Mythos and Eros in Fin de siecle russia: zinaida gippius' sexual revolution

Philippa Hetherington

A thesis Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of ba (hons) in history

University of Sydney
October 2006

Contents

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank first and foremost Dr Zdenko Zlatar, without whose teaching over the course of the last four years and supervision this year I could not have written this thesis. For responding to various queries and questions of mine I would also like to thank Professor Glenda Sluga, Professor Robert Aldrich, and Dr Chris Hilliard. Many thanks to Robyn Hetherington and Leslie Hetherington for their support, and to James and Liz for support, and for reading and critiquing the innumerable drafts I gave them.

Notes on Transliteration and Spelling

In transliterating Russia titles, quotations, and names I have used the Library of Congress system, except in the case of well known personalities (thus I have written Tolstoy, rather than Tolstoi). The case of Zinaida Gippius can be particularly confusing, as her name is Germanic in origin and this is variously transliterated as Hippius (the original German name) or Gippius (the correct transliteration of the Russian). I have chosen the latter, on the basis that it accords with the Library of Congress transliteration system, and is most widely used by other sources.

Notes on Translation

All translations from Russian and French, unless otherwise cited, are my own. I have endeavoured, where possible, to provide the original language in the footnotes.

Introduction

Zinaida Gippius and the Silver Age

Zinaida Gippius, poet, essayist, playwright and polemicist, was the only female writer to gain equal recognition to her male contemporaries in Russian literature prior to the twentieth century. She came to prominence during the cultural renaissance known as the Silver Age, generally dated from 1890 to 1917, when artists and writers were reassessing the positivist legacy of the nineteenth century intelligentsia, rejecting what they perceived as the stagnant style of realism in favour of a renewed aestheticism and focus on the individual psyche.[1] Public discourse was increasingly preoccupied with questions of sexual morality, while mass industrialisation was creating a consumer market more open to female writers than at any previous time in Russian history. At the same time, although the new intelligentsia generally eschewed the old-fashioned materialism that characterised the nihilist 1860s, most Russian *intelligenti* continued to read and write about social change in terms of revolutionary rather than evolutionary transformation. Gippius' personal philosophy embraced many of these trends and her 'religiously heretical, politically radical and sexually unconventional'[2] views reflected the confluence

[1] The name 'Silver Age,' with its evocation of both shining evanescence and cultural twilight, prompts comparisons with both the so-called 'Golden Age' of Pushkin and Lermontov, and the Iron Age of Socialist Realism. Neither of these comparisons is necessarily appropriate. The Silver Age arguably experienced a flourishing of poetry that was equal, if not superior, to that of the Golden Age; it certainly involved a far wider range of participants, schools, and styles than the age of Pushkin in the early nineteenth century. In addition, the first decade after the revolution of 1917, far from being a time of artistic stagnation, was one of the highpoints Russian avant garde culture, as Futurist poets such as Khlebnikov and Mayakovsky experimented with radical new linguistic forms, and Meyerhold staged Imagist and Surrealist theatre. Nonetheless, for the sake of chronological clarity and historical continuity, the term Silver Age will be used in this thesis to refer specifically to the cultural period 1890 to 1917, and more broadly to the range of literary, artistic and cultural movements and currents interacting and cross-fertilising in this period of Russian history.

[2] Simon Karlinsky, Introduction to Vladimir Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 2.

of revolutionary philosophies and the new individualistic aesthetic. However, her experiments with gender fluidity, inscribing both male and female identities onto her body and into her literary work, and her utopian vision of primordial androgyny, posited a non-essentialist view of gender and sexuality that ran counter to the biological discourse of two distinct, physiological sexes that characterised the *fin de siècle.* Gippius' repudiation of 'natural' sexual difference, formulated in the last decade of the nineteenth century, in turn underpinned the utopian vision she developed after 1905 of a religious revolution that would sweep away both political order and the repressive doctrine of biological determinism, making way for a society of spiritual and sexual freedom, and gender equality (indeed, gender dissolution). As such, she provides one of the most compelling examples of radical protest against hegemonic discourses of sexuality and gender in late nineteenth century Russia.

This thesis will examine some of the ways sexuality may have been constructed and negotiated within the particular historical moment that was Russia during the Silver Age, through the prism Zinaida Gippius' experience and ideas.[3] It will take Gippius' life and

[3] Chris Brickell has recently urged historians to move beyond what he perceives as the 'teleological' paradigm of histories of sexuality which has, until now, dominated the field, whereby conceptualisations of sexuality and gender in a particular period are studied with a view to tracing where they fitted into the development, imposition or subversion of current categorisations such as homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, and transgender. This thesis will take Brickell's suggestion as a starting point, focussing not so much on sexual categories, definitions or identities, but on sexuality and gender as Gippius conceptualised these terms. See Chris Brickell, 'A Social Interactionist History of Sexuality?' *Rethinking History,* 10:3, 2006, pp. 415-432. This attempt to avoid a 'teleological' narrative is also informed by Russian intellectual historian Aileen Kelly's assertion that the need for a Bahktinian 'dialogic' approach to the past is particularly pressing in the period immediately before the 1917 revolution, when the temptation to fit historical study into the overall narrative of the success of Social Democracy and failure of liberalism can distort the picture of *fin de siècle* Russia and erase nuances and pluralities of narrative which should form a vital part of the record of that period. See Aileen Kelly, *Toward Another Shore: Russian Thinkers Between Necessity and Chance,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

work between 1890 and 1917 as a 'concrete historical site and set of texts'[4] that enables the exploration of a number of questions regarding the development of sexual subjectivity in turn of the century Russia. How did Gippius conceptualise sexuality and gender, and the interplay between the two concepts? How did she construct this meaning textually and practically, and how was this interpreted by those around her? To what extent did this construction influence or interact with Gippius' utopian revolutionary program? Finally, what may this tell us about discourses of sexuality and gender, and discourses of revolution, in *fin de siècle* Russia? In attempting to answer these questions, I will trace the fundamental continuity between Gippius' anti-biological doctrine of gender and sexual indeterminacy and the revolutionary discourse she developed after 1905, which was as much a program for sexual freedom and gender equality as it was one for religious transfiguration and political transformation.

As Catherine Evtuhov has recently demonstrated, Europe, the United States and Russia at the *fin de siècle* constituted a single cultural world characterised by an international exchange of ideas and attention to common intellectual problems.[5] Gippius' utopian program was not the first to be premised on gender equality and sexual freedom. Such well known utopian feminists as Flora Tristan and Suzanne Voilquin were her predecessors in Western Europe, while she wrote contemporaneously with Charlotte

[4] Biddy Martin, *Woman and Modernity: The (Life)styles of Lou Andres Salome,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 2.

[5] Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997, p. 16. Other works examining the influence of Western cultural and philosophical trends in *fin de siècle* Russia include Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Nietzsche in Russia,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986; Christopher Read, *Religion, Revolution and the Russian Intelligentsia, 1900-1912,* London: Macmillan Press, 1979; and Alexander Etkind, *Eros of the Impossible: A History of Psychoanalysis in Russia,* Noah and Maria Rubens trans. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997.

Perkins Gilman, the American author of the utopian novel *Herland*.[6] Gippius had little in the way of Russian heritage of 'feminist utopias' on which to build. A contemporary who displayed a similar proclivity for gender play was Lou Andreas Salome, who moved from Russia to the West aged nineteen and forged a place for herself in the intellectual communities of Germany and France.[7] However, the considerable amount of time Gippius spent in Paris, in particular between 1906 and 1908, exposed her to the ideas of a number of well known contemporaries such as Nathalie Clifford Barney, Renee Vivien and Collette, whose open homosexuality coincided with real attempts to transform society on a non-heteronormative paradigm.[8] Such a project would have accorded well with Gippius' own, which was based on the desire to uncover what she considered the fallacy of biologically determined gender and sexuality. Gippius can be seen as part of a wider European context of sexual dissidence and gender rebellion that had interacted considerably with utopian narratives since the beginning of the nineteenth century. What made her unique was the way in which those utopian ideals, and the anti-determinist conceptualisation of gender and sexuality from which they developed, interacted with a wider intellectual, political and social context in which the opportunity to transform

---

[6] The feminism of Tristan (1804-1844) and Voilquin (1801-1877) was heavily influenced by the utopian socialism of Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier, which was at the height of its popularity in France in the 1830s and 1840s; see Doris Beik and Paul Beik, *Flora Tristan: Utopian Feminist,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993; Claire G Moses, 'French Utopians: The Word and the Act,' in Tjitske Akkerman and Siep Sturrman, *Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History: From the Middle Ages to the Present,* London: Routledge, 1998. On the utopianism of Gilman (1860-1935), who first made her name as the author of the short stories such as 'The Yellow Wallpaper,' (1892) see Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland,* New York: Pantheon Books, 1979; Chris Ferns, 'Rewriting Male Myths: Herland and the Utopian Tradition,' in Val Gough and Jill Rudd, *A Very Different Story: Studies on the Fiction of Charlotte Perkins Gilman,* Liverpool: Liverpool University Pres, 1998, pp. 22-56.

[7] Lou Andreas Salome (1861-1937) was a Russian psychoanalyst who left St Petersburg for Germany in 1880, and became heavily involved in Freudian psychoanalysis in the early twentieth century. See Martin, *Woman and Modernity.* This thesis has benefited in particular from a reading of Martin's examination of Salome's life and work, with its 'institutional' reading of her *in* as well as *against* its historical, political and intellectual context.

[8] See Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank,* Austin: University of Texas, 1986; Martha Vicinus,

society through revolutionary change was considered a concrete and imminent reality.

While this thesis focuses specifically on Gippius' conceptualisations of sexuality and gender, and the utopian program that developed from them, the considerable influence of her deep religiosity on the formulation of these ideas is undeniable. The early twentieth century in Russia was a period of marked resurgence in religious and mystical philosophy.[9] Gippius combined a lifelong faith in God and desire for spiritual transcendence with the external influence of nineteenth century religious thinkers such as Nikolai Fedorov and the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, and a metaphysical outlook based on a fervent desire to synthesise all opposites through a Trinitarian view of the world. Her belief in the primordial androgyny of human beings before the Fall and her doctrine of 'holy flesh' or *vyliublennost* influenced and were influenced by her fervent opposition to biological determinism. This thesis will, however, avoid an emphasis on purely religious aspects of Gippius' philosophical outlook, for two reasons. Firstly, such an approach would diverge from my aim to historicise Gippius' construction of gender and sexuality and would be outside the parameters of this thesis. Secondly, in the majority of the (limited) historical studies of Gippius in English, her religious ideas have been emphasised to the exclusion of almost all other concerns, marginalizing her theories of sexuality and revolution, and distorting the examination of Gippius herself and the cultural history of the period in which she lived.

Intimate Friends: Women who loved Women 1778-1928, Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004.

[9] There is a considerable literature on this Russian religious revival available in English. See Nikolas Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century,* New York: Harper & Row, 1963; Nicholas Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy,* London: Allen & Unwin, 1952; Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia 1890-1924,* New York: Fordham University Press, 1990; Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality,* The Hague: Martin Nijihof, 1975; Evtuhov, *The Cross and*

The primary example of this trend is Temira Pachmuss' *Zinadia Hippius: An Intellectual Profile,* the only book length biography of Gippius.[10] Pachmuss neutralises the unconventional in Gippius' ideas by refusing to consider Gippius' use of masculine personae in her poetry and prose or her predilection for cross dressing in the framework of her sexual and gendered subjectivity. She claims that the 'ludicrous' assumptions that have been made about the gender implications of these acts can be discounted on the basis that Gippius' pragmatic desire not to be stereotyped as a 'poetess' was the only motivation behind them.[11] In Pachmuss' book, Gippius' political ideas and revolutionary program are afforded five pages in a four hundred and ninety one page biography. While literary scholars such as Jenifer Presto and Sibelan Forrester have, in the past decade, undertaken much useful work on the homosexual and bisexual subtexts in Gippius' poetry and prose, their purely literary focus fails to place Gippius' revolt against heterosexism in the wider frame of social, artistic and political movements between 1890 and 1917.[12] The only scholar to successfully synthesise a historical and literary-historical approach to the study of Gippius is Olga Matich, who examines Gippius' sexual indeterminacy and the

---

the Sickle; Read, *Religion, Revolution and the Russian Intelligentsia.*

[10] Temira Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius: An Intellectual Profile,* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971.

[11] Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius,* p. 17. Pachmuss does not specify to which 'ludicrous assumptions' she refers. In her essay on Gippius' play *Sacred Blood* (*Sviataia krov'*) Catherine Schuler postulates that Pachmuss, openly hostile to feminism, and in possession of much of Gippius' archive from which she has published material selectively, may have withheld documents which run counter to 'her own prejudices.' (Schuler, Catherine, 'Zinaida Gippius: An Unwitting and Unwilling Feminist,' in Karen Laughlin and Catherine Schuler, *Theatre and Feminist Aesthetics,* Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995, p. 145). While this hypothesis has merit it remains speculative. It is possible (and, I would argue, historically necessary) to ascertain from the textual material that *has* been published by Pachmuss, as well as further literary and epistolary sources which are not in her possession, a conceptualisation of gender and sexuality radically different to that afforded Gippius by Pachmuss.

[12] See Jenifer Presto, 'The Fashioning of Zinaida Gippius,' *Slavic and Eastern European Journal,* 42:1, 1998, pp. 58-75; Jenifer Presto, 'The Androgynous Gaze of Zinaida Gippius,' *Russian Literature* XLVIII, 2000, pp. 87-107; Sibelan Forrester, 'Wooing the Other Woman: Gender in Women's Love Poetry in the

semiotic significance of her experiments with gender fluidity as part of a wider study of artists in *fin de siècle* Russia in her 2005 work *Erotic Utopia*.[13] However, Matich, like Pachmuss, does not consider Gippius' revolutionary program in depth, and hence fails to highlight the extent to which Gippius' utopian vision was one premised on revolutionary change. In addition, both Matich and Pachmuss claim that Gippius' experiments with cross dressing, professions of bisexuality and preoccupation with notions of 'holy flesh' actually concealed a fundamental asexuality and frigidity: this interpretation represents a fallacious construal of Gippius' philosophy and a political attempt to normalise Gippius' sexual dissidence. It also serves to achieve in retrospect what Gippius' contemporaries attempted, when they interpreted her transvestism and adoption of masculine linguistic traits as evidence of actual and physical hermaphroditism. It *de*-sexes her, labelling her biologically and psychologically incapable of enacting the philosophy of sexual freedom she devised, a claim Gippius, with her characteristic disregard for biological determinism, would have considered ludicrous in itself.

While little work has been done on Gippius' political philosophy, historian Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal contributed much to the study of the political and social thought of Gippius' husband, Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky, in her monograph *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky*: *The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality*.[14] Rosenthal, where she mentions Gippius, generally makes the (common) assumption that Gippius was in accord with the various permutations of her husband's thought, where she gave

---

Silver Age,' in Pamela Chester and Sibelan Forrester, *Engendering Slavic Literatures*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 192-203.

[13] Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's* Fin de Siècle, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

political or social problems consideration at all. In the course of doing so, Rosenthal presents a characterisation of Gippius as the intuitive, emotional poet with few original ideas outside of artistic theory, and Merezhkovsky as the rational political philosopher. This assumption may have suited the hegemonic *fin de siècle* doctrine of two separate and complementary sexes (one representing mind and the other, matter) but its use in historical study distorts an understanding of the interaction between Gippius' theories of sexuality and her political and social philosophies, and the social dynamics at work in the construction of the female intellectual in the culture of the Silver Age.

While existing studies of Gippius largely fail to examine her revolt against turn of the century gender norms, recourse to the wider scholarship on women in late nineteenth century Russia is largely unhelpful in filling this gap. Although much path breaking work has been done concerning both women in Russia, and gender as an epistemological tool in Russian history in the last three decades, it has typically focussed on images of the liberal feminist, socialist revolutionary or female worker. Works such as Richard Stites' *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, Barbara Alpern Engel's *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Russia,* and Linda Edmondson's *Feminism in Russia: 1900-1917,* remain key publications furnishing the historian of women in Russia with sophisticated analyses of the restrictions and opportunities facing women at the turn of the century.[15] However, all limit women's resistance to the bourgeois feminist, Populist or socialist revolutionary movements.

---

[14] Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky.*

[15] Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement: Feminism, Nihilism, Bolshevism 1860-1930,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978; Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Russia,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; Linda

Gippius, who actively eschewed these groups, does not fit comfortably into the narratives produced by Stites, Engel or Edmondson. As such, my study of Gippius seeks to problematise those narratives and offer an example of an alternative form of protest against hegemonic phallocentrism, a protest which presented a radical interrogation of the gender essentialism that characterised *fin de siècle* notions of gender.

Zinaida Gippius' literary, political, and sexual philosophies transgressed boundaries of genre and political factionalism. My aim is to recover her individual, subjective conceptualisation of sex and gender, as well as place her in a wider context of historically contingent discourses of sexuality, gender and revolution. Gippius, who altered the poetic sensibility of turn of the century Russia, occupies a central place in Russian literary history. Her subversive attempt to free sexuality and gender from the discourse of essentialism with which they were inextricably entwined at the *fin de siècle* claims for her an equally important role in the history of sexuality in Russia.

Edmondson, *Feminism in Russia, 1900-1917,* London: Heinemann Educational, 1984.

Part I

Art, Sexuality and Religion:

The Development Of A

Revolutionary Metaphysics

1890-1905

Symbolism contra Decadence:

The Metaphysical Foundation of Zinaida Gippius' Early Mythopoeia

I cry without tears over vows I can't trust / Vows I can't trust
I need something that is not of this world / Not of this world.
Zinaida Gippius, 'Song' ('*Pesnia')* 1893[1]

The publication of Zinaida Gippius' poem 'Song' (*Pesnia*) in the well respected Populist journal *Northern Star* (*Severnyi Vestnik*) in 1895 signalled not only her emergence as a lauded poetic talent (the poem would be one of her most popular throughout her career) but the indisputable arrival of a Symbolist school of Russian poetry.[2] Russian Symbolism, the name given to the new mood of artistic subjectivism combined with a rejection of materialism in favour of aestheticism, dominated Russian avant garde literature from 1895 until 1910.[3] Gippius' work, displaying both a concern with formal experimentation and a preoccupation with religion and mysticism, provided an

[1] *'No plachu bez slez o nevernom obete / O nevernom obete…/ Mne nuzhno to, chego net na svete / Chego net na svete.'* Zinaida Gippius, 'Song' (*Pesnia*), in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Spark, *Modern Russian Poetry,* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, pp. 56-57.

[2] As Avril Pyman remarks of 'Song', 'This new poet, then, appears to have entered literature in full maturity, like Pallas Athene stepping armed and helmeted from the head of Zeus.' Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 41. Gippius later recalled that 'Song' had been turned down by a number of editors because it 'didn't seem like a proper poem'. Zinaida Gippius-Merezhkovskaya, *Dmitrii Merezhkovskii,* Paris: 1951, pp. 63-65, cited in Avril Pyman, *History of Russian Symbolism,* p. 39.

[3] Ronald Petersen, *A History of Russian Symbolism,* Amsterdam, Philadelphia: J Benjamins Publishing Co, 1993, pp. 7-11. In this thesis, I use the term 'avant garde' (more specifically, Russian 'avant garde') to refer to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century experimental artistic movements centred around Moscow and St Petersburg, which were characterised by 'activism, or the spirit of adventure, agonism, or the spirit of sacrifice, unpopularity and fashion, or the continual oscillation between old and new, and finally alienation, as seen specifically in terms of cultural, stylistic and aesthetic connections.' (Renato Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant Garde*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, p. 131). This is not to deny there may have been movements in provincial Russian centres engaged in what may be considered avant garde artistic experimentation, or, of course, to claim that the avant garde was confined to Russia. Although, as Kirsten Strom has recently noted, the term avant garde has the potential to homogenise the disparate trends, schools and movements of early twenteith century art, it continues to be the most efficacious term available for the mood of artistic experimentation defined by Poggioli; it is with this definition in mind that I use it here. Kirsten Strom, 'Avant Garde of What? Surrealism Reconsidered as Political Culture,' *Journal of*

emblematic synthesis of the leitmotivs of Russian Symbolism. In particular, her early poetry was marked by a hostility towards nature and the biological, which formed the poetic context of her later rebellion against hegemonic discourses of biological sexuality and gender. In an artistic movement dominated by men, she was the only prominent female within the inner nucleus of Symbolist writers.[4] Her prominence in the movement came at a time when 'popular' and avant garde female writers were gaining wider recognition, as increasing industrialisation and its corollary, consumerism, led to an emphasis on the marketability of authors, favouring 'the purveying of female flesh'.[5] Gippius eschewed any characterisation of herself as a writer of 'women's' words. This did not, however, prevent her contemporaries from categorising her as such, and using the spectre of her eroticised flesh to justify accusations of her decadence and immorality. The label 'Decadent', the name given to a specific artistic movement in France and England and to certain trends of the 'new art' in Russia in the late nineteenth century, evoked images of sensuality and morbidity, and in the minds of conservative critics was a symptom of biological decline and degeneration.[6] Gippius rejected the label Decadent

---

Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 62:1, 2004, pp. 37-50.

[4] There were a number of other female Symbolist poets, such as Mirra Lokhvitskaia, Adelaida Gertsyk, and Gippius' close friend Poliksena Solovieva, none of whom achieved fame commensurate to that of Gippius either during their lifetimes nor in later criticism. The continued marginalisation of these writers is, arguably, partly the result of their involvement in a Modernist movement premised on a largely 'masculine' (or anti-feminine) aesthetic (on misogynist currents in Modernism generally, see Janet Wolff, *Feminine Sentence: Essays on Women and Culture,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, p34). Recent studies of women's writing in Russia, such as Catriona Kelly's pioneering *A History of Women's Writing in Russia,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, have gone some way to addressing this imbalance.

[5] Beth Holmgren, 'Gendering the Icon: Marketing Women Writers in *Fin de Siècle* Russia,' in Helena Goscilo and Beth Holmgren, *Russia-Women-Culture,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 321-347.

[6] On degeneration see J Edward Chamberlain and Sander L Gilman, *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Olga Matich has considered the discourse of degeneration in the Russian context in Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia.* See also Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-siècle Russia,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

with vehemence, as did many of her fellow Russian Symbolists.[7] The particular strength of her repudiation (and, despite it, the continued use of the Decadent label in reference to Gippius in recent literary histories) may in part be explained by the particular stigma attached to female artists who dealt specifically with female sexuality. The early (but continued) stigmatisation of Gippius as a Decadent and degenerate can be seen as an attempt to denigrate and neutralise that which was subversive in Gippius' poetic revolt against nature and the biological.

Gippius was born in 1869 in the provincial town of Belev, and grew up in Borzhum, Georgia, where her family moved as a result of her poor health. Here, she later claimed, she began writing poetry at the age of seven, and by sixteen had been given the title 'our poetess' by friends in Borzhum, writing impassioned juvenilia inspired by Lermontov, Dostoevsky and the then popular romantic poet Semyon Nadson.[8] She met poet and novelist Dmitri Merezhkovsky, a visitor to Borzhum, in 1888, and was attracted by his cosmopolitanism and abstract humanism which seemed to complement her introspective nature of self-imposed alienation.[9] Their marriage in Tiflis[10] in 1889 was the beginning of one of the most fruitful literary partnerships in Russian history, Merezhkovsky achieving greater international fame and Gippius earning the often ardent praise of her Symbolist *confreres.* Gippius remained Merezhkovsky's most fervent supporter until his

---

[7] Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism,* p. 39. See, for example, Sergei Diaghilev, 'Our Imagined Decadence,' (1899), in Maria Bohachevsky-Chomiak and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Values in Russia,* New York: Fordham University Press, 1990, pp. 85-93.

[8] Vladimir Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 36.

[9] Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul,* pp. 38-39. Gippius later recalled that 'Looking at D S (Merezhkovsky) and me from the outside it would have been hard to say that the basis of my soul was (if the expression is possible) darker and his - lighter. But so it was.' Zinaida Hippius-Merezhkovskaya, *Dmitry Merezhkovsky,* Paris: 1951, p. 69, cited in Pyman, *History of Russian Symbolism,* p. 41.

[10] Modern day Tblisi.

death in 1942. However, she also used her construction of their marriage as a platonic relationship based on intellectual equality, rather than sexual desire, to create her own persona as a female 'Don Juan' whose sexual experimentation took place outside her marriage.[11] On returning to St Petersburg in 1889, Gippius and Merezhkovsky set up a literary salon in their house, the *Dom Muruzi*, which was frequented by a number of writers and thinkers wishing to break the rigid mould of positivism fostered by the dominant intelligentsia ideology of political Populism and artistic utilitarianism.[12] Swiftly, the *Dom Muruzi* became the crucible in which a new doctrine of Symbolism was forged.

Russian Symbolism

The Russian Symbolism that emerged in the early 1890s was the most important of the early Modernist art movements that were to revolutionise Russian literature and culture during the Silver Age.[13] It was heralded by three groups or figures who served as nodes

[11] Gippius' open eschewal of conjugal monogamy through her self-construction as an androgynous 'Don Juan' is discussed in Jenifer Presto, 'The Androgynous Gaze of Zinaida Gippius,' *Russian Literature* XLVIII, 2000, pp. 87-107.

[12] For a discussion of the salon at the 'Dom Muruzi,' see Olga Matich, *Paradox in the Religious Poetry of Zinaida Gippius,* Munich: Fink Verlag, p. 17. 'Populism' is the name given to the Russian democratic ideologies of the 1870s and 1880s that expressed the interests of the peasants and small producers, a 'dynamic ideological framework' that incorporated both revolutionaries and reformists and was the dominant political philosophy of the intelligensia in the years between the radical nihilist 1860s and the new idealism of the 1890s. See Andrezj Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979, pp. 222-225.

[13] On Symbolism as a Modernist movement see Eugene Lampert, 'Modernism in Russia,' in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, *Modernism: 1890-1930,* Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978, pp. 135-144. While Russian Modernism can be seen as part of a Europe wide phenomenon of radical artistic experimentation at the end of the nineteenth century, a number of features distinguish it from its European counterparts. These include the legacy of the Russian tradition of politically engaged literature, which, despite their apolitical reputation, Russian Modernists did not abandon, and a powerful religious and mystical current which mixed occult influences with hopes for a New Christianity. They did, however, share many of the characteristics of the wider European phenomenon labelled Modernism, such as antagonism to authority and convention, an artistic manner marked by the disassociation of objects from their contexts and juxtaposition of events unconnected in time and space, and a rejection of the organic in favour of stylised art and form. See George Gibian and H W Tjalsma, *Russian Modernism: Culture and*

through which the new aesthetic entered the literary and artistic imagination. The first was the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) to whom is attributed the creation of the first school of Russian philosophy, representing the final stage of a confluence of German Idealism (Hegel and Schelling) and Russian Messianism (represented by Slavophiles Aleksei Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevsky, as well as Aleksandr Herzen and Fedor Dostoevsky).[14] Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, Soloviev's project was to bring together disparate strands of metaphysical philosophy and Eastern mysticism under the umbrella of his doctrine of 'All-Unity' (*vseedinestvo*) in which the separate spheres of human creativity, knowledge and social practice would be united.[15] A deeply religious philosopher, Soloviev developed a radical utopian vision in which humans were to be uplifted to a state of 'Godmanhood' (*bogochelevechestvo*) through their creative potential, manifested in art.[16] Soloviev's philosophy of 'art as theurgy' was highly attractive to early Symbolists, and the first to take it up was Merezhkovsky himself, the second node of Russian Symbolism, who argued that the old emphasis on positivism had led to the stagnation of Russian (and European) culture.[17] In his path breaking 1892 article '*O prichinakh Upadka i o novykh techeniiakh sovremennoi russkoi literatury*' (On the reasons for the decline, and new currents in contemporary Russian literature), Merezhkovsky declared his desire for a new art, inspired by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche,

---

the Avant Garde, 1900-1930, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976, pp. 11-15, Catriona Kelly, *History of Russian Women's Writing,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 148.

[14] David Bethea, *The Shape of the Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction,* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 111. On the Slavophiles see Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought,* pp. 92-114.

[15] Edith Clowes, *Fiction's Overcoat: Russian Literary Culture and the Question of Philosophy,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, p. 104; Walicki, *History of Russian Thought,* p. 377.

[16] Vladimir Marchenkov, 'Vladimir Soloviev and Viacheslav Ivanov: Two Theurgic Mythosophies,' in Wil van den Berken, Manon de Courten and Evert van der Zweerde, *Vladimir Soloviev: Reconciler and Polemicist,* Leuven: Peeters, 2000, pp. 211-222; T. G. Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia: Studies in History, Literature, and Philosophy,* Eden and Cedar Paul trans., London: Allen & Unwin, 1919, pp. 225-286.

