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Three Versions of Russian Decadent Dandyism:

Demonism, Hellenism, and Theatricality

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Slavic Languages and Literatures

by

Young Jin Byun

2012

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Three Versions of Russian Decadent Dandyism:

Demonism, Hellenism, and Theatricality

by

Young Jin Byun

Doctor of Philosophy in Slavic Languages and Literatures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Ronald W. Vroon, Co-Chair

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Russian artists of the early twentieth century focused not merely on the production of their own artistic works but also on the aestheticization of life itself. This phenomenon, known as

zhiznetvorchestvo (life-creation), was often expressed in the form of dandyism. Modernists clothed themselves in unconventional fashion and exhibited eccentric behavior in order to express their opposition to what they considered as the anti-aestheticism of quotidian life. Of the various instances of Russian modernist dandyism, this dissertation examines three distinctive manifestations of decadent self-creation. The primary material for analysis my discussion includes biographies, critical essays, and literary works that address the decadent aesthetic and its practice in life. First, I explore the literary group comprised of Valerii Briusov, Konstantin Bal'mont, and Aleksandr Dobroliubov by focusing on their demonic aestheticism. The next chapter illustrates the dandyism of Mikhail Kuzmin who rejects what he considered the demonic decadents' amoral aestheticism and in its place turns to Hellenic notions of beauty for inspiration. Lastly, I explore the dandyism of Aleksandr Blok who assumes the mask of a jester-dandy grieving over the loss of aesthetic ideals and who expresses his sorrow through theatrical performance. I also compare the three cases of Russian decadent dandyism with their European counterparts, particularly that of Oscar Wilde and Charles Baudelaire. By doing so, this work not only demonstrates the influence of Western dandyism on Russian decadent self-creation but also considers differences between

the two aesthetics, particularly their distinctive concepts of *convention* and *beauty*. In addition, I argue that in contrast to their Western counterparts Russian decadent dandyism and the aesthetics associated with it hardly marginalized such idealistic values as Hero, Truth, Life and Nature.

The dissertation of Young Jin Byun is approved.

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2012

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The neologism *zhiznetvorchestvo* (life-creation), combining *zhizn'* (life) and *tvorchestvo* (creation or work), reflects the cultural ethos that shaped the mentality of Russian modernists. In particular, Russian symbolists focused on an artist's creation not merely as the production of one's own artistic works but also the aesthetic construction of life: "Iskusstvo est' tvorchestvo zhizni (Art is a creation of life)," wrote Andrei Belyi (1908/1969, p. 43). For example, Aleksandr Blok, who described himself as the last man of the degenerate gentry, staged his wedding to Liubov' Mendeleeva unconventionally, using gentry costumes and rituals (see Chukovskii, 1924, p. 6). Furthermore, he construed the marriage as an articulation of the divine principle, Sophia.

Although Russian symbolist self/life-creation included an additional religious, metaphysical dimension, its origins, in fact, are found in the cultural archetype of a Romantic poet. Romantic poets considered *life* as a significant sphere of artistic creation, opposing the previous neo-classical ideal that emphasized a predetermined Truth and Beauty in the realm of art and knowledge. Their creation of life was aimed at restoring an *ideal* for living through the

iconoclastic defiance of the *false, anti-aesthetic, clichéd* world.¹

Romantics were not the only ones who subscribed to the idea of self/life-creation; it also affected the anticonventional practices of intellectuals in the realist tradition. Some members of the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia such as Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Aleksandr Gertsen assumed the image of *new men*, challenging the vulgar and corrupt state of everyday life in favor of their ethical and civic ideals (Paperno, 1994, p. 5). But while Romantic practices were focused mostly on individual lifestyles, the nineteenth-century intelligentsia's self-creation was more concerned with the transformation of the collective entity called *reality*. For that reason, the realists' self-creation is often called *life-creation*.

The idea of an *anticonventional man* influenced modernist culture universally but in different forms. Modernist artists refused to conform to cultural clichés and “quotidian life” (*byt*; Paperno, 1994, p. 8). Instead, they attempted to become new men who create *new culture*.² While

¹ Concerning the meaning of *zhiznetvorchestvo* (life-creation) in Romanticism, see Curie (1974, pp. 25-55); Lotman & Mints (1989, pp. 86-87).

² For an investigation of Nietzschean myth apropos the new men in Russian modernism, see Rosenthal (1974, 1986, 1994, 2002).

realist intellectuals sought to render an ideal world that is more moral, Russian modernists attempted to invent a world that was more appealing in an aesthetic sense.

Надо, чтобы красота сопровождала вас повсюду, чтобы она обнимала вас, когда вы встаете, ложитесь, работаете, одеваетесь, любите, мечтаете или обедаете.

Надо сделать жизнь, которая прежде всего уродлива,—прежде всего прекрасной.

(Gippius, 1903/2000, p. 74)

Although the notion of idealism differs in these world views, the structure of self/life-creation—the artist’s defiance of quotidian life and dominant conventions in defense of personal ideals—was a significant unifying element that shaped the mentality of Russian artists throughout the whole of modern Russian culture.

Anticonventional self-creation often emerged in visible manifestations; many artists expressed their aesthetics through their physical appearance. For example, the peasant poet, Nikolai Kliuev, wore Russian folk costumes to better embody his ideology. Others, such as the aesthetes in the *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art) group, practiced this form of aesthetic individualism by demonstrating aristocratic, refined taste. Viacheslav Ivanov and his wife, Lidiia Zinov’eva-

Annibal, decorated themselves and their apartment in ancient Greek style because they considered ancient Greek culture the antithesis of the corrupted, antiaesthetic modern world in which they lived. Another poet, Mikhail Kuzmin, who wrote the preface to the Russian translation of Barbey d'Aurevilly's book on George Brummell, a mythical dandy in the history of Western dandyism, was famous for his large collection of vests. Similarly, even Zinaida Gippius and Aleksandr Blok were concerned with style. Later, the early avant-gardists expressed their nonconformist attitude through theatrical public scandal.³ In this way, dandyistic culture was an influential phenomenon that shaped the self-creation of Russian artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This dissertation considers instances of dandyistic self-creation among the Russian decadents. The most characteristic feature of decadent self-creation lies in its expression of amorality and the apotheosis of beauty. For example, such early Russian decadents as Konstantin Bal'mont, Valerii Briusov, and Aleksandr Dobroliubov resorted to demonic imagery in styling themselves. They were fascinated by black attire and decorated their domiciles with demonic and black interiors. Along with their black fashion statements, they engaged in demonic behavior as

³ For an overall picture of the dandy culture of Russian modernists, see Demidenko (1990, pp. 71-84); Vainshtein (2006, pp. 513-526).

well, subverting traditional morality in a notorious fashion. Their fascination with the demonic was also related to their defense of beauty and art. The Russian decadents considered emancipation from moral and societal bounds as an aesthetic gesture (see Aleksandr Dobroliubov's idea of beauty in Gippius, 1914, p. 262).

The decadents' concern with fashion and amoral behaviors in defense of beauty often earned them the label of *dandy*. In his essay "Russkie dendi" ("Russian Dandies"; 1918/1962), Aleksandr Blok ascribed the title of dandy to the successors of Russian decadents who endorsed the ideas of *anticonventionalism* and *pure poetry*.

– Неужели вас не интересует ничего, кроме стихов? – почти произвольно спросил наконец я.

Молодой человек откликнулся, как эхо :

– Нас ничего не интересует, кроме стихов. Ведь мы—пустые, совершенно пустые. . . .

Так вот он—русский дэндиизм XX века! Его пожирающее пламя затеплилось когда-то от искры малой части байроновской души; во весь

тревожный предшествующий нам век оно тлело в разных Брэммелях, вдруг вспыхивая и опаляя крылья крылатых: Эдгара По, Бодлера, Уайльда; в нем был великий соблазн—соблазн “антимещанства”; да, оно попало кое-что на пустошах “филантропии,” “прогрессивности,” “гуманности” и “полезностей”; но, попав кое-что там, оно перекинулось за недозволенную черту. (Blok, 1918/1962, Vol. 6, pp. 56-57)

Based on its two representative characteristics, Russian decadent dandyism varies with individuals and their personal aesthetics. While some decadents focus on anticonventional demonic behavior, others put greater stress on the defense of art and beauty. Some decadent aesthetics were concerned with the issues of a moral or religious nature. Of these many variants, my work will address three different manifestations of Russian decadent dandyism. First, I will consider the decadent dandyism that initially emerged in the literary group comprised of Konstantin Bal'mont, Valerii Briusov and Aleksandr Dobroliubov (Chapter 2). In particular, I will focus on their *demonic* aesthetic and its practice in life. In Chapter 3, I take up Hellenism, an offshoot of decadent aestheticism, where an orientation toward *Hellenic harmony* is present. My

discussion here focuses in particular on the poet Mikhail Kuzmin as the quintessential representative of this aesthetic. In Chapter 4, I explore Aleksandr Blok's aesthetics and practice as yet another offshoot of decadent dandyism with a particular emphasis on his dandy persona in literature. Finally, in Chapter 5, I address how the early avant-gardists' practices of aestheticism differ from those of their predecessors'.

I will also examine Russian decadent dandyism with respect to its similarities and differences from its Western counterpart. Certainly there are similarities between Russian decadent dandyism and its Western counterpart, insofar as both movements manifest an aesthetic individualism and its performance in life. Likewise, both groups worship beauty and art as an alternative ideal to established cultural clichés. Above all, European dandy-modernists, including Charles Baudelaire and Oscar Wilde, influenced Russian modernist culture enormously.⁴ However, the Russian modernists' concept of dandyism is different from its Western counterpart, as I will argue in this study. Primary in this distinction is how Russian decadents perceived

⁴ See Basker (2006); Bershtein (2000, pp. 168-188); Donchin (1958); Moeller-Sally (1990, pp. 459-472); Pavlova (1991); Polonsky (1998); Pyman (1994); Roznatovskaia (2000); Vainshtein (2006); Wanner (1993, 1996) for more on Western influence on Russian modernism.

Western dandyism. Russian decadent self-creation will also be shown to differ from Western dandyism. Yet a comparison of European dandyism and Russian decadent self-fashioning is not the ultimate goal of this research. I will use the lens of European dandyism to provide new and significant perspectives for examining Russian decadent dandyism.

Thus this introduction serves mainly to outline the significant themes and perspectives of Western and Russian (premodernist) dandyism through which Russian decadent dandyism will be explored in the main chapters. As noted above, Blok describes Russian decadents as *dandies* because of their iconoclasm and apotheosis of beauty. Dandyism, however, is a more complex phenomenon than Blok's definition suggests. Furthermore, Russian dandyism should be viewed in its cultural context, which highlights its differences from its Western counterpart. This introduction will help clarify some of the confusion regarding the definition of dandyism.

The first section of this introduction is dedicated to Western dandyism, in particular, the representative cases of Lord Byron, Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Oscar Wilde, the figures most frequently referenced by the Russian decadents in their theories of aestheticism and self-creation. The next section outlines the premodernist history of Russian dandyism, focusing on

Aleksandr Pushkin and his literary characters as exemplified by Onegin and Charskii. I will also explore the dandyism of Mikhail Lermontov and his literary character, Pechorin, as well as Dostoevskii's character, Stavrogin. Furthermore, the dandyism of the Decembrist Mikhail Lunin will be examined in the context of ideas of dandyism formulated by such Russian critics as Leonid Grossman. In so doing, I will inductively present the definition of dandyism as well as the special characteristic of Russian dandyism, which in turn will be utilized in exploring Russian decadent self-creation.

Dandyism in the Western Cultural Tradition

In the European cultural milieu, the history of self-creation begins with Romanticism. Against the background of neoclassical values (universal Truth and its rule) and Christian ideals (goodness and spirit), Romanticism adopted *new* standards that reassessed the role of transgression, originality, emotion, transience, sensuality, and relativism in its system of values. A Romantic figure cultivated the image of a *genius* who challenges the conventional neoclassical and Christian value system. However, the concept of a Romantic genius was not completely divorced from the structure of the Truth-commitment function of neoclassicism and Christianity. The neoclassical ethos of a poet's honor and the Christian norms were still present in Romanticism in different ways. For example, the Romantic philosophy of history and the idea of a hero who participates in history were influential ideas that shaped the self-creation of a Romantic figure. In his rejection of conventional standards, a Romantic genius is ostensibly connected with an *ideal and genuine* vision than the one associated with conventional, clichéd truth. This iconoclastic heroism of a Romantic genius was sometimes expressed in the form of martyrdom. As Curie notes:

almost from the very beginning, romantics divided the concept of genius into two categories: that of the hero who triumphs immediately and directly over the forces of alienation; and that of the martyr who triumphs, but only through suffering and defeat (1974, p. 209)

Significantly, a Romantic genius was also associated with beauty. He was mostly depicted as a handsome man. The adoption of a code of beauty implies an archetypal idea of aestheticism as a rejection of values associated with Truth. This relationship between Romantic individualism and beauty, which was fully developed and prevailed in the Romantic period, can be traced back to Lucifer in the biblical myth: “With Milton, the Evil One definitely assumes an aspect of fallen beauty, of splendor shadowed by sadness and death” (Praz, 1951, p. 56; as cited in Matich, 1972a, p 191).

In addition, during the Romantic period, art began to be considered the realm in which to transcend the conventional, phenomenal world (Curie, 1974, p. 43). An artist, in particular a poet, was considered a representative Romantic figure who could solve “his own and the world’s alienation” and “establish a realm of unity and perfection” (Curie, 1974, p. 29). Thus, a Romantic

poet like Lord Byron was venerated as a larger-than-life figure who could fulfill the myth of “the epic and rhetoric of a single, self-made hero” (Greenleaf, 1994b, p. 389) after Napoleon’s death (about the historical evolution of heroism, see Howells, 1996, p. 107).

Romantic figures began to see something ironic about heroism. The myth of a genius began to be considered a convention, and Romantic figures freed themselves from the clichéd idea of a genius. This self-consciousness about a now clichéd Romantic myth was the starting point of dandyism as exemplified by that of Byron.⁵ His autobiographical work, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1912-1918), describes a Romantic dandy who cultivates a distinctive persona through playful behaviors and stylization. Byron is also famous for fashioning himself as a frivolous dandy who scorns a serious attitude toward artistic creation and pursues a dilettantish, slipshod writing style. He kept showing his contempt of writing—Byron even said that “writing verse is the easiest of all attainments” (Martin, 1984, p. 39). In his journal, Byron recalls his early

⁵ For more on the history and meaning of dandyism in the European context, see Baudelaire (1863/2006); Boym (1991, pp. 37-118); D’Aurevilly (1897); Feldman (1993); Fillin-Yeh (2001); Godfrey (1982, pp. 21-33); Greenleaf (1994a, 1994b); Hamilton (n. d.); Howells (1996); Moers (1960); Saisselin (1956, pp. 457-60); Sinfield (1994); Tacium (1998); Vainshtein (2006, pp. 390-435); Wohlfarth (1970, pp. 529-571).

dandy period, noting that the dandies who he met did not quite like writers, and he was the only one in the club (Bairon, 1963; as cited in Vainshtein, 2006, p.346). In other words, his dandyism was a product created by the self-irony of a Romantic poet.

Similarly, the myth of a Romantic figure and its attendant irony can be seen in the modernist period as well. In modernism, of course, the codes of beauty and conventionality became more complicated than those in Romanticism. The modernists not only rejected morality in favor of evil and beauty but also defied the bourgeois and middle-class culture of positivism, utilitarianism, democracy, and progress. In terms of the concept of beauty, the aesthetics of evil, chaos, excess, disharmony, and unwholesomeness emerged in opposition to harmonious, organic, and sanguine beauty. Homosexuality interested modernists as a repudiation of traditional patriarchy. With more complex codes of *conventions* and *beauty*, the modernists were also involved with the myth of a genius and its self-irony as exemplified by the dandyism of Baudelaire, insofar as they were the successors of Romantic self/life-creation.

In the 1840s, when he wrote the *Salon de 1846*, Baudelaire was influenced by the *heroism* of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thomas Carlyle. He endorsed the meaning of a genius as one who

represents cultural community and the evolution of history. However, disillusioned with the 1848 revolution, Baudelaire presents in the 1860s the dandyism that consists of an “ambition to be a ‘great man’ or a ‘hero’ or a ‘saint’ *for oneself*, thus twisting the formula of Emerson’s ‘heroism’” (Howells, 1996, p. xx). Baudelaire’s representative text of dandyism, “Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne” (“The Painter of Modern Life”; 1863/2006), also describes a dandy who demythologizes a Romantic genius. Baudelaire presents the painter, Constantin Guys, as a modern artist who hides himself in the impressionistic speed of a modern city and the world of common mortals. As Baudelaire notes,

M.C.G. loves mixing with the crowds, loves being incognito, and carries his originality to the point of modesty. . . .For the perfect idler, for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite. (Baudelaire, 1863/2006, pp. 395-396)

This “incognito prince,” who strolls around the city, is characterized by his aristocratic idleness that resists the bourgeois positivistic myth of labor. Yet this type of *flanêur* (saunterer)-

dandy also represents a modern poet who effaces the myth of a Romantic ego. He is no longer a genius who knows and lives out the meaning of Nature and History but rather the last hero who realizes the end of his heydays.

Dandyism is the last flicker of heroism in decadent ages. . . .Dandyism is a setting sun;

like the declining star, it is magnificent, without heat and full of melancholy. But alas!

The rising tide of democracy, which spreads everywhere and reduces everything to the same level, is daily carrying away these last champions of human pride, and submerging, in the waters of oblivion, the last traces of these remarkable myrmidons.

(Baudelaire, 1863/2006, pp. 421-422)

Paradoxically, the dandy is a hero who recognizes the death of the hero. Irving Wohlfarth points out that Baudelaire's voluntary rejection of the epithet *Romantic poet* is depicted in *Perte d'Auréole* (the loss of a halo) included in *Le Spleen de Paris* (Paris Spleen). *Perte d'Auréole* registers the demythologization of the poet:

He is not merely compelled to look at himself and the world "with sober eyes," but, making a virtue of necessity, gladly points out his indistinguishability from his

fellow-mortals. . . . More specifically, however, the poet's halo is not so much a feudal reality as a bourgeois illusion. It belongs to the whole myth of the Artist (with a capital letter) developed by nineteenth-century European Romanticism, and it is this Romantic myth, implicit in the initial words and surprise (or mock-surprise) of the poet's interlocutor that is the immediate object of his sly humor. . . .Its protagonist disconcertingly relishes hell, looks forward to prostituting himself and thereby subverts the myth of the fallen angel by radicalizing it and really falling. (Wohlfarth, 1970, pp. 533-545)

Wohlfarth (1970) notes that Baudelaire is, of course, still located in the Romantic frame that prioritizes the poet's originality by having him deliberately participate in the fleeting world and thereby differentiate himself from the common herd as well as from traditional poets (pp. 565-566). Yet Baudelaire's dandy differs from the Romantic hero. While a Romantic genius retains his own mission and Providence, the dandy does not rely on any values and abandons himself to the antiessential world over which only evil and beauty rule.

