig iz tysiachi,” *Znamia*, no. 2–5 (1963). A flood of works began in the mid-1970s: Artem Anfinogenov, *A vnizu byla zemlia* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1976); I.S. Kopylov, A.N. Lazukin, and G.L. Raikin, *Orenburgskoe letnoe* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976); V.I. Minakov, *Front do samogo neba* (Moscow: DOSAAF, 1977); P.A. Iurchenko, *Kryl'ia nad plamenem* (Khar'kov: Prapor, 1978); I.A. Arsent'ev, *Surovyi vozdukh* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1979); Natal'ia Fedorovna Kravtsova, *Vernis' iz poleta: povesti* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1979); V.V. Shcheglov, *A potom prishla pobeda...* (Moscow: DOSAAF, 1980); V.A. Kolykhalov, *Ognennaia lavina* (Moscow: Izd-vo DOSAAF SSSR, 1981); Artem Anfinogenov, “Mgnovienie - vechnost'. Roman,” *Znamia*, no. 8–9 (1982).

⁸ On that note, and recalling Elizabeth Papazian's work on documentary film and subjectivity, which I briefly mentioned in the introduction, it would also be interesting to explore representations of Stalingrad in the many movies about the battle released throughout the Soviet period.

⁹ Dennis Kozlov's book *The Readers of Novyi Mir* offers a suitable model for exploring Soviet readers' reactions to literature. Although, as Kozlov points out, there is no way to develop a statistically reliable way of gauging readers' opinions in retrospect (Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir*, 14), his study shows that readers engaged in discussion of

Indeed, the results of my work might also make an interesting foundation for exploring ethnic minority readings of Stalingrad in the USSR or today's Russia. In spite of my references to the battle's popularity as a literary theme, that appeal was most clearly targeted at Russians: what did Central Asians or Baltic minorities, newly incorporated into the Soviet fold, make of the battle's *kairotic* undertones? Other war narratives seem to have acted as centering points for non-Russian identity in the years after 1945; did Stalingrad have a similar effect?¹⁰ One could even take my survey approach in a different direction to study the emergence and memorialization of other Soviet war narratives, such as those of the Civil War or of Afghanistan, which seem not to have held such broad appeal.

Finally, for those interested in the present, I have provided a lens through which to understand the heated interest of today's Russians in Stalingrad. In closing, I wonder how belief in the myth will create new versions of Stalingrad as the Putin government attempts to rebuild Russia's military and patriotic spheres. The regime can sponsor big budget, epic films, but contrarily, writers are wresting back control in new ways. Moscow publishing houses are pumping out dozens of reissued and new works in small quantities,¹¹ and internet publishing gives writers the chance to produce any version of Stalingrad they want, invoking its power according to the demands of online communities rather than governments or professional writing institutions. Clearly these trends have implications for the multiplicity of present meanings Stalingrad makes possible. Just as the Putin regime seems intent on asserting control over the myth of Stalingrad in a significant way, technological developments imply that control is being

literature during the Thaw period with surprising frankness. A similar study of letters to major journals, or correspondence between major writers and their readers (especially Simonov, whose published letters have already yielded material included in this thesis) would expand the horizons of my work.

¹⁰ I am especially cognizant of Amir Weiner's work on Ukrainian reception of Soviet war myths in *Making Sense of War*.

¹¹ Aleksandr Avramenko, *Stal'naia duga* (Moscow: Iauza-Press, 2008); G.B. Gofman, *Samolet podbit nad tsel'iu. Dvoe nad okeanom* (Moscow: Veche, 2008); V.S. Pribytkov, *Zaveshchaiu vam zhizn'* (Moscow: Veche, 2008); Ivan Abramovich Vershinin, *Soldaty "kholodnoi voiny"* (Moscow: Veche, 2008); Evgenii Fedorovskii, *"Shturmfofel'" bez svastiki* (Moscow: Veche, 2009); G.B. Gofman, *Sotrudnik gestapo* (Moscow: Veche, 2009); Aleksandr Avramenko, *Bagrovyi dozd'* (Moscow: Veche, 2012). The publisher Eksmo had released forty-three works about Stalingrad between 2005 and 2013.

radically decentralized. Can this new, media-driven fragmentation preserve the monologic, epic nature of the story, or will it break it open to polyphony and open-endedness?

