

TERRITORY AND EMPIRE IN EARLY SOVIET POETRY

by

Elise Nicole Thorsen

B.A. College of William & Mary, 2006

M.A. University of Pittsburgh, 2009

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2016

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES

This dissertation was presented

by

Elise Nicole Thorsen

It was defended on

March 18th, 2016

and approved by

David J. Birnbaum, Professor, Slavic Languages & Literatures

Randall Halle, Klaus W. Jones Professor, German

Ilya Kukulin, Senior Lecturer, Higher School of Economics, Moscow

Vladimir Padunov, Associate Professor, Slavic Languages & Literatures

Jonathan Brooks Platt, Assistant Professor, Slavic Languages & Literatures

Dissertation Advisor: Nancy Condee, Professor, Slavic Languages & Literatures

Copyright © by Elise Nicole Thorsen

2016

TERRITORY AND EMPIRE IN EARLY SOVIET POETRY

Elise Nicole Thorsen, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2016

The Soviet state-building project of the 1920s and 1930s faced a number of challenges, among them reconceiving of the vast Eurasian territory and geographic relations seized from the Russian Empire as a new country. This dissertation takes as its goal the description of how civic poets sought to create a coherent sense of imagined community in which geographic and ethnic diversity was organized and enhanced by socialist ideology. As this poetic project developed over two decades, a consistent tension emerged between two positions. One, there is the necessity of constituting an imagined community that can account for the dynamism of the early Soviet decades; for example, the implicit boundaries of that community change radically over time. Two, there is a countervailing suspicion that such an imagined community will perpetuate the legacies of Russian empire and global colonialism.

The methodology of this dissertation is close to the texts themselves. These include Maiakovskii's Soviet work, the Center of Literary Constructivists, the literary brigades of the Five-Year Plans, and works dedicated to the dramatic rescue of the Cheliuskinites in 1934. In these poems, which consciously grapple with problems of geography, the prosodic and intertextual organization of space offers a basis for understanding the conceptual position of the lyric subject. This lays the groundwork for inquiry into the shifting potential roles for the civically-minded poet, and into the possibility of a community of citizens to which he could belong.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	X
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 THE POLITICAL FORMULATION OF SPACE.....	3
1.2 THE TRADITION OF IMPERIAL SUBJECTIVITY IN CIVIC POETRY	5
1.3 CONCEPTUAL METHODOLOGY	7
1.4 THE ALSO-RANS.....	9
1.5 SURVEY OF CONTENTS	15
2.0 ENCOUNTERS IN THE WILDERNESS: VIOLENT RECONNECTIONS	18
2.1 THE WILDERNESS IN CLASSICAL RUSSIAN POETRY: PUSHKIN’S “PROPHET” AND LERMONTOV’S “DREAM”	22
2.2 WILDERNESS ON THE PATH OF THE REVOLUTION: KHLEBNIKOV’S <i>TYRANT WITHOUT THE T’S</i>	30
2.3 THE PROLETARIAN PROPHET: GERASIMOV’S “DISSONANCES ON THE STEPPE”	33
2.4 EMBRACING THE WILDERNESS: MAIAKOVSKII’S “BAKU”	46
2.5 THE END OF THE ENCOUNTER.....	54
3.0 THE ALLEGORY OF THE FLOOD IN MAIAKOVSKII’S POST- REVOLUTIONARY POETRY	56

3.1	MAIAKOVSKII'S RELIGIOUS-AESTHETIC WORLDVIEW	61
3.2	THE FLOOD AS SACRED REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL ("OUR MARCH," 1917)	66
3.3	THE FLOOD AND GLOBAL CLASS CONFLICT (<i>MYSTERY-BOUFFE</i> , 1918 AND 1921)	71
3.4	<i>THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL</i> , 1922	75
3.4.1	The Cartographic View of the Flood.....	75
3.4.2	The Autobiographical Lyric Subject.....	89
3.5	<i>ABOUT THIS</i> (1923).....	100
3.5.1	Evoking the Petersburg Tale.....	105
3.6	THE FLOOD, <i>IN TOTO</i>	113
4.0	THE TERRITORIAL AESTHETICS OF THE LITERARY CONSTRUCTIVISTS	117
4.1	WESTERNIZERS AND SLAVOPHILES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY	118
4.2	SEL'VINSKII'S <i>ULIALAEVSHCHINA</i>	128
4.2.1	The Violent Steppe and the Appeal of Imperial Order	130
4.2.2	Depicting Heterogeneous Discourses.....	131
4.2.3	Tata as an Escape from Anarchy	135
4.2.4	The Steppe as Determinative	140
4.2.5	Russia from the East.....	145
4.3	SEL'VINSKII'S <i>PUSHTORG</i>	153
4.3.1	Moscow at the Intersection of Europe and Eurasia.....	156

4.3.2	Representing Imperial and Cosmopolitan Trade	162
4.3.3	Poluiarov's Byronic Failure	166
4.4	VERA INBER'S <i>A GOAL AND A WAY</i>	170
4.5	THE LITERARY CENTER OF CONSTRUCTIVISTS: AESTHETICS OF POST-IMPERIAL TERRITORY	183
5.0	THE AESTHETICS OF THE CLOSED SOVIET BORDER	186
5.1	SEMËN KIRSANOV: DEPICTING TRANSITIONAL BOUNDARIES..	195
5.2	VLADIMIR LUGOVSKOI: BORDER CROSSINGS IN DETAIL	211
5.3	"MY GRENADA," "MY AFRICA": THE MODIFIED FUNCTION OF TWENTIES ROMANTICISM.....	224
5.4	KONSTANTIN SIMONOV: EXPANSION AND THE NATURALNESS OF EMPIRE	235
6.0	EXPLORING THE NEW SOVIET EMPIRE IN IL'IA SEL'VINSKII'S <i>CHELIUSKINIANA</i>	251
6.1	THE ARCTIC AND SOVIET SPECTACLE	253
6.2	THE CULTURAL PRODUCTION OF "SETTLEMENT"	261
6.3	THE CHELIUSKINTSY AND OCCASIONAL POETRY	267
6.4	SEL'VINSKII'S CHELIUSKINIANA.....	273
6.4.1	The Array	279
6.4.2	Monolithic Language: Slogans and Citations.....	285
6.4.3	Historical Entanglement.....	290
6.4.4	Whither the Array?	298
7.0	AFTERWORD	304

7.1	NEW DIRECTIONS	306
BIBLIOGRAPHY		310

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. El Lissitzky, "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge"	18
Figure 2. ROSTA window b/No. 3 (1919) depicting the three leaders of the major White front: General Denikin, General Iudenich, and Admiral Kolchak (Maiakovskii, PSS 3: 17)	18
Figure 3. Stalin's canonizing statement about Maiakovskii.....	196
Figure 4. "Great Britain" as depicted in graphic poem (167), with map of England for comparison (Wikipedia).....	205
Figure 5. "Germany" as depicted (and distorted) in words.	206
Figure 6. Map of Soviet Union from the GIKhL 1931 edition of Piatiletka	207
Figure 7. The label for Kazbek cigarettes	244
Figure 8. Front page corner illustration on day Camp Schmidt's final inhabitants evacuated (<i>Pravda</i> 14 April 1934, 1).....	266

PREFACE

In my transliterations from Russian Cyrillic, I use the Library of Congress system without diacritics. In this dissertation, the Cyrillic “ë” is always explicitly expressed as “ë” in Cyrillic and Latin alphabets, in spite of the orthographic practice of expressing it as “e.” I do so for the purposes of making the phonetic character of cited poems as clear as possible.

I have deep gratitude to my dissertation committee, who consistently made productive and thoughtful comments on drafts of this dissertation, and no one more than Nancy Condee. I would also like to acknowledge the faculty of the Russian as a Foreign Language Department of the International University in Moscow for their contributions to several preliminary readings during a Title VIII ACTR Combined Research and Language Training grant in 2014. My fellow graduate students at the University of Pittsburgh have likewise always kept my analysis fresh between informal conversations and multiple standing reading groups.

Many people have been on this journey with me for several years, but no one longer than my parents, Hanna, and the rest of the family; thank you for your patience and unflagging support.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 1910, Imperial Russia extended across Eurasia, from Poland to Sakhalin, from the Dnieper to the Amur. Its bounds were constantly challenged and shaped by competition with the other Great Powers and those who aspired to that status, as in the Great Game in Central Asia and the unexpected defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. The interior was riven by varied elite interests—landowners in the agrarian heartland, Russian colonists and regional elites in the hinterland, nationalist movements in its industrializing west. The interior was stitched together by a network of bureaucratic and military relations—but also by a certain kind of imagined community.

Over the course of 1914-1922, Imperial Russia imploded, bringing the many divergent interests that it contained—including that of the peasant majority—into sharp relief and competition, with no guarantee that they would be brought back under one government.

By 1941, the Soviet Union stood as a country that had, for the most part, retaken the space that Imperial Russia had once held, with the loss of industrial strongholds to the west. The border was no longer stabilized by Great Power balancing, but ever contingent upon withstanding a uniformly hostile capitalist world (or perhaps overtaking these war-exhausted, economically depressed states by means of a world revolution). The interior comprised as many diverse interest groups as before and also, as before, military coercion and bureaucratic redistribution of property—particularly in massive infrastructure projects toward the end of the

1920s and into the 1930s—accounted for much of the cohesion of the Soviet Union. There was a continuity between Imperial and Soviet practices, particularly in such areas as engineering, that required experts trained under the old regime, at least until a new generation of specialists could graduate in the Soviet era,¹ and pragmatism dictated introducing change unevenly. Yet the changes in the logic of territorial organization and administration were significant, given Bolshevik nationalities policy² and the transfer of the ownership of capital and land to the state, entailing new administrative units such as *sovkhozy* and regional committees.

Insofar as it depicted the greater territory of the Soviet Union, the cultural production of the 1920s and 1930s that was dedicated to the support and shaping of the Bolshevik state-building project had, then, to represent both continuity and the radical shift in governance. This dissertation will argue that there were distinctive, medium-specific patterns to the way that this

¹ The lag between expertise and ideological goals manifested itself in concrete ways. For example, the Party had difficulty creating a “Kazakh proletariat” through participation in the construction of the Turkestan-Siberian Railroad specifically because the imperially-educated engineers (in tandem with the entrenched interests of Russians, both colonists and newly arrived) resisted ideologically-motivated efforts to train Kazakhs to skilled positions and properly integrate Kazakhs into the labor force, on essentially racist bases, “masked in the rhetoric of efficiency” (Payne 228).

² Terry Martin gives an account of how Soviet nationalities policy fundamentally restructured relations between regions and the Soviet political center of Moscow, as well as among regions, in *The Affirmative-Action Empire* (2001).

cultural task was handled, in spite of the fact that territorial aesthetics were not an explicit element of most creative programs.

1.1 THE POLITICAL FORMULATION OF SPACE

Although they were not united by programmatic priorities, creative producers were nonetheless responsive to state policy. In their own ways, individual writers or groups developed the aesthetic significance of at least two major political formulations on Soviet space: World Revolution and Socialism in One Country.

The first concept, World Revolution, is an extrapolation from the premises of Marx and Engels: given the interwoven nature of global capitalism across national boundaries, proletarian revolution in one country would lead to revolution in others. Failing that, capitalism would retrench at the source of revolution. Lev Trotskii averred that the Bolshevik Revolution³ could succeed only if it “raise[d] the whirlwind of struggle in the west, or the capitalists of all countries [would] crush [their] revolution” (866). In the aftermath of the 1917 Revolution in Russia, this model gained empirical traction from the short-lived revolutions in Germany and Hungary. Although, as a political reality, revolution beyond the Soviet Union was unlikely after 1919, it

³ The names of historical events are always ideologically marked, and especially so in Soviet and post-Soviet history. When I use the term “Bolshevik or October Revolution,” in lieu of other potentially descriptive terms like “Bolshevik coup” or “regime change”—or “Great Patriotic War” in lieu of “World War II”—it is a concession to the fact that my texts participated in the discourses of Soviet identity and the limited community to which these terms belong.

remained an important part of the cultural imagination. While in many senses a retrenchment of petty bourgeois capitalism, the New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1921 through 1927 was also a policy of contingency, a simple pause to regroup after the devastation of World War I and the Civil War and to prepare for a next step. As such, even as the geopolitical possibility of revolution became more remote, it remained within the realm of potential so long as a rival for cultural attention was absent.

The policy of Socialism in One State definitively displaced World Revolution from the public cultural imagination. It set aside the anticipation of the spread of socialism in favor of concerted organizing and developing a single country in accordance with socialist principles. By contrast to the contingency underlying the cultural logic of NEP, Socialism in One Country was characterized by short- to long-range plans, mostly prominently, the First and Second Five-Year Plans.

These political formulations were important elements in the cultural imagination of Soviet space. Scholarly accounts⁴ have characterized spatial imagination in the 1920s in terms of reconnaissance, a high degree of mobility, and horizontal spread. There is not much discussion of how these qualities do not necessarily stop at political borders; while the Soviet Union was diplomatically isolated, there was still a significant exchange of people, cultural goods, and ideas across that border. By contrast, discussions of Stalinism in the 1930s emphasize the greater

⁴ Prominently, but not exhaustively, Vladimir Papernyi's *Kul'tura 2* (1985), Emma Widdis's *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (2003), and Eric Naiman and Evgenii Dobrenko's edited volume *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space* (2003).

control over movement imposed by the passport system—domestic as well as international—and the restructuring of architecture and represented space to emphasize verticality and stability, a huge, static picture in lieu of unlimited range of motion.

1.2 THE TRADITION OF IMPERIAL SUBJECTIVITY IN CIVIC POETRY

The ideas of motion and readily traversed distance, and of vast, static landscapes, intuitively lend themselves to the visual arts, especially the new technologies of photo-collage and film. However, with regard to these media, the issue remains open of how sovereign subjectivity was represented—how a human subject could position him- or herself within the larger community and space of the Soviet Union. For a variety of reasons rooted in Russian literary tradition, poetry was conditioned to take up this question of Soviet subjectivity. First, lyric subjectivity is persistent and difficult to elide in poetry, at least as practiced in the Russian tradition. More importantly, secular Russian poetry's relationship to the imperial state dates to its original definition in the eighteenth century, when versification debates played out in the context of the occasional ode. Vasilii Trediakovskii, Mikhail Lomonosov, and Aleksandr Sumarokov contextualized their disputes over the nature of meter and style in their odes to the empresses of the eighteenth century. One of the major characteristics of the age of the ode was the sustained development of a sense of imperial subjectivity, as when Lomonosov used the odic "I" to survey the vast expanse of the empire, marvel at the sovereign, and, importantly, offer a separate, invested perspective, like encouraging peace to the west and war to the south: "what was being ascribed in laudatory terms to the ruling monarch was, in fact, the poet's own vision which, although not inimical to the empress, was hardly a royal attribute or achievement" (Ram 78).

Gavril Derzhavin personalized the imperial subject further, offering not generality, but a model of historic and individual specificity for subjectivity. As Harsha Ram comments, “The life story thus becomes a necessary foil to the abstractions of empire [...] As the vicissitudes of ambition and the struggles of conscience loom larger in the poet’s consciousness, the fortunes of empire are gauged less for their importance to Russia than as benchmarks in the career of the Russian statesman” (Ram 120).

Beginning, with the Decembrists, of whom Konstantin Ryleev and Vil’gel’m Kiukhel’beker were poets who preserved the “archaic” style of the ode in the early nineteenth century, the locus of civic poetry shifted outside of the court. While occasional poetry to the emperor was certainly still written, it was no longer a site for innovation or for the active development of civic subjectivity. Rather, when in the 1870s Nikolai Nekrasov prominently raised questions of citizenship and responsibility, as in *For who is it good to live in Russian* [*Komu na Rusi zhit’ khorosho*] (1869), it was in relation not to the emperor and autocracy, but in relation to an imagined community of Russia. It is only really with the Revolution that civic poetry as an innovative, or at least as an affectively constructive practice once again aligned itself with the state. As such, while the state was an important element in the community articulated by early Soviet civic poetry, the state was not the intended audience.⁵ Rather, state policies were part of a process of thinking through what the imagined community of the Soviet Union would look and feel like from a variety of perspectives—the experience of a single subject or the observation of a more diffuse arrangement of social types. Whether the lyric subject was

⁵ Also, by the late 1940s and early 1950s, the state was the only intended audience for published works, so absorbing was navigation through the censorship process.

more or less articulated (as “I,” for example, in Vladimir Maiakovskii’s poetry, “we” in Proletkult or literary brigade poetry, or an extra-narrative presence or implied author, as in the case of some longer narrative poems), the importance of a community in which the subject fit was imperative.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL METHODOLOGY

My focus on placing lyric subjects in their imagined communities transparently owes much to Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation-state as “an imagined political community [...] both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). Clearly, too, I do not by virtue of using this concept propose that the Soviet Union was a nation state—by contrast to a nation state, the Soviet Union included ethno-territorial heterogeneity in its self-definition, and its delimitation was therefore always overtly open to change rather than supposedly tied to a single, territorially-rooted identity. Rather, the reality of the Soviet Union as a modern state was shaped by many of the same forces that Anderson describes in *Imagined Communities*.

My analysis of how lyric subjects imagined the larger space and communities they belonged to—that is, their territorial aesthetics—also draws upon the conceptual framework of imaginative or imagined geography. Following such observations as Henri LeFebvre’s that space is socially constructed and Gaston Bachelard’s observations that space becomes imbued with symbolic value through habit and memory, imaginative geography extends that symbolic weighting to space one has not necessarily experienced directly, on a scale beyond the personal and into the imaginary. Edward Said’s work is an example of a critical discussion of the distribution of positive and negative valences between West and East in 18th- and 19th-century

European scholarly and cultural production, revealing persistent and self-reproducing assumptions in the Western imagination of the East. What habit conditioned in personal space, the weight of tradition and fashion did in imagined geography.

There is a very important subset of critiques of imagined geographies that handle periods of first contact, and especially how imagined expectations conditioned lived experiences well beyond that point of first contact—for example, in Oscar Ronald Dathorne’s *Imagining the World: Mythical Belief versus Reality in Global Encounters* (1994) or Tsvetan Todorov’s *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (1984). With regard to the Soviet Union, one might posit a complementary dynamic, as the “Soviet Union” presupposed a new country taking the place of the one that had previously occupied that space. In this case, entrained experiences of imperial space continually interfered with the aesthetic exploration of the new state, with its expectations of discovering in the Soviet population an emergent set of new relations to capital and to each other. This kind of imagined geography was more self-reflexively critical than the geographic explorations critiqued by Said and others, for there was always the suspicion of old, bourgeois ways and colonial relations remaining in place in the Soviet community. Such suspicion sometimes obstructed the overarching effort to form community in the first place.

Two sites that I find important for examining this imagined community and concomitant suspicion of the mechanisms that make it work are representations of the border and of intra-Union socio-political organizations—how regions, tribes, and other territorial units are represented as connected. One key to a modern imagined community is its boundedness; there is the sense of a limit to a community beyond which others lie. However, examples of this boundedness can be examined in greater detail, and one can qualify them as falling within a range of stability, of porousness, of embattledness, of relative difference between the two sides.

Certainly, while the physical borders of the Soviet Union did not really change in the 1920s and 1930s, these imagined qualities of the border were apt to vary, as the following chapters will show.

Beyond borders, there was also the challenge of imagining and representing a robust set of connections across the ethnically diverse Soviet Union, uniting all the peoples under a just economic order and granting access to the abundant expanse of the country, from the oil-rich Caspian basin to the fur-rich far north and east. This richness in resources in particular had gone hand-in-hand with colonial expansion, leaving the problem of integrating peoples of Imperial Russia's periphery—small tribes, nomads, non-Russians in general—a rather thorny one for those who wished to reinforce Soviet robustness while also empowering these peoples. Those poets who chose to examine the colonial legacy directly, such as Vladimir Maiakovskii or Il'ia Sel'vinskii, tended to run into the greatest challenges in reconciling these two needs. No wonder, then, that it was typical, in poetry as in propaganda, to describe discontent in the regions as a foreign relic of a pre-socialist past.⁶

1.4 THE ALSO-RANS

The works and authors analyzed in this dissertation represent a range of the kind of poetry that extends beyond an immediate locality, represented in a way that entails a subjective relationship

⁶ This is true, for example, in the case of Lugovskoi's use of the term "Basmachi" in his poetry about the Central Asian desert—these nationalists were coded as the dispossessed landowners who sought to reinstall a feudal order over a now-liberated land.

to that territory. Because matters of space preclude a comprehensive survey of everything that falls under this scope, I have privileged writers and writers' groups that reflected aesthetic innovation or range as well as civic engagement or engagement with policy-relevant values. In general, this has meant a neglect of mass poetry, in spite of the intriguing geographic patterns that the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) and its institution of pedagogical poetry offer in terms of cultural production.

In particular with regard to pedagogical poetry—poetry that the barely literate proletarians, peasants, and especially notables like Stakhanovites and border guards were encouraged to write, as a means of developing civic identity—it is difficult to identify an aesthetic that engages clearly with questions of geographic specificity. Writers in this mode are constrained to write “what they know”—as an advisor said, “If one is sitting in Riazan', one should not write about Sakhalin, which the beginning prose writer is not familiar with, nor should the Sakhalin essayist describe the life of Chilean rebels, which is unknown to him” (qtd. in Dobrenko 314). In principle, this does not prevent the development of a territorial aesthetic; indeed, this injunction would contain the potential for a multiplicity of decentralized views on the Soviet situation and the imperial legacy were it not for the fact that the detail of lived experience does not preclude reinforcing a single geographic template. If a writer says, “[My novel] *The Quiet Life* is like this: similar to and a bit more interesting than Sholokhov's novel *The Quiet Don*. But the novel *The Quiet Don* portrays the life of the Don Cossacks, while the novel *A Quiet Life* portrays Siberia,” what is specific about the geographic experience of the Siberians or of the Don Cossacks?

Similarly indistinct is the territorial aesthetic inscribed in the following excerpt by a beginner border-guard poet from Belorussia:

На границе дуб зелёный,
Золотая цепь на нем,
Днём и ночью красноармеец
Ходит по цепи кругом.

A green oak at the border,
On it a golden chain,
Day and night a Red Army man
Walks around the chain.⁷
(Dobrenko 262, translation by Dobrenko)

This excerpt makes obvious the un-reflective sutures between classical model and Soviet interpellation. It is a particularly awkward effort—this student border guard has correctly counted out binary meter while making his most major interventions of changing the place and agent of Pushkin’s poem, but broken Pushkin’s rhyme of “dub zelënyi/kot uchënyi [green oak/learned cat]” with “dub zelënyi/krasnoarmeets” [green oak/Red Army man]—but for that reason a particularly good example of the relationship of RAPP-sponsored student to the classical model for imitation. While taking on words from the lived experience of the shock worker, the skeleton of the poem is an alien discourse that has come to dominate other voices.

⁷ This is a nearly verbatim repetition of the famous introduction to Aleksandr Pushkin’s fairytale in verse, *Ruslan and Liudmila* [*Ruslan i Liudmila*], with a few significant words replaced:

У лукоморья дуб зелёный;
Златая цепь на дубе том:
И днём и ночью кот учёный
Всё ходит по цепи кругом;
(Pushkin, *PSS* 4: 5)

By the sea stands a green oak tree;
A golden chain strung round it:
And on the chain a learned cat
Day and night circles round it;

This dissertation deals at some length with citations and reworkings of Pushkin and Lermontov, but in these cases, the attitude of the lyric subject or the implied author toward the cited classical text and the function of classical verse offers more aesthetically productive differences.

To be sure, not all poetry produced in response to the call for literary shock-workers was this technically bad, and one could make the case of coherent spatial aesthetics from, for example, the Civil War poetry of Aleksei Surkov, who, as a poet entering literary work through political education in the twenties and becoming part of the leadership of RAPP in time for its major call to shock-work, seems a fairly reasonable reference point for more “developed” territorial aesthetics of RAPP, if a single, short example can be sought.

For the most part, location in Surkov’s first book of poetry *Breaking into Song* [*Zapev*] is impressionistic and rural, without more specific markers. In poems with a more comprehensive view on Soviet territory, one finds geographic markers organized in a way that completely subordinates space to the rhythm of a soldier’s song, as in “About a Song” [“O pesne”]:

Эту песню пронесли мы
Вдоль по Гомелю
И мимо
Лозовой и Узловой
Перебежкой боевой.
(Surkov I:17)

We pronounced this song,
Along the way to Gomel’
And past
Lozovaia and Uzlovaia
In the rush of battle.⁸

⁸ Unless otherwise stated, glosses of poems and criticism are mine.

Here, clearly, the principle of selection of cities was the euphony of names. Lozovaia and Uzlovaia—one not far from the Ukrainian city of Khar'kov and the other in the Tula region neighboring Moscow—are united by the harmony of their names. Further on in “About a Song,” Surkov mentions a slew of famous battles and theaters of war, of which the following is merely one example:

По Волге ходили —
Летучки водили,
В Царицыне были —
Деникина били.
(Surkov I: 17)

We went (by foot) along the Volga,
And conducted meetings on the fly,
We were in Tsaritsyn
And beat Denikin.

The named sites are essential to the narrative of the Civil War, but there is little sense of the relationship of these places to one other. They are simply equal to one another within the matrix of the Civil War.

This anti-geographic aesthetic is announced in the manifesto poem of Surkov’s first collection of poetry, “Hero” [“Geroi”]. Here, the lyric subject says bluntly that he is not interested in engaging with geographic difference or perspectives on territory:

Каюсь. Музу мою невзлюбила экзотика.
Не воспитанный с детства в охотничьих играх,
Мой герой не ходил за Чукотку на котика
И не целился в глаз полосатого тигра.

И норд-ост не трепал его пышные волосы
Под оранжевым парусом легкой шаланды.
Он не шёл открывать неоткрытые полюсы,
Не скрывал по ущельям тюки контрабанды.
(Surkov I: 5)

I confess. Exotica has not entranced my muse.
My hero was not trained from childhood in hunters' games,
He did not go to Chukotka after whales
And never took aim at a striped tiger.

And the north-east wind never tousled his luxuriant hair
Under the orange sail of a light scow.
He did not go off to discover undiscovered poles,
And did not uncover bundles of contraband in ravines.

The lyric subject of “Hero” rejects the details of geographic specificity—hunting the creatures of the Russian Arctic and Far East and the establishment and maintenance of borders (that is, contraband control)—as “exotica.” In its place, he suggests the perspective of the Red Army Commissar, around whom geography falls out rather differently: “Along the roads of war, from Chita to the Donbass,/ He walked, dedicated to the world revolution [Po dorogam voyny, ot Chity do Donbassa,/ On khodil – mirovoi revoliutsii podannyi]” (6). Chita, somewhat near the border with Manchuria, and Donbass, in the industrial heart of Ukraine, inscribe a sense of the Soviet periphery. Along with the word “khodil [went/walked],” this juxtaposition suggests that they are simply a subset of “revolution experienced” within that of “revolution as a whole.” Geography here suggests the absolute centrality of the Party to the perception of territory; in order to talk about geography in this sense, it is sufficient to talk about it as a place touched by the Party. While this is indeed a geographic aesthetic, it is one that banishes a sense of differentiated relationships within this realm, or across its boundaries. Whatever the role of such poetry in reproducing the imperial trace in the mode of cultural production, textually speaking, “Hero” emphatically rejects the negotiation of imperial legacy, of geographic diversity, or of borders as an aesthetic task.

1.5 SURVEY OF CONTENTS

Although mass movements of poetry like RAPP and poetry as a pedagogical device are not the objects of this dissertation, there is still a large array of poetry that inscribes a territorial imagination in a variety of ways. I discuss there here in terms of their intertextual relationships to the imperial Russian tradition—a potential repository of connective mechanisms that are often mined for contemporary use, and just as often discarded or abandoned as flawed—and in terms of their articulations of contemporary geopolitical and economic models of global and regional space, including those of Vladimir Lenin, Georg Simmel, and Nikolai Trubetskoi. Each chapter of this dissertation reflects a different kind of close reading depending on what most prominently presents itself in the poetry, from intertextual allusions to close prosodic readings.

Chapter One describes an early moment in the attempt to raise the problem of territorial aesthetics and imagined community. In 1921, there was a rash of explicit citations of the romantic motif of the Prophet in the Desert, a figure in generic exile who, through an encounter with a sublime higher order, is able to re-enter civic space, now constituted in the wilderness. Authors such as Mikhail Gerasimov and Vladimir Maiakovskii used a rather more concrete sense of desert, locating their encounters with the sublime in the desert Aral steppe and Baku, respectively. In reproducing the sublime encounter in the desert, these poems conceive of their far-flung locales as newly connected with the wider Soviet Union. While this cultural moment opens the question of connection between center and periphery, its tools of citation do not seem adequate to answer it, and many of the conundra of territorial aesthetics continue developing over the next two decades.

Chapter Two turns to Maiakovskii specifically and follows his recurring motif of a world flood up through the formal incorporation of the Soviet Union—from his Revolutionary poem

“Our March” to his long poem *About This*. While initially an abstract allegory for the rapid spread of a new order, the global flood acquires increasing geopolitical shading, becoming a means of inquiring into the nature of colonialism, nation states, and the utopian potential of urban cosmopolitanism (as well as its more likely colonialist alternative).

Chapter Three examines the programmatic geographic aesthetics of the Literary Center of Constructivists (LTsK). The LTsK, led by Kornelii Zelinskii and Il’ia Sel’vinskii, positioned itself in opposition to LEF Futurists like Maiakovskii. In terms of territorial aesthetics, the LTsK agreed that cosmopolitanism played a role in the construction of a Soviet- or world-scale imagined community. However, in lieu of looking at this dynamic from an all-encompassing vantage-point, their works looked closely at localities, their relationships to one another in regional and global networks, and how they reflected imbalances in economic development. Sel’vinskii’s novels in verse, *Ulialaevshchina* and *Pushtorg*, as well as selected poems by Vera Inber, appear to be in dialogue with contemporary theories of Eurasianism, with its deep skepticism of global networks and European cosmopolitanism.

Chapter Four moves into the 1930s, a period that scholars typically characterize as having a wholly different spatial character than the 1920s: as conceptually bounded as opposed to revolutionarily explosive, and as relatively immobile compared to the perception of fluidity and instability in the 1920s. Young poets of the 1930s, such as Semën Kirsanov, Vladimir Lugovskoi, Boris Kornilov, and Konstantin Simonov, were enjoined to represent a stable border; a close analysis of the prosodic character of their texts shows, however, that their border reflected a great deal of dynamism. From their generational vantage point, the border was simultaneously a point of conflict, as in the military threat of bourgeois Europe and the military conflicts in Manchuria and Finland, and also a point of transition in an inevitable historical

progression—in other words, both impervious and ultimately porous. In the end, too, the border began to organize a certain divided territorial consciousness, in which pleasurable exoticism or romanticism was displaced beyond the Soviet border, and an ascetic renunciation of affective community (or at least the performance of such) characterized the interior.

Chapter Five addresses a radical site of the aesthetics of settlement in the 1930s: the wreck of the *Cheliuskin* in 1934 and life at Camp Schmidt, the survivors' settlement on the ice floes of the Chukotka Sea. This chapter examines two modes of writing about the event: that of flagship newspaper poetry, which emphasized the continuity between Camp Schmidt and Moscow, particularly because of shared time and community; and the critical stance that Sel'vinskii took to this aesthetic. In particular, he emphasized the discontinuities across the peoples of the Soviet Union, who continued developing in place, with greater reference to their own traditions than to the joint Soviet community.

In its path tracing the development of imagined community, this dissertation crosses many ruptures and abrupt shifts in the cultural landscape of the Soviet Union. My hope is that, having had to consider the concept in such a variety of novel contexts, this analysis will extend the range of inquiry about imagined community, imagined geography, and empire beyond its traditional contexts in a way that is meaningful for cultural studies and for Slavists.

2.0 ENCOUNTERS IN THE WILDERNESS: VIOLENT RECONNECTIONS

During the Civil War, Russia as a political entity existed in a state of flux—of moving fronts between the Red Army and the wide array of forces pressing against it. Bolshevik management of geography was in large part restricted to logistical supply lines for food and necessary resources, making contingent arrangements with local elites to gain tactical advantages over



Figure 1. El Lissitzky, "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge"



Figure 2. ROSTA window b/No. 3 (1919) depicting the three leaders of the major White front: General Denikin, General Iudenich, and Admiral Kolchak (Maiakovskii, PSS 3: 17)

opposing forces,⁹ and meeting those opposing forces on the most opportune terrain possible. Prominent Civil War representations of Bolshevik control of Russian space¹⁰ were symbolic—think of the 1919 El Lissitzky propaganda poster “Beat the Whites with a Red wedge” [“Klinom krasnym bei belykh”] (see fig. 1), with its allusion to the Red Army’s focus disrupting the encompassing white circle.¹¹ Or think of Vladimir Maiakovskii’s ROSTA windows (see fig. 2), which offered a metonymic view on the war and land embodied in the personages of the Red Army and the social types of the nascent Soviet Union.

The Civil War more or less came to an end in 1921. Although fighting continued in parts of Central Asia into 1924, Bolshevik policy and culture were nonetheless shifting to a new set of

⁹ For example, the defection of Bashkir troops from Admiral Kolchak’s army was a decisive factor in the failure of Kolchak’s spring 1919 offensive on the eastern front (Schafer 169)

¹⁰ In contrast to a rather different array of more universalist, worldwide revolutionary rhetoric that could also be found at this time, a subset of which will be handled in Chapter Two, in terms of Vladimir Maiakovskii’s allegory of a revolutionary flood.

¹¹ In its abstraction, the imagery of “Red Wedge” is more a manifesto than political propaganda. If the poster allegorically represents breaking the figurative encirclement of the Red Army by White forces, it is also a claim about the power of the new art: dividing the “whole orb of the earth into two circles”—two camps of old and new—and capturing “the entire sky with a quadrangle, the leaf of a book” (Lissitzky, qtd. in Kozlov 42). Breaking the integrity of the white circle also referred to passing beyond the horizon of conventional realism, “a passage into a new representativity [izobrazitel’nost’]” (Kozlov 42). I am grateful to Il’ia Kukulin for referring me to this source.

tasks tied to state-building. The New Economic Policy (NEP) temporarily permitted the return of small-scale private industry in order to allow the state to focus on developing heavy industry, which remained nationalized. In a sense, cultural production was left to make sense of gap between lived experience on the street and in the regions, and the greater plans for building the Soviet Union to which it belonged.

In addition to laying a roadmap from the current situation to the socialist future, cultural producers could also be seen constructing a sense of how these streets and regions were connected to a bigger idea of Soviet Russia and, more broadly, to the Transcaucasian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian Soviet Federated Socialist Republics that had also emerged from the war (and would go on to be founding members of the Soviet Union in December 1922). Though the umbrella of Bolshevik Party leadership extended over all of these republics, their relative autonomy from Russia also reflected the potential for further, more definitive separation. Bolshevik nationalities policy would, over the course of the 1920s, negotiate this risk by granting a certain amount of autonomy to non-Russian nationalities—autonomous Party apparatuses and the development of mother-tongue education and culture through *korenizatsiia*, for example. In the imagination of Moscow cultural production, such negotiation took different forms.

For example, at this particular moment, a small set of poetic texts reaffirmed the relationship between Moscow and the SFSRs in terms of a well-known motif of nineteenth-century poetry, the “Prophet in the Desert.” This motif is a narrative of internal exile for the lyric persona, who is cast out of the civilized metropole as much by his sensitivity to hypocrisy and banality as by political exigencies. Through the experience of exile, however, he is empowered and enjoined to return and renew the center. This chapter will contextualize two poems from 1921 within this tradition, arguing that they are an attempt to repurpose a motif of imperial

spatial imagination to the socialist end of reinforcing conceptual connections among republics. These two texts may very well stand out as unique, rather than representative of the main artistic polemics of the early Soviet period. Nonetheless, they warrant particular attention for their authors, Mikhail Gerasimov (1889-1939) and Vladimir Maiakovskii (1893-1930), Russian poets whose work spans the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary periods, and who each had to make aesthetic leaps in order to write a state-aligned civic poetry. As a Left Bolshevik worker-writer in exile, Gerasimov had always written from the perspective of underground agitation, rather than from the center of power; Maiakovskii, for his part, took up writing for Bolshevism during the Civil War.¹² With the “Prophet in the Desert,” Gerasimov and Maiakovskii recast their own roles as civic poets through a discrete spatial experience of the emerging Soviet Union.

The context of their work is two-fold. On the one hand, the civic nature of the motifs associated with prophecy in the wilderness emerged as an aspect of the imperial sublime. Harsha Ram traces the trajectory of the prophet in the imperial sublime from Gavril Derzhavin’s (1743-1816) “On the Taking of Izmail” [“Na vziatie Izmaila”] (1790) through Aleksandr Pushkin’s

¹² He had joined the Russian Communist Party (b) in 1908, but left after a prison term in 1910, in other words, just about when, as his biography *I Myself* [*Ia sam*] states, his literary career began. He returned to working with organized politics only after the Revolution. Initially his enthusiasm had been for the anarchistic potential of the revolution, an extension of the avant-garde aesthetics of anarchy that Nina Gurianova describes (*The Aesthetics of Anarchy: Art and Ideology in the Early Avant-Garde*). However, Maiakovskii shifted away from anarchy more quickly than his compatriots; this “early adoption” of the Bolshevik program is a factor in his greater prominence in the 1920s compared to others from the pre-revolutionary avant-garde.

“The Prophet” [“Prorok”] (1827) and Mikhail Lermontov’s “The Dream” [“Son”] (1841). These last two poems offer particular insight into the reflective work of the authors on their personal and aesthetic relationship to their sovereign and country. On the other hand, the early 1920s did not copy the nineteenth-century model without reference to the intervening century. Poets of the Silver Age had also dedicated attention to the aesthetics of prophecy and travel, as reflected in long-standing salons on the topic of Persia and, quite vividly, in Velimir Khlebnikov’s (1885-1922) aestheticized account of his journey to Iran in 1920 in the long poem *Tyrant without the T’s* [*Tiran bez Tè*].

2.1 THE WILDERNESS IN CLASSICAL RUSSIAN POETRY: PUSHKIN’S “PROPHET” AND LERMONTOV’S “DREAM”

The lyric mode of the “Prophet in the Desert” was characterized by a spatial vocabulary that foregrounded the *pustynia*, the barren wilderness or desert, with its romantic and proto-romantic connotations of being cut off from the world and civilization, and from worldly social relations in general. In the spiritual verse tradition, the desert is a metaphor for the monastery as a site at which one withdraws from the world, actually in search of “a city,” with the connotation of learning the lessons of “the mortification of the flesh, innocence, redemption, and a holy life (represented in verse by the evangelical testament of blessedness” (Sreznevskii).¹³ As reworked

¹³ I am grateful to Il’ia Kukulin for prompting me to extend the discussion of the wilderness beyond the imperial sublime and directing me to this account of medieval and early modern uses

in the early nineteenth century, most prominently by Aleksandr Pushkin (1799-1837) and Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841), this spiritual “lesson” was transmuted into a violent encounter with the angel of God and interpellation into his greater plan. This deity and plan can be more broadly generalized to power and ideological order, or reformulated to a representation of a more specific geographic order.

Mapped onto the Russian empire, civilization and the desert reflect the logic of metropole and periphery: the wilderness is sparse, while the city is densely populated; in the wilderness, violence is an explicit element of social relations, while in the city, relations are mediated by systems of manners and bureaucracy; the wilderness is far away, while the city is conceptually “near” the assumed reader. Connecting the two spaces within the single whole of empire is a geopolitical equivalent of spiritual withdrawal and internal exile. In cases such as Pushkin’s “Southern Exile” or Lermontov’s repeated assignments to the Caucasus, the sovereign assigned citizens appointments or missions at the extreme periphery of imperial control with the implicit purpose of removing them from the capital.¹⁴ And to telegraph a remapping of this pattern of

of the “wilderness and city” metaphor, preserved into modernity in the culture of the Old Believers.

¹⁴ In the following chapter, citations of internal exile are much closer to this idea of spiritual exile than the kind of internal exile that would become entrenched in the Soviet period, of forced and punitive resettlements of individuals or groups, with strong limitations on movement and entry to major cities (e.g., Mikhail Bakhtin, Iosif Brodskii or Andrei Sakharov, or the Chechens, Crimean Tatars, or Volga Germans). While Pushkin and Lermontov were sent far away by Tsars

movement in the post-revolutionary period, connections between civilization and wilderness took the shape of an array of relations to an evolving cultural definition of power. Thus, the Soviet prophet in the desert evolved from the figure of Khlebnikov blown by the wind of Revolution to Iran in 1920, to Gerasimov's sense of exile from a corrupted center of power in 1922, to Maiakovskii's ascetic mission of propaganda in the service of the Party in 1923.

In the poetic imagination, the wilderness involves not a divorce from civilization, but instead a new perspective on larger space and its ideological organization. Such an understanding seems particularly evident in Pushkin's early characterizations of his "Southern Exile" in Kishinev and Odessa, 1820-24. Here, initially, Pushkin modeled his experience on that of Ovid, also exiled to Moldavia by Augustus Caesar in his time, but played on the fact that what was the inhospitable north for the Roman was the gentle south for the poet. As the severe [*surovyi*] poet inherited the classical lyre of the gentle bard [*pevets*], his ability to withstand the trials of the wilderness tempered and strengthened his gift. While previous to the introduction proper of the Prophet, which appeared around the time of Pushkin's *Imitations of the Koran* and "André Chénier," this model lays out a geography that will also develop along with the severe lyric subject.

In Boris Gasparov's reading of *To Ovid* [*K Ovidiiu*] (1821), Pushkin describes his experience as akin to a classical descent into Hell on the model of Dante: "Pushkin embodies the meeting with Ovid in the form of a Dantean pilgrimage into the inferno, having by means of this image given a new aspect to the mythological reformulation of his exile" (Gasparov, *Poëticheskii*

Alexander I and Nicholas I in punitive fashions, their representations take this position as one of (not always peaceful) reflection.

iazyk 214). In referencing this classical organization of space, Pushkin not only establishes his poetic “lineage,” but reinforces that his lyric subject is operating within a totalized space: Heaven or Hell, all space is organized according to some divine, state, or ideological order. This conceptualization of space lays the groundwork for the movements of the Prophet proper in Pushkin’s poetry at the end of the Southern Exile.

Pushkin’s topography of the wilderness involved a move away from the classical poets who had so occupied his comrades in the poetic circle of Arzamas. Instead, he invested the encounter with a shade (such as Ovid) in the wilderness with the terror and splendor of the imperial sublime. Imperial because, while the sublime has a long history as a generalized discourse of exaltation through language and the temporary departure from reason occasioned by overwhelming sensation,¹⁵ in the Russian tradition, this mode inclined sharply toward a

¹⁵ The aesthetic history of the sublime in European literary theory begins with Longinus’s treatise “On the Sublime,” which describes the effects of the sublime style in rhetoric as leading to a position through induced ecstasy, rather than rhetorical persuasion. Rather than develop a narrative or psychological logic over time, a sublime work “illumines an entire subject with the vividness of a lightning-flash, and exhibits the whole power of the orator in a moment of time” (Longinus 3). Nicolas Boileau-Depréaux’s discussion of the sublime in *L’Art poétique* (1674) preserves this sense of the irrationality and energy of the sublime, and was a particularly formative influence on the secular Russian literature that was emerging in the eighteenth century. The terrible sublime of the Romantic period, which also had a strong effect on Russian post-romantics like Pushkin and Lermontov, can be tied to the English philosophical tradition, as in Edmund Burke: “Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger [...] is a

politicized sense of the aesthetic category.¹⁶ The encounter with Ovid in the wilderness is, by extension, contact with the emperor who controlled his movements, and thus mirrors Pushkin's relationship to Alexander I. "The Prophet" recasts this contact with power in an odic style that summons a sense of the imperial sublime. Contact with God's seraphim leads to an expanded awareness of sensory details, but also to the threatened violent dissolution of the lyric subject:

Моих ушей коснулся он, —
И их наполнил шум и звон:
И внял я неба содроганье,
И горний ангелов полёт,
И гад морских подводных ход,
И дольней лозы прозябанье.
[...]
И он мне грудь рассёк мечом,
И сердце трепетное вынул
И угля, пылающий огнём,
Во грудь отверстую водвинул.
(Pushkin, PSS 3.i: 30-31)

source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. [...] When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are, delightful" (Burke, emphasis in the original).

¹⁶ The introduction of the "imperial sublime" here, as will be apparent in further discussion, comes from Harsha Ram's book on this subject, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetic of Empire*, which surveys the aesthetic mode of the sublime in modern Russian poetry, from Lomonosov's and Derzhavin's odes to their empresses, through the Russian self-reflexive response to European romanticism in the works of Pushkin and Lermontov, to Tolstoi and the final destabilization of the exalted sense of the citizen within empire.

Upon my ears his touch then fell,
And they were filled with noise and clangs:
I heard the heavens shift on high,
The whispering of angels' wings,
Sea monsters moving in the deep,
The growing grapevines in the vales.
[...]
And with his sword he cleaved my breast
Removed my shaking heart,
And then he seized a blazing coal,
And placed it in my gaping breast.
(Translation at *From the Ends to the Beginning*)

Even as the lyric subject's bodily integrity is breached by contact with the seraphim, he is given more powerful prosthetic replacements (as well as his heart, his tongue is replaced with a serpent's eloquent forked tongue). After this transformation into the prophet, the lyric subject is considered equal to the mission that God's voice bequeaths him: "Go forth now over land and sea,/ And with your word ignite men's hearts [I obkhodia moria i zemli,/ Glagolom zhgi serdtsa liudei]" (31). Harsha Ram, in reading this poem in the context of the prophet motif from Gavriila Derzhavin through Vil'gel'm Kiukhel'beker, notes, "The romantic tradition came to equate the nation's body with the poet's, lingering over the details of his martyrdom in sleep, and finally *elided the history of Russia's imperial expansion into the problem of prophetic utterance*" (174, emphasis in original).

The stakes for poetry, then, were raised, even as the consequences for the lyric subject were dire. Few poets understood this as personally as Lermontov, whose loyalties were palpably split between poetry and his privileged status as an officer. His poem on Pushkin's death in 1837, *The Death of the Poet* [*Smert' poëta*], made his sense of the incompatibility between artistic freedom and the mores of the aristocracy clear enough to precipitate his first exile to the Caucasus. He was exiled there a second time for dueling in 1840; in spite of working assiduously

in both his writing and his military endeavors, serious advancement in either field (e.g., early retirement in order to write full-time or honors and promotion through the ranks) became untenable. In this enforcedly stagnant atmosphere, Lermontov ended up dying in a duel in 1841. Over the course of these exiles, he was in a particularly good position to observe the relationship between the court and the army in the Caucasus, the sovereign and the subject that he attempted to control.

In particular, Lermontov's "The Dream" makes plain the relationship between the aesthetic model of the wilderness and the imperial colonial project—and the toll that it takes on the subject, in what Susan Layton characterizes as "violent [personal] conflict about committing murder in the Caucasus in the service of the tsarist state" (227).

В полдневный жар в долине Дагестана
С свинцом в груди лежал недвижим я;
Глубокая еще дымилась рана,
По капле кровь точилась моя.

Лежал один я на песке долины;
Уступы скал теснились кругом,
И солнце жгло их желтые вершины
И жгло меня — но спал я мертвым сном.

И снился мне сияющий огнями
Вечерний пир в родимой стороне.
Меж юных жен, увенчанных цветами,
Шел разговор веселый обо мне.

Но в разговор веселый не вступая,
Сидела там задумчиво одна,
И в грустный сон душа ее младая
Бог знает чем была погружена;

И снилась ей долина Дагестана;
Знакомый труп лежал в долине той;
В его груди дымясь чернела рана,
И кровь лилась хладеющей струей.
(Lermontov, *PSS* 2: 127)

In the midday heat in a ravine of Dagestan
With a bullet in my breast I lay unmoving;
The deep wound still smoked,
My blood turned out drop by drop.

I lay alone on the sand of the ravine;
The ledges of the cliffs crowded round,
And the sun burned their yellow heights
And burned me – but I slept as the dead.

And I dreamed of an evening banquet lit
By fires in my native land.
Among the young women, crowned with flowers,
A cheerful conversation about me was happening.

But not taking part in this cheerful conversation,
She sat alone and thoughtful there,
And her young soul seemed weighted down
In God knows what sad dream.

And she dreamed of a ravine of Dagestan;
A familiar corpse lay in that ravine;
In his breast the wound while smoking blackened,
And blood flowed in a cooling stream.

“The Dream” is structured as a *mise-en-abyme*, in which the lyric subject lies dying, the hole in his chest no longer metaphorically veiled, but historically specific: “where a seraph had thrust a burning coal into the prophet’s breast, now we find a soldier mortally wounded by a bullet” (Ram 204). Thus injured, the lyric subject dreams of a young woman, who in turn dreams of him dying in Dagestan. The poem suggests a novel and cynical twist on the poet-prophet who gains for his pain the compensatory heightened senses of the imperial sublime; this dying man gains nothing new. Lermontov’s lyric subject is instead tied up in a very narrow feedback loop, gaining a telescopic view on a domestic scene in the capital, which gives him an outside perspective on himself. What is produced through this poem is not an expansion of sensory input, but a clear sense of the two spaces belonging to each other within the lyric subject’s

imagination. This, and the vivid vocabulary of the burning sun and the flow of blood from the heart, become marked elements of the texts of the twenties.

The sacrifice, clearly, is a source of ambivalence toward the imperial project in these works. Although Pushkin is working within a history of civic poetry in “The Prophet,” there is no doubt that he recodes the experience of sacrifice “as a spiritual-aesthetic transfiguration of the poet’s self” (Ram 175), which itself had lasting influence on further developments of the continuing motif of prophecy. No wonder, then, that the problem of prophecy remained heightened, whether in Lermontov’s continued development of this motif or, as I argue, in the civic poetry of the early Soviet period, which once again grappled with the question of state expansion.

2.2 WILDERNESS ON THE PATH OF THE REVOLUTION: KHLEBNIKOV’S *TYRANT WITHOUT THE T’S*

After the Revolution and during the Civil War, the larger cultural interest in the desert steppe to Russia’s south reflected the contested and turbulent status of Transcaucasia, especially oil-rich Baku on the Caspian Sea. In 1920, a number of poets and artists had gathered in Baku under the impression that the Red Army was about to move into Iran, or Persia, which, for its part, had been a site of sustained interest in Silver Age circles.¹⁷ Famously, Velimir Khlebnikov crossed

¹⁷ This cluster of interest in 1920 on the part of prominent cultural figures—Sergei Gorodetskii, Aleksei Kruchënykh, Velimir Khlebnikov, Viacheslav Ivanov, and the artists Sergei Sudeikin and Savelii Sorin—had effects that reverberated well into the early 1920s. For example, Shirin

into Iran and spent some months on the Iranian coast of the Caspian Sea, acting on his “vision of the Asian revolution that [would] throw off the yoke of British imperialism and spread around the globe” (Hacker 545) with a trajectory “From Baku and to Bombay/ Beyond Byzantium and beyond Baghdad [Ot Baku i do Bombeia,/ Za Bizant i za Bagdada]” (Khlebnikov, qtd. in Hacker 454, translation Hacker’s).

Moreover, Khlebnikov elaborates on the Russian prophet as the bearer of a kind of expansionist history, of Revolution (one of the “holy” books he shares is Pëtr Kropotkin’s 1894 *The Conquest of Bread* [*La Conquête du Pain*]). This is prominent in the case of his persona Gul’ Mulla in *Tyrant without the T’s* [that is, Yran, or Iran, *Tiran bez Të*] (also known as *Gul’ Mulla’s Trumpets* [*Truby Gul’ Mully*]), written between the end of 1921 and 1922. Here, Khlebnikov’s prophetic gift is recognized by the older prophets of Islam, “There’s how the prophets ran down from the mountains/ To greet their descendent Khlebnikov [Èto proroki sbezhalisia s gor/ Vstrechat’ chado Khlebnikova]” (Khlebnikov, *Tiran bez Të* 345). The prophets welcome him, as indeed does all of the nature in Iran, from the mountains and flowers to the clouds and ravens. If the mystics and wilderness are kindred, though, Iran, as embodied in the form of a human maiden, does not greet him so, setting up the dichotomous relationship between spirit and nature, on the one hand, and human relations, on the other: “Only the maiden of Iran did not say ‘mine,’/ Only she did not say ‘mine’ [Tol’ko ‘moi’ ne skazala deva Irana,/ Tol’ko ‘moi’ ne skazala ona]” (345).

Manafov cites this set of luminaries and their respect for Persia as a major reason for Sergei Esenin’s fixation on Persia in 1924-25 (19).

Khlebnikov describes the violence of his arrival, and refers thereafter regularly to the toll that this rigorous journey takes on him:

Белые крылья сломав,
Я с окровавленным мозгом
Упал к белым снегам
И терновника розгам.
(Khlebnikov 349)

When my white wings had been broken,
I fell to the white snow
And the brambles of the thorn bush
With a bloodied brain.

In bearing this violence upon his body, though, he shapes the landscape of Iran, as “The scarlet gardens are my blood,/ The white mountains, my wings [Alye sady – moia krov’/ Belye gory – kryl’ia]” (350). The prophet thus reprises the role of the martyred lyric subject in the expansion of Russian/Revolutionary ties to territory.

Tyrant without the T’s is a far longer poem than the prophet poems by Pushkin or Gerasimov, which leave the lyric subject at his moment of awakening, and spends more time following Gul’ Mulla’s ministry. The balance between mission and human limitations becomes tangible, especially in the incorporation of quotidian experiences of traveling by himself and the charitable, but somewhat inscrutable people he encounters:

Где развилок дорог поперечных, живою былиной
Лег на самой середке дороги, по-богатырски руки раскинул.
Не ночлег, а живая былина Онеги.
Звезды смотрят в душу с черного неба.
Ружье и немного колосьев — подушка усталому.
Сразу заснул. Проснулся, смотрю — кругом надо мною
На корточках дюжина воинов.
Курыт, молчат, размышляют. «По-русски не знай».
[...]
«Пойдем». Повели. Накормили, дали курить голодному рту.
(357-8)

Where the road forked in a cross, like a living legend
I laid in the middle of the road, throwing out my hands like a bogatyr.
I was not just staying the night, I was a living legend from Onega.
The stars peer into my soul from the black sky.
A firearm and some stalks of wheat is a pillow for a tired man.
I fell asleep immediately. On waking up, I see, all around me
A dozen soldiers crouching on their haunches.
They smoke, are silent, contemplate. "Not know Russian."
[...]
"Let's go." They led me off. Fed me, offered this hungry mouth a smoke.

The use of such prosaic moments in the work of prophecy expands the palette of potential motifs in the "Prophet in the Desert" model. In particular, everything in the environment has the potential to be fantastic, although much in society mitigates against it.

2.3 THE PROLETARIAN PROPHET: GERASIMOV'S "DISSONANCES ON THE STEPPE"

Officially founded in the revolutionary era (between February and October in 1917), Proletkult (abbreviated from *proletarskaia kul'tura*) was founded in accordance with Aleksandr Bogdanov's conception of developing proletarian culture to a degree sufficient to resist intellectual subordination to the predominant bourgeois culture and its interests. "It required [...] that workers should free themselves from the trammels of bourgeois mentality and be able to orient themselves in the world according to their own lights" (White 57).

Proletkult sought to reorganize culture and, in the formulation of Pavel Lebedev-Polianskii, politics and economics as well, as mere facets of culture (Levchenko 23). Mariia Levchenko notes that, in its efforts to organize in an ideologically coherent fashion, "Proletkult, in its own way, reproduces the Bolshevik party not only in its organization, but in its ideological

and rhetorical plan” (12). With this conjunction between the priority of culture and the alignment with the ruling political structure, Proletkult is a first enunciation of prophetic utterance as integral to the expansion of the country.¹⁸

The most prominent poets of Proletkult—including Mikhail Gerasimov, Vladimir Kirillov, and Aleksei Mashirov-Samobytnik—began publishing as proletarian writers well before 1917, in the journals and newspapers printed in the leftist community in exile. Their poetic biographies, in other words, were inscribed with the motifs of exile and prophecy. After he joined the Russian Social-Democratic Workers’ Party in 1905, Gerasimov spent time both in prison and in emigration in France, Belgium, and Italy (Z. Papernyi 550). While in Paris, he was one of Lunacharskii’s students (Mally 10), and in general during this period he emerged as a prominent worker-writer. Exile is a key motif in his aesthetic work as well as his biography, but the site of realization is not the metaphoric wilderness or the actual spaces of Europe, but the factory.

Levchenko notes how the revolution and official formation of Proletkulèt greatly circumscribed the possible affect of poetry like Gerasimov’s, juxtaposing a poem of 1913 to the revolutionary mode:

Иду к заводу, где опять
В тоске глухой, больной, кипучей
Я буду целый день страдать
(М. Герасимов. *Заводской гудок*. 1913 г.).

Ср.:

¹⁸ The idea of the word as action or as a concrete object like a stone is characteristic of post-Symbolist poetry in general (Levchenko 69).

Люблю я зарево вагранок, —
В нём небо звёздное ясней,
Люблю куски стальных болванок
Меж вальцев превращенных в змей
(М. Герасимов. «Люблю я зарево вагранок...». 1918 г.).

I go to the factory, where once more
I will suffer the whole day
In boredom that is dull, painful, roaring.
(M. Gerasimov. *The Factory Whistle*. 1913)

Compare:

I love the glow of the furnace,
The starry sky is clearer in there,
I love the bits of bar
Turned to snakes by the rollers.
(M. Gerasimov, “I love the glow of the furnace...” 1918)

(Levchenko 16)

Where the factory had been a site of capitalist humiliations in the pre-revolutionary period, it was transformed into “the source of a new life”—a new text, a new culture, a new social-physical reality (Levchenko 75). In 1917, the poem “To the Leader” [“Vozhdiu”], dedicated to Marx, realizes this shift in the nature of exilic space specifically in terms of prophecy.

Философ, социолог, гений,
Рождённый меж фабричных труб,
Пророк невиданных стремлений,
Живых лесов могучий дуб.

Великий Маркс! С набатной силой
Твой голос бьёт, могуч и строг
Над буржуазною могилой,
Над дряхлым миром трубит в рог.
(V. Papernyi 157)

Philosopher, sociologist, genius,
Born among factory smokestacks,

Prophet of wondrous endeavors,
Powerful oak of the living forests.

Great Marx! With the force of a tocsin
Your voice beats, powerful and severe,
It blows the horn over the grave of the bourgeoisie,
Over the decrepit world.

The factory, briefly alluded to in this poem, is the site where the transformative prophetic word is born in the form of Marx. However, the prophet, in the sense of the martyred lyric subject, is absent here, perhaps abandoned as a motif in the first utopian flush of the revolution. However, one can make a case that the tortured body of the lyric subject as vehicle for the ideology of power returns with a vengeance in Gerasimov's poem "Dissonances on the Steppe" ["Stepnye dissonansy"].

