

Creating Life

The Aesthetic Utopia
of Russian Modernism

EDITED BY

Irina Paperno and
Joan Delaney Grossman

STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Stanford, California 1994

The Symbolist Meaning of Love: Theory and Practice

OLGA MATICH

The self-conscious construction of one's life according to a philosophical, social, or literary model was begun not by the Symbolists but by literary forebears who set wide-ranging precedents for Symbolist behavior: first the romantics of the Decembrist era, then the men of the 1840's, and then the "new men" of the 1860's. For these several generations of Russians, "living ideas," so typical of Dostoevsky's heroes, became a life strategy. The tendency to turn philosophy into praxis and abstract ideas into a strategy for living had European sources as well as Russian; one of these, for the generation of the 1860's, was L. A. Feuerbach's anti-idealism, which privileged the senses and the immediacy of lived experience at the expense of pure ideas. At the end of the century, Nietzsche reinforced the emphasis on praxis by rejecting abstract theory in favor of a philosophy of life, a move that captured the imagination of the Symbolist generation.

The Symbolists' immediate Russian predecessor in the sphere of life-creation was, of course, Vladimir Solov'ev. In keeping with the emphasis on an experiential rather than an abstract

philosophy, he began the process of translating key religious and aesthetic concepts into a life strategy. Solov'ev's ideas, which incorporated Platonism, Christian mysticism, Hegelianism, and positivism, became a way of life for the Symbolists, believing as they did in the sacramental transubstantiation of "the word"—that it could become flesh and blood.

The ultimate goal of the men and women at the turn of the century was a total transformation of life resulting in earthly immortality. In this they were inspired by Solov'ev's Christological model of godmanhood as based on the union of flesh and spirit, as well as Nietzsche's godlike superman, who, they believed, would transcend death by giving birth to himself; Nikolai Fedorov's project of resurrecting dead ancestors in the flesh; and Nikolai Chernyshevsky's "new men and women." Love played a seminal role in these utopian projects. For Solov'ev love was even more powerful than art in that it had real-life potential to bring about the actual end of history and transform material reality.

Building on the ideas of Feuerbach and French Christian socialists, nineteenth-century Russian utopian thought in the 1860's commonly combined militant atheism, Christian theological terminology, and asceticism in private life. Solov'evian romantic *life-creation*, adopted by the Symbolists, reinstated the centrality of religion. Reappropriating it from the hidden underside of the utopian culture of Russian radicals and the metaphoric discourse to which they had relegated it, Solov'ev fused religion and eros in his theory of love. That theory was closely linked with his theory of art, described in the preceding chapter.

Seeking transcendence and immortality through love, the Symbolist new man and woman, inspired by Solov'ev, were driven by the eschatological impulse toward rebirth or resurrection, not procreation. Premised on the continuous cycle of birth and death, procreation was rejected; hence the common preoccupation with abstinence in the here and now and with conquering death by a higher form of love that rechanneled erotic energy away from the biological drive to reproduce.¹ In their search for these higher forms, the Symbolists offered a variety of erotic practices as alternatives to the traditional family. Among them

were Platonic love for a soul twin, Dionysian eros, new versions of the romantic triangle, homoerotic love, narcissism, and romantic love for an unattainable object. These models were frequently intertwined, reflecting the eclectic, syncretic spirit of the time. In its cultural sources, the Symbolist ethos brought together ancient Greek life practice (in the Platonic, or Apollonian, sense, and in the Dionysian as defined by Nietzsche); elements of Gnostic mysticism; the ideal of courtly love filtered through German romanticism; the Slavophile notion of collectivity; and aspects of Russian radical ideology of the 1860's.²

The Solov'evian Erotic Utopia

Vladimir Solov'ev in his seminal work "The Meaning of Love" ("Smysl liubvi," 1892–94) presented a program of action for an "erotic utopia,"³ which had a profound influence on the Symbolist generation's mythology of love. Solov'ev envisioned eros, which, he believed, was the only sign of divinity in the material world, as having transformative power, not a procreative function. Its goal was the creation of the new man who would transcend death by reclaiming divine androgyny. According to Solov'ev, the meaning of love emerged from a synthesis of opposites—the feminine and masculine and the spiritual and material. His summons to recover the union of the spirit and flesh in love, as well as in art, paved the way for the later Symbolist attempts to combine Greek paganism and Christianity.

Eros was to be retrieved from the dustbin to which Christian life practice had discarded it and reunited with the spirit in the new man: "False spirituality is the negation of the flesh; true spirituality represents its transformation, salvation, rebirth."⁴ This, however, did not connote the physical consummation of passion by historical men and women, but the transubstantiation of the flesh. Like his followers, Solov'ev was both ambivalent and ambiguous about the physiology of love. It may be that he intended a collective physical union of all humanity to mark the end of history and the emergence of the new man; before the coming of that time the consummation of passion would be pro-

scribed because it resulted in the disintegration of humanity and death. Conflating the spirit and flesh, as if in an erotic retort, the androgynous godman could be re-created only by mankind as a whole, not by individuals. (Like Fedorov and other Russian utopians before and after, Solov'ev insisted on the Slavophile principle of communalism [*sobornost'*].)

In keeping with nineteenth-century utopian discourse, he associated the transformation of life with the notion of *task* (*delo liubvi*), connoting activity and process. Moreover, the task of love was intertwined with the task of Logos (*delo slova*); their common goal was the creation of the new man. In the words of Evgeny Trubetskoy, "for [Solov'ev] Godmanhood . . . is . . . that unique *task* which man is called upon to accomplish on this earth. The calling of man is first of all *theurgy*, i.e. the fulfillment of God's *task* . . . both in private and public life."⁵

Solov'ev's theory of love, premised on unconsummated eros and an antiprocreative bias, had its basis in Plato. Emphasizing the experiential, personal character of Plato's erotic philosophy, the Russian thinker explored its potential to transcend abstract thought. The title of his most extensive essay on Plato, "Plato's Life Drama" ("Zhiznennaia drama Platona," 1898), emphasizes the philosopher's personal history and life practice at the expense of pure philosophy. Written against the background of Russian nineteenth-century utopian thought, Hegelianism, and Nietzsche, Solov'ev's "The Meaning of Love" was, first of all, a response to Plato's *Symposium* (translated into Russian as *Pirshestvo*, or *Pir*). In the words of Viacheslav Ivanov, "Perhaps no one since Plato has said anything so deep and vital about love and sex . . . as Solov'ev, crowning the former and restoring the latter's human dignity and goal of godmanhood."⁶ Plato was the source of Solov'ev's ideas of unconsummated divine love and divine androgyny.⁷ Created in the image and likeness of God, Solov'ev's androgyne reclaims the original wholeness that reinstates immortality. But in contrast to Plato, whose androgyne exists only in the realm of forms, Solov'ev awaited its actual materialization in the future.

Solov'ev's mythology of love took as its starting point the dis-

tinction between earthly and divine love described in the *Symposium*. Plato represented them by Aphrodite Pandemos and Aphrodite Urania. The former, who is younger than her heavenly counterpart, was born of the union of male and female and is the patron of physical love. Spiritual love is associated with Aphrodite Urania, who is older and "springs entirely from the male," according to Pausanias in the *Symposium*; "those who are inspired by this Love are attracted toward the male sex."⁸ Describing the higher form of love, Socrates says that those "whose creative desire is of the soul, and who long to beget spiritually, not physically," beget wisdom and virtue. This he associates with sublimated love between male friends. Socrates' teacher of eros, Diotima, posits a third and higher form of love, which is linked to philosophy and involves the transcendence of the sensible world. Divine love in the Platonic sense is a pilgrimage that starts with the love of male physical beauty, moves to love of spiritual and moral beauty, proceeds to love of the beauty of knowledge and truth, and finally attains to the contemplation of absolute beauty (*Symposium*, p. 94). Mystical light illuminates the end of this path from ordinary physical love to Platonic eros.

In distinguishing between the two Aphrodites, Solov'ev, unlike his Athenian predecessor, did not draw a sharp line between them, although his preference was for the celestial goddess. Nor did Solov'ev associate her with homoerotic love. For Solov'ev, Aphrodite Urania was the emblem of the eternal feminine, whom he described as the woman clothed in the sun (*zhena oblechennaia v solntse*), an image from *The Revelation of St. John*:

The woman clothed in the sun is already suffering birth pains: she must reveal the truth, give birth to the word, but the ancient serpent is gathering his last forces against her . . . in the end Eternal beauty will be fertile, and from her will emerge the world's salvation, when her deceptive physical likeness has disappeared, as that sea foam which gave birth to Aphrodite Pandemos. My poems do not serve *her*, not with a single word.⁹

Juxtaposing images from the Apocalypse, Old Testament, Plato, and Greek mythology, Solov'ev imitated Plato's method of "the midwifery of thought" by using metaphors of love that were

pointedly procreative. Despite a disdain for physical progeny, paradoxically, both Plato and Solov'ev appropriated the imagery of birth and fecundity to describe divine love. Solov'ev depicts eternal beauty as *fertile*, out of which will emerge salvation (in the sense of rebirth), but not till the disappearance of beauty's physical form. The image that he proposes is that of a woman enveloped by the sun and in the throes of childbirth, giving birth to Logos.