I suspect that the myth will continue to be invoked and rewritten as Russians search for tools to stabilize and harmonize a society still working through the “confusion and twilight” of the post-Soviet era.¹² The myth’s promise to transform darkness into light retains a vast importance for ordinary people and writers: as one reviewer of Bondarchuk’s *Stalingrad* remarked, “I love you, Stalingrad, and I will always remember your great feat!”¹³

¹² Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: Adventures in Modern Russia* (London: Faber, 2015). 77.

¹³ Review, User Dr. Dmitriy, “Stalingrad: KinoPoisk.”

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Appendix

A. Sketches & Poems by Wartime Correspondents

I. Sketches

Ehrenburg, Il'ia [Reporting from Moscow]

Krasnaia zvezda

28.08.42 – *Nenavist' i prezrenie (Hatred and Contempt)*

06.09.42 – *Stalingrad*

10.09.42 – *Bit' i bit'! (Beat Them and Beat Them!)*

20.09.42 – *Russkii antei (The Russian Antaeus)*

27.11.42 – *Nastuplenie prodolzhaetsia (The Advance Continues)*

04.12.42 – *Zavetnoe slovo (The Sacred Word)*

01.01.43 – *Na poroge (On the Threshold)*

10.01.43 – *Put' (The Path)*

17.01.43 – *Oblava (The Stalking)*

26.01.43 – *Kogda oni otstupaiut (When They Retreat)*

Pravda

12.11.42 – *Znachenie Rossii (The Meaning of Russia)*

Grossman, Vasily

Krasnaia zvezda

- 21.08.42 – *Na Volge (On the Volga)*
26.09.42 – *V stepnom ovrag (In the Gully on the Steppe)*
15.10.42 – *Pervaia vstrecha (First Contact)*
27.10.42 – *Stalingradskaia bitva (The Battle of Stalingrad)*
04.11.42 – *Stalingradskaia pereprava (The Stalingrad Crossing)*
10.11.42 – *V gorode Stalina (In Stalin's City)* (with V. Koroteev)
13.11.42 – *Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad*
20.11.42 – *Stalingradskaia byl' (A Stalingrad Tale)*
25.11.42 – *Napravlenie glavnogo udara (On the Axis of the Main Attack)*
01.12.42 – *Stalingradskoe nastuplenie (The Stalingrad Offensive)*
01.01.43 – *Segodnia v Stalingrade (Today in Stalingrad)*
13.01.43 – *Stalingradskaia armii (The Stalingrad Army)*

Pravda

- 26.11.42 – *Napravlenie glavnogo udara (On the Axis of the Main Attack)*

Koroteev, V.I.

Krasnaia zvezda

- 12.09.42 – *Pod Stalingradom (Near Stalingrad)*
08.10.42 – *Nochoi boi v Stalingrade (A Night-Time Battle in Stalingrad)*
13.10.42 – *Boi v Stalingrade (The Fighting in Stalingrad)*
10.11.42 – *V gorode Stalina (In Stalin's City)* (with V. Grossman)
14.11.42 – *Boi v severnoi chasti Stalingrada (The Fighting in Northern Stalingrad)*
22.11.42 – *Volgar' (The Volga Boatman)*

- 27.11.42 – *Vzятие станицы и города Абганерово (The Capture of Abganerovo)*
- 02.12.42 – *Бои за южную высоту под Сталинградом (The Fighting for a Hill in Southern Stalingrad)*
- 05.02.43 – *Сталинград празднует победу (Stalingrad Celebrates Victory)*