Baudelaire's dandyism was not merely a philosophical concept defining the ontological

state of a modern poet. He practiced his dandyism, dressing it in the *reality* of black clothing. The obsession with black demonstrates the effacement of a *heroic firm* self that underlies Romantic and bourgeois culture. According to Hamilton (n.d.),

Baudelaire used the color black extensively in his wardrobe (and one could say in his poetry as well) for some time before it became the dominant uniform in bourgeois society. He felt that black was the most appropriate color for an age in mourning and dived into like an evangelist into the Bible. Black from head to toe, from his silk hat, to his long, straight coat, to his stiff cravats, all the way down to his perfectly polished shoes. Even his linen was black. (p. 3)

Stéphane Mallarmé is another example of dandyism as antiheroism. Baudelaire achieves dandyism by hiding (at the same time, distinguishing himself by hiding) himself in the world of *modernity*: “modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent” (Baudelaire, 1863/2006, p. 403). Similarly, Mallarmé’s dandyism manifests itself in his abandonment of self to eventless everyday life. He did not construct his biography to conform with that of a Romantic hero. Instead, he led a non-Romantic eventless life as a high school teacher and family man, making a name for

himself instead through his meticulous craftsmanship. Svetlana Boym (1991) argues that Mallarmé, in his autobiography, stresses the “casual, fragmentary” character of his writing, which defies a “unified, coherent” image of himself (p. 50). Instead, Mallarmé worshiped Art as an absolute entity.

Paul De Man (1971) notes in this connection that “Mallarmé’s modernity consists of his radical disfiguration of both the Christian and the Romantic images of a martyr and a poet” (as cited in Boym, 1991, p. 45). Mallarmé’s antiheroism, like Baudelaire’s, triggered his dandyism. He was similarly famous for his black attire and wrote an essay called “La Dernière Mode” (“The Latest Fashion,” 1874; see Boym, 1991, p. 68) in which he reveals his fascination with black clothing. For Mallarmé, as well as Baudelaire, it embodied a predicament of modern poets who dethrone themselves and distinguish themselves from traditional poets by taking the halo off their heads. Thus, Baudelaire and Mallarmé’s *black* demonstrates the effacement of a *heroic, firm self*⁶ and at the same time demonstrates one’s originality by the erasure of self. Boym (1991)

⁶ Boym notes that Baudelaire “Moi c’est tous, tous sont moi (I is everyone, everyone is I)” and Mallarmé’s “disparition élocutoire du poète (elocutionary disappearance of the poet)” are an analogous idea to Rimbaud’s “Je est un autre (I is another),” which Shoshana Felman considers as “violent and

explains the paradoxical meaning of the dandy's black attire:

In this respect, the color of the dandy's clothes is crucial. Black attire helps to erase the physicality of the body, emphasizing spirituality; and at the same time it is uniquely flattering to the figure. The black figure can function as a hieroglyph, an incorporeal sign of writing. Blackness might appear as a lack of color and as an oversaturation. It is an aristocratic sign, a sign of permanent spiritual mourning, and also a kind of coy poverty—false modesty, so to speak. It is pretentiously unpretentious, anti-aristocratically aristocratic, asexually sexy. Black clothes disguise the very presence of clothing and help to highlight the whiteness of the face. They de-individualize the face by surrounding features, causing them to stand out with particular clarity against the black background. (p. 67)

Oscar Wilde's dandyism also adopts an ironic attitude toward the myth of the Romantic hero. In his novel *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* (1890/1964) the painter Basil Hallward, who is sincere about his art, is murdered by Dorian Gray. Hallward is not a Romantic poet, but he

rigorous deconstruction of the Cartesian 'ego'." See Boym (1991, p. 99); Felman (1973, pp. 3-22).

embodies the values of the traditional artist who believes in the mission of the artist and the ethical implications of art. As we shall see in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, in contrast to Hallward, Lord Henry and Dorian Gray both represent the dandy who rejects traditional idealistic aesthetics. Wilde vacillates between the two worlds of Hallward and Lord Henry, but eventually has Dorian Gray kill Hallward.

Wilde's dandyism differs slightly from that of his French predecessors. While the two French dandies cultivate a solipsistic attitude, Wilde's dandyism favors public performance and theatricality: he conducted lectures to propagandize the art-for-art's sake idea and sometimes wore Greek costumes, decorating himself with lilies and sunflowers (on Wilde's dandyism, see Vainshtein, 2006, pp. 458-477). In contrast to Baudelaire and Mallarmé's self-effacing stoicism, Wilde's dandyism was characterized by excessive self-advertisement and scandal mongering. Both versions of dandyism, however, subvert the traditional notion of a Romantic poet, but in different ways. While Baudelaire and Mallarmé's ascetic black served to erase the traditional notion of the self/artist, Wilde's emphasis on theatrical costumes and playful protean masks also subverted the conventional idea of self and artist by parodying the image of the Romantic poet

who is guided by providential destiny and has an active role to play in history.

The distinction between Wilde and Baudelaire's dandyism can be better understood in light of Iurii Lotman's treatment of European dandyism. Lotman contrasts Brummell's dandyism with that of Byron. In his article, "Russkii Dendizm" ("Russian Dandyism"; 1994), Lotman notes that Byron's dandyism is marked by its *romanticheskoe buntarstvo* (Romantic rebellion), whereas Brummell's is characterized by its *iznezhennaia utonchennost' individualista* (delicate refinement of the individualist):

Дендизм приобретал окраску романтического бунтарства. . . . Оскорбительная для света манера держаться, "неприличная" развязность жестов, демонстративный шокинг—все формы разрушения светских запретов воспринимались как поэтические. Такой стиль жизни был свойствен Байрону. На противоположном полюсе находилась та интерпретация дендизма, которую развивал самый прославленный денди эпохи—Джордж Бреммель. Здесь индивидуалистическое презрение к общественным нормам выливалось в иные формы. Байрон противопоставлял изнеженному свету энергию и героическую

грубость романтика, Бреммель—грубому мещанству “светской толпы”
изнеженную утонченность индивидуалиста.

Этот второй тип поведения Бульвер-Литтон позже приписал герою романа “Пелэм, или Приключения джентльмена” (1828). . . Герой Бульвера-Литтона, денди и нарушитель порядка, следуя принятому плану, культивирует “модную слабость,” как герой Байрона—силу. . . . Ценность поведения денди придает не качество поступка, а то, в какой степени он выпадает из общепринятых норм: крайней трусостью можно так же тщеславиться, как и крайней храбростью. (Lotman, 1994, p.124)

In particular, Lotman imbues Bulwer-Lytton’s dandy character, Pelham, who inherited Brummellian dandyism, with *extreme passivity* (which is reminiscent of Baudelaire and Mallarmé’s antiheroic self-effacing dandyism). In contrast, Byronic dandyism, based as it is on *romanticheskoe buntarstvo* (Romantic rebellion) is characterized by *energiiia* (energy), *geroicheskaia grubost’ romantika* (the Romantic’s heroic roughness) and *krainiaia khrabrost’* (extreme audacity), which are reminiscent of Wilde’s public demonstration of anticonventional

fashion and behaviors. Although Lotman employs the term *heroic* in his description of Byronic dandyism, he does not represent Romantic heroism as deriving from the myth of the Romantic genius. Instead, the dandy Byron defies social conventions as a *post-romantic* dandy. Of the two types of dandyism, as we shall see, Russian artists were attracted by Byron and Wilde's *rebellious* dandyism.

Along with its characteristic antiheroism, dandyism develops the provocative idea of a particular relationship between the inner content (idea, meaning) and the outer form (clothing) of art and self. Howells notes that Baudelaire inverted the structure of Emerson and Carlyle's Romantic hero. Particularly, Carlyle's philosophy of clothes holds that

all forms of nature, culture and history are the outer expression or "dressing" of ideas. . . .And everything that nature brings into existence represents a necessarily imperfect attempt to realize transcendental values, which are in themselves inaccessible and inoperative from a human point of view until they assume their outer dressing.

(Howells, 1996, p. 107)

By twisting this philosophy of clothes, dandyism sanctions the worship of outer form,

alone, form that exists without any relation to inner and universal meaning. Concomitantly, the dandy has no implicit inner self. In his essay “The Painter of Modern Life (1863/2006),” Baudelaire explains his own philosophy of fashion and make-up:

Most wrong ideas about beauty derive from the false notion the eighteenth century had about ethics. In those days, Nature was taken as a basis, source and prototype of all possible forms of good and beauty. . . . We can see at once that nature teaches nothing or nearly nothing. . . . I am led to regard adornment as one of the signs of the primitive nobility of the human soul. . . .Painting the face is not to be used with the vulgar, unavowable intention of imitating the fair face of nature, or competing with youth. It has, moreover, been observed that artifice does not embellish ugliness, and can only serve beauty. Who would dare assign to art the sterile function of imitating nature? Make-up has no need of concealment, no need to avoid discovery; on the contrary, it can go in for display, if not with affectation, at least with a sort of ingenuousness. (pp. 425-428)

According to Baudelaire, beauty lies in complete artificiality, not in the imitation of Nature

or God. Accordingly, the dandy's mask and fashion are not a medium for expressing inner meaning, but are an end in themselves and do not possess any ultimate meaning. In dandyism, the outer form is thus an *auto-referential* thing that demonstrates that there is no original signifié.

Baudelaire's rejection of the Carlylean idea of symbolization also accounts for the dandies' notion of art. The dandy-artists insisted on the art-for-art's sake idea that accentuates the significance of *form* in art. A similar idea can be seen in Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. The idealist, Hallward, believes that he can represent the Greek spirit through Dorian Gray. His idea is similar to the Carlylean idealization of form and meaning. In contrast, Dorian and Lord Henry's fascination with the antiquity is depicted solely as a form of stylization (Wilde, 1890/1964, pp.109-110). Their dandyism lies in a fetishistic concern with the outer form itself.

In this pure obsession with style itself, the *elegance* and *refined taste* commonly attributed to dandies do not significantly define dandyism. Rather, dandyism prioritizes an excessive decoration or minimalism over well-constructed manners and decorum. If we compare dandyism with the neoclassical *honnête homme* (gentleman), we see that the dandy does not imitate or embody the ideal and harmonious state of beauty, but the *honnête homme* does. According to

Saisselin (1956):

This insistence on clothes marks a departure from the practices of *honnêteté*. The gentleman was not especially concerned with his dress so long as it was decent. The dandy's preoccupation with what might be considered externals, however, marks a decline in true *honnêteté*. But then this is a result of the paradoxical situation of the dandy-*honnête homme*. But another result and a more important one of this paradoxical situation is the relation of the dandy to esthetics. Dandyism is also a cult of beauty. *Honnêteté* could be called that too, provided one insist that it was linked to classical esthetics and also to the idea of *bienséance*. *Honnêteté* then would be the imitation of noble lives of antiquity. Montaigne, de Méré, Saint-Evremond, in a sense imitated Socrates, Caesar, Cicero. Thus, they were in tradition with classical esthetics, one which insisted on the imitation of models and on respect for decorum. Now the dandies, though, as we have seen with Baudelaire, they may have claimed kinship with heroes of antiquity, did not really imitate them. One finds rather a nostalgia for the eighteenth century among them than one for antiquity. (p. 459)

The *honnête homme* shares the structure a Romantic hero in that both models are based on the idea that the self projects universal vision. Compared with these two modes of self, the dandy's *self* lacks any symbolization whatsoever. Thus, with its focus on the outer form of self and art (mask, make-up, style, and form), dandyism constitutes a world of *simulacra* where the structure of copy and mimesis is deconstructed:

La singularité, l'autre notion de la définition de Lemaire, relève du modèle romantique de l'esprit créateur mais refuse d'admettre l'enjeu de la vérité. Pour le romantisme, le héros est une lampe qui émet sa propre lumière et non pas un miroir qui la reçoit. Le héros-lampe coïncide ainsi avec l'origine du monde (voir Abrams 1953). Le sujet dandy, par contre, s'éloigne de toute prétention de participer à la création du monde. Désormais est-il tout au plus "original" et non pas "originel," ayant rejeté le modèle organique des origines. Dans la mesure où il s'accroche au romantisme, il trahit le caractère esthétique de la notion d'originalité. Pour l'esthétisme romantique, toute origine procède de l'imitation. En faisant coïncider les soucis de beauté et de vérité, l'esthète place la vérité sur le plan de la *mimésis* et donc du "simulacre." Dans le

Sophiste, Platon distingue le simulacre de la simple copie: là où la copie travaille dans le faux avec des matériaux faux (le marbre, l'huile, etc.), afin de rendre une bonne *imitation* de l'oeuvre d'art originale, le simulacre essaie de *brouiller la distinction entre l'original et la copie*. En misant sur son originalité, le sujet semble se situer au-delà du vrai et du faux. Car le simulacre abolit la notion d'origine. Deleuze pense qu'en prônant une esthétique de l'artifice, le dandy est une figure antiplatonicienne. (Tadium, 1998, ch. I. para. 79-80)

In addition to denying the symbolic content of art and the self/artist, dandyism subverts the conventional notion of sexuality. Even though homosexuality per se cannot be equated with dandyism, there was a tendency toward homosexuality in dandyism. Felski (1991) maintains that the dandy's attraction to homosexuality is related to his denial of "the conventional opposition between the 'modern' bourgeois man and the 'natural' domestic woman" (p. 1099). Moreover, in terms of his antiheroism, the dandy symbolizes a castrated being, that is, the dandy is a hero without the symbolization of a hero. Accordingly, the pronounced masculinity of the Romantic hero is annulled and denied (Tadium, 1998), leaving the sexuality of the dandy ambiguous. In this

way, dandyism is a significant symptom of modernity that subverts the cultural and philosophical *center* exemplified by Romantic heroism, Neoclassical Truth/honor, representation, patriarchy, Nature and so on.

Dandyism in the Russian Cultural Tradition before Modernism

The structure of Western Romantic dandyism as an ironic reworking of the myth of the Romantic poet can also be seen in Russian Romanticism. Aleksandr Pushkin's dandyism betrayed the artist's drive to distance himself from the archetype of the Romantic hero, resulting in his concern with style as an expression of self-irony. As memoirists report, Pushkin was a frivolous dandy in his younger years, and the poet's interest in dandyism continued even into his later life (Driver, 1985, pp.243-244).

Pushkin was rarely able to dress with true elegance, so he dressed for effect (Barbey d'Aurevilly's *imprévu*). In the muddy frontier town of Kishinev, he would appear in formal black, "buttoned up to the chin, with all the graces and *recherché politesse* of a young man in society" (Gorchakov, 1931, p.66), while for a formal evening in the capital at which he was to give a poetry reading, he arrived with a soft open collar, *un col à la Byron*. At an officer's dinner party in Moldavia, he shocked a conservative minor functionary by turning up in a Bessarabian *arxaluk* and fez. . . . He scorned bluestockings and "serious" interlocutors; he much preferred the fashionable routs of

the day, . . . His Onegin-like conduct at the theatre in Kishinev is preceded by an incident in Petersburg in 1819, where he was attending some mindless play. Pushkin yawned, whistled, and called aloud, “Nesnosno!” (“Unbearable!”) All this led to a challenge from a philistine officer behind him who was enjoying the performance. (Driver, 1985, pp. 248, 250)

In addition, the hero of Pushkin’s *Evgenii Onegin* (*Eugene Onegin*; 1833/1953), the work that introduced the term *dandy* to the Russian cultural milieu, differentiates himself from the clichéd type of the Romantic poet, Vladimir Lenskii. Just as the dandy Dorian Gray kills the painter Hallward in *the Portrait of Dorian Gray*, Onegin murders Lenskii in a duel, symbolizing the dandy’s ironic stance toward the Romantic hero. In a later prose work, *Egipetskie nochi* (*Egyptian nights*; 1835/1978) Pushkin depicts another dandy character, Charskii:

Чарский употреблял всевозможные старания, чтобы сгладить с себя несносное прозвище. Он избегал общества своей братьи литераторов и предпочитал им светских людей, даже самых пустых. Разговор его был самый пошлый и никогда не касался литературы. В своей одежде он всегда наблюдал самую

последнюю моду с робостью и суеверием молодого москвича, в первый раз отроду приехавшего в Петербург. В кабинете его, убранном как дамская спальня, ничто не напоминало писателя; книги не валялись по столам и под столами; диван не был обрызган чернилами; не было такого беспорядка, который обличает присутствие музы и отсутствие метлы и щетки. . . . Он прикидывался то страстным охотником до лошадей, то отчаянным игроком, то самым тонким гастрономом; Однако ж он был поэт,(Pushkin,1835/1978, p. 245)

As we see from the above description, Charskii is a dandy poet who keeps an ironic distance from the literati and who serves as a contrast to the poet-improvisor who has arrived from Italy. While the poet-improvisor represents the ideal of the Romantic poet who is able to interpret and convey the secret of Nature and God (people have difficulty understanding what the poet-improvisor says, which implies the unattainability of those ideals), Charskii embodies a poet who distances himself from the myth of the Romantic poet. In particular, he cynically views the poet as a commodity onto which readers project their clichéd image of the Romantic poet.

Здесь общество никогда еще не слыхало импровизатора. Любопытство будет

возбуждено; правда, итальянский язык у нас не в употреблении, вас не поймут,

но это не беда; главное—чтоб вы были в моде. (Pushkin, 1835/1978, p. 248)

Although he exploits the relationship between readers and the poet-improvisor, Charskii's dandyism epitomizes the poet's pursuit of originality and rejection of the role of the clichéd artist who allows his art to be dictated by readers' expectations.

One of the representative behaviors of Romantic self-creation, the *duel*, more obviously characterizes an anti-heroic dandy like Onegin. In Russian culture, *dueling* was “an important means for individuals—first within the nobility but later across other strata of society—to maintain their independence from the state as well as to define and defend their personal space” (Reyfman, 1999, p. 15). In a word, *dueling* and *honor* were codes that represent the individualistic heroism of the Romantic self. The Decembrists favored the duel as a symbol of individual freedom and honor, regardless of the state's prohibition of dueling. In addition, for Romantics such as Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii dueling embodied the ideal of the *point d'honneur* (see Reyfman, 1999, pp.188-189). However, in contrast to the Decembrists and Marlinskii, Pushkin's (1833/1953) dandy character assumes a different attitude toward the duel. Onegin finds no reason

to duel with Lenskii. In fact, he does not even observe the rules of dueling (pp. 127-128). For him, the expression and defence of one's dignity is not an important value. This playful attitude toward individual dignity is one of the characteristics of dandies in Russian romantic and postromantic culture.

Dostoevskii's character, Stavrogin, in the novel, *Besy* (*Devils*; 1872/1994), is a dandy in the Onegin mold. He is depicted as a fashionable man who lived in Europe:

Это был очень красивый молодой человек, лет двадцати пяти и, признаюсь, поразил меня. Я ждал встретить какого-нибудь грязного оборванца, испитого от разврата и отдающего водкой. Напротив, это был самый изящный джентльмен из всех, которых мне когда-либо приходилось видеть, чрезвычайно хорошо одетый, державший себя так, как мог держать себя только господин, привыкший к самому утонченному благообразию. (Dostoevskii, 1872/1994, p. 42)

Like Onegin, Stavrogin is not eager to duel and does not value any code of honor. After he is slapped by Shatov, Stavrogin does not respond to his opponent's offense, and in the duel with Gaganov that later transpires, he refuses to take direct aim at his opponent. Yet he kills people in

duel and does not feel guilty about his act. For Stavrogin, morals based on human dignity do not exist. As Irina Reyfman (1999) points out, “the duel’s function as a safeguard for human dignity is thus entirely lost on him (Stavrogin). . . .By toying with the honor code, . . . he creates an atmosphere of moral ambiguity that has a powerfully destructive effect on everyone around him”(pp. 244-246). In that he does not react against his offenders, he is similar to Myshkin in Dostoevskii’s other work, *Idiot*. They both transcend the conventional morality. Yet while Myshkin forgives his neighbor’s misdeed on the basis of his Christian spirit of humility, Stavrogin’s indifference is based on his lack of morality. Thus, there are two distinct concepts of *beauty* in Dostoevskii’s system. Myshkin represents the Christian concept of beauty and, in contrast, Stavrogin embodies demonic beauty where relativism and sensuality prevail. Dandyism lies in this amoralistic beauty of Stavrogin.

