Avant-Garde Historians: Poetic Experiments in Factography for the Ten-Year Anniversary of the October Revolution

By

Zachary Rewinski

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Karen Evans Romaine, Professor, Slavic Languages and Literatures
Kirill Ospovat, Assistant Professor, Slavic Languages and Literatures
Andrew Reynolds, Professor, Slavic Languages and Literatures
Irina Shevelenko, Professor, Slavic Languages and Literatures
David McDonald, Professor, History

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Abstract

This dissertation examines narrative poems (*poemy*) written in commemoration of the ten-year anniversary of the October Revolution by Nikolai Aseev and Vladimir Mayakovsky. These poets, experimenting with the theory of factography (*faktografiia*) advanced in 1927 by the Left Front of Arts (LEF) in its journal *Novyi Lef*, present historical narratives of the establishment of Bolshevik power in poetic form, and, in the common phrase of the time, "sum up accounts" of the years 1917-1927. These works are analyzed in the overlapping contexts of Lefist theory, ongoing debates over the shape and direction of Soviet literature, the cultural and historiographical norms and practices of the anniversary celebration itself, and the broader social, political, and cultural context of 1927. Given programmatic declarations of factography in each poet's *poema*, special analytic attention is devoted to these authors' overt and covert uses of factual source material in their compositions. It also identifies deviations, omissions, and distortions of that same material.

Chapter 1 introduces these overlapping contexts as factors in the telling of October narratives. Chapter 2 analyzes Aseev's *poema Semyon Proskakov* and argues that despite declarations of factography and explicit use of source material, including previously unanalyzed archival documents, Aseev conforms the real-life figures in his narrative of the Civil War in Siberia, whether hero or villain, to character types common in Soviet literature of the 1920s. Chapter 3 analyzes Mayakovsky's *poema Khorosho!* with a focus on depiction of events of 1917, its use of source material, Mayakovsky's positioning of himself as a participant in and chronicler of these revolutionary events, and the satiric tactics he deploys against anti-Bolshevik figures. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings of the preceding chapters in terms of Aseev and Mayakovsky's experimental practices of factography and their place in the broader anniversary celebration. It concludes that both poets utilized the theory of factography selectively, but in accordance with the social mandate (*sotsial'nyi zakaz*) of their historical moment, to craft narratives that delegitimize the views and actions of anti-Bolshevik villains and legitimize Soviet political authority.

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Despite this abundance of support, the flaws, shortcomings, and errors of this dissertation are my own.

Note on Transliteration and Translation

This dissertation uses a modified Library of Congress system of transliteration. Diacritical marks are omitted. Surnames are spelled with -sky (Mayakovsky, Gor'ky, Trotsky) unless convention or the original author's preference dictates otherwise (Iampolski, Kolonitskii). Most first names are transliterated (Aleksandr rather than Alexander). Russian *ë* is spelled as *yo* in the name Semyon and otherwise as *e* (Potemkin, Kruchenykh).

The bibliography uses the Library of Congress system, excluding diacritical marks.

Primary texts originally appearing in languages other than English are provided with translation. Unless otherwise indicated, all translation in this work is my own. My approach to translation in this work prioritizes literal meaning, even if at the expense of the aesthetic appreciation of the English-only reader. Titles are given in English and transliterated Russian on the first usage. For reasons described in that chapter, I opt not to translate the title *Khorosho!*

Chapter 1

Introduction: Left Front of the Anniversary

Ну, вот, все кричат: лефы, да лефы. А переберите всех поэтов: я спрашиваю вас, кто написал что-нибудь к октябрьским дням? Как же, теперь все за революцию. Даже рабоче-крестьянский граф Алексей Толстой – тоже за революцию. А кто участвовал своим творчеством в праздновании советской страной ее величайшей годовщины? Да те же лефы. Как хотите переворачивайте, но вот я написал «Хорошо», а Асеев написал «Семена Проскакова».

Everyone yells: the Lefists, those Lefists. But go through all the poets: I ask you, who wrote something for the October Days? Naturally, these days everyone is for the revolution. Even the 'worker-peasant' Count Aleksei Tolstoy is for the revolution. But who contributed their creative work to the celebration of its greatest anniversary, together with the whole country? Naturally, those same Lefists. Turn it around however you like, but I wrote *Khorosho!* and Aseev wrote *Semyon Proskakov*.

- Vladimir Mayakovsky[1]

In 1927 Soviet society commemorated the ten-year anniversary of the October Revolution. 7 November, the official day of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, was a Monday. *Pravda* published a double issue the day prior – sixteen pages – of articles on topics like "The International Character of the October Revolution," "What Can be Achieved in Ten Years," "The Decennial of the October Revolution and Laboring Youth," "October and Women," "The Siege of the Winter Palace," and "Whence Came Proletarian Literature." Interspersed among these and

[1] Qtd. from an appearance by Mayakovsky at the Polytechnical Museum in Moscow in Zelinskii, "Itti li nam s Maiakovskim," *Na literaturnom postu* no. 5 (1928): 49. All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

According to Vasily Katanian's *Maiakovskii: khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1985), Mayakovsky spoke at the Polytechnical Museum several times in 1927, thrice from the time since he and Aseev had completed the works referenced here. Katanian does not mention this remark, and it is unclear whether Zelinskii refers to a remark from October or November, at which Mayakovsky read from *Khorosho!*, or at a December "Evening of Journals" (*Vecher zhurnalov*) organized by Gosizdat and at which he likely did not.

other articles were quotes from leading Party members and congratulatory messages from international communists in China, Britain, Japan, India, the United States, Czechoslovakia, Ireland, France, Indonesia, Korea, and Sierra Leone; a summary of the events of 24-26 October 1917;[2] multiple images of Lenin; and poems by Aleksandr Bezymensky, Sergei Obradovich, Ivan Fillipchenko, and Nikolai Aseev. Even the final pages of advertisements were permeated with anniversary: for screenings of commemorative films like Esfir' Shub's *The Great Way* (*Velikii put'*) and Boris Barnet's *Moscow in October* (*Moskva v Oktiabre*), special jubilee studies of economics, construction, and agriculture, and a full page for preorders of the new edition of Lev Tolstoy's collected works set to begin publication in 1928, the centennial of his birth.[3] 1927 was a year of commemoration in the Soviet Union.

Even as Soviet society looked back at the ten years since the October Revolution, 1927 in many ways was a year on the brink. Everyday Soviet citizens feared foreign invasion even as this same issue of *Pravda* featured caricatures of defeated leaders of the White movement in the Civil War era, each struck through with an X.[4] The New Economic Policy (NEP) was faltering.[5] Soviet dignitaries were assassinated abroad. With rare exception, 1927 saw but fleeting glimmers of hope for the spread of socialist revolution around the world.[6] A strongly opposing tendency was on

[2] A "Calendar of October" appeared in preceding issues.

[3] On the Tolstoy centennial – which also coincided with the centennial of the birth of Nikolai Chernyshevsky – see Nickell, "Tolstoy in 1928: In the Mirror of the Revolution," in *Epic Revisionism*, Platt and Brandenberger, eds., 17-38.

[4] According to Olga Velikanova, "Historians are unanimous in their opinion that international relations, though worsening in 1927, gave little or no grounds for panic within the USSR." Velikanova, *Popular Perceptions of Soviet Politics in the 1920s* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 45.

[5] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017), 125-27.

[6] Stalin put forward the idea of 'socialism in one country' two years earlier, in an article "October, Lenin, and the Prospects of Our Development" ("Oktiabr', Lenin i perspektivy nashego razvitiia") published in *Pravda* on 7 November. The introduction directly references the anniversary.

display in the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti in the United States.[7] Literary polemics abounded, with attacks on Boris Pil'niak and Evgenii Zamyatin to come in the following year. Two anniversaries earlier, Stalin had articulated the basic concept of "socialism in one country" in an article published on 7 November in *Pravda*. "October, Lenin, and the Prospects of Our Development" directly connected Stalin's views on the prospects of international revolution to the anniversary of October in its introduction.

One article in the anniversary issue of *Pravda*, titled "For the Central Committee Line, for Leninism – Against Trotskyism," is the exception in an issue that focused on the anniversary and revolutionary history, but it reflected the long struggle between Stalin and Trotsky, in which the question of how to address the international situation was among the divisive ideological issues. The tenth anniversary saw the culminating moment of this struggle. Trotsky organized an anniversary counterdemonstration with the Left Opposition in Moscow on 7 November.[8] In the telling of film producer Grigorii Aleksandrov, Stalin came to him and director Sergei Eisenstein at the Goskino studio around 4:00 pm on November 7 with instructions to cut scenes featuring Trotsky from their film *October* (*Oktiabr'*), perhaps the most well-known artistic work of the 1927 anniversary. Aleksandrov and Eisenstein removed what they could in the three hours before the film's now fragmentary showing at the Bolshoi Theater. Expulsions of Trotsky and other members

[7] Nikolai Aseev wrote a poem titled with the last names of the Italian emigrant anarchists criticizing the trial proceedings and death sentence, the injustice of which was acknowledged by Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis in 1977.

[8] The counterdemonstration described in Velikanova, *Popular Perceptions of Soviet Politics in the 1920s* 182-83; on the parades and demonstrations in Moscow on 7 November and delegitimization of Trotsky's experience of and views on the October Revolution, Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 161-64, 177-78, 208.

of the Left Opposition began within days; removing Trotsky from other scenes in *October* delayed general release of the film to March 1928.[9]

According to historian Frederick Corney, the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution featured the most significant outlay of government manpower and resources for an anniversary in years, and it "produced some of the most evocative tellings of October to date."[10] Its events allowed for participation by every Soviet citizen, whether as a participant or onlooker of a demonstration, or even as both simultaneously, and even in or walking by "living pictures" of key moments from 1905 through the Civil War.[11] Soviet citizens could participate in the anniversary as a respondent to surveys about experiences of the revolution, or as a narrator of those experiences in print or aloud at an 'evening of reminiscences' (*vecher vospominanii*). Soviet citizens could view a commemorative film, attend an anniversary concert, or read academic studies on the history of the Bolshevik Party, the events of 1917, or a 'summing of accounts' of the past ten years in any number of fields of Soviet life and culture in standalone editions or journals.[12] They could read anniversary materials in newspapers and journals, and literary works about the October Revolution. In these far-ranging commemorations a reciprocal process of memory formation was taking place: as participants from various levels of society articulated their memories of the years of revolution, they contributed to the overall narrative of the creation of Soviet power; conversely, the narratives

[9] Aleksandrov, *Epokha i kino*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1983), 21.

[10] Corney, *Telling October*, 175.

[11] On one such demonstration, orchestrated by Nikolai Podvoisky, see Corney, *Telling October*, 178.

[12] Many journals focused on the anniversary in their October/November issues. The journal *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, for example, published a double 7-8 issue subdivided into sections "Art and Literature of the October Decennial" and "Science and Scientific Institutions," each consisting of numerous articles. Some émigré publications also marked the anniversary. These include the newspaper *Dni* (Paris), under the editorship of Aleksandr Kerensky, which published summary articles on the October Revolution in November 1927 issues, and *Volia Rossii* (Prague), which featured numerous anniversary essays and articles beginning with Marina Tsvetaeva's 'notes on those days' titled "October in a Train Car" ("Oktiabr' v vagone").

of the October Revolution that Soviet citizens encountered in these manifest formats retold and reorganized the memories that transformed into narratives.

Artistic contributions to the anniversary spanned media. Eisenstein and Aleksandrov, Shub, Barnet, and Vsevolod Pudovkin in his *The End of Saint Petersburg* (*Konets Sankt-Peterburga*) were commissioned for their films with October as "the implicit or explicit telos."[13] Amy Nelson describes musical contributions to the anniversary as "an outpouring" including works by Dmitri Shostakovich and the composers collective Prokoll (Proizvodstvennyi kollektiv studentov-kompozitorov Moskovskoi konservatorii).[14] Visual artists contributed to anniversary parades and mass demonstrations and produced agitational posters, photographs, woodcuts, and more. In print form but through a wide range of traditional and hybrid artistic genres, the Left Front of Arts (Lef), with a reincarnated monthly journal *Novyi Lef* as its organ and Vladimir Mayakovsky as its main editor, paid particular attention and contributed significantly to the literature of the anniversary. Even if Mayakovsky exaggerated in the epigraph above, Lef's contribution was extensive, perhaps greater than that of any other artistic group. However, it was by far not alone. By my count, based on the bibliographic *Velikaia Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia v proizvedeniiakh sovetskikh pisatelei*, data from the National Corpus of the Russian Language, and individual research, the works of poetry, prose, and drama dealing with the October Revolution

[13] Corney, *Telling October*, 184. It is worth noting that Shub produced another film, *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (*Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*), for the tenth anniversary of the February Revolution. The films *Mother* (*Mat'*), The *Strike* (*Stachka*), and *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potemkin*) were produced for the twenty-year anniversary of the 1905 Revolution.

[14] Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 198. Similar debates were happening in music as in other arts in 1927 and were particularly difficult there because of the inherent abstractness of music compared to other arts. Nelson argues that "Perhaps because identifying acceptable 'content' was so difficult, most composers relied on revolutionary texts to ensure that their piece's content would be unmistakably clear" (Nelson, *Music for the Revolution*, 201).

published in 1927 number at least 150.[15] These were not all necessarily anniversary works, but nonetheless, in the words of Pereval literary critic Abram Lezhnev, "the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution called forth an entire literature."[16]

Narrative and Legitimacy

This study is devoted to poetic narratives of the October Revolution produced for its tenth anniversary. In the following pages I turn frequently to historian Frederick Corney's 2004 study *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution*. Corney emphasizes the multiplicity of interpretations, evaluations, and contestations to Bolshevik power that became possible virtually immediately after the assertion of Soviet power and demonstrates that the narrative of revolution was a Bolshevik concern from the first Menshevik outcry against the storming of the Winter Palace in October 1917 through to 1927. By 1927, Corney argues, the demand for a harmonious and coherent narrative that presented the October Revolution as inexorable was at the fore. To be sure, some narratives and narrative projects were more successful than others. Even while "a single narrative of the October Revolution did not emerge in this first decade […] the tale of the October Revolution was the primary language within which the former citizens of the tsarist empire came to articulate *and conceive* of themselves as members of the new

[15] Several notes on the bibliography *Velikaia Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia v proizvedeniiakh sovetskikh pisatelei* are in order. First, this bibliography counts volumes of short stories, volumes of poetry and other forms of collected works as one item. If single works were counted, the number certainly would increase. It also would be at least slightly higher if works published outside of the Soviet Union were counted. One such work is David Burliuk's "Ten Years of October," published in 1928 in New York but clearly intended for the ten-year anniversary celebration. Similarly, some works that appeared in the periodic press or journals either are not counted or are counted for the year in which they first appeared in a book edition. Mayakovsky's *Khorosho!* is categorized as a work of 1927, whereas Aseev's *Semyon Proskakov* is listed in 1928. One might also distinguish literature that depicts or discusses the revolution from 'anniversary literature' as a form of occasional writing. That said, one must wonder if readers and critics of 1927 would have seen the matter differently. I would argue that any literary work published in 1927 concerning any part of the history of Russian revolution and civil war could have appeared to readers and critics as engaging in some way with the anniversary celebration, regardless of its author's intent or initiative.

[16] Abram Lezhnev, "Dve poemy," *Pereval* no. 6 (1928): 353.

Communist polity, a polity that presented its citizens with a radically transformed political and linguistic landscape."[17]

Corney argues that a question of legitimacy was at the center of Bolshevik concern over the narrative and narration of 1917. "Like all foundation narratives, the story of October is by definition a *legitimizing* process and merits close scrutiny within that context, but it must be freed from the straitjacket of the (il)legitimacy debate."[18] By shifting focus to the narrative of October itself, Corney frees the question of legitimacy from a preoccupation of Cold War-era scholarship, that of the legitimacy of the Soviet government overall. As he writes,

> Soviet historians described an act of revolution that laid the sturdy pillars of the new Soviet state. Many Western scholars described a coup d'état by a small band of merciless opportunists, which served as only the shakiest of foundations for an illegitimate and immoral Soviet state. As historian Ronald Suny succinctly puts it, these Western scholars often wrote Soviet history backward from the Great Purges to 1917 'to find out what went wrong.'[19]

Taking this cue from Corney, I avoid these mindsets to the greatest extent possible. In this study reference to events after 1927 is deliberately limited in pursuit of the goal of close examination of how poets engaged in the anniversary at their own contemporary moment. Mayakovsky's suicide was not yet a 'literary fact' in 1927, but Esenin's was.

On the question of early Soviet political legitimacy, Mikhail Iampolski observes that in its early years, the Soviet government lacked a foundational document that would legitimize its power in the fashion of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States or the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in the French Revolution of 1789, ratified as they were by national assemblies and approved, explicitly or implicitly, by the population, and

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[17] Corney, *Telling October*, 201, italics in the original.

[18] Corney, *Telling October*, 5, italics in the original.

[19] Corney, *Telling October*, 5.

argues that in the absence of such a document, the government turned to other means to symbolize the legitimacy of its power.[20] What Iampolski's argument has in common with Corney's is the strong sense of a need for legitimizing narrative and emphasis on non-legalistic methods with which the early Soviet government pursued a popular sense of legitimacy.

Both Iampolski and Corney also emphasize, albeit for the most part implicitly, the role of artistic production in the construction of the Soviet narrative of the revolution. Iampolski does not consider anniversaries specifically and points to visual documents as comprehensible symbolic representations of Soviet power, and therefore legitimacy: visual depiction of moments like the Second Congress of Soviets, as in the 1947 painting *Lenin Declares Soviet Power* (*Lenin provozglashaet Sovetskuiu vlast'*) can create a sense of political legitimacy, in this case via depiction of Lenin leading the country by word and deed. Such visual representations of power function according to a similarly reciprocal relationship to the types of narration at the focus of Corney's study: the viewer sees in the painting proof of the Soviet government exercising functions of government, and in observing the painting, endows with meaning the events and figures depicted there.

The narrative of 1917 remained a key issue in the anniversary celebration in 1927. "In 1920, the third anniversary celebrations represented the Soviet state's best effort to find a Bastille for October, to distill it to a single transcendent event; in 1927, the tenth anniversary celebrations represented its best effort to tell an unequivocal narrative of the October Revolution."[21] Corney describes shifting contours and disputes over the narrative of the October Revolution. By 1927, the centrality of the storming of the Winter Palace as 'Bastille' – the "transcendent 'total event' to

[20] Iampolski, "Lenin provozglashaet Sovetskuiu vlast': zametki o discurse osnovaniia," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 26 (1997): 48-70.

[21] Corney, *Telling October*, 2.

serve the October Revolution in the way the Storming of the Bastille had served the French Revolution" and "the reduction of the entire revolutionary narrative to an emotive and transparent symbol"[22] – was articulated more strongly than ever before in accounts from Bolshevik participants, not to mention Eisenstein and Aleksandrov's depiction in *October*. The narrative had gained the clarity and drama common to foundation stories, if sometimes at the expense or to the modification or even exclusion of earlier versions. Some questions remained: the uncertainty of how to view the Revolution of 1905 in relation to the October Revolution was evident in the celebration of the former's twentieth anniversary, and Corney generally does not present material on debates over how to understand the relationship between the February and October Revolutions. Nonetheless, consolidation of the narrative of the October Revolution fulfilled a legitimizing function.

Corney emphasizes the dynamism of narratives of the October Revolution. While Istpart, the Commission on the History of the October Revolution and the Russian Communist Party (Komissia po istorii Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii i Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii), oversaw many aspects of anniversary celebrations in its national and local bureaus, it was not the only participant, initiator, or influencer of anniversary events, nor did the resulting narrative emanate exclusively from the RKP(b).

> Although the telling of October was clearly an ambitious project initiated and energetically promoted by the rulers and intellectual elites of the new regime, it should not be seen as the imposition of a finished narrative on the tabula rasa of the population. The effectiveness of the story relied on the ability of the storytellers to draw in, indeed implicate, the listeners in the telling of the story. They did so by providing individuals with multiple means of experiencing the event and providing the language with which to articulate that experience.[23]

[22] Corney, *Telling October*, 10, 76. On the limits of the comparison between the Bastille and the Winter Palace, see Corney, *Telling October*, 80.

[23] Corney, *Telling October*, 10.

The poets Nikolai Aseev and Vladimir Mayakovsky provided their own narratives of the events leading to legitimate Soviet power. While filmmakers were commissioned to produce cinematic narratives of October, I have found no such evidence in these cases. On the contrary, Aseev and Mayakovsky competed to write the better work for the tenth anniversary celebration. Aseev and Mayakovsky operated in the anniversary context, but also in the context of their own artistic movement, Lef, with its own theoretical considerations. The next section outlines the theory of factography (*faktografiia*) in general and its particular instantiation in literature of fact (*literatura fakta*) and identifies points of contact between the thinking of Lefists in 1927 and the dynamics of the anniversary celebration.

Lef, *Novyi Lef*, and the 1927 Anniversary

"For ten years we have been making October. For ten years October has been making us," begins the collective lead article in the double anniversary issue of *Novyi Lef*. "Ten years ago the essential core of today's Lef laid into the shaft-poles (*vlozhilos v oglobli*) of October work."[24] This anniversary issue featured a cover created by Aleksandr Rodchenko with a photograph of Lenin from Rodchenko's "revolutionary archive" (*revarkhiv*).[25] Contributions in various genres, some hybridized, came from Sergei Kirsanov, Mayakovsky, Aseev, Osip Brik, Viktor Shklovsky, Sergei Tret'iakov, and Viktor Pertsov, in order of appearance.[26] Interspersing and complementing

[24] Lef, "Desiat'," *Novyi Lef*, no. 8-9 (1927): 1. Also cited in Corney, *Telling October*, 175, but described as "a poem for the tenth jubilee."

[25] As described in the issue, it is not clear whether the original photo was Rodchenko's. John Bowlt refers to it as Rodchenko's own (Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde* [New York: Thames & Hudson, 2017], 310).

[26] Kirsanov made two contributions to this issue: the *poema* "Moia imeninnaia" appears after "Desiat'," and the prose essay "The Black Sea Futurists," which directly invokes Kirsanov's reminiscences (or lack thereof) as a ten-year-old experiencing the October Revolution in Odessa. The essay appears last in the issue, or more accurately, before the standard "Ongoing affairs" (*tekushchie dela*) section and backmatter.

primarily textual contributions were still shots from anniversary films *The Great Way* by Esfir' Shub and *Moscow in October* by Boris Barnet in Rodchenko's composition, plus others from Dziga Vertov's *The Eleventh* (*Odinnadtsatyi*) and Anton Lavinsky's *Radio*.[27] Aseev and Mayakovsky's contributions to this issue were not excerpts of their anniversary *poemy*: Aseev's was the article "October in the Far East" ("Oktiabr' na Dal'nem"); Mayakovsky's the article "Anything but Reminiscences" ("Tol'ko ne vospominaniia"). At 90 total pages, the issue's page count doubled the usual.[28]

The subject of the opening assertions of "Desiat'" is an ambiguous subject 'we' until the third sentence – Lef? Plus its readership? Soviet people? Lef's involvement in the building of socialism was an argument in favor of the group's continuing cultural relevance, with the terminological caveat that Futurists existed in 1917, but Lefists did not. Lef formed in 1921 and persisted until 1925, publishing a total of seven issues of the journal *Lef* in those years. One of Lef's most lasting theories, the 'social mandate' (*sotsial'nyi zakaz*, translated variously), is fundamental to the theories of factography and literature of fact. The social mandate entailed attenuation by the artistic producer, in whichever medium, to the current needs of the society for which the artist produced. As summarized by Bengt Jangfeldt,

> The basis of Lef's aesthetics was what in the language of the time was called 'social commissioning': the artist's task was to fulfil the 'commissions' issued by time through the proletarian state. Mayakovsky's ROSTA posters were held up as a classic example of such an artistic attitude. Out of this basic idea came the theory of 'literature of fact,' according to which, in Aseyev's words, 'imagination can deceive, while reality, underpinned by facts, necessarily leaves traces in art.' Instead of novels and short stories – journalism, instead of painting – photography and documentary films. This

[27] Vertov's film was already in preparation for the eleventh anniversary of the October Revolution. I have not found much information about *Radio* but can note that Lavinsky was involved in the staging of Mayakovsky's play *Mystery-Bouffe* in 1918 with Vsevolod Meyerhold directing, was involved in Lef's first iteration, and produced the recognizable poster for Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* featuring a sailor in the foreground with guns of the *Potemkin* protruding over each shoulder.

[28] Generally speaking, *Novyi Lef* was much shorter than *Lef*, the shortest issue of which still eclipses this longest issue of *Novyi Lef* in its two years of existence. However, *Novyi Lef* appeared monthly, *Lef* irregularly.

> 'antiromanticism' was itself in essence a form of romanticism: a veneration of the new socialist reality, which was not to be distorted by the imagination of individual authors – a dream of being able, with pure facts alone, to represent 'reality itself.'[29]

Of crucial importance to the theoretical stance of *Novyi Lef*, which reformed in late 1926 following meetings with Trotsky and Lunacharsky and consisting of many of the former contributors to *Lef*, was reciprocity in art's relationship to reality.[30] Perhaps the most extreme view was that of Sergei Tret'iakov, one of Lef's most active theoreticians and experimenters, who "founded his entire praxeology on the notion of 'operativity,' on the claim not to veridically reflect reality in his work, but to actively transform reality through it."[31] Another of the prominent theoreticians, Nikolai Chuzhak, developed the concept of *zhiznestroitel'stvo* ("life-building"), the name of which suggests an affinity with Symbolist life-creation (*zhiznetvorchestvo*), but which Chuzhak discussed in terms of building socialism. More cynically, Evgeny Dobrenko suggests that Lef's interest in remaking people was oriented around creating a consumer for their own artistic works.[32] Insofar as Lef remained embattled throughout the 1920s, it may have been possible for altruistic goals to coexist with the more self-interested ones. Lefists certainly believed that they deserved a place on the Soviet literary scene.[33]

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[29] Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 399-401. Aseev's statement appears in his article "March of the Thick-Skulled" ("Pokhod tverdolobykh"), his polemical response to Polonsky in *Novyi Lef*, no. 5 (1927).

[30] A succinct summary of the opening of *Novyi Lef*, appears in Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 370-76.

[31] Fore, "Introduction," *October* no. 118 (Fall 2006): 3-4.

[32] Dobrenko, *Aesthetics of Alienation: Reassessment of Early Soviet Cultural Theories* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 55.

[33] In the inaugural issue of *Novyi Lef*, which expresses many of the group's goals in openly polemical form, Viktor Pertsov emphasizes that "Lef does not want to be a hegemon in art, [but] on equal standing in the army of builders" («Леф не хочет быть гегемоном в искусстве, он хочет быть равноправным в армии строителей»). Pertsov, "Grafik sovremennogo Lefa," *Novyi Lef* no. 1 (1927), 16.

The double anniversary issue of *Novyi Lef* affirms for the umpteenth time the group's commitment to the social mandate.

> Мы умеем делать, любим делать и делаем на потребу Октября лозунги, фельетоны, монтажи, частушки, вывески, кинонадписи, рекламстихи, киоски, эстрадные куплеты, витрины, кинохронику, марши для шествий, фото, перевинчиваем старые пьесы и строим новые, инструктируем речевиков, и будем делать это впредь.
>
> We know how to make, love to make and make, at the demand of October, slogans, feuilletons, montages, ditties (*chastushki*), signboards, film captions, advertising poems (*reklamstikhi*), kiosks, verses for the stage, window displays, film chronicles, marches for parades, photos, we rescrew old plays and build new ones, instruct speech-givers, and we will do this in the future.[34]

The direct reference to October is not solely motivated by the anniversary celebration. Underwritten by the social mandate, Lefists here present themselves as more than willing participants in the larger Soviet project, as contributors to the building of socialism through artistic production. The theory developed in the journal corresponded to this goal.

The concept of the social mandate radically changed the purpose of art that had formerly emphasized experimentation as a self-sufficient goal. In the description of Halina Stephan,

> These ex-Futurists now began to abandon the medium of poetry, which was the medium of Futurism, and to turn to prose written according to a new program of "literature of fact" (*literatura fakta*). The most important difference that set this literature apart from the original Futurism was the fact that it no longer existed simply as an esthetic experiment offering a new way of looking at words and images. Despite the assurances of commitment to verbal experimentation, by 1925 the works written by the former Futurists began to serve a cause; they were produced to convey a message. In *New Lef*, experimentation with form became clearly subservient to the higher goal of shaping the social experience through literature that now responded to "social commission" (*sotsyal'nyi zakaz*). With this development the original Futurism came to an end.[35]

While Stephan emphasizes the shift toward prose, verse remained a primary medium for Aseev, Kirsanov, and Mayakovsky, and was far from a rarity in the creative work of other Lefists.

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[34] Lef, "Desiat'," *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927), 1.

[35] Stephan, *"Lef" and the Left Front of Arts* (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1981), ix.

More recently Devin Fore has placed greater emphasis on hybridity in Lef's experimental practices. Hybridity is immediately evident in Lef's enumeration of its social contributions: *reklamstikhi* (advertisement poems), for example, would be inconceivable to earlier generations of Russian poets.[36] Fore observes that

> the factographers who published in the journal *Novyi lef* paid little heed to the traditional divisions between the arts. Tretiakov, who worked as a photographer, prose author, dramatist, reporter, film scenarist, radio commentator, and lyrical poet, considered genre as a shifting and protean aspect of the art work that must be dynamically and expediently negotiated in the process of aesthetic production. […] the members of Lef […] understood factography not as a static genre, but as a mode of praxis.[37]

To give but one concrete example of experimentation with hybridity in Lefist work, Sergei Kirsanov's "My Name Day" ("Moia imeninnaia") is labeled a *poema* mostly but not exclusively in Mayakovsky's *lesenka* style; it intersperses prerevolutionary characters like yat (ѣ) and Gothic-style lettering in German text, and a chess puzzle.[38]

Central to this study of Aseev and Mayakovsky's contributions to the ten-year anniversary of the October Revolution is the Lef theory of factography. In Fore's conception, factography defies a single normative definition, but that it designates an "aesthetic practice preoccupied, as the lexical roots of the neologism *fakto-grafiia* show, with the inscription of facts."[39] Previous scholarship has viewed factography in more blunt terms. Victor Erlich refers to it as a "hybrid half-documentary, half-fictional mode."[40] Natalia Kolchevska argues that the priority of factography

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[36] Liudmila Shleyfer-Lavine analyzes two *reklamstikhi*, one a collaboration between Mayakovsky and Aseev, the other between Mayakovsky and Tret'iakov, in her article "Pushkin Pushing Production: The Repurposing of Literary Tradition by V.V. Maiakovskii & Co," *Slavic and East European Journal* 62, no. 2 (2018): 339-358.

[37] Fore, "Introduction," 4-5.

[38] Kirsanov, "Moia imenninaia," *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927): 2-31.

[39] Fore, "Introduction," 3.

[40] Erlich, *Modernism and Revolution: Russian Literature in Transition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 220.

(particularly its prose, although as discussed above, generic boundaries in the works of Lefists are often indistinct) would be "to accentuate real material gathered either first-hand or culled from documentary sources."[41] In the updated version of his autobiography *I Myself* (*Ia sam*), Mayakovsky described "the basic position" of *Novyi Lef* as "against invention (*vydumka*), aestheticization and psychologizing by art – for agitation (*agit*), for qualified publicism and chronicle."[42] In short, factography proposed a complex and dynamic relationship between the artistic producer, the work of art, and their cultural milieu. In this factography mirrors the mutually reinforcing relationship between memory and narrative that Corney identifies in the telling of October, the status of which was fundamental to the Lef project. The lead article of the anniversary issue of *Novyi Lef* succinctly summarizes: "The very human changes, must change. The revolution mixes the dough of everyday life like the pistons of a motor."[43] In an earlier issue, Viktor Pertsov described Lef's method as "on the border between aesthetic effect and utilitarian life practice. This border position of Lef between 'art' and 'life' predetermines the very nature of the movement," which "gallops from the border of art to unmediated real-life activity."[44]

One theoretical forerunner in Lef theory was Tynianov's article "On the Literary Fact," in which Tynianov argues that one mechanism in the evolution of literary genres is the transfer of the everyday (*byt*) into literary texts.[45] At the same time, Tynianov argues that literary genres evolve

[41] Natalia Kolchevska, "Toward a 'Hybrid' Literature: Theory and Praxis of the 'Faktoviki'," *Slavic and East European Journal* 27, no. 4 (1983): 452.

[42] Maiakovskii, *Ia sam*, in vol. 1 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 13-i tomakh* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1955-1961), 28.

[43] «Самый человек меняется, должен измениться. Революция шатунами двигателей месит тесто быта». Lef, "Desiat'," *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927): 1.

[44] Pertsov, "Grafik sovremennogo Lefa," *Novyi Lef* no. 4 (1927): 15.

[45] Iurii Tynianov, "O literaturnom fakte," *Lef* no. 4 (1924): 101-116.

also through the instantiation of new "literary facts": that changes in literary genre occur not through systematic development, but in leaps, which redefine the boundaries of the given genre. Lefists developed this concept into a literature of fact (*literatura fakta*), the specific iteration of factography in the literary text. Literature of fact advocated for use of real-life factual material in literary texts. Lefists debated the distinctions between artistic and biographical or historiographical forms of writing, but they generally sought to expand the conception of artistic tasks, as the above-quoted enumeration of genres of their work from the anniversary issue of *Novyi Lef* illustrates.

The use of factual material pulled from everyday reality, oftentimes in genres of art traditionally understood as 'low,' to return to the terminology of Tynianov's article, was not merely to chronicle that reality, but to efface the distinction between everyday reality and the reality of the artistic work. As Fore summarizes,

> In this society [of the late 1920s], where the distinction between the object and its image grew increasingly tenuous, the factographers understood acts of signification not as veridical reflections or reduplications of an ontologically more primary reality, but as actual and objective components of everyday, lived experience.[46]

In the article "Literature of Life-Building," Nikolai Chuzhak enumerates predecessors to literature of fact including Dmitry Furmanov's *Chapaev* (1923) and Tynianov's *Kiukhlia* (1925, written in connection to the centennial of the Decembrist Uprising), and other examples of texts and other art forms, many of which transcend genres and delineations between fiction and non-fiction, "not even to speak of the best factographic works of the drivers of the revolution and Party leaders."[47]

Other historical developments in theorizing the relationship between art and reality cannot be traced here, but it is worth mentioning that the narrower question of factual depiction of the October Revolution appeared early and often, including discussions connected to anniversaries.

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[46] Fore, "Introduction," 6.

[47] Chuzhak, "Literatura zhiznestroeniia (istoricheskii probeg)," *Novyi Lef* no. 11 (1928): 15-16.

Nikolai Evreinov, one of the principal directors of *The Storming of the Winter Palace* (*Vziatie Zimnego dvortsa*), a mass spectacle staged on Uritsky (formerly Palace) Square for the third anniversary of the October Revolution in 1920 and involving "up to eight thousand participants and one hundred thousand spectators,"[48] wrote that

> In contentious sessions, we studied the historical 'course of events,' not only through books but also in live, heart-felt conversations with those who had actually participated in the storming of the Winter Palace, as well as with some of the former palace servants who had lived through those events so catastrophic to the old regime.[49]

Corney shows that Evreinov conscientiously framed the mass spectacle to invite comparisons with the Storming of the Bastille.[50] These essential tensions between factuality and "the distillation in a single emblematic event of the October Revolution's essential qualities" persist in the *poemy* that Aseev and Mayakovsky contributed to the anniversary.[51]

By 1927 the Lefists were long acquainted with hostility from other literary camps. Indeed, the opening of *Novyi Lef* was met immediately with attacks by Viacheslav Polonsky in *Izvestiia*, who referred to Lef as a "sham" (*blef*).[52] In 1927 Aseev and Mayakovsky were also feuding with Maksim Gor'ky, whom Aseev visited in Italy in November.[53] As will be discussed in the following chapters, some of the negative criticism of their anniversary *poemy* proceeded on explicitly anti-

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[48] Corney, *Telling October*, 76.

[49] Nikolai Evreinov, "The Storming of the Winter Palace. Recollections of the staging to celebrate the third anniversary of the October Revolution," in *"The Storming of the Winter Palace,"* ed. Inke Arns, Igor Chubarov, and Sylvia Sasse (Zurich-Berlin: diaphanes, 2016), 31.

[50] Corney, *Telling October*, 80.

[51] Corney, *Telling October*, 76.

[52] Barnes, *Boris Pasternak: A Literary Biography*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 386-89.

[53] Aseev published reminiscences of his visit to Gor'ky in his 1928 *The Beauty without Her Makeup* (*Razgrimirovannaia krasavitsa*).

Lef partisan grounds. Caricatures and satiric poems about Lefists appeared in major journals of competing artistic groups.

Given this heated opposition to Lef, it is perhaps counterintuitive that *Novyi Lef* invited feedback from its readership on its anniversary issue. The note appearing in the table of contents to the issue reads:

> Считая, что сдвиг и изменения художественного вкуса нигде не могут отразиться так сильно, как в художественном оформлении Октябрьского десятилетия, редакция Нового Лефа просит читателей сообщить ей свои наблюдения по поводу этого оформления (изобразительного, речевого, музыкального, организационного).
>
> Being of the view that the shift and change of artistic taste cannot be reflected anywhere as strongly as in the artistic design of the October decennial, the editorial board of *New Lef* asks readers to inform it of their observations concerning this design (visual, oral, musical, organizational).[54]

The reference to 'the editorial board' might suggest that this invitation emanated from Mayakovsky's pen, but the question of its authorship is of no particular importance. Rather, I would draw attention to another example the reciprocal dynamic between the artist and the recipient of the artistic work: the implication is that feedback on the "artistic design of the October decennial" from the journal's readers would help Lefists to identify areas for improvement to better meet the "shift and change of artistic taste." At the same time, the contributions of Lefists would shape the October narrative in the minds and memories of its readers.

Contributions of Lefists certainly received feedback, both approving and disapproving, in their own time and in Soviet literary scholarship, but the anniversary *poemy* of Aseev and Mayakovsky by and large have escaped Anglophone scholarly attention. This dissertation begins to fill that gap. The following chapters will examine in turn Nikolai Aseev's *Semyon Proskakov* and Vladimir Mayakovsky's *Khorosho!* with explicit focus on how these works operate within and

[54] *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927): 88.

respond to the context of the tenth anniversary celebration. Applying Corney's arguments about the interconnectedness of memory and narrative and the importance of articulation of personal experience in the process of formation of the October narrative, these chapters will observe the ways in which the principles of factography function in these *poemy*. Emphasis therefore will be placed on these authors' use of documentary sources and various types of reminiscence in their works. Certain of these sources appear only in archival materials from the State Archive of the Russian Federation (Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii, GARF) and the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstvo, RGALI); some of these sources are considered, as best as I can tell, for the first time in this dissertation.

Of equal importance from this point of view will be the poets' deviations from source material: I will argue that despite programmatic emphasis on factuality in *Novyi Lef* and within these specific *poemy*, both Aseev and Mayakovsky deviate from, modify, omit, and otherwise manipulate source material. At times these manipulations correspond to broader tendencies in Soviet literature of the 1920s; at others, they may be understood as attempts at creation of ideologically acceptable, dramatic, cohesive narrative. In any case, the starting point of this study is the premise that these works, neither commissioned nor compelled from above, represent their authors' attempts, under the aegis of the social mandate, at experimentation with the ideas of factography, and in the face of sharp criticism, to tell October.

Chapter 2

The Civil War in Siberia: Facts and Inventions of Nikolai Aseev's *Semyon Proskakov*[55]

Nikolai Nikolaevich Aseev (1889-1963) is likely the less familiar poet to enter this study. His work is far less studied than that of Mayakovsky, and many biographical details remain unestablished. Nonetheless, Aseev occupied a significant place in Soviet literature, both in the 1920s and subsequently. This chapter begins with a brief introduction to Aseev's life and works on the assumption that they are less familiar to the reader.

Aseev was born in L'gov in Kursk Province.[56] He moved to Moscow in 1909 and enrolled in the Institute of Commerce (from which it appears that he withdrew) and audited courses at Moscow State University. Aseev was associated with Futurism from the early years of the movement as a member of the Centrifuge group.[57] In Moscow in 1913 or 1914 he also met Mayakovsky and Velimir Khlebnikov – poets who would greatly influence his subsequent development. After a stint in the army in World War I as a draftee, Aseev met the October Revolution as a deputy of the Soviet of Soldiers in Vladivostok. While there, he worked initially at the Labor Board (*Birzha truda*), then as a literary correspondent and editor for the newspaper

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[55] A version of this chapter has been published as: "Telling the Civil War in Nikolai Aseev's *Semën Proskakov*," *Revolutionary Russia* 32, no. 1 (2019): 86-109.

[56] Biographical information has been compiled primarily from *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Handbook of Russian Literature*, Urban, "Poeziia Nikolaia Aseeva," Aseev, "Put' v poeziiu" and "Oktiabr' na Dal'nem," and Aseeva, "Iz vospominanii." Additional citations appear for other sources.

[57] With Boris Pasternak and Sergei Bobrov, Aseev was a founding member of the Centrifuge group. He contributed to its 1913 miscellany *Lirika* (other contributors to the volume were Vera Stanevich, Semyon Rubanovich, Sergei Raevsky, Aleksei Sidorov, Sergei Bobrov, and Boris Pasternak). Markov refers to Aseev's first book of poetry, *Nochnaia fleita* (*Nocturnal Flute*) as both "his least Aseyev-like book, because it is too Western and too literary" and "paradoxically, the most futuristic book of the Lirika group" (Markov, *Russian Futurism*, 235). Bobrov wrote the introduction for *Nochnaia fleita*; Aseev wrote the introduction to Pasternak's first volume of poetry *Bliznets v tuchakh*; Pasternak reviewed Aseev's 1916 volume *Oksana*.

It appears that Aseev remained a member of the group until his departure for the Far East in 1917, the year to which Markov dates the end of the group as such (Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism: A History* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968], 275).

On Centrifuge, see Markov, *Russian Futurism*, 228-275, and on Aseev in the group, 242-252; and Lazar' Fleishman, "Istoriia 'Tsentrifugi'," in *Stat'i o Pasternake* (Bremen: K-Presse, 1977): 62-101.

Dal'nevostochnoe obozrenie (later *Dal'nevostochnaia tribuna*). After the establishment of a White government in Vladivostok in 1921,[58] Aseev and his wife Kseniia (née Siniakova, also referred to as Oksana) relocated to Chita. Although it seems that Aseev maintained only sporadic contact with the mainstream of Futurism in Moscow, he collaborated with Futurists in Vladivostok and Chita including fellow future members of the Left Front of Arts (Lef) David Burliuk, Nikolai Chuzhak, Pyotr Neznamov, and Sergei Tret'iakov in the *Tvorchestvo* group.[59] At the same time, Aseev advocated for and published works by Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, Kamensky, and other Futurists in the *Tvorchestvo* group's journal of the same name and co-wrote satire with Tret'iakov for the newspaper *Dal'nevostochnoe obozrenie.*[60] The print run of Aseev's only book of poetry published in the Far East, the 1921 *Bomba* (*The Bomb*), was mostly destroyed in consequence of the struggle for Vladivostok, but the book has been described as Aseev's "categorial futurist yes to the communist revolution."[61] In his 1927 prose essay "October in the Far East" Aseev described himself and his Futurist colleagues in Vladivostok as follows:

> Мы в городе, кишащем интервентами и контрразведчиками, чувствовали себя такими же литературными партизанами, беспокоящими сознание, делающими

[58] The Whites occupied Vladivostok in May 1921. On the change of power see Canfield Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in the Russian Far East, 1920-1922* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), 93-98.

As is frequently the case with Aseev's biography in these years, precise dates are difficult to establish. It may be inferred from Mayakovsky's letters to Aseev and Chuzhak, dated to around 20 August 1921, that they had been in Chita for some time by then. See Mayakovsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 13, 50-51.

[59] *Tvorchestvo* was the successor to the "literary-artistic society" *Balaganchik*, named, as Kseniia Aseeva confirms, after Aleksandr Blok's 1906 play of that title (Aseeva, "Iz vospominanii," in *Vospominaniia o Nikolae Aseeve* [Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1980] 20). Burliuk, Chuzhak, Tret'iakov and others had also been in Vladivostok, where the journal *Tvorchestvo* and the group that bore its name grew from Aseev and Tret'iakov's collaborative work on political feuilletons for the newspaper under the pseudonym "Bul'-Bul'." Neznamov corresponded with *Tvorchestvo* from Chita. See Aseev, "Oktiabr' na Dal'nem," *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927), 43-47.

[60] According to Kseniia Aseeva, her husband initially contributed "verse feuilletons" to the newspaper and worked as a proofreader; he became an editor of the paper after the seizure of Vladivostok in April 1920 by the Japanese army, because he, unlike the sitting editor at the time, was politically unaffiliated. As a condition for serving as editor, Aseev chose the content for one page of the newspaper, and "after this, Aseev gained the opportunity to print Mayakovsky almost every day." Aseeva, "Iz vospominanii," 19.

[61] Markov, *Russian Futurism*, 250.

> вылазки против беляков на литературном фронте, ободряющими и перекликающимися со своими, отошедшими в сопки и затаившимися в них.[62]
>
> We, in a city teeming with interventionists and counter-intelligence operatives, felt like such literary partisans [as those who fought in the Far East – ZR], who were disturbing consciousness, making excursions against the Whites, on the literary front, emboldening and aligning with our own, who had withdrawn to the hills and hidden in them.

In Chita, Aseev also participated in a literary-historical group led by the historian Mark Azadovsky and connected to the State Institute for Public Education (Gosudarstvennyi institut narodnogo obrazovaniia).

Upon his return to Moscow in early 1922[63] with the assistance of then-Commissar of the People's Enlightenment Anatoly Lunacharsky and the literary critic and former participant in the Futurist artistic group *Balaganchik* Iuda Grossman-Roshchin,[64] Aseev reunited with Mayakovsky and other Futurist colleagues in the newly formed Lef. In Moscow Aseev worked prodigiously, writing and publishing original works in *Lef* and elsewhere. At this time Aseev actively collaborated with Mayakovsky; he also engaged in writing for cinema, albeit with limited

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[62] Aseev, "Oktiabr' na Dal'nem," *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927): 46.

[63] According to the reminiscences of Kseniia Aseeva, she and her husband left Chita on January 28, 1922, and the trip back to Moscow took over a month. Furthermore, Aseeva recalls that Velimir Khlebnikov visited them a few days after their return, and that he wrote the *poema Sinie okovy* (*Blue Fetters*) then and there. The *poema* is dated March-April 1922. Aseeva, "Iz vospominanii," 25, 28; Grigor′ev and Parnis, "Primechaniia," 687.

A more precise date of their return has not emerged in my research, but it is clear that Aseev resumed activity in the Moscow literary scene quickly. Both Nikolai Khardzhiev and Vasily Katanian place Aseev at a meeting in Moscow between numerous Futurists and Anatoly Lunacharsky held 1 May 1922 (Khardzhiev, "A.V. Lunacharskii o Khlebnikove," in *Stat'i ob avangarde v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 2 [Moscow: RA, 1997], 289; Katanian, *Maiakovskii: Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti,* [Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel′, 1985], 227). In his "Reminiscences on Mayakovsky" ("Vospominaniia o Maiakovskom"), Aseev writes that:

> In the years of revolution we [he and Mayakovsky] did not see each other. I was in the Far East. […] In the year 1922 we met as if we had never parted: we had everything in common – views, tastes, sympathies, antipathies. Mayakovsky made efforts for me, arranging for me accommodations, work; he brought me into society, carefully detailing to a public that was still unfamiliar with me who I am and what I am.
> (Aseev "Vospominaniia o Maiakovskom," in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, 672)

The date of 1923 provided in Aseev's entry in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* therefore seems inaccurate.

[64] Aseev writes in "October in the Far East" that Grossman-Roshchin assisted him and his wife Kseniia Aseeva with their return to Moscow without additional description. Aseev, "Oktiabr' na Dal'nem," *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927): 49.

success.[65] At the same time, Aseev caught on to developments in Futurism like Mayakovsky's 'staircase' (*lesenka*) graphic orientation, which Aseev adopted by 1925,[66] and the theory of social mandate.

It can be said that Aseev had been fulfilling the social mandate since well before its formulation, often in the form of topical and commemorative poems. In the Far East Aseev began writing "lyric feuilletons," one of the first of which, by Aseev's own appraisal, was the poem "An Answer" ("Otvet," 1918), on the occupation of Vladivostok by interventionist forces; the topical satire written by Aseev and Tret'iakov mentioned above also had a sociopolitical function.[67] Topical poems of the post-Vladivostok 1920s include "Sacco and Vanzetti" (1925), an indictment of the judicial system of the United States and defense of the Italian immigrant anarchists accused of murder in Braintree, Massachusetts; "Don't Push!" ("Ne tolkaites!" 1926), a poem published in *Izvestiia* on 1 October 1926 that chastises pedestrians and commuters for poor manners; and "Combat Alert" ("Boevaia trevoga," 1927), a response to fears of military intervention by Western powers.

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[65] For example, Aseev composed and is credited for a screenplay for Lev Kuleshov's *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mister West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*, although it was almost entirely rewritten. Lev Kuleshov and Aleksandra Khokhlova, *50 let v kino* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1975), 86-87; see also Graffy, "Literature and Film," in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature*, ed. Evgeny Dobrenko and Marina Balina (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 247.

[66] Mayakovsky developed *lesenka* in 1923 and "used it in every poem until his death seven years later" (Michael Wachtel, *The Development of Russian Verse: Meter and its Meanings* [Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 206). For a formal analysis of Mayakovsky's *lesenka*, see M. Gasparov, "Ritm i sintaksis: porozhdenie 'lesenki' Maiakovskogo," *Problemy strukturnoi lingvistiki 1979* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, Institut russkogo iazyka, 1981): 148-168. To the best of my knowledge, Aseev's use of *lesenka* has not been studied outside of Wachtel's brief discussion.

[67] Adolʹf Urban, "Poeziia Nikolaia Aseeva," in *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatelʹ, 1980), 17.

By 1927 Aseev was also a veteran writer of commemorative poetry.[68] In the decade since the October Revolution, Aseev had written, in chronological order by the dating in the 1967 *Biblioteka poeta: Bol'shaia seriia,*[69] poems for the seven-year anniversary of the October Revolution ("Parade of the Seven-Year Anniversary" ["Parad semiletiia"] and "Poema," 1924), the twenty-year anniversary of the 1905 revolution ("The Fifth" ["Piatyi"], 1925),[70] the hundred-year anniversary of the Decembrist Uprising ("Blue Hussars" and "December Fog" ["Sinie gusary" and "Dekabr'skii tuman"], 1925),[71] the anniversary of Lenin's death ("The Anniversary of the Death of the Leader" ["Godovshchina smerti vozhdia"], 1925), the deaths of Polish revolutionaries Walery Bagiński and Antoni Wieczorkiewicz ("In Memory of Bagiński and Wieczorkiewicz" ["Pamiati Baginskogo i Vechorkevicha"] 1925), the renaming of Petrograd as Leningrad ("To the City" ["Gorodu"], 1925-1927), the death of Felix Dzerzhinsky ("The Time of the Best" ["Vremia luchshikh"] 1926), and poems on May Day ("The Sun of the First of May" ["Pervomaiskoe solntse"], 1925) and International Women's Day ("Female Worker Comrades! The everyday is a walking skeleton. To the struggle with it from the diapers and cabbage soup!"

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[68] The 1928 three-volume *Sobranie stikhotvorenii* includes sections of "agitation poems" (in vol. 1) and "occasional poems" (in vol. 2). These designations overlap somewhat with categories of 'topical' and 'commemorative' poems in use here.

[69] In the following I list elegies together with works commemorating holidays, events, people, and so forth, to suggest that they belong to one broad category, but not to diminish or overlook generic differences.

This list is selective in two ways. First, I have listed only those poems that show the consistency of Aseev's participation in literary commemoration and/or the breadth of topics he pursued; second, no complete collection of Aseev's works has ever appeared. The most comprehensive publication, the five-volume *Sobranie sochinenii* published in 1963, is incomplete and lacks academic commentary. For these reasons, I refer also to the 1967 second edition of *Biblioteka poeta: Bol'shaia seriia* which includes some works not published in the *Sobranie sochinenii* as well as academic commentary.

[70] Meshkov does not provide a name for Aseev's additional unfinished *poema* on the 1905 Revolution (Meshkov, *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost' i ideono-khudozhestvennoe razvitie* [Sverdlovsk: Izdatel′stvo Sverdlovskogo universiteta, 1987], 152).

[71] "Sinie gusary" and "Dekabrskii tuman" were published together as a short cycle as "To the Decembrists" ("Dekabristam") in the third issue of *Novyi mir* in 1926 and as "Poems about the Decembrists" ("Stikhi o Dekabristakh") in Aseev's 1927 volume *Hoarfrost* (*Izmoroz'*).

["Tovarishchi rabotnitsy! Byt – kashei. S nim na bor'bu ot pelenok u shchei!"], 1925). The commemorative poem "October" ("Oktiabr") appeared in the 7 November 1926 issue of *Izvestiia*, two pages after Mayakovsky's anniversary poem "Don't jubilee!" ("Ne iubileite!").[72] In 1927, Aseev wrote and published numerous poems for the ten-year anniversary. In addition to *Semyon Proskakov*, parts of which appeared as separate works, sometimes without attribution to the larger work,[73] Aseev published "The Tenth October" ("Desiatyi Oktiabr'"), which was published in *Pravda* in the issue for 6-7 November, "She [the revolution] continues" ("Ona prodolzhaetsia"), and "The Biography of the Revolution" ("Biografiia revoliutsii"). The essay "October in the Far East," published in the double 8-9 (August-September) issue of *Novyi Lef* for 1927, provides a briefer biographical account of Aseev's experience of the Civil War in Vladivostok.[74]

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[72] This issue, longer than usual at ten pages, featured only these two poems.

Two other poems, both titled "Deviat' let" but with different first lines («Жизнь – сильней и ярче стихов…» and «Девять лет, потрясающие мир…») were published 6 November 1926 and 7 November 1926 in *Uchitel'skaia gazeta* and *Krasnaia gazeta*, respectively. These poems were not anthologized subsequently, and I have been unable to locate copies of their original publications; however, their titles, first lines, and dates of publication suggest that they commemorate the ninth anniversary of the October Revolution.

[73] For example, Aseev published two sets of two poems each under the heading "October Songs" ("Oktiabr'skie pesni," not to be confused with his 1925 book of poems with the same title) in the periodic press. In the 6 November 1927 issue of *Zaria Vostoka*, Aseev published poems with the first lines «За то, что наша сила…» and «А пока мы здесь разговариваем…»; the latter of these is identifiable as a line in the third section of the chapter "Trains." In issue 11 (November) of *Oktiabr'*, Aseev's "October Songs" included a poem «По мелочам» («Мы ходим в кино, играем в маджонг…») and «А пока мы здесь разговариваем…», under the title «Жизнь».

Library holdings of *Zaria Vostoka* for 1927 in the United States are sparse; I have not been able to view this issue, and therefore cannot ascertain that these two versions of «А пока мы здесь разговариваем…» are identical, or that it also had the title «Жизнь». In *Oktiabr'*, the poem has no attribution to *Semyon Proskakov*; the chapter in question first appeared in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* on 6 October, but I have not located a copy of that issue either. In any case, the dates of these publications are certainly significant.

Information on these publications gathered from: *Russkie sovetskie pisateli, poety: Biobibliograficheskii ukazatel'*, vol. 2.

[74] The role of personal accounts of the Revolution and Civil War in the 1927 anniversary will receive further treatment not only in this chapter, but also in the next chapter, in the context of Mayakovsky's *Khorosho!* and his 1927 essay "Anything but Reminiscences…" ("Tol'ko ne vospominaniia…"), which appeared in the same issue of *Novyi Lef* immediately before Aseev's essay.

Some of the content of "Oktiabr' na Dal'nem" had appeared previously in the essay "Tri goda na Dal'nem Vostoke," published in the sixth issue of *Pechat' i revoliutsiia* in 1922.

After 1927, Aseev continued to write commemorative poems, including "The Song of Eleven Years" ("Pesnia odinnatsati let," 1928) for the eleven-year anniversary. Interest in historical subjects and figures continued with a longer poem lauding Nikolai Chernyshevsky; this work was published a year after the centenary of his birth ("Chernyshevsky," 1929).[75] Had Aseev completed the longer work about Lenin that he began, and even published part of as "The Youth of Lenin" ["Molodost' Lenina," 1929]), but ultimately abandoned, a cycle of longer works tracing the "three stages" of the Russian revolution as outlined by Lenin (the epochs of the Decembrists, of Chernyshevsky, and of the Bolsheviks) would have emerged.[76]

The remaining years of Aseev's career span over three decades. After Mayakovsky's death, some considered Aseev for the unofficial position of 'first poet;' Aseev, like Pasternak, declined this role.[77] The work that some consider Aseev's magnum opus, the *poema Mayakovsky Begins* (*Maiakovskii nachinaetsia*, first printed in full in 1940), for which Aseev won the Stalin Prize in 1941, aims to commemorate the works and legacy of Mayakovsky. He also wrote an introduction titled "The Strength of Mayakovsky" ("Sila Maiakovskogo") for the twelve-volume *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* of Mayakovsky's works published 1939-1949, which he co-edited with the poet's sister Liudmila Mayakovskaya, Viktor Pertsov, and Mark Serebriansky. At the same time, and continuing through the 1940s, Aseev translated poetry from Polish, Ukrainian, Czech, Spanish,

[75] According to William Nickel, the 1928 Chernyshevsky centennial jubilee was a muted affair compared to that of Tolstoy, who was born in the same year. I have not found any works by Aseev that connect with the Tolstoy centennial (and think Tolstoy an unlikely figure for Aseev to celebrate; if Tret'iakov expressed the general Lef position, Tolstoy was a perceptive writer, but also a propagator of bourgeois ideology. See Tret'iakov, "Novyi Lev Tolstoy," *Novyi Lef* no. 1 (1927): 34. On the Tolstoy and Chernyshevsky centennials, see Nickel, "Tolstoy in 1928," 17-38.

[76] Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil: Poeziia Nikolaia Aseeva* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1985), 306-307. Aseev published "Chernyshevsky" in the journal *Oktiabr'* in 1929 as an excerpt from a *poema* called "Tri pokoleniia." Shaitanov explains: "Its [the *poema*'s] name was prompted by Lenin's thought on three stages of the liberation movement in Russia" (Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil*, 307). It is worth noting that Aseev ultimately never compiled the cycle, and Shaitanov speculates that either the unfinished work on Lenin's youth or his cycle "Vremia luchshikh," on Felix Dzerzhinsky, could have represented the final part.

[77] Shklovsky, "Krutaia lesnitsa," in *Vospominaniia o Nikolae Aseeve*, 90-91.

Azerbaijani, and Armenian.[78] After turning to patriotic poetry during World War II, Aseev wrote a prose essay "Moscow – The Head of the Whole World" ("Moskva – vsemu svetu golova") for the 800-year anniversary of the founding of Moscow, and he continued to write commemorative poems into the 1950s, including "Our October" ("Nash Oktiabr'," 1951-1954) and "The Fifth Decade" ("Piatoe desiatiletie," 1953). From the late 1950s until his death, Aseev also corresponded regularly with Dmitry Likhachev and mentored young poets including Viktor Sosnora, Andrei Voznesensky, and others.[79] His final volumes of verse, *Harmony* and *My Poems Themselves* (*Lad* and *Samye moi stikhi*), appeared in 1961 and 1962 respectively. The announcement of his death published in *Pravda* on 18 July 1963 defined him as "one of the renowned pioneers of Soviet poetry, a great master of the literature of Socialist Realism."[80]

This chapter focuses on the *poema Semyon Proskakov*, Aseev's lengthiest contribution to the poetry of the 1927 anniversary of the October Revolution. It examines *Semyon Proskakov* in the context of the 1927 anniversary, the literary landscape of the 1920s, and the literary theories advanced in *Novyi Lef* in 1927 to shed light on how norms of representation broadly observed in Soviet literature and theoretical principles advocated by Lef at the time coalesce in a literary work written for an event that provided opportunities for pro-Soviet authors to voice their own narratives of the revolution. Although Aseev was a prominent poet in the late 1920s – one commentator in 1927 noted a preponderance of "Aseev imitators" or "sub-Aseevs" (*pod-Aseevy*) alongside

[78] It is not clear which, if any, of these languages Aseev knew; most likely, he worked from literal translations (podstrochniki).

[79] Some of these letters are collected in Aseev, *Rodoslovnaia poezii: stat'i, vospominaniia, pis'ma* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990).

[80] Coincidentally, this announcement was printed alongside an announcement of events and publications connected to commemoration of the seventieth year since Mayakovsky's birth (19 July 1893, N.S.).

imitators of Mayakovsky, Pasternak, and Tikhonov[81] – his work is not often read nor discussed in scholarship today. The next section provides an overview of extant scholarship.

Literature Review: Aseev and *Semyon Proskakov* in Russophone and Anglophone Scholarship

Anglophone scholarship devoted to Aseev's life and works is virtually nonexistent. His name appears frequently in studies of Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Tsvetaeva, and others, and in histories of Russian Futurism. Although there are entries on Aseev in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* and the *Handbook of Russian Literature*, to the best of my knowledge, a book-length biography of Aseev in English is yet to be written. The lengthiest English-language discussions of Aseev's work of which I am aware are the approximately eight pages in Halina Stephan's 1981 study *Lef and the Left Front of Arts*, which considers Aseev's role in Lef and its journal in the years 1922-1925, and the approximately ten pages loosely devoted to him, plus passing mentions, in Vladimir Markov's *Russian Futurism: A History* (1968), which by design focus on the Futurist movement only to 1917. Describing the allocation of space devoted to discussion of individual poets after 1917 in the book's 'epilogues' on various poets, Markov names Aseev as one of the poets "whose development after 1917 has been sufficiently studied," and gives him only passing treatment.[82]

Markov presumably means that Aseev's development after 1917 has been studied sufficiently in Russophone scholarship, and it is true that Russian scholars, primarily of the Soviet era but in fact mostly writing after the publication of Markov's study, have devoted more attention to the biography and works of Aseev than Anglophone scholars. Five monographic studies of Aseev's life and works are cited in the following pages. These are Dmitrii Moldavsky's *Nikolai*

[81] Iuc Bol'shoi, "Chetyre poeta – Oktiabriu," *Krasnaia gazeta*, 30 November 1927 (evening edition): 5.

[82] Markov, *Russian Futurism*, x-xi.

Aseev (1965), Anatoly Karpov's *Nikolai Aseev: ocherk tvorchestva* (1969), Vladimir Mil'kov's *Nikolai Aseev: literaturnyi portret* (1973), Igor Shaitanov's *V sodruzhestve svetil: poeziia Nikolaia Aseeva* (1985), and Iurii Meshkov's *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost' i ideino-khudozhestvennoe razvitie* (1987). Each of these works, as their titles suggest, focus on links between the biography and creative work of the poet.

These works provide useful information about the origins of *Semyon Proskakov* and textual commentary on the *poema*.[83] They remark on several key issues for this study, including the dual roles of Proskakov as an individual and a symbol of the partisan movement, negative depiction of villains, and overall, the extent to which and mechanisms by which *Semyon Proskakov* adheres to or deviates from the facts of source material. These studies refer to source material to contextualize Aseev's *poema*, but do not discuss the *poema* with reference to Proskakov's reminiscences, or with the other sources cited in the *poema*. Rather, they tend to examine the question of factuality as it relates to the subtitle of the *poema*, "Verse notes on materials on the history of the Civil War," and of later statements by Aseev in which he downplays the extent to which he and Mayakovsky engaged in literature of fact in their 1927 anniversary *poemy*.[84] Scholars have seen in these statements support for the view that *Semyon Proskakov* features both factual material and authorial invention. With some variation in the details, this consensus ultimately entails dismissal of the issue of fact versus invention as irrelevant. I address conclusions of most of the scholars mentioned here in the course of analysis.

