

Time has elapsed since the Kiev Conference. My own contribution presented aspects of a poem, its translation and a film based on both; the poem - kamennaia baba, stone woman, (translated as rockin mama) - written by a Russian poet Velimir Khlebnikov. It interrogated the meanings the Conference's theme - Writing Europe - might contain or produce that conceivably bore on this specific, singular piece of writing, including its derivatives. Time since passed has naturally given time for reflection, particularly as regards the links the presentation proposed between what finally and irreducibly were very different kinds of writing - the writing of poetry, and writing of diplomatic, propagandist and military kind, both conjunctural - the former implicit, the figure in the carpet of a poem in that place and at that time -, the latter whose conjuncture was an implacably explicit constituent of its text, in its various modalities - decisions, minutes dispatches... - with moments of great intensity, a disposable writing of immense leverage - of a Peace that inscribes war, the writing of a cordon sanitaire, keeping other Europes unwritten or at bay, yielding a clear view of the Enemy.

Two views that seem to map each other with difficulty circumscribe the moment of conjuncture, the meeting point which concerns this text, call it the war of rockin mama: the view expressed in a Times leader of 1 March 1919: "A nation cannot be made by clauses...It is not enough for the Conference to legislate a precarious and discordant Poland into existence, it must be prepared to support its legislation by action and, if necessary, by force.."; - and the poet's, in the editor's gaze, militarily speaking: "War turned the universe into an inkwell filled with blood and sought to drown the absurd, hapless writer in it. But the writer seeks to drown war in his inkwell, war itself. The clash of beliefs is the ring of wills. Who will win?" (1). Whereas the first, asserting the insufficiency of writing, passes over its dense, administrative fecundity, and, as conflict intensifies, its obligatoriness, aware, like Humpty Dumpty, that what matters is "which is to be master..." - , the second, poetic, carnivalises its own remit, the ultimate role - of writing, that kind of writing, alchemically to transmute, even to disappear war, Writing's division of labour - force and persuasion.

At the time of the (Kiev) Conference the link and the division of functions seemed distant - between some writing on a scrap of paper stuffed in a pillow-case, without the institutional matrix and technological infrastructure normally inscribed in (presupposed by)writing of whatever kind, the imprimatur of status, thence grille de lecture; and writing amply thus equipped - here, immensely resourced - embassies, secretariats, commissions, press bureaus, premises; a great symbol of which was the voyage of the USS George Washington in December 1918, which "creaked and groaned across the Atlantic under the weight of erudition...[of] the most elaborate organization of experts that ever attended any peace conference" (2), its hold laden with the files, papers, maps and documents of a European archive, as well as the President himself, to Brest, then on to the forthcoming Peace Conference in Paris, who there, despite his idealism was positioned, willy-nilly by the logics of power and interest, to preside over the formulation of propositions defining Europe in terms of its necessary exclusions, the writing of peace as the administration of war; and the transcribing of his doctrine of national self-determination as the humanizing of imperialism.

A pure instance of text as act - the Deleuzian order word, "often with little plausibility or truthfulness, [but saying] clearly what should be observed or retained"(3), become a matter for the (Paris) Conference's consideration, the pragmatics of Writing Europe incarnate, of geographical relevance to its poetic penumbra - is enshrined in an explicitly "secret" understanding, one of an elaborately interlinked series, said of 17 August 1916 but with much prior contractual haggling: the Treaty of Bucharest: Article II -Roumania binds herself

to declare war and to attack Austria-Hungary [“at the latest on 28 August”]; while - Article III - France, Great Britain, Italy and Russia acknowledge Roumania’s right to annex the territories of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy stipulated and set by - Article IV - defined, specifically, to the west, by a line following the frontier of Galicia and Bucovina...[then] the line of separation of the waters of the [rivers] Theiss and Viso, until it reaches the Theiss at the village of Trebuza...it will [then] go down along the thalweg of the Theiss to a distance of 4 kilometres downstream from its confluence with the Szamos, leaving the village of Vasares-Nemeny to Roumania....; it being understood that, Article VII: the contracting Powers bind themselves to keep the present Convention secret...(4), granting Roumania a large westward expansion, to the banks of the river Theiss - Tisza - Tisa, rising in the Eastern Carpathians.