Interestingly, Dostoevskii’s depiction of Stavrogin is reminiscent of the Western dandy as an embodiment of nonmeaning. Stavrogin is described as a man whose beautiful face does not represent anything:

Поразило меня тоже его лицо: волосы его были что-то уж очень черны, светлые

глаза его что-то уж очень спокойны и ясны, цвет лица что-то уж очень нежен и бел, румянец что-то уж слишком ярок и чист, зубы как жемчужины, губы как коралловые,—казалось бы писанный красавец, а в то же время как будто и отвратителен. Говорили, что лицо его напоминает маску. (Dostoevskii, 1872/1994, p. 42)

In other words, the beauty of his mask-like face is related to the worship of outer form (i.e., style) in Western dandyism. Reyfman (1999) also points out that “the narrator’s focus on Stavrogin’s face leaves the reader with the feeling that the face we see is not the one that is ‘an image of one’s personality (*lichnost*’), of one’s spirit, of one’s dignity’ (Dostoevskii, 1994, Vol. 24. p. 153) but is something superficial that Stavrogin can change at will. In the narrator’s portrayal, it is less a face than a conglomeration of features” (Reyfman, 1994, p. 240).

This concept of beauty as a nonreferential icon can be traced back to the eighteenth century. In his *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskogo* (*History of the Russian State*), Nikolai Karamzin(1815) notes that the impostor-pretender, Grigorii Otrep’ev, is the “first Russian dandy (*shchegol*),” in that he constantly performs different roles by changing his clothes (Vol. XI, p. 263; as cited in

Murav, 1991, p. 58). For Karamzin, the imposture of protean faces which leads to the effacement of a face's original meaning is consonant with dandyism. This code of a false tsar appears again in Dostoevskii's works. In *Besny* (*Devils*), Maria Lebiadkina calls Stavrogin a "tsar-pretender" (Dostoevskii, 1872/1994, p. 253).

Mikhail Lermontov also embodies the antiheroic dandy. Although the poet tried to create an image of himself as a romantic hero, particularly in his early period, he kept resisting the static Romantic model that readers chose to see:

Lermontov appeared at balls uninvited, improvised withering epigrams, insulted his admirer, wrote scandalously violent and sexually explicit poems, stages disruptive pranks, calculately seduced and abandoned at least one woman, fought two duels over trivial matters and was exiled twice. Devoid of explicit and acceptable moral or political meaning, such provocative behavior contradicts the poet's "traditionally heroic persona," which Russian critics have labored to protect. (Powellstock, 2005, p. 12)

Along with Lermontov, some Decembrists practiced antiheroic dandyism, too. In his

article about Pushkin's dandyism, Leonid Grossman (1923) adds to the list of Russian dandies some Decembrists as exemplified by Batenkov and Lunin.

Русский дэндиизм—явление не единичное и не случайное. К нему принадлежат немного, но самые яркие представители нескольких поколений : Пушкин, Грибоедов, Чаадаев, Лермонтов. За ними идут менее заметные, но всегда облеченные даром широкой просвещенности и толкового остроумия—князь Вяземский, Катенин, Гнедич, впоследствии Дружинин. Признаки дэндиизма заметны на образах некоторых декабристов, например, Батенкова или Лунина.

(Grossman, 1923, p. 7)

Grossman (1923) does not provide any criteria of dandyism, but Reyfman's (1999) remark on Russian duelists indicates that Lunin was not same as the typical Decembrists. Rather, he was ironic about the heroic self-creation of his colleagues. Many memoirs characterize Lunin as a frivolous and bold spirit who used to play with death and “enjoy danger” (Reyfman, 1999, pp.78-79). As dandyism appears in the dandy's ironical stance toward the typical Romantic model, Lunin's dandyism emerged in defiance of the Romantic heroism of his Decembrist

colleagues.

Interestingly, Lunin's dandyism is different from that of Onegin and Stavrogin with respect to the dandy's attitude toward duels. Where Onegin and Stavrogin were reluctant to join in duels, Lunin was fascinated with them. Yet his attraction to duels has nothing in common with romantic heroes' defense of aristocratic valor and ideals. Just as Onegin and Stavrogin approach dueling nonchalantly, so Lunin approaches it as a manifestation of *style*. This attitude can be detected in those dandies who served as models for Pushkin: Jakubovich and Liprandi were famous duelist-*bretteurs* (Reyfman, 1999, p. 26) as well as dandies (Driver, 1985, p. 251). Zisserman (1930) notes that Pushkin admired them both for their elegance and their skill as duelists (as cited in Driver, 1985, p. 251).

Thus, we can say that, of the two types of (European) dandyism singled out by Lotman Lunin is close to the Byronic dandy as characterized by *romanticheskoe buntarstvo* (Romantic rebellion). Lunin, Lermontov and Pushkin all belong to the Byronic type of dandy because of their frivolous and reckless behavior. These *rebellious* dandies "demonstrate their bravery and experience the thrill of danger" to "prove that they are free human beings, and that the choice of

whether to live or die is. . . not the state's" (Reyffman, 1999, p. 80). In contrast, the dandies as literary characters (particularly, Stavrogin) can be said to be closer to the Brummelian solipsistic type. Stavrogin embodies the dandy as *other*, which does not exist in Russia.

The *rebellious* dandies are concerned with their appearance. Where solipsistic dandies are concerned with style per se, *rebellious* dandies dress up in order to shock the public. For them, preoccupation with style is not itself a primary factor in determining dandyism. That is why Lermontov, who "dresses too unremarkably to stand apart as a principled dandy" (Todd, 1986, p. 163), is perceived as a dandy by Grossman. (Pechorin, however, is depicted as a beautiful youth like most of Romantic figures [Lermontov, 1840/1990, pp.493-494]) The eccentric amoral behavior of this *rebellious* dandy emerges in the self-creation of the *demonic man*, which characterizes Russian demonic decadent dandyism. Like his predecessor, the demonic decadent dandy attempted to create public scandal with duels, and his dandyism was focused on demonic behavior rather than making a stylistic statement.

In this way, although there has not been a philosophical discussion of self and art in the Russian cultural tradition as there has been in Western dandyism, the idea of *antiheroic playful*

beauty has developed in Russian cultural context, at times, in relation to Romantic dandyism and, sometimes, as a negative object in Orthodox aesthetics. Although each focus of dandyism is slightly different, its fundamental characteristic lies in the dandy's ironical stance toward the myth of the (Romantic) hero, who symbolizes such universal values as honor, Nature and History.

Definition of Dandyism

However, Russian dandyism is often attenuated by Romantic heroism. Particularly, the dandy in real life, as exemplified by Lermontov and Lunin, lies on the border between the post-Romantic dandy and the Romantic hero. Powellstock (2005) notes that Lermontov maintained the tension between the desire to become a Romantic figure and his ironic stance. Furthermore, Lunin also embodies both the Romantic hero (Decembrist) and the post-Romantic dandy.

This offshoot of dandyism is caused by the special nature of the Russian cultural milieu. In the Russian Romantic period, different literary movements and aesthetic trends coexist and thereby allow competing codes of *conventions* (see Lotman, 1973, pp.74-89, 42-73; as cited in Greenleaf, 1994a, pp. 15-16). Under such circumstances, both Romantic heroism and dandyism were equally considered anticonventional; whereas in the European context of dandyism, Romantic heroism was perceived solely as clichéd. Thus, in the Russian Romantic period, the Onegin-like dandy appears in opposition to the clichéd Romantic hero. Simultaneously, the heroic figure, like the Decembrist, emerges as well in defiance of the neoclassical self of the *honnête homme*. Mills Todd III (1986) also accounts for the syncretism of Russian Romantic culture,

explaining how the three types of self-creation (Decembrists, dandy and *honnête homme*) are related.

Decembrists chose to challenge the status quo and to make changes beyond those involving the gradual amelioration of manners. Writers close to the movement, such as Griboedov, redirected satire toward society itself. Other writers publicized heroic images more militant than the *honnête homme*, the man of feeling, or the dandy, as odes and historical meditations challenged the priority of elegies and madrigals. . . . They had to appear at balls in order not to dance at them, take cognizance of social fashions in order to oppose them diametrically, and ultimately, contribute to the theatricality of society's behavior by staging scenes of latter-day Roman virtue in ways that did more to intensify the *honnête homme*'s image of Stoic virtue and self-control than to contradict it. . . . The Decembrists projected the enlightened gentleman's idea of independence onto all levels of Russian society. (Todd, 1986, pp. 40-41)

Significantly, as noted above, this syncretism of conventions occurs in the self-creation of

one person, as exemplified by Lunin and Lermontov, who has the face of a Romantic hero as well as of a post-Romantic dandy. At times, the Romantic figure himself utilized the various models of self to deal with the multiple modes of readership. For example, Pushkin fashioned himself with various faces: as noted earlier, Pushkin was famous for his dandyish Onegin-like behavior. Yet his contemporaries also remember him as a man who defended aristocratic valor and the individual's right to stand up to the tsarist regime.

In the manner of a *beau joueur*, he (Pushkin) plays honestly and pays his substantial debts conscientiously, even when his opponents have cheated. . . .Durov had managed to swindle Pushkin at cards. . . . Moreover, because both games of chance and debts of honor incurred at cards were illegal in Pushkin's day, stories about his gambling, like those about his duels, resonated with themes of the writer's opposition to the tsarist regime. . . .He emphasizes that he is less concerned about the money involved than about the threat to his honor. (Helfant, 1999, pp. 379-81)

Pushkin's multiple personae arose in cultural situations in which authors needed to cultivate protean selves in order to deal with their audiences. At that time, in particular, a mass

readership was beginning to emerge in addition to the traditional aristocratic literati.⁷ Pushkin had to fashion himself at times as a frivolous dandy who disdains the role of the typical Romantic poet, and at other times, he adopted the persona of a Romantic hero or *honnête homme* who defends individual honor against political oppression.

In this way, whether the dandy consciously fashions various images of himself or he is unconsciously influenced by various modes of self-creation, Russian dandyism often turns out to be attenuated by other modes of self-creation. This special characteristic of Russian dandyism continues into the period of modernism as well. As we shall see in Chapter 2, the *demonic dandyism* of Russian decadents is attenuated by Romantic heroism.

Due to this complexity, the term dandyism is often employed without an accurate definition. Yet there are fundamental criteria whereby one can determine what is dandyism, what is an offshoot of dandyism and what is not dandyism. In the first place, dandyism involves the construction of the self, particularly with reference to one's appearance and attitude. But not every fashion-related anti-conventional behavior can be deemed dandyism. The most fundamental

⁷ Concerning Russian romantics' self-fashioning, see Greenleaf (1994a); Helfant (1999); Powellstock (2005); Todd (1986).

feature of dandyism is rooted in Western (Romantic), and entails an iconoclasm focusing on the erasure of the Romantic heroic self. In literary characters as well as in real self-creation in Russia, concepts of dandyism mirror those of Western original dandyism. Particularly, of the two representative types of European dandies, the Russian dandy in real life has more kinship to the Byronic rebellious dandy as characterized by reckless antisocial behavior. He seeks absolute freedom from established forms of morality and expresses the quest through frivolous behavior and eccentric appearance. Yet Russian dandyism often creates its version of dandyism in combination with the feature of a Romantic hero.

Russian decadent dandyism, which will be examined in the chapters that follow, typifies this offshoot of (Romantic) dandyism. Russian decadents are the successors of dandies in that they adopt forms of behavior and appearance according to their decadent *Weltanschauung*, which prioritizes amorality and beauty. Influenced by various models such as the Nietzschean *superman*, the Russian traditional rebellious dandy and Western Romantic and modernist dandies, Russian decadents consider one of the primary principles of their self-creation *demonism*, characterized by absolute emancipation from any values. In addition, the Russian decadents defend beauty as a

new ideal. Yet Russian decadent dandyism is attenuated by other elements of self-creation as exemplified by that of a Romantic hero. I will foreground the special characteristics of Russian decadent dandyism in comparison with Western dandyism.

With these common characteristics, the each case of Russian decadent dandyism varies according to individual aesthetic focuses. Of the three distinctive instances of Russian decadent dandyism, the next chapter deals with the demonic decadents, the most representative type of Russian decadent dandyism.

Chapter 2: Valerii Briusov, Aleksandr Dobroliubov, and Konstantin Bal'mont:

Demonic Decadent Dandies

As George L. Kline (1986) points out, the late nineteenth century of Russia was an “intellectual and ideological vacuum” (p. xi), when the previous ideal of civic populism declined but a new ideal had not yet been created. A rejection of established ethics and the apotheosis of human will dominated the atmosphere of the period. In this vacuum, Nietzsche appealed to intellectuals who attempted to dismiss conventional morals and reenact a new culture.⁸ More particularly, what characterized the Nietzschean culture of the late nineteenth century was its concern with the type of a *new man*. The Nietzschean *superman* embodied a creative new individual who subverted the old values. Yet Nietzsche's philosophy was not completely new in shaping the amoral individualism of the period. Prior to Nietzsche, the Romantic tradition sanctioned unconventional and blasphemous characteristics of an individual. In addition, the nihilists of the 1860s and also Dostoevskii's demonic figures typified an amoral individual who challenged societal and moral idealism. Russian intellectuals did not have to read Nietzschean

⁸ For Nietzsche's influence on Russian modernism, see Gasparov, Hughes, & Paperno (1992); Rosenthal (1986, 1994, 2002).

writings to comprehend Nietzsche. In a simplistic way, people had long understood the problem of good and evil and its Nietzschean resolution. As Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (2002) points out, “The pollen of Nietzschean idea hung in the atmosphere” (p. 2). Login, in Fedor Sologub’s novel, *Tiazhelye sny* (*Bad Dreams*; 1895/1978), is a product of both the Russian tradition of demonic man and the influence of Nietzsche in the late nineteenth century (see Kalbouss, 1986, pp. 181-194). Disillusioned with traditional ideals of goodness, love, and happiness, he murders Motovilov, the symbol of the corrupted, vulgar life of the provinces (Sologub, 1895/1978). Fascination with this demonic individualism affected the Nietzschean heroes of early Maksim Gor’kii, Mikhail Artsybashev, and Leonid Andreev, and they reemerged even in the characteristics of Soviet Bolsheviks (Rosenthal, 2002, p. 23).

Another type that arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is that of the decadent artist, a product of amoralism combined with an emphasis on aestheticism. Decadent artists criticized the utilitarian idea of art which degrades art as a means of reflecting ideologies. Instead, they championed the autonomy of art, free from any predetermined goals. Thus, decadent artists ought to find a model for their self-creation that combines the blasphemous rebel with the

aesthete. They found one in the dandy, a figure that in their eyes incorporated both modes of self-creation.

They were attracted by various Western and Russian dandies, particularly those artists who had demonic and eccentric appearances and behaviors. For that reason, as noted in Chapter 1, Blok (1918/1962) labeled Russian decadents and their successors as “dandies” (Vol. 6, pp. 56-57). Valerii Briusov, Aleksandr Dobroliubov, and Konstantin Bal'mont were the three most famous poets who exemplified the practice of demonic decadent dandyism. They particularly fashioned themselves according to the archetypal image of a demon, by donning, for example, completely black attire. Also, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii and Zinaida Gippius were interested in decadent self-creation in their early years. More specifically, Zinaida Gippius publicly projected the image of a satanic woman, and her decadent self-fashioning continued in an idiosyncratic mode even in her symbolist period (see Matich, 2005; Presto, 2008). The cultivation of demonic dandyism can also be detected in the cases of secondary literary figures. One of the representative poets was Modest Durnov who was notorious for his decadent *chudachestvo* (eccentricity; see Gershkovich, 2003; Khodasevich, 1976, p. 9). Briusov wrote the cycle *Liubimtsy vekov* (*Favorites of the Ages*) for his

friend Durnov in the collection *Tertia Vigilia* (1900), and Bal'mont also dedicated his 1903 collection, *Budem kak solntse* (*Let us be like the Sun*), to Durnov, with the remark that Durnov creates poetry with his life: “художнику, создавшему поэму из своей личности, М.А. Дурнову” (as cited in Lotman & Mints, 1989, p. 88).

This chapter will discuss the figures of Briusov, Dobroliubov, and Bal'mont, who are examples of demonic decadent dandyism. In focusing on these three figures, this chapter will be concerned with codes of art/beauty and life that constitute the structure of demonic decadent dandyism. As the main materials for the analysis, I look into the biographies of the poets and the critical essays in which they consider the concepts of and the interplay between life and art. In addition, I explore the characteristics of Russian demonic decadent dandyism, discussing the Russian decadents' view of the Western idea of art-for-art's sake. Also, by looking at their models in the Russian romanticism tradition as well as its Western counterpart, I will analyze the romantic structures that affect Russian demonic decadent dandyism.

Art and Life

Aleksandr Dobroliubov was the decadent artist who most distinctively exemplified demonic dandyism. As a polyglot, he had direct access to the sources of Western decadence. Accordingly, he was quick to absorb Western decadent culture in contrast to his contemporaries who lacked his language skills. Many of Dobroliubov's fellow writers witnessed his exceptional, idiosyncratic behavior and appearance during his decadent period, which spanned the years from around 1893 to 1897, before he abruptly converted to sectarian mysticism (see Gippius, 1914; Vengerov, 1914). During that time, he became fascinated with the cult of Satan and spiritism. In terms of fashion, he always dressed in black. Even his house was decorated in black: "Обивки комнаты черными обоями, постоянного хождения в черных перчатках" (Vengerov, 1914, p. 266). In addition, his *chudachestvo* (eccentricity) in the literary salon and a serious addiction to opium drew people's attention. The most striking rumor is that, fascinated with the cult of death, he was involved in the suicide of female students in a high school. According to the reminiscence of Vladimir Gippius, Dobroliubov's high school classmate and a decadent poet himself, Dobroliubov's demonism was based on the worship of art/beauty, and his dandyism represents the

absolute emancipation from all the moral bounds of society.