Kruger, Evgenii

Izvestiia

- 06.09.42 – *В уличном бою (In the Street Battle)*
- 29.09.42 – *Степь в огне (The Steppe Aflame)*
- 10.10.42 – *Сталинград в бою (Stalingrad in Battle)*
- 13.10.42 – *Гнев добрых (The Anger of the Good)*
- 20.10.42 – *Битва на Волге (The Battle on the Volga)*
- 25.10.42 – *Это – Сталинград! (This is Stalingrad)*
- 28.10.42 – *Где немцам чудится форт... (The Germans Believe it a Fort)*
- 01.11.42 – *Сталинградские уллицы (The Streets of Stalingrad)*
- 25.11.42 – *Стойкость русских (The Steadfastness of the Russians)*
- 17.01.43 – *Ответ Сталинграда (Stalingrad's Response)*

Nedzel'skii, A.

Izvestiia

- 03.10.42 – *Рассказы о защитниках Сталинграда (Tales of Stalingrad's Defenders)*
- 06.10.42 – *Люди переднего края (People of the Front Line)*
- 23.10.42 – *Они сражаются за Сталинград (They Fight for Stalingrad)*
- 30.10.42 – *Для спасения товарищей (Save our Comrades)*

10.12.42 – *Pered atakoi (Before the Attack)*

Polevoi, Boris

Pravda

08.10.42 – *Nebo Stalingrada (The Sky of Stalingrad)*

12.10.42 – *Za Volgu-Matushku (For the Mother Volga)*

13.10.42 – *Boitsy tsekhov (The Shop Factory Soldiers)*

14.10.42 – *Dom 21/a (House 21/a)*

17.10.42 – *Ogon' s Volgi (Fire From the Volga)*

23.10.42 – *Stena Stalingrada (The Wall of Stalingrad)*

29.10.42 – *Redut Tarakulia (Tarakul's Redoubt)*

Simonov, Konstantin

Krasnaia zvezda

11.09.42 – *Soldatskaia slava (The Soldier's Glory)*

18.09.42 – *Boi na okraine (The Battle on the Outskirts)*

24.09.42 – *Dni i nochi (Days and Nights)*

09.10.42 - *U-2*

Pravda

25.09.42 – *Dni i nochi (Days and Nights)*

II. Poems

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B. Works Sorted by Total Print Run, 1942-2013

Title & Year of Authorship	Author	Total Copies
1. <i>Goriachii sneg</i> (<i>Hot Snow</i> , 1969)	Bondarev, Iu.V.	2,435,500
2. <i>Soldatami ne rozhdaiutsia</i> (<i>Not Born Soldiers</i> , 1963)	Simonov, K.M.	2,282,500
3. <i>Ploshchad' pavshikh boitsov</i> (<i>Square of Fallen Soldiers</i> , 1990)	Pikul', V.S.	1,870,400
4. "Saturn" <i>pochti ne viden</i> (<i>"Saturn" is Almost Invisible</i> , 1963)	Ardamatskii, V.I.	1,392,000
5. <i>Dni i nochi</i> (<i>Days and Nights</i> , 1943)	Simonov, K.M.	1,138,000
6. <i>Goriachii pepel</i> (<i>Hot Ash</i> , 1985)	Ovchinnikov, V.V.	1,100,000
7. <i>Buria</i> (<i>The Storm</i> , 1947)	Ehrenburg, I.G.	945,000
8. <i>V okopakh Stalingrada</i> (<i>In the Trenches of Stalingrad</i> , 1946)	Nekrasov, V.P.	904,000
9. <i>Nasledniki</i> (<i>The Successors</i> , 1957)	Alekseev, M.N.	800,000
10. <i>Kruzhok na karte</i> (<i>A Circle on the Map</i> , 1970)	Baskakov, V.E.	785,000
11. <i>Za pravoe delo</i>	Grossman, V.S.	737,000