“These are not agreements written on parchment; it is a matter of diplomatic correspondence and coded telegrams, messages exchanged by governments”, Lev Trotsky had noted, in his report of 8/21 November 1917 to the Executive Committee of the 2nd All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies, referring to the Bucharest treaty and other documents then as the new People’s Foreign Minister at his disposal but obtained with difficulty, he being unfamiliar with the ramifications of the writing machine.(5) (Two days later, a notice in *Izvestiia*, giving reasons for exposing the courteous punctilio of the Old Diplomacy through their publication, signed by the Narkomindel in his official capacity, prefaced the first instalment: “secret diplomacy is a necessary instrument in the hands of the propertied minority, which needs to deceive the majority, in order to subordinate the latter to its interests. Imperialism, with its grim, predatory designs and spoliatory coalitions and accords, has raised the system of secret diplomacy to the highest state of development...In publicly proposing an immediate armistice to all the belligerent nations and their governments, we are concurrently publishing those treaties and understandings which now are no longer mandatory for Russian workers, soldiers and peasants, who have themselves taken power into their own hands.”(6)

In the changed and unstable circumstances of 1919, a functional redefinition of the Bucharest treaty’s western limit as that of a “neutral zone” “5 km west of the treaty line of 1916”, was placed before the Conference’s Supreme Council by the Roumanian Affairs Commission at the Council’s 21 February meeting at the Quai d’Orsay, a draft agreed in principle at its 25 February meeting, the text finalized on 26 February, a “geographical description of the line [having been] substituted for the description given”, and allusion to the secret Treaty suppressed, as suggested by British Foreign Secretary Balfour. The zone thus decreed was intended to keep warring Hungarian and Roumanian forces apart, and if needs be, “occupied by Allied troops [to prevent] the spreading of Bolshevism...prevalent in Hungary”.(7) (The proclamation on 21 March of a Hungarian soviet republic was followed by the enforcement of a strict Allied economic blockade.)

Izvestiia’s clarification, of 22 November 1917, that the new regime’s first utterance, the Peace Decree of 8 November, was an act and not an appeal, constituting a “formal proposal for an immediate armistice on all fronts and opening of peace negotiations” towards a “democratic peace without annexations or indemnities on a basis of self-determination of peoples”(8), invited Allied censure of “this arbitrary method of conducting foreign intercourse ...further evidence of the despotic spirit of the Bolshevik faction and...utter disregard of constitutional and representative government, which is the very foundation of national independence and the safeguard of individual rights”, a text drafted “as a public statement”, intended to justify Allied non-recognition of the “de facto government of

Russia”, by US Secretary of State Robert Lansing, which, “after conferring with the President, I did not use”.(9)

The President himself had responded to Trotsky’s act at first with extreme circumspection and in conformity with the machine’s modus operandi, making known, indirectly via British diplomacy’s channels, “his words...not [to]be quoted as his own”, the need to make a statement “in self-defence to answer the Bolshevists’ appeal...to prevent a rift from beginning [in Allied unity which] would quickly spread”(10); then, later, grandly and publicly, expunging its origins in Bolshevik brutalism, in the Address, celebrated as “The Fourteen Points”, on 8 January 1918 to a joint session of Congress, there advocating a democratic non-annexationist peace, and the right of nations to self-determination; Lansing’s view of “the dangers of putting such ideas into the minds of certain races...” was noted by Wilson’s Press Officer.(11)

The “scrap of paper” of the Stone Woman, as well as its text, provided support for a “clustered thesis”, that at the time remained schematic: Peace writes war; writing Europe writes the (Other) Enemy, Europe writes the world, the democratic rewriting of empire, writing’s concerted autonomies, the supple modalities of its sitings of institution as author, writing as slave or master: - but the poem lacked a fulcrum, the Archimedean “where to stand” allowing “me to move the earth”, a definition of the discursive Mobius strip on whose opposite sides were inscribed war and its writing, as the poet himself proposed.

Stone Woman is chronologically located, a “when”, hors-texte - for the poet an uncommon precision - 10 March 1919, a temporal vortex, the month in which “the enemy generally prepared his offensive”, Marshal Foch told the Entente Heads of State in Paris on 17 March, urging them to seal the cordon sanitaire against “infestation” by a “violent virus” from the East.(12)

It has an internally inscribed map coordinate, a “where to stand”, uniquely defining the poetic space’s intersection with the domain of the real, a figure in its carpet forming a gestalt only after Kiev, the first two lines of a vast quatrain claiming an epochal and epic status for the poem: “Kogda krasnela krov’iu Visla / I pokrasnel ot krovi Tiss” (An when all rivers flowin blood, / an Visla an Tiss dem water crimson), completed by “Togda rydaiushchie chisla / nad bednym mirom proneslis’(then de cipher numbers griev’ an sobbin / jettin cross dem poor planet.) - a major signifier; the poet’s sound-meanings always playful, never decorative.