Чем искушил эстетизм его, воспитанного на идеях общественно-освободительных? Именно идеями освободительности, но того психологического освобождения, разрешения себя от всяких из идеальности, морали,....Эта “вседозволенность” казалась нам истинной эмансипацией,. . . .Отозвавшись на эстетизм, Добролюбов ему отдался вполне, безраздельно, преклонившись перед искусством, как перед кумиром, . . . как перед абсолютно свободным проявлением ничем не связанной, утверждающей себя личности, стремящейся к пределам и за пределы познаваемого, данного. (Vengerov, 1914, p. 275)

The emancipation of the individual and the cult of art appealed to another poet, Valerii Briusov. Whereas Dobroliubov's decadent dandyism is marked by a distinct demonic persona, Briusov presents a more complex figure that cannot be explained solely in terms of demonism. Like Dobroliubov, he was an admirer of amoralistic individualism, but he also was an academic researcher with an objective, sober spirit. At times, people saw in him a rigorous administrator: he

was the main editor of the journal, *Vesy (Scale)*. At other times, he was a simple and modest man searching for domestic bliss. His contemporaries recalled Briusov's protean faces in their respective memoirs.⁹ Among these contradictory features, the demonic persona was the most distinctive characteristic of his decadent period between 1900 and 1906. During that period, Briusov cultivated his physical image by wearing black clothes as Dobroliubov did: he wore a black frockcoat and "black beard trimmed to a point" (Groberg, 1997, p. 117). Furthermore, infatuated with spiritism, he experimented with magic on people around him. Andrei Belyi was one of his objects of *black magic* when Briusov and Belyi were conflicted over their triangular relationship with Nina Petrovskaja.¹⁰ Belyi wrote a poem "Mag" ("The Magician"; 1903) with Briusov in mind, and Bal'mont also dedicated a cycle of poems *Khudozhnik-D'iavol (The Artist-Devil; 1903)* to Briusov (Groberg, 1997, p. 117). Briusov's scandalous love affairs, which ended in women's suicides (the poets Nina Petrovskaja and Nadezhda Lvova) were as notorious as those

⁹ On Briusov's various faces, see Belyi (1933/1990); Gippius (1925/1971, pp. 73-120); Khodasevich (1976, pp. 7-60); Kuzmin (1924, pp. 2-33); Petrovskaja (1976, pp. 773-788); Staniukovich (1976, pp. 713-758); Tsvetaeva (1980, pp. 161-73).

¹⁰ See Belyi (1933/1990, 304-316); Briusov (1976, pp. 381-383); Grossman (1994); Khodasevich (1939/1976).

of Dobroliubov. People saw in Briusov's fatal romances the echo of his aesthetic individualism.

Khodasevich (1939/1976) criticized Briusov, insisting that he exploited the fate of his mistress,

Nina Petrovskaiia, for his art:

Он любил литературу, только ее. Самого себя—тоже только во имя ее. . . . Это
безцельное искусство было его идолом, в жертву которому он принес
нескольких живых людей, . . . Литература ему представлялась безжалостным
божеством, вечно требующим крови. (p. 39)

Briusov even challenged Belyi to a duel in connection with that romance. Yet this was not an expression of Briusov's love for Nina Petrovskaiia. Rather, he utilized the sensational event of a duel for public scandal. In his critical essays, Briusov reveals the impetus for his doctrine of committing evil for the sake of art. Professing an aestheticism similar to Dobroliubov's, Briusov claimed that art is more valuable than life, and that an artist's individual life should be dedicated to art. In particular, he maintained that an artist should concentrate on practicing beauty in his life and the result of such an experiment of the self should be employed for the creation of art. His insistence on the intensity of life is embodied by his expression, *tselikom* (entirely, with full

intensity). He maintains that the artist should explore his life/soul *tselikom* and should *tselikom* record his spiritual experiences in art. Briusov calls this drive to unify life with art the artist's *sviashchennaia zhertva* (holy sacrifice) to beauty.

Мы знаем только один завет к художнику: искренность, крайнюю, последнюю. . . . Мы требуем от поэта чтобы он неустанно приносил свои “священные жертвы” не только стихами, но каждым часом своей жизни, каждым чувством,—своей любовью, своей ненавистью, достижениями и падениями. Пусть поэт творит не свои книги, а свою жизнь. (Briusov, 1905/1975, Vol.6, p. 99)

What Briusov suggested the artist experience is a world of evil where *everything is permitted*. Hence, giving oneself to the exploration of evil is the ideal for the demon-artist.

Душа в своей сущности не знает зла. . . .Стремление глубже понять себя, идти все вперед, уже святыня. Нет осуждения чувствам истинного художника. . . . Истинно понятое зло всегда ступень на бесконечном пути к совершенству. (Briusov, 1899/1975, Vol.6, p. 45)

The poet Konstantin Bal'mont was also notorious for his demonic dandyism. His decadent self-creation, however, was not the demonic individualism of Dobroliubov and Briusov, but rather, one attenuated by pantheistic Hellenism. For that reason, while Dobroliubov and Briusov favored black clothes, Bal'mont wore a flower in his buttonhole in the Wildean mode (Belyi, 1933/1990, p. 241). Bal'mont, however, was also fascinated with Nietzschean philosophy and sought to practice the myth of a *superman* in his life. Briusov (1903/1975) considered Bal'mont “новый человек” (a new man; Vol. 6, p. 250) and recalls in his 1896 diary the rendezvous with Bal'mont and the “безумные вечера (mad nights)” (Briusov, 2002, p. 39) when they indulged in poetry and alcohol. Like Briusov, scandalous and fatal love affairs were one characteristic of Bal'mont's decadent dandyism (Orlov, 1969, p. 7). Briusov interprets Bal'mont's affairs in terms of decadent aesthetic individualism. For Briusov (1903/1975), Bal'mont was interested not in women but in love (Vol. 6, p.253). His affairs were merely the experiences that the artist employs for the creation of art.

A Hero for Art

In this sense, Russian demonic decadent self-creation succeeds the amoral, eccentric, and rebellious dandyism of their Romantic predecessors. Lermontov, in particular, represented the model that the demonic decadent dandy worshipped. In his youth, Briusov (1994) found in Lermontov the model of demonic self-creation (p. 584). Around the mid-1890s, his concern shifted from Lermontov to Pushkin. However, for Briusov, Pushkin symbolized a certain greatness of literature, but not an ideal of artistic self-creation. Rather, Briusov thought of Pushkin as an example of the separation of art and life (Briusov, 1905/1975, Vol. 6, p. 95). In contrast, Lermontov, Briusov thought, was a “poet for himself” who practiced absolute individualism in life (Briusov, 1903/1975, Vol. 6, pp. 76-77). The duel to which Briusov challenged Belyi can also be explained by his identification with the Lermontovian dandy. He constructed an image of himself as a Lermontovian duelist defending an individual’s absolute freedom vis-à-vis moral conventions. Bal’mont (1916/2007) was also influenced by Lermontov (p.125-126). He considered Lermontov to be a passionate poet willing to surrender himself to the experience of the disharmony of one’s soul.

Similarly, Russian demonic decadent dandies were fascinated with European decadent dandies, above all by Oscar Wilde. Vladimir Gippius (1914) recalled that Wilde was his friend Dobroliubov's idol, and he saw in Dobroliubov an echo of Wilde's literary hero, Dorian Gray (p.284). Briusov (1994) also confessed in his later autobiography that he was a follower of Wilde in his youth (p.179).

Yet Bal'mont focuses on Wilde's *rebellious* spirit, his effort to integrate life and art instead of the English dandy's antiheroic self-parody. In his lecture, *Poeziia Oskara Uail'da* (Poetry of Oscar Wilde), he depicted Wilde as one who strives to live *tselikom* for the sake of art and beauty.

Оскар Уайльд любил Красоту и только Красоту, он видел ее в искусстве, в наслаждениях и в молодости. . . . он знал счастье постепенного расширения своей личности, увеличение знания, . . . Он осуществлял, до чрезмерной капризности, все свои "Хочу!" (Bal'mont, 1904, p. 115)

The Russian demonic decadents' interpretation of Baudelaire also demonstrates their emphasis on *the unity of life and art*. Instead of Baudelaire's antiheroism, Bal'mont (1904) focuses on the *integrity* of his quest for evil and beauty: "если же он живет в мире Зла лишь

затемь, чтобы жить в мире Зла, я полюблю его за его цельность” (p. 58). His poem entitled “К Бодлеру” (“To Baudelaire”; 1899/1969) also reveals Bal’mont’s worship of a demonic soul that passionately seeks a world of *uzhas* (terror) and *obryv* (outburst; Bal’mont, p. 188). He presents Baudelaire as the model of a new artist along with Paul Verlaine and Felicien Rops.

Бодлер и Ропс, еще чуждые нам по своей форме, но родные по своим порывам и переживаниям, истинные предшественники “нового искусства.” . . Поль Верлен, стоящий на пороге нового искусства, уже воплотил в себе тип художника, не знающего, где кончается жизнь, где начинается искусство. Этот покаянный пьяница, слагавший в кабаках гимны телу, а в болницах—Деве Марии, не отрекался сам от себя, принося свою “священную жертву.” . . Кто принимает стихи Верлена, должен пронять и его жизнь. (Briusov, 1905/1975, p. 96,98)

Furthermore, in translating the ambiguous line of Baudelaire’s poem *La Beauté*, which had been traditionally understood as an expression of impassive cold beauty, Briusov (1904/1975) insisted that Baudelaire’s aestheticism is not that of deathly immobility but of a passionate *iskanie* (quest) and *poryv* (outburst; p. 86):

“Искусство для искусства” отрывает искусство от жизни, т. е. от единственной почвы, на которой что-либо может взрасти в человечестве. Искусство во имя бесцельной Красоты—мертвое искусство. . . . Человеческий дух не может примириться с покоем. “Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes”—“Я ненавижу всякое перемещение линий,” говорит Красота у Бодлера. Но искусство всегда искание, всегда порыв, и сам Бодлер в свои отточенные сонеты влил не смертную неподвижность, а водовороты тоски, отчаянья и проклятий. (Briusov, 1904/1975, p. 86)

It was not only Briusov who sought to understand Baudelaire as he chose. Ellis (L. L. Kobylinsky), who himself was an admirer of Briusov’s individualism, depicted Briusov himself as the successor of Baudelaire’s demonism. Significantly, Ellis stresses Briusov’s fascination with Baudelaire’s “heroic demonism.”

A shadow from Baudelaire’s soul has fallen on him, and this means everything to me, absolutely everything! ‘The heroic in demonism’—this is his essence, and for me this is the most important. (Ellis’ letter in 1907; as cited in Wanner, 1996, p. 129)

In this way, Russian demonic decadents paid particular attention to the dandy's integration of life and art instead of his antiheroism. They even described both Baudelaire and Wilde as *martyrs*. Bal'mont's defense of Wilde focuses not only on Wilde's aestheticism but also on his *muchenie* (suffering). Claiming that only Nietzsche can surpass Wilde in the integrity with which he merged life and art, Bal'mont notes that Nietzsche's madness and Wilde's exile indicate their fates as martyrs (Bal'mont, 1904, pp. 124-125) Bal'mont even depicts Baudelaire's indomitable quest for evil and beauty as a form of self-torment.

Мир мучительства над самим собой, неудержимое стремление входить в диссонансы, и вводить в себя волну противоречий. Странная прихоть поэта, с таким пронзительно-ясным умом, желать во чтобы то ни стало быть только с тем, что ранить, не убегать от боли, а приближать ее к себе. (Bal'mont, 1904, p. 54)

The artist then is a martyr who suffers from the inner and outer conflicts caused by his practice of aesthetic individualism. This essentially Romantic idea of the artist's *sacrifice* later develops into the symbolists' narrative of Christian martyrdom in which an artist is equated with

Christ (Rosenthal, 2002, p. 39).

Thus, the Russian demonic decadents' self-creation and its models demonstrate a peculiar blend of dandyism and Romantic heroism. The Russian demonic decadents succeed dandies, in that they fashion their lives according to the principles of amoralism and aestheticism. Yet the demonic decadents put more emphasis on the spirit of the *unity of art and life* than the playful antiheroic spirit in dandyism. For that reason, Russian demonic decadent dandies in particular considered Lermontov their model instead of Pushkin. For them, Pushkin's dandyism is based on the separation of art from life like that of some Western dandies.

The uniqueness of Russian demonic decadent dandyism can be defined by comparing it also to Baudelaire's dandyism. As Baudelaire's dandyism twists Carlyle and Emerson's philosophy of heroism (see page 13-14 of this dissertation), Russian demonic decadent dandyism inverts romantic heroism and makes the dandy a *hero* who dedicates himself to beauty and art. Yet for Baudelaire, to become a "hero *for oneself*" represents the separation of life from art. In other words, in Baudelaire's heroism *for oneself*, art is a separate realm from life. Yet in Russian decadents' *heroism for Art*, art should be integrated with life. (Yet this *heroism for the sake of art*

is different from the original structure of Romantic heroism which the dandy rejects. While a Romantic hero embodies and seeks the realization of such idealistic values as Nature and History, a *hero for Art* worships such anti-idealistic ideals as evil and beauty)

In this hybrid mixture of dandyism and heroism, some of the Western dandies' *solipsistic* dandyism and their concerns with *craftsmanship and style* are perceived as being alien to the spirit of "genuine decadence." Briusov dismisses European Parnassian aestheticism for its mechanistic, dehumanizing characteristics. Criticizing Theophil Gautier's Parnassianism, Briusov argues that genuine aestheticism should not be understood as consisting of the kind of the formal craftsmanship that would have the artist mechanically grind out ideal beauty.

Теофиль Готье, этот последний романтик во Франции и первый парнасец, оставил и свое определение поэта. "Поэт, пишет он, прежде всего рабочий. Совершенно бессмысленно старание поставить его на идеальный пьедестал. Он должен иметь ровно настолько ума, как и всякий рабочий, и обязан знать свой труд. . . . " . . . И, верные такому завету, парнасцы работали над своими стихами, как математики над своими задачами, быть может не без вдохновения. . . . Но

современное искусство, то которое называют “символизмом” и “декадентством,” шло не этой опустошенной дорогой. . . .Романтизм¹¹ сорвал с души поэта веревки, которыми опутывал ее лжеклассицизм, но не освободил окончательно. Художник-романтик все еще был убежден, что искусство должно изображать одно прекрасное и высокое, что есть многое, что не подлежит искусству, о чем оно должно молчать. (Briusov, 1905/1975, pp. 95-97)

Here the focus on the artist’s craftsmanship represents the separation of life from art, as Mallarme’s dandyism demonstrates (see page 17-18 of this dissertation). For that reason, Briusov (1905/1975) presents the aestheticism of Stephan Mallarme, Arthur Rimbaud, and Joris-Karl Huysmans as the negative side of decadence where the spirit of authentic decadence is absent (p. 113).

¹¹ Briusov understood that Parnassians comes from Romanticism.

Crisis of Demonic Dandyism

Interestingly, unlike his aesthetics, Briusov displayed in real life a dispassionate Parnassian craftsmanship reminiscent of Mallarmean self-fashioning. While Bal'mont favored a sentimentalist *vdokhnovedenie* (inspiration), Briusov subscribed to the ethos of cold and accurate research and craftsmanship. He worked on a history of the Russian lyric and made a major contribution to Pushkin studies. Joan Delaney Grossman (1992) points out that Briusov's scholarly work on Pushkin came from something other than his symbolist identity (pp.81-82). Furthermore, unlike his public image as a liberal decadent, he was fascinated with the peaceful domestic life, which is also reminiscent of Mallarmé. Nonetheless, it is hard to say that his sober approach to literature and a desire for a simple domestic life was a function of antiheroic dandyism, as was the case with Mallarmé. Rather, it would be more correct to say that Briusov's ascetic and dispassionate ethos comes from a classical desire for greatness. His 1896 diaries written right before he began to work on a "History of the Russian Lyric" show his ambition to become a great artist.

Ноябрь, 26. "Ныне, за несколько недель перед появлением в свет последней

книги моих стохов, я торжественно и серьезно даю слово на два года отказаться от литературной деятельности. Мне хотелось бы ничего не писать за это время, а из книг оставить себе только три—Библию, Гомера и Шекспира. Но пусть даже это невозможно, я постараюсь приблизиться к этому идеалу. Я буду читать лишь великое, писать лишь в те минуты, когда у меня будет что сказать всему миру. Я говорю мое прости шумной жизни журнального бойца и громким притязаниям поэта-символиста. Я удаляюсь в жизнь, я окунаюсь в ее мелочи, я позволю заснуть своей фантазии, своей гордости, своему я. Но этот сон будет только кажущимся. Тат тигр прикрывает глаза, чтобы вернее следить за жертвой. И моя добыча уже обречена мне. Я иду. Трубы, смолкните!” (Briusov, 2002, p. 41)

Marina Tsvetaeva (1925/1980) also notes that Briusov was a man of “ox-like labor” who sought the *glory* of a great poet (p. 163). However, again, Briusov’s mask of a seemingly solipsistic Parnassian craftsman, in fact, is not related to Mallarmean dandyism. More precisely, his dispassionate, ascetic approach to literature does not seem to be a role he attempted to enact.

Rather, for Briusov, unlike his decadent mask as a passionate demonic dandy, it seems that his cold, objective spirit of craftsmanship was inherently a part of his personality. The conflict between his public persona as a demonic dandy and his natural inclination toward craftsmanship seemed to have given people an impression of the poet's protean face. Adrian Wanner (1996) also points out that, while he denounced dehumanizing Parnassian Western aestheticism and emphasized Baudelaire's passionate *quest* and *outburst*, Briusov's translation of Baudelaire's poem *La Beauté*, in particular of the features therein of the goddess of Beauty turned out "even more aloof, monumental, and destructive than in Baudelaire's original" (p. 96).

Ultimately, Briusov could not deal with the dissonance between his natural persona and his mask of a demonic dandy. He realized that he had suppressed his natural persona for the sake of a mask of a superman. Around 1906, after Bal'mont left Russia for France, depressed and exhausted with the failure of revolution and his ideological conflict with symbolism, Briusov began to feel trapped by this dissonance. In a letter (1906) to Nina Petrovskaja, he confesses that he can no longer live as a decadent Nietzschean.

Два года назад я был в своей душе слепым нищим; теперь я зрячий нищий—в

этом вся разница, и только (или почти только) в этом. Я не могу более жить изжитыми верованиями, теми идеалами, через которые я перешагнул. Не могу более жить “декадентством” и “нищенством,” которые, верю я, верю—и тебе уже чужды, хотя ты и говоришь иное (тоже из желания противоречий? Да?); в поэзии не могу жить “новым искусством,” самое имя которого мне нестерпимо более. . . . Ты когда-то сказала, что я по душе—инок, монах, в средние века я пошел бы в монастырь. Да! да! Я должен верить в то, чему служу, совсем, до конца, и должен служить чему-то. Я притворяюсь скептиком, . . . я не могу жить: без Бога, без алтаря. (Briusov, 2002, pp. 309-310)

On the other hand, Briusov’s confession of his difficulty performing the role of a demonic dandy demonstrates another element that explains the crisis of Russian decadent aesthetic self-creation. The poet notes that he is no longer able to live as a skeptic who does not believe in God. He apparently began to consider Nietzschean aesthetics as limited, since they were bereft of such idealistic values as Truth and God.

The same idealistic orientation can be found in Bal’mont’s idea of Wilde as well. To his

endorsement of Wilde's individualism, Bal'mont (1904) adds the remark that Wilde's aestheticism holds the danger of losing one's conscience and the human heart (p.115). Bal'mont also reveals his ambivalence toward Baudelaire's apotheosis of beauty. In his article on Baudelaire, "O tsvetakh zla" ("On Flowers of Evil"), he approves of Baudelaire's *integrity* in exploring his own soul through fusing life with art. At the same time, however, he says that he would also love Baudelaire if behind the search for absolute evil and beauty, he should conserve "молитвенное отношение к Добру" ("a prayer-like attitude to the good"; Bal'mont, 1904, p.58; as translated in Wanner, 1996, p. 75).