[17] Edith Clowes, *The Revolution of Moral Consciousness,* Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988, p. 118.

which would reveal eternal truths through the prism of subjective experience.[18] The new art was to reflect the belief that the phenomenal world, so beloved of the Realist school, was a mere reflection of a higher reality, which could be represented through 'correspondences' or symbols.[19] Merezhkovsky argued that this new art could only be developed 'where two or three (artists) were gathered together'; that is, where there was a network of artists and thinkers engaged in cultural exchange and experimentation.[20] Such a network was formed, in 1898, by the journal *Mir Isskustva* (The World of Art), the third node of Silver Age cultural interaction. *Mir Isskustva* was the first of the new literary and art journals which emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, taking the vanguard role of artistic innovation from realist-favouring 'thick journals' and attaining a notoriety and influence out of all proportion with their (low) circulation.[21] It was formed by schoolmates Sergei Diaghilev, Dmitri Filosofov, Alexander Benois and Walter Nouvel, and its contributors included many of the most important cultural figures of the Silver Age, including Gippius, Merezhkovsky, journalist Vasilii Rozanov, poets Aleksandr Blok and Andrei Belyi, and the painter Mikhail Vrubel.[22] *Mir Isskustva,* published in French and Russian, sought to expose Russian readers to what its editors considered the best in Western European culture, and was emblematic of the interaction between contemporary Western artistic movements, such as French Symbolism as led by Mallarmé and

[18] Dmitri Merezhkovsky, 'O prichinakh Upadka i o novykh techeniiakh sovremennoi russkoi literatury' Saint Petersburg, 1893, in Ronald Peterson, *The Russian Symbolists: An Anthology of Critical and Theoretical Writings,* Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986*,* pp. 18-19.
[19] Victor Terras, *A History of Russian Literature,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991, p. 385.
[20] Merezhkovsky, 'O prichinakh Upadka' p. 18*.*
[21] Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing,* p. 133.
[22] On the *Mir Isskustva* group see Pyman, *A History of Symbolism,* pp. 93-123; John E Bowlt, 'Through the Glass Darkly: Images of Decadence in Early Twentieth Century Russian Art', *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol 17, No 1 ('Decadence'), 1982, pp. 93-110.

Verlaine, and early Russian Modernism.[23] Merging aesthetic pleasure with a desire to transcend the boundaries of the objective, *Mir Isskustva* typified the aim of the new Symbolist art to reach inside the world of the individual and discover the mysteries of the self.

Gippius' Imaginary Decadence

Gippius' mythopaeia emerged in the early 1890s, manifesting both the atmosphere of early Symbolism and her own personal concern with spiritual transcendence. The striving for something 'not of this world' expressed in 'Song' remained her most consistent poetic motif. Characteristic of her early poetry was a pervasive hostility towards nature and the organic. In another poem of 1895, 'Autumn', (*Osen*), the season is personified as a manifestation of alienation and melancholy:

Everything heeds Autumn,

The final shadows

Of final visions

Of living exhaustions

Float, slip away -

Incorporeal - they melt-

[23] Eugene Lampert has argued that the Russians, 'eager to borrow from a number of sources,' based their new art directly on the Symbolist paradigms provided by the earlier French Symbolist movement (generally dated from 1880 to 1900). Eugene Lampert, 'Modernism in Russia,' in Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism*, pp. 136-137. While it is true that early Russian Symbolists expressed admiration for the French school, the strongly atheistic strain in French Symbolism was never reflected in its Russian counterpart, which was always accompanied by a desire for spiritual transcendence. Many Russian Symbolists later denied any direct modelling of their poetry on French Symbolism; see, for example, Gippius' claim that 'As to the French innovators of that time, they were not much known in our circles…' cited in Pyman, *History of Russian Symbolism,* p. 39.

Before eternal rest…[24]

In 'Dust' (*Pil*) nature is once again a malignant force; as dust gathers on the poetic narrator's skin, the clouds give 'deathly shadows'[25] and 'the fibers of grey cobwebs / float out and stretch across the sky', engendering a natural oppression that lends the poem a sense of claustrophobia and isolation which Gippius would develop throughout her career.[26] In 'Leeches' (*P'iavki*) Gippius inverts the picturesque image of a 'quiet pond / where the stream is mute'[27] by describing the 'black leeches' that 'fasten to reed and reedy root', declaring that 'I see leeches sticking, Onto my soul also.'[28] Nature in Gippius' poetry is never benign; it is oppressive, restrictive, and suffocating, and consistently thwarts the poetic narrator's attempts to move beyond the temporal to the metaphysical realm.

Anti-naturalism was a much noted characteristic of the Decadent movement in poetry in France, typified by J K Huysmans' 1884 poem 'Against Nature' *(À Rebours*).[29] Its

---

[24] *'Vse Oseni vnemlet, / Skol'ziat, uletaiut - / Besplotnye - taiut / Poslednie teni / Poslednikh videnin / Zhivykh utomlenii - / Pred otdykhom vechnym***.** Zinaida Gippius, 'Autumn' (*Osen*) in Temira Pachmuss, *Women Writers in Russian Modernism,* Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1978, pp. 26-27.

[25] '*Mertvennye teni*'; Zinadia Gippius, 'Dust' (*Pil'*) (1902) in Markov*, Modern Russian Poetry,* pp. 58-59.

[26] '*Volokna serykh pautin plavaiut iz / u protiagivaiut cherez nebo*'. Gippius, 'Dust', pp. 58-59. Spiders and cobwebs are a recurring motif in Gippius' poetry, and often engender a malevolent claustrophobia that characterises the sense of opposition between poet (or poetic narrator) and his/her natural surroundings. The paradigmatic example is 'Spiders' (*Pauki*) (1903):

The cell is narrow and low ceilinged,
This world's narrow cell that I'm in.
And in each one of the four corners
Four never tiring spiders spin.
They are adroit, fat and dirty,
They spin, spin, spin…
And horrendous is the manner of their labour:
Non-stopping and monotonous.

See Markov, *Modern Russian Poetry,* p. 69.

[27] '*Tam, gde zavod' tikhaia, gde molchit reka.'* Zinaida Hippius, 'Leeches' (*P'iavki*) (1903) in Markov, *Modern Russian Poetry,* pp. 66-67.

[28] '*Lipnut p'iavki chernye k korniu trostnika*'; '*Vizhu p'iavok, lipnuvshikh i k dushe moei.*' Hippius, 'Leeches' in Markov, *Modern Russian Poetry,* pp. 66-67.

[29] Jean Pierrot, *The Decadent Imagination,* Derek Coultman trans., Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981, pp. 9-11; Charles Bernheimer, *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the* Fin de Siècle *in Europe,* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002,

manifestation in Gippius' poetry contributed to claims by her Russian contemporaries of her 'Decadence' (*dekadentstvo* or *upadochnichestvo)*.[30] This claim has been perpetuated in many recent cultural histories of Russia.[31] Some Russian Symbolists, such as Konstantin Bal'mont and Valery Briusov, welcomed the Decadent title, considering it an articulation of their poetic pessimism and sense of alienation.[32] However, other participants in the new art rejected it, including, and perhaps most vehemently, Gippius. Gippius complained of the 'rope walking in syllables' and 'mischief in metaphors' with which she was associated when she was labelled Decadent. She later recalled that 'From the very beginning of my literary career, I aspired to get away from each manifestation of Decadence'.[33] In 1899, Sergei Diaghilev published a blistering attack on the use of the Decadent label for the new art, in which he argued that the practitioners of the 'old' art were the 'Decadents of their own revival' and in their attempt to 'build their destroyed edifice anew, on dead and rotten ideas' were tainting that which was new and vital with the stigma of decay.[34] The word Decadence was often used, in Russia as in Western

---

pp. 56-104; David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism,* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995, p. 12.

[30] Russian critic Victor Mamchenko, for example, claimed that proof of Gippius' Decadence could be ascertained in her cultivation of the 'abnormal, the artificial, and the neurotic.' Cited in Temira Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius: An Intellectual Profile,* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 25.

[31] See Oleg Maslenikov, 'Spectre of Nothingness: The Privative Element in the poetry of Zinaida Hippius,' *Slavonic and East European Journal,* New Series, IB, 1966, pp. 199-311; Georgette Donchin, *The Influence of French Symbolism on Russian Poetry,* London: Mouton & Co, 1958, p. 151; Kelly, *History of Russian Women's Writing,* pp. 155-156; Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism , Bolshevism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 272, Alexander Etkind, *Eros of the Impossible: A History of Psychoanalysis in Russia,*Noah and Maria Rubens trans. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997, p. 45; Renato Poggioli, *The Poets of Russia 1890-1930,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960, pp. 111-113.

[32] Joan Delany Grossman, *Valery Bryusov and the Riddle of Russian Decadence,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, pp. 86-110**.**

[33] Sergei Makovsky recalled Gippius' statements regarding Decadence as 'mischief in metaphors' in his memoir *Na Parnasse Serebyanogo veka,* Munich, 1962, p. 19; cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius,* p. 25. Her remarks regarding her renunciation of the label 'Decadent' are from Z Hippius to Georgy Adamovich, September 1928, cited in Pachumuss, *Zinaida Hippius,* p. 24.

[34] Sergei Diaghilev, 'Our Imaginary Decadence,' in Bohachevsky-Chomiak and Rosenthal, *Revolution of the Spirit,* pp. 86, 91.

Europe, to disparage the new artistic movements of the late nineteenth century, as the term conjured up the fall of civilisations and a sense of biological decline or 'degeneration' that was accompanied by amorality and neurosis.[35] Degeneration was the flip side of the nineteenth century narrative of progress, and like that myth, was strengthened by the pervasive influence of evolutionary theory in the last quarter of the nineteenth century: just as natural selection could further the development of civilisation, inattention to society's 'weak points' could lead to civilisation's decay.[36] As a discourse Degeneration was 'produced, inflected, refined and re-constituted in the movement between human sciences, fictional narratives and socio-political commentaries', and Decadence was its stylistic manifestation, in which artists were said to be manifesting the era's phobias, neuroses and manias.[37] This opinion was expressed most virulently in Max Nordau's 1892 work *Degeneration,* which identified unhealthy nervosity, mysticism and extreme subjectivity as symptoms of 'degeneracy', and proceeded to diagnose these characteristics in a broad array of modern art and literature, including the work of Russian Leo Tolstoy.[38] In Russia, where Darwinian evolutionary theory had pervaded scientific discourse, fears of biological decay were expressed by no less a figure than the doyen of Populist critics, Nikolai Mikhailovski, in his 1893 review of Nordau's *Degeneration*.[39] Mikhailovski declared his wholehearted approval of Nordau's

---

[35] On the conscious assumption of Decadence by poets such as Huysmans and Mallarme see Pierrot, *The Decadent Imagination,* p. 10. On the derogatory use of the discourse of Decadence see Bowlt, 'Through the Glass Darkly,' pp. 93-94; George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe,* New York: Howard Fertig, 1985, p. 109; Sandra Seigel, 'Literature and Degeneration: The Representation of 'Decadence,' in Chamberlain and Gilman, *Degeneration,* p. 207.

[36] Seigel, 'Literature and Degeneration,' p. 205.

[37] Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c.1848-c.1918,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 8; Bowlt, 'Through the Glass Darkly' pp. 93-94.

[38] Max Nordau, *Degeneration,* London: Heineman, 1895.

[39] N.K. Mikhailovsky in *Russkoe Bogatsvo,* 1, 1893, cited in Pyman, *History of Russian Symbolism,* p. 7. On Darwinism in Russia see Alexander Vucinich, *Darwin in Russian Thought,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. As Vucinich argues, the massive involvement of natural scientists in philosophical

abhorrence of the 'new tendencies' in art (in which he included Russian Symbolism) and announced that the duty to exercise a boycott of this degraded art lay with 'all healthy and moral men'.[40] In doing so he not only set the dominant Populist school of criticism against emergent avant garde, but directly associated the emergent Symbolist school with Decadence.[41]

While Gippius was not the only Russian symbolist to reject the title of Decadent, her repudiation of it had distinctly gendered implications. The discourse of Degeneration was accompanied by the belief that civilisation was a manifestation of the 'masculine' whereas Decadence was synonymous with effeminacy; it was malformed civilisation, regressing from the rational and natural to the supernatural and perverse.[42] For women like Gippius, who were breaking down the boundaries between public and private spheres, operating in the liminal space of literature, the label Decadent could entail accusations that their transgression of gender boundaries was a sign of the decay and corruption of civilisation. This was particularly the case if their lifestyles incorporated sexually dissident behaviour, such as lesbianism or bisexuality, as the discourse of Decadence could be used to place same-sex love between women in the framework of 'an exotic spectacle for male gaze' whereby lesbians were 'a decadent species confined to an

---

discourse was one of the defining characteristics of Russian intellectual culture during the waning decades of the Tsarist regime. See Vucinich, *Darwin in Russian,* p. 249.

[40] Mikhailovsky, *Russkoe Bogatsvo,* cited in Pyman, *History of Russian Symbolism,* p. 7.

[41] For examples of the terminological slippage between 'Decadence' and 'Symbolism,' see Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in* Fin de Siecle *Russia,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004; Kelly, *History of Russian Women's Writing,* Oleg Maslenikov, *The Frenzied Poets: Andrei Biely and the Russian Symbolists,* Berkeley: University of California, 1952.

[42] Alison Hannigan, 'Personalities and Principles: Aspects of Literature and Life,' in Mikulas Teich and Roy Porter, *Fin de siècle and its Legacy,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 190-191.

indoor and artificial world'.[43] The (unwanted) association of Gippius' early poetry with literary Decadence represented in part an attempt to marginalise both her poetry and her rejection of the normative domestic discourse of bourgeois femininity.[44] Gippius' distance from the spirit of Decadence is clear from a reconsideration of her 'against nature' motif. Whereas, among French poets like Huysmans, the rejection of nature was in part an articulation of the misogynist view of women as 'flesh' and men as 'spirit' (and thus targeted women as the incarnation of nature) this subtext is absent from Gippius' work.[45] As her short stories from the period demonstrate (collected in *Novyi Liudi* [New People], 1896, and *Zerkala* [Mirrors] 1898) Gippius' poetic rejection of the empirical and biological was accompanied by a prosaic concern for the material situation of women. In one of her earliest stories, 'The Luckless One' (*Zloschastnaia*) (1890), Gippius examined the experience of a woman whose biology was, indeed, the cause of her tragedy, leaving her pregnant and destitute, abandoned by her wealthy lover.[46] As the concern with gender roles and sexual identity pervading Gippius' early short stories suggests, her poetic stance 'against nature' represented not a misogynist rejection of 'the female' but a subversion of the hegemonic biological discourse that underpinned the notion of essential sexuality and gender in late nineteenth century Russia.

---

[43] Dan Healy, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 59. Diaghilev's distaste for the Decadent label may have similarly been influenced by its use to marginalise the homosexual subculture he cultivated in his *Mir Isskustva* circle. However, as Healy has argued, the very existence of a discernible subculture made the need to resist discourse of marginality less urgent for male homosexuals than for female sexual dissidents, for whom no such subculture existed and who had limited if any forums for the expression of their sexuality. See Healy, *Homosexuality in Revolutionary* Russia, p. 50.

[44] For a discussion of Gippius' construction of her own sexuality, see Chapter 2 of this thesis.

[45] Weir, *Decadence,* p. 19.

[46] For a discussion of 'The Luckless One' see Charlotte Rosenthal, 'Achievement and Obscurity: women's prose in the Silver Age (1885-1925),' in Toby W. Clyman and Diana Greene eds, *Women Writers in Russian Literature,* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994, pp. 149-170; Antonina Filonov Gove, 'Gippius, Zinaida Nikolaevna,' in Marina Ledkovsky, Charlotte Rosenthal and Mary Zirin, *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers,* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994, p. 210.

Purveyor of Women's Words

Gippius, already facing marginalisation as a result of her status as a female poet in the male dominated Symbolist movement, could ill afford to succumb to such attempted stigmatisation. The discursive prominence of the 'woman question' in the second half of the nineteenth century in Russia had, to some extent, cleared a path for a number of women to enter the traditionally male intellectual world, armed with higher education and more employment opportunities as teachers, journalists, or civil servants.[47] Industrialisation, bringing thousands of peasant women to the major cities, enacted a demographic shift that resulted in the enhanced visibility of women in urban Russia.[48] As a new mass-circulation press flourished, the literary market was opened to female writers who, it was believed, would 'reflect the female experience' and appeal to a newly literate female population.[49] As a result the female writer was often perceived as the purveyor of 'women's words' which constituted either domestic 'hearth and home' tales or melodramatic romances with, it was claimed, popular rather than literary merit.[50] Women

[47] While excluded from universities, special 'women's courses' such as the Bestuzhev courses in St Petersburg offered women a chance to extend their studies beyond the *gymnazia.* The most extensive account of women's 'widening sphere' in Russia between 1880 and 1917 is still Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism,* although this can now be augmented by more recent studies such as Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 107-128; Christine Johanson, *Women's Struggle for Higher Education in Russia 1855-1900,* Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987.

[48] Engel, *Women in Russia,* p. 108.

[49] Holmgren, 'Gendering the Icon,' pp. 324-325. Holmgren discusses two photographic tableau published in mass circulation periodicals between 1901 and 1907 containing portraits of Gippius. One, entitled 'The Poets of Our Days,' included her as part of a trio with Ivan Bunin and Andrei Belyi; the other, a 'group shot' included her portrait with that of six other female writers. Such promotion of Gippius as both a central figure in the pantheon of Russian *women* writers, and a figure who could hold her own among men, contributed to her currency as a well known poet, and exemplified the expansion and diversification of Russian literature during this period. See Holmgren, 'Gendering the Icon,' pp. 328, 331, 341.

[50] Rosenthal, 'Achievement and Obscurity,' pp. 149-150. The paradigmatic example of the popular female writer was Anastasia Verbitskaia, author of the wildly successful *The Keys to Happiness,* whose heroine experiences rape, abuse, and insanity in her impassioned quest to become the 'New Woman'. See Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness,* pp. 404-414.

who, like Gippius, aspired to take part in avant garde Modernist art movements faced not only the public assumption of their inability to break free of the boundary of women's writing but also the misogyny of male artists themselves.[51] The Symbolist aesthetic was premised on a gender essentialist outlook; the female images in the poetry of Symbolists such as Aleksandr Blok and Andrei Belyi were invariably those of the idealised 'Eternal Feminine' whose capacity for prophecy was directly dependent on her biologically determined female nature.[52] To counter this ethos, many women, including Gippius, combined an active participation in literary production with the hosting of literary salons, whereby they could occupy a 'public' space while retaining the authority of the domestic setting in which the salons occurred.[53] Despite the surge of female writers at the end of the nineteenth century, Gippius was one of the few who forged a place for herself at the core of the most important literary movement of the period. As this thesis will argue, a primary contributing factor to Gippius' efforts to overcome this attempted marginalisation was her ability to draw strength from her repudiation of the biological discourse that dictated an essential difference between male and female gender roles.

Gippius' early mythopoetics manifested not only the mysticism and sense of spiritual quest for which, on publication of 'Song', she became instantly famous, but also the 'anti-nature' discourse that provided the literary foundation of her rejection of gender determinism and sexual normalisation. The accusations of degeneration and decay which her repudiation of the discourse of biological determinism provoked served to undermine

---

[51] Kelly, *History of Russian Women's Writing,* pp. 163-164.
[52] Kelly, *History of Russian Women's Writing,* p. 164.
[53] Beth Holmgren, 'Stepping Out/Going Under: Women in Russia's Twentieth Century Salons,' in Goscilo and Holmgren, *Russia - Women - Culture,* pp. 225-242.

her non-essentialist outlook, painting it as a cleavage to the exotic eroticism of *fin de siècle* Decadence. Gippius discounted such claims with characteristic contempt for those who disseminated a doctrine premised on biological metaphors. In the 1890s, she was both an integral part of the emergent Russian Symbolist movement and an original contributor to Symbolist discourses of sexuality and gender. It was on the basis of this role, rather than the erroneous one of Decadent *femme fatale,* that she constructed gender and sexuality through her own practice, and projected this construction through her poetry, prose and personal theatrics.

Sexual Dissidence in Theory and Practice:

The Sexual Foundations of Gippius' Utopian Vision 1890-1905

Zhdal ia i zhdu moyei yasnoi
Neyutomimo tebya polyubila ya
Vstan' zhe, moi mesyats serebryano-krasnii
Viidi, dvurogaya - Milii moi - Milaya

I waited and await for my clear dawn
I have come to love you tirelessly
Arise then, my silvery red moon
Emerge, two horned one - my Dear - Dear
Zinaida Gippius 'You' (*Ty*) 1905[1]

There can be no doubt she artificially worked up two features of her personality: poise and femininity. Within she was not poised. And she was not womanly.
Nina Berberova, *The Italics are Mine*[2]

As an embodiment of the metaphysical ethos of Russian Symbolism, Zinaida Gippius' poetry of the late nineteenth century reflected a pervasive idealism that was the hallmark of her philosophical outlook. However, in the eyes of many of her contemporaries, it was her rejection of normative gender paradigms through her iconoclastic behaviour that earned her attention and notoriety among the artistic circles of St Petersburg. Between 1890 and 1905, Gippius developed a theory of sexuality premised on the bisexual androgyne, postulating the idea of gender and sexuality as social constructs through her parody of cross dressing, alternating between the role of masculine aesthete and exaggerated *femme fatale.* In addition, she rejected the idea of procreation and

[1] As cited in Sibelan Forrester, 'Wooing the Other Woman: Gender in Women's Love Poetry in the Silver Age,' in Pamela Chester and Sibelan Forrester, *Engendering Slavic Literatures,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, p. 113.
[2] Nina Berberova, *The Italics are Mine,* Philippe Radley trans. New York: Vintage Books, 1991, p. 65.

motherhood, demonstrating a fear of progeny that drew on the discourse of anti-procreation utopianism in the work of philosophers Vladimir Soloviev and Nikolai Fedorov. Her performance of gender indeterminacy was often misinterpreted as biological hermaphroditism, an assumption symptomatic of the misogynist discourse that sought to 'de-sex' women who rejected domestic roles and the heterosexual norm. This betrayed a fundamental misunderstanding of Gippius' attempts to transcend gender binaries through an idealisation of androgyny. It also demonstrated the hegemony of biological conceptualisations of sexuality in late nineteenth century Russia and Western Europe. Through her rejection of this discourse of biological determinism, Gippius formulated a sexual subjectivity premised on the desire to transcend the gender binary through a process of 'transfiguration of the flesh', which would form the basis of her utopian program of sexual revolution after 1905.

The Sexual Question in Russia

The incitement to discourse regarding sexuality was no less discernible in late nineteenth century Russia than in Western Europe, although the 'machinery for producing true discourses about sex' differed from the Western equivalent.[3] The most obvious difference

[3] The incitement to discourse refers, of course, to Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol I: The Will to Knowledge,* Robert Hurley trans, New York: Vintage Books, 1990, pp. 17-36. The Russian application of Foucault's hypotheses regarding the history of sexuality in Western Europe can be problematic. The bourgeois capitalist order to which Foucault ascribes the particular systems of power relations configuring the body and sexuality at the end of the nineteenth century, although certainly present, had not developed in Russia to the extent it had in Western Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, while Russia produced it own 'version of the Western tradition, in the sexual arena as well as in other cultural domains', the hegemony of bourgeois and liberal discourses in Russia at the *fin de siècle* ensure that Foucault's *History of Sexuality* can still provide a useful framework in which to view sexuality and gender in this particular historical place and moment. For a discussion of the applicability of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* to the Russian context, see Eliot Bornstein, 'Slavophilia: The Incitement to Russian Sexual Discourse,' *Slavic and East European Journal,* 40:1, 1996, pp. 142-147, Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, pp. 3-5.

was the context in which the discourse was produced, as the repressive and autocratic state both impeded public debate and severely restricted access to political power.[4] Despite these restrictions, the new science of sexology (as practised by Western Europeans such as Richard von Krafft-Ebbing and Havelock Ellis) infiltrated the Russian medical establishment through the dissemination of a number of key texts in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[5] Russian physicians such as Veniamin Tarnovskii categorised sexual behaviour as organically determined and vulnerable to hereditary defect; according to this idea, homosexuality was a perversion, and sexual deviance a congenital flaw over which the 'victim' had no power. [6] As in Western Europe, the hegemony of the physiological categorisations of sexuality served to strengthen the notion of an essential difference between men and women: thus it seemed that anatomy was, indeed, destiny.[7] The biomedical understanding of sexuality was particularly marked in relation to perceived female sexual deviance, as criminal anthropologists such as Pavel Kovalevskii identified the organic distinction of sex as the origin of the female

---

[4] Engelstein, *Keys to Happiness,* p. 4.

[5] Among the medical texts available in Russia before 1900 were: Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characteristics,* London: W Scott, 1894 (Russian translation 1898); Richard von Krafft-Ebbing, *Grundzuge der Criminalpsychologie auf Grundlage des Strafgestzbuchs des deutschen Reichs fur Arzte und Juristen,* Erlangen: Enke, 1872 (Russian translation 1874), Krafft-Ebbing, *Psychopathia Sexualis,* Stuttgart, Enke, 1886, (Russian translation 1887); Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrerro, *La donna deliquente: La prostituta e la donna normale,* Turin: Roux, 1893, (Russian translation, 1898); Louis Martineu, *La Prostitution clandestine,* Paris: A Delahaye & E Lecrosnier, 1885, (Russian translation:1885). After 1900, there was Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Inversion,* London: Wilson & Macmillan, 1897, (Russian translation, n.d.), Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlins drittes Geschlect,* Grosstadt-Dokumente, Bd 3, Berlin, H Seeman Nachfolger, 1904, (Russian trnaslation 1908). Freud's work was translated from 1911. See Laura Engelstein, 'Lesbian Vignettes: A Russian Triptych from the 1890s,' *Signs,* Vol 15:4, 1990, p. 814.

[6] Dan Healy, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 4.

[7] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: From the Greeks to Freud,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 193. Despite its incongruity with some his psychoanalytic theories, the phrase 'Anatomy is destiny' is in fact Freud's; as cited in Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crisis of Identity: Culture and Society in* Fin de siècle *Vienna,* Rosemary Morris trans., Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993, p. 300.

criminal impulse.[8] Thus congenital understandings of sexuality interacted with the notion of sexual dimorphism (two discreet and biologically determined sexes), each discourse confirming and reinforcing the other. The interaction of these two discourses in turn served to marginalise attempts by isolated individuals in the medical establishment (such as Praskov'ia Tarnovskaia) to make a claim for the influence of social over biological determinants in the formation of sexual subjectivity.[9]

An analysis of medical literature regarding sexuality demonstrates a response to and reflection of the changes in the organisation and ideology of sexuality in Russia at the *fin de siècle*. However, the hegemony of medical discourse did not prevent individuals from negotiating and subverting such categorisation of their sexual behaviours in their own practice.[10] Simon Karlinsky considers the late nineteenth century an era of relative tolerance of homosexuality in Russia, at least among the educated public.[11] While this tolerance did not manifest itself in a concrete juridical shift towards homosexuality (sodomy - *muzhelozhstvo* - was outlawed under Sections 995 and 996 of the Criminal Code until 1917) an increasingly visible subculture of (mostly male) homosexuality did develop in some circles.[12] In the *Mir Isskustva* group, Diaghilev was only the most

---

[8] Kovalevskii claimed that ordinary manifestations of the female reproductive cycle could lead to mental imbalance and even psychosis. See Engelstein, *Keys to Happiness,* p. 145.

[9] Healy, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia,* p. 12; Engelstein, *Keys to Happiness,* pp. 146-152.

[10] Healy, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia,* p. 12; Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women who loved Women 1778-1928,* Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004, p. 177.

[11] Simon Karlinsky, 'Russia's Gay Literature and Culture: The Impact of the October Revolution,' in Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey, Jr., *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past,* New York: NAL Books, 1989, pp. 350-351. Karlinsky's most famous work on the subject of homosexuality in Russia, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) examines the effects of personal repression of homosexual 'identity' in the 1840s and 1850s, a period he marks as one of relative silence on the subject of sexuality in comparison with the *fin de siècle.*

[12] Despite the continued existence of the anti-sodomy provisions in the Criminal Code, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw persistent attempts by reformers such as Vladimir Nabokov to rid the

notable of a number of openly homosexual men. The development of a homosexual subculture such as that nourished by the Diaghilev circle occurred within the specific paradigm of the aesthete dandy, whose sexual choices were firmly associated with his sublimation of art and beauty.[13] Female same-sex love was conceptualised far less overtly, largely because women had less access to the public sphere and thus could not construct for themselves the same public subculture as male homosexuals.[14] The ambiguity of this position is typified by the confused nomenclature involved: 'lesbian' (*lebiiskaia*) was a word used almost solely in a literary sense, while 'female homosexual' was confined to medical discourse.[15] 'Lesbian' carried with it the decadent connotations outlined in Chapter 1; thus an entry in the 1896 Russian *Encyclopaedia* asserted 'Lesbian love - a form of perversion of sexual feeling, an unnatural attraction of a woman for another'.[16] Female deviations from the heterosexual norm were hence doubly marginalised, devoid of any collective identity and constructed as 'unnatural perversions'.

Code of these provisions. Laura Engelstein has charted the fate of these attempts, as manifested in the work of progressive jurists on the 1903 reform of the Criminal Code. Although more conservative jurists on the editorial commission appointed to revise the code ultimately voted to retain the anti-sodomy provisions, Engelstein considers the reformed code progressive for the distinction it made between sexual acts committed in private and sexual acts in public. The 1903 code was discarded by the authoritarian government who were not bound to implement to suggestions of the committee of jurists. Engelstein, *Keys to Happiness,* p. 42; George Chauncey Jr., 'From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualisation of Female Deviance,' *Salmagundi,* 58, 1982, pp. 114-146; Healy, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia,* pp. 29-49.

13 The most obvious comparison for Diaghilev's cult of the aesthete is Oscar Wilde's circle in Britain, which nourished a similar worship of 'divine art'. See Betsey F. Moeller-Sally, 'Oscar Wilde and the Culture of Russian Modernism,' *Slavonic and East European Journal*, 34:4, 1990, pp. 459-472. The superficiality of *fin de siècle* Britain's tolerance for Wilde's sexual choices was revealed with stunning brutality at his trial in 1896 – for the best account of the social and political implications of Wilde's trial see Michael S Foldy, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality and Late-Victorian Society,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

14 Healy, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia,* p. 50; Luc Beaudoin, 'Reflections in the Mirror: Iconographic Homoeroticism in Stephanie Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 145.