A line of demarcation separating Europe from not-Europe, in flux, marked by waters - of the Vistula (Visla), through the still molten state of Poland, northwards to the Baltic, and the Tisa (Tizza, Theiss), a meandering bisection of the Transylvanian plain fixed in the Peace Conference’s gaze, through the wreck of Austro-Hungary, becoming the Danube, southwards to the Black Sea. Both rose in the Carpathian Mountains, their sources, separated by some 250 miles, Tisa to the East, Wisla to the West, caressing the region of Galicia. Galicia was the imaged site of an unfinished dark and episodic epic of 1922, the year of Khlebnikov’s death, when “you saw Mava’s black hair become Volgas of corpses, streams of death...when I in spirit roamed through Galicia, along its cold and lofty heights...” Mava is the witch of world war, pictured by the poet as Breugel’s Mad Meg, innards bared, whose “spine, where only are bones, whose gut moves like stars [according to] the pure laws of time...”(13). The gap between the rivers’ tails became known to Allied strategists, as (World) war became un-War, as the Lemberg Gap.

The city (Lemberg, also L'viv, Lwow, L'vov, names tracing its shifts in history), anciently a node of east-west trade, recently an important rail junction of military significance, an infested conduit linking in military imagination the troubled, disputed city with Budapest, Vienna, Berlin, Glasgow..., named a "gap", a broad saddle, an ancient node of trade and belief, acquiring further enormous ideological and military weight, the weak point of fortress Europe, the point at which the aporia between Bolshevism and the "Bolsheviki", the viral and the military, spirit and matter, the "remarkable instrument" of Lenin's mind, and its monstrous brood the Red Army, threatened to be crossed. The poet's mythopoesis casts rivers as the hair of the world, the silken strands of the World-book's bookmark (here marking "Europe", elsewhere, Asia), and a figure of the navigability and plasticity of time.

In 1920, Vladimir Mayakovsky - the Other poet of the militant, "Hylaeon", pre-war wing of Russian Futurism, whose acknowledged beggar king was Khlebnikov - wrote an enormous "unauthored" poem entitled 150,000,000, narrating events leading up to a world championship in Chicago between a technologically neat American contender personified by Woodrow Wilson, and in the opposite corner an Ivan, a heroic amalgam composed of the Russian masses in their "maimed, shattered, war-ravaged millions". He characterised this contest as an "Epic of the Hero Ivan", and also as an "Epos of Revolution". Despite this, Yurii Tynyanov, co-editor of the first, posthumous edition of Velimir Khlebnikov's "complete works", with Roman Jakobson the most eminent of his early exegetes, knowing well both poets, was emphatic in identifying Khlebnikov, rather than Mayakovsky, as "our one epic poet of the 20th century".(14) In the same passage, he notes that in its formative phase the epic (epos) had its origins in "skazka", a fairy tale more elemental than our own. Statements with an epic weight, but Tynyanov did not elaborate.

The poem's tone is that of *skazka*. It tells how its central figure, a lifesize prehistorical stone carving, a Stone Woman (*kamennaia baba* - the expression is generic) acquired the gift of sight, bestowed on her by a blue butterfly, and, brought to life, was shattered, in an ecstatic paronomasia of grave, rage, rock and rave, in a hail of shell(?) - and transformed into a cosmically dancing figure - liberashun! her honey love codex - *ustav* - shattered. The writer is present as a graphomaniac narrator, "pishi-pishi" "wid dreads of gold"; sound, language, and writing are woven into the poem's fabric, adding an "epigraphic" dimension to a rustling, vast and serene landscape in which everything speaks with wordless names, except the poet who, mute, can only scribble.

Viscous, unidyllic phrases drift, disappear through its warp and weft, vehicles of an insensate slippage of its pastorage into domains of conflict, the (un)war - "kak mnogo stonet mertvykh tysiach / Pod pokryvalom svezhym prakha!" (a thousand wasted corpses groan / all covered over dem cool fresh ground), glimpsed only by "ia - poslednyi zhivopisets/ Zemli neslykhannogo strakha./ Ia kazhdyi den' zhdu vystrela v sebia" (me de last badass painter/written nameless horror of all de world / Evva waitin fe blastin in me direkshun) - and the question, why? za chto? "what fe man, why yu packin?"