<i>(For a Just Cause, 1952)</i>		
12. <i>Sputniki</i>	Panova, V.F.	698,000
<i>(The Fellow Travellers, 1946)</i>		
13. <i>Zdravstvui, kombat!</i>	Gribachev, N.M.	690,000
<i>(Hello, Commander!, 1970)</i>		
14. <i>Soldaty</i>	Alekseev, M.N.	680,000
<i>(Soldiers, 1951)</i>		
15. <i>Donna Anna</i>	Tendriakov, V.F.	560,000
<i>(Donna Anna, 1988)</i>		
16. <i>Sotvorenie mira</i>	Zakrutkin, V.A.	480,000
<i>(The Creation of Peace, 1968)</i>		
17. <i>Za oboronu Stalingrada</i>	Bogomolov, V.M.	450,000
<i>(The Defence of Stalingrad, 1974)</i>		
18. <i>Povest' o voennykh godakh</i>	Levchenko, I.N.	385,000
<i>(A Tale About the War Years, 1952)</i>		
19. <i>I odin v pole voin</i>	Dol'd-Mikhailik, Iu.P.	320,000
<i>(Alone on the Battlefield, 1957)</i>		
20. <i>Istoki</i>	Konovalov, G.I.	300,000
<i>(Origins, 1959)</i>		

Note: Print run data for a handful of years in the 1950s and 1980s was unavailable. Totals are therefore relative and approximate, rather than absolute.

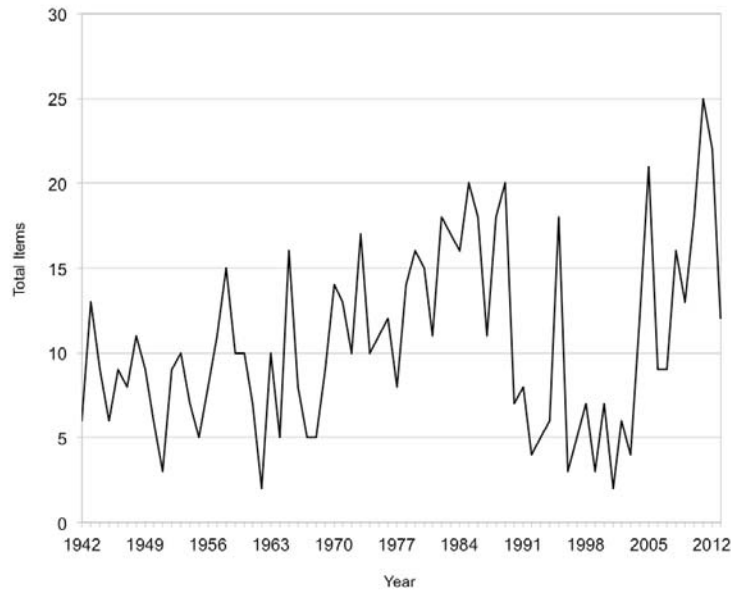
C. Works Sorted by Total Number of Reprints, 1942-2013

Title & Year of Authorship	Author	No. of Printings
1. <i>Goriachii sneg</i> (<i>Hot Snow</i> , 1969)	Bondarev, Iu.V.	26
2. <i>V okopakh Stalingrada</i> (<i>In the Trenches of Stalingrad</i> , 1946)	Nekrasov, V.P.	22
3. <i>Dni i nochi</i> (<i>Days and Nights</i> , 1943)	Simonov, K.M.	19
4. <i>Zhizn' i sud'ba</i> (<i>Life and Fate</i> , 1960)	Grossman, V.S.	15
5. <i>Soldatami ne rozhdaitsia</i> (<i>Not Born Soldiers</i> , 1963)	Simonov, K.M.	15
6. "Saturn" <i>pochti ne viden</i> (<i>"Saturn" is Almost Invisible</i> , 1963)	Ardamatskii, V.I.	12
7. <i>Soldaty</i> (<i>Soldiers</i> , 1951)	Alekseev, M.N.	11
8. <i>Sputniki</i> (<i>The Fellow Travellers</i> , 1946)	Panova, V.F.	9
9. <i>Buria</i> (<i>The Storm</i> , 1947)	Ehrenburg, I.G.	9
10. <i>Za pravoe delo</i> (<i>For a Just Cause</i> , 1952)	Grossman, V.S.	9
11. <i>Ploshchad' pavshikh boitsov</i>	Pikul', V.S.	6

