MAXIMILIAN VOLOSHIN'S POETIC LEGACY AND THE POST-SOVIET RUSSIAN IDENTITY

Marianna S. Landa

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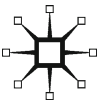

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For Juna, Doron, Daniel, and Catherine
and in memory of Ian Zek, Semyon Landa,
Sergey Landa, and Galina Dombrovskaya
With love

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Illustrations

Acknowledgments

I learned about Maximilian Voloshin when I was 11, spending a summer with my parents in Koktebel. Beautiful landscapes, Voloshin's poetry, stories about him, his House-Museum, and his widow Maria Stepanovna, who was my parents' friend and whom I met briefly—all of this seemed like a fascinating fairy tale to me. Growing up in Leningrad with my father, a Pushkinist and historian, and my mother, the French art curator at the Hermitage museum, I heard about history and art every night eating dinner in the kitchen. My family's world of intellectual freedom stood in stark opposition to the Soviet reality with its censorship and iron curtain. But in Koktebel, where I returned many times, the reality was different. Maria Stepanovna preserved the spirit of Voloshin's artistic commune—its cult of poetry and art and its cordial atmosphere. After her, the museum curator and Voloshin's biographer, Vladimir Petrovich Kupchenko with his wife Roza Pavlovna Khruleva, became the guardians of this spirit.

Many years later in California, I returned to Voloshin in my Stanford University master's thesis on Cherubina de Gabriak that resulted in several publications in Russia and the United States. My present project grew out of my Stanford University dissertation (2001), which benefited from the support of the Stanford University Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, two Stanford Graduate Research Opportunities Fellowships for research in Russia, and Stanford Center for Russian and East European Studies Grant. As I developed my project into its current form, I was fortunate to receive financial support from University of Maryland Research and Scholarship Award and three University of Maryland School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures Conference Travel Grants. I have also received a Subvention Award for Book-publishing Costs from the College of Arts and Humanities and the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the University of Maryland.

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I would like to thank Brigitte Shull for welcoming this project to Palgrave Macmillan and Ryan Jenkins and Chelsea Morgan for managing all the stages of its publication. I am grateful to Deepa John for her meticulous copyediting.

Two people were instrumental for the inception of my project. My dear friend, the late Dmitrii Alekseevich Machinskii, brought to my attention Voloshin's postrevolutionary poems during our conversations one summer in Russia. His insight, love of Voloshin, and knowledge of poetry inspired the subject of my dissertation and its reworking in Part I of this book. Galina Rylkova pointed out to me the contemporary relevance of Voloshin and supported my project from the inception to the end. Her expertise, original thinking, and scholarship has served as a model in my own endeavors. Special thanks go to Judith Kalb whose knowledge, support, and friendship have tremendously benefitted my book, and to Alex Ogden whose perspectives always inspired me. I am deeply grateful to Michael Wachtel whose important comments strengthened the final product and whose interest in my project has been a great source of support. Helen Blythe's gigantic help in proofreading my book, and her wonderful comments made my book better. I am also extremely grateful to Glennys Young for her tremendous help, perspective on the Russian Revolution, and critical comments. My heartfelt thanks go to Robert Chandler and Boris Dralyuk for their interest in my work, friendship and invaluable help in commenting on my English translations of Voloshin's poems.

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The memory of my father Semyon Semyonovich Landa, my brother Sergei Landa, and my grandmother Galina Vyacheslavovna Dombrovskaya-Rakova has been a constant source of strength for me. My study of the Soviet terror was driven by the memory of my grandfather Ian Ianovich Zek who perished at age 31 during the Great Terror. My mother, Juna Ianovna Zek, helped me throughout my writing as an attentive and critical listener and coach. Finally, heartfelt thanks go to my wonderful husband Doron Levy, for his intellectual companionship and amazing support, and to my children, Daniel and Catherine Levy who are my muses.

A portion of Chapter 3 in a somewhat different form appeared previously in "Symbolism and Revolution: On Contradictions in Maximilian Voloshin's Poems on Russia and Terror in the Crimea (1917–1920s)." *Slavic & East European Journal*, vol. 58, no. 2 (2014): 217–236. Illustration credit goes to the Private Archive of Vladimir Kupchenko and Roza Khruleva and to the State Tretyakov Gallery.