The word epic has continued to assert itself as a feeling that it offers a key to the question posed by the Conference - of 2005, not 1919 (even though one is the legacy of the other - how is Europe written? - and: why? Cui bono?). The making of a film allowed the question of what the poem shows or points to (rather than what it is) to be framed in terms of the (illicit) logic of "montage", background transmuted into foreground, through the democracy of photography. In staging *Coriolanus*, Bertolt Brecht observed that "the first thing shown is a civil war. That's too interesting to be mere background preparation for the entrance of the

hero.” Brecht admired and worked in the 1920s “epic” theatre of Erwin Piscator, commenting its use of “film and film projections as an integral part of the settings...the setting was thus awakened to life and began to play on its own; the film was a new, gigantic actor that helped to narrate events... documents could be shown as part of the scenic background, figures and statistics.”(15) This aesthetics of praxis has resonance with Hegel’s philosophical aesthetics, positing epic as the epigraph of (epochal) war: “In the most general terms we can cite conflict in a state of war as the situation most suited to epic. For in war it is precisely the whole nation which is set in motion and which experiences a fresh stimulus and activity in its entire circumstances”(16). Ground becomes figure, and war a player.

But - Hegel sees modernity and the “epic requirement” as disjuncture. Socially and politically: “we must dismiss...the idea that a truly epic action can take place on the ground of a political situation developed into an organized constitution with elaborate laws,... ministers, bureaucracy etc... in epic we find an underlying community of objective life and action, but nevertheless a freedom in this action and life which appear to proceed entirely from the subjective will of individuals.” And economically: “for his external life man needs house, tents, swords,...kettles and roasting tins etc, [not as] dead means of livelihood; [but in which] he must still feel himself alive with his whole mind and self...modern machines and factories with their products....would be just as unsuitable as our modern political organization is for the social background required by the primitive epic.”(17)

So what light can disjoint meanings of “epic” - as a keyword of a radical modernist aesthetics confronting its philological avatar - throw on processes, including writing, which articulate modern war? Or - what conditions oblige modernity’s inner structures to precipitate its anti-thesis - epic space but with a minus sign, a reversal of Hegel’s time arrow, the validation under certain boundary conditions of Tynianov’s formula, even, as a strong variant, requiring that every writing of art, whatever its “surface” topic, has as its only, deep, structural theme, the war itself? A player to be taken seriously, an insurgent backdrop.

The maintenance of writing’s structures, involving construing war as peace, is as ever a serious project: the Peace Conference’s 58 committees held 1646 meetings from January to June, among them the conclave of the great powers, the “Big Four”, holding some 300 meetings in 100 days, producing 700 decisions, importantly territorial and economic, filling ten large volumes of typed material.(18) Even though the well-ordered modernist war was over, its global logistics cast a long shadow, and there were strong reasons why the writing of swords into ploughshares would not be hasty. Industrially speaking, that war, budgeting for 1919, required the shipping “from Chile of 788,000 tons of nitrates to utilize fully our existing high-explosive plants”; the construction of “proper machines and the setting up of “smelting plant... on the battlefields”, where on the Somme alone “there must be 700,000 or 800,000 tons of shell-steel lying about”(19); the “delivery in a growing stream of ammunition, guns, and above all rifles, ... [in early 1917] nearly 1,200,000 from the United States, France, Italy and Japan to the Russian front, hitherto seeing a “very tranquil form of trench warfare, with scarcely 100 to 150 casualties a day”, but now with “the ranks...refilled, large numbers of unarmed men stood behind every formation ready to relieve the fighters of their rifles”(20) (which along with large munitions dumps littering the territories of the former ally remained usable and offered further grounds for intervention - “what fe man, why yu packin’?”)

“A strange war,” Churchill wrote in 1929, reflecting on the Great War’s “civil” extension, - “a war in areas so vast that considerable armies indeed of hundreds of thousands of men,

were lost - dispersed, melted, evaporated; a war[of] raids and affrays and massacres...a war with little valour and no mercy..." ; with an enemy equipped with "the most grisly of all weapons [Lenin], arriving in a sealed truck like a plague bacillus from Switzerland into Russiathe Grand Repudiator - of God, King, Country, morals, treaties, debts, rents, interest..."(21)

