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Ludmila Lavine
Bucknell University, llavine@bucknell.edu

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LUDMILA SHLEYFER LAVINE

At the height of Stalin's campaign against "rootless cosmopolitans," a literary critic was castigated for attributing the source of Vladimir Mayakovsky's "hatred toward hangmen" to the works of Chaim Bialik. *Literaturnaia gazeta* called this parallel disrespectful "to the memory of the great patriot" Mayakovsky.[1] "Rootless cosmopolitanism," a slanderous phrase during Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign that intensified in the late 1940s, referenced the Jews' supposed lack of connection and, hence, allegiance to the country. Mayakovsky addressed such divisive rhetoric repeatedly during the first Soviet anti-Semitic peak in the 1920s, though his Jewish alter-ego in poetry appeared much earlier. In 1915 the speaker mythologizes the ethnicity of his Jewish muse, as if conjured up by a "new Bialik."[2] In fact, far from finding this comparison to Bialik disrespectful, Mayakovksy would have welcomed it. He knew Bialik's poetry and, on one occasion, recited by heart the beginning of "Tale of a Pogrom" in Vladimir Zhabotinsky's translation from Hebrew.[3]

Images of Jewishness as ethnic, cultural, and biblical categories in Mayakovsky's works are both plentiful and understudied. This reluctance of scholars to engage such ethnocentric issues may stem from Mayakovsky's persona as the poet of internationalism. Still, cultural types in Mayakovsky's works are as important as his universal themes—in fact, one complements the other—and Jews in particular have a special place in his universalism. The present study is an attempt to bridge this gap.

This article traces Mayakovsky's increasing engagement with the Jewish experience, sparked by his trip to America and reflected in his cycle *Verses about America* (1925–26), as well as in his agitational works for Jewish agrarian settlements: his collaboration on the film *Jews on the Land* (1927) and his poems "Jew (To comrades from OZET)" (1926) and

"'Yid,'" (1928). I first propose the subtext of Exodus in *Verses* for its universal and concretely Jewish themes of marginalization, persecution, and a search for a home, all of which resonate on the level of the speaker's personal journey in the poetic cycle. I then argue that the poet's flipping of stereotypes is the central device in addressing Jewish persecution. Mayakovsky makes foreign the anti-Semite by ascribing to him traits that are traditionally associated with Jews and, conversely, revising the Jewish stereotype in the image of the dominant culture. The poet-speaker includes himself in the biblical, historical, and contemporary cluster of the proverbial Other—the Moses-Columbus-modern Jew matrix—by rearranging the *svoi-chuzhoi* distribution.[4] While on the one hand battling the growing anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, on the other hand in these works the poet relocates the metaphorical Promised Land to the land of the Soviets by invoking the story of Exodus.

As various scholars have claimed, Christian symbolism surges in Russian literature of the revolutionary period.[5] Viktor Shklovsky suggests that Mayakovsky uses imagery from the New Testament as the "most accessible mythology" for his audience, even if he does so to underscore his blasphemous pose.[6] Mayakovsky also engages symbolism from the Hebrew Bible in his revolutionary works; for example, allusions to Noah's Ark in *The Man* (1916–17) and in *Mystery-Bouffe* (1918), the new tablets from "our" Mount Sinai in *Revolution* (1917), or the golden calf in *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin* (1924).[7] This study deals with the poet's turn to the Hebrew Bible and particularly to the Exodus theme, beginning with his 1925 trip to the United States, at a time when a significant portion of his audience was Jewish.

"ALL YOU KNOW IS ZION"

Mayakovsky's trip to America is a formative moment in the poet's engagement with Jewish cultural projects in the Soviet Union.[8] His poetry readings were sponsored in large part by Yiddish newspapers.[9] According to Marie Syrkin (daughter of the prominent Labor Zionist, Nachman Syrkin), Mayakovsky was initially upset to see that only Yiddish *literati* had come to meet him at a café upon his arrival; the poet kept asking, "where are your American

[4]According to Leonid Livak, Jews are historically Europe's main paradigm of difference. European colonists even describe newly-encountered peoples in the language used for discourse on Jews. Furthermore, East Slavic popular traditions encode any religiously or culturally marginal group as "Jews." See Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature* (Stanford, 2010), 20–21.

[5]Katerina Clark proposes the "master narrative" in the Soviet literature of the 1920s and 1930s as the story of Christ driving moneychangers out of the temple (*Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution* [Cambridge, MA, 1995], 3). Amelia Glaser observes that Christian imagery in the Russian avant-garde is a "metaphor for the death and transfiguration of society" (*Jews and Ukrainians in Russia's Literary Borderlands: From the Shtetl Fair to the Petersburg Bookshop* [Evanston, 2012], 120).

[6]Viktor Shklovsky, *Mayakovsky and His Circle* (New York, 1972), 36.

[7]Maiakovskii, *Chelovek, Misteriia-Buff, Revoliutsiia,* and *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, PSS* 1:243–72, 2:243–355, 1:134–40, and 6:231–310, respectively.

[8]R. M. Iangirov, "Marginal'nye temy v tvorcheskoi praktike Lefa," *Tynianovskii sbornik: Piatye tynianovskie chteniia* (Riga, 1994), 227–30.

[9]For a thorough discussion of Mayakovsky's relationship with pro-Communist Russian Jewish press in the United States see L.F. Katsis, "Vladimir Maiakovskii i russko-evreiskii N'iu-Iork," *Maiakovskii prodolzhaetsia* (2009): 51–70.

comrades?"[10] At one of Mayakovsky's readings, the audience broke into a spontaneous discussion of his poetry in Yiddish, to which the poet, in jest, responded loudly in Georgian.[11]

In his travelogue *My Discovery of America* and in his *Verses*, Mayakovsky presents a motley array of race, ethnicity, class, and gender topics. The poet comes in contact with a different type of "internationalism" in the United States, one that is constructed from diverse communities that live side-by-side while maintaining, as the poet terms, "unblended purity."[12] In *My Discovery of America*, the poet observes that blacks and Jews are on the same side in the United States; that is, not white and, hence, not "American."[13] In the discussion below I argue that the Exodus story is one of the organizing subtexts in *Verses*, offering another Promised Land—Moscow—for a flight from bondage and a return home. The poet engages the biblical story both for its global motifs of belonging and liberation, as well as for its special place in Jewish culture.

The speaker of the programmatic poem in the cycle, "Christopher Columbus," identifies with Columbus beyond the sole act of traversing the ocean to "discover" the New World. Columbus's yearning to belong somewhere is presented through the lens of a Jewish outcast. The epigraph to the poem references a myth of Columbus as a crypto-Jew: "Christopher Columbus was Christopher Colomb—a Spanish Jew." *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, published by Brokgauz and Efron between 1908 and 1913, presents this hypothesis of Columbus's origins in detail. As these years were marked for the Jews of the Russian Empire by exclusionary laws, pogroms, and the Beilis affair, a theory connecting Columbus's voyage to the expulsion of Jews from Spain—happening in the same year—must have resonated with the Jewish community.[14]

It is significant that, despite the poetry cycle's emphasis on the ills perpetrated on the Americas by European colonization, Mayakovsky's Columbus is not a colonizer, but instead a victim escaping persecution. "Christopher Columbus" opens with ethnic slurs from drunks at a bar: "'What kind of a nation are you?/ All you know is Zion!/ Any puny Portuguese can take you'" (*liuboi portugalishka/ dast tebe foru*).[15] Note that "Zion" itself carried negative connotations both in prerevolutionary and in Soviet Russia. From the Tsarist *Elders of Zion* to the Soviet understanding of "Zionism" as extreme nationalism, the term was used as a pejorative euphemism for a Jew in general. Here Mayakovsky mocks its contemporary negative aura by placing it in the mouths of drunkards.

Columbus's response to the stereotype of a meek Jew sets in motion another popular narrative, one of Jewish migration, positing escape from Judeophobia as the real impetus

[10]Carole S. Kessner's interview with Marie Syrkin, *Meeting with Mayakovsky*, American Jewish Archive. Kessner cites parts of this interview in *Marie Syrkin: Values Beyond the Self* (Waltham, 2008), 175–76.

[11]Viktor Shklovskii, "O Maiakovskom," in his *Zhili-byli. Povesti o vremeni: S kontsa XIX v. po 1964 g.* (Moscow, 1966), 401.

[12]Maiakovskii, *Moe otkritie Ameriki*, PSS 7:306.

[13]Ibid., 328.

[14]Hypothesizing on Columbus's Jewish roots began among American Jewry around the 1892 quadricentennial celebrations of Columbus's voyage largely as a defense against anti-Semitism in the United States. See Beth S. Wenger, "Rites of Citizenship: Jewish Celebrations of the Nation," in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Raphael (New York, 2008), 366–84.