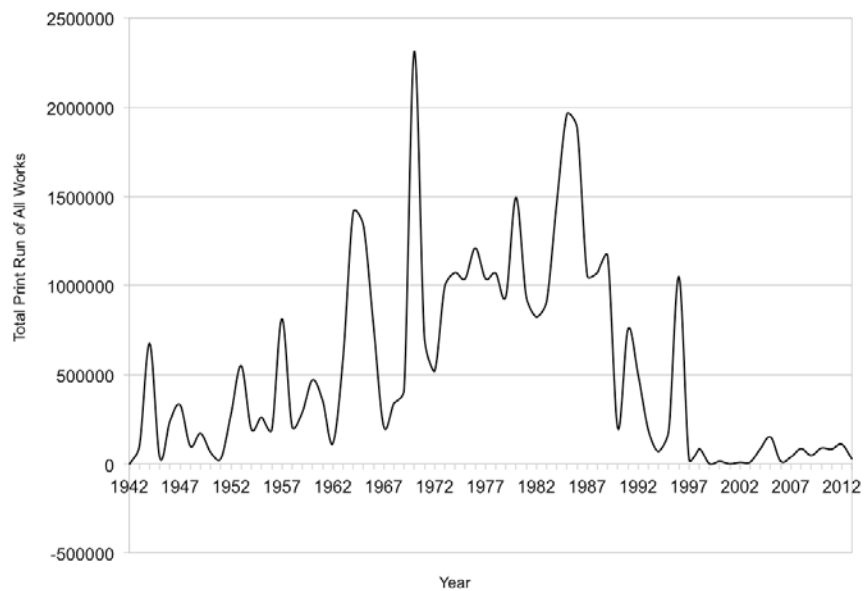
<i>(Square of Fallen Soldiers, 1990)</i>		
12. <i>Moi Stalingrad</i>	Alekseev, M.N.	6
<i>(My Stalingrad, 1995)</i>		
13. <i>Zdravstvui, kombat!</i>	Gribachev, N.M.	6
<i>(Hello, Commander!, 1970)</i>		
14. <i>Istoki</i>	Konovalov, G.I.	5
<i>(Origins, 1959)</i>		
15. <i>Nasledniki</i>	Alekseev, M.N.	5
<i>(The Successors, 1957)</i>		
16. <i>Rasskazy o s-gskoi bitve</i>	Alekseev, S.	5
<i>(Tales of the Battle of Stalingrad, 1973)</i>		
17. <i>I odin v pole voin</i>	Dol'd-Mikhailik, Iu.P.	5
<i>(Alone on the Battlefield, 1957)</i>		
18. <i>Druzhiba</i>	Koptiaeva, A.D.	5
<i>(Friendship, 1957)</i>		
19. <i>Stalingradskie byli</i>	Semin, I.A.	5
<i>(Stalingrad Tales, 1956)</i>		
20. <i>Sotvorenie mira</i>	Zakrutkin, V.A.	5
<i>(The Creation of Peace, 1968)</i>		

D. Comparative Graphs, 1942-2013

I. Total Number of Prose Works Printed Per Year, 1942-2013



II. Total Print Run of all Prose Works Per Year, 1942-2013



n.b. Data refers to the works included in Appendix E., Bibliography of Stalingrad Works, 1942-2013.

E. Bibliography of Stalingrad Works, 1942-2013

Note: This bibliography lists the first Russian-language publication of literary works about Stalingrad. It excludes newspaper sketches, which are detailed in Appendix A.

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