Aestheticism mingled with idealism marks one side of the Russian reception of Western decadence. Major proselytizers of European aestheticism such as Akim Volynskii, Zinaida Vengerova and Prince A. I. Ursov maintained the defense of beauty; yet their approval of beauty was conflated with idealism (see Donchin, 1958; Polonsky, 1998). For Volynskii and Vengerova, the iconoclastic spirit of aestheticism should be connected with "a deep love for the ideal of good and truth" (Vengerova, 1891, p. 214; as translated in Wanner, 1996, p. 70). Thus, the idealistic orientation inherent in the literary group continuously undermined the further growth of aesthetic

individualism in the cultural tradition of Russian modernism. Around the early 1900s, decadent aesthetic individualism already began to be considered as an object needing to be synthesized with other supplemental value systems such as Hellenic harmony or Christianity.

Another phenomenon that hindered the further development of demonic decadent dandyism was, ironically, its popularization. As Nina Petrovskaja (1976) recalls, the vogue for a decadent life exemplified by the imitation of Wildean fashion and vulgar Nietzschean hedonism dominated the culture of the literary epigones of the period (p. 778). More particularly, she notes that Bal'mont's literary success around 1903 prompted the popularization of demonic decadent dandyism (Petrovskaja, 1976, p. 778). Yet this vulgarization of decadence caused the group to feel the need to present another model of aestheticism. The poets sought to differentiate themselves from bohemian literary epigones. Nina Petrovskaja (1976) recalls that Briusov did not like the general population's shallow interest in decadent life (p.778). Ellis (1907/2003), the enthusiast of decadent demonism as well as a major symbolist, remarked that as decadence became popularized, decadent dandyism became increasingly clownish.

Однако это неизбежно и последовательно вытекает из *процесса вульгаризации*

художественного творчества, который постепенно исказил вечные заповеди искусства, еще так недавно омытые кровью служителей чистой красоты (Бодлер, По, Ницше, Уайльд), незаметно превратил искусство из служения в развлечение, а художника из жреца в трибуна, публициста, а чаще просто в шута! (Ellis, 1907/2003, p. 294)

In this way, (demonic) decadent dandyism began to be considered shallow and immature, denying all values and incapable of creating anything. The symbolists who succeeded the decadents criticized decadence as “a conventional and popular tag” (Ivanov, 1906, p. 55; as cited in Grossman, 1985, p. 305) and championed instead an idealistic mysticism. The symbolist Blok (1918/1962) also negatively describes the worshipers of Baudelaire, Byron, and Wilde, who once rejected the values of gentry culture and lost their identity, as *infatuated* with their impotent cult of art-for-art’s sake (pp.56-57).

Demonic Decadent Dandyism

Thus, we can locate the Russian demonic decadents' aesthetic individualism and its practice in relation to other modes of aestheticism. Russian demonic decadent dandies can be said to be successors to the Russian dandies of premodernist culture. Like their predecessors, demonic decadent dandies subverted established morality and associated their amorality with an apotheosis of beauty. Their behavior and appearance were fashioned according to principles of amorality and aestheticism. However, demonic dandyism in the Russian modernist period also takes on features of romantic heroism. In this offshoot of dandyism, which one would call *aesthetic heroism*, aestheticism and dandyism based on the separation of art and life are considered negatively. Russian demonic decadents disapproved of solipsistic antiheroic dandyism, because of its alienation of life from art and absolute self-withdrawal into nonbeing. For that reason, Belyi (1933/1990), discussing Russian decadence in retrospect, labels Briusovian decadence as an intermediate phase, *decadent-symbolist*, which is neither extreme European decadence nor mystical symbolism.

“Символисты”—это те, кто, разлагаясь в условиях старой культуры вместе со

всею культурою, силятся преодолеть в себе свой упадок, его осознав, и, выходя из него, обновляются; в “символисте” декадентизм—только стадия; так что мы полагали: есть декаденты, есть “декаденты и символисты” (т.е. в ком упадок борется с возрождением), есть “символисты,” но не “декаденты”. . . . Бодлер был для меня—“декадент”; Брюсов—“декадент и символист,” ибо в нем силы упадка казались уравновешенными потенцией к новому творчеству; в стихах Блока видел я первые опыты “символической,” но не “декадентской” поэзии; (Belyi, 1933/1990, p. 128)

Like Bely’s analysis of Briusov’s aesthetics in their relation to Western decadence and (Russian) symbolism, we can also locate demonic decadent dandyism vis-à-vis Romantic heroism and Western dandyism. And, as we saw, demonic decadent dandyism, located between Romantic heroism and Western antiheroism, embodies an offshoot of the original Western dandyism.

Demonic decadent fashion can also be explained in its relation to other instances of dandyism. As noted above, black clothes were the symbol of aestheticism for both European

decadent dandyism and Russian decadent dandyism. For Western decadents, black clothes represented demonic dandyism based on antiheroism and the separation of life from art. In contrast, the black clothes of the Russian decadents embody demonic dandyism based on heroism and the unity of life and art. (In that sense, the demonism of the Western decadents differs from its Russian counterpart. While the former focuses mostly on the appreciation of evil and beauty itself, the latter emphasizes its practitioners' relation to society. In a word, in Russian demonic decadence, the Romantic characteristic of *transgression* is a more significant element)

Later, the aesthetic individualism of Russian demonic decadents came to be dominated by Hellenic idealism and mystical Christianity; however, demonic decadent self-creation continued to function as a fundamental structure that combined with other heterogenous characteristics. The symbolists' life-creation reflected a continuous vacillation between idealistic mysticism and decadent aesthetic individualism. And, in the avant-garde period, as we shall see in Chapter 5, the young Acmeists and early futurists reinstated demonic decadent dandyism to oppose the idealistic tendency of symbolist self-creation.

Before Russian demonic decadent dandyism reemerges in the subsequent generation in

various permutations, a new type of decadent artist emerges as another offshoot of decadent dandyism. Such artists not only belong to decadence but also serve as precursors of Acmeism (Lotman & Mints [1989, p. 106] use the term, *predakmeist* [pre-Acmeists]). They share with the demonic decadent dandies the spirit of self-creation based on anticonventionalism and the apotheosis of beauty. Yet against the demonic decadent's amoralistic aestheticism, they present Hellenic harmonious beauty as an ideal. The next chapter will examine this new aestheticism and its practice in reality.

Chapter 3: A Hellenist Dandy: Mikhail Kuzmin

The Russian literary scene of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was populated not only with demonic dandies typified by Valerii Briusov, Konstantin Bal'mont, and Aleksandr Dobroliubov, but also those whom we have termed Hellenic dandies. The Hellenic dandies shared a common aesthetic with the demonic dandies: they both challenged the anti-aesthetic philistine world and civic idea of art and instead promoted the value of beauty and art. Moreover, like their demonic decadent counterparts, the Hellenic decadent dandies rejected conventional morality.

However, the Hellenic dandies practiced a different aesthetic than that of the demonic decadents. While demonic dandies consider beauty an absolute emancipation of the individual from conventional values, Hellenic dandies relate beauty to such idealistic elements as religion and truth. The Hellenic aesthetes also differ from the demonic decadents in terms of self-creation. While demonic decadent dandyism is based on a *serious heroic imperative* to unify life and art, Hellenic decadent dandyism is focused on the *nonchalant joyful affirmation* of the sensuous world and the appreciation of beauty. Hellenic dandyism differs from Western dandyism as well.

Although it shares such analogous themes as the concern with style, beauty, and homosexuality, Hellenic dandyism deviates from dandyism in its focus on beauty as harmonized with religion. (In this sense, both demonic decadent dandyism and Hellenic decadent dandyism can be said to be the offshoots of dandyism)

Mikhail Kuzmin is one of the representative dandies who practiced the Hellenic aesthetics. While the demonic decadents clothed themselves with the black fashion of the satanic image, the mature Kuzmin wore a bright-colored jacket as an expression of a more harmonized, Hellenic world where sensuous appeal and spiritual vision are equally valued. Viacheslav Ivanov also was interested in Hellenic aesthetics, before he converted to symbolist mysticism. His Hellenic aestheticism, however, mainly focuses on its Dionysian principle instead of Kuzmin's emphasis on harmony. What is noteworthy in Ivanov's case is that his and his friends' self-creation was performed in Ivanov's apartment dubbed the *Bashnia* (Tower). Calling themselves *gafizity* (Hafizites), they wore Greek costumes and conducted theatrical performances in a weekly gathering called *sredy* (Wednesdays; Lotman & Mints, 1989, pp. 103-104). The *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art) group also shared the structure of a Hellenic aestheticism. Actually it consisted of

several different sub-groups, and thus it is not easy to define their aesthetic creed. Some subscribed to Nietzschean demonic decadence, whereas for others nationalism was a major concern (see Grover, 1973, pp. 28-42; Pyman, 1994, pp.93-122). Yet their devotion to Art (see Ahn, 2002b, para. 15), retrospectivism (see Ahn, 2002b, para. 18; Polonsky, 1998, p. 119), dandyistic culture, and antisymbolism influenced Hellenic aesthetic ideas and self-creation.¹²

Dmitrii Merezhkovskii and Vikentii Veresaev developed a theory for Hellenic aestheticism. Merezhkovskii maintained that the concept of aesthetics as antireligion is far from *harmonious*, which leads eventually to a world of *death* instead of providing an entrance to *life*. He instead presented a new aesthetic concept that combines Nietzschean (demonic) aestheticism with Christianity (see Merezhkovskii, 1897/1971, pp. 46-47). Similarly, Vikentii Veresaev differentiated Apollonian (Hellenic) *joy* from Alexandrian (Hellenistic) *hedonism*, claiming that the former is *deep, bright, and religious joy* (Veresaev, 1914/1999, p. 261-262) whereas the Alexandrian (Hellenistic) *joy* is based on the Dionysian principle of death and sorrow. Like Merezhkovskii, he insisted that the Nietzschean (demonic) decadent aestheticization of life

¹² For more about the influence of the *Mir Iskusstva* (World of Art) group to Kuzmin, see Bogomolov & Malmstad (1999, pp. 69-70).

belonged to the Alexandrian (Hellenistic) world and turned human life into a lifeless artifact.

Самое высокое и самое прекрасное, чем может человек прославить бога, что он должен нести ему, это собственная радость и счастье. . . .А именно такой характер носила радость в религии аполлоновского эллина. В наших представлениях на этот счет царит большая путаница. Конечно, кто же не знает, что древние эллины любили жизнь и ее радости? . . .Но это все было выражением уже полнейшего разложения эллинской жизни, как и столь ненавистная Ницше “александрійская веселость.” Глубокая, серьезная жизнь превратилась в предмет удовольствия, наслаждения. С этим плоским, мертвым, безрелигиозным смакованием жизни и ее мгновений не имеет решительно ничего общего та глубокая, светлая радость, которая составляет существо аполлоновой религии. . . . Эта радость носила характер глубоки религиозный. . . .

Несмотря на скорби, несмотря на несправедливость судьбы, он жадно любил жизнь “нутром и чревом,” детская радость жизни переполняла его душу.

(Veresaev, 1914/1999, pp. 261-262)

This chapter deals with the aesthetics and dandyism of Kuzmin, in particular for the period prior to 1915, when his aesthetic world began to change in conjunction with new political realities. First, based on biographical works on Kuzmin, I examine the aesthetics that constitute his dandyism, focusing on the concepts of beauty and religion. Second, focusing on the key words of Kuzminian aesthetics, love and life, I will analyze his biography and literary works and determine how Kuzmin's aesthetics and dandyism differ from that of the demonic decadents. The third section looks at the other characteristics shaping his Hellenic dandyism: retrospectivism and *veshchizm* (the term *veshchizm* which comes from the Russian word *veshchi* (things) signifies a demonstrative interest in things and details). His dandyism is characterized by a fascination with classical culture and the (classical) emphasis on *details* that symbolize the concreteness and ephemerality of this world. Fourth, I compare Kuzmin's aesthetics to Western aestheticism focusing on a comparison of the aesthetes in Kuzmin's novel *Kryl'ia* (*Wings*) and those in Oscar Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*.

Beauty and Religion

Kuzmin's dandyism is related to his idiosyncratic biography.¹³ He professed a completely different way of life prior to his period of dandyism. Before he made his debut in Petersburg literary society in 1907 and became a famous dandy, he rarely had contact with the intellectual scene. He traveled to Italy for aesthetic reasons and suddenly fascinated with the Old Belief, made a pilgrimage to Northern Russia. After several years he renounced the Old Belief and devoted himself to the world of beauty. Interestingly, his appearance also varied according to the change of his aesthetics. In his period as an Old Believer, he wore "a long beard and a *poddevka* (long-waisted coat), heavy peasant boots and a peaked cap like an adherent of the Old Belief" (Bogomolov & Malmstad, 1999, p. 56). Yet in 1907, he changed his style to that of a Western dandy. During that period, he described himself as being like Casanova (Kuzmin, 2000, p. 61), and one of his friends depicted Kuzmin's new appearance as similar to that of Oscar Wilde (Kuzmin, 2000, p. 45). Mstislav Dobuzhinskii also notes Kuzmin's change of appearance in his

¹³ Concerning Kuzmin's dandyism and biography, see Bogomolov & Malmstad (1999); Blok (1907/2003); Dobuzhinskii (1987); Ivanov (1928); Kuzmin (2000); Makovskii (1955); Paperno (1989); Shmakov (1972).

reminiscence about the poet:

В “башне” же впервые в 1906 году появился Кузмин. Удивила его тогдашняя внешность. Он носил синюю поддевку и своей смуглостью, черной бородой и слишком большими глазами, подстриженный “в скобку,” походил на цыгана. Потом он эту внешность изменил (и не к лучшему)—побрился и стал носить франтовские жилеты и галстуки. Его прошлое окружала странная таинственность—говорили, что он не то жил одно время в каком-то скиту, не то был сидельцем в раскольничьей лавке, но что по происхождению был полуфранцуз и много странствовал по Италии. (Dobuzhinskii, 1987, p. 278)

In his essay, “Pis'ma o poezii (1908/1962),” Aleksandr Blok also notes Kuzmin's two faces, that of the Old Believer and of the European aesthete.

Как будто есть в Кузмине два писателя: один—юный, с душой открытой и грустной оттого, что несет она в себе грехи мира, подобно душе человека “древнего благочестия”; другой—не старый, а лишь поживший, какой-то запыленный, насмехающийся над самим собой не покаянно, а с какой-то задней

мыслью, и немного озлобленный. Если развить первого из них—веет от него
Старой Русью, молчаливой мудростью и вещей скорбью. . . . И вдруг—все
меняется. Действие с какой-то бутафорской стремительностью переселяется в
XVIII и XIX столетия. ...Перед нами—новоявленный российский вздыхатель,
“москвич,” не “в гарольдовом плаще” а в атласном “камзоле,” чувствительный и
немного кукольный, (Blok, 1908/1962, Vol. 5 pp. 291-292)

Kuzmin's transformation from an Old Believer to a Western dandy embodies the special characteristics of his dandyism: the relationship between religion and beauty. His aesthetics consist of the conflict of these two contradictory elements. The poet desired to unify the two realms throughout his life.¹⁴ His search for a new, balanced Hellenic beauty is also related to his

¹⁴ Kuzmin's practice of dandyism stops at the end of the first decade of the new century. In 1909, Kuzmin realizes the imitative aspect of dandyism, which he notes in the preface to *Barbey d'Aurevilly's* book on dandyism. At the time, he shaved his mustache and attempted to find a balance in his aesthetics. Georgii Ivanov (1928) writes in his memoir *Peterburgskie zimy*:

Когда в 1909 году я познакомился с Кузминым, Кузмин только что сбрил бороду. . . .Еще точнее: перестал интересоваться своей внешностью, менять каждый день цветные жилеты, маникюрить руки. . . .Короче: апостол петербургских эстетов, идеал дэнди с солнечной стороны Невского стал равнодушен и к дэндизму и к эстетизму. Перестал. Но костюмы элегантного покроя

biography. In his early years as an Old Believer, Kuzmin began to feel that the official established Orthodoxy was deficient and longed for another type of religion.¹⁵ His autobiographical novel, *Kryl'ia* (*Wings*; 1906), shows how he perceived the asceticism of Christianity. Kuzmin's literary persona, Vania Smurov, renounces the lifeless asceticism in the Old Belief and turns to the world of beauty. In particular, Vania is fascinated with Hellenism, which his spiritual mentor, Larion Stroop, proffers as an alternative to Judaism which ostensibly denies art and beauty.

Мы—эллины: нам чужд нетерпимый монотеизм иудеев, их отвертывание от изобразительных искусств. (Kuzmin, 1906/1999, p. 91)

However, importantly, for Kuzmin, hedonistic aestheticism is not the only alternative to established Christianity. He searches not merely for hedonistic beauty but also for a new type of religion, more precisely, a faith mixed with aesthetics. In that sense, Kuzminian aesthetics differs from demonic decadence in its emphasis on religion. Both decadent groups challenged the unhealthiness and lifelessness of Christian morality and worshiped beauty as a solution to the

еще остались, запах “Астриса” из хрустящей бумаги еще не выветрился. (pp. 126-127)

¹⁵ See Kuzmin's letter to G. Chicherin on February 11, 1897 in Bogomolov & Malmstad (1999, p. 33).

deadening anti-aesthetic world. However, as noted in Chapter 2, for demonic decadents, the devotion to beauty focuses on the destruction of established morals. They identify evil with beauty and even call their own idea the aesthetics of *ugliness*.

The Hellenic aesthetes, in contrast, comprehend religion and beauty as an inseparable whole, and the conjunction or union of beauty and spirit is described as producing a world of harmony, wholeness, and unity. Along with the notion of *harmony*, Kuzmin often employed such words as *happiness*, *love* and *wisdom*, all of which embodied the state of spirit mixed with sense and beauty (see Kuzmin's undated letter in Bogomolov & Malmstad, 1999, p. 54).

For that reason, Kuzmin favored the pagan concept of religion, where aesthetics are not divorced from religion. Kuzmin's inclination toward paganistic religion can also be seen in his biography. In his childhood, he was exposed to the cultures of Italy and Egypt. Influenced by his family's religious outlooks, he could have become acquainted with such unconventional types of faith as Russian sectarianism, Catholicism, and early Christianity (Bogomolov & Malmstad, 1999, pp 36-37). For that reason, he was not attracted by a Nietzschean philosophy hostile toward religion. Instead, in those unconventional types of religion, he sought to find an alternative

religious world free of modern conventional faith (Bogomolov & Malmstad, 1999, p. 50).

Another crucial element which determined his orientation toward Hellenism was the influence of Plotinus and German philosophers as exemplified by Johann Georg Hamann and Johann Jakob Wilhelm Heinse. They provided Kuzmin with major ideas concerning a faith acquired through sensuous enjoyment, and their philosophies helped to shape Kuzmin's aesthetic religion (see Bogomolov & Malmstad, 1999, pp. 72-79; Shmakov, 1972, p. 352-353).

Furthermore, his homosexuality led him to become interested in the Hellenic aesthetics. From his childhood, he had ambivalent feelings toward his own sexual orientation because traditional Orthodoxy did not accept homosexuality. For that reason, he sought a new faith that approved of it. In Hellenism, he found an idea which connects homosexuality to the world of God (see Gillis, 1978). In sum, Kuzmin found in Hellenism a *new* world where religion and beauty are combined and homosexuality is approved. In terms of self-creation, he searched for a new model of self-creation that transcended the limitation of a religious man (in his case, an Old Believer) and a demonic dandy as well. Additionally, he had to find a new character that combined beauty (harmonized with religion) with homosexuality. The "Hellenist dandy" was his

model that incorporated the two worlds.