This poem appears in *Red Virgin Soil* [*Krasnaia nov'*] in 1922. It is written then, in the wake of one of the major splits in Proletkult between two factions that had always been in tension in the attempt to define proletarian culture: "on the one hand, [looking to] the highest achievements of proletarian literature—the poetry of Gerasimov, Sadof'ev, Kirillov; on the other, support for mass poetry, which captured the proletarian picture of the world" (Levchenko 53). In 1920, many of Proletkult's most mature writers departed the organization to form the Smithy [Kuznitsa]. The Smithy had for some time aligned with the All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP), thereby giving it the imprimatur of an avant-garde organization at the forefront of a mass movement, but VAPP was taken over in 1921 by the October and Young Guard movements, which also had no interest in supporting the elitist model of the Smithy (Kornienko 34). Later, in 1922, the Smithy would endure its nadir, as younger members left for the October group, which, through canny politics and the literary-critical organ *On Guard* [*Na postu*], "dominated proletarian literature and fixed [itself] in the public mind [...] as the

spokesmen for the [proletkul't] movement as a whole” (Maguire 159). Moreover, this moment in literary politics took place just as NEP was implemented. Visible classes distinctions in Moscow re-emerged, and left the impression that proletarian culture had suffered a major setback in its goals of creating a new world through the reformation of culture.

In addition to these organizational upheavals, Gerasimov himself had to leave the Bolshevik Party in 1921, and left the Smithy in 1923, abandoning all organizational life thenceforth (“Gerasimov”). It is thus from a position of increasing isolation and vulnerability in the cultural polemics of the 1920s that Gerasimov and his cohort were recruited to occasional participation in Aleksandr Voronskii’s thick-journal project, *Red Virgin Soil*.

The poem “Dissonances on the Steppe” describes an imaginary escape from Moscow for the lyric subject, who has been beaten down by the difficulties he has endured to no apparent effect in the NEP era. By contrast to the joyful factory of his revolutionary poetry, here the factories have returned to being a site of anguish.

Бродили озорные по Страстному,
А я голодным, беспризорным мулом,
Казались ненастными и хлѣсткими
Яркие дни голубые.
Грубо кололи глаза
Липовые лепестки
И бриллианты напудренных дам совбуров,
Их карминные губы
Горели острей
Облинялых флагов.
Убежал с Тверской.
От угля и стали
На заводском костре
Посинела шкура –
Был оглушаем машинным гулом
И свистом Голутвинских мастерских.
(Gerasimov 36)

Those who wandered on Strastnoi were full of mischief
But I was like a hungry, homeless mule
The bright blue days
seemed foul and biting
The tender leaves of the lindens
Rudely scratched at my eyes
As did the diamonds of the powdered ladies of the Soviet bourgeoisie,
Their ruby-red lips
Burned more brightly
Than our faded flags.
I fled from Tverskaia.
The coal and steel burning
Over the factory bonfires
Caused my hide to blacken.
I was deafened by the hum of machines
And by the whistles of the Golutvino workshops.

The factory district in which he shelters dissolves into the harsh deserts of the Aral steppe, where
he continues to suffer.

Но заманили голубые дали нереальное
И вот – ползучим саксаулом
Душа проросла в сыпучих песках.
Ползла на корточках
По дюнам
У Приаралья,
Кровавая полынь и солонцы,
Лишь юрты, да дымок лунный
Указывали путь к солнцу.
У Актюбинска и Акбулака
Лакал я марево степей,
Где солнце лаком неласковым
Полировало полынь и лишай
Всё жёстче и нелепей.
Где солнце, ветер и верблюды
Вылизывали солонцы
И озёр соляные блюда
Дымились в миражевом танце.
Песочный ветер пудрил солью
Шерсть верблюжьей и мою,

В какой арык, какие страны
Мечты и боль мои волюю?
(36)

But the blue sky beckoned to the imaginary in me
And there, like a creeping saxaul
My soul germinated in the crumbly sand.
It crawled on its haunches
Along the dunes
In the Aral region,
Sprinkling blood on Artemisia and clay-heavy soil,
Only yurts, and their moonlit smoke
Showed the way to the sun.
At Aktiubinsk and Akbulak
I lapped at the mirage of the steppe,
Where the sun with an harsh lacquer
Polished the Artemisia and lichen
Ever more roughly and grotesquely.
Where the sun, wind, and camels
Licked away the clay
And the metallic salt plates of lakes
Smoked in the mirage's dance.
The sandy wind powdered with salt
The hair of the camel and of me,
To what irrigation canal, to what countries
Do my dreams and pain will me?

His experience in the desert allows him to actualize his creative will and potential to the service
of the Soviet republics, building, in essence, a locomotive.

Но вот я юный
Смельчак и дерзкий
Вдали от Тверской,
Воздвиг на дюнах
И соляных блюдах
Многогорбых,
Грозой громыхающих
Чугунных верблюдов.
Приползали и дивились твари –
Никогда не вылинивал

Карминный стяг зари.
(36)

But I am a young
Brave guy, and stubborn.
Far from Tverskaia
On the dunes
And on the salty plates, I have erected
Cast-iron camels,
Many-humped,
Thundering like a storm.
The beasts crept up and marveled:
The ruby-red flag of the dawn
Had never actually faded.

Some elements of this poem reflect a vocabulary held in common between Gerasimov and Khlebnikov. His “cast-iron camels [chugunnye verbliudy]” are of a type with Khlebnikov’s trains, which also appear at the culmination of *Tyrant without T’s*, “figured monsters with bodies of steel,/ With the names ‘Trotskii’ and ‘Rosa Luxembourg’ [uzornykh chudovishch s telom zheleznyum,/ S nadpis’iu ‘Trotskii’ i ‘Roza Liuksemburg’]” (Khlebnikov 358).

Yet Gerasimov’s lyric subject also speaks in terms evocative of Pushkin and the transfiguration of the aesthetic self. For example, the lyric subject speaks of his legacy in terms evocative of “*Exegi monumentum*” (1836): compare the otherwise inapt use of the verb to erect, *vozdvignut’* in “I have erected on the dunes [...] cast-iron camels [Vozdvig na diunakh [...] chugunnykh verbliudov]” with Pushkin’s “I have erected to myself a monument not made by hands [Vozdvig ia pamiatnik sebe nerukotvornyi]” (Pushkin, *PSS* 3.i: 424). By bringing the tradition of “erecting” the poetic monument to bear, Gerasimov invites the reader to understand his accomplishments as aesthetic, as well as political or material.

Essentially, all of their lyric subjects are driven to wander by a spiritual lack in their surroundings. Pushkin’s lyric subject ascribes the cause of his wandering to “spiritual thirst

[dukhovnaia zhazhda],” an inability to find spiritual nourishment among people in more civilized spaces. Khlebnikov underscores this mismatch of individual and society by enacting such homeless wandering in his own artistic biography. Gerasimov’s lyric subject allocates relatively more time to distinguishing explicitly between his psychic needs and those of the Moscow crowd—perhaps not a surprise, given that this poem is in part in response to a failure to bridge the gap between elite proletarian writing and the crowd. Thus, while those around him are “ozornye”—in a state of youthful, carefree puckishness—the lyric subject feels homeless, like an animal (a mule) cut away from human society.

There is minimal positioning of the soon-to-be prophet in Moscow before the moment of encounter with power. If a six-winged seraph or the prophets of Islam do not appear to signal the encounter explicitly, Gerasimov’s lyric subject is nonetheless subjected to a flood of sensory imagery so intense that it does violence to his body. The agent of violence in “Dissonances on the Steppe” does not reveal itself as an allegorical figure, but emerges from the hostile cityscape and the resurgent bourgeoisie produced by the state’s NEP. Indeed, one of the first signs of “dissonance” might be the pejorative “Sovbury,” the portmanteau of Soviet Bourgeoisie that had been coined to describe this phenomenon, and which should have made no sense in a country ruled by the proletariat.

Dissonance is introduced in a new dimension fairly quickly, as the encounter seems to rack into a new focus. Where “blue” has initially been associated with time, the here and now, “the bright blue-skied days [iarkie dni golubye],” it shifts to signaling spatial distance, “the blue distance [golubye dali].” The lyric subject is now in an imaginative space of the distance wilderness, where his trials continue. Now he is not beset by the callous cacophony of Moscow, the desert for the soul, but by the exigencies of a literal desert, the desert for the body.

Gerasimov's proletarian subject draws on the gritty material of the industrial center, a kind of degraded and denigrating sublime that dates at least back to Nikolai Nekrasov (1821-1878)—consider the dull horror of the string of deaths and crimes in “Morning” [“Utro”] (1872) or the menacing, otherworldly existence that drunkenness brings close in “The Drunkard” [“P'ianitsa”] (1845). Gerasimov incorporates such material with the explicitly transformational narrative of the prophet in the desert—quite literally imagining this realia in traditional aesthetic terms. Gerasimov is thus at the tail end of a larger phenomenon of twentieth-century Russian literature in which the Symbolists and post-Symbolists revisited the Romantic preoccupation with transcendence, while not forgetting the dominant discourses of positivism and utilitarian literature of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Symbolists are the primary example of this recursion: Irina Paperno suggests that their transcendent aspirations reproduce the Romantic striving for *Jenseits* [the Hereafter], while not forgetting the critical realists and the tradition of positivism in which they were educated.

In [the Symbolists'] view, Chernyshevskii's famous thesis that the ‘beautiful is life’ implied that real life in its entirety [and not just the relatively limited vocabulary of the Romantic sublime, such as mountains, oceans, tubercular maidens, and such] could become a domain of the beautiful and, therefore, a sphere of artistic creation. Life as a whole, without any ‘residue,’ can be transformed into art. (Paperno 22)

The material of all life is available to be transfigured, including the factories and tools of the proletarians and the barren desert. The culmination of Gerasimov's poem draws upon the materials of both the wilderness and city to build the modern Soviet state. The resulting apotheosis is positivist, fixed in the concrete product of a train, but it is also transcendent, as

suggested by the revelation of the scarlet banner that lay beneath the “faded flags” of Moscow—the idea of Soviet, proletarian power.

The specificity of Gerasimov’s poem is not merely in the tactile concreteness of the materials he transforms, but also in the specificity of the spaces he traverses. In Moscow, his movement can be traced from Strastnoi Boulevard to Tverskaia Street, to the industrial neighborhood of Golutvino.¹⁹ In the overwhelming and deafening presence of the “shrill from the Golutvino workshops,” the subject’s attention can shift from the sensory overload of the outside to the interior experience of the more symbolically resonant realm of the Aral wilderness. As in Moscow, the lyric subject’s movements are attached to specific locations that enable us to draw a mental map of his agonizing crawl across Central Asia, from the steppes of the Aral Sea region to Aktiubinsk²⁰ and Akbulak, on opposite ends of the Kazakh stepped. The vast expanse that these markers delimit is filled with a sparse inventory of objects that are repeatedly mentioned so as to underscore that there is little else to break up the landscape: dunes [*diuny*], clay-heavy soil [*solontsy*], Artemesia [*polyn’*], and salty [*solianyi*]. These elements are certainly insufficient to describe accurately the expanse that Gerasimov covers—the Orenburg district

¹⁹ Alternatively, the lyric subject is already flying farther afield from the locality of Moscow if, as Il’ia Kukulin has suggested, he is potentially in Golutvin, a suburb of Kolomna in the Moscow region. Suggestively, a locomotive factory was located here, prefiguring the later appearance of the locomotive in the poem.

²⁰ A city in the Orenburg region, not so far from Samara; Gerasimov had worked for the Proletkul’t branch in Samara, and the focus on this area may be an extension of his own experience there.

where Aktiubinsk is, for example, is semi-forested. But their limitation does convey its apparent spiritual emptiness.

The two cities of Aktiubinsk (now Aktobe, in Kazakhstan) and Akbulak serve as geographic anchors on a vast canvas, but poetic devices make them seem closely connected: “At Aktiubinsk and Akbulak/ I lapped at the mirage of the steppe [*U Aktiubinska i Akbulaka/ Lakal ia marevo stepei*].” The alliteration that connects the two also marks an increase in the interweaving of sounds across spatial and semantic divides in this section of the poem. Similar discrete moments of assonance appear at other points within the desert episode, such as the repetition of “u” in “I vot – polzuchim saksaulom/ Dusha prorosla v sipuchikh peskakh [And there, like a creeping saxaul/ My soul germinated in the crumbly sand]” (lines 18-19). As such, in spite of the affect of suffering in this episode, the lyric persona is revealed by both semantic meaning and additional aesthetic layers to have much greater sensitivity to the sensory and aesthetic potentials of the immense and severe desert. He incorporates all of the desert’s elements, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral (or phonetic).

For an additional point of comparison between the poems on a formal level, the chaotic rhyme scheme of Pushkin’s “Prophet” becomes even more disorganized under the normal terms for reading rhyme in Gerasimov’s poem. There, only traces of rhyme remain. Indeed, in the teasing traces of rhyme that appear in “Dissonances on the Steppe,” a central irresolvable oscillation emerges. The poet appears to make a point of failing to meet expectations of rhyme specifically for the reader, but not for the listener. Frequently, consonant and vowel letter combinations will repeat in near proximity, but the distribution of stress will thwart the reading of these moments as rhyme or assonance. Early examples of this near rhyme include the juxtaposition of “ozornye [mischievous ones]” (line 1) with “bezprizornym [homeless]” (line 2),

or of “solontsy [clayey soil]” (line 23) with “solntsu [sun]” (line 25). This latter example bears out this principle even more clearly, given the silence of the “l” in “solntse” and the deliberate non-assimilation of the sound in “solontsy.”

The “dissonances” of the steppe are, in a sense, oscillations on multiple levels: between visual and phonetic rhyme, between Moscow and the wilderness, between “Soviet” and “bourgeois.” Moreover, in invoking Aktiubinsk, Gerasimov situates one of the anchors of his geography in the Orenburg region, which has been both within and beyond the Russian border, becoming part of the Kirgiz SSR in 1920, then of the Kazakh SSR, and returning to the Russian SFSR in 1925.²¹ At the end, these are resolved by the train, which provides a single chain of logic from Moscow to the wilderness.

The lyric subject has escaped into the materialist-spiritual desert and rediscovered his purpose (affirmed by the ruby-red flag of the Revolution) as a constructor of connections across conceptual space. The wilderness provides a kind of reconciliation of dissonance as he recognizes the state he wished to see in his desert surroundings, in essence, a perfected proletarian space, by contrast to the contamination of Moscow. Nevertheless, the emphasis in the formulation above is more on *escape* than on cementing *connection* to the center. This may be a point of intervention best made in spaces that are strongly claimed by Moscow, mitigating the effects of conceptual central control in a way that preserves the “wilderness” potentiality of encounter—a strategy employed by Maiakovskii in his first poem on “Baku.”

²¹ I am grateful to Il’ia Kukulin for pointing out the geographic “dissonances” that come with invoking this particular region.

2.4 EMBRACING THE WILDERNESS: MAIAKOVSKII'S "BAKU"

Within the general concerns about the potential centrifugality of components of the emergent Soviet Union, Baku holds an outsized importance for very clear reasons: it is a major oil-producing center. It had been a site of conflict between Armenians and Muslims early in the Civil War, and as the Western front of World War I wound down, the Turks and Great Britain competed for control over the city and area, while the Azerbaijani nationalist group Musavet attempted to negotiate between the powers. In September of 1918, Great Britain decisively occupied Baku, leaving in August 1919, when it considered the government it had helped to establish to be stable enough. Baku was captured by the Red Army in April 1920 (Hacker 443-4). Given the economic value of Baku and its evident geographic volatility, it is small wonder that Maiakovskii wrote not one, but two poems dedicated to affirming the Soviet claim on Baku and its wealth, one in 1923, the other in 1927.

Maiakovskii wrote the first of these poems in 1923 while in Baku, publishing it in the newspaper *The Baku Worker* [*Bakinskii rabochii*], as a part of his tours around the Soviet Union to declaim on behalf of the Bolshevik Party and their work building the state. As a figure who had placed himself at the behest of the state and moved in coordination with its needs, Maiakovskii reproduced the movements of Pushkin and Lermontov to a greater degree than Khlebnikov, whose trip to Iran on behalf of the Revolution was a personal initiative, or Gerasimov, whose imagined Central Asian ordeal is an escape from the state. Moreover, over the course of the poem, Maiakovskii seems attuned to the effects of colonialism on Baku. As in Lermontov's "Dream," the violence of the relationship between center and periphery is fairly explicit, and the poet's attitude toward it is at least initially ambivalent. However, Maiakovskii

manages to cast the relationship between the Transcaucasian city and Moscow in a positive light
in the end.

Баку.
Город ветра.
Песок плюет в глаза.
Баку.
Город пожаров.
Полыхание Балахан.
Баку.
Листья — копоть.
Ветки — провода.
Баку.
Ручьи —
 чернила нефти.
Баку.
Плосковерхие дома.
Горбоносые люди.
Баку.
Никто не селится для веселья.
Баку.
Жирное пятно в пиджаке мира.
Баку.
Резервуар грязи,
 но к тебе
я тянусь
 любовью
 более —
чем притягивает дервиша Тибет,
Мекка — правоверного,
 Иерусалим —
 христиан
 на богомолье.
По тебе
 машинами вздыхают
миллиарды
 поршней и колес.
Поцелуют
 и опять
 целуют, не стихая,

маслом,
 нефтью,
 тихо
 и взасос.
Воле города
 противостать не смея,
цепью сцепеневших тел
льнут
 к Баку
 покорно
 даже змеи
извивающихся цистерн.
Если в будущее
 крепко верится —
это оттого,
 что до краев
изливается
 столицам в сердце
черная
 бакинская
 густая кровь. (1923)
(Maiakovskii, *PSS* 5: 57-58)

Baku.
City of wind.
Sand spits in the eyes.
Baku.
City of fires.
The flaring of Balakhani.
Baku.
Its leaves – soot.
Its branches – wires.
Baku.
Its brooks –
 the ink of oil.
Baku.
Flat-topped houses.
Hump-nosed people.
Baku.
No one would live here for fun
Baku.

A greasy spot on the jacket of the world.
Baku.
A reservoir of filth,
 but to you
I am drawn
 with a love
 greater –
than that with which Tibet draws the dervish,
Mecca – the faithful Muslim,
 Jerusalem –
 the Christian
 in pilgrimage.
Because of you
 billions of pistons and wheels
sigh
 in the form of automobiles
They kiss
 and again
 kiss, not abating,
by means of oil,
 of crude oil,
 quietly
 or sucking face.
Not daring to oppose
 the will of the city,
even the serpents
of writhing railway tank cars
 cling
 to Baku
 obediently.
If one believes strongly
 in the future –
it is because of this:
 into the capital city's heart
filling it to the brim,
 Baku pours out
thick
 black
 Baku blood.

The description of Baku in the poem seems particularly grotesque in comparison with contemporaneous depictions of locations abroad from the same period of travel. This visit to Baku is bracketed by travel to Paris and Berlin, from which Maiakovskii had returned after two months abroad at the end of 1922, and Mexico and New York, where Maiakovskii would travel extensively in 1925. The relative grotesquery of Baku indicates that Maiakovskii is relying on a particular aesthetic to describe the Soviet periphery from within, as a destination for internal exile. By contrast, when Maiakovskii looks at Baku from outside of the Soviet system, as in his sketch “The Parisian Provinces” (“Parizhskie provintsii”), his attitude toward the capital of Azerbaijan is completely different:

И здесь, как и во всем, Октябрьской революцией сделан невероятный сдвиг.

Мы даже не заметили, как наши провинциальные города стали столицами республик Федерации, как городки стали центрами огромной революционной культуры и как Москва из второсортных городов Европы стала центром мира.

Только в поездке по Европе, *в сравнении*, видишь наши гулливеровские шаги.

(Maiakovskii, *PSS* 4: 254, emphasis mine)

And here, as in all areas, an unbelievable shift has been made by the October Revolution.

We did not even notice how our provincial cities became the capitals of the republics of the Federation, how small towns became centers of enormous

revolutionary culture, and how Moscow went from being one of the second-rate cities of Europe to being the center of the world.

Only on a trip through Europe, *through comparison*, can you see our Gulliverian steps.

Maiakovskii's perspective from outside the Soviet Union allows him to see how, in spite of their apparent slow progress, provincial cities have proven to be capital cities, and Moscow, among them, the center of the world. Without the benefit of a foreign perspective, however, the question of defining likeness, difference, and connection was apparently more complicated.

Maiakovskii initially characterizes Baku in terms of the most basic elemental blocks of the desert: a space open to wind from all corners and sand. In conjunction with this, it is also the "city of fires," in association with its industrial purpose as an oil city. The two facets of the city combine into grotesque facsimiles of nature in the debris of industry, with leaves of soot, branches of wires, and brooks of oil. In the end, he terms the city "A greasy spot on the jacket of the world," using the metaphor of clothing, a bourgeois signifier for him, given its association with fashion. As much as Baku is defined by oil, in the esteem of the world, it is a mere greasy spot, where "no one would live for fun." Evoking the duality of Gerasimov's hybrid Moscow-desert, Baku is represented in terms drawing upon the harsh challenges of nature and the worst elements of contemporary urbanism.

The shift to inspiration and potential occurs as the lyric subject emerges to praise Baku as a destination for pilgrimage on a par with three holy sites, Tibet, Mecca, and Jerusalem. In doing so, he replicates the original "Dantean pilgrimage" within a totalized, religion-style system that had typified Pushkin's aesthetics of internal exile. The significance of Baku as a site of pilgrimage is reinforced by notes that "tebe"/"Tibet" was among the first four rhymes jotted in

the poet's notebook and was thus the basic foundation from which this poem emerged (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 5: 434). It is at this point that organization of the typography of the poem shifts as well, as at this point Maiakovskii's stair-step *lesenka* structure begins in earnest to define the graphic experience of the poem. Evocatively, the stair-step covers the greatest horizontal area specifically at the point at which Baku, Tibet, Mecca, and Jerusalem are brought to bear for comparison.

Baku's position has shifted from being a cheap and dirty extension of artifice and civilization to being akin to a sacred pole within a Soviet cosmos. At this point, the lyric subject himself enters as an actor in the poem in order to profess his love: "but to you/ *I* am drawn/ by love [no k tebe/ *ia* tianus'/ liubov'iu]" (emphasis mine). This profession of Baku's sudden, affective significance to the lyric subject presupposes that the relationship between Moscow and Baku is different from that to the rest of the world, in spite of the fact that Baku is geopolitically valuable for the same reasons as ever. Rather, in Maiakovskii's language, Baku infuses the machines of the Soviet Union with an erotic energy that, in turn, the lyric subject offers back with his love. In a sense, he is the presence in the desert that transforms the city and especially if one considers the "heart" that resides in Moscow to be something of a prosthetic for an absent heart in Baku, this exchange of love may serve as a similar replacement.

Even in this ecstatic address to Baku, the historical violence of colonialism is explicit. The figurative language of "thick black blood" that is used to describe Baku's oil is not atypical in Maiakovskii's poetry, and actually fits well within the poet's array of hybrid organic-inorganic creations (as in the persona of the flying radio-man he assumed in the 1922 *Fifth International* [*Piatyi Internatsional*]). However, the presence of blood is evocative of the prophet, in particular Lermontov's dying officer, although the mutilated body that is meant to propel the colonizing

mission of the state forward is now the embodied city, rather than Maiakovskii's lyric subject. Even given the remapping of image to position, this poetic vocabulary of the prophet in the desert helps to enunciate a mode of exchange and relations within the Soviet Union. Perhaps what is most important in the address is redress from the ambivalent colonizers through acknowledgement and reciprocity (but certainly not autonomy).

In 1927, Maiakovskii again dedicates a poem to Baku and its oil, in a longer, but more tightly controlled lecture given from a stable subjective position—basically, that of a Muscovite observing current affairs. An impressionistic sketch of the tumultuous Caspian Sea is tied to the sea power that is augmented by oil-burning ships.

Объевшись рыбачьими шхунами до сыта,
Каспийское море
 пьяно от норд-оста.
На берегу —
 волна неуклюжа
и сразу
 ложится
 недвижимой лужей.
[...]
С нефтью
 не страшны водные рвы.
Через волну
 в океанском танце
на броненосце
 несётесь вы —
прямо
 и мимо угольных станций.
(Maiakovskii, *PSS* 8: 227-30)

Having overeaten its fill on pheasant-schooners,
The Caspian Sea
 is drunk off of the nor'easter.
On the shore –
 an unwieldy wave
just immediately

lies down
as a motionless puddle.
[...]
With oil
the roar of water is not terrifying.
Across the wave
in an oceanic dance
in a battleship
you all will be carried –
directly
bypassing coal stations.

In this light, the first, more ecstatic “Baku” seems to respond specifically to the need to acknowledge and recast the grip that Moscow had to keep on the city. The organic connections of the circulatory system metaphor, while implemented with violence, raise Baku up in imaginary status and inscribe an indelible bond between power and wilderness.

2.5 THE END OF THE ENCOUNTER

Well into the 1930s, the desert wilderness retains its capacity as a space for discovering the physical and spiritual limits of humanity through trial and asceticism, as in Andrei Platonov’s use of the Center Asian desert in the novella *Soul [Dzhan]* (1935). The poet Vladimir Lugovskoi wrote a series of collections dedicated to the desert as a place for forming Soviet identity during the Five-Year Plans, the four volumes of *To the Bolsheviks of the Desert and Spring [Bol'shevikam pustyni i vesny]* (1931-1948). Boris Pil’niak develops the idea of interconnectedness between the wilderness and the civilized center by describing the desert in terms of processes and flows, as the progression and regression of desertification that dictates the

flows of peoples in *The Volga Falls into the Caspian Sea* [*Volga vpadaet v Kaspiiskoe more*] (1934).

These novels and poems describe the desert as a place of trial and proving, or of intricately interconnected systems. However, I would argue that this particular moment of the early twenties is not only referring to ascetism or struggle, but specifically in reaction to the violence the state inflicted upon its land and martyred agents in the process of, essentially, recolonizing the periphery during the Civil War. This violence had been productive—whether in the imaginative leaps of Gerasimov or the erotic power of Maiakovskii's Baku. However, those who grappled with the legacy of Russian imperialism and *de facto* Soviet colonialism developed additional, sophisticated modes for this purpose as NEP continued. This will be the subject of the next two chapters, dedicated to readings of Maiakovskii's *About This* [*Pro èto*] (1923) and the works of the Literary Center of Constructivists.

3.0 THE ALLEGORY OF THE FLOOD IN MAIAKOVSKII'S POST- REVOLUTIONARY POETRY

Chapter One closed on the question of colonization and empire as elements in the Soviet narrative of encounters in the wilderness. These lingering traces of imperial relations remained pertinent to avant-garde cultural production over the course of the 1920s. Given that imperialism and colonialism were explicitly coded as problems of the Soviet Union's opponents, however, the cultural handling of such issues in geography and society could be indirect. In the case of Vladimir Maiakovskii, this chapter will show, responsibility for these lingering problems could be cast entirely as an issue of subjectivity (rather than, say, material conditions or policy). At any time, the recognition of omnipresent, potentially apocalyptic moments could transform modes of relations, creating a self-generative and just imagined community in the Soviet Union and beyond. No less important is the fact that these moments of potential consistently fail to be realized. In his early revolutionary work, Maiakovskii draws more and more sophisticated scenarios to avoid this outcome, taking into account geography, economics, and history and exploring a range of possible points of intervention. This is all to no avail, but the attempts reveal a great deal about Maiakovskii's geographic imagination.

There is a strong sense of potential change that is recognized in Maiakovskii's representations of space, including the territory of the Soviet Union as a whole. "Baku" (1923) shifts the perspective on Baku from the gross indifference of Europe to within the ecstatic

community of the Soviet Union, reflecting one such transformation. This chapter takes a more general approach to the representation of the territory of the Soviet Union, drawing upon his recurrent use of the world flood as a spatialized representation of revolutionary catalysis, a revolutionary chronotope on a scale capable of depicting Soviet territory and its position vis-à-vis the world.²²

²² Maiakovskii's returning flood, it will be seen, has something in common with the threshold chronotope that Bakhtin uses to define works of spiritual conversion, "the advent of a new form for relating to oneself" (*Dialogic Imagination* 145). However, the desire to circumlocute around Mikhail Bakhtin's term when analyzing poetry is common, given his emphasis on novelistic discourse and direct deprecation of poetry as monological, "illuminated by one unitary and indisputable discourse" in his essays on the novel (286). Even if one acknowledges the oversimplifying vulgarity of that reading of Bakhtin—any use of language, poetry included, has the qualities that can, in sufficient density, fuse "spatial and temporal indicators" (Ladin 131)—poetry still treats the fused intersection of time and space differently from prose, "as transitory rather than stable" (137). The compressed language of poetry "[narrows] time and space to [a] single gesture[, which] creates a sense of temporal suspension" (144). Given the supposed compression of chronotopes in language, the poet can bring these well-built, but fleeting senses of narrative space-time into "brief but evocative dialogue" (144). Maiakovskii, even with his narrative longer poems, often deploys varied chains of metaphor and allusion. In other words, a series of evanescent battles between times that have been spatialized in the language and gestures of poetry, which in the texts addressed here form the personal

The Frenchman of *Mistery-Bouffe* [*Misteriia-buff*] (1918/21), offers an early image of the flood and its apocalyptic import, arising from an invisible source and decisively ending a certain stage of civilization, as had happened before in Pompeii:

Смотрю —
все сухо,
но льется, и льется, и льет.
И вдруг,
крушенья Помпеи помпезней, картина разверзлась —
с корнем
Париж был вырван
и вытоплен в бездне
у мира в расплавленном горне.
(Maiakovskii, *PSS* 2: 173)

I look around:
The sky is entirely dry,
But it pours and pours and pours.
And suddenly,
in a fall more Pompeiian than Pompeii, this picture opened in a gulf:
Paris was torn away
by its root
and drowned in the depths
in the swimming furnace of the world.

The explosive potential of the flood exists in tension with two other tendencies in Maiakovskii's representation of territory. On the one hand, Maiakovskii frequently depicts the besieged status of the Soviet Union and calls citizens to its defense. The fantastic *Flying Proletariat* [*Letaiushchii proletarii*] (1925) depicts the total war waged with airplanes and poison gas that ensues when, in the future, bourgeois countries attack the Soviet Union. Agitational political poetry like "Well, what now!" ["Nu, chto zh"] (1927), "A Summons" ["Prizyv"] (1927),

chronotope of the flood. I am grateful to Il'ia Kukul'in for suggesting that the chronotope concept should be confronted directly, by way of Joy Ladin's article.

and “We’ll see for ourselves, we’ll show them” [“Posmotrim sami, pokazhem im”] (1927) responded directly to these threats to Soviet territorial integrity.²³ Aesthetically, these poems rely on localized metaphor and metonymy, lending outsized meaning to every individual component’s actions:

В ответ
на разгул
белогвардейской злобы
тверже
стой
на посту,
нога!

(PSS 8: 135)

In answer
to the rumble
of the White Guard’s wrath
stand
ever firmer
at your post,
foot!

If the Soviet Union under threat weighed against the possibility of the triumphant expansion of the Revolution, the second tendency that countervailed the potential of catalytic change was the persistence of the old. Historical modes of relations continued to echo into the Soviet period, disrupting the construction of the future. This was a persistent theme in Maiakovskii’s works of the 1920s, from his early Soviet play *Mystery-Bouffe* [*Misteriia-buff*] (1918, revised for staging in 1921) to his late satirical plays, *The Bedbug* [*Klop*] (1928) and *The Bathhouse* [*Bania*] (1930),

²³ I am grateful to Il’ia Kukulin for suggesting these texts as exemplary of Maiakovskii’s territorial aesthetic in his agitprop poetry, and particularly way that a different set of devices—metaphor and metonymy—predominate in the agitational mode.

and long poem *cum apologia*, *At the Top of My Voice* [*Vo ves' golos*] (1930). In many ways, these works became testaments, the ossified ruins of previous moments of potential transformation—including the October Revolution itself—that had sputtered out before achieving the total transformation of the world and relations within it, and, by extension, his ever-imperiled own place there as a sensitive and ardent poet-citizen.

In particular, the long poem *About This* [*Pro èto*] (1923) offers a tour de force of these ruins at all possible scales, including the personal, the urban, the Soviet Union, and Europe and Africa. Against this backdrop, the poem suggests that, if the ineffable “this” (an unsatisfying shorthand might be “love”²⁴) can be achieved at any of these levels, it will fuel the constitution of a new kind of imagined community, one that can realize the imagined potential that all previous unsuccessful transformations attest to. That it itself also becomes another monument of a failed transformation does not undermine its use as an illustration of Maiakovskii’s handling of imperial legacies.

The scope of *About This* is wide and, as a means of anchoring this analysis specifically to space and territory, the world flood as a specific kind of catalytic chronotope is a useful point of focus. However, in Maiakovskii’s use of the image over the course of the first post-revolutionary

²⁴ Or, indeed, a different shorthand would be the image of the flood as it repeats through Maiakovskii’s revolutionary work. In both cases, that of the image and that of the word (“love” or “this”), the problem is that the symbol refers to a concept that remains out of the range of the graspable. These symbols clearly refer to some concept of great importance, but no matter how many exemplars are brought forth to define it, its nature cannot be deduced. The elusiveness of this concept is one of the main benefits to invoking allegory.

years leading up to *About This*, the flood accretes different kinds of interpretations, usually with increasing attention to its concrete geopolitical manifestations and always with the effect of refining the meaning of the allegorical symbol. The initial portions of this chapter will address Maiakovskii's development of the flood as an allegorical device in post-October poetry: as a structuring metaphor for the revolution in the 1917 "Our March" ["Nash marsh"], as a relatively simple allegory in the play *Mystery-Bouffe* (1918/1921), and as an abstracted dynamic in the long poem *The Fifth International* [*Piatyi internatsional*] (1922), all the time looking forward to its particular appearance in *About This*.

3.1 MAIAKOVSKII'S RELIGIOUS-AESTHETIC WORLDVIEW

The religious overtones of Maiakovskii's catalytic flood and sense of community developed well before the Revolution. While his work took a decisive turn towards using materialist historical observations to buttress this approach after the Revolution, the development of his religious worldview continued relatively unbroken.

"Religious" here refers to a non-doctrinaire worldview, a secondary product of Silver-Age mystical thinking, in particular that of Vasilii Rozanov and Nikolai Fëdorov, who deal in great part with the metaphysical ethics of sexual and family relations.²⁵ Beyond the Silver Age,

²⁵ The influence of Rozanov's contextualization of death within a philosophy anchored in the body, family, and reproduction, in which death is an extension of this into an unknown stage, is a major thread in Leonid Katsis's book on Maiakovskii's intellectual context. One may see parody of Fëdorov's prediction that technology will overcome death, and perhaps even engagement with

Maiakovskii's religious worldview can also be contextualized within the greater post-World War I European tendency towards a theological materialism. Here, materialist theories of history operated in concordance with theologies of immanence, as in Ernst Bloch's understanding of chiliasm (cited by Lawrence Stahlberger in his analysis of Maiakovskii's religious symbolic system as an explicitly Marxian theology) and Walter Benjamin's work on allegory and dialectical images as open symbolic systems: "Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* [the change produced in the face by impending death or long term starvation] of history as a petrified, primordial landscape" (Benjamin 166).²⁶ While the impressive spectacle of Maiakovskii's flood would seem

the ethical formulation of "love for the fathers" that demanded their resurrection in Maiakovskii's recurrent motif of figures resurrected in sterile futures. Iurii Karabchievskii sees the most relevant connections in the idea of mass mission-orientedness, with the following distinction: "Fëdorov's collectivism is fanatical and genuine. Maiakovskii's collectivism is demagogic, a means of action, a means of communion, and finally a means of surviving, a road to psychological health" (161). I am grateful to Il'ia Kukulin for directing me to Karabchievskii and returning my attention to the Rozanov chapters of Katsis's book.

²⁶ With regard to this small engagement with Benjamin's work on allegory, I am indebted to Susan Buck-Morss's reading of Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* and *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* in *The Dialectics of Seeing* (1989). As was brought to my attention by Randall Halle, all of the works discussed in this chapter predate Benjamin's trip to Moscow in the winter of 1926-7; indeed, they also predate his focused consideration of "radical communism," datable to

categorically to align with the idealization of destruction and transcendence, in practice, over and over in Maiakovskii's work, the flood is more or less a repeated material attestation of the failure of transfiguration.

With his reliance on allegory in this particular set of instances, Maiakovskii appears to be reaching toward an archaic way of aestheticizing the world with the device of allegory, theorized in a pan-European context. However, in the Russian context, there is an added fillip: "Futurism was very close to the eighteenth century, simply because it was the most archaic first stage of secular Russian literature, one that preserved a dependence on medieval culture with its Manichean-God-loving substrate" (Vaiskopf 11). If devices drawn from this stage of Russian literary history provided the associated halo of medieval cosmography, they also carry the shadow of their actual context: the imperial cult. Vaiskopf focuses on the shadow of the state-writer in his analysis of Maiakovskii's Soviet work; this chapter, however, is more concerned with the functions that led Maiakovskii, among many other writers of the time, to consider allegory an appropriate form for the revolutionary times, in spite of its imperial history.

reading Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) and meeting Asja Lacis in 1924 (Steiner 10). Though Maiakovskii's worldview developed in as much isolation from Benjamin as one can imagine in the intellectual churn of the 1920s, it is striking that, in his development of allegory, he parallels Benjamin's assertion that the constitution of modernity (specifically, German expressionism, although readings of *Tragic Drama* often extend the logic beyond this specific moment) "reflects certain aspects of the spiritual constitution of the baroque, even down to the details of its artistic practice" (55), that is, the aesthetic needs of the "decadent" early 20th century match those of German literature following the 30 Years' War.

With regard to Whitman as another influence, Maiakovskii began his literary lifestyle by modeling himself on the American poet, with “a coincidence [...] in the details of everyday life” (Katsis 63) that dates after Kornei Chukovskii’s earliest 1907 translations. There is also a great deal of communication between Maiakovskii’s style and Chukovskii’s translation, in the way that “lines and images from verses by Whitman in Chukovskii’s translation fell into Maiakovskii’s verse” (65). Both Leonid Katsis and Clare Cavanagh, among others, have underscored the demonstration of this tendency in the transformation of Whitman’s “flesh” into Russian “meat” [“miaso”].

Vaiskopf argues that following Chukovskii’s interpretive lead with regard to Maiakovskii’s emulation of Whitman is not necessarily productive, especially because the Whitmanian collective body is better constructed by Proletkult:

All the same, it is necessary to clarify that the system of imagery of [Whitman] and his theme of universal “democracy” was already in practice mastered by the proletarian poets before Maiakovskii, who wove that into their poetry along with the objects of Symbolism [...] and the legacy of the 18th century and the scientific cosmism of Semën Bobrov or the so-called Radishchevist poets. (Vaiskopf 74n.)

Maiakovskii, however, adds a useful element of contingency and imminent failure to his composite or collective heroes, as in the death of Ivan in *150,000,000*. Ivan is composed from the citizens and beasts of the Soviet Union and presents an imposing figure. However, he is felled during the first sortie of Soviet forces on the stronghold of Woodrow Wilson, an equally imposing and less cobbled-together figure: “He will lie down in the grave/ and from now on/ no one/ will ever/ hear/ anything/ about our Ivan [Liazhet v grob,/ i otnyne/ nikto,/ nikogda,/ nichego/ ne uslyshit/ o nashem Ivane]” (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 2: 150). While the multitudes that had

crossed the ocean with him teem and fight on after the loss of their champion, Ivan is not, in the end, constructed as a usable unifying aesthetic device, although the poet is working in imitation of the American poet's construction of an embodied collective subject, the "body politic." Whitman "translates quotidian, democratic practices into poetry, offers a poetic transcription of the polyvocality of the vox populi, thereby offering the body politic an aesthetically transformed depiction of itself as sublime potentiality, which further enhances its latent autopoietic power" (Frank 429). In Cavanagh's reading, "the erotically charged body [the outgrowth of his 'emotional elephantiasis,' as Cavanagh later says, quoting Victor Erlich] of Mayakovsky's poetry resists the fusion of lyric and epic modes that marks Whitman's most effective civic verse" (Cavanagh 209).

However, to say that Maiakovskii fails in imitation of Whitman is to neglect an important distinction between their aesthetic tasks of articulating citizenship. Were Maiakovskii only interested in replicating the Whitmanian device of gathering a multiplicity of kinds of citizen and civic reproduction into a collective self, how would he handle the fact that there is only one ideologically permissible mode of citizen and civic space: the proletarian and the factory? He would have the option of depicting a unitary class identity (Proletkult's "we") or of gesturing toward a totality that did not include himself with a catalogue of the many kinds of workers at their toil. Instead, Maiakovskii resolutely remains in "the street," in the sphere of social contact and community formation. Rather than take on the personas of alien individuals,²⁷ Maiakovskii

²⁷ A vivid exception, of course, is the 1927 anniversary poem *It Is Good!* [*Khorosho!*], in which Maiakovskii does indeed adopt and overlay the voices of a number of historical personages with his own lyric voice.

often imagines the multiplicity of scales and roles that can define contact between his lyric subject and an “other.” The flood is one such zone of contact, and it acquires increasing connotations of interconnection and conflict in his work over time. This development begins with one of the very first post-October poems invoking the global flood.

3.2 THE FLOOD AS SACRED REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL (“OUR MARCH,” 1917)

“Our March,” dated in November 1917, soon after the Bolshevik seizure of the Winter Palace, introduces the flood quickly.

Бейте в площади бунтов топот!
Выше, гордых голов гряда!
Мы разливом второго потопа
перемоем миров города.
(Maiakovskii, *PSS* 2: 7)

Beat at the squares with the rumble of revolt!
Higher, crest of proud heads!
Like the spilling-over of a second flood
we will wash over the cities of the worlds.

As the poem continues, Maiakovskii deploys varied metaphors—for example, the sacrificial victim of the “piebald bull of days [dnei byk peg]” (l. 5). While different, each of these serves to contribute to the overall sense of a new sacral atmosphere outside of time, located on earth instead of in the heavens.

As sacred meaning is increasingly placed on the sign of “we,”²⁸ the heavens are asked to invest in the success of the revolution, in an inversion of the system of theological investment in the heavens. The rainbow at the end of the biblical first flood was a divine covenant, a promise never to destroy the world again. Now, the rainbow of the second flood is to be a tool for earthly progress, as it will “lend its arch/ to the fleet-footed stallions of time [Raduga, dai dug/ let bystrolëtnym koniam]” (7). In a sense, this is an all-incorporating poem, breaking down long-observed inequalities between heaven and earth, and appropriating divine power to a unified collective “we.”

In addition to the general inversion of sacral space from heaven to earth, Maiakovskii begins to develop a specific role for the flood in his revolutionary work, here with the help of striking rhythmic and phonic structures. The rhythm of this accentual poem is defined by episodic tight clusters of stressed monosyllables, frequently accentuated by consonance (for example, “Dnei byk peg [the piebald bull of days],” “Nash bog beg [our god is the race],” “Liag lug [the meadow has lain down],” “dai dug [lend your arch],” “pei! poi! [drink! sing!]”). These staccato moments naturally attract one’s attention, but so should slower sections of the poem. The longest distance between realized ictus occurs in the third strophe; here, the tone of the lyric shifts, and instead of contrasts between heaven and earth, there is a kind of sermon:

Есть ли наших золот небесней?
Нас ли сжалит пули оса?
Наше оружие — наши песни.

²⁸ In the prominence of the pronoun “we”—used eleven times in twenty-four lines—and in the cosmic scale of “worlds” and “stars,” Maiakovskii’s poem reflects kinship with the general aesthetic of Proletkult.

Наше золото — звенящие голоса.

(7)

Is there a gold more heavenly than ours?

Does the wasp of bullets pity us?

Our weaponry is our songs.

Our gold is our voices, which ring out.

Another striking event with regard to intervals between realized ictus is directly connected with the motif of the flood. Throughout the poem, the first syllable of a line is typically stressed; the only case in which this is definitively not so is the first strophe, in the enjambed sentence, “Мы razlivom vtorogo potopa/ peremoem mirov goroda [Like the spilling-over of a second flood/ we will wash over the cities of the worlds].” Enjambment occurs twice more, both times creating cases in which the status of the first syllable requires interpretation.

Радуга, дай дуг

лет быстrolётным коням

[...]

Эй, Большая Медведица! требуй,

чтоб на небо нас взяли живьем.

(7)

Rainbow, give your arch

to the fleet-footed stallions of time

[...]

Hey, Ursa Major! Demand

that they take us up into heaven alive.

In principle, “let” in the second quoted line does not receive phrase stress, although by virtue of monosyllabism it attracts lexical stress. The ambiguity is heightened in the second example: in the invocation to Ursa Major. The typically unstressed conjunction “chtob” could attract stress solely by virtue of the trend in the poem as a whole of zero anacrusis, of upbeat,²⁹ reflecting its

²⁹ The dominant upbeat is not restricted to this poem, but reflects “a distribution which is broadly characteristic of Maiakovskii’s early accentual verse generally: monosyllabic and zero anacruses

domination by a kind of collective rhythmic mass. On the other hand, if the ictus is not realized on “chtob,” the perfect anapest of the line would hearken to the only other line of this type: the perfect anapest trimeter of line four, “peremooem mirov goroda.” In either case, the lines appear connected, either by the loss of the upbeat or by the allusion to classical completion—thus, the flood and the ascent to heaven share a dynamic formal tie.

In and of themselves, these formal features are the innovations of an earlier avant-garde; the experiments of the preeminent Symbolist Viacheslav Ivanov in his translations from Ancient Greek bring together the sacral theme and monosyllabic rhythm.³⁰ The Silver Age development

are the leading forms” (Aizlewood 86). The predominance of zero anacrusis here inverts the typical distribution, which tended more toward monosyllables (Aizlewood’s characterization above was in comment about a raw frequency of 37 zero anacruses to 47 monosyllabic anacruses in the long poem *A Cloud in Trousers* (1915) [86]). In as short a poem as “Our March,” though, the apparent prominence of zero anacruses is of less statistical significance.

³⁰ I am grateful to Il’ia Kukul’in for drawing my attention to Ivanov’s earlier work in the 1910s, as well as to sources linking Ivanov to the Futurists, as is apparent in Kruchënykh’s polemic with Ivanov: “Going against the neomythological intensions of the theurgic branch of Symbolism, Kruchënykh builds a regressive model of culture and turns the transrational word to face its mytho-ritualistic substrate. [The mutations he introduces into his quotation of Ivanov’s ‘Zeus’] were called upon to lay bare the bankruptcy of the Symbolists’ insistence on literal translation at the expense of the acoustic resonances of the spaces where [...] a choral performance-intonation of the hymn ought to be” (Loshchilov). Although transrational poetry bears no superficial

of monosyllabic poetry that Maiakovskii would have drawn upon came from Viacheslav Ivanov's studied use of single-syllable words in order to identify them as "singular and indivisible, whole and set apart from the completely different monad of meaning. [...] It was shut in on itself and autonomously contains the whole of its own definition as it was laid out over history" (Averintsev 162). The Futurists radicalized devices such as this for the sake of breaking with the authority of the past (famously throwing Pushkin, Tolstoi, et al. from the boat of modernity) and rejecting middlebrow standards. With "Our March," however, Maiakovskii aligns the elite style with the masses, giving ownership of the sacral, almost priestly knowledge to the collective movement of revolution.³¹

Yet "Our March" is not the conclusion for the flood as a means of thinking through revolution and community. In the next major work featuring the world flood, Maiakovskii adds another interpretation of the flood in the form of the allegorical drama *Mystery-Bouffe*.³²

connection to classical poetry, the Futurists argued that, in fact, it was renewing the spirit of sacred texts.

³¹ I am grateful to Randall Halle for noting the major difference that Maiakovskii introduces in Soviet poetry by conceptually democratizing this avant-garde aesthetic and emphasizing the multiplicity of the community

³² To differentiate from the more slippery idea of allegory as a multiplicity of symbols accumulated to define a single entity, allegorical drama draws on the neoclassical notion of allegory as a kind of parable where the audience is encouraged to interpret surface details to decode a rule of behavior or social reality.

3.3 THE FLOOD AND GLOBAL CLASS CONFLICT (*MYSTERY-BOUFFE*, 1918 AND 1921)

Mystery-Bouffe used the image of the flood, which Maiakovskii had recently characterized as a sacralized, collective experience in “Our March,” to represent the Marxist concept of class conflict in a transparent allegory based on the Revolution and crises following it. This section will discuss how Maiakovskii gives a more specific geographic logic to the revolutionary flood, introducing conceptual units such as class, countries, and cities into the way that the flood works.

The nature of this flood is particularly palpable in the first variant of the play from 1918, in which the prologue continues to underscore the pronoun “we” and the sacral nature of the current, material world:

Здесь,
на земле хотим
не выше жить
и не ниже
всех этих елей, домов, дорог, лошадей и трав.
(Maiakovskii, *PSS* 2: 170)

It is here,
on the earth that we want to be
to live no higher
and no lower
than all these firs, homes, roads, horses, and grass.

The geography of “Our March” had similarly focused on vertical alignment and the investment of power in the earthly sphere, but *Mystery-Bouffe* breaks these abstractions into more concrete imagery and spaces appropriate to a stage interpretation of the flood mythology. In particular, for the sake of the discussion of the world and its plurality, the play introduces geographic specificity in the form of bourgeois nation-states allegorically personified. All of the

“Clean” [“Chistye”] are essentially emblematic of countries, whether Western or colonial.³³ They are juxtaposed to the “Unclean” [“Nechistye”], who are defined by their labor (as “Carpenter” or “Smith,” for example), and who declare as one:

По свету всему гоняться
привык наш бродячий народина.
Мы никаких не наций.

Труд наш — наша родина.
(Maiakovskii, *PSS* 2: 260)

To be chased across the whole world
our wandering people has become accustomed.
We are of no nation [natsiia].
Our labor is our motherland.³⁴

Nationality appears to work generically, almost solely as a bourgeois marker. While each of the Clean is introduced with some kind of reference to their origins—the Australians, for example, mourn the loss of platypodes and echidnas [*dikobraz*] (174)—this specific information

³³ The exceptions are Russians who are emblematic of the remaining bourgeois class enemies in a Russia purged of its aristocracy—merchants, ladies, students.

³⁴ This is, as Il’ia Kukul’in brought to my attention, a citation from the Communist Manifesto, in which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels say “The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got [Rabochie ne imeiut otechestva. Nel’zia lishit’ ikh togo, chego ikh net; Die *Arbeiter* haben jedoch *kein Vaterland*, welches man ihnen nehmen können]” (“The Communist Manifesto (Chapter 2),” “Manifest Kommunisticheskoi partii,” “Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei”). In capitalism, the worker has progressively lost any sense of national character with modern subordination to capital, which operates according to the same rules of accumulation regardless of region or country. Maiakovskii paraphrases this quotation, rewriting the objective declaration as a subjective, possibly prideful experience for his Unclean characters.

does not play any further role as the action develops (there are no differing national psychologies, for example). However, the introduction of the very concept of nationality, even abstracted to such a degree, introduces nuance to Maiakovskii's flood. The global flood has already begun by the beginning of the play, when a leaky hole is discovered at the North Pole by an Eskimo hunter and fisherman, but neither the Clean nor the Unclean are aware of it until it begins to spray. This happens in earnest only upon the arrival of the Unclean—and their declaration of consciousness of class division as the true organizing principle of the world, as opposed to a false consciousness of national difference. By virtue of essentially wiping away territorially defined national difference, the flood now can be understood as acting upon the world in a specific geopolitical way.

Maiakovskii also introduces new facets of his flood allegory by examining its immediate consequences. The flood, after all, also threatens the Unclean who propagated it. At the conclusion of class warfare, the tiny economy of the ark they have built is on the brink of disaster—there is no food, nor means of producing food, nor means of navigation, and the very ark that sustains the new classless, boundary-less society “shudders” [“kovcheg treshchit”] (292).³⁵

The Unclean reprise the foundational structure of “Our March” and use the heavens to reach a new earthly reality. They undertake to ascend from the ark, through the heavenly spheres, and to a materialist Promised Land, mere moments before the boat capsizes, by means of a

³⁵ It does not take a great deal of interpretive work to understand these bad conditions as a direct reference to the dire situation in which the citizens of Soviet Russia found themselves during and directly after the Civil War.

rainbow: “Along the sunny path/ along the stairways of rainbows! [Po solnechnym trapam/ po lestnitsam radug!]” (215). By contrast to the flattened time of “Our March,” additional action is required of the Unclean in order to leave the anarchic, all-destroying flood behind. This is one of the most important nuances of the flood of *Mystery-Bouffe*: the flood is only a field of potential, and requires further action in order to complete its transformative purpose.

The development of the flood-ascension motif in a modern drama with a narrative economy predicated on action and reaction, on the development and resolution of antagonism, has here resulted in the allegory’s taking on an additional interpretive framework. *Mystery-Bouffe* telescopes in on the threshold moment of transcendence, and reveals antagonisms within the flood itself—lack and danger, along with cleansing egalitarianism and freedom of movement. The motifs of sacredness and explicit theology fade away in Maiakovskii’s later Soviet works, and become more of an internal skeleton that provides structure without betraying its metaphysical origins. Maiakovskii appears to be on the way to his own version of what Theodor Adorno characterized as negative theology in Benjamin’s work, that is, a theology, inherently universalist, that rejects immediately theological concepts, as “such concepts would distort theological truth by dragging the new back into the discourse of the old; whereas the true Messianic task is to resurrect the old within the discourse of the new” (Buck-Morss, *Dialectics* 244). Even as the theological underpinnings of the flood become less explicit, the structure of messianism and immanence remains useful for interpreting more distanced and complicated allegorical uses, as in *The Fifth International* and *About This*.

3.4 *THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL, 1922*

By 1922, when the New Economic Policy had been adopted and it was becoming increasingly clear that the goal of world revolution was being deferred to sometime in the future, it made some sense to examine anew the Soviet Union as a specific geographic body, delineated and even hemmed in by the hostile world. This section examines the flood's capacity in *The Fifth International* to connect cities and peoples without regard for borders; as the geographic situation is described with ever-more concrete detail, this dynamic becomes suggestive of urban cosmopolitanism. *The Fifth International* defamiliarizes many elements of the global flood as it had been presented thus far. Most vividly, the dynamics and geographic logic that have been established thus far remain, but the long poem recasts the original, watery event as fire and lava.

3.4.1 The Cartographic View of the Flood

Set five to ten years ahead of its date of composition, *The Fifth International* features Maiakovskii's lyric subject initially as he explores Soviet territory in two modes. In the first, he flies along rail lines, arriving at and leaving cities in rapid-fire succession. In essence, this is an illustration of the lyric subject's assertions about the expansion of the railway system in the Soviet Union in the past years, passing through Moscow almost as quickly as through much smaller towns like Pushkino and Murom, newly on the rail lines. One effect of this mode of travel is an apparent equality of locations within the Soviet Union—Maiakovskii's lyric subject remains in Moscow only long enough to take note of the tallest landmarks, including the ten-

story Nirensee House (the tallest residential building in Moscow at the time), and Vodop'iany Corner, where Liliia Brik resided.³⁶

Having mentioned a cluster of toponyms in the Soviet heartland, the lyric subject moves outwards and toward the Caucasus. Upon reaching this site, he cannot restrain himself and climbs upwards explosively. His view on the Soviet Union and the world changes; where the observations of the low-flying lyric subject had initially comprised railroads, cities, and rivers—the nodes and connectors of a domestic network—now the lyric subject sees geopolitical boundaries. The aerial view is, essentially, a cartographic view.

Глобус — и то хорошо. Рельефная карта — еще лучше. А здесь живая география. Какой-нибудь Терек — жилкой трепещет в дарьяльском виске. Волга игрушечная переливается фольгой. То розовым, то голубым акварелит небо хрусталик Апаратика. (Maiakovskii, PSS 4: 112-3)

A globe is a good thing. A relief map is even better. And here is living geography. Some Terek is like a little vein that shudders in the temples of the Daryal Pass. The toy-like Volga pours over itself like foil. The sky watercolors little Ararat first in roses, then in baby blues.

The moment of uncontrolled uplift into the heavens occurs at Mount Ararat, where Noah's Ark lands in the Bible, textually reinforcing the connection of this poem with the revolutionary-biblical myth of the flood from *Mystery-Bouffe*. However, Mount Ararat here is not simply a

³⁶ The toponyms *vodop'iany*, “watering,” could well be one more small factor contributing to the inexorable orientation toward the flood, particularly given Maiakovskii's handling of the myth in *About This*.

symbol, but is also a geographic location, situated meaningfully near the edge of Soviet territory. This is the point at which the lyric subject must contend with the Soviet Union's boundedness.

Where the exploration of the Soviet Union had been dominated by a string of toponyms and metonyms (e.g., bells in Moscow), with the institution of the aerial, cartographic view, exploration begins to make greater use of a variety of metaphors. Immediate connection with the object of contemplation has been broken; where previously exploration had been connected to the direct, vestibular sense of speed, there is now an exclusively audio-visual dimension. The lyric subject cultivates a hyper-acute sensory apparatus in compensation, extending his ears and eyes into antennae capable of capturing the subtle harmonies of the solar system or the radio transmissions of the countries below him. In the Soviet Union, various parties turn out to be aware of the strange man-machine phenomenon flying above them; while no one seems quite to understand what Maiakovskii's lyric subject is up to, the reaction is not aggressively hostile. Territories beyond the Soviet Union are less observant, as the countries there are wholly occupied by the stereotypical concern of capitalists: monetary transactions. Visually, each of these countries is delineated.

Швейцария.
Закована в горный панцырь.
Италия...
Сапожком на втором плане...
И
уже в тумане:
Испания...
Испанцы...
А потом океан — и никаких испанцев
(113-4)

Switzerland.
Enchained in a mountainous armor.
Italy...
A boot in the little background...

And
already in the mist:
Spain...
Spaniards...
And then the ocean—and no Spaniards of any kind.

Aurally, however, they are interconnected by discourse around monetary transactions, specifically Germany paying its war debts under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Possible centers of revolution, in the Ruhr Valley, for example, or the colonial lands of southeast Asia, appear as smoldering embers or pinpricks completely isolated from one another by capitalism (here in the idiom of cooling lava, black clouds, and of bourgeois everyday fashion and meals):

Франция.
Сплошной мильерановский фрак.
Черный-черный.
Прямо синий.
Только сорочка блестит —
как блик на маслине.
[...]
И на горизонте,
где Америка,
небо кро́я,
сплошная чернотища выметалась икрою.
(123-4)

France.
A solid Millerand dress coat.
Quite black.
Straight up cold blue-black.
Only an undershirt gleams,
like a speck in an olive.
[...]
And on the horizon,
covering the sky,
America, a solid black mass,
billowed out like caviar.

The change to this status quo is not quick to arrive; the lyric subject tires of the repetitive mutual exploitation among the chattiest of the empires below, and does not seem to take much

inspiration from the Soviet Union, either. Sudden exaltation and height had historically been associated with sublime experiences and heightened sensitivities to the wonders of the state, but this episode definitively arrests that dynamic. This lyric subject plugs his ears, closes his eyes, and turns away from the world he had undertaken to describe; he enters a sort of suspended animation until world revolution finally arrives.