However, in contrast to Plato, who put ideas above praxis, Solov'ev adapted the Platonic discourse of love to a utopian ideal and to the Russian tradition of turning ideas into life practice. Like Chernyshevsky and Fedorov—his nineteenth-century utopian predecessors in Russia—he emphasized the transformative power of eros, whose goal is the transfiguration of human nature: "Plato had not mastered the eternal power of Eros to perform the real task of the *rebirth* of physical nature, his and another's," although he had already begun transforming erotic philosophy into a life strategy.¹⁰ According to Solov'ev, the three most important aspects of active love existed in Plato's philosophy in embryonic form: "the concepts of androgyny, spiritual corporeality, and godmanhood . . . [t]he first—in the myth put into the mouth of Aristophanes (*Symposium*), the second—in the definition of beauty (*Phaedrus*), and the third—in the very concept of eros as a mediating force between God and mortal nature (the speech of Diotima in the *Symposium*)" ("Zhiznennaia," p. 235). These three manifestations of eros were for Solov'ev the goal of the transformation of life. For Plato, however, they remained in the realm of fantasy: "He did not tie them together and put them at the real basis of life's journey," wrote Solov'ev, "and for this reason the end of the journey, [which was] the resurrection of mortal nature to eternal life, remained hidden from him, although logically it followed from his own ideas. . . . Plato's Eros did not fulfill its goal, did not unite heaven with earth and the underworld, did not build between them any actual bridge, and, empty-handed, flitted away indifferently to the world of ideal speculation" (*ibid.*, p. 235).

As this passage so clearly illustrates, Solov'ev, like one of his

other teachers, Fedorov, believed in the creation of a *real* bridge between heaven and earth, what he called *pontifex*, and in the *actual* rebirth of mortal human nature. Modeled on the resurrection of Christ, the prototypical godman, the transfiguration of mortal flesh that is mediated by love's winged eros is the path to immortality: "Our personal task . . . [and] the common task of the whole world . . . [is] to spiritualize matter. It is being prepared by the cosmic process in the natural world, being continued and reified in the historical process of mankind."¹¹ This path is associated with divine androgyny and the union of spirit and flesh. Identified as the triad of divine love, androgyny, sanctified flesh, and godmanhood became Solov'ev's life task.

Like Fedorov, whose philosophy of the "common task" rejected consummated, procreative love in favor of an active, redemptive love that resurrects the dead fathers, Solov'ev seems to have considered tampering with nature. He suggested the actual physical transfiguration of man, especially since Adam the procreator would become obsolete with the advent of androgyny. (Reproduction, after all, is premised on the polarization of male and female.) Resembling Fedorov's, as well as positivist, utopian visions of the scientific transformation of nature, his description of man's rebirth borrowed terms from the physical sciences: "Only this, so to speak, chemical fusion of two beings of the same kind and significance, but throughout different in form, can render possible (both in the natural and the spiritual order) the creation of a new man, the actual realization of the true human individuality."¹² This new man was to be an androgyne, representing the free union of the masculine and feminine principles, whose androgynous wholeness will reestablish in him the image and likeness of God:

In empirical reality there is no man *as such*—he exists only in a one-sided and limited form as a masculine or a feminine individual. . . . The true human being . . . cannot be merely a man or merely a woman, but must be the higher unity of the two. To realize this unity or to create the true human being as the free unity of the masculine and the feminine elements, which preserve their formal separateness but overcome their essential disparity and disruption, is the direct *task* of love.¹³

Although Solov'ev does not actually name Fedorov, "The Meaning of Love" concludes with Fedorov's ideas about the internalization of sexual energy that transcends procreation: love's task is "the transformation or the *turning inwards* of the creative power which in nature, being turned outwards, produces the bad infinity of the physical reproduction of organisms." This will be accomplished by the release, or liberation, of "spiritual-material currents [*dukhovno-telesnye toki*], which will gradually gain possession of the material environment," resulting in the birth of the "living and eternal likeness of absolute humanity."¹⁴

Solov'ev's images of the physical transfiguration of the body and his call for androgyny and the fusion of spirit and flesh were to remain on the plane of discourse until the advent of Symbolist discussions about life-creation. One of the examples of the Symbolist attempt to translate Solov'evian theory into practice was the debate in the Merezhkovsky circle about new forms of sexuality that circumvent procreation. (In 1900, the circle included Vasily Rozanov, Alexander Benois, Leon Bakst, Dmitry Filosofov, Pavel Pertsov, Vladimir Gippius, Walter Nuvel', and Sergei Diaghilev.) According to Zinaida Gippius, they were all preoccupied with "the unsolved mystery of sex," its relation to God, and possible alternatives to the biological sex act. Unlike some of the others, Gippius proposed that it be abolished altogether: "The abolition of procreation abolishes the [sex] act, of its own accord—not by any law, but because of its having become . . . an unlawful state. . . . Conversely we must . . . assert the phenomenal . . . transfiguration of the flesh here."¹⁵ In contrast to his wife, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, like Solov'ev, seems to have toyed with ideas that prefigure genetic engineering. Both he and Filosofov believed that the procreative sex act would be replaced "by some other common single act . . . , equally powerful in its sensation of union and corporeality"; but Gippius saw in this vestiges of the animal law and old procreative psychology.¹⁶

Among the Symbolist followers of Solov'ev, there was a broad range of erotic ideology. The Merezhkovskys attempted to reify his ideas about the transfiguration of the body. Alexander Blok and Andrei Bely borrowed Solov'ev's romantic form of Platonic

love, which had distinct courtly connotations and which the philosopher had projected onto the Gnostic image of Sophia. Gippius also appropriated the myth of divine androgyny and consecrated flesh. The bolder Viacheslav Ivanov and especially Mikhail Kuzmin experimented with Platonic love in its original, homoerotic sense. In many cases, these elements of Platonism and Neoplatonic, neoromantic, and Christian mysticism were interlaced with vestiges of the preceding Russian tradition of radical utopianism formed in the 1860's.

Homoerotic Love

An alternative to procreation was homoerotic love, celebrated in European artistic and intellectual circles at the turn of the century. According to Foucault and his followers, male homosexuality was a late-nineteenth-century cultural construct, which permeated the Decadent ethos. According to Elaine Showalter, the homoerotic discourse of the 1890's reflected the emergence of two different kinds of homosexual identity. One was the *fin de siècle* model of sexual intermediacy, characterized by liminality and border-crossing in the sphere of gender. The other emphasized sexual polarization, or heightened forms of masculinity and femininity.¹⁷ Whatever the differences, both life strategies were opposed to the subordination of erotic love to procreation. The adoption of the second type as an elitist cultural model was part of a general revival of ancient Greek culture and Platonic thought at the end of the century, which also characterized Russian cultural development. Reclaiming the spirit of classical antiquity, with its cult of sensual beauty, the post-Victorian and post-Nietzschean generation rebelled against Christian asceticism, including militant heterosexuality. The Greek revival elevated the status of homoerotic love, practiced by the aristocratic elite in Plato's Athens. The projection of Plato's procreative metaphor onto homoerotic love, which results in "generation in beauty," was particularly congenial to the apocalyptic mood of the times in Russia. In Plato's words, "the partnership between [those whose progeny is spiritual] will be far closer and the bond

of affection far stronger than between ordinary parents, because the children that they share surpass human children by being immortal as well as more beautiful. Everyone would prefer children such as these to children after the flesh" (*Symposium*, p. 91).

The preference for mental progeny, artistic and spiritual, which Plato associated with homosexual love, was imitated in Symbolist culture, in which personal mythmaking and erotic experimentation had homoerotic connotations that went beyond simple sexual preferences. This was true of the Merezhkovsky circle and of some of the inhabitants of Ivanov's Tower, especially Kuzmin. The celebration of homosexuality at the Ivanovs' had a programmatic cultural subtext, whose intention was the reclamation of the original meaning of Platonic eros.

The reappropriation of the homoerotic meaning of Platonic love by Solov'ev and his Symbolist followers took place in stages. The process was characterized by an initial denial of the homosexual nature of Platonic eros, followed by its gradual acceptance. Solov'ev himself rejected homoerotic love, although his theory of eros reflects an unspoken conflict between the heterosexual Sophia, or Beautiful Lady, and the sexually ambiguous androgynous, who can be seen in homoerotic terms. Sophia, whose image informed Blok's and Bely's poetry and life practice, maintained her ties to Christian love symbolized by the Madonna; the androgynous became associated with Plato's Phaedrus and Aphrodite Urania, representing an assault on traditional Christian values. Solov'ev seems to have resolved the contradiction between them by simply fusing the teachings about Sophia with courtly as well as Platonic ideals.