[15]Maiakovskii, "Khristofor Kolomb," PSS 7:31. After expulsion from Spain in 1492, many Jews fled to Portugal, where forced conversions began in 1497, followed by massive ethnic cleansing.

behind the discovery of the New World: "(this touched the Jewish nerve): ... 'I'll show them and discover another country.'"[16] The voyage, however, at first seen as a solution to Columbus's "Jewish problem," works against him when his sailors become disaffected with the long journey:

Черту ввязались в попутчики.	We've become fellow travelers to the devil.
Дома плохо?	Was it so bad at home?
И стол и кровать.	A table, a bed.
Знаем мы	We know
эти	these
жидовские штучки –	yid ways:
разные	covering and discovering
Америки	all sorts
закрывать и открывать![17]	of Americas!

In the poem the speaker associates himself with Columbus almost physically. He revels in the thought that the same waves that "pawed" Columbus now surround him (*eti vot volny Kolomba lapili*), that he is crossing the same waters that received Columbus's sweat (*v etu zhe vodu/ s Kolombova lba/ stikali/ pota/ ustalye kapli*).[18] This corporeal union, however, is secondary to the speaker's identification with Columbus's psychic pain of a homeless Jewish outcast.

The formulation of the poet-Jew as a solitary outsider is poeticized by Marina Tsvetaeva several years earlier in *Poema of the End*, where the speaker likens a poet's position of Otherness to the Jewish predicament: "Life is a place where living is impossible: A Jewish ghetto. ... In this most Christian of worlds/ poets are yids!"[19] However, while Tsvetaeva celebrates such poetic ostracism, Mayakovsky bemoans it.[20]

Unlike Tsvetaeva's elevation of a poet's marginality in "this most Christian of worlds," Mayakovsky attempts to assert his place, as well as a place for poetry, in the shifting literary landscape of Soviet Russia. The loaded word *poputchik* ("fellow traveler") in the passage above echoes in "City," a poem from another travel cycle of 1925, *Paris*, with the same sense of tragic isolation: "But who the hell is my fellow traveler? (*No komu ia, k chertu, poputchik?*)/ Not a soul walks by my side." Yet, a longing to find this "fellow traveler," despite the hopelessness in the speaker's voice, is also palpable: "Only one desire swells in me: ... to see, face to face,/ who is/ this fellow traveler of mine (*videt' v litso, komu eto/ ia/ poputchik?!*)."[21] In "Christopher Columbus," the sailors reject their "fellow traveler" as the "devil" with his "yid ways," foreshadowing that the new continent will not resolve Columbus's (and the speaker's) search for belonging.

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[16]Ibid., 32.

[17]Ibid., 36.

[18]Ibid., 34.

[19]Marina Tsvetaeva, *Poema kontsa*, in her *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh* (Moscow, 1997), 3:48.

[20]Similarly, Julia Vaingurt observes that Mayakovsky's lyric hero uses Jewishness in "Khristofor Kolomb" to expand "the horizons of the world in order to assert his own position within it." See Vaingurt, *Wonderlands of the Avant-Garde: Technology and the Arts in Russia of the 1920s* (Evanston, 2013)*,* 170.

[21]Maiakovskii, "Gorod" (from the cycle *Parizh*), *PSS* 6:200–201.

The story of Exodus dominates the American foundational myth, from the Founding Fathers' countless references to Moses and the Promised Land, to the inscription on the Liberty Bell (God's words to Moses on Mount Sinai from Leviticus 25), to the Statue of Liberty with the nimbus of light around her head and the tablet in her arms, and, finally, to the slave spirituals. The Soviet press of this period also frames American technology in terms of human liberation.[22] In *Verses*, America is initially presented as that new Zion for which both Columbus and the speaker set sail. Mayakovsky's Columbus assumes the features of Moses, who leads the oppressed out of slavery and into an uncertain future: his sailors have "Prison behind them,/ Not a ruble in front of them."[23] The sailors' rumblings parallel the Israelites' fatigue with the leader who takes them away from their domestic comforts ("Was it so bad at home?").[24] The speaker's ruminations on crossing the ocean in "Atlantic Ocean" allude to Israelites' crossing of the parted sea: "the moon spreads like a road ... one can crawl on one's stomach, as if by dry land *(kak po sukhu)*." The following image continues the allusion: "But the enemy can't squeeze in *(No vrag ne sunetsia)*:/ into the sky/ stares cautiously,/ without blinking,/ the Atlantic eye."[25] The ocean watches over its people, as God watches over the Israelites while closing the sea on their enemies.

Instead of the Promised Land, however, the destination turns out to be another metaphorical Egypt, with statues to pagan gods *(dvumordye idoly)* and re-enslaved racial minorities, this time as the capitalists' doormen, baggage boys, street sweepers, and sexually victimized women.[26] In the concluding part of "Christopher Columbus," the speaker castigates Columbus for his "blockhead" hopes of freedom *(ty balda, Kolomb)*, claiming that his "descendants" *(potomki)* are still enslaved in the "technological hell," resting their faces on "bundles" *(kotomki)*.[27] This *potomki-kotomki* rhyme underscores two critical points: Columbus is presented not as a colonizer who populates the continent with European capitalist-exploiters, but as a progenitor of the same old oppressed people; *kotomki* suggests that Columbus's *potomki* are not home yet, that they are still wandering, still carrying their belongings from place to place, which in the poem serve as makeshift pillows. In the concluding poems of *Verses*, the speaker realizes that it is precisely American technology that is the false idol. In the context of the Israelites' long trip home, it is significant that the speaker's journey back to the Soviet Union is lyricized in the final poem of the cycle entitled "Homeward," especially since the poem that precedes it, "Camp 'Nit gedaige,'" suggests that the American Jews' Zion, their place of belonging, is geographically the country most

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[22]In *Moe otkrytie Ameriki*, Mayakovsky derides the Soviet obsession with Fordism and the numerous translations of Henry Ford's book (*PSS* 7:338).

[23]Maiakovskii, "Khristofor Kolomb," *PSS* 7:33.

[24]Parallels between Moses and Columbus are plentiful in the myth of America's founding. Curiously, in his journal, Columbus himself notes the parallel: "It was just like the Jews, on their way out of Egypt, arguing with Moses as he led them out of captivity" (*The Voyage of Christopher Columbus: Columbus' Own Journal of Discovery*, trans. John Cummins [New York, 1922], 89). Washington Irving transports this comparison into *The Life and Voyage of Christopher Columbus* (New York, 1868), 2:488, where Columbus, in the context of his own journey, alludes to the story of Exodus: "What did he more for the great people of Israel, as he led them forth from Egypt."

[25]Maiakovskii, "Atlanticheskii okean," *PSS* 7:15.

[26]Maiakovskii, "Meksika," *PSS* 7:44.

[27]Maiakovskii, "Khristofor Kolomb," *PSS* 7:37–38.

of them fled, the former Russian Empire, not Palestine, and not the United States.[28] This circular structure, the implication that one's true destination is reached by completing the circle, as well as the the initial deception of the Promised Land in America, parallels Mayakovsky's own lyric hero's mental journey in *Verses* through shiny falsehoods back to where he started ("*domoi*").

The biblical and the historical Jewishness—the Egyptian exile and the Spanish Inquisition—converge in the image of Columbus. In the cycle's penultimate poem, "Camp 'Nit gedaige,'" the biblical and the contemporary Jews now come together.[29] The title of the poem refers to Camp "Nit gedaiget" ("don't worry" in Yiddish), organized by the Yiddish daily *Morgen Freiheit* and affiliated with the Communist Party, USA, where Mayakovsky stayed several times.[30] The poem captures a moment of contemplation on the poet-speaker's American experiences as he lies in a tent, overlooking the Hudson. The setting of the poem—tents and singing by the water—is reminiscent of the Israelites' rest after crossing the sea, prompting the reader to anticipate other key elements of the biblical narrative, particularly the miraculous movement of waters and, most importantly for Mayakovsky's theme of false "discovery" of America, the construction of false gods.

Instances of American worship of money in *Verses* are too numerous to list. The significant element for the Exodus subtext in "Camp 'Nit gedaige'" is Mayakovsky's framing of America as a false object of worship for the Soviets, who begin to "pray" to it as a vision of technological utopia in the guise of Fordism: "Mister Ford, ... We'll hang up your portrait./ We would even mold a monument of your likeness./ The kids would bow [to it]."[31] "Molding a monument" to bow to recalls the story of the golden calf that the Israelites cast out of their jewelry in order to worship a god they can see and touch. In an earlier poem in the cycle, "A Decent Gentleman," a businessman communes with God over a shot of alcohol at the Plaza Hotel. In the poem that follows, "A Challenge," the golden calf syndrome takes the

[28]Maiakovskii, "Domoi," *PSS* 7:92–95. It is customary to trace the agrarian aspirations of Zionism to the Jews of the Russian Empire at the end of the nineteenth century, imagining labor in the historical Holy Land in Palestine. See, for instance, Boaz Neumann's *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* (Waltham, 2011) for discussion of the early Zionist "desire for the Land." In his *Zion in America: The Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 1974), Henry L. Feingold points out that America was also envisioned as a location for Zionist pioneers from the Russian Empire (for example, the Am Olam movement of which Abraham Cahan was an enthusiastic member [ibid., 120]). Moreover, Feingold notes that Zionism in America itself predates Russian Jewry's visions, with American Jews creating farming settlements as early as in 1819, 1826, and 1837 (ibid., 155).