Abbreviations

Biblioteka Poeta	Voloshin, M. *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*. Biblioteka Poeta. St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1995.
Kritika	*Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*.
Liki tvorchestva	Voloshin, M. *Liki tvorchestva. Literaturnye pamiatniki*. Eds. V. A. Manuilov, V. P. Kupchenko, and A. V. Lavrov. Leningrad: Nauka, 1988.
Mints	Mints, Zara Grigorievna. *Poetika russkogo simvolizma. Blok i russkii simvolizm: izbrannye trudy v trekh knigax*. Book 3. St. Peterburg: Iskusstvo-SPb, 2004.
SEEJ	*Slavic and East European Journal*.
Sobr. soch	Voloshin, M. *Sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk, Institut Russkoi Literatury. Moskva: Ellis Lak, 2000–2013.
Stranstvie	Kupchenko, Vladimir. *Stranstvie Maksimiliana Voloshina: dokumental'noe povestvovanie*. Sankt-Peterburg: Logos, 1996.
Trudy i dni, vol.1, 2	Kupchenko, Vladimir. *Trudy i dni Maksimiliana Voloshina: letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva. 1877–1916, 1917–1932*. Vols. 1, 2. St. Peterburg: Aleteiia, 2002, 2007.
TSQ	*Toronto Slavic Quarterly*. University of Toronto, Academic Electronic Journal in Slavic Studies.
Vospominaniia	*Vospominaniia o Maksimiliane Voloshine*. Eds. Vladimir Kupchenko and Zakhar Davydov. Introduction by Ozerov, L. Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990.

A Brief Chronology of Life and Work

Setting Voloshin's life and work in a historical perspective, this chronology focuses on the events described in Part I of this book and is based on Vladimir Kupchenko, *Trudy i dni Maksimiliana Voloshina: letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva. 1877–1916, 1917–1932*. Vols. 1, 2. St. Peterburg: Aleteiia, 2002, 2007. The dates of Voloshin's life in Russia are given according to the Julian calendar ("Old style") until February 1918 when the Soviet government changed it to Gregorian calendar. Julian calendar was 12 days behind the Gregorian in the nineteenth century and 13 days behind in the twentieth century.

1877

May 16: Born in Kiev in the family of Aleksandr Maksimovich Kirienko-Voloshin, a member of the Kiev Chamber of Criminal and Civil Justice, and Elena Ottobaldovna (born Glazer).

1881

March 1: Tsar Alexander II is killed by members of the People's Will Party.

October 9: Father's death. Soon afterward moves with his mother to Moscow.

1893

June 3*:* The Voloshins move from Moscow to Koktebel, a Bulgarian village, where they build a house.

End of August*:* Voloshin starts studying at Theodosia Lycée.

1897

August 1: Enters Moscow University, department of jurisprudence.

November*:* Enters the Crimean Zemliachestvo, a semi-legal student self-help group based on students' domicile of origine in Russia (the organization was officially forbidden in 1887).

1899

February 8: The beginning of the all-Russia student strike.

February 15: For "agitating [the unrest]," Voloshin is expelled from the university for a year and exiled to Theodosia.

August 29–January 12, 1900: First trip to Europe with his mother and a friend.

1900

February: Reinstated in Moscow University, at a sophomore level.

March: Attends a meeting of the executive committee of Moscow Student Organization. Wants to study literature, history, and art instead of law.

May 26–July 28: A trip to Europe with friends.

August 21: Back in Crimea, he is arrested in Sudak on allegation that he is a member of the student executive committee. Transported to Koktebel for a house search, then to Moscow.

August 25–September 1: Interrogated. Denies his membership in the student executive committee but admits it in the Crimean Zemliachestvo. While in jail, writes poetry on the walls.

September 1: Freed from jail but prohibited to enter Moscow. The next day he leaves to Sevastopol, Crimea with V. Viazemskii, the head of the expedition researching the railway trajectory for the Erenburg-Tashkent road.

September–December: Joins Viazemskii in a caravan expedition in the Middle Asia. Reads Vladimir Soloviev's "Three Conversations" and Friedrich Nietzche's "Beyond Good and Evil." Considers 1900 the year of his spiritual birth. After the police permits him to return to Moscow University, he decides not to return and instead devote his life to studying history, literature, and art.

1901–1916

Voloshin lives in Paris, working as an art correspondent for Russian periodicals. Travels, writes poetry, paints, studies art, literature, history, and religion. Creates his own artistic circles in Paris, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea. Becomes a Freemason, Theosophist, and Anthroposophist. Builds his own house in Koktebel and starts hosting friends there.

1903–1904: Meets Russian Symbolists, religious philosophers, and other vanguard artists and intellectuals.

February 11, 1903: Meets his future first wife, Margarita Sabashnikova, in Moscow at the house of an art collector, Sergei Ivanovich Shchukin.

January 9, 1905: The First Russian Revolution. Witnesses the shooting of the workers' demonstration in Petersburg. Writes a poem "Forebodings [Predvestiia]."

April 12, 1906: Marries Sabashnikova in Moscow.

January 1907: Vyacheslav Ivanov invites the couple to move into his house and literary salon "The Tower," a major center of Russian modernist art. Voloshin forges a close friendship with Ivanov and joins his circle.

March: Voloshin's marriage falls apart because of Ivanov's failed life-creation experiment, involving himself, Sabashnikova, and Ivanov's wife, a writer Lydia Zinovieva-Gannibal.