[83] Several articles and studies of book-chapter length specifically addressing *Semyon Proskakov* do not receive citation in this chapter because they have proven impossible to obtain.

[84] See, for example, Aseev's description of *Novyi Lef* in the chapter "Artel' Lefa" of his "Vospominaniia o Maiakovskom" (Aseev, "Vospominaniia o Maiakovskom," in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, 667-678). In the *Sobranie sochinenii* the essay is dated 1930-1963 (the year of Aseev's death).

Given that scholars have generally found discussion of and comparison to Mayakovsky inescapable in discussion of Aseev, it stands to reason that Aseev has received attention from *maiakovedy*. Among such studies, valuable discussion of Aseev and particularly *Semyon Proskakov* appears in the works of Aleksandr Metchenko, Vasily Katanian, Nikolai Khardzhiev, and Viktor Pertsov, the latter three of whom associated with Aseev and other Futurists (or former Futurists) at the time. Alisa Kriukova has addressed the question of Aseev and Mayakovsky's interrelations specifically; her examination of the history of composition of similar works by Aseev and Mayakovsky reveals that Aseev did not always follow Mayakovsky's lead: the reverse was also true. Kriukova also compiled and edited voluminous materials on the composition of *Mayakovsky Begins*.

Building on insights of these scholars and agreeing in general with the conclusions of many of them, the present study aims to remediate a lack of examination of the documentary sources used by Aseev in his factographic practice, without which the *poema* and its mechanisms of presentation of fact (and, alternatively, distortion or deviation from it) cannot be adequately understood. Likewise, the goal of this work is not to understand Aseev's *poema* in terms of its role in the poet's development, but in terms of literary norms, theories, and practices operating contemporaneously with the ten-year anniversary celebration of the October Revolution. *Semyon Proskakov* is considered first and foremost as a contribution to the poetry of the ten-year anniversary, with limited attention to its place in Aseev's poetic career.

My research has not uncovered any studies devoted exclusively to Aseev or *Semyon Proskakov* in English, although as mentioned above, he sometimes receives passing reference. One recent article by Liudmila Schleyfer-Lavine discusses several *agit-poemy* co-written by Aseev and Mayakovsky (and Mayakovsky and Sergei Tret'iakov) in the mid-1920s. This study, for all its

insights on the *agit-poemy* themselves, continues a tradition in scholarship to shunt Aseev to the side and focus on Mayakovsky. In Lavine's article, both Aseev and Tret'iakov occupy no appreciable place; the *agit-poemy* are understood as outcomes of Mayakovsky's engagement with Russian literary tradition and his agitational work in the 1920s.

Therefore, this chapter will attempt to break new ground in Aseev scholarship. To the best of my knowledge, it is the only close examination of *Semyon Proskakov* in English. The following section provides an account of the origins of the *poema*, a synopsis of it, and contextualization of the *poema* in the 1927 anniversary of the October Revolution.

***Semyon Proskakov*: Overview**

With the ten-year anniversary approaching, Aseev and Mayakovsky made an agreement to write something "new and unusual" («что-нибудь новое и необычное») to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution.[85] The outcome of Mayakovsky's side of the agreement, the *poema Khorosho!*, will be discussed in the next chapter. The obvious pride with which Mayakovsky described his and Aseev's contributions to the literature of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution is evident in Aseev's recollections of Mayakovsky's initial reaction to *Semyon Proskakov*:

> Помню, когда я написал «Семена Проскакова», Маяковский слушал его первым. Прослушав, как-то взволновался, посмотрел на меня внимательно и с какой-то хорошей завистью сказал: «Ну, ладно, Колька! Я тоже скоро кончу свою вещь! Тогда посмотрим!» В этой простодушной, мальчишеской фразе сказался весь Маяковский. Это была и высшая похвала мне, и удивительно хорошее чувство товарищеского соревнования.[86]

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[85] V. Voronov, "Rassvet – chto ni den′ – molozhe…," *Ogonek* 28 (July 1959): 27. For further (albeit limited) discussion of the agreement, see Meshkov, *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost'*, 152, and Metchenko, *Tvorchestvo Maiakovskogo 1925-1930 gg.* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1961), 320-321.

[86] Aseev, "Vospominaniia o Maiakovskom," in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, 675.

> I remember that when I finished writing *Semyon Proskakov*, Mayakovsky listened to it first. When he had heard it through, he somehow became agitated, looked at me intently and with a kind of good-natured envy said: "All right, Kol'ka! I also will finish my thing soon. Then we'll see!" In this simplehearted, childlike phrase the whole Mayakovsky proclaimed itself. This was also high praise for me, and a remarkably nice feeling of comradely competition.

Aseev's focus on the Civil War should not be considered unusual: it was a common literary subject in the 1920s. It also was not unusual in the context of the anniversary celebration: although the Civil War was violent and devastating, its conclusion represented the end of the Bolshevik struggle for power.[87] Michael Gorham points out that in the 1920s "the civil war [was] probably the seminal event in the Bolshevik quest for postrevolutionary legitimacy."[88] Sheila Fitzpatrick has described the Civil War on the level of the Bolshevik Party as a "formative experience" and a "baptism by fire… that the Bolsheviks and Lenin seemed to want."[89] Moreover, Frederick Corney describes the Civil War as an integral part of anniversary celebrations in 1927. For example, a march through Moscow was planned to guide participants past "living pictures, platforms with spectacles and plays that enacted seminal moments: 1905, the 'dress rehearsal for the October Revolution'; 1914; 1917; and the Civil War."[90] A similar mass spectacle centered at Petropavlovsk Fortress in Leningrad sonically and visually depicted the history of the revolution thus:

> The spectacle announced the February Revolution to the strains of the 'Marseillaise' and a circle of burning torches around the fortress. It announced October by the illumination of factory chimneys, the gallows, the casemates of the fortress, and a single shot from the *Aurora*. The Civil War was signaled by machine gun fire and howling sirens and factory

[87] The front page of *Pravda* for 6-7 November 1927 is illustrative of the link between the October Revolution and the Civil War: "The sons of the working class, the blossom of the working class, perished in the Civil War, whose bones lay in the Urals and Siberia, near Perekop and approaching Leningrad, by Warsaw and Vladivostok – our thoughts and reflections (*dumy i mysli*) are of them on the tenth anniversary of October."

[88] Michael Gorham, *Speaking in Soviet Tongues: Language Culure and the Politics of Voice in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 116.

[89] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Civil War as Formative Experience," in *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution*, eds. Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 74.

[90] Corney, *Telling October*, 178.

> whistles; Lenin's death, by a 'funereal, plaintive symphony of sirens.' The apotheosis of the spectacle came as a tight circle of torch fires surrounding the Petropavlovsk Fortress gradually merged into a 'continuous red glow,' while a 'majestic fountain' shot up from a barge on the Neva, the geyser lit in all colors, and hundreds of fireworks were fired into the skies. In a final scene, the illuminated profiles of the ships on the Neva stood out against the Leningrad night.[91]

Additional confirmation of the importance of the Civil War to the story of the Russian Revolution (in the broadest possible sense) comes in another artistic contribution to the 1927 anniversary, Eisenstein and Aleksandrov's *October*. Upon receiving the commission to make a film for the 1927 anniversary, Eisenstein initially planned as "a huge, heroic film about the entire revolution, from the overthrow of the Czar in February to the end of the Civil War in 1921."[92]

Aseev at times emphasized the importance of personal experience for his choice of literary subjects,[93] but the extent to which his personal experience factored into *Semyon Proskakov* is unclear.[94] Meshkov writes that "work on the *poema* was helped by the circumstance of the poet's location in the Far East during the years of the revolution and the chance to see firsthand both the 'famed forces' (*slavnoe voinstvo*) of the White Guard and the courage (*muzhestvo*) and heroism of the partisans," but does not apply this claim to the text of the *poema*.[95] The only experience that I

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[91] Corney, *Telling October*, 179.

[92] Robert A. Rosenstone, "*October* as History," *Rethinking History* 5, no. 2 (2001): 257.

[93] For example, Shaitanov discusses a long-form project after *Semyon Proskakov*, a *poema* titled *Smert' Oksmana* and similarly focused on a 'little hero,' but now in the setting of the Caucasus. Aseev did not complete the *poema*, and later wrote that he found his research insufficient without seeing the Caucasus in person. Shaitanov regards this claim with some skepticism because of Aseev's work with documentary materials in *Semyon Proskakov* (Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil*, 314-315). Furthermore, Mil'kov cites an interview with Aseev published in *Literaturnaia gazeta* in early 1932 in which Aseev described its hero of the work in terms equally applicable to Proskakov, but without the dual characteristics of Proskakov as individual and typical: "'In this *poema*,' the poet said, 'I want to give a type of person – an unnoticed, humble communist, on whose shoulders the revolution was carried out" (Mil'kov, *Nikolai Aseev: literaturnyi portret* [Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1973], 131). This statement could signal a departure from Lef's dismissive position on literary typology, but also calls the justification quoted by Shaitanov into question.

[94] Mayakovsky is more explicit in his participation and witness of the events of 1917; other works of the 1920s in which the persona of the narrator is more or less explicitly tied to the author's personal experience include Babel's *Red Cavalry* and Furmanov's *Chapaev*.

[95] Meshkov, *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost'*, 155.

have found in Aseev's biography with obvious connections to miners appears in "October in the Far East." Aseev describes an excursion to the Suchansk coal mines, undertaken as part of his work with the Labor Bureau, to investigate and resolve a work stoppage that resulted from the mine operators decision to detonate some sort of combustible material in a mine shaft.[96] He does not, however, connect this experience to *Semyon Proskakov*, which he was writing, or might have even completed, by the time of the essay's publication (sections of the *poema* already had been published, including in the preceding issue of *Novyi Lef*).

The role of Aseev's personal experience in the conception or writing of *Semyon Proskakov* may be an unanswerable question, but in any case, the core material of the *poema* was derived from documentary sources, many of which are explicitly named in the *poema* itself. Aseev found the most crucial documentary source in the historical archives of the Central Committee of Mine Workers (Arkhiv istprofa tsentral'nogo komiteta soiuza gornorabochikh): the reminiscences of Semyon Proskakov, a Siberian miner-turned-partisan.[97] These reminiscences and historical documents published since 1925 enter the *poema* directly as epigraphs and indirectly as a factual basis for its narrative.

With sections published in *Krasnaia nov'*, *Novyi Lef*, *Ogonek*, *Otkiabr'*,[98] and the periodic press in Moscow, Kharkov, Odessa, and Tbilisi in 1927, and in a five-thousand-copy revised full

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[96] Aseev, "Oktiabr' na Dal'nem," 40-41. Kseniia Aseeva also recalls the excursion: see Aseeva, "Iz vospominaniia," 18-19.

A poem published in the 14 October 1926 issue of *Izvestiia*, "Ballada o zheltom Tomase," appears to discuss the coal miners' strike in the United Kingdom that took place in that same year.

[97] In light of certain ambiguities regarding the origin and nature of Proskakov's text, which will be discussed in the next section, throughout this work I use the more neutral "reminiscences" instead of terms like "note(s)" (although Aseev described Proskakov's text in that way at least once), "memoir(s)," or "diary/ies," etc.

[98] *Oktiabr'*, the journal of the All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP), published selections from *Semyon Proskakov* despite antagonism of the journal's editors towards the Lefists. This antagonism is seen clearly in the first issue of *Oktiabr'* in 1927, in which Aseev debated the utilitarian function and future development of Soviet poetry with his former colleague in the Far East Iuda Grossman-Roshchin. An editorial note to Aseev's article "Na chorta nam stikhi" ("What do we need verse for?") indicates that the journal published Aseev's article "only owing to

book edition with photographs in 1928,[99] *Semyon Proskakov* is categorized as a long narrative poem (*poema*), although that generic designation neither appears in the work itself nor captures the work's specific relation to the theoretical views of Lef outlined in the introduction. The subtitle of the work, "Verse notes for materials on the history of the Civil War" ("Stikhotvornye primechaniia k materialam po istorii grazhdanskoi voiny"), immediately signals the work's ascription to literature of fact.[100]

Semyon Proskakov is comprised of an introductory section followed by four titled and numbered chapters.[101] With rare exceptions (including two partisan songs), the *poema* is structured

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the fact that the article contains a fairly clear formulation of the main errors of Lef and thereby facilitates the task of exposing and struggling with the harmful influence of those mistakes, which lead any of their followers far away from Marxism," whereas Grossman-Roshchin's response "expresses the opinion of the editorial board." See Aseev, "Na chorta nam stikhi?" and Grossman-Roshchin, "Otvet: otrkytoe pis'mo tov. N. Aseevu," ("Response: Open Letter to Comrade N. Aseev") both in *Oktiabr'*, no. 1 (1927): 142-154, 155-162 respectively.

Despite the deficiencies that its editorial board saw in Lef, *Oktiabr'* published a section of Aseev's *Semyon Proskakov* ("Chernyi ataman," *Oktiabr'* 9 [1927]), the lyric poems "Vesn" ("Spring," *Oktiabr'*, no. 4 [1927]) and "Chudna (krymskaia, lodochnaia)" ("Chudna [Crimean, Boating]," *Oktiabr'* no. 8 [1927]; a note in the *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* explains *chudna* as "a fore-and- aft sail in Norwegian"), and poems under the heading "Oktiabr'skie pesni" in its anniversary issue (*Oktiabr'*, no. 11 [1927]). Poems by the Lefist Semyon Kirsanov were also published in the journal in 1927; in 1928, it published several poems by Mayakovsky in its sixth issue, as well as a cycle of seven poems by Aseev in its seventh.

[99] Aseev introduced changes to punctuation and stanza breaks in the 1928 edition, and added, modified, or supplemented epigraphs in some sections. This version of the *poema* was reprinted again in full in the third volume of *Sobranie stikhotvorenii* (1928-1930).

A section of the final chapter was also published in *Oktiabr'* as part of the cycle "October Songs" (not to be confused with the short collection of poems that Aseev published under the same title in 1925), which also commemorated the 1927 anniversary.

According to Shaitanov's account of Aseev's visit to Gor'ky in Sorrento in 1928, Gosizdat initially planned a print run of three thousand for the 1928 edition of *Semyon Proskakov*. In Shaitanov's telling of the story, having heard Aseev recite the *poema*, Gor'ky was shocked that the print run was to be so small, claiming that "such things ought to be published in a print run of one hundred thousand" (Aseeva, "Iz vospominanii," 30, qtd. in Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil*, 313).

[100] This point was evident to contemporary commentators. Reviews of *Semyon Proskakov* published in 1927-28 noted its subtitle and source material; one reviewer even described the subtitle as "a direct indication of the method of [Aseev's] work" (Beskin, "Khorosho," *Chitatel' i pisatel'*, 1 February 1928, 6).

[101] Chapters begin with a title, followed by one or more epigraphs, followed in turn by neuter-gender ordinal numbers (*pervoe*, *vtoroe*, etc.). This style of enumeration could imply that each chapter comprises a "note" (*primechanie*); some critics have interpreted the sections in this way. However, each of these parts is subdivided into two, or in one case three, sections, numbered with Arabic numerals. The system of numbering parts and sections therefore also evokes the division of a dramatic work into acts (with the ordinal number agreeing with *deistvie*) and scenes (1, 2, 3…).

in a *lesenka* format; its varying polyrhythms can be summarized, if vaguely, as *taktovik*; the majority of its rhymes are alternating or paired.[102] In the first part, "Two Epitaphs" ("Dve epitafii"), the hero Proskakov and the villain Admiral and Supreme Leader of Russia (*verkhovnyi pravitel'*) from 1918 until his execution in February 1920 Aleksandr Kolchak speak their own epitaphs from beyond the grave.[103] Focus then shifts to the military tribunal of Ataman of the Semirech'e Cossacks Boris Annenkov in July-August 1927 in the first part, "The Black Ataman" ("Chernyi ataman"), with interpolated reminiscences by the narrator about *annenkovshchina*. Following this section, the plot settles into a mostly chronological progression that appears to begin in approximately the middle of 1919.[104] The second chapter, "Partisans" ("Partizany"), shows the dissolution of the partisan unit in its first section; in the second, Proskakov makes his way alone through the taiga to a village, where he observes, but does not engage, an encampment of White officers.

"Trains" ("Poezda"), the third chapter, opens with the movement of trains through Siberia, and then focuses on the train that brings Admiral Kolchak to Irkutsk, where the Czechoslovak Legion turns him over to the Bolsheviks. As if by chance, Proskakov has joined with the Bolshevik forces in Irkutsk, and he assists in the capture of and stands guard over Kolchak. Perspective then zooms out to partisans throughout Siberia, continuing to struggle for the revolution while dreaming of a peaceful life once they defeat the counterrevolutionary forces. The fourth and final chapter, "It was fated in advance that we would meet in this world!" ("Vstretit'sia na svete suzhdeno nam

[102] A full analysis of the meter and rhyme is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, limited discussion of the meter, rhyme, and graphic orientation will appear in this and the following chapter as relevant to analysis.

[103] Leaving aside the strangeness of these characters speaking their own epitaphs, the fact that unbeknownst to Aseev, Proskakov was still alive in 1927, is worth mentioning here and returning to later.

[104] In general, historical dates are not marked in the text; I infer that the time is mid-1919 from a reference in the section "Partisans" to morning dew (which would not be present in colder months), and from the fact that Proskakov reaches Irkutsk before mid-January 1920 (again, the date is unspecified).

vperedi!"), comments on the hardships endured by Proskakov (which he enumerates in the epigraph to the section) and other partisans, emphasizing the severity of the privations endured by the people of Siberia for the sake of establishing Soviet power. The second section of the chapter shows Kolchak at military tribunal in January-February 1920 and briefly mentions his sentencing and execution.[105] The work concludes with a break from the work's chronology for a final exultant look at Proskakov, who has "lived through all and conquered all."[106]

In addition to the implicit claims to factuality of the subtitle, "Verse notes for materials on the history of the Civil War," and overt citation of historical materials in epigraphs, *Semyon Proskakov* announces its allegiance to literature of fact in the opening to "Partisans." The narrator voices a program that certainly resonates with that of Aseev himself and the factographic impulses of Lef:

> Мы же хотим – / без выдумок –
> что жизнь нам / дала,
> рассказать / о видимых
> людях / и делах.[107]

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[105] The military tribunal of Kolchak was held in nine sessions beginning 21 January and ending 6 February 1920; Kolchak was executed 7 February 1920.

[106] This line also appears at the end of Proskakov's epitaph.

[107] Aseev, *Semyon Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, vol. 2, 342. The version of the *poema* published here and the version published in *Biblioteka poeta*, correspond to the 1928 book edition.

When quoting the text of *Semyon Proskakov*, I do not attempt to replicate the *lesenka* format. Slashes within lines indicate the boundaries between 'steps'; as a general rule, the subsequent 'step' in the *lesenka* is justified to the end of the last character in the preceding 'step' (i.e., without overlap). The same formatting is used in all quotations of poetry in the *lesenka* format.

Among other options, *vydumka* can be translated also as 'imagination,' 'fabrication,' 'artifice,' or even 'falsehood' or 'flight of fancy.' Throughout this work, I use the English 'invention' as an approximation of *vydumka*, as it maintains a certain link between objective reality and artistic thinking that alternative translations lack. By Aseev's own admission, these lines allude to the introduction to *The Lay of Prince Igor's Campaign* (*Slovo o polku Igoreve*). In the translation by Vasily Zhukovsky: «Начаться же сей песни / По былинам сего времени, / *А не по вымыслам Бояновым*…» ("This song is to begin / According to the heroic songs of that time / *And not the fantasies of Boyan*;" emphasis added). See Liliia Sazonova, *Pamiat' kul'tury: Nasledie srednevekov'ia i barokko v russkoi literature Novogo vremeni* (Moscow: Rukopisnye pamiatniki Drevnei Rusi, 2012), 52; and Alisa Kriukova, *Tvorcheskoe vzaimodeistvie: stat'i o sovetskoi literature* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1988), 215-216.

Notably, the section "Partisans," which begins with these lines, was the first section published; in this sense, evocation of *The Lay of Prince Igor's Campaign* endows Aseev's *poema* with deep historical-literary roots from its very opening.

> We want – without invention
> to tell of what life gave us –
> the people and events
> that we witnessed.

Despite the explicit claim to a factual (that is, non-inventive) telling of the Civil War, and the perceptions of many readers and critics of 1927 (and the suppositions of subsequent scholars), this chapter contends that historical material may provide the backbone for Aseev's *poema* as an experiment in factography, but that Aseev's representation of that historical material nonetheless conforms to norms observed in the literature of the 1920s and particularly in the late and post-NEP era. The next section addresses the titular hero Proskakov in this context; analysis will then turn to the villains, whose deeds Proskakov has "lived through" and whom Proskakov has, if only figuratively, "conquered."

Semyon Proskakov: Hero of the Collective, Collective Hero

Scholarship on *Semyon Proskakov* has emphasized that the reminiscences of the titular hero, held at that time in the archive of the History of the Profession of the Central Committee of the Union of Mine Workers, provided a narrative basis for Aseev's *poema*. However, the origin of the reminiscences is unclear. At least two archival copies exist: the undated copy held by the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) appears to be complete;[108] the copy dated to 1919 in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI) is not.[109] Neither version includes a title,

[108] GARF fond R6935, opis 7, delo 131. This is the version that I consider most authoritative, and in subsequent discussion, I will refer to this version of the reminiscences when citing material that does not appear in *Semyon Proskakov*.

[109] RGALI fond 28, opis 3, ed. khr. 160. If this is the copy used by Aseev, some pages have been lost, insofar as some passages quoted in *Semyon Proskakov* are absent from the RGALI version.

date, or typographer's name – typical ephemera in other partisan memoirs at GARF.[110] Furthermore, the original format of the reminiscences is unclear: sections up to a whole line long are written as dots, suggesting perhaps that a typist could not read an original (possibly handwritten) copy, or that the original stenographer was unable to transcribe part of an orally delivered text. These ellipses were removed in the only known published version of the reminiscences, which appeared in *Ogonek* issue 42 of 1927 together with a section from the chapter "Partisans" titled "Semyon Proskakov: A Chapter from a *Poema*" and with an accompanying editorial note from Aseev:

> Записки партизана Семена Проскакова – подлинный документ, разысканный мной в архиве Истпрофа ЦК Союза горнорабочих, – документ, характерный непосредственной силой своих литературных средств. Стоит вспомнить стилистические особенности письма И. Бабеля, чтобы понять, что является их прообразом. Лично мне записки Проскакова послужили толчком для поэмы «Семен Проскаков», в задачи которой входило сохранение того подлинного лирического пафоса, который выделяет эти записки из многочисленных мемуаров и воспоминаний времен гражданской войны. Сохраняем в неприкосновенности все особенности его своеобразного языка.[111]
>
> The notes [*zapiski*] of the partisan Semyon Proskakov are an authentic document that I found in the archive of the History of the Profession of the Central Committee of the Union of Mine Workers. It is a document characterized by the natural power of its literary means. It is worth recalling the stylistic features of the writing of I[saak] Babel to understand what constitutes their prototype. The notes of Proskakov have served me personally as the impetus for the *poema Semyon Proskakov*, into the tasks of which entered preservation of the authentic lyric pathos that sets these notes apart from the numerous memoirs and reminiscences of the times of the Civil War. We preserve, unaltered, all peculiarities of his unique voice.

[110] Although it is possible that the typist simply failed to include these typical elements, the absence of notation raises the question of whether Proskakov's reminiscences were initially gathered as part of a larger collection and subsequently moved to a different file. (They were moved at least once when the archive of the History of the Profession of Mine Workers was closed in the early 1930s.)

[111] Aseev, "Semyon Proskakov: Glava iz poemy," *Ogonek* no. 42 (1927): 6.

Even though the reminiscences do not bear a date, it is plausible that they resulted from the large-scale efforts to collect common peoples' experiences of the revolution in the 1920s.[112] The remarks in Proskakov's reminiscences would not be out of place at the "evenings of reminiscences" common throughout the 1920s.[113] To the best of my knowledge, no study has examined Proskakov's reminiscences in the context of non-professional autobiographical prose of the 1920s; moreover, studies of *Semyon Proskakov* have not examined the *poema* alongside Proskakov's reminiscences.[114] However, examination of the literary Proskakov against the record left by his real-life version is crucial to understanding the mechanisms by which Aseev engaged literature of fact and the praxis of factography in the text. Bearing in mind Devin Fore's definition of factography as "the inscription of facts,"[115] this chapter examines the facts that are and are not

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[112] Corney reports that requests for material related to the revolution were published in newspapers as early as November 1918; local Istpart bureaus actively collected reminiscences throughout the 1920s. Corney argues that Istpart interest in this material partially responded to a concern over the "Party-centric" portrayal and documentation of the Revolution in the early 1920s. See Corney, *Telling October*, 82 (on 1918), 119-121 (on Istpart collection efforts), 149, 158-59 (on collection and publication of reminiscences of 1905), 197 (on the problem of establishing 'objective' truth of the revolution through 'subjective' materials such as reminiscences).

[113] On "evenings of reminiscences" in 1927, see Corney, *Telling October*, 209-217. Kevin M.F. Platt intriguingly suggests that Evgeny Zamyatin's "Comrade Churygin Has the Floor" ("Slovo predostavliaetsia tovarishchu Churyginu") engages evenings of reminiscences as

> a topic that enjoyed constant public attention during the 1920s. Throughout the decade following the October revolution massive efforts were devoted to retelling and interpreting the events of 1917. These efforts were most intensely coordinated around the annual observances of the November 7 state holiday in commemoration of 'October.' From 1918 onward these festival celebrations fell increasingly under the direction of the party authorities and grew steadily more elaborate toward a peak of activity in 1927, when the tenth anniversary of the October revolution was observed with the extravagant pomp and ceremony appropriate to the celebration of the new state's survival of the dangers of infancy.
> (Kevin M.F. Platt, *History in a Grotesque Key: Russian Literature and the Idea of Revolution* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997], 132).

[114] Aseev's contemporaries also accepted his use of Proskakov's reminiscences at face value.

As regards commentaries on *Semyon Proskakov*, Meshkov implies that Metchenko reviewed Proskakov's reminiscences, but I have found no such indication in Metchenko's work. Meshkov cites archival documents from RGALI (at the time, TsGALI), raising the question of whether he reviewed the partial copy of Proskakov's reminiscences there, and if so, why he does not include them in his analysis. (There could be many reasons for this: Meshkov could have hesitated to cite an obviously incomplete copy or could have ignored it entirely. He argues that parsing fact and literary invention in the text misses the point.)

[115] Fore, "Introduction," 2.

inscribed in *Semyon Proskakov*, and which elements of Aseev's telling of Proskakov's story are inventions presented as facts. In turn, this examination reveals textual strategies – chiefly, strategies of selective omission and addition, complemented by juxtapositions and contrasts with the villains of the text (to be discussed in detail in subsequent sections) – that cast Proskakov in a heroic light.

Epigraphs from the reminiscences of Proskakov overtly align the *poema* with literature of fact, and the reminiscences also provide much (but not all) of the basic structure of Proskakov's narrative. Most of the three-and-a-half-page typewritten manuscript appears in epigraphs to sections of *Semyon Proskakov* that focus on him; sections focusing on Kolchak and Annenkov feature epigraphs drawn from the stenographic notes of the Interrogation of Kolchak (*Protokoly doprosa Kolchaka*) and the article "Ten Years of Counterrevolution" ("Desiat' let kontrrevoliutsii") respectively and will be discussed in subsequent sections.

In addition to the publication of Proskakov's memoirs in *Ogonek*, Aseev provides the name of the archive in which he discovered Proskakov's reminiscences in the text of the *poema* itself. Some publications even include precise citations.[116] It therefore may be conjectured that at least some contemporary readers of *Semyon Proskakov* could verify Aseev's account against the archival version of Proskakov's reminiscences.[117] Nonetheless, the portrait of Proskakov in the text is far less vividly rendered than those of the villains, who were notorious to the Soviet reader of 1927. One reason for this is that with the exceptions of the epitaph and epigraphs from his

[116] For example, in the section "Partisans" published in *Novyi Lef* 7 (1927): «Архив Истпрофа ЦК горнорабочих, 483, рис. 8, С IV. А.».

[117] It is unclear to me in what ways archival access may have been restricted at the time of Aseev's writing. Aseev was listed as "unaffiliated" (*bezpartiinyi*) in the rolls of the First Congress of Writers; one might wonder whether his status as a writer afforded him certain privileges of access despite his lack of membership in the Bolshevik Party. In any case, the reviews of *Semyon Proskakov* that I have examined suggest that fidelity to the reminiscences was assumed. As noted above, literary scholars have made the same assumption.

reminiscences, Proskakov rarely speaks in the text. Moreover, there is an ambiguity in his speech in that it is unmarked by punctuation in the text, and thus appears undistinguished from the speech of the narrator.[118] Through his directly quoted speech in epigraphs, and in the absence of other speech that could develop an individual psychological portrait, Proskakov's identity is defined in terms of his class status (proletarian), his profession (a miner), and his revolutionary activity (Bolshevik partisan).

The vagueness of Proskakov's portrait evidences a textual strategy in the late 1920s, outlined by Katerina Clark, of creating heroes out of ordinary people. These heroes emerge not from individual feats, but from participation in and contribution to the tasks and triumphs of the collective. Such "little heroes," in Clark's terms, accomplish deeds that can be called "big" not because of their intrinsic significance or magnitude, but because of their contribution to the greater Soviet project: in this case, the establishment and consolidation of Soviet power in Siberia.[119] According to Clark, literature eschews larger-than-life heroes like Chapaev or Gleb Chumalov (the protagonist of Fyodor Gladkov's *Cement*) in the late 1920s and instead valorizes a "modest hero who plays a part, usually small, in the great machine of society," who "shared in the great achievements of the age," and therefore are "great." These heroes fit the First Five-Year Plan rhetoric that "celebrated the achievements of the masses rather than those of exceptional

[118] This speech could be interpreted as dialogue with the narrator, or otherwise as Proskakov's internal dialogue. In either case, it is rare and brief. Dialogue is also unmarked in "The Black Ataman," although in other sections, it is marked conventionally.

[119] Katerina Clark, "Little Heroes and Big Deeds: Literature Responds to the First Five-Year Plan," in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931,* ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 189-206. Clark derives the terms "little hero" and "big deeds" from Gor'ky's evaluation of the formerly debased "little man" who was raised to "human dignity" in the new society. Clark focuses on novelistic prose in the period 1928-1932 (from the announcement to the conclusion of the First Five-Year Plan); although discussion of overlap between the *poema* and the novel in this period is beyond the bounds of this study, I maintain that Clark's insights about novelistic prose of this period are applicable to *Semyon Proskakov*.

individuals."[120] Aseev's Proskakov anticipates (if only slightly) this new paradigm for Soviet literary heroes. Although a historical personage, Proskakov appears as a model member of the collective in the mold of the "little hero" of the First Five-Year Plan period.

Proskakov also realizes a general aim to depict heroes of correct mindset and firm action. Eric Laursen has emphasized the importance in the literature of the 1920s of balancing the psyche of the hero between two undesirable extremes, realized in two types of villains of hyper-consciousness (mind) and unmediated spontaneity (body), in order to ensure that readers did not misunderstand either of these extremes as positive:

> …in order to overcome the mind-body disconnect, the beast and the alien are silenced and their individualistic desires translated into collective desire. The hero must learn to harness – that is, in a sense, to embrace – the forces they represent for the good of the group and to maintain a balance at the center of a continuum with the beast on one end and the alien on the other.[121]

In Laursen's analysis, positive heroes respond in some way (and notably, not always in direct confrontation: a hero and villain could respond variously to similar situations, for example) to the threat posed by villains to the Soviet establishment as represented in the literary text; if they do not, these villains could destabilize the delicate balance between spontaneity and consciousness of the Soviet reader.

Semyon Proskakov is this type of hero, and he is juxtaposed with these two types of villains in the text. His greatest victory in the text is not in any singular confrontation with his enemies: he in fact does not confront Annenkov at all, and he plays only a supporting role in the drama of the capture and imprisonment of Kolchak. Furthermore, as Meshkov points out, in the lone scene

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[120] Clark, "Little Heroes," 190, 191.

[121] Laursen, *Toxic Voices: The Villain from Early Soviet Literature to Socialist Realism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 6. Laursen views the reader's potential to misunderstanding ideological messages in literature as a primary motivating factor in the development of Socialist Realism.

showing Proskakov and Kolchak in the same place at the same time, they do not interact, nor does Proskakov participate directly: he stands at the doorway with the war commissar's horse.[122] Rather, Proskakov's heroism appears in his ability to operate between the psychic polarities of these villains – to complete "big deeds" as a "little hero." In the following analysis, I will argue that Proskakov triumphs in the text as one of many "little heroes" of the Civil War through correct participation in significant historical processes rather than individual achievement, and thus models an appropriate balance of consciousness and spontaneity in a rank-and-file member of the Soviet collective to readers (and, of course, Aseev and Proskakov's real-life fellow citizens). Aseev's selective use of Proskakov's reminiscences as source material in combination with description of events of the Civil War results in a hero who is both a stand-in for the collective and a model individual.

Epigraph and Epitaph

Proskakov has the first word three times in the text that bears his name: first in the title itself, then in the epigraph to the opening "Two Epitaphs" (Kolchak's is the second), which cites the opening sentences of Proskakov's reminiscences, and then in the following verse, in which Proskakov delivers an epitaph for himself. The first words of the epitaph announce Proskakov's typicality[123]:

> В тысячах / повторенный / имен
> из-под глухого / земного покрова,
> я, партизан / Проскаков Семен,
> жить начинаю / снова и снова…[124]
>
> In thousands of names repeated

[122] Meshkov, *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost'*, 157. Metchenko makes a similar observation: "Semyon Proskakov as a persona (*lichnost'*) plays a comparatively minor role in the fate of Kolchak" (Metchenko, *Tvorchestvo Maiakovskogo*, 324).

[123] Meshkov makes a similar observation (Meshkov, *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost'*, 157).

[124] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 331.

> out from the dense earthly cover,
> I, partisan Proskakov Semyon,
> begin to live again and again.

However, the epitaph is at the same time a personal account: in an undated handwritten draft held by RGALI, Aseev titled this section "Biography."[125]

Leaving aside the strangeness of delivering one's own epitaph – Proskakov says explicitly that he is dead in its closing lines – this choice of framing reveals an instance of creative license in the text's presentation of its protagonist. Proskakov was still among the living in 1927.[126] Aseev did not know this until 1928, when the eighth issue of the journal *Rezets* (a literary journal designated for an audience of workers and supportive of proletarian authors) published an open letter from Proskakov under the title "Letter of a Hero" ("Pis'mo geroia").[127] Aseev responded to Proskakov in an unpublished note:

> То, что я про Вас написал – есть лишь бледная тень Вашей дорогой человеческой жизни. А кроме того, у меня вышла ошибка в том, что из Вашей записки не было видно, живы ли остались Вы или были убиты белыми бандами. И я решил, что должно быть Вам в живых не привелось остаться. И теперь я эту ошибку должен исправить…[128]
>
> What I wrote about you is only a pale shade of your dear human life. And moreover, an error of my doing occurred in that it wasn't clear from your note [*zapiska*, that is, Proskakov's reminiscences – ZR] whether you were still alive or were killed by White bands. And I decided that in all likelihood you didn't happen to remain among the living. And now I should fix that mistake…

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[125] RGALI, fond 28, opis 1, ed. khr. 49.

[126] According to a 1967 article in *Ogni Kuzbassa*, Proskakov died in 1941, before the onset of World War II. See Maziukov, "Geroi poemy – kolchuginskii shakhter," *Ogni Kuzbassa*, no. 1 (1967): 96-98. It is worth noting that the sources of Maziukov's information are not stated in the article.

[127] *Rezets* no. 24 (1928), 8. Karpov dates the note to 6 November 1928. Karpov, *Russkaia sovetskaia poema, 1917-1941* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989), 178.

[128] Aseev, quoted in Meshkov, *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost'*, 156. The document reviewed by Meshkov in TsGALI is: fond 28, opis 2, delo 21, list 46. Karpov cites the same source but does not provide the page. The fact that this letter was (apparently) in the archival collection raises the question of whether Aseev sent it (or he may have retained a copy). This question cannot be answered without examination of the original document itself.

However, Aseev did not make this change in subsequent publications of *Semyon Proskakov*. In the first section of the chapter "Trains," the narration hints at this biographical question:

> Жив ли ты, / нет ли,
> друг мой / безвестный, –
> свинцу / и петле
> не стиснуть песни.
> Пускай / убит ты,
> немой / и строгий, -
> тобой взвиты
> эти строки![129]
>
> Are you alive or not
> my unknown friend, –
> lead and the noose
> cannot constrain the song.
> Let it be that you are killed
> mute and severe, –
> by you are raised up
> these lines!

Recasting Proskakov as a survivor of the Civil War would entail significant changes to the text. The chapter "Two Epitaphs" would no longer cohere, both in terms of structure and internal logic. The direct address to the deceased Proskakov that concludes the *poema* would also require modification, since it too clearly marks Proskakov as deceased. This creative license (ultimately, Aseev had to choose how to treat his hero's post-Civil War biography) has been noted by several other scholars. Meshkov treats it as evidence of Aseev's prioritization of "artistic truth" over that of actual fact.[130] Shaitanov mentions Proskakov's letter parenthetically;[131] this limited reference, together with his general aim to show *Semyon Proskakov* to be a harmonious whole, suggests that he also does not find this departure from fact significant. Outside of literary scholarship, Maziukov,

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[129] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 362.

[130] Meshkov, *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost'*, 156.

[131] Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil*, 312.

who provides the most detailed biography of Proskakov that I have found, does not mention this disconnect between the life of Proskakov the person and his literary version at all.

Proskakov himself did not indicate hard feelings at the premature declaration of his death. Nor did he request that Aseev modify the *poema*. In his letter, which follows an announcement that Proskakov has been awarded a certificate of merit (*gramota*) by the Leninsk City Soviet (*Gorsovet*) "on the day of the anniversary of the October Revolution [in 1927],"[132] Proskakov, now working in a rural cooperative (*sel'skoe potrebitel'skoe obshchestvo*) in the Kuzbass region, congratulates Soviet workers on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution and calls for fellow partisans to remain focused on the struggle for Soviet power:

> Я, Проскаков, получив этот подарок, даю свою партизанскую клятву перед лицом его высокой светлости пролетариата и бедного крестьянства. Я даю клятву, что я, Проскаков Семен Ильич, при каждом малейшем нападении иду в защиту нашего Советского Союза на первый призыв нашего завоевания. […]
>
> Мое чувство – оно заставляет быть чутким и зорким партизаном. Я думаю: те бывшие партизаны никогда не оставят своей идеи борьбы за власть Советов и мы все при каждом нападении должны пойти в защиту и не должны забыть свой таежный костер.
>
> Он еще горит.[133]

> I, Proskakov, having received this gift, give my partisan oath before its serene highness the proletariat and the poor peasantry. I swear that I, Proskakov Semyon, upon every smallest aggression go forth to defend our Soviet Union at the first call of our conquest. […]
>
> My feeling – it compels me to be a keen and vigilant partisan. I think: those former partisans will never abandon the idea of struggle for power of the Soviets and we all upon every attack should move to protect and should not forget our fire in the *taiga*.
>
> It still burns.

[132] *Rezets* no. 24 (1928), 8. The article does not specify the reason why Proskakov received this award, or whether anyone else received it with him. Furthermore, the extent to which Proskakov's status as a literary hero may have affected the Soviet's decision to bestow the award on him, is unclear.

[133] *Rezets* no. 24 (1928), 8. It is interesting to note that Proskakov's naming of the proletariat as "its serene highness" recalls the prerevolutionary honorific form of address to "junior members of the imperial line, most serene princes, and some ruling persons" (*Bol'shoi tolkovyi slovar'*).

How did Proskakov enter the "struggle for the power of the Soviets?" This was a question of primary importance in personal accounts of the revolution at the time,[134] and in his reminiscences, Proskakov answers it immediately in an opening quoted by Aseev as the epigraph to Proskakov's epitaph. In this passage, Proskakov establishes his identity as a member of the working class, as a neophyte in the Bolshevik Party in 1917, and as an active contributor to the Bolshevik cause:

> 1917 года, при свержении Николки Романова, я, Проскаков Семен Ильич, работал на Ленинском руднике, а всего проработал по разным рудникам Сибири 17 лет. И вот 1917 года я вступил в добровольную Красную гвардию и в партию большевиков.[135]
>
> In 1917, upon the overthrow of Nikolka Romanov, I, Proskakov Semyon Ilych, worked in the Leninsk mine, and worked in various mines of Siberia for a total of seventeen years. And so in 1917 I entered the volunteer Red Guard and the party of the Bolsheviks.

The epitaph transposes these details into poetic form, beginning in the lines immediately following the opening quatrain quoted above:

> Я проработал / семнадцать лет
> на рудниках / и на шахтах Сибири…
> Болью резал / глаза мои / свет;
> ночь почивала / на мне / и на мире. […]
> В год, / когда первому / ясному дню
> было дано / надо мною зардеться,
> бросил я дом, / жену / и родню
> и записался / в красногвардейцы.[136]

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[134] A dramatic rendition of the importance of this question appears in Gladkov's *Cement* during the Bolshevik Party *chistka*. On the near-obligatory inclusion of justification of political affiliation (or the lack thereof) in personal accounts at evenings of reminiscences, see Corney, *Telling October*, 213-214.

[135] Unless otherwise specified, quotations from Proskakov's reminiscences in this chapter are translated from the version of *Semyon Proskakov* published in the *Sobranie sochinenii*, which corresponds to the book version published in 1928. When the text quoted in *Semyon Proskakov* deviates from that of the reminiscences held in GARF, or when sections of the reminiscences held in GARF and not quoted in *Semyon Proskakov* are cited, citation will refer to the GARF version.

In this quoted passage there is a slight difference between the GARF version of the reminiscences and the quoted passage. In the GARF version, a 12-dot ellipsis appears after the phrase 'Red Guard and.' As mentioned above, it is not clear what these ellipses signify. The version of Proskakov's reminiscences published together with a fragment from the chapter "Partisans" in *Ogonek* (no. 42, 1927) does away with them entirely.

[136] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 331-332.

I worked for seventeen years
in the mines and shafts of Siberia…
Light cut my eyes with pain;
night reposed on me and the world. […]
In the year when the first bright day
was given to grow red above me,
I abandoned home, wife and kin,
and signed up for the Red Guard.

Only the abandonment of "home, wife and kin" is absent from the epigraph, but this is not an invention on Aseev's part. Rather, it has two sources in Proskakov's reminiscences. Much later in his account, Proskakov mentions his wife, who was tortured by White soldiers while he was away. A more direct appearance in terms of the lexicon of the epitaph appears when Proskakov discusses the head of his partisan brigade, one Ivan Matuzov, who wanted to desert the brigade after a battle in Kol'chugino: «благодаря дорогого товарища Сухова, он бросил как и мы жену и детей и вступил в ряды…» ("thanks to the dear comrade Sukhov, he [Matuzov], just like us, abandoned wife and children and joined the ranks…").[137]

Each point in the quoted passage of the epigraph is made idiosyncratically.[138] Proskakov's prerevolutionary résumé includes seventeen years of work in various Siberian mines, most recently in the 'Leninskii' mine, although the mine at that time was named 'Kol'chuginskii' for its location in Kol'chugino (later Leninsk).[139] Furthermore, Proskakov dates his entry to the Bolshevik Party

[137] GARF fond R6935, opis 7, delo 131.

[138] It is worth noting that aside from a few points that will be discussed in the following pages, I am compelled to take Proskakov's reminiscences at face value – not precluding the possibility that he may have tailored his account to the time and situation in which he presented it (and rather assuming that he probably did, whether consciously or not), but also assuming that Proskakov presents a basically accurate factual account of his activity during the Civil War.

Similarly, the extent of external or self-censorship of Proskakov's account is an unanswerable question. The texts I viewed did not show any signs of redaction, but Corney has shown that Istpart and Istprof officials at times exerted control over eyewitness accounts in various ways. See Corney, *Telling October*, 209-211.

[139] According to the *Elektronnaia entsiklopediia "Leninsk-Kuznetskii,"* the mine was renamed as Leninskii (and the town Kol'chugino as Leninsk) in 1922 on the request of the mine workers themselves, one of the first of many such name changes. The *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* dates the name change to 1925. Nina Tumarkin describes one earlier name change (from the Michelson factory to the Lenin factory) in 1922 as based on the 1918 assassination

as "upon the overthrow (*sverzhenie*) of Nikolka Romanov" without explaining how he connected the downfall of the monarchy to a need to join the Bolshevik Party.[140] His very use of the term 'overthrow' (*sverzhenie*, and not the perhaps more accurate *otrechenie*, 'abdication') attributes the downfall of the monarchy to the Bolsheviks, and could suggest either an instance of politically cautious speech (insofar as one may think it safer to give credit where little or no credit is in fact due, in this case to the Bolshevik Party, than to overlook it), or alternatively a poor understanding of the events leading to and participants in the end of Nikolai II's reign, or perhaps a combination of these two rationales.

Linguistic idiosyncrasies like those above raise the question of whether Proskakov is 'speaking Soviet'[141] with limited understanding of the sociopolitical tenets of Bolshevism. Although the parameters of this work require that these questions remain unanswered, it is worth noting that the biographical account provided by Maziukov does not fully correlate with Proskakov's own account. To judge by the article, titled "Geroi poemy – kolchuginskii shakhter" ("The Hero of the *Poema* is a Kol'chugino Miner") and published in 1967 in the journal *Ogni Kuzbassa*, one might suspect that Proskakov's entry into the Bolshevik Party was not as

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attempt on Lenin by Fania Kaplan (Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives*, 105). See the same, 151-152, on the renaming of Petrograd as part of a widespread practice of renaming factories, buildings, towns, and cities, after heroes of the revolution.

On the basis of this almost certainly deliberate anachronism, one may safely assume that Proskakov composed his reminiscences no earlier than 1922.

Some readers have misidentified the mine as the Lena goldfields. See, for example, Nikolai Ushakov, "Dobrye sovety N.N. Aseeva," in *Vospominaniia o Nikolae Aseeve*, 166.

[140] Reciting local revolutionary history, A. Maziukov dates the arrival of the revolution to Kol'chugino to March 1917, at which time "the red flag went up" and the workers of mine organized a Red Guard unit "for the preservation of order (*dlia okhrany poriadka*)" (Maziukov, "Geroi poemy," 96).

[141] I borrow this term from Michael Gorham's study of developments in the Russian language in the 1920s *Speaking in Soviet Tongues*. Gorham argues that people across the Soviet Union and the social spectrum encountered competing models of new Soviet speech as part of the cultural revolution of the 1920s, and that while these models were not mutually exclusive, and rather that all contributed something to the language that would emerge as standard, one model – the bureaucratese originating in the Party and spread through newspapers – brought a certain standardization of the language with which one spoke of politics and the revolutionary process. The oratorical speech model that Gorham attributes to Mayakovsky, among others, will be relevant to the next chapter's discussion.

spontaneous (in the sense of dictated by the historical moment) or self-explanatory as he would have his audience believe. According to Maziukov, Semyon Proskakov was born at the Salair mine in Siberia in 1877. His father, Il'ia Proskakov, had been sent to the Kuzbass region as a political exile.[142] Further, Maziukov describes a second potential biographical reason for Proskakov's politicization:

> The Salair mine in the pre-revolutionary years belonged to the joint-stock company Kopikuz. Its management, in pursuit of profit, did not think at all about maintaining tolerable conditions of work and life [*byt*] of miners and their families. The owners of Kopikuz also treated nature rapaciously.
>
> Salair had long been famed for its pine forest, which bordered the settlement. But then the *kopikuzovtsy* began to destroy it barbarously. They felled the magnificent forest for crossties for the Kolchugino rail line and for mine supports.
>
> One day the honest and direct young worker Semyon Proskakov expressed his indignation. After this Proskakov was compelled to leave the mine, although work was difficult to find at that time. There was nothing left for him to do but to hire himself out as a day laborer for the well-off peasants…[143]

Horrible working conditions, of course, have the potential to politicize (as they do, for example, in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*). But another suggestion of rising political consciousness, however slight, is Proskakov's reaction to the clear-cutting of the forest, insofar as it led him to opposition to the local capitalist order, with negative consequences for his labor prospects. Maziukov's account is to be regarded with some skepticism: although he appears knowledgeable on the region, and one would hope that any gross inaccuracies would be corrected in the editorial process, he does not indicate any sources for the information presented in the article. I have not found reference to Maziukov's account in subsequent scholarship on *Semyon Proskakov*.[144]

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[142] Maziukov, "Geroi poemy," 96. Maziukov also writes that Aseev visited Leninsk in 1927, but I have not found external confirmation of the visit.

[143] Maziukov "Geroi poemy," 96.

[144] Maziukov's article is listed in the literature on *Semyon Proskakov* in *Russkie sovetskie pisateli: Biobibliograficheskii ukazatel'*, vol. 2, published in 1978. Therefore, in principle Meshkov or Shaitanov could have cited it in their studies; the fact that neither does could have as much to do with their dismissive stances on the question of fact versus invention as with the lack of bibliographic information in Maziukov's article.

If Maziukov's timeline is correct, the next passage in Proskakov's reminiscences, which also continue the epigraph, could indicate similar inconsistencies in Proskakov's timeline:

> И тут же эта партия повела борьбу против эсеров, против учредилки, и наши советы начали работать, вести в полном смысле и организовывать партию большевиков и повели борьбу с эсерами и другими партиями за советскую власть, а когда организовывали Красную гвардию, то она работала под руками советов и выполняла все распоряжения советов.[145]
>
> And then and there this [the Bolshevik] party began carrying out the struggle against the SRs, against the Constituent Assembly [*uchredilka* (cf. *Nikolka*)] and our soviets began to work, to lead in the full sense and to bring in shape the party of Bolsheviks and began to struggle with the SRs and with other parties for soviet power, and when they organized the Red Guard, it worked under the direction of the soviets and carried out all the orders of the soviets.

If the local Bolshevik Party organization indeed was formed only in September 1917, it would not have been able to struggle against the Constituent Assembly for long. Equally unclear is chronology of the formation of local soviets and Bolshevik Party structures and the nature of their collaboration.

One discrepancy between the accounts of Proskakov and Maziukov concerns the dating of the formation of the Red Guard and Bolshevik Party organization in Kol'chugino. As quoted above, Proskakov implies that he joined the Red Guard and the Bolshevik Party "upon the overthrow of Nikolka Romanov." It is difficult to interpret the time as any other but spring (and maybe even specifically March) 1917. However, Maziukov dates the formation of the Red Guard to March 1917, and the Bolshevik Party organization to September 1917, further specifying that Proskakov was one of the vanguard workers that joined the Party organization immediately upon its formation. Maziukov, "Geroi poemy," 96.

[145] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 331. The original reminiscences also mention the organization of a professional union:

> и тут же эта партия повела борьбу против эс-эров, против учредилки и наши советы начали работать вести в полном смысле и организовывать партию большевиков и повели борьбу с эс-эрами и с другими партиями и *тут же организовали профсоюз, который тоже боро[л]ся с другими партиями за советскую власть*, а когда организовывали красную гвардию, то она работала под руками ……. Советов и выполняла все распоряжения советов… (GARF fond R6935, opis 7, delo 131; italics added.)

In raising these questions about the chronology of events, I do not mean to accuse Proskakov of deliberately misleading his audience. Such distortion could be politically dangerous for him; more importantly, I doubt that full accuracy is a reasonable expectation of such a participant.

Regardless of difficulties in establishing the accuracy of Proskakov's chronology, the ideological side of Proskakov's account has significance for Aseev's depiction of him in *Semyon Proskakov*. From the earliest activity of the Bolshevik Party, Proskakov describes a collective effort, implying that workers like himself in the Red Guard were from the outset entirely supportive of the Bolshevik Party and the efforts of the Soviets; he describes himself as a part of the collective first and foremost, even as his decision to join the Red Guard and the Bolshevik Party reads, in Corney's terms, like a self-explanatory moment of revolutionary epiphany.[146]

Information Proskakov provides about himself is limited to political, social, and class status. Personal information in the epitaph is similarly limited: Proskakov begins by defining himself as "a worker, a miner, a Bolshevik," and only later (in both the epitaph and the original reminiscences) mentions that he "abandoned home, wife, and kin" to join the Red Guard. Dedication to the revolution apparently outweighs ties to family.[147] Pre-revolutionary occupation was a crucial factor in determining class status.[148] Proskakov seems to understand the importance of this question, and immediately establishes his working-class status and Party membership as credentials. His epitaph similarly emphasizes these elements.

When Proskakov's description of himself in the epitaph moves beyond the designations quoted above, he focuses on his achievements during the Civil War, mainly using past perfective

[146] On such moments see Corney, *Telling October*, 140-141, 214.

[147] I have in mind here the distinction between "filiation" (biological ties) and "affiliation" (social ties) that Eliot Borenstein develops in his study *Men Without Women*. Borenstein argues that the ideological shift away from family towards the collective in the 1920s manifests itself in literature and language replete with militaristic language and metaphors. At the same time, Bolshevik ideology and revolutionary-utopian thinking underwrote a prioritization of ties to society and the collective (affiliation) above ties to the family unit (filiation). See Eliot Borenstein, *Men Without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Russian Fiction, 1917-1929* (Durham, NC, and London, UK: Duke University Press, 2000), 14-18, 36-37.

[148] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton and Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2005), 48-51.

verbs and emphasizing progress through obstacles: «Я проработал семнадцать лет…; молча я путь пробивал пред собою…; я пролетел, просквозил, проскакал / сквозь пули японцев и чехословаков…» ("I worked for seventeen years…; Silent, I carved out the path before me…; I flew through, shone through, galloped through / the bullets of the Japanese and Czechoslovaks…").[149] Meshkov points out that "in the monologue of Proskakov emphasis is placed on the resoluteness of the steps of the hero, who inextricably linked his own life and hopes with nascent Soviet power, who in the struggle opened for himself the path to the light."[150] To Meshkov's observation can be added a grammatical underpinning: unlike Kolchak, whose more frequent use of 'I' and abundance of participial phrases will be discussed in the section focusing on his epitaph, Proskakov emphasizes completed deeds and active labor, most often with perfective verbs.[151]

Frequent use of verbs with the *pro-* prefix in the epitaph highlights that *Pro*skakov is practically a ready-made "speaking name" (*govoriashchee imia*) from the verb *proskakat'* ('to gallop by, past, through').[152] The prefix *pro-* in his surname resonates with verbs in the epitaph: *prorabotat', proletet', proskvozit', probivat', prostirat', prozhit'*. Furthermore, a sense of motion forward through time and space denoted by the *pro-* prefix dominates in this word choice, as if

[149] Proskakov does not mention fighting Japanese forces in his reminiscences.

[150] Meshkov, *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost'*, 157-158. The last phrase evokes the opposition light-dark within the text itself, by which Proskakov literally emerges from the darkness of the mine to fight for Soviet power, and figuratively Proskakov's contribution to establishing the new Soviet era (Meshkov equates *svet* with *budushchee*).

[151] The imperfective verb in the examples given above, «молча я путь *пробивал* перед собою», relates to Proskakov's pre-revolutionary labor. The remaining examples use perfective verbs and directly relate to Proskakov's revolutionary activities.

[152] An alternative meaning of *proskakat'* as 'to miss something (by galloping/riding quickly or inattentively)', comparable to these meanings of *proiti* and *proekhat'* (i.e. *proekhat' nuzhnyi povorot*), does not figure into the text. I thank Zara Torlone for raising this question at the 2017 Young Researchers' Conference.

Proskakov moves forward with his society towards the Bolshevik future. The last two of these verbs appear in the emphatic final sentence of the epitaph:

> Кто остановит / меня на пути?
> Мертвый, / я раны свои простираю
> к дальнему свету, / к новому краю,
> всё пережив / и всё победив![153]
>
> Who will stop me on the way?
> Dead, I stretch out my wounds
> to the distant world, to the new land
> having lived through all and conquered all!

Sonically suggesting words like *partiia, proletarii,* and *pobeda* through repeated *p, r, l, s,* and *t* sounds, it is as if Proskakov further establishes his revolutionary credentials with the very sounds of his speech.[154]

Proskakov's Big Deeds

What specifically did Proskakov live through and triumph over in the Civil War? The *poema* does not answer this question immediately. Following his epitaph, Proskakov fades from view. His name appears once in Kolchak's epitaph, in a single line that further underscores Proskakov's collective status: «Путь заградил мне – / Семен Проскаков» ("Blocking my path – was Semyon Proskakov").[155] He does not reappear until the chapter "Partisans" (also designated as "Second").

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[153] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov,* in *Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 2, 333. Metchenko hears in these lines "a solemn requiem for the thousands of nameless heroes who defended the path to the bright horizons of communism at the cost of their lives" (Metchenko, *Tvorchestvo Maiakovskogo,* 322).

[154] Moldavsky makes a similar argument about *pr-* and *s-* sounds, which he views as a sonic hint at Proskakov's first and last name. He finds it unlikely that Aseev used these sounds consciously, although he notes a certain 'laying bare of the device,' in Formalist terms, in the line «Я пролетал, просквозил, проскакал». Moldavskii, "Chto takoe schast'e? (O Nikolae Aseeve)," in *Perekrestok stikhov i trass: V. Maiakovskii i fol'klor, N. Aseev, I. Sel'vinskii, A. Prokof'ev* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1972), 118.

[155] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 335. Shaitanov points out that it is extremely unlikely that Kolchak would know Proskakov's name (Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil*, 310); I would go so far as to say that it is impossible, on the argument that the two appear not to have actually met. To the point of Proskakov's function not only as himself, but as a representative of the many "little heroes" of the revolution, could be added Meshkov's

"Partisans" opens with an epigraph from Proskakov's reminiscences. In it, Proskakov describes a lost battle with the Whites at Telezhina[156] and the dissolution of Proskakov's partisan unit. The narration resumes at this point and thus conceals a significant omission from the reminiscences. According to Proskakov's reminiscences, his partisan unit participated in several battles with White troops, liberating a group of Peasants' Deputies, withdrawing, regrouping, and continuing to skirmish with White troops.[157] In one such passage, Proskakov relates a moment of victory:

> Нам пришлось разбиться на два фронта частью поехали на станцию Арльон ж.д. и часть была направлена в Красное на местное восстание, где был в селе Красном арестован весь совет Крестьянских депутатов и приговорены были местными белогвардейцами к вешелице [sic], но тут уже наш отряд по счастью успел захватить тех товарищей и мы в числе 60 человек нашего отряда повели упорный бой и через 20 минут выбили белогвардейцев.[158]
>
> We were compelled to split into two fronts; one part went to the railroad station Arlon, and one part was detached to the local uprising at Krasnoe, where in the village of Krasnoe the entire Soviet of Peasant Deputies had been arrested and sentenced to hanging by the local White Guard, but on their way our unit was able to seize those comrades then and there, and we, the sixty men of our unit, began a stubborn fight and in twenty minutes drove out the White Guardists.

observation that Proskakov announces his own typicality to open his epitaph («В тысячах повторенных имен…») (Meshkov, *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost'*, 157), and Moldavsky's claim that "the concrete, real Semyon Proskakov goes in the *poema* alongside Semyon Proskakov, the symbol of the revolution" (Moldavskii, "Chto takoe schast'e?" 118).

[156] 'Telezhina' in the 1927 version of this chapter published in the seventh issue of *Novyi Lef*; 'Telezhikha' in Proskakov's reminiscences. The latter of these appears to be correct.

[157] GARF f. R6935, o. 7, d. 131, ll. 21-21b. Proskakov identifies White forces in the second battle as Kolchak's; the first battle may have been fought with Annenkov's forces, insofar as Annenkov specialized in mass executions of pro-Red citizens. Furthermore, Proskakov describes a battle that forestalled his partisan unit's progress towards Semipalatinsk, where Annenkov was based for much of the Civil War.

[158] GARF f. 6935, op. 7, d. 131. This passage is reminiscent of Annenkov's treatment of the villages in this general area, to be discussed later in the chapter.

Proskakov proceeds to describe the further movement of his partisan unit, which culminated in a battle with entrenched White forces on the way to Semipalatinsk. After a day and a half of fighting, Proskakov's unit makes a decisive move:

> …а в последнее время и мы начали поступать и отбили у них 4 пулемета и все остальные их винтовки и тысяч 10000 патронов и дали им знать как воевать с Красными дальше…[159]
>
> … but at the end we also began to act and retook four machine guns from them, and all the remaining rifles and some ten thousand (?) rounds, and we let them know how to fight with the Reds from then on…

The narrative (and section epigraphs) omits these episodes from the reminiscences, but perhaps obliquely signals these twists and turns in the partisans' fate in the opening to the "Partisans":

> Можно написать:
> «…Тропка вела
> не то на небеса,
> не то на елань.»
> Мы ж хотим - / без выдумок,
> что жизнь нам / дала,
> рассказать / о видимых
> людях / и делах.
> Чтоб, / к правде лицом,
> пути не терял
> сух / и весом –
> наш материал[160]
>
> It could be written:
> 'The trail led / neither to the heavens,
> nor to the glade.
> We want – without invention,
> what life gave us
> to tell of
> people and events that we witnessed.
> So that, with face to the truth,
> the way was not lost
> to our material
> dry and weighty

[159] GARF f. 6935, op. 7, d. 131.

[160] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 342.

As referenced above, the first four lines of this passage evoke the rejection of the *vymysly*, 'fantasies,' that begin *The Lay of Prince Igor's Campaign*; it seems that even as they and the subsequent lines insist on the text's factuality, they also obliquely indicate an omission (i.e., that not everything will be narrated, but in short, things were not easy for the partisans).

It is at this point in the narrative that the partisan unit dissolves. Aseev places the partisans in the *taiga*, rather than at Telezhikha as in Proskakov's reminiscences. The partisans sing a song as they march through the *taiga*, the first two lines of which Urban and Val'be identify as an allusion to Aleksandr Blok's *Dvenadtsat'* (*The Twelve*) in their commentary to the *Biblioteka poeta* publication:

> «Что ты невеселый, / наш товарищ командир?»[161]
>
> "Why are you gloomy, / our comrade commander?" (Aseev)
>
> «Что, товарищ, ты не весел?»
>
> "Why, comrade, are you not happy?"[162] (Blok)

Here the narrator hints at an authorial invention, or at least an acceptance of imprecision, introducing the song «Вроде вот этого пели» ("They sang something like this").[163] The partisans are interrupted by their commander:

> «Я вам / не начальник, -
> кто куда хотишь, иди.
> Много троп / наслежено,
> да кончены пути;
> вот она - / Тележина,
> да к ней не подойти.
> Стоит вам / послушать,
> бойцы, мои слова:

[161] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 344.

[162] Urban and Val'be, "Primechaniia," in *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, 699. A closer look at the role of music in the *poema* is a topic for future study.

[163] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 344. This observation is Moldavsky's, in "Chto takoe schast'e?" 116-117.

нечего нам кушать
и нечем воевать.
Сосны / еле шепчутся,
обстигла / нас беда.
Обнимемся покрепче,
разойдемся, / кто куда».[164]

"I am no commander to you –
go whichever way you like.
Many trails are trodden,
and our paths have ended;
there it is – Telezhina,
but we cannot approach it.
It's worth it for you to listen,
warriors, to my words:
there is nothing left for us to eat
and nothing to wage war with.
The pines are barely whispering,
misfortune has cut us short.
Let's embrace each other warmly,
and disperse, each his own way."