[29]Maiakovskii, "Kemp 'Nit gedaige,'" *PSS* 7:88–91. Exodus as a literary subtext is popular during this period in the Soviet Union, especially among Jewish writers. See Boris Czerny, "Le voyageur et l'émigré: Le motif de la sortie d'Égypte dans la littérature russe des années 1920–1930," *Cahiers du monde russe* 52:4 (2011): 529–53. Several scholars note the importance of the Exodus story in Andrei Platonov's novella *Dzhan*. See Thomas Seifrid's *Andrei Platonov: Uncertainties of Spirit* (Cambridge, England, 1992), 245. In his *Russian Poet/Soviet Jew: The Legacy of Eduard Bagritskii*, Maxim D. Shrayer discusses intonations from the book of Isaiah in Bagritskii's 1933–34 poem on the February Revolution. The book of Isaiah, in turn, is often seen as the new Exodus, the return to the Promised Land from Babylonian exile.

[30]*Morgen Freiheit* advertised one of Mayakovsky's poetry readings at Camp "Nit gedaiget" in the following way: "The famous proletarian poet V. Mayakovsky will recite a proletarian 'Kol Nidre.'" See V. Katanian, *Maiakovskii: Khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti* (Moscow, 1985), 314. Mayakovsky's reading was scheduled for September 26, 1925. The next night that year was the Eve of Yom Kippur on the Hebrew calendar, during which *Kol Nidre* is recited.

[31]Maiakovskii, "Kemp 'Nit gedaige,'" *PSS* 7:90.

form of statues to financial success: "Into the pavement/ they nail the bodies/ of Vanderlips,/ Rockefellers,/ Fords."[32] Of course, deifying the nailed bodies is also an explicit allusion to Christ, who now joins in the deflated status of other idols. Significantly, the poet's experience of the United States turns him away from the futurist ideal of technology as the driver of human consciousness.[33] Of interest for the present analysis is that, once again, this epiphany is framed in terms of the golden calf story. Furthermore, this biblical subtext invests the poem that precedes "Camp 'Nit gedaige,'" "Brooklyn Bridge"—which is traditionally read as a paean to American steel might—with idol worship as well.[34]

After the speaker experiences the bridge with almost religious awe in "Brooklyn Bridge," in "Camp 'Nit gedaige'" its grandeur is exposed as a shiny object that takes one's attention away from what is important:

Мы	We
ничьей башки	don't pull the wool
мостами не морочим.	over anybody's eyes with bridges.
Что такое мост?	What's a bridge,
Приспособленье для простуд.[35]	but a contraption for catching colds.

The speaker's answer to the Brooklyn Bridge of the previous poem is "our" ideological bridge in "Camp 'Nit gedaige,'" an abstraction rather than a physical chunk of metal, "a bridge over the abyss ... stretching directly to communism."[36] In light of the biblical story, the speaker's admiration of the Brooklyn Bridge ("oh .../ What a thing!"; *da .../ Eto veshch'!*), as well as his self-humbling before this object, may indeed be reanalyzed as idolatry as well:

Как в церковь	As into a church
идет	enters
помешавшийся верующий,	a deranged believer
...	...
так я	So I
в вечерней	in the evening hour
сереющей мерещи	of graying dusk-delusion
вхожу,	step,
смиренный, на Бруклинский мост.[37]	submissive, onto the Brooklyn Bridge.

The bridge signifies what the poet sees as the American tendency to kneel before financial and physical majesty; a type of "sin" for an iconoclast such as Mayakovsky's speaker, who transforms temporarily into a "deranged believer" at the sight of this metal "thing."

Perhaps the reason for the poet's rearrangement of the physical geography of New York City, an apparent mistake that confounds many readers—the Brooklyn Bridge spans

[32]Maiakovskii, "Vyzov," *PSS* 7:75. See also his "Poriadochnyi grazhdanin," ibid., 70–72.
[33]See Vaingurt, *Wonderlands of the Avant-Garde*, 173–78.
[34]Maiakovskii, "Bruklinskii most," *PSS* 7:83–87.
[35]Maiakovskii, "Kemp 'Nit gedaige,'" *PSS* 7:89.
[36]Ibid., 89.
[37]Maiakovskii, "Bruklinskii most," *PSS* 7:87, 83.

the East River, not the Hudson—is to maintain the integrity of the cycle. The actual Camp Nitgedaiget was located on the other side of the Hudson River. The speaker takes us from "dusk" as he crosses the Brooklyn Bridge to nighttime beyond the Hudson in "Camp 'Nit gedaige.'" In the finale of the poem, the speaker's contemplations are interrupted by what he perceives to be a mere vision at first, a "dream":

Ну, и сон приснит вам	Such a dream will have you dream
полночь-негодяйка!	the good-for-nothing lady-midnight!
Только сон ли это?	But is this really a dream?
Слишком громок сон.	Too loud to be a dream.
Это	Those
Комсомольцы	are the Young Communists
Кемпа «Нит гедайге»	of Camp "Nit gedaige"
Песней	With their song
Заставляют	forcing
плыть в Москву Гудзон.[38]	the Hudson to flow to Moscow.

In keeping with stories surrounding Moses' supernatural powers over water (turning the river into blood, parting the sea, and the like), the poem ends on another aquatic miracle as the singers redirect the flow of the Hudson River. The literal Jews of this poem, the Yiddish-Russian speakers, are now turning course from their false Promised Land by the Hudson, to whose shores they immigrated in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, back to their true Zion: "to Moscow."

In *The Jewish Century*, Yuri Slezkine posits three potential Promised Lands in the popular imagination of the Russian Jewry at the time, framed by Tevye's three emblematic daughters from Sholem Aleichem stories. Only two of these possibilities are explored in the scholarship on Zionism of the late nineteenth century: Palestine (Chava's choice) and the United States (Beilke's choice). Slezkine proposes the third way, the least studied yet also within the same framework of reference: Hodle's choice of Soviet Russia.[39] Mayakovsky appears to be tapping into this third way examined by Slezkine.

One expects Mayakovsky's Nitgedaiget campers to sing Yiddish songs; after all, the poem itself has a Yiddish title. Instead, the speaker overhears lines from a famous Russian Civil War song. Nothing in the poem suggests that the campers are foreign vis-à-vis the speaker. Aside from the name of the camp, Mayakovsky does not play on foreign words in this concluding poem, as he does so abundantly in other poems in *Verses*. The Israelites of the Torah sing songs about God who leads them out of captivity into the Promised Land. Mayakovsky's singers are "*komsomol'tsy*," singing a famous Russian song, in Russian. If the poet-speaker is the figurative Moses, then these are his people.

JEWS ON THE LAND

The poet's growing interest in the film industry, according to some film historians, helps create *agitfilm*, a form that not only pushes an ideology, but also educates on a particular

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[38]Maiakovskii, "Kemp 'Nit gedaige,'" *PSS* 7:91.
[39]Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, 2004), 204–371.

topic.[40] *Jews on the Land* is one such example.[41] Before Birobidzhan, Crimea served as the place for experimental Jewish collectives, another alternative to Zionism.[42] While traveling around Crimea, Lily Brik developed the idea of a documentary on this experiment, for which Mayakovsky co-authored the film's captions with Shklovsky. Directed by Abram Room with Lily Brik's assistance and under the stewardship of the Society for Settling Jewish Workers on the Land (OZET), the film had various conflicting purposes. First, it aimed to mobilize the Jewish population inside the Soviet Union into collective farms that would develop agrarian lands.[43] The Russian "*zemlia*" in the film's title is both "land" (which taps into the Zionist idea of working on the land, a practice generally denied to Jews in the European diaspora) and "earth," asserting a life of rootedness. Second, the film was a fundraiser directed at Jewish immigrants in America: in 1924 the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee established the American Jewish Joint Agricultural Corporation (Agro-Joint), dedicated to the resettlement of Soviet Jews on farming colonies of Crimea, Ukraine, and Belarus, and contributing some $16 million to the project.[44] Mayakovsky held a fundraiser reading at an Argo-Joint event on Coney Island, and joined the executive board of the Moscow branch of OZET, the principal Soviet side in the partnership, upon his return from the States. The third and most paradoxical motivation for the film, given its goal to advertise to American Jewry the virtues of this Soviet Zion, was to address the rising wave of popular anti-Semitism within the Soviet Union.