Kuzmin's case is special, insofar as his aesthetics emerge from his biography, that is, his private concerns about faith, beauty, and homosexuality. Thus, it is hard to say that his aesthetics typify a literary response of a new generation to the aesthetics of the older generation. However, in a broad sense, his concern with Hellenism exemplifies the cultural and literary model of the period. His denial of a traditional Orthodoxy and pursuit of aesthetic religion reflects the mentality of the intellectuals in fin-de-siecle Russia, "an age of inorganic disunity" (Bogomolov & Malmstad, 1999, p. 53). As noted above, many of his contemporaries, as exemplified by Merezhkovskii, also faced the conflict between beauty and religion. He constantly modified his view of beauty/religion, even after he accepted the priority that religion had over aesthetics. Kuzmin's homosexuality also represents the aesthetic ideal of the Russian silver age. For many of the Russian modernists, homosexuals, or, at least, sexually ambiguous figures embodied the combination of Nietzschean aestheticism and Christianity (see Matich, 1979). In short, the biographical foundations of Kuzmin's aesthetics are unique, but at the same time, reflected the cultural structure of the period. Presumably, as he came into contact with the aesthetic ideas prevalent in intellectual society, his

private interests began to unite with the dominant cultural discourse of the time. And, as many researchers point out, his ideas provided crucial concepts in shaping a new literary movement called *Acmeism*.

Although he aimed for the harmonious balance of faith and beauty, Kuzmin experienced the vacillation between beauty and religion and the poet's contradictory appearances reflected the change of his aesthetic focus. In his diary (1905), Kuzmin himself mentions his contradictory faces:

Но эсли у меня есть три лица, то больше еще человек во мне сидит, и все вопиют, и временами один перекрикает другого, и как я их согласую, сам не знаю? Мои же три лица до того непохожие, до того враждебные друг другу, что только тончайший глаз не прельстится этою разницей, возмущающей всех, любивших какое-нибудь одно из них, суть: с длинной бородою, напоминающее чем-то Винчи, очень изнеженное и будто доброе и какой-то подозрительной святости, будто простое, но сложное; второе, с острой бородкой,—несколько фатовское, франц<узского> корреспондента, более грубо-тонкое, равнодушное

и скучающее, лицо Евлогия; третье, самое страшное, без бороды и усов, не старое и не молодое, 50-л<етнего> старика и юноши; Казакова, полушарлатан, полуаббат, с коварным и по-детски свежим ртом, сухое и подозрительное.

(Kuzmin, 2000, p. 61)

However, his conflicting faces are not completely contradictory. Whether he is oriented toward aestheticism or religion, he never escapes the structured combination of faith and beauty. Even in his period as an Old Believer, he did not exclude the aesthetic element. Rather, his concern about the Old Belief includes its aesthetic side. His letters to his friend, G. Chicherin, show that his understanding of the Old Belief is based on its organic link of art and life, in contrast to official Orthodox, which he believed denied art (see Bogomolov & Malmstad, 1999, p. 58). For that reason, his practice as an Old Believer consisted not merely of the spiritual devotion to religion, but also of its aesthetic self-expression as characterized by the donning of Old Believer attire and make-up. Remizov (1923) remembers Kuzmin before the poet threw out his Russian clothes and became a Westernized dandy:

Кузмин тогда ходил с бородой—чернящая!—в вишневой бархатной поддевке,

а дома. . . . появлялся в парчевой золотой рубахе на выпуск, глаза и без того—у

Сомова хорошо это нарисовано!—скосится, ну, конь! А тут еще карандашом

слегка, . . . и очень душился розой—от него, как от иконы в праздник. (p. 106)

For Kuzmin, faith had aesthetic aspects that could be experienced only empirically. Thus, Kuzminian aesthetics derived from two principles. The first was the paganistic *incorporation* of faith and aesthetics, that is, religion experienced through the world of sense. The second was a *balance* between religion and aesthetics, not giving too much weight to either of them. His drive for balance seemed to trigger the idiosyncratic feature of his dandyism as well as his internal oscillation between faith and aesthetics. These two principles summarized by the *incorporation* and *balance* of faith and beauty, yield *harmony*.

Love and Life

Of the many themes that constitute Kuzmin's aesthetics, *love* is one of the most important. For him, love symbolizes an aesthetic relationship capable of challenging the dead world of convention. At the same time, his idea of love implies faith combined with the sensual world. Accordingly, as pointed out above, Kuzmin's Hellenic notion of love does not share common features with the Christian concept of love. Rather, the Christian notion of love is viewed negatively because it is related to the conventional world of marriage and patriarchy. In *Devstvennyi Viktor* (*Virginal Viktor*; 1918), Viktor's aunt and the priest attempt to marry Viktor off, but Viktor refuses their push toward marriage. Instead, he seeks a true love in which a genuine faith is mixed with the sensuous world (Moss, 1997). *Kryl'ia* (*Wings*) also centers on the idea of Hellenic love in opposition to Christian ascetic love and marriage. Stroop's negative view of Judaism focuses not merely on its anti-aesthetic stance but also on its orientation toward marriage and procreation.

Во всей Библии нет указаний на верование в загробное блаженство, и единственная награда, упомянутая в заповедях (и именно за почтение к давшим

жизнь)—долголетен будешь на земле. Неполезный брак—пятно и проклятье, лишаящее даже права на участие в богослужении, . . . Любовь не имеет другой цели помимо себя самой; природа также лишена всякой тени идеи финальности. Законы природы совершенно другого разряда, чем законы божеские, так называемые, и человеческие. Закон природы—не то, что данное дерево должно принести свой плод, но что при известных условиях оно принесет плод, а при других—не принесет и даже погибнет само так же справедливо и просто, как принесло бы плод. Что при введении в сердце ножа оно может перестать биться; тут нет ни финальности, ни добра и зла. (Kuzmin, 1906/1999, Vol.1, pp. 91-92)

Another key principle in Kuzmin's aesthetic structure is that of life. To him, *life* represents an empirical and sensual experience through which he recognizes and appreciates the world. His inclination toward classical antiquities and pagan religions lies in the fact that he finds in them *life*. In relation to the Old Belief, in contrast, Kuzmin was disappointed by its ascetic aspect. *Kryl'ia* (*Wings*) shows Vania's trial and failure in the quest for a life-oriented faith in the Old Belief. Based on what Stroop told him, Vania thought that the Old Belief accepted the world of beauty. But with

the exception of Maria, who praises *love*, Vania cannot share his interest in the world of sense with the people on the Volga. Sasha Sorokin's death implies the irreconcilability of religion and aesthetics in the Old Belief. Sasha notes that the Old Believers are bound too much to their own narrow world and do not understand all the other things of the world. He decisively tells Vania that although the latter can hypothetically combine aesthetics with the Old Belief, the Old Believers are not able to admit Vania's world of beauty. Hence, Vania heads for Italy and finds more complete acceptance of the sensuous world in the pre-Christianity of Canon Mori:

Саша Сорокин, темнея у красневшего вечернего окна, продолжал говорить:—

Трудно это совместить. Как один из наших говорил; “Как после театра ты канон

Исусу читать будешь? Легче человека убивши.” И точно: убить, украсть,

прелюбодействовать при всякой вере можно, а понимать “Фауста” и убежденно

по лестовке молиться—немыслимо,. . . Вот вам со стороны, может быть,

понятней и видней, чем нам самим наша жизнь, вера, обряды, и люди наши

вами поняты могут быть, а вы ими—нет, или только одна ваша часть, не

главнейшая, поймется тятенькой или стариками нашими, и всегда вы бы были

чужанин, внешний. (Kuzmin, 1906/1999, Vol. 1. pp. 114-115)

Significantly, Kuzmin constantly compared the *love/life* of demonic decadence with its Hellenic counterpart. The 1915 novel, *Plavaiushchie-puteshestvuiushchie* (*Travellers by Sea and Land*), clearly demonstrates this difference between demonic decadent love and that of Kuzmin. Polina Dobroliubova-Chernikova and her follower, Elena Aleksandrovna, who typify Nietzschean demonic decadence, seek the evil, chaotic, and enthusiastic energy in love as an antidote to an anti-aesthetic bourgeois life. In their idea of love-for-love's sake, suffering, caprice, and nervousness in any of themselves are all praised and pursued:

Я не потому ищу бури, что, там есть какой-то покой, я именно потому, что там никакого покоя не может быть. Я люблю бурю за то, что она буря. . . . Да чем же жить, как не обманом, что бы без него была наша жизнь? И любовь, и искусство, разве это не обман? . . . Не все ли равно, хоть день, хоть час прожить полно, интересно, красиво! Вот в чем главное Красиво и трепетно. (Kuzmin, 1915/1999, Vol. 2, p. 317)

Yet their philosophy of love/life is presented as a limited one. As the novel comes to an

end, all the men come to realize that they were simply toys in Elena and Polina's love game. Even Elena recognizes that her obsession with love was in vain and comes to devote herself to the new faith of theosophy. In contrast to this demonic decadent love, another type of love/life is presented in the relationship between the main hero Lavrik and his uncle Orest Pekarskii. Lavrik and Orest note that their love is based on the harmonious world combined with *peace and joy*, and their search for "*vysshee chelovecheskoe schast'e*" ("the highest human happiness"; Kuzmin, 1915/1999, Vol. 2, p. 317) differs from Polina and Elena's love, which is based on the futile agitation of nerves.

я уверен, а что касается того, что мы цыгане, так вы же знаете, что мы всегда в пути и что кто останавливается, тот гибнет. И не в таком пути, как Елена Александровна или знакомая нам Полина (они мечутся, как угорелые зайцы в загородке, и в сущности остаются на той же площадке), а мы идем прямым путем вперед, хотя бы и медленно. (Kuzmin, 1915/1999, Vol. 2. p. 417)

These two distinct connotations of love are seen not merely in literary characterizations but also in real life. As noted in Chapter 2, for the demonic decadents typified by Bruisov and

Bal'mont, life connotes a nervous and intense exploration of the disharmony of the world, whereas for Kuzmin, life implies the *harmonious, highest happiness* in which hedonism is combined with spiritual peace. The demonic decadents' notorious romances, which ended in their mistresses' tragedies, also typify the love of nervous intensity, which Kuzmin negatively depicted in his novel.

Interestingly, as *Plavaiushchie-puteshestvuiushchie* (*Travellers by Sea and Land*) demonstrates, in Kuzmin's world, the homosexual relationship is presented as a harmonious state of love/life, based on the synthesis of peace and joy. In contrast, the heterosexual relationship including demonic erotic love and traditional marriage is depicted mostly as an unbalanced, unharmonious state of love/life. In *Kryl'ia* (*Wings*), the relation between Stroop and a woman called Ida Goldberg is juxtaposed with the homosexual relationship between Vania and Stroop. Realizing Stroop's sexual preference for the boy, Ida Goldberg commits suicide in the end. Stroop himself distinguishes Hellenic homosexual love from the sort of love associated with the traditional Jewish concept of marriage, calling the latter greedy *pokhot'* (lust).

И связывающие понятие о красоте с красотой женщины для мужчины являют

только пошлую похоть, и дальше, дальше всего от истинной идеи красоты.

(Kuzmin, 1906/1999, Vol. 1, p. 92)

In addition, it should be noted that the homosexual relation in Kuzmin's world is depicted as similar to the mixture of religious ecstasy and sexual relations. In *Devstvennyi Viktor* (*Virginal Viktor*), Viktor prays for the recovery of his lover Andrew. Kuzmin depicts the scene with images reminiscent of sexual intercourse (Moss, 1997). Also, in *Plavaiushchie-puteshestvuiushchie*, two men's meeting in the forest is ambiguously described to the extent that it is hard to determine whether the scene hints at a religious ritual or a sexual encounter.

Топот лошадей все приближался, и на дорогу выехал два всадника, из которых в одном Лаврик без труда узнал Стока; другой был тем офицером, очевидно, который тогда здесь же проезжал с англичанином в бричке. По-видимому, поляна, на которой находился Лаврик, была конечною целью всадников, потому что, выехав на нее, они спешились и, привязав лошадей у въезда, медленно пошли к месту, где, спрятанный теперь в кустах, находился Пекарский. . . .К тому же его поразили лица приезжих; не столько лица, сколько их выражения :

они были до крайности спокойны и вместе с тем являли какую-то напряженность, почти восторженную. . . . И между тем это не были лица людей, отрешенных от всех волений и человеческих чувств. . . . Наоборот, казалось, что они выражали предел стремления и желания, но очень просветленного и чем-то преображенного. На их скрытого зрителя нашел как бы столбняк, и неизвестно, сколько бы времени он продолжался, если бы внезапный поворот, внешний, но не менее изумительный, не спутал еще более его мыслей. . . . в ту же минуту, как он увидел, что младший, став на колени, поцеловал руку другому, он услышал явственно его слова:

— Боже мой, Боже мой! Неужели это будет завтра?!

На что старший ответил:

— Да, так мне написали из Праги.

Тогда первый, подняв в какой-то радостном исступлении руки к небу, громко сказал:

— Как могут жить люди, не знавшие таких минут?!

Затем они поцеловались и молча направились к своим лошадям. (Kuzmin, 1915/1999, Vol. 2, pp. 381-382)

Moreover, homosexual motifs are constantly presented in connection with religion. In *Kryl'ia*, Maria comments that she became aware of homosexuality by reading the saints' lives (Kuzmin, 1906/1999, Vol. 1, p. 103). Also, Zasadin's antique shop, which Stroop and Vania visit, is described as a mysterious place in which religion and sensuality are mixed in a strange way: Zasadin shows Vania an Old Belief reprint of the *Limonar*, a collection of didactic tales and admonitions, but, at the same time, the antique shop turns out to be a place that the bathhouse boys frequent (Kuzmin, 1906/1999, Vol.1, pp. 94-97). In a word, homosexuality embodies the Kuzminian aesthetic ideal of the incorporation of sense and religion.

Retrospectivism and *Veshchizm*

The special characteristics of Kuzmin's aesthetics and dandyism can also be seen in his classical orientation and interest in antiquity. He idealized classical culture as one in which the sensuous world does not contradict religion. He not only theorized about classical culture, but also clothed himself in archaic fashion. For example, he liked to wear a beauty-spot on his face, just as the women of the eighteenth century used to wear: “Приехал Сомов, привезший мушки и чертика... наклеили мне к глазу сердце, на щеку полумесяц и звезду, за ухо небольшой фаллос” (Kuzmin, 2000, p. 178). Some of his contemporaries even depicted Kuzmin as a man from another ancient era:

Я не верю (искренно и упорно), . . . что вырос он в Саратове и Петербурге, Это только приснилось ему в “здешней” жизни. Он родился в Египте, между Средиземным морем и озером Мереотис, на родине Эвклида, Оригена и Филона, в солнечной Александрии, во времена Птоломеев. Он родился сыном эллина и египтянки, и только в XVIII в. влилась в его жилы французская кровь, а в 1875 году—русская. Все это забылось в цепи превращений, но осталась вещая

память подсознательной жизни. (Gollerbakh, 1922, p. 43)

Along with Kuzmin, the *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art) group was also fascinated with eighteenth century Russian and French costumes (see Demidenko, 1990, pp.80-81). They wore eighteenth century clothes, because they considered Russian culture in the eighteenth century to be an aesthetically ideal age (see Demidenko, 1990, pp.80-82). At times, the historical restoration of a particular period did not matter in Hellenic aesthetes' *retrospectivism* (see Poliakova, 1971, p. 115; as cited in Ahn, 2002b, para. 28). Various modes of archaic culture could be accepted if they opposed the current antiaesthetic conventional world of Christianity and utilitarianism. The Hellenic aesthetes sought to find their aesthetic ideals in the Orient (Karlinsky, 1989), the Old Belief, and classical ancient periods such as Rome, Alexandrian culture (Matich, 1992), and eighteenth-century Russian culture.

Along with retrospectivism, another key notion of Kuzmin's Hellenic dandyism is the world of *veshchi* (things), around which a philosophy often described as *veshchizm* may be elaborated. His works, particularly his poetry, are characterized by an excessive emphasis on details. In his article, "Preodolevshie simvolizm (1916/2000)," Viktor Zhirmunskii notes that

Kuzmin's poetry placed too much focus on details, to the extent that the literary persona is overshadowed (p.401). Blok also criticizes Kuzmin's extravagant employment of details, depicting it as "*shchegolevataia vul'garnost'*" ("dandyistic vulgarity"; as cited in Shmakov, 1972). Later, Soviet critics attacked Kuzmin as a representative of corrupt bourgeois culture. Yet Kuzmin's focus on details is not simply an approach to the description of bourgeois life. Rather, his *veshchizm* lies in the consciousness that the empirical world is a significant site in which his aesthetic synthesis of sense and spirit can take place. His exaltation of the aesthetic world can occur only through the concrete apperception of the *vneshnii mir* (outer world).

Just as the literary works consist of concrete, *this-worldly* details, man's appearance and his place alongside these aesthetic objects are none other than creations of art itself. Because of this emphasis on details, not to mention Kuzmin's dandyistic self-stylization, most of his characters are presented as aestheticizing their appearances and space with great attention to detail. Stropov's house is filled with a large collection of classical antiquities, and Vania's appearance in Italy is described as that of the dandy (Kuzmin, 1906/1999, Vol. 1, p.125). Also, Ugo's red carnation in the buttonhole is reminiscent of Wilde's dandyism (Kuzmin, 1906/1999, Vol.1, p.126).

Kuzmin is concerned not only with the concreteness of the world of objects, but also its ephemerality. He often comments on the mortality of earthly objects: his *Aleksandriiskie pesni* (*Alexandrian Songs*; 1906) exemplifies his awareness about the impermanence of the world and worldly things: “Разве меньше я стану любить эти милые хрупкие вещи за их тленность?” (“Am I the less to love these dear and fragile things because they must decay?”; Kuzmin, 1923, p.171; as translated in Green & Shvabrin, 2005, p. 53). His retrospectivist preference for ancient and Renaissance culture is also related to the two aspects of *veshchizm*. He is interested in the concreteness of aesthetically oriented archaic cultures, but also inclined toward cultures of specific periods by virtue of their emphasis on ephemerality. In particular, he was fascinated with Konstantin Somov’s art of eighteenth century Italy and France, which focuses on the fleetingness of life, *maskarad* (masquerade), the theatricalization of life and illusion (Ahn, 2002b, para.30).

Kuzmin’s attraction to ephemeral details and fleeting existence is negatively commented on by some of his contemporaries. For example, Georgii Ivanov noted that Kuzmin’s literary success could not continue due to the lack of content, depicting Kuzmin’s world as that of *опасная легкость* (dangerous lightness).

После 1905 года вкусы русской “передовой” публики начали меняться.

Всевозможные “дерзания” ее утомили. После громов первых лет символизма

хотелось простоты, легкости, обыкновенного человеческого голоса. Кузмин

появился как нельзя во-время (1928, 133-134). На “настоящую” дорогу Кузмин

не вышел. “Прекрасная ясность” стала походить на опасную легкость.