Aside from the difference in location, this speech of the partisan commander is close to Proskakov's own telling in the reminiscences:

> Приехав в деревню Тележиху там уже нас встретили неприятельской (?) пулей и их орудии. Тут нам пришлось задержаться трое суток и у нас вышли патроны и нам стало воевать ничем. Тут издали приказ наш командир, чтобы кто как мог так и спасался от белой сволочи.[165]
>
> Having arrived in the village of Telezhikha, there already they met us with unfriendly bullets and their weapons. Here we were forced to delay for three full days and we ran out of cartridges and we had nothing left to wage war with. Here our commander issued an order that each saved himself from the White scum.

In his reminiscences, Proskakov proceeds into the *taiga*, alone and without supplies, eventually making his way to the village Elinovka, where he hides for five days before

[164] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 344-345.

[165] This passage is linguistically strange; the apparent grammatical issue in the first clause of the last sentence and the word «неприятельской», which is hard to read past the к- in the original, might suggest that this is a transcription of an oral text (assuming that a typist would not permit the grammatical error nor run out of space in the margin if retyping a written text).

encountering a Magyar from his partisan unit by chance. In the *poema*, the dissolution of the partisan unit is followed by an interlude lamenting Proskakov's difficulties, then an encounter with billeted White officers. In this scene, not attested in the reminiscences, Proskakov's ability to balance spontaneity and consciousness is tested.

Proskakov first identifies these officers by their "shouts and whistles" as "black hussars [and] blue uhlans [with] Ussuriisk yellow stripes;" upon approaching them, he hears drunken snippets of conversation, insults, boasts of conquest, and song:[166]

> Без интеллигентских / штучек,
> если пьяны - / ползите под стол!
> … Под Тюменью
> было именье
> в семнадцать тысяч душ.
> …Туш, туш. Туш!
> Чего расклеились? / Чего раскисли?
> Ждете, / чтоб мамка соску дала?
> Выбросить к черту / кислые мысли!
> …Я мммучительный талант! […]
> …Сла-а-авен / выпивкой / и пляской
> чудный полк / Ингерманландский![167]

> Without intelligentsia gimmicks,
> if you're drunk – crawl under the table!
> … Near Tiumen
> was an estate
> of seventeen thousand souls.
> … Carcasses, carcasses. Carcasses!
> Why are you falling apart? Why the long faces?
> Are you waiting for mama to give you a pacifier?
> Throw your sour thoughts to the devil!
> …I am a tooormenting talent! […]
> …Fa-a-med for carousing/drinking and dancing
> is the splendid Ingermanland regiment!

[166] There are many speakers in this section; however, individual voices are not set off from one another by punctuation, creating a sort of homogenized mix of many voices (because there is no struggle between them – they may be hostile towards one another, but represent a single worldview – I do not use the word polyphony here to avoid confusion with Bakhtin's concept). The carousing of the group of officers, of course, also contrasts with the fate of the partisans, who have all gone their separate ways.

[167] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 349, 350.

The commander of these troops is not named. Shaitanov identifies them as Annenkov's.[168] Another small detail, the addressing of one of the officers as *khorunzhii*, supports this claim, insofar as it identifies the officers as Cossack.[169] In any case, the officers, with their boasts of mass violence and short temperaments that result in a fatal duel, and despite their toasts to Kolchak, resemble the Ataman to a far greater extent than the Supreme Leader, even though Annenkov was at least nominally under Kolchak's command.[170] The narrator's characterization of Proskakov's situation also suggests that these troops are Annenkov's:

> По всей / по Сибири, / вблизи и далеко,
> порки, / пожары / и паника:
> справа Семенов, / сзади Калмыков,
> слева / и спереди / Анненков.[171]
>
> Throughout Siberia, near and far,
> beatings, fires and panic:
> on the right, Semyonov, in the rear Kalmykov,
> on the left and ahead Annenkov.

Proskakov, crouched under a window, observes the scene. He could engage with the enemy, especially if incensed by their conflation of the Bolshevik and Social Revolutionary parties or the description of them as one officer's former "lousy [*vshivye*] friends," continuing to claim this

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[168] Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil*, 311. The *zheltye lampasy* mentioned here also appear in description of Annenkov in "The Black Ataman," while the phrases "black hussars" and "blue uhlans" appeared as descriptor's of Annenkov's troops in coverage of his trial (first in 29 July 1927 issues of *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*). It is worth noting that the first publication of "Partisans" appeared two months before that of "The Black Ataman," and that the latter did not bear designation as part of *Semyon Proskakov*; it therefore seems that Aseev meant these troops as Annenkov's, although for the average reader, just understanding that these are White Guards might be sufficient.

[169] Urban and Val'be, "Primechaniia," 700. According to the *Bol'shoi tolkovyi slovar'*, in pre-revolutionary Cossack armies *khorunzhii* was the lowest-ranking officer, approximately equivalent to lieutenant or cornet.

[170] 'Nominally' because newspaper accounts, which will be discussed in the section on Annenkov, emphasized that Annenkov did not always follow the directions issued from Kolchak's central command.

[171] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 347-348.

officer had joined the SRs "on the night when all cats turned grey"[172] and referring to him as "a democratic louse [*demokraticheskaia tlia*]."[173] This man's death in the duel is taken as proof that he was a "red spy" – an ironic accusation, given that Proskakov is eavesdropping at this very moment. However, Proskakov, at this point starving, unarmed, and alone, chooses not to engage his enemy – a conscious decision that results in his escape and survival.

Proskakov does not function alone in this scene. As he approaches the officers' billet, the narrator tests his mettle, suggesting that he sneak back into the taiga – a suggestion Proskakov rejects:

> Эй, Семен, / бросай, / перестань-ка,
> выходи / из дебри / с повинной! […]
> Нет, не брошу, / не перестану,
> не скули, шахтерское сердце!
> Оползи / кругом полустанок,
> погляди / на то офицерство.[174]
>
> Hey, Semyon, give up, stop already
> leave the wilderness and surrender! […]
> No, I won't give up, I won't stop,
> don't whimper, miner's heart!
> Crawl around the station town
> take a look at those officers.

Following the duel, which seems to end up more like an execution, the narrator, or maybe Proskakov's inner monologue, again urges Proskakov not to engage these officers, but instead to sneak away with supplies taken from the murdered officer, and thus live to fight another day:

> Отползай, Проскаков, / отползай!

---

[172] This line, «В ночь, когда стали все кошки серы» modifies the proverbial phrase «Ночью все кошки серы», likely referring to the many opposing political parties and factions of the revolution. The line evokes and contrasts with Proskakov's description of the start of his revolutionary activity: «В год, когда первому ясному дню было дано надо мной зардеться, бросил я дом, жену и родню, и записался в красногвардейцы».

[173] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov,* in *Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 2, 350.

[174] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov,* in *Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 2, 348. This section does not indicate changes of speaker; dialogue must be understood from shifts an addressee. This exchange also may alternatively be interpreted as Proskakov's inner monologue on the basis of Proskakov's direct address to his "miner's heart."

Зыбкий сумрак / от рассвета сер.
Не успел / подсумка отвязать
стрелянный / в затылок / офицер.
Хороши / для раненой ноги
мягкого опойка / сапоги;
хорошо, / свернувшись тихо, / лечь,
на плечи напялив / плотный френч.[175]

Crawl away, Proskakov, crawl away!
The unsteady gloom is gray from daybreak.
The officer didn't manage to unfasten his cartridge pouch,
shot in the back of the head.
Good for an injured leg
are boots of soft calfskin;
it's good, having turned away quietly, to lay down,
having laid on your shoulders a thick field coat.

Proskakov takes advantage of the officer's death to gain necessary supplies, and his conscious decision to 'observe but not engage' allows him – and the reader – a chance to observe the beastliness of the White troops. At the same time, the supplies Proskakov gains (calfskin boots, a field coat, the cartridge bag full of biscuits) from the White officer simulate some comforts of home life for him, even if Proskakov must remain vigilant. The section (and with it, the chapter) ends:

Лес, / гори / разливами зари,
не до дремы тут, / не до спанья:
сухари в подсумке, / сухари!
И горячий / смоляной / коньяк![176]

Forest, burn, like outpourings of dawn,
no place for slumber here, no place for sleep,
there are biscuits in your cartridge bag, biscuits!
And hot pine-pitch cognac!

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[175] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 352.

[176] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 352. The apostrophe to the forest here is not the only direct address to nature in this chapter: earlier in this section, the narrator addresses the sun; the first section of the chapter includes addresses to meadows, an aspen tree (possibly meaning the forest), and a 'circle of stars' in the sky. Mention on the light of the early day concludes with the opening two lines (written as one line in Aseev's quotation of it) of Pushkin's poem "The Cherry" («Вишня», 1815): «Румяной зарею покрылся восток» ("Rosy dawn covered the east"). Urban and Val'be, "Primechaniia," 700.

The cautious approach to the officers pays off: Proskakov now can hide away from them, leaving slightly better provisioned than before the encounter, but still unequipped for combat.

Proskakov's movement after this scene is not entirely clear, and the rest of his plot has no attribution in his reminiscences. In Aseev's version, Proskakov returns to hiding in the *taiga* at the end of "Partisans," but suddenly reappears far from where he was last seen in the second section of the following chapter "Trains" at the station "Winter." The Czechoslovak Legion controls the station, and here the Czech commander "Vónia," with stress marked and without a surname,[177] and an unnamed Bolshevik *voenkom* (war commissar) discuss remittal of Kolchak to the Bolsheviks. Though unstated in the text, the Czechoslovak Legion has gone back on its agreement to escort Kolchak to the British mission in Irkutsk.[178] At the end of the scene, the negotiation completed in the Bolsheviks' favor, the narrator indicates that Proskakov has appeared at this same railroad station at a crucial moment:

> Ну, а что Проскаков? / Хочешь знать о нем?
> Он стоит у входа / с военкомовым конем.[179]
>
> But what about Proskakov? Do you want to know about him?
> He is standing by the entrance with the commissar's horse.

The third section opens with an address to Proskakov by an unspecified speaker, perhaps the same *voenkom* as in the second section, with emphasis on the exigency of the moment:

> Шпарь, Сенюха! / Выгорело дело:
> взяли в плен, / душа его из тела!

---

[177] Throughout this section Aseev highlights Czech speech with stress marks reflecting Czech pronunciation and lexical and syntactic Czechisms («Ко́лчака не згодно о́тдавать на плен», for example). Although at this moment the Czechoslovak Legion is helping the Bolsheviks, they were enemies throughout the Civil War, and thus stylizing the Czech commander's Russian speech could be seen as a way of making him sound ridiculous (satire as delegitimization).

[178] For an account of the halting of the train at Station Zima, see Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 634-639. Smele names the commander of the protective picket that the Czechoslovak Legion posted around the train as Major Gustav Becvar.

[179] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 357. Earlier in the scene a command was given – we now understand, to Proskakov – to take the commissar's horse.

Стой сторожи, / глазу не спускай,
в рот не ложи / единого куска.
До ветру бегая, / воду кипятя,
помни вагон / на дальних путях.
Каждую минуту / держи в голове:
нас ведь / всего-то / шестьсот человек![180]

Quickly, Seniukha! The thing's come off:
They took [him] captive, and his soul's out of his body!
Stand and guard, don't take your eye off him,
don't put a single bite in your mouth.
Going to pee, boiling water,
remember the train car on distant lines.
Every minute keep in mind:
after all, in total, there are only six hundred of us!

Proskakov therefore must continue (or resume, as the case may be) his privation for the sake of the cause: the timing of his arrival in Irkutsk creates an opportunity to contribute, but only if Proskakov can manage his physical needs for the sake of a greater good. Proskakov accepts this duty:

Ни ночью, / ни днем / не снимая тесак,
Проскаков / стоит и стоит / на часах.[181]

Neither night, nor day, not removing his *tesak*
Proskakov stands and stands guard.

Discipline takes precedence over physical needs.

Throughout the *poema* Proskakov appears as a rank-and-file actor who acts in accordance with the moment; in the two chance encounters analyzed in this section, he acts in opposite ways. He consciously chooses not to engage the White officers when stumbling upon the chance but takes advantage of the opportunity to participate in the capture of Kolchak. His internal psychology

[180] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 357.

[181] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 357. *Tesak* – a short saber (Urban and Val'be, "Primechaniia," in Aseev, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, 700).

Linked by the metaphor of the sword for military duty, Proskakov's discipline and diligence here implicitly contrasts with Kolchak's *post factum* willingness to resign his post in his 'epitaph.'

is relevant in these scenes only to the extremely limited extent that it dramatizes his correct decisions: his speech is minimal, and typically takes the form of internal monologue or dialogue with the narrator. Proskakov therefore implicitly rejects the speechifying typical of Kolchak and Annenkov in favor of action in support of the revolution. His status as hero in the text derives from his conscious acceptance of the revolution, his action in its support, and his stoicism in withstanding physical (and not ideological) trials.

Another way of looking at Proskakov's plot speaks to its harmonization with the narrative of the revolution propagated in 1927. Bolshevik leaders began crafting the narrative of the revolution from its earliest stages, and one persistent concern was the extent to which agency should be ascribed to leadership from the Party and action of the masses. By 1927, the role of the Bolshevik Party as a director of the masses loomed large in discussions of the revolutionary past.[182] It is notable, then, that through the text Proskakov moves from point to point of Bolshevik direction; whenever possible, he acts under the explicit instruction of a higher-ranking authority. He goes off by himself into the *taiga* on the orders of his unit's commander, does not engage in conflict with the White officers on his own initiative, but does participate in the capture of Kolchak on the orders of the local War Commissar. This reflects Proskakov's reminiscences, in which he emphasizes collective, coordinated efforts, whether in partisan or propaganda activities; his undertakings are always authorized by a higher authority, whether the Bolshevik Party (or its representative) or the collective itself. In this way, Proskakov is ideologically self-sufficient, just as his entry into the Bolshevik Party is self-sufficient in his reminiscences and the opening

[182] For example, for participants in evenings of reminiscences "a personal encounter with Lenin, or being present at one of his speeches, became a badge of revolutionary credentials. Reminiscers organized their autobiographies around these and future such moments. Lesser Bolsheviks might also be invoked in this vein." For historians including Emel'ian Iaroslavsky, "Lenin became the prophet and guide of October, the Bolshevik Party its avatar," and the Bolshevik Party was credited with preparing the masses for October (Corney, *Telling October*, 215, 199).

epigraph of the *poema*. Moreover, no character responsible for or representing political or ideological education (along the lines of Liutov in Babel's *Red Cavalry* or Gints in Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*) appears in the text; even the narrator, who certainly directs the reader's interpretation at key points, does not speak didactically. As in Proskakov's character, so in the text on the whole correct behavior is modeled without explanation of the underlying mindset.

Through Aseev's discovery of the reminiscences, Proskakov tells his account of the Civil War. However, the status of "little hero" does not lessen Proskakov's significance for the events in which he participates, because he is but one of many participants. Metchenko argues that Aseev "announced in 'Antigenial'naia poema' [1930 – ZR] that history had put forward a new hero – the class, the collective; the poet identified individual heroism with individualism. With this also is connected the demand of the poet: 'Full elimination of the individual biography of the poet is necessary, down to refusal to sign one's works.' That is why consideration of the personality of the hero is so subdued, which is particularly striking, given that the *poema* is named after him."[183] Indeed, the *poema* does not fail to emphasize the collective efforts that led to victory in the Civil War. As Proskakov stands guard over Kolchak, arguably his greatest achievement in the text, albeit one invented by the author, the narrator broadens perspective to the other "little heroes" who complete similar "big deeds" as part of the collective effort.

> А сотни / Проскаковых / бродят вокруг
> средь белых, / последних, / разнузданных вьюг.[184]

[183] Metchenko, *Tvorchestvo Maiakovskogo*, 323.

[184] The "unbridled snowstorms" («разнузданных вьюг») fits the common metaphor of the Revolution as a storm; in this instance, the omnipresence of White Guard forces seems like a snowstorm. The phrase is therefore somewhat pleonastic: it begins with 'white,' although snowstorms probably cannot be any other color. The metaphor may have its origins in Aleksandr Blok's citation of Thomas Carlyle's view of the French Revolution, given in Blok's 1918 article "The Intelligentsia and the Revolution": "Russia is in storm. Carlyle has said that democracy arrives 'storm-girt'." («Россия – буря. Демократия приходит «опоясанная бурей», говорит Карлейль»). Blok, "The Intelligentsia and the Revolution," trans. Marc Raeff, in *Russian Intellectual History: An Anthology* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1966), 364.

И бродят / и бредят / о времени том,
когда они встретят / свой брошенный дом…[185]

And hundreds of Proskakovs roam about
among the white, the last, unbridled snowstorms.
And they roam and rave about that time,
when they will meet their abandoned home…

The Reds are grouped by synecdoche with the titular hero: as "hundreds of Proskakovs" act together, their "big deeds" accomplish the even "bigger" deed of Bolshevik victory.

Admiral and Ataman: Siberian Villains

In his study of the villain in Soviet literature of the 1920s, Eric Laursen differentiates two common types of villains: the "alien," who "lives a life of the mind, building castles in the air and dreaming dreams that are never fulfilled," and the "beast," who "follows the dictates of the body, motivated by greed and selfish desire."[186] Such villains threatened Soviet readers with their hyper-consciousness or visceral spontaneity, respectively. Ideological disorientation could ensue if these characters were allowed free rein in the text, because the reader may be tempted to read them positively. This fear of readerly confusion, Laursen argues, significantly contributed to the ideological strictures of Socialist Realism.

But because the villains in the works analyzed here also represented real threats to the Soviet project during the Revolution and Civil War, a further theoretical step is necessary. Works such as *Semyon Proskakov* that depict historical personae of the recent past, especially when the

White snow and wind also evoke the imagery of Blok's *The Twelve*, perhaps also suggesting that Proskakov, and not Christ, is who really emerges from the storm.

[185] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 358.

[186] Laursen, *Toxic Voices*, 6. With some exceptions, Laursen views the alien and the beast as continuations of the 'superfluous man' character in Russian literature, whose deviations from the status quo must be rectified for the good of the social order. See Laursen, *Toxic Voices*, 15-21.

choice of specific figures as villains is viewed as an outcome of the theoretical position of "literature of fact," enter a broader discussion of the legitimacy of these historical actors and their actions; they deal with broader groups (partisans, counterrevolutionaries, etc.) by extension from the specific individual to the type that individual represents.[187] In a work designated for commemoration of the anniversary of the October Revolution, depiction of villains in *Semyon Proskakov* serves to delegitimize them in the eyes of the reading public, and, conversely, to legitimize the heroes that overcome them. Such a literary undertaking can brook no confusion regarding how posterity is to remember historical actors.

In her article "Little Heroes, Big Deeds: Literature Responds to the First Five-Year Plan," from which I apply insights into the heroic type in the above analysis of Proskakov, Katerina Clark argues that villains in novelistic prose of the period are most frequently little more than caricatures.[188] This contention on its own does not contradict the historical nature of the villains of Aseev's work; on the contrary, historical figures were ripe for caricature, as will be seen in the next chapter in discussion of villains in Mayakovsky's *Khorosho!* However, in the cases of Aseev and Mayakovsky, this argument must be put into dialogue with Lef's distaste for "psychologization" (*psikhologizatsiia*) and "typification" (*tipizatsiia*) in literature. On the latter of these terms, for example, Chuzhak wrote:

> Как относимся мы к типизации? Плохо относимся мы к типизации. Без должного почтения и – очень, главное, условно.
>
> Мыслить придуманными типами мы, к счастью, уже не можем.[189]

> How do we regard typification? We regard typification poorly. Without proper esteem/deference and – very, this is the main thing, contingently.

[187] I am grateful to Boris Kolonitskii for suggesting this approach.

[188] Clark, "Little Heroes," 202.

[189] Chuzhak, "Pisatel'skaia pamiatka," in *Literatura fakta: Pervyi sbornik materialov rabotnikov Lefa*, 20; quoted also in Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil*, 309. In this same article, Chuzhak uses the formula of the first sentence quoted here to discuss generalization (*obobshchenie*), towards which his view was significantly more accommodating.

To think in contrived types we, happily, are not able.

The views of Lef on literary types have some commentators to confused arguments about how to view the villains. Shaitanov writes:

> If Lefists had not borne an insurmountable enmity towards everything connected with typification, then it would be possible to say that with the image of Annenkov Aseev presented a degeneration, the downfall of a historic type illuminated by the gleam of inherited splendor. In the image of Kolchak – the downfall of an identity within the confines of one life.[190]

Nonetheless, it seems that Shaitanov tries to have it both ways when he adds, referencing lines that will receive attention in the next section: "Not only about Kolchak could he [Aseev] say: 'cursed in songs, forgotten in legends,' – this is about all whose lamentable present-day reputation will turn into future ignominy."[191] In summary, Shaitanov wants to accept Aseev's artistic subordination to Lef theory at face value, even as he clearly sees that Aseev's characters can be made to represent historical types as well as individuals.

Discussion of villains will expose tensions between these positions. At times Aseev's villains do appear as types, at times as historically specific individuals – that is, they maintain the same tension as Proskakov himself, who appears as both a historically distinct individual and a stand-in for the proletarian partisan hero type. Aseev does not shy away from describing Proskakov as the representative of a type (recall the "repeated in thousands of names" and "hundreds of Proskakovs") while maintaining his biographical specificity; a similar situation holds for the villains. The following sections will explore the functioning of Kolchak as alien and Annenkov as beast in relation to "facts" and "inventions" about them. It will also draw attention to the literary

[190] Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil*, 311.

[191] Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil*, 311.

strategies deployed by Aseev to present the villains as illegitimate voices that threaten the hero, and by extension, to the reader meant to identify with him.

The Alien Admiral: Kolchak

The stenographic transcript of the interrogation of Kolchak is the only historical material on Kolchak to enter *Semyon Proskakov* with explicit citation.[192] Unlike Proskakov, and as Kolchak himself comments in the part of his epitaph cited in the previous section to be examined in this section, he was notorious to the Soviet public of 1927. As a temporary resident of Vladivostok and then Chita in the years 1917 to 1922, Aseev's own experience of the Civil War was perhaps more strongly connected to the rise and fall of the Omsk-based and Kolchak-headed Provisional All-Russian Government than those of his peers in European Russia. One would imagine that he was well-informed of Kolchak's movements because of his role at the newspaper *Dal'nevostochnoe obozrenie*; however, as with the rest of the text, it is not clear how Aseev's personal experience entered the text, if at all.[193] In "October in the Far East," Aseev mentions White control of Vladivostok and refers several times to "counter-intelligence operatives" (*kontrrazvedchiki*) loyal to Kolchak or the White counterrevolution generally, but he does not delve into events from Kolchak's campaign.[194]

In *Semyon Proskakov* Kolchak appears in defeat. In Formalist narrative terms, the *fabula* shows him first in the chapter "Trains." The time is January 1920, and the commander of the

[192] *Dopros Kolchaka: Protokoly zasedanii Chrezvychainoi sledstvennoi komissii v Irkutske. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1925).

[193] This difficulty results at least in part from the sparse availability of Aseev's letters and sparse holdings of *Dal'nevostochnoe obozrenie* in the United States. A close analysis of Aseev's letters and the Vladivostok newspaper would help ascertain his experience with White forces during the Civil War; however, that will need to be the subject of future research.

[194] Aseev, "Oktiabr' na Dal'nem," 44, 46-48.

evacuating Czechoslovak Legion is surrendering Kolchak to the newly established Bolshevik authority in Irkutsk.[195] In the next and final chapter, Kolchak appears in silence at military tribunal, then at execution. In terms of the *siuzhet*, Kolchak first appears immediately after Proskakov to deliver his own epitaph as the second of the opening "Two Epitaphs" at an unclear time, but logically after his execution on 7 February 1920.[196]

In the epitaph, Kolchak reveals himself to be fully alien to the rising Soviet state and its system of values, but also to be fully conscious and even regretful of that fact: speaking from beyond the grave, he explicitly and implicitly admits to being on the "wrong side of history." I will argue that Kolchak's penitent position, while aligning him with the 'alien' character type in Laursen's terms, differs significantly from Kolchak's presentation of himself under interrogation. The version of Kolchak shown in *Semyon Proskakov* alludes to facts as the basis for a fictionalized self-portrait but also contorts them to highlight his alien nature, with the effect of delegitimizing both Kolchak the historical figure and the mindset of the bourgeois *intelligent* that he is made to represent.

The first of the two epigraphs to Kolchak's epitaph establishes the shift from Proskakov to Kolchak in a simple exchange: "Are you Admiral Kolchak?" and its affirmative answer "Yes, I am Admiral Kolchak," taken from the opening of the military tribunal of Kolchak on 21 January 1920.[197] The content of the second epigraph, by far the lengthier of the two, pertains to Kolchak's unrealized aspirations to scientific work at the South Pole. (He had sailed on exploratory and

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[195] Changes of power in Irkutsk during the Civil War years were complicated. A Bolshevik-led Military Revolutionary Committee took control of Irkutsk from a coalition group called *Polittsentr* (Political Center) in mid-January 1920, just days before the capture of Kolchak. On the establishment of the Military Revolutionary Committee, see Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 656-658.

[196] At one point in the epitaph Kolchak says explicitly that he now sees "from the darkness of the grave" (*iz mogil'nogo mraka*). Like Proskakov in his own epitaph, Kolchak explicitly refers to himself as dead.

[197] *Protokoly doprosa Kolchaka*, 3.

scientific expeditions in the Arctic Sea before World War I.) Kolchak therefore enters the *poema* not as a military or political leader, but as a scientist and explorer, the reality of whose military career and anti-Bolshevik actions drastically failed to accommodate his dreams. As Shaitanov puts it, "the fate of an individual in any case is taken under the sign of the historical choice they make. The tragedy of Kolchak is a tragedy of misconception (*tragediia zabluzhdeniia*)."[198] The epitaph recapitulates Kolchak's frustrated hopes in a tragic key. Kolchak defines himself in terms of both his personal failures and his legacy; he realizes that he is on the wrong side of history.

In stark contrast to Proskakov's use of mostly perfective verbs, Kolchak defines himself in the epitaph with a string of past participles, focusing on his unfulfilled dreams and the vicissitudes that rendered them unachievable, endowing each action with a negative connotation: «*отраженный* в сибирских ночах… *погубивший* мечту свою; плыть *захотевший* на юг… и *отнесенный* далеко на север; *изменивший* стихии родной; *вышедший* биться на сухопутье; *пущен* болотам сибирским на дно; путами тропок таежных *опутан*; путь мой *искривлен* рукой англичан; бег мой *направлен* рукою французов» ("Reflected in Siberian nights; having brought my dream to ruin; having wanted to sail to the south… but was carried far to the north; having betrayed my native element; having left to fight on dry land; was released to Siberian swamps to the bottom; was tangled by ways on the trails of the taiga," "my way was twisted by the hand of the English," "my retreat was directed by the hand of the French").[199]

As adjectives, these past participles (italicized above) define their grammatical subject, Kolchak (or things proper to him, in the last two examples) in terms of his past actions. The variation of active and passive participles comingles admissions of guilt with passivity and

[198] Shaitanov, *V sodruzhestve svetil*, 311.

[199] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 353, 354, 355.

victimization by circumstances. Each phrase refers to actions and events that may be verified and explained biographically; the most figurative of them, "reflected in Siberian nights," still speaks to the impact Kolchak had on the areas that he tried to control. However, they are worded to suggest Kolchak's alienation from the current reality. Echoing the epigraph, Kolchak states that he "wanted to sail to the south" on a scientific expedition, but "was carried far away to the north" by the revolution, in consequence of which he was "cursed in songs and forgotten in *skazaniia*"; he attempted to join the British armed forces following Russian withdrawal from World War I, but was sent back to Russia to resist the revolution; he "returned to land" from his "native element," water, for this purpose. These last lines, «Я, изменивший стихии родной / вышедший биться на сухопутье» ("I, having betrayed my native element / having left to fight on dry land") speak to Kolchak's hyper-intellectual alien consciousness even as Kolchak appears to take responsibility for his role in the Civil War. They pun *stikhiia* (element) with *stikhiinost'* (spontaneity): through wordplay, Kolchak tacitly acknowledges his lack of a crucial element of the revolutionary character. He possesses only the hyper-consciousness that he acted against the course of history but no ability to change his past actions.

The several references in the epitaph to interference in Kolchak's biography by foreign powers have led at least one scholar to the assertion that Aseev's depiction of Kolchak aligns with the Bolshevik historical narrative, according to which he is "a marionette of foreign powers," albeit also "a tragic hero who had a lofty purpose, and who recognizes (atypically for the image of the enemy in Soviet poetry) his own guilt."[200] This view of Kolchak, specifically as subordinate to Western powers, certainly did exist; however, this was certainly not the only image of Kolchak in early Soviet culture (as will be discussed in the coming pages). It does not, however, appear to

[200] Svetlana Sheshunova, "Obraz Admirala Kolchaka v khudozhestvennoi literature," *Posev* 9 (September 2004): 29.

align with Aseev's authorial intent. According to materials at TsGALI cited by Karpov, Aseev maintained that "Kolchak is done in terms of a profound appraisal of his fate not only as an enemy, but also as a person."[201] Furthermore, in 1927 – a year in which war seemed imminent to many Soviet citizens and government officials – one would think that passing references to interference by Britain and France, even together with the involvement of the Czechoslovak Legion in Kolchak's fate, are not sufficient evidence of the 'marionette' status. Indeed, were Aseev's goal to emphasize foreign influence, an obvious addition to *Semyon Proskakov* would be the fact that Kolchak was traveling under the protection (initially) of the Czechoslovak Legion to the British mission in Irkutsk. Any or all these elements of Kolchak's biography conceivably could be much more strongly emphasized. I argue that the force of history plays a greater role: the revolution is the 'first cause,' so to speak, of Kolchak's ruin, even if Kolchak's involvement with foreign powers might seem ripe for exposition in 1927,[202] when military intervention by a British-led capitalist coalition was widely feared.[203]

One of the quoted participle phrases serves as emblematic of Aseev's interweaving of historical fact with literary villainy in the 'alien' image of Kolchak. Here Kolchak remarks on his legacy:

> Я, / адмирал Александр Колчак,
> проклятый в песнях, / забытый в сказаньях».[204]
>
> I am Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak,

[201] Karpov, *Nikolai Aseev: ocherk tvorchestva* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1969), 93.

[202] However, it is interesting to note that Annenkov appears to have attempted to take advantage of Soviet trepidation about foreign incursion when questioned about Kolchak at military tribunal. In trial proceedings covered in the 29 July 1927 issues of *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, Annenkov described Kolchak as the "blind performer of the will of foreigners," specifically naming the British General (Alfred) Knox, head of the British Mission in Siberia at the time, as exerting control over Kolchak.

[203] Aseev's 1927 poem "Boevaia trevoga" addresses this topic.

[204] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 334.

cursed in songs, / forgotten in legends.

Kolchak is conspicuously aware of his degraded status in public opinion – a status which in 1927 remained in common circulation in discussion of the revolution.[205]

That Kolchak was "cursed in songs" is true in the most literal sense. Dmitrii Moldavsky comments on these lines:

> Поэтический образ? Да, безусловно. Но за этим образом стоит абсолютная достоверность – пожалуй, из всех врагов советской власти Колчак наиболее часто встречается в народных частушках и песнях.[206]
>
> Is this a poetic image? Yes, without question. But behind this image stands an absolute veracity: it is possible that of all the enemies of Soviet power, Kolchak was the most frequently encountered in popular *chastushki* and songs.

A version of the popular song "Oh, little apple" («Эх, яблочко») denies Kolchak the right to cross the Ural Mountains.[207] A song of the Red partisans in Siberia, titled "Lullaby" («Колыбельная песня») and modeled on Mikhail Lermontov's "Cossack Lullaby" («Казачья колыбельная песня»), casts Kolchak as an illegitimate pretender to power. The song promises the same fate as Kolchak's – execution – to those who decide to "march on my Siberia with war" («идти войною на Сибирь мою»).[208] Because this song references Kolchak's execution as an accomplished fact, it must date to after February 1920, and it therefore exemplifies Kolchak's usability as a legible negative symbol of the counterrevolution.

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[205] For example, the photograph of him among other defeated military leaders of the White movement in the 6-7 November 1927 issue of *Pravda* noted above.

[206] Providing several examples of Kolchak in song, Moldavsky continues to speculate that the *chastushka* «Как иркутская Чека разменяла Колчака…» was Aseev's own invention, although he acknowledges that "in any case, many analogous *chastushki* were composed precisely about Kolchak, perhaps more than about all the other 'liberators' of Russia" («как бы то ни было, именно о Колчаке сложено аналогичных частушек, пожалуй, больше, чем о всех остальных «освободителях» России»). Moldavskii, *Nikolai Aseev* (Moscow and Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965),, 82, 83.

[207] Another part of this song appears on the lips of Sharikov in Mikhail Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog*.

[208] A version of this song appears in Lazar' Eliasov, *Narodnaia revoliutsionnaia poeziia vostochnoi Sibiri epokhi grazhdanskoi voiny* (Ulan-Ude: Buriat-Mongolskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1957).

Extension of Kolchak's statement beyond popular song to poetry reveals that in the period 1917-1927, no fewer than twenty-two examples of poems that mention Kolchak appear in the verses of Eduard Bagritsky, Demian Bedny, Sergei Esenin, Nikolai Kliuev, Mikhail Kuzmin, Leonid Martynov, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Velimir Khlebnikov.[209] Bagritsky's 1922 "Get Kolchak! Across the sleepless taiga…" («На Колчака! И по тайге бессонной…») is one example of extreme anti-Kolchak sentiment. The poem begins:

> На Колчака! И по тайге бессонной,
> На ощупь, спотыкаясь и кляня,
> Бредем туда, где золотопогонный
> Ночной дозор маячит у огня…
> Ой, пуля, пой свинцовою синицей!
> Клыком кабаньим навострись, штык!
> Удар в удар! Кровавым потом лица
> Закапаны, и онемел язык.[210]
>
> Get Kolchak! And across the sleepless taiga,
> Gropingly, stumbling and cursing,
> We make our way to where the gold-lined
> Night watch looms at the fire…
> Oh, bullet, sing like a lead chickadee!
> Make yourself like a boar's tusk, bayonet!
> One blow after another! With bloody sweat their faces
> drip, and the tongue has fallen speechless.

Written two years after the execution of Kolchak, Bagritsky's poem, like the partisan "Lullaby," presents Kolchak as a metonymic stand-in for all remaining counterrevolutionary forces in Siberia to be eliminated.

Mayakovsky also employed the negative image of Kolchak in politically oriented verse. His commemorative poem for the Day of the Paris Commune "The First Communards" («Первые

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[209] These results are compiled from a search of "Kolchak" in the National Corpus of the Russian Language; as such, they only include references to Kolchak by his surname.

[210] Eduard Bagritsky, "Na Kolchaka! I po taiga bessonnoi…," in *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (Moscow and Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1964), 267.

коммунары», 1927) is premised on remediation of the lack of historical memory of the events of the Paris Commune among Soviet citizens.[211] As Mayakovsky describes the rise, development, and repression of the Paris Commune, Kolchak appears in comparison to Gaston Alexandre Auguste, Marquis de Galliffet, who led forces in the repression of the Commune: «Коммуну поставил к стене Галифе – французский ихний Колчак» ("The Commune was put to the wall by Galliffet – the French's own Kolchak").[212] Kolchak figures in the poem as a convenient comparison to the idea of "repressor of revolutionary freedom," a touchstone with which Soviet readers could identify. Mayakovsky's poem is otherwise devoid of references to Russian historical figures and events, with the exception of its description of the abatement of revolutions in Europe after the repression of the Paris Commune:

> Версальцы, / Париж / оплевав свинцом,
> ушли / под шпорный бряк,
> и вновь засияло / буржуя лицо
> до нашего Октября.[213]
>
> Those of Versailles, having spat Paris with lead
> left under the clang of spurs
> and anew shone
> the face of the bourgeois,
> until our October.

The latter half of the line "cursed in songs and forgotten in *skazaniia*" hints at the inventive counter-impulse to the factual basis of Aseev's *poema*. The very idea of Kolchak as a positive hero

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[211] March 18, the Day of the Paris Commune, was established as a holiday and day off by a decree issued in December 1918; it was a holiday through 1928 (Shilova, "Building the Bolshevik Calendar"). Bergman attributes the discontinuation of the holiday to Stalin's "belief in the self-sufficiency of the October revolution," which "obviated the need for prior events, especially foreign ones, to legitimise it." Bergman, "The Paris Commune in Bolshevik Mythology," 1439.

The Paris Commune played an appreciable role in Bolshevik mythologizing of the revolutionary process as well as debates within the Bolshevik Party: see Bergman, "The Paris Commune in Bolshevik Mythology," *The English Historical Review* CXXIX, no. 541 (2014): 1412-1441, and "The Perils of Historical Analogy: Leon Trotsky on the French Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48, no. 1 (1987): 73-98.

[212] Mayakovsky, "Pervye kommunary," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* vol. 8, 57.

[213] Mayakovsky, "Pervye kommunary," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* vol. 8, 57.

in a Soviet *skazanie* ('legend' or 'folk tale') is misguided at best, regardless of the ambiguous status of such folkloric texts in the 1920s.[214] In a more figurative sense, Kolchak implies that he is not fit to be the hero in texts bearing the epic or legendary quality of the *skazanie*,[215] even though that comes with the implication that he feels that he ought to be (the epitaph is, after all, the reader's introduction to Kolchak in the text, and he describes himself as 'cursed' and 'forgotten' in his second sentence about himself). Self-definition as 'cursed and forgotten' allows self-aggrandizement to accompany self-pity.

Like in poetry, when Kolchak appears in Soviet prose works of the 1920s, including those that depict the Civil War on an epic scale, he appears as a villain. Svetlana Sheshunova notes that Kolchak, his government, and his military forces play a prominent role in one of the foundational prose texts of the new Soviet literature, Dmitry Furmanov's 1923 novel *Chapaev*, and a more peripheral role in another formative text, Aleksander Fadeev's *Razgrom* (*The Rout*). These portrayals, of course, are negative. Sheshunova locates an alternative interpretation of Kolchak in essayistic prose written in the 1920s by émigré authors Ivan Bunin, Aleksander Kuprin, and Ivan Shmelyov. These authors, all of whom were far from positively disposed to Bolshevism, showed

[214] Ziolkowski characterizes the situation in the late 1920s as follows: "The almost frenzied collecting activity [of folk tales and other types of popular stories – ZR] in the second half of the 1920s to some extent masked a situation marked by ambiguity, confusion, and vulnerability. The heirs apparent to the success of the revolution were after all members of the Russian working class, not the peasantry. Peasants and peasant culture were suspect, potential harborers of backward, if not downright subversive, attitudes who appeared to be in dire need of education, political enlightenment, and social transformation. Some radical Soviet intellectuals and others engaged in combating the negative features of life in the countryside considered folklore useless or even dangerous." Margaret Ziolkowski, *Soviet Heroic Poetry: Folklore or Fakelore* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2013), 80-81.

[215] The above-mentioned "Lullaby" mentions a genre etymologically linked to, if still quite distinct from, the epic tale: the fairy tale (*skazanie* and *skazka*, respectively). The song describes, somewhat fancifully, how Kolchak's living conditions took a turn for the better («Сам зажил Колчак, как в сказке» [Kolchak himself began to live like in a fairy tale]) at the expense of the Siberian people («По его указу банды / Грабили в краю» [On his order bands / plundered in region]) after he declared himself ruler («объявился царь»).

Kolchak in tragic or ironic – but not heroic – light.[216] In short, Kolchak's self-designation as "cursed in songs, forgotten in *skazaniia*" is certainly based in fact, but contorted to the demands of his portrayal in the *poema* as hyper-conscious, powerless, and unfairly vilified.

The pathetic rhetoric of Kolchak's epitaph contrasts strongly with his tone as recorded in the *Dopros*. In the epigraphs to Kolchak's epitaph, Aseev cites sections of *Dopros* that pertain to Kolchak's frustrated aspirations to continue polar exploration, but not Kolchak's military or political career. However, Kolchak's epitaph culminates in evocation of one dramatic event from his military past, and comparison of his statements to the military tribunal in Irkutsk highlights the divergent tone of the epitaph. By the end of the First World War, Kolchak held the rank of vice-admiral as commander of the Black Sea Fleet. After instructing his loyal officers to surrender their arms, Kolchak refused to surrender his own as he relinquished command of the Fleet to the Soviet of Soldiers' and Sailors' Deputies in early June 1917.[217] On 26 January 1921, Kolchak narrated this moment to the military tribunal as follows:

> …я сказал, что вообще какой бы то ни было контр-революции не существует в природе, потому что союз офицеров существует совершенно открыто, он мне лично известен, я знаю все его дела, я бы сам не допустил в такое время какие бы то ни было выступления, потому что они приблизили бы нас к полнейшей гибели. Я указал им, что мы – старшие офицеры – были лояльны в отношении к правительству, исполняли все его приказания, что, следовательно, вопрос о какой-нибудь контр-революции никогда не поднимался. Затем я сказал, что могу рассматривать это, как оскорбление, которое наносится прежде всего мне, как старшему из офицеров, здесь находящихся, что с этого момента я командовать больше не желаю и сейчас об этом телеграфирую правительству. Затем я взял свою саблю и бросил ее в воду. Я стоял около трапа и ушел вниз.[218]
>
> …I said that no counterrevolution of any sort exists naturally, because the union of officers exists absolutely openly, I know it personally, I know all its affairs, I myself would not

[216] Sheshunova, "Obraz Admirala Kolchaka v khudozhestvennoi literature," published in two parts in *Posev*, no. 9 (September 2004): 28-31, and no. 11 (November 2004): 45-48.

[217] There appears to be some disagreement regarding the precise date of this episode.

[218] *Protokoly doprosa Kolchaka*, 78.

> allow whatever sort of speeches these were at such a time, because they would have brought us closer to utter ruin. I showed them that we – the senior officers – were loyal to the government, that we carried out all its orders, that, consequently, the question of any sort of counterrevolution never arose. Then I said that I can consider this an insult that is directed first and foremost at me, as the most senior of the officers located here, that from this moment I no longer wish to command and will now telegraph the government about it. Then I took my saber and threw it into the water. I had been standing near the gangway and went below.

Kolchak in this speech is direct, candid, and unrepentant. He relates the event without suggestion that he may have made the wrong choice or acted against his own or his country's interests – on the contrary, he claims that he would have forbidden speeches on the grounds that "they would have brought us closer to the most complete ruin,"[219] suggesting that this ruin did, indeed, arrive. He also speaks of personal insult in a decidedly un-Soviet way: not only is the idea of mutiny among the sailors insulting, but it insulting to him in particular as an individual charged with command of them.[220] When preserving his place on top of the hierarchical relationship to the proletarian sailors becomes impossible, Kolchak displays sentiments that maintain a dictatorship of the individual and dismiss a dictatorship of the masses.

This precise moment concludes Kolchak's epitaph as a culminating symbolic gesture to his past errors, with a tone shot through with regret. Kolchak laments:

> Против народа / безмерностью пагуб
> оборотившему острие,
> если б мне / снова / сломав свою шпагу,
> в Черное море / бросить ее![221]
>
> Against the people [*narod*] with boundless perdition,
> having turned my blade,

[219] The Provisional Government, to which Kolchak remained loyal, established freedom of speech in its declaration of 3 March 1917 (O.S.), extending it and political freedom to persons serving in the armed forces "to the extent permissible by military-technical circumstances."

[220] In this I cannot help but recall the 'significant personage' of Gogol's "The Overcoat."

[221] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 335.

> if only I could again, having broken my sword,
> throw it into the Black Sea!

In contrast to most of the preceding lines, these lines use an impersonal dative construction (in which, however, Kolchak remains the semantic subject). He would relinquish power if given the chance to relive this moment, with the added suggestion that Bolshevik power is what the people wanted – he acted against the *narod*.[222] Describing Kolchak's actions in June 1917, Smele writes that "this dramatic gesture was undoubtedly an expression of wounded pride,"[223] an interpretation evident in Kolchak's evocation of personal offense. Aseev's version transposes the emotional tenor of the moment into a remorseful key. The suggestion to break his sword, a detail not mentioned Kolchak's account quoted above, and throw it into the Black Sea here evokes the ceremonial removal of noble titles in Imperial Russia. Kolchak acts not out of defiance of the revolting sailors, but as if he could have become one of the *narod* against which he turned his blade. Becoming one of the *narod*, though, is an implausible proposition. Sheila Fitzpatrick summarizes Bolshevik methods of determining class status via genealogy and activities before and after the Revolution with the credo of "once a bourgeois, always a bourgeois."[224] For a person of Kolchak's pre-revolutionary credentials, downward mobility from the imperialist bourgeoisie to a more acceptable class status would be all but impossible. In this closing statement, Kolchak's wishful thinking illustrates once again his alienation from real life. As with the rest of Kolchak's epitaph,

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[222] Kolchak's phrase "against the people" has a Soviet-ese ring to it for good reason. Boris Kolonitskii notes usages of the term "enemy of the people" as early as 1917. See Kolonitskii, "Antiburzhuaznaia propaganda i 'antiburzuaznoe' soznanie," in V. Cherniaev et al, eds., *Anatomiia Revoliutsii: massy, partiia, vlast'* (Saint Petersburg: Glagol, 1994).

[223] Smele, *Civil war in Siberia*, 68.

[224] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks*, 59-60. Applying Fitzpatrick's analysis of Bolshevik determinations of class in the NEP era, Kolchak was also condemnable as one of the *byvshie* (previous ones), or "the old bourgeoisie, [who were] assumed to be potential allies of the Russian and foreign capitalists abroad" (Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks*, 57). Given Bolshevik fears of a 'capitalist *revanche*' in the NEP era and Kolchak's actual connections with foreign governments and militaries even before 1917, he was almost certainly doomed from the start.

historical fact collides and fuses with ascription of unachievable dreams to Kolchak, with the end of confirming the villain as alien.

In terms of the *siuzhet*, Kolchak's final appearance in the *poema* occurs in the second part of its final chapter. Here Kolchak stands silent before the military tribunal. The scene that opens this part is worth quoting at length.

> Висков серебря / внезапную проседь,[225]
> стоял и стыл / Колчак на допросе.
> Он никогда / не знал и не ведал
> и не встречался / лицом к лицу
> с тем, / кто вырвал / над ним победу
> из рук холеных / в таежном лесу.
> Он никогда / не знал и не понял,
> вежливо сдержан, / изящно лукав,
> что / не Англия / и не Япония –
> Проскаков / держал его жизнь / в руках.[226]
>
> With sudden grey of temples turning silver,
> Kolchak stood and froze at interrogation.
> He never had the faintest idea
> and never met face to face
> the one who seized victory over him
> from his pampered hands in the taiga forest.
> He never knew or understood,
> politely restrained, artfully cunning,
> that it was not England and not Japan
> who held his life in his hands, but Proskakov.

The narrator makes an important correction to Kolchak's earlier implication that foreign powers led him astray: Proskakov, and by extension the Soviet people, were in control all along. Kolchak's alien consciousness has fatally misunderstood the course of history: a condition underscored by the repetition of verbs related to knowledge and knowing (знать, ведать, понять) and contrasted with the figurative description of Proskakov's action («держал его жизнь в руках»).

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[225] This reference to Kolchak's grey hair provides an opportunity to mention that Kolchak and Proskakov were almost the same age: Kolchak was born in 1874, and Proskakov in 1877 (according to Maziukov, "Geroi poemy," 96).

[226] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 362-363.

Returning to Laursen's arguments about the symbolic defeat of villains in literature of the 1920s through the limiting of their voices, it is worth noting that Kolchak is silent throughout this scene. The final eight lines accomplish his ultimate fate while emphasizing Proskakov's symbolic role as stand-in for the Soviet people:

> И, лишь выслушав / приговор смертный,
> жизнь / перебравши / в последний раз,
> вспомнил и он / о силе несметной,
> тяжкой силе / восставших масс.
> Вспомнил, / увидев / дымок на костре,
> мирно курившемся / утром пастушьим..
> И разорвал / тишину расстрел
> эхом распарывающим / и растущим!..[227]
>
> And, having just heard the sentence of death,
> having gone through his life for the last time,
> he remembered also a strength incalculable,
> the terrible strength of the insurrecting masses.
> He remembered, having seen the smoke of the fire,
> peacefully smoking like a (in the?) pastoral morning…
> And the silence was rent by a salvo
> with an echo ripping and rising!..

Compared to the length at which Kolchak speaks in his epitaph (more than Proskakov by several lines), his trial and execution occupy relatively little space in the *poema*. There are several mutually compatible possible explanations for this. First, the reader certainly would be aware that Kolchak was by now a long-defeated enemy. Second, his silence at trial is a symbolic defeat and an opportunity to emphasize once again the relationship between Proskakov and the masses. Third, although it is not clear whether Aseev knew about how the execution was conducted, this moment aligns well with the historical record. The head investigator Popov recalled Kolchak as "entirely dignified" during the interrogation (unlike other members of Kolchak's government, in whom Popov observed cowardice and attempts to shift the blame to others, and uncharacteristic for the

[227] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 363.

ordinarily short-fused Kolchak).[228] On the basis of accounts by the Chekists present at the scene, Smele reports that even at execution "Kolchak, having refused a blindfold, stood calm and erect," unlike Kolchak's Prime Minister Viktor Pepeliaev, who "had to be dragged into place," and who is absent from Aseev's narrative.[229] If Aseev knew of the circumstances of the execution, then his account in the *poema* is fairly accurate; if not, then this may be a case of invention coinciding with reality, but it nevertheless is a coincidence that underscores the alignment of Kolchak with a literary type.

Finally, the military tribunal creates sonic juxtaposition: Kolchak's silent thought contrasts with the loud, sudden noise of the gunshots that kill him. Their description, it should be noted, contains two present active participles: *rasparyvaiushchim* and *rastushchim*. This is the least common type of participle in Kolchak's epitaph; in fact, the two present active participles in his epitaph apply to other people; all the participles he uses to describe himself are past (whether active or passive). In this description of Kolchak, three past-tense verbal adverbs times (*vyslushav, perebravshi, uvidev*) underscore for a final time Kolchak's orientation towards the past while keeping focus on him in the narrative.

Contrasting sounds continue after the execution. With an ellipsis indicating a change of scene, an unspecified speaker speaks of similar future victories:

> «Как иркутская / чека
> Разменяла / Колчака,
> Так и прочих / выловим
> свидеться с Корниловым…»[230]

Like the Irkutsk *cheka*

[228] Smele, *Civil war in Siberia*, 664.

[229] Smele, *Civil war in Siberia*, 665. Smele also reports that there were two volleys, not one.

[230] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 363. Unlike previous dialogues, here speech is marked conventionally. Mil'kov writes that in these lines "the melody of Siberian *chastushka* is heard." (Mil'kov, *Nikolai Aseev: literaturnyi portret*, 100).

Exchanged for Kolchak,
That is how we will catch the others
to meet up with Kornilov…

The narrator then delivers his final emotional address to Proskakov, replete with rhetorical questions and exclamations:

…Всё пережив / и всё победив,
с прошлым / будущее сличая,
встань, / Проскаков, / и обведи
землю / выцветшими очами.
Как не узнать ее, / как не понять?!
Разве тебе / эта даль незнакома?
Разве не ты / вскочил на коня,
на боевого коня военкома?
Разве не ты / в боевых рядах
Поднимаешь / лицо свое,
и под марш мой / идешь сюда,
и на строчках моих поешь […][231]

…Having lived through all and conquered all,
comparing the future with the past,
arise, Proskakov, and look around
the land with faded eyes.
How could you not recognize it, how could you not understand?
Is this expanse truly unknown to you?
Was it not you that jumped onto that steed,
the warhorse of the war commissar?
Is it not you in the military ranks,
that raises his face,
and to the tune of my march comes here,
and in my little lines sings…

A partisan song, which appears to be Aseev's invention, follows. More important to present discussion is the narrator's third rhetorical question, "Was it not you that jumped onto that steed, / the warhorse of the war commissar?", which recalls Proskakov's role in the capture of Kolchak. Although the narrative of the *poema* answers the question affirmatively, examination of

[231] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 364. An issue not fully explored here is the ways in which Proskakov might himself be a poet-like figure: here, for example, the call for him to arise seems to echo the call of God to the poet in Pushkin's "The Prophet" ("Prorok").

Proskakov's reminiscences has shown that he most likely did not participate in the capture; therefore, the historical answer to the question is negative. Here, as seen in the partisans' song mentioned in analysis of Proskakov, the narrative hints at its own inventiveness.

In conclusion, Kolchak appears in *Semyon Proskakov* as a disempowered and repentant enemy from the past who has, from the reader's perspective in 1927, already been thoroughly neutralized. He is the alien, in Laursen's terms, who is conscious of his misalignment with the course of history but can do nothing to correct it. The capture and defeat of Kolchak entails a military triumph in the Civil War, but also a symbolic triumph of the balanced psyche over a hyper-consciousness that thinks about history (including biography) only in terms of a self that could not abandon the past and come into step with historic change.

Even as Aseev drew on historical materials for his depiction of Kolchak in *Semyon Proskakov*, he transposes them into a key appropriate for the alien, hyper-conscious intellectual type that Kolchak represents, while also incorporating significant details from public perception of Kolchak. Similar practices of representation appear in the depiction of Ataman Boris Annenkov in *Semyon Proskakov*, with the opposite effect of highlighting the beastly nature of one perpetrator of the White Terror in Siberia that had remained at large and in hiding – that is, still figured as a potential threat – until the summer of 1927. The next section examines the role of Annenkov in *Semyon Proskakov* in light of his status in the public eye in 1927 and the role of the narrator in guiding reader reception of the beast.

The Unabashed Beast: Annenkov

The first chapter after the introductory "Two Epitaphs," of which the speech by Admiral Kolchak analyzed above comprises the second, is titled "The Black Ataman," and depicts the military

tribunal of Boris Annenkov in July-August 1927. In terms of the chronology of the narrative and the interrelation of characters, the chapter seems incongruous with the remaining text. Proskakov does not mention Annenkov in his reminiscences.[232] In Aseev's text, Proskakov never encounters Annenkov directly; the above analysis of the encounter that brings him closest to Annenkov, observation of carousing White officers, has noted difficulties that the average reader may have in identifying these troops specifically as under the command of Annenkov. Annenkov himself does not appear in the other chapters, nor do any events that could be definitively ascribed to *annenkovshchina*.

This apparent disconnect between "The Black Ataman" and the rest of *Semyon Proskakov* can be partially explained by its publication history. It is not clear whether Aseev wrote "The Black Ataman" specifically for inclusion in *Semyon Proskakov*. "The Black Ataman" was first published in the September 1927 issue of the journal *Oktiabr'* with the subheading '*Poema*';[233] that is, the text was presented as a stand-alone work. It is significant to note that by September 1927 Aseev had already published other sections from *Semyon Proskakov* with clear indications of their status as excerpts from a larger work.[234]

Nonetheless, reasons to depict Annenkov at trial appear when one views the chapter in terms of current events in 1927, the strivings of Soviet authors in the 1920s to create unambiguous villains, and Aseev's penchant for writing poetic responses to current events. The military tribunal that tried and ultimately sentenced Annenkov to death received coverage in *Pravda* from 24 May

[232] As referenced above, Proskakov's partisan division at one point moved toward Semipalatinsk, Annenkov's base of operations for much of the Civil War, but Proskakov does not mention Annenkov by name.

[233] This version lacked the epigraph that will be discussed in this section.

[234] These sections include "Partisans," published in *Novyi Lef* 7 (1927) with the heading title and subtitle of the complete work and with a leading designation as "From a *poema*" (*Iz poemy*), and "Two Epitaphs," published in the ninth issue of *Krasnaia nov'* for 1927 (and not the tenth issue as reported in the notes to Aseev's *Biblioteka poeta: bol'shaia seriia*) with the heading title and subtitle, but no other designations.

to 2 August 1927, and in *Izvestiia* from 15 July to 13 August 1927; at times, the proceedings of the trial were literally front-page news. Aseev's depiction of the military tribunal may be considered an attempt to convince his reader of Annenkov's guilt and the justice of his death sentence – that is, an attempt to delegitimize a Soviet enemy in public opinion.[235]

There is no question as to whether Annenkov achieved the notoriety of Kolchak during the Civil War. Newspaper coverage of the trial in 1927 tended to assume that the general public was not familiar with him or his misdeeds. The basis for this assumption might have less to do with Annenkov's persona than it does with limited access to information about Siberian conflicts during the Civil War. It is also not clear what Aseev knew of Annenkov before 1927.[236] Annenkov's name appears rarely in *Pravda* for the period 1917-1922, and only once in *Izvestiia*,[237] in an article of 25 October 1918 titled "Siberian Affairs: Report of an Eyewitness." The article, signed with the initials L.N., reports on the Red "rebellion" (*bunt*) of peasants in the area of Slavgorod, to which Annenkov was sent with the "specific order to crush the rebellion by any means." Annenkov succeeded in this task: "first the Red Guards captured during the 'offensive' (original quotation marks) were executed. They were executed on the spot, near the city, before the very eyes of the

[235] Because Annenkov was at least nominally subordinate to Kolchak, delegitimizing Annenkov could delegitimize Kolchak by association. The first two articles on the case in *Pravda,* published 24 and 25 May 1927, even bore the heading "The Case of the Kolchak Generals Annenkov and Denisov" ("Delo kolchakovskikh generalov Annenkova i Denisova"). Most subsequent articles, including those in *Izvestiia*, bore the heading "The Case of General Annenkov" ("Delo generala Annenkova"), occasionally without his title.

[236] As far as I can tell, during the Civil War Annenkov never approached Vladivostok or Chita; I have found no evidence of Aseev's knowledge of him before 1927. Aseev mentions Annenkov in his poem "Boevaia trevoga," which was published in issue 6 of *Novyi Lef* for 1927.

[237] Issues of *Pravda* for 1919 are not fully digitized; in those which are available, Annenkov's name does not appear. An article in *Pravda* on the Civil War in Kazakhstan appeared on 17 January 1919 with the title "Victims of the White terror in Siberia," and is cited in *Grazhdanskaia voina v Kazakhstane: letopis' sobytii*. It does not mention Annenkov by name, but the "brutal reprisals of White Guards with the population of the Semipalatinsk region, mass arrests of supporters of Soviet power, inhuman interaction with the arrested, execution of Soviet commanders taken captive" sound very much like Annenkov's doing (A.S. Elagin, comp., *Grazhdanskaia voina v Kazakhstane: letopis' sobytii* [Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1974],122).

everyday citizens (*obyvateli*) of Slavgorod." The report continues to describe execution by single bullets followed by a strike with a saber that left some victims only mortally wounded. L.N. reported that Annenkov promised to kill 200 people for every dead White officer, adding that the total may have reached as many as 700 executions. The article ends on the grim note that Annenkov may indeed have fulfilled his promise.

This account from the Civil War years of Annenkov's activities describes some of many acts of violence that Annenkov wrought on Siberia and northern Kazakhstan throughout his campaigns. Newspaper coverage of the 1927 military tribunal, which also tried Annenkov's chief of staff (*nachal'nik shtaba*) Major General Nikolai Denisov,[238] retold the story of Slavgorod, informed the Soviet public about other violence perpetrated by Annenkov and his men against the people of southern Siberia and Kazakhstan, his subsequent escape to China, and attempts by Western agents to involve him in organization of an anti-Bolshevik counterrevolution there. On 16 June 1927, shortly after Annenkov's arrest, *Pravda* published an article indicatively titled "Who is Annenkov" that enumerated Annenkov's counterrevolutionary history, including graphic descriptions of executions, looting, and destruction. An article in the 15 July issue of *Izvestiia* emphasized Annenkov's lawlessness, noting that:

> Despite the end of the [first world] war, despite the order to demobilize the troops, especially the Cossacks, Annenkov retained his detachment intact and headed from the front to Siberia… Annenkov also did not subordinate himself to the order of the Omsk Soviet of Cossacks' Deputies on the immediate disarmament of the detachment. As a result, the Omsk Soviet declared Annenkov outside the law…

[238] Coverage of the trial devoted limited attention to Denisov. According to coverage of the trial in *Izvestiia* from 9 August 1927, mere days before Annenkov and Denisov were sentenced, includes Denisov's argument that as the chief of staff, he did not see or know of many of Annenkov's terrors; instead, Denisov claimed that he "was a little person that primarily engaged in clerical work, practically did not get mixed up in operational matters," including counterintelligence and punitive operations. According to this article, Annenkov himself repudiated these claims.

Coverage of the first day of the trial, published in the 26 July 1927 issue of *Izvestiia*, reported a packed courtroom and hundreds of witnesses volunteering to testify against Annenkov. According to the 29 July report in *Izvestiia*, the total number of testifying witnesses surpassed one hundred. Rehearsing the history of Annenkov's involvement in the Civil War, the article of 26 July concludes that "the despotism (*proizvol*) and beastliness (*zverstva*) [of Annenkov and his men] knew no limits." Other coverage went further still. Describing Annenkov and his divisions in Semipalatinsk, the 16 July article "Who is Annenkov" reported that "the outrages (*bezobraziia*), excesses (*beschinstva*), bloody carnage (*krovavaia rasprava*) of Annenkov's partisans were so astounding that even in Kolchak's headquarters it was considered that Annenkov's forces amount to a wild gang of thugs (*dikii sbrod*)."

These and other articles practically declared Annenkov guilty from the outset; however, the newspapers also published quotations that could suggest a dramatic change in Annenkov's opinion of the Bolshevik state. Annenkov downplayed his involvement in counter-revolutionary efforts while he was hiding in China. The article "10 let kontrrevoliutsii" ("10 Years of Counter-revolution"), published in issue 24 of *Ogonek* for 1927 and cited by Aseev as the epigraph to the chapter, reports the following exchange between Annenkov and the criminal investigator D.I. Matron:

> – Что заставило вас возвратиться в СССР? – спрашиваю Анненкова.
> – Убедился в том, – отвечает Анненков, – что никакая борьба против советской власти немыслима и не нужна. Советская власть действительно возрождает разрушенную Россию и при поддержке всего народа создает государство.
>
> "What made you return to the USSR?" I ask Annenkov.
> "I became convinced," Annenkov answers, "that any struggle against Soviet power is inconceivable and unnecessary. Soviet power in truth is regenerating decimated Russia and with the support of the whole people is creating the state."

Annenkov also attempted to exculpate himself more directly from accusations of involvement in foreign plots against the Soviet state. When questioned on his involvement, he said:

> Все находящиеся в Китае белые эмигрантские организации, – отвечает Анненков, – руководятся иностранцами и, главным образом, англичанами, на средства которых и содержатся. Было бы ошибочно думать, что англичане сочувственно относятся к русской эмиграции. Англичане и другие – глубоко презирают русских эмигрантов, потерявших свою родину, но англичане хорошо учитывают то, что этих эмигрантов легко эксплоатировать [*sic*], как рабочую силу на своих заводах в Китае и, в виду безвыходного положения, эмигрантов легче всего использовывать в определенных политических целях. Меня тоже хотели использовать.[239]
>
> All White émigré organizations in China, Annenkov replies, are directed by foreigners, and mainly the English, on whose means they support themselves. It would be a mistake to think that the English regard the Russian emigration sympathetically. The English and others – they deeply despise Russian emigrants, who have lost their homeland, but the English well account for the fact that these emigrants are easy to exploit as a labor force in their factories in China and, in light of their desperate condition, that it is easiest to use emigrants for certain political goals. They wanted to use me too.

