The first wave of émigré writers to leave Russia after the 1917 Revolution invented a spectral geography of their nation—a map assembled from the wistfully utopian, occasionally dystopian, world of memory. Exiled writers of all nationalities often choose to fictionalise themselves, re-inscribing their own identity in order to assimilate within their adopted homeland. Yet the writers of the first wave of the Russian emigration rarely altered their own pasts; indeed, the fiction of Vladimir Nabokov, Gaito Gazdanov and others almost obsessively re-iterates the semi-autobiographical adventures of insubstantially differentiated alter egos. Rather than rewriting self, these authors fictionalised their homeland, memorialising past experience while subtly, inevitably, and not always consciously transforming it. The émigré writer’s effort to re-imagine his or her lost homeland functions, of course, as an allegory for any diegetic excursion; similarly, the act of emigration is a trope for our common human transition from life to afterlife. The neatly arranged and perfectly unusable items that Sergei Dovlatov packed in his eponymous suitcase, as related in *The Suitcase* (*Chemodan*, 1986), just before emigrating from Soviet Russia to New York, recall scale-model grave-goods arrayed on the shelves of Ancient Egyptian tombs. Exile, ironically enough, is irresistibly *unheimlich* (uncanny). There are numerous studies devoted to exile in literature; it has become ‘a privileged trope migrating through the Western cultural

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1 The first wave of Russian emigration occurred between approximately 1917 and 1925. It included such well-known authors as Ivan Bunin, Aleksei Tolstoi, Ivan Shmelev and eventually Maxim Gorky, as well as the then-unknown Gaito Gazdanov and Vladimir Nabokov.

2 According to Leonid Livak, where self-fictionalisation occurred, it tended to concern exiles’ depiction of their overseas existence as more culturally isolated or economically deprived than it actually was. He lists numerous agonised ‘émigré Hamlets’ whose ‘claims to artistic isolation’ are riddled with contradictions. See Leonid Livak, *How It Was Done In Paris: Russian Émigré Literature and French Modernism* (Madison, WS.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 43.
imaginary’. In the following pages, I will borrow Svetlana Boym’s categories of restorative and reflective nostalgia to discuss fiction by two relatively neglected Russian émigré authors, Petr Krasnov and Georgii Peskov, in order to argue my own point—that the nostalgic reflection of homeland in exile literature creates neither utopia nor dystopia, but a haunted, spectral geography that undermines both.

Boym’s double categorisation of nostalgia (evolved from her earlier dichotomy of utopian and ironic nostalgia) is based upon Russian twentieth-century experience of exile, homesickness, and return. Restorative nostalgia, the successor to utopian nostalgia and the would-be successor to utopia itself, ‘proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and time’. Since restorative nostalgia concentrates upon the rediscovery of origins and the reconstruction of interrupted tradition, it can be distorted by political interests to create fanaticism and prejudice, or be manipulated by association with an invented heritage. Thus, while claiming to ‘restore’ what was lost, this variety of nostalgia actually provides a substitute, a cuckoo in the nest of memory. In the process of reconstruction, the original memory—and thus the imaginary topography of home—is profoundly transformed and distorted. My exemplar of restorative nostalgia at work in Russian émigré fiction is Petr Nikolaevich Krasnov’s novel Beyond the Thistle (Za chertopolokhom, Berlin, 1922), a vision of post-revolutionary Russia, reinvented in an authentically nineteenth-century spirit of monarchist nationalism.

Reflective nostalgia, by contrast, is a much more passive affair: rather than recreating an idealised past in the indefinite future, it provides a simulacrum of the irrevocably forsaken. As such, it foregrounds ‘longing