15 Healy, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia,* p. 12.

16 *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* St Petersburg, 1896, Vol 27A, p. 590, cited in Diana Lewis Burgin, 'Laid Out in Lavender: Perceptions of Lesbian Love in Russian Literature and Criticism of the Silver Age, 1893-1917', in Stephanie Costlow and Judith Vowles, *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, p. 177.

Nevertheless, a small number of women, most notably Gippius, were able to negotiate and subvert the dominance of heteronormativity to formulate a protest against hegemonic biological discourse through their sexually dissident practice.

'A Place to Speak About My Flesh'

A frequent contributor to *Mir Isskustva* and visitor to Diaghilev's salon between 1895 and 1903, it was in the context of that group's (at least superficial) encouragement and acceptance of non-heterosexual practices that Gippius began exploring her own sexual subjectivity in her diaries, letters, poetry and prose. She devoted her diary 'Contes d'Amour' to the recording of her most intimate affairs and constructed in the process a psychologically remarkable autobiographical narrative.[17] Gippius began her diary in 1893, four years after the posthumous publication of the extremely popular diary of Maria Bashkirtseva, a Russian artist living in Paris who documented her sexual confessions in lurid prose, and whose self-portrait as the struggling female artist provided a model for Russian contemporaries who had all too few female predecessors on which to model themselves.[18] Gippius, like Bashkirtseva, chooses to devote a whole diary to sexual and romantic experiences, telling, 'every base and impure thought which only I will have known to exist - concealing nothing.'[19] Despite her claim of transparency, Gippius' diary reveals a conscious attempt to fashion herself in a non-monogamous, non-heterosexual

---

[17] Zinaida Gippius, 'Contes d'Amour,' (February 19, 1893) in Zinaida Gippius, *Between Paris and St Petersburg: Selected Diaries of Zinadia Gippius,* Temira Pachmuss ed., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975, p60. Antonina Filonov Gove, 'Gippius, Zinaida Nikolaevna,' in Marina Ledkovsky, Charlotte Rosenthal and Mary Zirin. *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers,* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994, p. 212.

[18] Charlotte Rosenthal, 'Silver Age: A High Point for Women?' in Linda Edmondson (ed), *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 65; Hilde Hoogenboom, 'The Famous White Box: The Creation of Maria Bashkirtseva and Her Diary,' in Peter I Barta (ed), *Gender and Sexuality in Russian Civilisation,* London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 181-204.

framework, not only through intimate details of her many affairs, but through specific tirades against 'sexual specialisation' and the gender inequality she perceived in monogamous, heterosexual relationships.[20] In 1898 an affair with an English Baroness, Liza von Overbek, sparked the first of many musings on notions of heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality.[21] Gippius met von Overbek at Taormina, an idyllic Sicilian artists' commune where she stayed with the openly homosexual Wilhelm von Gloedan, about whom she made the revealing observation, 'I like the illusion of his possibility - as if there were a tinge of bisexuality: he seems to me both woman and man. This is terribly akin to me. The fact is, that one seems to be both woman and man...Because, in essence, all ends...'[22] In line with the relative fluidity of boundaries between different sexual identities in late nineteenth century Russia, Gippius did not conceptualise herself as 'bisexual' to the extent that it defined her choice of sexual object.[23] Rather, her understanding of bisexuality (which she used to describe both erotic feelings for members of both sexes and as a synonym for androgyny) suggests instead that she understood the term as a mark of the instability of sexuality and sexual difference.[24] Gippius' experiences at Taormina inspired a key entry in the diary in

---

[19] Gippius, 'Contes d'Amour,' (February 19, 1893), p. 60.

[20] As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has argued, women often use ostensibly 'private' writing spaces, such as letters and diaries, to negotiate the space between private and public expression. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America,* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, pp. 44-46. See also Dena Goodman, 'Letter Writing and the Emergence of Gendered Subjectivity in Eighteenth Century France,' *Journal of Women's History,* 17:2, 2005, pp. 9-37.

[21] The negative attitude of a large portion of the supposedly sexually adventurous intelligentsia towards female same-sex relations is well demonstrated by Valery Briusov's statement regarding von Overbek: 'Attending Zinochka (Gippius) was Liza Overbek, a girl for lesbian caresses, gaunt, dried up, bad looking.' Cited in Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Fin de Siecle Russia,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, p. 183.

[22] Gippius,'Contes d'Amour', (August 16 1899) p. 74. Taormina was frequented by writers such as Oscar Wilde and Marcel Proust at the turn of the century; Matich, *Erotic Utopia* p184. On William von Gloeden see also Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean,* London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 144-145.

[23] Engelstein, *Keys to Happiness,* pp. 56-97.

[24] Claire Buck argues that a similar conceptualisation of bisexuality can be discerned in the work of H.D.

which she inveighs against '[sexual] specialisation' arguing, 'It is equally good and natural for each person to love any other person. Love between men may be endlessly beautiful and divine like any other. I am *equally* attracted to all God's creatures, when I am attracted.'[25] The notion of equality is a leitmotif of Contes d'Amour, which can be seen in her examination of kissing, about which she rapturously declares, 'In a kiss...there is equality, identity, and the unity of the two. And yet, although *one* exists at that instant, united from two - *two* also exist.'[26]

Gippius describes her feelings towards the Baroness as 'Tenderness, my sensual Tenderness which in its intensity was even painful: my tendency which instilled faith in me, as well as a desire to save...'[27] She later contemplates whether same-sex passion could provide a greater depth of the equality to which she aspired, asking herself, 'But how am I to know whether I believe that this equality is possible, or that my belief is only a deception - for the sake of my Tenderness?'[28] Throughout the 1890s Gippius oscillated between rejection of the figure of the patriarchal male in favour of love premised on sisterhood, and fear that such a love might be no more likely to provide her with the equality she desired. In 1894, she complained to Liudmila Vilkina-Minskaia, in barely veiled flirtation, 'There has not yet been a case in which a woman - whether pretty or ugly, kind or mean - was attracted to me. That has been the rule - one that remains

---

(Hilda Doolittle); see Claire Buck, *H.D. and Freud: Bisexuality and a Feminine Discourse,* New York: St Martins Press, 1991, p. 11. Bisexuality understood in this way 'represents the sign that masculinity and femininity are not fixed identities but references to points of desire to which the subject has a shifting relationship,' leading to a sense of 'split' subjectivity. See Juliet Mitchell, Introduction to Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Subjectivity: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne,* Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose eds., New York: W.W.Norton & Co., 1982, pp. 12-14.

[25] Gippius, 'Contes d'Amour,' (October 17, 1898), p. 73.

[26] Gippius, 'Contes d'Amour,' (October 17, 1898), p. 72.

[27] Gippius, 'Contes d'Amour,' (August 16, 1899), p. 73.

unclear - for I myself like women - beautiful ones, of course, such as yourself.'[29] Gippius had a number of relationships with men as well as with women, and criticised sharply anyone who confined themselves to men *or* women. In letters and diaries she styled herself as a *fin de siècle* Don Juan, frequently boasting about her many liaisons with, often married, men.[30] Despite her platonic relationship with Merezhkovsky, there is little question that her other relationships were often (if not always) sexual; as she wrote to Dmitri Filosofov, with whom she had a lengthy, often tempestuous affair, 'The feeling of love is sexual. That is, real love *must* take place on earth; it must be in our earth, and consequently it must manifest itself as earthly love as well as spiritual.'[31] Gippius subversion of heteronormativity was subversion in practice, not merely in discourse, a practice complimented by and further articulated in her subversion of gendered norms in poetry and prose.

The Divine Androgyne

While Gippius' sexuality defies anachronistic attempts at categorisation as either strictly heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual, what can be demonstrated is her identification with the notion of the androgyne. As she said of herself, 'I do not desire exclusive femininity, just as I do not desire exclusive masculinity...they are so fused together that I know nothing.'[32] The paradigmatic figure of the androgyne has a literary and philosophical heritage stretching back to Plato's *Symposium* and the Gnostic tradition of

---

[28] Gippius, 'Contes d'Amour,' (September 14, 1900), p. 77.

[29] Zinaida Gippius to Liudmila Vilkina-Minskaia, September 9, 1894, IRIL, f39, op3, ed khr 847, cited in Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 186.

[30] At one point Gippius made a point of wearing the wedding rings of her male admirers on a necklace around her neck; see Jenifer Presto, 'The Androgynous Gaze of Zinaida Gippius,' *Russian Literature* XLVIII, 2000, pp. 87-107.

[31] Zinaida Hippius to Dmitri Filosofov, 16 July 1905, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius,* p. 86.

Sophia, the androgynous figure of Divine Wisdom.[33] The revival of the notion of the androgyne in the nineteenth century Russian imagination was inspired by both the popularity of occult traditions during the period, and the work of Vladimir Soloviev, the key proselytiser of the ideal of the androgyne in the late nineteenth century.[34] Soloviev's concept of the divine androgyne was premised on the ambiguous figure of Sophia, who was simultaneously characterised as the 'Eternal Feminine' and androgynous 'man' before the Fall.[35] Soloviev's androgyne was both dual-sexed Adam and Eternal Feminine, onto which was grafted the Platonic androgyne from the myth of Aristophanes, whose 'uncertain gender titillated the *fin de siècle* imagination.'[36] Sophia inspired not only Soloviev but, through him, a whole school of 'Sophiology' led by the 'socialist idealists' Sergei Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdiaev, and the worship of the Eternal Feminine in the poetry of Aleksandr Blok and Andrei Belyi.[37] Paradoxically, Soloviev's androgyne was not free of sexual dimorphism. In his hope that the highest, and idealised, form of androgyny would unite 'female and male, flesh and spirit' Soloviev perpetuated the prevailing equation of women with flesh, the corollary of their association with nature.[38]

---

[32] Gippius, 'Contes d'Amour,' (14 September 1900), p. 77.

[33] Olga Matich, 'Androgyny and the Russian Silver Age,' *Pacific Coast Philology,* Vol 14, 1979, pp. 42-50; Kari Weil, *Androgyny and the Denial of Difference,* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992, p. 17.

[34] Kristi A Groberg, 'The Eternal Feminine: Vladimir Soloviev's visions of Sophia,' *Alexandria,* 1:1, 1991, p. 79. A fascination with the occult was a central characteristic of pre-revolutionary Russian culture, which manifested itself in popular practices of card reading, seances and 'rappings' as well as wide interest in the 'new religions' of Theosophy and Anthroposophy. The popularity of the occult during this period was both part of a wider European trend for 'spiritualism' and a response to specifically local circumstances, such the questioning of the traditional doctrines of Orthodoxy that had accompanied the Emancipation reforms of the 1860s. See Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (ed.), *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997; in particular Kirsti A Groberg, 'In the Shade of Lucifer's Dark Wing: Satanism in Silver Age Russia,' p. 101-133; Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* pp. 63-66.

[35] Rosenthal, *The Occult,* p. 4-5.

[36] Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 73.

[37] Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism,*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 115-181. On Sergei Bulgakov see Evtuhov, Catherine. *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

[38] Vladimir Solov'ev, 'Zhiznennaia drama Platona' 1898, cited in Eric Naiman, 'Historectomies: On the

The idealistic rhetoric of Soloviev's conceptualisation of androgyny suggested that a return to primordial androgyny would involve the negation of the flesh, and the female, presaging a mystical whole.[39]

Gippius too was drawn to Sophia, directly addressing the divine androgyne in poems and prayers she wrote in the years of the twentieth century. As she pleaded in a prayer she wrote for the private religious services she held with Merezhkovsky and Dmitri Filosofov, 'Grant us Thy new genuine, universal Church, the Church of Sophia of the Divine Wisdom, the Church of the Trinity in One, Indivisible yet Individual!'[40] Sophia represents Gippius' rejection of a dualist separation of male and female, spirit and flesh, and demonstrates a Jungian desire to reconcile the binary (both male and female, homosexual and heterosexual) in order to progress to a higher level of consciousness.[41] Gippius' poetic and philosophical *weltanschuaang* was indeed characterised by this repudiation of dualism in favour of a semiotic system based on threes, symbolised by the desire to reconcile opposites, or forge a middle path between two simultaneously existing and oppositional poles.[42] The desire for the reconciliation of opposites is most potently

---

Metaphysics of Reproduction in a Utopian Age,' in Costlow and Vowles, *Sexuality and the Body,* p. 261.

[39] Naiman, 'Historectomies,' p. 263. As Luc Beaudoin has argued, androgyny in the Russian Silver Age was largely a 'male conceived phenomenon' that excluded the 'nature-bound' female, who was unable to divest herself of the animalistic qualities of her flesh to reach the divine state of androgyny. Luc Beaudoin, 'Reflections in the Mirror' pp. 144-147.

[40] Pachmuss, *Zinadia Gippius,* p. 157.

[41] Jung based much of his theory of the collective unconscious on his study of Gnostic archetypes, which he argued recurred throughout history; see for example, Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,* R.F.C. Hull (trans), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968. The conceptualisation of Jung's gnosticism as the reconciliation of two opposites (for Jung, the reconciliation of the unconscious with the ego consciousness), as opposed to the insurmountability of their polarity, comes from Robert A Segal, *The Gnostic Jung,* London: Routledge, 1992, p. 25.

[42] Mikhail Epstein has identified the nineteenth century as the period in which the semiotics of Russian culture shifted from a binary to a ternary outlook, whereby artists and thinkers sought a new 'middle ground' that was related to their eschewal of secularism for a 'new middle ages.' See Mikhail Epstein, 'The Demise of the First Secularisation: The Church of Gogol and the Church of Belinsky,' *Studies in Eastern*

captured in her 1901 poem 'Electricity' (*Elektrichestvo*) which describes the spark created by the meeting of two oppositional wires:

Two wires are wrapped together,

The loose ends naked, exposed

A yes and no, not united,

Not united but juxtaposed.

A dark, dark juxtaposition -

So close together, dead.

But resurrection awaits them;

And they await what waits ahead.

End will meet end in touching

Yes - no, left and right,

The yes and no awakening.

Inseparably uniting

And their death will be - Light.[43]

As a paradigm of indeterminate gender, Sophia embodied Gippius' desire to reconcile binaries, and her explorations of the blurred lines between homosexuality, bisexuality and hermaphroditism. Unlike Soloviev, however, Gippius' conceptualisation of androgyny

---

European Thought, 58:2, 2006, pp. 95-105. This article forms part of a larger paper entitled 'Russian Culture at the Crossroads: Secularisation, Demonism and a transition from a Binary to a Ternary Model,' which has been published in Russian in Mikhail Epshtein, *Slovo i molchanie. Metafizika russkoi literatury*, (Word and Silence: The Metaphysics of Russian Literature). Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 2006. The binary model of Russian cultural history was articulated in Iurri Lotman and Boris Uspenskii's highly influential 'Binary Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture (To the End of the Eighteenth Century)' in Iurii M Lotman, Lidiia A Ginsburg and Boris A Uspenskii, *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

[43] *Dve niti vmeste sbiti' / Konts'i obnazheni' / To 'da' i 'net' - ne sliti / Ne sliti - spleteni'. / Ikh temnoe splen's / No zhdet iz voskressenie / I zhdut oni ego./ Konts'ov konts'i' kosnutsia - / Drugie 'da' i 'net', / I 'da' i 'net' prosnutsia / Spletenni'e sol'yotsia, / U smert' ikh budet - Svet.* Zinaida Gippius, 'Electricity,' Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks, *Modern Russian Poetry*, London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, p. 65.

was not premised on the neutralisation of a spirit/flesh binary, but on the fundamentally socially constructed nature of these binaries, and the fallacy of their physiological existence in this world. In contrast to Soloviev and his Sophiologist followers, Gippius sought to practise the androgyny she preached through cross dressing and transvestism. This practice both drew attention to her corporeal and eroticised body, and allowed her to embody the notion of the androgyne, parodying in the process the notion of an essential gender binary on which Soloviev's androgyne was premised.

Literary/Literal Transvestism

The most commonly noted manifestation of Gippius' attempts to blur the lines between male and female is the use of the masculine voice in most of her poetry. Russian is a 'gendered' language, in which, as Roman Jakobson observes, the female gender is 'marked' while the male is 'unmarked' and in which a masculine 'speaker' can be identified by the denotation of past tense masculine verb endings, adjectives or pronouns.[44] Gippius' decision to use the masculine voice can be seen as a desire to distance herself from the problematic definition of the 'poetess' (*poetessa*) which in Russia designated a specific cultural mask denoting an 'impure poet', an 'impostor in the world of letters'.[45] As she famously declared in 1902, 'I wish to write as a man/person, not as a woman.'[46] Her conscious confusion of gender, further blurred by her insistence on signing her poetry with her real, female name (rather than choosing a neutral pseudonym

---

[44] Roman Jakobson, *Shifters, Verbal Categories and the Russian Verb,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 6.

[45] Svetlana Boym, *Death in Quotation Marks: Cultural Myths of the Modern Poet,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 192-193.

[46] *'Ia khochu chitat' kak chelovek, ne kak zhenshchina.'* cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius,* p. 70. This statement is made doubly ambiguous by the use of the word '*chelovek*' which in Russian denotes both 'man' and 'person.'

as her friend Allegro [Poliksena Solovieva] did) suggests a deliberate attempt to disconcert the reader, and indeed draws attention to the issue of gender, rather than obscuring it.[47] In the overwhelming majority of instances where Gippius used a gendered first person narrative voice in her poetry, it was masculine as opposed to feminine.[48] In her 1905 poem 'You' (*Ty*) Gippius took her gender bending one step further, alternating between masculine and feminine verb forms and adjectives. This results in confusion over the gender of both the speaker and the object of his/her declarations, the personified moon (for which there are two words in Russian, *mesiats*, which is masculine, and *luna,* which is feminine). Thus, the final stanza of the poem reads,

I (m) waited and I wait for you my clear dawn

I (f) have come to love you tirelessly

Arise then my silvery-red moon (m)

Emerge, two-horned one (f) - My dear (m)

Dear (f)[49]

Gippius highlighted the ambiguity of gender in this poem through her choice of personified love object - the moon has a considerable heritage of symbolic association with androgyny and the notion of dual sex.[50] In another poem, 'Ballada' (*Ballada*) the (male) narrator takes on the stereotypical characteristics of the female in Russian love

---

[47] Poliksena Solovieva, like Gippius, employed masculine verb endings in the majority of her poems. Between 1899 and 1923, she published nineteen books of poetry, verse plays and stories for children. See Jane A Taubman, 'Women Poets of the Silver Age,' Toby W. Clyman and Diana Greene, *Women Writers in Russian Literature,* p. 176.

[48] As Antonina Gove has demonstrated in her statistical study of Gippius' poetry, in the two hundred and eighty two poems in Temira Pachmuss' edition of her complete works, 51.2% use the first person singular are of unspecified gender, and a further 45.2% are gendered masculine. See Antonina Filonov Gove, 'Gender as a Poetic Feature in the Verse of Zinaida Gippius,' in Henrik Birnbaum (ed), *American Contributions to the Eighth Congress of Slavists,* Columbus: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1978, p. 381.

[49] *Zhdal ia i zhdu ia zari moei yasnoi / Neutomumo tebya polyubila ia…/Vtan' zhe, moi mesiats serebryano –krasni'/Vi'idi, dvurogaya – Millii moi – / Milaya.* in Forrester, 'Wooing the Other Woman,' p. 113.

poetry, subverting the association of the feminine (in this case represented by his love object, a *rusalka* or mermaid) with the animalistic, by declaring,

I am a beast for the mermaid. I have rot in my blood.

And she seems a beast to me.

The stronger in love: We measure love's force

By its impossibility.[51]

'Ballada' blurs the line between the 'rational' male and 'animal' female, the watery motifs in the poem accentuating the sense of gender fluidity that pervades it. Gippius' poetic choice to write in masculine voices thus reveals itself as not merely the desire to shed oppressive femininity, but to disrupt and reconcile the binary opposition of male and female.

In a process reminiscent of Stephen Greenblatt's notion of poetic self-fashioning, Gippius transferred her 'literary transvestism' into practice via her controversial cross-dressing, evidence of which survives in portraits and contemporaries' accounts.[52] In doing so, she engaged in what Irina Paperno has identified as Symbolist life-creation (*zhiznetvorchestvo*), through which the Symbolists hoped to unify the antitheses of life and art.[53] The most famous extant portrait of Gippius is that by the prominent *Mir*

---

[50] Matich, 'Androgyny and the Russian Religious Renaissance,' p. 67

[51] *Ia zver' dlia russalki, ia s tlen'em v krovi. / I mne ona kazhetsia zverem.../ Tem zhgucheu vyliublennost: mi silu lyubli / Odnoi nevozmozhnost'yu merim.* Cited in Sibelan Forrester, 'Wooing the Other Woman,' p. 112. Diana Lewis Burgin cites 'Ballada', with its fluid motifs of gender deconstruction, as an example of (encoded) lesbian poetry from the Silver Age. See Burgin, 'Laid Out In Lavender,' p185.

[52] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980. On literary transvestism see Sandra Gilbert, 'Costumes of the Mind: Transvestism as Metaphor in Modern Literature,' *Critical Inquiry,* 7:2, 1980, pp. 391-417.

[53] Irina Paperno, Introduction to Irina Paperno and Joan Delany Grossman, *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994, p. 1. The word *zhiznetvorchestvo* appears in Symbolist Viacheslav Ivanov's 'Zavety Simvolizma' in his *Borozdy i mezhi,* Moscow, 1916, cited in Paperno, *Creating Life,* p. 1.

Isskustva artist Leon Bakst, painted in 1906, which shows her dressed not only in the leggings and cravat of a man but also adopting the slouching and simpering pose of a turn of the century dandy [Frontispiece].[54] Gippius declared gleefully in a letter to journalist Zinaida Vengerova in 1897 that she had caused a great stir while staying at her dacha by her habit of traversing the fields dressed in Ukrainian culottes and eschewing corset and petticoat [Fig. 1].[55] Gippius seems to have enjoyed the shock value of her behaviour - Valery Briusov, for example, criticised her for her deliberate attempts to flout social custom - but in the light of her preoccupation with the boundary between male and female, it would be erroneous to assume this was her only motivation.[56] To cross-dress is always a self-conscious act, and in many ways an assertion of gender instability, underlining the fact that what can seem natural and immutable is often socially constructed.[57] The process of cross dressing can often be used to parody the very notion of essential gender, by demonstrating the fluidity of boundaries of sex (and sexuality) and the ease with which one can construct for oneself a new gendered identity.[58] The suggestion that just such a conceptualisation of gender lay at the heart of Gippius' behaviour is strengthened by her frequent assumption of overtly *feminine* clothing, wearing ruffled dresses she designed herself and elaborately styling her hair, to which Nina Berberova refers in the quote at the beginning of this chapter. Gippius' decision to

---

54 Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 172.

55 Gippius letter to Zinaida Vengerova, 1897, undated, Institut russkoi literatury, f.39, op2, ed khr.542, cited in Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 173.

56 In his diary, Briusov recounted his visit to Gippius in her hotel in Moscow in December 1901, where she received him undressed, much to his embarrassment, and then proceeded to inquire, ' I don't know your Moscow customs. May one go anywhere in white dresses? Otherwise I don't know what I'll do. My skin somehow won't take any other colour...In St Petersburg everyone knows me this way. It is because of this that we don't go to the theatre. Everyone points at me...' Valery Briusov, *The Diary of Valery Briusov,* Joan Delaney Grossman (ed), Berkeley: California University Press, 1980, p. 117.

57 Vicinus, *Intimate Friends,* p. 176.

58 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* New York: Routledge, 1990, pp. 128-141.

dress alternately as man and woman did not automatically denote homosexuality or bisexuality to the same extent that it may have done for a man, for whom female dress and homosexuality were closely linked in sexological discourses at least until the publication of Magnus Hirschfeld's *Die Transvestiten* in 1910.[59] Women's desire to dress as men could sometimes be attributed to a need to assume the more powerful and less restricted role of a man.[60] However, in Gippius' case, her propensity to take her female persona to the point of parody, wearing thick makeup and refusing for a time to wear anything but white dresses, suggests that she sought to exercise greater authority and power not by donning the costume of a man, but by taking a position of radical gender indeterminacy, *both* man and woman.[61] As Jenifer Presto has argued, in late nineteenth century Russia 'the female artist was constantly being presented as female and fashionable', and Gippius found that one of the best ways to uncover the cultural production of female artists was dressing herself in an extremely feminine manner.[62] In this way, Gippius performed the gender fluidity she preached, uncovering not only the fallacious view of the female artist, but the fallacious doctrine of gender essentialism.

---

[59] Vern L. Bullough, Introduction to Magnus Hirschfeld, *Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross Dress,* Michael A Lombardi Nash trans, New York: Prometheus Books, 1991, p. 12.

[60] The most notorious Russian example of this practice was Nadezhda Durova, who dressed as a male soldier and fought in the Napoleonic Wars, publishing an account of her time as a cavalry officer, entitled *The Cavalry Maiden,* in 1836. See Jane T Costlow, Stephanie Sandler and Judith Vowles, 'Introduction' in Costlow and Vowles, *Sexuality and the Body,* pp. 22-23.

[61] See the above referenced anecdote by Briusov regarding Gippius' predilection for white dresses, n74. Gippius' most famous use of her appearance as a tool of 'self-construction' was her habit, in the mid 1890s, of wearing her hair in a long braid during her Sunday evening salons. The long single braid was the immediately recognized Russian peasant symbol of virginity, a stark juxtaposition to the whispers about her coquettish behaviour and rumours of her late night entertainments of lovers. See Sergei Makovsky, *Na Parnasse 'Serebrianogo veka,'* Munich: Izd. Tsentr. ob'edineniia polit. emigrantov iz SSSR, 1962, p. 89, cited in Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 166.

[62] Jenifer Presto, 'The Fashioning of Zinaida Gippius,' *Slavic and Eastern European Journal,* 42:1 (1998),

Excavating the Female Soul

Gippius' explorations of gender could sometimes take the form of an apparent denigration of the female, as in one of her most famous poems, 'She' (*Ona*). Written in 1905, the poem creates an atmosphere of suffocating claustrophobia in four brief verses, in which the narrator describes her soul as a 'scabrous' (*shershavaya*) snake which is 'coiling around me, stubborn, insinuating / She hugs and strangles me, crushing me whole.'[63] 'She' is often cited as an example of Gippius' Decadent conceptualisation of women as base, degenerate and promiscuous, an example of her 'female self-hatred' which also manifested itself in antipathy towards the liberal feminist movement.[64] However, 'She' represents not the denigration of women or of the female self, but rather rejection of all gender differentiation - her soul suffocates not because it is *female* but because it is *gendered*. Gippius herself was all too cognizant of the restrictions placed on women who sought to exert influence in the public sphere; a motivating factor behind her antipathy towards liberal feminism may have been a desire to distance herself from the Russian tradition of segregating women, and especially women poets, into an inferior category.[65] Richard Stites justifies his claim of Gippius' anti-feminism by citing her response to a 1914 women's demonstration outside the Tauride Palace, relating Gippius' 'testy' remark that the women should work on 'all-human freedom and not just the feminist struggle that only alienates men.'[66] In claiming that such a response on the part of Gippius evidenced

---

p. 63.

63 *Svoimi kol'tsami ona, upornaya/ ko mne laskaetsya, menya dusha.* Markov, *Modern Russian Poetry,* p. 73.

64 Pachmuss, *Zinaida Gippius,* p. 27.

65 Simon Karlinsky argues a similar motivation for Marina Tsveteaeva's derogatory remarks about 'female separatism.' See Simon Karlinsky, *Marina Tsveteaeva: The Woman, Her World and Her Poetry,*' Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 97.

66 Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, Bolshevism 1860-1930.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978*,* p. 293.

her 'lack of logic as great as her lack of awareness for how much Russian women had worked for their rights', Stites fails to take into account Gippius' rejection of gender difference, which explicates her hostility towards separatist women's struggles. Gippius' opposition to the feminist movement in late nineteenth century Russia was not an opposition to equality between men and women - equality was, after all, one of her central leitmotifs - but rather an opposition to the segregation or different treatment of women.[67] Unlike the liberal feminists, Gippius did not want to emphasise the differences between men and women as a justification for the amelioration of women's situation, but rather eradicate them, through embracing the notion of the androgyne and the practice of bisexuality.[68]

The Dual-Sexed Hermaphrodite

While Gippius may be seen to have inscribed a bisexual and physically androgynous identity on to her body through poetry and parody, many of her contemporaries mistook this as an actual projection of physiological hermaphroditism. There is no physical evidence to confirm this claim - any attempt to do so would, as Jennifer Presto argues, risk a Barthes-ian necromancy towards Gippius' dead body.[69] However, the existence of

---

[67] In his study of Liubov Gurevich, the journalist and editor of the 'thick journal' *The Northern Herald* (*Svernyi Vestnik),* Stanley J Rabinowitz argues that Gippius was, along with his subject, one of the few truly 'independent' women of *fin de siècle* Russia. Indeed, Gurevich was apparently obsessed with differentiating herself from Gippius, who she saw as a rival, and more successful example of the Russian intellectual woman; as Rabinowitz argues, 'Gippius was the successful poet/poetess – Gurevich-the-struggling-journalist was not; Gippius was the socially adept *femme fatale* – Gurevich (decidedly) was not; Gippius conducted (often passionate) relationships with several men – Gurevich did not; Gippius lived in comfortable bourgeois surroundings – Gurevich did not. In many respects Gippius was Gurevich's alter-ego.' Stanley Rabinowitz, 'No Room of Her Own: The Early Life and Career of Liubov Gurevich,' *Russian Review,* 57:2, 1998, p. 250.

[68] On the importance of the concept of 'difference' in the liberal feminist movement in Russia see Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement in Russia,* pp. 191-232.