Изящная небрежность—быстро превратилась в неряшливость. Освободившись

от своего прежнего “эстетического” содержания, писания Кузмина с каждой

новой вещью все определеннее делались болтовней без всякого содержания

вообще.(Ivanov, 1928, pp. 133-134, 127)

However, Kuzmin’s Hellenic aesthetics, balanced between religion and beauty, does not focus solely on the world of lightness. Certainly his *veshchizm* is based on the fleetingness of the world, that is, the Hellenistic perspective of the world of senses. His *Aleksandriiskie pesni* (*Alexandrian Songs*) betray the poet’s interest in the ephemerality of earthly objects. However, the poet continuously attempts to search for the Hellenic. More precisely, vacillating between sense and spirit, the poet does not seek to resolve the tension between the two worlds. In

particular, Kuzmin depicts this synthesis of the ephemeral and eternal with the motif of *eternal wandering*. Mr. Stock of the *Plavaiushchie-puteshestvuiushchie (Travellers by Sea and Land)* tells Lavrentiev his philosophy about the ephemeral and eternal. He says that the full appreciation of every fleeting moment can be acquired by the immediate detachment from the previous moment and the every moment can be connected with *forever* only with this constant wake-up.

— На всю жизнь! Сколько раз мы говорим самим себе и другим эту фразу, и мы не лжем, хотя знаем, что десять раз говорили то же самое совсем по другим поводам. Вы, конечно, еще слишком молоды, вы, может быть, еще в первый раз говорите: “навсегда.” Я нисколько не хочу вас разочаровывать, но потом вы увидите, что я был прав. И удивительнее всего, что повторность этого сознания нисколько не мешает его свежести, а даже как будто наоборот—прибавляет ее.

В этом залог нашей живучести, нашей способности к жизни; и, говоря в двадцатый раз : “навсегда,” вы верите сильнее и острее в свою искренность, чем когда вы это сказали в первый раз. Без этого немислимо жить. . . .И это относится не только к любви. . . . Всякий раз после пожара мы строим новый

дом и думаем : он простоит до нашей смерти,—определенно зная, что он погибнет от первого нового пожара. Мы вечные плотники и постоянные путешественники. . . . Кто бы мог сказать неделю тому назад, что я буду увлечен этим всю жизнь? Хотя я отлично знаю, что эти занятия продолжатся не более года. Без этого сознания “навсегда” ничему нельзя отдавать свою душу, потому что получится одно легкомысленное равнодушие и разочарованность. (Kuzmin, 1915/1999, Vol. 2, p. 271-272)

In other words, for him, *moment* and *forever* are connected through the acceptance of the transience of the world, which is reminiscent of Kuzmin’s peculiar religion, that is, faith experienced through sense perception.

Thus, Kuzmin’s *veshchizm* also constitutes the locus of an aesthetic that is distinct from demonic decadence and symbolism. His concern with the empirical world is not based on the ephemerality of *this-worldly* objects as in demonic decadent philosophy. At the same time, Kuzmin’s *veshchizm* is not the same as the symbolist aesthetic perspective in which this world symbolizes the eternal vision of another world. As E. V. Ermilova (1989) points out, Kuzmin’s

veshchizm is located between the absolute focus on the fleetingness of this-worldly objects and their potential for relating to the symbolic (p. 123-124; as cited in Ahn, 2002b, para. 22).

Kuzmin and Wilde

The special position of Kuzmin's Hellenic dandyism becomes much clearer when one compares it to Western aestheticism, in particular, the idea of art-for-art's sake. As with its relationship to demonic decadence, Kuzmin's aesthetics share common characteristics with Western aestheticism, while at the same time, maintaining a distance from its European counterpart. In his early years, he viewed the European notion of art-for-art's sake negatively. He wrote to G. Chicherin that he disliked the isolation from life that he found in the concept of pure art as exemplified by Shelly's art (Bogomolov & Malmstad, 1999, p. 28). However, he was better acquainted with the general trends of Western modernism than any other Russian modernist, and was well aware of one of the most iconic figures of Western aestheticism, Oscar Wilde. His opinion about Wilde changed as his ideas on religion and aesthetics evolved, but Kuzmin never lost interest in Wilde's aesthetics and his self-creation. In his period as an Old Believer, he said that he disliked Wilde and did not understand why Ivanov and his friends projected the image of Christ onto Wilde (Kuzmin, 2000, p. 166). By 1907 his notion of Wilde underwent a change and he began to translate Wilde's works, including him in a list of his favorite writers (see Bogomolov

& Malmstad, 1999, p.139).

The most significant example of Wilde's influence on Kuzmin is the similarity between Kuzmin's *Kryl'ia* and Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. In the Russian modernist tradition, Kuzmin was often called a Russian Oscar Wilde because of his interest in dandyistic appearance and homosexuality. Yet their similarity more fundamentally stems from the analogy of the structure and themes in the two famous works. First, they share the theme of aesthetics and relate the theme of beauty to that of homosexuality. The main heroes in Wilde's and Kuzmin's works are young handsome beauties as typified by Lavrik in *Plavaiushchie-puteshestvuiushchie* (*Travellers by Sea and Land*), Vania in *Kryl'ia* (*Wings*), and Dorian in *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* (interestingly, they are all depicted as orphans). Moreover, they have love affairs with older, wiser figures such as Orest and Mr. Stock in *Plavaiushchie-puteshestvuiushchie*, a Greek teacher and Stroop in *Kryl'ia*, and Lord Henry and Basil Hallward in *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. In addition, heterosexual relations are presented as negative. In each work, the women who are involved in homosexual relations eventually die. Like Ida Goldberg in *Kryl'ia*, Sibyl Vane in *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* commits suicide.

Another crucial code the two authors share is that of England. In *Kryl'ia* as well as *Plavaiushchie-puteshestvuiushchie*, England is not merely a place where aestheticism and homosexuality originated, but also an ideal place where beauty as well as homosexuality metamorphose into a higher state. Stroop in *Kryl'ia* is of English origin and heads for England with Vania at the end of the work. In *Plavaiushchie-puteshestvuiushchie*, an Englishman, Mr. Stock, helps Lavrik to realize his love for Orest. Mr. Stock leaves for London with Lavrik and Orest in the end of the novel.

Regardless of these structural similarities, Kuzmin's notion of beauty and homosexuality differs from Wilde's in some respects. First, as pointed out above, for Kuzminian aesthetes, beauty is always linked with religion. The aesthetics of Vania, Canon Mori, and Mr. Stock are focused on the harmonious state of spirituality and sensuality. In contrast, Dorian Gray and Lord Henry do not show an interest in any religious principles. They certainly are fascinated with religious trappings, but for them, religion is understood solely as an aesthetic style. For that reason, Dorian treats religious trappings as he does his favorite objects such as jewelry and fragrances.

It was rumored of him once that he was about to join the Roman Catholic communion,

and certainly the Roman ritual had always a great attraction for him. The daily sacrifice, more awful really than all the sacrifices of the antique world, stirred him as much by its superb rejection of the evidence of the senses as by the primitive simplicity of its elements and the eternal pathos of the human tragedy that it sought to symbolize. He loved to kneel down on the cold marble pavement and watch the priest, in his stiff flowered dalmatic, slowly and with white hands moving aside the veil of the tabernacle, or raising aloft the jewelled, lantern-shaped monstrance with that pallid wafer that at times, one would fain think, is indeed the “*panis caelestis*,” the bread of angels, or, robed in the garments of the Passion of Christ, breaking the Host into the chalice and smiting his breast for his sins. . . . But he never fell into the error of arresting his intellectual development by any formal acceptance of creed or system, or of mistaking, for a house in which to live, an inn that is but suitable for the sojourn of a night, or for a few hours of a night in which there are no stars and the moon is in travail. Mysticism, with its marvellous power of making common things strange to us, and the subtle antinomianism that always seems to accompany it, moved him for a

season; and for a season he inclined to the materialistic doctrines of the Darwinismus movement in Germany, and found a curious pleasure in tracing the thoughts and passions of men to some pearly cell in the brain, or some white nerve in the body, delighting in the conception of the absolute dependence of the spirit on certain physical conditions, morbid or healthy, normal or diseased. (Wilde, 1890/1964, pp. 109-110)

Similarly, a demonic decadent, Polina in *Plavaiushchie-puteshestvuiushchie*, also comprehends religion only in terms of its style.

Я ведь тоже очень религиозна. Если бы у меня в жизни случилось какое-нибудь крушение, ничего бы, ничего не оставалось—я бы тоже пошла в монастырь, это так красиво! Свечи, черное, покрывало, . . . экстазы. (Kuzmin, 1915/1999, Vol. 2, p. 318)

Importantly, Lord Henry and Dorian Gray's aestheticism, focusing as it does only on the ephemeral and external side of an object, suggests a fundamental idea of art-for-art's sake in Western aestheticism and its life-creation version, dandyism. As noted in Chapter 1, the idea of

art-for-art's sake and dandyism takes place at the moment when the ephemeral ceases to serve as a medium to convey the universal and becomes autonomous from what is assumed as its inner meaning. In that notion, the *form* of the aesthetic subjects is no longer a means to imply its content (see page 23-28 of this dissertation). For that reason, the art-for-art's sake idea and dandyism praise what is considered meaningless, trivial, and useless. It is still unclear whether the author, Wilde himself, supported the aestheticism of Dorian Gray and Lord Henry, or whether he presented their ideas negatively by orchestrating a tragic end for Dorian Gray. Yet certainly, Dorian and Lord Henry's treatment of religious details exemplifies the Hellenistic focus on the ephemeral in the art-for-art's sake idea and dandyism.

In contrast, Kuzmin's stress on the ephemeral does not lie in the complete separation of the ephemeral from the universal. Rather, as pointed out above, his *veshchizm* is grounded in the synthesis of the ephemeral and the universal. In the aesthetics of Stroop/Vania, the details of the classical antiquities and the Old Belief are the realization of religious meaning, that is, an incarnation of God. However, in Kuzmin's world, the relation between the externals of aesthetic objects and their inner implication is distinct from traditional *mimesis*. Rather, the ephemeral in

and of itself symbolizes the universal, as can be seen in Stroop's note on a *reading* in *Kryl'ia*. He says to Vania, who is struggling to learn Greek grammar, that the translation of Hellenic art cannot convey its spirit. Stroop even associates reading with a sexual relationship, a meeting with the flesh of the world culture and accordingly with its spirit.

— Можно читать в переводах, а столько времени учить грамматику?! Штруп посмотрел на Ваню с бесконечным сожалением.

— Вместо человека из плоти и крови, смеющегося или хмурого, которого можно любить, целовать, ненавидеть, в котором видна кровь, переливающаяся в жилах, и естественная грация нагого тела,—иметь бездушную куклу, часто сделанную руками ремесленника,—вот переводы. А времени на подготовительное занятие грамматикой нужно очень мало. Нужно только читать, читать и читать. Читать, смотря каждое слово в словаре, пробираясь как сквозь чащу леса, и вы получили бы неиспытанные наслаждения. А мне кажется, что в вас, Ваня, есть задатки сделаться настоящим новым человеком. (Kuzmin, 1906/1999, Vol. 1, p. 78)

In other words, the idea of *translation*, which consists of the dualism of a higher *meaning* and secondary *form/word* is not accepted in Kuzminian aesthetics. Thus, Kuzmin's Hellenic aesthetic subverts the structure of dualism in a similar yet different way from that of dandyism. Both Western dandyism and Kuzmin's *veshchizm* challenge the concept of *mimesis* by prioritizing what has been assumed *secondary* and *vneshnii* (external). However, while dandyism separates the world of flesh from that of spirit, Kuzmin's Hellenic aesthetics connect the ephemeral with the eternal/universal by finding the eternal within the world of sense.

The painter Basil Hallward, in Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*, embodies the Kuzminian view of beauty. In response to Lord Henry's aestheticism, Hallward notes that he does not pursue the beauty of the purely physical side of a man. Instead, he seeks a love which Michelangelo, Montagne, Winkelmann, and Shakespeare realized, that is, which implies the combination of a physical and spiritual side in man.

He (Dorian) shuddered, and for a moment he regretted that he had not told Basil the true reason why he had wished to hide the picture away. Basil would have helped him to resist Lord Henry's influence, and the still more poisonous influences that came

from his own temperament. The love that he bore him—for it was really love—had nothing in it that was not noble and intellectual. It was not that mere physical admiration of beauty that is born of the senses and that dies when the senses tire. It was such love as Michelangelo had known, and Montaigne, and Winckelmann, and Shakespeare himself. Yes, Basil could have saved him. But it was too late now.

(Wilde, 1890/1964, pp. 96-97)

In this way, Kuzmin shares his aesthetics with the Hellenism of Hallward in *Dorian Gray* rather than that of Lord Henry. As Hallward worships the world of Shakespeare, Vania experiences the energy of beauty and life by reading Shakespeare (Kuzmin, 1906/1999, Vol. 1, p. 110). If we employ Veresaev's notions of Hellenism for these instances, it appears that while Kuzmin and Hallward's Hellenism is based on the praise of the Hellenic (Homeric/Apollonian), where the world of sensuality is incorporated with that of faith, Lord Henry and Polina Dobroliubova-Chernikova's worship of beauty subscribes to the Hellenistic (Alexandrian) where the ephemeral is separated from the universal.

Kuzmin's Orange Jacket

Thus, we can locate Kuzmin's Hellenic aestheticism in its relation to the other modes of aesthetics as exemplified by (Russian) demonic decadence and Western aestheticism. As a proponent of Hellenic beauty, Kuzmin searched for beauty where the spiritual vision does not contradict the ephemeral world. In addition, according to Kuzmin, the two spheres should be equally valued. For him, demonic decadence and Western aestheticism were aesthetically inadequate and needed to be supplemented by the spirit of balance. Demonic decadence was too inclined toward rebellious amoralism for Kuzmin. Also, Kuzmin kept a distance from Western aestheticism, because it emphasized the ephemeral part of being.

The relation of Kuzmin's aesthetics to the two modes of aestheticism is manifest in his own self-creation. First, Kuzmin's self-image is different from a demonic dandy. His novel, *Plavaiushchie-puteshestvuiushchie (Travellers by Sea and Land)*, clearly shows that the author does not endorse the demonic decadent dandy. In the work, demonic decadents, as exemplified by Polina Dobroliubova-Chernikova and her follower Elena Aleksandrovna, are negatively depicted as nervous searchers of the *chaotic* side of life. Instead, Kuzmin fashions himself as a nonchalant

joyful dandy who no longer attempts to explore one's demonic side *tselikom* (entirely, with full intensity). In that sense, Kuzmin's dandyism shares characteristics of antiheroic playfulness with Western dandies. Yet the dandy Kuzmin differs from Western dandies as exemplified by Lord Henry who pursues only hedonistic beauty and is cynical about a faith mixed with aesthetics. Kuzmin also distinguished himself from the symbolist. Although he was fascinated with religious culture, the poet never assigned himself the role of *prorok* (prophet). Lotman and Mints (1989) similarly account for Kuzmin's special characteristics of self-creation in his relation to demonic decadence and symbolism.

Для предакмеистов (поэт М. Кузмин, художники из группы "Мир искусства" и другие) и для акмеистов "жизнетворчество" свелось к настроениям художественной богемы: художник имеет право жить не так, как все, а осовой, чисто эстетической жизнью. Художник теперь не представляется обязательно "дьяволом," которой ненавидит или презирает людей, как это было у декадентов. Но он тем более и не пророк или герой, который, "сгорает на костре страсти," чтобы указать людям путь к Красоте, как мечтал Вяч. Иванов и

многие другие символисты в годы революции. Человек искусства—не “погубитель,” но и не “спаситель” человечества. Он просто не такой, как все, и, чтобы писать стихи или картины или сочинять музыку, он должен жить своей, осовой, богемной жизнью. (Lotman & Mints, 1989, pp. 106-107)

Kuzmin’s cult of Pushkin also demonstrates the special characteristics of Hellenic dandyism in its relation to demonic decadent dandyism. Because of their retrospectivist orientation, Kuzmin and the *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art) artists imitated the culture of the Russian Golden Age. In particular, Pushkin was presented as a model of Hellenic aesthetics. Merezhkovskii and Veresaev, two theoreticians of Hellenic aestheticism, considered Pushkin an ideal artist who overcame the limitation of demonic decadence. In contrast, they criticized Lermontov and Byron as models of demonic aestheticism: For example, Merezhkovskii (1897/1971) notes that “Пушкин один преодолевает дисгармонию Байрона, достигает самообладания, вдохновения без восторга и веселия в мудрости” (pp. 17-18). Based on this idea of Pushkin, Hellenic dandies sought to imitate Pushkin and his culture. The artists of Ivanov’s *Bashnia* (Towers), including Kuzmin, called each other by the nicknames of Pushkin’s *Arzamas*

members. The publishing house *Apollon* was named *Dom na Moike* in imitation of the title of the house where Pushkin lived during the last years of his life (Paperno, 1989, pp. 79-80). In addition, Kuzmin identified himself with Pushkin, emphasizing his short height and dark skin (Paperno, 1989, p.80). Thus, in Russian modernist culture, Kuzmin was depicted as *mavr* (Moor), *mulat* (mulatto), and *tsygan* (gypsy), just as Pushkin was perceived in the Russian Golden Age (Paperno, 1992, p. 35). For Hellenist-dandies, Pushkin did not merely represent the unified world of the sense and spirit. As noted in Chapter 2, Briusov presents Pushkin as a symbol of the *greatness* of literature. For him, Pushkin's greatness differed from that of Lermontov. While Lermontov's self-creation is dominated by the spirit of unity of life and art, Pushkin differentiates life from art. In other words, in the Russian decadent consciousness, Pushkin was regarded as a *creator*, not as an iconoclastic *demon*. Hence Kuzmin's identification with Pushkin: he sought to become a creator-dandy, instead of a demon-dandy. His Pushkinian Hellenic creator-dandy is characterized by an antiheroic, joyful, nonchalant attitude toward art and world.

Kuzmin's depiction of writing as an ostensibly frivolous activity is relevant in this sense. In his reminiscences, Georgii Ivanov (1929) notes that Kuzmin appeared not to take writing

seriously: Kuzmin at times wrote poems in bed and even on the road, and did not rewrite them.

— Как вы думаете, включать мне эти стихи в книгу? — спрашиваю я у Кузмина.

Кузмин смотрит удивленно.

— Почему же не включать? Зачем же тогда писали? Если сочинили —так и включайте.

Он сам “включает” все, что написалось. Пишет, между прочим, что придется. . . .На самом деле собирался идти сниматься. За завтраком у Альбера—об этом проекте заговорили, пришла рифма весна—Боасона, а там и весь “стишок.” Придя домой, Кузмин аккуратно переписал его в тетрадку. Собирая новую книгу—не забыл вставить и этот.

. . . . Сочиняет стихи на ходу. Шел к вам—вот сочинил по дороге.

Пишет музыку—в комнате, где играют дети сестры. Басы на рояле ему не нужны: дети колотят по басам изо всей силы. А с другого бока, на клавишах повыше, Кузмин подбирает новую песенку, стряпает свою “музычку с ядом.”

Прозу пишет прямо набело.—Зачем же переписывать, у меня почерк хороший?(Ivanov, 1928, p. 130)

Kuzmin's frivolous attitude seems related to his conscious defiance of the *serious* (writing) approach of demonic decadents who championed the complete dedication of one's life to art. Georgii Ivanov (1929) also contrasts Kuzmin's world with the *lofty* worlds of the symbolists, the successors of demonic decadents, maintaining that, although Kuzmin's world attracted people tired of the symbolists' lofty words, it is the world of *dangerous lightness* that requires firmness.

Вот, вот—именно. Все устали от слога высокого, все хотели “прекрасной ясности,” которую провозгласил Кузмин....