October–November 1909: Together with a close friend, a beginner poet Elizaveta Dmitrieva, Voloshin creates a mask of a Symbolist woman poet, the exotic decadent seductress, Cherubina de Gabriak. Hiding under this mask and guided by Voloshin, Dmitrieva writes the poems and mails them to the modernist journal *Apollo*. The fascinated editors believe that Cherubina de Gabriak is a real poet and celebrate her as the star of modernist Petersburg. Two months later Dmitrieva discloses her secret to a friend. The ensuing scandal costs her a long hiatus in literary career and leads to her separation from Voloshin.

November 22: Voloshin's shooting duel with the poet Nikolai Gumilev, involving a love triangle between the two poets and Dmitrieva. Voloshin defends Dmitrieva's honor in what he understands as an insult coming from Gumilev. There are no casualties, but the duel is greatly ridiculed in press as a modernist Bohemian excess.

February 1910: Voloshin's first book of poetry published, *Poems. 1900–1910*. Moscow: Grif, 1910.

The end of December: Meets Marina Tsvetaeva who has just published her first book of poetry, *The Evening Album*. Becomes her life-long friend and patron.

February 12, 1913: Criticizes Ilya Repin's painting "Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan" after the painting was damaged by a psychopathic viewer.

July 1914: Travels to Dornach in Switzerland to build Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophic Temple "Goetheanum." World War I starts. Witnesses it from the neutral zone, working on a peace project with representatives of the warring nations.

September 20: German shellfire damages the thirteenth-century cathedral of Reims triggering a huge international protest. Voloshin writes "Our Lady of Reims."

1915: Moves to Paris. Witnesses a night air attack when two German Zepellins dropped more than 30 50-kilogram melenite bombs on Paris. Writes "Zepellins above Paris" and other poems about the war for the book, *Anno Mundi Ardentis 1915*, published in Moscow's "Zerna" in 1916.

March 1916: Returns to Russia and stays there until his death in 1932.

1917

February 23–28: The February Revolution. Demonstrations and armed uprisings in Petrograd.

March 2: Nicholas II abdicates. The Provisional Government is set up in Petrograd.

February–March: Voloshin witnesses the Revolution in Moscow.

March 12: Watches a parade in honour of the triumph of the Revolution that inspires his poem, "Moscow (March 1917)."

April 3: Lenin arrives to Petrograd from Switzerland and gives a speech at the Kshesinskaya Palace.

April 12: Voloshin leaves Moscow for the Crimea.

April 21: First Bolshevik demonstrations in Petrograd and Moscow.

April–May: Voloshin prepares his third book of poetry *Iverni*.

Summer: Hosts friends. Reads Hebrew prophets and studies the history of the French Revolution in Hippolyte Taine's *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine* in four volumes.

July 4: Unsuccessful Bolshevik uprising in Petrograd. Lenin goes into hiding.

August 25: Voloshin is deemed unfit for military service because of injured arm.

October 10–25: The October Revolution. Bolsheviks seize power in Petrograd.

October 31: Tsvetaeva leaves Theodosia for Moscow where Bolsheviks besieged Junkers [junior officers] in Kremlin.

November 3: Junkers are defeated in Moscow. Kremlin is damaged by the artillery fire, nine thousand people are killed.

November 10: Having arrived to Moscow in the midst of revolutionary unrest, Tsvetaeva immediately returns to Koktebel with her husband, Sergei Efron, and tells Voloshin about the Bolshevik uprising. He writes some of his most famous poems, "The Holy Rus'," "Peace," "The Takeover of Tuillerie," and "Moscow."

November 25: Tsvetaeva goes back to Moscow, taking these poems to the poet Konstantin Balmont. He publishes them in the newspaper *Slovu—Svoboda!* on December 10.

November: The tsarist administrations of Petersburg and Moscow, intelligentsia, artists, industrialists, and middle class start relocating to the south of Russia and Crimea.

November 23–December 6: Russians, Germans, and Austrians agree on Armistice at Brest-Litovsk.

December 6: Chrezvychainaia Komissia (Cheka, the Bolshevik secret police agency) established.

December 16: The Bolshevik War Revolutionary Committee is formed in Sevastopol and seizes power.

December: Voloshin writes "Thermidor," "Petrograd," "Trichinae," "Demetrius-Imperator," "Sten'ka's Judgment," and "Deaf and Dumb

Demons." The Crimean Tatar revolutionaries organize armed regiments, declare Crimea autonomous and create a Crimean-Tatar national government. They want Crimea to be an independent democratic state where all nationalities and languages are welcome.

Mid-December: Civil War starts in Crimea. Armed conflicts between Bolsheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries (SR), Left SR, Anarchists, and the Tatars. The anti-Bolshevik White Army forms in the south.

1918

January, early-April: The Bolsheviks defeat the Tatars and seize power in Crimea.

January 5: Constituent Assembly meets in Petrograd and is dispersed the same day.

March 3: The Bolsheviks sign the separatist Peace Treaty with Germany at Brest-Litovsk.