[69] Jenifer Presto, 'Reading Zinaida Gippius: Over Her Dead Body,' *Slavic and East European Journal,* 43:4 (1999), p. 621.

a strong historical discourse of the 'lesbian as hermaphrodite' suggests more that this nomenclature, while partly the result of the gender confusion caused by Gippius herself, was also largely due to prevalent biomedical understandings of sexuality, and misogynistic characterisation of non-heterosexual women as 'not all female'.[70] In Gippius' case, this view was postulated by her contemporary Sergei Makovsky, who declared that Gippius was 'biologically incapable of engaging in heterosexual relations', and fellow poet Andrei Bely, who spoke of Gippius' 'hipless frame' and 'breastless chest'.[71] The philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev, a close friend of Gippius between 1900 and 1904, characterized her as 'snake-like,' in his memoirs, stating that, 'she *physically* embodied an uncomfortable combination of the feminine and the masculine elements, and it was difficult to ascertain which was the strongest [emphasis added]'.[72] This opinion was particularly sinister in view of his earlier declaration that:

> 'The holy, mystical idea of androgyny has its dangerous caricature in hermaphroditism. Turned inside out, androgyny in 'this world' assumes a hermaphroditic form. Androgyny is man's likeness to God, his assent above nature. Hermaphroditism is a bestial, nature bound mixing of the sexes that has not been transformed into a higher being. The women's emancipation movement is essentially a caricature, simian and imitative, in it there is hermaphroditic deformity and not an androgynous beauty…'[73]

---

[70] Emma Donoghue, 'Imagined More than Women: Lesbians as Hermaphrodites 1671-1766,' *Women's History Review,* 2:2, 1993, p. 200. In the late nineteenth century, the association of the lesbian, as well as the 'emancipated woman' with hermaphroditism was given added fuel by degeneration theory. Nordau dedicated his *Degeneration* to the phrenologist Cesare Lombroso, who argued in *La Donna Delinquente* that women who attempted to transgress the strict distinction between masculine and feminine were engaged in evolutionary reversion, a 'sinking back into the hermaphroditism of the indeterminate primal state.' See Bram Djikstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 212-213.

[71] Sergei Makovsky, *Na Parnasse,* p. 89, cited in Karlinsky, Introduction to *a Difficult Soul,* p. 8; Andrei Bely, *Nachalo veka,* Moscow, Khudozhestvennia literarue, 1990, p. 194, cited in Jennifer Presto, 'Reading Zinaida Gippius,' p. 622.

[72] Nikolai Berdiaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography,* London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950, p. 145.

[73] Nikolai Berdiaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act, (Smysl Tvorchetva),* Donald Lowrie trans, London: Collier Books, 1962, p. 238.

The association of Gippius with hermaphroditism was the corollary of her success as an artist and cultural figure - a misogynistic attempt to explain her incursion into the supposedly 'masculine' world of literature and art.[74] It was the opposite and complementary view to that which argued Gippius' Decadence, which similarly sought to exclude her from the 'masculine' sphere of the intellect as a result of her female nature. The growing strength of women's emancipation movements in Russia and across Europe in the late nineteenth century sparked a discernible intensification of misogynistic currents in much art and literature of the period, a powerful counter thrust to representations of the liberated and supposedly emancipated 'New Woman'.[75] The claim that Gippius was 'not all woman' was thus both a rhetorical slippage between the notions of bisexuality, asexuality, lesbianism, androgyny and hermaphroditism, and a misogynistic attempt to label her 'demonic' and 'freakish' despite her apparent acceptance as a figurehead of the Russian Modernist avant garde.

Abolishing Death, or the End of Procreation

Gippius' rejection of the supremacy of biology was underscored by a similar distaste for procreation and marriage, a prominent current in late nineteenth century Russian philosophy.[76] This philosophical 'crisis of filiation' was exemplified in Soloviev's *The Meaning of Love* (*Smysl Liubov'*) in which he argued that men and women should save sexual energy for a 'big bang' when this energy would be released collectively and

---

[74] The late nineteenth century in Western Europe saw a strengthening of the notion of literature and art as a 'male' sphere, as the virulently anti-nature aesthetic of Decadence excluded the female, supposedly 'natural' element. When French author George Sand died, Edmund de Goncourt declared that an autopsy must prove she was a hermaphrodite, as no *real* woman could write the books she did. See David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995. p. 20.

[75] See Djikstra, *Idols of Perversity,* for a masterly survey of misogyny in *fin de siècle* art and culture.

transform the world.[77] The origins of the *fin de siècle* anti-procreation discourse can be traced back to the influence of the mid-nineteenth century philosopher Nikolai Fedorov, who first promoted the idea that, in procreating, humans were surrendering to nature.[78] In his *Philosophy of the Common Cause* (*Filosofia Obschego Dela*) Fedorov elucidated his central thesis that birth was the precursor to death, and articulated his desire to 'abolish death' by making birth obsolete.[79] Fedorov developed a cult-like following both during his lifetime, when admirers would flock to his office at the Rumiantsev Museum in St Petersburg, and after his death, when followers transformed his erratic and scattered writings into a coherent philosophy in *Philosophy of the Common Cause.*[80] The best known attempt to enact Fedorov's theories in real life was that of Symbolist poet Aleksandr Blok, who declared his refusal to have children and maintained a celibate relationship with his wife Liubov Mendeleeva (also involved in a complex ménage à trois with Andrei Belyi).[81] The concept of utopia as freedom from reproduction reflected a deep strain of hostility towards the maternal in nineteenth century Russian thought, an often ignored counter-discourse to the myth of 'Mother Russia'.[82]

---

[76] Naiman, 'Historectomies' p. 256.

[77] Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 59. The term 'crisis of filiation' comes from Edward Said, who has identified anti-hereditary discourses as a significant trend in Modernist movements across Europe: as he argues, 'Modernism was a crisis in *filiation* - linear, biologically grounded processes that tie children to their parents.' Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, p. xiii.

[78] Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: the Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 30.

[79] Stephan Lukashevich, *N.F. Fedorov 1828-1903: A Study in Russian Eupsychian and Utopian Thought,* Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1977, pp. 18-19. The term 'abolish death' comes from Irene Masing-Delic, *Abolishing Death: A Salvation Myth of Russian Twentieth Century Literature,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.

[80] Lukashevich, *N.F. Fedorov,* p. 303; Irene Masing-Delic, 'The Transfiguration of Cannibals: Fedorov and the Avant-Garde,' in John E. Bowlt and Olga Matich, *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment,*' Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 17-36.

[81] For an account of the triangular relationship between Blok, Mendeleeva and Belyi, see Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* pp. 89-126.

[82] Naiman, *Sex in Public,* p. 44. For symbolism associated with the myth of Mother Russia see Joanna Hubbs, *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture,* Bloomington: University of Illinois Press,

On hearing of Blok's intended marriage, Gippius wrote to him and warned him that marriage was in 'disharmony' with his poetry, as she perceived a dissonance between the mystical, Soloviev-ian themes of his poems and the mediocrity of *quotidienne* domesticity (*byt*).[83] Gippius' account of her own marriage to Merezhkovsky when she was nineteen emphasises her rejection of the normative paradigm of marriage and maternity. As Vladimir Zlobin, her private secretary, recounted, on the evening of her marriage she claimed to have gone to bed 'forgetting she was married'. The next morning, when her mother called through the door, 'You're still sleeping and your husband is here. Get up!' she exclaimed 'My husband? How astonishing!'[84] Gippius made a concerted effort to assert her independence from Merezhkovsky. Like her younger British contemporary, she understood the need for a room of her own: in their St Petersburg apartment, she and Merezhkovsky had separate rooms and separate studies, in which Gippius always entertained her own guests.[85] In an interesting switch of gender roles, Zlobin states that Gippius 'fertilised' where Merezhkovsky 'gestated' ideas, and thus the couple replaced literal procreation with literary progeny which, in the case of Gippius, were then used to undermine the notion of woman's maternal role.[86]

Perhaps the greatest manifestation of Gippius' rejection of the procreative ideal was her

---

1988.

[83] Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* pp. 96-97. Gippius considered Blok at this time to be her disciple: she had published his 'Poems to the Beautiful Lady' (*Stikhi O Prekrasnoi Dame*) in her journal *New Way* (*Novyi Put*) in March 1903. She was thus particularly disturbed by his decision to marry Liubov, purportedly the ideal woman in his 'Beautiful Lady' poems. Jennifer Presto, 'Unbearable Burdens: Aleksandr Blok and the Modernist Resistance to Progeny and Domesticity,' *Slavic Review,* 63:1, 2004, p. 14.

[84] Vladimir Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 41.

[85] Karlinsky, Introduction to *A Difficult Soul,* p. 8; Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 179.

[86] Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul,* p. 45.

own ménage à trois, which would be one of the defining acts of Gippius' 'life creation'. She met Dmitri Filosofov for the first time in 1897, and by 1900 was professedly in love with him, choosing him as the third member of the 'Trinity', or inner 'church' she and Merezhkovsky decided to form as part of their nascent plans to inspire a new religious consciousness among the Russian intelligentsia.[87] In her mystical union of three, Gippius achieved a semiotic subversion of the marriage/procreation ideal, which she believed sanctified her erotic love for Filosofov. As she wrote to Filosofov in 1905,

> It often seemed to me, I felt, that in relation to you and with you I could do and feel only what I could do before Christ, under His gaze, indeed, in His very presence. That is, so that He not only could be present, but absolutely had to be present. This much I do know about myself and about the fleeting moments of the prelude to my love for you: they were, for all their carnality, transparent, open to God's gaze.[88]

Many of their friends began to address the three collectively in letters: Viacheslav Ivanov wrote to them as 'dear trio' (*dorogoe trio*).[89] As Karlinsky dryly notes, it was the tragedy of Gippius' life that she chose as her beloved a homosexual man who could not return her affections: her attraction to the effeminate Filosofov was, however, arguably another manifestation of her eschewal of normative gender roles.[90] Gippius' letters to Filosofov reveal that far from the 'erotophobia' with which historians such as Matich have charged

---

[87] For a first hand account of the tempestuous relationship between Gippius and Filosofov see Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul,* pp. 77-133.

[88] Cited in Matich, *Erotic Utopia*, p. 200.

[89] Matich, *Erotic Utopia*, p200.

[90] Karlinsky, Introduction to *A Difficult Soul,* p14. Filosofov was not shy about expressing his distaste for physical relations with Gippius; in a letter written in the summer of 1905 he declared, 'Today you used my cigarette holder, and I can no longer use it because it arouses in me a specific feeling of disgust…Before we were intimate that wouldn't have happened…' Cited in Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul,* pp. 86-87. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has suggested, the erotic love triangle, far from representing ahistorical, deadly symmetry, can act as a 'sensitive register for delineating relationships of power and meaning,' and for making the play of desire and empowerment in which individuals are involved at various points in history intelligible. According to Sedgwick's reasoning, Gippius' menage a trois could be seen not only as a subversion of the monogamous, marital norm but a means of exercising vicarious sexual power through the juxtaposition of erotic and platonic relationships. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, pp. 21-27.

her, Gippius did not fear sex or physical love: it was sex for the purpose of procreation she found repugnant, not sensuality itself.[91]

In 'Contes d'Amour' Gippius declared that she could 'accept love and sensuality if it were possible to change them into a new, different kind of love, as well as a new, infinite sensuality.'[92] Her faith in the sacred nature of sexuality did not preclude physical expressions of love; rather, it held that they were permissible, and indeed desirable, having been illuminated, she believed, by Christ. While Gippius premised her construction of sexuality on the rejection of heterosexism, she also fashioned her sexual dissidence around her non-biological interpretation of gender. Her protest against the notion of gender dimorphism adapted existing avant garde preoccupations with androgyny and holy flesh, rejecting the essentialism that characterised the theories of other 'philosophers of Eros' such as Vladimir Soloviev and Nicholas Berdiaev. Gippius' contemporaries were fascinated by the spectre of her female body, characterising it as either the eroticised flesh of the *femme fatale* or what they perceived as the physiological asexuality necessitated by hermaphroditism. Rather than succumb to such

[91] The idea that both Gippius and her predecessors in the anti-procreation discourse, such as Soloviev, were incapable of engaging in the physical aspects of their preoccupation with sexuality has been perpetuated by a number of historian of Russian Modernism, not least of all literary historians of Gippius' work such as Pachmuss ("Aware of her own sensuality, Gippius did not wish to succumb to purely physical love,' *Zinaida Gippius,* p. 86.) and Matich , who argues in *Erotic Utopia* that none of Gippius' (many) affairs were consummated (pp. 179-190). For her accusation of 'erotophobia' see Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 187.

characterisations, Gippius turned her body into both an expression of her sexual subjectivity and tool to reclaim agency through gender indeterminacy.

[92] Gippius, ‘Contes d'Amour,’ p. 74.

From Symbolism to Mysticism

Gippius and the New Religious Consciousness, 1900-1905

As her belief in erotic love sanctified through Christ demonstrates, Gippius' spiritual yearnings were not confined to her poetic mysticism. Rather they informed a fervent, if unconventional, devotion to Christianity. Around 1900, Gippius' search for personal enlightenment began to develop into a utopian belief in the possibility of a 'new religious consciousness' to transform Russia into a society premised on sexual freedom and gender dissolution. In September 1901, Gippius declared resolutely to Merezhkovsky, 'We want to found a new Church. Our symbols have not yet translated into actions. In other words, we have only taken half a step towards our temple, but not taken any step towards our Church.'[1] The foundation of this new Church was destined to become Gippius' 'Cause' (*glavnoe),* the private articulation of which was the formation of the 'holy' inner circle of three, Gippius, Merezhkovsky and Filosofov. Its public manifestation was the foundation, in 1901, of the Religious-Philosophical Meetings, which subsequently became an important forum for discussion of religious questions among the St Petersburg intelligentsia. Prominent *intelligenti* such as Vasilli Rozanov, a proto-conservative who courted controversy with his often contradictory views on sex, Judaism and Orthodoxy, used the meetings to debate 'questions about the spirit and the flesh... the relationship

[1] Zinaida Hippius, 'About the Cause,' in Zinaida Hippius, *Between Paris and St Petersburg: The Selected Diaries of Zinaida Hippius,* Temira Pachmuss ed, Urbana: University of Illinois, 1975, pp. 118-119.

between church and art, between marriage and celibacy, between Gospels and paganism'.[2] Rozanov, like Gippius, rejected the Cartesian separation of 'spirit' and 'flesh', opposing clergy present at the meetings who insisted on this distinction. However, while Rozanov defended the unity of spirit and flesh by asserting the *natural* quality of sex, as evidenced by its necessity for procreation, Gippius rejected altogether biological definitions of sexuality. The polemic over questions of sex and procreation, between Rozanov on one side, and Gippius and Merezhkovsky on the other, was played out both in the Religious Philosophical Meetings and the pages of *Novyi Put* (The New Way), the journal Gippius and Merezhkovsky founded in 1902 to disseminate the discussions of the Religious Philosophical Society. It serves as a case study to highlight Gippius' radical non-biologism and the centrality of a noumenal conceptualisation of flesh to her repudiation of Cartesian dualism, in turn demonstrating the powerful interaction between her unorthodox religious beliefs and unconventional sexual philosophy.

The Religious-Philosophical Meetings

The Religious Philosophical Meetings commenced in late 1901, under the aegis of Gippius and Merezhkovsky, the latter of whom received permission for their foundation during a private audience with Pobedonostsev, the procurator of the Holy Synod.[3] The meetings of the Society took place in the context of a resurgent interest in religion among the Russian intelligentsia in the early twentieth century, a trend pervasive enough to be

[2] Vasilii Rozanov, 'On the Sweetest Jesus and the Bitter Fruits of the World', (1911) in Martha Bochachevsky-Chomiak and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *A Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia 1890-1917,* Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1982, p. 97.
[3] See Zinaida Gippius-Merezhkovskaya, *Dmitry Merezhkovsky,*Paris: 1951, p. 92, cited in Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 212.

described by contemporaries as a 'Russian religious renaissance'.[4] This had been foreshadowed in the late nineteenth century by Vladimir Soloviev's return to religious philosophy and popular explorations of the occult and the supernatural.[5] While Gippius' early work in the 1890s had often explored her own search for religious enlightenment, it had been characterised by a tension between her sensual and erotic aesthetic (and sexually dissident practice), and her desire for spiritual transcendence, as articulated in her 1895 poem 'Grizelda',

Oh tell me, wisest tempter

Dark Spirit could you be?

The Misconstrued Perceptor

Who Teaches us beauty?[6]

On 28 March 1893, she interrupted her diary of love affairs, 'Contes d'Amour' to record a plaintive cry, 'Oh Lord, Calm my heart! Alleviate my pain. Quiet my anger. Forgive me, absolve me!…Oh Lord, calm my heart!'[7] Her spiritual distress may have been in part the result of an internal struggle over the course of the 1890s: as she declared in 'Contes d'Amour' on 17 October 1898, 'As soon as I, assuming that the flame of my flesh is sensual desire, lead my body in this direction - my flames die out. Does this mean - depravity? That is, evasion?'[8] By the early twentieth century, her heart was indeed calmer, its turmoil quelled by her decision that spirituality and sensuality could be

---

[4] Nicholas Berdiaev, *Dream and Reality,* London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950, p. 140.

[5] Evtuhov, Catherine. *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 1-21; Bochachevsky-Chomiak and Rosenthal, *Revolution of the Spirit,* pp. 1-80.

[6] Zinaida Gippius, 'Grizelda,' in Vladimir Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 134.

[7] Zinaida Hippius, 'Contes D'Amour,' (28 March 1893), in Zinaida Hippius, *Between Paris and St Petersburg: The Selected Diaries of Zinaida Hippius,* Temira Pachmuss ed, Urbana: University of Illinois, 1975, p. 65.

reconciled, that sex could be 'exalted', a fundamental tenet of her 'new church'.[9] Her rejection of sexual repression found a spiritual outlet in *glavnoe,*[10] and any fears she may have had regarding the ability to reconcile her sexually experimental behaviour and deep religiosity were quelled by her belief that sex was, indeed, transcendental; as a 'non-rational means of cognition', it enabled humans to reach God.[11] In one of her last entries in 'Contes d'Amour', in December 1900, she mused 'The fact is that everything has changed, and therefore, the place where I speak about my flesh, about my voluptuousness, about the flame of my amorousness - for me, my conscience, is no longer cursed, no longer a pit.'[12] In poetry, she now declared confidently,

So I surrender my daring soul,

To the Creator of my Torment,

The Lord has said, 'I will send a White Garment

To him who triumphs.[13]

---

[8] Gippius, 'Contes d'Amour,' (17 October 1898), p. 73.

[9] Merezhkovsky declared that, 'The soul needs divine ecstasy (sex) in order to survive,' as sex is 'the endless road to Resurrection, the vain striving of the two halves to unity…uniting and disintegrating anew.' D S Merezhkovsky, *Taina trekh,* 1903, pp. 332-33, cited in Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality.* The Hague: Martin Nijihof, 1975, pp. 107-108. Rosenthal elucidates well the source of Merezhkovsky's philosophy of sex in both his own 'introspective orientation,' and the Russian sectarian tradition (manifested, for example, in the *khlysty,* a self-flagellating sect who preach asceticism but allowed free intercourse between 'brothers and sisters of their communities'). However, her analysis of the evolution of Merezhkovsky's beliefs with regards to 'holy flesh,' is compromised by the assertion that his 'preoccupation with sex reflects the post-Victorian reaction to repression,' a contention difficult to justify in the light of the pioneering work Laura Engelstein, has done, *pace* Foucault, to demonstrate the continuity between the *fin de siècle* preoccupation with 'the sexual question,' and the earlier proliferation of sexual discourses, which, far from repressed, were aided in their multiplication by socio-legal attempts to curtail them in the nineteenth century. See Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992. On the fascination of many Russian Modernists with the *khlysty* see George Ivask, 'Russian Modernist Poets and the Mystic Sectarians,' in Gibian and Tjalsma, *Russian Modernism*, pp. 56-82.

[10] *Glavnoe* was the name Gippius gave to private efforts to which she, Merezhkovsky and Filosofov made to found a new 'inner' church, as outlined in Chapter 2.

[11] Rosenthal, *D S Merezhkovsky,* p. 107.

[12] Zinaida Gippius, 'Contes d'Amour,' (19 December 1900), p. 78.

[13] *I otdaiu ia dushu smeluiu / Moe stradan'e Sotvoruvshemu. / Skazal Gospod': 'Odezhdu beluiu / Ia posylaiu – pobedivshemu!'* Zinaida Gippius, 'A White Garment', in Temira Pachmuss, *Women Writers in Russian Modernism,* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978, p. 33. This mood of spiritual triumphalism

No longer perceiving any tension between her faith in God, and her use of her body as a protest against confining heteronormativity and sexual dimorphism, Gippius began to proselytise the reconciliation of spirit and flesh in her poetry, prose, and essays, placing 'holy flesh' at the centre of the new Church she longed to establish.

Holy Flesh and Sacred Blood

Gippius' faith in the sanctity of erotic love found literary representation in her play 'Sacred Blood' (*Sviataya Krov'*), published in 1901. 'Sacred Blood' tells the story of a young *rusalka* (mermaid) who longs for a human soul and ultimately kills the only person she loves, the hermit Father Pafnuty, in order to obtain his soul through blood sacrifice.[14] The *rusalka* epitomises the paradigmatic 'fleshly' woman; soulless, she is characterised by her eroticised flesh. This raises the ire of Pafnuty's ascetic novice Nikodim, who attempts to beat her when she first appears, naked, at the hermit's hut.[15] The *rusalka's* gendered body haunts the stern ascetic, who labels her 'impure', 'unclean', and 'Satan's breed'.[16] Nonetheless, the *rusalka* is ultimately able to transgress the apparent incommensurability of her *female* flesh and Nikodim's *male* spirit, as Father Pafnuty agrees to baptise her in order to grant her a soul. Informed by Nikodim that Pafnuty may lose his own soul as a result, the *rusalka* kills Pafnuty, despite the fact that his blood was 'dearer to me than my own', in order that she may obtain her soul without jeopardising his immortality.[17] The

---

is also well reflected in two of Gippius' poems from 1905, 'Incantation' (*Zaklinanie*) and 'Wedding Ring' (*Brachnoe Kol'tso*); see Catriona Kelly ed. *An Anthology of Russian Women's Writing,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 168-169, Russian text pp. 424-425.

[14] 'Blood-letting imagery' was one of the recurrent motifs of Gippius' poetry; see for example *Zaklinanie* (Incantation) in Kelly ed. *An Anthology of Russian Women's Writing,* pp. 169, Russian text p. 425.

[15] Zinaida Gippius, 'Sacred Blood,' in Katherine E. Kelly, *Modern Drama by Women 1880s-1910,* London: Routledge, 1996, p. 288.

[16] Gippius, 'Sacred Blood,' p. 292.

[17] Gippius, 'Sacred Blood,' p. 297.

rusalka represents the stereotype of female as demonic 'Other', whose desire to divest herself of her 'Otherness' challenges the hegemony of the supernaturalism with which 'woman' was invested by Soloviev, and later, his followers Blok and Belyi, in their cult of the Eternal Feminine.[18] In 'Sacred Blood', Gippius presented a critique of traditional Orthodox asceticism, favouring an emotional intuitive response to religion as opposed to a strictly rational one.[19] Once again, the presence of a *trio* negates the possible implications of a binary dualism; with Nikodim as the Orthodox ascetic, Parfnuty as the loving sensualist, and the *rusalka* as the supernatural 'other' who manages to pass from (and thus synthesise) paganism to Christianity and gain her soul. In 'Sacred Blood', Gippius presented a female hero who defies the dictates of male censure to seize her own violent fate. Through this character, Gippius underlined the role she envisaged for the 'new religious consciousness', to undermine the strict gender binary which had characterised 'historical Christianity', and rehabilitate the transcendent power of Eros in a religion which should, she argued, embrace the flesh as it did the spirit.[20]

Confronting the Cartesian Subject

Gippius' attempt to rehabilitate sex as a religious and spiritual experience coincided with

---

[18] Catherine Schuler, Introduction to Zinaida Gippius, 'Sacred Blood,' p. 278.

[19] Joanna Kot, 'Manipulating Distance in Zinaida Gippius' Drama Holy Blood: A Well-Balanced Experiment,' *The Slavic and East European Journal,* 40:4, 1996, p. 654.

[20] In her essay, 'Zinaida Gippius: An Unwitting and Unwilling Feminist,' Catherine Schuler claims any 'feminist' subtext in 'Sacred Blood' is the unintentional result of Gippius' immersion in a social climate imbued with the ideals of bourgeois feminism, despite Gippius' own antipathy towards the women's movement. See Catherine Schuler, 'Zinaida Gippius: An Unwitting and Unwilling Feminist' in Karen Laughlin and Catherine Schuler, *Theatre and Feminist Aesthetics,* Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995, pp. 131-147. However, I would argue that the repudiation of feminism that Schuler puzzles over in Gippius' biography in far from a contradiction of the 'discourse of resistance' she posits in 'Sacred Blood.' Any 'feminist' subtext is the result of a *conscious* decision to reject the gender binary, rather than the unintentional result of a vague proliferation of bourgeois feminist ideas among *fin de siècle* intelligentsia. Gippius' rejection of these ideas is a conscious and deliberate repudiation of the discourse of *difference* on which liberal feminism in early twentieth century Russia was premised (see Linda

Merezhkovsky's critique of 'historical Christianity' which he contrasted with the sensuality of pagan Greece in his trilogy *Christ and Anti-Christ.*[21] In attempting to reconcile the religious and pagan poles of his thought, Merezhkovsky developed a dialectic whereby Christianity and paganism would be synthesised in a Third Age, which would coincide with the Second Coming of Christ.[22] For Merezhkovsky, the central importance of the Trinity lay in its application to history and the identification of the Three Ages. In his *Christ and Anti-Christ* trilogy, the Age of the Father was manifested in the paganism of Julian the Apostate,[23] the Age of the Son in the Italian Renaissance;[24] and the Age of the Holy Spirit, predicted for the future, was presaged by the attempted synthesis of the pagan and Christian represented by Peter the Great and the Tsarevich Alexis.[25] The Third Age was the moment when 'historical Christianity' would give way to an acceptance of 'Holy Flesh', that is, the 'spark of God', in sexuality and sexual love.[26] The notion of Three Ages has a long heritage, and was most extensively developed by the twelfth century Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore, who argued that history must adapt to the structure of the Three Ages because God, its creator, is three Persons.[27] As Marjorie Reeves has argued, material on Joachim was available to nineteenth century thinkers in

---

Edmondson, *Feminism in Russia, 1900-1917:* London: Heinemann Educational, 1984.).

[21] Peter Christensen, 'Christ and Anti-Christ as Historical Novel,' *Modern Language Studies,* 20:3, 1990, p. 68.

[22] C H Bedford, 'Dmitry Merezhkovsky, the Third Testament and the Third Humanity,' *The Slavonic and Eastern European Review,* December 1963, pp144-157; Rosenthal, *D S Merezhkovsky,* pp. 96-97.

[23] Dmitri Merezhkovsky, *The Death of the Gods,* London: Constable & Co, 1920.

[24] Dmitri Merezhkovsky, *Leonardo da Vinci,* London: J M Dent, 1926.

[25] Dmirti Merezhkovsky, *Peter and Alexis,* New York: Modern Library, 1931.

[26] Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality,* The Hague: Martin Nijihoff, 1975, p. 106-108.

[27] Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought,* New York: Collier MacMillan, 1985, p. 161. Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202) wrote a number of influential theological texts in which he outlined his theory of the Three Ages of history and accompanying apocalyptic vision, including the *Liber Concordiae* and *Expositio in Apocalypsim.* These were subsequently disseminated throughout Europe and found their way into the libraries of royal courts, universities and religious communities from England to Sicily. See McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot,* pp. 3-25.

many forms, often mediated through the writings of later 'Joachite' prophets and religious thinkers.[28] In the case of Merezhkovsky, this was most likely Dante, one of the most important Western literary influences on the Russian thinker.[29] Merezhkovsky vociferously defended his belief in the 'third hypostasis', that would reconcile Christianity and 'the world', at the podium of the Religious-Philosophical Meetings and, from 1902, in the pages *Novyi Put.* Nikolai Berdiaev later recalled a speech Merezhkovsky made at one of the meetings in 1903, which typified the latter's aim to synthesis spirit and flesh:

> Until now it has seemed to us that to be a Christian means to love the sky, only the sky, rejecting the earth, detesting the earth. But here is Christianity - not as a rejection of the earth, not as a betrayal of the earth, but as a new, as yet untried 'faithfulness' to the earth, a new love for the earth, a new 'kissing of the earth.' It turns out that not only is it possible to love the sky and the earth together, but that, by the teaching of Christ, it is impossible to love them otherwise than together, it is impossible to love them separately.[30]

For Gippius, the notion of 'the three', or the Trinity, was no less important than it was for Merezhkovsky, although it was predicated on a more personal than historical conceptualisation. Gippius' Trinity represented an eschewal of the binary inherent in Cartesian dualism; that is, the Trinity was the reconciliation of spirit and flesh into 'Holy Flesh' (*vyliublennost)*.[31] As Henrietta Mondry has argued, *fin de siècle* Russian culture was based on the notion of 'two mutually exclusive types of things, physical and mental,

---

[28] Warwick Gould and Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Ninteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, pp. 3-5.

[29] Gould and Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the EternalEvangel,* p. 5.