Acknowledging the differences in values between the nineteenth century and Plato's time ("Zhiznennaia," p. 223), Solov'ev exalted heterosexual, not homosexual, eros. His preference was most clearly reflected in his Sophiological treatment of androgyny, which he based on the deification of the feminine principle. The lonely Silver Age prophet of the family, Rozanov, however, accused him of having introduced an antiprocreative homosexual bias into Russian culture. He considered the reinterpretation of Plato by Solov'ev only a mask concealing his

subversive intentions. Describing Solov'ev's erotic ideal, Rozanov offered the pejorative syncretic image of "Aphrodite Sodomica," which contaminated Greek and biblical mythology. According to him, she represented a sterile erotic ideal, expressed most powerfully in her words to the earthly Aphrodite: "Oh, if only I could smash your children against the rock."¹⁸ It was Rozanov who, at the turn of the twentieth century, first focused on the homosexual nature of Platonic love, which had been consigned to oblivion in Christian culture. "Plato called love of the opposite sex—'earthly' love; 'heavenly' love he calls not philosophical but sensual love and only for the same sex. In making the distinction, he names and quotes the poetess Sappho, . . . this is so indisputable that there is no doubt about it."¹⁹

While Blok and Bely followed Solov'ev's courtly Sophiological treatment of Platonic love, Gippius adopted the ambiguous ideal of androgyny. Repudiating all forms of physical union because they are founded on power and inequality, she professed androgynous love, which is unconsummated and egalitarian by definition.²⁰ In this she followed Solov'ev's definition of the "new man" in terms of Aristophanes' erotic myth of the androgyne. In relation to Decadence, she assumed a position of sexual intermediacy. "I do not desire exclusive femininity, just as I do not desire exclusive masculinity," wrote Gippius in an intimate diary. "Each time someone is insulted and dissatisfied within me; with women, my femininity is active, with men—my masculinity. In my thoughts, my desires, in my spirit—I am more a man; in my body—I am more a woman. Yet they are so fused together that I know nothing," wrote Gippius in her diary of unconsummated love affairs.²¹

Gippius's views on homosexuality were ambivalent. She celebrated the highest form of Platonic love—"Love between men may be endlessly beautiful and divine"—but rejected its physical consummation. In her private life Gippius was attracted to homosexual androgynous men: "I like the illusion of possibility—as if there were a tinge of bisexuality; he seems to be both woman and man."²² The biggest love of her life was Filosofov, who was homosexual. A union with him would have come closest to the

androgynous ideal as she understood it. Such a love could be described as the fusion of two androgynes, mediated by the mystical presence of Christ.²³ She herself described this love as having elevated her to the status of the utopian new man (*budushchii dalekii chelovek*).²⁴

Ivanov treated all love relationships as elaborate reenactments of ancient or contemporary myths. Among them were Dionysian frenzy, which he experienced with his wife, Lidiia Zinov'eva-Annibal; sacred incest, in which he engaged with her daughter Vera; and Platonic love patterned on the myth of Zeus and Ganymede. Although directly connected with homosexual eros, Ivanov's Platonism was much more than a sexual preference; it informed his behavior and worldview as a whole. It defined his path of *de realibus ad realiora*, based on the continuous effort to glimpse higher, absolute reality behind the world of appearances.²⁵ While experimenting with homosexuality, which in 1906 he identified with the ethos of humanism, Ivanov spoke of its superiority. He described his friend Kuzmin as "a pioneer of the coming age, when with the growth of homosexuality contemporary sexual aesthetics and ethics, understood as 'men for women' and 'women for men,' will no longer deform and destabilize humanity." Yet he rejected exclusive homoeroticism, supporting the ethos of bisexuality.²⁶

Viacheslav the Wise (also known as the Magnificent)²⁷ imitated the Platonic life model that merged the roles of teacher and lover, and saw himself as the divine *pontifex*, mediating between all kinds of people and ideas. Fedor Stepun described him as the most "Symposiesque person" of the prewar period, whose speech was "bewinged."²⁸ (The image of wings refers, of course, to Plato's *Phaedrus* and the myth of the winged soul.) "His love of discussion was not so much a partiality for polemics, but love of the feastlike [*pirshestvennyi*] play of the spirit," writes Stepun.²⁹ (*Pirshestvo* is the title of one of the Russian translations of Plato's *Symposium*.) Life at the Tower, especially its Wednesdays, was associated by many with the Platonic symposium.³⁰ At one of the first Wednesdays, attended by, among others, the Merezhkovskys, Berdiaevs, Bloks, Rozanov, and Bely, the sub-

ject of discussion was the meaning of love. "I don't remember who said what," writes Bely, "but from everyone burst the words: 'the erotic soaring [*krylen'e*] of Plato.'"³¹ In a 1920 drawing of an Olympian gathering at the Tower by Sergei Gorodetsky, he and Ivanov are connected by the image of winged Eros. Blok and Kuzmin are depicted with wings growing out of their shoulders, which may refer to the image of sprouting wings in the *Phaedrus* and in Kuzmin's *Wings* (*Kryl'ia*, 1906).

Ivanov's wife, Lidiia Zinov'eva-Annibal, was known among the cultural elite of Silver Age Petersburg both as Demetra and as Diotima; the former referred to the Dionysian lifestyle of their spiritual commune, the latter to its Platonism. In Nietzschean terms, the two names symbolize the split between the Ivanovs' Dionysian and Apollonian visions, with Diotima, whose image is associated with the elitist ethos of Plato's Athens, representing Apollonian sublimation and aesthetics. In the character of Diotima, the Mantinean priestess who taught Socrates the meaning of divine love, Zinov'eva-Annibal assumed the role of spiritual midwife and Ivanov's counselor.

In Plato's thought, the love of an older, well-educated male for a handsome youth, who combined physical and spiritual beauty, was the starting point of "generation in beauty" and philosophy. Appropriating woman's biological role, Plato's Diotima bestowed procreative power on the male: the procreation of philosophical knowledge was to be engendered in a young man "fertile in soul" by an experienced, refined male friend. Thus childbirth was spiritualized and disembodied.³² The reclamation of the Platonic ideal became a central point in Ivanov's life strategy: "[He] fell in love with people's souls passionately, in whose depth he heard the call and cry of 'Plato's infant.'"³³

His most self-conscious attempt to reenact Athenian eros was his relationship in 1906 with the young poet Sergei Gorodetsky, whose soul Ivanov compared to that of Plato's ideal adolescent.³⁴ Twenty-two years old, tall and supple, Gorodetsky was a clever and talented disciple, to whom Ivanov taught classical Greek, Hellenic religion, and the subtleties of versification. The goal of the relationship was the Platonic contemplation of pure beauty,

as well as consummation of passion. In describing the poet's erotic fantasy about Gorodetsky, Olga Deschartes interprets it in terms of the *Phaedrus* and the metaphor of the winged soul: "V.I. hoped that at any moment this young soul would be awakened, would open up and grow."³⁵ In his diary from this period, Ivanov depicts Gorodetsky naked, looking at himself in the mirror while Ivanov reads to him an aesthetic treatise about the body. Ivanov, cast in the role of the voyeuristic sensualist, watches the young Narcissus indulging in his own reflection.³⁶ Applying the roles of Platonic teacher and disciple to the Renaissance, he also compared himself to Leonardo, whom he wanted to imitate by teaching Gorodetsky "everything he knew."³⁷ (Leonardo was a characteristic Platonic image of the Decadence, popularized in European culture by the Pre-Raphaelites and in Russia by Merezhkovsky's novel about the artist; Merezhkovsky's Leonardo also sprouts wings.)

The myth of the winged soul³⁸ and the erotic relationship between teacher and disciple lay at the core of Kuzmin's famous novel, *Wings*, written in 1905 and published in 1906, at the time when Ivanov was actively searching for a new meaning of love. An intimate of the Tower, which he began to visit regularly in 1906 and moved into in 1907, Kuzmin and his controversial homoerotic novel must have influenced Ivanov and the members of his commune. The novel's mysterious, refined Englishman, Stroop, is steeped in Hellenic culture. In his role of spiritual and aesthetic guide to the young Vania Smurov,³⁹ Stroop can be compared to Ivanov, who perceived himself as the teacher and initiator of young men like Gorodetsky. One of Gorodetsky's literary prototypes may very well have been Kuzmin's Vania Smurov. The host of a Petersburg salon, Stroop urges Vania to study classical Greek; his relationship with Vania is emblematised by the sprouting of wings: "Just one more little effort and you'll grow wings. I can see them already," says Stroop. "Perhaps—but the growing can be very painful," responds Vania with a grin;⁴⁰ it is from Stroop that Vania learns of nonprocreative homoerotic love.