By contrast to the narratives of “Our March” and *Mystery-Bouffe*, in which the revolutionary flood is contemporaneous to or precedes ascent, the lyric subject’s proactive ascent offers contemplative distance when revolution erupts in *The Fifth International*. The dynamic of revolution is realized in metaphors of fire and rays, as opposed to water. However, the revolution spreads in a way that was already implicit in the ground-eye view of the flood in *Mystery-Bouffe*. Thus, one might consider the metaphors of fire and water to be tied together, particularly in the hybrid combination of lava, which “when red,/ trembles like the earthquake of revolution [to krasnaia,/ drozhit revoliutsii zemletriaseniem]” (124). The lyric subject observes how “rays” [“luchi”] extend outwards from the centers of revolution toward one another, penetrating and obliterating any man-made borders that exist between them. In these rays, one finds that city-to-city connection precedes propagation outwards into the countryside, in accordance with the leading role assigned to the industrial proletariat in Marxism-Leninism. Variations on this particular urban-outwards dynamic have been repeated more than once, in this work and beyond. The initial high-spirited rollick from city to city at the beginning of the poem turns out to prefigure the more serious work of revolution.

Пушкино размельчилось.
[...]
Москва.
[...]
Москва стуманилась.
Ока змейнула.

Отзмеилась Ока.
[...]
Становища Муромца
из глаз вон.
(111-12)

Pushkino has diffused into something tiny.
[...]
Moscow.
[...]
Moscow has been obscured.
The Oka snaked.
The Oka snaked itself out.
[...]
And Muromets's clearing [Murom is a city on the Oka]
gets out of my sight.

The importance of the population center and the spread of an essentially urbanist dynamic over the world bring to the fore Maiakovskii's aesthetic of the city and questions of cosmopolitanism active at the time Maiakovskii was writing, as in the work of Georg Simmel.³⁷

³⁷ Cosmopolitanism as a recurring issue in this dissertation is simply the discourse implicit in the search for a supra-national, supra-territorial community (and whether that can exist within the bounds of the Soviet Union). This discourse does take root at times in specific models of cosmopolitanism, here in the similarities between Maiakovskii's aesthetic representation of the first stage of the revolution and Georg Simmel's description of how city-spaces shape the behaviors and movements of individuals.

The invocation of Simmel is not as strong as it could be, as analysis here relies on similarity, rather than an established link of influence. Yet those similarities seem especially provocative in light of Maiakovskii's associations with Productivist Constructivism, which speculates on shaping society by shaping the spaces it moves through.

Simmel described the colonizing relationship between city and country that cosmopolitanism enabled as always “transcending the visible expanse [of the current bounds of e.g. a city]” (Simmel 181), that is bringing more of the countryside into the economic value-system of the city. The mechanism that Simmel sees as propagating the urban value-system is, in a sense, one of entropy brought about by industrialization. Specialization does not flow only from competition for gain, but also from the underlying fact that a seller must always seek to call forth new and differentiated needs from the lured consumer. In order to find a source of income that is not yet exhausted and to find an economic function that cannot readily be displaced, it is necessary to specialize one’s services. The imperative to specialize promotes differentiation, refinement, and the enrichment of the public’s needs, which obviously must lead to growing personal and class differences within this public (Simmel 183).

Simmel suggests that this dynamic emerges from the increasing mobility and productivity of increasingly atomized labor: “The sphere of life of the small town is, in the main, self-contained and autarchic. For it is the decisive nature of the metropolis that its inner life overflows by waves into a far-flung national or international area” (Simmel 182). The visual kinship between the expansion of Simmel’s metropolis and the city-centeredness of Maiakovskii’s floods are provocative.

If the city retains a certain amount of privilege in Maiakovskii’s work in his transition from Futurism to the Left Front of the Arts (LEF),³⁸ it is not necessarily because, as Anatolii Lunacharskii claims, it was a means of giving art that possessed

³⁸ LEF was the grouping around the journal of that name, edited by Maiakovskii and Osip Brik, and was the organ associated with the Productivist branch of Constructivism (in which the new

the same exhausted or metaphysical abstract character [as in Symbolism] [...] a sped-up city tempo, an activeness, a heightened feeling of life... [The LEF-Futurist body of work] reflect[ed] soullessness, the internal wrongness of an imperialism that has no ideals and represents itself as the handmaiden of the bourgeoisie. (Lunacharskii 32-33)

Maiakovskii's city is more ambivalent and aware of the concentration of imperial and bourgeois elements in urban environments than Lunacharskii claims. For Maiakovskii, the

“settled and civilized” aspect of city life was deeply repugnant [...] In the “empirical” city, as in Act One of *The Tragedy* and those parts of *150,000,000* set in Chicago, things are trapped by their banal significations, by their status as sources of gratification. In *Mystery-Bouffe*, Maiakovskii remains beholden to the city as an abstract framework, as the best possible setting for his vision of the Promised Land, while rejecting the status the city of the present confers on things—and on its citizens as well. (Klanderud 44)

However, in opposition to the qualities of *poshlost'* [bad taste] and *byt* [everyday life], he activated an alternative dimension of the city: that of social dynamism (and, implicitly, destruction and the freeing of potential). The city was a space of commodity trading, it is true, but its importance for creative work lay in its concentration of basic social and class conflicts and

Soviet art was to be utilitarian and reveal the principles of their construction; in practice, this meant great attention to the experience of space in visual arts and architecture, as in the case of Tatlin's tower or Aleksandr Rodchenko's photo-montage). LEF and Constructivism were the source of the aesthetic widely associated with the Soviet twenties across the world today.

dialectics. In 1926, in the essay “How to Make Verse” [“Kak delat’ stikhi”], the poet claims an important link between sociological knowledge and poetic production:

In order to correctly understanding an order made by society [*sotsial’nyi zakaz*], a poet should be at the center of business and events. For the poet, a knowledge of economic theory, a knowledge of real everyday life, an embedding in the history of the sciences—as the foundation of his work—are more important than scholastic textbooks of professor-idealists who worship the old. (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 12: 116)

Maiakovskii, as an observer of these elements of the city, the “center of business and events,” is in a good position to observe the relationship of urban dynamics to imperial cosmopolitanism and the entropy of economic diversification.

The processes of overflow and colonization described by Simmel also characterize Maiakovskii’s descriptions of the countryside. The spread of socialist values that Maiakovskii lauds as taking over the Soviet countryside in such commissioned poems as “The Harvest Holiday” [“Prazdnik urozhaiia”] would seem to support an alignment between Simmel’s economic geography and Maiakovskii’s aesthetic geography.

In this 1926 poem, the area covered by the “lava” of praise is presented in militaristic tones, and in opposition to tradition associated with Cyril and Methodius—“Earlier/ some Cyril/ and Methodius/ would be celebrated [Ran’she/ praznovalsia/ raznyi Kirill/ da Mefodii]” (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 7: 200)—and village life negatively inflected by a monoculture of alcoholism and hooliganism. Mimicking the language of specialization and industrialization of labor, the poem articulates the many separate crops and kinds of labor that go into the harvest, e.g.:

Каждый лишний вагон репы —
это

смычке новые скрепы.
Взрастишь кукурузу в засушливой зоне —
и можешь

мечтать о новом фордзоне.
Чем больше будет хлебов ржанных,
тем больше ситцев у моей жены.
(Maiakovskii, PSS 7: 201)

Every extra wagon of turnips
these are
new screws in the convergence [of country and industry].
You will grow corn in a dry zone
and you can
dream of a new Ford tractor.
The more rye bread there is,
the more print calico my wife will have.

At the center of this sequence is the *smychka* policy, advocating for the convergence of the interests and practices of the agricultural and industrial sectors; the specialization of labor at this site (in which rye can be exchanged for textiles, for example) is reminiscent of Simmel's discussion of the spread of cosmopolitanism. That Maiakovskii considers this part of the same dynamic city-country dynamic as in his earlier works, and not just a response to policy, seems particularly apparent from his reuse of the "spreading lava" motif of *The Fifth International*.

Лейся
по селам
из области в область
слов
горящая лава:
урожай — сила,
урожай — доблесть,
урожай увеличившим
слава!
(202)

Pour out
over the villages
from district to district
a hot lava

of words:
the harvest is power,
the harvest is heroism,
honor
to those who have increased the harvest!

Returning to the earlier development of this aesthetic motif in *The Fifth International*, this mode of economically diversifying cosmopolitanism, in which the economy can grow only more diversified and specialized, never less, comes with consequences for aesthetic geographies. While the problem of dealing the remnants of old-style European cosmopolitanism is more specifically a topic for Il'ia Sel'vinskii's work, to be addressed in Chapter Three, it also concerns Maiakovskii. He describes the Soviet Union in a way that is constrained by global cosmopolitanism, caught up involuntarily in the same processes that allow it to propagate modernization throughout the country, but on a scale beyond its control and still constrained by capitalist empires.

However, while global imperial cosmopolitanism is not the desired goal, Maiakovskii's work reveals the revolutionary potential in the cosmopolitan dynamic. As he repeatedly illustrates this dynamic, Maiakovskii offers a glimpse of the utopian dream that inspires every outward movement of the cosmopolitan, mobile city, along with how that dream is typically immediately squashed (hence his lengthy description in *The Fifth International* of the smoldering aftermath of the First World War and failed revolutions in Europe). The flood—chaos, maximal complexity—is inimical to human life as a social structure, but can, in principle, also be harnessed for humanist utopian purposes.

One can see an allegorical allusion to the desired end—the capture and subordination of this force to human needs—when the lyric subject includes canals in his description of the future utopia: “the geometry of strict canals/ calmly lay, guided by marble [geometriia strogikh

kanalov/ mramoru v rusla spokojno legla]" (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 4: 134). Of all the potential markers of future utopia, especially in light of the stereotypical Futurist orientation toward mechanization and speed, canals may seem underwhelming, but they invoke a long literary tradition of the canal-river-flood. After the lengthy portion of the narrative dedicated to fire, the lyric subject turns specifically to language tied to a traditional narrative of the flood as part of a Russian tradition of representing urban, mercantile rivers.

In a 1930s article, Lev Pumpianskii cataloged a number of eighteenth-century commonplaces that Pushkin exploited in *The Bronze Horseman* [*Mednyi vsadnik*] (1833). Of these, at least two appear to be active in Maiakovskii's city-text as well: the dual valence of the rivers that flow through the cities and the formula of "where then" and "now there" ["gde prezhde ... nyne tam"]. Pumpianskii describes the odic prototype of the flooding river in eighteenth-century Russian literature as having two sides. On the one hand, rivers continued to be important means of connecting the imperial center to its heartland and periphery: "The odic riparian mythologies knew the beneficial divinity of the river (the divinity of the epoch of mercantilism), which spilled out an abundance of trade" (Pumpianskii 102). On the other hand, the river as a concept had a dangerous undercurrent, the potential to become bestial and destructive. As such, "In *The Bronze Horseman*, there are two Nevas: one good in a mercantile fashion [...] It is like a part of the imposing architectural whole: 'The authoritative flow of the Neva...' And another, furiously avenging, for which the appropriate comparisons are: a beast (wolf), waves as thieves, 'an evil-doer with his fierce band'" (Pumpianskii 103).

Maiakovskii's citation of the formula "where then"/"now there" and the river-flood-canal matrix at the end of *The Fifth International* suggests an intent to exploit their different temporal natures. On its own, a river operates cyclically—a periodic alternation between antagonistic

force of nature and beneficial tool of mercantilism. The threatening river can be a feature of the past or, as Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* demonstrates, jeopardize the present's pretensions to eternity. Yet, Maiakovskii also seeks to make the temporal-spatial formula of "where then"/"now there" take root by virtue of the flood—shifting it to the solidus between rather than before or after.

The flood, in other words, may be considered a representation of the moment of sensing the potential of technological or political innovation. Drawing on Susan Buck-Morss's explanation of Benjamin's dialectical image, the flood is a kind of utopian wish image, one of the "images that conjured up the symbols and myths of antiquity at times of radical historical rupture" that give the potential future the shape of a mythical past in order to signal that a similar radical shift away from the normal order will take place (Buck-Morss, *Dialectics* 122). Such symbols include the "mask of Paul the Apostle" for Luther in Marx's *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, the land of Cockaigne as the reference for Fourier's phalansterie (110-11). With regard to the flood in eighteenth-century Russian literature, "then" and "now" were not particularly differentiated. This is one of the ironies brought forth in *The Bronze Horseman*, where the disaster of the flooded Neva belied the belief that the wilderness of the past had been tamed by civilized splendor; indeed, after the flood, the flat continuity of time emerges: "Already the traces of yesterday's misfortune/ Were nowhere to be found; evil/ Had already been covered by purple robes [I ne nashël uzhe sledov/ Bedy vcherashnei; bagrianitseï/ Uzhe prikryto bylo zlo]" (Pushkin, *PSS* 5: 145). At moments like these, the image of the flood gestures at the idea that radical change took place—even as it does not.

If Maiakovskii uses the flood in such a way, it is also self-consciously, with the intent of causing the reader to grapple with the disjunction between a symbol implying radical change and

the absence of a radically changed world. Such disjunction is not always perceptible with these kinds of image; indeed, typically the utopian desire it refers to is redirected. The association of a current event with a past one that is laden with utopian desire is readily coopted to capitalist myths of progress. Benjamin's interpretation of the discarded paraphernalia of nineteenth-century fashion and fashionable architecture—the passé arcades of *The Arcades Project*—is as the material testimony of the utopian wish image, hollowed of its revolutionary potential. In Maiakovskii's work, in association with the repeated symbol of the flood, one may identify a similar dynamic of hollowed-out progress. Time travel between a near and distant, "utopian" future of one sort or another occurs repeatedly in Maiakovskii's work, from the works discussed here to the long poem *The Flying Proletarian* [*Letaiushchii proletarii*] (1925), the play *The Bedbug* [*Klop*] (1929), and to Maiakovskii's comprehensive polemical apologia *At the Top of My Voice* [*Vo ves' golos*] (1930).

These distant futures lack a certain humanity, lack the space for the lyric of twentieth-century subject with his foibles and keenly felt emotion and creative impulses. These Maiakovskii-less futures are quite possibly tied to the critique of ever-increasing bureaucracy, a trajectory that Jangfeldt notes, for example, in *The Bathhouse* [*Bania*] (1930); as a sequel to *The Bedbug*, *The Bathhouse* contains "a more direct criticism of the bureaucratization of Soviet society and the emergence of a new privileged class of high-ranking bureaucrats with party membership" (Jangfeldt 485-6). However, the repetition of revolutionary bursts of activity, often in the metaphor of the flood, followed by lifeless futures, suggests that Maiakovskii's ends are placeholders as much as satirical spaces. Over and over, society fails to realize the revolutionary potential of temporary egalitarianism and create a new kind of social and cultural structure of relations. In this context, the fact that Maiakovskii never really portrays transition to future

utopias—the origins of the Promised Land happen off-stage in *Mystery-Bouffe*, the process of moving from awakened world proletariat to international commune in *The Fifth International* occurs behind the lyric subject’s back—is not a lapse in creativity, but a moment that cannot be constructed by the author alone, but only mutually with a reader.

3.4.2 The Autobiographical Lyric Subject

Such a joint endeavor is made possible by the adamant return of Maiakovskii’s autobiographical lyric subject, which had receded from the scene after 1917. Maiakovskii himself directs the reader to pay attention to this return by inserting a direct explanation into *The Fifth International*. In Maiakovskii’s argument, the Proletkult preference for “we” reflects the desire “to have a more ‘collective’ psychology than a Futurist does [chtob psikhologiiia/ byla/ ‘kollektivnei’, chem u futurista]” (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 4: 122). But, he claims in this passage, this “collective psychology” will not allow the lyric subject/readers to “drag themselves out of a lyrical pit [ne vzlezhesh’ iz lirichskoi iamy]” (122). No amount of “we” will suffice to make the aesthetic representation of anything—not the valorized factories of Proletkult, and certainly not the trivialities of everyday life—go beyond self-indulgence and self-aggrandizement. The problem of revolutionary poetry has to include an understanding of revolutionary aesthetic process as well as of revolutionary content, and Maiakovskii suggests the singular lyric subject is better positioned to point to this understanding.

In “The Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” [“Avtor i geroi v èsteticheskoi deiatel’nosti”] (1924), an early treatise being worked out essentially contemporaneously to Maiakovskii’s aesthetic, Mikhail Bakhtin outlines a basic dynamic between an author and the hero whose history he writes, one that relies on the architectonics of two kinds of space: the

open, uncompleted world of the author and the world of the hero, which, in the excess of vision of the author, is understood to be composed and complete. As described in this essay, Bakhtin's aesthetics have a highly *ethical* bent to them; correct aesthetics model the correct relations between selves and others as non-instrumental and lovingly consummating.³⁹ In introducing Bakhtin's "Author and Hero," Michael Holquist characterizes Bakhtin's boldest development as the directive "to treat the activity of perception as the structure of authoring. I give shape *both* to others and to my self as an author gives shape to his heroes" (Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability* xxx, emphasis in original). The gift of consummation through possession and contextualization must remain a gift, not a tyrannical mode of rigid definition.⁴⁰

Maiakovskii's autobiographical lyric subject is an aesthetic representation of such excess of seeing, with his hyper-acute set of eyes and ears at a long distance from the object of

³⁹ An aesthetic version of the conditions in which "You complete me" would be a sign of complementarity, vulnerability, and generosity, rather than creepy neediness.

⁴⁰ The tension in author-hero architectonics drives Bakhtin's further work, oscillating between analyzing the ways in which heroes retain an openness of horizons of value and expectations with such devices as double-voicedness or the "word with a sideways glance" in Dostoevskii, and the ways in which authorial definition dominate, for example, in the authorial orchestration of heteroglossia and polyphony. This suggests that devices that have often been taken as more or less sociological or in isolation, such as carnival and chronotope, should also be considered as derived from this basic relationship. Indeed, the idea of the chronotope in particular seems to be intimately linked to the authors privileged total view of a hero's temporal and spatial boundaries and the rhythms that underlie their intersection.

contemplation. This particular distance offers the lyric subject the ability to see the wider principles that structure human activity on “the world below that is smaller than an anthill [mir/ podo mnoi/ muraveinika menee]” (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 4: 124). Seeing the world in aggregate allows the lyric subject to describe the effects of abstractions like boundaries and the economic interweaving in Europe and its colonies. Yet these observations are not in themselves very aesthetically compelling to the lyric subject—they do not offer the reciprocal dynamic of shaping the implied author himself⁴¹ and are excessively dehumanizing.

When excited by the awakening of the world proletariat, the lyric subject begins to engage in a more mutually shaping relationship:

Размахивая громадными руками, то зажигая, то туша глаза, сетью уха
вылавливая каждое слово, я весь изработался в неодолимой воле —
победить. Я облаками маскировал наши колонны. Маяками глаз указывал
места легчайшего штурма. Путаю вражьи радио. Все ливни, все лавы, все
молнии мира — охапкою собираю, обрушиваю на черные головы врагов.
Мы победим. (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 4: 131-32)

Fanning with my enormous arms, now enflaming, now extinguishing my eyes,
picking up every word with the nets of my ears, I worked all of this up into an

⁴¹ Less than helpfully, the implied author is embodied in the same figure as the lyric subject, given that this is an autobiographical hero, but there are points where there is more contemplative distance and excess of seeing (the implied author) and points where the experience is more immediate and contingent on surroundings (the vertigo of flying, boredom in outer space, joy at being received).

unassailable will to conquest. I masked our columns with clouds. With the lighthouses of my eyes I indicate the best points to storm. I interfere with the enemy radio signals. All the downpours, all the lavas, all the lighting of the world – these I gather by the handfuls and scattered on the black heads of our enemies.

We will conquer.

One may immediately note the emergence of “we” in this endeavor. However, an immediate divergence takes place and it takes some time before the potential of this word, used in the furor of revolutionary action (in which flooding—downpours—and lava appear in strength), to be realized. The lyric subject has the autobiographical experience of 1917-1922 to inform his understanding of the next stage:

Я видел революции,
видел войны.
Мне
и голодный надоел человек.
Хоть раз бы увидеть,
что вот,
спокойный,
живет
человек меж веселий и нег.
(132-3)

I have seen revolutions,
I have seen wars.
I
have had enough of the starving man.
I'd like to see just once
how there,
quietly
a man lives
among pleasures and luxuries.

While the economic struggles of the masses are absorbing for the masses themselves, they are, in principle, a completed picture for the lyric subject, and not a partner in creation. In realizing the potential of revolutionary consciousness, the participation of the lyric subject is not sufficient.

The final transformation is evident when the lyric subject is hailed at the very conclusion. One recognizes, finally, the degree to which the lyric subject himself desires consummation—to be embraced and known, in the terms under which “individualism can determine itself positively and feel no shame about its own determinateness[, that is] in an atmosphere of trust, love, and possible choral support” (Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability* 171-2). When he had been able to recognize the distortions and alienation incumbent in the socio-economic mechanisms of global capitalism, trusting that community to recognize and embrace him was impossible. In the Soviet Union, although various figures recognize and strive to hail the lyric subject, they fail to see him correctly or completely:⁴²

Те, кто не видят дальше аршина,
просто не верят:
«Какая такая машина??»
Поэты утверждают:
«Новый выпуск «истов»,
просто направление такое
новое —
унанимистов».
Мистики пишут:

⁴² This misrecognition and mismatching is reprised on a more personal tragic note in Maiakovskii's analyses of his love for Liliia Brik and hers for him. He imagined Liliia's position: “But do you love *me*?... You feel love toward everything. I too occupy my place in it (perhaps even a large place), but if I come to an end I'll be removed, like a stone in a stream, and your love will go on washing over all the rest” (Jangfeldt 239).

«Логос.
Это
всемогущество. От господ бога-с».
П. С. Коган:
«Ну, что вы, право,
это
просто
символизируется посмертная слава».
Марксисты всесторонне обсудили диво.
Решили:
«Это
олицетворенная мощь коллектива».
А. В. Луначарский:
«Это он о космосе!»
(120-1)

Those who can't see further than a league,
simply don't believe:
“What kind of machine is that??”
The poets confirm:
“A new issue of ‘the -ists,’
it’s just a kind of movement
new:
the Unanimists.”⁴³
The mystics write:
“Logos.
This is
omnipotence. From the Lord God.”
P. S. Kogan:
“Well, really, it’s actually
that this
simply
symbolizes posthumous fame.”
The Marxists discussed this miracle from every direction.

⁴³ The editors of the 15-volume *Complete Works* direct the reader to the French movement of Unanisme, which worked with concepts of universal, collective consciousness and the eclipse of individual consciousness in this larger one.

They decided:
“This is
the personified power of the collective.”
A. V. Lunacharskii:
“He’s going on about the cosmos!”

In the author-hero dynamic, the autobiographical hero is characterized by a resistance to consummation and the idea that his obituary is written. He strives to keep the horizon of possibility open, in aesthetic consequence of which we see Maiakovskii’s lyric subject fall into a familiar pattern: a certain loss of consciousness of his own boundaries that leads to disfiguration, multiplication, and magnification. This is, on the one hand, an important moment of potential, as given everyday assumptions fail to be definitive; however, on the other hand, the lyric subject’s embodied potential must be realized by those with the capacity to recognize it. Once recognized, the lyric subject can complete his own transformation and return to a new affirmation of his boundedness within a totality:

Маяковский!
Опять человеком будь!
[...]
Небылицей покажется кое-кому.
А я,
в середине ХХІ века,
на Земле,
среди Федерации Коммун —
гражданин **ЗЕФЕКА**.
(134, emphasis in original)

Maiakovskii!
Be a person again!
[...]
This will seem to a certain someone like a tall tale.
But I
am in the middle of the twenty-first century,
on the **E**arth,
in the midst of the **F**ederation of **C**ommunes—
a citizen of **EAFECO**.

As such, when Maiakovskii uses this poem to insist emphatically on the first-person singular pronoun, it is as if he insists on holding the declaration of a collective to a higher standard and articulating the aesthetic process behind it.

The Soviet Union as well as the entire post-revolutionary world had been unequal to the excessive lyric subject before—he knew what would happen and did not want to subordinate himself to the narrative of suffering without cause. When the Earth Federation of Communes is established, the horizon of potential opens back up for him, and he can join the community in exploring the future. The excessive lyric subject that matches the open horizon of the Soviet Union or world is taken up by Cavanagh as a particularly vivid moment of attempting to reproduce the “body politic” that Whitman had represented for an American democracy.

Mayakovsky is not simply a poet of the self. Like Whitman, his monumental ego is housed in a suitably oversized body. Mayakovsky’s body is the tortured hero of his early poetry. Only in *150,000,000*, though, does he first attempt to turn this body to the purposes that Whitman’s body had been crafted to serve all along. In *150,000,000*, he emulates Whitman’s feat in creating a poetic body designed to incorporate a young and growing state. He works to locate the juncture where his poet’s form fuses with the body politic. (Cavanagh 207)

In *150,000,000*, prior to the use of the Soviet lyric subject, Maiakovskii experiments with an assemblage of all the people and beasts of the Soviet Union. In the end, there is little in this experiment, beyond battle with America, to direct the energies of this entity; it is governed by reaction instead of procreation. Maiakovskii begins exploring alternative processes that can shape the collective body of the Soviet Union; the most compelling, especially in the presence of his autobiographical lyric subject, is love:

For Maiakovskii, the idea of democracy in the abstract was already realized toward 1925 in Soviet communism. However, he could not realize his poetic dreams of free love. Chukovskii intensified this definition [of democracy] even further: “And democracy? It is the Queen of Queens, it is the Lover.”

From this it is perfectly clear that Whitman’s love and democracy (in Chukovskii’s translation) and Maiakovskii’s love and communism are synonymous. (Katsis 67)

Cavanagh focuses on the attempts to project a sense of material physicality, given in particular as “his extended quest to find the one object, be it public (the state) or private (a woman ‘as large as me’ [Maiakovskii, *PSS* 3: 23]), who will answer his outsized needs” (217). Certainly, no one would deny that Maiakovskii engages in hyperbole about his needs. However, “outsized” suggests a simple mismatch between desires that fails to take into account the dynamic that generates the imbalance between Maiakovskii and the world. This may be addressed by a brief return to the imagined geography of *The Fifth International*.

From *Mystery-Bouffe* to *The Fifth International*, Maiakovskii develops his geographic imagery. The emblematic congress of nationalities is recast to depict a more concrete sense of how economic and political connections can be articulated in spatial terms—for example, as a “fan of rays [luchei veer]” spreading out from Hungary, India, and Angora (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 4: 124). The problem of boundaries interfering with proletarian solidarity (if not monetary exchanges) among countries still requires an aesthetic solution, however. The lyric subject had demonstrated the ease with which the expanse of Soviet territory could be covered along the rail system, using the same language of rays, “parallels of fire/ are Russia railroading the darkness [ognei paralleli –/ èto Rossiia zheleznodòzhit tem’]” (125). It is the nearing Soviet border at

Mount Ararat in Armenia that limits this kind of interconnected, horizontal solidarity and sends the lyric subject in an orthogonal direction, in a secularized version of holy transcendence at the edge of current revolutionary potential. Later, the conflagration of revolutionary potential of industrial centers penetrates and renders inoperative national boundaries. Over the course of world revolution, the lyric subject devotes the lion's share of his attention to how rays fan out toward one another and specifically pierce borders, of which the following is only one of several examples:

Ныне
революции не залить.
Склонись перед нею! —
А луч
взбирается на скат Апенниньий.
А луч
рассвечивается по Пиренею.

Сметая норвежских границ следы,
по северу
рвется красная буря.

[...]

Побзда чище
лился Сибирью третий лучище.
Красный поток его
уже почти докатился до Токио.
(131)

Now
the revolution cannot be quenched.
Bow before her!
And a ray
throws out over the slope of the Apennines.
And a ray
blazes through the Pyrenees.

Sweeping away the traces of the Norwegian borders
a red storm tears
through the north.

[...]

Cleaner than a train
an enormous third ray poured through Siberia.
Its red flow
has already nearly made it to Tokyo.

While not consistently observed throughout this episode, the initial imagery of revolution spreading “like mercury [kak rtut’]” across the Apennines and Pyrenees—natural borders between France and Italy and France and Spain—followed by the disintegration of Norwegian borders suggests the foundational nature of the binary between boundary and connectivity.

The spatial terms in which the future history of the Fifth International is presented are also suggestive of the language of the ethics of authorship. The borders drawn on maps, even if based on natural landmarks, are inherently a matter of convention, one that the lyric subject abides by as he contemplates the Soviet Union and Europe. His imaginative work suggests that borders are an important aspect of his uneven relationship to the Earth below. Recall that the capacity of the author to see the physical and future outlines of the hero in his environment is a characteristic of the excess of sight, dividing the lyric subject, whose horizon is represented in the vast expanse of space, from his object of contemplation. It is in the end, when the lyric subject can no longer see the limitations of borders, that he feels equal to, and not in excess of, the world-woman-community he is contemplating.

Maiakovskii’s citizen of the new world commune created by the Fifth International is a manifestation of a totality that is as whole at two members as it is at one hundred and fifty million. It is the quality of a true affective community that concerns the lyric subject; once it has been established, everything else falls into place. But how to get there? In *About This*, Maiakovskii further telescopes in on this critical moment, which is elided in *The Fifth International*: the moment of constitution of loving affective community in the direct, potential-laden aftermath of the revolutionary flood. *About This* zeroes in on the essential mechanism in

Maiakovskii's personal mythology, a moment that is almost mystic in its inarticulability—the polysemy of “this” cannot be pinned down.

3.5 ABOUT THIS (1923)

In handling this mechanism of catalyzing love, the poem *About This* develops a great deal more obvious complexity in aesthetic structure and intertextual referentiality than previous flood allegories. A number of complications arise that were practically inevitable with the reintroduction of the personal lyric subject, including the return of the pre-revolutionary explicit theme of suicide. With regard to death, though, there is also the question of resurrection; in light of the strong connections that Katsis draws between Maiakovskii's and Rozanov's works, especially *The Family Question in Russia* [*Semeinyi vopros v Rossii*] (1903), *The People of the Moon* [*Liudi lunnogo sveta*] (1911), and “On Ancient Egyptian Beauty” [“O drevneegipetskoi krasote”] (1899), we can introduce the myth of Osiris as a dimension to the allegory of the flood. The Egyptian god Osiris is slain by base trickery and undergoes a journey by boat through the underworld, while in the meantime his wife Isis collects his body parts scattered in the Nile, reconstitutes his body, and returns him to life.

Once again, we see a watery interlude between an imperial status quo (Osiris is murdered while celebrating his conquest of the east) and a new status, during which traditional senses of organization are scattered and require reconstitution. In particular, this interpretation of the flood may be attractive for the regime of thought that Rozanov attaches to Egyptians, in which they “did not just draw about how they travel and till the ground ‘in that world,’ but simply did not have the word death” (qtd. Katsis 175). In Maiakovskii's work, death is generally represented in

spatial terms, often with reference to the heavens, giving additional nuance to Maiakovskii's injunction in "Our March" to "take us into the heavens *as a living substance* [na nebo nas vziali zhiv'ëm]" (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 2: 7, emphasis mine). In light of the theme of suicide in *About This*, one may keep this definition of death in mind as waters carry Maiakovskii's lyric subject to a multiplicity of places.

In *About This*, the autobiographical lyric subject no longer regards events from a bird's-eye view of grand scope, but he still possesses the authorial excess of seeing. This quality translates into the acuity necessary to identify the microscopic fractures that characterize every community, even as political and technological transformations seem to caulk over them. This is possible because the lyric subject feels intensely and personally the first such fracture, his distance from his lover; the closer his attempts to connect with her come to their goal, the more keenly their failure is felt. The imagery of failed, destructive connection begins in earnest at the beginning of the chapter entitled "The Ballad of Reading Gaol,"⁴⁴ in which the lyric subject depicts an abortive phone call to Liliia Brik.⁴⁵ The call crosses specific space in its short journey

⁴⁴ A reference to Oscar Wilde's poem of that title, which had been translated earlier by Valerii Briusov and in which the central figure is in jail for killing the object of his love.

⁴⁵ The setting of *About This* at Christmastime is connected to the beginning of a two-month separation between Liliia Brik and Maiakovskii in 1922, during which the poet was meant to examine scrupulously the amount of philistine comfort—tea and jam and card games, for example—Maiakovskii had allowed to take the place of his ideals as revolutionary poet. In *About This* he depicts how alone he is in eschewing his bourgeois trappings, as "during his strolls under Liliia's window Mayakovsky was able to see for himself what kind of life she was living

from Miasnitskaia to Vodop'iani, by way of the operator in the Post Office, where the force of the telephone call is felt as an earthquake: “An earthquake?/ In winter?/ At the Post Office?! [Zemletriasen'e?/ Zimoi?/ U pochтамта?!]” (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 4: 143).

Crossing physical space with extreme agility could be taken as a given in this relatively late development of the motifs of connection in Maiakovskii's work. Barriers and boundaries, though, are not absent, and take on a more dynamic role in the spatial logic of *About This*. The telephone at first seems to make short work of the barrier of the lyric subject's apartment, his “prison cell”:

Дыры
 сверля
 в доме,
 взмыв
 Мясницкую
 пашней,
 рвя
 кабель,
 номер
 пулей
 летел
 барышне.
 (141-2)
 Drilling
 holes
 in the house,
 soaring up
 Miasnitskaia
 like a plow,
 tearing up
 the cable,

in his absence, with constant guests, music, and dancing—the one-step and two-step were the fashion” (Jangfeldt 237).

the number
flew
to the operator
like a bullet.

The rapid-fire pile-up of images—a drill, a plow, a bullet—suggests an ineffable aspect to this phone call, tied to the inarticulable theme of the poem. Further, in association with the telephone, he deploys the strongest imagery of revolutionary shift yet available. There is lava: “breaking the silence with its assault of rings,/ the telephone pushes trembling lava in all directions [pogromom zvonkov gromia tishinu,/ razverg telefon drebezzhashchuiu lavu]” (143). There is the flood itself, in miniature, as “the phone has drowned in a flood of its own rings [tonul v razlive zvonkov telefon]” (143).

In other words, these images do not simply suggest the context of the lyric subject’s distraught frame of mind, but also the expectation that technology will provide the authentic human connection he desires, that it will be the source of the spiritual revolution. Drilling through the walls, making nothing of the snowy streets of Moscow, reprising the burning away and total dispersal of all difference in lava and floods, the telephone call nevertheless fails in its connective role. It is held up at the other end, first by the agonizingly slow conveyance of the lyric subject’s message to his lover by the cook, and then absolutely ended by the lover’s refusal to come to the phone. After all of that space has been conquered, the most infinitesimal remaining distance still cannot be crossed.

The episode of the telephone prefigures a flood in a fuller realization soon after. In a fit of jealousy, the lyric subject transforms from a respectable citizen into a polar bear:

В Париж гастролировать едуший летом,
поэт,
почтенный сотрудник «Известий»,
царапает стул когтём из штиблета.
Вчера человек —

единым махом
клыками свой размедведил вид я!
(146)

A poet,
 who goes to Paris on tour in the summer,
a distinguished contributor to *Izvestiia*,
claws at the chair with nails protruding from his boots.
Yesterday a person—
 in one fell swoop
I have made my visage bear-like because of my screaming.

In this representation of himself, the lyric subject has created enough distance to express irony—jealousy transforms even the most model of citizens. The double image suggests that neither model citizen poet nor beast adequately describes the lyric subject; at the very least, his aspirations go beyond either.

In the context of spatial sensibilities, the reference to Paris comes across as a pointed moment in the construction of Soviet geography in this poem. After a painful failure to reach an “other” only a few streets away, the government-sanctioned capacity to tour beyond the Soviet border in France suggests that, in some essential way, France and the Soviet Union are not different, and that the national border is not, in the end, the essential difference that must be bridged. This is a departure from the internationalism at the base of *The Fifth International*.

Soon after becoming a bear, the lyric subject is carried away by a proper flood that begins seeping out in his room. This is not simply a hyperbolic exaggeration of the lyric subject’s distress, but a typical effect of a general driving issue in Maiakovskii’s aesthetic. If the flood of *Mystery-Bouffe* had emerged from the consciousness of irreconcilable class differences, here it is prompted by a more fundamental, equally irreconcilable difference: that between “I” and the “Other.” Regardless of the scale of the difference, the consequences look the same, and play out on a similar scale.

3.5.1 Evoking the Petersburg Tale

The flood carries the lyric subject to Petrograd, where he encounters the past version of himself from *A Man* [*Chelovek*] (1918), his first attempt to catalyze the spiritual-cultural revolution associated with the flood, specifically at the point in which the earlier version is captured in the perpetual cycle of incomplete suicide in the Neva's icy green waters:

И падает
— опять! —
на лёд
замёрзший изумруд.
Дрожит душа.
Меж льдов она,
и ей из льдов не выйти!
Вот так и буду,
заколдованный,
набережной Невы идти.
Шагну —
и снова в месте том.
Рванусь —
и снова зря.
(Maiakovskii, *PSS* 1: 256)

And he falls
– once again! –
onto the ice
the frozen emerald.
My soul trembles.
It is stuck in an icy place,
and it cannot leave the ice.
So I shall,
entranced,
walk the Neva Embankment.
I pace –
and again I'm at that place.
I leap out...
once more in vain.

The connection of the river Neva with “blesk”—the glimmer or flash of light—first quoted in the epigraph to “From Reading Gaol,” is repeated here, reinforcing a tie between electrical connection and an older form of modernity marked by the mercantile river. If one is faster and lighter than the other, they nevertheless perform the same function, down to the failure to make the final connection—the lyric subject of *A Man* has to turn to poison in order to complete suicide and ascend to the anodyne Heaven.

The resurgence of this function of the urban river, which was earlier tied to Pumpianskii’s reading of eighteenth-century commonplaces of court literature and *The Bronze Horseman*, invites the reading of *About This* in the context of the Petersburg tale and mythology. For example, in its long agony over suicide and its imaginative travelling, Maiakovskii’s Petersburg tale has particular resonance with Dostoevskii’s—Katsis draws out the parallels between *About This* and *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* [*Son smeshnogo cheloveka*] and *The Devils* [*Besy*] at length. It also takes up elements of the older Petersburg texts of Aleksandr Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov, bringing with them the shades of imperial subjectivity.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Vladimir Toporov developed the concept of the semiotic code of ideas, myths, and symbols embedded in the material and cultural history of Saint Petersburg. Petersburg is a metaphysically doubled city, populated by specters and phantasmagoria. Traditionally, the confluence of grinding reality and the seductive and terrifying other world is located in Petersburg’s grandiose and horrific origins as a massive empire-building project, in which thousands of coerced workers died to raise a city from a swamp. This beginning is paralleled by an anticipation of its apocalyptic end.

In terms of Pushkin, the parallels with *The Bronze Horseman* are fairly transparent: a flood belies the seductive claim of transformation that had characterized the ode-like prologue of Pushkin's poem. Maiakovskii's lyric subject combines within himself the role of sovereign creator and sovereign subject:

Недвижный,
страшный,
упершись в бока
столицы,
в отчаяньи созданной мною,
стоит
на своих стоэтажных быках.
(Maiakovskii, PSS 4: 150, emphasis mine)

Immobile,
terrifying,
clinging to the sides
of the capital,
created by me in despair,
he stands
on his hundred-story parapets.

If “the capital created by me” seems like a creative paraphrase of the Pushkin line addressed to St. Petersburg “I love you, Peter’s creation [liubliu tebia, Petra tvoren’e]” (Pushkin, *PSS* 5: 136), the torment of the past lyric self seems analogous to that of Evgenii clinging to the stone lion during the flood, “Astride a marble beast⁴⁷/ .../ He sat *immobile, terrifically* pale [Na zvere mramornom verkhom./ Sidel *nedvizhnyi, strashno blednyi*]” (Pushkin, *PSS* 5: 141).

⁴⁷ The connection may be tenuous, but while “byki” in Maiakovskii’s verse refers to a structural element of a bridge, *About This* later refers to its homophone meaning “bull” to discuss destroying that bridge: “Let’s run to the bridge!// Like a bull in the fight/ under a strike/ it bent my noggin [Bezhim k mostu!// Bykom na boine/ pod udar/ bashku moi u nagnul]” (Maiakovskii,

In Maiakovskii's previous engagements with the Bronze Horseman myth, or more generally with the Pushkinian statue myth, "the motif of the forced, imprisoning immobility of the statue, polemically opposed to Pushkin's myth of sovereign rest" (Jakobson 364), dominates. James Rann elaborates on Maiakovskii's Soviet relationship to the idea of the monument, examining the poet's antipathy to monumental inertness in favor of mobility and life. This led to his consequent ambivalence about his own role as state poet (e.g., characterizing himself as "fossilized shit [okamenevshee govno]").

The lyric subject of 1922 already begins to reflect this ambivalence, first with the alienation from his persona of "distinguished contributor to *Izvestia*" and now from his early attempts to effect spiritual revolution. The approach of animate to inanimate is not invested in a statue, but in the statue-like man on the bridge. The interplay of animacy and inanimacy is repeated in the approach of the past lyric subject and the lyric subject of 1922; one is rooted to the spot, while the other is superficially more mobile, but has no control over his motion, as the flood carries him right by his past incarnation. Finally, as the lyric subject of 1922 is carried away, the past lyric subject shouts after him,

Зачем ты тогда не позволил мне
броситься!
С размаху сердце разбить о быки?
Семь лет я стою.
Я смотрю в эти воды,
к перилам прикручен канатами строк.
[...]
— Не думай бежать!
Это я

PSS 4: 170). The two definitions of "byk" introduced an interesting reproduction of the lion and horseman statue motif of *The Bronze Horseman*.

ВЫЗВАЛ.

Найду.

Загоню.

Доконаю.

Замучу!

(151)

Why did you not allow me then

to throw myself over!

To dash my heart on the parapets with one flutter.

I've stood for seven years.

I gaze into these waters,

bound to the parapet by the cables of my lines.

[...]

-- Don't think of escape!

It was I

who summoned you.

I'll find you.

I'll track you down.

I'll finish you off.

I'll martyr you!

The past lyric subject's admonition and threat evokes, in one breath, Evgenii's "just you wait! [uzho tebe!]" and the punishing chase of the animated Bronze Horseman. The confusion of statuary and roles in Maiakovskii's poem, in a sense, draws a line of equivalence between the half-dead Evgenii and the half-alive creation within one figure.

One of Maiakovskii's accomplishments here is to undermine the integrity of what Jakobson argues was Pushkin's exit strategy from the inextricable connection between the statue and its political shadow—the monument "not made by human hands [nerukotvornyi]," or his own creative work, in which "*logos* (the word) overcomes *eidolon* (the idol) and idolatry" (Jakobson 350, italics in the original). Maiakovskii has, after all, witnessed and more than once rejected the way that the word could also become a fetish, as in the Pushkin cult embodied in the Pushkin statue.

As the flood causes the two extremes of frozen Maiakovskii and mobile Maiakovskii to approach, but not touch each other, the lyric subject is deprived of the distance necessary for a polemic with the monumental. In place of the revolutionary moment of iconoclasm, the lyric subject here can explore only the spaces that the state and society have constructed. These are just as artificial and “built” as the capital city in which Maiakovskii had imprisoned his earlier lyric subject. In the end, the juxtaposition of past and present does not allow for the contrastive “where then/ now there” that Pumpianskii had elaborated, but only metonymic analogy. Instead, these spaces are what might be termed “ruins” in a Benjaminian reading—the debris that reflects both the lack of revolutionary change in “progress” and the ever-present imaginary revolutionary potential that had made the myth of progress possible.

The link to Lermontov is also rather explicit. As the lyric subject’s “final death” is set up, he is standing on “the icy Mashuk [l’disty Mashuk]” (Maiakovskii, *PSS* 4: 175), a mountain in the Caucasus near Piatigorsk where Lermontov died in a duel. As all of the forces of bourgeois vulgarity assemble, called up by the Pinkertons, the private police agency notorious for breaking strikes and enforcing the capitalist economic order, the lyric subject hears “You are our age-old enemy.// One like you already fell—/ a hussar! [Ty vrag nash stoletnii./ Odin uzh takoi popalsia—/ gusar!.]” (176).

The invocation of the most Byronic of classical Russian poets once again reflects disaffection with the role of “state poet” and the desire to escape from the vulgarity of society. Moreover, the lyric subject’s enemies seem not to be the indigenous population, but the representatives of Soviet bourgeois society, and especially those who dog Maiakovskii in polemical journalism:

Пассажи —
перчаточных лавок початки,

дамы,
духи развевая паточные,
[...]
Газеты,
журналы,
зря не глазейте!
(175-176)

The arcades—
the spadices of glove sellers,
ladies
wafting off their treacly scents,
[...]
Newspapers,
journals,
you wouldn't gawk in vain!

While these are elements of the everyday life characteristic of Maiakovskii's Moscow, rather than (one presumes) of the Caucasus, the decision to position the lyric subject's "final death" at a site of colonial periphery cannot simply be considered a means of aligning the lyric subject with Lermontov's similar aversion to vulgarity. It also inexorably brings in Lermontov's aesthetics of colonial space. Lermontov, for all of his Byronic disaffection from the metropole and identification with wild nobility of the *Mtsyri* variety, nevertheless was deeply imbricated inside of the colonial project (Ram 207). To return to the poem "The Dream (In the noonday heat of a valley in Dagestan)" ["Son (V poldnevnyi zhar v doline Dagestana)"], the death of the officer in the Caucasian ravine is exactly the imaginative space that constructs a connection between him and a female other in the metropole—"And I dreamed of an evening feast/ Glowing with fires in my homeland [I snilsia mne siiaiushchii ogniami/ Vechernii pir v rodimoi storone]" while one woman at this feast "dreamed about a valley in the Caucasus/ A familiar corpse lay in that ravine [I snilas' ei dolina Dagestana/ Znakomyi trup lezhal v doline toi]" (Lermontov, *PSS* 2: 197). It is an exemplary moment of near connection between the two spaces, although the officer's

sacrifice fails to sustain this moment beyond the moment of death (this is perhaps infinitely sustained by the mise-en-abyme structure of the poem itself, but the moment is constrained to the aesthetic context).

These questions are particularly pertinent given the final trajectory in *About This* from France, through Moscow, and to the Caucasus. Notably, the imagery of the flood has more or less given way to that of the mercantile urban river, which shifts without a sense of motion from the Seine to the Moscow River to the Terek, which flows through the Caucasus to the Caspian Sea. This imagery, and the sense of trade networks it connotes, brings the essentially unchanged global economic system into relief—socialist Moscow changes nothing about the colonial cosmopolitan network in which it still operates, in which the periphery is the space for the externalization of the coercion and violence inherent in the system as a whole—where the systems of honor and indebtedness formulated in the center determine that, in the foothills of Mashuk, like Lermontov long ago, “Duelists proceed [Idut duelianty]” (Maiakovski, *PSS* 4: 175).⁴⁸ The lyric subject seems pessimistic about the possibility for revolutionary change. Maiakovskii retains the dual role of civilizer and martyr within this form of civilization; it will

⁴⁸ The nature of these political and economic networks will be a major element of the discussion of the Literary Center of Constructivists, particularly in Il’ia Sel’vinskii’s novel in verse *Pushtorg*, which highlights the ways in which Soviet cosmopolitanism and international trade may lead to the enrichment and development of the regions and small peoples of the Soviet Union. As a clear polemic with Maiakovskii and the Futurists, *Pushtorg*, it must be admitted, doesn’t have much truck with the Futurist amateur-intellectual engagement with problems of trade and economics, or any truck at all with Maiakovskii’s metaphysics of revolution.

take some fundamental change to the civilization in order to escape this dynamic. (And the solution is love. If not the love of Liliia, then the sacrificial love of Maiakovskii himself, if it will only work.)

However, much as in Lermontov's poem on the death of an officer in Dagestan, the death of Maiakovskii's lyric subject provokes the brief activity of the revolutionary ideal, without, in the end, permanent effect. The flood has apparently been re-tamed into the mercantile river—the Seine, Moscow-River, as into canals in *The Fifth International* or water pipes in *At the Top of My Voice*. Yet, once more, waters flood beyond the walls of such canals following the “final death” of the lyric subject, when he ascends to his heavenly ursine kin, the Great Bear, using familiar imagery: “Great [Bear],/ carry me through the Ararat-centuries // through the sky of the flood/ like an Ark-Dipper! [Bol'shaia,/ nesi po vekam-Araratam// skvoz' nebo potopa/ kovchegom-kovshom!]" (4: 177).

3.6 THE FLOOD, *IN TOTO*

Imagery of the flood spills over the bounds of the relatively short period from 1917 to 1924 taken up here. It is a persistent symbol of revolution from the “new Noah” of *A Man* onward, whether in straight propaganda poetry like the 1927 “Harvest Celebration,” cited above, or in his major late plays like *The Bathhouse* and *The Bedbug*, or in *At the Top of My Voice*, which is something of a comprehensive catalog of all of the aesthetic struggles Maiakovskii has ever waged. This period is sufficient, however, to illustrate the way in which this symbol is overdetermined: likely among many others, by the Biblical narrative of starting over, by contemporary theories about the mechanisms of economic and social change, by the specifically

Russian cultural tradition of the flood as the seed of destruction contained within (imperial) civilization; by Maiakovskii's personalized mythology of revolutionary death as being carried away over water. In the works of the period covered, however, it is remarkable to note how sophisticated the image of global revolution becomes; it is not merely a matter of reflecting Maiakovskii's disappointment with the New Economic Policy, but a self-sustained, and increasingly overwhelming, unfolding of what "global" means, whether how class division is distributed through space, the political-economic terms of war and peace, or the consequences of the Soviet Union remaining in a capitalist global order, one in which Moscow serves simply as a link in global exploitation.

Additionally, Maiakovskii's representation of these dynamics through a stable lyric subject is a beginning to establishing a relationship to a certain body politic. Rather than define the nature of the others who are also participating in this project, he poses them the challenge of proper love for him (and for each other) as the only way to overcome what he increasingly realizes as the very complex problems of the world. It is, of course, egotistical to demand love and recognition. However, Maiakovskii's "I," for all of its autobiographical shading, is in the end simply the position that every subject occupies, with their own equally vivid autobiographical details, in relations with the vast Other of the world. Maiakovskii's lyric subject is just the test case for the exercise of recognition and love.

If the aesthetic task of Maiakovskii's lyric subject and representations of Soviet territory is relatively clear, at the very least on the basis of the incessant repetition of its basic motifs, it's also clear that it always fails. Yet the repeating motif of the flood stands as testament to the fact that each of these iterations has borne revolutionary potential. The flood as a mythic image

evokes a cultural memory reservoir of myths and utopian symbols from a more distant ur-past. [...] Sparked by the new, from which they ‘maintain their impulse,’ they envision its revolutionary potential by conjuring up archaic images of the collective ‘wish’ for social utopia. Utopian imagination thus cuts across the continuum of technology’s historical development as the possibility of revolutionary rupture. (Buck-Morss, *Dialectics* 116)

The image of the flood, in all of its incarnations in Maiakovskii’s work, stands not as a moment, of transformation itself, but as recognition of the revolutionary potential of a moment. In a sense, what is actually represented is a frustrating reification of the same old social, economic, and geopolitical civilizational order—essentially the Soviet Nepman lifestyle, Soviet cosmopolitanism, and love that is bad, even within a “progressive” ménage-a-trois, are the same old order under the sign of the myth of “progress”—but it is also a sign of the transformative potential of the revolutionary imagination. A poem itself (and, importantly, Maiakovskii by himself) is never going to change anything—that particular avant-garde view of art commanding life does not, in the end, seem to be operative here—but it stands as a landmark to the reader, whose reading may be revolutionary. That Maiakovskii deployed it in even more modest works or in connection with personal lyric themes suggests that a variety of access points for the reader,⁴⁹ rather than an encyclopedic comprehensiveness for the author, is at work.

⁴⁹ A reader does have to be in a certain position of receptivity for this particular dynamic to work. Maiakovskii does not seem to have been at all lucky with his readers, who are generally either polemicizing with him (on the basis of vulgar sociology, formal bases, material accuracy, or basically whatever might lend itself to taking a leader in the field down a peg) or questioning

The particular aesthetic device of the flood in Maiakovskii's work revealed the revolutionary potential of the current Soviet order while exploring the failures of that same order. However, in the case of cosmopolitanism and the colonial metropole-periphery relationship in particular, there were also less metaphysical and more optimistic examinations of the potential of these systems for development under Soviet governance. Chapter Three, "The Territorial Aesthetics of the Literary Center of Constructivists," will examine how the Literary Center of Constructivists undertook a different kind of pedagogical project, essentially one of better signaling between center and periphery and striking the correct, enlightened balance between the political needs of the center and regional knowledge and economic development of the periphery.

the utility of literature in general (his potential allies at LEF). At a certain point, too, one has to concede that the failure was also his. Liliia Brik, for example, was a highly skilled reader of Maiakovskii and his personal mythology, and yet did not really engage him on the point of loving community.

4.0 THE TERRITORIAL AESTHETICS OF THE LITERARY CONSTRUCTIVISTS

In the texts discussed in previous chapters, from Mikhail Gerasimov's and Vladimir Maiakovskii's revisions of the "prophet in the desert" motif in Chapter One to Maiakovskii's progressive development of the metaphor of the revolutionary flood in Chapter Two, the geographical scope has been cosmic and universal. Every place has equal potential to be touched by the processes of revolution and modernization, to be contaminated and transformed by them. As a result, in spite of the concrete details of Gerasimov's Aral steppe or Maiakovskii's Baku, the overall processes are generalized. Specific, historically conditioned relations among regions and cultures did not have much of a role to play in these kinds of grand narratives. This gap between universal trajectory and local experience served as a natural point of intervention and development for the Literary Center of Constructivists [Literaturnyi Tsentr Konstruktivistov, or LTsK] (1923-1930), which defined itself in opposition to what it presented as the underdefined and uncontextualized territorial aesthetics of LEF-Futurist writers like Maiakovskii. Indeed, traces of the center's long, fierce polemic can be found in a great deal of their creative as well as publicistic work.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Making the connections among these traces, citations that would have stood out like burning letters to a contemporary audience, but which have become less distinct for readers since, is the

The writers of LTsK expressed interest in specifics, in the technical realization of socialism in the localities that the Soviet Union would produce—in arranging the country into something where its parts were connected in a rational fashion. This concern with geographically specific form took into consideration both local traditions and balances of power within the Russian Empire and between it and the rest of the world. In imagining the socialist community organization for any given locality, then, LTsK also committed itself to imagining ways in which socialist localities or regions would relate to other localities or regions (which could or could not be socialist), taking into account the historical interrelationships among those places. Thus, the forms of socialism and strategies for their continued development within the larger world would be specific to those places. In the examples to be discussed in this chapter, these localities are the great Russian steppe as represented in Il'ia Sel'vinskii's *Ulialaevshchina*, the Far North in Sel'vinskii's *Pushtorg*, and Moscow in Vera Inber's *A Goal and a Way* [*Tsel' i put'*]. Each of these places is understood not only as unique unto itself, but also in relation to Moscow as a historical imperial center of power and current center of Bolshevik power, and in relation to the greater economic and military networks of Europe and beyond.

4.1 WESTERNIZERS AND SLAVOPHILES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The Literary Center of Constructivists was formed in 1923 in connection with the debates arising from the general creative consensus that Soviet culture must take on new forms to suit the needs

major focus of Book Two of Leonid Katsis's *Maiakovskii: Poët v intellektual'nom kontekste èpokhi*.

of the new era. As was the case for most of the cultural organizations of the Soviet twenties, the group's end came at the turn of the decade: the mass organization of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers consumed most of the available resources in publication and made ideological attacks on individuals and groups between 1928 and 1932. In this turbulent period, LTsK tried briefly to remake itself as the writers' brigade M-1 in 1930 before finally disbanding.

However, much earlier, one of the first struggles the Literary Constructivists conceived for themselves was, as their name suggests, with Constructivism and LEF. Theories of art such as those articulated by Aleksei Gan in the 1922 treatise *Constructivism* [*Konstruktivizm*] left the theoretical basis of literature relatively weak in comparison to the more tangible, technologically enhanced arts of sculpture, architecture, or collage photography.⁵¹ First in a manifesto published in *LEF* itself in 1924, and then independently in such compilations as *All Are Changed* [*Mena veskh*] (1925), *The State Plan for Literature* [*Gosplan literatury*] (1925), and *Business* [*Biznes*] (1927), LTsK positioned itself as the theoretical center specifically for literature. More than just filling an apparent niche, Literary Constructivists understood the formal tasks of Soviet literature to be less a matter of observing and celebrating Soviet novelty and the proletarian class, and

⁵¹ "Weakness" here does not simply telegraph the arguments of LTsK. Writers associated with LEF and Constructivism also had some amount of difficulty finding a place for themselves within the theoretical frameworks of LEF Constructivism. An account of this negotiation for literature within LEF, resulting in the "literature of facts" epitomized by Sergei Tretiakov's plays, can be found in Devin Fore, "The Operative Word in Soviet Factography," *October* 118 (2006): 95-131.

more as a critical bridge for the gap between the masses and the leadership that had, confounded many left movements in the nineteenth century.

In *The State Plan for Literature*, LTsK's primary theorist Kornelii Zelinskii depicts the task of the Literary Constructivists as the resolution of a long-standing tension in Russian history between the Westernizers [*zapadniki*] and Slavophiles [*slavianofily*]. These two trajectories in intellectual history are complementary responses to a problem introduced in Pëtr Chaadaev's *Philosophical Letters* (1826-31), in which the author meditates on the unrelenting backwardness of Orthodox Russia in comparison to Catholic-Protestant Europe. The anxiety that this work unleashed motivated debates in the 1840s and 1850s between the Westernizers (for which key thinkers include Aleksandr Herzen, Nikolai Ogarev, and Vissarion Belinskii) and Slavophiles (of whom key thinkers include Konstantin Aksakov and Aleksei Khomiakov) about the appropriate path for future intellectual, social development in Imperial Russia, such that their country would not be at a disadvantage to Western Europe.

For both camps, lags in technological or economic development were essentially secondary effects of underdeveloped non-state communal organization. However, Westernizers sought to use blueprints for the ideal communal organization that were developed in Europe, especially by the French utopian socialists Fourier and St. Simon. In this way, they took a key concept from Chaadaev's 1837 "Apology of a Madman" ["*Apologie d'un Fou*"].⁵² Theories that

⁵² This work was a response to severe criticism of and persecution for *The Philosophical Letters*, in which Chaadaev places an optimistic spin on Russian intellectual backwardness, "The day will come when we shall take our place in the middle of intellectual Europe, as we have already done in the middle of political Europe [as intermediate territory between European powers and their

had developed in response to the social problems of industrialization, urbanization, and city poverty could be used in order to “leap over” the suffering and struggle that had accompanied the technological development of Europe. Slavophiles, by contrast, located the blueprints for ideal community organization in traditional structures rooted in the Orthodox community that had remained untouched by state reforms, but also had not been allowed to develop beyond the village in modern Russia. The most promising utopian structure for them was *sobornost'*, the “organic conceptual of ecclesiastical consciousness [...] which, internally, defined the Church not as a center of teaching or authority but as a ‘congregation of lovers in Christ’” (Edie, Scanlan, and Zeldin 161). In the Slavophiles’ estimation, it was not even really the institutional Orthodox Church that preserved this ecclesiastical consciousness. Rather, the autochthonous social formation of the peasant *obshchina*, the village-commune, attested to the existence and value of *sobornost'* for Russian social development.

In his theoretical writings for the Literary Constructivists, Zelinskii draws on this intellectual framework of juxtaposing a foreign, theoretically universal blueprint for further development with a native, organic path of development. Zelinskii proposed “Soviet Westernization”: the technology and forms of governance that would stabilize and modernize

transoceanic colonies...] This is the logical result of our long solitude: great things have always come from the desert” (310). While always in relation to Europe (in the middle), Russia gained power from its intermediary role. Here, the land empire could skip over all of Europe’s mistakes, suffering, and struggles, and appropriate the results of these struggles to an un-battered population.