April 22–November 15: German occupation of the Crimea.

From June 23: Matvei Sulkevich heads pro-German Crimean Regional Government.

Summer: Voloshin hosts friends, gives lectures and poetry readings in Theodosia and Sudak.

July 16–17: Tsar Nicholas II and his family are murdered in Ekaterinoslav.

August 4: End of free press in Russia. Sovnarkom banishes all "bourgeois" newspapers.

August 30: The chief of Petrograd Cheka, Moisei Uritsky is assassinated. Fannie Kaplan shoots and wounds Lenin. Lenin orders Felix Dzerzhinsky to start the Red Terror as a means to fight the White Terror.

October 14: The Tauria University is formed in Simferopol.

November–early January 1919: Voloshin goes on lecture tours to Yalta, Sevastopol, Simferopol. Influx of intellectuals and artists fleeing from the Bolshevik North.

November 11: End of World War I. The Allies sign armistice with Germany at Compiègne.

November 15–April 11, 1919: Crimea is ruled by the second Crimean Regional Government of Solomon Krym, under the protectorate of the Allies.

Voloshin writes "Deaf and Dumb Rus'," "De Profundis," "Transfiguration," "Vision of Ezekiel," "Europe," "Archpriest Avvakum," "Motherland," "Prayer for the City (Theodosia in the Spring of 1918)," "Koktebel," and "Karadag." His book, *Iverni* comes out in Moscow in "Tvorchestvo." Prepares the book of poems, *Deaf and Dumb Demons.*

1919

January: Gives lectures at the People's University of Sevastopol. *Deaf and Dumb Demons* comes out in Kharkov in "Kamena."

January 20–May 10: Visits Odessa; stays in Mikhail and Maria Tsetlin's house. Reads his poems at concerts and actively participates in Odessa's vibrant cultural life invigorated by the influx of artists from the north.

Apri–June: Bolsheviks' arrival to Odessa in April causes a huge emigration of artists and writers, including most of Voloshin's friends. He stays and organizes unions of artists. Crimea is declared the Crimean Soviet Socialist Republic within the Russian Republic.

April 23: Ivan Kvitko, denounces Voloshin in an article, "It's Necessary to Start Political Cleansing." Voloshin anticipates the arrest and has to leave Odessa quickly.

May 10: Helped by Aleksandr Nemitz, the Red Army commander of the Black Sea Fleet, and Severny (B. S. Iuzefovich), the head of the Odessa Cheka, Voloshin leaves Odessa for Crimea on a boat.

June 18: Voloshin visits the White Army ship Kagul, where his poetry reading is a great success.

June 20–November 14, 1920: The Crimea is occupied by the White Army and ruled by the Government of South Russia.

June 23–July: Voloshin travels to Kerch, Ekaterinodar, Rostov, and Novorossiisk [the towns of South Russia] to save the life of the arrested ex-tsarist general Nikandr Marks accused of collaborating with the Bolsheviks.

Voloshin writes "The Burning Bush," "Written Records about the Moscow Tsars," "Kitezh," "The Russian Revolution," "The Sea Voyage," "The Sailor," "The Red Guardsman," "The Bolshevik," "Theodosia," "The Bourgeois," "Spekuliant [Black-Marketeer]," "The Escape," "Spell for the Russian Land," "At the Railway Station," The Civil War," "Sowing [Posev]," "Judas the Apostle," and "Saint Francis."

1920

April 5: General Anton Denikin resigns. Pyotr Wrangel becomes commander in chief of the White Army in Crimea.

November 12: The Red Army breaks the defense of the isthmus of Perekop and invades Crimea.

November 13–16: Wrangel organizes a massive evacuation of the White Army and civilians. The Red Army conducts spontaneous mass executions that soon stop.

Late November: Lenin orders political cleansing of the Crimea and blockades the peninsula under the pretext of quarantine from infectious diseases. The new Bolshevik commanders arrive to Crimea to conduct the Red Terror in

relative secrecy from the public and Communist Party in the north. Sweeping arrests, torture, and nightly mass executions without trial last in all major Crimean cities until March 1921, when the news of atrocities reach Moscow, and Lenin is forced to reduce the scale of the Red Terror. The Red Terror continues with less intensity till December 1921.

November 1920–1922: State-organized famine decimates Crimea. Crimea is not given the status of famine region and cannot receive domestic and international help.

Voloshin writes "Magic Spell (Against Civil Unrest)," "The Wild Field," "Northeast," "The Civil War."

1921

February: Mass strikes in Petrograd and rebellion at Kronstadt naval base.

March 15: Beginning of the New Economic Policy (NEP).

March 17: Suppression of the Kronshtadt rebellion.

March: News of the Crimean humanitarian disaster reach Communist circles in Moscow. Dzerzhinsky blames Bela Kun and Rozalia Zemliachka and recalls them to Moscow. Official end of the Red Terror in Crimea.