Jews on the Land is another version of the Moses story, a journey home from exile and bondage. After presenting the difficulties of *shtetl* life, the film arrives at its programmatic caption: "resettlement on the land is the way out of the situation" (*pereselenie na zemliu - vykhod iz polozheniia*).[45] The initial appearance of *zemlia* (the land) stands on its own, as if referencing something that needs no explanation; for the initiated, it rings with the Hebrew *ha'aretz*, literally "the Land." The first shot of "the land" captures a bearded old man heading toward the camera with a walking staff, Moses-like, through a desert field.

After some shots of men cultivating the earth, a polysemantic caption—"An ox draws a line under the old way of life" (*Vol provodit chertu pod staruiu zhizn'*)—is followed by a shot of four oxen dragging equipment that digs a line in the earth. This boundary, beyond which a new life begins, along with subsequent shots of tent-dwelling collectives of Jewish agrarian communities, functions to reclaim both the story of Exodus, as well as the kibbutz

[40]N. A. Lebedev, "Agitfil'my," in his *Ocherki istorii kino SSSR: Nemoe kino (1918–1934)*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1965), also available at http://bibliotekar.ru/kino/9.htm (last accessed February 27, 2019)

[41]Maiakovskii, *Evrei na zemle*, PSS 11:425–27.

[42]For an analysis of the film's imagery directed specifically at an audience who would recognize allusions to Zionist tropes see L. F. Katsis, *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Poet v intellektual'nom kontekste epokhi*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 2004), 250–74.

[43]For a discussion of the Jewish agrarian colonies see Jonathan L. Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land: Jewish Agricultural Colonization and Local Soviet Power, 1924–1941* (New Haven, 2005); and Allan L. Kagedan, "American Jews and the Soviet Experiment: The Agro-Joint Project, 1924–1937," *Jewish Social Studies* 43:2 (1981): 153–64.

[44]Shklovsky contrasts the proletarian ideal of the Crimean project to the bourgeois orientation of the proposed Jewish state in Palestine: "It is already apparent that Zionism and the Jewish State in Palestine will turn into nothing more than a summer resort for rich Jews" (Iangirov, "Marginal'nye temy," 231).

[45]Maiakovskii, *Evrei na zemle*, PSS 11:425.

movement, for Soviet territories.[46]   The term "cherta" evokes the Pale of Settlement (*cherta osedlosti*), the liberated Jews' metaphorical Egypt. The "line under the old way of life," which represents the end to discriminatory prohibitions, rings with the "line/pale" of Imperial Russia.[47]

Scenes of well-building and water extraction from the earth that, only several minutes back, is presented as hopelessly arid, allude to Moses' miracle of extracting water from a rock. Mayakovsky includes this mythological detail in his 1926 companion poem to the film, "Jew (To Comrades from OZET)," framing the "Jewish question" in analogous terms. After debunking the myth of Jewish privilege, the speaker describes the Crimean land allocation:

Ни моря нет,
   ни куста,
      ни селеньица,
худшее из худших мест на Руси –
место,
   куда пришли поселенцы,
палаткой взвив
   паруса парусин.
Эту пустыню
   в усердии рьяном
какая жрала саранча?!
...
	No sea,
	   no bush,
	      no settlement,
	the worst of the worst places in Russia –
	the place
	   where the settlers came,
	their tents fluttering
	   like sailcloth in the wind.
	Every kind of locust
	   put its mettlesome efforts to eating
	this desert.
	...

А нынче
   течет ручьевая лазурь;
...
	But now
	   flows the azure of brooks;
	...

      перелился в лозум,
и сочной гроздью
      повис виноград.[48]
	
	      turning into vine,
	and in juicy bunches
	      grapes hang.

The wandering of Jewish settlers in the desert is replaced with the land of the grapevine, referenced frequently in the Bible.

The Moses-like bearded old man travels through the film as a leitmotif, first trying unsuccessfully to sell fish on a deserted street of a *shtetl*, then standing with a group of townsfolk, purportedly discussing their way out of this dead end, then walking toward the camera through the inhospitable-looking land allocated for his people, and, finally, sitting comfortably at a table and eating. By this point, the old man is established as the wisdom

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[46]Traditionally the Exodus story has been used by Zionists to present Palestine as the ultimate destination, but it also becomes a fitting subtext for claiming thematic continuity of Jewishness within Soviet space. A report by David A. Brown to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee on an exploratory trip to the Soviet Jewish colonies, for instance, is titled *The New Exodus: The Story of the Historic Movement of Russian Jewry Back to The Soil* (New York, 1925). A caption under one of the photographs in the report reads: "History repeats itself in Jewish life after nearly twenty centuries. Like the Jewish maidens of ancient Palestine, this modern Russo-Jewish maiden is tending a flock of sheep on rich, fertile pasture-land" (ibid., 24).

[47]Even though these Soviet settlements were, in part, located within the old Pale, it is the symbolism of the Pale and its *shtetl* life rather than its actual geography that serves as an opposition to this Soviet project.

[48]Maiakovskii, "Evrei (Tovarishcham iz OZETa)," *PSS* 7:246.

bearer. In the eating scene, he translates the biblical land of milk and honey (promised to Moses at the burning bush) into the proletarian one of bread and water: "What I didn't see is bread in the *shtetl*. ... Here we will have bread because there is water ... and there is land."[49] As the final portion of the Torah deals with Moses' farewell song, the final utterance of the film belongs to the old man.

It is difficult to tease out Mayakovsky's contribution to this collaborative project.[50] In fact, the narrative arc is rather formulaic: *Jews on the Land* meets all the major objectives established by OZET in representing Jews in their transition from *shtetl*s to farming collectives. A historically unnatural fit, this image of the Jewish peasant becomes the standard representation of Jews.[51] Soviet museum exhibits of the 1920s and 1930s on Jewish life, for instance, follow the same template employed in the film, contrasting the old *shtetl* professions to the new ones, from artisans and petty tradesmen to modern-day collective farmers and factory workers.

The policy of "indigenization" (*korenizatsiia*) of the same period, which called for preservation of ethnic cultural practices, at least on the surface, contrasts to these OZET principles in important ways. R. M. Iangirov notes that the idea of a Jewish Crimea at the time was expressed almost in Zionist formulas, but, significantly, with a Soviet gesture toward "a path of ethnic expression."[52] Indeed, Yiddish was the language of instruction in primary and secondary schools, and even at an agricultural technical school, until Russian became the mandatory language in 1937.[53] *Jews on the Land* pays lip service to the principle of "indigenization" by repeatedly cutting to kolkhoz signs that are both in Russian and Yiddish. The school children, though, are presented in generic Soviet pioneer ties, whereas in reality, at least initially, *heders*, or religious primary schools, outstripped secular education in these colonies.[54] Iangirov observes that the crew misses the opportunity to make the film ethnically colorful, that the filmmakers ultimately do not distinguish a "live 'Jew on the land'" from the multitude of generic-looking extras.[55]

[49]Maiakovskii, *Evrei na zemle*, *PSS* 11:426.

[50]It is generally considered that Mayakovsky's participation in this project is limited to captions (Katanian, *Maiakovskii: Khronika zhizni*, 348). Iangirov, on the other hand, claims that the poet initiated the project and was the main conceptual force behind it ("Marginal'nye temy," 230). Similarly, Aleksandr Pronin argues that Mayakovsky's captions set the main compositional and plot elements. Pronin also suggests that Mayakovsky's collaboration on the film influences the poet's subsequent work: it represents his first experimentation with *Lef*'s theories of documentariness in film form and lays the groundwork for the poet's productive period of screenwriting during 1926–28. See Pronin, "Maiakovskii v kinopublitsistike: K voprosu ob uchastii poeta v sozdanii agitkartiny 'Evrei na zemle,'" *Mediaskop: Elektronnyi nauchnyi zhurnal Fakul'teta zhurnalistiki MGU imeni M. V. Lomonosova*, no. 2 (2013), http://www.mediascope.ru/node/1336#8 (last accessed February 27, 2019). Katsis discusses the film's proximity to the poet's dramatic works and its subsequent footprint on *Klop* (*The Bedbug*, 1929), in *Maiakovskii: Khronika zhizni*, 261–63.

[51]A. Ivanov, "Evrei v tsarskoi Rossii i v SSSR – vystavka dostizhenii evreiskogo khoziaistvennogo i kul'turnogo stroitel'stva v Strane Sovetov," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 102 (2010), also avaialable at http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2010/102/iv14.html (last accessed March 19, 2019).