[30] Nikolai Berdiaev, 'O novom religioznom soznanii,' reprinted in Nikolai Berdiaev, *Sub specie extremitatis* (St Petersburg, 1907), p. 347-348; cited in Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy* Ithaca: Cornell University Press*,* 1997, p. 78. As Evtuhov notes, in Slavic mythology the relations between the sky and the earth (and particularly rainfall) have heavy sexual connotations, which emphasised the sensual dimension of Merezhkovsky's desire to synthesise spirit and flesh.

[31] Gippius had earlier attempted to infuse religion with 'flesh' by attempting a 'discussion on the New Testament, namely, on the concept of flesh and blood', a project emblematic of her attempts to destroy the barrier between spiritual asceticism and sensuality. See Gippius, 'About the Cause,' (1899), p. 101.

body and mind'.[32] By repudiating the separation of spirit and flesh, Gippius was challenging a discursive hegemony that also reinforced the idea of biological difference between men and women. Following Cartesian dualism to its logical conclusion, the separation of mind (which was sexless) and body (which was sexed) meant that all gender difference *had* to derive from biology.[33] This difference was therefore 'natural' and could be used to uphold the superiority of one sex (males) over the other (females). Between 1901-1904, Gippius threw all her energies into subverting biological essentialism, and the notion of a separate spirit and flesh, by cultivating a new religious consciousness in both its external (the Religious-Philosophical Meetings and *Novyi Put*) and internal (the 'new church' of Gippius, Merezhkovsky and Filosofov) manifestations.[34] More than either Filosofov or Merezhkovsky, the latter of whom still placed his faith in Orthodoxy, Gippius emphasised the need to break away from the confining strictures of organised religion, and develop a faith based on individual consciousness, tolerance, and freedom of [sexual] expression.[35]

Rozanov's Philosophy of the Everyday

In their desire to inaugurate an era of 'holy flesh', Gippius and Merezhkovsky were most often associated, by their contemporaries, with Vasilii Rozanov, a journalist and literary

---

[32] Henrietta Mondry, 'Beyond the Boundary: Vasilii Rozanov and the Animal Body,' *The Slavic and East European Journal,* 43:4, 1999, p. 667. The continued centrality of the body/flesh dichotomy in the Russian *fin de siècle* demonstrates the extent to which 'the body politic of Modernism was characterised by binary categories and dualisms.' Mondry, 'Beyond the Boundary,' p. 667.

[33] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: From the Greeks to Freud,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 155-156.

[34] As she declared in 'Contes d'Amour,' on March 13 1901, 'I am afraid I will not reach my destination, that I may not give my whole being to the Cause…but at the present moment there is so much vital force within me.' Gippius, 'Contes d'Amour,' (13 March 1901), p. 83.

[35] On Merezhkovsky's belief in the value of 'Orthodoxy unfettered by the interference of the state,' see Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle,* p. 81.

critic who dreamed of establishing himself as a serious philosopher.[36] Rozanov was one of the most controversial figures of the Silver Age intelligentsia, and one of the few who achieved fame beyond the narrow circles of the Symbolist coterie, writing a column for the commercial daily newspaper *Novoe Vremia* (The New Times), as well as publishing articles in art journals such as *Novyi Put, Mir Isskustva* and Valery Briusov's *Zolotoe Runo* (Golden Fleece).[37] Fond of sexually explicit and scatological language, he was a notorious anti-Semite and frequently attacked the Orthodox Church and the sanctity of the figure of Christ.[38] Like Gippius and Merezhkovsky, to whom he was close at the turn of the century, Rozanov was eager to reconcile sensuality and sexuality with mysticism and spirituality. With this in mind he praised Judaism (paradoxically, in the light of his journalistic anti-Semitic tirades) for what he considered its 'earthy' spirituality, which he believed worshiped the phallus through the rite of circumcision.[39] Rozanov was the primary contributor to the debate on church dogma regarding celibacy and married life which consumed meetings twelve to sixteen of the Religious Philosophical Society.[40] For Rozanov celibacy was unacceptable because it was the negation of life, and Church law

---

[36] Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Fin de Siecle Russia,*Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, p. 212.

[37] Edith Clowes, 'Philosophy in the Breach: Rozanov's Philosophical Roguery and the Destruction of Civil Discourse,' in Edith Clowes, *Fiction's Overcoat: Russian Literature and the Question of Philosophy,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, p. 160. On the distinction between the daily newspapers such as *Novoe Vremia* and the 'thick journals,' whose readership was limited almost entirely to the intelligentsia who wrote for them, see Louise McReynolds, 'V M Doroshevich: The Newspaper Journalist and the Development of Public Opinion in Civil Society,' in Edith W Clowes, Samuel D Kassow and James L West, *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. 236-237.

[38] Anna Lisa Crone, *Rozanov and the End of Literature,* Wurzburg: Jal-Verlag, 1978, pp. 12-13. Rozanov's propensity for sexually explicit language elicited the condemnation of many, such as Nikolai Mikhailovski who deemed his work 'philosophical pornography,' and Andrei Belyi, who dubbed him '*plo'* for '*plot'* (flesh). See Dmitry Khanin, 'Beauty and the Beast: Vasilii Rozanov's Aesthetic and Moral Ideal,' *Russian Review,* 57:1, 1998, p. 73.

[39] See V V Rozanov, *V mire neiasnogo I ne reshining,* 2d ed, St Petersburg: 1904, pp. 355-358, cited in Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin de Siecle Russia,*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 323.

[40] Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* pp. 216-217.

was, he argued, hypocritical for its arbitrary distinction between de jure and de facto marriage.[41] Rozanov shared Gippius' desire to purge Christianity of its Puritanism with regards to sex. The purpose of the meetings, he exclaimed, was to 'pour religion into sex itself'.[42] Where he differed from her, however, was his belief that sex should be sanctified because it, like eating, drinking and praying, was *natural,* a fact amply demonstrated by its necessity for the procreation of the species: for Rozanov, a pregnant woman was the most sacred being on earth.[43] Rozanov argued that newlyweds should consummate their marriage in churches, staying there until they have conceived, resulting in, he claimed, 'the veil of the Fata Morgana falling from the eyes of the world'.[44] He took pleasure in making explicit references, in front of clergy, to menstrual blood, genitalia and childbearing.[45] This in turn helped to ground his philosophy of Eros soundly in a framework of strict gender demarcation. Women were defined, in Rozanov's discourse of sex, by their maternal role. Thus, despite his rejection of the Cartesian split between spirit and flesh, he retained the accompanying misogynistic rhetoric of woman as receptacle of

---

[41] As well as attacking Church doctrine on marriage in the Religious-Philosophical meetings, Rozanov decried them in articles such as 'O nekotorykh podrobnostiakh tserkovnogo vozzrenila na brak,' *Zapiski religiozno-filosofskii sobranii* (St Petersburg, 1906) pp. 294-303, in which he condemned the Church for its refusal to recognise monogamous relationships between unmarried couples; Khanin, 'Beauty and the Beast,' p. 75. Rozanov's attack on the marriage customs of the Orthodox Church was undoubtedly influenced by personal as well as ideological considerations: while unable to obtain a divorce from his first wife Appollinara Suslova, he lived for many years in a monogamous relationship with his common law wife Varvara Butygina, with whom he had a number of children. Khanin, 'Beauty and the Beast,' pp. 74-76.

[42] Vasilii Rozanov, *Religiya I Kultura,* Second Edition, St Petersburg, 1909, p. 197, cited in George Kline, *Religious and Anti-Religious Thought in Russia,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 68.

[43] Renato Poggioli, *Rozanov,* New York: Hillary House Publishers, 1962, pp. 15-22; Stephen C Hutchings, 'Breaking the Circle of the Self: Domestication, Alienation, and the Question of Discourse Type in Rozanov's Late Writings,' *Slavic Review,* 52:1, 1993, pp. 67-86; Clowes, 'Philosophy in the Breach,' p. 174; Khanin, 'Beauty and the Beast,' p. 74. In a famous study of Rozanov published in 1921, the Formalist critic Victor Shklovskii argued that, before Rozanov, 'family life (*semeinost'*), quilted comforters, kitchens and kitchen smells (without *satiric* intent) did not exist in literature.' V B Shklovskii, *Rozanov: Iz Knigi 'Sizhet, kak iavlenie stilia,'* Petrograd, 1921, pp. 10, 17, cited in Engelstein, *Keys to Happiness,* p. 316.

[44] '13-oe sobranie,' *Novyi Put* 8m 1903, p. 296, cited in Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 223.

[45] Clowes, 'Philosophy in the Breach,' p. 170-173.

man's fertilisation.[46]

Vyliublennost

Such an insistence on gendered differentiation could not have been anything but anathema to Gippius, whose repudiation of Rozanov's biological discourse of sex demonstrates the extent to which she refused all arguments of 'natural' sexual difference. In her diary 'About the Cause', Gippius recalls her disagreements with Merezhkovsky, who at first considered Rozanov's attempts to 'make sex public' as in accord with their own project to sanctify 'holy flesh'. She accused Rozanov of 'wanting God for the justification of sex'; by failing to accept the fundamental rejection of a biological discourse that enshrined sexual differentiation, Rozanov revealed himself as an opportunist who, in Gippius' eyes, used the doctrine of 'holy flesh' merely to justify his own unorthodox domestic arrangements.[47] Gippius' differences with Rozanov over the notion of 'Holy Flesh' reveal the extent to which her concept of *vyliublennost* (exalted love) was premised not merely on a belief that sex could be sanctified, but on a fundamental negation of gender differentiation. In her 1904 article entitled '*Vyliublennost*' Gippius directly addressed her differences with Rozanov. The Religious-Philosophical Meetings had, by now, been closed down by the same Pobedonostsev who gave permission for them to be held (on April 5, 1903, after twenty two meetings). Nonetheless, in '*Vyliublennost'* Gippius picked up many of the themes raised in the debates about celibacy and marriage, framing her article as a response to Rozanov's 'quick

[46] Rozanov deplored the modern women who, in his opinion, neglected their procreative mission to receive man's seed in their zeal for independence. 'The fate of a girl without children is horrible,' he bemoaned, 'A girl without children is a sinner. This is Rozanov's law for all of Russia.' V V Rozanov, *Opavshie list'ia,* St Petersburg, 1913, p. 169, cited in Engelstein, *Keys to Happiness,* p. 328.

and perhaps, careless lines' during the meetings in which he claimed the primacy of marriage and family over a conceptualisation of sexuality based on 'transfigurative flesh'.[48] Like Rozanov, Gippius argued that Christ, through his bodily incarnation, had sanctified the flesh, and thus only the flesh, in the realm of sex, with all its power affirms the *personal* in humans.[49] 'Christ himself represents the resolved riddle of sex. Love for man, for people, and for the whole world becomes holy and radiant through Love for Him.'[50] Sex was thus one of the mysteries of God's creation. However, it was not to be premised on 'desire and passion' (that is, the biological urges which Rozanov prioritised) alone, but rather on its unique ability to transform the individuality of separate personalities, into a union that nonetheless preserves the uniqueness of each. For Gippius, this was best represented by the kiss which, while physical, ensured the equality of both parties. 'Desire and passion stole the kiss from love (*vyliublennost*) because of greed a long time ago, when it was still asleep...in actuality, desire and passion don't need it at all. Animals don't have it; they implement the law of procreation honestly.'[51] The kiss represented sexual love *outside of* the need to procreate; such exaltation could extend to all forms of sexual intimacy, as long as they were motivated by 'transfiguration' and not mere procreation. *Vyliublennost* was consecrated flesh, sex for the transcendent purposes for which God gave it to humankind, and thus the doctrine of *vyliublennost*, formulated as a direct attack on Rozanov's organic eroticism, elucidated the fundamental importance of Gippius' anti-biological and anti-procreative discourse to her conceptualisation of sexuality.

---

47 Zinaida Gippius, 'About the Cause,' pp. 104-105.
48 Zinaida Gippius, 'Vyliublennost,' *Novyi Put,* 3, 1904, p. 200.
49 Gippius, 'Vyliublennost,'p. 208.
50 Gippius, 'Vyliublennost,' p. 200.

In early twentieth century Russia, social and cultural constructions of gender and sexuality were widely informed by the notion of a Cartesian split between spirit (associated with man) and flesh (associated with woman). Contributors to the Religious-Philosophical Meetings and *Novyi Put*, such as Gippius, Merezhkovsky and Rozanov, used these forums to question this doctrine, arguing that it was the unification of 'spirit' and 'flesh' that would lead to the recognition of sex as a transcendent, rather than corrupted, act. However, while Rozanov based his philosophy of 'sacred' sexuality on a strict demarcation of gendered roles, at the centre of which was a worship of procreation and woman as mother, Gippius refused such a construction, arguing instead for her concept of exalted love (*vyliublennost*). Christ, Gippius argued, illuminated the flesh, and thus it (and, by extension, sexuality) did not need to be justified through marriage and procreation, but was holy in itself. The flesh and the spirit were not opposites but unified equals, and were no more separate or demarcated than man or woman. Through *vyliublennost* Gippius was able to reconcile her fundamental belief in sexual freedom with her religious faith and 'Cause'. As she began to engage more with the revolutionary discourse among the intelligentsia of the early twentieth century, it was on this notion of sexual freedom and 'exalted love' that her hopes for utopian transformation of society would rest.

Gippius, 'Vyliublennost,' p. 200.

Part II

Utopia and Apocalypse -

Revolutionary Praxis 1905-1917

Proselytising the Sexual Revolution

1905-1914

The question of 'free love,' comes to the fore in any large-scale revolutionary movement. For some, it is revolutionary progress, liberation from the old traditional bonds that have ceased to be necessary, for others the eagerly accepted tenet is a convenient cover for all manner of free and easy relations between men and women.[1]

Frederick Engels

'To vanquish Tsarism, the Russian Revolution, the new Russia, must oppose it with an idea no less profound, no less universal than the idea of its enemy. The revolution must take a new route, conscious of its universal worth. We believe firmly that this will occur, because we have complete faith in Russia and the holy truth of our revolution.'[2] So declared Gippius in her revolutionary tract 'The True Force of Tsarism' (*La Vraie Force du Tsarisme*) published in Paris in 1906 as part of *Tsar and Revolution* (*Le Tsar et la Révolution*) a collection of essays by herself, Merezhkovsky and Filosofov.[3] In the years 1905 to 1914, Gippius developed a revolutionary program she proceeded to proselytise in articles, poetry, stories, and plays, which were permeated with the expressive and symbolic structures of a utopia of spiritual and sexual freedom. From the nascent

---

[1] Freidrich Engels, 'Kniga otkroveniya,' Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Sochineniya* Izd 2, vol 21, Moscow: Polizdat, 1962, p8; cited in Igor Kon, *The Sexual Revolution in Russia: From the Age of the Czars to Today,* James Riordan trans., New York: Free Press, 1995, p. 3.

[2] 'Pour vaincre le tsarisme la révolution russe, la Russie nouvelle, doit lui opposer une idée non moins profonde, non moins universelle que l'idée de son ennemi. La Revolution russe doit prendre une nouvelle voie consciente et avant valuer universelle. Et nous croyons fermement qu'elle le fera, parce que nous avons tous foi en la Russie et en la sainte verité de notre révolution.' Zinaida Hippius, 'La Vraie Force du Tsarism,' in Dmitrii Merezhkovsky, Zinaida Hippius and Dmitrii Filosoffof; *Le Tsar et la Révolution,* Paris: Mercure, 1907, p. 283. The national/international scope of Gippius' projected revolution was ambiguous. While most of her discussions of revolution, as in the above referenced quote, referred specifically to Russia or the Russian social and political context, she never specifically restricted her revolutionary goals to Russia alone, and spoke later in terms of a religious revolution of projected global proportions. There has been little examination of the way in which Gippius identitifed as or constructed herself as Russian or as European, an area beyond the scope of this thesis but nonetheless deserving of further study.

[3] Merezhkovsky, Hippius and Filosoffof; *Le Tsar et la Révolution.*

utopianism of her calls for sexual freedom and gender indeterminacy, as well as her hope for a socially transformative 'new religious consciousness', Gippius developed a radical vision of the dissolution of the state in favour of an anarchic order of 'religious sociality' (*religioznyi obshchestvennost*). As it had been during the Religious-Philosophical Meetings, the 'transfiguration of the flesh' was at the centre of Gippius' metaphysical outlook, and took on a new urgency as it became part of her revolutionary program. Gippius' projected revolution lacked any resonance with a popular movement; her utopian dreams were too cerebral and abstract to have a connection with the material conditions around which revolutionaries such as the Social Democrats organised. However, she did not completely deny the role of violent upheaval, as evidenced by her involvement with members of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (PSR). Between 1905 and 1914, Gippius' desire for sexual equality and gender freedom began to directly interact with wider agitation for revolutionary change in Russia, resulting in a doctrine of spiritual and sexual revolution, the nexus around which she developed a utopian program of social transformation.[4]

The Revolution of 1905

The year 1905 was one of political turbulence and social upheaval in Russia, exacerbated by the disastrous events of the Russo Japanese war, resulting in the destruction of the Imperial navy at Tsushima Strait in May that year. The tensions between the autocracy, the workers, the peasants and the radical intelligentsia ignited into a full scale revolt after

[4] In this thesis, I use the term 'sexual revolution' metaphorically to refer to Gippius' specific program of a change in *sexual* relations through *revolutionary* change, as opposed to using it specifically to refer to a broad period during which wide social change resulted in a shift in attitudes towards gender and sexuality, as the term is often used in reference to the 1920s and 1960s. See John Levi Martin, 'Structuring the

the slaughter of Father Gapon's protesters by the Tsar's troops in St Petersburg, on 9 January 1905, thereafter known as Bloody Sunday.[5] In urban centres the student demonstrations and workers' strikes lasted until October that year, at which point the Tsar issued a manifesto conceding to the liberals' constitutional demands.[6] Even after October, increasingly militant workers continued to protest, forming the St Petersburg Soviet in the same month.[7] The peasant uprising lasted until the summer of 1906, only put down decisively with the imposition of martial law throughout much of the countryside in the winter of 1906-1907.[8] The events of 1905 had a far reaching effect on the radical intelligentsia and artistic avant garde. For some, it led to the abandonment of the revolutionary dream, as disillusionment with the goal of social perfectibility fostered pessimism in art and philosophy.[9] This trend was typified by the publication, in 1909, of *Signposts* (*Vekhi*), a collection of articles attacking the nihilism the contributors believed had characterised Russian thought throughout the nineteenth century.[10] A number of *Vekhi*'s contributors were ex-Marxists who had become disillusioned with the maximalism and materialism of their former comrades, such as Nikolai Berdyaev, who argued that '[The Russian intelligentsia's] love for egalitarian justice, for social good, for

---

Sexual Revolution,' *Theory and Society,* 25:1, 1996, pp. 105-151, in particular pp. 105, 130.

5 The events of Bloody Sunday shocked even some supporters of the autocracy; Father Gapon was, after all, no revolutionary, but one of the organisers of the 'police unions' that had been set up to undermine the appeal of socialist groups. See Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, p. 25.

6 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 27. As Ascher has argued, from an orthodox Marxist view the events of 1905 could not be designated a 'revolution' at all, for political power was not transferred from one social class to another. However, as they were designated such by contemporaries, and continue to be referred to as such by historians, this thesis will retain the label 'revolution' for the political and social upheaval of 1905. See Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905,* p. 127.

7 Fitzpatrick, *Russian Revolution,* p. 26.

8 Fitzpatrick, *Russian Revolution,* p. 27.

9 Leopold Haimson, *The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955, p. 218.

10 Marshall Shatz ed., *Signposts: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Intelligentsia,* Marshall Shatz and Judith E. Zimmerman trans, Irvine: Charles Schlacks Jr, Publisher, 1986, p. xxvii. As well as Gershenzon,

the people's welfare…almost destroyed interest in truth.'[11] *Vekhi* elicited an immediate response from both left and liberal camps, attacked publicly by figures such as Lenin, Plekhanov and Merezhkovsky.[12] As the vehemence of the response to *Vekhi* indicated, there were many whose revolutionary goals had been strengthened rather than challenged in aftermath of 1905.

For Gippius, 1905 resulted not in pessimism but in a process of radicalisation, as her abstract notion of the need for social transformation developed into a more concrete program for a complete restructuring of Russian (and ultimately, global) society. Her frequent references to the events of 1905 in *Tsar and Revolution* highlight the centrality of that year to her new radicalism. As a result of the 1905 revolution, she declared, 'the living soul of the people has been uplifted.'[13] Gippius' revolutionary fervour can be detected in the social commitment she now considered a prerequisite of her art, asserting, 'We are using art to provide an evolution of the world towards the ultimate goal of

---

the other contributors to *Vekhi* were Sergei Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdyaev, A S Izgoev, Bogdan Kistiakovskii, Petr Struve, and Semen Frank.

[11] Struve, Bulgakov and Berdiaev were all former Marxists. See Marshall Shatz, Introduction to *Signposts,* p. x. For the 'crisis' of the intelligentsia see Stuart R Tomkins, 'Vekhi and the Russian Intelligentsia,' *Canadian Slavonic Papers,* Volume 2, 1957, p. 18. Nikolai Berdyaev, 'Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth,' in *Signposts,* p. 6. Berdiaev's essay also contained a vitriolic attack on the apparent proponents of Russian mysticism who are now 'inclined to place themselves at the disposal of traditional social objectives.' (*Signposts* p. 15). This is a barely veiled criticism of his former friends, Gippius and Merezhkovsky, who he would later satirise for their revolutionary altruism in his memoir *Dream and Reality.*

[12] Responses to *Vekhi* included: from the Bolsheviks, *Iz istorii noveishei russkoi literatury* ('From the History of the Most Recent Russian Literature,' Moscow: Zveno, 1910; in the case of the Mensheviks, *V zashchitu intelligenstsii,* ('In Defence of the Intelligensia') Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Zaria, 1909; the Socialist Revolutionary tract *Vekhi kak znamnie vremeni,* (Vekhi as a Sign of the Times), Moscow: Izdanie Zveno, 1910; and the Kadet collection *Intelligensia v Rossii* (Intelligentsia in Russia), St Petersburg: Knigoizdatel'stvo Zemlia, 1910. See Nikolai P Poltoratzky, 'The Vekhi Dispute and the Significance of Vekhi.' *Canadian Slavonic Papers,* IX, 1, 1967, pp. 92-93.

[13] 'L'ame vivante du people s'est soulevée.' Zinaida Gippius, 'La Révolution et la Violence,' in Merezhkosvky et al, *La Tsar et La Révolution,* p. 120.

mankind'.[14] Even her religious poetry became infused with the spirit of revolution; the almost liturgical 'Incantation' (*Zaklinanie*) of December 1905, culminates with the fervent appeal, 'Beat, heart, beat each heart in turn! / Rise up each unshackled soul!'[15] In Gippius' 1909 poem 'Petersburg' (*Peterburg*) she spoke of the 'red spots of revolution' on the banks of the Neva, declaring, 'These spots, the rust ones, settled deeply / One can't forget or tramp them clean!'[16] In 'Petersburg' Gippius was entering into a long tradition of writers who had presented the capital as a phantasmagoric city of death and destruction (from Pushkin's *Bronze Horseman* to Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*) and shades of this myth lent the revolutionary content of the poem an apocalyptic tenor.[17] The directly political themes in Gippius' art strengthened her hostility to any Decadent movement. In her 1905 essay, 'Decadence and Society', she argued that Decadence represented individualism atrophied, and as such, those artists who *did* consider themselves Decadents, such as Konstantin Bal'mont, were 'outside the flow of history, humanity, the struggle between the 'we' and the 'I'.[18] As Gippius' critique of the social inequities she perceived in Russian society (such as gender inequality, religious repression and heterosexism) became more radical, she began to argue that the only solution was the

---

[14] Gippius, 'Iz dnevnika zhurnalista,' *Russkaya Mysl,* 2, 1909, p. 157, cited in Olga Matich, 'The Dialectics of Cultural Return,' in Boris Gasparov, Robert P Hughes and Irina Paperno, *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism,* Berkeley: University of California, 1992, p. 60. Gippius had earlier expressed a similarly vehement defence of the use of art to convey religious and political ideals in her 1908 article, 'The Bread of Life,' (*Khleb Zhizni),* declaring that art that was not elevated by a higher purpose was merely a 'dry piece of bread, devoid of the life giving moisture that would transform it into the bread of life.' See Anton Krayny, 'Khleb Zhizni,' *Literaturny Dnevnik 1899-1907,* St Petersburg, 1908, p. 13, cited in Temira Pachmuss, *Zinaida Gippius: An Intellectual Profile,* Carbondale: Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 433.

[15] *Beisia serdtse, kazhdoe, - otdel'noe / Voskresai, dysha osvobozhdennaya!'* Zinaida Gippius, *Zaklinanie* (Incantation), in Catriona Kelly (ed), *Anthology of Russian Women Writers,*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 169, Russian text p. 435.

[16] *Te piatna, rzhavye, vkipeli, / Ikh ni zabyt', - ni zatoptat'...* Zinaida Gippius, 'Petersburg,' in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks, *Modern Russian Poetry,* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, p. 80.

[17] Katerina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution,* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 3-16; David Bethea, *The Shape of the Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 125.

complete destruction of the current political and social order.

Personality, Sex and Society: The Revolutionary Triad

In 1906 Gippius, Merezhkovsky and Filosofov travelled to Paris, where they spent two years attempting to garner support for their 'Cause' and make contacts with other revolutionary émigrés.[19] It was while there that Gippius, always obsessed with numerology, developed her theory that 'everything was contained in 1,2,and 3', and that metaphysically, the one, two and three represented 'Personality, Sex and Sociality'.[20] This theory underlines the systematic nature of Gippius' thought: her numerological preoccupations provided the structural basis of her philosophy, which was influenced by occult numerical systems, and Western philosophical schools such as that of Joachim of

---

[18] Anton Krayny (Zinaida Gippius), 'Decadence and Society,' 1905, in Ronald Peterson, *Russian Symbolism: an Anthology of Critical and Theoretical Writings,* Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986, pp. 75.

[19] While in Paris, Gippius' did not restrict her social network to the Russian émigré population; she was also well known to prominent French intellectuals such as Henri Bergson and Anatole France. Early twentieth century Paris attracted a number of sexual dissidents from around the world, particularly in the case of lesbian culture, led by figures such as Americans Nathalie Clifford Barney and Renee Vivien. Barney was notable for her attempt to 'systematically set about creating her unique protest against heterosexism,' through the foundation of a group of 'Sapphist' poets whose open advocacy of lesbian practices attracted disciples such as Collette and Gabriele d'Annunzio. Gippius, whose interest in sexually dissident behaviour while in Paris was demonstrated by her visit, with Andrei Belyi, to a well known gay bar in 1907, could well have come into contact with Barney through her involvement in Parisian artistic circles. On Barney and Vivien see Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women who loved Women 1778-1928.* Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004*,* pp. 177-188. Andrei Belyi recounts his nocturnal wanderings with Gippius in Andrei Belyi, *Mezhdu Dvukh Revoliutsii,* Moscow: Khudozhestvennia Literatura, 1990, pp. 154-155. In the same memoir, he recalls that while in Paris Gippius and Filosofov both read Richard von Krafft-Ebbing's influential sexological text *Psychopathia Sexualis.* Belyi does not record their response to this work; it is, however, unlikely that Gippius, with her virulent hostility towards congenital and biological conceptualisations of sexuality, would have approved of Krafft-Ebbing's pathologising of dissident sexualities. See Belyi, *Mezhdu Dvukh Revoliutsii,* p. 158.

[20] Zinaida Gippius, 'About the Cause' in Hippius, Zinaida. *Between Paris and St Petersburg: The Selected Diaries of Zinaida Gippius*. Temira Pachmuss ed. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1975, p. 140. Gippius' interest in numerology was also manifested in her emphasis on the number 8, which she used to explain her understanding of bisexuality; that is, the correspondence of two equal circles, one male and one female, which acted in a symbiotic relationship in the true, bisexual personality. See Pachmuss, *Zinaida Gippius,* p. 93. She had first expressed her notion of the significance of Three in a letter to Filosofov in March 1905, declaring 'All of a sudden a thought occurred to me. This thought, I feel, is very important: it is One, Two and Three!.' See Zinaida Hippius to Dmitri Filosofov, March 12 1905, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius,* p. 83.

Fiore, whose complex system of threes and sevens so infiltrated the Trinitarian philosophy of Merezhkovsky.[21] Personality, Sex and Society exemplified the reconciliation Gippius attempted to broach between the individualism that had informed her idealistic outlook of the 1890s, and the theory of spiritual 'sociality' (as opposed to 'socialism') which became increasingly central to her thinking after 1905. It highlighted the new role Gippius' erotic philosophy of *vyliublennost* was to play in her revolutionary program, a program that saw Sex (and more precisely, sexual freedom) as an integral component of the new utopian society. According to the triad of Personality, Sex and Sociality, all people would be united in a collective body, through a dialectic synthesis of Personality (One), and Sex (Two), ensuring the satisfaction of everyone's personal, erotic and social needs.[22]

For Gippius, Personality represented the importance of tolerance for human uniqueness and difference, for 'humanity is not a compact, homogenous mass - but a mosaic picture, where each piece should resemble another, but be differentiated by colour, form, size and still each piece is nevertheless needed for the whole, fits tightly and wholly *in its own place*.'[23] The concept of 'Personality' was intrinsically connected to that of 'Sex', which for

---

[21] Joachim of Fiore, whose Trinitarian view of history so influenced later literary and philosophical currents (see p58, n27 above) developed within his theory of the Three Ages a complex system of biblical correspondences of sevens (for example, in the generations after Abraham, as listed in the Old Testament). This he used to elucidate the periodisation of the three *status.* His system can be found in a broad array of Western iconographical manifestations, such the Sistine Chapel. See Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsh-Reich, *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, pp. 3-8, 170-172.