Russia were to be found in the technology of the West. Lacking intensive Western guidance,⁵³ it was the responsibility of “Russian Americans, the most active part of society, who were ready to take on themselves the mission of systematically transforming the country” (Gol’dshstein 119).⁵⁴ Signaling their support of a Bolshevik state and the building of socialism in Russia, he expressed concern that their Western ideas and technology would prove as unable to penetrate the backwards countryside as they had for previous modernizers and left movements, such as the *Narodniks*, with their failed attempt to “go to the people” in 1874. Such unsuccessful penetration into the countryside would also prove deleterious for the Bolshevik and fellow-traveler intellectuals themselves. Zelinskii describes the effect of undigested Western ideas (the

⁵³ One might reason that Western countries did not see it in their interest to participate in the Literary Constructivists’ proposed “exchange: we will give you revolution, you will give us cutting-edge civilization and a new lifestyle” (Gol’dshstein 118).

⁵⁴ I am grateful to Il’ia Kukulin for bringing my attention Aleksandr Gol’dshstein’s *Parting with Narcissus* [*Rasstavanie s Nartsissom*]. It required me to refine my earlier reading of Literary Constructivist theory and poetry, where I had overstated the argument that Zelinskii and Sel’vinskii’s correctives to Westernism in order to ensure full penetration of technological and societal reform were a critique against Westernism. Sel’vinskii’s poetry still deals with very specific sites of intervention for the local intelligentsia, who are to act as mediators in the rational organization of society; this specificity is the main thrust of the argument, but adjustments have been made to account for an initial over-reading of a distaste for European influence in these works.

“technology of intellectual production”) on Russian intellectuals as persistently alienating, provoking returns to an idyllic dream of the country:

So the Western technology of that time and the entire “enlightened” regime of Europe entered the intelligentsia and noblemen’s consciousness. This new technology of production divided their psyche in two, it nourished Bazarovism⁵⁵ and nihilists; it was reflected in the attitude of the *narodniki*, of the “superfluous men.” But through all of their roots in society, having departed for the dreamlike old-world Russia, these people naturally could not find a clear, historical-dialectical formula to cure their alienation [*toska*]. (Zelinskii and Sel’vinskii 18)

In Zelinskii’s treatise, such alienation is not only a historical phenomenon, but can be identified in contemporary “Soviet Westernism” (*sovetskoe zapadnichestvo*), so called because the October 1917 Revolution had shifted the center of “Western” political philosophy from Paris and Zurich to Moscow. “Westernizing” thus entered a new stage of development.

Zelinskii and LTsK were not the only figures drawing upon the framework provided by the polemics of the Westernizers and Slavophiles. This polemic was a major point of contact for the group with the émigré “Changing Signposts” circle [*smenovekhovtsy*]. “Changing Signposts”

⁵⁵ In Ivan Turgenev’s novel *Fathers and Children* [*Ottsy i deti*] (1862), Bazarov is the standard-bearer for the Nihilists, an 1860s movement that was young, skilled in the natural sciences, and critical of the tsarist order (but indirectly, by way of criticizing the idealist theories of the previous generation of Russian intellectuals). The disruptive, rather than constructive attitude toward order (i.e., a preference for anarchy over unjust order) may account for Zelinskii’s choosing to criticize particularly Bazarovism.

saw the Bolshevik victory in the Civil War as an essential step to the restoration of Russian empire (which, like European empires in general, had experienced crisis culminating in World War I). For “Changing Signposts,” the Bolsheviks had preserved the integrity of Russia, allowing it to develop; “the Bolshevik empire would shift things around inside itself and show itself to be one combination or another of monarchy and corporative solidarity, or a synthesis of these two beginnings” (Gol’dstein 114). The Literary Constructivists were less interested in reorganizing elements that were already there and more interested in “Americanizing [becoming the technological, rational equal of America] Russia [that is] in fact overcoming Russia in its national (and supranational) special character” (114). That this process had to come from within, led by the Soviet technical intelligentsia, was incidental to the overarching ideology of LTsK, but it is, as this chapter will argue, one of the most important challenges for the territorial aesthetic in Sel’vinskii’s and Inber’s work.

LTsK’s concerns about a passive, backwards Russia being at a disadvantage to the industrialized, civilized West had, in the end, something in common with the contemporary Eurasianist mistrust of “universal” cosmopolitan values, as articulated by Nikolai Trubetskoi in his early treatise on Eurasian themes, *Europe and Mankind* [*Evropa i Chelovechestvo*] (1920).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Nikolai Trubetskoi was a member of the Cercle Linguistique de Prague as well as an intellectual leader of Eurasianism in Europe. He taught in Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s. His work was seized and destroyed during the Nazi occupation of Austria in March 1938, after which his health radically declined before he died in June 1938. The preservation of his reputation and work, both linguistic and in speculative political philosophy, owes much to Roman Jakobson’s

In great part, this essay develops the same themes as Zelinskii's article, of Russia's cultural humiliation and psychological alienation. Trubetskoi describes the perversity of "Romano-German" cultural domination in Russia:

[A non-organically assimilated, Europeanized] people [*narod*] must give up independent cultural creation completely, live in the reflected light of Europe, and turn into an ape that imitates the Romano-German tirelessly [...] Such a people will always "lag behind" the Romano-Germans, i.e., assimilate and reproduce various stages in the cultural development of Europe [...] from a disadvantageous, subordinate position, from a state of material and spiritual dependence on them.
(62)

Émigré Eurasianism diverged in the twenties into those who used a more materialist, economistic language in Soviet organs for audiences abroad, as in the case of the French journal *Eurasia* [*Evrasiia*] and those who were committed to recognizing the putatively organic compatibility of Byzantine culture (i.e., the Orthodox Church) with Eurasian development. Like with "Changing Signposts," though, émigré Eurasianism's orientation toward the Soviet Union was generally positive, as the Bolsheviks had effectively disengaged Russia's interests from European interests and politically isolated the country (even as ideas and trade clearly still continued to cross the border, given the cross-pollination of émigré and Soviet discourses). In "The Russian Problem" ["*Ruskaia problema*"] (1922), Trubetskoi describes how Russia, now Soviet, will inevitably become a colony (not an "equal," as the Russian Empire had contested in

dedication to disseminating the work of the Linguistic Circle after his own escape from Brno to the United States on the eve of World War II.

its geopolitical positioning) of European powers. Even in the case of a successful world revolution, Communist Russia would become a colony, in spite of its priority as the first socialist state; if Germanic countries were to become communist, dominance in the geopolitical order would shift from Moscow to those countries, whence the principles of Marxism originated. Without world revolution, in the meantime, Soviet Russia would be left outside of the prevailing geopolitical order and continue to lag behind it. However, through its colonial status with respect to Europe, Russia would be better able to connect with its Asian culture:

Many Asians now associate the Bolsheviks and Russia with the idea of national liberation and with protest against the Romano-Germans and European civilization [in spite of Communism's intellectual roots in western Europe ...] This view is shaping Russia's future historical role—not as a great European power but as an immense colonial country leading her Asiatic sisters in their common struggle against the Romano-Germans and European civilization. (109)

LTsK cast themselves as an active part of the Soviet state-building project, and as such they suggested immediate and productive interventions in order to introduce Western-inspired progress, mediated by Soviet experts. The inevitable trajectory supposed by Trubetskoi presumed the eventual eclipse of Communism on the way to a new stage of history, while such an eclipse was by no means required in the Literary Constructivist perception. Zelinskii outlines the consequences of an artistic movement that does not have the semi-Westernized complex of problems in mind, ascribing to it a major moment of alienation and divided consciousness in the acrid competition between the writers of LEF and of the RAPP critical organ *On Guard [Na postu]*:

Both LEF and *On Guard*, one along the lines of artistic technique, the other along the lines of political-tendentious demands, have been two extreme expressions of the assertive, artificial inclination [*napravlenchestvo*] of October that collapsed under itself in art. Now a new literary-social grouping is coming up [that is, LTsK], which has its roots in common with the aforementioned groups, but gives a new positive artistic formula to the inclination of October. (Zelinskii and Sel'vinskii 17, emphasis in the text)

The particular “positive artistic formula” by which the Literary Constructivists proposed to serve Soviet Westernism comprised a set of literary guidelines. For example, because the Revolution demanded dynamism in order to disrupt the stagnancy of the capitalist *status quo*, Constructivists were instructed to strive for narrative thrust and meaning in their works. Though this formulation would seem to privilege prose, many of the members were poets. Perhaps poetry was more amenable to the realization of the most important aesthetic principles for LTsK, overloading a text with semantic intention [*gruzifikatsiia*] and its associated, geographically inflected device, the “local principle” [*lokal'nyi printsip*]. This principle requires that the formal layers of the text reflect the geographic and class context in which the events of the work are situated. Zelinskii offers the example of “a jellyfish wave [*meduznaia volna*]” (27), which draws metaphorical modifiers from the local realia of the ocean, by contrast to, say, traditional mythological metaphors like Poseidon's horses. As such, the work of the Literary Constructivists appears to be an ideal site for characterizing a major thread of Soviet territorial aesthetics in general.

The works of Il'ia Sel'vinskii (1899-1968) and Vera Inber (1890-1972) offer some insight into the Literary Constructivist territorial aesthetic. While their approaches to the guiding principles of the group greatly differed, the range of styles they represent offers a chance to

generalize about the group. If Sel'vinskii's style drove the aesthetic program of overloading language with geographic information, Inber's defines the limits of what can be considered part of "Literary Constructivism." The driving concern of the territorial aesthetics of both, and of the Literary Constructivists in general, is connected to the problem of incorporation and boundary construction. The representation of Soviet Russia resonates with contemporary speculative thinking about Eurasia, and constitutes a basis on which to judge later representations of the Soviet community and its borders.

4.2 SEL'VINSKII'S *ULIALAEVSHCHINA*

Il'ia L'vovich Sel'vinskii was born in Simferopol' in Crimea, into a family of Crimean Jews. He grew up in Evpatoriia, where his family traded in furs, and retained ties there after moving away. He graduated in 1919 from the gymnasium in Evpatoriia, where he had taken part in student revolutionary movements, and went on to fight in the Red Army during the Civil War. Such elements in his biography, along with a variety of other experiences and observations acquired from a series of itinerant jobs (driver, reporter, circus wrestler, etc.), provided the material for a richly detailed texture in his poetry, including the two long works discussed in this chapter. He moved in 1921 to Moscow and studied law at Moscow State University, graduating in 1922 (biographical details from Nazarenko). He began experimenting with incorporating argots and dialects into poetry when he first began writing in his teens, and it was his interest in the programmatic implications of such innovations that contributed to his co-founding the Center of Literary Constructivists.

Sel'vinskii composed his first major work, the epic poem *Ulialaevshchina* [roughly, *The Scourge of Ulialaev*] by 1924, and published excerpts from the poem in various journals, before publishing it as a stand-alone work in 1927. The work summoned a wide variety of reactions. On the one hand, the epic poem accrued praise for its innovative representations of the chaos of the Civil War and the attention it drew to the formal characteristics of language.⁵⁷ On the other hand, it also attracted criticism for its portrayal of Party representatives in the story, as they were remarkably less colorful than the members of Ulialaev's Cossack band, while being equally thuggish. In an encyclopedia entry of 1937, the critic G. K. claims that "the importance of the work is weakened by the Constructivist philosophy set at its base. Consistently developing the principles of Constructivism, Sel'vinskii tried to show in *Ulialaevschina* that the Revolution was transitioning from a first, destructive period into a second 'peaceful,' 'constructivist' one" (G.K. 613), without success in the critic's estimation. This negative criticism eventually led to a drastic revision of the poem to represent the Red Army in a more positive light, with more swashbuckling and more thought given to good governance, although famous episodes from the

⁵⁷ In spite of the sharp polemics that characterize their interactions within Russia, Maiakovskii mentions Sel'vinskii with approval in his representations of the Soviet literary scene to foreign presses while traveling abroad, presenting a united front and sense of coherent culture to the outside world. An account of a conversation with the editor of *Polish Liberty* [*Pol'skaia volnost'*] contains the note that Maiakovskii, while listing current prominent figures in Soviet poetry, burst out in spontaneous recitation from *Ulialaevshchina* when he reached Sel'vinskii's name: "Here Maiakovskii declaimed in a singing voice Sel'vinskii's verses in *Ulialaevshchina* that begin with the words 'The Cossacks rode...'" (Maiakovskii PSS XIII 238).

first edition continued into later versions (notably among them, “The Cossacks rode...” to be discussed below). Given the range of critical attention to this work, it may be assumed that its imagined geographies were in play in the larger scheme of cultural production.

4.2.1 The Violent Steppe and the Appeal of Imperial Order

Sel’vinskii’s literary world is constructed on the basis of representations of discourses, which are tied to the political-social philosophies that motivate the events of the epic. As the following section on the representation of bandit discourse will elaborate, Sel’vinskii provides a creative example of what Mikhail Bakhtin would later describe as heteroglossia [raznorechie] and its aesthetic functions.⁵⁸ Most importantly, Sel’vinskii’s epic captures the centrifugal tendencies of this kind of organization, and his representations of divergent discourses goes hand in hand with the emergence of political anarchy in the poem. For all that anarchy allows every individual voice to be heard, it poses an obstacle to the incorporation of these voices into a larger collective that can be identified with the larger Soviet territory.

There are multiple means for organizing the great variety of voices and motivations in *Ulialaevshchina*. One is embodied in Tata, whose linguistic markers reflect classical Russian literary influences; her role as the romantic interest for several significant characters suggests a certain amount of attraction to the imperial past as a means of counteracting the negative

⁵⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin’s descriptions of discourse are defined in relation to the novel; although Sel’vinskii’s work is poetry, it appears to break substantially enough with classical assumptions about epic poetry (that it is written in an exalted style, for example) that one may talk at least about innovations introduced by a person living in a literary period dominated by the novel.

consequences of anarchy. Another is connected to contemporary speculations about the steppe and how it might develop from its current chaotic state into a well-organized unit of the Soviet state. Additionally, Sel'vinskii offers programmatic commentary about how to ensure that such a community would reflect Soviet values and correct relations with the Party.

4.2.2 Depicting Heterogeneous Discourses

Sel'vinskii's poem is set at a time when territory is in a state of flux, beginning *in media res* as order collapses in the Russian heartland. V. N. Morozov, the bourgeois factory owner who had once dominated the region, appears just long enough to flee the agitating workers of his factories and to leave a power vacuum. This local power vacuum is first filled by Serga Ulialaev's bandit horde, which in turn attracts the attention of the Red Army. From then on, the land is shaped by clashes, vividly depicted, between Ulialaev, who has thrown in with the White Army to keep the regional situation profitably destabilized, and the Red Army. While these entities would seem at first to be diametrically opposed, they actually have much in common: both are determined by the anarchic spirit of the time.

Sel'vinskii portrays the Civil War as a series of concrete and grounded events that foreground the brutality that had been required to conquer an explosive and unpredictable region, personified in Ulialaev. Often, this energy and unpredictability is conveyed through Sel'vinskii's stylistic renderings of speech patterns and settings, conveyed with a granularity of detail and variety that can be quite chaotic. Published first as an excerpt in LTsK's collection *The State Plan for Literature* in 1925 as an ideal example of the local semantic principle, the previously mentioned ride of the Cossacks in Chapter Three of the epic is a notable example of the

disruptive potential of this method, beginning with its unusual use of punctuation and stress shifts reproduced here:

Éхали казáки, ды ехали казáки,
Ды éхали казáха?ки, чубы́ па губáм.
Éхали казáки ды на башке па?пахи
Ды нáб'шке папахи чéрез Дóн нá Кубáнь.

(Sel'vinskii 301, punctuation for proper pronunciation reproduced exactly as in original, where there is no key)

The Cossacks rode, yea the Cossacks rode,
Yea the Cossaha-acks rode, their forelocks in their lips.
The Cossacks rode with sheepskin caps on their noggins
Yea sheepskin cap on their noggins across the Don to the Kuban.

This first strophe alone draws attention to the rhythm of the ride through the atypical presence of written stress marks, which, moreover, shift unexpectedly. Punctuation also prepares the reader for elisions (e.g., нáб'шке for ná bashke) and elongation (e.g. kázaha?aki) in the service of rhythm. As the passage follows the Cossacks on their ride, one can sense how regular contact between hoof and the ground, with its minor undulations and irregularities, translates into verbal shapes.

In addition to these virtuosic moments, there are also more prosaic ways in which Sel'vinskii represents regional speech styles. In the context of Ulialaev's band, the language of the narrative becomes very inflected with *surzhik*, the linguistic mix of Ukrainian and Russian that is found in the zone spanning the two countries' border. Sel'vinskii marks this language zone through lexical choice and written, non-normative stresses. When Ulialaev himself speaks, it is with these markers, as well as the additional tendency to harden his consonants, for example, "Synki. Iak ia bachu, néma vzhé durnykh,/ Shchob za smért'iu poity na Tsaritsyn [Sonnie, as I see, you are not so dumb/ As to go to Tsaritsyn in pursuit of death]" (307).

In taking this approach, Sel'vinskii would seem to develop a device, with a history rooted in the nineteenth century, of drawing attention to the ways in which ideolects, jargons, dialects, and language generally reflect socio-economic and ideological origins. Such texts provided the examples that illustrated Bakhtin's explanation of heteroglossia in the novel. Through heteroglossia, a novelistic work "orchestrates all of these themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions" (*Dialogic Imagination* 263). Depicting the phonetic and lexical differences in characters' languages captures the image of the linguistic and social tendency to develop in diverging directions ("centrifugally," in Bakhtin's metaphor) in response to sociological stimuli. It can also serve to balance against the author as a limiting function on the freedom of the presented characters, as "the author's linguistic consciousness, his consciousness as a writer of prose, is [...] revitalized" (316).

Ulialaev's band is the definition of miscellaneous, even incorporating deserters from the Red Army, and so would seem to provide the best basis for identifying heteroglossia. Almost paradoxically, but in keeping with the idea that heteroglossia lends itself to "orchestration," Ulialaev manages his ban by consensus and charisma. For example, in the collective decision of whether to travel to Tsaritsyn, where a major battle of the Civil War was taking place, most of the bandits agree because there is booty to be had. However, one orator exhorts the band to attack the Red Army for the sake of the Constituent Assembly, persuading at least (at most?) himself and using language that bears little of the character of *surzhik*.

«Братва! Мы сейчас выступаем в поход,
В поход, если хотите – крестовых рыцарей.
Мы должны устроить бойню пехот
Красной республики – Царицына.

Какая вам разница, где вам слечь?
Днём поздней или ранее.
Вы умрёте, но помните, что вашу честь
Почтят в Учредительном собрании.
(Sel'vinskii 306-7)

“Brothers! We now embark on a march,
If you like, on a crusader-knights’ march.
We must create a slaughterhouse for the troops
of the Red Republic of Tsaritsyn.

What difference is it to you where you are stricken down?
That day will come sooner or later.
You will die, but remember that you
Will be honored by the Constituent Assembly.

If this anonymous orator’s claims are abstracted to the level of state government, one can also find exclusively personal reasons to go to Tsaritsyn. For example, Marus’ka, one of Ulialaev’s lieutenants, “reached unceasingly for Tsaritsyn/ (A lover of hers was stuck there; she wanted to be with him) [Marus’ka tianula nepremenko na Tsaritsyn/ (Tam u nei byl liubovnik – ei by s nim)]” (304). From this wide range of personal motivations, the will of the band as a whole emerges: to join the battle in Tsaritsyn.

By contrast to the consensus-seeking motley crew of bandits, hierarchy defines the Red Army, at least at first. The Red Army Commissar Gai is described as “a Lenin in miniature for the whole province [vsegubernskii, liliputnyi Lenin]” (280). He speaks for and exerts complete control over his revolutionary committee (or *revkom*). If hierarchy implies stability, though, that assumption is swiftly challenged as upheaval strikes the *revkom*: the commissar executes an embezzling member of his collective, and the remaining members shuffle around and take on new roles to fill the gap. In this episode, no Bolshevik comes across as a positive role model. Additionally, the episode underscores the lack of stability within the Red Army, despite a clear overarching mission and mandate for discipline. While Gai and his *revkom* may be at odds with

the bandits in the plot, they appear to be subject to similar systemic pressures toward instability and disorder.

4.2.3 Tata as an Escape from Anarchy

Sel'vinskii offers a key to interpreting the variations in speech and motivations by explicitly introducing the motif of anarchy. The slogan “Property is theft. Anarchy is order [Sobsvennost' – krazha. Anarkhiia – poriadok]” clearly refers to Proudhon. Yet while citation gives the term a relatively fixed meaning from the intellectual history of anarchy, the discourse in the epic goes in several directions. On the one hand, the Social Revolutionary Shtein uses the trappings of anarchy to advocate his goal of undermining the Bolsheviks:

Мы, анархисты, подняли стяг
Стяг беспощадной борьбы с держимордой
За личность, за святость её, её гордость
Во имя и хищников и растяп.
(334)

We anarchists have raised a banner
A banner of merciless struggle with the goon
For individuality, for its sacredness, its pride
In the name of both predators and dolts.

Shtein aestheticizes anarchy by valorizing an abstract ideal of individualism and the “survival of the fittest.” One of Ulialaev’s deputies enunciates the practical implications of such “anarchy”:

Теперьча, значить, наш анархистский сход,
Который есть за вас в боях закалённый,
Вынес: просить от вас миллиона,
А то очень масса пойдёт в расход.
(335)

This means, now, that our anarchist assembly,
Which has become battle-hardened for you,

Has pronounced: a million from you
Or else the whole lot will be executed.

Every individual has his own concept of the term “anarchy,” whether or not that position is explicitly articulated in the discourse. While anarchy ennobles individuals, it also isolates them. A certain desire emerges for a principle by which to organize disparate individuals into a more collective identity that nonetheless preserves a diversity of languages and loyalties, in much the way that empire putatively once had in Russia. In the poem, this desire is realized in terms of attraction from all sides toward the single love interest, Tata.

Early on, the epic establishes Tata’s connection to pre-revolutionary culture and to cosmopolitan space—in Gol’dstein’s reading, a symbol of “traditional Russia” (109). She is initially tied to the pre-revolutionary economic order as V. N. Morozov’s wife; she is abandoned on the estate when her husband flees the uprisings at his factories. Her further fate is to be possessed by one lover after another, from Ulialaev to Gai to Ulialaev and one of the foreign officers from the White Army. On her estate, she can recall being connected to a much wider world of elite (or elite-imitating) tastes: to Carlsbad, to Paris, to the French spa town of Menton, and to Moscow, which is included specifically as part of this European array. Discourse associated with her (her “character zone”) also reflects a classical, pre-revolutionary aesthetic. Her introduction in the second chapter begins in a landscape saturated by a colorful palette reminiscent of Ivan Turgenev or Afanasii Fet. The specter of the latter poet in particular arises in the absence of verbs in the moody opening strophe depicting the magnate’s estate under Ulialaev’s rule:

Лиловые тучи. Серое поле.
Умиротворённость и великолепие.
Пегие берёзки в золотой боли,
Задумчивая кляча с галкой на репнице.
(286)

Lilac clouds. A gray field.
Tranquility and grandeur.
Piebald birches in a golden dolor,
A pensive nag with a jackdaw on her docktail.

Later, Tata passes from Ulialaev's to Gai's hands as the Red Commissar sneaks onto the estate and carries her off in a tilt-cart. The classical literary tradition is prominent here too, as she wonders:

И может, на самую эту звезду
Смотрел полудрёмой в кибитке Пушкин,
С таким же снежком на бобровой опушке,
И так же сквозь дырочку ветер дул...
(297)

And it could be that Pushkin, in his covered wagon,
Gazed drowsily upon this very star,
With the same snowflakes on his beaver fur trim,
And as a wind also blew through a little hole...

The specific mention of Pushkin brings with it a number of citations. The beaver-fur trim comes straight from *Evgenii Onegin* as the hero makes the rounds of Petersburg hedonism, conditioning Tata's reception of the world: "Frozen dust silvers/ his beaver fur-trim collar [Moroznoi pyl'iu serebritsia/ Ego bobrovyi vorotnik]" (Pushkin, *PSS* 6: 11).⁵⁹ The pleasantness of Onegin's journey, though belied by the "dyn'dyn'" of Tata's cart, which summons the refrain of "din'-din'-din'" from Pushkin's "The Devils" ["Besy"]. The passage also evokes the snowstorm of *The Captain's Daughter* [*Kapitanskaia dochka*] (1836), in which the noble protagonist Pëtr Grinëv dreams of his future encounter with Emelian Pugachev, the leader of a massive peasant uprising in the 1770s. Certainly, these allusions suggest that Tata is heading toward encounters with elementally powerful and destructive forces. They may also suggest that Tata functions as an

⁵⁹ I am grateful to Il'ia Kukulin for pointing out this quotation.

extension of what could be termed an imperial ideological system.⁶⁰ Tata's final connection to the pre-revolutionary order is her religious faith in a guardian angel, a "personal angel in her heart [sobstvennyi angel v serdtse]" (291), which is the only religious imagery in the epic and suggests the association between the Orthodox Church and the autocratic State in pre-revolutionary Russia.

Tata maintains this dreamy and poetic view of the world even when she enters the challenging and rough world of banditry. Her childlike demeanor and long eyelashes attract the men around her. They are compelled to treat her tenderly and protect her—and to preserve, at the same time, her older, imperial view of the world. However, in spite of the fact that Tata and the larger cultural system she represents hold attraction for the anarchic men of war, she is ultimately unable to reconcile the opposing elements of Ulialaev and Gai into a whole community.

First, her belief in a guardian angel shatters after an encounter with a lusty sailor (at this point, she has been recaptured by Ulialaev from Gai):

⁶⁰ *The Captain's Daughter* has been at the heart of many discussions about Pushkin's role in political identity formation in imperial Russia, including the tension between national and imperial identity. Irina Anisimova proposes that Pushkin uses the metaphor of a vertically-organized, parent-child family to smooth out the mutually traumatic encounter between imperial violence and national (*narodnyi*) violence: "Despite their problematic historical roles, Catherine and Pugachev act as true benefactors to Masha and Pëtr, thereby establishing a generational and historical continuity. Pushkin uses familial imagery to mask social problems of an imperial project, and the inter-social family is a powerful image that helps him to creatively shape a national myth" (13).

Но Тата вырвалась, и он, похабно зыря,
Сдунул харк, обкуренный и горький,
И слизь, ляпнув, поползла пузырясь
Зелёным ядом по шее за норку.

И стало ясно: от жизни устала.
Ничего не нужно. Мёртвая скука.
И кто-то в висок настойчиво стучал,
Что ангелы – глупость. Что их не осталось.
(350)

But Tata tore herself away, and he, obscenely leering,
Hocked a loogie, smoky and bitter,
And the splurged mucus crawled, bubbling
Like green poison down her neck toward her mink.

And it became clear: she was tired of life.
Nothing was necessary. Deadly boredom.
And someone knocked insistently on her temples
That angels were stupid. That none were left.

The mention of the mink [norka] signals a shift in the relationship between Tata and the anarchic atmosphere of the steppe. She had maintained faith in all turning out for the good, but without the cloak of this belief, she takes on an association with hunted animals and physicality. When, later, she takes on her fourth, final lover, the Hungarian officer Zverzh (who seems to keep her in common with Ulialaev), she acknowledges her own physical attraction to men for the first time: “He understood that she liked him back,/ And she. She too. Understood. The same. [Ponial, chto on i ei nraivlsia./ I ona. Ona tozhe. Poniala. Èto samoe]” (376). As she considers that she has been with surprisingly many men, the discourse associated with her shifts immensely, into an assemblage of colloquial, phatic statements: “So she was a prostitute?/ And she was hung up on something about this. It’s only the beginning, well, what!/ Good god, what was this? So it goes. Mmhmm. [Tak ona prostitutka?/ I chto-to prodtrudnivalo – to li eshchë, nuko!/] Bozhe moi, chto zh èto? – Tak-tak. Aga]” (367).

The triumph of physicality over spirituality reduces Tata's sphere of influence to a much more local environment than her past, classical discourse had suggested. She had believed in a larger, powerful system, religiously and socially more developed and benign than her surroundings. Once it has been negated, it is clear how isolated she and her estate were, and how tiny they were compared to the vastness of Russia. At this scale, she is no match for the chaos of the Civil War or the steppe that hosts it. Like an animal, Tata is killed and put mutely on display in the course of a battle.

И Тата лежала пастилой кожи;
Войлочная степь её лужицу вопьёт.
Гай подъехал и весь перекошенный
Откатил голову и вздел на копье.
(387)

And Tata laid like a confection in skin;
The felt steppe howled about her little puddle.
Gai approached and, all lopsided,
Rolled her head off and lifted it on a spear.

Tata, the alien bourgeois element on the steppe that all figures of power adore, is one device for creating harmony from the anarchy of this Civil War epic. She is clearly insufficient, and her death signals a rejection, if a regretful one, of an organizing principle for collective identity derived from Imperial Russia. An alternative means of forming collective identity must be found. Potentially, one that derives more specifically from the steppe may be able to stand against the chaotic potential of this region.

4.2.4 The Steppe as Determinative

If Tata represents an entry into a vast network of places characterized by shared cosmopolitan values (Carlsbad, Paris, etc.); in Russia, this is transformed into a morally and economically

skewed community constituted by the repeated exchange of Tata herself.⁶¹ Sel'vinskii's presents the alternative kind of community as rooted in a problematic geographic space: the steppe, which stands in for Russia as "thousands of kilometers of heavy, crooked material, lying beyond the sphere of meaning, unorganized material, unstructured, irrational" (Gol'dshtein, 95). The steppe is central to any question of bringing order to Russia, simply because it is such a definitive geographic feature in the constitution of Russia. Any systematic plan would have to deal with it.

In contemporary discourse, a pithy description of the steppe's proposed role in shaping new Soviet society can be found in Trubetskoi's 1925 book *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: A Perspective on Russian History Not from the West but from the East* [*Nasledie Chingizkhana: vzgliad na russkuiu istoriiu ne s Zapada a s Vostoka*]. This book positively defines the geographic and cultural forces shaping Russian history, by contrast to the relatively negative definition offered in *Europe and Mankind* (or the Literary Constructivists). Trubetskoi describes the steppe as the central constitutive geographic unity of the Russian polity:

From the beginning, the political unification of Eurasia was a historical inevitability, and the geography of Eurasia indicated the means to achieve it. [...] [T]he single steppe system passes across the entirety of Eurasia from east to west. Consequently, there was only one path of communication between east and west, while there were several between north and south (all the riverways between north and south intersect the steppe road between east and west at some point).

⁶¹ I am grateful to Jonathan Platt for noting the strange economic community that is created by this system of exchange. This observation deserves greater elaboration in future work on this subject.

Therefore, a people that gained control over one of the river systems became a master of only one specific part of Eurasia, but a people that gained control of the steppe system became the master of Eurasia. (165)

Trubetskoi's ultimate conclusion is that "Eurasia is a geographically, ethnographically, and economically integrated system whose political unification was historically inevitable. [...] Instinctively the Russian state has striven and is striving to recreate this broken unity" (167).

Sel'vinskii outlines a strong sense of the steppe's history and the popular figures who attempted to assert control over the steppe. First, he associates Ulialaev with Emelian Pugachëv and Sten'ka Razin:

Вин не допустыть ны яких безобразьев,
Три дни на грабёж, а тамо – цыц. Ны гу-гу!
И уже расплывались Пугачёв и Разин
По улялаевщины гул...
(306)

He doesn't permit any kind of confusion
Three days of robbery, and then that's it. No more!
And Pugachëv and Razin have already grown indistinct
Under the rumble of Ulialaev's scourge.

Historical references in the epic point to the much grander story of the steppe: the Mongol Conquest of Kievan Rus' in the twelfth century, and the reciprocal Muscovite and Imperial conquests of Eurasia beginning four centuries later. A new oscillation in this dynamic is signaled by the specter of Ivan the Terrible, who conquered the Astrakhan and Kazan Khanates in the 16th century: "The cloud of Ivan the Terrible is over the steppe of Ulialai [Oblako Groznogo nad ulialaiskoi step'iu]" (394).

The band, in its ethnic makeup, offers a vivid sense of the scope and delimitation of the steppe. Ulialaev is a Cossack who bears the linguistic imprint of Ukraine. Purely in terms of distance, Paris is as close to Ukraine as Pishpek is, but Ulialaev clearly holds more in common

with the Kirghiz bandits led by Prince Kutuz-Mamashev, who hail from the other end of the great Eurasian steppe and travel with Ulialaev. The edge of the steppe as a delimiting boundary is more important than the distances involved.

Even more striking is the transformative effect of the steppe upon Gai. His personal history had him coming from elsewhere, a “*kammer-intellectual*/ A cheerful playboy of the decadent north [komnatnyi intelligent,/ Vesëlyi zhur dekadentskogo severa]” (395). It may be supposed that his intellectual development in the north was not firm or complete, as rather than him acting upon the steppe and bringing order, the steppe acts upon him. The steppe shapes him to the point that “he [becomes] the hero of gloomy legends [Stal geroem mrachnykh legend]” (395). Tata observes that Gai has acquired the physical characteristics of the steppe, juxtaposing him to Zverzh (a White Army officer who is still implicitly “European”): “But [Gai’s] hair was also *the grass of the steppe*,/ Not like Zverzh’s, but a hedgehog [No ved’ volosy tozhe – *stepnaia trava*,/ Ne tak, kak u Zverzha – *ëzhik*]” (368, emphasis mine). In light of the fact that Gai is at the top of the pyramidal hierarchy of the *revkom*, one might characterize the disorder of the Red Army faction of this epic as a consequence of “going native.” It should be noted that this transformation enhances the qualities of ruthlessness and mercurial dynamism to emerge in the Bolshevik, whereby he beats Ulialaev in the end.

Gai’s assimilation to the steppe, though, seems to precipitate a crisis of governance between Moscow and the region. Following the rout of Ulialaev’s band, Lenin is depicted as issuing a pragmatic dictum, that “as revolution is a task for generations [ibo revoliutsiia – delo pokolenii]” (393), the historical, determinative steppe must be brought into line with the long-term Bolshevik plan. The Red Army’s excesses must be reined in and the government must punish those who alienated local populations. Gai is arrested for his early execution of his own

food-supply commissioner; in the end, like the bourgeois Tata, Gai as an outside, the ruthless enforcer of Moscow policies, is removed from the scene of the steppe.

In place of Gai and the Red Army, Ulialaev's old lieutenants have become schoolteachers and members of the village council—the local intelligentsia. Their personal investment in the Soviet development of the “tamed” steppe becomes clear when they resolve the threat of anarchic violence themselves. That is, when Ulialaev suddenly reappears with an appeal to return to pillaging, they execute the bandit without appeal to central authority (415). In conjunction with appropriate (though very vaguely represented) guidance from Moscow, the elements of the steppe become self-regulating and self-developing.⁶²

The steppe's transition to peacetime thus entails a radical shift in the imagined geography of the region. An entire story has unfolded with the geographically specific coloration of nomadic mobility and a stormy elemental nature driving it. Without an announced motivation, the former bandits settle down as leading figures in a village. With the flight of V. N. Morozov, the death of Tata, and the arrest of Gai, the steppe is no longer explicitly within an economic, ideological, or political network, which seemed to enhance the dynamism inherent to it. In principle, such isolation and settledness reinforces the Literary Constructivists' principle of every place working according to a rational order—no outside reference is needed. The steppe's geographical particularity, however, has been to be a conduit for the circulation of goods,

⁶² Ulialaev and his *stikhiinost'*, his unpredictable, elemental nature, are a permanent potential of the steppe setting, all the time. Sel'vinskii preserves the chance that chaos and violence could once again emerge with the final line: “But they say [the man the reformed bandits killed] was not Ulialaev... [No govoriat, chto èto byl ne Ulialaev]” (Sel'vinskii 415).

information, and people, and this defining tendency seems to have been negated. The leaders of this locality have, presumably off the page, properly assimilated the lessons of good governance and are now committed to maintaining civil order, transcending their reactivity to Russia's special national characteristics, like chaos and backwardness.

4.2.5 Russia from the East

Sel'vinskii does not necessarily face head-on the problem introduced by depicting the steppe, a region traditionally associated with mobility, as a settled area; in this scenario, Ulialaev, the personification of the chaotic steppe, simply "uses up his internal energy" (Gold'shtein 110) and loses his charismatic power to lead. What Sel'vinskii does seem to be interested in is using the steppe to recenter intellectual discourse vis-à-vis Russia, the East, and the West. The epic is peppered with discrete programmatic dialogues about the problems of, essentially, European intellectual history and "Bolshevik Westernism."

The figure of the Socialist-Revolutionary Shtein in particular directs the reader to consider such problems. He appears in the epic twice, both times apparently just to rile up debate about necessary future developments in art (as a foil for explaining Literary Constructivism, in other words). He draws many comparisons among East, West, and Russia, with a persistent emphasis on the importance of harmonizing technical skill with meaningful content. An educated man among Ulialaev's bandits, Shtein has clearly been bothered by his observations of disorganized and unruly Russian space; the moment he meets the educated Gai, he launches into a lengthy diatribe about art without prelude or invitation.

Сравните японца: арбуз как арбуз
Петушьи гребни и пузырьки морозца,

Но рядом гейша – вот такусенький бюст,
Да и вся лилипутного роста.

Варвары – ну и метод такой.
Иное дело Сезанн, барбизонцы:
Они – композиции, план, протокол,
У них на каркасе солнце.

А тут полюбуйте: ведь здесь наши судьбы –
Тыква, банан и... зелёный лук.
Эх, взять бы этот лук, тетиву натянуть бы,
Да и вставить перо: улюлю на луг.
(336-7)

Compare the Japanese: a melon like a melon
Cockscomb and beads of frost,
But beside there's a geisha – now there's an itty-bitty chest,
And she's of Lilliputian stature on the whole.

They're barbarians, and so they have such a method.
Cezanne and the Barbizon school are a different matter:
They're about the composition, the plan, the protocol,
The frames are in the spotlight.

And here you can feast your eyes: our fate is here
A pumpkin, a banana, and... a green onion.
Ah, to take that onion, to string it like a bow,
And place a quill upon it: hi-ho, off to the meadow.

Shtein's discourse on art is schematic. Looking to the East, to Japan, he sees content without artifice. Western art offers technical mastery, though it has nothing meaningful to represent. Russian art, in his representation, is an unsuccessful combination of the two. The materials for the still life he describes—a pumpkin, banana, and green onion—suggest a rich variety of contents, but do not have much internal unity, echoing the political-geographical problem of integrating Russian diversity into a single Soviet Union. In Shtein's description, there is a natural Russian inclination toward figurative language—an onion evokes a bow—but in making sense of the onion, this metaphor must ignore the pumpkin and banana.

As Shtein turns to poetry, his critique of Russian literature clearly parallels that of LTsK. Shtein takes “homeless Esenin [besprizornyi Esenin]” as a relatively “Japanese” poet, that is, interested solely in the image as direct referent and not in technique as such. This is apparent when the poet does turn to metaphor:

[«]Но нет – я берусь
Доказать, что Пегас без хлыста обнаглел,
Например: «Сторожит голубую Русь
Старый клён на одной ноге».

А где же другая? Утолите мои нервы.
Иль от этой ловкости надевать мне панцирь?
Вы себе представил всю грациозность дерева,
Которой балетно стоит на пуанте?»

«Видите ли, Штейн, я не так закалён,
Но вы-то как сказали бы – любопытно право».
«Мастер бы сказал – «одноногий клён»
И разом вогнал бы образ в оправу».

«Ка-кой придира! – а скажите-ка вы,
Ну, «медведь ковыляет» – это грамотно?»–
«Что же!

Ковылять глагол от слово *ковыль*,
Значит, белый медведь ковылять не может».
(337-8, emphasis in original)

“But no, I have undertaken
To prove that without the whip Pegasus has become brazen
For example, ‘An old maple on one leg
Guards blue Rus’.’

And where is the other leg? Assuage my nerves.
Or should I wear armor against this sleight of hand?
Have you imagined, in its entire gratuity, a tree
That stands *en pointe* as in ballet?”

“You can see, Shtein, that I’m not so hard-hearted,
But you are, so to speak, correct in a curious way.”
“A master would have said, ‘A single-legged maple’
And in one sweep of the hand righted the image.”

“What a puncturing! And tell me,
 Well, ‘the bear shambles [*kovyliat*],’ is that literate?”
 “What an idea!”
 ‘To shamble’ [*kovyliat*] derives from ‘feather-grass’ [*kovyl*]
 So, a polar bear cannot shamble!”⁶³

Shtein, at this point, would appear to be a mouthpiece for the Literary Constructivists, providing examples of how one might better pay attention to the relationship between content and the local coloration of the language used to depict it (i.e., a polar bear should not be associated with words that evoke the grass of the steppe).

Shtein does not appear again until the end of the epic. His geographically-organized prosecution of Soviet aesthetics continues, though. The bandits who embody the steppe, as Shtein has observed, cannot produce, understand, or preserve creative art. The steppe is purely destructive anarchy.

Но матрос ворочался. Присел на бруствер.
 Треснул спичкой – и рыжий ужал
 Лизнул сафьян «Истории искусства»,
 Трезубой короной яростно жужжа.
 Керенские прапоры страдали от сплина.
 Что это всё? Грабёж или ересь?

⁶³ Gai and Shtein are here critiquing the prologue to Sel'vinskii's new novel in verse, *Pushtorg*. Later, a character in *Pushtorg* will critique similar geographic ungrammaticalities in “The Lynx” [“Rys”], an earlier poem by Sel'vinskii. Moments such as these suggests that the author himself specifically leaves room for departure from a strict principle of saturating verse with local color, perhaps as a means of drawing attention to the consistency of the background. That he feels the need to point out the ungrammaticality suggests that he doesn't trust the audience to feel it, perhaps needing better geographic education.

Липовые командиры рыскали карьеры-с,
Но какая тут карьера, если нет дисциплины?

С печальными глазами, не в силах отстраниться,
Но по-демагожьи растягиваясь ртом,
Смотрели, как в пламени роскошный том
Пеплился, от боли листая страницы.

Ганзейская шхуна. Вот кошка и пинчер.
Вот натюрморт и Бордо.
И листнулись вдруг глаза Леонардо да Винчи
Над струистой золотистой бородой.
(351)

But the sailor turned about. He sat at the parapet.
Scratched a match, and a red stinger
Licked at the morocco leather of *The History of Art*
Fiercely buzzing as a three-pronged crown.

The warrant officers from Kerensky suffered from spleen.
What was all of this? Theft or heresy?
The false/linden commanders had prowled for careers,
But what is a career, if there is no discipline?

With sorrowful eyes, without the strength to divorce themselves,
But stretching at the mouth as if demagogues,
They watched, as in the flame the luxurious book
Turned into ashes, turning its own pages from pain.

Hanseatic schooners. There was the cat and pincher.
There the still-lives and Bordeaux.
And suddenly it flipped to Leonardo da Vinci's eyes
Above a streaming golden beard.

In spite of the historical and geographic reasons for Sel'vinskii's special attention to the steppe, the region and its people, unmediated, cannot be the source of a new, autochthonous art in opposition to Western art. The putative heart of Russia is still Chaadaev's "black hole": it can only distort and render Western aesthetic systems meaningless while replacing them with nothing. Significantly, this episode occurs just after Tata has lost her faith in her angel, in the idea that something larger than the chaos around her will make everything right again. The

destruction of the book and of Tata's role as referent to classical, imperial Russia reinforces the insufficiencies of Western and Russian art techniques for representing the steppe.

The previous two episodes emphasized the lack of technical expertise in Russian creative practices and the consequential vacuum created by the removal of Western, bourgeois art. The best option for filling this vacuum is the subject of the final debate. After Gai has been arrested and slips into iniquity, Shtein unexpectedly reappears in Moscow. He comes into contact with the poet Zhikhov (with the nom-de-plume of Barabanov), who avows a Constructivism that is alien to what Shtein expects. Trying to approach the debate in the same way he had with Gai, Shtein characterizes Constructivism as more or less the continuation of the Russian Futurist adoration of the city, a style he claims is an importation from Europe (Russia is a country predominantly of cottages, after all, not skyscrapers). Futurist *zaum'*, Russian transrational poetry, also has a clear kinship to Dada, and can be considered a European import. Zhikhov corrects Shtein: Dadaism is not what he means by Constructivism.⁶⁴ The following conversation underscores the difference between Shtein and the Literary Constructivists as far as the purpose and audience for aesthetic innovation are concerned. Shtein speaks first, then Zhikhov:

«“Dada” – это заумь: Крученных по-французски
То же, что, вот именно, до Октября у нас.
Ага: различна база для музыки
В хозяйстве концерна и в хозяйстве масс.

В первом поэту отпущены: весна,
Ода урбанизму и неземные звуки;
В другом – поэту – очки да руки
Строить, вот именно, вести, разъяснять».

⁶⁴ This is a jab at LEF Constructivists, with whom the Literary Constructivists were constantly polemicizing.

«Бросьте, бросьте – зуб заболит.
Понимаешь – насосался на рабфаке открытий
И прямо граммофоном. Но запомните, “крытик”:

*“Мы рождены для вдохновенья,
Для звуков сладких и молитв”.*

(403, emphasis in original)

“‘Dada’ is just zaum: Kruchenykh in French
The exact same thing as we had before October.
Aha: the base for music is differentiated
Between the realm of factories and the realm of the masses.

In the first the poet’s given tools are: spring,
The ode to urbanism and unearthly sounds;
In the other kind, the poet’s tools are the eyes and hands,
He must build, lead, and explain.”

“Come off it, my teeth hurt from this.
Understand: we have suckled our discoveries at the technical schools
And directly, like a recorder. But remember, ‘crytic’:

*‘We were born for inspiration,
For sweet sounds and prayers.’*

In *The State Plan for Literature*, Zelinskii uses the above passage as an illustration for the following explanation of the Literary Constructivists’ program:

There is a gourmet aesthetic constructivism that wishes to feed its satiated user artificially, misusing the authentic technical-organizational accomplishments of civilization.

Bourgeois constructivism is analytical in a torn-away fashion and soullessly formalist.

These bourgeois influences have been reflected in the various kinds of Russian constructivism.

But what was needed was the atmosphere of Soviet Westernism in order to give the elements of organic, “collectivist” [sobiratel’nyi], coordinating

constructivism and elements of an organizational-rational healing of art the chance to grow. (Zelinskii and Selvinskii 22-3)

In this way, the answer that has been made implicitly to Shtein's challenge to Russian art in the form of Sel'vinskii's epic itself is made explicit in Zhikhov's answer. Technical expertise does not have to come from beyond the Soviet Union, but is in fact available in the language of the specialist that the *rabfak* (*rabochii fakul'tet*, a technical school for newly literate peasants and workers) produces. The technical school is, in the end, the state-provided matrix, through which collective identity can emerge and produce local meaning and technical mastery. Importantly, while this language will reflect a variety of geographic and socio-economic origins, it is not invested in keeping these languages "pure" or overly attached to their pre-industrial histories, but rather (hypothetically) in listening to how these various people articulate the progress of the present in terms of their own priorities. Such language may well include the slight deformation of "kritik" to "krytik" when Zhikhov addresses Shtein as a critic.

After this discussion of the Moscow-based *rabfak* as his aesthetic laboratory, Sel'vinskii makes a final return to a tamed and transformed steppe. This suggests that, while he is in agreement with certain discourses that see the steppe as a self-contained unit with its own specific geographic destiny, he does not privilege any sort of ultra-authentically Russian spirit of the steppe. Following the violent reconnection of the steppe to Moscow and with the introduction of technical education that allows for controlling its potential instability, the steppe once again becomes self-determining. Indeed, it seems rather disconnected from Moscow.

The final domestication the steppe, however, goes against the actual geographically determined nature of the region, as explicated by, for example, Trubetskoi. Sel'vinskii's geographic aesthetics seem very much to be tied to a respect for boundaries and regional growth;

this respect is balanced against the necessary dynamism, circulation, and interpenetration that would be essential to a greater collective identity on the scale of the Soviet Union. This problem is central to Sel'vinskii's next large work, the novel in verse *Pushtorg*, which constructs its territorial space on the basis of the Soviet fur trade from the vantage point of Moscow.

4.3 SEL'VINSKII'S *PUSHTORG*

Pushtorg (a typically Soviet abbreviation for *pushnaia trgovlia*, fur trading) was first published serially, in abridged form, in *Red Virgin Soil* [*Krasnaia nov'*] in 1928; the first full-length separate edition was published in 1929. In the newspaper *Reader and Writer* [*Chitateľ' i pisatel'*], Sel'vinskii explained the novel's motivating problem as

The young Soviet intelligentsia [...] which has grown up in the revolutionary epoch and which is feverishly seeking to join together with the worker-peasant bloc. I count myself as one of the representatives of this intelligentsia, but nonetheless I strove not to idealize this intelligentsia, but to depict, as objectively as possible, that parts of its psychology are bright, while others are sick.

Technically, the novel is written in modernized octave of *taktovik*⁶⁵ verse. The

⁶⁵*Taktovik* is "one of the meters of Russian tonic versification; it is generally understood as a line in which the intervals between stresses (ictuses) range from one to three syllables, and occasionally from zero to two syllables. Stresses are rarely omitted on the strong syllables, but in the three-syllable intervals an additional stress often occurs on the middle syllable. Consequently, in Russian versification the *taktovik* occupies an intermediate place between the

atmosphere of the novel was composed in the tradition that was brought to Russian poetry by Byron's influence. (Sel'vinskii 916)

As this section will show, the territorial aesthetic of the novel of the educated specialist begins in a far different place than that of *Ulialaevshchina*. The steppe, was a site of turmoil from which individuals sought to escape by finding a place in a larger ideological or political formation. *Pushtorg*, by contrast, examines Moscow as a major locus in the intersections between such formations: European capitalist cosmopolitanism and Russia, historically and in its current Soviet development. The furs traded over the course of the novel cross the border between the Soviet Union and Europe, raising the question of how much interpenetration is taking place when such trade takes place. Sel'vinskii does not end with any recommendation for policy, but underscores the need to think about this question directly, particularly because of the fur trade's capacity to reproduce unjust imperial patterns of exploitation.

Indeed, the setting of a fur-trading company entails dealing with a central dynamic of the Russian Empire's expansion over centuries. Alexander Etkind tracks the correlation of the movement of the fur trade ever outwards from European Russia, mainly as fur-bearing animal populations became depleted, with local economic and political collapses within the empire. That is, the decline of Novgorod following the collapse of the gray squirrel population (79), for example, and the ceding of Alaska to the United States followed the collapse of the sea otter population (83). Quixotic mythologization romanticized fur traders—in 1716, they played a role

more inflexible *dol'nik*, in which the intervals between stresses may be one or two syllables, and the freer accentual verse, in which there is no limit to the length of these intervals" (from the entry "Taktovik" in *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* 1979).

in the “local interpretation of the Greek myth of the Argonauts: the Golden Fleece was understood as Siberian sable and the Argonauts as fur traders” (85). Yet while whitewashing the colonial violence of the fur trade certainly provides one cultural narrative, the 1920s offer other public discourses that draw the connection between the fur trade and colonialism, as in a debate on Russian history in 1922 between Leon Trotskii and the Marxist historian Mikhail Pokrovskii, who asked his interlocutor, “Does [a colonial system] require ostriches and rhinoceroses, or are foxes, sables, and martins enough for the colonial system?” (qtd. in Etkind 87). Sel’vinskii’s protagonist, the Komi-Zyrian Onisim Poluiarov, takes up this question from the point of view of the colonized periphery, seeking not only to unveil the continuing legacies of colonialism in Russia, but to resolve them for the better.

The devices by which this truth is uncovered differ from those of *Ulialaevshchina*. In *Pushtorg*, Sel’vinskii’s talent for reproducing speech patterns is not as prominently on display. For the most part, it is restricted to the prologue, which recounts hunting a polar bear in a traditional fashion. The prologue has sprinklings of Finnish and non-normative grammar (“belaia medved’ [white bear],” for example, where a soft-stem masculine noun is mistaken for a third-declension feminine noun). This indicates that the narrator is in the linguistic position of a member of a Far Northern tribe (the protagonist is a Komi-Zyrian). The hunter of the prologue has also experienced contact with a wider Russia, though, as attested in the Transbaikal Cossack song “A Beaver Went Wading” [“Kupalsia bobër”] that is centrally cited. In the body of the novel, however, the degree of non-normative language ratchets down significantly.

4.3.1 Moscow at the Intersection of Europe and Eurasia

By way of another contrast with *Ulialaevshchina*, the action in *Pushtorg* is set exclusively in Moscow, with the semi-exception of an inserted letter penned by the protagonist while in Penza. Implicitly, the concerns of the novel turn to the future of the Soviet capital over that of one of the regions. It is even less possible there to bracket away the problems of circulation, mobility, and interaction than it had been on the steppe. Moscow is immediately introduced as a large and diverse city,

Где население Латвий и Литв,
Где целый Ив́ан-город Ивано́вых,
Где целая Винница пьяниц одних
Где пьяные ночи, где ночи как дни
(Sel'vinskii 504)

Where there is population of Latvias and Lithuanias,
Where there is a whole Iván-City of the Ivanóvs,
Where a whole Vinnytsia is filled with only drunkards
Where there are drunken nights, with nights like days

The traces of Moscow's non-European origins can be found in the way the city is organized; they are emphasized by reference to dancing bears, the staple of European exoticizing reports about Russia:

Татарской Казанью удельная Москва
Пряталась по тупикам и проулкам,
Косила бульваром, где с топотом гулким
Под бубен пляшут медвежьи пыжи
(502)

Like Tatar Kazan' Moscow specifically
Hid along the dead ends and alleys,
Crossed by a boulevard, where with a resounding clatter
Bears' tampers dance to a tambourine.

The variety of Soviet peoples who work and live in Moscow operate in an urban organizational structure that, for the most part, subsumes national and subnational identities. This leaves a somewhat comedic assortment of *personal* foibles along the lines of chess fever, and attachment to sentimental poetry, or speech impediments,⁶⁶ a sort of low-key reproduction of the atomized individuals of the steppe.

Onisim Poluiarov, the director of the Moscow-based business Pushtorg, is marked in distinction from this set of personalized voices. A Komi-Zyrian by birth, his ethnic accent and appearance are explicitly described in terms of his origins:

(Он говорил. Его речь была
В нерусских пряностях, как алоэ:
Лиловые «у» и белые «а»,
Жёлтые «э» и алые «о».
Но в перепонках из линий и нитей,
До сивой соли височных остей
Чернело нёрвное его обличье,
Собранное из рыбьих костей.)
(518)

(He spoke. His speech was made
With non-Russian spices, like aloe:
A purple “u” and white “a,”
A yellow “e” and scarlet “o.”
But in his membranes of lines and filaments,
Down to the grey salt of the fur at his temples
His volatile features, which looked as if made
From fishbones, darkened)

Poluiarov’s accent is described, but not represented typographically, perhaps because it is equally important to underscore that he is an educated specialist respected by his colleagues in

⁶⁶ Not only are these personal foibles, they are, in large part, lampoons of figures on the Moscow literary scene (Katsis 283).

the business. The identity between the Komi-Zyrian bear-hunter of the prologue and his educated counterpart is underscored more by Poluiarov's ideological investment in retaining a connection than by the accident of accent.

At the heart of the representation of Moscow are questions about defining the nature of the regional and global networks that intersect at the Soviet capital, and how to determine that the correct network will dominate the consciousness of the Soviet populace. On its face, the question is easily resolved: European bourgeois capitalism certainly should not be dominant. But without a clear image of an alternative, alignment of the Soviet NEP market with European priorities seems inescapable. This tension is reflected in the central conflict of the plot, between Poluiarov and his deputy director, the Party member Krol'.

The narrator's sympathies align with Poluiarov, who, in his private correspondence, expresses his dreams for the future, including stabilizing the polar fox fur trade, and engages thoughtfully with Lenin's statements on the national Soviet question (531). He dies (of despair?) at the novel's conclusion, to the bathetic plea of the narrator that as "one of the best Russian specialists,/ You are needed, understand—without people like you,/ Our dreams will never befriend life [Odin iz luchshikh russkikh spetsov,/ Ty nuzhen, poimi – bez takikh, kak ty,/ S zhizn'iu ne odruzhit' mechty]" (579).

Krol', by contrast, has become a member of the Communist Party through service in the Civil War, but spends his post-war life trying to leverage his membership into a profitable bureaucratic sinecure. He possesses little enough imagination that it is the foreign, Paris-based corporation Francoruss that has to initiate the plot to unseat Poluiarov on his behalf. The company argues that if Krol' were to be director and sold Pushtorg to Francoruss, it would be

profitable for all involved: he would be paid well and they would acquire the accreditation for winter fur trading in the taiga—unique foreign access to Soviet resources (524).

Sel'vinskii's anti-bureaucratic orientation is typical of engaged NEP culture, which was concerned with the paralysis of bureaucratic paperwork and the wanton freedom granted to unscrupulous *nepmen* (speculators and small business owners). Maiakovskii, for example, takes aim frequently at the unfortunate way that creative problem solving enters the bureaucratic apparatus to die, as in his satirical mock-epic *The Bureaucraciad* [*Biurokratiada*] (1922). Sel'vinskii signals, however, that he intends to incorporate the critique of bureaucracy into a larger critique. For example, he produces a caricature of Maiakovskii's satirical style, then forces this humorous moment to work toward his larger plot and elaboration of systems. He offers the following contrastive depiction of Francoruss's Russian branch office:

«Спою франкорусское:
 “Франкорюсс”-ка я
 (Телефонище 40-10),
Которого
Конторы –
 «ВВО»:
В Париже,
 Царьграде,
 Одессе.
Муза,
 лиры
 восхищения
 лей!
Бей
 в равнодушия
 панцирь:
Основной
 капиталишка –
 десять
 нулей;
 девиз:

«Никаких
испанцев».
(Sel'vinskii 519-20)

«Французкая концессия
“ФРАНКОРИЮСС”
(Телефон директора: 40-10)
Меха и пушнина. Конторы: в Одессе,
Во Франции, Турции, Пруссии.
Учреждениям, сдавшим тысячу штук,
Причитается пятипроцентная премия.
Спешите. Товарная недвижимость – бремя.
С почтением *Джошуа Кук*».
(520-21, emphasis in original)

“I sing the Franco-Russian:
I am a “Francoruss”-er
(Telephonian 40-10),
The offices
Of which are –
“in no particular order”
In Paris,
Constantinople,
Odessa.
Muse,
pour
the lyres/liras
of inspiration!
Beat
at the armor
of indifference.
The fundamental
bit of capital –
ten
zeroes;
the device:
“No
Spaniards.”

“The French concession
‘FRANCORUSS’
(Telephone of the director: 40-10)

Furs and pelts. Offices: in Odessa,
In France, Turkey, Prussia.
To entities turning over a thousand pieces
We offer a five percent bonus.
Hurry. Immobility of trade goods is a burden.