[52]Iangirov, *Maiakovskii: Khronika zhizni*, 232.

[53]Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land*, 157.

[54]Ibid., 120.

[55]Iangirov, *Maiakovskii: Khronika zhizni*, 235.

To my mind, this choice is deliberate and works to erase ethnic differences in representing the new Soviet Jewry, following the principles coming out of OZET.[56]

An important filmic counterpoint to representing the Jews of the Russian Empire is released two years earlier, *Jewish Luck* (1925). It is based on Sholem Aleichem's cycle of stories about a hapless entrepreneur, Menachem-Mendel, with captions written by Isaac Babel. Shklovsky explicitly contrasts this film's depiction of the Jewish past to the Soviet Jewish future: "The Soviet Union will gain a new autonomous region, perhaps a new republic. There is no need to mourn Menakhem-Mendel's tattered umbrella, no need to look for romanticism (*romantizm*) in the past." In addition to addressing the needless nostalgia for a lost way of life, Shklovsky appears to reference a literary "romantic" orientation toward typecasting minority ethnicities. Here Shklovsky proposes to leave behind representations of Jewish "local color"; namely, those traditions and characters that are connected with the impoverished *shtetl* existence symbolized by the "tattered umbrella." The critic suggests that the continuation of Menakhem-Mendel in film should be set in Soviet Russia: "We can show farming colonies ... and Menakhem-Mendel in the foreground, having rejected all 'airy' professions and settled on the land."[57] *Jewish Luck* presents a Jewish type: profession, dress, speech, and attitude. In the famous poster for the film, Solomon Mikhoels, who plays the role of Menachem-Mendel, wears a Chaplin-esque bowler hat and is dwarfed by his own shadow. In contrast, the men and women in the documentary, old and young, tame bulls and conquer inhospitable terrain. *Jews on the Land*, in contemporary language, could be termed a type of sequel to *Jewish Luck*, a way out of the Jewish predicament. *Jews on the Land* begins with a *shtetl* setting reminiscent of *Jewish Luck*, but continues with Jews who take ownership of their place on earth. Significantly, once Shklovsky's "settling on the land" happens, Jewish farmers become visually indistinguishable from Russian farmers, even down to raising pigs.

The conscious choice to shed Jewish "features" as targets of Tsarist oppression, to expand the sphere of our-ness, is present in Mayakovsky's *Verses*, in his captions to the film, and in his poems "Jew" and "'Yid.'" In "Jew," Mayakovsky declares that "People of labor/ look the same":

узнай –	I challenge you to identify –
хоть раз из семи,	just once out of seven times –
который	which one
из этих двух –	of these two
из славян,	Slavs,
который из них –	which one of them
семит.[58]	is a Semite.

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[56]As Slezkine aptly observes, many Jews who participated in the Revolution were fighting not for the right to be Jewish, but rather for freedom from Jewishness (*Jewish Century*, 152).

[57]Shklovsky, cited in Iangirov, *Maiakovskii, Khronika zhizni*, 231.

[58]Maiakovskii, "Evrei," *PSS* 7:246, 247. In Iurii Rozhkov's photomontage to "Evrei," the graphic illustration of these verses presents faces composed of two separate halves. See *Fotomontazhnyi tsikl Iuriia Rozhkova k poeme Vladimira Maiakovskogo 'Rabochim Kurska, dobyvshim pervuiu rudu ...': Rekonstruktsiia neizdannoi knigi 1924 goda. Stat'i. Kommentarii* (St. Petersburg, 2014), 61. As Mikhail Karasik comments, each face in

In examining the ways culture inscribes meaning onto the human body, Sander Gilman has argued that the construction of the Jewish body as inherently different stems from anti-Semitism. In *The Jew's Body* he asserts that the normative representation—a "Christian body"—is just as important in this configuration. With secularization, the notion of a "Christian body" transforms into, as Gilman puts it, a "German" or an "English" body.[59] To extend Gilman's argument to Mayakovsky's "Jew," the Jew there assumes the features of a "Slavic" body. Similarly, Elena M. Katz discusses the image of the Jew as a "useful foil for designating essential Russian traits."[60] As Mayakovsky erases physical ethnic features, he explicitly targets the anti-Semitic notion of difference. In the poem's land of labor, the Semites become "us"-the-Slavs, as the film's subjects are quite intentionally dressed up as Tolstoyan peasants. In these works Mayakovsky complicates the dichotomy of *svoi-chuzhoi* and widens the parameters of the dominant culture visually in order to include the Jews. This shift reverberates in Mayakovsky's poetic confrontations with Jewish stereotypes that surface with increasing frequency in the mid 1920s.

FROM "JEW" TO "'YID'": SOVIETIZING TRADITIONAL STEREOTYPES

Even though the Soviet Criminal Code of 1918 made anti-Semitism a punishable offense, the mid-1920s saw a drastic increase in anti-Jewish incidents. Free to leave the Pale of Settlement, Jews flooded the capital cities, particularly Moscow, which came to be known as a "Jewish city" experiencing a "Jewish invasion."[61] In Mayakovsky's unfinished play for the Meyerhold Theater, *A Comedy with a Murder* (1926), a young woman, looking to make a wealthy match, confuses "Mossel'prom" for a Jewish last name.[62] Even the state-run Mossel'prom now fuses with the NEP-Jew matrix in the popular imagination. The Crimean project ended up further perpetuating the stereotype of privilege: Jews receiving coveted land and western financial aid to develop it.[63] In 1926, Mikhail Kalinin wrote that "there are many letters and written questions addressed to speakers at public meetings ...

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this montage is pieced together out of a Russian peasant and a Jewish settler (ibid., 83). To my mind, the issue here is more complicated. Rozhkov's visuals are rather vague on ethnic identities of each half. The illustrator approximates Mayakovsky's impossible challenge to pick out a "Semite" precisely by making it difficult to identify the ethnicities of different facial components.

[59]Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York, 1991), 38.

[60]Elena M. Katz, *Neither with Them Nor without Them: The Russian Writer and the Jew in the Age of Realism* (Syracuse, 2008), 26.

[61]State and popular attitudes diverged dramatically during this period. Policies battling anti-Semitism proliferated during the mid-1920s. However, as various scholars point out, it is in part this popular perception of the Jewish-friendly officialdom, with Jews themselves occupying prominent positions in the government, which propelled the narrative among the masses that "the Jews have taken over Russia." See Anna Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Bloomington, 2006), 158–59. For a discussion of the popular anti-Semitic wave in the mid-1920s also see G. V. Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina: Vlast' i antisemitizm* (Moscow, 2001), 100–111; Slezkine, *Jewish Century*, 242–54; and Nora Levin, *The Jews in the Soviet Union since 1917: Paradox of Survival* (New York, 1988), 166.

[62]Maiakovskii, "Komediia s ubiistvom," *PSS* 11:413.

[63]For a discussion of how the Crimean project in particular contributed to popular anti-Jewish sentiments, see Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, 159–60; and Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina*, 99.

which refer to the Jewish question in general and to the transfer of Jews to Crimea in particular. Some are clearly reactionary, bigoted, and anti-Semitic."[64]

As Soviets sought to appeal to demographics beyond the Russian majority, state propaganda pushed class stratification as a threat, and ethnic diversity as a solution. For instance, a Russian *kulak* in posters of the time is presented as dangerous to a Russian peasant, while a resettled Jew is portrayed as an ideal collective farmer.[65] The Russian term for peasant/farmer—*krest'ianin*—with the word "cross" at its root, is now expressly applied to Jews in agitation materials for the Crimea project. Two collective farms in Crimea bore the name "Evreiskii krest'ianin," which was also the title for a two-volume collection of articles released in 1925 by OZET. Note that *krest'ianin* has very specific visual associations (linen shirt tied at the waist, tall boots, long beard, peaked cap), in contrast to the Jewish dress (either religious or secular; jacket, yarmulke or black-rimmed/bowler hat). In fact, the shot in *Jews on the Land* of a bearded man in a peaked cap tilling the land, his plow pulled by two horses diagonally across the screen toward the camera, with a wide expanse of empty field in the background, calls to mind Il'ia Repin's 1887 painting of Tolstoy plowing, that visual epitome of Russianness. The Jewish settlers on the screen now cross over into the mainstream visually as well as linguistically: they appear in peasant belted shirts, pants tucked into tall boots, and are now described in the film's captions as *krest'iane*.

Mayakovsky continues this official line of rearranging the components of *svoi-chuzhoi* as it pertains to Jewish types. In the poems below, the poet adopts the established mode of fighting anti-Semitism through the representation of Jewishness in the images and terminology of Russianness. But he also extends this practice by doing the opposite; that is, by expressly depicting non-Jewish "class enemies" through negative Jewish stereotypes. *Jews on the Land*, and Mayakovsky's poems "Jew" and "'Yid,'" address the faulty impression that Jews, once again, got the tastiest piece of the pie. The film opens with scenes of Jewish poverty in the Pale of Settlement. In "Jew," Mayakovsky stages a mental dialogue between a voice disseminating Jewish stereotypes of privilege and a voice dispelling them:

Еврей – караты,
Еврей – валюта.
...
 	