In an explicit polemic with Rozanov, Stroop attacks the Old Testament focus on procreation and its antiaesthetic ethos, con-

trasting it with love in a higher, Platonic sense: "We are Hellenes: the intolerant monotheism of the Hebrews is alien to us—their rejection of the visual arts, their slavish attachment to the flesh, to the getting of heirs, to seed" (p. 218, p. 32). He also speaks of the interpretation of the biblical Fall by the Jews themselves, who equated it with childbirth: "It is a Jewish legend which tells us that childbirth and toil are a punishment for sin, not the purpose of life. And as human beings put sin behind them, so will they put behind them childbearing and toil" (p. 218, p. 32). Emphasizing the superiority of homosexual love, Stroop relegates the love of men for beautiful women to lust, which takes them away from the true idea of beauty.

Although Kuzmin's posture was aesthetic, not mystical or ideological, it may have utopian connotations in *Wings*, in which homosexual eros is associated with the myth of the new man and the transformation of life and with the myth of the Argonauts.⁴¹ "We are Hellenes, lovers of the beautiful, the bacchants of the coming day. Like the visions of Tannhäuser in Venus' Grotto, like the inspired revelations of Klinger and Thoma,⁴² somewhere lies our ancient kingdom, full of sunlight and freedom, of beautiful and courageous people, and thither we sail, my argonauts, over many a sea, through mist and darkness. And in things yet unheard we shall descry ancient roots, in glittering visions yet unseen we shall know our own dear land!" proclaims Stroop in his treatise on love (p. 220, p. 33). This image of the future based on the return to the Hellenic myth of the Argonauts reappears at the end of the novel in the projected opera by the composer Ugo Orsini. Depicting a series of mythological male heroes, including the Argonauts, the opera, according to Orsini, will contain the figures of Prometheus, Oedipus, Icarus, Phaethon, and Ganymede. But only Ganymede will be transformed into a new man, because, contrary to the others, he is motivated by a higher form of love, not rebellion against the gods. His wings are Platonic, unlike those of Icarus and Phaethon, who are doomed to fall from the heavens because their wings have a Promethean, not an erotic, subtext.

Lover of Zeus, the beautiful youth Ganymede alone among

his brothers remained in the heavens: "My poor brothers, of all who sought to fly up to the heavens only I have remained, for it was childish curiosity which lured you toward the sun, while I was lifted up in the beating wings of a love beyond mortal ken" (p. 320, p. 109). Ganymede, whose homoerotic image was at the basis of the *Phaedrus*, reflects Kuzmin's conception of the erotic utopia, as does the figure of the beautiful youth Antinous, who died for his beloved emperor Adrian. In an inserted tale, Kuzmin's Antinous, like Ganymede, is also transformed by means of love, becoming a godman at the behest of the emperor. It is the myth of Ganymede and Antinous that Ivanov invoked in his desire to transform Gorodetsky into a new man or demigod, a task that could only be accomplished in the act of love. But, in contrast to Vania in *Wings* and his mythological prototypes, Gorodetsky refused to play the role selected for him.⁴³

In a typical example of cultural syncretism, Ivanov's Platonic ideal was intertwined with the Oriental homoerotic image of the Persian poet Hafiz, chosen as the patron of the playful homosexual coterie that met at the Tower from 1906 to 1907. Besides Ivanov and his Diotima, its best-known members were Kuzmin, the artists Konstantin Somov and Leon Bakst, the musician Walter Nuvel', prose writer S. A. Auslender, and Gorodetsky. The Hafiz Society had its own symposia, or banquets, presided over by a chorus leader, as in Greek tragedy. In contrast to the public Wednesday symposia, which had a social, even revolutionary utopian mission, these were intimate, frivolously playful, artistic gatherings. The members of the Hafiz Society, emphasizing the importance of "life" over Promethean revolutionary activity, rejected the conceptualization of love in the grand utopian sense. Associated with "the hashish of fantasy, which led them through the gardens of pleasure,"⁴⁴ they practiced erotic and artistic refinement, effeminacy (except for Lidia, no women were allowed), and effete languor, represented by Beardsley's and Swinburne's androgynes and dandies.⁴⁵

The celebration of intimacy by the Hafiz Society was reflected in the special focus on its members' diaries, which they read to each other. Diaries with a fragmentary lyrical structure re-

sembling poetry assumed a central place in Symbolist literary practice in general. Gippius, whose *Contes d'amour*, or diary of "love affairs," reflected her ideology, considered diaries and letters of equal importance with poetry.⁴⁶ The diary could be seen as the archetypal Symbolist text, blurring the boundaries between art and life, as well as transforming the life text into art. Ivanov considered Kuzmin's intimate diary, which the poet read to his Hafiz intimates, a "work of art," comparing its form with that of the novel.⁴⁷ In doing so, he must have had in mind the fragmented, allusive, open-ended novel that was emerging at the time, not the Russian realist novel of the nineteenth century, with its ideological focus.

And yet, despite Kuzmin's cultivated aestheticism and anti-utilitarian stance, his novel celebrating homoerotic love was seen by some contemporaries as a program of action, something like Chernyshevsky's prescriptively ideological *What Is to Be Done? From the Tales About the New People (Chto delat? Iz rasskazov o novykh liudiakh)*, 1863). According to Blok, "contemporary criticism has the tendency to perceive Kuzmin as a *preacher*, to consider him the bearer of some kind of dangerous ideas. I heard the opinion that *Wings* for our time corresponds to Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is to Be Done?*"⁴⁸

Celibate Marriage

The Platonic love myth suggests another important cultural model of love—the practice of chastity, including marital celibacy and chaste triple union, which were contrasted to traditional marriage and adultery. Chaste love, of course, goes back to the chivalric ideal of the troubadours, or courtly love, which developed in opposition to the feudal institution of marriage. According to some interpretations of courtly love, it had a triangular structure: the poet-knight's love for the wife of a feudal lord was mediated by the power of the husband. Courtly love, with its mystical and romantic connotations, was celebrated by Solov'ev and his Symbolist followers.⁴⁹

Culturally the most significant chaste marriage among the Symbolists was Alexander Blok's union with Liubov' Dmitrievna Mendeleeva (they were married in 1903), which Bely and Sergei Solov'ev (the philosopher's nephew) saw as a Solov'evian "sacred mystery" heralding the new theocratic era.⁵⁰ The realization of this kind of marriage, according to Bely, was a "world-historical task."⁵¹ In his view, Liubov' Dmitrievna, whose name means love in Russian, represented "the image of 'the woman clothed in the sun' or of 'Sophia Divine Wisdom,'" which "received its incarnation in . . . an earthly woman."⁵² Bely's later marriage (1910) to Asia Turgeneva, in whom he saw the androgynous Mona Lisa,⁵³ may have also been conceived as a chaste marriage based on a shared philosophy of life, even though it was not in actuality.

The most consistently celibate and long-lasting chaste union was the marriage (1889) of Dmitry Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius, who lived together for 52 years, without parting for a single day. It is this union that presents the most heterogeneous model of celibate marriage at the turn of the century. The case of the Merezhkovskys is an example of Symbolist syncretism, which combined what may seem to be incompatible cultural sources informing the Symbolist conceptualization of love. The most unexpected ideological aspect of their marriage was the conflation of Solov'evian erotic mysticism with the ideology of love developed in the 1850's and 1860's that was codified in Chernyshevsky's famous novel *What Is to Be Done?*⁵⁴

One of the nineteenth-century prototypes of the celibate marriage between Merezhkovsky and Gippius was Chernyshevsky's concept of fictitious marriage, which influenced marital practice among radical youth in the 1860's and 1870's. Fictitious marriage, originally a legal convenience that allowed a young woman to leave the parental home and thus escape the strictures of traditional family life and marriage, developed into a symbolically significant pattern of human relations. "It was regarded as the ideal marriage, a union that served" not only personal happiness, but also "the realization of the common cause."⁵⁵ The young couple, which had married purely *pro forma*, frequently

continued to live together on the basis of total equality; refraining from sexual relations, the two worked together for the shared goal of social revolution.

Thus chastity, an integral component of courtly love, was grafted onto marriage, whose ideology of love is very different from the courtly ideal. The new radical family of the 1860's and 1870's, based on the precepts of equality, economic cooperation, control over one's emotions and physiology, and ascetic self-denial, was regarded as a prototype of future society. Symbolist marital celibacy can be seen as a continuation of the erotic practice of earlier Russian utopian generations.

If one peels off the turn-of-the-century cultural layers from the Merezhkovsky marital union, their partnership begins to resemble a nineteenth-century radical marriage in some very essential ways. Gippius was hiding a persona of populist persuasion behind the Decadent mask of *femme fatale* and queen of Petersburg social life.⁵⁶ Despite the Merezhkovskys' polemic with the preceding literary generation, they appear to have implemented Chernyshevsky's views on love and marriage in their secret private life. It was the concepts of asexual love and marriage, defined by a shared ideology, not by family and procreation, that helped shape the Merezhkovsky marriage. A celibate, spiritual partnership, it was based on what Gippius called a *common cause* associated with the transformation of life in the "Third Testament."