Best regards *Joshua Cook*

The “Maiakovskian” rendition is certainly humorous, particularly in the concluding *non sequitur* of “No Spaniards [Nikakikh ispantsev],” a somewhat parabolic citation from *The Fifth International*. The unexpected conclusion seems to exist only to reinforce its partner in rhyme, “Beat the armor of complacency [Bei ravnodushiiia pantsir].” The satirical mimicry can be read as a critique of overly forcing an observation. Yes, Francoruss is indeed a foreign company and will, it is clear, navigate bureaucracy in support of its own internal interests, but to force it to fit an anti-bureaucratic campaign against complacency is to sidestep questions brought up by Francoruss’s presence in the first place.⁶⁷

In *Pushtorg*, the motifs that characterize Moscow focus on the city’s role as a locus for trade and the movement of people. As represented, the city stands at the crossroads between Europe and the less-developed, fur-rich periphery of the Soviet Union. More than the frontier of Ukraine or Belarus, Moscow is the meaningful boundary between Europe and Soviet Eurasia.

⁶⁷ There is also a slight pushback on Maiakovskii’s city-centeredness. As Sel’vinskii’s more direct narrator reports, Cook’s company has branches in France, Turkey, and Prussia, as well as Odessa. “Maiakovskii” reduces these spaces to “Paris, Constantinople, Odessa,” skipping the problematic state of Prussia inside the German Empire completely. The metonymic relationships are straightforward, but this small difference in style suggests that Sel’vinskii’s geographic aesthetic is concerned with identification with broader territories.

This representation seems to evoke the mirror-image of Mikhail Ryklin's cosmopolitan vision for Berlin as a city of contradiction: "Berlin is not just a [Western European] city turned toward the east of Europe, but the east is an essential part of its character" (256). In Ryklin's formulation, post-Soviet Moscow could model itself in a westward-facing fashion, becoming both essentially west and west-looking. Sel'vinskii's representation of NEP-era Moscow positions it as the primary Russian interface with the West. Ideally, the West would be an essential part of exotic Eastern Moscow's character, so that "the nearing of the two systems would be systematic" (Gol'dshtein 118). Yet, Sel'vinskii shows us, Moscow is too inadequately developed not to be wholly subjugated to Western interests.

Francoruss's manipulation of Krol' and bid for control over Pushtorg indicate that, as a conceptual border, Moscow is less west-facing than a crucial point of penetration toward the east. The novel's representation of this danger recapitulates the mistrust of European cosmopolitanism articulated by Trubetskoi, that cosmopolitanism was Romano-German egocentrism by another name.

4.3.2 Representing Imperial and Cosmopolitan Trade

The text at the heart of discourses about trade and the technological development of the peoples of the Soviet Union is Onisim Poluiarov's letter, written from Penza to his brother Sever'ian. He contemplates Soviet governance, the central task of which Poluiarov sees as "to raise an establishment not in one stroke, not by wholesale,/ But through the true-to-life growth of individual places [Podniat' khoziastvo ne s makhu, ne optom,/ No zhiznennym rostom otdel'nykh mest]" (Sel'vinskii 531). The real and potential contributions of peripheral peoples—the literal

borderland—alongside those of Moscow—the economic boundary between Europe and Eurasia—challenges the *status quo* of distribution and symbolic valuation.

И вот исправничья наша Расея,
Рублевская, богомазная, – вдруг
Треснула радиусами вокруг
И зацвела голосами окраин,
Свежей экзотикой Коми, Украин,
Где ту же рожь и тот же чай
По-старому жнут, по-новому сея,
Коми, Ойратия, Азербайчан.
(531-2)

And so our pioneering Raseya,
That of Rublëv, of the icon painter, suddenly
Burst out in radii all around
And effloresced with the voices of the borderlands,
With the fresh exotica of Komis, of Ukraines,
Where they reap the old way, while sowing a new way,
The same exact rye and same exact tea,
Komi, Oiratia [Kalmykia], Azerbaichan.

These borderlands are valuable and equal to the Russian heartland that is symbolized by icon painting. The key to recognizing their value is to cast the problem of incorporation correctly, not as a cultural problem, but as a class problem:

Ученик Маркса, сумевший стать
Европейским социологом из русского народника,
Всечеловек, человек без родинки,
Ленин учёл особую статью
России Тютчева, Скифии Блока.
Не знаю, поймёшь ли ты мой восторг –
Он слил проблему “Запад – Восток”
В идею рабоче-крестьянского блока.
(532)

Marx’s disciple, having succeeded in developing
From a Russian *narodnik* into a European sociologist
An everyman, a man without moles
Lenin read out a particular article

On Tiutchev's Russia, on Blok's Scythians.
I don't know if you understand my joy –
He merged the problem of "West—East"
With the idea of the worker-peasant block.

Poluiarov rejoices in a reorientation away from a symbolic geography that invests the West-East axis with meaning that arises from the "centuries-old, truly Russian debate/ of the Westernizer and the Slavophile [Istinno russkii stoletnii spor/ Zapadnika i slavianofila]" (532). The alignment with workers and peasants relieves geography, especially at its peripheries, of the weight of symbolism developed over the long nineteenth-century search for Russian identity. It also requires the cultivation of geographically specific (rather than symbolically arranged) knowledge and, as a consequence, a new educational and intellectual apparatus.

Poluiarov follows up this direct manifesto with passages related more specifically to his own field of the fur trade. He highlights the fur-trade illiteracy of the literature that has informed Russian identity and awareness of "exotic" borderlands. The snow leopard that has somehow wandered as far south as Georgia from its native mountains to the north and east in Mikhail Lermontov's long poem *Mtsyri* is particularly irksome (534). The fur-trader also obliquely takes the author Sel'vinskii himself to task, citing his earlier poem "The Lynx" ["Rys"], and how the frisky lynx of the poem is transparently an allegory: "That 'The Lynx,' as such, is not a lynx, but the history of a genius [Chto 'Rys', mol, ne rys', a istoriia geniia]" (535), completely distorting the natural behavior of the lynx for this purpose. With such illiteracy at the very foundations of the creative intelligentsia's technical knowledge, there is no real possibility of their cultivating the native materials of the Soviet Union. By contrast, Poluiarov has a relatively localized plan to establish a self-sustaining colony of fur foxes on an island in the Arctic Sea, on a specific island in the Arctic Sea, "At 70°N latitude and 40°E longitude [V 0° s. sh. i 40° v. d.]" (536). This sort of plan serves as a technocratic development of the fur-hunting practices of the area, in a sense

“industrializing” the ways of the Komi-Zyrians of the area with an eye towards regularizing output and taking advantage of the economy of scale. That is, the “fox farm” is a northern analogue for the ideals of collectivization in agricultural areas.

With his lack of interest in playing a stabilizing and retarding role in the flow of Russian furs to European markets or in restructuring the fur trade away from an imperial model and towards an industrial Soviet one, Krol’ threatens to reprise the unsustainable cycle of resource boom and exhaustion that drove Russian fur trade and colonialism eastward in the Russian Empire. The counterweight to the exploitative Europe-Russia commercial relationship at the heart of this dynamic in this novel is, clearly, not the rejection of the fur trade, but giving it native roots and recuperating the capacity of fur-bearing animals within the former ever-expanding “frontier” of fur extraction. Poluiarov’s expressed desire to raise a population of arctic foxes on an island in the north, for its part, reflects an awareness of the need for the wise husbandry and conservation of fur-bearing animals; investment in the fur trade has to go well beyond enforcing quality standards at the point of sale.

Poluiarov has explicitly noted that violence is part of non-Slavs’ history in Russia; when “Russian imperialism was naked,/ It went forth exclusively with the voice of cannons [Russkii imperializm byl nag,/ On shël iskliuchitel’no golosom pushek]” (530). Reinforcing the connection between Russian empire and the fur trade, Russian imperialism’s endeavors to spread through violence are met with a response on the part of the tribes that Poluiarov describes as that

of an “overall scrofulous white bear [Belyi medved’⁶⁸ voobshche zolotushen]” (530), before he moves on to a more specific list of historical defeats as Russian imperialism spread from sea to sea:

Вспомни русско-чукотские войны,
Окончившиеся победой чукчей;
Сравни с якутами, где русские воины
Взяли верх – где же лучше? на чьей?
Да просто нигде: как было, так есть.
Сванеты, жмудины ли, колмычвне –
То же бездолие и одичанье.
(530-1)

Remember the Russian-Chukotka Wars,
That ended with the victory of the Chukcha;
Compare them with the Yakuts, where Russian forces
Took the summit – where else is better? On whose?
Simply nowhere: as it was, so it is.
Whether Svanets, Zhmudis, Kolmyks –
It’s the same unhappiness and ferality.

Poluiarov’s reference to ferality [odichan’e] further extends the fur-bearing animal imagery in connection with the peoples subjugated by Russia; such imagery ceases with Lenin’s policies.

4.3.3 Poluiarov’s Byronic Failure

Poluiarov makes his case in a letter while away from Moscow on a business trip; meanwhile, Krol’ has striven to cut Poluiarov out of Pushtorg entirely. This attempt is ultimately not successful, but the temporary severance from the fur trade seems to condition Poluiarov’s return

⁶⁸ Note that the ungrammaticality of “belaia medved’” from the prologue is corrected in Poluiarov’s letter—a small detail attesting to the fact that, while Poluiarov’s expertise is enhanced by his origins, he is not restricted by them.

to Moscow. Though Poluiarov has found a new position at Gostorg, the state trading agency, the experience challenges the feasibility of the ideas he had had for the Soviet Union. This is reflected in the changes in Moscow and an apparent new imbalance in its roles of mediating influence from the West and bringing together the peoples and resources of the Soviet Union.

The trader takes a final walk around Moscow as it celebrates carnival; the city has, since we last saw it, taken a decisive turn toward the international, rather than the local. The image of Chamberlain seems inescapable on the street: “Sir Chamberlain/ Lounging like a scarecrow [Chuchelom valandaetsia/ Ser Chemberlen],” “It holds that same Chamberlain by the scruff [Derzhit za shivorot togo zhe Chemberlen],” and “Once more it’s Chamberlain, suffering from spleen:/ ‘Mister Sterling, by name of Pound [Opiat’ Chemberlen, stradaiushchii splinom:/ ‘Gospodin Sterlingov, imia – Funt’]” all occur in discrete episodes in rapid succession (570-71). The representation of Chamberlain is hardly respectful, but he nonetheless dominates the street. Additional international markers include references to the Chinese politicians Hu Peifu and Chan Tsolin and the procession of a chess club bearing a checker-draped king and calling, “October has the bourgeois in check/ The world revolution declares mate! [Oktiabr’ postavil burzhuia pod shakhom/ Mirovaia revoliutsiia ob”iavit’ mat!]” (571).

Moscow, then, has remained a site of intensive contact between city-dwellers and global discourses. In principle, it should also be a site of contact among the peoples of the Soviet Union as well. Several discourses intermingle, even harmonize, as Poluiarov passes by:

Мы грянем дру́жноé úrá...»
«Да здравствуют Рыков и Калинин. Да здра...»
«...вствуй, милая картошка-тошка-тошка-тошка,
Низко бьём тебе челом-лóm-ло?м».
(573, punctuation reproduced from original)

We are rumbling with a friendly hoorah...”
“Hail to Rykov and Kalinin. H...”

“...i, dear potato-tato-tato,
We kow-tow-tow-to-ow to you.”

That this carnival scene collects together the regions is clear from the example of a workers' club from Tula, singing such refrains as “Eh, Tula, you are Tula,/ Tula is my homeland [Ekh, Tula zhe ty, Tula,/ Tula – rodina moia]” (572). The singers also identify themselves as from a technical school, which ought to signal that this carnival is an ideal site of the education and local empowerment that Poluiarov had described in his letter. However, Poluiarov himself is completely excluded from this milieu; in the inscrutability of it, he sees only a summons to his own homeland in the north:

Онисим шагал. Народная мистерия,
Разыгрывающаяся пред ним,
Как вешний вихрь Белого моря,
Звала, окликала с собой в Поморье –
(573)

Onisim paced. The folk mystery play,
That was playing out before him
Like the eternal whirlpool of the White Sea
Called, shouted to him to come with it to Pomor'e.

The Tula workers remain separate from Poluiarov's Zyrian sensibilities. The revelers essentially send him away, saying, “You, citizen,/ Give this a miss:/ We're all from the same factory, here [Vy, grazhdanin,/ Otsiuda, pozhaluista, daite drap:/ My tut vse s odnogo zavoda]” (574). In spite of theoretically possessing a language in common through their technical expertise, the Tula workers are too insular to accept Poluiarov in their midst. Even if many regions are present in Moscow, they are not communicating. Thus ejected, the idealistic Poluiarov dies. In this final carnivalistic moment of contact among Russians, Europeans, and Poluiarov from the periphery, the Zyrian's death is a critique of much, including the continuing failure to properly integrate the Soviet periphery, where self-definition in opposition to Europe is

preferred. *Pushtorg*'s narrative structure thus reprises a classic romantic formulation of the expulsion and destruction of the sensitive, hybrid hero at the edge of contact between civilization and its Other. Poluiarov's *cri de coeur* to his brother had provided a blueprint for transgressing the boundary between Russian and non-Russian citizens, to ameliorate and avert the violence of colonialism in the Soviet Union; his death marks its destruction in favor of patterns that exclude the northern peoples as citizens.

In the final chapter, the implied author telegraphs all of the possible critiques of his work, from his grammatical, banal rhyme to his representation of Krol' as a Party member. There is a lacuna in these responses; no one responds directly to the territorial, anti-colonial policies that Poluiarov had proposed. Instead, glancingly, the critical response to Poluiarov's attempts to integrate the Soviet periphery with the heartland appears in the apparently unmotivated interjection of anecdotes:

«Жорж, вот тут неплохой анекдот:
Один армянин увидел жирафа...»
«Серж, погоди, не то уйдёт:
Приходит Мотя требовать штрафа:
Семь лет назад какой-то мот
Сказал про Мотю, что он бегемот.
– Семь лет назад? – И ответил Мотя:
– Я только вчера увидел бегемотя».
(584-5)

“Zhorzh, here's a pretty good anecdote:
An Armenian caught sight of a giraffe...”
“Serzh, wait, that one won't hunt:
Motia arrives to demand a fine:
Seven years ago some spendthrift
Said that Motia was a hippopotamus.
'Seven years ago?' and Motia answered:
'Only yesterday I finally saw a hippo.'”

In place of engagement with Poluiarov's interpretation of Lenin's east-west, peasant-worker formulation, the reader is instead given ethnic anecdotes. While Sel'vinskii's presumed critics are telegraphed as happy to read closely enough to criticize the formal characteristics of the verse, they do not seem to understand the necessity of discussing the biggest points of the books.

4.4 VERA INBER'S A GOAL AND A WAY

In Sel'vinskii's two works discussed above, specific characteristics of borders and boundaries played various roles. In *Ulialaevshchina*, Sel'vinskii suggested that, in the right conditions, the steppe could constitute a self-regulating unit of development within the Soviet Union (in contrast to as an imperial unit or system of anarchy). In *Pushtorg*, Moscow itself is presented as an important border between European cosmopolitanism and Eurasian identity. European pressures threaten the integrity of that border, and are far stronger than the reciprocal pressure from the underdeveloped and relatively unconnected peoples of the Soviet Union. The idea of the inviolable border of a state or region, however, remains an idea opened up in *Ulialaevshchina* without further development. For further insight into this aspect of borders in the Literary Constructivist aesthetic and how it may interfere with or facilitate the construction of a larger Soviet identity, it may be useful to turn to the 1924 works of another member of LTsK, Vera Inber.

Vera Inber, née Shpentser grew up in Odessa, in a respectable family of well-educated, assimilated Jews. Her first collections of poetry, *Melancholy Wine* [*Pechal'noe vino*] (1914), *Bitter Delights* [*Gor'kaia uslada*] (1917), and *Fleeting Words* [*Brennye slova*] (1922) reflect her place in cosmopolitan and educated society and the strong influence of Symbolism. Her fourth

collection of poetry, *A Goal and a Way* [*Tsel' i put'*], published in 1924 at the beginning of her collaboration with Literary Constructivists Zelinskii and Sel'vinskii, signaled a complete about-face in Inber's attitude toward the Revolution and the relationship of poetry to society. In spite of the precarious position that her privileged background put her in (as well as her close family relationship to Lev Trotskii, the source of many rumors), Inber henceforth proved to be one of the most visible female contributors to revolutionary literature and Soviet literature as a whole. Though her work itself is not necessarily statist, she exhibited a developed sensitivity to the need to participate in civic and political exercises in order to participate openly in literature. Her contributions to the volume dedicated to the Stalin White Sea-Baltic Canal, in theory a monument to Soviet engineering and the re-forging of Soviet consciousness, in reality an extravagant waste of life and capital that was useless as a canal, might be one of the more damnable instances of this sensitivity. On the other hand, a civic consciousness also led her to demonstrate great courage in wartime Leningrad, including during the Siege, where she documented the horrific and the heroic in her autobiographical *Almost Three Years* [*Pochti tri goda*] (1946).⁶⁹

A Goal and a Way stands out in Inber's career, but also as a contribution to Literary Constructivist aesthetics. Although she was a central member of the LTsK, her style differs strongly from Sel'vinskii's, which had served as the basis for Zelinskii's theories about correct aesthetics. In a review of *A Goal and a Way* published in *Red Virgin Soil*, Zelinskii characterizes

⁶⁹ The details of Inber's life and works in the above paragraph are drawn from Mary A. Nicholas's entry in the encyclopedia volume *Russian Poets of the Soviet Era*, ed. Karen Rosneck in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 359 (Detroit: Gale, 2011): 120-129.

her poems on revolutionary themes as the strongest in her collection, those where the “influence of Constructivist ideas is particularly clear” (“Inber” 286). However, the examples he finds of the local semantic principle⁷⁰ in her work seem rather weak: “And so we find in the poetess’s work the widespread use of the local principle. Here, for example, Inber says: ‘The *honor guard* of the moon’ (at Lenin’s coffin); in ‘The Earth of Moscow,’ it is written that ‘The Most Serene Tsars *crumbled you like phosphora*’; in ‘The East and Us,’ where it is written about China that ‘The moon pours out *golden lacquer*’” (“Inber” 286, emphasis in the original). Zelinskii’s selection of relatively isolated and attenuated metaphors suggest that Inber’s work was not, in the end, a strong example of the saturation required by the local semantic principle. Nevertheless, *A Goal and a Way* was accepted as a book affirming Inber’s place among the Literary Constructivists.

Where Inber’s short poems might highlight the limited scope of overloading and the local principle as enunciated, they might also serve to underscore how the philosophy of balancing against Soviet Westernizer tendencies affects territorial aesthetics, leading to expansive claims about territory, even as it adheres to what is presumably a “local” principle. Inber’s localities tend to gravitate toward Moscow or toward the extreme extents of Soviet projection—or toward mediation between the two kinds of space.

Inber establishes this mediating structure in poems about figures of power, including Lenin and Trotskii. In the poem “In the light, the green light of a lamp,” Lev Trotskii is the locus of Bolshevik power, with whom contact once distorts space and time. The leader of the Red

⁷⁰ Recall, the “local principle” or “local semantic principle” was supposed to be the stylization of a text to reflect the place where it was set, as part of the process of “overloading” the text with motivation.

Army is never named, but is identified by the trappings of the office, which include international maps and several telephones characterized in military color, “the picture of cannons on a cliff [tochno pushki na skale]” (Inber 12), and Inber’s familial relationship to him, as they were first cousins. The poem begins with a strong sense of interiority, describing a scene lit by a desk lamp with a green shade:

При свете лампы – зелёном свете
Обычно на исходе дня,
В шестиколонном кабинете
Вы принимаете меня.

Затянут пол сукном червонным,
И, точно пушки не скале,
Четыре грозных телефона
Блестят на письменном столе.
(12)

In the light, the green light of a lamp
Usually as the day departs
You receive me
In your six-columned office.

The floor is stretched over with scarlet canvas,
And four terrible telephones,
The very picture of cannons atop a cliff,
Gleam on the desk.

The metaphor that equates the phones on the desk to cannons on a cliff already suggests that the idea of a bigger space exists within the confines of the office. The next strophes realize this potential. The windows that look outward end up offering far less of a view than the opposite wall, covered with maps:

Налево окна, а направо,
В междуколонной пустоте,
Висят соседние державы,
Распластанные на холсте.

И величавей, чем другие,
В кольце своих морей и гор,
Висит Советская Россия
Величиной с большой ковёр.
(12)

To the left is a window, but to the right,
Stretched spread-eagled,
In the space between columns,
Hang our neighboring powers.

And more grand than the rest,
Soviet Russia hangs
In a ring of her own seas and mountains
An expanse the size of a large carpet.

The lyric subject orients herself not toward the literal windows on the left that might look out on the Cathedral Square of the Kremlin, but to the figurative windows on the right, an array of maps. The Soviet Union's neighbors appear "stretched spread-eagled ... in the space between columns [V mezhdukolonnoi pustote, / ... / Rasplastannye ...]" (12). Such columns serve to frame away the Soviet Union's regional competitors; by contrast, the geographic contours of Soviet Russia itself are defined by geographic features, its seas and mountains. Soviet Russia, as well, is understood both in terms of greater majesty (*velichavei*) and in the idiom of the interior, as an "expanse the size of a large carpet [velichinoi s bol'shoi kovër]" (12). The office proves to be a mediating point between a constrained interiority and a real sense of greatness. Beyond space, contact with this individual also affects the experience of time as the clock's pendulum slowly counts out "fifteen bronze minutes [piatnadtsat' bronzovykh minut]" (12). While the time seems to flow quite slowly, and the invocation of metal might even suggest it stops, this potentially infinitely expansive period is also strictly bounded. As the time for conversation draws to a close and Trotskii returns his attention to his work, the spatial and temporal expansiveness that had existed during the moments of contact disappears for the lyric subject. It

continues to exist, but she is now excluded from that interior space that opens onto that paradoxically much larger one, as “you forget about this, as if I were not there [Vy zabyvaete ob etom, / Kak budto ne bylo menia]” (12).

As this telescopic motif in the poems on leadership implies, the localization of Inber’s poems in Moscow does not preclude more global, “Soviet” representations. In “The Earth of Moscow” [“Zemlia moskovskaia”], the land under Moscow appears to be a site invested with the residue of various historical disruptions that trampled it. Addressing the soil of Moscow directly, the lyric subject progresses through history, describing how “the Tatar’s stallion trampled you [Tebia toptal tatarskii kon’],” how “the broom of your *oprichniki* / was hung with a bloody pearl [krovavym zhemchugom byla povita / tvoikh oprichnikov metla],” how “the bare heels of Napoleon’s soldiers / made mounds of you [Tebia buravili bosye piatki / Napoleonovykh soldat]” (16). She concludes this historical progression with the events at Khodinka on the coronation of Nicholas II, when thousands were crushed to death on the square by mismanaged crowd control.

In this account, Moscow as a site that invading forces crossed and pillaged is balanced against Moscow as a site of tsarist violence. In this way, Inber’s Moscow prefigures the Moscow of Sel’vinskii’s *Pushtorg* as a crossroad, a point of access between global and domestic powers. However, the earth of Inber’s Moscow is marked very specifically with imperial history. While, the list of events includes foreign invasions, one of which predates the rise of Muscovy, the lyric subject brackets these events not chronologically, but rather within the frame of Russian empire. The rubric of “everyone, from Ivan the Terrible to Nicholas [i vse, ot Groznogo do Nikolaia]” (17), evokes the beginning of Moscow’s expansion with Ivan and the end of the dynastic empire with Nicholas II. The tsars are described as the source of Moscow’s troubles, but also as

constitutive of the earth's nature. The final section directly addressed to Moscow makes the case that these experiences of power have given strength to the walls of the Kremlin.

И всё, что веяло, как ворон-птица,
Бедою на тебя, земля,
Всему дано было огородиться
Стеной Московского Кремля.
(17)

And everything that waved, like a raven-bird,
Was as misfortune upon you, earth,
All was given to be fenced in
By the walls of the Moscow Kremlin.

At this point in the poem, the rhythmic character of the poem changes sharply, moving from a regular iambic pentameter to a far less regular iambic dimeter that comes to be punctuated by lines of a single word:

Там хоронили и
Короновали,
Пока флотилии,
На горе нам,
И Севастополи
Атаковали
И сталью цокали
По черепам.
(17)

There they buried and
Coronated,
While the flotillas,
To our sorrow,
Attacked
Sevastopol'
And steel clanged
On skulls

The shift in line-length signals a change in the perception of Moscow and, with its greater sense of staccato, a sense of militancy. As the meter changes, the author turns away from Moscow as a

site imbued by the Russian experience of empire, whether on the edge of the Mongol and French empires or at the center of the Russian empire, and toward the recent events of the Revolution. The direct address to Moscow as “ty” (or, more precisely, “tebia,” placing the soil of Moscow in the position of constantly being acted upon) nearly ceases; the only exception is when the author remarks on the heart of the revolution: “And a scarlet heart / Stubborn / Isn’t it yours presently [I serdtse aloe / Upriamo / Tvoë ne vskore li]” (18). The disappearance of the earth of Moscow as an object to be abused would seem to belie the nominal focus of the poem, given its title. Alternatively, the drop in the pronoun may, like the shortened lines, signal that Moscow’s role as a crossroads can now be understood in a completely different, more immediate and substantive way.

The events of the Revolution, of course, do not begin in Moscow; the greater portion of this second half is dedicated to central symbolic sites and events of the Revolution, e.g., the Bolshevik Revolution in Petrograd (“Already above the Neva / machines are flying [uzh nad Nevoi / letiat mashiny]”) and disarmament on the Eastern Front (“Disarmament / Fire, / Already no one falls / Toward / L’vov [Razoruzhenie – / Pozhar, / Uzhe ne rinetsia ko / L’vovu]”). Once again, however, Moscow appears to be in the path of this history, including, most importantly, Lenin’s lead-lined railway car, which apparently goes straight through Petrograd (where, historically, he had been heading in secret from Germany) to Moscow (or enters an undifferentiated Russia in which Petrograd and Moscow are essentially equivalent), the assumed location from which the author writes “to here [siuda]” (18).

И тот, кто с громом
 На ладони
 Летел в тумане
 (Дни – года)
 В запломбированном
 Вагоне

Через Германию
Сюда.

И кто потряс,
Подобно кию,
Потряс грозово
Шар земной,
Кто и сейчас
Ведёт Россию
Парализованной
Рукой.
(18-19)

And he, who with thunder
On his palm
Flew in a cloud
(The days were years)
In a lead-lined
Train-car
Across Germany
To here.

And who broke everything up
Like a billiard cue
Shook threateningly
The earthly sphere
Who even now
Leads Russia
With his paralyzed
Hand.

The somewhat strange invocation of the power of Lenin's metonymic paralyzed hand suggests that something immobile can be invested with power, rather than remain a passive object. Such a lesson has direct implications for Moscow. After suffering under various global and imperial waves of destruction, Moscow becomes a site from which the rest of the world can be "shaken." In other words, Moscow, here, is no longer the bearer of the scars of empire, but is the instantiation of the new Soviet way.

Paradoxically, the city assumes this status at the same time that, as a toponym itself, it seems to recede from the foreground of history, which might contradict some of the arguments of “Changing Signposts” and the Eurasianists that Moscow and its polity inherited the Eurasian empire of the Mongols. Alternatively, the shift in scope suggests a concern with a holistically interconnected polity of continental reach, in which Moscow is a center, but is not the instigator of events.

The poem beginning “She encompasses everything: the fields of rye” [“Vsë vmeshchaet: polosy rzhanye”] suggests that Inber’s work is invested in grappling with the effects of the territorial aesthetics expounded in the Moscow poems at the larger, more diverse scale of Russia as a whole.

Всё вмещает: полосы ржаные,
Горы, воды, ветры, облака.
На земной поверхности Россия
Занимает полматерика.

Четверть суток гонит свет вечерний
Солнце, с ней расстаться не спеша.
Замыкает в круг своих губерний
От киргизских орд до латыша.

Ближние и дальние соседи
Знали, как скрипят её возы.
Было всё – от платины до меди,
Было всё – от кедра до лозы.

Долгий век и рвала и метала,
Распирала обручи границ,
Как медведица нору, меняла
Местоположение столиц.

И мечась от Крыма до Китая
В лапищах двуглавого орла,
Жёлтого царева горноста
Чортовы хвосты разодрала.

И лежит теперь нага под небом,
Дважды опалённая грозой,
Бедная и золотом и хлебом,
Бедная и кедром и лозой,

Но полна значения иного,
Претерпевши некий страшный суд.
И настанет день – Россию снова
Первою из первых нарекут.
(11)

She encompasses everything: the fields of rye
Mountains, waters, winds, clouds.
Russia takes up half a continent
Of the terrestrial surface.

For a quarter of the day the sun chases
The evening light, not hurrying to part with [Russia].
She wraps in a sphere her provinces
From the Kirghiz hordes to the Latvians.

Neighbors near and far
Knew how her carts creak.
There was everything—from platinum to copper,
There was everything—from cedars to osiers.

For a long century she ripped and threw,
And forced the band of the border outwards,
As a she-bear does a burrow, she changed
The placement of the capitals.

And tearing from Crimea to China
In the clenched fist of the two-headed eagle,
She lacerated the bedeviled tails
Of the tsar's yellow ermine.

And now she lies naked under the sky,
Twice hit by thunder,
Poor in both gold and grain,
Poor in both cedars and osiers,

But she is filled with a different meaning,
Having undergone a terrible trial.

And the day will come – they will once again
Name Russia as first among firsts.

As the opening line suggests, the object of representation in the poem is “everything: the fields of rye, / Mountains, waters, winds, clouds [Vsë ... : polosy rzhanye / Gory, vody, vetry, oblaka]” (11). In this initial description, Russia is rich in a number of ways, beginning with sheer geographic size. Indeed, the six hours (“quarter of the [twenty-four-hour] day [chetvert’ sutok]”) that the poem claims it takes for the sun to finish setting over Russia is an understatement. The richness of Russia appears in the form of ethnic diversity, as the edges that Russia stitches together reach “from the Kirghiz hordes to the Latvians [ot kirgizskikh ord do latyshai]” (11), and in the form of natural resources, “from platinum to copper ... from cedars to osiers [ot platiny do medi ... ot kedra do lozy]” (11). The repeated structure of “from ... to [ot ... do]” suggests that both ethnic diversity and a multitude of natural resources contribute to the wealth of the country, unified by the fact that the sun shines down on all of these geographic features, peoples, and material riches. However, the poem’s structure also introduces a sense of exclusion, as the doubled introduction “It was everything [Bylo vsë]” addresses only these natural resources, forcing geographic and ethnic richness out of the picture.

At the point in which Russia’s wealth is understood only in terms of material wealth, instability sets in. An array of animals that could be understood in an emblematic sense—the Russian bear, the two-headed eagle of the Romanov family crest, and the ermine of royalty—quite busily reorganize and ravage the country according to their instincts. Thus, the spread of the Russian empire is understood as “tearing,” while the move of the Russian imperial capital from Moscow to Petersburg is characterized in terms of a she-bear: “As a she-bear does her burrow, / [Russia] changed the location of its capitals [Kak medveditsa noru, meniala /

Mestopolozhenie stolits]” (11). The dynastic eagle, it seems, is even inclined to devour the royal ermine.

Following this self-devouring of the autocracy, Russia’s wealth seems to be similarly devoured, gone. Russia is “Poor in both gold and grain, / Poor in both cedars and osiers [Bednaia i zolotom i khlebom, / Bednaia i kedrom i lozoi]” (11). The doubling of the beginnings of the lines recalls the initial enumeration of Russia’s material wealth. In so doing, it returns also to the understandings of wealth as geographic and ethnic diversity that had initiated the poem. The “meaning” with which the emptied Russia is now filled is implicitly the Marxist-Leninist message, but it coexists with these remaining understandings of wealth. These are not necessarily the riches that had been admired previously by “neighbors near and far [blizhnie i dal’nie sosedii]” (11), but they would seem to be closely allied with the new ways and central to Soviet Russia’s future power.

The thrust of geographic representation in Inber’s poetry seems to negotiate the hazards both of Moscow-centrism (by allocating the city no more prominence than other centers of the revolution, and of the Soviet Union generally) and of erasing all of the diverse ethnic experiences. The range of geographic modes in *A Goal and a Way* reflect a geographic imagination that tends toward the abstraction of ethnic and political space within the Soviet Union, particularly in contrast with Sel’vinskii’s investment in Soviet internal diversity. Poems of international scope clearly support the sense that a multitude of proletariats will, barring the intervention of foreign powers, develop class consciousness and industry in a way particular to the ethnos and local territory with which they identify. In poems focusing on Moscow and on microscopic environments within Moscow, such as Trotskii’s office, Inber’s focus seems to turn from an emphasis on particularity to one of interconnectedness and radical egalitarianism. Such a

leveling gesture serves to neutralize the effects of Moscow's centrality in Bolshevik politics, at least rhetorically. Such equality is also of service to Moscow, as well, as "The Earth of Moscow" reveals how, for Moscow, being a locus of empire was essentially to be at the nexus of violence propagated from without and within. The paralyzed arm of Lenin on which that poem ends can only point the way; it really cannot strike out at its own country the way that Ivan Groznyi, for example, did with his *oprichniki*. Without venturing into the direct representation of diversity in the style of Sel'vinskii, Inber produces a level field for internal proletarian development.

4.5 THE LITERARY CENTER OF CONSTRUCTIVISTS: AESTHETICS OF POST-IMPERIAL TERRITORY

The works of Sel'vinskii and Inber demonstrate an attempt to respect the separate and distinctive paths of specific places, generally tied to territory, at every scale from the city to the entirety of the country. In this way, LTsK may be understood to have effectively addressed the problem of European dominance at the heart of both Westernism and cosmopolitanism. This abstract principle nonetheless leaves some elements underdeveloped. In particular, in spite of the acrobatics of Inber's telescopic space in her poems dedicated to Lenin and Trotskii, the conceptual linkages between scales (for example, from the steppe region to the entire Soviet country) remain unclear. So too, do the reasons why, if the inviolability of borders can be surmounted to support federal-level apparatuses (for example, the Red Army), the same cannot be true of the Soviet border with respect to the world. In a sense, this is a problematic area complementary to that left by Trubetskoi in his émigré theorizations on Eurasia and his arbitrary definitions for why some boundary transgressions were more natural than others, summed up by

Viacheslav Ivanov as, “One could ask why the union between the Eurasian, Genghis-Khanian element and the Orthodox element (Byzantine in origin), which Trubetzkoy uncovered—with considerable evidence—in Russia’s history, was more organic than the subsequent merge of these same elements with the Western European” (Ivanov xviii). Where Trubetskoi wrote about the relationships between neighboring large cultural units⁷¹, the Literary Constructivists wrote similarly about the relationships among nested “organic” cultural units of varying scales. Both Sel’vinskii and Inber suggest that there are natural sites and means of mixing, such as the steppe or Moscow, but such mixing is a less developed element of this aesthetic than the general proscription on transgressing boundaries. Indeed, the conclusion of *Pushtorg* suggests that all that they can do is gesture toward the lack of a productive, native Soviet variation on cosmopolitanism, rather than propose an alternative.

Perhaps less conceptually problematic in itself, but related to the abovementioned lack of clarity, is the fact that the ethno-territorial aesthetic seems to omit the Literary Constructivists themselves. Inber and Sel’vinskii are both Jews, who would seem to be left out of the territorial aesthetic enunciated in their works. While it would be irresponsible to speculate excessively, the

⁷¹ Trubetskoi actually wrote only about the larger cultural units, in a fashion familiar to the modern reader in Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” theory (*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*), and to scholars of Soviet and post-Soviet Russia in the body of work spanning temporally from Lev Gumilev to Aleksandr Dugin (as covered in Edith Clowes, *Russia on the Edge*). The Literary Constructivists, by contrast, seem to be interested in extending the rights and responsibilities of socialist organization to every definable collective identity, on every scale.

lacuna left between the Constructivists and their proposed mode of relating the intelligentsia to the proletariats of various scales in the Soviet Union is troubling, and may have some relationship to the slippery behavior of scales and boundaries in their territorial aesthetic.

Respect for borders, however they might be drawn, and the healthiness of remaining quietly within them has been a running theme of the Literary Constructivist literature under examination; at least some of this predates the official adoption of the formulation “Socialism in One Country” by the government. LTsK’s point of intervention has typically been in places like Moscow and the internal steppe, which are, in their own ways, sites of intersection between the international and the domestic. While the openness of these sites in some degree to the circulation of goods and people is probably necessary for the construction of a “Soviet” civic consciousness and federal-level policy, the Literary Constructivist works discussed underscore that it also makes them potential points of entry for Western ideology (e.g., the alignment of Ulialaev’s band with the White Army) and capital (as in the case of Francoruss in *Pushtorg*). Inber’s poems like “The Earth of Moscow” and “In the light of the lamp, the green light” gesture towards configurations that transcend those boundaries without transgressing them. This problem will only become more pertinent after 1930, when the question of participating in global cosmopolitanism, for better or for worse, is closed by the Stalinist sealing of “the homeland of world communisms from all interaction with the West with a tightly controlled border” (Clowes 101). As I will discuss in Chapter Four, “The Closed Soviet Border in the Works of Thirties Poets,” once free of this question of cosmopolitanism and internationalism, the respect for boundaries that had preoccupied the Literary Constructivists takes on new and multivalent meaning.

5.0 THE AESTHETICS OF THE CLOSED SOVIET BORDER

The current chapter will follow a turn in geographic representations in poetry away from the direct representation of imagined community, whether the ideal loving community of Maiakovskii or the community that may organize itself rationally under the tutelage of the intelligentsia in Sel'vinskii's work. In its place, there is an important emphasis on how the community is delineated—in other words, the changed nature of the border, not only as a site of anxiety about transgression, but as a site of community definition and growth. As an analysis of the works of four young poets relating to the border in various capacities will show, representations of the border increasingly polarize and reify the positive, expansive and the negative, vulnerable faces of the border. By the end of the 1930s, this dynamic seemed unabashedly to reproduce a certain imperial mindset.

Texts discussed in previous chapters of this dissertation described the economic and political patterns that defined the Soviet Union. In international space, Soviet socialism struggled with global imperialism. In domestic space, the symbolic balance of power in aesthetic texts oscillated between Moscow and the heartland, developing a sense of connection and shared interests between the two. In the twenties, the distinction between international and domestic was not always constant: international revolution, with its roots in the Soviet Union, could come to characterize the world order, but there was a corollary possibility of the imperial world order subsuming the interconnected, but disorganized domestic Soviet socialist order under its own

geospatial logic. Representations of the Soviet interior, then, bore the trace of international concerns—as in the mixed make-up of Ulialaev’s band in *Ulialaevshchina* or the ultimate destination of Siberian furs in *Pushtorg*. Conversely, Maiakovskii’s cosmopolitan urban aesthetic underscored the revolutionary potential, however slight, of any given locality around the world.

As the Soviet state-building project approaches the 1930s, the possibility of contamination in either direction lessens considerably. This tendency is a trailing indicator of major political shifts in the late twenties. In 1926, Stalin formally removed his opponent Lev Trotskii from the Politburo, effectively declaring the end of the active pursuit of International Revolution. Stalin’s political formulation of “Socialism in One Country” [“sotsializm v odnoi strane”], introduced in the 1925 article “On the Issues of Leninism” [“K voprosam leninizma”], took its place. Outlining the policy to be adopted in 1926, Stalin holds that worldwide socialism is the ultimate goal of Soviet policy, but that its absence does not preclude the construction of a localized socialist state in the meantime, even while “surrounded by inimical capitalist countries and a bourgeoisie that cannot help but support international capital” (24). The stabilization of the border may settle conceptual questions of cross-border contamination, but the border itself is by no means a stable site. Lenin’s 1917 *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* [*Imperializm, kak vysshaia stadiia kapitalizma*] argued that monopolies capture national and supranational governments and spur conflicts over resources as they come into contact at borders. Renewed attention to the boundary in Soviet culture then means an intensification of the sense of the Soviet Union as embattled, and also as required to operate on the same logic of competition for resources.

At the same time, a clear and stable boundary between the Soviet Union and the rest of the world affords the opportunity to highlight its different system of governance and unification

of peoples. Perhaps counterintuitively, this better-defined, more homogenized imagined community better enabled a conceptual “leaping” of borders to identify with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War or with Africans.

A number of critical overviews of this period explain how a homogenized, stable view of the Soviet Union predominated in spatial aesthetics of the thirties. Vladimir Papernyi’s *Culture Two* [*Kul'tura Dva*] (completed in 1979 and first published by Ardis in 1985) draws upon the methodologies of Iurii Lotman’s semiotics and Heinrich Wölfflin’s formal method in art history to identify, beneath what can be considered the superficial flurries of cultural politics, persistent latent cultural structures. Taking the architectural plans and monuments of the early Soviet and Stalinist periods as his object, Papernyi postulates a major cultural shift between the twenties and thirties. The first period—Culture One, in the twenties—was characterized by terms like “uniform,” “mobile,” and “horizontal,” while the second—Culture Two, in the Stalinist period—was characterized by their inverse: “hierarchical,” “immobile,” and “vertical.” Papernyi suggests that Soviet culture was a single half-cycle in a continuous oscillation in Russian history between Culture One and Culture Two, with shifts observable in other periods like the Petrine revolutions.⁷² One further generalization, made later in an interview, is especially pertinent to

⁷² This formulation takes as given that there is an entity of “Russian space” that oscillates between these tightly connected poles. It does not really leave room for the clear questions of the twenties about cosmopolitanism and the way that Soviet and international space mutually informed one another. This suggests that Papernyi’s cultural object, while of considerable duration, is not the constant that structuralist analyses typically assume. Papernyi’s later commentary on this subject extends beyond Russian space. For example, characterizing the

this chapter's discussion of borders: "Speaking roughly, 'Culture One' is the culture of flowing out, the abrogation of borders between countries and cities, between interior and exterior space. And it is the reverse with 'Culture Two,' which is a culture of consolidation, the appearance of borders, movement's halt" (Timofeeva). At a certain point in its extension to describe, e.g., world culture, Culture One/Culture Two ceases to be the most useful cyclic model for describing changes in geography and culture.⁷³ However, Papernyi's attention to border behavior at the very least provokes a closer examination of the relationship of the reinforced border to movement.

Papernyi's overarching observations on the representation and planning of Soviet space have influenced further work in this area, such as Emma Widdis's survey of Soviet representations of territory in film. In *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (2003), Widdis outlines complementary aesthetic tendencies, such as the train film (capturing a mobile countryside from close up in the twenties) and the airplane film (capturing a vast, differentiated countryside within a single, organizing view from above in the thirties).

1990s as dominated by Culture One, he speaks of the recession of hierarchical society in the Russian Federation, but also describes the situation in America: "young Internet millionaires, a Europeanized lifestyle – espresso instead of drip coffee and dry wine instead of whiskey" (Timofeeva).

⁷³ David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), for example, elaborates a model of how human geography and culture develop in connection with the behavior of capital in late capitalism (booms and busts, for example). At least in part, this model can be tested against observed evidence, whether in economics or in culture.

There is abundant evidence of a comprehensive shift in Soviet spatial aesthetics between the twenties and thirties, whether or not one agrees with the structuralist explanations for it. In particular, it is difficult to read poetry specifically through the binaries as defined. Papernyi's and Widdis's analyses focus on architectural and visual texts, in which the perception of movement through space is direct, or, at least, it is relatively direct in comparison to the perception of space as mediated through language and figure in verbal arts. Poetic works that represent Soviet space are distinguished from structuralist assumptions about the monolithic, static representation of space by two features. First, in poetry there was a comparatively high degree of aesthetic diversity as an appropriate style was sought. Second, one can point to the border and periphery as actually quite dynamic, not merely in their potential to be transformed in the image of the center, but even in an expanding, incorporative way.⁷⁴

The deferred future of international socialism and the new implications for space required revisions to the aesthetics of territory that would have proceeded in tandem with the decisive turn

⁷⁴ One can immediately cite examples of representations of the border from other genres and media, especially in the form of the border-guard narrative. Oleksandr Dovzhenko's *Aerograd* (1934) is an early example of the new concept of the border: it is visualized as the taiga, apprehended at leisure over long shots from overhead until one reaches the ocean; it is threatened from without by Japanese spies and from within by traitors; the make-up of the border guards reflects how several peoples are brought together under a single set of values. However, the only potential dynamic of the border that operates is that of contraction, that the Japanese may penetrate the country; the film warns the viewer to help reinforce the border, to be on guard against its change, without hinting at potential movement in the opposite direction.

away from avant-garde aesthetic programs, which were attacked during the 1928-1932 Cultural Revolution. In a certain way, the more conservative selection of formal structures and aesthetic devices complements the conservatism in the aesthetic task of defining a bounded imagined community. Cosmism—showing Soviet territorial space, the world, or the universe from the enhanced, godlike perspective of a unified proletariat—would be an immediate analogy to the vision of monumentality in film, but it remained a deprecated aesthetic in poetry.⁷⁵ The representation of space in poetry is instead generally at the scale of the human individual moving through space in a more or less conventional fashion.

There is, for example, a marked tendency to focus on specific episodes and personal experiences as documentary facts of Soviet community as a whole. Aleksei Surkov, the RAPPist who became the first chairman of the poets' section of the Writers' Union in 1934, offers typical examples of such generalization. In "The Red Cavalry's Song" ["Konarmeiskaia pesnia"] (written in 1935 and set to lyrics by the Pokras brothers in 1936), Surkov moves from an impressionistic portrait of the Civil War, in which he fought, to a characterization of the current Soviet situation:

По военной дороге
Шёл в борьбе и тревоге
Боевой восемнадцатый год.
Были сборы недолги,
От Кубани и Волги
Мы коней поднимали в поход.
[...]
Если в край наш спокойный
Хлынут новые войны

⁷⁵ This was, for example, a critique frequently tied to Proletkult in the revolutionary period (Levchenko 5)

Проливным пулемётным дождём, –
По дорогам знакомым
За любимым наркомом
Мы коней воевых поведём.
(2-3)

Along the road of war
The embattled year of 1918
Went through struggle and alarm.
There were brief musters
From the Kuban and the Volga
We mounted our horses for the trek.
[...]
If new wars should sweep down
Over our peaceful land
Like a torrential machine-gun rain,
Along those familiar roads
Behind our beloved Commissar
We will lead our battle horses.

Surkov establishes continuity between his lived experience as a machine gunner and mounted scout in the Civil War with the cultural needs of the present. The poem is clearly a response to the continuing need to create a usable history for the Soviet Union (the beloved Commissar of the past, for example, can be a symbolic extension of Stalin), but it is achieved throughout by spatial analogies. The past and present are similar in terms of space (“along those familiar roads”). The transition from past bravery to present mission occurs at the spatial sites of “the river Don and in Zamość,” where “white bones rot [Na Donu i Zamost’e/ Tlejut belye kosti]” (Surkov 3). These sites warrant note not simply for their prominence in the Civil War and Polish-Soviet War, but for their positions at metaphorical and actual borders: a river is a conceptual point of transition from one state to another, and Zamość is a Polish town only forty miles from the Soviet Ukrainian border. As the white bones become a locus for contemplation, the border becomes the point from which the Soviet past and present are perceived by Surkov’s unmarked lyric persona.

Surkov's poems can be read as well within the conservative conventions for poetry that were becoming more difficult to deviate from—no striking metrical disruption, neologisms, jargon, or otherwise non-normative language. The juxtaposition of the hustle of the initial musters and the long-lasting trace of the white bones in “The Red Cavalry’s Song” is an effective device for representing the temporality of memory, rather than revealing new meaning through some sort of shock. In the marked tendency to set these poems to music as mass songs, one can see evidence of regular rhythm, uncomplicated phonetics, and general accessibility.

This style could also be used to provide guidance for the appropriate affective reaction to specific events. In an agitational poem written for Pravda in 1937, in association with the show trial for the “Parallel Center” or the “Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Center,” Surkov wrote of the accused that they were spies [shpiki], whose crimes included the abrogation of the border:

Торгуя нашим будущим и кровью,
Несли они свинцовую пургу.
Приморье, Приамурье, Приднепровье
Отдать хотели лютому врагу.
 (“Smert’ podletsam!” 4)

Trading in our future and blood,
They brought along a blizzard of bullets.
They wanted to give the cruel enemy
Primor’e, Priamur’e, Pridneprov’e.⁷⁶

If the affect here is fear and anger instead of respect and resolve, but a number of elements are repeated. Time—here, the future—is condensed again into something analogous to an object, or something that can be traded. Notably, the anger and fear is presented in this strophe in terms of a relationship to the border. In the poem, the future and blood, already traded away, are paralleled with imperiled frontier regions of the Soviet Union—Primor’e and

⁷⁶ I am grateful to Il’ia Kukulin for the reference to this poem.

Priamur'e, vulnerable to Japan in the Far East, and Pridneprov'e, the region around the Dniepr river in Ukraine (essentially the edge of the region before the annexation of western Ukraine in 1939). Here, the interests of the prosecuting state are aligned explicitly with the borders of the Soviet Union, once again using very simple formal structures.

However, if the potential forms of poetry appeared to become more bounded along with the Soviet Union, individual authorial aesthetics nonetheless emerged within those constraints. In a way, the necessarily “human” scale of lyric poetry meant that the individual positions and imaginations of each poet took on greater significance in depicting Soviet territory. These individual nuances within the early years of defining lyric style may be a transient moment in Soviet territorial aesthetics. However, they may help especially to illustrate the emergence of a rather aggressively imperial aesthetic towards the onset of the Great Patriotic War in 1941.

The remainder of this chapter will examine four young poets who published regularly within the emergent dominant poetic style, all of whom travelled and described the Soviet Union from the perspective that the borders and contested peripheries afforded: Semën Kirsanov (1906-1972), Vladimir Lugovskoi (1901-1957), Boris Kornilov (1907-1938), and Konstantin Simonov (1915-1979).⁷⁷ By this time, one can already speak of multiple generations of Soviet poets:

⁷⁷ I am positioning these authors at various points within the range of conventional style—within the bounds of what the state cultural apparatus found acceptable to publish. It could be argued that their variable fates during the Great Purges that began in 1936 is evidence against that assumption—for example, Boris Kornilov was executed in 1938 and Vladimir Lugovskoi's work was temporarily proscribed from publication. A counterargument is that the effect of the Great Purges on cultural production were determined more by personal denunciations or patterns of

Kirsanov was a member of LEF, and clearly reflects Maiakovskii's influence, while Lugovskoi was a member of the Literary Center of Constructivists (LTsK) until a demonstrative departure for RAPP in 1930. Additionally, this chapter will argue for the influence of Mikhail Svetlov (1903-1964) on representations of war and borders in works by Kornilov and Simonov. This constellation omits a number of productive poets of the 1930s; to name a few: Nikolai Aseev (1889-1963), another compatriot of Maiakovskii at Lef; Eduard Bagritskii (1885-1934) who had also been a member of LTsK; or Nikolai Tikhonov (1896-1979), who wrote extensively of his travels and became friends with Lugovskoi while they were on a literary excursion in Central Asia. Crudely put, the final selection is made on the basis of their age—even the smallest age gap, five years between Lugovskoi and Tikhonov, meant experiencing the Revolution and Civil War during significantly different life stages, and coming to artistic maturation during different historical periods.

5.1 SEMĖN KIRSANOV: DEPICTING TRANSITIONAL BOUNDARIES

The transition from a sense of international revolution to the construction of socialism in one country did not happen immediately, and it was not necessarily felt as a total aesthetic break. Semĕn Kirsanov, for example, wrote as a compatriot of Maiakovskii who inherited the older

patronage than by aesthetic determinations (the topic of patronage is a running theme in Sheila Fitzpatrick's work, who mentions the possibility of cascade effects from political falls from grace; see *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s* [114]).

poet's creative tasks. In the introduction to *The Five-Year Plan*, published separately in 1930 in *Red Virgin Soil*, after Maiakovskii's suicide, Kirsanov writes:

Здесь,
в крематории,
перед пепловою горсткой –
присягу воинскую
я даю –
в том,
что поэму
выстрою твою,
как начал строить ты,
товарищ Маяковский.
(Kirsanov, *Piatiletka* 7)

Here,
in the crematorium,
before an ashy handful,
I make
a soldier's oath
that
I will form up
the ranks of your poem,
as you began to form them,
Comrade Maiakovskii.

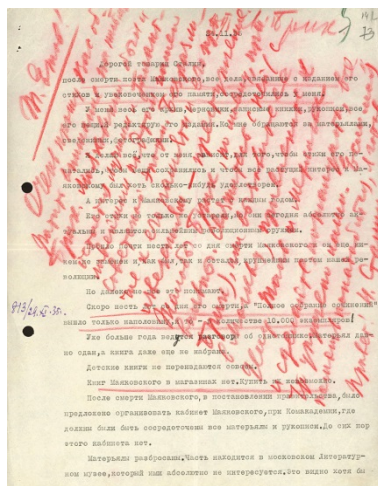


Figure 3. Stalin's canonizing statement about Maiakovskii

Kirsanov stylistically signals allegiance to Maiakovskii's civic creative agenda by means of the signature step-ladder construction, the *lesenka*. In 1930, he does so well before Stalin's affirmation in 1935 that "Maiakovskii was and remains the best, most talented poet of our Soviet epoch [Maiakovskii byl i ostaëtsia luchshim, talantliveishim poëtom nashei sovetskoi èpokhi]" (see Fig. 3 from Muzei Maiakovskogo),⁷⁸ after which the *lesenka* acquired "widespread popularity, ultimately becoming a staple of the Soviet poet's repertoire" (Wachtel, *Development of Russian Verse* 207). Consequently, Kirsanov's use was a specific signal of continuity with Maiakovskii's aesthetics before they were massaged to fit a Socialist Realist canon.

In this opening section, Kirsanov takes up the mantle from Maiakovskii of being on the figurative front line of culture. The nature of that line, however, was shifting, both in terms of aesthetics and in terms of where it was located. In any case, as Kirsanov takes up Maiakovskii's mission, one may call attention to a shift in rhythm: Mikhail Gasparov sees a notable difference between Maiakovskii's intentionally forced accentual verse and Kirsanov's (and Nikolai Aseev's) tendency toward syllabo-tonic verse and *dol'nik*, which more readily accommodated natural language.⁷⁹ Gasparov's impression is that "the poetry of Maiakovskii all sounded like a

⁷⁸ It must also be noted, however, that it came after Kirsanov publically broke with Maiakovskii during the RAPP attacks on the older poet.

⁷⁹ Accentual or tonic verse denotes a fixed number of strong syllables in a line regardless of total number of syllables (Scherr 160); accentual verse is more typical of stress-counted languages like English than syllable-counted languages like French, where lexical meaning is unrelated to the placement of stress. Russian is also a stress-counted language, but because rules of prosody were first introduced from Polish by Simeon Polotskii and on the basis of French translations,

struggle with language, as if titanic feelings are, in an unwieldy and repeated fashion, drumming against and breaking up language that is insufficient to them. Aseev's and Kirsanov's poetry, by contrast, grew from language easily and naturally, like a song or ditty" (9).

Gasparov's juxtaposition of rhythms may be analogized to the shift in aesthetic tasks for standardbearers of the LEF tendency.⁸⁰ Maiakovskii's language and lyric persona had consistently exemplified rupture at the point of contact between incommensurable systems—linguistic vs. emotional, and socialism in its banal existence vs. socialism in its transcendent potentiality (as described in Chapter Two). Kirsanov's work, by contrast, appears to occupy the space of transition between systems more readily, as evidenced in a strong thematic of transportation and the positive transformation caused by moving into a new, Soviet space.

The short poem "The Letter M" ["Bukva M"] (1935), for example, is dedicated to the Moscow metro system; the linguistic game of the poem is the prominence of the letter M in the experience of a ride on the metro. The lyric subject seems "Marble, maritime malachite, milky mosaics [Mramor, morskoi malakhit, molochnaia mozaika]" in the stations. When in motion, the

syllabic verse played an important early role in Russian versification. *Dol'nik* is a loose syllabotonic meter popular in 20th-century Russian poetry that calls for combinations of one- and two-syllable intervals between ictus (140).

⁸⁰ That is, part of New LEF (1927-1929), the second life of the LEF circle (1923-1925), which itself had a great deal of continuity with pre-revolutionary Russian Futurism. The aesthetic trajectory of LEF through the twenties, however, clearly has momentum independent of the group's sporadic organizational history and infighting—Kirsanov's alignment in this poem reinforces the discourse of LEF continuity.

train “glimmers, glimmers, glimmers, like magnesium,/ like meteors, like lightning [mel’kaet, mel’kaet, mel’kaet/ magniem, meteorami, molniei]” (Kirsanov, *Stikhotvoreniia* 136-7). The playful device that is associated with the thrill of the new transportation system begins to overtake the larger systems in which it is situated, linguistic and spatial, creating a forced tautogram:

Слов не хватает на букву эту...
 (Музыка... Муха... Мечта... Между тем...)
 Мелочи механизма!
 Внимайте поэту –
 Я заставляю
 слова
 начинаться
 на букву эМ:
 МЕТИ МОЕЗД МЕТРО МОД МОСТИНИЦЕЙ
 МОССОВЕТА
 МИМО МОЗДВИЖЕНКИ
 К МОГОЛЕВСКОМУ МУЛЬВАРУ!
 МОЖАЛУЙСТА!
 (137)

There aren’t enough words that begin with this letter...
 (Music... Fly [*mukha*]... Dream [*mechta*]... For that matter [*mezhdue tem*]...)
 Trivialities [*melochi*] of the mechanism!
 Hearken to the poet!
 I will force
 words
 to begin
 with the letter eM:
 MOOM, METRO MAGON, UMDER MOTEL
 MOSSOVET
 MAST MOZDVIZHENKI
 MO MOGOLEVSKII MOULEVARD!
 MLEASE!

The final, emphatically emmed-up passage is fully comprehensible; the underlying linguistic structure and the city map (hotel Mossovet, Vozdvizhenka Street, Gogolevskii

Boulevard) remain clear. Though unintelligible at first, the poem's effects are less jarring than the Soviet practice of abbreviation through condensing the first syllables of an institution's title into one word. Kirsanov presents a radical transformation as a result of contact with innovation, but the transformation is an accentuation of an existing consonance, rhythm, and affect, not its disruption.

Kirsanov focuses specifically on *being* in the state of transition, of being in a liminal space that incorporates a sense of the inherent structure of what came before with its undeniable transfiguration. In "The Rainbow Road" ["Doroga po raduge"] (1932), one of his most popular poems of the 1930s, such a transfiguration takes place on the road to Yalta on the Crimean peninsula, at the periphery of the Soviet Union. The lyric subject, riding in a car along the cliffs near Yalta and wedged "between two ladies colored beige [mezh// dvukh dam/ tsveta bezh]" (104), catches sight of an enormous rainbow after a torrential rain:

и вдруг от Чаира до Аира
 в нагорье уперлась
 такая ра...
 такая!
 такая!
 такая
 радуга дугатая!
 как шоссе,
 покатая
 (105)

and suddenly, from Chaira to Áira
 there was fixed in the highlands
 such a rai
 such a!
 such a!
 such a
 bowed rainbow!
 like a highway
 it sloped

The rainbow ends up serving the function of an actual highway, as the car leaps from the ordinary road to follow the rainbow instead. The two ladies in beige do not understand the importance of the state of transition, and see this event as a detour from the desired destination on an itinerary from point A to point B, “Where are you taking us? [Kuda ty/ vezësh’?]” (106). The lyric subject, by contrast, draws attention to the fact that the direction forward can be an experience independent from a destination in space. It is expressed in the joy of the machine and driver together: just before they begin driving on the rainbow, the lyric subject observed, “The auto and the driver/ are already in a delirium [Uzhe v likhoradke/ avto i shofër]” (105).