As the tribunal approached its conclusion, coverage published in *Pravda* on 13 August included the following statement by Annenkov:

> Когда я возвращался в Советский Союз, то думал, что правительство даст мне возможность верной службой загладить свою вину. После речей обвинителей в этом суде я понял, что я не нужен советской власти, что мне не может быть прощения. Но я имею право сказать, что я, Анненков, сознал свои преступления, я имел мужество предстать перед советским судом. Я ухожу из этой жизни раскаявшись, со снятым с меня и моей фамилии проклятием.
>
> When I was returning to the Soviet Union, I thought that the government would give me the chance to smooth over my guilt with faithful service. After the speeches of the accusers in this trial I have understood that Soviet power does not need me, that no pardon is possible for me. But I have the right to say that I, Annenkov, have acknowledged my crimes and had the courage to stand before a Soviet court. I leave this life having repented, with the curse removed from me and my name.

Whether or not this statement may be taken as sincere, it reads like an attempt to gain the sympathy and leniency of the court. Reporting on the rendering of the verdict in its 13 August issue, *Izvestiia* coverage included arguments from lawyers for the defense Boretsky and Tsvetkov that the

[239] D.I. Matron, "10 let kontrrevoliutsii," *Ogonek*, no. 24 (1927): 10.

sentence be lessened in light of "the political ignorance (*politicheskaia bezgramotnost'*) of the accused, the absence of mercenary interests, [their] repentance and voluntary return."[240] These arguments were unsuccessful. In its article of 13 August 1927, *Izvestiia* announced that Annenkov and Denisov were sentenced to "the supreme measure of social defense" (*vysshaia mera sotsial'noi zashchity*) – death by firing squad.

That charges against Annenkov were summarized as *zverstva* (atrocities, with the root *zver'*, 'beast') and his status as the 'beastly' villain in the text are, of course, a coincidence of terminology. Nonetheless, the text of "The Black Ataman" makes concerted efforts to vilify Annenkov as a beastly figure, beginning with the epigraph to the chapter. The passage, cited from the article "10 Years of Counterrevolution," establishes an initial characterization of Annenkov for the *poema*:

> Соратники его знают как человека, не курившего и не потреблявшего спиртных напитков, но много уничтожавшего конфет. Он не имел друзей, чуждался и женщин – он холост. Любил покататься на автомобиле, любил задавить кошку, собаку, курицу, барана. Хотелось задавить какого-нибудь киргизенка.[241]
>
> His fellows-in-arms know him as a person who did not smoke and did not consume alcoholic beverages, but who devoured candies. He had no friends, and he avoided women – he was unmarried. He loved to ride in automobiles, to run over cats, dogs, chickens, and rams. He wanted to run over a Kyrgyz child.

[240] Other articles emphasized that Annenkov had no real understanding of politics or what he was fighting against; for example, "Delo Annenkova," *Pravda*, 28 July 1927; "Delo generala Annenkova," *Izvestiia*, 29 July 1927. On the other hand, an article in *Pravda* published 28 July 1927 reported that "Annenkov accepted the revolution as a replacement of one tsar with another through the Constituent Assembly," while an article in *Izvestiia* on the same day reported that Annenkov claimed that in 1917 he was most sympathetic to the Socialist Revolutionary Party.

[241] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 336. Aseev made a minor change to the original text from *Ogonek*, omitting what could be a typographic error in the original, which reads: «Соратники его знают Анненкова, как человека…». As will be discussed later in this section, Annenkov's name does not appear in the chapter until its second part; Aseev's modification to the original text therefore serves the purpose of withholding Annenkov's name, although his name is redundant with 'ego' in Matron's article.

Two of the photos in this article (at least one of which had also appeared in newspapers) appear in the 1928 edition of *Semyon Proskakov*.

Like Smerdyakov of Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, Annenkov derives pleasure from the torture of animals. Moreover, one implication of this reported speech is that Annenkov viewed Central Asians as subhuman: the neologism *kirgizenok* belongs to the word-building paradigm for infant animals (*utka-utenok, tigr-tigrenok*, etc.; that paradigm is applied to humans as *rebenok-rebiata*, albeit with a shift in meaning). Even before his name is said, Annenkov is characterized in the cited historical material as a cruel and impulsive individualist, a beast.

Laursen argues that in the 1920s, Soviet authors grappled with the concern that their literary villains may appeal to their readership as models for self-identification and emulation. One tactic to minimize this threat was to limit the speech of villains. Laursen conceptualizes this limitation as quarantine: the voices of villains are not eradicated, but they are kept at a distance with appropriate warnings to the audience of their danger.[242] In this way, the literary text may maintain the conflict between hero and villain yet ensures that the imbalanced energies of the alien and the beast cannot be taken for anything but the threat they pose to the orderly, balanced Soviet psyche. Laursen analyzes Mayakovsky's 1928 play *The Bedbug* (*Klop*) as an example of these attempts to cleanse Soviet society of the 'toxic' influence of the beast: in it, Prisypkin ends up in a literal cage in the zoo, with signs on the cage warning zoo-goers that his conduct and language are inappropriate. Beyond the literal quarantine of Annenkov at military tribunal, his voice is figuratively quarantined in *Semyon Proskakov*. In the absence of the hero Proskakov from the section, the narrator provides a positive counter-model to Annenkov's beastliness through ironic

[242] Laursen views the shift to the 'conflictless' narratives of Socialist Realism as a means of resolving worries that the reader may find a positive model in the beast despite this strategy. "This exaggeration of the negative qualities of the villain continued in the hopes of removing any sympathetic response in the reader. And in some texts the villain was removed entirely, which led to a charge of 'conflictless' (*bezkonfliktnost'*) in the 1950s, when Andrey Sinyavsky would assert that 'there are books in which *all* the heroes are positive." Laursen, *Toxic Voices*, 90.

Katerina Clark argues that the literature of the 1920s featured exaggerated villains that were often little more than caricatures partially as a response to low reader interest. See Clark, "Little Heroes," 202.

commentary that precedes and follows Annenkov's speech and directs the reader's interpretation of Annenkov towards rejection of the beast's pernicious words.

The narrator explicitly undermines the credibility of Annenkov's voice before it is even heard, and well before Annenkov's name is given. Bringing the two elements of the epigraph together – individualism and love of inflicting pain – the narrator warns the reader about Annenkov: «Он и жулик и аскет» ("He is both a swindler and an ascetic"); «жизнь ему недорога – / своя, чужая» ("Life for him is not precious – his own or others'"); «Он – / не с нами, / не с ними, // он – / сам по себе» ("He is not with us, not with them, // he is all alone").[243] The narrator then paints a villainous portrait of Annenkov:

> Он кривит / усмешкой рот
> злой / и узкий,
> он бахвалится / и врет…[244]
>
> He twists his mouth to a sneer,
> wicked and narrow,
> he boasts and lies.

Following this prelude, it would be difficult for a reader, even one who knew nothing of the recent trial or Annenkov's activities in the Civil War, to respond sympathetically with anything Annenkov might say afterward.

Such sympathy would in any case be difficult to muster. Confirming description of his unchecked individualism, Annenkov declares his uniqueness: «Я – особый!» ("I am special!"), in

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[243] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 336, 337.

[244] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 337.

Later in this chapter, the narrator comments that Annenkov's face is reminiscent of the faces in paintings by Karl Briullov (1799-1852). I have not found any specific paintings, nor anything in Briullov's rendering of faces generally, that would explain this comparison.

No such physical description of Kolchak appears in the text. Its absence extends the contrast between the alien and beast: Kolchak, the *intelligent*, has no body with which to signify his position; he is a man of words. Annenkov, a man willing to act to fulfill his physical and visceral desires, is embodied by an evil look and a black uniform.

contrast with the insults he directs at the court: «Все вы, рвань, дураки…» ("You all are trash, idiots…").[245] It is fitting for Annenkov, as the 'special' individualist, to homogenize his plural audience ("you all," emphasized further with *vse*) into a collective of idiots and grammatically singular trash (*rvan'*). Even when not explicitly attacking – a risky move to say the least when on trial for serious crimes – Annenkov's use of the short and informal *koi* instead of *kakoi* suggests both anger and lack of respect for the judges trying him along with the state they represent: «Кой там черт – / социализм! // Все – евреи!» ("What sort of devil is it – socialism? / All Jews!").[246] These attacks on the public contrast with Annenkov's Christian beliefs:

> Лучше / богу помолись
> поскорее:
> без икон, / без лампад,
> мы забыли / о нем…[247]
>
> Best for you to pray to God
> and make it snappy:
> without icons, without oil lamps,
> we have forgotten about Him…

Elsewhere in the section, the narrator recalls the time of *annenkovshchina*, remembering specifically the exclamations of Annenkov's soldiers of «С нами Бог и атаман» ("God and the ataman are with us"), a phrase frequently evoked in coverage of the trial.[248] Furthermore, Annenkov emphasizes Russianness as an inherently positive trait:

> Я, мол, / русский.
> Я останусь / таким

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[245] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 337.

[246] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 338. In the original publication of "The Black Ataman" in *Oktiabr'*, Annenkov instead targets Karl Marx: «Маркс – жидюга!», an even more aggressive and vulgar statement than the «все – евреи» of the 1928 edition quoted above.

[247] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 338.

[248] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 340.

век / до гроба.[249]

I, they say, am Russian.
And I will be
unto the grave.

Annenkov evokes the xenophobic Russocentrism seen in his attitude towards Central Asians in the epigraph. In the anti-religious environment of the 1920s, the reader could certainly read Annenkov's emphasis on Orthodoxy in his conception of Russianness as outlandish,[250] and the narrator is quick to use irony to expose the inconsistency of Annenkov's xenophobic statements: «Сколько им повешено? / И все – русские!» ("How many have been hung by him? / And all Russians!").[251]

Ironic treatment of Annenkov continues in the second section of "The Black Ataman," which finally gives Annenkov's name in dramatic fashion in its opening:

Не буяна / пьяненького,
на карачках / лезущего,
мы судим / Анненкова,
округа / вырезавшего.[252]

Not a drunken brawler
crawling on all fours,
we judge Annenkov,
who tore entire regions apart.

Although the narrator directly speaks of a drunkard who cannot stand, the phrase "crawling on all fours" again evokes an animal. The opposition between a typical drunken brawler and Annenkov further underscores the factual basis of the work: this is not a familiar type, but a real person. As

[249] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 337.

[250] Or, at the very least, retrograde and out of alignment with the current attitude towards religion. One might even argue that Annenkov evokes the line of thought summarized in the official doctrine "Orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality" initiated under Nikolai I by Sergei Uvarov.

[251] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 338.

[252] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 338

with the name Proskakov in Kolchak's monologue, the narrator places Annenkov in the final position in the line. It is fitting that this character, denounced in the first section as an individualist, here is put in opposition with the first word in the line, 'we,' which involves the narrator and the reader alike in the court that tries Annenkov.

Further irony is evident when the narrator responds to the idea that Annenkov was a descendent of the exiled Decembrist of the Southern Society Ivan Annenkov: «Вот он сидит – / «потомок» декабриста…» ("Here he sits, / 'descendent' of a Decembrist…").[253] The notion of kinship between the Ataman and the Decembrist was not Aseev's invention: the fact that Annenkov claimed this ancestry appeared in the coverage of the trial in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* on 28 July 1927, and in the article by Matron.[254] However, it is possible that even those readers who were unfamiliar with these claims could wonder about a possible genealogical connection between Boris Annenkov and his Decembrist namesake Ivan Annenkov. The reader might recognize the surname Annenkov from a silent film titled *The Decembrists* (*Dekabristy*), written by Pavel Shchegolev and featuring Boris Tamarin in the role of Decembrist Ivan Annenkov. Otherwise, the reader might recall the surname from the centennial celebration of the Decembrist Uprising held two years earlier in 1925. It is reasonable to think that Aseev would recognize the name for precisely that reason.[255]

In the 1920s, the Decembrist Uprising represented an ideologically ambiguous moment in Russian history. Could the Decembrists be celebrated as revolutionaries, even if their motivations

[253] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 339.

[254] Matron, "10 let kontrrevoliutsii," 10.

[255] A document held at RGALI contains passages that Aseev copied from historian Mikhail Pokrovsky's *Ocherki po istorii revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii*, first published in 1924 and republished in 1927. The file at RGALI is dated to "not earlier than 1924"; Aseev may have been reading Pokrovsky's work as research for his poems about the Decembrists. (RGALI f. 28, op. 1, ed. khr. 104)

were decidedly bourgeois?[256] It is not clear why Annenkov would make this claim at trial; the *Pravda* article of 28 July mentions it in the context of Annenkov's explanation of his childhood and family history, adding that Annenkov was "raised in extreme monarchism." One might speculate that Annenkov mentioned this detail in the hopes that it would bolster his case. But whether there could be a positive association between the Ataman and the Decembrist, the sarcastic quotation marks ensure that even if there is a biological connection between the two Annenkovs, this Annenkov cannot be pardoned on that basis.

The line "Here he sits – 'descendent' of a Decembrist…" repeats twice in the second section of "The Black Ataman;" in both instances, the narrator then draws attention to the judges, in whose eyes "the taiga glistens silver," underscoring the painfulness of recollection in the image of terror sweeping across the snowy taiga glistening as tears in the judge's eyes. The first appearance of this line leads to a flashback to "scarlet (*alye*) villages / in the white taiga,"[257] a seeming reversal of the colors of the revolution (Reds and Whites) that evokes bloodshed in a pure and innocent place. The narrator then conjures Annenkov's men who, with the support of "God and the ataman," recount their atrocities towards women and children. The second instance leads to the narrator's final judgement on Annenkov:

> Вот он / сидит –
> «потомок» декабриста.
> В глазах / у судьи
> тайга / серебрится.
> Как / заученных
> слов / ни цеди –
> трупы / замученных
> в глазах / у судьи.

[256] Lenin argued that the Decembrists represented a significant stage in Russian revolutionary history; historian Mikhail Pokrovsky, on the other hand, regarded the Decembrists negatively. As suggested above, Aseev seems to have followed Lenin's line of thought on this question. On Soviet historiography about the Decembrist Uprising, see John Gooding, "The Decembrists in the Soviet Union," *Soviet Studies* 40, no. 2 (April 1988): 196-209; on celebration of the centennial anniversary of the Decembrist Uprising, see Corney, *Telling October*, 132, 169.

[257] «Алые деревни / средь белой тайги». Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 340.

Если б были они мне / братья,
эти люди-звери,
я стрелял бы в них, / слов не тратя
и словам / не веря![258]

Here he sits –
'descendent' of a Decembrist.
In the eyes of the judge
the taiga glistens silver.
No matter how you might strain rote words –
the corpses of the tortured
are in the eyes of the judge.
Even if they were brothers to me,
these human beasts,
I would open fire on them, not wasting words
and not believing words!

This second evocation of Annenkov's possible Decembrist heritage puts an end to discussion of ancestry as a redeeming factor. In fact, the narrator advances the opposite argument: even literal brotherhood would not change the narrator's judgement of Annenkov and those like him. However, it is worth considering the identity of the "you" addressed in this passage: who might "strain rote words" in Annenkov's defense? One could read the apostrophe as strictly rhetorical; however, readers inclined to defend Annenkov might understand these lines as addressed to them directly. A third possibility reads these lines as addressed to Annenkov himself: recalling Annenkov's above-quoted statement at the military tribunal, it is his rote words that are empty and unable to undo the damage he inflicted on Soviet Siberians.

Finally, these lines conclude the section by repeating the conditional voicing (*esli by*…) employed by Kolchak in the final lines of his "epitaph." Calling for legally enacted violence to repay extreme unlawful violence that Meshkov refers to as "open journalistic commentary"

[258] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 341-342. The phrase «люди-звери» evokes a similar compound word, «зверолюд» ("human beast"), used by Fyodor Gladkov to describe roving White and bands in and around the town in *Cement* (Gladkov, *Tsement*, in *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, vol. 2 [Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1958], 172).

(*otkrytaia publitsistichnost'*),[259] the narrator reuses Kolchak's language to condone the execution of Annenkov. Throughout "The Black Ataman," the narrator not only guides the reader towards the conclusion that Annenkov deserves the severe justice of his sentence, but also models the balanced psyche with which the citizenry should deal with beastly threats: with appropriate degrees of emotional outrage and conscious restraint. Despite his strong emotional response, the narrator subordinates his desires for swift *samosud*-like justice to the Soviet judicial process. In other words, the narrator models how to keep the spontaneity that overwhelms the 'beast' in check: with poetic words that direct the reader's interpretation of Annenkov towards the same conclusion reached in the press and by the court.

Conclusion

The juxtaposition of Kolchak and Annenkov's primary appearances in *Semyon Proskakov* in adjacent chapters invites comparison of them. Both appear at military tribunal, and both deliver extended monologues, the differing emotional tones of which determine the limitations imposed by the narrator. Throughout his speech, Kolchak is repentant, passive, and disempowered. He recognizes his guilt as an unchangeable fact of the past. Because of his adopted contrition, and perhaps also because of the historical distance between him and the reader of 1927, he is allowed to incriminate himself freely as the alien who cannot cross over to the right side of history. This image corresponds with the 'alien' type even as it creates an image of Kolchak that reinterprets the emotional tenor of historical and biographical events and deviates from the more vicious portrayal of Kolchak in Soviet print of the time. By the same token, the sentencing and execution of Kolchak are treated briefly. Annenkov, on the other hand, speaks with a visceral anger as an

[259] Meshkov, *Nikolai Aseev: tvorcheskaia individual'nost'*, 160.

enemy that until very recently represented a threat to the Soviet state (even if the chance that he would ally himself with a foreign government to lead a counterrevolution was minimal). Such a threat cannot be admitted to the text without limitations; in the absence of Proskakov himself, the narrator imposes limitations on Annenkov's voice, guiding the reader to a correct understanding of Annenkov himself and the mechanisms by which to deal with such enemies. These narratives at times veer away from the plot of the hero but exhibit the rightness of the hero through exposition and delegitimization of two different types of villains.

For these similarities, though, the juxtaposition of these two speeches highlights important differences between the two villains. Kolchak and Annenkov display opposing attitudes towards language itself. Kolchak, the alien, transforms his deeds into words, specifically into participles, which in turn integrate those events into his personal identity. Annenkov, the beast, cannot control his words when backed into a figurative corner at trial, and shows no remorse for the deeds that brought him there. In accordance with the paradigm of the 'beast,' the audience should not only be warned or kept away from him, but he should be put down to preclude any further negative influence. The text's differing treatment of its villains does not depend on the historical facts of their ultimate fates: both Kolchak and Annenkov were tried and executed. Rather, the portrayals of Kolchak and Annenkov both display the workings of literature of fact in the text: taking the historical facts of their lives, actions, and characters, the text selects and accentuates those facts – with the omission of others – that develop its literary villains within the boundaries of the consciousness-spontaneity dynamic common to literary villains of the 1920s, even if some depictions (like that of Kolchak) deviated in part from the common image of their historical referents in Soviet culture of the late 1920s.

In his "Reminiscences on Mayakovsky," Aseev wrote that he and Mayakovsky "did not really master the theory of literature of fact."[260] Proskakov exemplifies the limits of Aseev's factographic practice. On the one hand, large sections of Proskakov's reminiscences appear throughout *Semyon Proskakov* as epigraphs; on the other hand, several key events of Proskakov's plot in the *poema* have no basis in the reminiscences. Moreover, several victories and defeats that Proskakov details in his reminiscences either do not appear or are severed from their historical chronology to dramatic and ideological effect. Thus, the dissolution of Proskakov's unit presents him with the opportunity to survive in the taiga, evade his White adversaries, and ultimately participate in the capture of Kolchak; that the last of these events has no attestation in Proskakov's reminiscences, and that the first of them followed a victory that Aseev omits from his version of Proskakov's story, speaks to the selectivity of Aseev's approach to factual material and the permissibility of invention in a text that overtly claims its own factuality.

This chapter has argued also that Proskakov anticipates the paradigm of "little heroes" who complete "big deeds" in the literature of the First Five-Year Plan. There is no mistaking Proskakov for a larger-than-life figure in the model of Furmanov's Chapaev. But regardless of Proskakov's status in comparison with other heroes of revolutionary literature, he successfully models a correct balance between spontaneity and consciousness, and thus models a particular type of heroism based not on individual achievement, but on correct alignment with the collective (and the authority of the Bolshevik Party). In the end he is rewarded, both in the sense that his story is put down in writing, and that in the text the "hundreds of Proskakovs" that perform similarly motivated deeds return home victorious. Departure from the material of his reminiscences, whether in the form of omission of key episodes or invention of supplementary biographical material, aggrandizes

[260] Aseev, "Vospominaniia o Maiakovskom," in *Sobranie sochinenii* vol. 5, 668.

his achievements in the name of the Soviet cause even as the text emphasizes the typicality of his persona. This emphasis, taken together with limited exposure of Proskakov's personality and internal psychology in the text, especially relative to emphasis on these elements in depiction of Kolchak and Annenkov, and the confusion of his voice with that of the narrator in sections after Proskakov's epitaph, ultimately renders Proskakov in less vivid colors than the villains.

Historical material not only serves as the inspiration for *Semyon Proskakov*, but also provides the basis for its plot. But this analysis shows that it would be an exaggeration to consider *Semyon Proskakov* merely an experiment in the presentation of historical material or a faithful account of the events and people it depicts. This examination of the combination of factual material and literary technique in *Semyon Proskakov* calls uncritical acceptance of the work as factual into question. It also speaks to why Lef editor and key theoretician of literature of fact Nikolai Chuzhak viewed *Semyon Proskakov* as a "factual pathétique" (*fakto-patetika*): that is, an emotionally charged display of historical events that are (or should be) meaningful for the audience.[261] In this sense, another critic's 1927 appraisal of the work as "high-style agitprop" (*vysokaia agitka*), of which Aseev became a "qualified master" and thus rose to the level of a "contemporary of his own epoch," reveals more of the work's function as a literary text, even if the term "agitprop" obscures the historical and factual grounding of the *poema*.[262]

Semyon Proskakov employs strategies of characterization, exposition of small-scale heroism and limitation of dangerous villainous voices, and a disjointed, non-chronological

[261] Chuzhak, "Literatura zhiznestroeniia: istoricheskii probeg," in *Literatura fakta: Pervyi sbornik materialov rabotnikov Lefa*, 62. Other works mentioned in this essay as exemplars for future production of literature of fact include feuilletons by various authors, John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*, Vikentii Veresaev's "documentary-montage" (*dokumental'no-montazh*) study *Pushkin v zhizni*, the memoirs of Vera Figner and other revolutionaries, Vladimir Arsen'ev's travelogue *V debriakh Ussiriiskogo kraia*, and Viktor Shkolovsky's memoir *Sentimental'noe puteshestvie*, among others. It is notable that many works listed belong to genres traditionally understood as non-fiction.

[262] Innokenty Oksenov, untitled review of *Semyon Proskakov*, *Zvezda*, no. 12 (1927), 141.

temporal structure to develop literary characters out of historical personages. These factors underwrite fulfillment of the commemorative task of *Semyon Proskakov* for the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution: with clearly rendered and threatening individual villains and a modest collective hero, *Semyon Proskakov* presents the Soviet reader with one narrative of "how the East was won": a story of decisive victory, an end to physical and ideological dangers of the past, and a heroic beginning for the right-minded Soviet hero. The *poema* concludes with the narrator addressing the hero and the reader simultaneously (thus prompting the reader for a last time to identify with the hero and not the villains), emphasizing the common victory that has been won:

> Это тебе / петь и плясать,
> радоваться / и веселиться.
> Это твои / звонки голоса,
> явственны взоры / и лица.
> Это тебе / жить и дышать,
> скинув / со счету всякого,
> кто осмелится / помешать –
> песне и жизни / Проскакова.[263]
>
> This is for you to sing and dance,
> be joyful and happy.
> This is your resonant voices,
> distinctive gazes and faces.
> This is for you to live and breathe,
> Having dropped from the account anyone
> who would dare to interfere
> in the song and life of Proskakov.

The call for common celebration of Proskakov (and, by extension, all heroes of the Civil War, if not more broadly still), bears a warning to those who might, like Kolchak and Annenkov, act against the interests of the collective.

When depiction of factual people and events intersected with the need to "tell October," the resulting deployment of literary strategies of characterization and representation entailed

[263] Aseev, *Semen Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 365.

deviation from the historical reality to be depicted. In *Semyon Proskakov*, the literature of fact of Lef calls for the author to attend to factual material, which in turn provides a basis for narrative, but Aseev's 'verse notes for materials on the history of the Civil War' must be considered within the parameters of widely observed literary norms of its historical moment.

Chapter 3

Khorosho! Mayakovsky's October[264]

In 1927 Vladimir Mayakovsky was entangled in debates about his own ideological and aesthetic literary merit. Beyond animosity toward Futurism in general and Mayakovsky specifically, these debates refracted broader issues of the development of Soviet culture and the role of the artist in it as well as social and political questions. Referring most directly to the years 1917-1924, Maria Zalambani identifies "the earliest years of the Soviet regime" as a "period of ferment, when the pursuit of a new revolutionary aesthetic was under way." In the proliferation of aesthetic manifestos of these early years of Soviet power, Zalambani sees "evidence of the polychromatic multiplicity of existing literary groups, but also of the struggle among aesthetic currents to affirm their leading role in the literary arena."[265] This struggle continued through 1927: opponents of Mayakovsky and the Lefists frequently criticized the group's verbal and formal experimentation, arguing that the verbally and formally experimental works (regardless of medium) characteristic of Lef were inaccessible to a broad Soviet audience.[266]

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[264] Various translations of the title of Mayakovsky's *poema* exist. These include "Fine!" "Good!" "Very Good!" I have opted not to translate the title for several reasons. First and most obviously, there is no standard translation of the title, and choosing any of these options might therefore limit the findability of the study. Second, to my mind, each of these titles fails to convey the clarity of the Mayakovsky's appraisal of the October Revolution and its aftermath: "Fine!" for example could come across as a response of a petulant child to an unwanted restriction, while each of the others can read more ambiguously than the Russian title.

[265] Maria Zalambani, "Literary Policies and Institutions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature*, 254. It seems that Zalambani refers most directly to the period 1917-1924, although the ferment she describes continued through 1927. Contributors to Lef certainly perceived the situation in this way. The pages of *Novyi Lef* filled with polemical articles, some primarily concerned with (revolutionary) aesthetics, while many others explicitly argued against the forming hegemony of opposing, typically proletarian, groups.

[266] Mayakovsky responded to some of these criticisms directly, for example in his 1928 essay "Vas ne ponimaiut rabochie i krest'iane." At the same time, Lef attempted to define itself from the first issue of *Novyi Lef* as a "free association of all workers of the left revolutionary art," and thus not insistent on any one aesthetic tendency (*Novyi Lef*, no. 1 [1927], 1).

Mayakovsky occupied a paradoxical and difficult position in 1927, even while it was a remarkably productive year.[267] Although his stature practically guaranteed him a place of prominence in Soviet literature,[268] influential Soviet literary figures rehashed old arguments and advanced new ones about the unsuitability of avant-garde writing to the current political and social climate. Recognizing but resenting Mayakovsky's continued prominence, critics like Kornei Zelinsky felt trapped with Mayakovsky for the time being:

> От Маяковского отталкиваешься не сразу, после некоторой внутренней борьбы. Ведь для многих Маяковский был когда-то «первой любовью». Но к новому пониманию революции можно притти, уже перешагнув через Маяковского. Образ новой, более глубокой, более человечной, более сложной социалистической культуры растет в новом человеке. Эта культура растет совсем из новых корней, она начинает совсем новые, необычные для России традиции.[269]
>
> You cannot discard Mayakovsky right away, only after a certain internal struggle. After all, there was a time when the 'first love' for many was Mayakovsky. But one can reach a new understanding of the revolution while moving beyond Mayakovsky. The image (*obraz*) of a new, deeper, more human, more complex socialist culture is growing in the new man. This culture is growing entirely from new roots, it starts altogether new traditions that are novel for Russia.

For these opponents, Mayakovsky frequently embodied the avant-garde's inability to reach a sometimes newly literate proletarian and peasant Soviet audience. An unattributed satirical poem

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[267] By the count of Mayakovsky's personal manager Pavel Lavut, Mayakovsky composed "70 poems (of which 4 for children), 20 essays and articles, 3 film scripts, and, finally, the *poema Khorosho!*." Lavut also notes that Mayakovsky travelled for near half of the year (by his exact count, Mayakovsky spent 181 days outside of Moscow, including five weeks abroad), and calls 1927 Mayakovsky's "Boldino year," perhaps forgetting that Pushkin spent the Boldino autumn confined to his estate for the sake of the comparison (Lavut, *Maiakovskii edet po Soiuzu* [Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1978], 9). For discussion of the causes of this output in 1927, see Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 369.

[268] For example, in connection with the anniversary, Anatoly Lunacharsky published a list of literary works that he considered the best examples of the last ten years. When it comes to poetry, Lunacharsky writes that: "it seems to me that here it would be incorrect to seek individual works. Many of the poets have written a full array of good things and, along with them, of course, weaker works as well. There can be no doubt that a very good revolutionary anthology could be made of works by Mayakovsky" (Lunacharsky, "Desiat' knig za desiat let revoliutsii," *Smena* no. 9 [1927]: 1). Lunacharsky makes a similar claim about Aseev and Tret'iakov while also arguing that their more recent work is weaker.

[269] Zelinskii, "Itti li nam s Maiakovskim," *Na literaturnom postu* no. 5 [1928]: 54. The critic considers Mayakovsky a faithful enactor of the factographic practices theorized by Tret'iakov and Chuzhak and the antithesis of Esenin, whose poetry he clearly prefers.

in *Na literaturnom postu* even referred to Mayakovsky as "an academic,"[270] while a review published in the 27 November 1927 issue of the Rostov newspaper *Sovetskii iug* described *Khorosho!* as "cardboard." Opponents attended Mayakovsky's public poetry readings seemingly for the sole purpose of heckling him.[271]

Mayakovsky was not without supporters in 1927. He received praise from Nikolai Bukharin in the inaugural issue of *Revoliutsiia i kul'tura*, albeit primarily for earlier works and not without accusations of 'philistinism' (*meshchanstvo*).[272] Lunacharsky praised *Khorosho!* itself as "the October Revolution cast in bronze," "a magnificent fanfare for our anniversary, without a single false note."[273] The *poema* also was well received at an October recitation for members of the Communist Party's Moscow Section.[274] Even the critic Petr Kogan, who scarcely could mention the Futurists without criticizing them, acknowledged the strength of their revolutionary

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[270] *Na literaturnom postu* no. 20 (1927): 130. Chapter 9 of *Khorosho!* appeared for the first time in this same volume. For the anonymous satirist, Aseev, Brik, and Tret'iakov also counted as "academics." The poem, titled "Our Accomplishments" («Наши достижения») and signed under the pseudonym "Ping-Pong," is tellingly written from the perspective of a worker.

Mayakovsky appears also as an object of satire in humorous epigrams "Our wishes for the ten-year anniversary" («Наши пожелания к 10-летию Октября»). Here, the same anonymous author criticizes authors across the political spectrum, including many *poputchiki.* Of Mayakovsky the satirist writes:

От вас еще шедевров ждет эпоха.	The epoch awaits more masterpieces from you.
Известно нам, что вы скромны / душой,	We know that you are humble in spirit,
Но пусть читатели не скажут – плохо,	But let readers not say 'it's bad'
О том, что вам казалось хорошо.	About something that seemed good to you.

A third satirical poem, titled "Not Bad" («Не плохо») and featuring in an exaggerated *lesenka* style also appears in this issue.

[271] See Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 392. As Jangfeldt relates, Mayakovsky could give as well as he received in these confrontations. Jangfeldt also notes some more tempered reactions to *Khorosho!* For example, the reviewer from the Kharkov journal *Proletarian* (*Proletarii*) concluded that despite Mayakovsky's best efforts, epic poetry simply is not his genre.

[272] Bukharin, "O starinykh traditsiakh i sovremennom kulturnom stroitelstve," *Revoliutsiia i kul'tura* no. 1 (1927): 19-20.

[273] Qtd. in Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 391.

[274] Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 392.

credentials, even as the RAPP artists to whom Kogan was more sympathetic continually attacked Mayakovsky.[275]

Attacks on Mayakovsky specifically for *Novyi Lef* were widely public. They began on 28 January 1927 with M. Ol'shevets's article "Why Lef?" ("Pochemu Lef?") in *Izvestiia*; Viacheslav Polonsky, one of the editors of the journals *Pechat' i revoliutsiia* and *Novyi mir* and another prominent opponent of Lef,[276] published the article "Lef or bluff?" ("Lef ili blef") in two parts on 25 and 27 February.[277] A debate moderated by the literary scholar V.M. Friche followed on 23 March. In it, Mayakovsky maintained that Lef deserved a place in Soviet literature, and moreover that it did not consider itself the only viable progenitor of the new Soviet culture: "We do not lay claim to monopolization on the revolutionary [*revoliutsionnost'*] in culture. The first issue – that Lef tries to declare its full hegemony in Soviet art, even without sufficient information – is the first sham [*blef*]."[278]

Like Aseev, Mayakovsky in the 1920s commemorated in verse significant events connected with the revolution.[279] Such commemorative works include the poem "The First of

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[275] Kogan, "Poeziia (1917-kh – 1927)," *Krasnaia nov'* no. 11 (1927): 199. This eleventh issue of *Krasnaia nov'* was devoted to commemorations of the tenth anniversary in poetry, prose, and articles summarizing revolutionary progress over the past ten years.

[276] In a diary entry of 18 February 1927, Polonsky described Mayakovsky as: «груб, нахален, невыносим» (Polonsky, "Moia bor'ba na literaturnom fronte," *Novyi mir*, no. 1 (2008): 149.

[277] These articles were framed as reviews of the first two issues of *Novyi Lef*, and as Fevral'sky notes, Mayakovsky considered the strong negative reaction a positive sign, since no reaction would mean that Lef was failing in its mission to remain relevant by means of provocation. Fevral'skii, "Vystuplenie na dispute 'Lef ili blef?' 23 marta 1927 g.," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 65 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1958), 65, 47.

[278] «Мы не претендуем на монополизацию революционности в культуре». Первый вопрос – о том, что Леф пытается, да еще без достаточных данных, заявить о своей полной гегемонии в советском искусстве – это первый блеф» (Maiakovskii, "Vystuplenie na dispute 'Lef ili blef?'," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 65, 331). As the notes in the *PSS* indicate, in the first sentence of the quoted passage, Mayakovsky quotes from the article "Za chto boretsia Lef?" (*Lef* no. 1 [1923]: 40). See Zemskov et al, "Primechaniia," in *PSS*, vol. 12, 640-50.

[279] As in the analogous overview in the chapter on Aseev, I define 'commemorative poetry' as poetry written explicitly for or in connection to holidays and other significant events, including deaths or anniversaries of deaths. By including these texts that otherwise may be referred to as elegies according to standard generic classifications, I do not intend to

May" ("Pervoe maia," 1923);[280] *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin* (1924), a *poema* completed in the wake of Lenin's death in January 1924;[281] "The Ninth of January" ("9-e ianvaria," 1924), on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday in the 1905 Revolution; "Jubilee Poem" ("Iubileinoe," 1924), written for the 125th anniversary of Pushkin's birth; and "October (1917-1926)" ("Oktiabr' (1917-1926)," 1926). Works of 1927 include "In Place of an Ode" ("Vmesto ody"), a poem for International Women's Day (8 March) that chastises Soviet society for gender inequality; "The Soldiers of Dzerzhinsky" ("Soldaty Dzerzhinskogo"); "Stabilization of the Everyday" ("Stabilizatsiia byta")[282]; and "The Crown and the Cap" ("Korona i kepka"), a commemoration of the abdication of Nikolai II. In 1927 these works were complemented by poems on topical and historical subjects, including "Yes or No?" ("Da ili net?"), a reflection on the 7 June 1927 assassination of ambassador to Poland Pyotr Voikov, and "A Visual Aid" ("Nagliadnoe posobie"), written in response to unrest among Viennese workers. One commemorative poem of 1928 is "The First Communards" ("Pervye kommunary"), a commemoration of the Paris Commune.[283] In short,

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blur generic distinctions, but rather to suggest that the concept of commemoration links works on various topics with varying emotional tones. Limitation to poetry written from 1920 to 1927 also precludes the play *Mystery-Bouffe* from appearing in this list, although Mayakovsky wrote it, and together with Vsevolod Meyerhold staged it, for the first anniversary of the October Revolution.

[280] Along with Mayakovsky, Aseev, Vasily Kamensky, Pyotr Neznamov, Pasternak, Aleksei Kruchyonykh, Igor Teren'tev, and Sergei Tret'iakov all published poems titled "Pervoe maia" in the second issue of *Lef* (1923).

[281] It is noteworthy that *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin* was republished in a second book edition in 1927. Furthermore, the notes in the *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* indicate that Mayakovsky's first poem about Lenin, "Vladimir Il'ich!" (1920), was written and published in commemoration of Lenin's fiftieth birthday (Eventov and Prokushev, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 6, 520).

[282] Although this poem does not appear to have been connected to any specific event or holiday, its discussion of changes in everyday life since the revolution fits with the widespread phenomenon of 'summary accounts' that the ten-year anniversary prompted.

[283] The "Day of the Paris Commune" was celebrated on 18 March from 1918 to 1929. It was one of six holidays celebrated as rest days, the others being: 1 January (New Year's Day), 22 January ("The Day of 9 January 1905"), 12 March ("Overthrowing the Autocracy"), 1 May (Day of the Internationale), and 7 November ("Day of the Proletarian Revolution"). On these holidays in Soviet culture of the 1920s, see Shilova, "Building the Bolshevik Calendar through *Pravda* and *Izvestiia,*" *Toronto Slavic Quarterly* 29 (2007).

while Mayakovsky's support of the Bolshevik revolution through poetry has been pointed out many times over, it should be added that in the 1920s, commemoration of revolutions in Russian and internationally constituted a substantial part of Mayakovsky's poetic output.

While the theory of factography was in development much later, a proto-factographic tendency existed in Mayakovsky's earlier work. When demonstrations began in late February 1917 in Petrograd, Mayakovsky began writing the poem "Revolution," subtitled "A Poetic Chronicle" or "A Chronicle in Verse" ("Revoliutsiia: poetokhronika," first published May 1917), which exhibits an early tendency toward the role of poet as chronicler of historical events. In November 1918, Mayakovsky published his "Ode to the Revolution" ("Oda revoliutsii") and the play *Mystery-Bouffe* (*Misteriia-buff*), which Anatoly Lunacharsky lauded in 1918 as "the only play that was conceived under the influence of our revolution and therefore bears its imprint."[284] *Mystery-Bouffe* was performed for the first anniversary of the October Revolution. A 1918 volume, *Heroes and Victims of the Revolution* (*Geroi i zhertvy revoliutsii*) featured Mayakovsky's *chastushki*-style captions to illustrations by Kseniia Boguslavskaia, Vladimir Kozlinsky, Sergei Maklentsov, and Ivan Punin.[285] The year 1919 saw the anniversary of the newspaper *Art of the Commune* (*Iskusstvo kommuny*), to which Mayakovsky contributed his "With comradely greetings, Mayakovsky" ("S tovarishcheskim privetom, Maiakovskii"). In 1920, Mayakovsky marked the arrival of communist delegates to the Second Congress of the Communist International in Moscow with his "Third International" ("Tretii internatsional"). He recited the poem "Vladimir Il'ich!" at a "Lenin evening" (*Leninskii vecher*) held at the Moscow *Dom pechati* in 1920. In 1922 Mayakovsky updated the

[284] Lunacharsky, "Kommunisticheskii spektakl'," in *Petrogradskaia Pravda* 243 (5 November 1918): 2.

[285] Correspondence between the 'heroes' and 'victims' of the revolution in this volume and the 'Clean' and 'Unclean' pairs, respectively, in *Mystery-Bouffe* indicates that the continuity discussed later in this chapter between *Khorosho!* and Mayakovsky's earlier works was not without precedent.

poem and published it in the 5 November issue of *Krasnaia gazeta* in commemoration of the five-year anniversary of the October Revolution.[286]

Despite these earlier commemorative works, the 1926 poem "Don't Jubilee!" ("Ne iubileite!"), written for the ninth anniversary of the October Revolution, takes a more pessimistic view of the social value of the anniversary celebrations. Correctly forecasting that society soon will 'take account' of the previous ten years, Mayakovsky argues that jubilees take the life out of significant events:

> Юбилей – это пепел, / песок и дым;
> юбилей – / это край / кладбищенских ям;
> это речи / и фимиам;
> остановка предсмертная, / вздохи, елей –
> вот что лезет / из букв / «ю-б-и-л-е-й».[287]
>
> A jubilee – it is ash, sand and smoke;
> A jubilee – it is the edge of cemetery pits.
> it is speeches and incense;
> the last stop before death, sighs, unction –
> that's what creeps out from the letters 'j-u-b-i-l-e-e.'[288]

Nonetheless, Mayakovsky suggests that celebration of the anniversary could be appropriate if given appropriate terminology: in Lefist terms, the time might be right for 'fixation of the fact,' or as Corney might describe it, for a coherent readerly experience of the October narrative. This is the issue that opens the poem:

> Мне б хотелось / про Октябрь сказать, / не в колокол / названивая,
> не словами, / украшающими / тепленький уют, –
> дать бы / революции / такие же названия,
> как любимым / в первый день дают!
> Но разве / уместно / слово такое?
> Но разве / настали / дни для покоя?

[286] Nadezhda Reformatskaia, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 493-494.

[287] Maiakovskii, "Ne iubileite!," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 236.

[288] I have opted for a literal translation of «фимиам» as 'incense,' but in the context of Mayakovsky's misgivings about the outcomes of jubilees, the metaphoric meaning as «восторженная похвала, лесть» (*Большой толковый словарь)* should not be disregarded.

Кто галоши приобрел, / кто зонтик;
радуется обыватель: / «Небо голубò…»[289]

I would like to tell about October, not ringing the bells for all to hear,
not in words that decorate warm coziness, –
I would like to give the revolution the kind of names
that people give beloveds on the first day!
But is such a word really appropriate?
But have days for peace and quiet really come?
Someone got galoshes, someone else an umbrella;
the man in the street is happy: "The sky is quite blue…"

Mayakovsky's questioning of the proper name for the revolution leads him to consider the possibility of a global spread of socialism: referencing the 1926 miners' strike in Britain and unrest in China and employing the common metaphor of revolutionary fire, Mayakovsky ultimately names a "trio" of the Soviet Union, Britain, and China as "armfuls" (*okhapki*) stoking revolutionary fervor, with the metaphor of fire in contrast to the warning «Нам девятый Октябрь – не покой, не причал» ("The ninth October for us is not a rest or a mooring"). Continuing the metaphor of revolution as natural disaster from *Mystery-Bouffe*, Mayakovsky promises that "under our feet the earth will shake / stronger than Japanese earthquakes," referring to natural disasters in

[289] Mayakovsky, "Ne iubeleite!" in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 235.

Japan in 1923-25.[290] Mayakovsky calls for the "living thought of Il'ich" («живая мысль Ильича») to "lead us to the final victory" («к последней победе веди»).[291]

In another poem of 1926, titled "Oktiabr'" and subtitled "1917-1926," Mayakovsky addresses the Communist Youth League (*Komsomol*)[292] – some of whom might barely remember the events of 1917, some of whom may even have been born after it, and for whom the revolution already seems like the distant past:[293]

> Мир / другими людьми оброс;
> пионеры / лет десяти
> задают про Октябрь вопрос,
> как про дело / глубоких седин.
>
> The world has grown over with other people;
> For nearly ten years pioneers
> have been asking the question about October,
> As if they are asking about something gone gray.

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[290] Kozhinov, Robin, and Timofeeva, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 512. It is possible that with this imagery Mayakovsky implicitly evokes the title of John Reed's account of the October Revolution, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, with which Mayakovsky was almost certainly familiar in Russian translation (Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 65, 324). On the early role of Reed's account in shaping the October narrative, see Corney, *Telling October*, 83-89.

Corney's appraisal of Reed's method provides a point of comparison with Mayakovsky's practice of factography: "As Reed pointed out, he supplemented his 'chronicle' of the events he had himself observed and experienced with other 'reliable evidence' from the radical press, and with information obtained while he worked in the Communist Department of International Revolutionary Propaganda (later the Department of Foreign Political Literature)." Corney also points out that Mikhail Kalinin gave a copy of *Ten Days that Shook the World* to Sergei Eisenstein when the latter was commissioned to direct the film *October*. There is a certain irony in this, since "Reed apparently derived the narrative structure of his work from Trotsky's earlier pamphlet, *October Revolution*," while Stalin compelled Eisenstein to remove Trotsky from the film. (Corney, *Telling October*, 83, 206-207).

Pasternak also refers to earthquakes in Japan (in connection with memory) in his revision of *Vysokaia bolezn'* published in 1928.

[291] In these closing lines of the poem one can see a reflection of fading hopes that the Russian revolution would spark worldwide socialist revolution, and not an endorsement of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. The interpretation of the status of the Russian revolution in "Ne iubileite!" therefore resonates with the idea of the revolution's incompleteness in the 1918 poem "It is Early to Rejoice" ("Radovat'sia rano").

[292] Specifically, he addresses *komsomoltsy* and *komsomolki* (male and female members of the Komsomol). A repeating rhetorical device in the poem is comparison of Mayakovsky's generation ('we') with the younger generation ('you'). For example: «Остановка для вас, / для вас / юбилей – // а для нас / подсчет рублей».

[293] Cf. "Parizhskaia kommuna": «Мало кто помнит про дни про те…»

Mayakovsky calls on the Pioneers, future Komsomol and then Party members, to bring the revolution to its completion. They are to bear the flag of revolution forward with the "Internationale," dismissing monarchism while secularizing, modernizing, and weaponizing the country:

> Будет знамя, / а не хоругвь,
> будут / пули свистеть над ним,
> и «Вставай, проклятьем…» / в хору
> будет бой / и марш, / а не гимн.[294]
>
> There will be a banner, but not a holy one,
> there will be bullets whistling over them,
> and with "Arise, with the curse [branded]…" in chorus
> there will be a battle and a march, not a hymn.

For the ten-year anniversary, however, Mayakovsky again couches the revolution in the "Internationale." In the closing lines of Chapter 6 of *Khorosho!*, Mayakovsky again deploys the "Internationale" as a symbol of revolutionary change, this time through revision of its chorus:[295]

> Впервые / вместо / – и это будет…–
> пели: / – и это есть / наш последний… – [296]
>
> For the first time, instead of – and this will be… –
> they sang: – and this is our last…

[294] Maiakovskii, "Oktiabr'," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 232-234. I read an ambiguity in the symbols *khoruvg'* (banner) and *gimn* (hymn): these may be either religious or heraldic, and it seems probable that Mayakovsky intended both meanings.

[295] Sources on the rise of the "Internationale" in Soviet culture do not attribute this change to Mayakovsky. See Caroline Brooke, "Changing Identities: The Russian and Soviet National Anthems," *Slavonica* 13, no. 1 (2007); Marina Frolova-Walker and Jonathan Walker, *Music and Soviet Power, 1917-1932* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2012); and Nadezhda Soboleva, "The Composition of State Anthems of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union," trans. Liv Bliss, *Russian Social Science Review* 50, no. 2 (2009): 67-94, originally published as "Sozdanie gosudarstvennykh gimnov Rossiiskoi imperii i Sovetskogo soiuza," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 2 (2005): 25-41.

It is also worth noting that the "Internationale" was not exclusively a Bolshevik anthem: for example, Kolonitskii notes that Kerensky led an audience in singing it during an April 1917 speech (Kolonitskii, *Tovarishch Kerenskii: Antimonarkhicheskaia revoliutsiia i formirovanie 'kul'ta vozhdia' (mart – iun' 1917 goda)* [Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2017], 221).

[296] Mayakovsky, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 262.

In 1927 Mayakovsky was prepared to do what he could not a year earlier: to commemorate the October Revolution in a factographic *poema,* and thus to articulate a narrative of the revolution, and in doing so, to guide the memories of his readership.[297]

Khorosho! therefore represents a continuation of Mayakovsky's commemorate practices, a repackaging of his views on the October Revolution and the prospects for global spread of revolutionary fervor, and his most overt and lengthy attempt to "tell" October. Mayakovsky was able to tell his version of the story to a much wider audience than just readers of *Novyi Lef*: sections of the *poema* were published not only in *Novyi Lef*, but also in literary journals *Krasnaia nov'*, *Na literaturnom postu*, *Molodaia gvardiia*, the newspapers *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, *Leningradskaia Pravda*, *Vecherniaia Moskva*, plus numerous publications in the peripheral press in Odessa, Khar'kov, and Biisk. Several of these publications were timed to anniversary events and publications in October and November of 1927. The first book edition of the *poema* also was published in 1927, with a second in 1928.[298] Mayakovsky also read from the *poema* at public readings in the Soviet Union and abroad throughout the year.[299]

This chapter focuses on the factographic techniques that underlie Mayakovsky's narrative. Analysis will include sources of significance to Mayakovsky, as well as evidence from Mayakovsky's earlier prose and poetic texts, including works which he closely paraphrases in *Khorosho!* In some cases, I cannot establish the existence of specific sources of significance for this poema, nor have I found existing scholarship on specific sources, but I argue that Mayakovsky

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[297] On the iterative and mutually reinforcing processes of memory and narration, see Corney, *Telling October*, 100, 209-217, and passim. Here I also have in mind Devin Fore's etymological parsing of *faktografiia* as "the inscription of facts."

[298] For a full list of publications from *Khorosho!* in 1927, see Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 439-440.

[299] See Katanian, *Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti*, 363-420; Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 368-394.

relied on well-known perceptions – whether true or false, rumored or debunked – of heroes and especially villains of the revolutionary era. In many cases, the boundaries between historical facts and rumors that circulated in 1917 and subsequently are blurry. Corollary to this argument is my examination of Mayakovsky's interpolation of direct references to his own biography and previous writings, a technique of factography unseen in Aseev's *Semyon Proskakov*.[300]

Like Aseev, though, Mayakovsky draws character portraits of participants in the historical events he describes, with the villains in more vivid colors than the heroes. These portraits reveal Mayakovsky's adherence to the theory of factography in that they derive to varying extents from documentary sources, Mayakovsky's previous writings, and his own memories. At the same time, they reveal deviations from factography in the form of factual inconsistencies, ideologically motivated conflations, revisions, and omissions, and Mayakovsky's own misperceptions. Certain passages also appear to be pure invention. In short, this chapter details the variety of techniques in Mayakovsky's factographic practice, the ways in which Mayakovsky motivates or ignores the use of fact to delegitimize villains and lionize heroes of 1917, and ways in which Mayakovsky explores, exploits, and obscures the tension between the poet as hero (autobiographical, mythologized) and the poet as the documenter and mouthpiece of history.

[300] Yet also a technique that other Lefists employed as a premise for artistic experimentation. Another example from Lef's commemoration of the ten-year anniversary is Kirsanov's "Moia imeninnaia" in the anniversary issue; in the preceding double issue, Kirsanov begins his article "Black Sea Futurists" ("Chernomorskie futuristy") by acknowledging that he does not remember the October Revolution well, being a child at the time and thus "too young for immediate participation and conscientious (soznatel'nogo) observation)," but he nonetheless connects Futurism to the revolution, for example, saying that the writing of his first truly 'Futurist' poem coincided exactly with the Bolsheviks' decisive capture of Odessa in 1920.

Lefists did not write only about themselves: for example, Sergei Tret'iakov in his "bio-interview" *Den-Shi-Khua* (1929) and Tynianov in his fictionalized biography of Wilhelm Küchelbecker *Kiukhlia* (1924).

Literature Review: The Place of *Khorosho!* in Mayakovsky Scholarship

Much has been written about Mayakovsky in English and in Russian. Major monographic and biographical works were published in English in the 1970s, including Edward J. Brown's *Mayakovsky: A Poet in the Revolution* (1973), Victor Terras's *Vladimir Mayakovsky* (1976), and Vahan Barooshian's *Mayakovsky and Brik* (1978). Essays on Mayakovsky by former Lefist Victor Shklovsky were collected in English in *Mayakovsky and His Circle* (1972). More recent is Bengt Jangfeldt's 2014 *Mayakovsky: A Biography* (originally in Swedish, 2007), which is cited throughout this chapter. Most recently, Katherine Lahti devotes significant attention to Mayakovsky in *The Russian Revival of the Dithyramb* (2018).

Major works in Russian on Mayakovsky cited in this study predominately appeared in the postwar era. These include studies by scholars who had known Mayakovsky personally, including Vasily Katanian, whose *Maiakovskii: khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti* appeared in 1985. Katanian was also one of the general editors of the *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* that was published between 1955-1961, and the commentaries by him and Nadezhda Reformatskaia have been invaluable for my research. Other works by scholars personally acquainted with Mayakovsky include essays of various years by Nikolai Khardzhiev and his 1970 monograph *Poeticheskaia kul'tura Maiakovskogo*, and Viktor Pertsov's three-volume *Maiakovskii: zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (1969-1972). Although my analysis does not focus on versification, the studies of Mayakovsky's prosody by Mikhail Gasparov also deserve mention. Major studies of the post-Soviet era include Leonid Katsis's *Vladimir Maiakovskii: poet v intellektualnom kontekste epokhi* (2004) and Mikhail Vaiskopf's 1997 *Vo ves' logos: religiia Maiakovskogo*.[301] An important reference work cited in

[301] My thanks to Kirill Ospovat for directing me to Vasikopf's study.

this study is *Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo: opyt slovaria okkasionalizmov*, compiled by V.N. Valavin.

Scholarly work on *Khorosho!* specifically is far vaster in Russian than in English, with much of it published in the Soviet Union in the latter half of the twentieth century. One struggles to find even article-length studies of *Khorosho!* published in English since the fall of the Soviet Union. Indicative of this lack of English-language scholarship on *Khorosho!* is Robert Bird's article "Envoicing History: On the Narrative Poem in Russian Modernism," published in the spring 2007 issue of *The Slavic and East European Journal*. Even with a topic so germane to discussion of *Khorosho!*, Bird instead insightfully discusses *At the Top of My Voice* («Во весь голос»), *150,000,000*, and the 1925 lyric poem "Radio Agitator." In this regard my project represents a fresh look, long overdue, at the later political-historical poetry of Mayakovsky.

Auxiliary to the relative paucity of scholarly focus on *Khorosho!* in Anglophone scholarship is the lack of new translations of the *poema*: to the best of my knowledge, only one translation of *Khorosho!* into English exists. This is the translation of Dorian Rottenberg, published in 1986 by the Soviet publisher Raduga, which produced translations for a foreign audience. This situation persists despite recent translations of Mayakovsky's poetry, most notably the 2013 translation by James H. McGavran III. This volume of excellent translations is also notable for McGavran's inclusion of some of Mayakovsky's *poemy*: *A Cloud in Trousers*,[302] first published in full in 1918; *The Backbone Flute* (1915), *150,000,000* (1919-1920), *I Love* (1922), and *The Flying Proletarian* (1925). A revised version of Dorian Rottenberg's 1986 translation of *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin* (1924) produced and introduced by the poet, scholar, and activist Rosy Carrick was

[302] In McGavran's translation, *The Cloud in Pants*. Here I use the more commonly encountered translation of the title.

published in 2017.[303] To be sure, translating *Khorosho!* is a monumental task, but the lack of adequate translations highlights the lack of attention paid to the work.

That said, the prominence of *Khorosho!* in Soviet representations of Mayakovsky cannot be ignored. According to Natalia Karakulina, the standard literature textbook for the last year of grade school, Valentin Kovalev's *Russkaia sovetskaia literatura*, which went through several editions in the 1980s, placed heavy emphasis on Mayakovsky's post-1917 works, particularly *Vladimir Ilych Lenin* and *Khorosho!*[304] In contrast, the post-Soviet curriculum tends to omit precisely these works in favor of Mayakovsky's pre-revolutionary works.[305] Karakulina's study, while focused on the literary curriculum and not on literary scholarship, nonetheless signals a need for new scholarship on *Khorosho!* (and other post-revolutionary works). Soviet citizens, after all, knew 'this' Mayakovsky just as well, if not better, than the early Futurist Mayakovsky that has received the lion's share of Anglophone scholarship.

The Soviet scholarship most useful for study of this work mostly dates to the 1960s. That said, much of the scholarship of that era repeats ideological truisms: that Mayakovsky expressed the great vision of Lenin, that he shows how the Russian people supported the Bolshevik party, that *Khorosho!* exhibits Mayakovsky's genius, and the like. While drawing on the analytic insights of Soviet scholarship, I aim to avoid such truistic conclusions.

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[303] Carrick's translations of selected poems by Mayakovsky, including excerpts from some of the *poemy*, appeared recently as *Volodya: Selected Works of Mayakovsky* (Ripon, UK: Smokestack Books, 2017).

[304] Karakulina notes that a full half of revision questions on Mayakovsky related to these two works. Karakulina, "Vladimir Maiakovskii and the National School Curriculum," in *Twentieth Century Russian Poetry: Reinventing the Canon*, ed. Katherine Hodgson, Joanne Shelton, and Alexandra Smith (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2017), 105, 107.

[305] Karakulina, "Vladimir Maiakovskii and the National School Curriculum," 120. The text bears a typo: "Soviet exams omit the long poems 'Khorosho!' and 'Vladimir Ilich Lenin' – instead questions on his pre-revolutionary works are more common" must be read as 'post-Soviet exams.'

An exception to this general situation is the work of Vasily Katanian. Katanian's detailed biographical scholarship on Mayakovsky features prominently in this study, especially in its analysis of Chapter 6 of *Khorosho!* (I also turn frequently to Bengt Jangfeldt's *Mayakovsky: A Biography*.) Nonetheless, this study bears the good fortune of a different time and place, and thus can raise questions that Katanian did not. At the same time, Katanian was limited by the resources of his time and place. At times I supplement, but at others contest, Katanian's findings based on research made possible by searchable databases of newspapers, the National Corpus of the Russian Language, and other more recently accessible resources. In post-Soviet Russophone scholarship, Vaiskopf's above-mentioned study *Vo ves' logos: religiia Maiakovskogo* (1997) centers attention on the religious underpinnings of Mayakovsky's sociopolitical mythmaking, albeit with relatively little attention to *Khorosho!*.

Scholars writing in English have long been conditioned to diminish Mayakovsky's post-revolutionary political poems compared to his personal lyrics.[306] Edward J. Brown, for example, tacitly agrees with Mayakovsky's negative critics who in his summary "wanted none of it"[307] and leaves *Khorosho!* in essence unanalyzed. In this Brown followed the same general line of thought as Victor Erlich, who in 1962 expressed his obvious distaste for *Khorosho!* as part and parcel with his negative evaluation of Mayakovsky's post-revolutionary work in general:

> there is hardly anything in Mayakovsky's bulky post-1917 output to rival the striking power and the imaginative freshness of "A Cloud in Trousers." Eloquent passages in Mayakovsky's two programmatic poems, "V.I. Lenin" and "Well Done!," the deftly ingenious rhymes of some of his occasional verse, the vitality and gusto of several

[306] Exceptions to this in recent scholarship include the above-cited study by Ludmila Schleyfer Lavine of "agit-*poemy*" of the early 1920s, which Mayakovsky co-authored with other Lefists, and Katherine Lahti's chapter on Mayakovsky in *The Russian Revival of the Dithyramb: A Modernist Use of Antiquity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018). Although the latter of these is mainly concerned with the play in verse *Vladimir Mayakovsky: A Tragedy* (1913), I apply some of its insights about the dichotomy poet/addressor-crowd/addressees to analysis of *Khorosho!*

[307] Edward J. Brown, *Mayakovsky: A Poet in the Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 26. While I disagree with many of Brown's evaluations of Mayakovsky's work, I appreciate that he points out both the anniversary context of *Khorosho!* and its connections to factography.

> "American poems," for example, "The Brooklyn Bridge" […] none of this can quite compensate for the reams of journalistic bombast, of strenuous red-flag waving, not devoid of rhetorical effectiveness but unworthy of Mayakovsky.[308]

In his 1983 biography of Mayakovsky, Victor Terras expresses an only slightly more nuanced appraisal of *Khorosho!* as "probably Mayakovsky's best poetic work about the Revolution, but it is very uneven. It contains magnificent epic passages and some good realistic descriptions, but several of its episodes are no more than versified feuilletons. The versification is perhaps not quite so polished as that of *V.I. Lenin*."[309] But like others, Terras devotes seemingly as few words as possible to analysis of *Khorosho!*[310]

While this study gestures toward a greater degree of sophistication in *Khorosho!* than has been acknowledged in Anglophone scholarship, I leave the question of its literary quality aside. Rather, I focus on how Mayakovsky's *Khorosho!* is interconnected with its historical moment: in other words, how *Khorosho!* both shaped and was shaped by the social, political, cultural, and anniversary context of 1927. Therefore, this study draws on Russian and Anglophone scholarship on Mayakovsky but attempts to analyze his most significant work of 1927 without Soviet cliché or Anglophone dismissiveness.

Chapter 1: The River by the Name Fact

Mayakovsky's autobiography *I Myself* (*Ia sam*) was first published in 1922. Having published two subsequent editions, in April 1928 Mayakovsky added sections on the years 1922-1928 for

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[308] Erlich, "The Death Hand of the Future: The Predicament of Vladimir Mayakovsky," *Slavic Review* 21, no. 3 (September 1962): 438.

[309] Terras, *Vladimir Mayakovsky* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), 103.

[310] My general sense from discussion of Mayakovsky with a range of scholars is that these judgments indeed are too dismissive. However, to my mind that view still must be expressed in written scholarship.

inclusion in the 1928 publication of his collected works by Gosizdat.[311] The entry for 1927 is sufficiently brief to quote in its entirety:

> Восстанавливаю (была проба «сократить») «Леф», уже «Новый». Основная позиция: против выдумки, эстетизации и психоложества искусством – за агит, за квалифицированную публицистику и хронику. Основная работа в «Комсомольской правде», и сверхурочно работаю «Хорошо».
>
> «Хорошо» считаю программной вещью, вроде «Облака в штанах» для того времени. Ограничение отвлеченных поэтических приемов (гиперболы, виньеточного самоценного образа) и изобретение приемов для обработки хроникального и агитационного материала.
>
> Иронический пафос в описании мелочей, но могущих быть и верным шагом в будущее («сыры не засижены – лампы сияют, цены снижены»), введение, для перебивки планов, фактов различного исторического калибра, законных только в порядке личных ассоциаций («Разговор с Блоком», «Мне рассказывал тихий еврей, Павел Ильич Лавут»).
>
> Буду разрабатывать намеченное.
>
> Еще: написаны – сценарии и детские книги.
>
> Еще продолжал менестрелить. Собрал около 20 000 записок, думаю о книге «Универсальный ответ» (записочникам). Я знаю, о чем думает читающая масса.[312]

> I am reestablishing (there was an attempt to 'cut' [shut down – ZR]) *Lef*, now as *New Lef*. The principal position: against invention [*vydumka*], aestheticization and psychologization through art – for agit[ation], for qualified journalism and chronicle. [My] main work is in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, and after hours I work well [*Khorosho*].
>
> I consider *Khorosho!* a programmatic thing, like *A Cloud in Trousers* was for its time. Limitation of distracting poetic devices (hyperboles, vignette-like images for their own sake) and invention [*izobretenie*, and not *vydumka*] of devices for the treatment of chronicle and agitation material.
>
> Ironic pathos in the description of trifles, but those that can also be a sure step toward the future ("The cheeses aren't flyspecked – lamps glow, prices lowered"), the introduction, for purposes of delineation, of facts of varying historical caliber, allowable only as personal associations ("Conversation with Blok," "I was told by the quiet Jew, Pavel Ilych Lavut").
>
> I will continue working on the above-proposed.
>
> Also written: scripts and children's books.

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[311] Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 421.

[312] Mayakovsky, *Ia sam*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 28-29. Use of the word 'thing' (*veshch*) here to describe *Khorosho!* is not new: the generic subtitle of 1916's *Chelovek* was 'thing' rather than 'poema.' See Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 445.

Jangfeldt notes that Mayakovsky did indeed collect notes from attendees of his public performances and speculates that this "Universal Reply," had it been written, might have corresponded closely with Mayakovsky's 1928 essay "The Workers and Peasants Do Not Understand You" ("Vas ne ponimaiut rabochie i krest'iane"). Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 393.