Like those men and women of the 1860's who behaved in accordance with the radical code of celibate love, the Merezhkovskys lived in a fraternal union, which Gippius flaunted during the first ten years of marriage by wearing a single braid, signifying her virginity. In her biography of Merezhkovsky, Gippius depicts their courtship, wedding, and early life in Petersburg in terms remarkably similar to those describing the Lopukhov marriage in *What Is to Be Done?*, the archetypal radical fraternal union in literature.⁵⁷ The first uncanny coincidence is Merezhkovsky's name and patronymic, Dmitry Sergeevich, which are the same as Lopukhov's. Both men reenact the radical version of the Pyg-

malion myth by playing the role of mentor who introduces the bride to a new way of thinking.⁵⁸ Merezhkovsky, by marrying the young Zinaida and bringing her to Petersburg, could be seen as delivering her from her provincial environment and exposing her to new ideas.

Like Vera Pavlovna and Lopukhov, Gippius and Merezhkovsky subverted the traditional wedding ceremony and sexual initiation of the bridal night. In contrast to the wedding and marriage of Kitty and Levin, which Gippius invokes in the description of her own, the Merezhkovskys had a conspicuously modest ceremony, lacking in epithalamic symbols. Instead of an extravagant wedding costume (extravagant dress became her trademark only in later years), she wore a grey suit; he was dressed in a great-coat. The only elements of the wedding ritual that she mentions reflect a feminist concern: the couple stepped on the wedding carpet simultaneously, so as to signify sexual equality. After the ceremony they had dinner as usual, as if nothing had happened; like Vera Pavlovna and Lopukhov, they spent their wedding day in her room, reading a book together: "Our day was the same as yesterday. Dmitry Sergeevich and I continued reading yesterday's book in my room, then we had dinner. . . . D.S. went back to his hotel rather early, and I went to bed and forgot that I was married."⁵⁹ The arrangement of the Merezhkovsky apartment in Petersburg is described in almost the same terms as the arrangement of the Lopukhovs'. Like the narrator in *What Is to Be Done?*, Gippius underscores that the couple had separate bedrooms divided by a common dining room. Separate bedrooms were typical of the Russian upper class and intelligentsia in the nineteenth century; the ideologically significant point is the emphasis on the spatial division of Vera Pavlovna's and Gippius's private lives into what they shared and what they did not share with their husbands. In both cases, there was common space for husband and wife and exclusive space designated for the wife's intellectual socializing with her male and female friends. (The husband also had his own room[s], but the narrative focus is on the woman's quarters.) Although this is where the textual simi-

larities with *What Is to Be Done?* end, the later appearance of Filosofov in the Merezhkovskys' personal life may be compared to the role played by Kirsanov in the Lopukhov marriage.⁶⁰

Gippius's concerns with sexual equality continue the ideas current in Russia in the 1860's, even though she did not define her theory of love in radical or feminist terms. It may be significant, in this respect, that Filosofov, a major inspiration in her life for many years, was the son of Anna Filosofova, a well-known feminist and populist whose values were formed in the 1860's under the influence of the milieu of Chernyshevsky's followers. (She knew Ivan Sechenov, the third party in a well-known *ménage à trois* of the 1860's, whose role was similar to that of her son in the Merezhkovsky marriage.) Anna Filosofova's ideas are known to have influenced her son and may have contributed as well to Gippius's views, which were tempered by the mystical tendencies at the turn of the century.

Triangular Love

Having rejected the procreative goal of marriage, the Symbolists were seeking more dynamic and open forms of family life, with greater creative potential. Among alternatives to traditional marriage was the expansion of the chaste, as well as sexual, union of two into a more fulfilling erotic union of three. This triangular living arrangement should not be confused with adultery, which is generally illicit and sexual; adultery attacks marriage from within, offering no constructive alternatives. The Symbolist triangular relationship was conceived as a harmonious union, or fusion, of three people into one through the transformative power of love. The triple union represented the triumph of synthesis and was the highest attainment of synthesis in the sphere of private life, fusing together not two elements but three. It was seen as a projection of the Christian trinity or as a reenactment of Greek mythic communalism, as viewed through the prism of Slavophile *sobornost'* (communality). In other words, the new family triad was intended as a prototype of the new community, in which eros was joined to religion and to society.

The experiments with alternative family structures, in which a triangular arrangement was the desired goal, centered around two Symbolist "families": Gippius and Merezhkovsky, and Zinov'eva-Annibal and Ivanov. In the spirit of cultural syncretism, these experiments were informed by a variety of sources. And as in chaste marriage, Platonic, Neoplatonic, and romantic mysticism were combined with the Russian radical utopia of the 1860's.

The belief in the revolutionary function of private life found its expression in the experiments with "collectivity in love" undertaken in radical circles in the 1860's. In their attempts to reorganize established patterns of interpersonal relations underlying the existing social order, the "people of the 1860's" sought to transform the fateful, adulterous love triangle into a form of human relations that would be emotionally fulfilling, as well as socially subversive. Radical versions of the *ménage à trois* and larger love collectives were presented in literary texts and were practiced in some circles.

The harmony of the celibate marriage of the Lopukhovs in the first chapters of *What Is to Be Done?* is destroyed when Vera Pavlovna falls in love with Lopukhov's best friend, Kirsanov. Although the possibility for a harmonious cohabitation of all three is offered, it remains unrealized. Later in the novel, however, collectivity in love triumphs when Vera Pavlovna with Kirsanov and Lopukhov with his new wife settle *à quatre* in a shared household. Their foursome is meant as a prototype of an emotionally, sexually, and economically harmonious society of the future. The real-life examples include two celebrated cases: the triple union involving the radical activists and literati Nikolai and Liudmila Shelgunov and Mikhail Mikhailov and the triple union of the distinguished scientist Ivan Sechenov and Petr and Maria Bokov. In both instances, the establishment of a *ménage à trois* followed what was initially a celibate marriage.⁶¹

Following Chernyshevsky's linkage of triangular love and political action, Gippius and Merezhkovsky began searching for another person when they decided to build a New Church: "We needed a third person to divide us, while uniting with us,"

wrote Gippius in 1900.⁶² Around 1902, they were actively seeking someone to form with them a triple union that would serve as the secret, conspiratorial nucleus of the Church of the Third Testament. Filosofov became that third person, living with the Merezhkovskys for fifteen difficult years. After their final rupture, in Warsaw in 1920, Vladimir Zlobin, a pale replica of Filosofov, gradually replaced him and remained with them until they died, in Paris, although his life in the Merezhkovsky household was also a cover for his homosexual life style.

Gippius, who was the active force behind the Merezhkovsky *ménage*, modified the populist triangle with Solov'evian ideas, as well as a Decadent ethos. Combining Solov'ev's and Chernyshevsky's views of love, she grafted onto them romantic unrequited love and the *Liebestod*. In a mystical sense, the triangle, which was symbolically associated with the Holy Trinity, represented Solov'ev's idea that the higher form of erotic love must be mediated by God, not the desire to propagate. According to Gippius, divine resurrective love is triangular by definition, with Christ as the third person in the configuration: "The one I love—I love for God," proclaimed Gippius in an early poem ("Truth or Happiness?" ["Pravda ili schast'e," 1904]). "In relation to you and with you," wrote Gippius to Filosofov, "I could do and feel only what I could do before Christ, under His gaze, and even of necessity in His presence."⁶³ Following Chernyshevsky, however, the notion of mediated desire was also reified in the here and now. Triangular love, according to Gippius, was intended to energize the union, promoting activism in the social sense. Like the role of Vera Pavlovna in *What Is to Be Done?*, Gippius's role was to stimulate the men in the union to action.

The underside of the radical triple union *à la* Merezhkovsky was the romantic ideal of unrequited love and incompatibility, which helped reinforce the principle of chastity. (Since Filosofov was homosexual and Merezhkovsky appeared to be asexual, there was no compatibility among the three partners in purely sexual terms.) Incompatible in their sexual preferences, the members of this triangle were psychologically incapable of physically consummating their love for each other. Instead they

sublimated their erotic needs by dedicating themselves to a common cause. Actually, Filosofov was Gippius's ideal "new man"; he combined homosexuality, which she associated with the androgynous sexual intermediacy, and unattainability.

On the surface, the triple union seemed idyllic, and their religious and political cause was well served. Like the Shelgunov *ménage*, they lived together, traveled to Europe in search of collaborators, and even emigrated together. They first went to France in 1906 to "discover in their closeness new things that would be useful later for their cause and for Russia."⁶⁴ Like the characters in *What Is to Be Done?*, they equated the triple union with marriage. The religious ceremony they celebrated in 1901 to consummate their relationship reflected this equation: in dedication to each other and to the invisible New Church, they devised a combined wedding ritual and Communion. At the first service, they removed all rings (Gippius had seven) symbolizing past relationships and exchanged crosses to signify the triple marital union.