Modernity bequeathed the disavowed post-War with unsymmetrical de-industrializing consequences: "[through industrial collapse and blockade] in spring 1919, ...output of rifle rounds from Soviet munitions factories... amounted to 2 bullets per man per day...equipment supplied from base depots tended to be replaced by "self-supply" from local resources...armies in continuous pursuit advanced for weeks and months on end seated on farm carts and in bulging wagon trains...the army became independent of its base, [while] bases came to depend on the army, sending provisions back in rapid marches from captured regions..."(22). In early 1919, Bolsheviks advanced into Ukraine, "the soldier-peasants' multifarious styles of uniform or civilian dress lending an aura of the wandering caravan...the primitive migration of peoples... to the irregular columns...the swelling units [fighting] far too constantly for... order and loyalty to the Communist cause to have much meaning for the newcomers...the Soviet infantry [were carted] rapidly across the great steppes of the Dnepr's left bank"(23), "a vast plain...which blinded the eye with its phosphorescent whiteness, [where] time, losing its boundaries, stratified in all directions at Chernianka..." , as fellow warrior poet Benedikt Livshits later recalled that place as it mythically was in 1911(24), become in the nomad poet's memory a substratum of Rockin mama's domain, in the vast wanderings in that year, 1919, "of isolation", through islands of survival, as Red Army journalist on the Volga delta, back to Moscow as proof reader of his (unrealized) "complete works", as a case study in the psychopathology of creativity (also draft-dodger) in a psychiatric clinic, then as poet-in-residence in Bolshevizing Kharkiv.

Towns, in the rear of a front line as unstable as the identities of friend and foe, post-industrially Hegelian epic topoi became "neighbourhoods, autonomous units of public and daily life, assuming responsibility for maintaining their factories, domestic safety and housing.. apartment buildings became 'wild', managed ad hoc by residents...as landlords fled"(25), mass-produced objects were incorporated into a generalized bricolage, and, mimicking Homeric tents and swords, "Briansk metal workers made axes to trade for grain, soap workers bartered wages in kind, and whole enterprises shifted production towards products that could be readily exchanged..."(26)

In a speech of 12 or 13 March 1919 to party workers in Petrograd rushed out as a pamphlet, "The Successes and Difficulties of the Soviet Power", Lenin, struggling for the mot juste, for himself as well as his listeners, in addressing the burning question: what is a soviet? seeking a definition in terms of movement and process, finally settled, as it were involuntarily, for an oddly un-Leninist word, the "roaming" (bluzhdanie) of the proletarian masses within the soviets (a postscript, published first only in 1922, insisting that his words be reported rather reproduced literally as verbatim transcription, offers grounds for thinking this was a word which may not have survived had his proof corrections reached the printers in time.)(27)

At a meeting of the Supreme War Council in Paris on 17 March 1919, Marshal Foch, Supreme Allied Commander urged that the Allied Governments "take immediate action...to ward off the grave peril which threatened Poland..." , a domino in danger of collapse, were "the town of Lemberg, infested by Ukrainians, to fall,...entailing that of the Polish Government...[drawing] into anarchy a country menaced on three sides by the Germans,

Bolsheviks and the Ukrainians...(28) Three weeks earlier, Foch, pursuing his “*idee fixe*” characterized the Enemy as “badly organised,...but [difficult to deal with because]... scattered over an enormous territory, acting like a violent virus... Polish troops would be quite able to face the Russians... strengthened by the supply of modern appliances and engines of war...the great numbers required...could be obtained by mobilizing the Finns, Poles, Czechs, Roumanians and Greeks...under a unique command[which], if done, would see the end of Bolshevism.”(29) Lloyd George was not present, having returned to England in haste on 10 February to cope with industrial and political turmoil ever on the verge of eruption, disorders in Glasgow having been quelled days before, requiring machine guns to control public spaces, the deployment of thousands of troops, six tanks and 100 lorries, with further large-scale unrest threatening in industrial centres; “a misnomer to call the situation in Glasgow a strike - it was a Bolshevik rising” was the declared view of Secretary for Scotland Robert Munro(30).