> I also continued to minstrel. I have gathered about 20,000 comments, I'm thinking about a book called "The Universal Reply" (to note-writers). I know what the reading masses think about.

In this passage Mayakovsky indicates a certain alignment of his aesthetic views with those of *Novyi Lef*, and that in writing *Khorosho!* he operated with a wide and conscientiously chosen range of devices for the discovery, exploration, and incorporation of historical material into the *poema*. I argued in the previous chapter that Aseev's use of personal reminiscences of participants in the Civil War was, to paraphrase Mayakovsky, "lawful" (*zakonno*) within the boundaries of literary types of the late NEP era. Mayakovsky uses similar materials, among others, but unlike Aseev, he also justifies his version of the historical 'chronicle and agitation material' that he presents in *Khorosho!* "on the basis of personal associations" – a sort of internal example of the alternation in Mayakovsky's work of love poems and lyric cycles with 'lyric epics' identified by Roman Jakobson.[313]

When Mayakovsky submitted the complete manuscript of *Khorosho!* to Gosizdat for publication, he defined it as a work in three parts preceded by an opening chapter.[314] The opening

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[313] On the alternation, see Jakobson, "K pozdnei lirike Maiakovskogo," in Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, vol. 5, 382-405. In this article Jakobson views the same alternation in Mayakovsky's uncompleted "Plokho," to which Jakobson refers as "parodic contrast to the programmatic 'Khorosho'" (385).

While Jakobson supposes that "Plokho" was to have a love theme, Erlich claims that it was "clearly [to be] a polemic with his own earlier epic of the October Revolutionary [sic], 'Well Done!' [i.e. *Khorosho!*]," but provides no argument for why this would necessarily be the case.

Jangfeldt supports neither position, nor does he speculate on the content of "Plokho." Rather, he points out that Mayakovsky's next major published work was the 1928 play *The Bedbug*, which he views, implicitly disagreeing with Jakobson, as Mayakovsky's "most antilyrical work to date." See Jakobson, "K pozdnei lirike Maiakovskogo," 382; Erlich, "The Dead Hand of the Future," 439; Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 429.

[314] The three sections are: Chapters 2-8, Chapters 9-17, Chapters 18-19. See Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 441.

chapter – a sort of preface or introduction, with Mayakovsky almost acting as his own Greek chorus – immediately announces the factuality of the following work:[315]

> Время – / вещь необычайно длинная, –
> были времена – / прошли былинные.
> Ни былин, / ни эпосов, / ни эпопей,
> Телеграммой / лети, / строфа!
> Воспаленной губой / припади и попей
> из реки / по имени – «Факт».[316]

> Time is a thing unusually long,
> there were times – the folkloric ones passed.
> No heroic songs, no epics, no sagas,
> Fly like a telegram, verse!
> Like an inflamed lip fall and drink
> from the river named – Fact.

Metchenko and others have identified this opening with Mayakovsky's search for new poetic forms. Pertsov calls it a "manifesto" that announces "the unity of epic and lyric," but also emphasizes its 'publicistic orientation').[317] Jakobson speaks less of a search for new forms than of alternation of love poems and lyric cycles with 'epic-lyric' works via the planned but uncompleted work "Plokho."[318] Scholars also have pointed out the similarity between this opening and the

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[315] Mikhail Gasparov has demonstrated that the basic organizational unit of Mayakovsky's poetry is the quatrain; however, here Mayakovsky begins with a sestet, or otherwise a couplet followed by a quatrain. See Gasparov, *Sovremennyi russkii stikh: metrika i ritmika* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), 466-67.

On the dithyrambic chorus in Mayakovsky's *oeuvre*, Lakhti argues: "Mayakovsky often has the voices [of himself and the audience – ZR] merge into 'we' by the end of the poem. The way Mayakovsky depicts the poet's relation to that audience is the relation of the chorus leader to the chorus in the dithyramb" (Lakhti, *The Russian Revival of the Dithyramb*, 204). Later she adds that characters can also play that role: for example, in *Vladimir Maiakovskii: tragediia*, the various "Men" exhibiting "Dionysian dismemberment," in Lakhti's terms, fulfill that function (209-10).

[316] Maiakovskii, *Polnoe Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 235.

[317] Aleksei Metchenko, "Slovo o Maiakovskom," in *V mire Maiakovskogo: Sbornik statei*, ed. Aleksandr Mikhailov and Stanislav Lesnevskii (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1984), 29; Viktor Pertsov, *Maiakovskii: zhizn' i tvorchestvo, 1925-1930* (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), 167. Il'ia Sel'vinsky's 1927 *Ulialeaevshchina* is subtitled "Epopeia," as is Andrei Bely's 1926 prose trilogy *Moscow*.

[318] Jakobson, "K pozdnei lirike Maiakovskogo," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 5 (Berlin and Boston: De Gryuter Mouton, 2010), 385-86.

opening to the chapter "Partisans" in Aseev's *Semyon Proskakov*.[319] Here the 'river by the name of [capital-F] Fact,' gestures towards a factographic approach and contrasts the apostrophe to the *poema* itself (via 'strofa') with the *bylina*, or traditional heroic poem, the epos and the epic: this is *factual* poetry. Rejecting of other genres appears as a sign of the times: the second line's «были времена – прошли былинные» puns on the common collocation «былые времена», "days of yore." Factographic poetry rejects these for the speed, precision, and lack of embellishment of the telegram.

Creation of new hybrid literary forms to the rejection of the heroic national forms of the past is more obvious in his earlier draft:

> Эпос – времена и люди,
> дни и солнце – эпос.
> Эпоса не видеть – слепо.
> Я ни эпосов не делаю
> ни эпопей.[320]
>
> An epos is times and people,
> days and the sun – that's an epos.
> You have to be blind not to see an epic.
> I don't make any epics
> or sagas.

Although the basic ideas of the draft and final versions of the chapter opening are similar, absent from the former is the *bylina*, or folk tale. Insofar as *byliny* can be thought of as mythologized or

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[319] For example, Karpov, *Nikolai Aseev: ocherk tvorchestva*, 90; Kriukova, "Rodstvo i preodolenie," in *Tvorcheskoe vzaimodeistvie*, 212; Pertsov, *Maiakovskii: zhizn' i tvorchestvo*, 212-217; Vasilii Rakov, *Maiakovskii i sovetskaia literatura 20-kh godov* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1976), 171-175. Kriukova's is perhaps the most in-depth comparison of Aseev and Mayakovsky's anniversary *poemy*. Moldavsky writes, "*Semyon Proskakov* – this is a *poema* of a new type. Like Mayakovsky's *Vladimir Ilych Lenin*, and like the following *poema Khorosho!*, it poses and answers questions of worldview connected with the problem of the national ethos and party-mindedness of literature" (Moldavskii, *Nikolai Aseev*, 88).

That said, it is worth noting again that I have found no evidence that Aseev and Mayakovsky consulted with one another while writing their respective *poemy*. In his "Reminiscences on Mayakovsky," Aseev implies that Mayakovsky first heard *Semyon Proskakov* in full after the work was complete (Aseev, "Vospominaniia o Maiakovskom," in Aseev, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, 675).

[320] "Varianty i raztochneniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 388.

fictionalized stories – if they were thought to have any basis in fact at all – the association of the epic genre with the *bylina* suggests that they share the inventive quality that Lefists rejected, at least in theory.[321] The final version underscores this understanding through the pun on *bylye vremena* and declares them past. Mayakovsky's preferred comparison of his *poema* with the telegram suggests the novelty, modernity, and efficacy of his work and, via the purpose of telegrams to convey information quickly over long distances, its factuality.

The river by the name of Fact suggests the classical image of the river Lethe, but connects it to memory rather than forgetfulness.[322] Accepting Devin Fore's evaluation of literature of fact as concerned first and foremost with "the inscription of facts," Lethe functions a collection of facts lost to the living, but which can be revived through poetry: the imperatives *pripadi* and *popei* are addressed to the *strofa*, which here can be read as a metonym for verse personified. Poetry, defined as the inscription of facts, becomes a mode of remembrance. In a fashion reminiscent of Corney's argument that commemoration of the October Revolution entailed both recollection and formation of memory, and in keeping with the Lefist idea that the transcription of facts simultaneously

[321] Cf. Bakhtin in "Epic and Novel" (1941): "We encounter the novel as a genre that has not only long since completed its development, but one that is already antiquated" (in *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, 44). Indeed, it seems that Mayakovsky actively resists the three constitutive features of the epic later identified by Bakhtin – a 'national epic past,' 'national tradition (and not personal experience and the free thought that grows out of it [!]),' and 'an absolute epic distance that separates the epic world from contemporary reality' (52).

To the best of my knowledge, the question of Mayakovsky's acquaintance and reception of the literature of classical antiquity has not been addressed conclusively. Ilya Kutik references it in passing in his *The Ode and the Odic* but focuses more on Mayakovsky's reception of Russian tradition of the 18th and early 19th centuries (primarily Lomonosov and Derzhavin). Lahti speculates that Mayakovsky might have received some exposure to the literature of classical antiquity in grade school, but for her study of the dithyramb, Mayakovsky's reception of Nietzsche, whether directly or via Symbolist intermediaries, played a more significant role, although she emphasizes that there is no clear evidence that Mayakovsky did or did not read about the dithyramb himself (Lahti, *Russian Revival of the Dithyramb*, 194-197).

A search of the National Corpus of the Russian Language gives two results for Homer in Mayakovsky's poetry and one each for Achilles and Odysseus. The single result for Ovid appears in the same line as one of the references to Homer. Searches for Virgil, Catullus, and Sappho yield no results.

It would of course be hazardous to draw conclusions from such a selective and pointed search, and, to point out the obvious, the poetry of the contemporaneous Acmeists is saturated with classical references, as is the poetry of Tsvetaeva, so it certainly cannot be said that Mayakovsky completely lacked exposure.

[322] Cf. «Во весь голос», in which remnants of the past arise from Lethe.

transfixed them and shaped the new Soviet reality, the image of verse drinking from the 'river by the name of Fact' also implies a certain life-giving quality of capital-F Fact. This suggestion of a of 'living water' echoes Biblical metaphors: for example, John 7:38 in the Russian Synodal version: «Кто верует в Меня, у того, как сказано в Писании, из чрева потекут реки живой воды».[323] Similarly, John 4:14: «а кто будет пить воду, которую Я дам ему, тот не будет жаждать вовек; но вода, которую Я дам ему, сделается в нем источником воды, текущей в жизнь вечную».[324] In typically Mayakovskian fashion, the sacred connotations of 'living water' become secularized through substitution of faith with fact.

The third and fourth quatrains outline Mayakovsky's anniversary memory project and explicates its intended effect on the reader:

> Я хочу, / чтобы, с этою / книгой побыв,
> из квартирного / мирка
> шел опять / на плечах / пулеметной пальбы,
> как штыком, / строкой / просверкав.
> Чтобы из книги, / через радость глаз,
> от свидетеля / счастливого, –
> в мускулы / усталые / лилась
> строящая / и бунтующая сила.[325]
>
> I want you, having been with this book,
> to go from the little apartment-world
> on the shoulders of machine-gun fire,
> A line of verse flashing like a bayonet.
> So that from this book, through the joy of eyes,
> from a happy witness,
> to tired muscles flowed
> a building and rebellious strength.

[323] In New International Version of John 7:38: "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

[324] In the New International Version: "but whoever drinks of the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

[325] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 236.

These lines define the purpose of the *poema* in the return of "building and rebellious strength,"[326] and thus align with Mayakovsky's insistence in "Ne iubileite" and "8-e marta" that the revolution cannot be considered complete as long as social and political problems prevail. At the same time, Mayakovsky explicitly connects witness and recollection of revolutionary violence with reading this account of it. He invites the reader to recall the experience of the revolution, and in doing so, follows the tendency of other anniversary reminiscences to unite the personal («квартирный мирок») with the universal: the very connection that Mayakovsky underscores later in the *poema* through description of his own experience of War Communism and NEP.

The metaphor of the river Fact for time also inverts the valence of metaphor 'river of times' in Gavrila Derzhavin's 1816 fragment "The River of Time in its Course…" ("Reka vremen v svoem stremlen'i…"). This river similarly views time as a river that carries away "all human affairs" («все дела людей»), and oblivion seems inescapable. Mayakovsky's river of Fact has an opposing restorative function, as does the living water in the Biblical passages. Reading the addressee in these lines as the verse itself (as metonymy via *strofa*, stanza), poetry, with inflamed lips, is invited to drink from the healing river of Fact. In other words, Mayakovsky revives poetry in a Messiah-like pose not unfamiliar from his previous works. Thus, drinking from the 'river by the name of Fact' is to restore memory of the revolution, which in turn is articulated from and become memories for the reader. The revolutionary message supplants the religious message implied by Mayakovsky's imagery.

[326] «Бунтующая сила» both recalls the cliché in revolutionary language of «бунтующие массы» and sets up a parallel with Kerensky's famous phrase «бунтующие рабы», which Mayakovsky evokes in his depiction of Kerensky in Chapter 6.

The concluding quatrain of the introductory first chapter emphasizes the commonality of Mayakovsky's memory project in *Khorosho!* and the role of the individual poet in it, merging the poet with the audience in an act of memory articulation:

> Этот день / воспевать / никого не наймем.[327]
> Мы / распнем / карандаш на листе,
> чтобы шелест страниц, / как шелест знамен,
> надо лбами / годов / шелестел.[328]
>
> We won't contract anyone to praise this day in song.
> We will crucify this pencil on the page,
> so the rustling of pages, like the rustling of flags,
> Will rustle over the foreheads of years.

The Biblically inspired imagery develops further into Mayakovsky's Christ-like pose, by which poetry acquires salvatory properties: 'crucifixion' of the pencil on the page not only promises, but is almost a precondition for a new era embodied by triumphal writing and flags.[329] Mayakovsky perhaps adjusts his Christ pose for the needs of the *poema*, but it recurs throughout Mayakovsky's writing before and after the revolution: in «А все-таки» (1914) Mayakovsky claims that "God will weep over my little book!" («И Бог заплачет над моей книжкой»); in *Mystery-Bouffe,* a Christ-like "most ordinary person" (самый обыкновенный человек) walks across waters of the flood to promise socialist paradise to the 'Unclean' proletariat on the ark.

The introductory chapter, then, identifies Mayakovsky's goal to tell the story of the revolution as a simultaneously collective and individual story. It provides opportunity for the

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[327] Cf. the opening lines of «Вместо оды», written for celebration of Women's Day in 1927: «Мне б хотелось / вас / воспеть / во вдохновенной оде, // только ода / что-то не выходит». The reason that Mayakovsky cannot write an ode, it turns out later in the poem, is the continued hardships that women faced, foremost among them domestic violence, often induced or exacerbated by alcohol.

[328] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 236.

[329] Mayakovsky's 1918 *poema* "Man" ("Chelovek"), which similarly features Mayakovsky in his Christ-like pose, uses the image of a crucifix on its cover, with "Mayakovsky" on the vertical and "Chelovek" on the horizontal axis, meeting at their shared 'o.'

reader to recall personal experience of the revolution and fixates concrete memories of it through an act of fervent reading (the repeated *shelest'*) that replaces the *khorugv'* of the poem "Oktiabr'" with Mayakovsky's revolutionary chronicle, the 'flag' of new, non-epic verse. At the same time Mayakovsky, in his typical fashion, desacralizes Biblical imagery in favor of his own new word and the 'living water' of capital-f Fact.

Chapter 2: From February to October[330]

Chapters 2-5 of *Khorosho!* focus on the period beginning with the February Revolution and continuing to approximately October 1917. In these chapters, Mayakovsky focuses on specific representatives of the Provisional Government – the immediate predecessor of the Bolshevik government in which the Bolsheviks did not participate. Reference to the preceding imperial tsarist regime is limited, and while Mayakovsky focuses on the comic yet severe incompetence of the Provisional Government, he also begins to forecast the October Revolution.

In these chapters, no single counterpart to the villains of the Provisional Government emerges as the hero. The rise of the Bolshevik party is intimated in Chapter 2, but the party does not appear in action until the end of Chapter 5, when the scene shifts to the preparations of anonymous Bolsheviks for the storming of the Winter Palace. The plot of the *poema* reaches its nadir in these chapters, structurally emphasizing the inability of the Provisional Government to address Russian needs and contrasting with the heroic chapters that bookend it, the above-discussed 'prologue' of Chapter 1 and the historical culmination of the *poema*, the storming of the

[330] I have subdivided analysis in a way conducive to this discussion. Mayakovsky's own subdivisions were different: in the version of the *poema* he submitted to Gosizdat for publication, they were: 1. Introduction (Chapter 1); 2. Part 1 (Ch. 2-8); 3. Part 2 (Ch. 9-17); 4. Part 3 (Ch. 18-19). These subdivisions, which roughly correspond to Mayakovsky's drafting of the poema, do not appear in the published version. The theatrical version of the *poema*, about which little information is available, staged Part 1 (Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 441).

Winter Palace in Chapter 6. Although the following chapters evoke the difficulties of War Communism and New Economic Policy, negative aspects of the early Soviet state are viewed through a teleology leading to a much better present in 1927 (i.e., various aspects of contemporary Soviet life appraised as *khorosho* in Chapter 17), in contrast to the attacks on Mayakovsky for so frequently writing "about trash."[331] Chapters 2-5 show the darkness before the dawn of the Soviet state.

This section presents analysis of the historical figures associated with the Provisional Government and the techniques that Mayakovsky uses to delegitimize them. Although analysis will refer the typology of early Soviet villains proposed by Eric Laursen, Mayakovsky's villains in these chapters do not fit so neatly into Laursen's categories, as I will demonstrate. In total, these chapters present a sort of anti-pantheon against which the heroic pantheon emerging in subsequent chapters implicitly contrasts. In these chapters, Mayakovsky deploys documentary materials, personal reminiscences, well-known facts and rumors about the Provisional Government and its representatives, at times allowing them to delegitimize themselves in the fashion of Aseev's Annenkov, at times conforming these factographic materials into an ideologically correct perspective, and at times thrusting these figures into altogether ahistorical situations in which they become targets of satire.

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[331] An example comes from a meeting of *Molodaia gvardiia* in Nizhnii Novgorod on 18 January 1927, at which Mayakovsky listened to other poets recite their work. According to Katanian, Mayakovsky's negative reaction to a poem about love prompted the following exchange:

> «Почему, Владимир Владимирович, вы все пишете о недостатках, о грязи, не пишете о прекрасном, о розах?» — Я не могу не писать о грязи, об отрицательном, потому что в жизни есть очень много дряни, оставшейся от старого. Я помогаю выметать эту дрянь. Уберем дрянь, расцветут розы, напишу и о них».
> "Vladimir Vladimirovich, why do you keep writing about deficiencies, about filth, why don't you write about the beautiful, about roses?" To this Mayakovsky replied: "I cannot not write about filth and bad things (the negative?) because there is a lot of rubbish left in our life from the old. I'm helping to sweep out the rubbish. Once we clear out the rubbish the flowers will bloom, then I'll write about them too" (Katanian, *Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti*, 366).

Mayakovsky's narrative begins with an impressionistic and polyphonic (in the literal sense of 'many-voiced') depiction of the February Revolution.[332] It evokes the confusion brought on by the abdication of Nicholas II, the installation of the Provisional Government and the onset of the 'springtime of freedom,' and the creation of the Petrograd Soviet, which led to the political condition referred to as dual power (*dvoevlastie*).[333] Although these chapters do not forecast the October Revolution explicitly, the contrast between the weakness and falsity of the Provisional Government and the demands of the people for social and political change imply a teleology leading to it (even as nobody, the Bolsheviks included, could have predicted the outcome of the coming months).

Foremost among the targets of Mayakovsky's satire is Aleksandr Fedorovich Kerensky, who first served in the Provisional Government as Minister of Justice, then Minister of War, and finally, from July 1917, as its second chairman-minister.[334] In Laursen's terms, Kerensky exhibits traits of both the 'alien' and 'beast' types. Mayakovsky grounds his portrayal in rumors, stories, and slogans relating to Kerensky from 1917 (and some subsequently). This is the factual material that a 'literature of fact' required, even if some of those materials were based less in fact than on public perception. Mayakovsky selects factual material that feminizes, dehumanizes, and sensationalizes Kerensky as a contradictory but certainly negative figure: Kerensky is at once a

[332] The temporal vagueness, together with conflation of the imperial past into a general composite, invite a Bakhtinian interpretation of epic time in the *poema*. Rather than a world of "firsts and bests" (as Bakhtin defines it in "Epos i roman"), it seems that Mayakovsky creates a sort of primordial world from which the revolution emerges and provides order.

[333] It is worth noting that Kerensky "had been active in setting up both institutions [and] served as liaison between them" (Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 48).

[334] Georgii L'vov, who does not appear by name (nor, as far as I can tell, obliquely) in *Khorosho!*, was the first chairman-minister.

garden-variety bourgeois intellectual, an attractive but ultimately vapid thespian, a mechanical contraption, and a capricious despot.

The second chapter opens with an unspecified speaker, possibly a composite of many voices and seeming to deliver a political speech, who reduces the confusion of political parties, hopes, and ambitions to two basic sides:

> «Кончайте войну! / Довольно! / Будет! / В этом / голодном году –
> невмоготу.
> Врали: / «народа – / свобода, / вперед, / эпоха, / заря…» -
> и зря.[335]
>
> "End the war! Enough! That'll do! In this year of famine –
> this is more than we can take.
> They lied: "freedom of the people, forward, the epoch, the dawn…" –
> all for nothing.

The association of falsity and lying with enemies, it should be recalled, also appeared in Aseev's depiction of Annenkov and to a lesser extent in his depiction of Kolchak. This speech also implicitly contrasts the sloganeers and deceivers of the Provisional Government with the Lefists' emphasis on 'fact' as material for art, and thus suggests alignment between the Lefists and the Bolshevik regime, even though in 1917 not all Futurists, still six years from naming themselves Lefists, supported the Bolshevik party. In the opening of this chapter, the voice of the people has the prominence of the first position, while the Bolshevik Party remains unnamed, although its program is suggested in the speaker's obvious dissatisfaction and demand to end Russian involvement in World War I.

The lines that follow logically could be uttered in spring or summer 1917, but only after the expectation of reform has been deflated. The orator's subsequent questions, rhetorically asked

[335] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 237.

and answered, guide the reader to the correct conclusion about the Provisional Government while addressing that reader as if a soldier at the front:

> Где земля, / и где / закон, / чтобы землю / выдать / к лету? –
> Нету!
> Что же / дают / за февраль, / за работу, / за то, / что с фронтов / не бежишь?
> Шиш![336]
>
> Where is the land, and where is the law, to distribute the land by summer?
> Nothing!
> And what do they give for February, for our work, for the fact that you don't desert the front?
> Nada!

These lines obliquely evoke the Bolshevik slogan introduced by Lenin in his April Theses: "Land, Bread, and Peace." Land reform and redistribution were key issues for the peasantry, which still suffered from the impoverishing conditions of the 1861 emancipation of the serfs;[337] the *zakon* (law) in the first quoted line may refer to new policies on land ownership and use, but may also refer to the general feeling of lawlessness and disorder that followed the initial euphoria of the February Revolution.[338] Another key issue of the February Revolution was fair pay and labor conditions,[339] which related directly to the question of bread: after all, insufficient rations contributed to the February demonstrations in Petrograd.[340] Finally, the continuation of Russian participation in World War I was highly divisive. The Bolsheviks vocally opposed the war, and as

[336] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 237.

[337] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution,* 18-19.

[338] As John Steinberg summarizes, in July 1917 "Prime Minister Kerensky wanted to be seen as a strong political executive who could overcome disorder" (Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution: 1905-1921* [Oxford, UK, and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017], 77). See also Steinberg's discussion of 'anarchy' and 'shameful disorder' (*bezobrazie*), 82-86.

[339] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution,* 45.

[340] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution,* 45.

1917 progressed, soldiers at the front were poorly equipped and increasingly discontent.[341] In this passage, presumably delivered from within Russia, apostrophe to an implied soldier unifies that soldier with the rest of the proletariat, his military concerns with the domestic concerns of workers and peasants.

At the end of the chapter, the rise of support for the Bolshevik party is mentioned more explicitly and framed as a natural spread through the country, independent of political agitation:

> То громом, / то шепотом / этот ропот
> сползал / из Керенской / тюрьмы-решета,
> В деревни / шел / по травам и тропам,
> в заводах / сталью зубов скрежетал.
> Чужие / партии / бросали швырком.
> – На что им / сбор / болтунов / дался́?! –
> И отдавали / большевикам,
> гроши, / и силы, / и голоса.
> До са́мой / мужичьей / земляной башки
> докатывалась слава, – / лила́сь / и слы́ла,
> что есть / за мужиков / какие-то / «большаки»
> - у-у-у! / Сила! – [342]
>
> Thundering, whispering, this grumble
> crawled out of the Kerensky prison bars [literally *prison-sieve*],
> walked to the villages on grasses and paths,
> in factories gnashed steel teeth.
> They tossed out other parties.
> What good to them is a bunch of babblers?
> And they gave to the Bolsheviks,
> their half-kopecks, and strength, and voices.
> To the earthiest muzhik noggin
> rolled their fame, – flowing and gaining passing along,
> that some kind of *bol'shaki* are for the peasants
> - ooo-ooo-ooo! Strength!

Despite the lack of human actors in this passage, description of the transformation of grumbling (*ropot*) into support for the Bolsheviks appears in developmental and personified terms: it crawls

[341] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 53-4. Fitzpatrick notes that while morale at the front was sometimes maintained, discontent grew especially among reserve troops garrisoned in Russia.

[342] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 238-239.

from the ‘Kerensky prison-sieve’ (implying a certain smallness), then walks to the villages, labors in the factories, ‘gnashing steel teeth’ as if suffering under pre-socialist rule. The idea of Bolshevik support spreading like rumors is further emphasized with the play on *bol'shak* (here perhaps both a main road and the senior member of a family) as peasants sometimes heard the word *bol'shevik*,[343] and the marking of non-standard stresses («дался́» rather than «да́лся», for example, which also allows the rhyme with «голоса́»).[344] At the same time, this passage gestures towards the spread of Bolshevik ideas and increased membership in the Bolshevik Party following the February Revolution.[345] However, it generalizes the *narod* to a grammatically implied ‘they’ that flows into the Bolshevik party as ‘strength,’ a synthesis of the word with human bodies.

The depersonalized spread of Bolshevism in this passage contrasts with metonymic wordplay that encapsulates the Provisional Government in names of two of its recognizable representatives and leaves no question as to the speaker’s opinion of them:

> На шее / кучей / Гучковы, / черти, / министры, / Родзянки…
> Мать их за́ ноги![346]
>
> Guchkovs, devils, ministers, Rodziankos in a pile on our necks…
> Grab their mother by the legs!

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[343] The term ‘Bolshevik,’ derived from the word *bol'shinstvo* (‘majority’) emerged from the 1903 split of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party into Lenin’s majority and Iuly (Julius) Martov’s minority, or Menshevik, factions.

Shchegolev writes of this word choice: “The characteristic little word (*slovechko*) *bol'shaki* subtly explains that the peasantry, befuddled by the harangues of the SRs, still has a comparatively indistinct understanding of the Bolshevik Party” (Shchegolev, *Khudozhestvennoe masterstvo V.V. Maiakovskogo v poeme ‘Khorosho’* [Moscow: Uchpedgiz, 1956], 12).

[344] Unconventional placement of stress happens frequently in *Khorosho!* and elsewhere in Mayakovsky’s poetry.

[345] Unlike other political parties, including those of the political left, the Bolsheviks did not participate in the Fourth (or previous) Dumas, nor the Provisional Government. Membership numbers were low before the February Revolution, but increased from 24,000 total membership (2,000 in Petrograd) to over 100,000 by April. By October, membership in the Bolshevik Party had reached 350,000, including 60,000 in Petrograd and 70,000 in Moscow (Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 53; Fitzpatrick notes that “the Bolsheviks never made any formal decision to launch a mass recruitment drive, and seemed almost surprised by the influx,” and considers these numbers “shaky and perhaps exaggerated”).

[346] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 238.

The names that Mayakovsky selects for this passage – Guchkov and Rodzianko – appear also in *I Myself,* and there as here as a shorthand for the Provisional Government. In the chapter "26 February 1917" of *I Myself,* Mayakovsky even creates a verb from 'Guchkov':

> Пошёл с автомобилями к Думе. Влез в кабинет Родзянки. Осмотрел Милюкова. Молчит. Но мне почему-то кажется, что он заикается. Через час надоели. Ушёл. Принял на несколько дней команду Автошколой. *Гучковеет*. Старое офицерьё по-старому расхаживает в Думе. Для меня ясно — за этим неизбежно сейчас же социалисты. Большевики. Пишу в первые же дни революции Поэтохронику «Революция». Читаю лекции — «Большевики искусства».
>
> Went with the automobiles to the Duma. Got into Rodzianko's office. Looked Miliukov over. He didn't say anything, but for some reason it still seemed like he was stuttering. After an hour, I got bored. Left. Took command of the Auto School for a few days. Guchkov was in the air. The old officers took to strutting about the Duma just like in the old days. It was clear to me: soon after this revolution, the socialists would take charge. The Bolsheviks. In the first days of the revolution I wrote the chronicle-in-verse "The Revolution." Gave lectures – "The Bolsheviks of Art."[347]

The verb 'guchkoveet' is categorized as an imperfective subjectless verb (*bezlichnyi glagol*) in *Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo* and defined as "to develop under the influence of the politics of Guchkov."[348] This use of singular personae as plural representatives of their types (despite Lef's theoretical dislike for literary typology) reflects Mayakovsky's note to *150,000,000*: "Those who draw the Wilsons, Lloyd Georges, Clemenceaus sometimes show their mugs with moustaches, sometimes not; but that's beside the point because they're all one and the same thing."[349]

In both *I Myself* and *Khorosho!*, Mayakovsky leaves no ambiguity as to how the generalized and impersonalized people should respond to the Provisional Government, embodied

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[347] Mayakovsky, *Ia sam*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie socheninii*, vol. 1, 24. Italics added. Translation: in *Vladimir Mayakovsky: Selected Poems*, trans. James McGavran III (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 24.

[348] «Развиваться под влиянием политики Гучкова (о политической, общественной жизни)». Valerii Valavin, comp., *Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo: Opyt slovaria okkazionalizmov* (Moscow: Izdatel'skii tsentr Azbukovnik, 2010), 147-148.

[349] Maiakovskii, *150,00,000*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 137; qtd. in Jakobson, "On a Generation that Squandered its Poets," in *Language and Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1987), 278.

in these two names.[350] Onomastic deformation, together with the narrator's closing comment, underscore the 'alien' nature of the simultaneously specifically named and metonymically generalized villains of the Provisional Government, while the strength of the Bolshevik word flows out of captivity and into the people.

Chapter 3: Kerensky, Beastly Alien

Chapter 3 focuses on Aleksandr Fedorovich Kerensky (1881-1970) in an ill-defined temporal setting that likely falls between February and October 1917. In terms of Laursen's typology of villains, Kerensky occupies an in-between position: while much of the discussion of Kerensky frames him as 'alien' to the rising popular support for the Bolsheviks and the actual needs of the people, he also appears perverted by power and willing to use that power in a 'beastly' way to preserve it. While Kerensky bears characteristics of both of Laursen's types, Mayakovsky attacks Kerensky's masculinity in various ways in these chapters. This complex satire of Kerensky, corresponding to the variety of discourse on him, relies less on specific reference to Kerensky's policies and activities in 1917 than on evocation of well-known facts, rumors, and myths. The chapter serves to delegitimize Kerensky in the eyes of the reader, primarily through feminization, and conversely to justify the impending seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, who gain clarity throughout the narration leading to Chapter 6 and the storming of the Winter Palace.

The chapter begins, however, with a broad historic overview of the tsarist state, leading to oblique introduction of Kerensky:

> Царям / дворец / построил Растрелли.
> Цари рождались, / жили, / старели.
> Дворец / не думал / о вертлявом пострелe,
> не гадал, / что в кровати, / царицам вверенной,

[350] Cf. Eisenstein's depiction of the Cabinet of Ministers in the Provisional Government as bodiless suit jackets sitting around a table. Corney refers to this as 'phantom power' (Corney, *Telling October*, 190).

раскинется / какой-то присяжный поверенный.[351]

For the tsars Rastrelli built a palace.
Tsars were born, lived, grew old.
The palace did not think about a scrappy rogue,
could not have guessed that in the bed entrusted to tsaritsas,
some attorney-at-law would sprawl.

These lines are notable for breaking Mayakovsky's usual quatrain organization: on the basis of their rhymes, they may be subdivided into an opening tercet (Растрелли / старели / постреле) followed by a punning couplet (вверенной / поверенный).[352] Prosodic variation accompanies sweeping narration of the longstanding status quo in the Winter Palace, and thus underscores Kerensky's illegitimacy as a 'troublemaker' or 'upstart' (*postrel*).

In 1918 Mayakovsky evoked Rastrelli in the poem "Radovat'sia rano" ("It's too early to rejoice"), which offers no sympathy to pre-revolutionary culture and connects it with the White counter-revolutionary movement in the first year of civil war:

Будущее ищем.
Исходили вёрсты торцов.
А сами
расселились кладби́щем,
придавлены плитами дворцов.
Белогвардейца
найдете – и к стенке.
А Рафаэля забыли?
Забыли Растрелли вы?
Время
пулями
по стенке музеев тенькать.

[351] This is similar to Aseev's introduction of Annenkov, who does not receive a name until much later in the chapter, in *Semyon Proskakov*. The notable difference here is that Kerensky was extremely well-known and was likely recognizable by this description alone, whereas Annenkov was far less notorious to the average Soviet reader.

Mayakovsky returns to the image of Kerensky in the bed of Aleksandra Fedorovna in the conclusion to Chapter 5: «Быть / Керéнскому // биту и ободрану! // Уж мы / подымем / с царёвой кровати // эту / самую / Александру Федоровну» ("Let Kerensky be beat and flayed! / We'll raise this Aleksandra Fedorovna herself / from the tsarist bed" (Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 253).

[352] Subsequent lines follow a quatrain structure.

Стодюймовками глоток старье расстреливай![353]

We search for the future.
We've covered *versts* of wooden paving blocks.
But we ourselves
have settled down like a cemetery,
weighed down by the slabs of palaces.
If you find a White Guardist,
push him to the wall and shoot him.
So you forgot Rafael?
Forgot Rastrelli, did you?
It is time
for bullets
to jingle along museum walls.
Fire on the old with the hundred-inch guns of your gullets!

The binary opposition here between old and new, separated implicitly by the revolution, links 'us' with the future. Halina Stephan refers to this poem as "a statement on the necessity of separating the new art from former artistic traditions,"[354] but it connects political and cultural questions in a literalization of oppression ("weighed down by the slabs of palaces") comparable to the political imagery of Chapter 2 of *Khorosho!* ("Guchkovs, devils, ministers, Rodziankos in a pile on our necks"). Just as the White Guard movement challenges Soviet power, so do the Renaissance painter Rafael and Rastrelli represent the 'old' (*star'e*, a key word in Mayakovsky's depiction of his meeting with Aleksandr Blok by the Winter Palace in Chapter 7).[355] The solution proposed to

[353] Maiakovskii, "Radovat'sia rano," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 16.

[354] Stephan, *Lef and the Left Front of Arts*, 11.

[355] One wonders if Mayakovsky here also suggests distancing himself and the Russian Futurist movement from Marinetti, whose 1914 visit to Russia ended in mutual disappointment for him and the Futurists. By 1918 Marinetti was tending towards the fascism that *Novyi Lef* would later decry. For a summary of Marinetti's visit and comparison of Italian and Russian Futurism, see Barooshian, *Russian Cubo-Futurism: A Study in Avant-Gardism* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 145-152.

Osip Brik's article 1927 "My – futuristy" represents a rare instance of a (New) Lefist referring to the group as Futurists; in it, he denounces attacks on the Lefists (Futurists, according to their enemies) on the basis of that connection with Marinetti and fascism. Nikolai Khardzhiev later picked up Brik's basic argument. In Erlich's summary: "Many years later, N. Chardžiev, that keeper of the Futurist faith, was to subject Italian Futurism to quasi-Marxist unmasking. 'The Italian Futurists came into being as an ideology of the technical intelligentsia allied with large financial and industrial bourgeoisie.' 'Hence <…> Marinetti's imperialism, militarism, espousal of cynical, Machiavellian foreign policy.'" In the early days of Lef, however, Lefists used both terms, as does Sergei Tret'iakov

both the problems of the White Guard movement and the old culture of the past, at once represented by and enclosed in museums as architectural monuments, is revolutionary violence and destruction, underscored here by the rhyme *Rastrelli vy / rasstrelivai*, and continued later in the poem, as Mayakovsky calls for dynamiting the statue of Tsar Alexander III on Znamenskaia Ploshchad' (today's Ploshchad' Vosstaniia).[356] At the same time, though, Mayakovsky models the new art sonically through the 'jingling' of bullets on museum walls: in other words, destruction of the past not only metaphorically clears space for the new art, but is also the new art itself. Moreover, this new art connects directly to revolutionary violence through the enclosed rhyme *k stenke / tenkat'*. The diminutive *stenka* therefore can be justified not only in prosodic terms (rhyming with *tenkat'*), and not only by ironic diminution of ordinarily formidable museum walls (*stenka* rather than *stena*, and in any case, a drastically different usage for museum walls than the hanging of pictures), but also as a lightening of severity of revolutionary violence – which, in this poem, is part and parcel with the new art.

In the opening to Chapter 3 of *Khorosho!* Mayakovsky introduces Kerensky, without use of his name, as an unexpected phenomenon occupying the same building, the Winter Palace.[357] Indeed, the 'palace,' synecdoche for the tsars, but also as an architectural monument to Russia's

in his article "Otkuda i kuda." See Brik, "My – futuristy," *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927), 49-52; Nikolai Khardzhiev, "Veselyi god Maiakovskogo," in *Vladimir Majakovskij: Memoirs and Essays*, ed. Bengt Jangfeldt and Nils Åke Nilsson (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1975) 119-120, qtd. in Erlich, "The Place of Russian Futurism in the Avant-Garde" 8; Tret'iakov, "Otkuda i kuda? Perspektivy futurizma," in *Lef*, no. 1 (1923), 192-203, qtd. in Dobrenko, *Aesthetics of Alienation*, 61.

[356] These lines conceal a more complex relationship between Mayakovsky, pre-revolutionary culture, and the nascent Bolshevik government in 1917, as exhibited in his participation in the Union of Creative Workers (Soiuz deiatelei iskusstv), in which figures including Aleksandr Benua (Benois), Aleksandr Blok, Osip Brik, Feodor Chaliapin, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and Il'ia Zdanevich, among others, also participated.

[357] Cf. Aseev's introduction of Annenkov in *Semyon Proskakov*, which similarly describes the character before revealing his name. If Aseev discusses Annenkov as a figure of the civil war whose destructive tendencies may still be felt in the 'hooligans' of the NEP era, though, Mayakovsky emphasizes the singularity of Kerensky as a phenomenon – at least until the appearance of the parasitic lawyer Komarovsky in Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*.

cultural heritage, "could not have guessed" that "some lawyer" would later take residence in it - and with it, political power. Although representing a break from the succession of tsars, who "were born, lived, and grew old" in the Winter Palace, the definition of Kerensky first as a lawyer (*prisiazhnyi poverennyi*, the pre-revolutionary term) highlights the fact that Kerensky's power was not underwritten by popular support or decision.[358] Kerensky's rise from petty bourgeois origins to the bureaucratic class perhaps also predispose him to Mayakovsky's criticism.

Katanian argues that Mayakovsky relied on widespread views of Kerensky from 1917: that is, that rumors, including the rumor that Kerensky slept in the tsarina's bed, have no specific sources, but "simply were preserved from that time in Mayakovsky's memory."[359] The second reference to rumors in 1917 – that Kerensky slept in the bed of tsarina Aleksandra Feodorovna – supports Katanian's argument. Therefore, this feminization of Kerensky's persona cannot be called Mayakovsky's invention: whether he believed this rumor to be true or not, he captures one of the ways in which popular society questioned Kerensky's legitimacy, in this case, in a sensational, tabloid-like rumor. Rumors about Kerensky supported the view of him as effeminate and connected him directly to negative images of Aleksandra Feodorovna. Kolonitskii writes:

> Adherents of various political views emasculated Kerensky and deprived him of his manliness. Aleksandr Fedorovich Kerensky became known as 'Aleksandra Fedorovna,' a

[358] To the best of my knowledge, there is no study focusing on images of lawyers in literature of the pre-revolutionary and immediate post-revolutionary period. Earlier images of law, including lawyers, in the works of Gogol have been analyzed by Naomi Olson in her dissertation *The Problem of the Law: Nikolai Gogol and Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*.

Historian Robert Sharlet describes a "revolution of law" in the late 1920s, arguing that this revolution was part of the broader cultural revolution of the time. Moreover, legal scholars like E.B. Pashukanis maintained that "law was rooted in the institution of private property," from which he "derived his complex theory of law as a uniquely 'bourgeois' phenomenon." Pashukanis therefore envisioned a "withering of the law" that would proceed together with the withering of the state. See Sharlet, "Pashukanis and the Withering Away of Law," in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931*, 171-72.

Lawyers also qualified as "bourgeois specialists," a group that was simultaneously necessary and reviled.

[359] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 290. It is worth recalling here Mayakovsky's description of *Khorosho!* as featuring "facts of varying historical caliber." Whether Mayakovsky believed this or any other rumor about Kerensky, he creates a villainous portrait of Kerensky through evocation of views on him in 1917.

> reference to images of the last empress and qualities attributed to her: debauchery and betrayal. [Zinaida] Gippius, in autumn 1917, referred to her former friend as a 'petticoat revolutionary.' G.V. Plekhanov was accredited with the following characterization of Kerensky: the 'Sarah Bernhardt from Tsarevokokshaisk.' By the same token the founder of Russian Marxism identified three commonly acknowledged characteristics of Kerensky: his capacity for acting, his femininity, and his provincialism.[360]

Nonetheless, Mayakovsky's feminization of Kerensky has a direct antecedent in his revolutionary poetry. Katanian identifies a short poem, written as a caption to illustrations and published without attribution to Mayakovsky in the "Panopticon" section of the satirical journal *Krasnyi Perets* in 1924,[361] in which this same aspect of Kerensky's life in the Winter Palace is satirized:

> №№ 16, 18 и 19 — Это
> Александра Федоровича Керенского исторические предметы:
> царская кроватка,
> левая перчатка
> и язык, который обвил как змий его
> и довел немного подальше, чем до Киева.
>
> Pictures 16, 18, and 19 – these are
> the historical objects of Aleksandr Fyodorovich Kerensky:
> the little royal bed,
> a left glove
> and a tongue that enwrapped him like a serpent
> and led [him] even a bit farther than Kiev.

Notable in this fragment is the inversion of nominative and genitive phrases, a sort of garden-path sentence in which once might initially think that tsarina Aleksandra Fedorovna Romanova is the subject. This phrasing associates Kerensky with the tsarina in an attack on Kerensky's legitimacy. Moreover, the continuity between this poem and depiction of Kerensky in *Khorosho!*, separated

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[360] Kolonitskii, "Russian Leaders of the Great War and Revolutionary Era in Representations and Rumors," trans. Diana Statham, in *Cultural History of Russia in the Great War and Revolution, 1914-1922,* ed. Murray Frame et al (Bloomington: Slavica, 2013), 46-7.

[361] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 305. This same journal is an object of Bulgakov's satire on the overabundance of all things 'red' in *The Fatal Eggs*. Aseev's 1920 poem "Kumach" is another example.

by a decade, provide Mayakovsky with an argument for being on the right side of history since the beginning.

In *Khorosho!* Mayakovsky returns to the image of Kerensky in the Winter Palace, now connecting it to Kerensky's background as a lawyer, his provincial upbringing, and his rapid political rise to present Kerensky as an illegitimate pretender to the throne. «От орлов, / от власти, / одеял / и кру́жевца // голова / присяжного поверенного / кружится» ("From the eagles, from power, blankets and lacework / the lawyer's head spins"). That is, imperial symbols and political power appear alongside domestic imagery, the combined impression of which illustrates Kerensky's illegitimacy: the Winter Palace is not Kerensky's domain, and his head spins from the combination of politics and royal finery. The idea of illegitimacy goes together with Kerensky's rise to power: in these lines he is not the Chair of the Provisional Government, but a backwater lawyer.[362] All that said, Mayakovsky cannot push this point too far: although he never became a practicing lawyer, Lenin also studied to become a lawyer, and like Kerensky, was born and raised in the provinces. This perhaps also explains Mayakovsky's use of the prerevolutionary term *prisiazhnyi poverennyi*.

Subsequently two contrasting versions of Kerensky emerge in compliment to those discussed above: Kerensky as a Napoleonic figure and Kerensky as feminized double of empress Aleksandra Fedorovna. Kolonitskii writes that in autumn 1917, "The characterization of Kerensky as a Napoleonic figure acquired new significance. Increasingly he was described as a phony Napoleon, a politician who was trying to play the role of Napoleon while lacking the necessary political and personal qualities (his reputation as an 'actor' reinforced this)."[363] This view of

[362] Kolonitskii notes that naming Kerensky as a 'False Dmitrii' was widespread in conservative circles by autumn 1917. These same circles previously referred to him as 'Minin' or 'Pozharsky.'

[363] Kolonitskii, "Russian Leaders," 47.

Kerensky had in fact emerged by spring 1917, although Kolonitskii notes that public opinion became increasingly polarized in the leadup to the June "Kerensky Offensive,"[364] with some viewing in Kerensky "a unique leader-cum-savior," while others saw in him "the gravedigger of the Revolution," although "for a time Kerensky's image served to unite a number of moderate socialists, several liberals, and even groups of nationalists."[365]

Mayakovsky relegates Kerensky's Bonapartist reputation from impressive political stature to physical caricature.[366] «Глаза / у него / бонапартьи // и цвета / защитного / френч» ("His eyes are Bonapartian / and the green color of his military field jacket").[367] *Bonapartii,* another of Mayakovsky's neologisms,[368] appears as a short-form soft-stem adjective that fits the word-formation paradigm common in adjectives from names of animals (*medvezhii,* 'ursine,' or *ribii,* 'fishlike,' for example).[369] Reference to the military green field jacket also corresponds with common physical description of Kerensky – a somewhat risky point for Mayakovsky to emphasize, given the outrage his own yellow jacket (*zheltaia kofta*) had been causing around the same time.[370]

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[364] Also known as the June or July Offensive (depending on the calendar), the Kerensky Offensive was the Russian Army's final attempt to gain territory in Galicia. Hans Rogger refers to it as a "military débâcle" (Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution, 1880-1917* [London and New York: Longman, 1983], 282). The offensive was one of Kerensky's last actions as Minister of War before becoming Prime Minister in early July.

[365] Kolonitskii, "Russian Leaders," 43.

[366] Kolonitskii cites one of Trotsky's speeches at the Petrograd Soviet in 1917 as an example (Kolonitskii, "Russian Leaders," 47); for extended discussion of Trotsky's role in "the formation of the image 'Kerensky-Bonaparte'," see Kolonitskii, *Tovarishch Kerenskii,* 332-335.

[367] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!,* in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 8, 240-1. Again I coin a neologism, 'Bonapartian,' to approximate Mayakovsky's.

[368] Valavin, *Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo,* 76.

[369] This image correlates quite well with Aseev's description of Annenkov in *Semyon Proskakov,* in which the narrowness of Annenkov's eyes suggest a certain evil.

[370] See, for example, Ivanov-Razumnik, "Misteriia ili buff?," in *Vladimir Mayakovsky (Misteriia ili buff*) (Berlin: Skify, 1922).

The image of Kerensky as a new Russian Napoleon entails abuse of power and aspirations to fame.[371] If the finery of the Winter Palace set Kerensky's head spinning upon arrival, ascent to the head of the Provisional Government now leaves him "intoxicated by his own fame / drunker than forty-degree [proof] vodka" («Он сам / опьянен / своею славой // пьяней, / чем сорокаградусной»).[372] In this chapter, Kerensky proves quite willing to wield his power as if drunk, and his speech reflects that sense of drunkenness, hardly resembling that of a competent political actor capable of careful consideration or a figure that would move Russia out of its tsarist past:

> «Аграрные? / Беспорядки? / Ряд?
> Пошлите, / этот, / как его, – / карательный
> отряд!
> Ленин? / Большевики? / Арестуйте и выловите!
> Что? / Не дают? / Не слышу без очков.[373]
> Кстати… / об его превосходительстве… / Корнилове…
> Нельзя ли / сговориться / сюда / казачков?!.»[374]
>
> "Agrarian? Riots? The ranks?

[371] In his analysis of Kerensky's 'Bonapartism,' Kolonitskii references Marina Tsvetaeva's May 1917 poem «И кто-то, упав на карту…» as an example of a positive interpretation of Kerensky's symbolic connections to Napoleon, and to Tsvetaeva herself as one of Kerensky's "enraptured adorers" (a phrase borrowed from the biographer O. Leonidov). Kolonitskii summarizes: "For Tsvetaeva the French emperor was a great historic figure who towered over countless mediocrities" (Kolonitskii, *Tovarishch Kerenskii*, 335-36).

In 2014 an auction house in Moscow offered a copy of Tsvetaeva's *Tsar-Devitsa* signed to Kerensky in 1924 with the inscription «Дорогому Александру Федоровичу Керенскому – русскую сказку, где ничто не сладится». https://russkiymir.ru/en/news/135124/

[372] In the next chapter, Mayakovsky references the ban on alcohol sales in Petrograd at the time, which loyal officers were able to circumvent.

[373] Grigorii Vinokur cites these lines, along with others from other works, as an example of Mayakovsky's "disjunction of words within an expression based on replacement of one part of an expression with some new and unexpected material" («разобщение слов внутри выражения, которое основано на подмене одной части выражения каким-нибудь новым и неожиданным материалом».). See Vinokur, *Maiakovskii – novator iazyka* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1943), 108.

Kirill Vishnevsky also emphasizes the strangeness of this phrase but views it as indicative of Kerensky's incompetence. However, he also suggest an association not with phrases like «Не вижу без очков», but with the idiomatic phrase «наденьте очки, если вы безграмотный». Vishnevskii, *Poema V.V. Maiakovskogo "Khorosho": Kommentarii* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1987), 43.

[374] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 220. Kerensky's speech continues to consider saving the now-deposed Nikolai II from arrest by the Petrograd Soviet by sending him to his cousin George V in England.

> Send that, what's it called, – the punitive
> division!
> Lenin? Bolsheviks? Arrest them, catch them all!
> What? They're not letting you? Can't hear without my glasses.
> By the way… about his excellency… Kornilov…
> Can't he get some Cossacks here?"

Kerensky's dominant idea in this passage is to use force to quash opposition, whether coming from rural localities, Lenin and the Bolsheviks, or urban workers. On this passage Pitskel' comments:

> Удивительно красноречива эта запинка, с которой он произносит, наконец, выражение «карательный отряд»: оно режет нежное соглашательское ухо этого забывшего «и классы и партии» политического деятеля. Но смущает его, конечно, только слово: само по себе действие, выраженное этим понятием, – жестокое подавление крестьянских выступлений – кажется ему вполне допустимым и приемлемым.[375]
>
> Surprisingly eloquent is this stumble in speech by which he pronounces, finally, the phrase 'punitive division': it grates the delicate compromiser ear of this political figure that forgot 'both classes and parties.' But what bothers him, of course, is just the word: the act expressed by this concept itself – harsh suppression of peasant uprisings – seems to him entirely permissible and reasonable.

This passage seems not so much eloquent as confused: surely the person with the authority to summon a military force ought to know its name and should treat it greater seriousness than Kerensky's use of the diminutive *kazachki* suggests. Kerensky's oratory comes into consideration elsewhere, but here, it seems that he is confused about the mechanisms of violence at his disposal, which include General Lavr Kornilov, whose leadership of Cossack forces into Petrograd in July 1917 has been understood as a possible attempt at a coup, but otherwise as a misunderstanding between Kornilov and Kerensky about the former's task to maintain order.[376] It is, as best as I can tell, the only direct or indirect reference to Kornilov in the *poema*.

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[375] Faina Pitskel', *Poema Maiakovskogo Khorosho!*, 141, qtd. in Vishnevskii, *Poema V.V. Maiakovskogo "Khorosho"*, 42.

[376] Steinberg emphasizes the confusion of the Kornilov uprising/coup, from the sides of Kornilov and Kerensky and the Provisional Government and in interpretations among various sections of Russian society. See Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution*, 77-78.

Kerensky's speech continues for several more lines in a similarly confused fashion marked by frequent ellipses. But Kerensky's voice faces other limits. In a manner similar to Aseev's treatment of Annenkov, Mayakovsky delegitimizes Kerensky's speech through narratorial commentary. Oratorial abilities eventually connect with the view of Kerensky as an actor, but Mayakovsky initially treats these aspects of Kerensky's persona separately. Following evocation of Kerensky's 'Bonaparte' eyes, the idea of speech, speeches, and speechifying comes to the fore; yet it is not Kerensky's voice that is heard, but the narrator's:

> Слова и слова. / Огнесловая лава.[377]
> Болтает / сорокой радостной.
> Он сам / опьянен / своею славой
> пьяней, / чем сорокаградусной.
> Слушайте, / пока не устанете,
> как щебечет иной адъютантик:[378]
>
> Words and words. Fire-worded lava.
> He chatters like a happy magpie.
> He himself is drunk on his own fame
> drunker than the forty-degree stuff.
> Listen, while you're still not worn out,
> to how another little aide-de-camp warbles:

In Fitzpatrick's evaluation, "the whole affair [the July Days and Lenin's decision not to capitalize on disorders in Petrograd] damaged Bolshevik morale and Lenin's credibility as a revolutionary leader" (Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 59).

[377] «Огнесловый» is another of Mayakovsky's neologisms (Valavin, *Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo*, 347). Kerensky's reputation as a passionate orator justifies this phrase in part, but it is not clear to me why Mayakovsky describes Kerensky's speech as lava. Perhaps it can be read as a synthesis of water and fire, two important motifs in *Khorosho!* It is curious to note that Mayakovsky used this word once elsewhere: in his 1915 essay "A Drop of Tar" ("Kaplia degtia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 349-51), to describe supposedly dead Futurism.

In this instance there does not appear to be any immediate context of 1927 to justify the adjective. Two earthquakes happened in Crimea in 1927, where there also are volcanoes, but they are inactive. As best as I can tell, no significant volcanic eruptions happened in Mayakovsky's immediate temporal context.

Lava perhaps contrasts with the spread of Bolshevism in Chapter 3 and could also suggest a slow, oozing perniciousness to Kerensky's rhetoric. Searches of *Pravda* for 1925-1927 yield many results (many of them false, for example, usages of *glavnyi* or *Lavrenty*), but closer examination might be clarifying.

The actor Narokov is cited in Kolonitskii's study of Kerensky as using the phrase «многоречивая лава», but the similarity seems likely coincidental, as the memoirs Kolonitskii cites were not published until 1956, and there are no grounds to assume that Mayakovsky would have known or heard this phrase from Narokov or anyone else at the time.

[378] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 241.

The opening line quoted here evokes Hamlet's response to Polonius, and thus again suggests Kerensky's illegitimacy.[379] Even Kerensky's famous oratorial abilities are dismissed by unflattering comparison with a "joyful magpie." The idea of falsity in Kerensky's words is called into question twice again in this short excerpt: first by drunkenness with power, actualized in the impaired speech seen above and underscored by hyperbolic description of Kerensky as "drunker than vodka."[380] Kerensky's power-drunk verbosity also 'bares the device,' in Formalist terms, of how to interpret Kerensky's speech, implicitly warning the reader that its fragmentariness arises from a figurative intoxication with power.

Mayakovsky does not incorporate Kerensky's own voice a second time in this chapter. When it appears again in Chapter 6, the negative interpretation requires no similar commentary. In that speech, Mayakovsky paraphrases one of Kerensky's most famous phrases, in which he referred to the Russian people as «взбунтовавшиеся рабы» ("slaves in revolt").[381] I return to that phrase with attention to its context in analysis of Chapter 6. Here again Mayakovsky does not reference a famous historical point for the first time. He had paraphrased this quotation in *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin* in description of the July Days:

> – Раб взбунтовался! / Плетями, / да в кровь его!
> И ручку / Керенского / водят приказом –
> На мушку Ленина! / В Кресты Зиновьева!
> И партия / снова / ушла в подполье.[382]

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[379] Katanian's notes to the *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* remind the reader that Lenin had written about Kerensky's 'Bonapartism' (Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 13, 442); the article in question is "Nachalo Bonapartizma," *Rabochii i soldat*, no. 6, 29 July 1917.

[380] Alcohol sales were banned during World War I (Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution*, 138). There were ways around the ban: the first half of Chapter 5 shows two pro-Provisional Government military officers at a fancy restaurant, drinking contraband vodka out of teacups.

[381] However, Mayakovsky incorporates parts of Kerensky's reminiscences on the storming of the Winter Palace into this chapter, to be discussed below.

[382] Maiakovskii, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 278-279. Here Mayakovsky references the aftermath of the July Days: the Provisional Government issued arrest warrants for Lenin and Zinov'ev,

– The slave has risen up! Lashes, until he bleeds!
And they take the pen of Kerensky like an order –
Lenin in your sights! Zinovev to Kresty [Prison]!
And the party again went underground.

Having warned the reader of the danger, but also the vacuousness of Kerensky's voice, the narrator diverts readerly attention to the birdlike 'chirping' of one of his aides-de-camp. Through that voice, the reader learns, or is prompted to recall, Kerensky's voice without having to actually hear it, and with the warning it could have a negative effect ("listen while you're still not worn out").

However, Mayakovsky acknowledges Kerensky's popularity in mid-1917. As the aide-de-camp describes:

«Такие случаи были –
он едет / в автомобиле.
Узнавши, / кто / и который, –
толпа распрягла моторы!
Взамен / лошадиной силы
сама / на руках носила!»[383]

"There were situations like this –
he is riding in an automobile.
Having found out who and which, –
the crowd unharnessed the motors!
In exchange for horsepower
they carried him in their own arms!"

These lines acknowledge Kerensky's significance to at least some people at the time, and receive corroboration in Kolonitskii's study of Kerensky, in which he cites the reminiscences of a female student on a visit by Kerensky to Odessa:

Когда показался автомобиль министра (т. е. Керенского), толпа бросилась к нему, прорвав солдатскую цепь. В страшной давке девушка чуть не потеряла сознание, но это не умерило ее энтузиазма.

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the former of whom went into hiding in Finland, and arrested Trotsky and other Bolsheviks (Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 59-60). Kolonitskii notes that Kerensky in fact used this phrase in April and contrasts it with appraisals of Kerensky as "a great citizen" (*velikii grazhdanin*; Kolonitskii, *Tovarishch Kerenskii*, 221).

[383] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 241.

> When the automobile of the minister (that is, Kerensky) appeared, the crowd threw itself at it, breaking through the chain of soldiers. In the terrible crush a girl almost lost consciousness, but this did not dampen her enthusiasm.[384]

Kolonitskii finds another example of this sort of response to Kerensky in the biography *Vozhd' svobody A.F. Kerenskii* by one O. Leonidov:

> Тернист путь Керенского, но автомобиль его увит розами. Женщины бросают ему ландыши и ветки сирени, другие берут эти цветы из его рук и делят между собою, как талисманы и амулеты.
>
> Thorny is the path of Kerensky, but his automobile is wreathed in roses. Women throw him lilies-of-the-valley and lilac branches; others take these flowers from his hands and share them among themselves like talismans and amulets.[385]

In Mayakovsky's rendition, the physical power of people replaces the horsepower of the vehicle, ironically foreshadowing Kerensky's later escape from the Winter Palace in a run-down automobile, seen in Chapter 6. At the same time, though, the 'crowd' (*tolpa*) bears negative connotations that the 'people' (*narod*) does not. These lines also contrast Kerensky with Mayakovsky himself, since Mayakovsky was drafted into the Military Automobile School in 1917, in which he served until August.[386]

Breaking from the aide-de-camp's speech, the narrator takes control of interpretation of this scene:

> В аплодисментном / плеске
> премьер / проплывает / над Невским,
> и дамы, / и дети-пузанчики

[384] Kolonitskii, *Tovarishch Kerenskii*, 320.

[385] Kolonitskii, *Tovarishch Kerenskii*, 181.

[386] On Mayakovsky's military service in 1917, see Efim Dinershtein, "Maiakovskii v fevrale-oktiabre 1917 goda," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 65, 541-570. The relative ease of this military service, as Dinershtein describes it, is perhaps also testified in the fact that Jangfeldt does not mention it in his biography of Mayakovsky.

кидают / цветы и розáнчики.[387]

In an applausatory splash
the premier floats above Nevsky,
and ladies, and potbellied children
throw flowers and rosebuds.

That is, the crowd in which Kerensky enjoys popularity is limited to high-society women and overfed children – hardly a show of mass support for the minister. Nonetheless, this detail reflects displays of affection for Kerensky: Kolonitskii further notes that "bringing flowers to Kerensky became an important ritual of greeting him."[388]

This passage prefigures the parodic representation of Kerensky as Onegin in Chapter 4. The 'applausatory splash' seen here has something in common with Onegin's arrival to the theater in Chapter 1, stanza XXI:

Все хлопает. Онегин входит,
Идет меж кресел по ногам,
Двойной лорнет скосясь наводит
На ложи незнакомых дам.

As all applaud, Onegin enters –
And treads on toes to reach his seat:
His double glass he calmly centers
On ladies he has yet to meet.[389]

Here, of course, Onegin observes the norm of the theater to wait for a break in the performance before entering. Nonetheless, it is not difficult to imagine Onegin feeling as though the crowd were

[387] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 241. «Аплодисментный» is another neologism; I have created the word 'applausatory' as an approximation (Valavin, *Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo*, 54).

[388] Kolonitskii, *Tovarishch Kerenskii*, 181.

[389] Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin*, in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, ed. Boris Tomashevskii, vol. 6 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1977-1979), 13; Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. James Falen (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), 13.

applauding him. Insofar as the Kerensky-Onegin connection becomes explicit in Chapter 4, one might also wonder if Mayakovsky hoped the reader would recall the remainder of this stanza:

> «Все ярусы окинул взором,
> Всё видел: лицами, убором
> Ужасно недоволен он;
> С мужчинами со всех сторон
> Раскланялся, потом на сцену
> В большом рассеянье взглянул,
> Отворотился – и зевнул,
> И молвил: «Всех пора на смену;
> Балеты долго я терпел,
> Но и Дидло мне надоел».
>
> He takes a single glance to measure
> These clothes and faces with displeasure;
> Then trading bows on every side
> With men he knew or friends he spied,
> He turned at last and vaguely fluttered
> His eyes toward the stage and play –
> Then yawned and turned his head away:
> 'It's time for something new,' he muttered,
> 'I've suffered ballets long enough,
> But now Didelot is boring stuff.[390]

The actor Kerensky, then, is doubly implicated as an obsolete and tiring performer and a hypocritical dandy, unaware that he also requires replacement (*smena*). The reader, however, must be aware that Kerensky's days are numbered, and the chapter thus builds anticipation of the October Revolution in Chapter 6.

The image of Kerensky as an actor emerges despite the absence of that word itself through the applause and flower-throwing of the crowd.[391] Furthering the image of Kerensky as actor and

[390] Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin*, in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 13-14; Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. Falen, 13.