А тут
  им
дают Крым!
А Крым известен:
не карта, а козырь;
...
 	
Так врут
  рабочим врагов голоса,
но ты, рабочий,
	A Jew means carats,
	A Jew means foreign currency.
	...
	
	And here
	  they go,
	giving them Crimea!
	And we all know what Crimea is:
	not just any card, but a wild card;
	...
	
	So lie
	  the enemies' voices to the workers,
	but you, worker

[64]*Izvestiia*, July 11, 1926.

[65]See Dekel-Chen's discussion of the ways in which the Jewish resettlement project was used in the propaganda campaign against rural class enemies (*Farming the Red Land*, 105).

но ты   but you –
ты должен честно взглянуть в глаза   you must look truthfully into the eyes
еврейской нищеты.[66]   of Jewish poverty.

The division between "us" and "them" is accentuated by way of Mayakovsky's famous *lesenka*, the pronoun "*im*" (them) occupying its own step in the verse. As Michael Wachtel observes in reference to Mayakovsky's graphic technique, "the seemingly visual element of *lesenka* contributes directly to the aural effect of verse."[67] The poet is inviting us to intone this isolated pronoun, to hear the scream of surprise at the audacity of giving *them* such territories. Several lines later "they" and "you" are once again emphatically dissociated in the *lesenka* to underscore the distance between the two pronouns, making one pause visually (and aurally) on the repeated "but you."

The impression of the recently urbanized Russian, that the worker-peasant class is "native," while the NEP-men are the foreigners with their "foreign currency," is flipped on its head. The wording "Jewish poverty" contradicts the dominant stereotype of this "privileged" minority. Notably, Mayakovsky resolves this contradiction while, at the same time, maintaining the "us"-versus-"them" formulation. The poet counters "their" lies by ascribing Russians' images of themselves, in which poverty gains almost holy proportions, to the ethnic Other, who, in turn, becomes no different than a poor, earth-tilling *krest'ianin*.

If one of the main properties of a stereotype is "fixity," "where the Other is fixed as unchangeable, known, and predictable," by attributing new features to a social type, the act of stereotyping itself disappears.[68] For instance, Pushkin's Tatiana becomes more "real" as she steps out of her prescribed role: in defying the stereotype of a provincial young lady and initiating a romantic encounter, she is placed on a course toward realism in Russian literature. Reverse stereotypes have become a common trope in popular culture. In the advertising of the 1970s in the United States, for example, sexually assertive women begin to appear as a result of the influence of feminism on popular culture and the role of women in the workplace.[69] To say that Mayakovsky also reverses stereotypes in combating anti-Semitism would be inaccurate if we understand counter-stereotyping as outlined above. In fact, examples from *Eugene Onegin* and advertising culture serve as points of contrast to the way Mayakovsky engages types in society. Discussion of social and ethnic groups in his works remains essentializing; sketchy outlines of culturally assigned features are the poet's short-hand (for example, a bourgeois exploiter, the Russian Ivan, and so on). Instead of destabilizing a stereotype and hence stripping it of its meaning, Mayakovsky confronts typecasting by having the perpetrator and the victim trade places. In his denunciation of anti-Semitism, the poet reassigns negative "Jewish" features to the anti-Semite, and comfortable, positive, "Russian" ones to Jews. Meanwhile, the typical ethnic clusters remain quite stable. The perpetrator of a stereotype now also becomes "fixed," defined by the

[66]Maiakovskii, "Evrei," *PSS* 7:244.
[67]Michael Wachtel, *The Development of Russian Verse: Meter and its Meanings* (Cambridge, England, 1998), 208.
[68]Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London, 1997), 125.
[69]Juliann Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (Boston, 2012), 269–86.

stereotype he exploits. The poet's *modus operandi* here is to reshuffle the binaries of *svoi-chuzhoi*, native-foreign, poor-rich, comrade-enemy, in a way that unsettles a worker-peasant's conventional mode of experiencing the Other.

To return to "Jew," the speaker reanalyzes the constituents of the friend-enemy worldview by breaking down the ethnic chauvinism of the worker-peasant class:

Слышатся отзвуки
    стонов и рёва.
Это, «жидов»
    за бунты карая,
тешилась
    пуля и плеть царёва.
...
	Heard are the echoes
	    of moaning and weeping.
	Those were the tsar's bullet and whip,
	    in amusement,
	punishing the "yids"
	    for rioting.
	...

Как там –
    война
        проходила в погроме:
и немец,
    и русский,
        и шайки поляков.
...
	In the same way
	    the [Civil] War
	        was conducted through pogroms:
	both a German,
	    and a Russian,
	        and gangs of Poles.
	...

То шел Петлюра
    в батарейных громах,
то плетью свистела махновщина.[70]
	Now passed Petliura,
	    artillery thundering,
	and now – Makhno's thugs, whips cracking.

The Russian word *bunt* has the primary meaning of rioting by the masses, as in *Solianoi bunt* (1648), *Khlebnyi bunt* (1650) or, more generally, *narodnyi bunt* (national revolt). The adjective *narodnyi* almost by definition refers to *russkii*. The famous line from Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*—"May God keep us from witnessing a Russian riot (*russkii bunt*), senseless and merciless"—introduces the story of the Pugachev-led peasant rebellion. Moreover, recall that the image of the Jewish type on the screen at the time, Menakhem-Mendel, humble and submissive, excludes a posture of valiant resistance. In his 1918 article "Apocalypse of Our Time," V. V. Rozanov recapitulates this servile image of a Jew: "Only out of stupidity and naïveté they [the Jews] sank to the flat bottom of the revolution, while their place is somewhere else altogether: at the feet of empires."[71] By reassigning the concept of *bunt* to the Jews, Mayakovsky includes this cultural Other in the sphere of "our" peasant-worker anti-tsarist rebels. At the same time, the elements of the *svoi-chuzhoi* divide are rearranged to lump together "a German," "Polish gangs," Petliura, Makhno, and, most notably, "a Russian," othering the entire group. Both the emperor and the anarchist Makhno have the same "whip" in their hands; the Russian tsar and the pro-Ukrainian

[70]Maiakovskii, "Evrei," *PSS* 7:245.

[71]V. V. Rozanov, *Apokalipsis nashego vremeni* (London, 2013), 109. In an open letter of 1916, Mayakovsky publicly severs ties with *Strelets*, a journal that printed, alongside his poem, an anti-Semitic article by Rozanov. The poet accuses the journal of assuming a "posture of Blackhundredism" (*okhotno-riadskaia grimasa*) for publishing Rozanov's article (*PSS* 1:370). For further discussion see E. Kurganov and G. Mondri, *Vasilii Rozanov i evrei* (St. Petersburg, 2000); and Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca, 1992), 299–333.

independence leader Petliura fire the same "bullet" at the same target. The grouping of these strange bedfellows challenges national categories as a way of understanding the changing Soviet reality.

The same dynamic unfolds in descriptions of Christopher Columbus in *Verses*, who is expressly juxtaposed to a wealthy colonizer. Columbus plays on "the kings' and the moneybags' (*bogachei*)" naked greed to raise money for his voyage, suggesting that their investment will yield high returns: "carats of diamonds/ for every fifty/ given as a loan" (*brilliantov karaty/ na kazhdyi poltinnik,/ dannyi vzaimy*). The "hucksters" (*torgashi*) cannot decline such a prospect, and line Columbus's "pocket full of holes" (*prodyriavlennyi karman*) with "florins and pesos."[72] Recall that in "Jew" Mayakovsky uses this precise terminology— "A Jew means carats,/ A Jew means foreign currency"—as the voice of an anti-Semite perpetuating the stereotype of Jewish privilege. In *Verses*, the elements of this stereotype are applied to the world of gentile businessmen and royalty, in direct opposition to Columbus, a poor Jew whose pockets, even when lined with rich people's money for the journey, are still "full of holes." Mayakovsky repeatedly confronts this popular European myth of Jewish materialistic domination over gentile nations, a topic hotly discussed toward the end of the nineteenth century.[73] In "'Yid,'" for instance, the speaker places the singularly privileged Solomon Rothschild alongside countless insignificant and persecuted "Solomonishki": "how many/ beaten/ little pauper Solomons there are" (*skol'ko/ pobito/ bedniakov "Solomonishek"*).[74]

The "new Bialik" of *Backbone Flute* assumes the voice of the Jewish poet once again in "Jew." To those familiar with Bialik's "Tale of a Pogrom," the poem immediately comes to mind when the pogroms are introduced in Mayakovsky's text.[75] Beginning with the second-person witness trope borrowed from Bialik's poem, Mayakovsky places the reader of "Jew" in front of the gruesome statistics of slaughter—"As if by a runoff of blood/ you stand at the columns of statistical figures."[76] Compare, for instance, Mayakovsky's imagery and word choice in "And sticking/ is the down from the featherbeds of Belostok/ to the supine eyes,/ which are gouged out" (*I lipnet/ pukh iz perin Belostoka/ k lezhashchim glazam,/ kotorye vykoloty*) to Bialik's "Stuffed with the down of their ripped open featherbed/ is the ripped open stomach" (*Nabityi pukhom ikh rasporotoi periny/ rasporotyi zhivot*).[77] With this source in mind, the number seven in Mayakovsky's "Jew" ("I challenge you to identify –/ just once out of seven times –/ which one/ of these two/ Slavs/ is/ a Semite") also

[72]Maiakovskii, "Khristofor Kolomb," *PSS* 7:33.