On his return, at the 17 March meeting, Lloyd George opposed Foch’s plan to set up “a great army for the eventual invasion of Russia” as “the perpetration of a great mischief”(31), having familiarized himself with the unstable condition of the home base; France would shortly be similarly instructed in related instabilities, at home but also abroad, in the sequence of events leading from the loss, with heavy civilian casualties, of the Dnepr port city of Kherson, within the French occupation zone of the Ukraine (whose eastern hinterland included Chernianka, mythologised as Hylaea, the adopted “Scythian” birthplace of Russian Futurism) - on the day - 10 March - of the writing of Rockin mama, ending, in April, with the mass mutiny of the French fleet, protests spreading from battleships La France, flagship Jean Bart, which hoisted red flags, to battleships Justice, Mirabeau, Vergniaud... the organization of soviets on board some, participation in pro-Bolshevik rallies on shore by crew members, and the evacuation on 28 April of the entire occupation force from Sevastopol, the presumed imperviousness of colonial troops to Bolshevism proving illusory.(32)

E H Carr characterizes 1919 as the “Year of Isolation”, when what had “appeared as a civil war waged on Russian territory...now took on the shape of a war between the revolutionary Soviet regime and the principal Powers of the capitalist world”(33), true in terms of diplomatic exclusion, blockade and starvation, but with implosive and invasive traits obsessively posted in early March, four months after the Armistice ...arrival in Estonia of transports from England with arms and munitions...Greek troops operating in Russia...yellow murderers to exterminate Europeans...Fighting in Transcaspia. Indian troops in action...Unrest in Spain...Spartacists well established in Dusseldorf...Bloody encounters on streets of Munich...clashes on streets of Budapest...(34), news undoubtedly ingested by the epic poet, recent journalist of the Astrakhan “Red Soldier” news sheet. Captain Nicholas Roosevelt reported on 26 March, five days after the self-declaration of the Hungarian soviet republic, to the American Delegation, for the US Field Mission in Budapest, that “Hungary had defied the Conference and allied herself with the Bolsheviki, [offering] an encouragement to the Germans which may be disastrous”(35), Germany, a nation state albeit (or because) reduced, in danger of succumbing to the emergent points of singularity (soviets), burning holes in the stretched fabric of its territorial continuum.

This was a quarrel of spaces, political aporiai. Reporting to the 8th Party Congress, 18 March, Lenin, answering charges of militarism and declaring himself “not against war in general”, only the imperialist kind, stated with emphasis, that “we are living not only in a state but in a system of states”(35), accepting the hard consequences of the premiss - a consolidated linear space (“territory”), equipped with “metrics”: of costing, output, command

structures, and norms, rejecting an uncentred space of neighbourhoods, an issue having an urgent military translation - “partizanshchina” versus a regular (Red) army. Other reactions to the same problem are readable - in the anxieties of a secret pro-forma questionnaire issued at that same time to British Station Commanders, instructing them to ascertain whether “troops in various areas [will] respond to orders...to preserve the public peace,...parade for draft overseas, especially Russia,...assist in strikebreaking; also whether [internal or external] agitation is affecting them,..and whether soldiers’ councils have been formed...”(37); in Woodrow Wilson’s memorable image, from the minutes of the first meeting of the Council of Four on 20 March, holding the ring while British and French heads of state imperially picked over the maps and clauses of the Sykes-Picot secret understanding of 1916: “The Turkish Empire...was as much in solution as though made of quicksilver” (38) - spatial involutions feared by all, inviting mathematical expression: “if, discarding the distance function of a metric space, we were to retain the systems of neighbourhoods of the points of the metric space, we obtain what we shall call a neighbourhood space.”(39)

The military issue was overriding at the 8th Congress. Did Congress see partizanshchina as the authentically revolutionary vehicle of bottom-up creative initiative of workers and peasants, democratic to its core, or as warlordism, random criminal gangs of ne’er-do-wells with opportunistic, fantastic or unstable loyalties? And was the systematic recruitment of military specialists (spetsy, ex-Tsarist officers) into a regularized (albeit Red) army a drift towards zubrezhka - Full Metal Jacket style drilling -, or an indispensable means of defending the proletarian revolution? The debate - prolonged, tense, often subtle in dissolving antinomies, precariously balanced military exigency and revolutionary consciousness(40). The poet incorporated one of its foci - army regulations - voennyi ustav - and Lenin’s take on the issue in a poem argued as Rockin mama’s pendant, A Night in the Trench(41): De Man[Lenin]... em callin Lettish hardcore bredrin [steadfast bros] /fe geekin up on soljah’s law [military regs] ./An de Man widdim han ev iron[with hand of iron]/keepin peeps [people]an de real line. /I ain lak em, not to em riddim! / but planet bredrin flyin high!