August 7: Alexander Blok dies.

August 25: Nikolai Gumilev is executed by Petrograd Cheka on fabricated charges of participating in a monarchist group "Petrograd Military Organization."

Summer–Fall: Deadly famine on large territories of Russia. Huge human losses in Crimea.

Voloshin writes "The Red Easter," "Terror," "Terminology," "To the Descendants," "Slaughter," "Readiness."

1922

February–March: Voloshin meets his future second wife, Maria Stepanovna Zabolotskaia.

March: Famine officially declared in Crimea.

April 3: Joseph Stalin is appointed general secretary

July: Relief food arrives to Crimea.

Voloshin writes "On the Bottom of Hell (In memory of A. Blok and N. Gumilev)," "Fist," "Sword," "Gunpowder," "Steam," "Machine," "State."

1923

January 8: Voloshin's mother, Elena Ottobaldovna Voloshina dies.

March: Zabolotskaia moves in with Voloshin in Koktebel.

Famine ends in Crimea. Voloshin writes "Hunger," "Rus'," "Blessing," "Wanton Rus'," " Rebellion," "Fire," "Magic," "Rebel," "War," Cosmos." *Deaf and Dumb Demons* (2nd publication) and *Poems About Terror* (1st publication) come out in Berlin in "Knigoizdatelstvo pisatelei v Berline." Up to 200 guests stays in Voloshin's house during the year.

1924

January 21: Lenin's death

March 1–May 19: Voloshin and Zabolotskaia travel to Moscow and Leningrad. Voloshin visits Anatoly Lunacharsky, reads poems to high officials in Kremlin, visits Valery Bryusov, Andrei Bely, Osip Mandelshtam, and other writers.

Voloshin writes "Russia." 300 guests stay in Voloshin's house.

1925–1932

1925: Voloshin writes "In Memory of Tserasskii," works on "The House of the Poet," and "A Quarter of a Century." 400 guests stay in his house.

January 29: The decree of the Crimean TSIK leaves the house to Voloshin.

1926: Voloshin writes "Tanob," "The House of the Poet," "Sorcery," "Kalliera." 410 guests stay in his house.

1927: Works on the poem "A Quarter of a Century." Up to 500 guests stay in the house.

February 9–April 19: Trip to Moscow and Leningrad.

March 9: Marriage with Zabolotskaia.

1928: 625 guests stayed in the house.

April: Becomes a member of the All-Russia Union of Writers.

1928–1961: Voloshin cannot be published in the USSR.

1929: Voloshin writes "Our Lady of Vladimir," "Saint Seraphim," "Adelaida Gertsyk," "The Tale about the Monk Epifanii."

December 9: Voloshin has a stroke.

1930–1931: After having recovered from the stroke, Voloshin writes memoirs, paints, transfers his house to the Union of Writers, hosts friends.

August 11, 1932: Voloshin died from complications of a flu and asthma. He was buried on top of the mountain Kuchuk-Enishary, now called after him, Voloshinskaia.

Note on Transliteration and Translations

I use the Library of Congress transliteration system. I also use accepted anglicizations of well-known Russian names and avoid diacritics in names. Translations from Russian are my own unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

In March of 2009 the popular singer and songwriter Larisa Novoseltseva performed Maximilian Voloshin's poem "Fatigue" (Усталость, 1915) at a concert commemorating the Russian invasion of Georgia the preceding August.[1] A modernist poet, Voloshin (1877–1932) wrote this poem during World War I, depicting the war as a fratricidal madness of the warring nations. The poem calls for the second advent of Christ, who comes to earth unknown and unseen and stops the war by his mere presence: "But all that is tired in human hearts / Will turn to Him with longing."[2] Voloshin's humanist message proved to be relevant to the Russians shocked by the absurdity of the recent war between Russia and Georgia. This message became relevant again five years later, during Russia's annexation of Crimea and escalating conflict with Ukraine. Starting from March, 2014, Voloshin's poems about the madness of the Civil War and Soviet terror, ("The Russian Revolution," "The Civil War," and other poems) were cited every day without commentaries on Voloshin's Russian social site VKontakte (vk.com) and other Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, and Crimean sites.[3]

Voloshin's new relevance to diverse groups of the population extends far beyond politics and the fear of war; it has been growing steadily since the 1970s thaw that brought Voloshin out of the oblivion created by earlier Soviet censorship. With the advent of glasnost in the late 1980s, Voloshin's popularity truly exploded, and 30 years later it is still growing.[4] Galina Rylkova has recently observed that "in the 2000s, Maximilian Voloshin . . . is as popular with the students of culture and readers at large as were Vladimir Nabokov and Mikhail Kuzmin in the 1990s, Akhmatova in the 1980s and Mikhail Bulgakov in the 1960s."[5] Indeed, scholarly books on Voloshin are published in large quantities and sell out in Russia. A growing number of publications has been appearing in the West. Since the beginning of the new century, Voloshin's house-museum in Koktebel has launched festivals, artistic competitions, and scholarly conferences that last from May to September, drawing Russian celebrities and the general public en masse to this already popular Black Sea resort. The annual conference, International Voloshin Readings, attracts scholars to Koktebel each May, while the Voloshin International Literary Competition for contemporary writers, critics, and translators is conducted online throughout the year. The award ceremony takes place in Koktebel during the events of Voloshin September, which attracts intellectuals for poetic tournaments, master classes, and the Voloshin Literary Festival. A monument to the poet has been erected in Koktebel on a specially built town square in front of his

house, while Koktebel tours now include not only Voloshin's house but also his favourite mountain paths.