[391] At the same time, this symbolism evokes the scenes quoted above from Kolonitskii's study: Kerensky's political career unquestionably brought with it a high degree of celebrity.

mirroring Onegin's wish for a change in repertoire, subsequent depiction presents Kerensky as constantly changing roles:

> Если ж / с безработы / загрустится
> сам / себя / уверенно и быстро
> назначает – / то военным, то юстиции,
> то каким-нибудь / еще / министром.[392]
>
> If he grows sad from lack of work,
> he names himself, self-assuredly and quickly,
> first minister of war, then of justice,
> then some other minister.

Evoking the 'ministerial leapfrog' of the Provisional Government but also naming each of Kerensky's titles in it, Mayakovsky links political power with theatrics and the idea that Kerensky acts (in both senses) primarily for his own amusement and self-aggrandizement. In doing so, he deploys tactics familiar to the general population from the tsarist era: in the face of civil disorder, his first response is to call in the literal cavalry.

The narrator provides the emphatic final appraisal of Kerensky in this chapter. In it, Mayakovsky acknowledges that Kerensky occupies but an auxiliary place in the narrative of the October Revolution, and indeed has been inscribed in it artistically, but argues that Kerensky is ultimately to be remembered as a sort of historical curiosity:

> Пришит к истории, / пронумерован / и скре́плен,
> и его / рисуют – / и Бродский и Репин.[393]
>
> Tacked on to history, numbered and tagged,
> and who draws him but Brodsky and Repin.

Both Isaak Brodsky and Ilya Repin painted portraits of Kerensky in 1917, both featuring the military green field jacket mentioned earlier. At the same time, the idea of fixing Kerensky in some

[392] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 241-242.

[393] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 243.

sort of scrapbook of the revolution and giving him a number in a catalog fits with both the factographic tendencies of the *poema* and with Istpart's 1927 calls for "relics" of the revolutionary era.[394]

This chapter of *Khorosho!* vividly evokes key elements of Kerensky's persona and reputation in order to delegitimize him. Katanian writes that in Mayakovsky's satiric work of 1917, "It was in no way possible to get by without Kerensky," and the same can be said of the necessary historical elements for an anniversary *poema* in 1927. Speaking at length of the months leading to October requires discussion of Kerensky, which in turn requires unambiguous delegitimization of him as the immediate predecessor to legitimate Soviet power.

Chapter 4: Aliens and Onegin

Mayakovsky develops the resemblance between Kerensky and Onegin in a parodic reenactment of sections of Chapter 3 of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* that he suggested in the preceding chapter. Kerensky does not in fact appear in the chapter, but he is the topic of discussion for the supporting cast. Socialist revolutionary-turned-liberal democrat Ekaterina Kuskova appears as Tatiana Larina with Cadet leader, prominent Duma representative, and professional historian Pavel Miliukov as the Larin family nanny. And as was the case for Kerensky there, the ultimate effect here is delegitimization of opposing views on the October Revolution, in this case, those of prominent liberals – and moreover, of influential voices in the émigré community.

The rewriting of *Eugene Onegin* in Chapter 4 of *Khorosho!* represents a continuation of Mayakovsky's insistence on the malleability of literary texts in the face of contemporary needs. Prefiguring the emphasis on "functional effectiveness" in the theory of factography and the theory

[394] Corney, *Telling October*, 117.

of social mandate, Mayakovsky prefaced the second version of the play *Mystery-Bouffe*, published and performed in 1921, as follows:

> «Мистерия-Буфф» – дорога. Дорога революции. Никто не предскажет с точностью, какие еще горы придется вырывать нам, идущим этой дорогой. Сегодня сверлит ухо слово «Ллойд-Джордж», а завтра имя его забудут и сами англичане. Сегодня к коммуне рвется воля миллионов, а через полсотни лет, может быть, в атаку далеких планет ринутся воздушные дредноуты коммуны.
>
> Поэтому, оставив дорогу (форму), я опять изменил части пейзажа (содержание).
>
> В будущем все играющие, ставящие, читающие, печатающие «Мистерию-Буфф», меняйте содержание – делайте содержание ее современным, сегодняшним, сиюминутным.[395]

> *Mystery-Bouffe* is a road. The road of the revolution. Nobody can foretell with certainty what mountains we will be forced to dynamite as we walk this road. Today the word 'Lloyd George' nags the ear, but tomorrow his name will be forgotten even by the English themselves. Today a wave of millions rushes to the commune, but in half a hundred years, perhaps, the aerial dreadnoughts of the commune will charge to the attack of distant planets.
>
> Therefore, leaving the road (form), I again changed parts of the landscape (content).
>
> In the future all those acting in, directing, reading, and printing *Mystery-Bouffe*: change the content – make its content contemporary, up-to-date, up-to-the-minute.

What Mayakovsky calls for in the future, and in fact does in 1920-1921 with a revised version of *Mystery-Bouffe*, he does similarly with *Eugene Onegin*.

By 1927 Mayakovsky had rewritten Pushkin to suit other purposes several times already. Liudmila Shleyfer-Lavine has recently analyzed the import of Pushkin's "Fairy Tale about the Tsar Sultan" ("Skazka o tsare-Saltane") to two 'extended advertisements' (*reklam-poemy*) of 1923: "The Tale about Klim from the Black-Earth Regions, about the All-Russian Exhibition, and about Rezinotrest" ("Rasskaz pro Klima iz chernozemnykh mest, pro Vserossiiskuiu vystavku, i pro Rezinotrest," with Sergei Tret'iakov) and "Weavers and Spinners! It's time for us to stop believing the foreign sheep" ("Tkachi i priakhi! Pora nam perestat verit' zagranichnym baranam," with

[395] Maiakovskii, *Misteriia-buff*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 245.

Nikolai Aseev). Shleyfer Lavine argues that in these *reklam-poemy* of the early NEP era, "Pushkin functions as the organizing principle," and that "One hundred twenty-five years after his birth, the poet becomes a sellable product that satisfies popular tastes, a convenient package that the avant-garde poet happily puts to use for the State."[396] Allusions to, overt borrowing from, and rewriting of Pushkin, she argues, "illustrate precisely the 'use value' of the literary canon, while the *reklam-poemy* – the creative 'inventions' – serve as examples of literary utility."[397] At this stage, roughly contemporaneous with Tynianov's first articulation of the idea of the 'literary fact,'[398] Mayakovsky (and presumably his co-authors) advocated that advertisement should include 'invention' or 'fabrication' (*vydumka* as Lavine's translates it, the same word familiar from Aseev's programmatic declaration of literature of fact in *Semyon Proskakov*), and should not drily list facts. In 1927, factography shifted the priority toward incorporation of factual material in literary works – still works of 'literary utility' – and conscientiously away from 'invention,' even if the Lefists never completely overcame 'invention' in creative work. In very rough terms, it can be said that Pushkin remains an organizing principle for this chapter.

While Mayakovsky's parody of *Eugene Onegin* is immediately evident, the rationale for his choice of characters is not. Mayakovsky scholars including Zemskov and Mashbits-Verov have

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[396] Lavine, "Pushkin Pushing Production," 340. The second quoted passage gestures towards a point of critique for Lavine's overall compelling analysis: as the phrase 'the avant-garde poet' suggests, analysis proceeds entirely through the prism of Mayakovsky, with cursory acknowledgement of Tret'iakov and Aseev's co-authorship.

Aseev claimed in the 1930s that he did not receive sufficient credit for his collaborations with Mayakovsky because Mayakovsky frequently arranged the contracts for these works himself and later passed on Aseev's pay to him (Aseev, "Vospominaniia o Maiakovskom," in *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, vol. 5, 681-82). There is probably some truth to this claim, although it is possible that Aseev's interest in emphasizing Futurism over work with the state in Mayakovsky's recollection prompted him to overstate his role in the creation of these works. In any case, disentangling the co-authors' contributions is a separate and perhaps fruitless task.

[397] Lavine, "Pushkin Pushing Production," 356.

[398] In "On the Literary Fact" ("O literaturnom fakte"), *Lef* no. 2 (1924).

proposed explanations from the political situation of 1917.[399] Katanian's proposal is somewhat more complicated. He proposes that Kuskova, who began political activity as a Marxist revolutionary but by the turn of the twentieth century had moved toward a centrist position close to that of the Cadet (Constitutional-Democratic) Party,[400] represents, together with Miliukov, the "philistine essence (*sotsial'no-obyvatel'skaia sushchnost'*) of the anti-Bolshevik camp."[401] According to Katanian's encyclopedic sources, after 1917 Kuskova became "a fierce enemy of Soviet power."[402] However, Katanian qualifies, little else was known of Kuskova after 1917. He cites one émigré journal that described her political views as "at a great distance from those of the leaders of the Menshevik-SR bloc and from the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies," adding that she was not aligned with any one Russian political group.[403] Additional loose connections to Mayakovsky in the 1920s, Katanian acknowledges, do not explain the choice to include her in *Khorosho!*

Katanian raises the possibility that Mayakovsky conflates the figure of Ekaterina Kuskova with Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia, the "so-called grandmother of the Russian revolution."[404] He does not point out the obviously shared first name, although linguistic play with personal names played a key role in Mayakovsky's satire as well as the political discourse of 1917.[405] More significant to Katanian are Breshko-Breshkovskaia's political views and role as a public figure in

[399] These arguments are briefly summarized in Vishnevsky, *Poema Maiakovskogo 'Khorosho'*, 47-48.

[400] After 1905, Kuskova published the liberal journal *Bez zaglaviia* (*Without a Title*).

[401] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 309.

[402] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 309.

[403] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 310.

[404] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 310.

[405] For example, the above-mentioned association of *Aleksandr Fedorovich* Kerensky with *Aleksandra Fedorovna* Romanova, suggested by Mayakovsky in this work and common linguistic currency in 1917 (Kolonitskii, "Russian Leaders," 46).

1917: returning from exile in March 1917 at the age of 73 to a leadership role in the Socialist Revolutionary party (the same party to which Kerensky claimed affiliation in 1917),[406] Breshko-Breshkovskaia was enamored with Kerensky, whereas "in the press of that time [1917] the name Kerensky was not connected with Kuskova."[407] The feeling between Breshko-Breshkovskaia and Kerensky, on the other hand, was apparently mutual: among those who met Breshko-Breshkovskaia at the train station upon her return was Kerensky, with a bouquet of roses in hand.[408] At the First All-Russian Conference of Soviets (Pervoe vserossiiskoe soveshchanie sovetov) in June 1917, the SR Kerensky and Menshevik president of the Petrograd Soviet Nikolai Chkheidze referred to Breshko-Breshkovskaia as an "emblem of freedom and the great Russian revolution."[409] Subsequently, mutual support between Kerensky and Breshko-Breshkovskaia continued, with the latter going so far as to "demonstratively leave" the congress of the SR party held in July 1917 to protest Kerensky's loss in elections to its central committee.[410] In the end, though, Katanian claims that this connection shows "the possibility and even necessity for generalization and typification."[411]

Biographies of Mayakovsky lack evidence of personal acquaintance between Mayakovsky and Kuskova, nor have I found any, although if a meeting ever happened, it likely would have

[406] Kerensky was initially a member of the Trudovik party, an offshoot of the Social Revolutionary Party.

[407] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 312.

[408] According to Elena Frolova, Breshko-Breshkovskaia's return from exile in Minusinsk (Krasnoiarskii Krai) to Petrograd was prompted by a telegram from Kerensky himself. See Frolova, "Istoricheskie portrety. Ekaterina Konstantinovna Breshko-Breshkovskaia," *Voprosy istorii* 8 (2004): 75.

[409] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 310. Chkheidze remained president of the Petrograd Soviet until September, when Trotsky was elected to the position.

[410] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 312.

[411] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 312.

happened in Paris 29 April – 9 May 1927 during Mayakovsky's European tour,[412] during which he recited poetry to huge audiences.[413] Katanian argues that the question is of no great importance, citing Mayakovsky's ability to categorize people according to broad characteristics, as seen at one literary dispute:

> Как-то на одном диспуте Маяковского упрекнули в том, что приведенная им цитата из Когана на самом деле принадлежит Львову-Рогачевскому (или Иванову-Разумнику?). — Все они Коганы! . . — безапелляционно возразил Маяковский».[414]
>
> Once at a debate Mayakovsky was reproached that a citation he quoted from Kogan in fact belonged to L'vov-Rogachevsky (or Ivanov-Razumnik?). "They're all Kogans!" Mayakovsky unequivocally retorted.

Complementary to Katanian's observations and quotations is the typological device that Mayakovsky also applied to Guchkov and Rodzianko:[415] it may be that Mayakovsky did not see noteworthy differences between these people, or otherwise that he identified specific personae for satire not for their individual characteristics, but for what they represented to him more

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[412] Of course, analysis of Mayakovsky's drafts would be necessary to argue for any specific relevance of Mayakovsky's time in Paris to the composition of *Khorosho!*

It is plausible that Mayakovsky would have encountered Kuskova at least by name in Paris, as Kuskova was a contributor to *Poslednie novosti* at the time. He could have come across Kerensky in similar fashion: Kerensky apparently moved to Paris sometime between 17 January and 1 October (*The New York Times* refers to Kerensky on the former date as part of "a local group of Russian exiles," while the founding of *Dni* under Kerensky's editorship is announced in the issue of the latter date (incorrectly, as it does not account for the newspaper's existence in Berlin). The precise date of the start of Kerensky's editorship of *Dni* has also proven elusive. Issues of *Dni* available in the internet archive of GPIBR (Gosudarstvennaia publichnaia istoricheskaia biblioteka Rossii) from April-June 1926 appear not to list an editor at all; issues from October-November 1927 that I viewed in the collections of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign feature a different layout and do list Kerensky as their editor. Access to the intervening issues might clarify the question.

[413] Katanian, *Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti*, 385-87. Sources quoted by Katanian estimate an audience of 1,200 at one of Mayakovsky's readings.

[414] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 312.

[415] Other examples of this tactic may be found, for example, in «Во весь голос»: «кто кропит, / набравши в рот: // кудреватые Митрейки, / мудреватые Кудрейки - // кто их к черту разберет!» (Maiakovskii, *Vo ves' golos*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 10, 280). The references here are to specific poets, but it is clear from the distortion and pluralization of the names Mitreikin and Kudreiko (the latter following the same pattern as 'Rodzianki' in *Khorosho!*) that other poets fit their description.

generally.[416] Nonetheless, even Katanian does not seem fully convinced by this explanation. Though consistent with Mayakovsky's conflation of figures he saw as similar, this would also run contrary to Lef's rejection of 'typology' (although, as seen above, Mayakovsky does exactly this with ministers of the Provisional Government in *Khorosho!*). In any case, with the help of searchable databases not at Katanian's disposal and recent research, it is possible propose an alternative explanation to Kuskova's appearance in this chapter, one that also explains her connection to Miliukov and at least speaks to a rationale for her love for Kerensky in the chapter.

Kuskova appears by name appears in *Pravda* thirty-three times from 1917-1926, including in two poems, one by Demian Bedny (11 April 1918), and another by an author with the pseudonym *Muzhik Vrednyi* (20 April 1918). In the period 1925-1927, her name appears only three times, including in speeches and articles by Grigorii Zinov'ev and Mikhail Pokrovsky. In *Izvestiia* Kuskova is mentioned 17 times from 1925-1927, including the same speech by Zinoviev as in *Pravda*. A search of the poetic corpus of the National Corpus of the Russian Language in the period 1917-1927 reveals only one other reference to Kuskova, a passing mention in Sasha Cherny's 1925 poem "Utopiia," which, incidentally, mentions a "local Miliukov" in the following line.

In these articles, several of the terms Mayakovsky uses in *Khorosho!* appear frequently. In the speech printed in both *Pravda* and *Izvestiia,* Zinov'ev refers to Kuskova with the title 'madam' ("Starye tseli, novye puti," *Pravda*, 30 April 1926); this title repeats or is otherwise substituted by

[416] Another explanation that Katanian does not consider is that Breshko-Breshkovskaia, a six-syllable word, could be cumbersome in verse. That explanation is not entirely convincing, insofar as the tonic metrics of *Khorosho!* allow for great plasticity in line length and distance between stressed syllables (as many as seven, by my count, which is admittedly not exhaustive). Perhaps another explanation could derive from the sonic rather than metric characteristics of the two surnames.

Beyond considerations of prosody, further research is required to determine the status of Breshko-Breshkovskaia in the revolutionary mythology of 1927. It is possible that Mayakovsky recalls her as a supporter of Kerensky but declines to name her because of her status as 'grandmother of the Russian revolution,' although she remained an opponent of Bolshevik power following the revolution.

the Russian '*gospozha*.' Another article in *Izvestiia* refers to Kuskova, who by now apparently was more accepting of Soviet power than Miliukov, resulting in a dispute between the two, as a "scheming banished Eve" («лукавая Ева изгнанная», *Izvestiia* 26 August 1926). Other results not directly related to Kuskova's political views per se, and at times not related to her at all, also could have prompted Mayakovsky to recall her: for example, an 8 March 1927 article in *Pravda* profiled a worker named Kuskova in a piece on female workers. More to the point, in its 8 September 1926 issue, *Pravda* covered theatrical productions by workers' clubs in metal factories. The performances did not satisfy the article's author, save one: a "near-professional" satire of Miliukov, Kuskova, the poet Bal'mont (also in emigration in Paris), and others by the "Krasnaia Presnia" drama circle. These results indicate that the early Soviet press discussed Kuskova more frequently than Katanian acknowledges. Continued discussion of Kuskova in Soviet press, together with Mayakovsky's trip to Paris in April-May 1927, perhaps provide sufficient rationale at least for Mayakovsky's awareness of her while writing *Khorosho!*

The rationale for inclusion of Miliukov in this chapter is somewhat less mysterious, especially given his status in the Parisian Russian émigré community and his connection to Kuskova through his editorship of *Poslednie novosti*.[417] As a prominent member of the Provisional Government of the Cadet party and the Third and Fourth Dumas, in the latter of which he gave the famous "Betrayal or Stupidity" ("Glupost ili izmena") speech, and a professor of history, Miliukov fits the model of the 'alien' villain. Like other members of the Provisional Government, and like Kolchak in Aseev's *Semyon Proskakov*, Miliukov represents a defeated villain. If nothing else, the fact of Miliukov's editorship of *Poslednie novosti* could not have escaped Mayakovsky's notice.

[417] Katanian does not address Miliukov's appearance in the *poema*: for him, apparently, the logic of Miliukov's inclusion is self-evident.

Mayakovsky's simultaneous parody of *Eugene Onegin* and Kuskova and Miliukov does not always proceed line-for-line with Pushkin's text. Nonetheless, Mayakovsky repeats some of the realia and motifs of *Eugene Onegin*. For example, Kuskova describes the degree of her infatuation with Kerensky as follows: «А как поет он / про свободу… // Я с ним хочу, - / не с ним, / так в воду».[418] This choice between requited love or suicide – a common trope in the literature of Pushkin's time – does not mirror Pushkin's plot: Tatiana finds an alternative to Onegin. When they meet again years later, she chides and categorically rejects him. However, the motif of water appears in a related passage of *Eugene Onegin*. Just before Tatiana reveals her love for Onegin (just as Kuskova is about to reveal that her love for Kerensky in this passage), she and the nanny have the following exchange in stanza XIX, in which Tatiana speaks first:

«Ах, няня, няня, я тоскую,
Мне тошно, милая моя:
Я плакать, я рыдать готова!..»
— Дитя мое, ты нездорова;
Господь помилуй и спаси!
Чего ты хочешь, попроси...
Дай окроплю святой водою,
Ты вся горишь... — «Я не больна:
Я... знаешь, няня... влюблена».

'Oh, nanny, life's so full of dangers,
I'm sick at heart and all upset,
I'm on the verge of tears and wailing!'
'My goodness, girl, you must be ailing;
Dear Lord have mercy. God, I plead!
Just tell me, dearest, what you need.
I'll sprinkle you with holy water,
You're burning up!' – 'Oh, do be still,
I'm … you know, nurse … in love, not ill.'[419]

[418] "And how he sings of freedom… / I want to be with him, and if not – I'll drown myself." Here my interpretation differs significantly from Katanian's. In these lines Katanian sees reference to Breshko-Breshkovskaia's accompaniment of Kerensky on many of his speeches and other engagements, including a visit to the Baltic Fleet. See Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 312.

[419] Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin*, in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 59-60; Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. Falen, 66. Italics added.

In addition to the water motif, substantially changed in Mayakovsky's rendition, Kuskova's love for Kerensky in this passage contains one indication of an 'alien' idealism: Kuskova is drawn to Kerensky in part because of how he "sings of freedom" – like a bird, the comparison Mayakovsky made in the second chapter, and a reference that substantiates the implied temporal setting between February and October 1917, a period that includes the 'springtime of freedom.'[420]

A few lines earlier, in a fashion reminiscent of the villains in *Semyon Proskakov*, Miliukov candidly exposes the falsity of his vision for Russian democracy to Kuskova:

> Чего ты хочешь? / Попроси.
> Чтобы тебе / на нас / не дуться
> дадим свобод / и конституций…
> Дай / окроплю / речей водою
> горящий бунт… / « – Я не больна,
> Я… / знаешь, няня… / влюблена».[421]
>
> What do you want? Ask.
> So that you won't get sulky with us,
> we'll give some freedoms and constitutions…
> Let me sprinkle with the water of speeches
> the fiery revolt… – I'm not sick,
> I… you know, nanny… am in love.

Miliukov's promise, though vague in its details (he is willing to grant an unspecified number of incomplete freedoms and constitutions?), is premised on appeasement of Kuskova rather than betterment of life for the country or its people. Democratic ideals, it turns out, are nothing more than reactionary promises designed to quell opposition. At the same time, etymological connections between *rech'*, 'speech,' and *reka*, 'river,' evoke the "river by the name of Fact" of the opening lines of the *poema*, involving a double meaning: on the one hand, Miliukov's speeches (and perhaps by extension, the speechifying of the Provisional Government) are as false as they

[420] Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution*, 16-17.

[421] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 245-246.

are numerous; on the other hand, Mayakovsky inscribes the fact of that falsity into the *poema* and connects it with the water motif. Moreover, Mayakovsky supplants the religious context of the nanny's original speech in *Eugene Onegin* with a political one: the 'water of speeches' replaces holy water, and further, is comically understated. 'Fiery revolt' would require more than a 'sprinkling' of water.

Another passage that closely mimics but rewrites Pushkin's original relates to questions of history and age. Preceding these lines, Kuskova asks Miliukov to open the window and sit with her, inviting him: «Поговорим о старине»,[422] replicating Pushkin's line exactly and obscuring the temporal setting (when are the 'olden times' for Kuskova and Miliukov?). In *Eugene Onegin*, the nanny's responds to Tatiana's request as follows in stanza XVII:

> — О чем же, Таня? Я, бывало,
> Хранила в памяти не мало
> Старинных былей, небылиц
> Про злых духов и про девиц;
> А нынче все мне тёмно, Таня:
> Что знала, то забыла. Да,
> Пришла худая череда!
>
> 'Well, what about it? Lord, it's ages…
> I must have known a thousand pages
> Of ancient facts and fables too
> 'Bout evil ghosts and girls like you;
> But nowadays I'm not so canny,
> I can't remember much of late.
> Oh, Tanya, it's a sorry state;[423]

Mayakovsky repeats Pushkin's lines at first, but diverges significantly from his source text after the first three lines, in which Miliukov responds to Kuskova:

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[422] Cf. an article published in the 26 March 1926 issue of *Izvestiia*, which describes a fundraising Maslenitsa celebration in Paris: "The kingdom of reminiscences attracts him [a reporter for the journal *Novoe vremia* – ZR], like Kuskova, like a gravitational force." ("Emigrantskaia Maslenitsa," *Izvestiia*, 26 March 1926, 2).

[423] Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin*, in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 58-59; Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. James Falen, 65.

— О чем, Кускова? / Я, / бывало,
хранила в памяти немало
старинных былей, / небылиц –
и про царей / и про цариц.
И я б, / с моим умишкой хилым, -
короновала б Михаила
Чем брать династию чужую…[424]

– About what, Kuskova? I, it used to be,
kept in my memory a number
of stories of yore, and fables –
about tsars and tsarinas too.
And I, with my feeble little mind,
would have crowned Mikhail.
Better than taking some other dynasty…

This passage also relates back to the opening of *Khorosho!*, in which Mayakovsky declares that he is not writing epics or fairy tales. Miliukov, the professor of history, displays the same faulty memory as Tania's nanny, intensified as a 'feeble little mind' that would even have 'coronated Mikhail.' There is multilayered irony in this phrase. In the most immediate sense, Miliukov likely refers to the attempt to transfer the emperorship from Nikolai II to his younger brother Mikhail, who refused to take the throne. However, Miliukov could also refer to the coronation of Mikhail Romanov in 1613 by vote in the Moscow Duma – the antecedent of the body in which Miliukov himself participated.[425] Suggestion of comparable political instability in the Time of Troubles and 1917 fits with Miliukov's vocation as a professor of history, but also provides Mayakovsky with an opportunity to ridicule Miliukov as a representative of the old, past Russian life.

[424] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 245.

[425] This seems also to fit with the idea of Kerensky's illegitimacy in Chapter 3, insofar as the election of Mikhail Romanov came in the wake of the series of False Dmitriis. That said, one might expect such an analogy to invoke Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, and I have not uncovered any such connections.

This passage fits an iambic rhythmic structure. Given how many of Pushkin's lines Mayakovsky uses verbatim, it is unsurprising that it approaches an Onegin stanza.[426] Mayakovsky uses this similarity to comic effect: substituting "about tsars and tsarinas" for "about evil spirits and maidens" places the former with the latter as creatures of a folkloric past, which Mayakovsky claimed he would not write in *Khorosho!*, but which suits depiction of the villains. The reader well-acquainted with *Eugene Onegin* could recall the rhyme *nebylits/devits*.[427] Moreover, this choice of words suits another historic detail: during World War I, rumors swirled about possible betrayal, both political and sexual, by the tsarina Aleksandra Feodorovna, the most recent *tsaritsa*, who, as seen in the preceding analysis, Mayakovsky closely connects with Kerensky. As Boris Kolonitskii describes,

> Rumors that the tsarina held pro-German views [Aleksandra Feodorovna was of the German nobility by birth – ZR] spread widely. Moreover, she was accused of preparing a separate peace and even conducting espionage on behalf of the enemy. Historians have not found convincing evidence to support these unlikely rumors. […] there was talk among both representatives of 'high society' and the common people that the tsarina was deceiving her husband. Rumors named a number of her alleged male and female lovers, but Rasputin was mentioned especially often. These rumors were completely groundless.[428]

Thus, with the change of one line after several verbatim lines from the original Pushkinian text, Mayakovsky evokes widespread perceptions of Alexandra Fedorovna while also subverting Pushkin's lines to place the tsarist era and its governmental system in a fairy-tale realm.

Some ways in which Miliukov is made to resemble the old nanny of the Larin family have already been suggested. It is noteworthy as well that in this passage, Miliukov speaks of himself

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[426] Beginning from the line «Не спится, няня…», as Pushkin's stanza does, the following rhyme scheme emerges, with bolded letters indicating deviations from the Onegin stanza: AbAbCCdd**eeFgFg**.

[427] The replacement of *devits* with *tsarits* also recalls Pushkin's own commentary in *Eugene Onegin* on expected rhymes: «И вот уже трещат морозы / И серебрятся средь полей… / (Читатель ждет уж рифмы розы: / На, вот возьми ее скорей!» (Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin*, in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 90 [Stanza 4.XLII]).

[428] Kolonitskii, "Russian Leaders," 31.

using feminine past-tense verb endings (*ia khranila, koronovala*, etc.). Usage of grammatically gendered past-tense forms is not consistent across the chapter. When the narrator refers to Miliukov by name, masculine past-tense verb endings appear: «И Милюков / ее / с мольбой // *крестил* / профессорской рукой» ("And Miliukov, with a prayer / crossed her with professorial hand"). A few lines later, grammatical confusion of biological gender continues in a neologism: «Смахнувши / слезы / рукавом, // взревел / усастый *нянь*» ("Brushing away tears with his sleeve / roared the mustached 'manny.'").[429]

This chapter of *Khorosho!* concludes with a lightly paraphrased passage from *Eugene Onegin*, still from the third chapter, but from the narratorial digression that follows the scene of Tatiana and the nanny (stanza XXII). Pushkin's stanza is:

> Я знал красавиц недоступных,
> Холодных, чистых, как зима,
> Неумолимых, неподкупных,
> Непостижимых для ума;
> Дивился я их спеси модной,
> Их добродетели природной,
> И, признаюсь, от них бежал,
> И, мнится, с ужасом читал
> Над их бровями надпись ада:
> Оставь надежду навсегда.
> Внушать любовь для них беда,
> Пугать людей для них отрада.
> Быть может, на брегах Невы
> Подобных дам видали вы.
>
> I've known great beauties proudly distant,
> As cold and chaste as winter snow;
> Implacable, to all resistant,
> Impossible for mind to know;
> I've marvelled at their haughty manner,
> Their natural virtue's flaunted banner;
> And I confess, from them I fled,

[429] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 246, 247.

Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo cross-references the neologism *nian'* with *lis* (from *lisa*, fox), one of Mayakovsky's terms of endearment for Lilia Brik (Valavin, *Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo*, 266, 333). As before, I create the neologism "manny" as an approximation.

As if in terror I had read
Above their brows the sign of Hades:
Abandon Hope, Who Enter Here!
Their joy is striking men with fear,
For love offends these charming ladies.
Perhaps along the Neva's shore
You too have known such belles before.[430]

Mayakovsky's conclusion reads: «Быть может, / на брегах Невы // Подобных дам видали вы?» ("Perhaps on the banks of the Neva / You saw similar ladies?").[431] That is, he changes Pushkin's closing statement to a question, but makes no other changes to this closing couplet.[432] Moreover, it is unclear to whom the "similar ladies" are to be compared: Kuskova, Miliukov, or both.[433] Katanian's interpretation of these lines again signals the "thinking in types" that Lefists rejected in theoretical writings.[434]

Mayakovsky's evocation of Pushkin in *Khorosho!* resembles his treatment of Pushkin in earlier works "Iubileinoe" and the *reklam-poemy* co-written with Aseev and Tret'iakov. He continues his emphasis on revision as a means to perpetuate the relevance of his works – an issue that faced the Lefists in 1927. The idea of revision of a published text to fit the needs of the present appears on a much broader level in Mayakovsky's rendition of the third chapter of *Eugene Onegin*: the entire chapter may be read as an 'updated' version to fit Mayakovsky's own social mandate.

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[430] Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin*, in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 61; Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. James Falen, 67, original italics in Falen's translation.

[431] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 247.

[432] At no point in the chapter does Mayakovsky exactly match the Onegin stanza's iambic pentameter or its rhyme structure. The 14 lines concluding with these, which could form an Onegin stanza, feature only paired rhymes.

[433] In Chapter 7, Mayakovsky meets Aleksandr Blok in front of the Winter Palace. While the location is not specified, one may deduce that it is the Palace Embankment, or in other words, on the banks of the Neva. However, I see no evidence for Mayakovsky feminizing Blok in that passage – his goals there appear to be different and will be discussed in due course.

[434] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 312. More precisely, Katanian argues that these lines create not only a possibility, but a necessity to generalize and categorize, in the same way in which Mayakovsky generalized antagonistic literary critics as "Kogans." Katanian does not consider the *poema* specifically in terms of factography.

In conclusion, this section offers a new explanation of the Kuskova-Miliukov-Kerensky trio in the chapter. It has shown that these historical personae not only remained relevant in 1927 but also may have had loomed in Mayakovsky's consciousness at the time, a circumstance facilitated by Soviet press of the time and possibly also Mayakovsky's trip abroad in spring 1927, which, I will argue, also figures prominently in Chapter 18. Satire is the primary weapon by which Mayakovsky exposes the vapidity and incompetence of liberal politics and politicians of 1917. It develops through tactics of feminization, which in turn echo common perceptions of the villains, hyperbole, which comically exposes the indifference of the liberals to deep change, and destabilization of the temporal frame, through specific utterances and the very couching of the chapter in *Eugene Onegin*. Together these devices cast the characters into the remote past that Mayakovsky rejects in *Khorosho!* and throughout his career. This chapter of *Khorosho!* uses Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* as a vehicle for exposition and delegitimization of the villains he targets.

Chapter 6: Mayakovsky and the Apotheosis of the Revolution

As Katanian points out, Chapter 6 of *Khorosho!* is the centerpiece of the *poema* that Mayakovsky had titled *25 October 1917* in drafts.[435] Discussing two of Mayakovsky's sources for the chapter, books that Katanian vaguely recalls as borrowed from the Briks and brought by Mayakovsky to the dacha in Pushkin in summer 1927 for composition of the chapter, Katanian explains that Mayakovsky "sought historical concreteness, precise historical details, the living view and feeling

[435] «[Маяковский] искал исторической конкретности, точных исторических деталей, живого взгляда и чувства участника. Иными словами – то, что не было им самим пережито на Дворцовой площади 25 октября 1917 г.» (Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 286).

Other commentators make similar statements about the centrality of the chapter: Vishnevsky, for example, claims that "the action here [in Chapter 6] reaches its highest tension" (Vishnevsky, *Poema Maiakovskogo "Khorosho,"* 67).

of a participant. In other words – that which he did not live through himself on Palace Square on October 25, 1917."[436]

Three plotlines unfold in the chapter: the storming of the Winter Palace; Aleksandr Kerensky's flight from the Winter Palace to Pskov; and happenings at the command center of the Bolshevik Military-Revolutionary Committee (MRC) at the Smolny Institute. In Corney's terms, the Bolsheviks presented the taking of the Winter Palace as the apotheosis of the revolution, the rough equivalent of the storming of the Bastille. In the analysis of Mikhail Iampolski, such symbolic representation of Soviet power was necessary because "one of the distinctive features of the October Revolution is that it did not create any fundamental symbolic document [of the type of the United States Constitution or the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen], the adoption of which would have formulated the revolution ideologically and gave it legitimacy."[437] In the absence of such symbolic documents, the storming of the Winter Palace occupied the central place in early (and subsequent) Soviet iconography of the October Revolution.

Chapter 6 of *Khorosho!* aligns with attempts to cast the storming of the Winter Palace as the singular transcendent moment of the Russian Revolution. The Bolsheviks understood the narrative potential of the storming of the Winter Palace in its immediate aftermath,[438] and sought to emphasize it in the historical-ideological narrative as a Russian version of the storming of the

[436] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 288. In this same discussion Katanian points out that 1929's "The Story of Khrenov about Kuznetskstroi and the People of Kuznetsk" (*Rasskaz Khrenova o Kuznetskstroe i liudiakh Kuznetska*) was written "entirely from the words of others" (*tselikom iz chuzhykh slov*).

[437] Iampolski, "Lenin provozglashaet sovetskuiu vlast'," 48. Iampolski convincingly argues that speeches by Lenin, as represented in Soviet visual art, came to substitute for a legitimizing document.

[438] Corney, *Telling October*, 32-35. Corney notes some early attempts to cast Smolny, the Bolshevik headquarters in October 1917, as the focal point of the revolution, but also that Smolny's importance quickly receded as that of the Winter Palace rose.

Bastille:[439] a single moment that encapsulates and transcends the revolutionary aspirations of the people through victorious conquest, overthrow of a key symbol of power. As Corney summarizes, in 1927 the storming of the Winter Palace was the centerpiece in commemorative depictions of revolutionary events focusing first and foremost on Petrograd and Moscow as the loci of revolutionary activity.[440]

Aside from the centrality of Chapter 6 for its depiction of a key moment in the Bolshevik historical narrative, the chapter is significant also for its depiction of Lenin – this is only chapter in the *poema* in which he appears, and in more complex terms than Mayakovsky had depicted him in 1924 – as a positive counterpoint to Kerensky, and for its import to Mayakovsky's experimentation with factography. The chapter is comprised almost entirely of deeply embedded citations from the published reminiscences of participants, or otherwise of paraphrases of them. Aside from a possible contradiction with Mayakovsky's earlier claim to witness of the events of 25 October at Smolny, to be discussed in this section, Mayakovsky himself remains subsumed by the revolution in this chapter: in the abundance of direct and paraphrased citations, little of the voice of Mayakovsky as author-narrator is heard.

The source materials in the chapter are poeticized not only in the way described by Corney, by which reminiscences such as those of Podvoisky changed their contours and emphases to fit

[439] Although arguing that the storming of the Winter Palace served a similar narrative purpose to that of the storming of the Bastille, Corney adds the qualification that the Bolsheviks did not intend to present the two events as historically parallel. There were both ideological and practical reasons for this. In ideological terms, the Bolsheviks generally viewed the French Revolution of 1789 as a bourgeois revolution, and thus as representing an earlier stage of the path to communism. In practical terms, as Corney points out, the Bastille also "had been 'prepared and instrumentalized by the media of the age' as a redoubtable fortress whose storming would symbolize an end to tyranny," whereas "the Winter Palace had undergone no such process." Corney, *Telling October*, 35.

[440] Corney, *Telling October*, 179. However, Corney acknowledges that emphasis on Petrograd and Moscow was tempered by calls for revolutionary actors of other localities to produce their own histories of October.

the criteria of "harmony, inexorability, and drama,"[441] but to a second degree, by which they were shaped to fit Mayakovsky's demands for rhythm, rhyme, and *lesenka* graphic orientation. Because Mayakovsky uses direct and paraphrased citations from accounts of participants for almost all lines of the chapter (with exceptions that will be discussed below), the chapter exemplifies the iterative and mutually reinforcing nature of narrative and memory, at least from a bird's-eye view. Mayakovsky himself does not appear in the chapter, but he instead channels the voices of participants into his own poetic voice: his individual voice is subsumed by the revolution, but it remains the voice of narration.[442]

That this sixth chapter is based heavily on source materials has been established by Katanian. In his 1958 article "O nekotorykh istochnikakh poemy 'Khorosho!'," previously cited in this chapter, Katanian identifies line-for-line source material. On the basis of personal recollection of Mayakovsky's work on the *poema* at the dacha in Pushkin (Tsarskoe Selo) in summer 1927, Katanian supposes that Mayakovsky found the majority of material for the sixth chapter in two anthologies of reminiscences, both likely borrowed from Osip Brik: *Khrestomatiia po istorii Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii*, compiled by the historian Sergei Piontkovsky and published in 1923,[443] and *Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia*, compiled by A.E. Sheinberg, edited by K.T. Sverdlova, and published in 1925.[444]

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[441] Corney, *Telling October*, 182.

[442] Thanks to Harsha Ram for drawing attention to the binary of standing above/being subsumed in Mayakovsky's poetry.

[443] This book was republished in a second edition in 1924, and a third edition in 1926. I have been able to access the second edition; it is unclear which edition Mayakovsky referenced.

[444] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh" 288. I have not been able to access this book; Katanian cites from it several times.

Katanian compellingly shows that Mayakovsky selected material from diverse sources for the sixth chapter of *Khorosho!*, including Military-Revolutionary Committee (MRC, Voenno-revoliutsionnyi komitet) members Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, also a member of the Petrograd Soviet; Grigorii Blagonravov, in 1917 stationed at the Peter and Paul Fortress; Mikhail Lashevich, who organized the uprising with Blagonravov from the Peter and Paul Fortress;[445] and Nikolai Podvoisky, who led the storming of the Winter Palace. The reminiscences of a worker named Adamovich, who participated in the storming, round out the pro-Bolshevik side. However, Mayakovsky also incorporates anti-Bolshevik voices: those of Kerensky, who has been described above, and Pavel Maliantovich, the last Minister of Justice of the Provisional Government. Katanian argues that some references, such as those to Maria Bochkareva and the 'women's death battalions' that she led, have no specific source, but "simply were preserved from that time in Mayakovsky's memory."[446] The unavailability of the two anthologies precludes deeper analysis of what Mayakovsky did *not* select from them, but it is certain that these two volumes represent only a small number of the reminiscences published from 1918 through 1927.

Katanian's identification of Mayakovsky's sources represents a laborious and painstaking task, and it is only thanks to his work that analysis in this chapter can proceed. However, without diminishing Katanian's efforts, this chapter addresses questions that his work does not. How does Mayakovsky's use of sources evidence his practices of factography, in terms of the selection of source material, its transformation in the literary text, and the limits of what factual material can 'tell' about the storming of the Winter Palace? How do these sources mesh with other representations of the storming of the Winter Palace in 1927 anniversary celebrations and with the

[445] Lashevich was a member of the Left Opposition in 1927; he was expelled from the Bolshevik Party in 1927. He recanted his Trotskyite views in 1928 and was readmitted to the Party, only to pass away in August 1928 in Harbin.

[446] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 290.

political realities of 1927? And why, if Mayakovsky witnessed the Bolshevik seizure of power from the Smolny Institute, as he previously suggested in *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin*, does Mayakovsky himself not appear in this chapter?[447] I argue that the organizing principle of this chapter is Mayakovsky's ability to subsume or separate the self from others in his poetic texts: subsuming himself in the events he narrates, Mayakovsky incorporates himself into those events, thus fusing himself and his narration to the events themselves. If Mayakovsky's sources are so deeply embedded in his narration that their sources cannot be determined easily, then he embeds himself in the storming of the Winter Palace so deeply that he becomes inseparable from it as well, even as he obliquely counters the trend throughout the 1920s of public remembrance (narration) of one's own role in the events of the revolution.

Katanian's study shows that Mayakovsky rarely uses verbatim citations. Most often, citations are paraphrased and subordinated to Mayakovsky's prosody.[448] Moreover, at no point does Mayakovsky suggest the presence of underlying source material, nor does he establish himself as a witness to the events at any of the Petrograd loci of the revolution. In essence, Mayakovsky becomes a sort *vox populi*: by concealing himself in narration, Mayakovsky

[447] This final question exemplifies the limits of Katanian's study. Katanian writes:

> Сравнение с описанием этого дня [25-ого октября – ZR] в поэме «Владимир Ильич Ленин» («Я вспоминаю одно и то же – двадцать пятое, первый день…») приводит нас к выводу: в отличие от сцены в Смольном, написанной по личным воспоминаниям, шестая глава поэмы «Хорошо!», описывающая события того же дня на Дворцовой площади и внутри Зимнего дворца, сделана, несомненно, по источникам. Маяковский, как мы знаем, не был ни на площади, ни в Зимнем, когда свергали Временное правительство. (Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 286).

The problem of Mayakovsky's place in this chapter and in the historical narrative he himself crafts, even if from source materials, will be addressed in detail in the coming pages.

[448] Katanian's identification of source materials supports Mikhail Gasparov's later argument that the basic unit of Mayakovsky's poetry is the quatrain.

circumvents the issue of his own credibility as a narrator and witness. If history is narrated in a quintessentially Mayakovskian way, it nonetheless does not place Mayakovsky in the lead role.[449]

The dual nature of paraphrase and Mayakovskian prosody is on display in the opening of the chapter:

> Дул, / как всегда, / октябрь / ветрами,
> как дуют / при капитализме.
> За Троицкий / дули / авто и трамы
> Обычные / рельсы / вызмеив.[450]

> October was blowing, as always, as winds
> as they blow under capitalism.
> Across Troitsky were blowing autos and trams
> Snaking out the usual rails.

This quatrain exhibits several features of Mayakovsky's method in this chapter. It uses approximate alternating rhymes – *vetrami/tramy* and *pri kapitalizme/vyzmeiv*.[451] According to Katanian, these lines are derived from the reminiscences of Grigorii Blagonravov, originally published in the fourth issue for 1923 of the journal *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* and subsequently in Piontkovsky's anthology:

> Октябрьская ночь вступала в свои права. Фонари мерцали тусклым светом, и лучи их дрожали на тяжелой зыби Невы; жизнь города шла обычным порядком: трамваи с резким звоном и шумом вереницей тянулись через Троицкий мост; мелькали автомобили и фигурки пешеходов; ничто не предвещало октябрьского боя.
>
> The October night came into its own. Streetlights gleamed with dim light, and their rays trembled in the heavy ripples of the Neva; the life of the city went in its usual way: trams

[449] This, of course, is markedly different from the *poemy* and plays from the prerevolutionary era through 1917: *Vladimir Mayakovsky: A Tragedy* (1913) and *Chelovek* (1918), for example. It is perhaps closer to *150,000,000* (1920). Although extended comparison of *Khorosho!* with *Vladimir Ilych Lenin* (1924) is beyond the limits of this study, remarks on the striking difference in how Mayakovsky integrates himself into the narrative in the two *poemy* appear later in this chapter.

[450] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 254.

[451] This pair can be viewed as combining a feminine rhyme (*kapitalízme*) and a dactylic rhyme (*výzmeiv*). *Vyzmeiv* is another of Mayakovsky's neologisms. *Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo* lists four other uses of this verb in Mayakovsky's oeuvre, one of which has a markedly different meaning from that here of "to stretch as a winding, serpentine line" («Вытянуть извилистой, змееподобной линией») (Valavin, *Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo*, 117-118).

> with sharp sound and the noise like a chain drew across the Troitsky Bridge; automobiles and figures of pedestrians flashed by; nothing foretold the October battle.[452]

Obvious details – trams and automobiles and the Troitsky Bridge – appear in both passages. One might argue that Mayakovsky emphasizes wind as an implied element causing the ripples of the Neva, but strong winds at any time of year, especially fall, are characteristic of Saint Petersburg in any case. Mayakovsky's own emphasis on urban *byt* finds a ready phrasing in Blagonravov's emphasis on the quotidian nature of the scene. However, Mayakovsky also transforms Blagonravov's description along ideological lines: expanding on the idea that "nothing foretold the October battle," the scene becomes a general depiction of life "under capitalism." Both phrasings establish the scene as reflecting normal life of the city for that historical moment: even when the storming of the Winter Palace is nigh, life is as it is on any other night. The importance of this transformation becomes evident at the end of the chapter, which largely repeats these lines but declares a deep change to socialism that is not evident in superficial urban realia.

It must also be noted, however, that Mayakovsky omits the people that Blagonravov places in the scene. Mayakovsky's city is primarily geographic (wind, Troitsky Bridge) and technological (automobiles, trams), while movement through it is snakelike (contrary to the rectilinear nature of Saint Petersburg emphasized, for example, in the introduction to Andrei Bely's *Petersburg*). Even though the presence of people is implied by the conveyances in the scene, these are the 'everyday citizens' (*obyvateli*) and not *the people* who make the revolution, that is, the masses that storm the Winter Palace. Thanks to Katanian's identification of the source text, we see fidelity in most images and ideas in combination with poetic rephrasing that expands the typicality of the night to represent the pre-October political situation. In this Mayakovsky hearkens back to the opening of

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[452] Blagonravov, in Piontkovsky, *Khrestomatiia po istorii Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii*, 195, qtd. in "Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochikakh," 290.

the *poema* ("Time is a thing extraordinarily long"; everything before October is part of the concluded capitalist past) but also alters the foreshadowing implicit in Blagonravov's original text ("Nothing foretold the October battle").[453] Nothing in these lines credits them to Blagonravov, and the average reader of 1927, and likely even the reader familiar with Blagonravov's account, may not identify it as source material.

A variation of Mayakovsky's citational technique from later in the chapter deserves attention as evidence of Mayakovsky's receptivity to external ideological considerations. Upon the Bolshevik taking of the Winter Palace, attention turns to one of the leaders of the assault, Nikolai Podvoisky:[454] «Товарищ Подвойский / сел в машину, // сказал устало: / «Кончено… / в Смольный».[455] According to Katanian, the corresponding moment in Podvoisky's reminiscences, published in Sheiberg's anthology, reads as: «Я уехал в Смольный. Было два часа. Зашел к Владимиру Ильичу».[456] The factographic relationship between Podvoisky's text and Mayakovsky's paraphrase of it is quite similar to that in the first example: rather than marking the time of night, Mayakovsky emphasizes the finality of the taking of the Winter Palace in accordance with his presentation of that moment as the apotheosis of the revolution.

Podvoisky, however, took issue with this version of events. As Katanian records,

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[453] It is worth bearing in mind that Chapter 5 ends with heightened expectation of the storming of the Winter Palace, namely, with a phrase by Lenin recorded by John Reed paraphrased as «Сегодня, / говорит, / подыматься рано. // А послезавтра - / поздно». See Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 443.

[454] Podvoisky wrote a short reminiscence in 1918 and updated it in 1927. Corney argues that "this [later] version of Podvoisky's recollections did not differ greatly *in its details* from his reminiscences of several years earlier, his vivid and dramatically embellished 'storming of the Winter Palace' now drew on ten years of cultural inscription of October, and incorporated all of the elements of harmony, inexorability, and drama that were markers of that process." Corney, *Telling October*, 89, 182.

[455] "Comrade Podvoisky got into the car, / said with fatigue: "It is finished – to Smolny." Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 262.

[456] "I left for Smolny. It was two o'clock. I stopped in to see Vladimir Ilych." Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 303.

> В поезде Кисловодск – Москва [in September 1927 – ZR] Маяковский встретил одного из своих героев – Н.И. Подвойский – и прочел ему некоторые главы, в том числе, разумеется, шестую.
>
> По поводу строк, где упоминается он сам («Товарищ Подвойский сел в машину, сказал устало: «Кончено… В Смольный»), Подвойский заметил: «Не мог я сказать тогда «кончено». Как «кончено», когда только началось?!».
>
> Я помню рассказ Маяковского о том, как он спорил тогда с Подвойским, возражал и доказывал, что в плане описания этого одного дня исторического переворота, подводя итог и подчеркивая завершение великих событий, это слово должно быть произнесено.
>
> On the train to from Kislovodsk to Moscow [in September 1927 – ZR], Mayakovsky met one of his protagonists – N.I. Podvoisky – and read several chapters to him, including, of course, the sixth.
>
> In regard to the lines in which he himself is mentioned ("Comrade Podvoisky got into the car, said with fatigue: 'It is finished… to Smolny"), Podvoisky remarked: "I could not have said then 'it is finished.' How could it be 'finished,' when everything had just then started?!"
>
> I remember Mayakovsky's story of how he argued with Podvoisky then, how he raised objections and tried to prove that in terms of description of this one day of the historic overthrow, summarizing and underscoring the accomplishment of great events, this word must be said.[457]

This story suggests Mayakovsky's intent for the Winter Palace scene: accomplishment of its seizure was to symbolize the apotheosis of the revolution. This is the sort of thinking about the transcription and transformation of reality that broadly characterized factography. However, Podvoisky's opinion also mattered.[458] Katanian continues:

> Герой требовал точности. Но и автор хотел быть точным. И хотя Маяковский продолжал настаивать, все-таки у спорной строки появился вскоре вариант, в котором замечание Подвойского было учтено. Поэма уже печаталась, и вносить исправления было поздно, но в чтении эта строка теперь выглядела уже так: «Товарищ Подвойский / сел в машину, // сказал устало: «К Ленину… / В Смольный». И это действительно в точности соответствовало тому, что сказано было в воспоминаниях Подвойского: «Я уехал в Смольный… Зашел к Владимиру Ильичу».[459]

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[457] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 314.

[458] Podvoisky was a member of Istpart, and thus had played a role deciding these very questions of how to narrate and remember the revolution. On Podvoisky's selection to the committee, see Corney, *Telling October*, 101, 103-104. Moreover, in 1927 he appeared as himself in Eisenstein's *October* (as also did Antonov-Ovseenko) and played a significant role in the organization of events for the tenth anniversary (Corney, *Telling October*, 174, 178, 181-183).

[459] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 314.

> The hero demanded precision. But the author also wanted to be precise. And although Mayakovsky continued to insist, all the same the disputed line soon gained a variation in which Podvoisky's criticism was heeded. The *poema* was already being printed and it was too late to make corrections, but in readings this line now looked like: "Comrade Podvoisky / got into the car, // said with fatigue: "To Lenin… / To Smolny." And this truly and precisely corresponded with what was said in Podvoisky's reminiscences: "I left for Smolny… Stopped in to see Vladimir Ilych."

According to Katanian, Mayakovsky proceeded to read the modified line at a Lef meeting on 20 September at which Lunacharsky, Auerbach, and Fadeev were also present.[460]

Of particular interest in this story is Mayakovsky's ultimate willingness to subordinate his ideological argument about the accomplishment of the revolution through the taking of the Winter Palace to Podvoisky's demand for precision. As Katanian points out, Podvoisky's demand corresponded with Mayakovsky's aim. But this small change renders visible the tension between the goals in factography to simultaneously record and transform life. Mayakovsky weakens his ideological argument and the symbolic potency of the taking of the Winter Palace, and disrupts the emphasis on the end of the old in his pun «Которые тут временные? / Слазь! // Кончилось ваше время» ("Who here's the temporaries? / Get down! / Your time has ended"), for the sake of more accurately inscribing Podvoisky's commentary – and thus his interpretation of these events, which prioritizes the start of Bolshevik power over the end of the former Russia.

Podvoisky was among the most significant Bolshevik Party authorities in the 1920s, and "he was often in charge of initiatives by the Soviet regime to commemorate October, culminating in his role as head of the Tenth Jubilee Commission, in which he was able to sponsor some of the major cinematographic incarnations of the revolution, most notably Eisenstein's *October*."[461] It

[460] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 314. However, the original version remained in the first book edition of *Khorosho!*

[461] Corney, *Telling October*, 204.

also is perhaps not incidental that Podvoisky's memoirs were not only among the most significant eyewitness accounts of the taking of the Winter Palace, but also that they were revised and republished in 1927. In Corney's analysis, "His series of recollections from 1919 to 1927 did not so much change the specific details of his tale as embellish them with increasing drama and passion. Thus from the bare facts he recalled in 1919 of the taking of the Winter Palace did his much richer and *meaning-full* tale of the storming of the Winter Palace emerge in 1927 as *the* central event of both the October Revolution and his own life of revolution."[462] Clearly this is an source of information whose word Mayakovsky would heed.

This change erases phrasing that mystifies the revolution as a religious process. In the Russian Synodal version of the Gospel of Mark (14:41), Jesus returns for the third time to the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. Finding them asleep, he rebukes them: «Вы все еще спите и почиваете? *Кончено*, пришел час: вот, предается Сын Человеческий в руки грешников».[463] Although the phrasing differs, the same basic idea is conveyed as Christ's final words from the cross (John 19:30): «Когда же Иисус вкусил уксус, сказал: - *Совершилось!* И, преклонив главу, он предал дух».[464] Other expressions of this idea have less religious valence. From within the Winter Palace, Antonov-Ovseenko declares: «Я, председатель реввоенкомитета Антонов, // Временное правительство объявляю низложенным» ("I, representative of the Revolutionary Military Committee Antonov, / Declare the Provisional Government overthrown."). This is a performative statement, in the sense that Antonov-Ovseenko's declaration both reflects and

[462] Corney, *Telling October*, 204.

[463] Cf. the 'inexorability' of the revolution and the 'arrival of the hour' here, as Christ has already announced that one of the disciples will betray him.

In the NIV translation: "Are you still sleeping? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners."

[464] In the NIV translation: "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

changes reality, issued by a Bolshevik leader with the people literally at his back. In Iampolski's terms, Antonov-Ovseenko's declaration is a symbolic representation of Bolshevik self-legitimization. Earlier in the chapter Mayakovsky puns on the name of the Provisional (or more literally, temporary) Government:

> И в эту / тишину / раскатившийся всласть
> бас, / окрепший / над реями рея:
> «Которые тут временные? / Слазь!
> Кончилось ваше время».[465]
>
> And into this silence, reverberating to its heart's content,
> a bass, strengthened, fluttering over yardarms:
> "Who here are the temporaries? Get down!
> Your time has ended."

This command, delivered by an unnamed actor, is the third verbal assertion of Bolshevik power in the chapter. According to Katanian, it originated in the minster Maliantovich's reminiscences, phrased as «Где здесь члены временного правительства?» ("Where are the members of the Provisional Government here?")[466] Although the description of this voice suggests attribution to a sailor, the bass voice subtly suggests that this phrasing is Mayakovsky's, and thus allows the poet to covertly announce the initiation of Soviet power in his own voice. That this line commanded particular importance is also evidenced in posters from Mayakovsky's 1927 tour of the Soviet Union advertising public performances of *Khorosho!,* on which each chapter was given an informal title.[467] The third line in the passage quoted above is given as the 'title' of Chapter 6.[468]

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[465] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!,* in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 261.

[466] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 302. The passage from Maliantovich's reminiscences cited by Katanian also mentions guards surrounding and protecting him and the others, who are absent in Mayakovsky's rendition.

[467] 'Informal' because no published versions, including the 1927 edition, bear chapter titles. Only a few of Mayakovsky's *poemy* utilize chapter titles: *Chelovek, Pro eto, Liubliu* and *Letaiushchii proletarii,* (*Man, About That, I Love, The Flying Proletarian*) for example.

[468] One such poster, in this case, advertising Mayakovsky's recitation of *Khorosho!* on 26 October at the State Academic Capella in Leningrad, appears in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, between pages 264-265.

A few lines before Podvoisky's pronouncement, Mayakovsky writes of the scene of the Second Congress of Soviets at Smolny:

> А в Смольном / толпа, / растопырив груди,
> покрывала / песней / фейерверк сведений.
> Впервые / вместо: / – и это будет… –
> пели: / – и это есть / наш последний… –[469]

> Meanwhile at Smolny, the crowd, heart splayed out,
> covered with a song the fireworks of intel.
> For the first time instead of: "And this will be"
> they sang: "and this is our final…"

Katanian maintains that neither of the two anthologies consulted by Mayakovsky mention singing of the Internationale at all during the storming of the Winter Palace, much less that it was at this moment that the change in tense in the chorus took place.[470] According to Podvoisky, "The report of the taking of the Winter Palace creates a triumphal and deeply concentrated mood at the congress."[471] It is possible that here Mayakovsky conflates two or perhaps even three distinct scenes: reaction to the news of the taking of the Winter Palace, reaction to the unanimous ratification of the "Proclamation to Belligerent Nations" earlier on 25 October, and perhaps also the Second Congress of Soviets on 26 October. The American journalist John Reed described the second of these as follows:

> Suddenly, by common impulse, we found ourselves on our feet, mumbling together into the smooth lifting unison of the *Internationale*. A grizzled old soldier was sobbing like a child. Alexandra Kollontai rapidly winked the tears back. The immense sound rolled through the hall, burst windows and doors and seared into the quiet sky. "The war is ended! The war is ended!" said a young workman near me, his face shining. And when it was over, as we stood there in a kind of awkward hush, some one in the back of the room shouted, "Comrades! Let us remember those who have died for liberty!" So we began to sing the Funeral March, that slow, melancholy and yet triumphant chant, so Russian and so moving.

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[469] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 262.

[470] Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 303.

[471] «Сообщение о взятии Зимнего создает торжественное и глубоко сосредоточенное настроение съезда». Podvoisky, in Sheinberg, *Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia: Khrestomatiia*. *Uchebnoe posobie dlia shkol I i II stupeni* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1925), qtd. in Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 303.

> The *Internationale* is an alien air, after all. The Funeral March seemed the very soul of those dark masses whose delegates sat in this hall, building from their obscure visions a new Russia – and perhaps more.[472]

Two stanzas of the funeral march "You Fell Victim" ("Vy zhertvoiu pali") follow this description, presumably in Reed's own translation. Reed does not mention any changes to the text of the *Internationale*, and in any case, the vote to adopt the Decree of Peace (*Dekret o mire*, to which Reed refers as the "Proclamation to the Peoples and Governments of All Belligerent Nations") was held on 26 October at the Second Congress of Soviets. Nikolai Sukhanov describes the scene immediately following the passage of the Decrees of Land and Peace in his memoirs:

> Долгие овации сменились пением «Интернационала». Затем снова приветствовали Ленина, кричали «ура», бросали в воздух шапки. Пропели похоронный марш в память жертв войны. И снова рукоплескали, кричали, бросали шапки.
>
> Весь президиум во главе с Лениным стоял и пел с возбужденными, одухотворенными лицами и горящими глазами. Но интереснее была делегатская масса. Ее настроение начинало основательно крепнуть. Переворот шел так гладко, как большинство не ожидало; он уже казался завершенным. Сознание его успеха распространялось, «интерполировалось» и на его результаты. Массы прониклись верой, что все будет хорошо и дальше.[473]

> Long ovations gave way to singing of the *Internationale*. Then we again acknowledged Lenin, shouted 'Hooray,' threw our hats in the air. We sang a funeral march in memory of the casualties of war. And again applauded, yelled, threw hats.
>
> The entire presidium with Lenin at its head stood and sang with impassioned, animated faces and burning eyes. But more interesting was the mass of delegates. Its mood started to staunchly strengthen. The overthrow had gone more smoothly than the majority had expected; it already seemed accomplished. The realization that it had succeeded spread, 'interpolated' on its results as well. The masses became imbued with faith that from now on all would be well.

Iampolski's interpretation of this scene supports the thesis that Mayakovsky conflates several distinct moments in *Khorosho!* One can easily imagine how the sense of rapid change would blur the distinctions between events: the 'overthrow' (*perevorot*), as Sukhanov notes, was smoother

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[472] Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 132.

[473] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revoliutsii*, 356, qtd. in Iampolski, "Lenin provozglashaet Sovetskuiu vlast'," 52.

than planned, and the Second Congress now suddenly acts as the power of the country. Iampolski argues that a similar conflation of events was characteristic of subsequent Soviet presentation of the Second Congress:

> Зачтение Лениным декретов обыкновенно понимается как момент оформления советской власти, как акт основания. Два выступления почти сливаются в одно, содержание их суммируется двумя магическими словами – мир и земля. Но для репрезентативной традиции важно не столько конкретное содержание выступлений Ленина, сколько сам факт его выступлений, который даже непосредственными и авторитетными свидетелями событий прежде всего описывается как момент спонтанного единения делегатов, охваченных невиданным энтузиазмом, сфокусированным на фигуре вождя.[474]
>
> Lenin's reading of the decrees is typically understood as the moment of formalization of Soviet power, as an act of foundation. The two speeches practically run together into one, their content is summarized in two magical words: peace and land. But for the representative tradition the specific content of Lenin's speeches was less important than the fact of his speeches itself, which even authoritative eyewitnesses of the events chiefly describe as a moment of spontaneous unification of delegates overtaken by unprecedented enthusiasm focused on the figure of the leader.

Perhaps Mayakovsky already had observed the conflation described by Iampolski and mimics it here, perhaps these scenes in fact had blended together in his memory, or perhaps Mayakovsky deliberately renders singing of the *Internationale* as an immediate reaction to the news of the taking of the Winter Palace. He could have done so solely on the basis of Podvoisky's reminiscences. While a definitive answer to this question is not forthcoming, it is undeniable that the heightened emotion at Bolshevik success conforms to the narrative of the storming of the Winter Palace as the apotheosis of the October Revolution.

In his 1924 *Vladimir Ilych Lenin* Mayakovsky had narrated the scene at Smolny on 25 October as if observing it himself. However, he does not mention the *Internationale* in the earlier *poema*. If Mayakovsky was in fact at Smolny on 25 October, he likely would remember whether the *Internationale* was sung, and if so, the tense of *byt* in the chorus. Although Mayakovsky's

[474] Iampolski, "Lenin provozglashaet Sovetskuiu vlast'," 52.

commentary on the *Internationale* does not appear historically accurate, the updated, present-tense version of the *Internationale* was useable as a means to present the storming of the Winter Palace as *the* salient moment of the revolution: it is at this moment that the socialist future becomes the present in Mayakovsky's narrative, and the revolution becomes a *fait accompli*. Meanwhile, if Mayakovsky was not present at Smolny during the storming, then his seemingly eyewitness description of Smolny reads like a surreptitious way to lay claim to presence at a key historical moment. He certainly could not lay claim to participation in the storming itself.

This moment in the text immediately follow's Antonov-Ovseenko's pronouncement of the overthrow of the Provisional Government, and thus suggests that the storming of the Winter Palace is indeed the "final, decisive battle." The result is an ideological oversimplification: as Podvoisky responded to Mayakovsky later, any Bolshevik of the time would have understood that the struggle to recreate Russia as socialist (whence communist) only began with the seizure of power. But for Mayakovsky, the drama of the narrative here takes priority even over ideological correctness.