On the basis of Gippius' triangular model, Anton Kartashev⁶⁵ and Gippius's sisters Tat'iana and Natal'ia also formed an ideological *ménage à trois* to promote the Religion of the Third Testament. Imitating the Merezhkovskys and Filosofov, they performed a ritual resembling a wedding ceremony to mark their triple union with the purpose of dedicating themselves to the invisible New Church. Kartashev, who was especially close to Zinaida Gippius at the beginning of the century, claimed that she preached the idea of celibacy and abolition of childbearing among her friends,⁶⁶ which included Blok, Bely, and himself. Gradually, however, Kartashev reverted to more traditional notions of love and Christian family, which resulted in the disintegration of his union with the Gippius sisters.⁶⁷

Even more eclectic and more radical than Gippius and Merezhkovsky were Viacheslav Ivanov and Lidiia Zinov'eva-Annibal, whose highly unconventional life practice combined a wide variety of disparate symbols. (The standard example is Ivanov's conflation of Dionysus and Christ, resulting in the powerful Symbolist metaphor of the suffering god who unites pagan

eros and Christian ascetic love.) In spite of his clear preference for Dionysian (i.e., physically consummated) eroticism, which set him apart from Solov'ev and the Merezhkovskys, Ivanov expressed a longing for celibacy. "Despite all that has happened to me . . . , I envy you: virginity like yours,—there is nothing higher," he said in a conversation with Solov'ev.⁶⁸ And although Ivanov's marital practice was Dionysian, not Apollonian, he was attracted to celibate marriage and the idea of immaculate, what he called "seedless," conception.⁶⁹ Yet his marriage, unlike the unions of Merezhkovsky and Gippius, Blok and Liubov' Mendeleva, and Bely and Asia Turgeneva, was not childless.

It is in a syncretic spirit that the Ivanovs approached the notion of the triple union in the period around 1905. Their theory of triangular love was related to the reenactment of the Greek tragic chorus at the Tower and belief in the transcendence of individualism and possessive love by Russian communalism: "We cannot be two, we should not close the circle. . . . Our rings of love are for the ocean of love!" wrote Lidiia Zinov'eva-Annibal in her diary from this period.⁷⁰ Describing their mythology of love at the time of the 1905 revolution, Olga Deschartes characterizes Ivanov's marriage to Lidiia by means of an alchemical image from his verse: "a melter of souls fused them into one nugget" (*plavil' shchik dash v edinyi splavil' slitok*). But this was only the beginning; according to Deschartes, they were "to 'melt' into their double union [*dvuedinstvo*] a third being—not only spiritually, but also physically."⁷¹ Aware of the difficulties posed by physical intimacy in such an arrangement, Ivanov and his wife perceived their plans for a sacred spiritual and physical triple union as a first step on the path to communalism.

Like the Merezhkovskys a few years earlier, they actively looked for a third person to join them in this radical enterprise. Margarita Sabashnikova-Voloshina, the Ivanovs' neighbor, who lived in a celibate marriage with the poet Maximil'ian Voloshin, became one of the main candidates for such a union. She describes it as the beginning of a new social and religious collective: "They had a remarkable idea: when two people, like them, had become one, they could love a third person. . . . Such a love is the beginning of a new human community, even of a new Church, in

which eros is incarnated into flesh and blood."⁷² Discussing the experiment with Margarita Voloshina a few years later, Ivanov referred to it as "marriage"; "my love was in the rhythm of three, not two," he wrote. The marriage, however, did not take place; when Ivanov realized that the inclusion of Voloshina in a triple union was not working, he lost interest in her.⁷³ As a result of this failure the Ivanovs began to doubt whether their program of triadic love was feasible at all.⁷⁴

Ivanov's active search for the third member of their new collective coincided with his homosexual experiments, which coincidence resulted in the conflation of Platonic love with the triple union. Before the experiment with Voloshina, his choice fell on the young poet Gorodetsky, who was expected to become the third member of the triadic family as well as Ivanov's Platonic lover: "I am seeking from fate happiness in the shape of a threesome," wrote Ivanov to his wife in 1906.⁷⁵ And in the poem "Architect" ("Zodchii"), he uses the recurrent image of metallurgical fusion to represent the desired union:

Dai vedat' vostorgi vershin
 . . .
I splav' ognezhalym perunom
Tri zhertvy v altar' triedin!⁷⁶
Let me know the rapture of the heights
 . . .
And melt by means of a perun with a fiery sting
Three sacrifices into a triple altar!

Like Diotima, Lidiia was expected to play the role of mediator, reifying divine love in the triple union. Her role may be likened to the image of Christ invoked by Gippius in her transformative love for Filosofov, with the exception that in the Ivanov triad the symbol of divine love becomes flesh and blood. It may be argued that Ivanov attempted a kind of transcendence similar to that celebrated by Gippius, and that both failed in their task of breaking down the barrier between homoerotic and heterosexual love.

To conclude, the erotic as well as family life strategies of the Symbolist generation were consummately eclectic and provoc-

tively subversive. In keeping with the Symbolist penchant for life creation, some of the movement's more active representatives attempted to project their favorite ideas and cultural models onto real life. Private life, especially life of the heart and family, became an arena for experimentation with the purpose of creating a "new man" and "new woman." The new man would resemble the divine androgynous; the new woman would be clothed in the sun; new forms of union between men and women would replace traditional marriage. The antiprocreative, androgynous, and triadic life practice among the Symbolists was rooted in Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Christian mysticism, which rested on the substratum of radical utopianism of the 1860's. Combining romantic love with social radicalism, the Symbolist models of love brought together two seemingly irreconcilable cultural myths, romantic and realist, in what appears to be a peculiar amalgam.

Three

Creating the Living Work of Art: The Symbolist Pygmalion and His Antecedents

IRENE MASING-DELIC

The notion that the artistic imagination coupled with the energy of sublimated eroticism was a powerful transformational magic, capable of overcoming even death, assumed the form of realized metaphor in the writings of the Russian Symbolists. In keeping with this notion, Pygmalion, who brought to life his own statue, became one of their preferred emblems of the artist. This mythic sculptor as it were anticipated their cherished theurgical aspirations. To them he was the true artist who transcended the confines of mere art, an artist who, knowing the secrets of wondrous transformations, learned how to animate stone in the literal sense of the word "animate." He thus achieved the creation of real life, as opposed to its mere likeness. In their interpretation of the animated-sculpture myth, Pygmalion might even surpass this wondrous transformation by creating, not just real life, but immortality, again in the literal sense of the word. This he would achieve when he transferred the metaphorical immortality of his work of art to the living beloved model. He would transcend the immortality metaphor of pure art, since a work of art sooner or later must disintegrate, whereas the aestheticized beloved would exist forever.

Meaning" and "Bely the Thinker," in Malmstad, *Bely*, pp. 285–335; the further development of theological metaphors in discussions of poetic language is traced in Irina Paperno, "O prirode poeticheskogo slova. Bogoslovskie istochniki spora Mandelshtama s simvolizmom," *Literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 1 (1991): 29–36; English translation in *Christianity and the Eastern Slavs*, vol. 2: Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno, eds., *Russian Culture in Modern Times* (Berkeley, Calif., forthcoming), and Steven Cassedy, "Icon and Logos: The Role of Orthodox Theology in Modern Language Theory and Literary Criticism," in Hughes and Paperno, *Russian Culture*.

31. Ivanov, *Borozdy i mezhi*, p. 139.

32. Victor Zhirmunsky, in *Nemetskii romantizm i sovremennaiia mistika* (German Romanticism and Contemporary Mysticism) (Petrograd, 1914), points out the importance of the heritage of realism for Symbolism, which he treats as neoromanticism. In Zhirmunsky's words, the age of positivism and naturalism that separates the last romantics from the Symbolists enriched Symbolism. The experience brought about "a new love for real life" and led to the establishment of "such mysticism that accepted the deification of any earthly matter" (p. 190).

33. The metaphor "incarnation," in application to aesthetics, metaphysics, and social programs, was used by many Symbolists. See, for example, Gippius's "Khleb zhizni" (1901). According to Pachmuss, Gippius shared Bely's idea that the meaning of art lies in the incarnation of the word into flesh. See *Between Paris and St. Petersburg: Selected Diaries of Zinaida Hippius*, ed. and trans. Temira Pachmuss (Urbana, Ill., 1975), p. 5. According to Gippius, Merezhkovsky focused his thoughts "on the incarnation of Christianity, on the Christianization of the earthly flesh of the world, on bringing heaven down to the earth." Zinaida Gippius, *Dmitry Merezhkovsky* (Paris, 1951), p. 99. Sologub echoes Bely's metaphor in Fedor Sologub, "Iskusstvo nashikh dnei," *Russkaia mysl'*, no. 12 (1915): 35–62.