[73]See, for instance, V. S. Solov'ev, "Evreistvo i khristianskii vopros," in *Taina Izrailia*, ed. V. Boikov (St. Petersburg, 1993), 31–79.

[74]Maiakovskii, "'Zhid,'" *PPS* 9:120.

[75]A deeper analysis of allusions in Mayakovsky from the world of Hebrew and Yiddish poetry is beyond the scope of the present article. Greta Slobin, in "Heroic Poetry and Revolutionary Prophecy: Russian Symbolists Translate the Hebrew Poets," *Judaism* 51:4 (2002): 408, notes the influence of Hebrew poetry's prophetic mode on Russian modernists, Mayakovsky in particular. More scholarly attention is given to the opposite direction of influence, namely Mayakovsky's impact on modern Yiddish and Hebrew poetry. Regarding Mayakovsky's impact on the Yiddis poet Peretz Markish, for instance, see Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley, 1996), 204–5; and Glaser, *Jews and Ukrainians in Russia's Literary Borderlands*, 111–26.

[76]Maiakovskii, "Evrei," *PSS* 7:245.

[77]Kh. N. Bialik, "Skazanie o pogrome," in his *Pesni i poemy* (St. Petersburg, 1914), 167–77.

rings with allusions to Bialik, its optimistic tone of assimilation counterposed to Bialik's horrifying violence in the repetition of the number seven: "a daughter was raped seven times" (*nad docher'iu svershalos' sem' nasilii*), "seven [rapists] to one woman" (*po semero s odnoi*), "seven people to one [hiding hole]" (*po semero v odnoi*).

The people hiding in their respective "holes" face two different realities. Bialik's Jews inherit the world of hopelessness: "And dozens of speechless and relentless eyes are looking out at you from their holes ... And everything surrounding you is dead." Mayakovsky's survivors ascend into a world of promise: "They were crawling out, leaving their hole ... And hunger/ was screaming into their ears ... 'Land and labor/ or death!'"[78] Bialik's survivors are rendered mute, incapable of processing the unimaginable brutality. Those who remain in Mayakovsky's poem, on the other hand, have a choice between life and death. Significantly, while Bialik's sun participates in the slaughter ("And the sun, and the spring, and the red slaughter!"), Mayakovsky's sun is a commiserating witness ("the sun watched/ barely keeping from crying").[79] Mayakovsky's "Jew" offers a way forward—"land and labor"—after the events that strip the Jews of language and humanity in Bialik's poem.

In his article, Rozanov manages to unite the purportedly Jewish instinct to serve "at the feet of empires" with the popular charge that Jews are responsible for the Bolshevik Revolution. In Mayakovsky's "'Yid,'" this paradox is reflected in the minds of anti-Semites, the nominal communists "from eight to three," who then "lock up communism along with the office" to go home and bemoan the murder of the "Russian knight" (*russki vitiaz'*) by Jewish socialists.[80] Every example of anti-Semitism in "'Yid'" (the poem comprises 218 lines) is prefaced by the angry "To hell with you" (*Chert vas voz'mi*). While the interlocutor in "Jew" is ultimately on the poet's side, two years later, the speaker of "'Yid'" unequivocally rejects his anti-Semitic addressee. Significantly, the quotation marks around the word "zhid" are part of the title; the Other's voice cannot be reconciled with the speaker's this time: "And those who, / out of their knuckleheaded darkness (*po dubovoi svoei temnote*) ... still curse using the word 'yid.'"[81] The addressee in "'Yid'" blends into the "Black-Hundreds scum" (*chernosotennaia sliz'*).[82]

In the second half of the 1920s, the split within the party increasingly carried ethnic undertones. Stalin was known to cast thinly veiled allusions to the Jewishness of his left-wing opposition.[83] In "'Yid,'" the accusation that "yids" are running the country evokes this unfolding split in the party. The year 1927 marked Leon Trotsky's expulsion from the party. At a Politburo meeting in 1926, Trotsky brought up the issue of casting the left opposition for the masses as "dissatisfied Jewish intellectuals." In a note to Bukharin, Trotsky claimed that one frequently hears "yids are rioting" (*zhidy buntuiut*) from the mouths of factory workers.[84] While tracing Mayakovsky's choice of words in describing tsarist

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[78]Maiakovskii, "Evrei," *PSS* 7:246.

[79]Ibid., 245.

[80]Maiakovskii, "'Zhid,'" *PSS* 9:116–21.

[81]Ibid., 121.

[82]Ibid., 116.

[83]See Leon Trotsky's discussion of this dynamic in "Thermidor and anti-Semitism" (1937), in his *On the Jewish Question*, intro. Peter Buch (London, 1970), 31–41.

[84]Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 238.

Russia—"yids punished for rioting"—to Trotsky's note is speculative, the fact that the poet was aware of these anti-Semitic undertones within the party struggle is doubtless.[85]

The initial appearance of the slur "zhid" in the body of the poem, as Mikhail Vaiskopf notes, alludes to Rozanov's "Apocalypse of our Time."[86] Mayakovsky's lines—"Today/ like a wardrobe/ lies on my heart/ the heavy word/ 'yid'" (*Segodnia/ shkafom/ na serdtse lezhit/ tiazholoe slovo –/ "zhid"*)—reference Rozanov's section of the article entitled "Nadavilo shkafom" ("Crushed by a Wardrobe").[87] There Rozanov claims that the Jewish moans under this "wardrobe" cannot go unnoticed by any Russian who has a heart. In the poem, Mayakovsky reformulates Rozanov's argument by replacing the Jew under the "wardrobe" with the speaker's own heart. In this article, Rozanov uses the words "evrei," "zhid," and "zhidok" interchangeably, taking full ownership of these terms without the distancing quotation marks. Mayakovsky cites the likes of Rozanov when he puts quotes around the title slur of his poem. Mayakovsky's speaker claims that the word "zhid" "is a password/ for priests,/ for nuns/ from among countesses, who had not yet been crushed completely (*dlia monashek/ iz nedodavlennykh grafin'*)."[88] Note that Mayakovsky's countesses-nuns (*nedodavlennykh*) replace Rozanov's Jews etymologically (*zadavilo*). The reference to Rozanov recalls the deliberate polarization of Russians and Jews within the intelligentsia, infecting not only the "knuckleheaded" masses, but also the ethnically charged conflict within the party.

Roger Chartier notes that literary texts offer a representation of the social world where individuals "act to classify others and, by doing so, classify themselves."[89] This principle defines "'Yid'": offensive stereotypes are constantly turned on their users. Formulations such as "nedodavlennykh grafin'" and "kommunist nedochishchennyi" (*an uncleansed/ unpurged communist*) mirror the complex prefix *ne-do* of the popular insult "zhid nedorezannyi" (*a yid who hasn't been knifed to death*). While turning the formula of this remark on the bigots themselves, the poet also conflates "office" communists ("nedochishchennye") and the aristocracy ("nedodavlennye") on the level of word formation. The poet continues his rearrangement of the *svoi-chuzhoi* divide in the following lines: "this word [*zhid*] / hissed (*shipelo*) / over the university student Raikhil' .../ when/ the 'Christian' students smashed/ the 'yid's' face."[90] These verses refer to the widespread violence against Jews at universities and places of work, reported regularly in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* at the time. "Hissed" (*shipelo*) applies both to the hushing consonant (*shipiashchaia*) in the word "zhid" and to the demonic undertones attributed to Jews in the form of the venomous snake/serpent in religious, folk, and everyday iconography: Jew as a