[22] Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's* Fin de Siecle*,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004*,* p. 204.

[23] Gippius, 'Decadence and Society,' in Peterson, *The Russian Symbolists,* p. 71. As Simon Karlinsky has argued, 'She (Gippius) believed that the coming revolution would give people a freedom of choice in their pursuit of religious experience and permit alternate lifestyles for those individuals for whom the traditional heterosexual family life were not suited.' Simon Karlinsky, Introduction to Vladimir Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 16. Gippius' belief in religious freedom had long been evidenced by her support of sectarians such as the *khlysty*, who continued to suffer persecution at the

Gippius represented the 'two in one', the perfect union of two individuals who nonetheless retain their uniqueness.[24] This idea was closely linked to that of *vyliublennost,* which necessitated the *equality* of the two individuals involved, allowing the sexual act to be elevated to the sphere of holiness Gippius believed it rightly occupied.[25] Thus Gippius' two central leitmotivs, freedom and equality, overlapped and interacted in her utopian vision, to be brought about by religious revolution and the stimulation of a new religious consciousness. The final concept, that of 'Sociality', was in many ways the synthesis of the first two, and required their manifestation in society before it could be achieved. Religious sociality encompassed the diminution of the ego in favour of the collective, via the experience of Sex (which would teach one to unite with another without losing a sense of uniqueness).[26] It would 'combine the loftiest aspirations of mankind on earth with the power of God', and Gippius likened its 'collective nature' to socialism, which, divested of its inherent atheism, would become 'righteous and divine only if based on people's religious consciousness.'[27]

Religious sociality formed the structural framework of the post revolutionary utopian society Gippius envisaged; politically, this would take the form of anarchic theocracy. For Gippius, theocracy entailed a combination of religious sociality and anarchism. Her conceptualisation of theocracy owed much to Vladimir Soloviev's theory of the state,

---

hands of the administration even after 1905.

[24] Gippius first expressed the connection between Personality and Sex two years earlier, before they began to form part of her revolutionary program, in her article *Vyliublennost.* She declared, 'Only the Flesh, in the realm of sex, with all its power, affirms the *personal* in humans.' Gippius, 'Vyliublennost,' *Novyi Put,* 3, 1904, p. 200.

[25] Gippius, 'Vyliublennost,' p. 208.

[26] Pachmuss, *Zinadia Gippius,* pp. 168-172.

[27] Z. Hippius, 'Otkrytoe pis'mo redaktoru *Russkoy Mysli,' Russkaya Mysl*, 5, 1914, p. 133, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius,* p. 168.

which held that theocracy, the ideal social order, would work as a three-fold power - royal (tsarist) power, the power of priesthood, and prophetic power.[28] The state in Soloviev's theocracy was accorded no purpose in itself, but rather a 'higher destination' sanctified by God.[29] As he asserted, 'The inner human good or justice or pity is organised in the State which grows more perfect by extending the domain of justice and mercy at the expense of violence and arbitrariness.'[30] Gippius, however, took Soloviev's concept of religious sociality and divested it of its attachment to the state, synthesising it with the contemporary revolutionary ethos by removing the autocrat and replacing it with the power of Soloviev-ian 'All-Unity' itself.[31] For her, theocracy had to contain a paradoxical element of anarchism, as all states are based on force and therefore suppress individuality, failing to recognise the tripartite nature of society in which all parts (Personality, Sex and Society) must exist and interact.[32] According to Gippius, in the new society, voluntary acceptance of Christ's law (love) and recognition of Christ as the sole ruler will replace legal force, and thus her anarchy was 'religious rebellion against the infallibility of the state'.[33] The Tsar, as manifestation of the state, was the greatest obstacle to the instigation of religious sociality; as such, he was a religious as well as secular oppressor. Gippius expressed this view in her declaration to Merezhkovsky and Filosofov, in July 1905, that 'Autocracy is from the Anti-Christ!', thus fusing her desire

---

[28] Michael Klimenko, 'Solov'ev's Vision of Theocracy: Utopia and Reality,' in Wil van den Berken, Manon de Courten and Evert van der Zweerde, *Vladimir Soloviev: Reconciler and Polemicist.* Leuven: Peeters, 2000, p. 446.

[29] N O Lossky, *A History of Russian Philosophy,* London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952, p. 95.

[30] Vladimir Solovyov, *The Justification of the Good,* Nathalie A Duddington trans., London: Constable and Company, 1918, p. 473.

[31] On Soloviev's concept of All-Unity as the fusion of human creativity, knowledge and social practice, see Edith Clowes. *Fiction's Overcoat: Russian Literary Culture and the Question of Philosophy.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, p104; Andrezj Walicki, *History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979, p. 377, and Chapter 1 of this thesis.

[32] Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality.* The Hague: Martin Nijihof, 1975, p. 171.

for religious transfiguration and earthly revolution.[34] Despite the vehemence of her opposition to autocracy, Gippius failed to elucidate in any detail the form she believed the transition to anarchic theocracy would take (after revolution). Instead, she placed her faith in the transfigurative powers of religious sociality and the new religious consciousness, which would replace the need for a state or organised religion and ensure the free and equal relations of all members of society.[35]

Gippius' utopian theocratic vision was developed in conjunction, although not always in agreement, with Merezhkovsky and Filosofov. Filosofov was an inconsistent supporter of the revolutionary program, torn between endorsement of Gippius' plans and the political cynicism that he retained from his days in the *Mir Isskustva* group.[36] Merezhkovsky, having been convinced that 'Autocracy is from the Antichrist', shared Gippius' hopes for anarchic theocracy. However, while Gippius emphasised the tripartite nature of post-revolutionary society, he continued his earlier emphasis on the synthesis of paganism and Christianity, which he believed would be achieved by the Second Coming

---

[33] Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeivich Merezhkovsky,* p. 172.

[34] Gippius recalled making this statement, which in the case of Merezhkovsky came after many arguments over the nature of autocracy and the State, in her diary 'About the Cause,' p. 140. In 'The True Force of Tsarism' Gippius outlined the way in which 'propaganda from below' should be used to disseminate this idea that the Tsar is the Antichrist among the traditionally conservative peasantry who, once aware of the inherent evil in the institution of autocracy, would immediately abandon their support of it and agitate for a revolutionary overthrowal of the Tsar. Hippius, 'La Vraie Force du Tsarisme,' pp. 279-283.

[35] Gippius' letters and diaries from the period contain many references to her hopes for future 'religious sociality.' See especially Gippius, 'About the Cause,' pp. 145- 146, 151. Her antipathy towards the organised Orthodox Church in the early years of the twentieth century was manifested in both her personal efforts through *Glavnoe* to spark a New Religious Consciousness (one in which, she, a woman, was to play an equal role) and in the cessation of her efforts with Merezhkovsky to broach a reconciliation between the Orthodox Church and the Intelligentsia. See Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 269-270.

[36] While Filosofov was often as eager as Gippius to meet revolutionaries in Paris between 1906 and 1908, who fascinated him with their 'sacrificial' fervour, he had frequent periods of disillusionment with the revolutionary project between 1905 and 1914. In 1913, for example, he wrote to Gippius that 'Our collective [the triple union of Gippius, Merezhkovsky and Filosofov] is only a symbol. We have neither the strength or the right to embody it in a popular movement.' Dmitri Filosofov to Zinaida Gippius, 1913

of Christ.[37] This Second Coming would herald the dawn of the Age of the Third Testament, the culmination of Merezhkovsky's Joachite worldview of the tripartite division of history.[38] As Merezhkovsky argued in 1908, 'Just as the First Hypostasis was revealed in the Old Testament and the Second in the New, so shouldn't the Third be revealed in a Third to Come?'[39] This Third Testament would be a dialectic synthesis of the first two, and would be heralded by the reappearance of Christ bearing a sword; that is, by religious revolution, an idea that encapsulated Merezhkovsky's (and Gippius') belief in the 'intimate connection between the political liberation of Russia and its religious destinies.'[40]

A New Mysterious Marriage

Gippius' post-1905 utopian project was accompanied by her continued critique of traditional marriage and procreation discourse. She looked forward to a time when 'man and woman will form a new, *mysterious* marriage, a mystical union without selfishness and alienation from the world, when a husband and wife will retain their individual personalities in a higher sense of the word.'[41] In her 1907 story 'Miss May', the eponymous heroine refuses to marry her lover on the basis that such an action would undermine the physical and emotional manifestations of their love.[42] Miss May

---

(undated), cited in Matich, *Erotic Utopia,* p. 203.

37 Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky,* p. 11.

38 C. H. Bedford, 'Dmitry Merezhkovsky, the Intelligentsia and the Revolution of 1905,' *Canadian Slavonic Papers,* Volume 3, 1958, p. 39.

39 D S Merezhkovsky, 'Ne Mir, No Mech,' ('Not Peace, but the Sword'), in Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal. *Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia 1890-1924.* New York: Fordham University Press, 1990*,* p. 212.

40 Merezhkovsky, 'Ne Mir No Mech*,'* pp. 219-220*;* D S Merezhkovsky, 'My Life,' in Paul Selver, *Anthology of Modern Slavonic Literature in Prose and Verse,* London: K Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1919, p. 24.

41 Z. Hippius-Merezhkovskaya, *Dmitri Merezhkovsky,* Paris, 1951, p. 144.

42 Zinaida Gippius, 'Miss May,' *Aly Mech, rasskazy kniga pervaya,* St Petersburg, 1907, cited in

condemns 'trying to reduce God given love to a wedding, to a simple union, to a habit, to those ties which are invented by people themselves…whereas I love only real love.'[43] Children are a reminder of decay, not rejuvenation, and are represented in this Fedorovian light in stories such as 'The Pilgrim' [1908] and 'An Ordinary Event' [1912], as auguries of death, leaving grieving parents unable to transcend their phenomenal reality.[44] In her 1911 poem 'And then' (*A potom*) the (male) narrator is visited by a 'Death-baby', who offers to explain the meaning of death:

Silently I grasped Death's meaning and

I caressed my guest as my own son.

Give him food and ask another one;

There is much he seems to understand.[45]

While Gippius' anti-procreation discourse was metaphysical and not practical (she never suggested, as did Fedorov, the resurrection of dead ancestors as an alternative to reproduction) in concrete terms it constituted an antipathy towards traditional family structures, and interacted with her rejection of 'unequal' patriarchal marriage.[46]

Gippius' rejection of marriage and monogamy placed her in a long ling tradition of Russian radicals expounding the notion of 'free love' as a revolutionary philosophy, from

---

Pachmuss, *Zinaida Gippius,* p. 89.

[43] Gippius, 'Miss May,' p. 430, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida Gippius,* p. 89.

[44] See Zinaida Hippius, 'The Pilgrim,' in in Zinaida Hippius. *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius*. Temira Pachmuss ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972*,* pp. 119-125; and Zinadia Hippius 'An Ordinary Event,' in Temira Pachmuss (ed), *Women Writers in Russian Modernism.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978, pp. 97-115.

[45] '*Tikho ponial ia pro smertny chas./ Ia laskaiu gostyia, kak podnogo./ Ugoshchaiu i pytaiu snova./ Vizhu, mnogo znaet on o nas! '* Zinaida Gippius, 'A Potom' (1911), in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks, *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, pp. 77-79.

[46] Irene Masing-Delic, *Abolishing Death: A Salvation Myth of Russian Twentieth Century Literature.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992*,* pp. 76-104.

Aleksandr Herzen to Gippius' contemporary, the Social Democrat Alexandra Kollontai, famous for her (often misquoted) remark that sexual need was as natural as hunger and thirst.[47] In 1909, Kollontai published the pamphlet 'The Social Bases of the Woman Question', her first detailed articulation of her belief that 'for women, the solution to the family question is no less important than the achievement of political equality and economic independence.'[48] For Kollontai, socialist revolution would free family and gender relations from the patriarchal, capitalist structure. For Gippius, a 'new religious consciousness' was the means through which to destroy traditional social relations. In an article published the same year as Kollontai's 'Social Bases', Gippius argued that the Trinity of Personality, Sex and Sociality would herald the demise of that 'impersonal marriage', which she likened to the kinship between a father and a son, rather than a manifestation of the transcendent mystery of sex.[49] Despite the ideological chasm that separated the socialist Kollontai and 'mystical' revolutionary Gippius, the two shared a belief that the current structures organising marriage and the family perpetuated patriarchal inequalities, and that without the transformation of these structures, no amount of legal reform would improve the status of women.

---

[47] See Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement: Feminism, Nihilism, Bolshevism 1860-1930.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, pp. 189-190. For Kollontai's remarks regarding sexual need see Barbara Evans Clements, 'Emancipation through Communism: The Ideology of A.M. Kollontai,' *Slavic Review,* 32:2, 1973, p. 323. This comment is often misquoted, most famously by Lenin in an interview in 1919 with Klara Zetkin, as 'Sex is a simple as drinking a glass of water,' feeding the later view (in both the Soviet Union and the West) of Kollontai as instigator of the alleged debauchery of 1920s Soviet Russia. See Klara Zetkin, *Lenin on the Woman Question,* New York, 1934, cited in Clements, 'Emancipation through Communism,' p. 323; George Carleton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia,* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005, p. 12.

[48] Aleksandra Kollontai, 'The Social Bases of the Woman Question,' in Aleksandra Kollontai, *Selected Writings of Aleksandra Kollontai,* Alix Holt trans, Westport, Conn., Lawrence Hill and Company, 1977, p. 64. Kollontai became a Social Democrat in 1898, largely, according to Beatrice Farnsworth, because she believed socialism was the surest means to achieve women's liberation. See Beatrice Farnsworth, 'Bolshevism, the Woman Question, and Aleksandra Kollontai,' *American Historical Review,* 81, 1976, pp. 292-316, in particular pp. 292-293.

[49] Zinaida Hippius, 'Iz Dnevnika Zhurnalista,' *Russkaya Mysl,* 2, 1909, p. 165, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida*

The Madwoman

Gippius critique of marriage was strongly linked to her attack on stereotyped gender roles in her fiction. A preoccupation with body politics, combined with themes of religious mysticism and revolutionary agitation, was the centrepiece of her 1906 prose collection *The Scarlet Sword* (*Aly Mech*).[50] In short stories such as 'Fate' (*Sud'ba*) and 'Its All For the Worse' (*Vse k khudu*) Gippius explored the detrimental effects of biological and historical determinism on men and women trapped by sexual stereotypes and unable to break out of the narrative in which society imprisons them.[51] One story in particular, 'The Madwoman' (*Sumasshedshaia*), synthesised all three concerns.[52] It relates the 'misfortune' of Ivan Vasilievich, a man who typifies the positivist *intelligent* Gippius so disliked, whose wife, Vera, has committed herself to an insane asylum. 'The Madwoman' explores the gendered language and assumptions of those who preach scientific rationality, a term long associated with masculinity.[53] Vera's response to this gendered stereotyping (her self-committal to an asylum) uncovers the predicament of women trapped by the 'scientific' view of sexual difference. Vera's repudiation of society allows her to 'de-centre' the rational world of Ivan, which in a 'weak moment' causes him to

---

Hippius, p. 90.

[50] Zinaida Gippius, *Aly Mech: rasskazy, chetvyortaya kniga.* St Petersburg, 1906. Following Judith Butler, the term 'body politics,' rests on a non-essentialist understanding of gender and sexuality, and refers to the assignment of different psychological and behavioural patterns to people in accordance with sex and gender stereotypes. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge, 1990, pp. 128-141.

[51] Zinaida Hippius, 'Fate' in Hippius, *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius,* pp. 77-106; Zinaida Hippius, 'Its all for the Worse,' in Hippius, *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius,* pp. 107-125.

[52] Antonina Gove has argued that Gippius' prose, long neglected in favour of her poetry, 'deserves to be re-evaluated, especially in the construction of the sexual identity of the characters.' Antonina Filinov Gove, 'Gippius, Zinaida Nikolaevna,' in Marina Ledkovsky, Charlotte Rosenthal, and Mary Zirin. *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994, p. 211.

[53] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture,* New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, p. 3-4.

question whether Vera may be insane at all.[54] At the end of the story, Vera is both a figure of female affirmation and of female despair, an unreconciled dualism for which Gippius, in a move paradigmatic of Modernist texts, seeks not a unitary resolution but a 'simultaneity that, from within dualism, imagines an alternative to it'.[55] In this way, Gippius used the process of 'de-centring', a characteristic protest against hegemonic discourses of race, class and gender postulated by Modernist artists across Europe, to reject both masculine gender subjectivity and, through Vera, to subvert the dominance of phallocentric discourses of essential female roles.[56]

'The Madwoman', also presents a characteristically Symbolist critique of the philosophy of scientific positivism which drove many Populists to the peasants in the 1870s in an attempt to 'enlighten' them.[57] Ivan Vasilievich, a police officer who considers such enlightenment his mission, seeks to educate his wife in the same condescending manner he does the villagers, declaring in hindsight, 'I saw that in time she would be a real woman - and not only a woman, but a human being as well. But now she was just a child.'[58] Vera responds desperately, 'You don't understand this Ivan, I'm suffocating. Its

---

[54] As Helene Cisoux has argued, the language of 'non-reason' or madness can be used by women to upset patriarchal thinking and complicate the use of the discourse of rationality to enforce gendered norms. Thus, 'madness is the historical label applied to female protest and revolution.' See Marta Caminero-Santagelo, *The Madwoman Can't Speak, or Why Insanity is Not Subversive,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998, pp. 1-2.

[55] Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, p. 25; Showalter, *Female Malady,* p. 4.

[56] Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane. *Modernism: 1890-1930,* Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978p. 26.

[57] The great crusade to 'the people,' on the part of hundreds of students and *intelligenti* inspired by the Populist call to live and work amongst the peasants (as well as disseminate revolutionary ideas), began in Spring 1874. Despite the relative disillusionment experienced by many participants in the 'going to the people,' (some of whom were arrested on arrival) the desire to share the peasant's suffering and toil was a continuous motif in revolutionary Populism and intelligentsia circles until the end of the nineteenth century. See Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement in Russia,* pp. 138-156.

[58] Zinadia Gippius, 'The Madwoman' in Pachmuss (ed), *Women Writers in Russian Modernism,* p. 40.

disgusting.'[59] The true test of her 'sanity' comes when Vera becomes involved with religious sectarians and tries to have their son baptised, against the vehement opposition of the atheist Ivan. For Vera, true social change derives from spiritual rejuvenation, not scientific enlightenment, and she angrily rebuts Ivan's criticism of the sectarians. 'Let them stay untouched by your 'knowledge'. They don't stifle me. Whereas you are convinced that one must live in the name of man yet there is all this stuffiness in your life.'[60] The climax of 'The Madwoman' offers Gippius' most striking critique of subjugation through imposed gender stereotypes. When Ivan visits Vera in the asylum, he censures her for not asking about their son, to which she is defiantly silent. When she does speak it is to voice a refusal 'quietly and in a low voice' of Ivan's offer to take her home.[61] She has been physically de-sexed, emerging from the ward, 'emaciated and small, limping as usual…her hair cut short'.[62] Julie de Sherbinin has argued that 'The Madwoman' is Gippius protest against the misogynistic construction of rationality as a 'male way of knowing'.[63] More than this, however, it is an articulation of Gippius' distrust of gendered norms altogether. Vera not only retreats from the society which offers her only wifely subservience, but repudiates even that which is meant to be her 'natural' role, of mother. Gippius suggests that this repudiation is the sole (if tragic) option open to women in Vera's position. 'The Madwoman' constitutes Gippius' most powerful argument for the spiritual transfiguration she believed would eradicate the difference between men and women, allowing for freedom of spiritual and sexual expression, for it is the lack of this freedom that is the motivating cause behind Vera's silent protest.

---

59 Gippius, 'The Madwoman,' p. 46.
60 Gippius, 'The Madwoman,' p. 51.
61 Gippius, 'The Madwoman,' p. 65.
62 Gippius, 'The Madwoman,' p. 65.

Revolution in Praxis: Gippius and the PSR

While Gippius' revolutionary ideals were largely metaphysical, they did not remain entirely divorced from the practical dimension of the overthrow of the autocracy. Between 1905 and 1914 she made a concerted effort to forge links with established PSR radicals such as Ilyusha Bunikov-Fundaminsky and Boris Savinkov. She eagerly discussed the policies of the PSR, the party most associated with revolutionary terrorism in the first decade of the twentieth century, and debated the necessity of a separation between religion and revolutionary action.[64] As Anna Geifman has demonstrated, members of the PSR, far from uniformly atheistic, often came to revolutionary politics from a variety of philosophical positions, including religious conviction.[65] Gippius certainly suggests that Fundaminsky, a 'Christian soul' came close to conversion to her 'Cause'.[66] However, his adherence to the PSR overrode his friendship with Gippius. He returned to Russia from Parisian exile in 1917 and was one of the Socialist Revolutionaries at the opening of the Constituent Assembly in 1918.[67] Gippius had

---

[63] Julie W de Sherbinin, 'Haunting the Centre: Russia's Madwomen and Zinaida Gippius' Madwoman,' *Slavic and East European Journal,* 46:4, 2002, p. 739.

[64] See Gippius, 'About the Cause,' pp. 148, 152. On the PSR see Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: revolutionary terrorism in Russia 1894-1917,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 45; Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977, p. 39.

[65] Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill,* p. 45.

[66] Gippius sensed in Fundaminsky 'a gentle, kind, most Christian person. He was the embodiment of love. A vague believer who was afraid of his own faith.' She recalls how, in 1908, 'we were with them [Fundaminsky and his wife] often and discussed many things together. And very intimately. The revolution was being suppressed at that time. Everywhere things were being closely scrutinised, old ideas and concepts being re-evaluated. And people were opening their souls to new possibilities.' Gippius, 'About the Cause,' (1911) p. 145.

[67] The Red Naval Leader F.F Raskolnikov recalled Bunakov-Fundaminsky's presence at the opening of the Consitituent Assembly in his memoir *Tales of Sub-Lieutenant Ilyin,* in which he described how the SR 'with his long hair combed back, was examining something through his pince-nez.' This description evokes the negative image of the effeminate dandy so despised by Raskolnikov's Bolshevik comrades, and suggests an awareness of Bunakov-Fundaminsky's involvement with the artistic avant-garde through his close friendship with Gippius. See F F Raskolnikov, 'The Tale of a Lost Day,' from *Tales of Sublieutenant Ilyin,* accessed via http://wwww.marxists.org/history/ussr/governement/red-

similarly mixed success with Boris Savinkov, leader of the PSR's Combat Organisation (*boevaia organizatsiia*) and the figure behind the 1904 assassination of Minister of the Interior Viacheslav Plehve.[68] Savinkov was attracted to Gippius' mysticism and the central role given to sexual freedom in her revolutionary doctrine, and her influence is powerfully evident in the Symbolist style and sense of spiritual searching in his quasi-autobiographical novel *The Pale Horse* (*Kon blednyi*), published in 1909.[69] *The Pale Horse* is a melancholy exploration of the psychology of terrorism, and incarnates the religious fanatic turned revolutionary in the character of Vanya, who is torn between his belief that God wills the overthrow of the autocracy and the knowledge that his soul may be damned for the sin of murder. Savinkov's biographer Richard Spence claims that such searching was evident in Savinkov himself; Spence certainly accords Gippius credit for convincing Savinkov to repudiate terrorism during the years of their friendship in Paris between 1906 and 1908. This repudiation was, however, temporary and like Bunikov-Fundaminsky, Savinkov ultimately remained committed to the goal of violent revolution, as opposed to the mystical pacifist revolution Gippius seemed to postulate.

Gippius' own attitude towards revolutionary terrorism was ambiguous. While she believed that true revolution was to come through spiritual awakening and a new religious consciousness, not force, she did defend those who had been compelled to resort

---

army/1918/raskolnikov/ilyin/ch01.htm, last viewed 20 August 2006. Gippius' faith in Fundaminsky's 'Christian soul,' was, however, to be vindicated, as he converted to Orthodoxy in Paris during the 1920s, only to perish at the hands of the Nazis in Auschwitz in 1942. See Hippius, *From Paris to St Petersburg,* p. 174, n56.

[68] Richard B Spence, *Boris Savinkov: Renegade on the Left,* Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1991, pp. 36-45.

[69] Spence, *Boris Savinkov,* p. 52; Ropshin (pseudonym of Boris Savinkov), *The Pale Horse,* Dublin: Maunsel & Co. Ltd, 1917. Gippius claimed in her diary 'About the Cause' to have edited the novel and suggested the name; see Gippius, 'About the Cause,' p. 147.

to violent means. As she argued in *Tsar and Revolution,*

> 'Revolution may take the exterior forms of anarchy, of disintegration, of chaos. But these are only the exterior forms. Our peasants and moujiks who burn properties, blindly massacre animals, destroy machines or precious works of art, are not men transformed into beasts, but beasts at the moment of their ascension to human beings…They do not fall, but are elevated…They are too oppressed to fall. It is birth, it is not death; but in their exterior manifestations, birth and death are equally painful and extraordinary.'[70]

Many years later, Gippius recalled that she had been attracted to the SRs because of their fundamentally 'sacrificial nature'.[71] Her 'spiritualisation' of violent revolution underlined the internal contradiction in her revolutionary program; ultimately opposed to violence, she nonetheless recognised that the removal of the autocrat by the people would require force. Gippius' failure to reconcile this contradiction, as well as her inability to speak the language of political pragmatism, prevented her bold vision from making the transition from idealistic goals to concrete reality. Nonetheless, the interaction of discourses of sexuality and discourses of revolution in Gippius' program demonstrates the extent to which rebellion against heteronormativity and gender differentiation could spark a radical plan for social reform, whether in the metaphysical or tangible sphere.

---

[70] 'La révolution peut prendre alors les formes extérieurs de l'anarchie, de la décomposition, du chaos. Mais ce ne sont là que des formes extérieurs. Nos pillards, nos moujiks qui incendient les propriétés, massacrent aveuglément les bestiaux, détriusent les machines ou les oeuvres critiques préceiuses, ne sont pas des hommoes transformés en bêtes, mais les bêtes au moment de leur ascension vers l'humain...Ils ne tombent pas, ils s'élèvent…Ils étaitent trop bas pour tomber. C'est la naissance, ce n'est pas la mort, mais dans leur manifestations extérieurs, naissance et mort sont également pénibles et terrible.' Gippius, 'La Révolution et La Violence,' p. 129. This sentiment was later echoed by Merezhkovsky in 'Ne Mir No Mech,' when he declared that 'Beasts do not have a God, and the people live worse than Beasts.' See Merezhkovsky, 'Ne Mir No Mech,' p. 199.

[71] Zinaida Gippius, *O evreyakh i o statye Fle'zena,'* (unpublished), August 22, 1939, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinadia Gippius,* p. 177.

The Sexual Question Intensifies

In the years following the 1905 revolution, members of educated society continued to meditate on themes of transgression, disorder, and desire, leading to a self proclaimed sexual crisis, in which sexuality provided a primary metaphor through which to express anxieties arising from class conflict.[72] A wave of 'sex-themed' journalism and literature such as Mikhail Artsybashev's notorious novel *Sanin* (1907) offered images of menacing darkness and yawning pits and aroused a storm of indignation, as well as attracting an avid readership particularly among students.[73] Gippius presented her own account of the revolutionary and sexual preoccupations of students in her 1913 play *The Green Ring,* the only one of her plays to be staged (in 1914), in which the eponymous revolutionary circle debate the 'problems' of sex, marriage, and suicide.[74] Members of the Green Ring look forward to the transformation of sexual relations through revolution. They reject the 'old' ways typified by the father of one of their members, Vozzhin, who considers himself enlightened for his belief in 'free love' but whose hypocrisy is revealed when he discards his common law wife so that his daughter, newly returned to his home, may 'enter a pure life'.[75] The student Roussya declares 'We quite realise that all this…love, marriage, the family, children…is terribly important…And...just now it isn't very important. I mean, there is no time for all that now.' To which her lover Serge replies, 'Yes, plenty of time for that later on. That must work itself out, but not in *their* way. It is very bad for them. Nor can we live like that.'[76] The physiological approach to sexual relations taken by the

---

[72] Carleton, *The Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia,* p. 3; Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, p. 216.
[73] Dan Healy, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 33. On the popularity of *Sanin* among students see Engelstein, *Keys to Happiness,* p. 373
[74] Zinaida Gippius, *The Green Ring,* S.S.Koteliansky trans., London: C.W.Daniel, 1920.
[75] Gippius, *The Green Ring,* p. 22.
[76] Gippius, *The Green Ring,* p. 70.

'positivist generation' of revolutionaries is critiqued through the character of Uncle Mike, who provides the Green Ring with illegal literature and revolutionary theory, but who fails to understand their spiritual search or Messianic sense of their 'chosen' status. He attempts to explain the urge to suicide by reminding the circle of 'Metchnikoff's theory of the physical causes of pessimism in the immature…So that the desire to die is purely physical.'[77] This explanation cannot, however, quell the distress of Vozzhin's daughter Sophia, who argues that one wants to kill oneself because 'one is surrounded with unhappiness and horror and ugliness, and everything is chaotic, and I am all alone, as if all alone in the world.'[78]

Sophia's solution comes when she stops perceiving sex and death as *biological* functions, but accepts them as part of her new religious revolutionary consciousness, with which she is imbued after Roussya and Serge dissuade her from killing herself in Act IV. Together with them, she pledges to work to bring about the formation of a new utopian society that will see the instigation of a new, spiritual marriage. 'Yes! Together. I believe. I believe…I feel now as if I have three souls. What will come of it I don't know. But I know that it will be good. I love tremendously, and I believe! I have three souls…three souls!'[79] In Sophia's closing lines, Gippius articulated her cherished dream of a utopia of spiritual renaissance in which the repressive force of biology would be replaced by the

---

[77] Gippius, *The Green Ring,* pp. 33-34.