Though the poem deals with a transformative moment, the style of the poem remains consistent on either side of the transformation, characterized throughout by internal, often dactylic rhyme, such as “pó Krymu mókromu [through sodden Crimea]” (104), and internal inversion like “shofër pover-/ nyl (nul-pover) [the driver tur-/ned (ned-tur)]” (104). The lyric subject’s facility with language seems temporarily to fail only at the moment of the rainbow’s appearance itself, with the straight repetition of “such a! [takaia!].” He recovers quickly by naming it “raduga dugataia [bowed rainbow],” playing with the shared root of the synonym pair. The result of this consistency is the sense that the lyric subject is an observer on the edge of this event, sharing in the joy of the moment, but also sufficiently sober to remain in possession of the technical faculties required to record the fundamental playful and joyful character of the event.

The stability of the subject may be the way that allows him to greet each color zone of the rainbow with equanimity:

Синим едем,
 желтым едем,
 белым едем,
 красным едем.
 (106)

We drive via the indigo stripe,
we drive via the yellow,
we drive via the white,
we drive via the red.

Though the colors change, the grammatical parallelism reduces any apprehension about crossing from one zone to another (in what could be read as an extreme abstraction of potential geographic, and especially ethnic, diversity—after all, white is not a color of the rainbow, but all of the colors could map to an extremely schematic sense of racialized skin color). Moreover, while the rainbow is far more internally variegated than the beige associated with the original path, this variegation does not threaten the integrity of the rainbow path forward.

This handling of the rainbow suggests that Kirsanov's aesthetic of boundaries and the "front line" diverged significantly from Maiakovskii's essentially destructive dynamic. Diversification and technology are central to Kirsanov's view of the transformed Soviet way of life, as they were for Maiakovskii, but they enhance, rather than obliterate, the concrete and bounded sense of space. And if "The Rainbow Road" comes across as whimsical and only distantly related to the grand themes of the Soviet thirties, one can also see its aesthetic at work in the long poem *The Five-Year Plan* [*Piatiletka*] (1931), Kirsanov's proposed conclusion to Maiakovskii's unfinished project of writing about the First Five-Year Plan, as announced in *At the Top of My Voice* [*Vo ves' golos*].

In great part, *The Five-Year Plan* is structured by chronology, as each of the four chapters addresses a stage of the First Five-Year Plan from its inception to its conclusion. However, as in "The Rainbow Road," the endpoint of the Five-Year Plan is less at issue than the observation, repeatedly, of moments of transformation at every stage—the real forward direction is realized in each of these small moments of contrastive states. For example, the poem compares university academics to polytechnic school graduates. If the former "discovered yesterday/ the root of the

soft sign in Sanskrit [vchera nashël v sanskrite/ koren' znaka miagkogo!]" (Kirsanov, *Piatiletka* 91), the latter, applied scientists, "will lay bare/ the black soils of the unknown [raskroem/ zemli neizvestnosti chërnye]" (93) and use their knowledge of metallurgy and chemistry to assist at factories and mines.

The poem does not always compare such apparently related objects as two kinds of researcher, the scholar and the engineer. To this point, the device of metonymy becomes dominant, establishing adjacencies and, therefore, means of transition from one state to another through a variety of shared characteristics. For example, after a long passage about the damaging effects of workers' alcoholism and truancy on the progress of the Five-Year Plan, the lyric subject tells "of a liquid/ more amazing than vodkas or wines [O zhidkosti/ vodok i vin/ udivitel'nei]" (86)—that is, oil, the fuel of the technological transformation of the Soviet Union. In this way, too, the lyric subject finds that the logical partner to the performance arts of ballet and opera is not, for example, constructivist art, but the drama of machine movement and the products of a figurative "mouth" at a steel refinery. A crucible's "mug opens/ its golden teeth,// flaming lace/ slithers out [zolotye zuby/ otkryvaet past',// vypolzaet/ plamennoe kruzhevo]" (74).

The greater body of the poem is dedicated to such comparisons of the old world and the new, with its emphasis on the transformation, rather than the loss, of the accoutrements of the pre-Plan Soviet Union. In the fourth and final chapter, Kirsanov takes on the transformation of the international position of the Soviet Union, placing the sense of boundary and transition in a new context. He describes the utopian future and returns to the present with imprecations, exhortations, and commendations of shock workers.

Finally, he presents a specifically world-geographic idea of the First Five-Year Plan; the scope of its progress and the unboundedness of its future is compared to the prospects of other

countries in Europe in an arresting way: by approximating maps using words in unanticipated and offset arrangements. Great Britain offers a pithy example (see fig. 4).

Лѣг
дог
Лондон,
флот
флаг поднял,
врос флот
плотно,
на синь наляг.

Ист
под игом,
ост
мачт иглам
«Мэд ин Игленд»
на всех морях!
Но марш твой спет,
и Новый Свет
на рынки прет.
Атлантик в брод
волну рассёк.
(167)

A Great Dane,
lay down,
London
the fleet
raised its flag,
the fleet took root,
firmly
filling up the blue.

The East
is under a yoke
Ost
is in debt to the needles of masts.
“Made in England”
On all the seas!
But your march is sung,
and the New World

is rolling out into the markets.
 The Atlantic divided
 the swell into a shallow ford.



Figure 4. “Great Britain” as depicted in graphic poem (1917), with map of England for comparison (Wikipedia).

The map begins with a set of lines dominated by the sounds “lo” and “do,” in apparent connection with the name “London.” This sort of repetition occurs again, with two barbarisms meaning “East,” or the Soviet Union, “Ist” and “Ost.” These foreign discourses of the “East” position it “pod igom [under a yoke]” and “macht iglam [in debt to the needles of masts].” In other words, the West sees the Soviet Union as in thrall to the economic export power of England, as Kirsanov notes when he transliterates the stamp on goods sent worldwide: “Made in England [Mèd in *Ing*lend].” However, while the sound texture of London and England are dominant in this section, they are readily played out within the “bounds” of the two strophes, with no further outlet. The semantic content of the graphic poem reproduces this sense of finitude: “Your march is already sung [marsh tvoi spet].” As the map is finished and the border is “closed,” the end point of the country’s history is also predicted.

As the lyric subject's attention turns to Germany—admittedly, to a rather 1920s portrait of Germany that focuses on the pressure on the Ruhr miner to pay the war debts and the shadow of the Kaiser and the return of war in the Weimar presidents rather than the rise of Hitler, and is interpolated with a Papal speech in doggerel Latin from Rome to create a general “European” situation—there is a similar apparent outline resembling that of Germany (see fig. 5). Here, the outward edge of the lines concluding the subject's address—where the country would abut Czechoslovakia and Austria—result in the arrangement of words taking a sharp turn to the left and downwards:

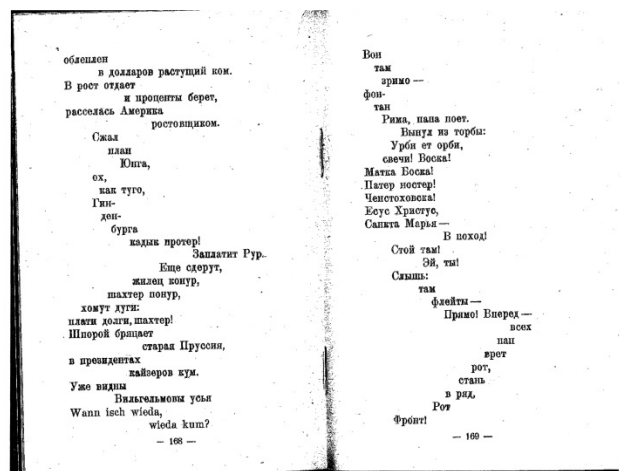


Figure 5. “Germany” as depicted (and distorted) in words.

Прямо! Вперед –
 всех
 пап
 врет
 рот,
 стань
 в ряд
 Рот
 Фронт!
 (168)

Forward! Ahead –
 the mouths
 of all

popes
 lie,
 stand,
 in ranks
 Red
 Front!

The Germany section concludes with this staccato of monosyllabic phrases receding to the left. Figuratively, this dramatic completion of the “border” also reflects a potential end to this phase of European bourgeois history by means of Germany. After all, the line proceeds both literally and figuratively to the political left, in the salutation of the Roter Frontkämpferbund. Yet it does



Figure 6. Map of Soviet Union from the GIKhL 1931 edition of Piatiletka

so quite slowly, between the reverse direction of reading and the nature “of single-syllable words to condense the tonal qualities of the poem and retard its motion” (Averintsev 163).

An appended map of the Soviet Union in the 1931 edition of *Piatiletka* presents the graphic relationship of poetry to maps completely differently (see fig. 6).⁸¹ Where Great Britain and Germany had been misshapen and bound in by Kirsanov's words, on the map of the Soviet Union, the passages mark notable work sites of the First Five-Year Plan, including a straight line of words that cuts across the space within, declaring, "Here is the Emba-Samarkand oil pipeline [Vot òmba-samarkandskii nefteprovod]." As in "The Rainbow Road," Kirsanov enriches a bounded interior, without any sense of order beyond. The expanse of the Soviet Union extends far beyond the page—all of the actual land east of the Urals, on the one hand, but also, on the other, the brightly colored poetic passages are far from reaching the edges of the map as presented. The potential of Soviet territory outstrips even Kirsanov's lengthy list of accomplishments.

Kirsanov's assembly of written maps draws attention to the project of building socialism and attests to how borders are connected in various ways to the obsolescence of the old world. Their immateriality is underscored in the poem's landscape of the future world economy:

Ползут из Канады
 пшеницы массы,
 Нету немецких машин
 точней,
 Африка дарит
 для сверл алмазы,
 Россия
 сталь
 посылает ей.
 И всё это даром,
 без рынков, без бирж,

⁸¹ I am grateful to Jonathan Platt and Il'ia Kukulin for locating this map for me at (<http://www.auction-imperia.ru/wdate.php?t=booklot&i=28304>).

притоками рельс
 без таможен струится,
 из Лондона в Тулу,
 из Тулы в Париж...
 Где же провинции?
 Всюду столица!
 (Kirsanov, *Piatiletka* 139)

 Masses of wheat,
 cascade out of Canada,
 There is no machine
 more precise than a German one,
 Africa gives away
 diamonds for drills
 Russia
 sends back
 steel.
 All of this is gratis,
 without markets, without exchanges,
 without customs, the rails
 flow back along tributaries
 from London to Tula,
 from Tula to Paris.
 Where are the provinces?
 Everywhere's a capital!

Here, while nations continue to exist, their differences create no friction in the transfer of goods from one place to another. Imperialist dynamics of uneven development and import/export seem to be smoothed over with the parallel structure of “from London to Tula/ from Tula to Paris [iz Londona v Tulu/ iz Tuly v Parizh],” in which Tula, a mid-sized industrial city in Russia’s heartland, operates on an even standing between the metropolises of London and Paris.⁸² Moscow,

⁸² Tula was a center of heavy industry in Russia, and played a particularly long and well-known role in weapons manufacture (the city’s tradition of gunsmithing was immortalized in Nikolai Leskov’s 1881 “The Tale of Cross-Eyed Lefty and the Steel Flea” [“Skaz o Tul’skom kosom

notably, is completely bypassed as an intermediary in this relationship, echoing the lack of organization in the map of the Soviet Union, and marking this poem as an early example of thirties culture.

Even as economic development dismantles the colonial structures of uneven accumulation and development, and goods travel unhampered across the world, the lyric subject documents this transformation from a particular position. When describing the new ways and values characteristic of the Five-Year Plan, he presents the new in terms of the old, not as wholly separate but instead as adjacent not only temporally and spatially, but also conceptually, through the use of metonym. He is located at the point of convergence between the two periods, and is tasked with presenting the larger conceptual framework in which the transformation can be coherent. In these works by Kirsanov, one can see a generalization of progressive dynamism—movement forward without a specific destination—that ends at the Soviet border. Seen from the Soviet Union, from without, the borders of other countries appear constrictive and invite thoughts of their trajectories in history. In the works addressed here, Kirsanov constructs a boundary with a dual nature, depending on one’s perspective on it from within—as a point of transformation—or without—as a point of cessation. An analogous duality of the border can also be seen, in more specific geographic detail, in Vladimir Lugovskoi’s travel poetry of the thirties.

Levshe i o stal’noi Blokhe”])). In the Civil War, it supplied arms to the Red Army, which may help to explain why it seems so frequently to appear as a reliably ideologically correct “province” (there is also the Tula Worker’s Club celebrating in Moscow in *Pushtorg*), but the name’s pithiness and phonetic qualities in and of themselves invite rhyme and wordplay.

5.2 VLADIMIR LUGOVSKOI: BORDER CROSSINGS IN DETAIL

A major element of Vladimir Lugovskoi's creative biography lies in his travels. Like Il'ia Sel'vinskii and Nikolai Tikhonov, his creative peers at various points in his literary career, he enriched his creative work with concrete details from his lived experience of traveling. This chapter takes his early 1930s poetry under consideration, in particular the collection *Europe* [*Evropa*] (1932), which depicts an international journey on a mission with the NKVD, and the first of the four-volume series *To the Bolsheviks of the Desert and Spring* [*Bol'shevikam pustyni i vesny*] (1931), which draws upon Lugovskoi's experience as a mobilized writer in literary brigades [*pisatel'skie brigady*] during the First Five-Year Plan. These sources offer a comparative look at the Soviet border and periphery, in a geographically and historically specific fashion.

The poem from *Europe* entitled "The Dardanelles" ["Dardanelly"] is dedicated to the experience of crossing a major traditional border between Western Europe and its neighbors to the east: the Dardanelles are located at the maritime point of entry to the Aegean Sea from the east. The poem documents the passage of three Soviet ships through the Dardanelles. The tension of the short, expressive narrative lies in whether they will be allowed through, and what will happen to their Soviet identity upon entering Europe.

"The Dardanelles" is characterized throughout by quatrains divided into hemistiches, organized in AbAb or aBaB rhyme schemes without apparent consistency as to where a masculine or feminine line leads. An initial harmony emerges between this alternating pattern and the setting of the ship bobbing on the open water. The opening strophe describes night falling over the Dardanelles, featuring only natural agents—the night and gloom "Night has fallen, / The basis of secrets and gloom [*Noch' nastupala — / tainy i mraka osnova*]" (Lugovskoi

237)—with no human activity. The rhyme is full, creating the sense of naturally fitting together: “osnova/snova [basis/anew]” and “zvenel/Dardanell” (237). This initial sense that the ship fits perfectly into its environment is the exception to the rule throughout the poem. Much of the poem seems to highlight artificial antagonisms that clash with the natural setting. As the sentries of the Dardanelles take notice of the Soviets, the nature of the rhyme shifts:

В тысячелетнем мраке
 высоко движутся
Суровые звезды
 топовых огней.
Ударники напрягают
 глаза и мышцы.
Брезенты орудий вздуваются,
 сдерживая гнев.
(237)

In the millennial gloom
 the austere stars
Of the range fires
 move on high.
The shock workers tense
 their eyes and muscles.
The canvas covers of the weapons billow,
 holding back fury.

This second strophe recreates the darkness and starlight of the first strophe, but along with the introduction of the human element, more open, even slant rhymes appear: “dvizhutsia/myshtsy [they move/muscles]” and “ognei/gnev [of fires/fury].” “Ognei” reprises its role as part of a surprising rhyme at a key moment later in the narrative, when the sentries of the Dardanelles enquire about the Soviet ship’s right to be there:

Темнота.
 И опять дарданельские короли
Спрашивают вспышками
 злых огней:
«Есть разрешение

на проход проливов?»
 Ответ:
 «Есть!»
 (239)
 Darkness.
 And again the kings of the Dardanelles
 Ask in flashes
 of angry fires:
 “Do you have permission
 to cross the straits?”
 The answer:
 “Yes!”

The antagonistic challenge to the Soviet ships prompts an assertive avowal of their right to be there. The utterance “Yes! [Est’!]”—in a conflictual rhyme with “ognei”—allows the ship to penetrate Europe and leave Soviet territory definitively behind. As the lyric subject explicitly states, this is *the* point of essential transition: “The Soviet country/ is left behind us [Sovetskaia strana/ ostalas’ za nami]” (237).

The Europe that the ships enter is a different Europe than they saw from the other side of the Dardanelles. For much of the poem, Europe is associated with an infrastructure of hostile wired communications—signals, telegraph wires, and so forth—and with the naval battle of Gallipoli 1915, which saw the heavy mining of the strait. Yet with penetration into the Aegean Sea, the recent violence of Europe is softened; the lyric subject refers to it in terms of classical culture, passing “Past Troy,/ past the old heart of history [I mimo Troi,/ mimo starogo serdtsa istorii]” (239). When seen from outside, the space of Europe aggressively abuts and even threatens the Soviet Union, but when its core is shown to be located in the past, it turns out that there is room for the Soviet Union throughout. The rhymes that had been inexact and discordant return, in the Aegean Sea, to more or less true and exact pairings, “istorii/more [of history/sea]” and “i ser/SSSR [and gray/USSR]” (239).

Here, the border in Lugovskoi's "The Dardanelles" has some parallels with the borders of Kirsanov's *The Five-Year Plan*. For both, the border itself can have a negative, retarding quality, but being at the position of the border allows the lyric perspective to see a natural, progressive relationship between the side of the past and the side of the future. The suggestion of temporal progression leads towards the Soviet Union, and suggests Soviet expansion is possible in spite of a bristling, threatening force at the border. Looking outwards is a key to this affirmation: in a later poem dating from the Second Five-Year Plan, "The Border Guards" ["Pogranichniki"], the refrain repeats, "Our country/ which lies behind us [Strana lezhashchaia pozadi]" (394-5).

Lugovskoi's work displays a similar attention to the border from a domestic perspective, as it becomes a position from which to process impressions of the First Five-Year Plan. These derived in great part from Lugovskoi's experience in 1930 as a member of a writer's brigade sent to document the First Five-Year Plan in Turkmenia (or Turkestan, or current Turkmenistan). He deployed on one of the most notable of many such expeditions, working alongside such literary luminaries of the twenties as Vsevolod Ivanov, Leonid Leonov, and Nikolai Tikhonov. A major product of this expedition for Lugovskoi was the first volume of the collection *To the Bolsheviks of the Desert and Spring*.

The title poem of this collection introduces the lyric subject and his comrades at an agricultural camp, "collecting the news of the hives [sobirali novostei ulov]" at the Gostorg complex (335). He also describes the administrators in the complex—the sowing committee and the chair of the regional executive committee—as well as technicians. All of these figures are depicted in a state that is unchanging, if also productive, a sense arising in large part from the use of the imperfective verbal aspect:

Член посеvкома зашивал рукав,
Предисполком отгонял жука,

Усталый техник, лежа на боку,
Выписывал последнюю строку,
А по округе, на плуги насев,
Водил верблюдов
Большевистский сев.
(335)

A member of the sowing committee was sewing up sleeves,
The chair of the executive committee was shooing away beetles,
A tired technician, lounging about,
Was writing out his final line,
And in the vicinity, Bolshevik sowers
Led camels,
Having hitched them to plows.

Having established this temporal baseline, the lyric subject then describes the workers who are reshaping the deserts of Central Asia in four waves, each coming into the Gostorg complex to rest after a shift of work: “the workers of the desert [rabotniki pustyn’],” “the workers of the fields [rabotniki polei],” “the workers of the water [rabotniki vody],” and “the workers of the borders [rabotniki granits]”⁸³ (336-7).

Though these waves of workers entering into the administrative center of the camp provide a sense of dynamic motion from outside to inside, Lugovskoi also uses variations in spacing and rhyme to establish a sense specifically of progress. For the majority of the poem, there is a regular hemistich, realized over two lines, at the end of each strophe, such that the two lines “Vodil verbliu dov/ Bol’shevistkii sev [The Bolshevik sowers/ led camels]” end up realizing the same regular iambic pentameter as the antepenultimate line, “A po okruge, na plugi nasev [And in the vicinity, having hitched them to plows].” Where a traditional hemistich or caesura is a point of coincidence between a word boundary and a foot boundary, these line breaks can also

⁸³ Less floridly, Chekists.

interrupt the iamb, in principle causing the next line to begin with a trochaic upbeat (as realized in the poem, the potential disruption is often softened by occurring during a long interval of unstressed syllables). This variation seems deliberately distributed in the poem, as the first five of ten strophes features a caesura after the fifth syllable, interrupting an iambic foot (-'-''). In the next four strophes, which sing the praises of the four waves of workers, the meter shifts to the heroic hexameter and the caesura appears after the fourth syllable (i.e., between iambic feet -'-''), lending these sections a more aphoristic sound. The caesura recedes in the final strophe from a line boundary to a word boundary: “Edinstvennaia na zemle strana [The only country like this on Earth!]” (Lugovskoi 337). The semantic connotation of “only/singular [edinstvennaia]” seems to predicate the metrical gesture it accompanies. It is an apparent fitting completion to the labor that the poem has depicted, indicating how these individuated waves of workers have been participating in the construction of a society in the Soviet Union in which they are ultimately unified.

The sense that there had been an underlying motivation towards unity prompts a review of the poem, during which two strophes in particular stand out. In one, the third, the desert prepares for the workers as if they are enemies:

Шакалы воем оглашали высь.
 На краткий отдых люди собрались.
 Пустыня била ветром в берега
 Она далёко чуяла врага,
 Она далёко слышала врагов –
 Удары заступа
 И шарканье плугов.
 (335)

The howl of jackals resounded through the heights.
 People gathered for a short rest.
 The desert beat with wind upon the shore
 She sensed the enemy from afar,

She heard her enemies from afar –
The strikes of the shovel
And the scraping of plows.

In the other example, the ninth strophe, enemies reappear when the Chekists are described as “workers of the borders”:

Но злоба конскими копытами стучит,
И от границы мчатся басмачи,
Раскинув лошадиные хвосты,
На землю, воду и песок пустынь.
Дом, где сидим мы – это байский дом.
Колхоз вспахал его поля кругом.
Но, чтобы убивать и чтобы взять,
Бай и пустыня возвращаются опять.
Тот топот конницы и осторожный свист
Далёко слышит по пескам чекист.
Засел прицел в кустарнике ресниц.
Да здравствуют
Работники границ!..
(337)

But evil knocks with stallions' hooves,
And the Basmachis rush from the border,
Having spread their horsehair tassels,
Over the earth, the water, and the sand of the desert.
The house in which we sit was once a rich landowner's home.
The collective farm plowed out into the fields around.
But the landowner and the desert are returning once more
To kill and to take back the land.
The Chekist hears that clatter of horses
And the warning whistle from far away over the sands.
He has set his rifle scope to his bushy lashes.
Hail to
The workers of the borders!..

The term “enemies” is invoked from the imagined perspective of the resistant desert; the Chekist, by contrast, holds the line at the house and fields against the Basmachis—the mujahid nationalists who had been dispossessed from their land or, in the simplified and propagandistic

terms of the Soviet authorities, the former landowners. The fields themselves are expanding, given that the prefix “vz-/vs-” in “vspakhal” implies explosive scope. As was the case in “The Dardanelles,” it is the act of standing one’s ground at the border that permits transcending the framework of “enemies”; over the course of the poem, the desert’s resistance against the Bolshevik workers is overcome, and its unity with the Soviet land as a whole is realized. The duality of hostility and harmonization is, on the one hand, a long-recognized trope of Soviet narratives;⁸⁴ what is potentially new is the dual valence of the border itself, as a rigid shell threatening Soviet space and as an elastic line indicating the point of transition between two states of a whole.

To the Bolsheviks of the Desert and Spring contains further developments of the aesthetics of the border site. In particular, the poem “The Desert and I” [“Pustynia i ia”] questions the nature of the lyric subject positioned at the extreme periphery of the Soviet Union. The sparse narrative of the poem opens with the lyric subject undergoing his third day alone in the desert, having apparently been separated from a caravan. The Byronically romantic scene is succeeded by a more practical depiction of Soviet work in the desert.

In terms of formal features, each strophe contains extreme variation in line length between two and ten syllables, chopping what would be regular lines of anapest hexameter into

⁸⁴ In Socialist Realism, nature is often hostile, a force to wrangle with, but also holds the potential to be an idyllic garden (see Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, Chapter 4, 93-113)

three separate lines.⁸⁵ The result is an apparently ungainly appearance that Lugovskoi draws attention to in an early meta-poetic statement:

Человек нагружает
Верблюжьи горбины
И лохмы.
А верблюды качаются,
Как человеческий стих.
(355)

A man burdens
A camel's humps
And tussets.
But the camel bobs
Like human verse.

The use of the undulation of camels to inform verse offers a mode for interpreting the very light sense of repeated structure in the poem as a whole. The shapes of the strophes themselves do not graphically recall the humps of camels with any regularity, but they all contain double “peaks” nonetheless. That is, in each twelve-line strophe, there is a single rhymed pair between one line in the first half of the poem and the final line. The first half of the rhyme sets up an attempt at self-definition by the human lyric subject; the second contextualizes that effort in the realities of the desert, which is both enormous, but also defeats romantic expectations.⁸⁶ For example,

⁸⁵ I am grateful to Il'ia Kukulin for identifying the highly regular structure that underlies the superficially disorganized lines of the strophes.

⁸⁶ In a different work, or a differently organized work, this collection by Lugovskoi would be paired productively with the “prophet” texts of Chapter One and thirties novels set in the desert, including Pil'niak's *The Volga Flows into the Caspian Sea* and especially Platonov's *Soul*, which engages with the transcendent idea of the desert in a different fashion from Lugovskoi.

Я не ястреб, конечно,
Но что-то такое
Замечал иногда,
Отражаясь
В больших зеркалах.
Доктор
Мне прописал
Лошадиную дозу покоя.
Есть покой,
Есть и лошадь,
А дозу,
Укажет аллах.
(356)

I am not a falcon, of course,
But there was something of the sort,
That I would sometimes notice
Reflected
In large mirrors.
The doctor prescribed
A horse-sized dose of peace.
There is peace,
There is even a horse,
But Allah will measure out
The dose.

In the first section of the strophe, up through the mention of the mirror, the lyric subject appears to experience difficulty in expressing himself in figurative terms, opting instead for the vaguer pronoun “something of the sort [chto-to takoe].” “Falcon” [iastreб] is a fairly straightforward epithet for a fierce or noble individual, but it is a title that a modern individual might hesitate to attribute to himself, especially without the recommendation of his community. A mirror offers glimmers of how others might see him, but nothing definitive.

If the first half of the strophe brings the difficulty of using figurative language without a constituted community, the second half challenges its capacity to convey information even within a community. The doctor has prescribed “a horse-sized dose of peace [loshadinuiu dozu

pokoia],” a phrase containing the figurative language of metaphor and hyperbole. In the context of the desert, the figurative phrase is deconstructed into three words now no longer in relation to one another: “There is peace,/ There is even a horse,/ But Allah will measure out/ The dose [Est’ pokoi./ Est’ i loshad’./ A dozu/ Ukazhet allakh].” Where the large “dose” of peace had had a meaning held in common between the lyric subject and the doctor, the context of the desert literalizes peace and the horse, and delegates the measuring of the “dose” to a force outside of human society. In this particular mode of traveling, as an isolated, romantic individual, there is no intelligible communication or contact with the desert.

The more meaningful point of contact with the alien occurs later in “The Desert and I.” The poem documents the lyric subject’s unfolding consciousness of human relations at a different site of contact. The lyric subject had desired to be a “falcon,” a sort of T.E. Lawrence of Central Asia, “to turn into a traveler/ or a desert khan [sdelat’sia putnikom/ ili pustynnym khanom]” (Lugovskoi 357). In his experience, though, his point of identity formation takes place not in the sublime desert, but at the edge of the modernizing desert:

А последнего хана
Я видел недавно
В сберкассе, –
Он слюнявил бумажки
И ругался
На бюрократизм.
(358)

And I saw, not long ago,
The last khan⁸⁷

⁸⁷ “The last khan” is the topos of a noble last remnant of a dying civilization as encountered in Soviet literature. For example, such a nobleman is helped by the protagonists of Lazar Lagin’s children’s tale *Old Khottabych* [*Starik Khottabych*] (I am grateful to Il’ia Kukulin for making this

At the savings bank;
He was slobbering on bits of paper
And cursing
Bureaucracy.

As he acknowledges a less romantic, more modernized experience of the desert, the lyric subject offers a vision of the desert's transformation rooted in civilization, in its transition from past to future. Where poetic language failed in the context of the individual and the wilderness, a place can be found for it in the context of people [*narod*].

Ты [the desert] начнёшь
Отступать,
Огрызаясь
Камнями и костью
Погребенных племён
И вымерших городов.

А когда через Азию
Руки протянут
Народы,
Боевыми клинками
Границы срубив,—
Зелень двинется
Дальше,
Каналами ринутся воды
И пойдут
Клокоча,
На Герат
И Мазар-и-Шериф.
(359)

You begin
To give way
Snarling
With the rocks and bones

connection). He is comparable to the American commonplace of the “last of the Mohicans” (from James Fenimore Cooper’s book of that name).

Of entombed tribes
And extinct cities.

But when the peoples
Extend their hands
Across Asia,
With the blades of battle
Having hewn down the borders,
Greenery will move
Further,
Waters will rush through canals
And go
Bubbling,
To Herat
and Mazar-i-Sharif.

At this poem's conclusion, the lyric subject exchanges the romantic falconic epithet for a prosaic falcon that "watches gopher hills [romanticheskii iastreby, / smotri na surikovye kochki]" (358). Transformation is not transcendental, but a realization of the possibility beyond edges and borders. Once again, in the case of the peoples of Asia, the other side is complementary, rather than antagonistic, in character. When conceived as alien and an entity to be confronted, the desert is genuinely hostile to human life and meaningful language. But Lugovskoi's lyric subject is also witness to a transformative and expansionary mode of border as a frontier that incorporates the desert and Asia into the Soviet Union. Positioned at the edge of Soviet civilization, he experiences both the antagonism and the progressiveness of the border.

Kirsanov's and Lugovskoi's representations of the border thus far have summoned a process specific to the economic visions of the First Five-Year plan: as something of a one-way transformative valve through which alien materials become Soviet (as when "old" bourgeois elements or Europe will inevitably develop into "new" socialism, or the desert will bloom). There is a transitional poetry of the early thirties, but one that bears keeping in mind as the new style coalesces in the later thirties. A comparative situation to the cultural front of engaged

poetry and the economic front of the Five-Year Plans is war, which foregrounds different qualities of borders, such as their integrity. This leads to important modulations on the motifs of antagonism and transformation described above, which are exemplified in selected poems by Mikhail Svetlov and Boris Kornilov.

5.3 “MY GRENADA,” “MY AFRICA”: THE MODIFIED FUNCTION OF TWENTIES ROMANTICISM

One of the most significant poems about war in the 1930s, Mikhail Svetlov’s “Grenada” [“Grenada”] was written too early to have been a direct political response to the adopted policy of “Socialism in One Country.”⁸⁸ Its simple narrative depicts a Red Army soldier marching to war in the Civil War; he is set apart by his dreams of freeing the Spanish peasants in Grenada, of whom he read in a book. Everyone else is moving forward under a marching song, but for him the words “Grenada, Grenada, my Grenada [Grenada, Grenada, Grenada moia]” are the motivation forward. He dies without reaching Spain, but his dream lives on, preserved in the

⁸⁸ Given that Svetlov wrote in support of Trotskii into 1927, while this poem gained popularity in the 1930s, it seems particularly appropriate to underscore that even poetry written on civic themes or for social purposes is appropriate to contextualize within personal or sub-government tendencies, rather than as direct responses to everyday shifts in policy. In fact, this seems to be a running feature in civic poetry of the 1920s and 1930s—such poetry is not a paeon to power or an aesthetic communication of policies from top to bottom, but a series of personal communications about major collective affective events.

ground on which he sacrificed himself. This is, then, not at all a poem of “Socialism in One Country” or a call to the defense of the borders, then. Yet it seems to have some amount of influence on the management of territorial aesthetics and the representation of the border, in great part because of its serendipitous pertinence when the Spanish Civil War broke out and the Soviet population was mobilized in support of the Republicans in Spain.

As seems to be a fixture in the mythology of many ultimately popular works, Mikhail Svetlov’s memoirs indicate that, when he wrote “Grenada” in 1926, the publication establishment met it with ambivalence:

I presented my verses then and there to Bagritskii and eagerly watched to see his delight. But there was no delight. “Huh,” he said. Nor did “Granada” affect Voronskii [the chief editor of *Red Virgin Soil*]: “Good. I might print them in August.” But it was May and I didn’t have a kopeck. And I rushed like a wolfhound from publisher to publisher. [...] And only the senior newspaper worker A. Stupniker, serving then at *October*, implored: “Misha! The verses are magnificent, but we have no money.” (Svetlov 3: 42-46).

In the end, Iosif Utkin published Svetlov’s poem with an advance in the literary supplement of the *Komsomol Pravda* [*Komsomol'skaia pravda*] on August 26th, 1926, an event that began the first of several lives for the verses. Several composers set Svetlov’s words to music, including G. Liaskunskii in 1926 and Iulii Meitus in 1927. Leonid Utësov performed this song more than once, reading it in his Thea-Jazz [Tea-dzhaz] program in 1929 and singing it to Konstantin Listov’s melody in the late 1930s, when Soviet investment in the Spanish Civil War lent the poem a fresh interpretation (“Grenada”).

Svetlov's work was thus very much an active part of the atmosphere in which Soviet civic poetry incubated and emerged in the Stalinist period, a fact that is almost surprising given that the poem reflects a rather un-Stalinist vision of socialism and revolution. Much of the content of "Grenada" strongly implies a masked elegy for Lev Trotskii's ideology of World Revolution. In the context of world revolution, after all, a Red soldier might very well have dreamt of reaching the western edge of Europe as a natural end to the revolution opening up before him—but he dies before reaching it. The formal construction of the poem also suggests an interpretation of the tragic death of an ideal. Michael Wachtel locates Svetlov's poem within the semantic halo of the amphibrachic tetrameter, a halo introduced by Vasilii Zhukovskii with his translation of Ludwig Uhland's ballad "Revenge" ["Die Rache"; "Mshchenie"] and cemented, Wachtel argues, in Pushkin's "The Black Shawl" ["Chërnaia shal"].⁸⁹ The amphibrachic tetrameter is associated with a lexicon of "sadness" [pechal'] and "urgent rushing" [*mchat'sia*], and conditions expectations of the tragic (and gendered) consequences of Romantic contact between the exotic and the civilized ("Chërnaia shal'," 39). However, while Svetlov's poem ends tragically, with the death of the young Soviet soldier, who holds the song of Grenada close to his heart as he goes to battle with the Whites, the poem appears to thwart the expectations of the meter, as the sacrifice is not female. Taking up this lacuna in Wachtel's mention of Svetlov, Omri Ronen suggests that the feminine sacrifice can be understood as the death of the poem's ideal of the World Revolution (41), as "Mirovaia Revoliutsiia" is a feminine noun phrase.

⁸⁹ Svetlov's poem follows Pushkin's in more than one way; "The Black Shawl" was also set to music in 1823 and became one of the most famous romances in the Russian repertoire.

Elena Mikhailik suggests that Svetlov's work fell within the semantic halo of the tragic ballad, but that soldiers' ballads mediated or contaminated the link between Pushkin and Svetlov. In this way, it becomes possible to reconcile, for example, the fact that "Grenada" is visually organized as octaves with lines of two ictus and in *dol'nik*, a more general accentual verse in which amphibrachs could be a subset.⁹⁰ In particular, Mikhailik sees an intertextual connection to a song sung by thousands of soldiers in the First World War:

Прощайте, родные,
Прощайте, друзья,
Прощай, дорогая
Невеста моя.
(Mikhailik)

Farewell, loved ones,
Farewell, friends,
Farewell, my dear
Bride.

Compare with:

Я хату покинул,
Пошел воевать,
Чтоб землю в Гренаде
Крестьянам отдать.

⁹⁰ It is a natural impulse to combine the lines of the octave into a quatrain, reading the poem as organized in hemistiches in accordance with the masculine rhyme scheme. However, the breaks across the line cause the underlying amphibrachic structure to express itself as the looser *dol'nik*, more typical of folksong; this relieves the reader of having to explain minor deviations from the amphibrachic meter. Lugovskoi's use of a similar principle of hemistiches and/or extreme caesura to different effect in "To the Bolsheviks of the Desert and Spring" suggests that a closer study of the device in poetry of this period might be pursued fruitfully in a separate project.

Прощайте, родные!
Прощайте, семья!
«Гренада, Гренада,
Гренада моя!»
(Svetlov 1: 155)

I abandoned my home,
Set off to fight,
In order to give the peasant
Of Grenada their land.
Farewell, loved ones!
Farewell, family!
“Grenada, Grenada,
My Grenada!”

Mikhailik explains, “This rhythmic-syntactic formula exists almost in full in ‘Grenada’—although the place of the ‘dear bride’ was taken by the Spanish province/a dream/World Revolution.” Svetlov reproduces much of the sense of the soldier’s song of regret at leaving the comforts of home, but inverts it so that the dreams of domestic comfort, joy, and reproductive fecundity lie abroad.

The inversion of the soldiers’ ballad and territorial aesthetics that arise from it seem to be meaningful as part of the explanation of the song’s longevity in the face of a major shift in territorial policy and the disavowal of actively fueling revolution across Europe in favor of intensive development of the Soviet industrial infrastructure. In the first life of “Grenada,” a satisfying sense of closure could emerge from the consecration of Spain and the westward direction as a result of the death of the Ukrainian fighter. In the first strophe, we see the division as a whole singing “A Little Apple” [“Iablochka”]; Svetlov notes how this song and the implicit sacrifice of the division are connected to a consecrated and transfigured image of the land on which the soldiers fall:

Ах, песенку эту
Доныне хранит

Трава молодая —
Степной малахит.
(155)

Ah, this little song
Is preserved to this day
In the young grass—
The malachite of the steppe.

As the grass has been transformed into malachite by the soldiers' experience, as encapsulated in their song, a similar transformation can be seen in connection with Grenada and the death of the single soldier who believed in Grenada:

Лишь по небу тихо
Сползла погода
На бархат заката
Слезинка дождя...
(158)

Only along the sky quietly
Descended a while later
Onto the velvet of the sunset
A little tear of rain.

If the grass becomes malachite, the sunset becomes velvet. In the context of 1926, the remaining soldiers' callousness toward the death of the singer, as they leave only the rain to weep for him, readily accommodates an interpretation of the indifference of the State to the promise of world revolution and to the lives sacrificed in the brutal transitional periods of the interwar period, from the Civil War to collectivization. However, Svetlov also leaves available a potential territorial aesthetic of rigid boundedness—the field of action on the original territory of the Russian Empire—constructed in parallel with the abandonment of an ideal located on the other side.

In principle, the death that Svetlov depicts remain influential because of its multiple valences. On the one hand, the moment of death for the Ukrainian singing of Spain signals the

curtailment of movement—the outwardly oriented soldier is planted in one place. But the sheer pathos of his death ensures that his ideal, now permanently outside of the borders, is preserved in song. The actual struggles of the Republicans in Spain ten years later, in the end, was simply an affirmation of the aesthetic truth expressed in the poem.

Boris Kornilov's long poem *My Africa* [*Moia Afrika*] (1935) revisits this vision of world revolution as an unrealized, but latent element of the Civil War that can now be shared with areas non-contiguous to the Soviet Union. The poem describes the first months of the Civil War in Petrograd, before the capital of the Soviet Union was moved to Moscow and the Soviet armed forces, including the Red Guard of Petrograd, reorganized into the Red Army. Fighters assemble from all of the large factories in the city—Gvozdil'nyi, Putilovskii, Baltiiskii, and so on (Kornilov 420-1)—in order to disperse in all needed directions across the Soviet Union:

на Зимний,
и на Пулков,
на Украину,
к югу,
на Восток.
(420)

to the Winter Palace,
and to the Pulkov heights,
to the Ukraine,
to the south,
to the East.

This introduction characterizes a gathering up of the organized and concentrated proletariat from the northern capital, and then their distribution across the entirety of the Russian Empire, from its political heart to the south, west, and east. These opening moments essentially claim identity between the working class centered in Petrograd and the territory of the nascent Soviet Union.

If the initial context implies dispersal from the old capital outwards to the extremes of the old empire, the narrative is nonetheless closely tied to Petrograd, to one person there who

experiences a spatial connection to Africa across discontinuous space. The story follows the teenager Dobychin, whose work in the first winter of the Civil War entails putting up agitational posters across the city. Not only is he relatively immobile compared to the Red Guard that Kornilov first illustrates, he is soon extremely immobile as he falls ill with typhus. Unlike the soldier of Svetlov's poem, Kornilov's hero does not die. Rather, in delirium close to death, he has an encounter with an African in the uniform of the Red Guard; he then has a hallucinatory fever-dream of reaching Africa. There is little in previous passages to anticipate the improbable African volunteer's appearance in the middle of a blizzard. After Dobychin recovers, the mystery of the unexpected African eventually drives the young man to abandon his work and new wife in order to seek out information about this man. The search takes him all throughout the Soviet Union with the Red Army, until he meets a cavalryman who served under the African, who was named Vilan and who died courageously for his men and Russia.

While Vilan himself does not have the opportunity to speak, the cavalryman he led serves as a proxy and proffers the African's reasons for fighting with the Red Army in Russia:

Не за награды
и не за медали –
за то, чтоб африканским буржуйам,
капиталистам африканским дали,
как у нас, в России, по шеям,
он с нами шёл –
на белом,
на буланом
(445)

Not for awards
and not for medals,
but in order to give it to the African bourgeoisie,
to the African capitalists,
on the neck, like we did in Russia,
he went with us,

on a white horse,
on a dun horse.

As an explanation made in terms of a Marxist-Leninist history of the progression of material bases and proletarian vanguards, Vilan's motivation contrasts with an earlier passage during Dobychin's hallucinations, in which the author works through a more complicated picture of African class and race history. Dobychin dreams of the hot and dangerous continent of Africa, then of being an African himself, enslaved to America and eventually lynched, taking the narrative to the very moment that he would begin swinging in the air:

Он африканец, раб и чернокожий,
он – бедный трус,
а белые смелы...
[...]
на кулаки его пошёл свинец,
под небом Африки его начало,
и здесь, в Америке, его конец.
[...]
Ведут судить
и судят самосудом --
и судят Линча старого судом.
(433)

He was an African, a slave and black-skinned,
he was a lowly coward,
and the whites were brave...
[...]
lead came to his fists,
his beginning was under the skies of Africa,⁹¹

⁹¹ I am grateful to Jonathan Platt and Il'ia Kukulin for underscoring the connection with Aleksandr Pushkin, who uses this phrase to refer to himself in *Evgenii Onegin*: "Under the skies of my Africa/ To sigh of dusky Russia [Pod nebom Afrikoï moei,/ Vzdykhat' o sumrachnoi Rossii]" (*PSS* 6: 26). The incorporation of Russian literature's most famous African (Pushkin's

and here, in America, would be his end.
[...]
They lead him to be judged
and they judge by mob law,
and judge by the law of the old Lynch.

Dobychin's first impression of Africans is, as the poem indicates, a combination of "everything that Dobychin/ had deduced from little books/ from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, long ago [vsë, chto Dobychin/ vychital iz knizhek/ iz *Diadi Toma khizhini* davno]" (435). In a sense, Dobychin's dream-death results in the dissolution of the logic of imperialism, imposed underdevelopment, and racist oppression, and creates the space for Vilan later to present his struggle as a straightforwardly class-based conflict against the bourgeois capitalists in Africa. Historical and geographic differences between Africa and the Russian Empire are minimized, such that their struggles become parallel and interchangeable.

Dobychin's dream-death and the subsequent equivalence drawn between the African and the Soviet situations offer an important recapitulation and development of the idea of death and transcendence over geographic borders. In a rearrangement of the elements of "Grenada," this realization is what prepares Dobychin to join actively in the Civil War, writing to his wife, "As he died in battle/ for gloomy Russia,/ for his own Russia,/ so I will die for my Africa [Kak umer on v boiu/ za sumrachnuiu,/ za svoiu Rossiu,/ tak ia umru za Afriku moi]" (450). "Africa" here lies somewhere beyond Dobychin's actual situation, as he writes from Kastornaia Station, near

great grandfather, Abram Petrovich Gannibal, was an African page given as a gift to Peter the Great, and Pushkin wove his lineage into his literary biography) provokes an entire separate discussion of the pleasure of the foreign trace mixed with the origin in an imperial or neo-imperial context.

Kursk. In concrete spatial terms, the continent of Africa remains inaccessible to Dobychna, like Grenada to the Ukrainian, becoming only the conclusion of a revolution fought to its logical conclusion.

Writing in 1935, well after the conceptual stabilization of the Soviet border that had prompted Svetlov's elegy to world revolution, Kornilov nonetheless preserves the dynamic of discontinuous space, which the subject cannot traverse conventionally, but only by entering an alternative state of being, e.g., death or a near-death experience. Kornilov also preserves the persistent and unexpected trace of the foreign within the Soviet Union—a book about Grenada for Svetlov's hero and the African in Kornilov's tale. This trace serves as an affective fuel for the reproduction of Soviet space within borders; after all, Dobychnin deploys not to Africa, but to the Soviet heartland. In the meantime, however, it also serves as evidence of the relative uniformity of Soviet territory, given that the sense of difference is provoked from beyond the Soviet border.

The continuities and subtle shifts in the representation of the border and Soviet territory developed in the idiom of the memory of the Civil War and the economic policies of the interwar period. As the Soviet citizenry became invested in the Spanish Civil War and the Soviet Union's own military actions at the Soviet-Manchurian border, the aesthetics of the border changed once again. The next section will examine how the dynamic of the border and relationship with foreignness continues to develop in Konstantin Simonov's poetry.

5.4 KONSTANTIN SIMONOV: EXPANSION AND THE NATURALNESS OF EMPIRE

Simonov wrote about Spain and the frontier of Soviet influence when the Soviet Union's projection of military power beyond its borders was intensifying in the late 1930s. Having at first done so relatively indirectly, with well-publicized Arctic and aviation missions and indirect support of the republicans in the Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union was engaged in direct military action in Manchuria by 1939, in Eastern Poland after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, and in Finland in 1940. In his poetry dedicated to these events, Simonov offers an example of how the border and Soviet interior could become unstable and expansionary once more—but in a different fashion from International Revolution.

The Spanish Civil War rearranged the sense of revolutionary geography as it had been seen in Svetlov's "Grenada." The cultural narrative of Soviet volunteers departing for Spain to fight the fascists offered renewed conceptual access to the archetypal "land beyond the Soviet horizon," although the sweep across Europe that Grenada had symbolized was now discontinuous.⁹² Not only was socialism not spreading linearly in a spatial sense, it was potentially taking root once again in an economically underdeveloped country and bypassing the large, concentrated proletariats of Germany, France, and England (disrupting the Marxist description of the stages of economic development for a different kind of narrative). Spain's agrarian economy and poverty made for an ideal comparison with the recent Soviet past; the

⁹² This recalls Maiakovskii's dynamic of world revolution being possible in any city, from which it would then propagate. But the connections—the "rays"—he had visualized are now entirely absent. Solidarity, it stands to reason, must take forms besides the revolution.

discourse of “Spain” offers a different experimental space for representing potential variations on the Soviet configuration of equivalence between being inwardly oriented and economically progressive, increasing homogeneity, and the enforced inviolability of the border by hostile outsiders.

“The General” (1937) is dedicated to Máté Zalka, a Hungarian revolutionary who had, as a Russian prisoner of war during World War I, come to fight for Communism; over the course of this fight, he never again returned to live in his native land. In this early, relatively romantic poem by Simonov, the general is depicted in Spain, thinking about Hungary shortly before his death. The landscape of Spain is not really imbued with any symbolic meaning in itself: “Above him the Aragonian laurels/ Rustle their heavy foliage [Nad nim aragonskie lavry/ Tiazhëloi listvoi shelestiat]” (20). Rather, it provides a set of referents that, when refracted through the consciousness of the general or the separate consciousness of the lyric subject, points to a place outside of Spain and the Soviet Union.

Formally, “The General” shares some evocative characteristics with Svetlov’s “Grenada.” Simonov also uses amphibrachs, albeit in the far more common trimeter, not dimeter or tetrameter. It also alludes to Svetlov’s masculine rhyme scheme, being in AbCb, though “The General” resists being read as organized by hemistiches in the same way that “Grenada” had invited.⁹³ If Svetlov’s elegiac space of world revolution is being invoked (especially given that it commemorates Zalka’s death), Simonov’s poem enforces a sense of layering, as opposed to

⁹³ To turn Simonov’s quatrains in trimeter into two lines in hexameter (4x3→2x6) would produce more elongation and distortion, while turning Svetlov’s octaves in dimeter into four lines in tetrameter would consolidate the shape (8x2→4x4).

extension, between Spain and Hungary. Such layers, invite a comparison between the prosaic and the poetic, realia and the ideal, the Soviet Union and Spain.

“The General” begins with a description of Zalka in the mountains of Spain. Observing the Spanish backwoods, the general imagines his native Hungary:

Давно уж он в Венгрии не был –
С тех пор, как попал в войну,
С тех пор, как он стал коммунистом
В далёком сибирском плену.
(20)

He has already long been away from Hungary
Ever since he ended up at war,
Ever since he became a Communist
In faraway Siberian captivity.

The poem describes Zalka’s far-ranging military career in brief, before a marked shift in perspective to that of Simonov’s lyric subject in Moscow, “not long ago [nedavno]” in contrast to the repeated line “He has *long* been away from Hungary [*Davno on v Vengrii ne byl*]” (21, emphasis mine). The lyric subject reports the rumors that Zalka has died in action near Huesca; while the historical record substantiates these rumors, the lyric subject prefers not to believe them. After geographic attention has wandered through Hungary and Russia, the antepenultimate strophe returns to a concrete Spain, where the general (now clearly imagined by the lyric subject in Moscow) remembers Hungary.

Он жив. Он сейчас под Уэской.
Солдаты усталые спят.
Над ним арагонские лавры
Тяжёлой листвой шелестят.

И кажется вдруг генералу,
Что это зелёной листвой
Родные венгерские липы
Шумят над его головой.
(21)

He is alive. He is now near Huesca.
The tired soldiers are sleeping.
Above him the Aragonian laurels
Rustle their heavy foliage.

And it seems suddenly to the general,
That it is his dear Hungarian lindens
That make noise in the green foliage
Above his head.

These final strophes reproduce the introduction to the poem almost in full—only the first line of the eight changes from “Coffee is bubbling in a coffee pot [V kofeinue kofe klokochet]” to “He is alive. He is now near Heusca [On zhiv. On seichas pod Uèskoi]” (20, 21). Semantically speaking, this change marks a significant transition from prosaic reality to an unfulfilled desire (Zalka here may be alive, but it is in the same sense that Lenin, interred in his mausoleum, is alive).

The dropped “Coffee is bubbling in a coffee pot” also signposts Simonov’s use of repetition. The first nine lines of the poem, ending at the line about coffee, have a relatively high degree of consonance by comparison to the remainder of the poem:

В горах этой ночью прохладно.
В разведках намаявшись днём,
Он греет холодные руки
Над жёлтым походным огнём.

В кофейнике кофе клокочет.
(20)

It is chilly tonight in the mountains.
Having worn himself out on recon during the day,
He warms his cold hands
Over a yellow campfire.

Coffee is bubbling in a coffee pot.

“Kh” occurs five times in four lines.⁹⁴ Even disregarding the grammatical endings of “v gorakh [in the mountains]” and “v razvedkakh [on reconnaissance],” it is all the more notable because the remaining three instances come from only two roots with many consonants in common, “kholod” [cold] and “khod” [way]. Likewise, half of the four “k” sounds of the second strophe’s first line come from the (foreign) word *kofe* [coffee]. The second instance of markedly foreign consonance prompts a possible rereading of the first strophe’s more geographic and prosaic vocabulary of mountains and weather, suggesting that the cold mountains are just as far away from “home” as coffee’s origins. As the poem’s narrative develops, the device of consonance as marked by the sense of the “faraway” Spain fades and signals a shift in the general’s situation. A far more conceptually meaningful repetition occurs on the semantic level when the general sees Hungary in the foliage of Spain, itself seen twice by the reader. The importance of this transcendent space may be underscored by the wholesale repetition of the first strophe (sans foreign coffee and kh-filled mountains), but its sense of reality affirmed by the lyric subject, located in Moscow.

The international solidarity of “The General” and similar poems dedicated to the heroism of the Spanish Republicans seems to reflect a sense of spectacle, particularly as Simonov simultaneously developed a separate (if related) aesthetic for conflicts at the Soviet border itself, such as those of the Soviet-Japanese War in Mongolia in 1939. Katharine Hodgson, in her history of the war theme in Soviet poetry, suggests that the decisive factor in the development of

⁹⁴ The typical frequency of the letter “kh [x]” in the Russian alphabet is 0.95% (<http://www.sttmedia.com/characterfrequency-russian>). In the poem as a whole, the character frequency of “kh” is 0.076%; in the first strophe, it is 4.39%.

an aesthetic alternative to romanticism was personal experience and firsthand witnessing. For example, by contrast to Simonov with regard to the Spanish Civil War, Il'ia Ėrenburg had “worked as a war correspondent in Spain, so [...] he saw the war at first hand. Ėrenburg’s poetry shows a different war, ultimately tragic, bringing destruction and ending in defeat” (39). Similarly, Simonov shifted in aesthetic strategies when he wrote about battles witnessed in Mongolia, writing “Faraway in the East” [“Daleko na vostoke”], a book of journalistic prose that “contained realistic descriptions of the harsh conditions in the desert where the battles took place, did not gloss over death in battle, and insisted on the soldiers’ right to think of home and loved ones without being considered weak or sentimental” (40). Il'ia Kukulin offers a significant addition to this formulation about the impact of the war: that the alternative aesthetic arose from the intersection of two incompatible wartime orientations toward suffering that intensified as defeats or non-victories occurred. One, the “propagandistic line that all suffering was deserved or, in any case, made worthwhile by the impending victory. [...] The second redounded from the perception that both positive and terrible experiences of wartime have their own independent meaning; a new aesthetic in depictions of war was constructed on this model.”

The difference between war as imagined and justified and war as witnessed and experienced described a thematic cleavage emerging in late 1930s poetry, as the years leading up to the Operation Barbarossa in 1941 offered an increasing number of opportunities to witness war and attempt to square the experience with the injunction not to write of suffering within the purview of the state (Kukulin). The coexistence of the two tendencies at one time within Simonov’s work, however, suggests that the key is not necessarily a matter of supersession, of the destruction of naivet  and romantic spectacle by gritty experience. Rather, it could also be understood as at least partially informed by a spatial logic—Spain was there, but Manchuria is

here. Here, the site of the dynamic border itself, where space is measured in bodies and landmarks (that disappear as the land is won), contrasts both with international transcendence in the style of “Grenada” or *My Africa* and with a flattened, ascetic mode of experiencing Soviet territory internally. The latter case can be made on the basis of Simonov’s poem cycle “Verses on the Railroad” [“Dorozhnye stikhi”], dated between 1938 and 1939.

“Verses on the Railroad” is a cycle of nine poems dedicated generally to the theme of travel, typically in the form of meditations or conversations, but also with a gesture toward the folk song, as in the ninth poem “A Northern Song” [“Severnaia pesnia”]. As a rule, the lyric consciousness is situated in the non-geographic location of the moving train or the generic railway station. Simonov’s imaginative descriptions between these small spaces and the landscape elapsing outside the windows of the train offer a complement to the aerial aspects of the Socialist Realist narrative of transcendence.

The first poem, “The Departure,” elaborates on the virtues of travelling light. This, certainly, entails travelling unburdened by possessions, but it also means travelling unburdened by regrets or sadness at leaving an old life behind:

Нам всем, как хлеб, нужна привычка
Других без плача провожать,
И весело самим прощаться,
И с легким сердцем уезжать.
(36)

All of us need the habit, like we need bread
Of seeing others off without tears,
And of ourselves bidding farewell cheerily,
And of departing with a light heart.

In an understated way, deciding to travel the Soviet Union and leave one’s old life behind reproduces the master plot device of death and resurrection that typified the above-described war poetry by Svetlov, Kornilov, and Simonov. Duty is taken on without regrets or expectations of

comfort; the lyric subject tries to leave personal desires behind.⁹⁵ “Not worrying about the future [O budushchem ne bespokoias’]” (36), the lyric subject settles in a sort of permanent present that covers an immense distance. Time becomes spatialized: in “Telegram” [“Telegramma”], the lyric subject sees the telegraph poles flying past as he travels by train.

Всегда назад столбы летят в окне.
Ты можешь уезжать и возвращаться,
Они опять по той же стороне
К нам в прошлое обратно будут мчаться.
(37)

The poles are always flying back in the window.
You can leave and return,
And again they’ll be on the same side
Rushing back toward us in the past.

By contrast to how one would imagine a poet like Kirsanov handling the movement of the train forward, Simonov’s lyric subject draws attention to the static position of the subject relative to the poles, which fall away no matter what the direction of the train. The telegram becomes a means of communicating over time, in place of the more traditional understanding of its being a mode of communication that covers great distances almost instantly. Simonov reinforces the impression of traveling through time with a deliberately childish visualization of telecommunication as “a piece of paper crumpled into the tube [Zakruchennaia v trubochku bumazhka]” (37).

⁹⁵ I would like to acknowledge an overall debt in this section to Il’ia Kukulin, who suggested throughout that I read Simonov’s poetry set within the Soviet Union and at its border with more sensitivity to the sense of melancholy, *toska*, and alienation that the poet expresses. It is very useful for thinking through the precarious state of imagined community at this point in history, although this perception may require better incorporation in later revisions of this work.

The two major exceptions to this rule of geographic non-specificity serve, in a way, to reinforce the greater desirability of the railroad space of immense presence. In the poem “Kazbek,” the lyric subject is surprised, upon arriving in the Caucasus, at how familiar Kazbek’s peak is, in a sense recapitulating poetic commonplaces of first encountering the mountains and entering into its literary tradition:

Я наконец приехал на Кавказ,
И моему неопытному взору
В далекой дымке в первый раз
Видны сто раз описанные горы.
(41)

I have at last arrived at the Caucasus,
And to my inexperienced gaze
For the first time, in the far-off smoke
The mountains, described a hundred times, are visible.

On further thought, he realizes why the mountain is so familiar to him—and in doing so, apparently drops out of the literary tradition, already rich in the age of Pushkin and Lermontov, into a very different register of knowledge:

И вдруг, соскучившись без папирос,
Берусь за папиросную коробку,
Так вот оно, пятно! На фоне синих гор,
Пришпорив так, что не угнаться,
На черном скакуне во весь опор
Летит джигит за три пятнадцать.
(41)

And suddenly, missing my cigarettes,
I take up my cigarette box,
And there it is, the blotch! Against the background of blue mountains,
Spurring forward and uncatchable
At full tilt on a black courser
A trick rider flies at a cost of three-fifteen.



Figure 7. The label for Kazbek cigarettes

Simonov's discovery that the vista is best known to him through the picture on a box of cigarettes (see fig. 7) draws the cultural tradition of the site more and more into doubt. Indeed, he seems to generalize geographic sites as a whole as being at risk for conscription to the needs of advertisement:

Как жаль, что часто память в нас живет
Не о дорогах, тропах, полустанках,
А о наклейках минеральных вод,
О марках вин и о консервных банках...
(42)

What a pity that our memories that survive
Are not of roads, paths, waystations,
But rather of the stickers on mineral water,
Of the labels of wine and cans of preserves.