In Moscow, a society of Voloshin's fans, the Klub Koktebel, meets monthly at the newly opened Voloshin Library (Kul'turnyi Tsentr—Biblioteka imeni M. A. Voloshina) that houses a permanent exhibition modeled after the poet's house in Koktebel. The library conducts a wide range of popular cultural events that are photographed, video recorded, and broadcast on television, YouTube, and Facebook.[6] The commercial value of Voloshin's memory has been recognized as well: a radio advertisement of air conditioners features a recitation of one of Voloshin's Parisian poems on nature, while travel agencies' leaflets guarantee the "spirits" of Voloshin and his famous guests at the Koktebel resorts.[7] And, perhaps, the most informative testament to Voloshin's new fame is the explosion of online Voloshiniana with blogs and forums voicing personal reactions to his poetry, his persona, and his Koktebel.

Voloshin's rise of popularity in post-Soviet Russia can be certainly seen today as a fashion for yet another modernist poet marginalized under the Soviet regime, and a tribute to the Silver Age mystique that refuses to die despite growing popular and scholarly attempts to deconstruct and put it to rest.[8] However, there is something particular about Voloshin's new acclaim that continues to attract Russian readers, writers, and scholars now, more than ever, with the political changes in Russia. His literary and cultural legacy is discussed and mythologized in the context of important themes that define contemporary Russian identity: politics, tensions between state and opposition, the Soviet past, threat of totalitarianism, nationalism, religion, pro- and anti-Western attitudes, conflict with Georgia and, recently, the annexation of Crimea and the conflict with Ukraine. The explosion of Voloshin's popularity today is driven less by the need to give tribute to another understudied Silver Age poet, and more by the new relevance of his views on Russia's national identity and historical path.

Voloshin's postrevolutionary poems (1917–1929) occupy a central place in his contemporary acclaim. Written in response to the Bolshevik Revolution, these poems explain the meaning of the Revolution in Russian history from Symbolist and Neo-Slavophile messianic perspectives and memorialize the events of the Civil War and Red Terror in Crimea. Voloshin's haunting images of Russia destroyed by the fratricidal Civil War and state terror, his faith in a future free, tolerant, and humane Russia, and the sheer force of anger, sorrow, and hope in his postrevolutionary poems are used now as reference points for national self-reflection. Voloshin's myth of Russia—his poetic image of Russia and its popular reception—help contemporary Russians redefine their national identity in relation to the Soviet past and rapidly changing post-Soviet present. This myth includes now not only his postrevolutionary poetry but also all of Voloshin's memory, serving as a flexible and highly expressive source of references in discussions on the themes of contemporary Russia.

It is little known that Voloshin's postrevolutionary poems that are popular now brought him fame in his own lifetime during the Civil War, instantly elevating him to the ranks of a national poet on par with Alexander Blok. A

witness recalls how the audience responded to Voloshin's poetry reading in Yalta, Crimea, in 1918 in the midst of the Civil War:

> When he read "Dmetrius-Imperator" and poems about Sten'ka Razin and Pugachev that sounded very revolutionary, his listeners completely lost their minds. They clapped, screamed, stomped their feet, rushed to the poet on the stage, lifted him up in the air, and showered flowers on him.[9]

Similar accounts of highly emotional responses to Voloshin's poems on Russia can be found in memoirs and letters of the time. The actor Konstantin Kedrov wrote to Voloshin that after he recited the poem "At a Railway Station" (На вокзале) at a concert in Sevastopol, Crimea, in 1919, "there was such an explosion of ovations that it felt rather eerie."[10] The singer Maria Izergina recalled Voloshin's poetry readings in Crimea in 1918: "the audience listened to the poems with an arresting attention, the way the thirsty drink water."[11] Voloshin's huge popular success after the Bolshevik Revolution testifies that his poems on Russia found the right words for his contemporaries of all political affiliations.