As Podvoisky and Antonov-Ovseenko map the impending assault on the Winter Palace from Smolny, Lenin appears, returned from hiding under the assumed identity Sestroretsky as a worker in the Ivanov factory, and still bearing the elements of his disguise:[475]

> А в Смольном, / в думах / о битве и войске,
> Ильич / гримированный / мечет шажки,
> да перед картой / Антонов с Подвойским
> втыкают / в места атак / флажки.[476]

> Meanwhile at Smolny, in thoughts of battle and troops,
> Ilych, in makeup, plants short steps,
> while Antonov and Podvoisky, facing the map,
> stick flags in it at points of attack.

[475] Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 444.

[476] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 255.

If it is surprising that this is the only mention of Lenin in this key chapter, it might be still more surprising that Lenin appears in a far from heroic pose that seems to align with documentary sources. One example comes from Trotsky (albeit from a source that Mayakovsky could not have known):

> …Ленин, еще загримированный, в парике и больших очках сидел у прохода в обществе двух или трех большевиков. По пути на собрание своей фракции Дан и Скобелев остановились напротив стола, за которым сидели заговорщики, увидели Ленина и, конечно, узнали его. Казалось бы, время разгримироваться. Но Ленин не спешил появляться на публике. Он предпочитал немного оглядеться и собрать нити в своих руках, покуда оставаясь за сценой.
>
> …Lenin, still in makeup, in a wig and large glasses sat by the aisle in the company of two or three Bolsheviks. On their way to the meeting of their faction Dan and Skobelev stopped facing the table where the conspirators sat, saw Lenin, and of course recognized him. One would think it was time to remove the makeup. But Lenin was in no hurry to appear in public. He preferred to survey the scene a bit and gather the threads in his hands while remaining offstage.[477]

Iampolski comments on Trotsky's reminiscences: "It is difficult to explain Lenin's behavior definitively. It is obvious, however, that at the moment of the first session of the congress he still does not feel like the victor and continues to conduct himself according to the laws of plot and conspiracy."[478]

Lenin's short steps are a far cry from the image of long, confident strides forward and the distinctive head and face of Lenin in other depictions (including Pasternak's in *Malady Sublime* [*Vysokaia bolezn'*]), while emphasis on the makeup used in his disguise suggests an affinity with Kerensky, who appeared as an actor in earlier chapters of *Khorosho!* Moreover, not only does attention shift from Lenin to Antonov-Ovseenko and Podvoisky, but the scene quickly shifts from

[477] Cf. Trotsky's description of the same historic moment: Trotsky, *The Russian Revolution* 440-441, originally published in Russian in three volumes in Berlin 1931-1933, qtd. in Iampolski, "Lenin provozglashaet Sovetskuiu vlast'," 49.

[478] Iampolski, "Lenin provozglashaet Sovetskuiu vlast'," 49.

Smolny to canonical representatives of the people – Red Guards, workers, sailors, and 'poor folk' (*goli*) – approaching the Winter Palace for the assault. In the totality of these actors one can sense Mayakovsky's alignment with a broader goal of discussion of the events of October 1917 during the ten-year anniversary: to resolve the issue of the relationship between the Bolshevik Party and the people. In this chapter, they act in concert.

This ambiguous portrait of Lenin in the crucial moment of the revolution contrasts sharply with the analogous scene in Mayakovsky's 1924 *poema Vladimir Il'ich Lenin*. Written in commemoration of Lenin's death and completed in early October 1924 but not explicitly connected to the seventh anniversary of the October Revolution (it is dedicated to RKP(b)), the *poema* was republished in a second book edition in 1927. According to a review of a public reading of *Vladimir Ilych Lenin* published in *Rabochaia Moskva*, Mayakovsky «хотел дать сильную фигуру Ленина на фоне всей истории революции» ("wanted to give a strong figure of Lenin against the drop of the entire history of the revolution").[479] Recalling the events of 25 October, here Mayakovsky emphasizes Lenin's role without mention of Podvoisky or Antonov, but with mention of Trotsky, in *Khorosho!* referred to only by his birth surname Bronshtein, and Stalin, whose role in the uprising was at most minor:[480]

> Когда я / итожу / то, что про́жил,
> и роюсь в днях - / ярчайший где,
> я вспоминаю / одно и то же –
> двадцать пятое, / первый день.
> Штыками / тычется / чирканье молний,
> матросы / в бомбы / играют, как в мячики.
> От гуда / дрожит / взбудораженный Смольный.
> В патронных лентах / внизу пулеметчики.

[479] "Poema Maiakovskogo 'Lenin' pered sudom partiinogo aktiva," *Rabochaia Moskva*, 23 October 1924. Qtd. in Eventov and Prokushev, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 521.

[480] In this passage it is unclear whom Stalin summons or for what purpose, and his role in the organization and execution of the storming of the Winter Palace was minor. Unsurprisingly, Soviet commentaries consulted for this study do not comment on Stalin's presence in the passage. It is possible that Mayakovsky mentions him here out of political necessity more than anything else.

– Вас / вызывает / товарищ Сталин.
Направо / третья, / он / там. –
– Товарищи, / не останавливаться! / Чего стали?
В броневики / и на почтамт! –
– По приказу / товарища Троцкого! –
– Есть! – / повернулся / и скрылся скоро,
и только / на ленте / у флотского
под лампой / блеснуло – / «Аврора».
Кто мчит с приказом, / кто в куче спорящих,
Кто щелкал / затвором / на левом колене.
Сюда / с того конца коридорища
бочком / пошел / незаметный Ленин.
Уже / Ильичем / поведенные в битвы,
еще / не зная / его по портретам,
толкались, / орали, / острее бритвы
солдаты друг друга / крыли при этом.
И в этой желанной / железной буре
Ильич, / как будто / даже заспанный,
шагал, / становился / и глаз, сощуря,
вонзал, / заложивши / руки зà спину.
В какого-то парня / в обмотках, / лохматого,
уставил / без промаха бьющий глаз,
как будто / сердце / с-под слов выматывал,
как будто / душу / тащил из-под фраз.
И знал я, / что всё / раскрыто и понятно
и этим / глазом / наверное выловится –
и крик крестьянский, / и вопли фронта,
и воля нобельца, / и воля путиловца.[481]

When I sum up what I lived through
And rummage in the days – none are brighter,
I think back to one and the same –
the twenty-fifth, the first day.
Like bayonets thrust the striking of lightning,
sailors play at bombs, like at ball.
From the buzz shakes riled-up Smolny.
In cartridge belts below machine guns.
“Comrade Stalin summons you.
To the right, the third, he’s there.”
“Comrades, don’t stop! Why are you standing there?
To the armored cars and to the post office!”
“On the order of Comrade Trotsky!”
“Yes, sir!” – he turned and quickly disappeared
and only on the sailor’s hat
under the lamp sparkled – the Aurora.

[481] Maiakovskii, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin,* in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 281-283.

> Someone rushes by with an order, someone else is entangled in an argument,
> Another rattled the [gun] bolt on left knee.
> From the other end of the vast corridor
> Sidled up Lenin, unnoticed.
> Having already been led to battle by Ilych,
> but still not recognizing him from portraits,
> soldiers jostled, hollered, sharper than a razor,
> swearing all the while.
> And in this desired iron storm
> Ilych, as if even sleepy,
> stepped, stopped, and squinting, fixed his gaze
> with his hands behind his back.
> At some lad, in leg wraps, disheveled,
> his beating eye aimed without missing,
> as if pulling his heart from words,
> as if dragging his soul out from under phrases.
> And I knew that all was revealed and clear,
> and that by this eye without fail will be fished out –
> the peasant shout, and wails from the front,
> and the freedom of workers of Nobel and Putilov.

In this passage Mayakovsky places himself at Smolny on 25 October. However, it is difficult to tell where Mayakovsky's personal reminiscences, if any of this can be understood as such, begin and end.

The scholarship that accepts Mayakovsky's claim to presence at Smolny but fails to explain it. In his autobiography "I Myself" Mayakovsky describes October 1917 briefly and laconically: "To accept or not accept [the revolution]? There was no such a question for me (and for other Muscovite Futurists). My revolution. *I went to Smolny. I worked.* I did everything I had to. The meetings begin."[482] Preceding and subsequent entries ("August [1917]," "January [1918]") provide no clarification of Mayakovsky's work at Smolny. Dinershtein relates that Mayakovsky responded to a call to convene Petrograd delegates of the intelligentsia for discussion of preservation of pre-revolutionary art (broadly defined and including buildings) and the

[482] «Принимать или не принимать? Такого вопроса для меня (и для других москвичей-футуристов) не было. Моя революция. Пошел в Смольный. Работал. Все, что приходилось. Начинают заседать». Maiakovskii, *Ia sam*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 25. Italics added.

organization of cultural life under the Bolshevik government. According to eyewitness accounts by B.F. Malkin cited by Dinershtein, Mayakovsky was present at a 7 November meeting of the Petrograd intelligentsia at Smolny.[483] The other eyewitness cited by Dinershtein, the political commentator for the newspaper *Novaia zhizn'* M. Iu. Levidov, claimed that Mayakovsky was not present at Smolny on 25 October, but that he saw Mayakovsky at some point in the following two weeks.[484]

Two scholars acquainted with Mayakovsky present similarly underexplained accounts. Pertsov, citing the stenograph of a speech Mayakovsky delivered to VAPP in 1925, writes with assurance that "Mayakovsky was at Smolny on the 25th of October, he saw V.I. Lenin."[485] However, the passage cited by Pertsov does not present conclusive evidence that Mayakovsky is speaking of 25 October specifically:

> Дальше идет вопрос о характеристике. Немногим из нас было дано счастье увидеть товарища Ленина. Взятый мною факт это один из тех, которые я описывал с натуры. Эта картина была в дни революции буквально списана с товарища Ленина, и такой способ стоять, заложив руки, всем известен. Дальше, для того чтобы сказать «заспанный», — это настолько казалось невероятным для Ленина, что за этой строчкой идет…[486]

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[483] Dinershtein, "Maiakovskii v fevrale-okiabre 1917 g.," 563. Malkin's reminiscences date to 1935; it is clear in context that Malkin uses old style (Julian) dates in his reminiscences (25 October O.S. = 7 November N.S.).

[484] Dinershtein, "Maiakovskii v fevrale-okiabre 1917 g.," 569.

[485] «Маяковский был в «первый день» или же в первые дни Октябрьской революции. С законной гордостью он писал в автобиографии: «Пошел в Смольный…» Pertsov, *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo*, vol. 1, 346.

[486] Maiakovskii, "Vystuplenie na pervoi vsesoiuznoi konferentsii proletarskikh pisatelei," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 12, 273. The criticism for describing Lenin as 'sleepy' was Demian Bedny's. Following the ellipsis in my quotation, Mayakovsky recited part of the long passage quoted above, then added, in typically sarcastic fashion, "Maybe after this comrade Sosnovsky can teach me how to depict Lenin." Sosnovsky, as Tumarkin observes, wrote and orated about Lenin "in Christlike terms" with the distinction that "Ilich is the mortal man and Lenin is the immortal leader and universal symbol" (Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997], 83-4).

In these terms, Mayakovsky's Lenin in *Khorosho!* could represent an attempt to unify these two personae. It is also worth noting that while the debate quoted here took place in 1925, Sosnovsky was a member of the Left Opposition well before 1927, and in May 1927 he was a signatory on the "Declaration of the 83" ("Zaiavlenie 83-kh").

> Now the question of characterization. Only a few of us had the good fortune to see Comrade Lenin. This fact I've taken is one of those that I described from nature. This scene was literally copied out from Comrade Lenin in the days of revolution, and everyone is familiar with his way of standing with his hands behind his back. Then, in order to say 'sleepy', - this seemed enough for Lenin that after this line goes…

Katanian expresses similar certainty, although, it seems, at least partially on the basis of *Vladimir Ilych Lenin*: "The Great October Socialist Revolution. On this day Mayakovsky was at Smolny, where the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the headquarters of the uprising were located; he saw V.I. Lenin (this was described in the poema "Vladimir Ilych Lenin")."[487] Katanian further confirms Mayakovsky's participation in discussions of the relation between Soviet power and cultural activity in early November; he also cites reminiscences by theater director Aleksandra Smirnova-Iskander, who saw Mayakovsky in December 1917 in Moscow and confirms that he and Meyerhold were at Smolny "during the October days."[488]

More recently, V.N. Diadichev acknowledged that "Требуют пояснения и слова «Моя революция. Пошел в Смольный…» («Я сам»)." However, he continues,

> Ведь Маяковский «пошел в Смольный» отнюдь не в первый день революции, а лишь через две недели, вместе с несколькими другими деятелями искусства. А вскоре, 5 декабря (18 по нов. ст.), поэт вообще уехал в Москву.[489]
>
> The words 'My revolution. I went to Smolny' (in *I Myself*) demand explanation. […] After all, Mayakovsky 'went to Smolny' far from on the first day of the revolution, but only two weeks later, together with several others from the artistic community. And soon after, on the 5th of December (the 18th in the new style), the poet left for Moscow.

Jangfeldt does not comment on Mayakovsky's whereabouts on 25 October, but writes that at this time, "Mayakovsky's attitude was one of wait-and-see."[490] It is also worth noting that Mayakovsky

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[487] Katanian, *Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti*, 134. Citation of the same passage of Mayakovsky's *Ia sam* follows.

[488] Katanian, *Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti*, 135.

[489] Vladimir Diadichev, *Zhizn' Maiakovskogo: verit' v revoliutsiiu* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2017), 263.

[490] Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 100.

does not place himself at Smolny in the earlier poems "Vladimir Ilych!" (1920) and "We do not believe" ("My ne verim," 1923), nor does he suggest as much in the later "Conversation with Comrade Lenin" ("Razgovor s tovarishchem Leninym," 1929).

Lack of clarity as to when Mayakovsky actually "went to Smolny" aside, Mayakovsky places himself there in *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin*, but not in *Khorosho!* Mayakovsky's omission of himself from the later text is particularly striking in the context of the 1927 anniversary. At a time when evenings of reminiscences flourished, people could establish legitimacy as a Soviet citizens or bolster revolutionary credentials through carefully framed and narrated reminiscences, and one way to demonstrate support for the Bolsheviks in 1917 (or, if possible, earlier) was to place oneself at a crucial moment (for example, opposing Kornilov during the July Days or hearing a speech by a prominent Bolshevik), and especially to highlight, in Corney's phrase, 'moments of revolutionary epiphany.'[491]

A simple resolution to this issue may be that Mayakovsky simply did not want to repeat content from *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin* in *Khorosho!*, or otherwise that he did not want to draw attention to the ambiguities of his political attitudes and revolutionary activities in 1917. However, I argue that omission of himself and the relatively scant attention he pays to Lenin are connected. If Lenin serves as a sort of wellspring of revolutionary thought in this chapter, with his thought spreading to the plans of the Military Revolutionary Committee leadership, whence to the people who execute them, then Mayakovsky is among the multitudes subsumed in the revolutionary collective. Among many watery images and metaphors, depiction of the stormers' entrance to the Winter Palace describes the stormers of the Winter Palace as an elemental watery force:

> Как будто / водою / комнаты полня,
> текли, / сливались / над каждой потерей,

[491] See, for example, Corney's discussion of the reminiscences of one A. Martsinovsky from Saratov, *Telling October*, 140-141.

и схватки / вспыхивали / жарче полдня
за каждым диваном, / у каждой портьеры.[492]

Like water filling the rooms,
they flowed, merged over each loss,
and skirmishes flared up hotter than noontime
behind each sofa, by each curtain.

The people who carry out Lenin's thought here become as a fluid filling a container, underscored by the thrice-repeated adjective *kazhdyi*. Recalling once again the opening of the *poema*, in which the 'river by the name of fact' connects directly with factually based depiction of the history of the revolution, and the conclusion of Chapter 2, in which "the fame [of the Bolshevik party] flowed," we now see an instantiation of history in water imagery and metaphors in connection with the spontaneous and elemental masses.

To a certain extent Mayakovsky's limited attention to Lenin may be explained as simply consistent with the ideas of Lef and Mayakovsky himself about the postmortem symbolic status of Lenin. The first issue of *Lef* for 1924 – also the first issue published following Lenin's death in January of the same year – was to a large extent devoted to Lenin, but specifically to Lenin as an object of linguistic study rather than as an object of laudation.[493] The opening article, signed 'Lef' and not attributed to Mayakovsky in the *PSS*, implored readers "Don't traffic in Lenin!"[494]

[492] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 260.

[493] Gorham discusses articles from this issue by Iakubinsky, Shklovsky, Tomashevsky, and Tynianov, arguing that "the *Lef* writers assigned great social authority to linguists and literary critics [i.e. themselves – ZR], who were most qualified to act as interpretive intermediaries between the heights and depths of verbal production" (Gorham, *Speaking in Soviet Tongues*, 42-45).

Il'ia Kalinin similarly argues that this same issue was an attempt to extend Formalist literary theory to a theory of social history, according to which "ideology is revealed as opposed to history in precisely the same manner as automatized practical language is opposed to poetic language" (Kalinin, "Kak sdelan iazyk Lenina: material istorii i priem ideologii," *Vestnik SPbGU: Iazyk i literatura* 15, no. 4 [2018]: 616).

[494] On the article and Mayakovsky's objections more broadly, see Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives*, 235-237.

Rejecting the cult of Lenin already in formation, they argued specifically against materialization and commercialization of Lenin through iconography.

> Мы настаиваем: – Не штампуйте Ленина. Не печатайте его портретов на плакатах, на клеенках, на тарелках, на кружках, на портсигарах. Не бронзируйте Ленина. Не отнимайте у него его живой поступи и человеческого облика, который он сумел сохранить, руководя историей.[495]
>
> We insist: do not stamp Lenin. Do not print his portraits on posters, on oilcloths, on plates, on cups, even on cigar cases. Don't cast Lenin in bronze. Do not take from him his living step and the human bearing that he managed to keep while directing the course of history.

It goes without saying that Lef ultimately lost this battle against objectification of Lenin, but their rejection of it in favor of a living Lenin whose great ideas "guided history" is apparent in Mayakovsky's depiction of Lenin at Smolny: while Antonov-Ovseenko and Podvoisky attend to the material details of the storming of the Winter Palace, Lenin is detached and lost in thought. Emphasis on his disguise provides factographic detail while shifting focus from Lenin's material body to the importance of his thought. Whichever coat Lenin dons, so to speak, his revolutionary vision remains the same.

The analogous scene in *Vladimir Ilych Lenin* features a more concrete description of Lenin. That depiction, however, connects directly with the idea of Lenin as the concrete instantiation of the abstracted revolutionary goals of the people: merely by looking at Lenin, Mayakovsky can imagine Lenin not as the source of sound, but as something absorbing and incorporating into the self the goals of various levels of society, all brought together under the care and concern of Lenin as the leader representing but standing outside of the political body.[496] In *Khorosho!*, Lenin is figuratively and literally peripheral to the physical seizure of the Winter Palace, yet at the same

[495] Lef, "Ne torguite Leninym," *Lef* no. 5 (1924), 4.

[496] This argument is strongly motivated by Iampolski's discussion of the codification of early Bolshevik political power in decrees and exertion of authority rather than a single codifying document.

time he encompasses the entirety of the revolutionary process: he is specifically in thought (thought metaphorically encloses him) about the battle and troops. In this way the October Revolution, encapsulated in the storming of the Winter Palace, proceeds both externally to Lenin and internally to his thought, which in turn envelops him as a physical being.

But lest the connection between earlier Lef views on Lenin's legacy seem insufficiently motivating for interpretation of this image of Lenin as an abstraction that specifically deemphasizes the corporality of the non-departed ruler, it is worth noting that Mayakovsky's position on this question in 1927 does not appear any different from that of Lef on the whole in 1924. For example, Mayakovsky's sharpest criticism of Eisenstein's *October* revolved around the latter's choice to cast an actor in the role of Lenin. At the "Dispute on the Path and Politics of Sovkino," Mayakovsky voiced his opposition:

> Мы отошли от хроники. Что же мы имеем к десятилетию Октября?.. Нам Совкино в лице Эйзенштейна будет показывать поддельного Ленина, какого-то Никанорова или Никандрова… Я обещаю, что в самый торжественный момент, где бы это ни было, я освищу и тухлыми яйцами закидаю этого поддельного Ленина. Это безобразие. И в этом вина падает на Совкино, которое в свое время не сумело учесть важности хроники и не учитывает этого и сейчас. И нашу хронику мы покупаем на доллары из Америки.
>
> We have moved away from the chronicle. What do we actually have for the ten-year anniversary of October?... Sovkino as represented by Eisenstein will show us a fake Lenin, some Nikanorov or Nikandrov… I promise that at the most triumphant moment, wherever it may be, I will whistle and throw rotten eggs at this fake Lenin. This is a disgrace. And in this matter blame falls on Sovkino, which did not manage to account for the importance of the chronicle at the proper time and does not account for it now. Meanwhile we buy our chronicle for dollars from America.[497]

At the same time, Tret'iakov's review of Eisenstein's film does not directly voice any such opposition to portrayal of Lenin by an actor, even a non-professional one like Nikandrov, although for Tret'iakov the most important aspect of these films is their 'recording of fact' (*fiksatsiia fakta*)

[497] Mayakovsky, "Vystuplenie na dispute 'Puti i politika Sovkino,' 15 oktiabria 1927 goda," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 12, 359.

through direct, documentary material.[498] Tret'iakov lauds Esfir' Shub's film, for example, for its use of video shot in 1917 while lamenting that so little footage exists. Mayakovsky goes a step further: in an argument reminiscent of the trend to 'sum up' the past ten years, Mayakovsky identifies the lack of chronicle of the revolution as a troubling continuity between 1917 and 1927.[499]

Chapter 6 concludes much as it opened, with a return to paraphrase of Blagonravov's reminiscences. Gunfire ceases, and although the environment looks much as it did before (but with slight modifications to the *lesenka* structure), a new political order has been established with cosmic support:

> Умолк пулемет. / Угодил толкòв.
> Умолкнул / пуль / звенящий улей.
> Горели, / как звезды, / грани штыков,
> бледнели / звезды небес / в карауле.
> Дул, / как всегда, / октябрь / ветра́ми.
> Рельсы / по мосту вызмеив,
> гонку / свою / продолжали трамы
> уже – / при социализме.[500]
>
> The machine gun fell silent. It quieted the rumors.
> The ringing beehive of bullets subsided.
> Like stars, edges of bayonets burned,
> stars of the heavens paled on guard duty.
> October blew, as always, with winds.
> Snaking out the rails along the bridge,
> trams continued their race,

[498] Tret'iakov, "Kino k iubeleiu," *Novyi Lef* no. 10 (1927): 27-31.

[499] Maiakovskii, "Vystuplenie na dispute 'Puti i politika Sovkino'," in in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 12, 359. It should be noted that Esfir' Shub's *Padenie dinastii Romanovykh* makes extensive use of original footage from October 1917. While Shub was not associated with Lef, her views on facts and films aligned with those of Lef. Corney writes: "Shub herself argued that fiction films should give way to newsreels, to 'film the here and now, contemporary people, contemporary events,' which could be as 'emotionally affecting' as the former" (Corney, *Telling October*, 197).

Viktor Shklovsky, reviewing Shub's *Padenie dinastii Romanovykh* in the anniversary issue of *Novyi Lef*, wrote: «Лента Эсфирь Шуб об Октябре – хорошая лента. Она неисправима, потому что подлинна» ("Esfir' Shub's filmstrip about October is a good one. It cannot be amended, because it is authentic." Shklovsky, "Po povodu kartiny Esfir' Shub," *Novyi Lef*, no. 8-9 (1927), 53.

[500] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 262-263.

now – under socialism.

Although Mayakovsky acknowledges, as his source material had, that political change was not recognizable on the surface of everyday life following the storming of the Winter Palace, he emphasizes the depth and completeness of the change from capitalism to socialism that has taken place by putting 'socialism' in the strong final position previously held by capitalism in a slightly rephrased return to the everyday scene in the opening four lines. In other words, he treats the storming of the Winter Palace as that salient, dramatic, crystallizing, Bastille-like moment that the Bolshevik regime sought. Contrary to broad tendencies in the narration of personal reminiscences in 1927 anniversary events, and in stark contrast with Mayakovsky's ordinary focus on himself, in this chapter Mayakovsky is as if one of the masses – not a direct participant, and perhaps even not a witness, but a later, authoritative chronicler, subsumed first in the revolution, and then in source materials from fully fledged participants.

Chapter 7: *Khorosho!* à la Blok

Chapter 7, set in winter 1917-18, depicts a chance meeting between Mayakovsky and Aleksandr Blok on the Palace Embankment. Mayakovsky mentions this chapter as "Conversation with Blok" specifically in *I Myself*, referring to it as an example of his inclusion of "facts of varying historical caliber, rightful only in accordance with personal associations."[501] This chapter marks the reemergence of Mayakovsky: if in Chapters 2-6 Mayakovsky subsumes himself in the revolution and source materials, then in this chapter, Mayakovsky emerges as if as an outcome of the October Revolution and supersedes Blok as the first poet of the new socialist order.

[501] Maiakovskii, *Ia sam*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 29.

Attention in this analysis focuses on three aspects of the Mayakovsky-Blok meeting. First, it addresses the connections and collaborations on sociocultural issues between Mayakovsky and Blok in 1917-1918. Second, it examines the content of Mayakovsky's depiction of the meeting in the context of Mayakovsky's views and previous writings about Blok. Finally, it examines mechanisms by which Mayakovsky interpolates Blokian works, motifs, and techniques into the chapter, particularly those of Blok's landmark 1918 *poema The Twelve,* the composition of which roughly coincides with the timing of the meeting. However, incorporation of allusions to other works by Blok into *Khorosho!* serves the dual purpose of distancing Blok from the revolution (highlighting Blok's ambiguous attitude towards it) while coupling the revolution to Futurism. Documented by Mayakovsky himself, the meeting illustrates both Mayakovsky's work with factual material and his departure from it.

In 1917 Mayakovsky was drafted and assigned to the Military Automobile School (Voennaia avtomobilnaia shkola) in Petrograd.[502] Military service did not preclude continued participation in the artistic life of Petrograd, and following the abdication of Nicholas II and the formation of the Provisional Government in March 1917, Mayakovsky responded to a call issued in the Cadet newspaper *The People's Freedom* (*Narodnaia svoboda*) for members of the artistic intelligentsia to convene and discuss their relationship with the Provisional Government. This resulted in the creation of the Union of Creative Workers (Soiuz deiatelei iskusstv).

The Union of Creative Workers counted in its membership cultural figures across the arts and aesthetic and political spectrums. In addition to Mayakovsky, participants included Leonid Andreev, Aleksandr Benua, Aleksandr Blok, Osip Brik, Feodor Chaliapin, Maksim Gor'ky,

[502] According to Dinershtein, Mayakovsky's assignment to the School may have come about through the assistance of Maksim Gor'ky or Aleksei Radakov. See Dinershtein, "Maiakovskii v fevrale-oktiabre 1917 g.," 541.

Aleksandr Kuprin, Mikhail Kuzmin, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Nikolai Punin, and Il'ia Zdanevich. Within days of the Union's first meeting, Mayakovsky joined a faction of the group called Freedom for Art (Svoboda iskusstvu), that viewed in the convocation of this group an attempt by the Provisional Government to subordinate artistic production to governmental control. According to Dinershtein, this group, which quickly became referred to as the 'left' position on questions of freedom of art and collaboration with the Provisional Government, "did not reach significant strength, but possessed highly enterprising and energetic leaders, who firmly opposed all attempts at establishment of governmental control over art and vied for a leading role in the Union of Cultural Workers that was being created." Mayakovsky and Punin were elected to the group's presidium as full members; Blok and Kuzmin were elected as candidate members.[503] Pertsov refers to this as the time when "in Mayakovsky awakens a public figure [*obshchestvenyi deiatel'*], who recognized his responsibility first and foremost for his sphere of work, that is, for the artistic front."[504]

Thus, despite a lack of evidence from Mayakovsky's letters or other writings, he unquestionably was in contact with Blok in 1917. Moreover, this contact continued after the events of 25 October, when the Union of Creative Workers met under the auspices of the Bolshevik Executive Committee rather than the Provisional Government but continued to debate questions of collaboration or subordination of art and artistic labor to the needs of the government.[505] In mid-December 1917 (N.S.), Mayakovsky left Petrograd for Moscow, not returning until mid-June 1918.[506]

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[503] This paragraph summarizes Dinershtein, "Maiakovskii v fevrale – oktiabre 1917 g.," 543-544.

[504] Viktor Pertsov, "Maiakovskii v 1917 godu," *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR* 9, no. 3 (1950): 225.

[505] Katanian, *Khronia zhizni i deiatel'nosti*, 135.

[506] Katanian, *Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti*, 135, 147.

Therefore, the chance meeting of Blok and Mayakovsky, which lacks a date in *Khorosho!* despite the suggestion via proximity that that little time has passed since 25 October 1917,[507] could only date to late October – mid December. That is, it likely predates Blok's rapid work on *The Twelve* in January 1918, but only slightly. In any case, no meeting is described in Katanian's *Chronicle*, nor in Dinershtein's study "Maiakovskii v fevrale-oktiabre 1917," nor in Jangfeldt's biography. The letters of Mayakovsky and Blok provide no clarification. The only source for the meeting outside of *Khorosho!*, as far as I am aware, is Mayakovsky's short eulogy "Aleksandr Blok has Died" ("Umer Aleksandr Blok"), published in AGIT-ROSTA shortly after Blok's death in August 1921. In it, Mayakovsky laconically dates the meeting to "the first days of the revolution."

The burning of Blok's library at Shakhmatovo plays an appreciable role in both of Mayakovsky's tellings of this meeting. We thus may try to limit the time frame for this meeting to after the burning of Blok's library, but before Mayakovsky's December departure for Moscow. However, scholars have disagreed about the fate of the Shakhmatovo library. In her biography of Blok, Avril Pyman cites a letter received by Aleksandra Andreevna Blok (née Beketova, mother of the poet) in which one Nikolai Lapin, "the general factorum and odd-job man"[508] at the estate, describes looting and devastation at the estate, including the smashing of Aleksandr Blok's writing desk with an axe and breaking down the library door. He does not, however, mention a fire. Pyman dates this letter to early November 1917, noting also that this letter "is glued into Blok's diary after the last entry for 19 October 1917: 'The peasants, sure that everyone in the towns has enough to

[507] The Neva also apparently remains clear of ice, suggesting that winter has not fully set in yet.

[508] Avril Pyman, *The Life of Aleksandr Blok* (Oxford, UK, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 273.

eat, are giving no bread to the cities' (VII. 312)."[509] In the remainder of the study, which concludes with Blok's death in 1921, Pyman does not mention the burning of the library. She refers to the "sacking of Shakhmatovo," citing additional materials in which Blok refers to the likely theft of valuable objects from the estate, but again, without mention of a fire.[510] In any case, although Shakhmatovo appeared several times in Blok's dreams, and he had considered moving there permanently on several occasions before the October Revolution,[511] he did not return to Shakhmatovo after July 1916[512] (although it seems that other family members were there at various times through August 1917[513]). Jangfeldt mentions the burning of Blok's library in passing in his biography of Mayakovsky and claims that Blok "saw in this a redeeming conformity with the laws of history."[514]

Other biographers and literary scholars differ in their opinions of whether the Shakhmatovo library burned. In his study of Blok's life and works, Leonid Dolgopolov writes simply and without citation (or reference to Mayakovsky's version of this story) that "In November 1917 the estate at Shakhmatovo was looted and then burned. For Blok, who loved the Shakhmatovo home and who dreamed in the difficult years of reaction of settling there permanently, this was a heavy blow."[515]

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[509] Pyman, *The Life of Aleksandr Blok*, 273.

[510] Pyman, *The Life of Aleksandr Blok*, 330. It is important to note that Pyman hints at later destruction: see, for example, page 309 of the same study.

[511] See Pyman, *The Life of Aleksandr Blok*, 265, 270. In 1910 Blok attempted to live at Shakhmatovo year-round rather than just in the summer months while also renovating the main building (Pyman, *The Life of Aleksandr Blok*, 90-99).

[512] Pyman, *The Life of Aleksandr Blok*, 237. This date is confirmed by the website of the Museum-Conservancy of D.I. Mendeleev and A.A. Blok.

[513] Pyman, *The Life of Aleksandr Blok*, 265, 270.

[514] Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 178.

[515] «В ноябре 1917 г. была разграблена и затем сожжена усадьба в Шахматове. Для Блока, очень любившего шахматовский дом, мечтавшего в тяжелые годы реакции переселиться туда навсегда, это был тяжелый удар». Dolgopolov, *Aleksandr Blok: lichnost' i tvorchestvo* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1978), 208.

Citing the same letter as Pyman, Nina Berberova dates the burning of the library to 1918, and claims that the library collection was destroyed in the fire.[516] The latter part of this statement is likely inaccurate: Zhurov's description for his catalogue, composed at Shakhmatovo in 1924, 1926, and 1927, mentions only that some books were destroyed or stolen.[517] At no point does Zhurov mention a fire. Berberova, having left Russia in 1922, perhaps cannot be faulted for this possible inaccuracy. In their entry for Blok in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Irene Masing-Delic and Ilya Vishnevetsky date the burning of the library to 1921.[518] This conforms with the following statement on the website for the Museum-Conservancy of D.I. Mendeleev and A.A. Blok: "In 1921 this poetic 'corner of paradise' shared the fate of the majority of 'gentry nests.' The furnishings and housewares were expropriated by local residents, the books were carried off, the house burned. After the fire all the structures were destroyed, and the estate park was severely damaged."[519]

On this basis tentatively dating the fire at Shakhmatovo to 1921 and rejecting the hypothesis that the fire coincided with the initial looting of the estate in 1917 for lack of definitive sources, I suggest that Mayakovsky conflates the looting with the fire. In any case, the juxtaposition of this chapter with the storming of the Winter Palace and the establishment of

[516] Nina Berberova, *Aleksandr Blok: A Life*, trans. Robyn Marsack (Manchester, UK: Carcanet, 1996), 118-119. It is worth repeating the translator's note: "This is an informal biography. Berberova's notes are minimal… She has often conflated passages from Blok's letters and diaries" (146).

[517] «Шахматовская библиотека, или, вернее, то, что от нее осталось при длительном уничтожении и расхищении внутреннего убранства дома, была вывезена в 1918-20 гг. Вертлинским Волисполкомом в село Новое, в 10 км от Шахматова. По словам очевидцев, было три проводы, нагруженных книгами и бумагами». Pavel Zhurov, "Shakhmatovskaia biblioteka Beketovykh-Bloka," in *Trudy po slavianskoi filologii,* vol. XXIV: Literaturovedenie, 401.

[518] Irine Masing-Delic and I.G. Vishnevetsy, "Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 295.

[519] «В 1921 году этот поэтический «угол рая» разделил судьбу большинства «дворянских гнезд», обстановка и утварь была экспроприирована окрестными жителями, книги вывезены, дом сожжен. После пожара были уничтожены все постройки, значительно пострадал и усадебный парк». "Usad'ba Shakhmatovo," Muzei-zapovednik D.I. Mendeleeva i A.A. Bloka," accessed March 19, 2019.

socialism in Chapter 6 suggests temporal proximity, an interpretation that the introduction to Chapter 7 furthers:

> В такие ночи, / в такие дни,
> в часы такой поры
> на улицах / разве что / одни
> поэты / и воры́.[520]
>
> In those nights, in those days,
> in the hours of such a time
> empty streets, except for
> poets and thieves.

This opening, despite and perhaps through its pleonastic use of time constructions, suggests the confusion that followed the October Revolution and the Bolsheviks' first declaration of power – a sense also clearly expressed in *The Twelve*. In a synthesis of factually based elements, it also brings together the Blok-Mayakovsky meeting (they are the two poets on the street in this scene), recalls the looting and disorder in Petrograd at the time, and hints at the feeling of chaos and lawlessness in *The Twelve*.

Mayakovsky's meeting with Blok begins after description of the dark Petrograd night; it is only then that Mayakovsky's poetic "I" reemerges in the narrative for the first time since Chapter 1. The meeting generally follows the description in Mayakovsky's "Aleksandr Blok has Died":

> Помню, в первые дни революции проходил я мимо худой, согнутой солдатской фигуры, греющейся у разложенного перед Зимним костра. Меня окликнули. Это был Блок. Мы дошли до Детского подъезда. Спрашиваю: «Нравится?», - «Хорошо», сказал Блок, а потом прибавил: «У меня в деревне библиотеку сожгли».[521]

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[520] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 264.

Cf. Aseev: «Не кончились эти дни, / не кончены эти дни, / горячечной ломки и стройки» ("These days have not ended / not ended are these days / of feverous demolition and building"). Aseev's revolution continues with the building of socialism to the present day, whereas Mayakovsky emphasizes the exceptionality of the time immediately after 25 October, in contrast to the relatively calm continuation of life in Petrograd prior to and after the storming of the Winter Palace.

This quatrain is also of interest because of its exact (but not grammatical) rhymes: *dni/odni* and *pory/vorý*. The latter rhyme is possible only because of non-standard stress in the nominative plural *very*.

[521] Mayakovsky, "Umer Aleksandr Blok," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 12, 21.

> I remember that in the first days of the revolution I was walking past the thin, hunched figure of a soldier, warming himself by a fire lit in front of the Winter [Palace]. They called out to me. It was Blok. We walked as far as the Children's Entrance [on the north side of the palace facing the Palace Embankment and the Neva – ZR]. I ask: 'Do you like it?' 'It's good,' said Blok, but then added: 'They burned down the library at my place in the country.'

In *Khorosho!* the same basic facts begin the meeting, but the conversation features a significant change:

> И здесь, / где земля / от жары вязка́,
> с испугу или со льда́,
> ладони / держа / у огня в языках,
> греется / солдат.
> Солдату / упал / огонь на глаза,
> на клок / волос / лег.
> Я узнал, / удивился, / сказал:
> «Здравствуйте, / Александр Блок.
> Лафа футуристам, / фрак старья
> разлазится каждым швом».
> Блок посмотрел – / костры горят –
> «Очень хорошо».[522]
>
> And here, where the earth was swampy from heat,
> from fright or from ice,
> holding his hands in tongues of flame,
> a soldier warms himself.
> The fire fell on the soldier's eyes,
> lay down on a clump of hair.
> I recognized him, marveled and said:
> "Hello, Aleksandr Blok.
> The good life for the Futurists – the frock of the old
> will come apart at every seam."
> Blok looked over – the fires burn –
> "Very good."

These two descriptions of Blok, united most visibly by the soldier's cloak, correlate. However, a significant alteration of the conversation that Mayakovsky recorded in "Aleksandr Blok has Died" follows. Instead of soliciting Blok's opinion on recent events, Mayakovsky advances Futurism,

[522] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 265-266. That the scene in many ways resembles that of John 18, in which the apostle Peter warms himself by a fire after the arrest of Jesus and denies knowing him three times, merits future analysis.

and thus himself, suggesting a deep affinity between avant-garde art and revolution. He receives more intense approval from the Symbolist Blok than he had recorded in the eulogy, and thus suggests a passing of the mantle of 'first poet.' This exchange thus demonstrates pliability in Mayakovsky's 'factographic' use of source materials, his own previous writings included.

The "frock coat of the old," "coming apart at every seam," continues the motif of descriptive attire already discussed in this chapter. Kerensky's military green field jacket, the prerevolutionary spurs of the aide-de-camp (Chapter 5), the coats of sailors, soldiers, and peasants storming the Winter Palace, and the soldier's coat implied in Mayakovsky's description of Blok are visual prompts for memory of the revolution. Mayakovsky himself, of course, was infamous for his yellow blouse. The disintegration of the "frock coat of the old" as a bourgeois article of clothing signals the transition from the old prerevolutionary world to a new post-revolutionary one, and as becomes evident in the subsequent lines, it is a transition which Blok (both in reality and in Mayakovsky's representation of him here) understood to come at a cost, despite his apparent and uncritical approval of both parts of Mayakovsky's statement in this passage.[523]

In "Aleksandr Blok has Died" Mayakovsky more incisively identified the mixed reaction of Blok to the revolution:

> Вот это «хорошо» и это «библиотеку сожгли» было два ощущения революции, фантастически связанные в его поэме «Двенадцать». Одни прочли в этой поэме сатиру на революцию, другие — славу ей.
>
> Поэмой зачитывались белые, забыв, что «хорошо», поэмой зачитывались красные, забыв проклятие тому, что «библиотека сгорела». Символисту надо было разобраться, какое из этих ощущений сильнее в нем. Славить ли это «хорошо» или стенать над пожарищем, — Блок в своей поэзии не выбрал.

[523] Jakobson claims that "if the title *150,000,000* was a polemical answer to Blok's *The Twelve*, the same poet gave Mayakovsky a cue for the title of the second *poema* about the revolution – *Khorosho!*" («если заглавие «Ста пятидесяти миллионов было полемическим ответом на «Двенадцать» Блока, тот же поэт подсказал Маяковскому и заглавие второй поэмы о революции – «Хорошо!» [Jakobson, "K pozdnei lirike Maiakovskogo," 385]). Vasikopf suggests that Blok here resembles the God of Genesis looking upon creation and calling it "good." Vaiskopf, *Vo ves' logos*, 146.

> So this 'it's good' and this 'they burned down the library' were the two senses of the revolution, fantastically linked in his *poema* 'The Twelve.' Some read in this poem a satire of the revolution, others – praise for it.
>
> Reading the *poema* absorbed the Whites, who forgot that [the revolution] is 'good'; reading the *poema* absorbed the Reds, who forgot the malediction that 'the library burned down.' The Symbolist had to figure out which of these senses was stronger in him. Whether to praise this 'good' or to groan over the conflagration – in his poetry Blok did not make that choice.[524]

The burning of the library here speaks to that same end of the old world suggested by the frock coats. Moreover, destruction of the library as a symbol of the rise of Futurism, a vague suggestion here, evokes the 'throwing overboard' of Pushkin, Tolstoy, etc. from the Futurist 'steamship of modernity.'[525] This sense that Futurism is supplanting Symbolism intensifies in the following lines:

> Кругом / тонула / Россия Блока.
> Незнакомки, / дымки севера,
> шли / на дно, / как идут / обломки,
> и жестянки / консервов.
> И сразу / лицо / скупее менял,
> мрачнее, / чем смерть на свадьбе:
> «Пишут… / из деревни… / сожгли… / у меня…
> библиотеку в усадьбе».[526]
>
> All around Blok's Russia was drowning.
> Unknown women, Northern mists,[527]

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[524] Mayakovsky, "Umer Aleksandr Blok," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 12, 22. In his 1961 essay "O poezii gromoglasnoi i priglushyonnoi" ("On Poetry, Loud-Voiced and Muted"), Aseev derives the title *Khorosho!* from *The Twelve*, a work that he discusses at length in the essay. See Aseev, "O poezii gromoglasnoi i priglushyonnoi," *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, 498 and passim.

[525] In "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste" ("Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu").

[526] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 266.

These lines show the potential of *lesenka* to convey drama: the pauses implied by each 'step' of *lesenka* underscore Blok's gloominess while also allowing for more rapid delivery of the parallelism in the phrases "than death at a wedding" and "the library at the estate." Even though the lines do not fully align metrically (taken without the first part of the line, «чем смерть на свадьбе» fits an iambic pattern, while «библиотеку в усадьбе» does not), the rhyme of *svad'be* and *usad'be*, together with this graphic parallelism, link the ideas of death in a new era (death at a wedding) with the old world that in the guise of Blok suffers demise (the library at the estate).

[527] «дымки» may be double sensed: 'northern mists,' as translated here and evocative of the opening of Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* and, or 'puffs of smoke,' reminiscent of the café setting of Blok's *Neznakomka* (*The Unknown Woman*).

went to the bottom, as go debris
and empty tin cans of food.
And immediately he changed his face to a more miserly one,
gloomier than death at a wedding:
"They write… from the village… they burned…
the library at my estate."

The lofty images commonly associated with Symbolism clash with a sonic resonance with *oblomovshchina* in Mayakovsky's quotidian image of tin-can refuse, evocative of the physical trash in Petrograd at the time and the privations of World War I,[528] the trash of 'Blok's Russia' that now drowns – a literalized opposite of Mayakovsky's rise. In their 1923 article "Our Linguistic Work" ("Nasha slovesnaia rabota"), Brik and Mayakovsky identified some of these same images as a formula for Symbolist poetry.[529] Here Mayakovsky links Symbolism directly with the old Russia and Futurism with revolutionary change. This opposition continues in the following lines that clearly reference Blok's mysticism and ironically reverse the appearance of Christ in *The Twelve*:

Уставился Блок - / и Блокова тень
глазеет, / на стенке привстав…
Как будто / оба / ждут по воде
шагающего Христа.
Но Блоку / Христос / являться не стал.[530]

Blok stared – and Blok's shadow
stares too, tiptoeing on the wall…
As if both are waiting on the water
for the strolling Christ.
But Christ would not appear to Blok.

[528] Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution*, 125.

[529] «…некто в сером + незнакомка + христос = символисты» ("…someone in grey + the unknown woman + christ = symbolists"). One assumes that "christ" is deliberately written without a capital letter. Brik and Mayakovsky, "Nasha slovesnaia rabota," *Lef*, no. 1 (1923): 40-41.

[530] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 266.

Blok waits for Christ much as he awaited the Unknown Woman (*neznakomka*) and the Beautiful Lady (*prekrasnaia dama*) in his poetry. However, the image of Christ or a Christlike figure walking on water, with its obvious reference to the story in the Gospels, is one to which Mayakovsky turned before 1927.[531] In *Mystery-Bouffe*, the "most typical person" walks across the water to the ark carrying the 'Unclean.' In *A Cloud in Trousers* (*Oblako v shtanakh*, 1916), Mayakovsky had evoked a similar image:

> Я,
> обсмеянный у сегодняшнего племени,
> как длинный
> скабрезный анекдот,
> вижу идущего через годы времени,
> которого не видит никто.
>
> Где глаз людей обрывается куцый,
> главой голодных орд,
> в терновом венце революций
> грядет шестнадцатый год.
>
> А я у вас – его предтеча…[532]
>
> I,
> ridiculed by today's tribe,
> like a long
> dirty joke,
> see the one walking across years of time,
> that no one sees.
>
> Where the limited eye of people falls short,
> as the head of hungry hordes,
> in the thorny crown of revolutions
> the year sixteen draws near.
>
> But I come to you as its precursor…

[531] This story appears in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John; I see no reason to suggest that Mayakovsky has any one version in mind.

[532] Maiakovskii, *Oblako v shtanakh*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 185.

In this passage Mayakovsky foretells revolutionary change through religious vocabulary and imagery, describing himself as a sort of John the Baptist of revolution (with the word *predtecha,* "precursor," "forerunner," or "harbinger" etymologically suggesting water via its root in *-tech-/-tek-*) and the Christ figure as "walking through years of time" – an image that aligns with Blok's Christ walking across the water via the opening metaphor of *Khorosho!*: time as the 'river of Fact.'

While the non-appearance of Christ evokes *toska* in Blok, Mayakovsky finds a more appropriately Soviet substitute in the masses: «Живые, / с песней / вместо Христа // люди / из-за угла» ("Living, with a song, instead of Christ / people from around the corner"). Vasikopf equates these singers both with Blok's "Red Guard apostles" in *The Twelve* and with Christ himself; like Mayakovsky, they have a 'new word' in the form of their song, albeit one that it borrowed in part from *The Twelve* and in part from Goethe's *Faust*.[533] Their song occupies the next twenty-four lines, and it bears recognizable elements of the poetry of both poets. For example, one section of the song features a sort of call-and-response:

> Вверх – / флаг!
> Рвань – / встань!
> Враг – ляг!
> День – дрянь.[534]
>
> Upwards – flag!
> Riffraff – stand!
> Enemy – sit!
> Day – trash.

This use of monosyllabic words with similar sounds resembles Mayakovsky's first post-revolutionary poem, the monosyllabically titled "Our March" ("Nash marsh"), particularly in the

[533] Vaiskopf, *Vo ves' logos*, 146.

[534] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 267. Elsewhere in *Khorosho!* Mayakovsky references and quotes popular songs of 1917; this song, although presented as a popular song of the time, appears to be his own invention.

latter's lines «Дней бык пег» and «Наш бог бег».[535] It also resembles lines of other poems of late 1917-1918, such as "Being Good to Horses" ("Khoroshee otnoshenie k loshadiam"), which also begins with the motif of monosyllabic lyrics:

> Били копыта.
> Пели будто:
> – Гриб.
> Грабь.
> Гроб.
> Груб. –[536]
>
> They beat their hooves.
> They sang as if:
> – Mushroom.
> Maraud.
> Coffin.
> Rude. –

Although in this part of *Khorosho!* Mayakovsky retains the *lesenka*, the regularity of the monosyllabic words and line breaks approaches Mayakovsky's early 'block' (stolbik) style of graphic organization.

Other parts of the song replicate sonic effects in *The Twelve*. The sound of gunfire, «Трах, тарарах-тах-тах-тах-тах» (*The Twelve*, Canto 6), becomes a monosyllabic «Трах! / Тах! // Тах! / Тах!» in the conclusion of a song that calls for the rise of the proletariat against factory owners and monarchic power; the gunfire that Blok incorporates into *The Twelve* in a complex of "recurrences and syntactic parallelisms"[537] transforms from a sonic effect represented in letters to an anthem of violence to complete the revolution. This use of violence becomes more overt in the versions of the song that "reached the remote peasants":

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[535] Maiakovskii, "Nash marsh," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 7.

[536] Maiakovskii, "Khoroshee otnoshenie k loshadiam," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 10.

[537] Efim Etkind, "'Demokratiia, opoiasannoi burei': Kompozitsiia poemy A. Bloka 'Dvenadtsat',' in *Tam, vnutri: o russkoi poezii XX veka. Ocherki* (Saint Petersburg: Maksima, 1996), 132.

Но- / жи- / чком / на / месте чик
лю- / то- / го / по- / мещика.
Гос- / по- / дин / по- / мещичек,
со- / би- / райте / вещи-ка!
До- / шло / до поры,
вы- / хо-/ ди, / босы,
вос- / три / топоры,
подымай косы.[538]

A kn-ife on the spot – slash
the fi-ie-rce land-owner.
Li-ttle mi-ster laa-ndowner,
gather up your things – now!
It's co-ome to the time,
come on out, barefoot ones,
shar-pen up your axes,
raise your sickles.

The third line from the end of this passage, «выходи, босы» directly evokes Canto 12 of *The Twelve*: «Кто еще там? Выходи! Кто в сугробе – выходи!»[539] divorced from its original ambiguity. Whether sang or read aloud, Mayakovsky's division of words into syllables in these phrases could resemble the staccato sounds of gunfire. It is difficult to determine where this song, the version «перепетая по-своему», "sung again in its own way," ends (another commonality with music in *The Twelve*[540]). It eventually picks up lines from the popular song "Oh, Little Apple" ("Ekh, iablochko"), the popular song mentioned also in connection with Aseev's depiction of Kolchak.

In comparable fashion to Aseev's conclusion to "The Black Ataman," the closing quatrain of chapter seven summarizes the revolutionary situation of the time, and thus provides an interpretation of the preceding narrative for the reader:

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[538] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 268-69.

[539] "Who else is there? Come out! Whoever is in the snowbank – come out!" Blok, *Dvenadtsat'*, in Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh* (Moscow and Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1960-1965), vol. 5, 19.

[540] Etkind's "Demokratiia, opoiasannoi burei" addresses the role of music in Blok's *poema.*

Этот вихрь, / от мысли до курка,
и постройку, / и пожара дым
прибирала / партия / к рукам,
направляла, / строила в ряды.[541]

This whirlwind, from thought to trigger,
and construction, and smoke of fires
the party took in hand,
directed, built into ranks.

In contrast to the rhythmic variation of the songs that precede it, the rhythm of the closing quatrain features a far more regular prosody: trochaic pentameter with a consistently incomplete final foot, a pyrrhic foot opening each line, one additional unrealized stress per line (the fourth ictus in each line except the second) and alternating masculine rhymes. 'Whirlwind,' as a summary of the preceding description of dramatic social and political change, recalls the 'black wind' of Blok's *The Twelve*.

However, if Blok's wind represents change without indicating any possible resolution or final result, Mayakovsky's wind represents the move from revolutionary ideas (the 'thought') to revolutionary action (the 'trigger'). If the wind that opens and closes Chapter 6 seemed indifferent to the political change from capitalism to socialism, its new form as a whirlwind becomes subordinate to the Bolshevik party even as its status as a natural element suggests the spontaneity of the urban and local people who sing Mayakovsky's revolutionary song. Intertextual revolutionary chaos becomes Bolshevik order. In this conclusion Mayakovsky himself mimics the Bolsheviks' creation of order out of the chaos of revolution on the level of the *poema*.

In conclusion, the meeting with Blok that Mayakovsky recalls in *Khorosho!* mirrors his writing about the meeting in the essay "Aleksandr Blok has Died." However, Mayakovsky uses the meeting to emerge from the revolution that subsumed him in Chapters 2 through 6. In Chapter

[541] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 270.

7, Mayakovsky's reemergence into the narrative of the *poema* corresponds to his adoption of the mantle of 'first poet,' or in other words, as the successor to Blok, suggesting that Mayakovsky can do what Blok did not: create a work that unambiguously commemorates and chronicles the Russian Revolution. At the same time, Mayakovsky does exactly that against which he railed in 1927: he brings personal reminiscences to the fore, and in doing so, establishes his own credentials as a revolutionary poet through contact with Blok at the moment, or close to it, when Blok's was composing his most significant poetic work on the revolution. As in previous sections, factography does not preclude poetic invention.

Chapters 8-17: The Civil War Years

Chapters 8-17 focus on the years of Civil War and War Communism, intermixing Mayakovsky's personal experiences with references and descriptions of larger-scale events. Chapter 8 shows a cold winter, perhaps the winter of 1918, and Mayakovsky hauling firewood during a *subbotnik*. The chapter concludes with a child's question of what is happening, and Mayakovsky provides a simple definition of socialism in response: «Социализм: / свободный труд // свободно / собравшихся людей» ("Socialism: the free labor / of freely gathered people").[542] Chapter 9 takes a wider look: it lauds this same labor while placing Russia in comparative context with European countries. Mayakovsky emphasizes the need to "catch up" with these countries, and perhaps naively questions why the interventionist countries in the Civil War would concern themselves with Russia. Chapter 10 continues description of the Civil War, with interventionist and anti-Bolshevik forces throughout Russia. Several leaders of the White movement, including Kolchak, are named specifically. This chapter concludes with acknowledgement of the difficulty of the

[542] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 272.

situation: speaking with a collective 'we,' Mayakovsky describes the new Soviet people as hungry and impoverished, but with a gun in hand and Lenin on their minds.

Chapter 11 shifts focus to Mayakovsky's life in Moscow during these years. He describes where he lives and the shortages with which he copes: in the context of Moscow under War Communism, Mayakovsky presents himself as living through the same hardships as the rest of society. Reference to a scandal at Glavtop (Glavnoe upravelenie toplivoi promishlennosti pri VSNKh), the government organ responsible for distribution of heating materials, places this chapter around spring 1920. These shortages remain relevant in Chapter 13, which begins with Mayakovsky talking about going to the Iaroslavskii train station to use the bathroom: due to the lack of heating in residential buildings, the pipes have frozen. Mayakovsky himself drags firewood found on the street home, where he lives with Lilia and Osip Brik and his dog Shchenik. He takes pleasure in splitting the wood: this is productive labor. Passing mention of Mayakovsky's foreign travels sets up a contrast with his current situation, and despite the hardships of the moment, Mayakovsky's patriotism persists: «но землю, / с которою / вместе мерз, // разлюбить / нельзя» ("But the land with which you froze together / you cannot cease to love").[543] A similar depiction of hardships is the focus of Chapter 14: here Mayakovsky brings some carrots to his sister and searches Moscow for salt for her to use for New Year's dishes. There is an obvious thematic and stylistic parallelism between the concluding lines of this and the previous chapter: «но землю, / с которой / вдвоем голодал, – // нельзя / никогда / забыть!» ("But the land with which you, a pair, went hungry / you can never forget!").[544]

[543] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 292.

[544] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 298.

These parallel chapter conclusions frame Mayakovsky as a participant in the common experience of the Civil War years, and this sense is heightened in Chapter 15. The temporal setting, however, becomes indistinct: Mayakovsky references military movements of 1919, then the August 1918 attempt on Lenin's life and the response of the Cheka, the Red Terror.[545] Chapter 16 jumps ahead to 1920 and from Moscow to Sevastopol, where the White general Wrangel and members of the bourgeoisie prepare to sail from Russia while the imminent success of the Red Army becomes more palpable. Chapter 17 summarizes the now-concluded years of civil war, and again Mayakovsky positions himself as one with the masses: «Я с теми, / кто вышел / строить / и месть // в сплошной / лихорадке / буден» ("I am with those who went to build and sweep / in the total fever of the workdays").[546] Mayakovsky writes with full approval of how events have progressed thus far and with optimism for the future: he loves "the colossal scope of our plans" («наших планов громадье»), and the hardships of the civil war years recede: Mayakovsky now "sings [his] fatherland" like the "the springtime of humanity."[547]

Chapter 18: Heroes of the Revolution in Post-Revolutionary Times

The temporal setting of Chapter 18 is very obviously 1927, and it clearly engages with the anniversary celebration. In it, Mayakovsky converses with Bolsheviks interred on Red Square: a Party-oriented pantheon of fallen heroes contrasting with the collective efforts into which

[545] Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 447.

[546] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 313.

[547] «И я, / как весну человечества, // рожденную / в трудах и в бою, // пою / мое отечество, // республику мою!» ("And I, like the springtime of humanity, / born in labors and battle, / sing of my fatherland, / my republic!") Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 313, 314.

Mayakovsky places himself in the preceding chapters.[548] Chapter 18 was first published in the newspaper *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* under the title "Red Square" ("Krasnaia ploshchad'").[549] The chapter provides a clear example of the adaptability of literature of fact to the anniversary context, as well as clear examples of the alignment of Mayakovsky's thought on the revolution across the *poema* and his occasional writings of 1927. Moreover, comparison of the chapter with Mayakovsky's earlier writings on the revolution illustrates the significant degree to which his expression of the revolution changed during the 1920s and concomitantly the extent to which Mayakovsky adhered to the broader image of the revolution projected by the Bolshevik party for the anniversary celebration.

The eighteenth chapter opens with explicit mention of early Soviet anniversary culture:

На девять / сюда / октябрей и маёв,
под красными / флагами / праздничных шествий,
носил / с миллионами / сердце моё,
уверен / и весел, / горд / и торжествен.[550]

For nine Octobers and Mays, here
under red flags of holiday processions,
I carried my heart with the millions,
certain and cheery, proud and festive.

As mentioned above, Mayakovsky had written poems in commemoration of previous anniversaries of the October Revolution and the Day of the Internationale (1 May). I have found no evidence of him ever marching as he describes here. A march of millions through Moscow seems far-fetched, and this phrase could be understood as Mayakovskian hyperbole or as an evocation of

[548] The time of year is not specified; aside from his trip to western Europe in April-May and trips to other Soviet cities, Mayakovsky was in Moscow or Pushkino (outside Moscow) for much of 1927 (Katanian, *Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti*, 363-420).

[549] Katanian, *Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti*, 402. As Mayakovsky writes in *I Myself*, he continued to actively contribute to *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* in 1927.

[550] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 315.

simultaneous marches in cities across the Soviet Union. The phrase also evokes *150,000,000*, Mayakovsky's 1920 *poema*, which at one point bore the title *Ivan Bylina: Epos revoliutsii* (*Ivan Bylina: An Epos of the Revolution*),[551] familiar terms from the introduction to *Khorosho!* In the 1920 *poema*, Mayakovsky imagines a possible future anniversary of the October Revolution:

> Год с нескончаемыми нулями. / Праздник, в святцах / не имеющий
> чина.
> Выфлажено все. / И люди / и строения.
> Может быть, / Октябрьской революции
> сотая годовщина,
> может быть, / просто / изумительнейшее
> настроение.[552]
>
> The year: with unending zeroes. The holiday: in the calendars
> unmarked.
> Everything in flags. The people and the buildings.
> Maybe it is the hundredth anniversary
> of the October Revolution,
> maybe it is just the most astounding
> mood.

By this time, Mayakovsky suggests, Soviet *byt* may progress to the extent that the early Soviet viewer would not be able to distinguish an anniversary celebration from everyday cheer. In this chapter Mayakovsky's tone is considerably more somber. Following the introductory evocation of anniversary celebrations, Mayakovsky writes of funeral processions in which he also claims to have participated, finally acknowledging frequent trips to Red Square by himself. One of these trips occupies the remaining narrative in the chapter.

The first of Red Square's tombs to occupy Mayakovsky's attention in the bright moonlight is Lenin's mausoleum. Like in Chapter 6, however, Mayakovsky does not linger on the memory

[551] Reformatskaia, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 504.

[552] In its first three editions, *150,000,000* featured Mayakovsky's block (stolbik) formatting. Mayakovsky reformatted the *poema* in *lesenka* for intended publication in 1924; that edition was not published. Reformatskaia, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 504.

of Lenin. Comparing the mausoleum to "heaps of books" (нагроможденные книги) he admits: «Но в эту / дверь / никакая тоска // не втянет / меня» ("but to this door / no grief pulls me"). In *Vladimir Ilych Lenin* Mayakovsky had called Lenin «и теперь / живее / всех живых» ("still now liver than any of the living)"[553] and now in *Khorosho!* the same idea repeats with Lenin as a sort of lifeblood: «он [Ленин] бьется, / как бился / в сердцах / и висках // живой / человечьей / весной» ("He [Lenin] is beating, like he did in the hearts and temples / like living human spring").[554] Although these lines do not synchronize well with depiction of Lenin disguised and unrecognized at Smolny in Chapter 6, they accord with passing mentions of Lenin elsewhere in the *poema*: Chapter 10, set in the years of War Communism (while Lenin is still alive), concludes «Мы – / голодные, / мы / – нищие, // с Лениным в башке / и с наганом в руке» ("We are hungry, we are destitute, / with Lenin in our blockheads and a Nagan [revolver] in our hands").[555] A passage in Chapter 15 referencing the 1918 assassination attempt on Lenin again evokes *150,000,000*:

> Миллионный / класс / вставал за Ильича
> против / белого / чудовища клыкастого,
> и вливалось в Ленина, леча,
> этой воли / лучшее лекарство.[556]
>
> The class of millions would rise for Ilych
> against the white-fanged monster,
> and would flow into Lenin, healing,
> for such willfulness they're the best medicine.

Other than his emphasis on Lenin's life after death, a point consistent with Mayakovsky and Lef's previously discussed opposition to 'trading on Lenin,' Mayakovsky does not dwell on the reasons

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[553] Maiakovskii, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 233.

[554] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 318.

[555] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 282.

[556] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 303.

that Lenin's mausoleum does not provoke any great reflection for him. However, other graves catch his attention.

The first of these is that of Leonid Krasin, who headed the project to construct the Lenin mausoleum.[557] Krasin himself died in London in 1926 and represents not only a recently departed Bolshevik: he and Mayakovsky were also personally connected. Mayakovsky "grimly reads" the epigraph on Krasin's tombstone and recalls seeing (but not meeting) Krasin upon the latter's arrival to Paris in December 1924 as the Soviet ambassador to France:

> И вижу – / Париж / из окон Дорио…
> И Красин / едет / сед и прекрасен,
> сквозь радость рабочих, / шумящую морево.[558]
>
> And I see: Paris through the windows of Doriot…
> And Krasin rides, silver-haired and splendid,
> through the workers' joy that roars seaily.