[78] Gippius, *The Green Ring,* p. 34. After the 1905 revolution, a popular perception of student revolutionary circles as 'suicide cults' arose in the mass-circulation press, scholarly journals and medical reports, such as that of Dmitri Zhbankov who, in 1906, declared that Russian youth was experiencing an 'epidemic of suicide,' linked, he argued, to the suppression of the revolution. The perception of an 'epidemic' was strengthened in the years between 1905 and 1910 by a number of high profile suicides of students who had been incarcerated for illegal political activity. See Susan K Morrissey, *Heralds of Revolution: Russian Students and the Mythologies of Radicalism,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 178-188.

liberating power of *vyliublennost.* They also suggest the messianic role she accorded the 'new' Russian intelligentsia, as the leaders of a revolution that would destroy all binaries: man and woman, heterosexual and homosexual, thus embracing the world in its utopia of religious sociality. Like Gippius, Merezhkovsky and Filosofov, Sophia, Roussya and Serge would use the 'mystical power of the three' to foster a new religious consciousness among the 'new people', which would, Gippius hoped, inspire revolutionary social transformation on a global scale.

Gippius' turn to revolutionary politics after 1905, and the vehemence with which she embraced it, contradicts the superficial characterisation of her as a socially disengaged artist presented by many historians of Russian culture. Far from an idiosyncratic philosophical fad, revolution provided Gippius with the synthesis of her earlier critique of religious repression and intolerance of sexual dissidence, and her rejection of gender inequality.[80] While her revolutionary program never acquired the practical detail to make it a viable alternative to Social Democracy, it provided Gippius with the opportunity to develop her sexual and religious dissidence into a utopian vision of freedom and equality, and highlights the plurality of revolutionary discourses in Russia after 1905. By the time World War I began in 1914, Gippius' hopes had been pinned on revolutionary transformation for nine years, and the brutality of war in the following three made this transformation more likely than ever.

---

[79] Gippius, *The Green Ring,* p. 88.
[80] See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

The Apocalyptic Resolution

1914-1917

In his *magnum opus* 'The Russian Idea', Nicholas Berdyaev argued that 'The Russian people, in accordance with their metaphysical nature and vocation in the world, are a people of the End.'[1] In an apparent confirmation of this assertion, between 1914 and 1917 Gippius' revolutionary philosophy, previously characterised by an emphasis on the utopian post-revolutionary society, became a theory of apocalyptic resolution in which World War I was the precursor to the apocalypse that would usher in the utopian age. Gippius' initial response to the outbreak of World War I was incomprehension and revulsion, leading to an active stance against Russia's involvement in the war. However, by 1916, her initial anti-war activism had given way to a qualified acceptance of war on the basis that it was a sign of the approaching revolution and apocalypse. Gippius was not the only Russian *intelligent* with visions of the End in the early twentieth century. The period saw a proliferation of such fears (and hopes) among Russian artists, filled with premonitions that they were 'the last in a series'.[2] However, as David Rowley has recently argued, it would be a mistake to view all Russian apocalyptic trends at the beginning of the twentieth century as manifestations of a single idea.[3] They were informed by disparate traditions and social contexts, and should be seen as symptoms of historical events and social conditions, not causes.[4] For Gippius, apocalypticism, like the

---

1 Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea,* London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947, p. 193.
2 Ivanov declared this feeling both 'oppressive and exalting.' Cited in David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995, p. 5.
3 David G Rowley, 'Redeemer Empire: Russian Millenarianism,' *American Historical Review,* 104:5, 1999, p. 1600.
4 Rowley, 'Redeemer Empire,' p. 1602.

revolutionary philosophy she had developed between 1905 and 1914, was informed by her radical sexual politics. As Eric Hobsbawm claims, counter-cultural apocalyptic philosophies emerge when persons/groups rebel against the social forces that oppress them.[5] Gippius' apocalypticism can thus be read as her last protest against both the autocratic state and the discourse of essential gender 'difference'.

Apocalypse in the Silver Age

The precursor to the chiliastic fervour of the period 1914-1917 can be discerned in the eschatological mentality that pervaded the philosophies of the Symbolist movement in Russia.[6] As Andrei Belyi wrote to Aleksandr Blok in 1903, 'We are nearing the fullness of time, and the limits are close.'[7] Belyi's apocalyptic predictions were permeated by an overall sense that the generation witnessing the end of the nineteenth century was in fact the last to grace the earth, that the *fin de siècle* was indeed the *fin de race.*[8] In Merezhkovsky's work, such eschatology took on a predictably religious tone. Thus at the end of his *Tolstoy and Dostoevsky* he made the Johannine invocation, 'Yea, come Lord!' articulating his belief in the Second Coming, as the Age of Historical Christianity was

---

[5] Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries,* New York: 1959, pp. 57-65.

[6] Sergei Hackel, *The Poet and the Revolution: Aleksandr Blok's 'The Twelve*,' Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, pp. 2-44; James Billington, *The Icon and the Axe,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966, p. 504-518. This thesis follows Bernard McGinn in differentiating between *eschatological* and *apocalyptic;* the former refers to the view of history as a teleological process the end of which is revealed through mysticism/religion, and the latter refers to a conviction that the last age is about to end, and the belief in the reality of the Antichrist (or secular version thereof) and certainty of his/her proximity. See Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1979, p. 4. Both mentalities are easily discernible in Gippius' revolutionary philosophy, and as such both will feature prominently in this chapter.

[7] *Aleksandr Blok and Andrei Belyi. Perepiska,* ed V N Orlov, Moscow: Letopisi Gosudarstvennogo literaturnogo muzeia, 1940, p. 15, cited in Hackel, *The Poet and the Revolution,* p. 2. Bely's very choice of name (Andrei Bely was his pseudonym; his real name was Boris Bugaev) reflected his chiliastic philosophy: Andrei was the 'first chosen' saint who allegedly brought Christianity to Russia, while white (*belyi*) is the symbolic shade of the Apocalypse. See Billington, *The Icon and the Axe,* p. 505.

drawing to a close.[9] Gippius' own declaration that 'Autocracy is from the Antichrist!' was a reflection of eschatological currents in her thought, revealing her belief in the current incarnation of evil on earth (a characteristic of modern apocalyptic movements).[10] Such prophecies of the end can be read, in part, as a reaction by a religiously inclined artistic elite to the mechanical horror of increasing urbanisation and industrialisation, which had accelerated at an astonishing pace under the Minister of Finance, S. Iu. Witte.[11] Thus the poet Klychkov declared that 'earth no longer resembles earth…Satan has beaten it down with iron hooves...'[12] To a large extent, the eschatological fervour of the early twentieth century was also influenced by largely rural millenarian sects such as the *skoptsy, khlysty* and most prominently the Old Believers or *raskolniki,* whose customs and beliefs had been debated at length among the educated Russian public since the first 'going to the people' in the 1870s popularised cultural anthropology and ethnography.[13] The *raskolniki* had long preached that the Tsar, who, in the form of Peter the Great had imposed Western religious rites and secular traditions on the Russian people, was a representative of the Antichrist and that his manifestation on earth in the form of the Romanov dynasty was a

---

[8] Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994*,* pp. 6-8. The term *fin de race* comes from Max Nordau, *Degeneration*. London: Heineman, 1895*.*

[9] Dmitri Merezhkovsky, *Tolstoi as Man and Artist, with an essay on Dostoevski,* London: Archibald, Constable & Co. Limited, 1902, p. 528.

[10] Vatro Murvar, 'Messianism in Russia: Religious and Revolutionary,' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 10:4, 1971, p. 283.

[11] Billington, *Icon and the Axe,* p. 507; Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988*,* pp. 18-21.

[12] Cited in Billington, *Icon and the Axe,* p. 507.

[13] *Raskol* means schism, and refers to the Russian church schism of the seventeenth century. The *raskolniki* are the followers of the Old Belief; that is, the rites and rituals associated with Russian Orthodoxy before the reforms of Patriarch Nikon in 1653. See Michael Cherniavsky, 'The Old Believers and the New Religion,' *Slavic Review,* 25, 1966, p. 1. On the *khlysty* see p. 55, n9 above. The *skoptsy* were *khlysty* who performed ritual castration; the best study of the *skoptsy* in English is Laura Engelstein, *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folktale,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999. For an exploration of the interactions between Russian populists and religious sectarians in Russia in the 1860s and 1870s, see Alexander Etkind, 'Whirling with the Other: Russian Populism and Religious Sects,' *Russian Review,* 62:4, 2003, pp. 565-588.

sign of the End to come.[14] In appropriating the notion of the Tsar as representative of ultimate Evil, Gippius adapted a popular tradition of 'Tsar as Antichrist', in Russia, a fact she readily acknowledged in 'The True force of Tsarism' in 1906.[15] Unlike the *raskolniki,* however, Gippius did not see the Tsar's adoption of Western customs as evidence of his demonic status. Rather, she saw the persistence of a particularly *Russian* brand of despotism as evidence of this status, and the overthrow of the despot as the only sure path to utopian salvation.

'There Is No Return'

Gippius' utopian program, premised on a rejection of biologically determined sexuality and gender, and incorporating the disintegration of patriarchal marriage structures in favour of a 'new, mysterious union', differentiated her apocalyptic premonitions from those of her fellow Symbolists.[16] Harold Bloom has argued that the androgynous being, such as that idealised by Gippius and postulated as an alternative to current gender differentiation, is the quintessential image of post-apocalyptic society, representing the reconciliation of opposites that returns humans to their 'unfallen' state.[17] While Gippius' eschatological premonitions of a return to a primordial state of androgyny were developing long before 1914, it was not until the spectre of World War I loomed that her

---

[14] Cherniavsky, 'The Old Believers and the New Religion,' pp. 1-39; Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil,* San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2000, p. 235; Murvar, 'Messianism in Russia,' p. 290.

[15] Gippius, 'La Vraie Force du Tsarisme,' p. 277.

[16] Z. Hippius-Merezhkovskaya, *Dmitry Merezhkovsky*, Paris: 1951, p. 144, cited in Temira Pachmuss, 'Women Writers in Russian Decadence,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17:1, 1982.

[17] Harold Bloom, *Omens of Millenium: The Gnosis of Angels and Resurrection,* New York: Riverhead Books, 1996, p. 9. Bloom argues that the centrality of the androgynous primordial being to apocalyptic symbolism is not, contra Carl Jung, the result of 'inherent archetypes' but rather it is a 'recurrent image of human spirituality,' with its own potency and persistence (p11). Such an assertion is, however, little different from that of Jung, removing the psychoanalytic subtext of the latter's theory of archetypes and replacing it with a literary critic's conceptualisation of recurring image and metaphor.

vague intuition of a coming Apocalypse became a certainty that the End was upon her. Her first fictional treatment of the notion of war as Apocalypse came two years before 1914, with her short story 'There Is No Return' (*Net Vozrata*) which introduced an apocalyptic subtext that would become central to her poetry and fiction between 1914 and 1917.[18] 'There Is No Return' tells the story of a family destroyed by the return of a son and daughter, Grisha and Nadya, from the Russo-Japanese War. Their anticipated return at first brings joy, but soon ominous signs suggest that Grisha has returned mentally unstable, suffering from psychological wounds that his family cannot heal. Eventually Grisha, his father Pyotr and sister Lyolya travel to Odessa to meet Nadya who is returning on a ship with wounded officers. Amid portents of a storm that mirror the increasingly flawed façade of Grisha's sanity, the three meet Nadya, the amputee Volodin, and fellow officer Ryumin in a hotel suite where Nadya cares for the other two. All four veterans are clearly wounded, either physically or psychologically. Pyotr and Lyolya become increasingly alienated from Grisha and Nadya, as the room's atmosphere becomes claustrophobic, thick with reminiscences of battle and punctured by Grisha's maniacal chatter.

> When they laughed, however, no one laughed in a funny way or at anything funny. Instead, Grisha would roll his head around, Ryumin would twitch and appear to be looking around. It was as though he was waiting for the usual bang to be heard alongside him, for someone to start moaning, for someone to be carried away - and that was just as it should be, no different. Nadya stood motionless in readiness...[19]

Eventually the horrified Pyotr and Lyolya flee the room, sobbing as they hear the war

[18] Zinaida Hippius, 'There Is No Return,' in Zinaida Hippius. *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius*. Temira Pachmuss ed. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1972, pp. 136-156.
[19] Hippius, 'There Is No Return,' p. 152.

veterans singing joylessly, 'We know, we know there is no return / No one can return.'[20]

Gippius wrote 'There Is No Return' seven years after her own meeting with wounded soldiers in Odessa in 1905, after which she was left with the impression that 'all of the people who had 'returned' from the flames of war had become (or were still) insane.'[21] 'There Is No Return' presents a critique of war based on the notion that those who have experienced it can never divest themselves of the resulting scars. At a more fundamental level, it constitutes an apocalyptic fiction: a story that is intrinsically about the End. Like Dostoevsky's *The Idiot,* a seminal work of apocalyptic fiction in Russian literature, 'There Is No Return' incorporates a character, in the form of Grisha, who comes from a temporality *beyond* (by virtue of his mental instability) and can see the futility of bourgeois social codes by which his family continue to live.[22] The moment of eschatological vision takes place in the heated atmosphere of the hotel room, a 'temporal moment of heightened intensity' which, in the words of Angus Fletcher, serves as a 'symbol of the centre', an allegory of the Apocalypse which is presaged by war and destruction.[23] 'There Is No Return' articulates Gippius' belief that a global catastrophe, in the form of meaningless war, will herald the apocalypse which will destroy the old, autocratic order, to make way for the utopian society she envisaged accompanying the

---

[20] Hippius, 'There Is No Return,' p. 153.

[21] Hippius-Merezhkovskaya, *Dmitry Merezhkovsky,* p. 136. Some of the wounded soldiers had been given rooms in the same hotel as Gippius, and she recalled that 'there were both seriously wounded persons and convalescing ones. With one of them, who had lost a leg, I became friends, and once, when the nurse stepped out and he developed severe pains, I injected him with morphine. He told me 'They keep hacking away at me, but they do not kill me.' Cited in Temira Pachmuss, Introduction to Hippius, *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius,* p. 20.

[22] In *The Idiot,* Dostoevsky's eponymous hero, Prince Myshkin, is the simple minded seer who uncovers the folly and futility in the lives of the other characters. See David Bethea, *The Shape of the Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction,* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 140.

[23] Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Sybolic Mode,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967, pp. 352, 359.

Second Coming of Christ.

World War I: Visions of the End

Gippius' initial response to the onset of World War I was consistent with her earlier eschewal of violence in her dialogues with Savinkov regarding terrorism. In a speech to the (newly re-founded) Religious-Philosophical Society of St Petersburg in November 1914 she maintained that war was a 'debasement of the universal human condition', an assertion for which she was roundly attacked for her lack of patriotism, most surprisingly (and painfully) by Filosofov.[24] In her 1916 poem 'No Justification' (*Bez Opravdan'ia*), she declared:

No, I shall never welcome it.

My curse has a place.

I won't forgive nor will I rush

Into the iron embrace.[25]

Such political subject matter became the main theme of Gippius' poetry between 1914 and 1917 - during this period more than any other, she produced 'tendentious' art, freely using literature to disseminate her social and political message. Her opposition to war was inextricably tied to her commitment to revolution, and she remained close to members of the PSR during the war, the left faction of which was heavily involved in the anti-war movement.[26] Gippius' spiritual abhorrence of warfare is best summarised in her

[24] Hippius-Merezhkvoskaya, *Dmitry Merezhkovsky,* p216, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius,* p. 181.
[25] *Net, nikogda ne primiryus' / Vernii mo prokliat'ia. / Ia ne proshchu, ia ne sorvus' / V zheleznie ob'iat'ia.* Zinaida Gippius, 'No Justification' (*Bez Opravdan'ia*) in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, pp. 82-83.
[26] On the PSR and the Anti-War movement, see Michael Melancon, *The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Russian Anti-War Movement 1914-1917,* Columbus: Ohio State University, 1990. Melancon argues that socialist parties, and in particular the socialist revolutionaries, played a significant role in the anti-war

short poem, 'Today on Earth' (*Sevodnia na Zemle*), published in 1916, which expresses a pathos absent from the internalised subjectivity of her earlier work.

It is so difficult

So Shameful

Almost Impossible

So Difficult

This lifting of the eyelashes

And glancing into the face of a mother

Whose son has been killed.

But let us not speak of that.[27]

As the conflict drew on, however, Gippius began to express a qualified acceptance of it, on the basis that it was a sign of the chaos that would presage the Apocalypse. In her apocalyptic characterisation of the war, Gippius developed her earlier assertion that, while 'a step back in the universal pilgrimage of mankind,' war *could* serve as a 'purifying fire', if it led to the 'determination to struggle anew in the name of a new truth'; that is, if it led to the revolutionary consciousness necessary to bring about her projected utopia.[28] Gippius may have been surprised to discover that Lenin, whom she despised for his atheism, had reached a parallel conclusion about the war, arguing that while the war itself was abhorrent, it was nonetheless the death throes of imperialism, the last surge of

---

movement during World War I, which may help to explain why large sections of the Russian population turned to the PSR for leadership after the October Revolution. See Melancon, *The Socialist Revolutionaries,* in particular pp. 279-286.

[27] *Est' takoe trudnoe / takoe stydnoe / Pochti nevozmozhnoe - / Takoe trudnoe: / Eto - podniat' resnitsy / I vzglianut' v litso materi, / U kotoroi ubili ee syna. / No ne nado govorit' ob etom.* Zinaida Gippius, 'Today on Earth,' (*Sevodnia na Zemle*) in Zinaida Gippius, *Poslednie Stikhi: 1914-1918,* St Petersburg, 1918, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius,* p. 184.

[28] Zinaida Hippius, 'The Great Path,' ('*Veliky Put*'), *Golos Zhizni,* 7, 1914, pp15-17, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius,* p. 186.

capitalism, and would usher in a revolutionary period, a secular apocalypse necessary before the dawn of a utopian age.[29] As Gippius concluded in a diary entry of late 1916, 'One must 'accept' war, but accept it only while denying its roots, without deluding oneself or becoming intoxicated (with patriotism), without lying to oneself or to others, that is, by 'debasing' one's inner self.'[30]

Gippius' Feminist Apocalypse

The ambiguity present in Gippius' attitude towards violence as both a 'debasement' and a herald of the end was only one of the contradictions in her apocalyptic outlook; the other was her refusal to accept the gender binarism and misogyny inherent in the Christian concept of Apocalypse. While her teleology was informed by Merezhkovsky's Trinitarian view of history, and through him, the eschatological tradition of Joachim of Fiore's Third Age, her apocalyptic discourse was above all infused with the language of its primary source; that is, the Book of Revelation. Her diary 'About the Cause', was freely interspersed with verses from Revelation. The liturgy she wrote for her private *agapes* with Merezhkovsky and Filosofov, recorded in the same diary, include the apocalyptic incantation, 'And to the victor, I bring white clothes', a declaration Gippius' Trinity hoped to render in reality though their own flowing white robes.[31] The title she

---

[29] Leopold Haimson, *Russia's Revolutionary Experience 1907-1917,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, pp. 20-22.

[30] Zinaida Gippius, *Sinyaya Kniga: Petersburgski Dnevnik 1914-1918,* Belgrade: 1929, p. 17, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinaida Gippius,* p. 186.

[31] Revelation 3:5; see Gippius, 'About the Cause,' in Zinaida Hippius, *Between Paris and St Petersburg: The Selected Diaries of Zinaida Gippius*, Temira Pachmuss ed. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1975, p. 123. Gippius' preoccupation with the Apocalyptic connotations of the colour white was also articulated in her poem 'A White Garment,' (1905) in Temira Pachmuss, *Women Writers in Russian Modernism,* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978, p. 33, and short story, 'He is White,' (1903), Hippius, *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius,* pp. 126-135.The white robes were painstakingly sewn by Gippius herself, in an approximation of the stereotypically female domesticity she otherwise eschewed. Jenifer Presto has examined this unexpected image in 'The Fashioning of Zinaida Gippius,' in which she connects it to

suggested for Savinkov's *The Pale Horse* refers to the last of the four apocalyptic horsemen, and to Revelation 6:8; 'And behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was death...'[32] In 1917, Gippius wrote the allegorical 'All of You', (*Vsia*) in which she called on the 'Promised Bride of Ages', and declared,

I love all of you, my Only One,

You are all mine, mine!

We shall be resurrected together, beyond the mysterious border,

Together, both you and I![33]

Nonetheless, the post-apocalyptic utopia Gippius envisaged bore little resemblance to the utopia of the Biblical text, which follows the slaying of the Whore of Babylon and the triumph of God. As Tina Pippin has argued, the biblical utopia is in essence a misogynist one, where patriarchal structures remain in place and women, who are represented in Revelation as the binary oppositions good and evil, Bride and Whore, retain their 'natural' and biological roles as mother and nurturer.[34] Such a utopian framework did not accord with Gippius' own rejection of biologically determined gender or sexuality. The ideal of *vyliublennost* left no room for the characterisation of 'woman' as Whore *or* Bride. By integrating the characteristics of apocalyptic fiction and imagery, and the millenarian

---

Gippius' self-parody and 'highly self critical' appropriation of feminine style. In her life as in her poetry, Presto argues, Gippius 'positions the feminine self as object rather than subject, thereby distancing the feminine self form the speaking subject which she inherently positions as male.' Jenifer Presto, 'The Fashioning of Zinaida Gippius.' *Slavic and Eastern European Journal,* 42:1, 1998, p. 65.

[32] This verse is the epigram at the beginning of Ropshin (Savinkov, Boris), *The Pale Horse,* Dublin: Maunsel and Co Ltd, 1917*,* p. 1.

[33] *Vsiu ia tebia liubliu, Edinstvennaya, / Vsia ty moia, moia! / Vmeste voskresnem za gran'iu tainstvennoiu, / Vmeste - i ty, i ia!* Zinaida Gippius, 'All of You,' (*Vsia*) in Z. N. Hippius, *Poslednie Stikhi: 1914-1918,* pp. 41-42, cited in Pachmuss, *Zinadia Hippius,* p. 197.

[34] Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John,* Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, p. 50.

belief in the Antichrist and an imminent End, into her utopian goals of sexual freedom and gender equality, Gippius engaged in a *re*-reading of the two thousand year old tradition of the apocalypse. Hers was a 'radical pacifist transformation of apocalyptic millennialism', into a utopia that sanctified free sexual expression and rejected gender differentiation.[35] In this way, Gippius used apocalyptic symbolism to link her hopes for sexual revolution to both an older tradition of Russian visions of the End, and a religious discourse as old as Christianity itself.

1917 brought first joy and then harsh disappointment for Gippius and her utopian program. Initially hopeful that the February revolution was the beginning of the apocalyptic resolution, she soon lost faith in Kerensky's leadership abilities and continued her agitation for 'true' religious revolution. What came instead was the revolution of the atheistic Bolsheviks, in whom Gippius saw little hope of either sexual freedom or gender equality, despite the work of female Bolsheviks such as Kollontai and Nadezhda Krupskaya.[36] Gippius, Merezhkovsky and Filosofov fled Russia in early 1918, initially to Poland where they were involved in abortive attempts to form Russian regiments to fight the Bolsheviks, and then to Paris, where Gippius forged a central role in the Russian literary community, largely abandoning politics, aside from vitriolic

---

[35] The above quote comes from Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then,* Boston: Beacon Press 1996, p. 233. Keller argues that a number of protofeminist groups or individuals, such Hildegard of Bingen, Guglielma of Milan, the female Saint-Simonians and utopian Shaker communities of eighteenth century United States, have, over the course of centuries, appropriated and reinterpreted apocalyptic traditions, underlining the 'churning multivalency of the apocalyptic script', (p. 238).

[36] In the light of Gippius' anti-procreation philosophy, her distrust of the Bolshevik's program for gender equality was well-placed; despite a conscientious effort to place the 'woman question' at the forefront of the new Communist Utopia through the creation of the special women's office the Zhenodtel in 1919 and attempts to reform family law in 1925, the 'socialist feminist' discourse of the Soviets, even in the years before NEP, continued to stress women's special roles as mothers and wives. See Beatrice Farnsworth, 'Bolshevism, the Woman Question, and Aleksandra Kollontai,' *American Historical Review,* 81, 1976, pp. 292-316.

attacks on the Bolshevik state.[37] She continued to hope for a religious revolution, but the failure of her early attempts to bring such social transformation to fruition left her with little faith that she would see it in her lifetime. Her apocalyptic *weltanschuaang* never left her - 'The Last Circle' (*Posledny Krug*), her final poem, was an extended esoteric rewriting of Dante's Inferno - and the horrors of World War II through which she lived in Paris brought her renewed hope that the End was, indeed, nigh. It was World War I, however, that was instrumental in forming the nexus between her own sexual subjectivity and her vision of a post-apocalyptic world of complete sexual freedom and gender indeterminacy. The theocratic anarchy Gippius preached between 1905 and 1917 was indeed 'sexual anarchy'[38] and thus constitutes a remarkable example of the fluid interaction between discourses of sexuality, religion and revolution in early twentieth century Russia.

---

[37] Gippius' involvement in underhand political machinations in Poland led to her final break with Boris Savinkov, who led the Russian delegation lobbying Polish leader Pilsudski to send Russian regiments to fight the Bolsheviks. Disappointed by Savinkov's betrayal of the 'cause' of religious revolution and what she saw as his quest for personal power, she scornfully declared he was no '*homme d'etat'* and gave up hope of fighting Bolshevism with him. Unfortunately, however, Filosofov disagreed with her, and he remained with Savinkov, incurring the horrified ire of Gippius for whom it was the end of their nineteen year relationship. See Vladimir Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul.* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991, pp. 124-125.

[38] The term 'sexual anarchy' comes from Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de siècle,* New York: Viking Books, 1990.

Conclusion

Through her efforts to destabilise biological conceptualisations of gender and sexuality, Zinaida Gippius represents a figure of resistance against patriarchal *fin de siècle* gender norms that refuses to fit into the idioms of liberal feminism or revolutionary socialism that have dominated historical accounts of women in late nineteenth century Russia**.** Her protest appropriated existing avant garde preoccupations such as androgyny (divesting it of its misogynist subtext) and rejected others, such as the dualistic separation of (male) mind and (female) nature manifested in the Decadence propounded by French poets such as Baudelaire and Huysmans and Russians such as Bal'mont and Briusov. Her performance of gender fluidity, and inscription of this performance on her body through transvestism, occurred during a period when greater educational opportunities and more numerous employment options were making women more visible members of urban Russian society, thus already provoking a sense of the fracturing and fragmentation of old gender norms. This visibility was particularly pertinent for female writers, whose images were known to readers through their reproduction in the burgeoning popular and mass circulation press. In this way, the subversive power of Gippius' acts was heightened by the historical moment in which they occurred. They also interacted with the particular political climate of the period: her personal emphasis on sexual freedom and gender equality (or gender dissolution) motivated her involvement in revolutionary theorising, through which she was able to project her personal rebellion against biological determinism and heteronormativity onto a vision for the utopian transformation of society. Gippius infused established discourses (such as apocalypticism) with new, sexually radical aims. In doing so, she confirmed the profound connection between

Russian Modernism and radical social movements, negating the stereotypical image of Symbolism as an apolitical and detached artistic movement.

Gippius' success in destabilising gendered norms through her subversive acts is demonstrated by the consistent efforts of her contemporaries to 'fix' her identity as Decadent *femme fatale* or hermaphrodite. Such efforts typically failed to comprehend her desire to transcend dualistic binaries and instead interpreted her behaviour as either confirmation of her erotomania or, conversely, of her biological deformity. Nina Berberova's claim that 'within' Gippius was 'not womanly' is characteristic of attempts to base Gippius' gender in her (female) body, and the accompanying obsession with the way her body did, or did not, function.[1] In the process, Berberova inverted Gippius' actual aim, to excavate any remnants of internalised, essential gender within and display the tattered and parodied remains of this notion on the outside of her body, as proof of their ephemeral and culturally constructed nature. Despite her assumption of both male and female characteristics and costumes, Gippius sought to be neither womanly nor manly, but to transcend such dualism in her poetry, fiction, and her practice. While the material evidence manifested in her corporeal body may no longer be available to us, her literary androgyny and bisexuality remain, and constitute one of the most remarkable testaments to *fin de siècle* sexual anarchy in Russian history.

[1] Berberova's comment is quoted in full at the beginning of Chapter 2 of this thesis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Primary Sources

A. Primary Sources by Zinaida Gippius

Poems

Gippius, Zinaida. 'All of You' (Vsia) in Z. N. Gippius. *Poslednie Stikhi: 1914-1918.* pp41-42. Cited in Temira Pachmuss. *Zinadia Hippius: An Intellectual Profile*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 197.

_____. 'And Then' (*A Potom*) in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, pp. 77-79.

_____. 'Autumn' (*Osen*) in Temira Pachmuss. *Women Writers in Russian Modernism.* Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978, pp. 26-27.

_____. 'Ballada' (*Ballada*) in Sibelan Forrester. 'Wooing the Other Woman.' in Pamela Chester and Sibelan Forreter. *Engendering Slavic Literatures.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, p. 113.

_____. 'Dust' (*Pil'*) in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, pp. 58-59.

_____. 'Electricity' (*Elektrichestvo),* in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, p. 65.

_____. 'Grizelda' (*Grizelda*) in Vladimir Zlobin. *A Difficult Soul.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 134.

_____. 'Incantation' (Zaklinanie) in Catriona Kelly ed. *An Anthology of Russian Women's Writing.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp.168-169.