What has made Voloshin's ideas, feelings, and poems so relevant during Russia's two major political and national crises of the twentieth century—the Bolshevik Revolution and dissolution of the USSR? Voloshin's myth of Russia that now includes not only his poetry but also all of his legacy offers unique perspectives on the contemporary society. It shows that some of the moods, ideas, and aesthetics of the Civil War are seen as relevant today and that other, sometimes unusual or controversial, features associated with the poet are now playing a role in the formation of a new Russian identity. What does the evolution of Voloshin's memory tell us about the ideological, aesthetic, and psychological needs of Russians during the two turbulent postrevolutionary and post-Soviet epochs? Can we posit core Russian national values that seek to be expressed during great ideological shifts, such as the shift from fin-de-siècle Russia to revolutionary and then Soviet Russia, or its current transformation from Soviet to post-Soviet Russia? And how have Russian poetry and Voloshin's poetry in particular worked as a powerful vehicle of national propaganda during the Civil War and post-Soviet period?

To respond to these questions, I study the reception of Voloshin's poems on Russia during the postrevolutionary and post-Soviet eras, the subjects respectively of Part I and II of my book. I seek to gain insight into Russian national identity and society during these epochs by analyzing the author's intent, his readers' responses, and the continuously changing ideological, aesthetic, and national needs that have been fulfilled by these poetic texts. Voloshin's postrevolutionary success was based on his poems' immediate reactions to current history and to the collective Russian experience of unfathomable violence. He wrote his poems in great urgency, believing that some of them would become quickly outdated if they did not reach the reader immediately.[12] Yet, many of these poems are popular online now, in post-Soviet Russia, outside of the experience of immediate history and, until recently, of violence.[13]

Part I of my book examines Voloshin's myth of Russia as it formed in his poetry and readers' reactions to it during 1917–1932 in the changing historical and cultural context of the pre- and postrevolution epochs. I study popular reactions to Voloshin's poems on Russia to delineate the meaning of his image of Russia for his contemporaries. Through the strong, positive and negative responses to his poetry I seek to illuminate the enduring national needs of the Russian society during a period of national crisis. In Part I my analysis focuses predominantly on Voloshin's most popular poems on Russia (1917–1924); written reader responses, such as letters, diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, newspaper articles, and literary criticism; and the cultural and historical context of his reader reception.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the following Civil War destroyed not only Russia's civil and social institutions, but also its turn-of-the-century self-view as a nation: its national identity, values, patriotism, idea of a particular historical path, and view of the outside world. The Soviet nation-building and its artificial construct, the identity of the "Simple Soviet Man," to use Yuri Levada's term for the Soviet model of national identity, took time to engineer.[14] In the meantime, the four years of Civil War were accompanied by a crisis of the Russian identity that could not be resolved through Bolshevik or White Army propaganda. During the Civil War the Bolsheviks pursued the goals of staging the world revolution, the idea Stalin and Bukharin started opposing only after Lenin's death in 1924. Their international ambitions and especially their acceptance of the humiliating Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that ended Russia's involvement in World War I in exchange for large territorial losses and economic concessions enraged the majority of the Russian population. On the opposing side, the leaders of the White movement, Anton Denikin and Pyotr Wrangel, sought to restore Russian monarchy, an idea that was widely unpopular among the Russian population. They failed to formulate a strong national message, and although Wrangel succeeded in building a positive image of their national cause at the end of the Civil War, he did not have time to win Russian minds at large, one of the reasons for the White Army's defeat.[15]

Voloshin's poems on Russia filled the vacuum of a national idea. They explained the Bolshevik coup in religious terms, addressed the unfathomable violence of his time, and offered hope in Russia's better future. How did Voloshin succeed in this task? Voloshin's poetic upbringing, especially the influence of his mentor, Vyacheslav Ivanov, uniquely prepared him for a position of the poet of Russia in Revolution that brought him fame after 1917. A poet who did not affiliate himself with other modernist artistic groups, Voloshin was close to the mystical Symbolist circle of Ivanov and shared his Symbolist artistic worldview that was hugely influential during the Silver Age (Russian modernism, 1890–1920s). This worldview was both artistic and religious. It was based on the Symbolist program of zhiznetvorchestvo (life-creation)[16] and the messianic idea of the revolution theorized by Ivanov, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, and associated with them religious philosophers. While the Russian revolutionaries prepared a social revolution, the Symbolist poets and Neo-Slavophile philosophers worked on a different scenario of "saving Russia." They theorized this

scenario as an Apocalypse in the form of a social and spiritual revolution with all the accompanying violence. Russia would physically survive in the end, transfiguring into the kingdom of God on earth and leading other nations to salvation.

This modernist messianic national idea stemmed from the sixteenth-century doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome where Moscow was posited as the third and last Christian leader of the world after the demise of Constantinople. Feodor Dostoevsky followed by the philosopher and poet Vladimir Soloviev reworked this doctrine into their versions of a national messianic idea, coining it as the Russian Idea, which was subsequently adopted by Symbolists and modernist philosophers. The idea of Russia's messianic predestination—her "special" self-sacrificial historical path among the nations—had already been part of the Russian identity, but the Symbolist poets amplified its importance in their poetry, linking it to their vision of the revolution and imbuing it with their mystical sensibility.