Seminal rap artist Ice-T holds that “rappers have been reporting from the front for years”(42). The present writer has explored in detail elsewhere the “rhizoid” affiliations linking the “senseless”, rough poetics of Russian Futurist poetry and rap music(43). Extending the “playful” agonism(44) of Futurism into fields of real conflict, taking “1919” as the poem’s chronotope suggests deepening, immanent links between art and war, in special “epic” circumstances - and that the (poetic) report from the front line renders nothing but its desperate, exultant unknowability, the hallucinatory clarity of its Otherness, Troy or L’viv, Bagdad or the Projex. Machinic writing, Our, moderate, kind leaks its trade secrets and its inner mechanisms, actually the grand narratives of Our “unepic” present, not a succession of faits accomplis but ever-unfinished business, managed in footnotes, a screened hegemonic marshalling of the world, the New “new diplomacy”. But as in illuminated Books of Hours, a teratology, knowing the value of being uninformed (and of disinformation), lurks in its margins: Robert Lansing (“Bolshevism is the most hideous and monstrous thing that the human mind has ever conceived... Its appeal is to the unintelligent and brutish element of mankind to take from the intellectual and successful their rights and possessions...”(45)) evokes an entity seen from another angle and at firsthand by John Reed (among others): “For the first time in history the working class has seized the power of the state for its own purposes..., and yet, as I write this, in the flush of their success, the new-born revolution of the proletariat is ringed round with a vast fear and hatred. The proletarian revolution has no friends except the proletariat.”(46) Futurist tribune Mayakovsky harangues the tongueless writhing street, wi’ nowt to shout and chat wi’; patrician renegade Blok records, in The

Twelve, the proletarian brutalism of voices belonging to it; Lobachevskian altermondialiste Khlebnikov aphoristically asserts that its five curses are a kiss. These are expressions by spokespeople of a “ringed round” aesthetic, driven to a language of challenge and confrontation. A translator is faced in his rewriting with a choice between assisting in the hegemonic “domestication” of its source or signalling its conjunctural alterity, a choice often itself less than free, driven by another conjuncture, now.

1. V Khlebnikov, *Sobranie proizvedenii 1928-1933*(hereafter SP), v 5, 1933, p266
2. H Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 1933 p27
3. Deleuze/Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980(1996), p76
4. Charles Upson Clark, *Greater Roumania, 1922*, pp171-172, for text; also F S Cocks, *The Secret Treaties and Understandings*, 1918, pp 49-58, for context
5. L Trotsky. *Sochineniia*, v3 part 2, 1925, p161
6. *ibid* p 164
7. *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, the Paris Peace Conference 1919*, (hereafter FRUSPPC), v4, pp59-60, 146, 158
8. Trotsky, *op cit*, p 157
9. *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, 1966-1994*, v45 p206
10. "Personal and Most Secret" T telegram from Washington, 4 January 1918, forwarded by Sir Cecil Arthur Spring Rice to Arthur James Balfour, British Foreign Secretary; *Wilson Papers* vol 45, p458
11. Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and the World Settlement*, vol 1, 1923, p15.
12. FRUSPPC v4 p381, meeting of the Supreme War Council
13. SP v5 (1933), pp 114-115.
14. SP v1, p 24
15. John Willett (ed/transl), *Brecht on Theatre, 1964(1977)*, pp 77-78, 257
16. F W Hegel *Aesthetics*, v2, 1976, p1047
17. *ibid* pp1052-1053
18. Ruth A Roland, *Interpreters as Diplomats 1989*, p121, citing Nicolson, *op cit*
19. W S Churchill, *The World Crisis*, vol 4, 1916-1918, part 2 (1927), *The Munitions Budget*, p318, 327
20. W S Churchill, *The World Crisis*, vol 6: *The Eastern Front (1931)* p335
21. W S Churchill, *The World Crisis*, vol 5: *The Aftermath (1929)*, pp232-233
22. *Grazhdanskaia voina 1918-1921*, eds A S Bubnov et al, 1928, vol 2, pp260-261
23. Arthur E Adams, *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine, the Second Campaign 1918-1919*, 1963, p90
24. Benedikt Livshits, *One and a Half-eyed Archer*, 1933, ed/transl John Bowlt 1977 pp44-45
25. Diane Koenker, *Party, State and Society in the Russian Civil War*, Koenker, Rosenberg, Suny, 1989, p87
26. William Rosenberg, *ibid* p124
27. V I Lenin, *Sochineniia*, 1928(1935), v24, pp55, 78.
28. FRUSPPC v4, p379, Council of Ten meeting 17 March
29. *ibid*, p122, Council of Ten meeting 25 February
30. Arno J Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking. Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles 1918-1919*, 1967, pp 609-612
31. FRUSPPC v4 p380
32. Michael Jabara Carley, *Revolution and Intervention. The French Government and the Russian Civil war 1917-1919*, 1983, pp173-174, quoting unpublished firsthand reports of French diplomatic and military personnel in Russia.
33. E H Carr, *The Bolshevik revolution 1917-1923 (1966)* v3 p123.
34. *The Times*, *le Temps*, *Pravda*, headlines, 1-4 March 1919 issues.
35. FRUSPPC v12, pp418-419
36. Lenin, *op cit* v 24, pp121-122; Central Committee report, 18 March 1919
37. Mayer, *op cit*, pp617-618
38. FRUSPPC v5 p10 (a meeting then understood as unminuted). The Sykes-Picot agreement is published in: Woodward and Butler, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1st Series* vol 4 (1919) , HMSO 1952, pp 241-248; the agreement was formalized in May 1916 (finally