These final four lines contain two sets of experiences, presenting them as a choice to the reader. In principle, it is not the corruptible sublimity of nature's extremes that are at stake, but the fact that their images can be subverted to the needs of Soviet consumerism.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ This is a possible reaction to the embourgeoisement of Stalinist society—the social contract that, in return for support of the regime, material comforts and class distinctions would be granted. This subject would have been trickier to handle than the 1920s dissatisfaction with NEP, in which Nepmen were conceptually outside of the ideological order.

It could be argued that Simonov substitutes one romanticized milieu for another in his preference for the train over impressive geographic sites. In advocating against the accumulation of possessions—including memories, which are comparable to the luggage that the passenger must attend to instead of being in the present moment at the window—Simonov’s poems suggest that the individual instance inevitably dissolves into a bigger system, whether market capitalism or the Soviet socialist project. Though a stable lyric subject characterizes his poems, this is a different articulation of the citizen’s relationship to an imagined community: no longer transformed or even sacrificed, but incorporated into a whole—and not a whole that is easy to belong to, but one which requires constant attention and proofs of loyalty lest one fall out of it. The actual physicality of territory or possessions becomes something of a handicap, in comparison with the complete transience of the new Soviet existence.

The other specific geographic location named in this cycle is Medvezh’ia Gora, situated in the far north between Petrozavodsk and Murmansk. By contrast with the magnificent mountain peak of Kazbek, the town’s significance is industrial and transient, as it is where the Belomor Canal administration was temporarily housed. The poem “Rooms in Medvezh’ia Gora” [“Nomera v ‘Medvezh’ei gore”] begins with the lyric subject’s explanation to a hotel clerk that all he needs are the basic essentials: “A stuffed mattress for sleep, a window for breathing/ And a key, in order to forget it in the lock [Chtob spat’ – tiufiak, chtoby dyshat’ – okno,/ I kliuch, chtob zabyvat’ ego v zamke]” (37). The dialogue itself is short and functional, but lyric, suggesting something at once both deeply melancholic and minimalist in human interactions.

The lyric subject speaks of the rented room as filled with such short and forgettable encounters as the interaction with the clerk, as “everyone leaves minor traces [Vse ostavliaiut melkie sledy]” (37). Much as in the case of the poem about Kazbek, he defines the room in terms

of a list of these traces: “Someone has left a transit pass from last year,/ Another a sprinkling of ash, another a glass of water [Kto proshlogodnii proezdnoi bilet,/ Kto gorstku pepla, kto stakan vody]” (37). The everyday is here entirely impersonal. He “will move the wardrobe, will place the table in the corner/ and even let loose a few rings of smoke/ over the table for beauty’s sake [Ia sdvinu shkaf, postavliu stol uglom/ I dazhe neskol’ko kolets/ Dlia krasoty razveshu nad stolom]” (38), but he acts upon his space without the hope to leave an intentional trace such as those that would be associated with creative acts in the name of beauty and art.

The fifth poem of the cycle, “Melancholy” [“Toska”], confirms as much. The lyric subject speaks with three melancholic men, one of whom has lost a beloved woman, another of whom has lost his artistic inspiration, and the last of whom has run out of cigarettes. The lyric subject is ready to help the first—“We’ll search and find another [Poishchem –/ I naidëm druguiu]” (38)—and the second—“We’ll track down [your muse] and bring her back [Dogonim, privedëm obratno]” (39). Being out of cigarettes when it is raining, though, is something the lyric subject cannot fix; he can only share the melancholy. Simonov appears to be at work on a certain anti-exoticism that is somewhat at odds with the aesthetics of travel and revolution; he focuses on the human being as a body with a social mission and few needs besides immediate physical demands, in spite of an inappropriate desire for more personal relations that leaks around the edges of these poems. The poems of “Verses on the Railroad,” in their tenacious insistence on the sensations of “now” and “here,” displace the value of “future” and “there” on a space beyond that in which Simonov travels.

A candidate for this other kind of space may be found in Simonov’s poetry as a witness of war, as in the book *To My Yurt-Mates* [*Sosediam po iurte*] (1939), which describes the front of the conflict in Manchuria, where he was a correspondent. In some ways, the impressionistic

portraits in this collection imply an aesthetic link between Simonov's Manchuria and his Spain. However, Simonov decides to focus on less "heroic" figures than Zalka or Amundsen, to whom he had dedicated earlier poems, and explains how he understands his wartime task in "The Mechanic":

Я знаю, что книгами и речами
Пилота прославят и без меня.
Я лучше скажу о том, кто ночами
С ним рядом просиживал у огня,

Кто вместе с пилотом пил спирт и воду,
Кто с ним пополам по Москву скучал,
Кто в самую дьявольскую погоду
Сто раз провожал его и встречал.
(49)

I know that in books and speeches
They will honor the pilot even without me.
I'd rather speak of him, who would spend the nights
Sitting next to him at the fire,

Who would drink spirits and water with the pilot,
Who would share his longing for Moscow,
Who a hundred times saw him off and met him
In the absolute most devilish weather.

The structure of poem is such that "longing for Moscow," does not create the same sort of transcendent space that is found in "The General," with its overlay of Hungary atop Spain. Action and affect remain rooted in the sphere of action, and Moscow (which serves, interestingly, as a placeholder for an implicit "home," perhaps because it is home for Simonov himself) remains distant from the affective routine that is rooted at the border between Mongolia and the Soviet Union. Longing is simply a shared affect, one that finally has the leeway to create a sense of shared community.

The border offers a space not only for comparison with the alien beyond, but also with the Soviet interior, which becomes a referent for the historical time and for a sense of

displacement and distance. This becomes most evident in a poem of the *Yurt-Mates* collection beginning “It is too hard to write from such a deafening distance” [“Slishkom trudno pisat’ iz takoi oglushitel’noi dali”] (1939), and written in the form of a letter between a lyric subject and his wife. Its underlying meter is essentially a regular anapest pentameter, though occasional discrepancies of excess syllables offer a glimmering of a looser accentual rhythm, as in the case of “Kogda blizko bombēzhka... No podrobnosti ei ne nuzhny [When bombing comes near... But she doesn’t need such details]” (56). What the sheer length of a five or more-ictus line in ternary meter offers in return for occasional rhythmic aberrations is a persistent caesura after the second ictus. Such a caesura offers a natural sense of division and split to reinforce the concept of “here” and “there”:

Есть простудные ветры. | Но московское слово «простуда»
 Ей всегда почему-то | казалось страшнее войны.
 Впрочем, всё хорошо, | пусть посылки не собирает.
 Но тебе я скажу: | в этой маминой мирной стране,
 Где приезжие вдруг | от внезапных простуд умирают,
 Есть не всё, что им надо, | не всё, что им снится во сне.
 (56, vertical bar my insertion)

There are chilling winds. But the Muscovite word “chill”
 Has always seemed for some reason to be more frightening than war to [mother].
 Incidentally, everything is fine, don’t let her gather together care packages.
 But I’ll tell you: in this non-combatant country of mothers,
 Where newcomers suddenly die of unexpected chills,
 There isn’t everything that they need, not everything they dream of.

The hard pauses in approximately the same place are particularly striking when punctuation to that effect is sometimes not found even at the ends of lines. All the same, this tendency is toward an aesthetic of connection between Moscow and the periphery in which division is highlighted, rather than systems of comparative parallelism and aggregation. Instead, while there is still an enumeration of the banal details of life that the soldiers on the Soviet

periphery do have, including “linens out of orange baize [bel’ë iz oranzhevoi baiki]” and “fur vests of Mongolian broadtail lambskin [mekhovye zhilety iz mongol’skoi karakul’chi]” (56), there is also a new feature, that of lack and its complement in Moscow, “There isn’t everything that they need, not everything they dream of [Est’ ne vsë, chto im nado, ne vsë, chto im snitsia vo sne]” (56), that is “They don’t have enough of that one, who.../ For them, I don’t know who. For me, it’s you [im ne khvataet toi samoi, kotori.../ Im – ne znaiu kogo. Mne -- tebia]” (56).

The complementary relationship between the violently negotiated border and the political, cultural center of Moscow seems a natural enough feature of war poetry, especially poetry concerned with the experience of war at the human level. Moscow and the centripetal force typically associated with it in cultural criticism had, been present from the start, in Kirsanov’s and Lugovskoi’s implication that Europe and other foreign sites were drawn towards incorporation (as opposed to hostile impact) with the Moscow project. The fact that this inward projection from the border becomes explicitly about Moscow in war poetry is not surprising, as political actions such as the decision to engage an enemy at the border derive from central commands.

The Soviet Union was conceptually expanding throughout the thirties, as in the case of setting an example of socialist construction or successfully navigating hostile European waters, or even projecting the successes of irrigation into Afghanistan. The late thirties saw a further split in consciousness across the border, also related to the expansion implicit in the transitional poetry. It does not seem accidental that traditional periphery-metropole relationship, in which the material and affective resources of the periphery are fed back into the imperial center, explicitly re-emerges with *actual* territorial expansion in Simonov’s poetry. However, if the internal dynamics of empire are reproduced, Lugovskoi and Simonov, for example, steadfastly refuse to

indulge in the pleasure of imperial spectacle, eschewing exoticism and sublime landscapes in favor of asceticism and self-sacrifice. In the developed territorial aesthetic of 1930s poetry, exoticism and romanticism could still be indulged—but as an element of a place fixed beyond the border of the Soviet Union, like Africa or Spain.⁹⁷ While split across the border, however, imperial consciousness has been reproduced.

One of the useful features of the text at the center of the next chapter, Il'ia Sel'vinskii's *Cheliuskiniana*, is that it reunites these features of imperial consciousness: the voyage of the ill-fated icebreaker *Cheliuskin* is transparently about projecting Soviet power as far afield as possible, but it is also characterized by the pleasure of exploration. In bringing these elements of imperial organization together, Sel'vinskii actually keeps questions of imagined community and responsible governance open that might otherwise have been left to the side by the self-sacrificial aspect of the Soviet poet.

⁹⁷ In a sense, imagined community arising from solidarity with the people of those countries is easier to envision than the Soviet community to which Simonov's ascetic, isolated lyric subject belongs, simply because there is some non-localized affect.

6.0 EXPLORING THE NEW SOVIET EMPIRE IN IL'IA SEL'VINSKII'S *CHELIUSKINIANA*

In the discussion of borders in 1930s poetry, imagined community was beginning to reflect the strains put on it by the Soviet ideology that continuing, very real sacrifices to the state or for the future (or, it was also apparent, for the material domestic comfort of a new Soviet bourgeoisie) outweighed human affective bonds. One of the ways that the cultural apparatus attempted to overcome the fractures of imagined community was with the spectacle for the masses, whether in the massive mobilization of support for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War or in the carefully cultivated celebrity spectacles of Arctic exploration and aviation. In principle, for the people of the Soviet Union, sharing the mass media representations of these feats was a means of constituting a Union-wide imagined community—not least because they were all consuming the stories simultaneously.

However, in an epic poem dedicated to one of these Arctic feats, the *Cheliuskiniana*, Il'ia Sel'vinskii challenges that strategy. Sel'vinskii shows the need for an imagined community that overcomes the atomization that had already been implicit in the rationalized social units of Literary Constructivist theory and that was becoming more apparent in the division of geographic consciousness along the state border into the exotic outside and the community-negating inside. If the mass media used the simultaneity of consumption as a means of integrating peoples across the Soviet Union into a single present, Sel'vinskii notes the deeply

rooted histories and habits that resist that kind of community-building. His proposed solution is essentially the extension of the guidance of leaders to poorly-governed zones in the Soviet Union; if the solution is not particularly creative, the articulation of the problem is nonetheless useful for thinking about the ongoing challenges to constructing a coherent imagined community with a real sense of shared, progressive time across the Soviet Union.

The specific site of interrogation for the methods, consequences, and critiques of temporal constructions is Camp Schmidt [Lager' Shmidta], the settlement established on the winter ice of the Chukotskoe Sea in early 1934 by the passengers and crew of the ship *Cheliuskin*. In July 1934, the *Cheliuskin* embarked on a mission, commanded by Otto Schmidt, to navigate the Sevmorput (Severnyi morskoi put', Northern Maritime Route) without the use of an icebreaker (the *Cheliuskin*, while reinforced with steel, was not itself an icebreaker). In addition to the crew, led by Captain Voronin, the *Cheliuskin* was carrying scientists and family members to an Arctic research station. Famously, one of these passengers gave birth *en route* to a baby girl, who would be named Karina for the Kara Sea on which she was born. By October, the *Cheliuskin* was caught in the drift of an ice floe, and staying through the winter became unavoidable. On February 13, the ship sank, and the surviving crew and passengers were left to fend for themselves on the ice until they could be rescued. The story of how the *cheliuskintsy* lived in a perilous but inimitably civilized fashion on the ice in the settlement named Camp Schmidt and of how they were rescued by pilots was one of the biggest media events of the early Stalinist period.

In spite of its natural impermanence, the culture produced by and about Camp Schmidt taps into more general constructions of Soviet time as stable and permanent, to the extent that Camp Schmidt was literally put on the Soviet map. Even as the camp was vacated and left to be

consumed by the elements, *Izvestiia* reported the re-issue of the Atlas of the North, with the settlement marked out on it in the middle of the sea. Reportedly, the story had resulted in the complete sell-out of the original three-thousand-copy run; now, even as the fanatic response to the feat of the *cheliuskintsy* was bound to begin ebbing, a new edition featuring Camp Schmidt was issued for which “the circulation was 1.5 million copies [tirazh atlasa – 1.5 mln. èkzempliarov]” (“Lager’ Shmidta na geograficheskoi karte” 4). In principle, this rhetorical gesture at the high water mark of interest in the Arctic reflects the temporal extension of Camp Schmidt’s immobility; its impossible position on the ice is preserved through the wide circulation of paper, and the long period of time it will presumably take for such a large run to disappear completely.

6.1 THE ARCTIC AND SOVIET SPECTACLE

Broad surveys of the representation of the *Cheliuskin* and *cheliuskintsy*, from the management of celebrity status through memoir and patronage to the youth clubs dedicated to Arctic exploration to the sheer breadth of *Cheliuskin* paraphernalia, have been made in such books as John McCannon’s *Red Arctic*. Such expansiveness creates the conditions for (a perhaps too-ready) elision into generally accepted characterizations of 1930s Socialist Realism and its reflection of aesthetic trends of the 1930s, such as Katerina Clark’s nature/garden dialectic and the militarization of society in the politically isolated Soviet Union, for which the prospect of wars with Germany and Japan already loomed large in 1934.

John McCannon locates maritime feats in the Arctic, such as that of the *Cheliuskin*, within the trope of the “struggle with nature” [*bor’ba s prirodoi*] (84). Clark, who also mentions

the *Cheliuskin* in this context, identifies this struggle as a central Stalinist image, “an autonomous route to heroic status [in which] Soviet man proved himself superior to all men who had existed before by combatting the natural phenomena of greatest symbolic resonance in traditional Russian oral and written literature: water and ice” (101), a process in which, following the adventure, “order triumphs in the end” (104). The process of transforming the hostile north into an accommodating garden, or at least a contained arena for the testing of human mettle, is encapsulated in the completion of the SP-1 mission (a long-term encampment in the Arctic—on the land this time), when Otto Schmidt reports:

Nature subordinates herself to man when he knows how to arm himself for a fight and when he does not come out alone, but in a large group surrounded by the warm love of millions of citizens. And in this case, nature had to yield and sign an honorable treaty of peace with man. (*On the Top of the World* xi-xiii)

The coincidence of the Arctic and the tropes of the 1930s may not be accidental; occurring at the same time as the formation of the Writers’ Union, the *cheliuskinty* and their rescuers were the ideal object within Socialist Realism for Nikolai Tikhonov, who addressed *cheliuskinty* at a ceremonial meeting, saying, “We studied the deeply pithy simplicity of your epic story. It is the very model of Socialist Realism made in life [My uchilis’ gluboko sodержatel’noi prostote vashei épokei. Ona iavliaetsia tem obraztsom sozdannogo v zhizni sotsialisticheskogo realizma]” (“Obrazets sotsialisticheskogo realizma” 1).

With regard to spatial commonplaces, the association of the Soviet 1930s with stationary points of view and immobility has already been well argued within the framework of Culture One/Culture Two outlined by Vladimir Papernyi, within the binary of mobility/immobility.

Thus, a person in Culture 2 loses his unfixedness in geographic space, but, compensating in its own peculiar way, Culture Two separates off special people, who take on the difficult burden of itineracy, freeing all others from it by this action. All of the famous expeditions of the thirties—the rescue of the *cheliuskintsy*, the drift of the *papanintsy*, Chkalov’s flights over the North Pole, flights into the stratosphere—are described by mass media as something extremely difficult and torturous [...] although also joyful. [...] A peculiar substitution took place: instead of his real torments of fixation, a person empathetically experienced the torments of overcoming space. (Papernyi 64-5)

Emma Widdis posits a more productive and active role for audiences of filmic representations of adventure and expeditions. She roots the “official adventure film” in the blossoming 1920s study of localities (*kraevedenie*) and exploratory films on this research model, which trained viewers to “explore” their own environment on the constructive model of the expeditionary teams, and to build connections between themselves and these far-flung spaces: “The local space was pictured as a crucial part of the ‘whole’ of the national space, and it had to be mapped” (103). Though in 1932 the residency registration system [*propiska*] “brought the shared project of exploration to a symbolic end” (144), a relationship between the domestic sphere and the wild periphery remains in “the transformation of the wild into the domestic, the antisocial into the social, [which were] central to the project of *osvoenie*⁹⁸” (155). This

⁹⁸ Widdis uses *osvoenie* (assimilation, mastery) as a key term in her description of Soviet imaginative geography. It is “consistently linked to the more aggressive *zavoevanie* (conquest [through battle]) in descriptions of the transformation of territory [during the first Five-Year

movement of enthusiastic discovery was suspended in 1930, when, at the All-Russian Conference of Localities Studies, “they decided to liquidate all local societies of local studies, creating in its stead a bureau of local studies. [...] Volunteer civil organizations were replaced with an organ for fulfilling administrative functions” (Boreiko).

By contrast to Papernyi’s schematic, Widdis’s methodology takes into account the subjective agency and work engaged in by “the masses” and assumed by culture workers. However, the two models share the extreme sensory experience of and subsequent affective investment in the Soviet spectacle within more everyday experiences. As Buck-Morss suggests:

A utopics of sensuality did exist as part of Bolshevik discourse, and it retained a strong hold within the culture. In the daily-life context of extreme cold, dark days, epidemics of disease, and wartime suffering in the Soviet Union, all of the attributes of organic “life”—light, movement, sun, air, water—had utopian appeal. Alla Efimova has argued on this basis that the sun-drenched canvases typical of socialist realist paintings were effective not because of what they depicted, but how. Their visual style of representing bodily comfort—life over death, health over illness, plenty over want—appealed to the view on a somatic level that had little to do with their ideologically contrived content. (Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld* 119)

Even in an environment as remote and hostile to the technologies of reproduction as the Arctic (certainly by contrast to the staged ornamental ensembles of musical comedies), the total

Plans]. [Wild, untamed] space is ‘conquered’—that is, it is incorporated, contained within a clearly demarcated border. The centre assimilates the periphery” (7).

apparatus of culture production could be subordinated to a sensory regime of abundance and light. So, in the visual work of photographers and cinematographers and in the saturation of the airwaves, one can find a significant emotionally-charged transition towards comfort in written and educational descriptions of the Arctic: “The rhetorical goal of documentalist narratives about Soviet research about and *osvoenie* of the Arctic, such as Il’ia Sel’vinskii’s *Cheliuskiniana* or *The Ordinary Arctic*, a collective of short stories by Boris Gorbатов, is to persuade the reader that it is possible, by means of emotions, with the help of pure passion, to transform the Arctic at this very minute into a land, into the south where one can relax and enjoy life” (Frank).⁹⁹

For the *cheliuskinty* to operate as spectacle, though, there needs to be a clear sense that they will become actors, playing themselves, but following a scripted choreography. The moment at which the sensory overload of spectacle becomes the operative mode for propaganda about the *cheliuskinty* seems clear—essentially, it is when the most important news outlets reflected a marked shift in tone. While the flagship newspapers of the Soviet Union participated in the propaganda efforts to rally the rescue effort and reported regularly on new developments in the *Cheliuskin* mission and steps taken toward rescuing the survivors, these were for a long time rather terse and constrained by the limits of telegraphy, as in the case of the sinking of the ship:

⁹⁹ As this chapter proceeds, it will be argued that the aesthetically structuring priorities of Sel’vinskii’s poem as a whole are not, in fact, closely tied to this narrative goal of Arctic transformation. However, Frank rightly observes that, in its final narrative arc, *Cheliuskiniana* does reflect the icy Arctic’s surprising capacity to host warm-hearted society.

13 февраля, в 15 часов 30 минут, в 155 милях от мыса Северного и в 144 милях от мыса Уеллен «Челюскин» затонул, разломленный сжатием льдов [...] Пытаясь сойти с судна, погиб завхоз Могилевич. Он был придавлен бревном и увлечен в воду. Остальные [...] здоровы. Живем в палатках, строим деревянные бараки. У каждого – спальный мешок, меховая одежда [...] (Schmidt, “‘Cheliuskin’ zatonul” 1)

On 13 February, at 15.30, 155 miles from the Northern Cape and Cape Uelen, the *Cheliuskin* sank, broken apart by the pressure of the ice [...] Attempting to disembark from the vessel, Mogilevich, the ship’s bursar, perished. He was hit by a beam and drawn away into the water. The rest of us [...] are healthy. We live in tents and are building wooden barracks. Each person has a sleeping bag and fur clothing.

Updates before then had been even terser, as in the page-four notice earlier in the year: “The deck of the *Cheliuskin*, 31 December. (By radio). 29 December coordinates for *Cheliuskin*: latitude 69° 07’, longitude 174°. As of 28 December there has been no drift. Clear winter weather has set in” (Schmidt, “Dreif ‘Cheliuskina’ prekratilsia” 6). This drily informative style, accompanied by informational announcements about the committee formed for the rescue of the *cheliuskintsy*, was the rule from the time of the ship’s sinking until 6 March, when the spectacle of rescue began with the report that the women and children at Camp Schmidt had been rescued. From here, the dramatic rescue of the *cheliuskintsy* by air occupied the lion’s share of the front page of flagship newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*. Once amplified in such a fashion, it seems it was rather difficult to ratchet back the volume until the rescue was completed, five weeks later, on 13 April.

In many ways the narrative of the Arctic struggle particularly lent itself to spectacle, not because of its inherent properties, but because of the active cultivation of a select group of “photographers who accompanied polar expeditions and voyages” (McCannon 122). But the fact that, even in the laconic language of telegraphs and newspapers, reports conveyed the everyday details of clothing and food suggests a connection between the attraction of the *Cheliuskin* spectacle and the everyday details of being eternally “cheerful” [*bodro*] on the ice, which would not typically have found a place on the front page of the central newspapers of the Soviet Union. The extreme visibility of a group of citizens essentially in limbo—a mini-civilization on the ice that had already been “discovered” by the planes, but was still trapped—seems to hold more semiotic potential than has been previously articulated.¹⁰⁰ It may be the case, then, that the

¹⁰⁰ Not least of which is the converse myth enunciated in the 1990s of extreme invisibility that lies in the shadow of the feat of the *cheliuskintsy*: the conspiracy theory of the *Pizhma*, covered and exhaustively debunked by Sergei Lar'kov (“Ob odnom poliarnom mife GULAGa”). Supposedly built and reinforced as the twin of the *Cheliuskin*, the *Pizhma* travelled in tandem with the *Cheliuskin* in 1933 while carrying thousands of prisoners to a camp on the Chukotka peninsula. In this story, the *Cheliuskin* carried the wives and children of the NKVD agents who ran the camp the *Pizhma* was bound for, not scientists or the wives of figures already on Wrangel Island, as is attested in records. When, like the *Cheliuskin*, the *Pizhma* was trapped in the ice, the rescue of the prisoners was deemed uneconomical, and they were left, either to freeze and drown or to escape to Alaska. The role of the *Pizhma* has also been filled by the *Djurma*, which (in part because of this story) is one of the most famous of the prisoner transport ships in the gulag

overwhelming spectacle of the *cheliuskintsy* overshadows other processes at work in its representation, which become naturalized in the grand (and now distant) context of generalized epic spectacle in the 1930s.

This chapter is an attempt to unravel a small amount of what exactly is happening when the *Cheliuskin* and the *cheliuskintsy* are trapped. Thus, rather than address the Arctic as a site for the recapitulation of narrative and spatial tropes of the 1930s that were or would become territorially generalized (already done with admirable comprehensiveness), this chapter first takes up flagship newspapers such as *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* as a specific element within the aesthetic apparatus that generates the field in which the more general commonplaces emerge. In particular, I will argue that taking poetry in the cultural production context of flagship newspapers creates a specific sense of temporality that ties together occasional lyric, calendrical time, and the Soviet countryside and periphery.

system, but the Soviet Union only purchased the *Djurma* from the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company in 1935.

The apocryphal nature of this myth appears settled. The desire for a horrific, unseen underside to the *cheliuskintsy*'s hyper-mediated feat invites interpretation elsewhere, particularly in light of the actual, intentional elision of the expedition sent out in October 1933 (with Sel'vinskii and cinematographer Mark Troianovskii among them) to establish the feasibility of transit to the continent. Clearly, the expedition established the infeasibility of such a solution, but it was ill fit to the narrative of the absolute inescapability of Camp Schmidt that made the narratives of heroic rescue so effective (Pupkova).

This particular mode of representation seems to find particular resonance in Il'ia Sel'vinskii's *Cheliuskiniana*, published serially in 1937 and 1938.¹⁰¹ Like all published literature of this period, *Cheliuskiniana* could be read with and against the emergent Socialist Realist tropes described above, but its inclusion in this chapter is predicated on its role as a critical foil to the temporal-spatial aesthetics of settlement for which the *Cheliuskin* narrative had been an incubator. Sel'vinskii's text is a celebration of the *Cheliuskin*, the Arctic, and the greater Soviet project, but it also reflects attention to problems such as the reformation of the intelligentsia and the existence of long-rooted, concrete, and non-interchangeable histories of places and peoples. In particular, his novel view on the narrative, while remaining positive and optimistic, highlights the imperial and colonizing implications of the master *Cheliuskin* narrative.

6.2 THE CULTURAL PRODUCTION OF "SETTLEMENT"

Soviet expeditions to the extremes of the country were frequently represented as microcosms of Soviet societal ideals: hierarchically organized and thereby connected to the grander geopolitical hierarchies of Stalinism, and populated by clean-cut and optimistic specimens of the New Soviet Man and Woman enjoying the fruits of Soviet industrialization in a civilized fashion. Camp Schmidt was a particularly apt site for the representation of aspirational Soviet society; in spite

¹⁰¹ As will be described later in this chapter, the epic poem encountered difficulties with censorship that were of a type with his difficulties at this time. In 1937, during the period that the *Cheliuskiniana* was being issued, the Politburo issued a crushing resolution criticizing Sel'vinskii's play *Umka – The White Bear* [*Umka – Belyi medved'*].

of the dangers of the ice pack, the *cheliuskintsy* ever cheerfully took meteorological measurements, built primary and secondary airfields, attended lectures given by Schmidt, and cared for two young children as the months passed. The material charms of comfortable life that account for the “ratification” of the new Soviet social contract that Vera Dunham identifies as *embourgeoisement* (66) are absent from the imagery of Camp Schmidt, but one can certainly place it within the spatial-temporal aesthetics as a whole of bourgeois literary culture, characterized by “the triumph of everyday life, and of the hegemony of its categories everywhere, over the rarer and more exceptional moments of heroic deeds and ‘extreme situations’” (Jameson 108). The *cheliuskintsy* are a textbook example of heroic deeds and extreme situations, yet the very nature of reporting over time, especially in newspapers, before visual media arrived from the site, reasserts the primacy of the everyday.

In many ways, the following discussion of newspapers and shared everyday life is informed by Benedict Anderson’s discussion of vernacular print, and particularly the shared time of the imagined community constructed by the implied “simultaneity” of newspaper reading. “The very conception of the newspaper implies the refraction of even ‘world events’ into a specific imagined world of vernacular readers” (Anderson 63); in the multi-lingual Soviet Union, one might rephrase “vernacular” to refer to an imagined community connected as much or more by the vernacular of Soviet idiom and symbol as the Russian language. Indeed, in spite of the limitations on access to Soviet resources for monolingual speakers of minority languages, all autonomous republics published newspapers in the language of the titular nationality, albeit administered by an ideologically coherent, centralized authority.

The mediating tie of the newspaper between the *Cheliuskin* drama and the everyday is structured by discrete experiences of shared time. In one sense of time, newspaper coverage of

the rescue over the course of more than a month could not but create a suspended sense of anticipation and normalization. In another sense, there is a useful moment in which the cyclic calendar of Bolshevik celebrations is seen in operation, producing an essential connection, indirect by structural necessity, between the *Cheliuskin* and poetry.

The first connection between the *Cheliuskin* and poetry is not, in fact, poetry dedicated to the *cheliuskintsy*, but the participation of their far-flung and temporary settlement in the ritual celebrations of the Soviet calendar. On 25 February 1934, *Pravda* reports that “the *cheliuskintsy* together with the entire country celebrated Red Army Day [cheliuskintsy vmeste so vsei stranoi prazdnovali den’ Krasnoi Armii]” by “raising the banner to the end of a large signal tower, from which the great canvas expanse of the Red Soviet Fleet waves out, visible for 30 kilometers [oznamenovali prazdnik okonchaniem bol’shoi signal’noi vyshki, na kotoroi razvevaetsia ogromnoe polotnishche Krasnogo flota Sovetov, vidimoe na 30 kilometrov]” (Shmidt, et al. 1). The report that Camp Schmidt celebrated the holiday was itself celebrated. The flag, in the meantime, marked the progress of a kind of *osvoenie*, first to signal to the collective of Camp Schmidt itself (and anyone within 30 kilometers¹⁰²) that it belonged to the Soviet Union, then a day later, to signal this belonging to Moscow and the rest of the Soviet Union, then as the final visual trace of Camp Schmidt.¹⁰³

¹⁰² The visibility of this flag recalls once again the presentation of this situation as spectacle, presented for itself and by itself, in a sense. After all, who, exactly, is within 30 kilometers of the camp to see the banner besides polar bears and Chukchi?

¹⁰³ In a sense, this reproduces the popular 1930s narrative of pilgrimage to Moscow, such as that found in Grigorii Aleksandrov’s *Jolly Fellows* [*Vesëlye rebiata*] (1934). This narrative

This pattern of modes of official observance diffusing from the center and being echoed back reflects a robust pattern emergent in interwar culture as a whole. Outward propagation prefigures the spatial organization that Malte Rolf observes in the Stalinist mass festival of the 1930s, “The public’s interest was directed by the movement of festivals through this space, in the model of which the new society was created” (78). The ostentatious mass festival and reshaping of public space not only reflects the influence of Moscow; it can also be a signal back to Moscow that the influence has been accepted and absorbed.

To regulate the materials of Party newspapers throughout the multiethnic Soviet state is to ensure that every province experiences the same “hypnotic confirmation of a single community, embracing characters, authors and readers, moving onward through calendrical time” (Anderson 27). As a narrative, the state holiday is an affirmation of the collective marking of calendrical time. The daily obsolescence of the newspaper itself conditions “almost precisely simultaneous consumption (‘imagining’) of the newspaper-as-fiction” (Anderson 35).¹⁰⁴ The

eventually develops into a commonplace where the protagonists of, e.g., Aleksandr Medvedkin’s *New Moscow* [*Novaia Moskva*] (1938) return from Moscow to find their homes have been transformed in their absence. In spite of the deferral of the pilgrimage to after the main body of the *Cheliuskin* narrative, there is evidence of operating according to the same plan and promised transformation of the far-distant site (the imminent/immanent navigability of Sevmorput, possibly) in conjunction with absence.

¹⁰⁴ Anderson is talking about imagined community as the foundation of nation. A continuing theme of this dissertation is other formulations of imagined community that can account for the

Soviet system of periodical publishing, too, has the advantage not only of the guidance of Party and ideology in content selection, but of coordinating interactions between levels, a very important element in managing a coherent, singular image of the Soviet Union, with its size and, more importantly, with its consistent commitment to language-based national self-determination beneath the umbrella of Soviet unity and shared Soviet destiny. The imperial legacy inherited by the Soviet Union presents risks of one province viewing the activities of another as “similar to” rather than “part of” the overall country, in a way conditioned by the uneven hierarchies of the Russian Empire and perpetuated into the Soviet period. While newspapers had to address geographically specific situations in the interest of maintaining a variety of center-periphery relations among many kinds of institutions and peoples, they, and other mass media, were also crucial to the shared sense of imagined community across republics with a shared capitalist past, a shared challenge of industrialization and being surrounded by hostile states, and a shared communist destiny, that gave the Soviet state ideological coherence.

The Soviet system, however, had the advantage not only of mandating content to be shared at all levels of the union, but of coordinating interactions between levels. Thus Soviet newspapers serve frequently and loudly the imperative of repeated hailing and verification, and affirm the centrality of the shared, bigger-than-life, wholly sensuous spectacle in Soviet culture. The cycle of holiday observance is one way to reinforce a sense of connection across the entire Soviet Union: to celebrate in parallel and in the same choreographed way, and then to see the similarities of the provincial celebrations reflected in the newspaper. Moscow is the point of

Soviet Union, by no means a nation, and the importance of imagined community to its state-building project and ideological coherence.

reference not only for the manner of simultaneous celebration, but for confirmation that the provinces observed the proper model of celebration correctly. The two stages of this process—declaring shared calendrical time and consuming news of this simultaneous declaration—does not leave room for accounts of regional or individual departures from the central model, should they take place. In a sense, while temporally anterior to the newspaper report, the similar celebrations themselves are a consequence of the newspaper report, choreographed together for the sake of convergent readings about convergence.

So, while poetry does not feature at all in the felicitations offered by the leadership of Camp Schmidt in honor of Red Army Day, it is not surprising. New content can come from the periphery, but first, it must be integrated into the feedback apparatus of celebration. However, if



Figure 8. Front page corner illustration on day Camp Schmidt's final inhabitants evacuated (*Pravda* 14 April 1934, 1)

Red Army Day is simply a return of the celebratory hailing from the center, it does percolate through the system into a creative act that flagship newspapers can then distribute in a new

center-periphery-center feedback loop. The image of the flag raised over Camp Schmidt on Red Army Day is reprised in the celebration of the rescue of the *cheliuskintsy* (see fig. 8), signaling the incorporation this event temporarily into the cycle of union-wide spectacular commemoration, and requiring the full celebratory works ranging from photo postcards and film to, here, occasional poetry.

6.3 THE CHELIUSKINTSY AND OCCASIONAL POETRY

In light of the media production of Camp Schmidt as transforming the extreme frozen sea into an extension of Soviet civilization, it is a curiosity that the first poetic commemoration of Camp Schmidt and its rescuers in *Pravda*, “To the Cheliuskintsy” [*Cheliuskintsam*] is itself also a performance of distance and integration, being translated from Persian¹⁰⁵ for inclusion in the paper:

Шмидт-богатырь, привет!
Воронин, Задоров, Бобров!
Ждут вас, товарищи,
в Красной Москве:
Димитров, Танев, Попов.
Мы,
прорвать сумевшие дым
Черных фашистских костров,
Знаем:
сдадутся и белые льды
Натиску

¹⁰⁵ The newspaper does not indicate who did the translation, but, as Il'ia Kukulin notes, it was likely done by his wife, Selsela Banu.

БОЛЬШЕВИКОВ!
(Lahouti 1)

Hail, Schmidt-knight!
Voronin, Zadorov, Bobrov!
They await you, comrades,
in Red Moscow:
Dimitrov, Tanev, Popov.
We,
who are capable of bursting through the smoke
of black Fascist bonfires,
know:
the white ices too will surrender,
to the onslaught
of the Bolsheviks!

The attributed author, Abolqasem Lahouti, was a Persian revolutionary who emigrated from Persia to Soviet Dushanbe in the twenties, and was an important figure in the development of modern Tadjik literature (‘Ābedi)—there is thus a whiff of cosmopolitan complexity in this situation not wholly mediated by Moscow. As such, the Arctic is, in a sense, triangulated between the symbolic center of Moscow, which waits to receive the heroes of this story, and a speaking figure who is naturalized as Soviet at the Soviet periphery.

This is counterbalanced by the generic inflections of *narodnost'* [folk-mindedness] seen in the invocation of the hero-knights [*bogatyr'*] of East Slavic epic songs and of Red Moscow (a color-coded locus that works within the aesthetic structure of the poem as a whole with black Fascist Germany and white ice, but which also alludes to the folk epithet of Red as beautiful). Such generalized slavisms raise some large, tangential questions about the “generalization” of Russian folk motifs to Soviet *narodnost'* and the mediation of the translator. As given, they act as gestures that level cultural distance between the Soviet center and the Soviet periphery implicit in Lahouti’s person.

Subsequently, the Arctic falls into the commonplace of figurative military front, tied to the anticipated front of European fascism by rhyme (*dym/l'dy*) and differentiated from it by the structure of color-coding that at once marks difference and confirms relationship. Both fronts are marked apart from Red Moscow; this poem does not seem to reflect a dynamic of dialectical transformation, but, rather, by the use of clashes at the country's extremes to consolidate the idea of the Soviet land proper. The struggle of the *cheliuskinty* functions, then, to highlight the contrast between "us" and "them."

It could be argued that a similar idea of consolidation drives Dem'ian Bednyi's short poem printed in the celebratory 13 April 1934 issue of *Pravda*; if so, however, it is a consolidation that is already in the process of assimilating the resources of the "conquered" Arctic "front" for the less figurative anticipated military fronts in Europe and Asia.

Героями герои спасены.
Какая радость нам! Какое беспокойство
В рядах затейщиков грозящей нам войны!
Им четко говорит полярное геройство,
Что этот героизм не личный лишь, а свойство
Сверхгероической Советской всей страны.
(2)

By heroes the heroes were saved.
What joy for us! What uneasiness
In the ranks of those who celebrate the war that threatens us!
Our polar heroism tells them plainly
That this heroism is not only personal, but the essence
Of the entire superheroic Soviet country.

The idea of “heroes saved by heroes” frequently arises at this time, sidestepping the apparent failure implicit in one party needing to be saved by another in the first place.¹⁰⁶ In addition to confusing distinctions by means of the inversion of subject-object and agent-patient correspondence, Bednyi also establishes and blurs boundaries through rhyme, maintaining an aBaBBa rhyme scheme. With distinctions blurred, the contents of the poem are unified by the use throughout of the epic iambic hexameter, with the exception of the establishing first line; this is explicated in the final line, which characterizes the Soviet Union itself as “superheroic,” granting the transcendent logic to deliberately muddled pairings.

Aleksei Surkov’s rather longer poem “The Heroes’ Road” [“Doroga geroev”], appearing on the same page as Bednyi’s celebratory verse, possesses a linear, easy-to-follow narrative about a pilot as he prepares to depart for Camp Schmidt from Vankarem, his journey and arrival at Camp Schmidt, and returning with the passengers across the whole Soviet Union. Over the course of this narrative, Surkov works to establish identity between Camp Schmidt and the greater Soviet Union chiefly through a series of repetitions. Episodes and motifs repeat; the take-off procedure from Camp Schmidt is a near verbatim repetition of the take-off from Vankarem:

Пилот подошел к машине.
 Махнул рукой пассажирам,
 Взглянул на серое небо,
 Спросил привычно:
 -- Стартуем?
 И сам же себе ответил

¹⁰⁶ In spite of rhetorical dancing around this subject, the “heroes” were ranked: the aviators named the first ever Heroes of the Soviet Union, while the *cheliuskinsty* received nothing. Even American mechanics who helped with the mission from nearby Nome, Alaska received the Order of Lenin (“Strana nagrazhdaet geroev”).

Под рев пропеллера:
--ЕСТЬ!

(2)

The pilot approached his machine.
Waved his hand at the passengers,
Glanced at the grey sky,
Asked out of habit:
 Shall we start?
And even answered himself
Under the roar of the propeller:
 YES!

The expertise and perspective implicit in this repetition is indicated by the use of the phrase “out of habit” [*privychno*]. In this repeated action, the pilot brings together the populated points of Vankarem and Camp Schmidt; his gaze especially brings attention to the fact that they hold the grey sky in common.

The second striking repetition creates commonality not between two remote points in the Arctic, but between the Arctic and the Soviet Union as a whole, in the verbatim repetition of the refrain

И в каждом пожатии –
НЕЖНОСТЬ,
И в каждом пожатии --
ГОРДОСТЬ,
И в каждом пожатии --
РАДОСТЬ
(2)

And in every press of the hand there was
GENTLENESS,
And in every press of the hand there was
PRIDE,
And in every press of the hand there was
JOY

This catalog of affects occurs as the inhabitants of Camp Schmidt greet the pilot, and later as people greet the pilot and a *cheliushkinets* in cities throughout the Soviet Union. There are two

potential sources of this affective warmth through handshakes: “a people who share a campfire [liudei odnogo kostra]” and “the people of the Soviet country [liudei sovetskoi strany].” It is striking how, in the process of scaling up from the fire pits of this rudimentary settlement to the patriotic whole, Surkov creates an identity between the rescuer and the rescued. In the same way that the perspective of the pilot joined together Vankarem and Camp Schmidt under one grey sky, the extra-large perspective of the Soviet Union makes the mobile heroism of the pilots and the settled (even passive) heroism of the *cheliuskinty* essentially the same and without distinction: “in Moscow the two are greeted,/ the two are greeted in Minsk [V Moskve vstrechaiutsia dvoe,/Vstrechaiutsia dvoe v Minske]” (ll. 74-75). Whatever comparisons one might be tempted to make between the heroism of the aviators and the heroism of the *cheliuskinty*, these differences are small from the perspective of the heroic people of the superheroic Soviet Union. This equivalence is established, moreover, by means of the lateral gesture of an array of cities, rather than the initial vertical of the pilot (there is, then, no issue of going all the way up that vertical and dealing with the challenge of representing Stalin).

To the extent that there is a trajectory in the sparse poetry publication of *Pravda* during the trials of the *cheliuskinty* between the March translation of Lahouti’s poem and the April publication of two occasional poems by Bednyi and Surkov, it is one in which the extremes of human existence no longer figure as the extremes of Soviet existence. Lahouti originally triangulates among three points: his peripheral milieu (marked by translation into Russian from Persian, as well as Lahouti’s own biography); Moscow at the center of Soviet identity (as represented in the poem and producer of *Pravda*); and Camp Schmidt as a front in the range of Soviet struggles. The problem of incorporation that he opens up is, in a sense, resolved by the April commemorative poems. In these, the Soviet values of gentleness, pride, and joy have

thrived on the ice and the problems of connectivity to the center have been (theoretically) resolved by the aviators. The Arctic can fall within the scope of Soviet panoramic and monolithic vision, at the expense of the implicit linguistically and geographically heterogeneous periphery of Lahouti's poem. The language of fronts recedes temporarily, as does the concept of a periphery that produces itself in the universalized Soviet model (in alignment with the temporary ascent of the rescue into the realm of Soviet holidays).

6.4 SEL'VINSKII'S CHELIUSKINIANA

If elided in Soviet festal observances, geographic heterogeneity and its import for the Soviet Union were important questions in Il'ia Sel'vinskii's work. This tendency remained from his work of the 1920s: in the Civil War epic *Ulialaevshchina*, Sel'vinskii makes a case for the importance of designing a new linguistic-cultural apparatus for organizing the chaotic elements of the steppe, an apparatus that could function similarly to the Orthodox Church in émigré Eurasianist conceptions of the steppe, or similarly to the imperial culture invoked directly in the character of Tata. In *Pushtorg*, Sel'vinskii's representation of the international fur market reveals the unresolved threat of capitalist exploitation to indigenous Sovietization and modernization; he continues to interrogate models for integration without destruction. Though the modes of cultural production within which Sel'vinskii operated shifted drastically between the twenties and thirties, upon evaluation his epic poem *Cheliuskiniana* reflects that these questions continued to operate for Sel'vinskii in the 1930s, alongside and in interaction with the more general commonplaces of the period and space. Sel'vinskii is in the position to write specifically about the *Cheliuskin*, as well, as a matter of having been a part of the ship's media team. His situation as mediator within

and therefore responding to specifically newspaper-regulated networks of production and distribution of culture may also offer some insight into the temporal-spatial effects of that network on Soviet culture.

Sel'vinskii's *Cheliuskiniana* offers a narrative developed from at least two aestheticized perspectives—the autobiographical witness borne out by passages in the first person and the coincidence of events in the poem with events from Sel'vinskii's time on the *Cheliuskin*, and the orchestrated perspectives of characters of varied type whom he invents as members of the crew of the *Cheliuskin* alongside historical figures like Otto Schmidt and Captain Voronin. As previously noted, Sel'vinskii was present as a correspondent from *Pravda*, part of Otto Schmidt's media management team for the closely attended spectacles of Arctic exploration. Sel'vinskii was present on the ship from the beginning of its voyage through October 1933, when the ship had already lost control and was considered likely to have to try to endure the winter. At this point, Sel'vinskii was a member of a team dispatched on dogsleds provided by Chukchi to establish the feasibility of transporting the people of the *Cheliuskin* to the more stable conditions of the continent. It was not feasible, nor could the team return to the ship as it temporarily broke away and floated further out into the frozen sea.¹⁰⁷ This first team did eventually join up with the

¹⁰⁷ This trip is not a part of the celebratory *Cheliuskin* narrative; indeed, Schmidt had to intercede personally to protect the members of this expedition from later accusations of desertion and cowardice.

ice-cutter¹⁰⁸ *Litke* and witnessed the ship's attempts to reach the *Cheliuskin*; however, the ship was too badly damaged by two winters' of work, and had to turn away at a point of 30 miles from the *Cheliuskin*. Sel'vinskii thus does not have first-hand experience of the spectacularized Camp Schmidt and its rescue, which is the subject of the third portion of his poem. He was thus in a particularly good position to contrast his own experience of the challenges and beauty of the Arctic with the vision that the Soviet people desired to see. Moreover, he was not required to perform the spectacle of the *cheliuskinty*, allowing him to present the voyage and feat with a clarifying objectivity.

Part One of the *Cheliuskiniana* describes the voyage of the *Cheliuskin* from its departure from Leningrad to its entrapment in the ice. Much of the narrative is dedicated to the psychological character and rather intellectual discourse of the crew and passengers; it also contains sweeping vistas of the Arctic landscape and accounts of the challenges of keeping the ship moving forward as the ice implacably forms. Part Two of the *Cheliuskiniana* (of which only parts were published) addresses the period from when Sel'vinskii is sent on the exploratory expedition with Chukchi who lend their dogsleds. They meet the *Litke* and are cheered by the solidarity that the sailors, exhausted after several months at sea, show for the trapped *cheliuskinty*. The narrative returns to the stranded *Cheliuskin*, continuing to follow developments among the characters (I follow the philosophical meanderings of Kotia in particular). The part ends as the ship sinks. Part Three is an account of the rescue, beginning with

¹⁰⁸ The *Litke*, like the *Cheliuskin*, was not built with the traditional icebreaker design (a rounded hull which crawls onto ice and breaks the ice vertically under its weight), but rather with a reinforced hull that would batter at the ice horizontally.

four biographies of leaders and what they do, or would have done: Stalin, a pilot, Roald Amundsen, and Otto Schmidt. In the meantime, the *cheliuskintsy* quickly establish a homey, if rustic camp.

In its history of publication in three parts,¹⁰⁹ Sel'vinskii's epic encountered a considerable amount of resistance from censors. *Oktiabr'* printed only excerpts from the second part, which deals specifically with the dogsled expedition and the *Litke*, neither central elements to the widely-propagated narrative of the *cheliuskintsy*. Sel'vinskii's reluctance to simplify his work attracted the accusation of "formalism": "Sel'vinskii is a formalist. He writes in a language completely incomprehensible to the masses. In his verses there is much grimacing, as in his search for cutting phrases he completely fails to reckon with the contents [Sel'vinskii – formalist, on pishet na iazyke, sovershenno neponiatnom massam. V ego stikhakh mnogo krivlian'ia, v pogone za khlëstkoi frazoi on sovershenno ne schitaetsia s sodержaniem]" (Mekhlis). Sel'vinskii's handling of the portrait of Stalin in Part Three seems in particular to have demanded multiple intensive revisions, as Mekhlis attests in his recommendation for further revision: "The part that concerns describing how Stalin matured has been fundamentally reworked. But I can't say that it is entirely satisfactory [Chast', kasaiushchiasia opisaniia togo, kak Stalin prokhodil skvoz' stroi, peredelana avtorom kardinal'no. Ne skazhu, chto ona vpolne udovletvoritel'na]" (Mekhlis). Editorial explanations for censorship are often not particularly helpful in identifying exactly how a work failed to meet the norms of the shifting orthography of Socialist Realism.

¹⁰⁹ Part One appeared in the January 1937 issue of *Novyi mir*, excerpts from Part Two appeared in the January 1938 issue of *Oktiabr'*, and Part Three appeared in the May 1938 issue of *Novyi mir*.

However, when Mekhlis singles out the problem that Sel'vinskii “calls Stalin Soso¹¹⁰ all the time [on vsë vremia velichaet Stalina Soso]” (Mekhlis), or that the poet compares anyone except Lenin favorably to the leader, the critic is also pointing out some of the core aesthetic structures of Sel'vinskii's poem. To judge by the repeated need for revision, the author was loath to depart from these structures and he dedicated a lot of time to finding the compromise that took him the least far from this greater context. Though Part Three reflects a larger amount of formal compromise than the remainder of the poem—with a more generically heroic tone and commonplaces familiar from the 1934 coverage of the *cheliuskintsy*, including their cheerfulness and their significance toward the anticipated fronts against the German and Japanese armies—it nevertheless retains a heterodox underlying structure to which Stalin was subordinated in a formal gesture that Sel'vinskii's critics did not or could not articulate.

These politics of representation are tied specifically to Sel'vinskii's re-introduction of a heterogeneous historical and geographic sensibility to the *Cheliuskin* saga. They are also tied to a more basic understanding of poetic representation, i.e., Sel'vinskii pre-emptively defends his choice to write a poetic work in a non-traditional meter, *taktovik*. Indeed, at this point, he exaggerates this defense, implying that he is not only obliged to justify his decision not to use a traditional meter, but also not to write in iambs. In principle, the pressure to write in iambs is in the interests of accessibility for the newly literate masses and even the newly literate worker-poet

¹¹⁰ Soso is a Georgian diminutive of Iosif that does not seem to carry the strong sense of overfamiliarity that it would in Russian. By using it, though, Sel'vinskii marks the period belonging to Georgia by “Soso”; in general, he marks the progression of Stalin's life through his names and pseudonyms.

is reflected in the condescending tone in which Sel'vinskii telegraphs the mandate, “Here now sweetheart, you’d do better/ To take the manner of the classics [‘Vot, golubchik, vam by/ U klassikov povadku pereniat’]” (Sel'vinskii *Cheliuskiniana* 1: 114)—as well as the interests of cultivating a verse variation on realism with the cultivation of “a stylistic ‘smoothness,’ a sort of ‘sterility’ in Soviet writing” (Dobrenko 257).¹¹¹

Of possible interest beyond Sel'vinskii's defensiveness about writing verses not predigested for a mass audience, he makes his final case in geographic terms:

Чтоб ты потом открыто мог сказать,
К мелодии прислушиваясь южной:
«Илья умеет ямбами писать,
А раз не хочет, – стало быть, не нужно».
(1: 115)

So that you then can openly say,
While listening attentively to the southern melody:
“Il'ia knows how to write in iambs,
And if he doesn't want to, it stands to reason he doesn't need them.”

In particular, this “southern melody”¹¹² reflects back on another reason that Sel'vinskii eschews the iamb, that “there is something of the glint of epaulettes in them [v nikh chto-to est' ot bleska èpolet]” (1: 114). The age of the classics, after all, is also the age of empire in Russia, and there is the suggestion that the uncritical adoption of this form may bring with it the uncritical

¹¹¹ In Russian syllabo-tonic verse, iambic meters are historically conditioned to be the closest thing to a neutral, unmarked meter; in other words, to write in iambs would be to minimize the need to engage with formal questions in reading.

¹¹² Though his subject matter here is the frigid Arctic, Sel'vinskii underscores the inseparability of the expressiveness of his verse from its author, a Jew born and raised on the Crimean peninsula, and his chosen form, *taktovik*.

adoption of imperial norms. Sel'vinskii signals the reasonability of holding in mind the trace of the past on people and places, and the importance of formal presentation to revealing meaning and truth. These, in the end, are the aesthetic basis on which he crafts the structure of the poem and reveals the residual problems beneath the monolithic representation of the Soviet Union.

6.4.1 The Array

The iamb is not the only instance in which Sel'vinskii pre-emptively defends his creative decisions. In his author's foreword, Sel'vinskii explains, "The task of this long poem is to portray modern Soviet society. [...] In this way, my long poem is not about a ship, but about a country [Zadacha poëmy – sozdat' obraz sovremennogo sovetskogo obshchestva. [...] Takim obrazom, poëma moia ne o korable, a o strane]" (*Cheliuskiniana* 1:114). Certainly, the *Cheliuskin* and other exploratory expeditions were often represented as microcosms of (a particular, publicized version of) Soviet civilization, defined under the terms of the emergent master narrative of heroism and coming to historical consciousness. Sel'vinskii's approach to this task is markedly different: his work represents not the narrative of Soviet civilization, but the array of Soviet civilization.

Such arrays begin with Sel'vinskii's treatment of his fictional characters, who act alongside well-known figures like Schmidt and Voronin (not to mention Sel'vinskii himself, who is a named personage in the epic), as "people who do not exist, and who never existed, but who are not made up, but created by a contemporary who has studied his friends with the interest of a historian [liudi, kotorykh net i nikogda ne bylo, no kotorye ne vydumany, a sozdany sovremennikom, s interesom istorika izuchavshim svoikh druzei]" (Sel'vinskii, *Cheliuskiniana* 1: 113). Their introduction is similar to the fur-trading office in *Pushtorg*, particularly in the

naturalistic sense in which the author sets up later conflicts and impasses. This pattern of individualized introduction is juxtaposed to a repeated slogan: “The newspapers wrote entirely baldly:/ Build Socialism!” [Gazety pisali vpolne obnazhënno:/ ‘Stroit’ sotsializm!’]” (1: 117). This slogan brandished by the newspapers is a faceless construction of obligation, pointing to the existence and necessity of the task without much trouble as to the identity of those fulfilling it. Sel’vinskii, by contrast, provides six faces.

One has the sense that the narrative is built upon generational difference. The younger characters—the somewhat sophistic student Malinovskii; the arrogant but highly competent *komsomolets* Petukh; Nastia, who is seeking to learn about herself; and Kotia, a young and idealistic enthusiast for exploring—may occasionally betray ignorance, but they do not suffer from the habituated behavior that characterizes the old Bolshevik Commissar Zverev or the peasant Fadeev, who “will build socialism,/As agreed: for seven hundred” (1: 121). There is, thus, a certain sense of internal organization to the characters, and thus a sense that their arrangement is not arbitrary, but dictated by further narrative and polemical needs.

However, one of the shapers of the polemics that Sel’vinskii will resolve through the constellation of these characters is the repeated use of the structure of the unmotivated array throughout the poem; even if a sense can be drawn from each individual iteration of this device, there is no overarching logic to all of them together.

Such arrays are implicit to the overarching, strongly hierarchical organization of the state. Soviet “space is strongly fragmented and segregated; the role of boundaries, barriers, and borders is extremely huge there. The rank or meaning of a cell is given by its position within the administrative hierarchy; this status is revealed spatially by its size as a status symbol” (Kaganskii 28). In the hierarchical organization of the Soviet Union, this fragmentation makes

the relationship of subordinate administrative units to the next largest administrative units absolutely direct and particular—there is no generalized rule of law that defines the administrative relations. In Sel’vinskii’s epic, this sense of fragmented space defines the Arctic, but Soviet governance in this far-flung location is weak enough that the boundaries. Without the enforcement of top-down hierarchy, it is particularly clear how “in every place, elements that are alien to one another by nature and antagonistic to each other, that are completely indifferent to each other, that just happen to be there, are neighbors and put together” (28).

The ship *Cheliuskin* itself is divided into contiguous zones, radically different in spatial character. The poop-deck is filled with apparatuses that resemble “bull horns, boar tusks [Bych’i roga, kaban’i klyki]” (1: 124); Petukh christens it “the village Pet’kino [...] / ‘In the name of the Oat and the Hay and the Swinish Spirit, Amen’ [Derevnia ‘Pet’kino’ [...] / ‘Vo imia Ovsa i Sena i Svinago Dukha – Amin’]” (Sel’vinskii, *Cheliuskiniana* 1: 124).¹¹³ This is a very different space from that of the hold near the boilers, where citrus fruits are stored, giving the area “the aroma of subtropical orangeries [Zapakh – subtropicheskikh oranzherei]” (1: 124). Finally, there is the now unmetaphoric airspace of the Sh-2 seaplane. Interestingly enough, though, an apparent favorite geographic ungrammaticality¹¹⁴, the inappropriateness of the verb “kovyliat’” (to hobble,

¹¹³ The humor of Petukh’s “prayer” is in its punning: “Of the Father” [Otsa] becomes “of the Oat” [Ovsa], “Of the Son” [Syna] — “Of the Hay” [Sena], and “of the Holy Spirit” [Sviatago Dukha] — “of the Swinish Spirit” [Svinago Dukha].

¹¹⁴ Recall Shtein’s peroration on this subject in *Ulialaevshchina*: “‘To shamble’ [kovyliat’] is a verb from the word ‘feather-grass’ [kovyl’],/Meaning, a polar bear cannot shamble [Kovyliat’ glagol ot slova kovyl’]/Znachit, belyi medved’ kovyliat’ ne mozhet]” (Sel’vinskii, *Iz pepla* 338).

summoning associations with steppe feather-grass, ‘kovyl’”) in an Arctic context, appears here and returns a sense of figurativeness to the scene: “Already it hobbles onto a snowy beach [Uzh on kovyliat na snezhyi pliazh]” (1: 124).

Such subdivision of a putatively unified space into contiguous spaces of absolutely different character is omnipresent throughout the poem. Even Arctic ice is presented in terms of variety collected together. Sel’vinskii presents different kinds of ice as August arrives and the shipping season ends:

Вода заиндевала звездной пылью,
За ней, сквозясь, тянулись леденцы
И вот с лебяжьей грацией поплыли,
Как паводок, снежурные птенцы.

За ними, ослепляя снежным верхом
С посадкою арктических рубак,
Обдувши воду январем и ветром,
Звения, летит сияющий ропаk;

Бок о бок с ним, зеленовато-бурый,
Видавший землю в гульбище погонь,
Несяк, пронзенный алой амбразурой,
В глубины брызнул голубой огонь.

И, наконец, как ведьма, нелюдима
Утратив и пристанище и цель,
Сосульками заплаканная льдина
Пришла и принесла с собой метель.
(129)

The water hoared over with a starry dust,
Beyond which, skidding, lozenges were pulled along
And so with cygning grace slushy nestlings
Swam along for a time, like a freshet does.