_____. 'Leeches' (*P'iavki*) in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, pp. 66-69.

_____. 'No!' (*Net!*), in Z.N. Hippius, *Poslednie Stikhi: 1914-1918,* p66, cited in Temira Pachmuss. *Zinadia Hippius: An Intellectual Profile*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 202.

_____. 'No Justification' (*Bez Opravdan'ia*), in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, pp. 82-83.

_____. 'Petersburg' (*Peterburg*) in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, p. 80.

_____. 'She' (*Ona*) in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, pp. 72-73.

_____. 'Song' (*Pesnia)* in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, pp. 56-57.

_____. 'Spiders' (*Pauki*) in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, p. 168.

_____. 'Today on Earth,' (*Sevodnia na Zemle*) in Z. N. Gippius. *Poslednie Stikhi: 1914-1918,* St Petersburg, 1918, cited in Temira Pachmuss. *Zinaida Hippius: An Intellectual Profile.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 184.

_____. 'Wedding Ring' (*Brachnoe Kol'tso*) in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966, p169.

_____. 'A White Garment' in Temira Pachmuss. *Women Writers in Russian Modernism.* Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978, p. 33.

_____. 'You' (*Ty*) in Sibelan Forrester. 'Wooing the Other Woman.' in Pamela Chester and Sibelan Forrester. *Engendering Slavic Literatures.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, p. 113.

Short Stories

Hippius, Zinaida, 'Heavenly Words' in Zinaida Hippius. *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius*. Temira Pachmuss ed. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1972, pp. 34-76.

_____. 'Fate,' in Zinaida Hippius. *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius*. Temira Pachmuss ed. Urbana, Illinois : University of Illinois Press, 1972, pp. 77-106.

_____. ' It's All For The Worse,' in Zinaida Hippius. *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius*. Temira Pachmuss ed. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1972, pp. 107-125.

_____. 'The Madwoman' (*Sumasshedshaia*) in Temira Pachmuss. *Women Writers in Russian Modernism.* Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978, pp. 40-65.

_____. 'Miss May' (*Miss Mai*) in Zinaida Gippius. *Aly Mech, rasskazy kniga pervaya.* St Petersburg, 1907, in Temira Pachmuss. *Zinaida Gippius: An Intellectual Profile.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 89.

_____. 'An Ordinary Event' in Temira Pachmuss. *Women Writers in Russian Modernism.* Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978, pp. 97-115.

_____. 'The Pilgrim' in Zinaida Hippius. *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius*. Pachmuss, Temira ed. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1972, pp. 119-125.

_____. 'There Is No Return,' in Zinaida Hippius. *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius*. Pachmuss, Temira ed. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1972, pp. 136-156.

Plays

Gippius, Zinaida. *The Green Ring.* S.S.Koteliansky trans., London: C.W.Daniel, 1920.

_____. 'Sacred Blood' (*Sviataia Krov'*) in Kelly, Katherine E. *Modern Drama by Women 1880s-1910.* London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 281-298.

Books

Hippius-Merezhkovskaya, Z. *Dmitry Merezhkovsky.* Paris, 1951.

Articles

Gippius, Zinaida. 'Iz dnevnika zhurnalista.' *Russkaya Mysl,* 2, 1909, p157, cited in Temira Pachmuss. *Zinaida Hippius: An Intellectual Profile.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 90

_____. 'Vyliublennost.' *Novyi Put,* 3, 1904, pp. 200-208.

Hippius, Zinaida. 'The Great Path' ('*Veliky Put*'). *Golos Zhizni,* 7, 1914, pp15-17, cited in Temira Pachmuss. *Zinaida Hippius: An Intellectual Profile.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 186.

_____. 'Otkrytoe pis'mo redaktoru *Russkoy Mysli.' Russkaya Mysl*, 5, 1914, p133, in Temira Pachmuss. *Zinaida Hippius: An Intellectual Profile.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 45.

_____. 'Revolution and Violence.' (*La Révolution et la Violence*) in Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Zinaida Hippius, and Dmitrii Filosoffof. *Le Tsar et la Révolution.* Paris: Mercure, 1907, pp. 87-132.

_____. 'The True Force of Tsarism.' (*La Vraie Force du Tsarisme*) in Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Zinaida Hippius, and Dmitrii Filosoffof. *Le Tsar et la Révolution.* Paris: Mercure, 1907, pp. 249-283.

Krayny, Anton (Zinaida Gippius). 'Decadence and Society.' in Ronald Peterson. *Russian Symbolism: and Anthology of Sources.* Amsterdam, Philadelphia: J Benjamins Publishing Co, 1993, pp. 70-76.

_____. 'Khleb Zhizni.' *Literaturny Dnevnik 1899-1907.* St Petersburg, 1908, p13, cited in Temira Pachmuss. *Zinaida Hippius: An Intellectual Profile.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 83.

Diaries

Hippius, Zinaida. *Between Paris and St Petersburg: The Selected Diaries of Zinaida Gippius*. Temira Pachmuss ed. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1975.

Letters

Zinaida Gippius to Liudmila Vilkina-Minskaia, 9 September 1894, IRIL, f39, op3, ed khr 847, in Olga Matich. *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination In* Fin de Siecle *Russia.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, p. 156.

Zinaida Gippius to Zinaida Vengerova, 1897, undated, Institut russkoi literatury, f.39, op2, ed khr.542, in Olga Matich. *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination In* Fin de Siecle *Russia.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, p. 173.

Z Hippius to G Adamovich, September 1928, cited in Temira Pachmuss. *Zinaida Gippius: An Intellectual Profile.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 24**.**

Z Hippius to D Filosofov, 12 March 1905, in Olga Matich. *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination In* Fin de Siecle *Russia.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, p. 200.

Z Hippius to D Filosofov, 16 July 1905, in Temira Pachmuss. *Zinaida Gippius: An Intellectual Profile.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 86.

B. Other Primary Sources

Belyi, Andrei. *Nachalo veka.* Moscow, Khudozhestvennia literatura, 1990.

_____. *Mezhdu Dvukh Revoliutsii.* Moscow: Khudozhestvennia Literatura, 1990

Berberova, Nina. *The Italics Are Mine.* Philippe Radley trans. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Berdiaev, Nikolai. *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography.* London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950.

Berdiaev, Nikolai. *The Meaning of the Creative Act.* Donald Lowrie trans, London: Collier Books, 1962.

Berdyaev, Nicholas. *The Russian Idea.* London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947.

Briusov, Valery. *Diary of Valery Briusov.* Grossman, Joan Delaney ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

Diaghilev, Sergei. 'Our Imaginary Decadence.' in Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal eds. *Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia 1890-1924.* New York: Fordham University Press, 1990.

Filosoffof, Dmitrii. 'Le Tsar Pape.' in Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Zinaida Hippius, and Dmitrii Filosoffof. *Le Tsar et la Révolution.* Paris: Mercure, 1907, pp. 17-83.

Hirschfeld, Magnus. *Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross Dress.* Michael A Lombardi Nash trans. New York: Prometheus Books, 1991.

Kollontai, Aleksandra. 'The Social Bases of the Woman Question.' in Aleksandra Kollontai. *Selected Writings of Aleksandra Kollontai.* Alix Holt trans. Westport: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1977.

Merezhkovsky, Dmitri. *The Death of the Gods.* London: Constable & Co, 1920.

_____. *Leonardo da Vinci.* London: J.M. Dent, 1926.

_____. 'My Life.' in Paul Selver. *Anthology of Modern Slavonic Literature in Prose and Verse.* London: K Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1919

_____. 'Ne mir, no mech.' in Martha Bochachevsky-Chomiak and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal. *A Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia 1890-1917.* Newtonville, Ma., Oriental Research Partners, 1982.

_____. 'O prichinakh Upadka i o novykh techeniiakh sovremennoi russkoi literatury.' Saint Petersburg, 1893, in Ronald Peterson. *The Russian Symbolists: An Anthology of Critical and Theoretical Writings.* Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986, pp.17-20.

_____. *Peter and Alexis.* New York: Modern Library, 1931.

_____. 'Religion et la Révolution.' in Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Zinaida Hippius, and Dmitrii Filosoffof. *Le Tsar et la Révolution.* Paris: Mercure, 1907, pp. 135-245.

_____.*Tolstoi as Man and Artist, with an essay on Dostoevski.* London: Archibald, Constable & Co. Limited, 1902.

Nordau, Max. *Degeneration*. London: Heineman, 1895.

Ropshin (Savinkov, Boris). *The Pale Horse.* Dublin: Maunsel and Co Ltd, 1917.

Rozanov, Vasilii. 'On the Sweetest Jesus and the Bitter Fruits of the World.' in Martha Bochachevsky-Chomiak and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal. *A Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia 1890-1917.* Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1982.

Shatz, Marshall ed. *Signposts: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Intelligentsia.* Marshall Shatz and Judith E. Zimmerman trans. Irvine: Charles Schlacks Jr, Publisher, 1986.

Solovyov, Vladimir. *The Justification of the Good.* Nathalie A Duddington trans. London: Constable and Company, 1918.

_____. *A Solovyov Anthology.* Nathalie Duddington ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950.

Zlobin, Vladimir. *A Difficult Soul.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

2. Secondary Sources

A. Reference Works and Anthologies

Collins, John, Bernard McGinn and Stephen Stein, eds. *The Encyclopaedia of Apocalypticism.* New York: Continuum, 2000.

Kelly, Catriona ed. *An Anthology of Russian Women's Writing.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Kelly, Katherine E ed. *Modern Drama by women 1880s - 1910: An International Anthology.* London: Routledge, 1996.

Ledkovsky, Marina, Charlotte Rosenthal, and Mary Zirin. *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Markov, Vladimir and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry.* London: McGibbon & Kee, 1966.

Pachmuss, Temira. *Women Writers in Russian Modernism.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978.

Peterson, Ronald. *The Russian Symbolists: An Anthology of Critical and Theoretical Writings.* Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986.

Selver, Paul. *Anthology of Modern Slavonic Literature in Prose and Verse.* London: K

Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1919.

Terras, Victor. *A History of Russian Literature.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

B. Other Secondary Sources

Aldrich, Robert. *The Seduction of the Mediterranean.* London: Routledge, 1993.

Ascher, Abraham. *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

Barker, Adele Marie and Jehanne M Gheith. *A History of Women's Writing in Russia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Barta, Peter I ed. *Gender and Sexuality in Russian Civilisation.* London: Routledge, 2001.

Bedford, C H. 'Dmitry Merezhkovsky, the Intelligentsia and the Revolution of 1905.' *Canadian Slavonic Papers,* Volume 3, 1958, pp. 27-42.

_____. 'Dmitry Merezhkovsky, the Third Testament and the Third Humanity.' *The Slavonic and Eastern European Review,* December 1963, pp. 144-157.

_____. 'D. S. Merezhkovsky: The Forgotten Poet.' *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 36, 1957-1958, pp. 159-179.

Beik, Doris and Paul Beik. *Flora Tristan: Utopian Feminist.* Blooington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Benstock, Shari. *Women of the Left Bank.* Austin: University of Texas, 1986.

Berken, Wil van den, Manon de Courten and Evert van der Zweerde. *Vladimir Soloviev: Reconciler and Polemicist.* Leuven: Peeters, 2000.

Bernheimer, Charles. *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the* Fin de Siecle *in Europe.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Bethea, David. *The Shape of the Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Billington, James. *The Icon and the Axe.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966.

Bloom, Harold. *Omens of Millenium: The Gnosis of Angels and Resurrection.* New York: Riverhead Books, 1996.

Bohachevsky-Chomiak, Martha, and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal. *Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia 1890-1924.* New York: Fordham University Press, 1990.

Bornstein, Eliot. 'Slavophilia: The Incitement to Russian Sexual Discourse.' *Slavic and East European Journal,* 40:1*,* 1996, pp. 142-147.

Boym, Svetlana. *Death in Quotation Marks: Cultural Myths of the Modern Poet.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Bowlt, John E. and Olga Matich. *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant Garde and Cultural Experiment.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Bowlt, John E. 'Through the Glass Darkly: Images of Decadence in Early Twentieth Century Russian Art.' *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol 17, No 1 ('Decadence'), 1982, pp. 93-110.

Bradbury, Malcolm and James McFarlane. *Modernism: 1890-1930.* Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978.

Brickell, Chris. 'A Social Interactionist History of Sexuality?' *Rethinking History,* 10:3, 2006, pp. 415-432.

Buck, Claire. *H.D. and Freud: Bisexuality and a Feminine Discourse.* New York: St Martins Press, 1991.

Bullough, Vern L. and Bonnie Bullough. *Cross Dressing, Sex and Gender*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge, 1990.

Caminero-Santagelo, Marta. *The Madwoman Can't Speak, or Why Insanity is Not Subversive.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Canning, Kathleen. 'The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History.' *Gender & History,* 11:3, 1999, pp499-513.

Carleton, Gregory. *The Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005.

Chamberlain, J Edward and Sander L, Gilman eds. *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Chauncey, George. 'From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualisation of Female Deviance.' *Salmagundi,* 58, 1982, pp. 114-146.

Cherniavsky, Michael. ‘The Old Believers and the New Religion.' *Slavic Review,* 25, 1966, pp. 1-39.

Chester, Pamela and Sibelan Forrester. *Engendering Slavic Literatures*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Christensen, Peter. ‘Christ and Anti-Christ as Historical Novel.’ *Modern Language Studies,* 20:3, 1990, pp. 67-77.

Clark, Katerina. *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution.* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1995.

Clements, Barbara Evans. 'Emancipation through Communism: The Ideology of A.M. Kollontai.’ *Slavic Review,* 32:2, 1973, pp323-338.

Clowes, Edith W, Samuel D Kassow and James L West. *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Clowes, Edith. *Fiction’s Overcoat: Russian Literary Culture and the Question of Philosophy.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.

_____. *The Revolution of Moral Consciousness.* Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988.

Clyman, Toby W. and Diana Greene eds. *Women Writers in Russian Literature.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Costlow, Stephanie and Judith Vowles. *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.

Crone, Anna Lisa. *Rozanov and the End of Literature.* Wurzburg: Jal-Verlag, 1978.

DeKoven, Marianne. *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Doan, Laura and Jane Garrity. *Sapphic Modernities: Sexuality, Women and National Culture,* New York: Palgrace Macmillan, 2006.

Donoghue, Emma. 'Imagined More than Women: Lesbians as Hermaphrodites 1671-1766.' *Women's History Review,* 2:2, 1993, pp199-216.

Djikstra, Bram. *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Donchin, Georgette. *The Influence of French Symbolism on Russian Poetry.* London: Mouton & Co, 1958.

Duberman, Martin Bauml, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey, Jr. *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past.* New York: NAL Books, 1989.

Edmondson, Linda. *Feminism in Russia, 1900-1917.* London: Heinemann Educational, 1984.

Engel, Barbara Alpern. *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Russia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

_____. *Women in Russia 1700-2000.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

_____. 'Women's Rights a la Russe.' *Russian Review.* 58:3, pp. 355-360.

Engelstein, Laura. *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folktale.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

_____. 'Holy Russia in Modern Times: An Essay on Orthodoxy and Cultural Change.' *Past and Present,* 173:1, 2001, pp. 129-156.

_____. *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

_____. 'Lesbian Vignettes: A Russian Triptych from the 1890s.' *Signs,* Vol 15:4, 1990, pp. 813-831.

Epstein, Mikhail. 'The Demise of the First Secularisation: The Church of Gogol and the Church of Belinsky.' *Studies in Eastern European Thought,* 58:2, 2006, pp. 95-105.

Etkind, Alexander. *Eros of the Impossible: A History of Psychoanalysis in Russia.* Noah and Maria Rubens trans. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997.

_____. 'Whirling with the Other: Russian Populism and Religious Sects.' *Russian Review,* 62:4, 2003, pp565-588

Evtuhov, Catherine. *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Farnsworth, Beatrice. 'Bolshevism, the Woman Question, and Aleksandra Kollontai.' *American Historical Review,* 81, 1976, pp292-316.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *The Russian Revolution.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Fletcher, Angus. *Allegory: The Theory of a Sybolic Mode.* Ithaca: Cornell University

Press, 1967.

Foldy, Michael S. *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality and Late-Victorian Society.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

Forrester, Sibelan. 'Reading for a Self: Self-Definition and Female Ancestry in Three Russian Poems.' *Russian Review,* 55:1, 1996, pp. 21-36.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality Vol 1 :The Will to Knowledge.* Robert Hurley trans, New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Gasparov, Boris, Robert P Hughes, and Irina Paperno. *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

Geifman, Anna. *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia 1894-1917.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Gibbian, George and H W Tjalsma eds. *Russian Modernism: Culture and the Avant Garde. 1900-1930,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976.

Gilbert, Sandra. 'Costumes of the Mind: Transvestism as Metaphor in Modern Literature.' *Critical Inquiry,* 7:2, 1980, pp. 391-417.

Goldstein, Jan ed. *Foucault and the Writing of History.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

Goodman, Dena. 'Letter Writing and the Emergence of Gendered Subjectivity in Eighteenth Century France.' *Journal of Women's History,* 17:2, 2005, pp. 9-37.

Goscilo, Helena and Beth Holmgren. *Russia-Women-Culture.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Gough, Val and Jill Rudd. *A Very Different Story: Studies on the Fiction of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.* Liverpool: Liverpool University Pres, 1998.

Gould, Warwick, and Marjorie Reeves. *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001.

Gove, Antonina Filonov. 'Gender as a Poetic Feature in the Verse of Zinaida Gippius.' in Birnbaum, Henrik ed. *American Contributions to the Eighth Congress of Slavists,* Columbus: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1978, pp. 379-407.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare.* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980.

Groberg, Kristi A. 'The Eternal Feminine: Vladimir Soloviev's Visions of Sophia.' *Alexandria,* 1:1, 1991, pp77-96.

Hackel, Sergei. *The Poet and the Revolution: Aleksandr Blok's 'The Twelve.'* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Haimson, Leopold. *The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955.

_____*Russia's Revolutionary Experience 1907-1917.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Healy, Dan. *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Heldt, Barbara. *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Heller, Leonid and Michel Niqueux. *Historie de l'Utopie en Russie.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995.

Hildermeier, Manfred. 'Neopopulism and Modernisation: The Debate on Theory and Tactics in the Socialist Revolutionary Party, 1905-1914.' *Russian Review,* 34:4, 1975, pp. 453-475.

Hobsbawm, Eric. *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries.* New York: 1959.

Hubbs, Joanna. *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture.* Bloomington: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Hutchings, Stephen C. 'Breaking the Circle of the Self: Domestication, Alienation, and the Question of Discourse Type in Rozanov's Late Writings.' *Slavic Review,* 52:1, 1993, pp. 67-86.

Jakobson, Roman. *Shifters, Verbal Categories and the Russian Verb.* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Johanson, Christine. *Women's Struggle for Higher Education in Russia 1855-1900.* Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987.

Jung, Carl Gustav. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious.* R.F.C. Hull (trans), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.

Kalbouss, George. *The Plays of the Russian Symbolists.* East Lansing, Michigan: The Russian Language Journal, 1982.

Karlinsky, Simon. Introduction to Vladimir Zlobin. *A Difficult Soul.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

_____. *Marina Tsvetaeva: The Woman, Her World and Her Poetry.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

_____. *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Keller, Catherine. *Apocalypse Now and Then.* Boston: Beacon Press 1996.

Kelly, Aileen. *Toward Another Shore: Russian Thinkers Between Necessity and Chance.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Kelly, Catriona. *A History of Women's Writing in Russia.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Kelly, Catriona and Lovell, Stephen eds. *Russian Literature, Modernism and the Visual Arts.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Kelly, Catriona and Shepherd, David. *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881-1940.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Khanin, Dmitry. 'Beauty and the Beast: Vasilii Rozanov's Aesthetic and Moral Ideal.' *Russian Review,* 57:1, 1998, pp. 72-86.

Kline, George. *Religious and Anti-Religious Thought in Russia.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

Kon, Igor. *The Sexual Revolution in Russia: From the Age of the Czars to Today.* James Riordan trans. New York: Free Press, 1995.

Kostalevsky, Marina. *Dostoevsky and Soloviev: The Art of Integral Vision.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

Kot, Joanna. 'Manipulating Distance in Zinaida Gippius' Drama Holy Blood: A Well-Balanced Experiment.' *The Slavic and East European Journal,* 40:4, 1996, pp. 649-666.

Lacan, Jacques. *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne.* Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1982.

Laqueur, Thomas. *Making Sex: From the Greeks to Freud.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Laqueur, Walter. 'Interpretations of Terrorism: Fact, Fiction and Political Science.' *Journal of Contemporary History.* 12:1, 1977, pp. 1-42.

_____. *Terrorism.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977.

Lasky, Melvin J. *Utopia and Revolution*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976.

Laughlin, Karen and Catherine Schuler. *Theatre and Feminist Aesthetics*. Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995.

Lauretis, Teresa de.ed. *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Le Rider, Jacques. *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in* Fin de Siecle *Vienna.* Rosemary Morris trans. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993.

Liljstrom, Marianne, Eila Mantysaari, and Arja Rosenholm eds. *Gender Restructuring in Russian Studies.* Tampere: Slavica Temperensia, 1993.

Lossky, Nicholas. *History of Russian Philosophy.* London: Allen & Unwin, 1952.

Lotman, Iurii M, Lidiia A Ginsburg, and Boris A Uspenskii. *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Lukashevich, Stephan. *N.F. Fedorov 1828-1903: A Study in Russian Eupsychian and Utopian Thought.* Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1977.

Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia.* London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, Ltd., 1940.

Marsh, Rosalind, ed. *Gender and Russian Literature: New Perspectives.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1996.

Martin, Biddy. *Woman and Modernity: The (Life)styles of Lou Andres Salome.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Martin, John Levi. 'Structuring the Sexual Revolution.' *Theory and Society,* 25:1, February 1996, pp. 105-151.

Masaryk, T. G. *The Spirit of Russia: Studies in History, Literature, and Philosophy.* Eden and Cedar Paul trans. London: Allen & Unwin, 1919.

Masing-Delic, Irene. *Abolishing Death: A Salvation Myth of Russian Twentieth Century Literature.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.

Maslenikov, Oleg. *The Frenzied Poets: Andrei Biely and the Russian Symbolists.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952.

_____. 'Spectre of Nothingness: The Privative Element in the poetry of Zinaida Hippius.' *Slavonic and East European Journal,* New Series, IB, 1966, pp. 199-311.

Matich, Olga. 'Androgyny and the Russian Silver Age.' *Pacific Coast Philology,* Vol 14,

1979, pp. 42-50.

_____. 'The Devil and the Poetry of Zinaida Gippius,' *Slavonic and East European Journal,* 16:2, 1972, pp. 184-192.

_____. *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's* Fin de Siecle*,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

_____. *Paradox in the Religious Poetry of Zinaida Gippius,* Munich: Fink Verlag, 1972.

McDermid, Jane and Anna Hillyar. *Midwives of the Revolution: Female Bolsheviks and Women Workers in 1917.* London: UCL Press, 1999.

McGinn, Bernard. *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil.* San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2000.

_____. *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought.* New York: Collier MacMillan, 1985.

_____. *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

Melancon, Michael. *The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Russian Anti-War Movement 1914-1917.* Columbus: Ohio State University, 1990.

Mlikotin, Anthony M ed. *Western Philosophical Systems in Russian Literature: a collection of critical studies.* Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1979.

Moeller-Sally, Betsey F. 'Oscar Wilde and the Culture of Russian Modernism.' *Slavonic and East European Journal*, 34:4, 1990, pp. 459-472.

Moeller, Peter Ulf. *Postlude to the Kreutzer Sonata: Tolstoj and the Debate on Sexual Morality in Russian Literature in the 1890s.* Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1988.

Mondry, Henrietta. 'Beyond the Boundary: Vasilii Rozanov and the Animal Body.' *The Slavic and East European Journal,* 43:4, 1999, pp. 651-671.

Morrissey, Susan K. *Heralds of Revolution: Russian Students and the Mythologies of Radicalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Moses, Claire G. 'French Utopians: The Word and the Act.' in Akkerman, Tjitske and Siep Sturrman. *Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History: From the Middle Ages to the Present.* London: Routledge, 1998.

Mosse, George. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe.* New York: Howard Fertig, 1985.

Murav, Harriet. 'The Beilis Murder Trial and the Culture of Apocalypse.' *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*. 12:2, 2000, pp. 243-263.

Murvar, Vatro. 'Messianism in Russia: Religious and Revolutionary.' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 10:4, 1971, pp. 277-338.

Naiman, Eric. *Sex in Public: the Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Pachmuss, Temira. 'Women Writers in Russian Decadence.' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17:1, 1982, pp. 111-136.

_____. *Zinadia Hippius: An Intellectual Profile*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971.

Paperno, Irina and Joan Delany Grossman. *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Perrie, Maureen. 'The Social Composition and Structure of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party Before 1917.' *Soviet Studies,* 24:2, 1972, pp. 223-250.

Petersen, Ronald. *A History of Russian Symbolism.* Amsterdam, Philadelphia: J Benjamins Publishing Co, 1993.

Pick, Daniel. *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c.1848-c.1918.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Pierrot, Jean. *The Decadent Imagination.* Derek Coultman trans. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981.

Pippin, Tina. *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John.* Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.

Poggioli, Renato. *The Poets of Russia 1890-1930.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960.

_____. *Rozanov.* New York: Hillary House Publishers, 1962.

_____. *Theory of the Avant Garde*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.

Poltoratzky, Nikolai P. 'The Vekhi Dispute and the Significance of Vekhi.' *Canadian Slavonic Papers,* IX, 1, 1967, pp. 86-106.

Presto, Jenifer. 'The Androgynous Gaze of Zinaida Gippius.' *Russian Literature* XLVIII, 2000, pp. 87-107.

_____. 'The Fashioning of Zinaida Gippius.' *Slavic and Eastern European Journal,* 42:1, 1998, pp. 58-75.

_____. 'Reading Zinaida Gippius: Over Her Dead Body.' *Slavic and East European Journal,* 43:4, 1999, pp. 621-635.

_____. 'Unbearable Burdens: Aleksandr Blok and the Modernist Resistance to Progeny and Domesticity.' *Slavic Review,* 63:1, 2004, pp6-25.

Pyman, Avril. *A History of Russian Symbolism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

_____. *The Life of Aleksandr Blok.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Rabinowitz, Stanley. 'No Room of Her Own: The Early Life and Career of Liubov Gurevich.' *Russian Review,* 57:2, 1998, pp. 236-252.

Read, Christopher. *Religion, Revolution and the Russian Intelligentsia, 1900-1912.* London: Macmillan Press, 1979.

Roberts, Marie-Louise. *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in* Fin de Siécle *France.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer. *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality.* The Hague: Martin Nijihof, 1975.

_____. *Nietzsche in Russia.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

_____. *The Occult in Russia and the Soviet Union.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press,1997.

_____. 'The Transmutation of the Symbolist Ethos: Mystical Anarchism and the Revolution of 1905.' *Slavic Review,* 36:4, 1977, pp. 608-627.

Rosenthal, Charlotte. 'Silver Age: A High Point for Women?' in Edmondson, Linda ed. *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Rowley, David G. 'Redeemer Empire: Russian Millenarianism.' *American Historical Review,* 104:5, 1999, pp. 1582-1602.

Russett, Cynthia Eagle. *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Said, Edward. *Beginnings: Intention and Method.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Sandler, Stephanie ed. *Rereading Russian Poetry.* New Haven: Yale University Press,

1999.

Scanlan, James P. 'The New Religious Consciousness: Merezhkovskii and Berdiaev.' *Canadian Slavic Studies,* 4:1, 1970, pp. 17-35.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Segal, Robert A. *The Gnostic Jung.* London: Routledge, 1992.

Shapiro, Leonard. 'The Vekhi Group and the Mystique of Revolution.' *The Slavonic and East European Review*. 34, 1955-1956, pp. 56-76.

Sherbinin, Julie W de. 'Haunting the Centre: Russia's Madwomen and Zinaida Gippius' Madwoman.' *Slavic and East European Journal,* 46:4, 2002, pp. 727-742.

Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.

_____*Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle.* New York: Viking Books, 1990.

Slonim, Marc. *From Chekov to the Revolution: Russian Literature 1900-1917.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1962.

Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

Spence, Richard B. *Boris Savinkov: Renegade on the Left.* Boulder: East European Monographs, 1991.

Stites, Richard. *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, Bolshevism 1860-1930.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Strom, Kirsten. 'Avant Garde of What? Surrealism Reconsidered as Political Culture.' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 62:1, 2004, pp. 37-50.

Teich, Mikulas and Roy Porter. *Fin de Siecle and its Legacy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Timberlake, Charles E. *Religious and Secular Forces in Late Tsarist Russia.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992.

Tomkins, Stuart R. '*Vekhi* and the Russian Intelligentsia.' *Canadian Slavonic Papers,* Volume 2, 1957, pp. 11-25.

Vicinus, Martha. *Intimate Friends: Women who loved Women 1778-1928.* Chicago:

University of Chicago, 2004.

Vucinich, Alexander. *Darwin in Russian Thought.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Walicki, Andrezj. *A History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979.

Weil, Kari. *Androgyny and the Denial of Difference.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992.

Weir, David. *Decadence and the Making of Modernism.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.

Wolff, Janet. *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Zernov, Nikolas. *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century.* New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

Zlatar, Zdenko. *The Slavic Epic: Gundulić's Osman.* New York: Peter Lang, 1995.

C. Electronic Sources

Raskolnikov, F F. 'The Tale of a Lost Day.' in *Tales of Sublieutenant Ilyin.* Accessed via http://wwww.marxists.org/history/ussr/governement/red-army/1918/raskolnikov/ilyin/ch01.htm, last viewed 20 August 2006.