confirmed in October) in an exchange of 11 letters marked “secret” between British, French and Russian ambassadors. It parcellated the Asian areas of the Ottoman Empire; Britain acquired rights of administration and concessions in Mesopotamia from Bagdad to Basra and the Persian Gulf. The Supreme Council of the Peace Conference devoted much time in 1919 to how the lines, capital letters and colours of the map drawn by Sir Mark Sykes and M Georges-Picot, and also key terminology of the agreement, especially “zone of influence” and “protect”, were properly to be interpreted. The map “is not here reproduced” in the British official publication; a sketch is published in Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, v2, 1938, p1024. A more accurate version is published in L Aldrovandi Marescotti, *Guerra Diplomatica*, but in relation to a different (also secret) treaty “Of Saint Jean de Maurienne”, 1917, assigning parts of south western Turkey to Italy

39. Bert Mendelson, *Introduction to Topology*, 3rd edition, 1990, p70.

40. *Protokoly VIII s’ezda RKP(b) 18-23 March 1919*, E Yaroslavsky (ed), 4th session morning 20 March, pp145-161, final resolution pp401-411; also a closed and unpublished 5th session of the military section 21 March is summarized; Lenin’s contribution to this was published in 1970, *Leninskii sbornik*, XXXVII. Note 48, pp496-498 indicates that the resolution as finally adopted was based on an earlier paper by Trotsky (he being absent from the Congress and at the Eastern front), but with serious modifications, nuancing his militarily hard line. The debate is discussed in terms of personalities and party factions in *The Trotsky Papers (Lenin-Trotsky Correspondence)* ed Jan M Meijer, 1964, vol1, pp300-302).

41. V Markov, *The Longer Poems of Velimir Khlebnikov*, California, 1962, pp130-133.

Markov argues that the two poems are closely related, persuasively in my view, given the military theme and the presence of “Stone Women” in both, indeed the two may be seen as episodes of a single, larger epic poem. The translated extract cited here is based on reading the lines as an expression of the poet’s positive attitude towards Lenin but also as a statement of temperamental distance - “Net, ia - ne on, ia - ne takoi!” , literally, “No I am not him, I am not like that!” followed directly by: “No chelovechestvo - leti!” “But mankind - fly! I have taken the conjunction “but” to imply that “fly” is here used in the sense of “soar”. The published Harvard translation has omitted “but”, and taken “fly” to mean “flee”, obviously a crucial distinction, ideologically speaking, both as regards a global reading of a major poet in revolution and as regards the purposes served by translation. However, this translator has so far been unable to find a native Russian speaker willing or able to make a definitive judgement in favour of one or the other reading!

42. Patrick B Hill, in *Bleep! Censoring Rock and Rap music*, 1999, p106

43. Brian Chadwick, *Issues raised by a rap translation of a poem by Velimir Khlebnikov*, in *Poetika iskanii, ili poisk poetiki*, Conference Proceedings, Moscow 16-19 May 2003, 2004, pp 26-41

44. “agonism” is a key concept in Renato Poggioli’s classic 1962 work, *The Theory of the Avantgarde*.

45. quoted in John M Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace*, 1966, p15, Confidential Memorandum for his files, 26 October 1918.

46. *The Masses*, November-December 1917, quoted in: Granville Hicks, John Reed. *The Making of a Revolutionary*, 1936, p285. Reed’s “Ten days that Shook the World” is used as a key source of information in an important post-soviet documentary reconstruction of the proceedings of the 25-26 October 1917 sessions of the 2nd Soviet Congress establishing the revolutionary regime, undertaken by A S Pokrovsky and E Yu Tikhonov, *Institute of Russian History*, 1997.

Postscript. US Diplomatic papers have been used only because of their relative ease of access.