Beyond them, blinding us with its snowy caps
As if arctic swashbucklers had alit
Having pumped the water full with January and wind,
Ringing out, glowing turret ice flies;

Smack up against it, greeny-puce,
Having seen earth in its ambulatory chases,
There is hummocked ice, shot through with scarlet embrasures,
In its depths a spray of blue fire.

And finally, at the social margins like a witch,
Having lost both refuge and destination,
An ice floe tear-stained by icicles,
Arrived, and brought along a blizzard.

While there is a sense of gradation of size from dust to floe, there is no further unifying taxonomy of appearance. The passage is instead strongly marked by expressions of adjacency (“beyond that,” “smack up against that,” even the sense of marginality or non-centrality conveyed by “neliudimyi” [unsociable, bad mixer]) and by absolutely scattershot imagery, moving from stars to birds to swashbucklers to architecture to people. This imagery is often tied phonetically to the peculiar names of these formations (e.g. “rubak/ropak” [of swashbucklers/turret ice] and “neliudim/l’dina” [unsociable/ice floe]), playing up and going beyond the highly specialized lexicon Arctic travelers have for the many manifestations of ice and snow they come across. Each of these kinds of sea ice is, in Sel’vinskii’s presentation, completely incomparable to the others, necessitating the repeated observations that they are near one another in order to establish that they belong together. Clearly, they are all products of the same process—freezing—but they have different behaviors and appearances. And as the *Cheliuskin* encounters each kind of ice and the lyric persona adds them to the catalogue, it becomes a matter of “annexing” new entities to the lyric world of the known, rather than one of “penetrating” into the unknown.

The similar structuring of arctic sea ice, the body of the *Cheliuskin* itself, and the make-up of Sel’vinskii’s fictional additions to the ship’s crew, suggests it is an essential element to his vision of the Soviet Union. It is also categorically dissimilar to representations in 1934 of the

Cheliuskin and its crew through larger-than-life collective heroes, and the abstractions of the symbolic center and dangerous extreme. In a way, Sel'vinskii's use of the array anticipates the allegory of the "great family" that dominated postwar Stalinist culture, in which the nationalities of the Soviet Union were arrayed in a brotherhood under Stalin's paternal leadership. Even more appropriate than the familial metaphor is Yuri Slezkine's development of the metaphor of the Soviet Union as a "communal apartment" of nationalities:

The dictatorship of the proletariat consisted of countless national groups (languages, cultures, institutions) endowed with apparently limitless national—that is, "nonessential"—rights (to develop their languages, cultures, institutions). The key themes were "national diversity [*raznoobrazie*]" and "national uniqueness [*svoeobrazie*]," both useful as paradoxical prerequisites for ultimate unity but also as values in their own right. (Slezkine 434)

Such variations on the array are, on the surface, innocuous observations of diversity, "celebrating separateness along with communalism" (Slezkine 415). But their nature, whether as a catalog of sea ice or a brotherhood of nations, is to absorb additions without changes to the overarching structure. The rhetorical Soviet brotherhood of nations, in the postwar context, could accommodate the newly annexed Baltic republics without representing the military coercion inherent to the act of annexation—it has merely become another adjacent category in an array of equal administrative units. There is nothing necessary to the collections of sites and peoples that Sel'vinskii first creates—this is one of the reasons that coercive violence is implicit to the apparently egalitarian, dispassionate, and voracious array, absent the discovery of another kind of unifying logic.

However, before Sel'vinskii introduces a logic that works, at least in the context of the poem, he follows two approaches to the array to their logical conclusions: on the one hand, failure to account for difference in the monolithic ritual language adopted in education and, on the other, simply celebrating that difference as the diversity of the Soviet Union without accounting for its imperial shape.

6.4.2 Monolithic Language: Slogans and Citations

As we saw, the faceless injunction to “Build Socialism” was subject to a certain deconstruction by virtue of its juxtaposition with six faces (a comparison we are invited to make by the fact that the imperative is repeated after the introduction of these figures). Like the general motif of the array, “Build Socialism!” is not the last time that Sel'vinskii performs some sort of creative exegesis on the limited and repetitive language of the Soviet public sphere.

At one point early in the *Cheliuskin's* voyage, the lyric subject joins a team in exploring an island. Upon this untouched, unearthly land, to which he has arrived “like its first thought [kak pervaiia mysl']” (Sel'vinskii *Cheliuskiniana* 1: 140), the lyric subject is delighted to interact with it by means of an echo: “and for the first time the echo/pronounced: ‘...il'ia!’ [i ekho vpervoi/Proizneslo: ‘...il'ia!']” (1: 140). The echo itself, of course, is indiscriminate. Il'ia can prompt it to hail him, but it also repeats a nonsense array, reflecting the joyous tone of the lyric subject:

«Стол!» — кричу я из-под горы...
«Стол! Кричу я... — «Стул!»
Она уж от криков вся навелась,
Мы лозунги ревом:
«Да здравствует советская власть!»
(1: 141)

“Table!” I shout from beneath the mountains...
“Table! I shout... “Chair!”
She has already gotten carried away with the shouts,
We roar slogans:
“All hail Soviet power!”

This episode of happy echoes, which concludes a self-reflective passage on the alien and perilous landscape, can be read, like so many sequences in this work, as an array: the self-affirming subject, the self-evidently existent concrete objects of table and chair, and the slogan affirming the existence of an imagined community. All are variations on “being,” but none of these entities reflect the nature of any of the others.

The meaning of the echo is particularly pertinent given that this episode on the island is immediately followed by one of the first “philosophical” discussions of the epic. Malinovskii, seeking to gain a rhetorical advantage in an elided discussion, introduces an obscure quotation of Marx:

«Архив Маркса и Энгелса».
Издание Гиза. Том первый.
[...]
«Чтобы мощно выявить творческую личность,
Пролетарии должны уничтожить труд».
(1: 144)

The Marx and Engels Archive
State Edition. Volume One.
[...]
“In order to unveil its creative individuality,
The Proletariat must destroy labor.”

Whether or not the quotation actually contributes to the on-going discussion of making labor valuable by making it psychologically satisfying,¹¹⁵ it is first and foremost an opportunity to underscore Zverev's obsolescent knowledge. *The German Ideology* was first officially published in the Soviet Union in 1932, long after we are given to understand that Zverev ceased to keep up with ideological literature. Zverev is quick to point out that *The German Ideology* is an early work (written in 1845-46) as a means of closing down the conversation. However, as an ideological guide he fails to point out how Malinovskii's use of citation as an act of virtuosity may obscure the Marxist-Leninist interpretation that is the foundation of Soviet socialism. The student and commissar, in some ways, simply model a common practice throughout public space of the thoughtless reproduction of citations and slogans.

In a similar conflict, young Kotia undertakes to understand the American pragmatist philosopher William James; old Zverev, aware that James is a problematic figure for a Marxist-Leninist intellectual framework, nevertheless lacks confidence in his own ability to grapple with philosophy. He unsuccessfully attempts to dissuade Kotia by an appeal to authority and to the

¹¹⁵ The passage Malinovskii paraphrases is "the proletarians, if they are to assert themselves as individuals, will have to abolish the very condition of their existence hitherto (which has, moreover, been that of all society up to the present), namely, labour [[...] müssen die Proletarier, um persönlich zur Geltung zu kommen, ihre eigne bisherige Existenzbedingung, die zugleich die der ganzen bisherigen Gesellschaft ist, die Arbeit, aufheben]" (Marx, "The German Ideology"; Marx "Die deutsche Ideologie"). There is in Malinovskii's use perhaps a certain slippage between "labor as alienated from itself" and the work the crew members were doing, but this is tellingly not what Zverev chooses to interrogate.

reading rubrics set out by experts. This is ineffective, in part because Kotia does not consider himself a naïve reader. He encounters James knowing the American is “a philosopher of a blood upon which the sun had set;/that there were bourgeois gestures in his theses/ and secrets of false treasures [Filosof zakatnoi krovi;/ Chto v tezhakh ego – burzhnaznyi zhest/ i tainy fal’shivyykh sokrovishch]” (2: 181). James, for him, is a test of his intellectual limits against a formidable antagonist, structurally similar to the *Cheliuskin*’s encounter with the elemental antagonism of the Arctic. However, the language that he takes as his guide for navigating the slippery logic of James is insufficient:

А ясность для Коти все и вся:
Недаром на стенах его каюты
Собственные плакаты висят:
«НЕ ЗАТУМАНЫСЯ!»
«ХОЧЕШЬ—БУДЬ!»
«ВПЕРЕД И ВЫШЕ—СТИЛЬ КОМСОМОЛЬЦА!»
А самой большой—на винтах и на кольцах:
«СТРАНЕ – НУЖЕН – ПУТЬ».
(2: 181)

But for Kotia clarity was everything and entirety:
Not for nothing did his personal posters
Hang on the walls of his cabin:
“DON’T GO ASTRAY!”
“IF YOU WANT IT, BE IT!”
“ONWARD AND UPWARDS—IT’S THE KOMSOMOL STYLE!”
And the biggest of all was on screws and rings:
“THE COUNTRY NEEDS A PATH.”

The troublesome facelessness of “Build Socialism!” that had been refracted into half a dozen individuated faces in the first chapter returns as an element of Kotia and Zverev’s conflict over reading and the sacred writings and symbols of the Revolution. Zverev, reflecting on his problem with Kotia, puts the generational conflict explicitly in terms of faces:

Что за новый лик революции?
[...]

И вспомнил смущенно Зверев,
Что он никогда не думал о том,
Какой-такой этот берег...
То есть не то, что не думал. Думал!
Но как-то *безлико*. В общих чертах.
(2: 185, emphasis mine)

What was this new *face* of the revolution?
[...]
And Zverev recalled with shame,
That he had never thought about
What exact kind of shore it was [towards which the wave of the revolution
strove]...
That is, it was not that he had not thought. He had thought!
But somehow without a face [*bezliko*]. In general features.

This failure to imagine the “far shore” of the Soviet future in specific features is just as characteristic of the authoritative slogans on Kotia’s walls. With their “faceless” language and automatized symbolism, slogans obscure the individuals who will perform the enjoined ideological labor, as well as the models for such labor.

Control over symbols and symbolic language is at the heart of the conflict between Zverev and these young people foraying into the philosophical roots of Marxism and empirical reality without guidance. The narrative of the *Cheliuskin*’s entrapment in the ice is structurally tied to the narrative of the intellectual impasse between the old guard and the new. In the end, this particular subplot is in fact resolved by an appeal to authority, to that of Schmidt, who scolds Zverev for his intellectual laziness and tells him to man up and read James. Schmidt models heroic will in historical context when he acts decisively, but also with an acute awareness of the historical circumstances of Arctic exploration in which he is contextualized: he considers what Amundsen would have done, but makes his own decision for the encampment (Sel’vinskii, *Cheliuskiniana* 3: 149).

The importance of taking specific histories into account in the construction of the *Cheliuskin*'s story and that of the Soviet Union is another motif in Sel'vinskii's epic. Historical traces and other kinds of shared time challenge the generalization of the administrative array and shared calendar; in writing of them, Sel'vinskii asks the reader to acknowledge the deeper challenges before the builders of Communism, in order to build a properly shared imagined community.

6.4.3 Historical Entanglement

One of the problems with the over-generalizing, all-inclusive facelessness of slogans and citations is their inadequacy to accommodate the present problem of the array. It is too glib an answer to the diversity of actors within the narrative, and can lead to impasses such as that between Kotia and Zverev, in spite of their mutually held dedication to the symbolic future of the Soviet Union. In this context, there are a number of reasons to recall the significant role of the newspaper in creating community through collective, simultaneous readership, and to read Sel'vinskii's epic as engaging with the problem of shared calendrical time across a vast range of histories.

In *Cheliuskiniana*, the role of the calendar, the basic marker of shared time, is very specifically circumscribed. There is no mention of the major holidays of the Soviet calendar in Sel'vinskii's narrative, although the diegetic timeline of the work spans at least three major holidays—the anniversary of the October Revolution, the anniversary of Lenin's death, and Red Army Day (which, the reader may recall, Camp Schmidt reported celebrating). The calendar *does* appear in the context of Zverev's remonstrations with Kotia:

[«]Но рано тебе Джемса читать.
Понял? Не вышли числа». -- «Бросьте это, Иван Петрович.
Какой тут может быть календарь?»]
(2: 183)

“But it’s early for you to read James.
Do you understand? The date has not come.”
“Abandon that point of argument, Ivan Petrovich.
What kind of calendar can there be for this?”

If this chapter has established anything, it is that Zverev relies on an outdated ideological toolkit that takes for granted the opportunity to shape people from scratch “like wax [voskom]” (2: 183). In this vein, that reliance on a calendar is attributed to Zverev is a sign from the author that collective time in the Soviet Union should be rethought. In a sense, Sel’vinskii takes for granted familiarity with the collective calendar and timescales in the same way he does familiarity with iambs; the implication is that, if he is not using them, it is because they are not useful to his creative task.

State community-building instruments like the newspaper and new calendar are relatively weak synchronic glues working against the continuing and divergent momentum of specific historical legacies and calendrical arrangements of time from another era. Indeed, the constant fiddling with the calendar week (e.g., instituting the five-day week so as to disrupt the observation of the Sabbath) and holidays throughout the 1930s suggests the possibility of a general readerly awareness that the ideal imagined community was not cohering.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ A vivid, if tangential, example of the attempt to find the happy medium between sufficiently disruptive and generally accepted includes the process of the Soviet remythologization of the Christmas tree, described here by Malte Rolf: “We can trace these parallels through the 1935 establishment of *ëlka*-Festivals. According to the official narrative, on the initiative of Pavel

The variations of time and history in *Cheliuskiniana* do not compose a linear set of arguments moving the narrative forward, but rather appear as episodic ruptures in the narrative. Over the course of this epic, at least three kinds of geographically specific accounts of calendrical and historical time emerge.

The first is a rendering of the personal history of Mogilevich, the single fatality of the entire trip and a Jewish member of the crew. After nearly dying in order to prevent the botching of an explosion to free the *Cheliuskin* from tight ice, Mogilevich tells Schmidt of how his attempt to cultivate courage now is a direct response to growing up Jewish. The ethical compromises necessary for a Jewish family to survive are made clear when Mogilevich tells of how he once beat up one of his Russian bullies, after which his parents beat him. They shout, “Do you want, god forbid,/ For the bailiff to shorten our lives for this? [Ty khochesh', bozheniu sokhrani,/ Chtob pristav [...] za èto sdela! nam/ Vyrvannye goda?]" (1: 152).

This story is from a pre-revolutionary time; Mogilevich acknowledges that the bad conditions of Jewish life and his own “orphanhood [sirotstvo]" have been addressed by the October Revolution and his political comrades. However, in spite of the material changes to the

Postyshev, the Christmas tree was “given amnesty” in 1935, after this symbol of religious Yuletide festivals had been forbidden for many years. In a conceptually and symbolically Sovietized form, during the winter of 1935-36 one could once more erect a Christmas tree in central squares and in private space—as a Soviet *ëlka* or Red *ëlka*. Not only were crystal and tasty treats attached to the Soviet conifer by the shift in terminology, but with time they were linked to Soviet New Year celebrations” (80).

world, the past continues to present a compelling alternative that cannot coexist with the Soviet present.

Но до сих пор поучает меня
Моя покойная мать.
Это она раньше других
Меня заставляет бежать.
«Осторожно с винтовкой!» — кричит она,
«Не иди работать в село!»
И я постоянно с нею грызусь.
И делаю ей назло.
(1:152)

But my departed mother
Lectures me to this day.
It is she who set me
Running back faster than the others.
“Careful with the bayonet!” she shrieks,
“Don’t go to work in the village!”
And I constantly squabble with her.
And spite her.

Mogilevich’s upbringing, shaped by the longer history of the Jews in Europe, continues to inform his behavior even when that history is supposedly no longer operative. Schmidt is seen soon after musing on his own memories of empire (mostly quite attractive—balls and parades), and why it is easier for him to relinquish those charms than for Mogilevich, who seems a model for an empowered and politically literate minority, to relinquish his unhappy Jewish childhood.

Но как обезвредить эту стрелу?
Ведь парень, корчась от боли,
Видит, глазами видит страну,
Где нет николаевщины более,
[...]
И все же он жил вчерашним днём
В своей иудейской опале.
Так, значит, *так* горяча тоска
Его погребенного детства,
Что от малейшего пустяка

Она, точно гейзер, действует!
(1:153, emphasis in original)

But how to neutralize this arrow?
Indeed the fellow, wracked with pain,
Sees, sees with his own eyes a country,
Where the scourge of Nicholas is no more,
[...]
And nevertheless he lived in yesterday
In his Judaic disgrace.
So very, it meant, so *very* alive was the heartache
Of his buried childhood,
That the very least trifle
Would activate it, like a geyser.

Though this conflict in Mogilevich's existence is mooted, it is not pursued as a structuring conflict for the epic as a whole. The puzzle of the persistent trace of the past inscribed on Mogilevich's consciousness is not resolved, but it ends with his death on board the sinking *Cheliuskin*, singing "not a psalm, but the anthem of the revolution/ that adopted the Jewish people [ne psalom – a gimn revoliutsii/ usynovivshei evreiskii narod]" (2: 189).

The second of the three divergent ways of remembering history in the epic is presented by the Chukchi native to the area where the *Cheliuskin* is stranded. If the trace of Jewish history was carried by family lore and strategy in the poem, Chukchi history is remarkable for its generation-collapsing orality. There is a moment of purely authorial diversion from the narrative of the *Cheliuskin*'s troubles when a Chukchi avers in accented language that he has seen a steamship locked in the ice before, although the crew knows that the Soviet fleet has not lost any of its ships or old captains in this way: "strongly remembers by Chaivuurgyn of a steamship he saw it is. An angry old man, walrus moustache, without a beard, bare head, on his lips a pale brown ice pellet—the winterer [kruto pomnit Chaivuurgynom paarakhoda on uvidel est'. Starik serdityi, morzhov'i usy, borody netu, golova bosaia, na gube gradinka buraia—zimuiushchii]" (1:

165). Chaivuurgyn, not understanding requests for clarification, can only explicate further as “eight [vosem’]” (1: 166). Schimdt, in his mission-orientedness, does not let this apparent inconsistency give him pause as he moves on to the next order of business. The poem, however, takes up this oddity in detail.

Но чукча думал вот что: в прошлом веке
Корабль, отошедший из Норвегии,
Примерз ко льду у этих берегов.
[...]
В кануне семьдесят восьмого года
Им первым экспедиция велась.

И чукчи наблюдали морехода,
[...]
Их память по-охотничьи крута:
[...]
И все, что чукча, подшивая лыжи,
От деда или прадеда услышит,
Он верует, что это видел сам.
(1:166)

But the Chukchi thought thus: in the last century
A ship, which had gone out from Norway,
Froze to the ice on these shores.
[...]
On the eve of seventy-five
The expedition [of the steamship *Vega*] first came this way.

And the Chukchi observed the seafarer,
[...]
Their memory is a hunter’s, strong:
[...]
And everything that the Chukchi hears
from his granddad or great-granddad while trimming his skis
He believes he has seen himself.

This impeccable memory goes hand in hand with another aspect of Chukchi imperial history. The ill-fated 1877 voyage of the *Vega* is, after all, not the tribe’s only encounter with the west. Their oral history is one of preservation—“Year follows year, century follows century/ But

the sailor didn't change one bit [Za godom god, za vekom vek smenil'sia/ A morekhod nichut' ne izmenilsia]" (1: 166). Their historical practices are similarly unchanging, as in an episode where Chukchi approach the *Litke* in canoes seeking to sell baleen—the whalebone of ladies' corsets. This detail, again unrelated to the mission of the *Cheliuskin*, is a pointed reminder of the role of traditional hunter societies within the Russian empire, where expansion eastward was driven by the booms and busts of the fur trade and the “silent trade” in which the Chukchi traded with Russians “at the end of a spear” (Etkind 75).

Он в мелкой байдарке из кожи моржа,
Метнувши копьем в китище,
Летал, кружился, от страха дрожа,
И хочет за ус до тыщи.
(Sel'vinskii, *Cheliuskiniana* 2: 178)

In a frail walrus-hide kayak,
Having cast his spear at a monstrous whale,
He [Umka from Yandagai] flew, whirled, while trembling from fear,
And he wants a thousand for the jaw.

Though the Chukchi are still habitually supplying whalebone in much the same way, the new fashions of the thirties have turned away from corsets, and Umka from Yandagai will be disappointed. Absent guidance, whether the violent signals of Russian imperial traders or the presumably more constructive guidance of the Party, they are left circling through a holding-pattern.

The peasant Fadeev on the *Cheliuskin* behaves according to another mode of calendrical time, the last of the three under discussion. He experiences homesickness in terms of the agricultural calendar of the Russian heartland, e.g., “Now [the pagan god] Vlas passes among the birch trees/ He goes, and raises up the cattle's strength [Seichas po berëzam prokhodit Vlas/ Idët – podymaet korov'u vlast']” (3: 157). In isolation from the space connected to this sense of time, Fadeev pines, and also reflects a deracination that many peasants, moving to the cities or

collectivizing, did not have to go all the way to the Arctic to experience. Fadeev is unique in this set of senses of time, in that he finds some amount of comfort for the loss of his agricultural calendar (or at least of the context that makes it make sense). His spirits lift during a particularly beautiful moonrise at Camp Schmidt, an experience that he naturalizes under the folktale title of “How a Peasant Warmed His Hands over the Moon in Winter [Kak zimoi/ Muzhik samoi na lune sogrelsia]” (3: 159).

Taken together, Mogilevich, the Chukchi, and Fadeev comprise a new “array,” here of modes of being that are conditioned by history, memory, and tradition. Each is problematic in its own way *in particular* because they are none of them actually fully separate groups in the way conceptualized by the nationalities policy of the “communal apartment.” The habits formed by these kinds of collective time are tied to contact with other groups; they cannot now be artificially understood as autonomous anymore, nor do they necessarily follow the same typologies (in the mode of “national language, national cuisine, national dance”). These three accounts of time among themselves reveal coercion and collective pain that belies the innocuousness of the array.

Schmidt’s reactions in these episodes range from puzzlement with regard to his comrade Mogilevich to impatience with the Chukchi (and silence towards Fadeev). His alienation from their temporal habits suggests that he is connected to his own temporality, which the entire thrust of the poem suggests is the most productive, if not universal or recuperative of imperial pain: progressive history, as opposed to habitual, calendrical time. In principle, if Schmidt is to be

taken as a role model within the *Cheliuskin* narrative, his figure points to the Socialist Realist goal of bringing audiences to consciousness of their agency in History as it inevitably unfolds.¹¹⁷

6.4.4 Whither the Array?

Sel'vinskii's widespread use of the unsystematic array in *Cheliuskiniana* systematically reveals both its inherent problems and the insufficiency of slogan- and symbolism-based attempts to resolve those problems. The final major set of arrays laid out in Part Three suggest a possible means of producing a transcendent unity, or at least the ongoing desire to do so.

Part Three at first appears to reproduce the earlier pattern of the array. Stalin himself is nearly subject to treatment as a figure in the same kind of array configuration, of kinds of leaders (granted, he also comes across in Part Three as emblematic of a key to moving past the array). In early versions of Part Three that did not pass the censors, his leadership is given the following two contexts:

И лоб его травлен, как нотная запись,
Но надо ж схватить черты этих линий,
Внутренний их порядок.

¹¹⁷ This portrayal of Schmidt might, at least superficially, be considered a response inverting William James's appraisals of habit and will. Personal and historical habit as a central concern of Sel'vinskii's epic may then be understood with reference to James's theory of will, in which there is an acknowledgement of determinism in human choices—analogueous to the ingrained instincts or habits of animals in response to stimuli—but also of a human element of contemplation of possible choices in the face of insufficient evidence. One can see how this understanding of will is antithetical to Marxist-Leninist historical consciousness.

Кормчий — его называет Калинин,
Зодчий — зовет его Радек.
А он — поэт!...

Есть вожди — куртизанки народа,
Пустые бубенчики прихотей масс;
Есть вожди — из лица Нерона,
Обер-диктаторы туш и мяс;
Но есть вожди — диалектики власти»...
(Mekhlis)

And his brow is scored like sheet music,
But one need to grasp the character of these lines,
Their internal order.
The helmsman, his name is Kalinin,
The architect, he is called Radek.¹¹⁸
But he is a poet!...

There are leaders who are courtesans of the people,
Empty baubles at the whim of the masses;
There are leaders who are from the school of Nero,
Ober-dictators over carcasses and meat;
But there are leaders who are the dialectics of power...

The first version in particular, with parallel lines etched in Stalin's brow, reflects a lack of didactic hierarchy while nonetheless privileging Stalin as a poet combining movement forward (the helmsman) with a plan (the architect), much as belovedness and will are dialectized in the second. Compare with the final version

Есть вожак—приживалки народа,
Этим—только рвануть бы куш;
Есть вожак волчиного рода,
Поработители тел и душ;
Но есть вожди—поэты у власти!
(Sel'vinskii, *Cheliuskiniana* 3: 143)

¹¹⁸ Kalinin and Radek are high-profile victims of the show trials of the Great Purges that were proceeding at the time of the *Cheliuskiniana*'s publication.

There are lead-dogs who sponge off the people,
These would only dive for cash;
There are lead-dogs who are of a wolfish breed,
Enslavers of body and soul;
But there are leaders who are poets in power!

The dissociation of the poet-leader Stalin (a *vozhd'*) from his contextual, unambiguously bad comparisons (*vozhaki*) is a significant step away from making him at all comparable to the other figures in the strophe, which become more and more undesirable over the course of revision.

The effect is to ensure that Stalin stands out, and is not merely a member of this array, nor of the other major array that spans several chapters, of four different kinds of heroes (Stalin, a hero-pilot, Amundsen, Schmidt). Additionally, after lingering over the egalitarian separateness of horizontally organized characters, ship-sections, ice types, and so on, the laudatory portrait of Stalin reintroduces a vertical orientation in lengthy descriptions of Stalin's native Caucasus. Moreover, these mountains incorporate massive geographic diversity:

Горы! Они в джигитском ученьи
Неслись от Дербента до Хосты!
Из полных шума и чада ущелий
Днем видны были звезды,
А выше звезд—над полянкою русой,
Над рыбаками на берегу —
Вспышкой магния полюс Эльбруса
Сдувает серебряную пургу, —
Собой осыпала по-барски
Облитые Арктику хребты
В змеях, орлах и барсах.
(3: 141)

Mountains! In their trick-rider studies
They were carried from Derbent to Khosta!
From the total noise and chaos of the ravines
The stars were visible in the day,
And above the stars, above the chestnut clearing.
Above the fishermen on the shore,
With a spark of magic the Pole of Elbrus

Blows off a silver blizzard,
It has strewn about itself in a lordly fashion
Ridges that pour out the Arctic
In snakes, eagles, and leopards.

Although the power vertical is reasserted with Stalin, Sel'vinskii adds logic to this resolution through more than just an appeal to authority. In each of the portraits anchoring this part of the narrative, heroic power devolves in various ways that are tied to books and revolutionary texts. Stalin's emergence as a revolutionary for the people is tied to a book; having assimilated it, he takes on his *nom-de-guerre* (3: 143). Much of the rest of this account about Stalin's life is concerned with his teaching of the text, especially reading aloud to workers and guards. The poem thus begins to establish an internal logic that produces the features of positivity, grand scale, and certainty about the future.

The logic of the book is a dynamic one, and can lead to a number of different results. The story of a hero-pilot is related orally by his mother, whom the lyric subject (long returned from the Arctic) encounters as a member of the Moscow crowd reacting to the news of the *Cheliuskin* finally sinking. As in the case of Stalin, the pilot's journey to heroism (by way of the Civil War), begins with reading:

Попался ему сосед по койке.
Безверный. Из моряков.
Так вот его сразу читать заставил,
И так это, барышны, вдруг,
Что он, вы поверите, у заставы
Листки запрещенные—вслух!
(3: 146)

His bunkmate turned up.
A non-believer. From the sailors.
And so he immediately made him read,
And so it was, ladies, that suddenly,
That he, you'll believe me, at the gatehouse
Forbidden words – aloud!

This narrative can easily be read as the inverse of Stalin's life history—this is the tale of the Stalin's pupil.

If Stalin and the pilot form a natural diptych, then Amundsen and Schmidt form another. Sel'vinskii frames the account of the Norwegian explorer within a scene in a café where the lyric subject is people-watching, drinking coffee, and reading about Amundsen's attempts to fund a *Cheliuskin*-like endeavor. The explorer is presented sympathetically, but his actions are wholly and involuntarily directed by the whim of capital and its desire to claim resources rather than explore the potential of existing resources. By contrast, the tale of Schmidt is presented without such a frame; instead, it reflects in Schmidt's consciousness an intimate awareness of the stories that the lyric subject is reading. In making decisions for Camp Schmidt, Schmidt performs correct exegesis:

Конечно, Амундсен на месте Шмидта
Немедленно пошёл бы. Это так.

[...]

И был бы прав.

Но Шмидт? Товарищ Шмидт?

У Шмидта есть выбор.

(3: 149)

Of course, in Schmidt's place Amundsen
Would rapidly have set off [for the continent]. That's so.

[...]

And he would have been right.

But Schmidt? Comrade Schmidt?

Schmidt has a choice.

In the process of articulating these four kinds of reading, Sel'vinskii finally makes an implicit argument for the natural relationship unifying the various arrays scattered throughout the poem. The importance of the written word underscores the necessity of correct reading with an

appropriate educational foundation, explaining at least in part why the frivolous reading of William James and the empty slogan are such strong motifs throughout the work.

The portrait of Stalin, with its all-encompassing mountainous vertical, along with the forms of the portrait of Schmidt, point toward the resolution of the problematic geography of the Soviet Union by means of experience and knowledge shaped by orthodox texts. As a vertical, internal logic finally emerges in the epic, the fictional characters, who had been characterized by diverse class types, finally become members of the single body of the celebratory parade and the forward-moving narrative of the Soviet Union. The old Bolshevik and purely self-interested peasant alike have been gently jolted out of habitual complacency, while the young people have found their footing and allegorically bear forth the future of the Soviet Union, in the form of an unborn child. The specific imagery of the celebratory conclusion—the marriage of Malinovskii and Nastia under Schmidt’s aegis, snippets of letters of admiration from various foreign countries and workers’ clubs, military marches, banner-infested parades and posters—can certainly just be read as gestures made obligatory by the cultural climate. However, after the long process of deconstruction and reconstruction undertaken by the epic, the monolith can be read as the indication of a kind of authorial reconciliation with State language as well as a celebration of triumphant success.

To return to the Soviet flag as the final trace of Soviet bravery left on Camp Schmidt in April 1934, “the banners, the pennants, the standards, the flags, red, burgundy, crimson, cerise [znamena, stiagi, shtandarty, flagy, krasnye, bagrianye, bagrovye, vishnëvye]” (3: 176) may stand as a model for the resolution of array. Even through the linguistic avowal of difference, they all still point in the end toward the same referent within the same symbolic system: the red banner and the Soviet Union beyond it.

7.0 AFTERWORD

The preceding analysis has surveyed part of the range of experimentation that went into writing for the Soviet project, whether in the case of the more grassroots intellectual efforts of the 1920s or in the case of efforts to work within the constraints of Socialist Realism and state projects and expeditions. They reflect a rich, consistent set of thoroughgoing concerns with the delimitation and integrity of the imagined geography of the Soviet Union.

There had been some explicit appeals to a repository of images and affects derived from the imperial past—which had, after all, successfully characterized its vast landscape in a dual fashion, as endowed with abundance and beauty of which to be proud, as well as empty and unattractive, necessitating the intervention and vision of the state (Ely). For example, citations in 1921 of the Prophet in the Desert motif of nineteenth-century poetry offered a means of making the potential of the peripheral desert visible to the metropolitan reader, thereby connecting the two spaces. Similarly, in Sel'vinskii's *Ulialaevshchina*, Tata and the orderly, beautiful Belle Époque past possessed a great attraction for the unruly denizens of the steppe. Yet the appeal to the imperial imaginary was unproductive: demonstrably ineffective given the recent dissolution of the monarchy and state, too distant from the underlying needs of the regions that had been revealed by Marxist-Leninist discourse, and too limited in the revelation of its socialist, revolutionary potential.

In lieu of empire, writers worked through various iterations of an alternative sense of community that could supersede ethno-territorial differences, which one may gather under a loose sense of cosmopolitanism. The hazards of deploying this term are multiple—it runs the risk of being confounded with the anti-Semitic rhetoric of “rootless cosmopolitanism,” or—to move from the veiled invocation of a specific Soviet population to a wholly non-Soviet system—of being confused with the current sophisticated discourses around cosmopolitanism in a globalized society.

All the same, cosmopolitanism remains a helpful concept in particular given Maiakovskii’s and Sel’vinskii’s representations of Soviet society and space, in no small part because the confusion of bounds between Soviet and international lent itself to their territorial aesthetics of potentiality and suspicion. Both, in their own way, drew attention to the interface between the connections among the regions and cities of the Soviet Union and the world beyond. With his repeated scenario of revolution as a flood spreading far and wide from a point (or set of points), Maiakovskii privileged the potential universalism of socialism, regardless of location or boundaries. Sel’vinskii’s long poems, for their part, also observed the contingency of the boundary between socialist and imperialist as competing global logics, with more attention to how imperialist logics could cross the Soviet borders and the different vantage points on this relationship that different regions supplied.

As this dissertation has argued, fluidity ceased to be an integral quality of the border following the adoption of Socialism in One Country. However, concepts of the border continued play a role in defining a unified Soviet identity that transcended regionalism. Such representations were especially effective in the metaphor of struggle and battle that characterized poetic observations about the Five-Year Plans and the Soviet Union’s border wars in the 1930s.

Along with this boundedness, there were new initiatives at managing the diversity and growth of the interior; a cosmopolitanism without reference to the outside. One might point in particular to the adoption of Socialist Realism as the aesthetic method of cultural production and to a turn in Russian-language poetry to a combination of newspaper topicality and metonymic representations of generalized localities for the Soviet Union (as in Surkov's representations of space, whether in the Civil War or in Camp Schmidt).

That this was not the end point for developments in territorial aesthetics and Soviet imagined community is telegraphed by Sel'vinskii's representation of the *Cheliuskin*'s voyage and the trials of the Cheliuskinites on the ice. In spite of the tendencies in Stalinism toward stasis and monumentality, this particular discourse had not yet been wholly pinned down for codification.

7.1 NEW DIRECTIONS

It is impossible to point to a conclusion of these developments. When Operation Barbarossa began in June 1941 and the Soviet Union was flung into the thick of World War II, the very existence of the country was under threat. Any aesthetic characterizations of the border from the interwar period were utterly voided. The nature of imagined community took on two potential valences. On the one hand, the war saw a resurgence of nationalist separatism in a time of instability, for example, the Ukrainian Bandera faction or the Idel-Ural Tatar Legion of the Wehrmacht. While such groups collaborated with the Axis powers to one degree or another, they were most united by repulsion against the Soviet Union, a clear signal that something was not so cohesive within any proposed imagined community. On the other hand, the total mobilization of

the war served to connect all the regions and ethnicities of the country to far greater effect than the Five-Year Plans or shared interest in celebrity events. With the nationalist separatists symbolically expelled from this new sense of imagined community, this effectively closed a lot of the questions of imagined community that had been left open in the years leading up to the war.

When the war ended, the evolving poetic norms of the 1920s and 1930s were essentially cancelled by Zhdanovshchina. Zhdanov's denunciation of Anna Akhmatova and Mikhail Zoshchenko in his 1947 "Report on the Journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*" severely deprecated individuality or lyricism in poetry (Lygo 13). By Stalin's death in 1953, the range of vocabulary, devices, and formal structures to be found in published poetry had shrunk drastically from the interwar period. Moreover, one may argue that, in this domination of poetry by the editors and censors of state apparatuses and the necessary orientation to their expectations, civic poetry's *de facto* audience had once again become the state, rather than an imagined community.

Nevertheless, with the opening up and diversification of cultural production during the post-Stalinist period, one may say that imagined community and a kind of bounded cosmopolitanism returned to poetry. These concerns were sustained through the war and late Stalinism in a variety of ways. If the nuance of interwar poetry had been lost in these upheavals, the imperative to transcend ethno-territorial bounds had been realized in other ways in cultural production. For example, the institutionalization of translating the literatures of the peoples of the Union meant the cross-pollination of various cultures, and gave a concrete, relatively unthreatening picture of the heterogeneity of the country. The fact, too, that translation became a refuge for poets to practice craft under the guise of conveying the lyricism or ornamentality of the past meant that, even as lyric poetry emerged from its *de facto* ban in the post-Stalinist era,

ethno-territorial difference and distance had acquired a new positive valence. A discussion of a cosmopolitan imagined community in the post-Stalinism era would ideally address the implicit relationship of translation from the perspective of the center and of regions where contemporary work was being translated into Russian and other languages of the Soviet Union.

In addition to the question of interactions between nationalities, the cultural producers of imagined communities were also challenged by new kinds of marginal or otherwise newly acknowledged populations. In particular, the population now leaving the GULags, having been amnestied or rehabilitated, contributed to the post-Stalinist reconceptualization of citizenship and belonging. They constituted a large enough proportion of the total population of the state that they had to be reintegrated in some fashion, rather than ignored. Likewise, the GULag, which had redefined Siberia and the Far East and North, challenged cultural producers to reincorporate these areas into the geographic imagination. Approaches to this task crossed media and styles: one of the central sites was guitar poetry, the semi-underground movement of performers characterized as “amateurs,” as authentic purveyors of an ethos and collective affect. Such guitar poets as Aleksandr Galich—whether or not they had spent time in the GULag—provided a new, lyric medium for the narratives and non-normative language of prison camps at the political and geographic margins, and the large population of former prisoners amnestied in the 1950s and 1960s. The guitar poets made visible a new dimension in the heterogeneous center-periphery networks that composed the “moral space” of the Soviet Union.

It seems apparent that the significant underlying network of problems and preoccupations of the interwar period that I describe in the above dissertation returned, manifesting themselves once more after being repressed, but not resolved, by the political situation and cultural politics of the War and Stalinism. It is my intention that further work will describe these new forms, with

the overarching goal of coming to terms with the underlying content that persists in the Soviet spatial imagination.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ‘Ābedi, Kāmyār. “Lakhuti, Abu’l-Qasem.” *Iranicaonline.org. Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 20 April 2009. 10 March 2015. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/lahuti-abul-qasem>
- Aizlewood, Robin. *Verse Form and Meaning in the Poetry of Vladimir Maiakovskii: Vladimir Maiakovskii. Tragediia; Oblako v shtanakh; Fleita-pozvonochnik; Chelovek; Liubliu; Pro eto*. London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1989.
- Aleksandrov, Grigorii Vasil’evich, dir. *Veselye rebiata*. Mosfil’m. 1934.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised Edition. London: Verso, 2006.
- Anisimova, Irina. “The Novel of Internal Colonization: Nation and Empire in Aleksandr Pushkin’s *Captain’s Daughter*.” Manuscript. 2014.
- Averintsev, Sergei Sergeevich. “Poëziia Viacheslava Ivanova.” *Voprosy literatury* 8 (1975): 145-192.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Spaces*. Trans. Maria Jolas. New York: Orion Press, 1964.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Trans. Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 1990.
- . *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- Bednyi, Dem’ian. “Geroicheskaia strana.” *Pravda* 13 April 1934: 2.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. London: Verso, 1998.
- Boreiko, Vladimir Evgen’evich. “Spad prirodookhrannoi aktivnosti i razgrom otechestvennogo kraevedeiia.” *Belye piatna prirodookhrany*. 2nd ed. 2003. *Kievskii êkolo-kul’turnyi tsentr*. 2003. 16 February 2016. <http://ecoethics.ru/old/b61/68.html>

- Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.
- . *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.
- Burke, Edmund. *On the Sublime and Beautiful*. Vol. XXIV, Part 2. The Harvard Classis. New York: P.F. Collier and Sons, 1909-14. *Bartleby.com*. 2001. [www.bartleby.com/24/2.5 February 2016](http://www.bartleby.com/24/2.5February2016).
- Cavanagh, Clare. "Whitman, Mayakovsky, and the Body Politic." *Rereading Russian Poetry*. Ed. Stephanie Sandler. New Haven: Yale UP, 1999. 202-22.
- Chaadaev, Peter [Pëtr Iakovlevich]. "Apology of a Madman." *Readings in Russian Civilization*. Vol. 2. *Imperial Russia, 1700-1917*. Ed. Thomas Riha. 2nd ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1969. 295-302.
- Clark, Katerina. *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*. 3rd edition. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000.
- Clowes, Edith. *Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2011.
- Cooper, James Fenimore. [1826]. *The Last of the Mohicans*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.
- Dathorne, Oscar Ronald. *Imagining the World: Mythical Belief versus Reality in Global Encounters*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1994.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny. *The Making of the State Writer: Social and Aesthetic Origins of Soviet Literary Culture*. Trans. Jess M. Savage. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001.
- Dovzhenko, Oleksandr Petrovych, dir. *Aerograd*. Mosfil'm and VUFKU. 1934. Film.
- Dunham, Vera. *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*. Durham: Duke UP, 1990.
- Edie, James M., James P. Scanlan, and Mary-Barbara Zeldin, eds. *Russian Philosophy*. Vol. 1. *The Beginnings of Russian Philosophy; The Slavophiles; The Westernizers*. Knoxville, TN: U of Tennessee P, 1976.
- Ely, Christopher David. *This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002.
- Etkind, Alexander. *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*. Cambridge: Polity, 2011.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Tear Off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005.
- Fore, Devin. "The Operative Word in Soviet Factography," *October* 118 (2006): 95-131.

- Frank, Jason. "Aesthetic Democracy: Walt Whitman and the Poetry of the People." *The Review of Politics* 69.3 (Summer 2007): 402-30.
- Frank, Susanne. [Frank, Siuzanna]. "Tëplaia Arktika: k istorii odnogo starogo literaturnogo motiva." *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 108 (2011): n.p. 6 March 2015. <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2011/108/fr7-pr.html>
- From the Ends to the Beginnings: A Bilingual Web Anthology of Russian Verse*. Trans. Tatiana Tulchinsky, Andrew Wachtel, and Gwenan Wilbur. Eds. Ilya Kutik and Andrew Wachtel. n.d. 5 February 2016 www.russianpoetry.net
- Gasparov, Mikhail Leonovich. *Poëticheskii iazyk Pushkina kak fakt istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*. Vienna: Wiener Slawistischer Almanach, 1992.
- . "Semen Kirsanov, znamenets sovetskogo formalizma." Introduction. *Stikhotvoreniia i poëmy*. By Semen Kirsanov. Sankt-Peterburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2006. 5-18.
- Gerasimov, Mikhail Prokop'evich. "Stepnye dissonansy." *Krasnaia nov'* 1 (1922): 36.
- Gol'dshtein, Aleksandr Leonidovich. *Rasstavanie s Nartsissom: Opyty pominal'noi ritoriki*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1997.
- Goodman, Russell. "William James." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Winter 2013 Edition. The Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. 29 October 2013. 12 March 2015. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/james/>
- G. P. "Gerasimov, Mikhail Prokop'evich." *Literaturnaia entsyklopediia v 11 tomakh*. Vol. 2. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Komitet Akademii, 1929. 468-71.
- "Grenada." *A-pesni: pesennik anarkhista-podpol'shchika*. A-pesni.org. n.d. 7 September 2014. <http://a-pesni.org/grvojna/oficial/grenada.php>
- Gurianova, Nina. *The Aesthetics of Anarchy: Art and Ideology in the Early Avant-Garde*. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 2012.
- Hacker, Andrea. "To Pushkin, Freedom, and Revolution in Asia: Velimir Khlebnikov in Baku." *Russian Review* 65.3 (July 2006): 440-68.
- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.
- Hodgson, Katharine. *Written with the Bayonet: Soviet Russian Poetry of World War Two*. Liverpool: U of Liverpool P, 1996.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

- Inber, Vera Mikhailovna. *Tsel' i put': Stikhi 1922-1924*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1925.
- Ivanov, Viacheslav Ivanovich. Preface. *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*. By Nikolai Sergeevich Trubetzkoy. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991. i-xix.
- Jakobson, Roman Osipovich. "The Statue in Puškin's Poetic Mythology." *Language in Literature*. Eds. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987.
- Jameson, Frederic. *The Antinomies of Realism*. London: Verso, 2013.
- Jangfeldt, Bengt. *Mayakovsky: A Biography*. Trans. Harry D. Watson. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2014.
- Kaganskii, Vladimir Leopol'dovich. "Sovetskoe prostranstvo: Landshaftnyi i èkologicheskii aspect." *Labirint*. 5 (2012): 26-36.
- Karabchievskii, Iurii Arkad'evich. *Voskresenie Maiakovskogo*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990.
- Katsis, Leonid Fridovich. *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Poët v intellektual'nom kontekste èpokhi*. 2nd ed. Moscow: Izdatel'skii tsentr RGGU, 2004.
- Kendall, Gavin, Ian Woodward, and Zlatko Skrbis. *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism: Globalization, Identity, Culture and Government*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- K. G. "Sel'vinskii, Il'ia L'vovich." *Literaturnaia èntsiklopediia v 11 tomakh*. Vol. 10. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1937. 613-17.
- Khlebnikov, Velimir [Viktor Vladimirovich]. *Tiran bez Tè. Tvoreniia*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1986. 348-358.
- Kirsanov, Semen Isaakovich. *Piatiletka*. Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia, 1932.
- . *Stikhotvoreniia i poëmy*. Sankt-Peterburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2006.
- Klanderud, Paul A. "Maiakovskii's Myth of Man, Things, and the City: From Poshlost' to the Promised Land." *Russian Review* 55.1 (Jan. 1996): 37-54.
- Kornienko, Natalia. "Literary Criticism and Cultural Policy during the New Economic Policy, 1921-1927." *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond*. Eds. Evgeny Dobrenko and Galin Tikhanov. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2011. 17-42.
- Kornilov, Boris Petrovich. *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*. Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1966.

- Kozlov, Dmitrii Vladimirovich. “*Klinom krasnym bei belykh*”: *Geometricheskaia simbolika v iskusstve avangarda*. Saint Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2014.
- Kukulin, Il'ia Vladimirovich. “Regulirovanie boli: Predvaritel'nye zametki o transformatsii travmaticheskogo opyta Velikoi Otechestvennoi/Vtoroi mirovoi voiny v russkoi literature 1940-1970x godov.” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 2-3(2005): n.p. 14 February 2016. <http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2005/2/ku37.html>
- Ladin, Joy. “‘It was not Death’: The Poetic Career of the Chronotope.” *Bakhtin's Theory of Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*. Eds. Nele Bemong, Pietwv Borghart, Michel De Deobbeleer, Kristoffel Demoen, Koen De Temmerman and Dart Keunen. Ghent: Academia Press, 2010. 131-55.
- “Lager' Shmidta na geograficheskoi karte: tirazh atlasa—1,5 mln. èkzempliarov.” *Izvestiia* 14 April 1934: 4.
- Lagin, Lazar' Iosifovich. *Starik Khottabych*. Moscow: Shkol'naia literatura, 1970.
- Lahouti, Abolqasem. [Lakhuti]. “Cheliuskintsam.” *Pravda* 7 March 1934: 1.
- Lar'kov, Sergei Alekseevich. “Ob odnom poliarnom mife GULAGa.” *Krasnoiarskoe obshchestvo MEMORIAL*. Krasnoiarskoe obshchestvo MEMORIAL, 2006. 3 March 2015. <http://www.memorial.krsk.ru/Articles/2007Larkov1.htm>
- Layton, Susan. *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.
- LeFebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991.
- Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich. [1917]. *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline*. *Marxists Internet Archive*. 2005. 10 February 2016. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>
- Lermontov, Mikhail Iur'evich. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 5 tomakh*. Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1935-37.
- Levchenko, Mariia Aleksandrovna. *Industrial'naia svirel': Poèziia Proletkulta 1917-1921 gg.*. Saint Petersburg: Sankt-Peterburgskii gosudarstvennyi universitet promyshlennykh tekhnologii i dizaina, 2007.
- Longinus. *On the Sublime*. Trans. H. L. Havell. London: MacMillan, 1890.
- Loshchilov, Igor' Evgen'evich. “O simbolistskikh istochnikakh dvukh stikhotvorenii Alekseia Kruchenykh.” *Interpretatsiia i avangard: mezhvuzovskii sbornik nauchnykh trudov*. Novosibirsk: Novosibirskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet, 2008. 72-77.

- Lugovskoi, Vladimir Aleksandrovich. *Sobranie sochinenii v 3 tomakh*. Vol. 1. Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1971.
- Lunacharskii, Anatolii Vasil'evich. "Tezisy o politike RKP v oblasti literatury." *Neopublikovannye stat'i o sovetskoi literature*. Ed. N. A. Trifonov. *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo* 74 (1965): 29-37.
- Lygo, Emily. *Leningrad Poetry 1953-1975*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2010.
- Maguire, Robert A. *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920's*. 2nd ed. Chicago: Northwestern UP, 2000.
- Maiakovskii, Vladimir Vladimirovich. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 13 tomakh*. Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1955-1961.
- Mally, Lynn. *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia*. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1990.
- Manafov, Shirin Mamedovich. "Persidskie motivy" *Sergeia Esenina*. Saint Petersburg: Sodruzhestvo, 2009.
- Martin, Terry. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Marx, Karl. [1845]. "Feuerbach. Die deutsche Ideologie." *Stimmen der proletarischen Revolution*. n.d. 12 March 2015. http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me03/me03_017.htm
- . [1845]. "The German Ideology." *Marxists.org*. n.d. 12 March 2015. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01d.htm>
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. [1848]. "Communist Manifesto (Chapter 2)." *Marxists Internet Archive*. 2004. 10 February 2016. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm>
- . [1848]. "Karl Marx u. Friedrich Engels: Manifest d. Kommunistischen Partei (2. Proletarier u. Kommunisten)." *Marxists Internet Archive*. June 2000. 10 February 2016. <https://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/marx-engels/1848/manifest/2-prolkomm.htm>
- . [1848]. "K. Marks – F. Engel's. Manifest Kommunisticheskoi partii." *Marxists Internet Archive*. 24 February 2004. 10 February 2016. <https://www.marxists.org/russkij/marx/1848/manifesto.htm>
- McCannon, John. *Red Arctic: Polar Exploration and the Myth of the North in the Soviet Union, 1932-1939*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- Medvedkin, Aleksandr Ivanovich, dir. *Novaia Moskva*. Mosfil'm. 1938.

- Mekhlis, Lev. Letter to Molotov, Kaganovich, Zhdanov about Sel'vinskii's poem *Cheliuskiniana*. 26 December 1937. *Bol'shaia tsenzura*. Fond A. N. Iakovleva. n.d. 11 March 2015. <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/1015940>
- Mikhailik, Elena Iur'evna. "'Grenada' Mikhaila Svetlova: otkuda u khloptsa ispanskaia grust?" *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 75 (2005): n. pag. 7 September 2014. <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2005/75/mi22.html>
- Naiman, Eric and Evgeny Dobrenko, eds. *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003.
- Nazarenko, Tatiana. "Il'ia Sel'vinskii (1899-1968)." *Russian Poets of the Soviet Era*. Ed. Karen Rosnek. *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 359. Detroit: Gale, 2001. 242-254.
- Nicholas, Mary A. "Vera Inber." *Russian Poets of the Soviet Era*. Ed. Karen Rosnek. *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 359. Detroit: Gale, 2001. 120-129.
- "*Obrazets sotsialisticheskogo realizma: Vystuplenie N. Tikhonova na ploshchadi Uritskogo.*" *Literaturnaia gazeta* 26 June 1934: 1.
- Paperno, Irina. "The Meaning of Art: Symbolist Theories." *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*. Eds. Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994. 13-23.
- Papernyi, Vladimir Zinov'evich. *Kul'tura* 2. 2nd ed. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie. 2007.
- Papernyi, Zinovii Samoilovich, ed. *Proletarskie poëty pervykh let sovetskoi èpokhi*. Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1959.
- Payne, Matt. "The Forge of the Kazakh Proletariat? The Turksib, Nativization, and Industrialization during Stalin's First Five-Year Plan." *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Edited by Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 223-252.
- Pil'niak, Boris. [Boris Andreevich Vogau]. *Volga vpadaet v Kaspiiskoe more*. Pullman, MI: Russian Language Specialties, 1973.
- Platonov, Andrei. [Andrei Platonovich Klimentov]. *V prekrasnom i iarostnom mire: povesti, rasskazy*. Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1979.
- Plisko N[ikolai Gavrilovich]. "Maiakovskii Vladimir Vladimirovich." *Literaturnaia èntsyklopediia v 11 tomakh*. Vol. 7. Moscow: OGIZ RSFSR, 1934. 46-74.
- Pumpianskii, Lev Vasil'evich. "*Mednyi vsadnik i poëticheskaiia traditsiia XVIII veka.*" *Pushkin: Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii*. Vol. 4/5. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1939. 91-124.

- Pupkova, Natal'ia. "Nashi na 'Cheliuskine': Iz 112 nakhodivshikhsia na legendarnom parokhode minimum dvoe – krymchane." *Krymskaia Pravda* 26 February 2014. 3 March 2015. <http://c-pravda.ru/newspapers/2014/02/26/nashi-na-chelyuskine>
- Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeevich. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 16 tomakh*. Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1937-59.
- Ram, Harsha. *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire*. Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 2003.
- Rann, James. "Maiakovskii and the Mobile Monument: Alternatives to Iconoclasm in Russian Culture." *Slavic Review* 71.4 (Winter 2012): 766-91.
- Revich, Aleksandr Mikhailovich [Rafaël' Mikhailovich]. "Sedoe s detstva pokolenie." Introduction. *Iz pepla, iz poem, iz snovidenii*. By Il'ia L'vovich Sel'vinskii. Ed. Aleksandr Mikhailovich Revich. Moscow: Vremia, 2004. 5-20.
- Rolf, Malte. "Das sowjetische Massenfest im Stalinismus (1932-1941)." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32.1 (Jan. - Mar. 2006): 69-92.
- Ronen, Omry. "Leksicheskie i ritmiko-sintaksicheskie povtoreniia i 'nekontroliruemyi podtekst.'" *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR. Seriiia literatury i iazyka* 56.3 (1997): 40-44.
- Ryklin, Mikhail Kuz'mich. *Prostranstvo likovaniia: totalitarizm i razlichie*. Moscow: Logos, 2002.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- Schafer, Daniel E. "Local Politics and the Birth of the Republic of Bashkortostan, 1919-1920." *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. 165-190.
- Scherr, Barry. *Russian Poetry: Meter, Rhythm, and Rhyme*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1986.
- Sel'vinskii, Il'ia L'vovich. *Cheliuskiniana: Épopeia*. Part 1. *Novyi mir* 1 (January 1937): 114-168. Print.
- . *Cheliuskiniana: Épopeia*. Part 2. *Oktiabr'* 1 (January 1938): 171-189.
- . *Cheliuskiniana: Épopeia*. Part 3. *Novyi mir* 5 (May 1938): 141-176.
- . *Iz pepla, iz poem, iz snovidenii*. Ed. Aleksandr Mikhailovich Revich. Moscow: Vremia, 2004.
- Shmidt, Otto Iul'evich. "'Cheliuskin' zatonul: ékipazh parakhoda vysadilsia na léd." *Pravda* 15 February 1934: 1.
- . "Dreif 'Cheliuskina' prekratilsia." *Pravda* 3 January 1934: 6.

- . Foreword. *On the Top of the World: The Soviet Expedition to the North Pole, 1938*. By Lazar Brontman. New York: Covici, Friede, 1938.
- Shmidt, Otto Iul'evich, et al. "Cheliuskintsy vmeste so vsei stranoi prazdnovali den'Krasnoi Armii." *Pravda* 25 February 1934: 1.
- Simmel, Georg. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*. Eds. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone. London: SAGE Publications, 1997. 174-85.
- Simonov, Konstantin Mikhailovich. *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh*. Vol. 1. Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1966.
- Sreznevskii, Vsevolod Izmailovich. "Begunskie stikhi: Vvedenie." *Materialy k istorii i izucheniiu russkago sektanstva i raskola*. Ed. Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich. 1 (1908). *Staroverie v dokumentakh*. <http://starajavera.narod.ru/duhovnystihi.html>. 4 February 2016.
- Stahlberger, Lawrence Leo. *The symbolic system of Majakovskij*. The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1964.
- Stalin, Iosif Vissarionovich. "K voprosam leninizma." *Sochineniia*. Vol. 8. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1948. 13-90.
- Steiner, George. Introduction. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. By Walter Benjamin. Trans. John Osborne. London: Verso, 1998. 7-24.
- Surkov, Aleksei Aleksandrovich. "Doroga geroev." *Pravda* 13 April 1934: 2.
- , lyricist. "'Konarmeiskaia' iz fil'ma *Raboche-krest'ianskaia* dlia golosa (ili khora) s fortepiano." Composed by Daniil and Dmitrii Pokrass. Moskva: Muzgiz, 1936. *a-pesni*. n.d. 14 February 2016. <http://a-pesni.org/grvojna/oficial/konarmejskaja.php>
- . *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1979.
- . "Smert' podletsam!" *Pravda* 26 January 1937. 4.
- "Strana nagrazhdaet geroev." *Trud*. 21 April 1934. 1. *Starye gazety*. n.d. 15 February 2016. <http://oldgazette.narod.ru/trud/21041934/text1.html>
- Svetlov, Mikhail Arkad'evich. [Sheinkman]. *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*. Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1974.
- "Taktovik." *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. 3rd ed. 1970-1979. The Gale Group, Inc. 14 Feb. 2016 <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Taktovik>
- Timofeeva, Ol'ga Viktorovna. Interview with Vladimir Papernyi. "Vladimir Papernyi: Na dvore ocherenaia 'Kul'tura Dva', pravda, s 'Feisbukom'." *Novaia gazeta* 30 January 2013. <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/arts/56485.html>

- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Harper & Row, 1984.
- Trotsky, Lev. [Leon Trotsky]. [1930]. *History of the Russian Revolution*. Trans. Ahmed Shawki. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2007.
- Trubetskoi, Nikolai Sergeevich. [Trubetzkoy, Nikolai Sergeevich]. *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*. Ed. Anatoly Liberman. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991.
- Vaiskopf, Mikhail Iakovlevich. *Vo ves' logos: religiia Maiakovskogo*. Moscow: Salamandra, 1997.
- Wachtel, Michael. [Maikl Vakhtel']. "Chërnaia shal" i eë metrisheskii oreol." *Russkii stikh: Metrika. Ritmika. Rifma. Strofika*. Moskva: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet, 1996. 61-80.
- . *The Development of Russian Verse: Meter and Its Meanings*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.
- White, James D. "Alexander Bogdanov's Conception of Proletarian Culture." *Revolutionary Russia* 26:1 (2013): 52-70.
- Widdis, Emma. *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2003.
- Zelinskii, Kornelii Liutsianovich. "Inber V. Tsel' i put': Stikhi. Bez mesta. 1925." Review. *Krasnaia nov' 3* (1925): 286-287.
- Zelinskii, Kornelii Liutsianovich and Il'ia L'vovich Sel'vinskii, eds. *Gosplan literatury: Sbornik Literaturnogo tsentra konstruktivistov (LTsK)*. Moscow: Krug, 1925.