This view of Krasin, notable also for the internal rhyme *Krasin / prekrasen,* which also plays on the formation of the adjective *prekrasnyi* as superlative with the prefix *pre-*, suggests that Mayakovsky affords Krasin a vaunted status in his Bolshevik pantheon. Moreover, it presents Krasin in a dignified pose: he rides 'silver-haired and splendid' through 'the workers' joy,'[559] and thus contrasts with the earlier 'crowd' (*tolpa*) enraptured by Kerensky in a similar vehicular procession. Moreover, Mayakovsky uses short adjectives (*sed* rather than *sedoi*, *prekrasen* rather than *prekrasnyi*) as part of the subject of this phrase – a construction that appears not for the first

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[557] Timothy O'Connor, *The Engineer of Revolution: L.B. Krasin and the Bolsheviks, 1870-1926* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, and Oxford, UK: Westview Press, 1992), 278-79.

According to Tumarkin, the idea of "permanently preserving and displaying Lenin's body originated with Leonid Krasin," under the influence of the ideas on immortality and resurrection of Aleksandr Bogdanov and possibly also Nikolai Fedorov. See Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives*, 180-183 and passim.

[558] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 318.

[559] The shift to the present tense here may be explained as standard usage of the Russian historical present; however, it also suggests the freshness and vividness of Mayakovsky's recollection.

time in *Khorosho!*, and which evokes the 18th-century ode. However, Mayakovsky's style is nonetheless mixed in this passage – the preceding and following lines feature the rhyme *Dorio / morevo*, the former of which is a foreign name,[560] the latter of which is one of Mayakovsky's neologisms.[561]

Mayakovsky continues:

> Вот с этим / виделся, / чуть не за час.
> Смеялся. / Снимался около…
> И падает / Войков, / кровью сочась, –
> и кровью / газета / намокла.[562]
>
> I saw this one, not an hour before.
> He was laughing. Taking pictures near…
> And Voikov falls, oozing blood,
> and the newspaper was soaked with blood.

It is not apparent until the third line quoted here that Mayakovsky's attention has shifted to Petr Voikov, who was assassinated in Warsaw in June 1927. Jangfeldt brings it up in connection with Mayakovsky's 1928 poem "Emperor" ("Imperator"), which imagines the murder of the royal family in which Voikov participated, and wonders if Mayakovsky might have received any special inspiration for the poem in this meeting.[563] In his *Chronicle* Katanian quotes a review of a speech Mayakovsky gave in Kharkov in the following month:

> Вл. Маяковский не делает обстоятельных докладов. Он любит только вскользь «рассказывать обо всём». А жаль! поэту есть что рассказать. Он только что вернулся из поездки в Польшу и Чехословакию. Но и те краткие сообщения о Польше, коими поделился Маяковский, очень любопытны… Особенно интересно было сообщение Маяковского об убийстве товарища Войкова. Поэт виделся с покойным полпредом

[560] In Mayakovsky's time, Jacques Doriot was a French socialist; he later turned to fascism and collaborated with Nazi Germany.

[561] Valavin, *Slovotvorchestvo Maiakovskogo*, 302.

[562] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 318.

[563] Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 398.

> за неделю до его смерти. Краткие сообщения в ярком докладе т. Маяковского перемежались крепкими стихами, дополняющими сказанное.[564]
>
> Vl. Mayakovsky does not do comprehensive lectures. He likes to just "tell a little about everything." Too bad! the poet has something to tell. He just returned from a trip to Poland and Czechoslovakia. But even those short messages about Poland that Mayakovsky shared were very curious… Particularly interesting was Mayakovsky's account of the murder of Comrade Voikov. The poet saw the deceased ambassador a week before his death. The short accounts in Comrade Mayakovsky's powerful lecture were interspersed with forceful poems that complemented what he said.

One wonders if the "forceful poems" mentioned here included this passage from *Khorosho!* Otherwise, the author could well refer to "Yes or No?" ("Da ili net?"), "Listen, Gunner!" ("Slushai, navodchik!"), "An Appeal" ("Prizyv"), or "The Voice of Red Square" ("Golos Krasnoi ploshchadi"), all written shortly after the assassination and focusing on it.[565]

On the whole, Mayakovsky uses this situation to argue for Soviet vigilance and further instigation of worldwide socialist revolution, but they do not seem explanatory for *Khorosho!*, nor does it seem that *Khorosho!* references them specifically. It is worth noting that Mayakovsky does not mention Voikov's assassination, nor indeed Voikov at all, in his travelogue *That's How I Travelled* (*Ezdil ia tak*) from this same European tour and published in the fifth issue of *Novyi Lef* for 1927.

Mayakovsky's descriptions of the deaths of Krasin and Voikov both emphasize a personal connection. Although it is likely that no one would have questioned Mayakovsky's decision to write about these two figures, at least in elegiac form, emphasis on personal connection aligns with emphasis on production of narratives from personal reminiscences in the 1927 anniversary celebration. Closeness to any Bolshevik leader – whether physical or interpersonal – could become a powerful credential for the average Soviet citizen. Even though Mayakovsky's political loyalties

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[564] *Proletarii* (Kharkov), 28 July 1927, qtd. in Katanian, *Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti*, 397.

[565] Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 13, 429.

were by no means suspect in 1927, he participates in the broader trend of establishing a personal connection to Bolshevik and subsequently Soviet power.

On the other hand, my research has not uncovered any personal connection with the third recently fallen Bolshevik figure in this chapter. This section continues:

> За ним / предо мной / на мгновенье короткое
> такой, / с каким / портретами сжи́лись, –
> в шинели измятой, / с острой бородкой,
> прошел / человек, / железен и жилист.
> Юноше, / обдумывающему / житье,
> решающему – / сделать бы жизнь с кого,
> скажу / не задумываясь – / «Делай ее
> с товарища Дзержинского».[566]
>
> After him before me for a fleeting instant
> just as in the portraits we are used to, –
> in a rumpled overcoat, with a sharp little beard,
> the man walked by, iron and sinewy.
> To the youth thinking over existence,
> deciding who to model himself after,
> I will say without hesitation: "Make your life
> like Comrade Dzerzhinsky's.

The first four lines of this passage seemingly could describe Lenin, However, the "iron and sinewy" revolutionary turns out to be Felix Dzerzhinsky, "Iron (*Zheleznyi*) Felix."[567] The unexpectedness of the rhyme draws attention to Mayakovsky's choice of model, but in any case, Mayakovsky clearly connects the past, present, and future of the revolution across generations.

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[566] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 318-319. On Mayakovsky's later rhymes, Victor Terras argued that "Starting in 1925, Mayakovsky wrote a great deal of poetry for children, much of it technically excellent – its rhythms are just as lively and its rhymes just as fresh as those of his best poetry for adults – and all of it aggressively didactic" (Terras, *Vladimir Mayakovsky*, 94). Insofar as this passage hypothetically addresses the younger generation, the question of whether this rhyme itself is 'aggressively didactic' is reasonable. To my mind, it is certainly clever.

[567] It is worth noting that while I have found no evidence of personal acquaintance, Mayakovsky wrote about Dzerzhinsky twice earlier: first in *Vladimir Ilych Lenin*, and then in "Letter from the Writer Mayakovsky to the Writer Aleksei Maksimovich Gor'ky" (Pis'mo pisatelia Maiakovskogo pisateliu Alekseiu Maksimovichu Gor'komu), which appeared in the inaugural issue of *Novyi Lef*. Later in 1927, Mayakovsky would evoke Dzerzhinsky again in "Soldaty Dzerzhinskogo," in which he explicitly marked the ten-year anniversary of the founding of Cheka, but which equally can be read as an elegy for Dzerzhinsky.

This turn raises the question: why is Dzerzhinsky Mayakovsky's chosen model for youth to emulate?

Perhaps the strongest explanation comes from the conjunction of the political context of 1927 with the circumstances of Dzerzhinsky's death. In July 1926, already in poor health overall and ill at the time, Dzerzhinsky delivered a speech to the Bolshevik Central Committee in which he denounced the United Opposition led by Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinovev.[568] Mayakovsky probably could have read the writing on the wall left from these heated debates about the direction of the country.[569] If nothing else, Mayakovsky may have read coverage of Dzerzhinsky's death in the 21 July 1927 issue of *Pravda*,[570] which occupied the first two of six pages of the issue and featured eulogies by Nikolai Bukharin, Kliment Voroshilov, and Yakov Ganetsky, as well as elegies by Iosif Utkin and Demian Bedny.[571] It also contained the following eulogy for Dzerzhinsky signed by the Central Committee:

> Скоропостижно скончался от разрыва сердца товарищ Дзержинский, гроза буржуазии, верный рыцарь пролетариата, благороднейший борец коммунистической революции... Его больное, вконец перетруженное сердце отказалось работать, и смерть сразила его мгновенно. Славная смерть на передовом посту!

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[568] This speech and the two that preceded it were published in 1926 under the title *Tri poslednie rechi*. Online at http://elib.shpl.ru/ru/nodes/37119-dzerzhinskiy-f-e-tri-poslednie-rechi-m-l-1926

[569] Mayakovsky refers to Trotsky as "Bronshtein" earlier in *Khorosho!*, and that production delays for Eisenstein and Aleksandrov's *October* resulted in part from Stalin's command to excise Trotsky from the film. While I am not certain of when Eisenstein received that command, he and Mayakovsky (and Lef on the whole) were familiar enough that one can reasonably expect that the matter did not escape Mayakovsky's attention.

Whether Mayakovsky refers to Trotsky by his birth surname to thinly veil Trotsky's much-downplayed presence in *Khorosho!* or for some other purpose is unclear. Textological analysis of earlier drafts could shed some light on the question.

[570] It appears that there is no direct connection between the content of this issue of *Pravda* and the language Mayakovsky uses to describe Dzerzhinsky.

[571] In his eulogy, Bukharin refers to Dzerzhinsky as «рыцарь без страха и упрека, рыцарь революции» (knight of communism). The headline uses the similar phrase «вернейший боец пролетариата» (the most faithful fighter of the proletariat).

The second of four lines in Bedny's poem features a similar phrase: «Рыцарь героических рядом пал в неустанной борьбе» ("The knight of the heroic ranks fell in unsparing struggle."). In the last line, he refers to the Party as «стальная» (made of steel).

> Comrade Dzerzhinsky has passed away suddenly from cardiac rupture. He was a menace to the bourgeoisie, a faithful knight of the proletariat, a most honorable fighter for communist revolution… His sick and ultimately overlabored heart declined to keep working, and death struck him down instantaneously. An illustrious death on the front lines!

For Mayakovsky, evocation of Dzerzhinsky, not only as a recently fallen Soviet hero, but also as a figure swimming with the political current of the time, supplements political credentials. A loose biographical connection also exists: the offices of *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, to which Mayakovsky continued to contribute in 1927, stood opposite the Cheka headquarters on today's Lubyanka Square, which had been renamed in 1927 as Dzerzhinsky Square.[572]

Whichever qualities for emulation Mayakovsky saw in Dzerzhinsky, he declines to specify. Perhaps he had in mind those named in the *Pravda* eulogy, or perhaps he assumed that readers would identify these qualities themselves. This vagueness in Mayakovsky's pronouncement furthers the hypothesis that Dzerzhinsky's recent and sudden death and his adversarial relation to the United Opposition are more important factors. These factors are underwritten by Mayakovsky's attention to the memorials on Red Square:

> Кто костьми, / кто пеплом / стенам под стопу
> улеглись… / А то / и пепла нет.
> От трудов, / от каторг / и от пуль,
> и никто / почти – / от долгих лет.[573]

> Some as bones, some as ash, to the foot of these walls
> laid to rest… Otherwise there is no ash.
> From labors, penal servitude and bullets,
> And almost none from long life.

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[572] As pointed out by M.K. Rozenfel'd in his reminiscences on Mayakovsky. See Rozenfel'd, "Maiakovskii – zhurnalist," in *V. Maiakovskii v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1963), 533.

[573] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 319. The last observation, while to some extent a matter of opinion (Krasin lived to 56, Voikov to 38, Dzerzhinsky 48) of course rings ominously: Mayakovsky would outlive none of the three.

Notably, Mayakovsky omits a verb from the final two lines. Perhaps one may read these lines as continuing the euphemistic verb *uleglis*; more direct verbs implied here might be *umeret'* or *pogibnut'*.

What follows is no less fantastic than Aseev's Proskakov and Kolchak speaking their own epitaphs from beyond the grave.

> И чудится мне, / что на красном погосте
> товарищей / мучит / тревоги отрава.
> По пеплам идет, / сочится по кости,
> Выходит / на свет / по цветам / и по травам.
> И травы / с цветами / шуршат в беспокойстве.
> – Скажите – / вы здесь? / Скажите – / не сдали?
> Идут ли вперед? / Не стоят ли? – / Скажите.
> Достроит / коммуну / из света и стали
> республики / вашей / сегодняшний житель? –[574]

> And it seems to me that in this red cemetery
> The poison of apprehension torments these comrades.
> It walks through the ashes, oozes through the bones,
> Goes out to the light through flowers and through grasses.
> And the grasses with flowers rustle in unrest.
> Tell us – are you here? Tell us – you didn't give up?
> Are they going forward? Not standing still? Tell us.
> The commune of light and steel of your republic –
> will it be completed by the current resident?

These questions incorporate the fallen Bolsheviks into the tenth anniversary celebration. They fit the general form of 'summing up accounts' that many journals, newspapers, and Mayakovsky himself undertook in this work in 1927. Mayakovsky's response begins with a rare break from *lesenka*, as if he must, paradoxically, reassure them without hesitation:

> Тише, товарищи, спите …
> Ваша / подросток-страна
> каждой / весной / ослепительней,
> крепнет, / сильна и стройна.[575]

[574] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 319-320.

[575] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 320.

Sleep peacefully, comrades, …
Your adolescent country
with every spring is growing more dazzling,
gaining strength, powerful and lean.

The first line quoted here bears similarities to the second part of the 1918 poem "Cantata" ("Kantata"), first published anonymously, then under the names of Sergei Esenin, Mikhail Gerasimov, and Sergei Klichkov. They wrote the poem in three separate parts in commemoration of the opening of a memorial plaque on Red Square in 1918, and Esenin's, the second part, reads:

Спите, любимые братья,
Снова родная земля
Неколебимые рати
Движет под стены Кремля.

Новые в мире зачатья,
Зарево красных зарниц...
Спите, любимые братья,
В свете нетленных гробниц.

Солнце златою печатью
Стражей стоит у ворот...
Спите, любимые братья,
Мимо вас движется ратью
К зорям вселенским народ. [576]

Sleep, beloved brothers,
Again our native land
our unshakable warrior hosts
Pushes under the Kremlin walls.

New conceptions in the world,
A glow of red lightning…
Sleep, beloved brothers,
In the land of imperishable tombs.

The sun, like a golden seal
Stands sentry at the gates…
Sleep, beloved brothers,

[576] Esenin et al, "Kantata," in Esenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh*, vol. 4, 285-86. The first part is thought to be Gerasimov's, the third Klichkov's (see Koshkin and Iusov, "Primechaniia" in the same volume, 480-81). The memorial plaque commemorated in the poem also was installed for the first anniversary of the October Revolution (482-83).

The people move past you
as one host to eternal dawns.

This passage of *Khorosho!* and Esenin's part of "Cantata" share obvious similarities: the poet directly addressing the dead, thus crossing between past and present, the motif of walking, that walking metaphorically connecting to life and progress, a certain pathetic fallacy of natural elements, reference to opposing vertical movements – burying heroes in the ground and flowers rising from it – and a positive notion of the revolution refashioning the world, developed in part through imagery of light, and in Esenin's case, sunrise.

While it cannot be asserted with full certainty that Mayakovsky knew this part of the poem to be Esenin's,[577] the possible allusion is still more poignant in the context of Esenin's recent suicide. Esenin, after all, also had not died *ot dolgikh let* in 1925 at the age of 30. While relations between Mayakovsky and Esenin had been "mostly confined to polemics in the early 1920s,"[578] "none of these losses [Gumilyov, Blok, Khlebnikov] evoked the same tortured reaction from Mayakovsky as Yesenin's suicide."[579]

In the second part of Mayakovsky's 1926 essay "How Verses Are Made" ("Kak delat' stikhi"), he refers to Esenin's suicide as a "literary fact" – the term Tynianov used two years earlier

[577] It is reasonable to postulate that Mayakovsky might have known this poem, but perhaps not the specifics of its authorship. Its first version appeared in the Moscow newspaper *Volia i dumy zheleznodorozhnika* on 26 October 1918; the second, in the Saratov journal *Zarevo zavodov*. It then appeared in the collection *Revoliutsionnye motivy v russkoi poezii*, compiled by Vasily L'vov-Rogachevsky and published in Tula in 1921. The four-volume Esenin *Sobranie sochinenii* published 1926-27 has not been available to me, but insofar as commentary cited above from the *PSS* mentions the commentary in the *SS*, it seems reasonable to conclude that the poem appeared there also. With this many publications, and especially one that was barely recent to Mayakovsky's composition of his *poema*, there at least seems to be opportunity for him to read it. According to the *PSS*, authorship of the three parts was noted in the *SS*, so if this is the version Mayakovsky saw, he certainly could have known who wrote which part (Koshkin and Iusov, "Primechaniia," in Esenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, 480-81).

[578] Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 356.

[579] Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 357.

in his article for the first *Lef*.[580] In "How Verses are Made," Mayakovsky comments extensively on his composition of his elegy "To Sergei Esenin" in the previous year, and indeed investigates Esenin's prosody more deeply than that of any other poet mentioned in it. Further evidence of the connection comes in the form of Mayakovsky's own periphrastic technique. As demonstrated above, Mayakovsky borrowed directly from his essay "Aleksandr Blok Has Died" in his description of their meeting in *Khorosho!* Mayakovsky had employed this same technique in "To Sergei Esenin," in that case borrowing from Esenin's own suicide poem to conclude «В этой / жизни / помереть / не трудно. // Сделать жизнь / значительно / труднее» ("In this life it is not difficult to die. / Making a life is much more difficult").[581] This same phrase *sdelat' zhizn'*, 'to make life' also appears in Mayakovsky's *poema*.

Another intertextual connection might come from the preceding lines of Mayakovsky's elegy: «Надо / вырвать / радость / у грядущих дней» ("Joy must be wrested from future days").[582] This connection depends on how strongly one reads the implication of Mayakovsky's line in Esenin's "Cantata." If the world is, as he describes, in the early stages of a new era, and the Soviet people currently moves toward the "eternal dawns," then it perhaps is reasonable to include that happiness lies in that destination, and in that sense, happiness indeed must be torn from future days. If, on the other hand, one reads Esenin's lines as suggesting a current 'dawn' that can be made 'eternal,' then happiness presumably is already present.

[580] Maiakovskii, "Kak delat' stikhi," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 12, 96. The article was published in several newspapers and journals in 1926 and as a separate book in 1927. Jakobson directly references Mayakovsky's application of the concept of 'literary fact' to Esenin in his 1930 essay "On a Generation that Squandered its Poets."

[581] Maiakovskii, "Sergeiu Eseninu," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 105. There may also be some significance to the similarities in *lesenka* structure: both poems put «сделать» and «жизнь» on the same 'step.'

[582] Maiakovskii, "Sergeiu Eseninu," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 105.

A stronger connection, I think, is to the beginning of chapter 19: «И жизнь хороша, и жить хорошо». These lines will receive detailed analysis in the next section; here it is worth mentioning that in the Esenin context, they read as a sort of reversal of the conclusion of Mayakovsky's elegy.[583] Given that Mayakovsky considered suicide throughout his adult life, the opening of chapter 19 might raise the question of whom Mayakovsky is trying to convince. In that case, Esenin implicitly is suggested as a negative example not worthy of emulation, while one wonders if Mayakovsky sends him the same wish for peaceful sleep that he speaks to the fallen comrades on Red Square, perhaps as a 'comrade,' perhaps has a 'beloved brother.'

Preceding analysis has referred to apprehensions about incursions from capitalist countries in 1927. Even as hopes for worldwide socialist revolution had faded, from the Soviet perspective there were still positive signs: coal miners in Britain had led a general strike in May 1926. Unrest in China developed into the Chinese Civil War.[584] Both Mayakovsky and Aseev referenced these situations in other poems, and here Mayakovsky keeps the *poema* 'up-to-the-minute,' to borrow one of his terms from *Mystery-Bouffe*, by reporting on the revolutionary situation abroad to the phantom Bolsheviks:

> – А в ихних / черных / Европах и Азиях
> боязнь, / дремота и цепи? – / Нет!
> В мире / насилья и денег,
> тюрем / и петель витья –
> ваши / великие тени
> ходят, / будя / и ведя.[585]
>
> – But in their black Europes and Asias
> is there fear, somnolence and chains? – No!
> In the world of violence and money,
> of prisons and the twisting of nooses –

[583] Perhaps other intertextual relationships could be identified as well.

[584] Velikanova, *Popular Perceptions of Soviet Politics in the 1920s*, 47, 53, 93.

[585] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 320-321.

your great shadows
go forth, rousing and leading.

Possible exaggeration aside, in this passage Mayakovsky speaks as much to his reader as to his ghostly interlocutors: these lines serve as a reminder of the continuing oppression of the capitalist world, in implicit contrast to the situation in the Soviet Union. The reader of 1927 could read in these lines hope for future revolutions, a warning to remain vigilant against the problems of the capitalist world, and a reification of the Bolsheviks.

Mayakovsky concludes the chapter with a return to specifically Soviet concerns:

– А вас / не тянет / всевластная тина?
Чиновность / в мозгах / паутину / не свúла?
Скажите – / цела? / Скажите – / едина?
Готова ли / к бою / партийная сила? –
Спите, / товарищи, тише…
Кто / ваш покой отберет?
Встанем, / штыки ощетинивши
с первым / приказом: / «Вперед!» [586]

And the all-powerful sludge does not pull you in?
Lackeyism hasn't woven a web in your minds?
Tell us – is it whole? Tell us – is it unified?
Is the Party's power prepared for battle? –
Sleep peacefully, comrades, …
Who will take away your peace?
We will rise with bristled bayonets
at the first command: "Forward!"

Mayakovsky again speaks reassuringly. He seems more certain of the future through repetition (with variation in word order) of the request for these comrades to sleep, increases the sense of certainty of the future. But most importantly, Mayakovsky concludes the chapter on a high note with the command "Forward!" – again addressed as much to the reader as related to the interlocutors within the text. While the word is likely enough, given the militaristic imagery of the passage, to limit the boldness of conclusions, it appears numerous times in the *poema*, including

[586] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 321.

in the storming of the Winter Palace in Chapter 6. It also appears in Chapter 2 in the voices of the 'liars' of the Provisional Government: through its repetition here, and no less in the strong position at the end of a line and as an inexact metaphorical opposite to its rhyming word *otberet*. The world Mayakovsky describes here has been put to right.

In this chapter Mayakovsky commemorates fallen Bolshevik heroes. In the cases of Krasin and Voikov, he incorporates personal reminiscences; in the case of Dzerzhinsky, he presents a model for emulation, omitting aspects of Dzerzhinsky's career that may give some readers pause, even if other verses by Mayakovsky suggest that he did not suffer doubts on the rightness of Dzerzhinsky's actions. For example, in 1924's *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin* :

> Плюнем в лицо / той белой слякоти,
> сюсюкающей о зверствах Чека!
> Смотрите, / как здесь, / связавши за̀ локти,
> рабочих на̀смерть / секли по щекам.
> Зверела реакция. Интеллигентчики […] [587]

> We will spit in the faces of that white muck
> that lisps over the atrocities of the Cheka!
> Look how here, joined at the elbows,
> they lashed the cheeks of workers to death.
> Reaction went beastly. Petty intellectuals […]

And in 1927's "Soldiers of Dzerzhinsky" ("Soldaty Dzerzhinskogo"):

> Солдаты / Дзержинского
> Союз / берегут.
> Враги вокруг республики рыскают.
> Не к месту слабость / и разнеженность весенняя.
> Будут / битвы / громше, / чем крымское
> землетрясение.[588]

> The soldiers of Dzerzhinsky

[587] Maiakovskii, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, 269.

[588] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 231-32. As before, Dzerzhinsky's name appears in the genitive case as the rhyming word; it rhymes with «Держись-ка».

As noted above, two earthquakes occurred in Crimea in 1927. Though written to commemorate ten years of the Cheka and GPU (7 December) and presumably written after the second earthquake of 11-12 September, this poem nonetheless does not account for one of them.

Protect the Union.
Enemies prowl around the republic.
Now is no time for weakness and springtimey pampering.
There will be battles louder than the Crimean
earthquake.

In conclusion, Mayakovsky reifies fallen Bolsheviks uncritically. The fantastic shift to conversation with the departed focuses on present internal and external circumstances, and thus is similar to Aseev's inclusion of Annenkov in *Semyon Proskakov*. Both works focus on the past, but incorporate events, personae, and details that make the influence of the past relevant to the present. The two also share the device of speaking with the dead. And like Aseev, Mayakovsky guides the reader's interpretation, implicitly addressing the reader just as he narrates an imagined situation. The final chapter of the *poema*, and the chapter than concludes this analysis, remains in the present, and offers an optimistic interpretation of the Soviet situation in 1927.

Chapter 19: Good 1927

The title of the *poema* resonates twice in strong position at the end of lines to open Chapter 19:[589]

Я / земной шар
чуть не весь / обошел –
И жизнь / хороша,
и жить / хорошо.[590]

I have traversed
nearly the whole earthly sphere –
And life is good,
and to live is good.

[589] The rhyming pairs, of course, are the odd and even numbered lines as pairs. However, parallelism in *zhizn'/zhit'* and repetition of almost the same word *khorosha/khorosho* in the rhyming position of the last two lines of the quatrain endow them with greater impact.

[590] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 322.

The parallelism of *zhizn'*, life, and *zhit'*, to live, and use of two forms of the same word *khorosho/khorosha* in rhyming position make these lines all the more impactful. We might read them as an attempt for Mayakovsky to convince himself, and perhaps also the reader, of the intrinsic value of life. In light of the preceding chapter's intertextual relationship with Esenin's parts of the collective "Cantata" and Mayakovsky's own elegy "To Sergei Esenin," itself rephrasing the conclusions on life Esenin gave in his suicide note in its empathetic but still somewhat condemnatory conclusion, these seemingly boisterously positive lines bear a dark undertone.

By 1927 Mayakovsky had traveled throughout Europe and North America, and some of Asia. In that sense these lines bear an element of factuality, albeit with the hyperbole that Mayakovsky claimed he strove to avoid in *I Myself*. It goes without saying that the verb that describes his travels – *oboiti,* to walk all around or to circumambulate – hardly conforms to reality. The verb is nonetheless significant as a metaphoric construct. Given that Mayakovsky's most extensive travels occurred after 1917, he implicitly acknowledges those travels as resulting from the revolution, insofar as his ability to travel was underwritten by the Soviet state (and his enviable Soviet passport).

On a broader symbolic level, use of a verb that connotes motion on foot suggests a world of dry land that may be traversed. Recalling the proliferation of water metaphors in Chapters 2 through 7, the reappearance of dry land suggests an overall conception of the past ten years as the rise and recession of a flood. In this way, *Khorosho!* recalls the flood allegory that frames *Mystery-Bouffe*. Rather than floating on the floodwaters of history to the Soviet promised land as in *Mystery-Bouffe,* in *Khorosho!* Bolshevik revolutionaries flood the Winter Palace, flushing out the Provisional Government and with it the old world. When the waters of revolution recede,

Mayakovsky ultimately, but not without first experiencing the hardships and privations of War Communism and NEP, emerges amidst the wreckage in a pair with Blok but assumes the role of new Soviet poet and citizen on Soviet *terra firma*.

As in the previous chapter, Mayakovsky shifts from this expansive and literally global (but at the same time, still personal) perspective to the domestic situation, which he ultimately claims to be better than the outside world despite word choice that clearly evokes the chaos of the era.

> А в нашей буче, / боевой, кипучей –
> и того лучше.
> Вьётся / улица-змея.
> Дома / вдоль змеи.
> Улица – / моя.
> Дома – / мои.[591]
>
> But in our fracas, militant, frenetic –
> it's still better.
> The street-snake winds.
> Houses along the snake.
> The street is mine.
> The houses are mine.

The image of the street as a snake – questionable at best for the rectilinear streets of Leningrad, but accurate to Moscow, where Mayakovsky spent much of his time in the 1920s – recalls the metaphor of Petrograd streets as snakes, via the occasionalism *vyzmeiv*, in Chapter 6.

Mayakovsky's claim to the street at first appears as a claim to his status as an oral poet, a 'poet of the street' and the people. However, repetition of the personal pronoun *moi*, my, indicates that something more is also at work here. Mayakovsky continues:

> Окна / разинув,
> стоят магазины.
> В окнах / продукты:
> вина, фрукты.
> От мух / кисея.
> Сыры / не засижены.
> Лампы / сияют.

[591] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 322.

«Цены / снижены!»
Стала / оперяться
моя кооперация.
Бьём / грошом.
Очень хорошо.
Грудью / у витринных / книжных груд.
Моя / фамилия / в поэтическом рубрике.
Радуюсь я – / это / мой труд
вливается / в труд / моей республики.[592]

With windows wide-open
stand stores.
In their windows are foodstuffs:
wines, fruits.
Muslin guards them from flies.
The cheeses aren't flyspecked.
Lamps glow.
"Prices lowered!"
My cooperative
is coming into its own.
We pound our pennies.
Very good.
Chest to the piles of books in the display.
My surname in the poetic heading.
I rejoice – this is my labor
flowing into the labor of my republic.

In *I Myself* Mayakovsky refers to precisely these lines as "ironic pathos in the description of trifles." Trifles though they may be, this passage exhibits Mayakovsky's intertwining of himself and his own fate as a poet with the development of the Soviet economy. The goods on display and even protected from decay (partly evocative of the Homeric simile involving flies and lump sugar in Gogol's *Dead Souls*) includes Mayakovsky's books, his contribution to the country.

Mayakovsky takes a strong stance here on his own value, but at the same time seems to equate it with products that have become regularly available, in contrast to his description of the privations of War Communism in earlier chapters. At the same time, Mayakovsky continues to claim ownership over things that now belong to the citizenry, at least in theory. He retains this

[592] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 322-323.

same cadence and repetition of 'my' subsequent lines, commenting, for example, that "My police protect me" («Моя милиция меня бережет»). Looking up at the "blue silk" of the sky and seeing planes overhead, he claims the pilots as well – in short, everything that is now 'good' in Soviet life and society is Mayakovsky's. Implicit in this statement is the notion that Mayakovsky is one of the common people: any Soviet citizen could make these claims to ownership, just as some of the stormers of the Winter Palace chided those attempting to loot it on the grounds that the revolution transferred ownership of artworks in the palace to the people.

This passage also shows Mayakovsky's adroit wordplay. He incorporates a paraphrased quotation, "Prices lowered!" from a 1927 advertising poster for Leningradodezhda (Leningrad Clothiers) to ironic effect, given that «снижены» rhymes here with «не засижены»: prices have gone down despite lack of defect in the goods sold.[593] This reference fits with the paraphrastic technique discussed earlier in this chapter, with the difference that this line is presented as a quotation, when it in fact is paraphrased. Further wordplay appears in the following lines: taking claim over some cooperative, could Mayakovsky have in mind the related English word 'cooperative?' This reading gains strength from the following word *operiat'sia*, with its sonic resonance with *operatsiia* ('operation'). In any case, Mayakovsky suggests a return to pre-revolutionary norms through the word *grosh*, a half-kopeck coin in imperial Russia, even as he uses the word in its primary colloquial meaning of 'a pittance.' In any case, the verb *operiat'sia* suggests a sense of new normalcy perhaps appropriate to the latter days of NEP, and Mayakovsky ultimately judges this situation 'good.'

[593] As far as I can tell, Mayakovsky had no part in the design or text of this poster. It appears to be the design of graphic designer Dmitry Bulanov. Its full text reads: «С 21 февраля Ленинградодежда снизила цены на все свои товары». It depicts a large, androgynous face in profile on its left side speaking these words, and four ears along the right border 'hearing' the advertisement.

The image of books in the store window deserves separate analysis in the context of Mayakovsky's position in 1927. Inclusion in the 'piles of books' in the window, a wordplay with *grud',* chest, and *gruda,* pile, may not seem so flattering for a poet of Mayakovsky's stature, but this basic image recurs across Mayakovsky's work. He already had compared Lenin's mausoleum to 'heaped books' in the previous chapter, evoking the literacy campaigns Lenin initiated and his widow Nadezhda Krupskaia continued in the 1920s.

In the introduction to *Khorosho!* Mayakovsky imagines the *poema* as a published book. While writing *Khorosho!*, namely in June 1927, Mayakovsky's collected works began to appear in print.[594] Later, in "At the Top of My Voice", Mayakovsky would imagine his books in burial mounds (*kurgany*) – certainly a metaphor closer to the Lenin mausoleum than books in the storefront, but a similar image, nonetheless. Most importantly, Mayakovsky 'commodifies' himself, presenting his poetry alongside everyday items for consumption – hardly a lofty position for a poet, but also a juxtaposition that normalizes Mayakovsky's continued presence on the literary scene, contrary to the wishes of his critics. It is in keeping with Mayakovsky's desire to be read, to be a 'professional' poet. The first of these in Russian poetry was Pushkin, to whose work "At the Top of My Voice" alludes.[595]

The lines "This is my labor / flowing into the labor of my republic" similarly represent a statement of position. Mayakovsky argues that he indeed is contributing to the building of socialism. This discussion recurs in Mayakovsky's post-revolutionary experience (as Mayakovsky is constantly fending off critics). Perhaps the clearest articulation of Mayakovsky's view of poetry

[594] Jangfeldt, *Mayakovsky*, 386.

[595] The reviewer of *Khorosho!*, Aseev's *Semyon Proskakov*, Pasternak's cycle "K oktiabr'skoi godovshchine" ("On the October Anniversary"), and Tikhonov's *Vyra* in the *Krasnaia gazeta* noted that each of the four poets "has, or at least wants to have, a mass working-class reader as audience, and they count on this audience when they write." Ius Bol'shoi, "Chetyre poeta – Oktiabriu," *Krasnaia Gazeta,* evening edition of 30 November 1927, 5.

as worthwhile socialist labor is his 1918 poem "The Poet Worker" ("Poet-rabochii"), in which he declares himself to be not just a worker, but an entire factory.[596] Perhaps not incidentally, that poem ends with an image of a specific type of hydropower: «Водой речей вертеть жернова» ("Let the millstones turn by the water of speeches"),[597] and the watery imagery repeats here in the expression of Mayakovsky's labor "flowing into" other labor, almost as if a tributary to a greater river – perhaps to the river of stormers of the Winter Palace in Chapter 6, an event in which Mayakovsky did not participate, and perhaps to the 'river by the name of Fact' in the introduction to the *poema*. If nothing else, these lines present a positive model for others to emulate. One might contribute labor in various ways, but happiness is when individual labor 'flows into' and joins the collective labor, flowing as a river by one inexorable course. These lines are thus a justification of Mayakovsky himself and a model for the reader.

Similar echoes of previous passages in *Khorosho!* appear in the following lines. Mayakovsky writes:

> Пыль / взбили
> шиной губатой –
> в моём / автомобиле
> мои депутаты.
> В красное здание
> На заседание.
> Сидите, / не совейте,
> в моём Моссовете.[598]

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[596] Maiakovskii, "Poet-rabochii," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 18. He returns to arguing for the utility of poetry elsewhere, for example, in the 1926 poem "Conversation with a Tax Collector about Poetry" ("Razgovor s fininspektorom o poezii").

[597] Curiously, this is almost the same phrase that Miliukov uses in Chapter 4 («Дай окроплю речей водою») with an opposing valence.

[598] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 323-324. Mossovet – Moscow City Soviet (Moskovskii gorodskoi sovet), the highest administrative body of the city in the Soviet era.

The last two quoted lines bear resemblance to Pasternak's description of the Ninth Congress of Soviets in his *Vysokaia bolezn'*. First published in 1923, the 1928 revised version of the *poema* includes the lines: «Проснись, поэт, и суй свой пропуск. / Здесь не в обычае зевать» ("Awake, poet, and give your pass. / It's not custom to yawn here"). This connection might be far-fetched: Serveeva-Kliatis and Lekmanov do not identify it in their study *'Vysokaia*

> They whipped up dust
> with a thick-lipped tire –
> in my automobile
> are my deputies.
> Going to a red building
> For a session.
> Stay seated, don't nod off
> in my Mossovet.

These lines suggest both internal and external connections. Mayakovsky's deputies in their car contrast with the image of Kerensky in Chapter 2 («Такие случаи были, / Он едет в автомобиле…»). Mayakovsky's deputies lack the hoopla of Kerensky's passage through Petrograd (this scene is also in Moscow), but they, unlike Kerensky, are effective in their movement: they kick up dust, while the crowds completely stopped Kerensky's movement («Узнавши, кто и который – / толпа распрягла моторы!»).

Furthermore, Mayakovsky hints at another important story of Kerensky's past: namely, his flight from the Winter Palace during its storming. Here Mayakovsky describes the tire of the vehicle as 'thick-lipped' (*gubatyi*); the car in which Kerensky fled to Gatchina to rally Cossack supporters, on the other hand, was in quite different condition. Katanian quotes from Kerensky's reminiscences, which "Mayakovsky certainly read":

> Я приказал подать мой превосходный открытый дорожный автомобиль. Как назло у машины не оказалось достаточного для долгого пути количества бензина и ни одной запасной шины. Предпочитаю лучше остаться без бензина и шин, чем долгими сборами обращать на себя внимание.
>
> I ordered my superb open travelling automobile. As if out of spite the car turned out to not to have enough gasoline for a long journey and no spare tire. I prefer to end up without gasoline and tires rather than attract attention to myself by taking a long time gathering them.[599]

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bolezn' Borisa Pasternaka. Dve redaktsii poemy. Kommentarii. There is, of course, a significant difference in that Mayakovsky issues his imperatives to Mossovet deputies, whereas Pasternak addresses a poet, perhaps himself.

[599] Kerensky, *Gatchina (Iz vospominanii)*, 13, qtd. in Katanian, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh," 292.

In the opening of Chapter 6 – even before the storming of the Winter Palace begins – Mayakovsky's version of this story reads as follows:

> В бешеном автомобиле, / покрышки сбивши,
> тихий, / вроде / упакованной трубы,
> за Гатчину, / забившись, / улепетывал бывший –
> «В рог, / в бараний! / Взбунтовавшиеся рабы!»[600]
>
> In a frenzied automobile, with battered roof,
> quiet, as if a packed pipe,
> for Gatchina, jammed in, the former took to heels –
> "To the horn, the ram's horn! Slaves uprising!"

Katanian credits Mayakovsky with "telegraphic laconicism" in this description, a phrase almost certainly chosen in light of Mayakovsky's command in the first chapter for his verse to "fly like a telegraph." Kolonitskii notes, however, that this phrase belongs to an earlier moment in 1917: namely, a speech that Kerensky delivered in April. In that speech Kerensky contrasted "slaves uprising" with "conscious citizens" (*soznatel'nye grazhdane*) – hardly the implication of Mayakovsky's lines, which suggest that Kerensky thus named the stormers of the Winter Palace.[601] In short, these lines exemplify Mayakovsky's ability to take a 'fact' of the revolution, dislocate it chronologically, and redefine its meaning for his own purposes. Mayakovsky argues by implication that the Soviet Union of 1927 has far surpassed the Kerensky government of 1917 in terms of material well-being.

Similar claims to possession of positive aspects of everyday Soviet life continue in the following lines, now extending beyond material goods. Appraisal remains as 'good':

> Моя / милиция
> меня / бережет.
> Жезлом / правит,
> Чтоб вправо / шел.
> Пойду / направо.

[600] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 254-255.

[601] Kolonitskii, *Tovarishch Kerenskii*, 221.

Очень хорошо.
Надо мною / небо.
Синий / шелк!
Никогда / не было
Так / хорошо.
Тучи- / кочки,
переплыли летчики.
Это / летчики мои.[602]

My police
protect me.
It directs with a baton,
for me to go right.
I'll go right.
Very good.
Above me is the sky.
Blue silk!
It has never been
this good.
Raincloud-hillocks,
pilots sailed across.
These are my pilots.

Mayakovsky's choice of direction in this passage is intriguing: why does the police direct him to the right? Is this an oblique reference to the rise of Stalin, whose place on the Soviet political spectrum was 'right' relative to the Left Opposition while also insistent on correctness as a continuation of Lenin's thought? Or does Mayakovsky refer to the cultural situation in 1927, in which the 'right' artistic groups maintained the conservative position that advocated for a return to the classics and eternal themes? Mayakovsky, after all, was the leader of a journal and group that featured 'left' – politically, artistically, culturally – as the first word of its name. Perhaps in this passage he foresees that these groups and their tendencies would ultimately win out – and accepts a lesser role. Or, perhaps, has the revolution set history on the 'right' trajectory? Or does Mayakovsky reference a return of order to Soviet life after the chaos of the Civil War, and thus, this image of a policeman guiding traffic suggests neither political nor artistic reality of the late

[602] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 324.

1920s, but simply continues the preceding line of thought, insofar as bustling traffic in need of direction could suggest healthy economic activity?

As if to distract from these questions, Mayakovsky turns his gaze upward. The sky is above him, but notably not his – similar again to Chapter 6, in which the Petrograd weather (together with urban realia) continues in its usual way despite the political changes about to occur or just recently taken place. In any case, it seems to the material improvements Mayakovsky describes in the preceding lines, appearing to him as blue silk and leading him to the conclusion that "It has never been this good" – an argument that earlier chapters highlighting the material difficulties of War Communism supports. Long gone, it seems, are the times when Mayakovsky spared a pinch of salt for his sister Olga's New Year celebration or when two carrots and an armful of birch firewood became more valuable gifts to his beloved than candies and flowers (Chapter 14). In this context, the pilots overhead – Mayakovsky's pilots – appear as much as a luxury item as a marker of Soviet modernity, completing a picture that turns the oppressive nature of everyday life (*byt*) that permeates so much of Mayakovsky's writing on its head.

The next lines reflect Lef's insistence on topicality in their writing. In a passage that echoes Mayakovsky's appraisal of the burning of Blok's library, the poet turns his attention to newspaper reports of the July Revolt in Vienna, which occurred while he was working on *Khorosho!*

> В газету / глаза:
> молодцы – ве́нцы!
> Буржуя́м / под зад
> наддают / коленцем.
> Суд / жгут.
> Зер / гут.
> Идет / пожар
> сквозь бумажный шорох.
> Прокуроры / дрожат.
> Как хорошо!
> Пестрит / передовица
> угроз паршой.

Чтоб им подавиться.
Грозят? / Хорошо.[603]

Eyes on the newspaper:
Good job, Viennese!
They're putting their knee
to the bourgeoise's behind.
Burning the court.
Sehr gut.
The fire burns
through rustling papers.
The prosecutors are quaking.
How good!
The front page abounds
with the mange of perils.
Let them choke on it.
They're threatening? Good.

Mayakovsky's support for the Viennese workers connects directly with the ongoing warnings of impending foreign attacks in the newspapers of 1927 and extends from explicit praise to linguistic solidarity (sehr gut).[604] Katanian's notes to this passage raise an important point: "grounds for the workers' actions were the courts' acquittal of fascists who had killed two workers."[605]

One wonders, then, if Mayakovsky emphasizes this moment not only as a positive sign for worldwide socialist revolution, but also because the Viennese workers responded against the court's exoneration of fascists. Authors of *Novyi Lef* sought to disavow connections with fascism, some of which were advanced because of their previous connections to the Italian Futurist Marinetti, who by now had joined the Italian Fascist Party.[606] Osip Brik responded to such

[603] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 324-325.

[604] This is not the only interlingual moment in *Khorosho!* For example, in Chapter 17 Mayakovsky writes «Ол райт», and elsewhere in the *poema* quotes "Yankee Doodle" and "It's a Long Way to Tipperary," there as here in Cyrillic transliteration.

[605] Katanian, "Primechaniia," in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 13, 448.

[606] Erlich, "The Place of Russian Futurism within the Russian Poetic Avantgarde: A Reconsideration," *Russian Literature* XIII (1983): 8.

accusations in his article "We are Futurists" ("My – futuristy"), published in the 8-9 double anniversary issue of *Novyi Lef* and a rare example of Lefists continuing to name themselves Futurists at the time. He argues, in essence, that Russian Futurism was completely separate from the Italian Futurism headed by Marinetti, which turned toward fascism later than Marinetti's visit to Russia:

> Злобные к Лефу люди любят говорить:
> - Что такое Леф? – футуристы; что такое футуристы? – Маринетти; - что такое Маринетти? – итальянский фашист; - следовательно… Вывод ясен.
>
> Все это чистейший вздор, так как русские футуристы возникли задолго до того, как Маринетти стал известен в России.
>
> А когда в январе 1914 г. Маринетти приехал в Россию, русские футуристы встретили его весьма враждебно.[607]

> Those who hate Lef love to say:
> – What is Lef? – Futurists; what are Futurists? – Marinetti; – what is Marinetti? – an Italian fascist; – therefore… The conclusion is clear.
>
> All this is complete nonsense, as Russian Futurists arose long before Marinetti became famous in Russia.
>
> And when Marinetti came to Russia in January 1914, the Russian Futurists met him with great hostility.

Brik supports his arguments with citations of documents from the time: from publications in *Iskra* to justification of the Futurists' destruction of the past via pronouncements by Lunacharsky. Brik acknowledges that certain slogans of the Italian Futurists received support from the Russian counterparts, but he still argues that "Russian Futurists followed their own path and did not accept Marinetti,"[608] and moreover that "the Futurists did not decline their task [to support the building of socialism] and passed it on to Lef."[609] If the Lefists have remained Futurists, they are Futurists of the right sort.

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[607] Brik, "My – futuristy," *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927), 49.

[608] Brik, "My – futuristy," *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927), 49.

[609] Brik, "My – futuristy," *Novyi Lef* no. 8-9 (1927), 52.

Mayakovsky concludes the chapter and the *poema* with the informal imperatives familiar from Aseev's conclusion to *Semyon Proskakov*. Where Aseev emphasized the joy of the present day deriving from the vanquishing of enemies of the Soviet state, Mayakovsky emphasizes the youth of the Soviet state, including himself both as poet and citizen.

Республика наша
Строится, / дыбится.
Другим / странам / пò сто.
История – / пастью гроба.
А моя / страна – / подросток, –
твори, / выдумывай, / пробуй!
Радость прет. / Не для вас / уделить ли нам?!
Жизнь прекрасна / и / удивительна.
Лет до ста́ / расти
нам / без старости.
Год от года / расти
нашей бодрости.
Славьте, / молот / и стих,
землю молодости.[610]

Our republic
Is being built, rising.
Some countries are a hundred years old.
History is like the mouth of the grave.
But my country – you adolescent –
create, invent, try!
Joy presses ahead. But not for you – shall we share some?!
Life is splendid and amazing.
May we grow to live to a hundred
without old age.
May our energy grow
from year to year.
Praise, hammer and verse,
the land of youth.

"Our republic" appears emphatically as one unified line without *lesenka* steps. In keeping with emphasis on his country's youth, Mayakovsky encourages it to "create, invent, try!" The middle of these imperatives does not contradict the ideas of factography that Mayakovsky embraced, at

[610] Maiakovskii, *Khorosho!*, in Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 327-328.

least in part, in this *poema*: it is the country, and not the poet, that he encourages to invent. If Lef's factography was "against invention (*vydumka*)," as Mayakovsky wrote in *I Myself,* then here he supports the thesis that life itself would provide the best material for literature. Soviet life will develop and innovate as it grows, a point underscored by repetition of *rasti* and its phonetic resonances with *starosti* and *bodrosti*. Mayakovsky concludes with a call for the hammer and verse alike to increase the country's stature: as the country grows and develops, the facts of its reality will remain the author's best material.

Conclusion

In 1927, as proletarian artistic groups attacked Mayakovsky as too avant-garde, too difficult to understand, and out of touch with the general public, Mayakovsky asserts himself as a legitimate poetic voice through his factographic narrative of the October Revolution. *Khorosho!* is therefore dually legitimizing, in that it establishes an origin narrative of the Soviet state, thus proving its right to exist, and simultaneously establishes the voice of the narrator – Mayakovsky himself – as a true 'poet of the Revolution.' Corney's argument that narration and memory are mutually reinforcing processes resonates in *Khorosho!*: in narrating October, Mayakovsky supports the standard view of 1927 that imagines the storming of the Winter Palace as the apotheosis of revolution. Mayakovsky's simultaneous self-legitimization, such as through ambiguities in the factual accuracy of his physical placement at Smolny during the storming aside, reinforces the veracity of his narrative of the October Revolution, and the legitimacy of the resulting Soviet state supports Mayakovsky's assertion of himself as its poetic chronicler. Mayakovsky underscores that he has always been on the proverbial right side of history through citations of his own previous works.

Mayakovsky's narrative relies on documentary sources, facts, myths, and rumors of the time, and on his own personal reminiscences, previous writings, and biographical connections to various dramatis personae. The heterogeneity of source material allows for some inaccuracies, such as the transposition of Kerensky's famous words to an altogether alien context, but also for compilation of various aspects of the revolutionary past into a cohesive if kaleidoscopic narrative. Part and parcel with the composite nature of *Khorosho!* comes ideological clarity: Mayakovsky's narrator guides the reader to ideologically sound conclusions about various actors in the revolution. This is the case with Kerensky, some of whose most famous statements from 1917 appear verbatim. On the other hand, other opponents, like Miliukov and Kuskova, appear as highly stylized caricatures, removed from contemporary reality through couching in *Eugene Onegin*, whose political and social positions could hardly be taken seriously.

These factors result in a *poema* that is both factographic and inventive, and in villains that share features with paradigmatic villains in Soviet literature of the late 1920s without neatly fitting with any one type. If Mayakovsky himself remains the hero in later chapters, as he or his avatar is in so many of his other works, it must be acknowledged that Mayakovsky cedes the position of prominence to the common people, and to a lesser extent the Bolshevik party, in Chapters 2 through 6. In Chapter 7 he styles himself as inheritor of the mantel of first poet in his symbolic meeting with Blok. Limiting focus on himself in earlier chapters may have been a politically savvy decision, given the biographical lacunae that Mayakovsky opts not to elucidate. In *Khorosho!* Mayakovsky attempts to unite himself with the people, his individual poetry with collective production, and the people with the Bolshevik Party in his telling of the October Revolution.

Conclusion

In 1927 the *poemy* of Aseev and Mayakovsky contributed to the ten-year anniversary of the October Revolution. Both were artistic attempts to 'tell October,' the story of how the Bolsheviks came to power. Neither Lefist was a stranger to the writing of commemorative or historical works, and while neither poet was officially commissioned to write for the anniversary, the Lef idea of the 'social mandate' surely factored into their decisions, as did their "creative competition" to "write something new and unusual for the October anniversary."[611] Both poets experimented with the Lef theory of factography in their works.

Aseev and Mayakovsky insist on the factographic quality of their works explicitly and implicitly in their respective *poemy*. Aseev establishes the factographic quality of *Semyon Proskakov* explicitly in its subtitle and in programmatic claims to writing "unembellished lines" («неприкрашенные стихи») "without invention" («без выдумок»), and through use of cited historical material as epigraphs. Mayakovsky claims the factual quality of *Khorosho!* via the first chapter's image of the "river by the name of Fact," and this analysis has shown ways in which he relied on historical materials, especially in Chapters 2-8 of the *poema*. In both cases, claims to factual presentation of historical material are often justifiable and objectively verifiable. Analysis in this dissertation has verified cited material in both poets' works and, in the case of Mayakovsky, supplemented established cited material with discovery of previously unacknowledged source material.

While this analysis has demonstrated ways in which both *poemy* can rightfully be called factographic, it also has shown that both poets diverge from historical material in significant ways, often but not always deliberately. Even once aware that his hero Proskakov remained alive and

[611] Voronov, "Rassvet – chto ni den′ – molozhe…," 27.

well at the time of writing, Aseev never modified his *poema* to reflect Proskakov's survival of the Civil War years. Even if Proskakov does not suffer a dramatic death in the *poema* – his death is in fact not shown at all, but only implied from his "Epitaph" – Aseev could have felt that the death of the hero was in some way necessary to his narrative.[612] Of course, Aseev also fabricates the speech of the historical subjects, although he frequently does so on the basis of factual statements, documentary materials, and current perceptions of those subjects.

Mayakovsky's use of and deviations from factual material impact the narrative of his *poema* in similar ways. In some passages Mayakovsky appears to conflate several historical events, such as his meeting with Blok and the burning of Blok's library. In other places, such as his description of Kerensky, Mayakovsky effaces the boundaries between historical fact, popular perception, and rumor. Other potentially salient historical details, like Kerensky's famous «взбунтовавшиеся рабы», are decontextualized and appropriated for use in other historical moments. Still other divergences from factographic praxis were uncorrectable at the time for reasons beyond the author's control. Mayakovsky could speak personally with Podvoisky and accept the head of Istpart's corrections for his portrayal of the storming of the Winter Palace and modify the pertinent lines in public readings of *Khorosho!*, but he was unable to enter these corrections into the book version of the *poema* because it was already in publication.

Aseev and Mayakovsky both populate their works with historical figures ranging from recognizable heroes and villains of the Provisional Government, October Revolution, and Civil War to historical actors hitherto unknown to nearly all potential readers. Aseev's principal villains,

[612] Focusing on commissioned films for the tenth anniversary celebration, Corney argues that "In a sense, the entire project to write October had been caught in *the conflict between truth and poetry*, a conflict among revolutionaries about the most legitimate and effective way to tell the story of the October Revolution" (Corney, *Telling October* 197, italics added). To my mind, the general contention that truth and poetry are necessarily at odds with one another is debatable, even though Corney convincingly demonstrates shifts in narratives of the October Revolution from 1917 to 1927.

Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak and Ataman Boris Annenkov, fit neatly into broader categories for villains in the 1920s as the 'alien' and the 'beast' respectively.[613] While it can be said that both of these individuals were naturally conducive to such depiction, the *poema* also puts these characters in juxtaposition with each other and with Proskakov in ways that underscore their status as villains according to these recognizable literary types. Even though the paths of Proskakov and Annenkov do not cross at all in the text, nor does the available historical record show convincingly any interaction, one justification for the inclusion of Annenkov in Aseev's work could be found in depiction of two highly contrasting but easily recognizable villains.

Mayakovsky's villains do not fit so neatly into these types. In Laursen's terms, Kerensky appears at times as alien, at times as beast. Still more often he appears as a buffoon. Kuskova and Miliukov generally fit the 'alien' type, and like Aseev's Kolchak, the historical individuals easily fit the literary type. That said, the dominant device in Chapter 4 is satiric rewriting of Chapter 4 of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. Casting these figures as Tatiana Larina and the nanny, respectively, places them in an acerbically comic situation replete with agist and sexist jokes (Kuskova as sexually interested in Kerensky, Miliukov as «усатый нянь»). Sections like these of course deviate from historical reality, but in them Mayakovsky satirically denounces the political consciousness of bourgeois liberals of 1917 within the format of Pushkin's original and in terms drawing on indictments already present in Soviet discourse, whether founded in fact or rumor and hearsay. In short, for Aseev and Mayakovsky, 'factographic' writing did not mean complete fidelity to source material, nor did it preclude a degree of 'invention.'

[613] It is worth noting that Andrei Kravchuk's 2008 film *Admiral* («Адмиралъ») retains a certain 'alien' view of Kolchak. The film devotes extended treatment to the love triangle between Kolchak, his wife Sofia, and Anna Timireva and presents Kolchak as a romantic dreamer, unfortunately but inescapably embroiled in the Civil War. In the film's scant presentation of the Red side of the conflict, Bolsheviks appear as nameless, faceless executioners.

Both *poemy* speak directly to the anniversary celebration without mentioning it aloud. The closing lines of both works directly address the reader of 1927, guiding that reader to ideologically acceptable conclusions about the work itself and the Bolshevik revolution more broadly. Similar commentary takes place elsewhere in each *poema*. Some of this commentary is explicit, as in the case of Aseev's discussion of Proskakov's use of the word «гад» to describe White soldiers and in Mayakovsky's emphasis on the unnatural deaths of prominent Bolsheviks. Some is implicit in their stacking of the odds against the dramatis personae on the 'wrong side' of history. In this sense the *poemy* of Aseev and Mayakovsky aligned with the broader Party-driven demands for this anniversary to tell October with transparency of meaning.

Both Aseev and Mayakovsky lead their narratives up to the present moment also in their interpolation of current events in 1927. Topicality is another justification for the inclusion of Annenkov in *Semyon Proskakov*, even though it seems possible that Aseev originally conceived "The Black Ataman" as a standalone work. Annenkov was another villain of the Civil War defeated in 1927, and moreover, his activities and connections with British agents in China connected to broader apprehensions in Soviet society about possible foreign invasion. Mayakovsky evokes these same fears in the later chapters of *Khorosho!*, in which he also honors Bolshevik leaders fallen in the revolutionary era and recent years alike. In *Khorosho!* other recent developments in the international revolutionary situation receive the appraisal "good," and if those developments did not materialize in socialist revolutions, then Mayakovsky in any case tempers enthusiasm for revolution abroad with a still stronger appraisal of "good" in his depiction of current Soviet reality.

Contributions, Limitations, and Future Development

This dissertation is, to the best of my knowledge, the first close analysis of *Semyon Proskakov* and *Khorosho!* specifically oriented toward their interaction with the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, and the first detailed analysis of Aseev's *poema* in English. It therefore contributes a new perspective on the works of Aseev and Mayakovsky and draws attention to the broader cultural context in which they wrote. It supplements the findings of Corney on the ten-year anniversary, and is, in its own way, a partial 'summing of accounts' of the anniversary itself.

Nonetheless, this study does not exhaust analytic possibilities of the texts analyzed. Three elements of these texts that I address only partially are religious symbolism, musicality, and reception of these texts. In Aseev's *Semyon Proskakov*, the hero's "Epitaph" concludes triumphantly: «Мертвый, я раны свои простираю / К новому свету, к новому краю, / Все пережив и все победив!».[614] These lines appear to present Proskakov as a Christ figure, 'resurrected' in the literary text and reaching out to future life. The image therefore seems evocative of the version of Christ as conqueror of death. However, in later passages of the *poema*, Aseev emphasizes Proskakov's Everyman status: there are hundreds like him throughout Siberia, each doing their part to establish Soviet rule. The simultaneous singularity and collectivity of Proskakov belie easy conclusions about the import of Christ imagery to Aseev's imagination of the Civil War. In the finale of the *poema*, the world that the 'hundreds of Proskakovs' have created seems to reflect Proskakov's epitaph: this 'new land' is a place of singing and dancing, of joy and happiness. One might hypothesize that the 'new land' involves a Sovietized version of the Biblical Promised Land. However, in this same passage, the role of Christ as resurrector seems to belong

[614] "Dead, I stretch out my wounds / to the distant world, to the new land / having lived through all and conquered all!" Aseev, *Semyon Proskakov*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 333.

to the narrator: «встань, Проскаков, и обведи / землю выцветшими очами».[615] I am not aware of any scholarship discussing religious symbolism in Aseev's writing, or indeed any impact of religion on Aseev as an individual or as a poet. Among the many topics related to Aseev that have not yet been explored, this one may be a starting point.

Religious symbolism in Mayakovsky's *Khorosho!* is more overt, but similarly underexplored here. As discussed earlier, the introduction to *Khorosho!* plays with Christ imagery; Mayakovsky's 'river by the name of Fact' seems to follow the same course as Christ's 'living water.' At the end of the introduction, Mayakovsky writes of 'crucifying the pencil on the page.' Perhaps it could be argued that the meeting of Mayakovsky and Blok resembles the meeting of Christ with John the Baptist. Mayakovsky often imagined himself and his avatars in the role of Christ; this question could be discussed also in analysis of *Khorosho!* So also could the idea of martyrdom in the *poema,* applied to fallen Bolsheviks and perhaps also to Mayakovsky himself. Perhaps of greatest import to interpretation of the *poema* is the text's relationship with the book of Genesis, both through Mayakovsky's pronouncement of the new Soviet world as "good" and its metaphors of flood. Such a project also could consider metaphors of resurrection in Mayakovsky's *poema* and overall would aim to apply critical insights on religious imagery in Mayakovsky's works, such as Vaiskopf's, to Mayakovsky's less-considered later works.[616]

Musicality is another area into which this work could go deeper. The musical references and interpolations in Aseev and Mayakovsky's *poemy* could be analyzed further, for example, as factographic devices. Musicality also could be relevant to questions of intertextual relationships

[615] "arise, Proskakov, and look around / the land with faded eyes." Aseev, *Semyon Proskakov,* in *Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 2, 364.

[616] Vasikopf identifies the relation of Mayakovsky's "good" to the Genesis creation story, but does not focus on the point.

with the poetry of Aleksandr Blok in general and his *poema The Twelve* specifically.[617] As discussed by Efim Etkind, musicality is vital to Blok's *poema* of the revolution.[618] Another aspect of these texts that could be related both to musicality and the influence of Blok is metric and rhythmic experimentation. Innovation in prosody was as unquestionably important to Aseev and Mayakovsky as to Blok and could relate to Lef's broader experimental practices and to aesthetic debates of the late 1920s. Finally, while this dissertation mentions some contemporary responses to Aseev and Mayakovsky's *poemy,* focused discussion of the range of responses to these works would complement analysis and create a fuller picture of the literary and political discourse of 1927.

The present dissertation is a first step toward a synchronous study of the literature of 1927 on the model of Jean-Michel Rabaté's *1913: The Cradle of Modernism*, published in 2007.[619] In a synchronous study of Soviet literature of 1927, literature of the anniversary celebration would constitute one vector of literary activity among many others. As Rabaté argues, a year does not need to be an 'annus mirabilis' for it to be productive and worthy of scholarly attention. Although perhaps many years of the 1920s could be thus called,[620] 1927 was unquestionably productive in the literary field. Just as 1913 is of interest to Rabaté as the year preceding the onset of World War I, so also is 1927 a year on the brink of political sea change as the NEP era draws to a close and Stalin consolidates power. A wide range of works in poetry, prose, and drama by Eduard

[617] Aseev mentions and discusses Blok many times in his prose writing. On Blok's role in Aseev's thinking about poetry, see Kriukova, "'Nastalo vremia otsenit vnimatelno poeticheskuiu sudby Bloka' (iz arkhiva N.N. Aseeva)." Among other considerations, Kriukova notes Aseev's role in the *Dalnevostochnoe obozrenie* publication of *The Twelve*. See also Nikitin, "N.N. Aseev o poslednikh stikhakh A.A. Bloka."

[618] For example, in "Demokratiia, opoiasannoi burei," cited earlier in this dissertation.

[619] Rabaté references similar studies of the modernist era with a synchronous approach.

[620] Rabaté, *1913: The Cradle of Modernism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 3-4.

Bagritskii, Ol'ga Berggol'ts, Mikhail Bulgakov, Ol'ga Forsh, Vsevolod Ivanov, Iurii Olesha, Boris Pasternak, Andrei Platonov, Lidiia Seifullina, Aleksei Tolstoi, Konstantin Vaginov, Evgenii Zamyatin, and others, and the literary reviews, polemics, and debates that appeared with and surrounded them, could receive analysis. Such a study would examine tensions, ambiguities, debates, and commonalities in Soviet literature and literary culture at a time when extraordinary works were written, but also just before the Soviet cultural apparatus made decisive moves toward greater aesthetic and ideological restriction.

The 1927 anniversary of the October Revolution provided a rich social, political, and cultural context for literary activity. The literary contributions of Aseev and Mayakovsky to the anniversary are complex and multi-faceted, and they engage with a wide range of issues pertinent to the anniversary itself and to their historical moment more broadly. The Lef theory of factography was naturally consonant with the goals of the anniversary celebration, and while Aseev and Mayakovsky were not historians in any conventional sense, their *poemy* represent literary experiments in ‘telling October.’

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