[85]In a scene from *Jews on the Land*, a somewhat discernible portrait of Trotsky hangs on the wall in the distant background, dwarfed by a cut-out of Lenin in the foreground. Even a suggestion of Trotsky's image was risky in 1927. In a film of the same year, *Tret'ia Meshchanskaia* (translated as *Bed and Sofa*), also written and directed by Shklovsky and Room, a big poster of Stalin hangs prominently, almost sarcastically, over one of the beds. It replaces Lenin, and certainly no image of Trotsky appears on the wall.
[86]Mikhail Vaiskopf, *Vo ves' logos : Religiia Maiakovskogo* (Jerusalem, 1997), 32.
[87]Maiakovskii, "'Zhid,'" *PSS* 9:117.
[88]Ibid.
[89]Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia, 1995), 47.
[90]Maiakovskii, "'Zhid,'" *PSS* 9:117.

trickster, an enemy that sheds skin, not easily identifiable and hard to catch, but ultimately slain by the righteous.[91] Significantly, the anti-Semites are the ones who "hiss" by uttering the slur "zhid" as they beat up the student, hence themselves assuming the role of the snake in this confrontation. The adjective "parshivyi" ("lousy"), popular in the word combination "zhid parshivyi" ("a lousy yid"), applies in the poem to the anti-Semite who has to be removed from the crowd before he infects others: "We'll pull out by the collar/ the lousy one" (*Vydernem/ za shivorot –/ odnogo, parshivogo*).[92]

   At the beginning of "'Yid,'" the speaker disavows membership in his own profession, if what is meant by poetry is lyric detachment:

Черт вас возьми,	To hell with you,
вас,	you,
тех,	who,
кто, видя	while seeing
безобразие	outrage
обоими глазами,	with both eyes,
пишет	write
о прелестях	about the charms
лирических утех.[93]	of lyric pleasures.

Note that the rhyme *tekh-utekh* is visually hidden by the *lesenka* form, *tekh* appearing mid-verse and *utekh* in the final position. Five syllables in a row receive stress (*voz'mí*, *vás*, *tékh*, *któ*, *vídia*) in the above passage, deviating from the expected alternation of stressed-unstressed syllables in versification. Appropriately, in the lines that obscure rhyme and meter, the speaker declares himself a "publicist" who strikes the "outrage" of anti-Semitism not with poetry, but rather with "raw phrases" (*syrymi frazami*). The poetic profession reappears later in the poem, this time in reference to a politically disengaged lyricist who uses specifically anti-Semitic language, blaming a Jewish critic for his own lack of talent:

Поэт	A poet
в пивной	in a bar
кого-то «жидом»	scolds someone with the word "yid,"
честит	to the clanking of bottles,
под бутылочный звон	for the fact that

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[91] In his *V plenu u "obez'ian" (Zapiski "kontrrevoliutsionera")* (Kiev, 1918)*,* the Russian monarchist Fyodor Vinberg casts Russia as the sleeping beauty besieged by the Bolshevik "yidomasonic Three-Headed Serpent" (*zhidomasonskii Zmei Gorynych*).

[92] Maiakovskii, "'Zhid,'" *PSS* 9:119 (as in the Russian saying, *Iz zhida parshivogo vsiu parshu ne vykolotit'* ("You can't beat all the ringworm out of a lousy yid"). A similar reversal happens in Mayakovsky's text to a 1930 poster: *Griaznye piatna,/ pogromshchiki i antisemity/ budut/ s predpriiatii/ schishcheny i smyty* ("Dirty spots,/ pogromists and anti-Semites/ will be/ scrubbed off and washed away/ from places of work"; *PSS* 10:207). Here Mayakovksy transposes the stereotype of an unclean (*nechistyi*) Jew, both in the physical and spiritual senses, onto the Judeophobes themselves. For a discussion of uncleanliness as a trait assigned to the Jews and, more generally, as a marker of Otherness in the Slavic world, see O. V. Belova, "Evrei i nechistaia sila (Po materialam slavianskoi narodnoi kul'tury)," in *D'iavol i evrei: Srednevekovye predstavleniia o evreiakh i ikh sviaz' s sovremennym antisemitizmom*, ed. Dzhoshua Trakhtenberg (Moscow, 1998), 258–76.

[93] Maiakovskii, "'Zhid,'" *PSS* 9:116–17.

за то, что	a surname
ругала	ending
бездарный том –	in "zon"
фамилия	blasted
с окончанием	his talentless
«зон».[94]	tome.

This is a direct reference to Sergei Esenin, who was known for his anti-Semitic outbursts when drunk.[95] Esenin, who eulogized the death of the Russian village, becomes *chuzhoi* in the above passage, ganging up against the last names ending in "zon."

In his *Soviet Primer* entry for the letter A, Mayakovsky suggests that ethnic bigotry follows from European nation-building: "An anti-Semite is dear to the Entente./ The Entente is a gathering of rampagers" (*Antisemit Antante mil./ Antanta -sborishche gromil*).[96] Note the suggestion of the word *pogrom* in "gromila" (bullies) and the echo effect of "anti-Semite" in the repetition of the sound "ant." The Triple Entente "giants-*pogromshchiki*," a pre-World War I alliance between Russia, France, and Britain, represents the nation-oriented world order that, according to the poet, naturally accommodates ethnic hatred.[97] In *Soviet Primer*, the Other is made up of the kinds of nation states, represented by the Triple Entente, that "we"-internationalists left behind. By the time the poet writes "'Yid'" almost a decade later, he rings a note of alarm that, in fact, anti-Semites remain in *our* villages, *our* factories, *our* bars, and among *our* cultural figures.

As Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspensky posit, the polarized space of Russian culture tends to lack a "neutral zone."[98] All binaries, including the underlying one—*svoi-chuzhoi*—are valuative (for example, *khoroshii-plokhoi* and *dobryi-zloi*), in which *chuzhoi* is unequivocally on the side of the negative. The archaic verb *chuzhati* means not merely to be suspicious and keep aloof of the unfamiliar (as in the modern Russian *chuzhdat'sia*), but more importantly, to reject it.[99]

[94]Ibid., 118.

[95]In 1923, Esenin and his poet friends were arrested for making anti-Semitic remarks at a bar to a patron who had objected to their loud conversation about the ubiquity of Jews in literature and the government. The arresting officer recalled that, while being detained, the poets parodied Jewish speech and claimed that Trotsky and Kamenev, while Jewish themselves, hated the Jews. In 1922, at a party in the New York City apartment of the Jewish poet and Esenin's Yiddish translator, Mani-Leib Braginskii, Esenin, in the company of his Jewish wife Isodora Duncan and other Jewish intellectuals, kept using the word "zhid" despite the guests' requests to stop; the poet then began slandering all Jews, cursed Trotsky, got violent, and finally had to be physically restrained. Subsequently, Esenin provoked Braginskii by presenting his new book of verse with an inscription "To a dear friend, yid (*zhidu*) Mani-Leib." See S. I. Zinin, *Esenin i ego okruzhenie: Bibliograficheskii spravochnik*, http://zinin-miresenina.narod.ru/profile1.html (last accessed March 19, 2019).

[96]Maiakovskii, "Sovetskaia azbuka," *PSS* 2:92.

[97]Mayakovsky is not alone in this view. The rise of racism and anti-Semitism in modern times is frequently attributed to nation-building in nineteenth-century Europe. For instance, see Neil Macmaster, *Racism in Europe* (Houndmills, 2001), 20–27.

[98]Iu. M. Lotman and B. A. Uspenskii, "Rol' dual'nykh modelei v dinamike russkoi kul'tury (do kontsa XVIII veka)," in *Istoriia i tipologiia russkoi kul'tury* (Petersburg, 2002), 88–115.

[99]Aleksandr Pen'kovskii, "O semanticheskoi kategorii 'chuzhdosti' v russkom iazyke," in *Ocherki po russkoi semantike* (Moscow, 2004), 14.

Mayakovsky's revision of the *svoi-chuzhoi* categories has to be understood in this framework. Christopher Columbus, as the poet's Jewish alter ego, sets sail for new lands not in order to satisfy his desire for discovery and conquest, but rather to escape rejection. Casting himself in the role of the cultural Other, the poet-speaker searches for a land he can call "his own," a home among "fellow-travelers." The agitational works discussed here extend the language of inclusion to the Other. Hence, the conventionally *chuzhoi* Jew is visually blended into a poor man's Russianness, a workingman's *komsomol'tsy* and *krest'iane*. At the same time, the chauvinist assumes negative Jewish stereotypes ("huckster," money-hungry, *nedochishchennyi*, "lousy," "unclean," demonic, treacherous, hissing and snake-like). In these works, Mayakovsky turns the terminology of "othering" on those who "other." One of the main purposes of the Exodus subtext in *Verses*, *Jews on the Land*, "Jew," and "'Yid,'" in which Israelites are central, foundational figures is, in fact, to expand Mayakovsky's zone of "our-ness" to encompass the typically marginalized modern Jew, while making the Promised Land and the lexicon of Zionism "our own" as well.