The poet played a high religious role in the Symbolists' messianic scenario because, according to them, art had the metaphysical power to affect history. Ivanov's theories of "theurgic" art and *mifotvorchestvo* (myth-creation) endowed the poetic word with an ability to create powerful "myths" that could metaphysically change spiritual and material reality.[17] Ivanov viewed the religious and historical roles of the Symbolist poet in the revolution as that of a "poet-theurge" rather than the traditional Romanticist poet-prophet. Like the "poet-prophet," the poet-theurge also receives revelations of God's will in the unfolding history and voices them to the people. But in addition he works as an assistant to God. He furthers God's will with his magical poetic word.

A member of Ivanov's salon The Tower in Saint Petersburg that drew all new artists, poets, and thinkers between 1905 and 1909, Voloshin participated in the vibrant debates about the future revolution, Russian history, folklore, Orthodox Christianity, and Russian religious sects. Unlike his literary peers, Voloshin was not interested in exploring these themes in his own poetry. Instead he spent most of his time in Paris, studying the European and French civilizations in libraries, museums, and historical sites. His poetry focused on the themes of love lyrics and personal spiritual search, which he culturally placed in Europe rather than Russia. Like other Symbolists, he embraced the fin-de-siècle proliferation of religious experimentation, mysticism, and the occult and explored medieval Christian mystical sects, Jewish Kabbalah, Buddhism, the occult, Masonry, and especially Theosophy. Yet, he was less interested in Orthodox Christianity and Russian mystical sects than other Russian modernist poets. As a Parisian art correspondent for the Russian newspapers between 1900 and 1916, Voloshin was an ambassador of French avant-garde art to Russia. Living in Belle-Époque Paris, the artistic Mecca of new art, he met many prominent French and foreign artists and writers and took active part in the vibrant Parisian artistic life. When the Russian Symbolists first met Voloshin during one of his trips from France, they saw him as an exotic French Russian poet, erudite, "wanderer," and Theosophist.[18]

Voloshin was fascinated with Ivanov's theories and especially myth-creation, linking myths to artistic and religious creativity of children's play

and dream consciousness in his own theoretical writings.[19] These and other Symbolist theories that viewed art as the metaphysical means to change reality, whether biographical, historical, or spiritual have been called life-creation (*zhiznetvorchestvo*) in studies of Russian Symbolism.[20] Following these theories, generations of Russian poets and artists engaged in diverse life-creation experiments and jokes, mixing art and life. Authors lived their lives as an artistic narrative and created their art to change their biographies. These experiments offered an unprecedented wealth of artistic possibilities, but could also lead to personal tragedies. Together with a poet Elizaveta Dmitrieva, Voloshin created one of the most famous and spectacular life-creation experiments, the fictitious woman poet Cherubina de Gabriak.[21] Before 1917 his religious artistic creativity was focused on jokes and experiments with his own biography. Voloshin was well familiar with another area of Symbolist life-creation: Russia's history, and the role of the poet-theurge of Russia who predicts and precipitates the revolution, but unlike Ivanov, he did not yet attempt to assume this role.

Neither Voloshin nor his literary peers could imagine his sudden poetic transformation and popular success after 1917. Voloshin was appreciated in modernist circles but did not enjoy the fame of such poets as Alexander Blok, Ivanov, or Valery Bryusov. Between 1900 and 1917, he was recognized as a master of verse who stood outside of literary movements but was closely affiliated with Ivanov's Symbolist group. Stylistically his poems predated Acmeism and, as Maria Rubins has demonstrated, transplanted French Parnassian aesthetics into the Russian language.[22] His complex and hermetic mystical poems, such as his two crowns of sonnets, "Corona Astralis" and "Lunaria," were largely misunderstood, and he was appreciated more for his beautiful and impressionistic poems on Paris, verse that was filled with love of the city. As Voloshin recalls in one of his autobiographies, he was considered Russia's least national poet "who wrote in Russian like in French."[23]

In 1916, in the midst of World War I, Voloshin returned from France to Russia for good and turned his attention to Russia and the problem of political violence. He was one of the very few Russian poets who did not share the hurray-patriotic mood at the beginning of the war. In his book of antiwar poems written in Paris, *Anno Mundi Ardentis 1915*, Voloshin defended the best of the European civilization that was destroyed by the warring nations and urged Russia to stay out of the fratricidal European conflict. Voloshin's reaction to the February Revolution of 1917 was similarly very different from the rest of the Russian writers. The Russian revolutionary and artistic intelligentsia rejoiced that the February Revolution was quick and bloodless instead of the anticipated violent struggle. According to the Symbolist apocalyptic script, Russia's betterment was to immediately follow, and a socially just society was to spring from the ashes of the monarchy. A student of the French Revolution, Voloshin, unlike other writers, did not celebrate the February Revolution and expected that a catastrophic second revolution would follow. As a result, he found himself alone but ready for the Bolshevik Revolution in October.