34. Metaphors derived from the Christological doctrine informed discussions of "the man and poet" issue in Pushkin studies; see Irina Paperno, "Pushkin v zhizni cheloveka Serebrianogo veka," in Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno, eds., *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992), pp. 19–51.

35. Andrei Bely, "Teatr i sovremennaia drama" in his *Arabeski*, p. 21.

36. Andrei Bely, "Realiora," *Vesy*, no. 5. (1908): 59. Following Solov'ev, the Symbolists used the word "realism" in the meaning ascribed to

it in the Platonic theory of universals (as opposed to nominalism). Thus, many polemical arguments concerning "realism" rested on a rhetorical operation of substituting the word with its homonym. An illustration can be found in Nikolai Berdiaev's article "Decadence and Mystical Realism" ("Dekadentstvo i misticheskii realism," *Russkaia mysl'*, no. 6 [1907]: 114–23). Berdiaev argues that the "mystical realism" propagated by the Symbolists is opposed both to positivistic "naturalistic realism" and to modernist "decadent aesthetism." Nineteenth-century realism and classicism, he states, are "pseudo-realisms," whereas the true, or "real," realism is Symbolism. It is quite clear from the context that by "realism" in the "real" sense Berdiaev means the mystical doctrine of the objectification of the word, or idea, expressed in the theological concept of the incarnation of the Word. In application to art, "realism" means art that creates (not reflects) life.

Two / Matich: Symbolist Meaning of Love

1. The most undisguised, radical expression of the antiprocreative bias of nineteenth-century utopian culture was Fedorov's project of resurrecting the dead, which proscribed the reproductive impulse. The wheel of history and laws of nature were to be reversed; "progress" would be defined by the act of giving new birth to one's fathers, who would then live forever, instead of to children, who were destined to die. For a discussion of the antiprocreative tendency in Russian utopianism, see Olga Matich, "The Merezhkovskys' Third Testament and the Russian Utopian Tradition," in *Christianity and the Eastern Slavs*, vol. 2: Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno, eds., *Russian Culture in Modern Times* (Berkeley, Calif., forthcoming).

2. In the words of Fedor Stepin, Ivanov's life practice was a unique combination of Slavophilism and Westernization, paganism and Christianity, philosophy and poetry, philology and music, ancient studies and journalism. Fedor Stepin, "Viacheslav Ivanov," in his *Vstrechi* (Munich, 1962), p. 141.

3. Evgeny Trubetskoy described Solov'ev's "The Meaning of Love" as an "erotic utopia"; see V. Zenkovsky, "Utopizm russkoi mysli," *Novyi zhurnal*, 42 (1955): 233.

4. Vladimir Solov'ev, "Smysl liubvi," in his *Sobranie sochinenii* (St. Petersburg, 1911–14), 7: 40.

5. Evgeny Trubetskoy, "Vladimir Solov'ev i ego delo," in *Sbornik pervyi. O Vladimire Solov'eve* (Moscow, 1911), p. 84. In the same collection,

Viacheslav Ivanov describes Solov'ev's vision of history in utopian terms: "[He perceived] history as the making of godmanhood, whose goal was to unite the sons of God on this earth and the Earth itself in one divine Body of the Woman clothed in the Sun." ("O znachenii Vl. Solov'eva v sud'bakh nashego religioznogo soznaniiia," p. 42.)

6. Ivanov, "O znachenii Solov'eva," p. 42.

7. Related to his teaching of Sophia, Solov'ev's image of the androgynous also came from Jakob Boehme and Franz Baader, not only from Plato.

8. Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. W. Hamilton (Baltimore, Md., 1967), pp. 46–47. Further references are given in the text.

9. Vladimir Solov'ev made this statement in 1900 in the third edition of his book of poetry. I am quoting it from Vladimir Solov'ev, *Stikhotvoreniia i shutochnye p'esy* (Leningrad, 1974), p. xiii.

10. Vladimir Solov'ev, "Zhiznennaia drama Platona," in his *Sobranie sochinienii*, 9: 235. Further references are given in the text.

11. Solov'ev, "Smysl liubvi," p. 52.

12. Ibid., p. 19, quoted from Vladimir Solov'ev, "The Meaning of Love," in *A Solovyov Anthology*, ed. S. L. Frank, trans. N. Duddington (Westport, Conn., 1974), p. 160.

13. Ibid., p. 24, quoted from *A Solovyov Anthology*, p. 164.

14. Ibid., p. 60, quoted from *A Solovyov Anthology*, p. 179.

15. Temira Pachmuss, *Intellect and Ideas in Action: Selected Correspondence of Zinaida Hippius* (Munich, 1972), p. 67.

16. Ibid., p. 64. "The [sex] act is directed backwards, downwards, into generation, childbirth," wrote Gippius to Filosofov (p. 67). As a substitute for the generic urge to propagate, Gippius suggested the Christian kiss, containing God's spark. Premised on the partners' androgynous identity, in Solov'ev's sense, it represented the union of "the two in one" that preserved each individual's uniqueness. "I love kisses. In a kiss both are equal," wrote Gippius in *Contes d'amour* (Zinaida Hippius, *Contes d'amour*, in her *Between Paris and St. Petersburg: Selected Diaries of Zinaida Hippius*, ed. and trans. Temira Pachmuss [Urbana, Ill., 1975], p. 71).

17. Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York, 1990), pp. 172–73.

18. V. V. Rozanov, *Liudi lunnogo sveta: Metafizika khristianstva* (Petersburg, 1911), p. 111.

19. V. V. Rozanov, "Krotkii demonizm," in his *Religija i kul'tura* (Petersburg, 1899), p. 162.

20. Hippius, *Contes d'amour*, pp. 73–74.

21. Ibid., p. 77. (The Russian original and English translation of *Contes d'amour* exist only in expurgated versions, but the omissions are not the same in both instances. For the passage just cited the Russian is unavailable.) Gippius's androgynous position was reflected in the male lyrical persona of her poetry and the male pen names under which she wrote philosophical essays and literary criticism.

22. Ibid., p. 74.

23. Unlike her counterpart in the Ivanov circle, Lidiia Zinov'eva-Annibal, Gippius seems to have neglected the ideological connotations of lesbian love, perhaps to conform with the male Platonic ideal. Apparently in 1900, Gippius had an affair with Baroness Elizabeth von Overbach, an English composer. "Can both of us be equal in our love? For I cannot be happy otherwise," she wrote in reference to that relationship (ibid., p. 78).

24. Pachmuss, *Intellect and Ideas*, pp. 71–72.

25. Like Plato, Ivanov was a practitioner of maieutics, or the midwifery of thought, a dialectical method involving question and answer and mutual criticism in arriving at the truth.

26. Viacheslav Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinienii* (Brussels, 1971–), 2: 750.

27. According to Bely, Shestov gave Ivanov the epithet Magnificent (Andrei Bely, *Nachalo veka* [Moscow-Leningrad, 1933], p. 322). It resembles the reference to Gippius as Zinaida Prekrasnaia (Zinaida the Fair), by analogy with Elena Prekrasnaia (Helen of Troy).

28. Stepun, "Ivanov," p. 143.

29. Ibid.

30. In a typical case of cultural syncretism, they also evoked Christ's Last Supper and the Passion of Christ, which the Ivanovs reenacted, combining them with the agony and ecstasy of Dionysus.

31. Bely, *Nachalo veka*, p. 316.

32. For a discussion of Plato and Greek homosexuality, see K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), and Anthony Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 1989).

33. Olga Deschartes, "Vvedenie," in Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinienii*, 1:

104. Like Plato, Ivanov believed that the spirit is born of beauty and that each person he loved represented the path *de realibus ad realiora*.

34. The image of the adolescent also evokes Pushkin's homoerotic "Imitation of Arabic" ("Podrazhanie arabskomu"), which begins with the verse "Tender youth, gentle youth" (*Otrok milyi, otrok nezhnyi*).

35. Deschartes, "Vvedenie," p. 98.

36. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochineneii*, 2: 753. The image of Gorodetsky before the mirror as the high point of his Platonic relationship with Ivanov may also be compared to Kuzmin's narcissistic mirror motif, symbolizing separation from as well as merging with the beloved. In *Wings*, Vania Smurov admires his own reflection in the water after he is told by another youth that he has a beautiful body. See Irina Paperno, "Dvoinechestvo i liubovnyi treugol'nik: Poeticheskii mif Kuzmina i ego pushkinskaiia proektsiia," in John E. Malmstad, ed., *Studies in the Life and Works of Mixail Kuzmin* (Wiener Slawistischer Almanach, 24 [1989]), pp. 59–61.

37. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochineneii*, 2: 759.

38. Perhaps the first Symbolist reference to the *Phaedrus* and the myth of the winged soul occurred in the 1901 novel *Leonardo da Vinci*, by Merezhkovsky; later it appeared in his study of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Discussing Plato's metaphor of love, Merezhkovsky emphasizes the association of pain and fever with feelings of love, symbolized by the regeneration of wings in the lover's soul, which Plato compares to the pain of teething and of boils and wounds.

39. Vania Smurov is the name of one of the young boys around Alesha in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

40. Mikhail Kuzmin, *Kryl'ia*, in his *Proza*, ed. V. Markov (Berkeley, Calif., 1984), 1: 319; quoted from Mikhail Kuzmin, *Wings*, trans. and ed. Neil Granoien and Michael Green (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1972), p. 108. Further references to both—first to the Russian, then to the English—are given in the text. For a discussion of the *Phaedrus* and *Wings*, see Donald Gillis, "The Platonic Theme in Kuzmin's *Wings*," *Slavic and East European Journal*, 22, no. 3 (1978): 336–47.

41. See Lavrov's essay in this volume.

42. Max Klinger and Hans Thoma were German painters associated with the Decadence.

43. Ivanov's Platonic feelings were extended to the sons of his wife, Lidia. In his diary he speaks of moments when he is in love with Kostia (Ivanov, *Sobranie sochineneii*, 2: 797) and with Serezha (*ibid.*, p. 745).

44. *Ibid.*, p. 744.

45. For a discussion of the Hafiz Society, see N. A. Bogomolov, "Epizod iz Peterburgskoi kue'turnoi zhizni, 1906–1907 gg.," *Blokovskii sbornik*, no. 8 (Tartu, 1988), pp. 95–111.

46. Temira Pachmuss, Preface, in Hippius, *Between Paris and St. Petersburg*, p. viii.

47. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochineneii*, 2: 749–50.

48. Alexander Blok, "O drame," in his *Sobranie sochineneii v vos'mi tomakh* (Moscow, 1962), 5: 185.

49. For a discussion of courtly love vs. marriage, see Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, 2nd ed., trans. M. Belgin (Princeton, N.J., 1956), pp. 32–35, 275–311.

50. For a discussion of Blok's marriage, see Vl. N. Orlov, "Istoriia odnoi liubvi," in his *Puti i sud'by* (Leningrad, 1971), pp. 636–743.

51. Andrei Bely, *Arabeski* (Moscow, 1911), p. 125.

52. Andrei Bely, *Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre Bloke* (Letchworth, Eng., 1964), p. 21.

53. "He liked the 'almond' eyes of Asia, in whose smile were fused the Gioconda and infant" (Nikolai Valentinov, *Dva goda s simvolistami* [Stanford, Calif., 1969], p. 14).

54. The Blok and Bely marriages contained elements of populist marital practice as well.

55. Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford, Calif., 1988), p. 136. On fictitious marriage in the 1860's, see *ibid.*, pp. 31–36, 133–36.

56. For a discussion of Gippius as Cleopatra, see Olga Matich, "Dialectics of Cultural Return: Zinaida Gippius' Personal Myth," in Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno, eds., *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992), pp. 53–60.

57. The biography was written in the 1940's, at a time when the polemics with utilitarian critics were no longer significant, which may help explain the seemingly undisguised Chernyshevskian subtext.

58. For a discussion of the Pygmalion myth in Russian Symbolism, see Irene Masing-Delic's essay in this volume.

59. Zinaida Gippius, *Dmitry Merezhkovsky* (Paris, 1951), p. 34. After Vera Pavlovna and Lopukhov first discuss their marital plans, they shake hands and part as usual. When they get secretly engaged, she feels that they had already been married for a long time, as if nothing had changed.

60. For a discussion of the Merezhkovsky marriage in terms of *What Is to Be Done?*, see Matich, "Dialectics of Cultural Return," pp. 60–66.

61. For a discussion of the radical triple union and collectivity in love, see Paperno, *Chernyshevsky*, pp. 29–36, 133–53, 156–58.

62. Zinaida Hippius, "About the Cause," in her *Between Paris and St. Petersburg*, p. 102.

63. Pachmuss, *Intellect and Ideas in Action*, p. 71.

64. Vladimir Zlobin, *Tiazheilaia dusha* (Washington, D.C., 1970), p. 54; quoted from Vladimir Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul: Zinaida Gippius*, ed. Simon Karlinsky (Berkeley, Calif., 1980), p. 85.

65. Anton Kartashev was president of the Religious Philosophical Society in Petersburg and was the last procurator of the Holy Synod. He was also a close collaborator of the Merezhkovskys.
66. Temira Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius: An Intellectual Profile* (Carbondale, Ill., 1971), p. 90.
67. Pachmuss, *Intellect and Ideas*, pp. 652–53, 662.
68. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinienii*, 1: 34–35.
69. Ibid., 2: 796.
70. Ibid., p. 755.
71. Ibid., p. 756.
72. Margarita Woloschin, *Die Grüne Schlange, Lebenserinnerungen* (Stuttgart, 1954), p. 191.
73. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinienii*, 2: 777–78.
74. Lidiia Zinov'eva-Annibal's doubts about the triple union were reflected in her 1906 novel, *Thirty-three Monstrosities* (*Tridtsat' tri uroda*), published in 1907.
75. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinienii*, 2: 758.
76. Ibid., p. 762.

Three / Masing-Delic: The Living Work of Art

1. Hermann Schlüter, *Das Pygmalion-symbol bei Rousseau, Hamann, Schiller* (Zurich, 1968), p. 5.
2. Rousseau's Pygmalion perceives all reality not created by him as so alien that he must produce a creature of his own imagination. The "belle âme" that he needs a partner, "an other," but this "other" can only be "another self" (*un autre moi-même*). For Rousseau's treatment of the Pygmalion motif, see Schlüter, *Pygmalion-symbol*, pp. 11–44.
3. Quoted from J. L. Carr, "Pygmalion and the *Philosophes*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 23 (1960): 239. It is this assumed transmutability of matter perceived as essentially one and the same in all its manifestations that allowed Denis Diderot to assert that "flesh can be made from marble, and marble from flesh" and that marble (as any other type of inorganic matter) had "inactive sensitivity," which could be stimulated and become active. Quoted from Lester G. Crocker's *Diderot: The Embattled Philosopher* (New York, 1966), p. 312.
4. Mathias Mayer, "Midas statt Pygmalion," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 64, no. 2 (1990): 290–91.
5. Elsie B. Adams, *Bernard Shaw and the Aesthetes* (Columbus, 1971), p. 133.

6. Carr, "Pygmalion," p. 255. These ideas had logical repercussions for pedagogics. A good teacher should fill the blank space of the mind within the purely material shell of the body with valid consciousness—that is, he should act as a kind of Pygmalion (as Shaw's Professor Higgins does). A good pedagogue makes learning, or the acquisition of consciousness, a pleasurable experience.

7. Alexander Lavrov's article in this volume deals in detail with the development of the term and concept "life-creator."

8. Adams, *Bernard Shaw*, p. 137.

9. In fact, Nietzsche views the creation of the superman in Pygmalionesque terms. His *Zarathustra* (in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1885) perceives "an image sleeping in stone" that he cherishes above all else (as "Bild meiner Bilder") because it is the image of the future dynamic and beautiful superman hidden in the rough stone of the amorphous contemporary man. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra, Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart, 1964), 6: 92–93. Bergson, in his *Creative Evolution* (1907), seems to perceive a basic "transmutability of matter" (Carr's term) that would allow for wondrous transformations.

10. Liudmila's erotic fantasies in Sologub's *Mel'kii bes* (1907) are Ovidian. Thus she envisions herself as lying naked on a lake shore while a white swan approaches on the dark calm waters, i.e., as Leda. Liudmila also constantly changes the image of her boy lover, Sasha, in dressing-up games and make-believe play. Her creativity, however, is limited to the pursuit of erotic pleasure and aesthetic play and therefore does not acquire the ontological validity of theurgical creativity.

11. Roman Jakobson, "Stikhi Pushkina o deve-statue, vakkhanie i smirennitse," in A. Kodjak and K. Taranovsky, eds., *Alexander Pushkin. A Symposium on the 175th Anniversary of His Birth* (New York, 1976), p. 10. It may also owe something to Diderot's close friend Étienne Maurice Falconet (1716–91), who created a well-known sculpture on the motif in 1763. Falconet's Pygmalion watches his nymph come to life "in rapt adoration" (Carr, "Pygmalion," p. 247). As is well known, Falconet is also the creator of the equestrian statue of Peter the Great, which, of course, is the subject of Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* (*Mednyi usadnik*, 1833). It could be argued that this equestrian monument contains an element of the Pygmalion myth in that the posture of the "proud steed," as it prepares for its leap, is so active as to be nearly animated. Also, according to a popular anecdote of the times, Peter the Great purportedly once embraced a statue of Richelieu with great passion, begging it/him to share some of its/his statesman's wisdom with him. This anecdote was used by the German philosopher Johann Hamann (1730–88) to present Peter