Но:

...Зачем же переписывать — у меня почерк хороший...

...Если написали — так и включайте...

...Он выстрадал свою философию...

...В начале будущей недели пойдем сниматься к Боасона...

Прекрасная ясность—опасная легкость.

У Кузмина было все, чтобы стать замечательным писателем. Не хватало одного—твердости. “Куда ветер подует.”(Ivanov, 1928, p. 134)

However, Kuzmin’s attitude did not turn out to be “dangerous,” despite Ivanov’s concern about the poet’s world of “lightness.” It is said that Kuzmin liked to read his diary in literary salons. Yet as Bogomolov and Malmstad (1999) argue, although his selective readings of diary created “various Kuzmins,” the poet’s self-exhibitionism was not the same as the Wildean construction of a “double life” (p. 122).

Additionally, Kuzmin’s homosexuality can be noted in his relationship to the two modes of aestheticism, Western aestheticism and demonic decadence. As noted above, he found in Hellenism a new religion that approves of homosexuality. Kuzmin did not subscribe to demonic decadent dandyism because it did not favor homosexuality. The demonic decadent dandies in Kuzmin’s literature as well as in real life were mostly involved with heterosexual relations. In contrast, Western dandyism, as exemplified by Wilde’s dandyism, shares with Kuzmin’s the idea of homosexuality as beauty. In both cases homosexuality as exemplified by the effeminate and beautified male destroys “the conventional opposition between the modern man and the natural

domestic woman” (see page 28 of this dissertation). While in Western art-for-art’s sake aestheticism, the focus of homosexuality lies in the Hellenistic idea of beauty, that is, the self’s impressionistic transience and corporeality, Kuzminian Hellenic aesthetics links homosexuality with a spiritual vision, reminiscent of the Platonic notion of beauty and same-sex relations (see Gillis, 1978).

This association of homosexuality with Hellenic beauty demonstrates a specifically Russian cultural instantiation of homosexuality. Konstantin Leont’ev exemplifies a homosexual dandy whose aesthetics are integrated with religious ideals (see Rzhevsky, 1976). In addition, Vladimir Solov’ev’ developed a theory of love based on the Gnostic myth of Androgyny, which considers homosexuality a “perfection or a godlike state, achieved by the transcendence of masculine-feminine polarity” (Matich, 1979, p. 43). Affected by Solov’ev’s philosophy, symbolists as exemplified by Merezhkovskii and Gippius attempted to accommodate their marriage and homosexual relationships.

On the basis of his unique idea of beauty and homosexuality, we can thus discern what Kuzmin’s concern with fashion connotes. First, his interest in fashion begins as a demonstration of

the rejection of an ascetic conventional world that does not approve of the world of sense. For Kuzmin, beauty represents a concrete ephemeral object. For that reason, this interest in the aesthetic details often called a *style* seems to trigger the poet's dandyism. But Kuzmin's colorful jacket turns out to be distinct from the *black suit* of the demonic decadent dandy. While the demonic decadents' black suits express the decadent orientation toward evil, disharmony, and death, Kuzmin's *orange jacket* expresses the Hellenic harmonious state where the world of sense is balanced with spiritual calm. In addition, Kuzmin's *orange jacket* embodies the poet's antiheroic, joyful, nonchalant attitude toward the world and art in contrast to the demonic decadents' serious, heroism-based aesthetics, symbolized by their black attire. Kuzmin's colorful vest is not an instantiation of the cult of fashion in Western dandyism either. Style in Western dandyism emphasizes the separation of the exterior of an aesthetic object from its inner meaning; however, Kuzminian style represents a combination of the ephemeral world of *veshchi* with its universal vision. Moreover, Kuzmin's combination of style and meaning is not the same as the traditional structure of *mimesis*, as characteristic of a man who expresses his inner/spiritual being through external form/fashion/appearance. While the Western dandies' style rejects the

conveyance of inner meaning, Kuzmin's concern with fashion rejects the dualistic structure of the external and internal. For him, the orange jacket, in and of itself, is the site where he can experience and appreciate the eternal.

Chapter 4: A Pierrot-Dandy: Aleksandr Blok

Along with Mikhail Kuzmin, Aleksandr Blok exemplifies decadent self-creation in the Russian modernist period. In their reminiscences of Blok, many observers commented on the poet's dandyistic attitude. Even Blok described himself as a dandy.¹⁶ Of his three stages of decadence and symbolism,¹⁷ Blok particularly related decadence to the practice of dandyism. Disillusioned with Vladimir Solov'ev's philosophy, which strongly affected the poet's early years, he became fascinated with the decadent aesthetics that privileges the world of evil and beauty over religion. He returned later to symbolism and criticized his decadent self-creation in retrospect with the term, dandyism (see Blok, 1918/1962, Vol. 6, pp. 53-57).

Although Blok equated his dandyism with his decadent period only, dandyism was practiced not merely by the decadent but also by the symbolist. While the decadents particularly favored black apparel to express their demonic worldview, the symbolists presented their self-

¹⁶ See Chukovskii (1924); Dobuzhinskii (1987, pp. 271-281); Enisherlov (1988); Makovskii (1962); Orlov (1976, 1978); Piast (1929/1997); Pyman (1979); Vogel (1982).

¹⁷ Based on the change in his aesthetics, Blok divided his life into the three stages: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. See Blok (1910/1962, Vol. 5, pp. 425-436).

image with the angelic *white* as well as the demonic *black*. The symbolist, Andrei Bugaev, employed *belyi* (white) as his pseudonym. Zinaida Gippius not only performed the demonic woman with her black costumes but also created an angelic image with white clothes. Her white dresses often came with long sleeves that were reminiscent of angel's wings (Bunin, 1961, p. 558; as cited in Demidenko, 1990, p.78). Gippius' contradictory appearance¹⁸ even caused people to

¹⁸ Zinaida Gippius typifies symbolist self-creation, but her case is idiosyncratic as well. Jennifer Presto and Olga Matich claim that the paradoxical aspect of her vision and self-creation was caused by the poet's idiosyncratic nature rather than her symbolist outlook. For example, along with the coexistence of the demonic and the angelic, Gippius' world consisted of other contradictory features as exemplified by the discordance between solemnity/lightness and public/private persona. Andrei Belyi thus found it hard to associate Gippius with a specific fixed image.

Presto also analyzes the implication of Gippius' fashion in terms of sexuality. Gippius created the image of a goddess or a femme-fatale by alternating her white and black clothes. She wore masculine costumes as well. As is the case with the transvestism of modernist artists, her cross-dressing exemplifies her defiance of established norms of sexuality. In addition, as a symbolist, she attempted to portray the homosexual as one who synthesized masculinity and femininity. Interestingly, her self-presentation as a goddess represented not merely the expression of the angelic image but also its parody. According to Presto, Gippius' excessive focus on femininity as exemplified by an ethereal white dress subverts and parodies *Eternal Femininity*, which such male symbolists as Vladimir Solov'ev, Aleksandr Blok, and Andrei Belyi worshipped. Concerning Gippius' fashion and its implication, see Belyi (1933/1990); Demidenko (1990, p. 13); Makovskii (1962); Matich (1992, 2005); Pachmuss (1971); Presto (2008);

call her the “white she-devil” (Zlobin, 1980, p. 47). Analyzing the self-creation of the symbolists and decadents, Iurii Lotman and Zara Mints thus label the symbolists as *belye magi* (white magicians) in contrast to *chernyi mag* (black magicians), a term they use to refer to the decadents.

Брюсов был человеком очень честолюбивым и волевым. Он выбрал себе роль “черного мага,” вождя русского символизма и постоянно играл ее. В черном сюртуке, с пристальным, неподвижным взглядом, скрестив руки на груди, Брюсов смотрел на чужих людей, как будто стараясь их “заколдовать.” . . . Совсем иным было “жизнетворчество” младших символистов. Они считали себя “белыми магами,” стремящимися к торжеству Добра, и в их “жизнетворчестве” преобладала эстетическая утопия. “Художественное поведение” людей искусства—это как бы практический урок будущей прекрасной жизни для всего человечества. А сам поэт, музыкант или художник —прообраз будущего “человека—артиста,” живущего в мире Красоты и радости. (Lotman & Mints, 1989, pp. 91, 97)

Vainshtein (2006); Zlobin (1980).

This hybrid image of the demonic and the angelic is based on the peculiar characteristics of the symbolist *Weltanschauung* as characterized by the synthesis of the two contradictory elements (Matich, 2005, pp. 69-70). The symbolists sought to incorporate the two opposing worlds as exemplified by paganism/Christianity and the material world/spiritual vision. In terms of sexuality, androgyny was presented as an ideal combination of masculinity and femininity. Thus, while the decadents mostly focused on demonic beauty, the symbolists united beauty with virtue.

Viacheslav Ivanov and his wife, Lidiia Zinov'eva-Annibal, also embodied dandyism based on the combination of beauty and virtue. More precisely, Ivanovs' dandyism can be said to border on Hellenic dandyism as well as symbolist dandyism. As noted in the previous chapter, their apartment (the *bashnia*) was a well-known place where many modernist artists visited frequently and engaged in live artistic communication. The aesthete, Kuzmin, was one of the guests who sat in the corner dressed in his famous colorful vest. Blok also frequented Ivanov's *bashnia* in his decadent period. The literary Wednesday gatherings (*sredy*), particularly at the apartment were full of a peculiar atmosphere in which the artists stylized themselves through fashion. Many people, including the Ivanovs, endorsed the Nietzschean philosophy of Dionysus and attempted to

transform everyday life into an aesthetic practice, mostly by following the model of ancient Greek culture. Lidiia Zinov'eva-Annibal preferred to wear Greek costumes and decorated the apartment in a highly unusual way:

Лидия Дмитриевна, женщина не первой молодости, ходила во время собраний. . . в античном хитоне. Комнаты были странно, но, безусловно, с большим вкусом собраны. “Башня” освещалась свечками, но вставлены они были как попало : не только в подсвечники или канделябры, но и в бутылки. В “оранжевом кабинете” Лидии Дмитриевны на полу лежали простые тюфяки, покрытые пестрыми тканями и заваленные огромным количеством мягких подушек, больших и малых, пестрых и одноцветных. Обстановка и большой комнаты, и “оранжевого кабинета” казалась очень необычной. (Lotman & Mints, 1989, p.104)

In addition, she held a special ritual that was reminiscent of a Dionysian festival. Blok's wife, Liubov' Mendeleeva, concentrated on self-stylization as much as her husband did (Belyi, 1922/1988, p. 113) and favored the theatrical atmosphere of the Ivanovs' place.

Снова зашла речь об “общем деле”—на этот раз об учреждении коллектива (“полустудии, полуобщины”), в котором можно было бы осуществить увлекшую Иванова идею превращения театра в ячейку “новых человеческих отношений,” перерастания его в “жизненное действие.”. . . На проекты Вячеслава Иванова сочувственно откликнулась Любовь Дмитриевна,—ее особенно привлекали подробности: пурпуровые одеяния для участников дионисийских игрищ и хороводов и прочее тому подобное.(Orlov, 1978, p. 239)

As in Gippius' case, the artists' aesthetic practice in Ivanov's *bashnia* was distinct from demonic decadent dandyism. On the fundamental level, the symbolists inherited the decadent aesthetics that favored the world of beauty and art. Yet unlike the demonic decadents' focus on the subversion of conventional morality, the Ivanovs' aesthetic vision was based on the utopian desire to invent a new harmonious world (Lotman & Mints, 1989, pp.97-98). They sought to present themselves in the role of an artist-*prorok* (prophet) who creates a new world. Furthermore, ancient Greek culture served as an original model for the Ivanov's, and they attempted to make a world where the poet becomes a prophet and where art is considered a standard of life (Lotman & Mints,

1989, pp. 409-410).

Blok's dandyism differed from that of Ivanov and Gippius. As we will see, Blok's aesthetics shared many features with the symbolists. His fashion, though, was not quite similar to that of the symbolists. Blok's dandyism did not directly relate to the combination of the demonic and angelic. Yet his decadent self-creation did vary from the other decadent dandyism that was grounded on Nietzsche's theory of the superman. Blok's dandyistic attitude consisted neither of an apotheosis of evil/beauty nor of demonic defiance of conventional morality. Furthermore, his dandyism was not related to Kuzmin's Hellenic dandyism either. In sum, Blok's dandyism deviated from demonic decadent dandyism, Hellenic dandyism, and their symbolist counterpart.

However, this offshoot of decadent dandyism provides significant clues for understanding demonic decadent dandyism and symbolist aesthetics as well, insofar as Blok's case relates to the two phases of modernism. Particularly, Blok's idea of dandyism uniquely explained the term, *dandy*, in relation to decadent and symbolist aesthetics, while, in those days, the epithet of the dandy was utilized simply as a so designate a stylish person or an aesthete.

In the first section of this chapter, I will illustrate the features of Blok's self-creation noted

in many of his (auto) biographical writings. In the second section, I explore Blok's writings concerning dandyism and how the symbolist Blok defined his decadent aesthetic practice in life. The third section will examine how the poet's decadent persona, mostly the jester, is presented in his literary work. Lastly, I will compare Blok's dandyism with Baudelaire's, as both share similar characteristics, while differing on fundamental levels. This comparison of the two cases will provide keys to understanding the difference between Russian dandyism and its Western counterpart.

The Nobleman-Dandy

As most acquaintances noted, Blok was a handsome and fashionable person. Sergei Solov'ev (1988) recalls Blok's stylish appearance at his first meeting with the poet:

В августе 1898 года я встречал Блока в перелеске, на границах нашего Дедова.

Показался тарантас. В нем—молодой человек, изящно одетый, с венчиком золотистых кудрей, с розой в петлице и тросточкой. (p.58)

Similarly, Andrei Belyi (1922/1988) also depicts his first impression of Blok as a person with good taste:

Очень скоро после этого раздался звонок, и когда я вошел в переднюю, то я увидел раздевавшегося молодого человека, очень статного, высокого, широкоплечего, с тонкой талией, в студенческом сюртуке. Это был А. А. Блок с Любовью Дмитриевной. Меня поразило в А.А.(это—первое впечатление) : стиль корректности, “светскости”(в лучшем смысле), называемой хорошим тоном. Все было в А. А. хорошего тона, начиная от сюртука, ловко обтягивающего его талию, с высоким воротником, но не того неприятного

зеленого оттенка, который был характерен для студентов-белоподкладочников, как тогда называли особый тип студентов-франтов. Кажется, в руках А. А. были белые перчатки, которые он не умело совал в карман пальто. Вид был вполне “визитный.” (p. 113)

Furthermore, the poet called himself a *frant* (dandy) in his 1918 diary while looking back on his early years: “Осенью я шил франтоватый сюртук, поступил на юридический факультет, ничего не понимал в юриспруденции, . . . Я был франт, говорил изрядные пошлости” (Blok, 1963, Vol. 7, p. 339).

The dandyism that Blok’s acquaintances remembered consisted of several characteristics. First, the poet was depicted as extremely neat and organized in his attire and belongings. Kornei Chukovskii (1924) recalls that Blok was a person with meticulous taste:

Для меня эта прямота и правдивость Блока была связана с другой его особенностью, которая почему-то даже пугала меня,—с необыкновенной его чистоплотностью. В комнате и на столе у него был такой *страшный* порядок, что хотелось хоть немного намусорить. В его библиотеке даже старые книги

казались новыми, сейчас из магазина. Вещи, окружавшие его, никогда не располагались беспорядочным ворохом, а казалось, сами собою выстраивались по геометрически-правильным линиям. Я не раз говорил ему, что, стоит ему только поддержать в руках какую-нибудь замусоленную книгу, и она сама собою станет чистой. Портфелей он не любил и никогда не носил, а все рукописи, нужные для заседаний, обвертывал необыкновенно изящно бумагой и перевязывал ленточкой.(pp. 40-41)

In addition to this fastidiousness, many people attached to him the epithet *aristocratic* or *prince-like*. Chukovskii (1924) pointed out that Blok was the “последний поэт-дворянин (last poet-nobleman)” (p. 4) who grew up in the cultural tradition of a patrician family. Yet it was also clear that the poet attempted to perform the role of gentry consciously.

И обличье у него было барское: чинный, истовый, немного надменный. Даже в последние годы—без воротника и в картузе—он казался переодетым патрицием. Произношение слов у него было тоже дворянское—слишком изящное, книжное, при чем слова, которые обрусели недавно, он произносил на иностранный

манер: не мебель, но мэбль (meuble), не тротуар, но trottoir (последние две гласные сливал он в одну). Слово “крокодил” произносил он тоже как иностранное слово, строго сохраняя два о. Теперь уж так никто не говорит.

Однажды я сказал ему, что в знаменитом стихотворении “Пора смириться, сэр” слово сэр написано неверно, что нельзя рифмовать это слово со словом ковер.

Он ответил после долгого молчания:

— Вы правы, но для меня это слово звучало тургеневским звуком, вот как бы мой дед произнес его—с французским оттенком — по-стародворянски.(Chukovskii, 1924, p. 5)

In his wedding ceremony in Shakhmatovo, Blok also consciously presented himself in the role of a prince. Blok and his wife, Mendeleva, wore traditional Russian costumes, and the ceremony was meant to evoke a traditional wedding. Blok consciously created an image of a prince and people, in turn, projected that image onto him. Andrei Belyi (1922/1988) compared Blok and his wife to a prince and princess when describing their wedding (p. 129). In Blok’s appearance, Vladimir Piast (1929/1997) thought of Apollo. Mendeleva (1982) also saw her

husband as Sigfried, pointing out her husband's concern with his own appearance:

A “racist” could look with pleasure at Blok—he was indeed the embodiment of the blond, blue-eyed, well-built, heroic Aryan. The severity of his comportment, its militarism, the straight bearing, the conservative manner of dressing, and at the same time his full awareness of his good looks and the lofty way he carried himself—all this complemented his Siegfried-like appearance. Alexander Alexandrovich liked and appreciated his looks; this was by no means the least of his “joys in life.” When a year or so before his illness he began to lose hope, when his hair began to thin out at the temples, when he did not stand up straight anymore and his glance was not as clear, he used to look sadly in the mirror and quietly, as though not wanting to admit out loud what had happened, he would say half in jest: “It’s not the same any longer; no one looks at me anymore in the trolley, . . .” and this for him was a very bitter reality.

(p. 54)

Blok’s self-presentation as a poet-prince was often accompanied by such a formal and aloof attitude that it gave people the impression of a theatrical pose. Mendeleeva (1982) noted that

her husband spoke slowly and theatrically (p.14). Even in Ivanov's apartment, Blok kept a reserved attitude and did not mingle with other artists: "Городецкий был прав: Блок дышал прямой утонченно-ядовитой атмосферой Башни. Но и тут, как везде, окружал себя как бы незримым кольцом, держался несколько отчужденно, оставаясь неизменно сдержанным, спокойным, ровным. Это чувствовали все, кому там повелось с ним встречаться"(Orlov, 1978, p. 243).

Blok's distinctive self-presentation, which was characterized by neat and fashionable clothing and this theatrical and aloof attitude continued throughout his whole life, regardless of the stages with which he divided it. In terms of that self-presentation, his dandyism differed from Kuzmin's whose fashion drastically altered whenever his aesthetic views changed (see Chapter 3 of this dissertation). Blok described himself as a dandy in his *thesis* period as well as in his *antithesis* phase. Even in his late symbolist period, he remained a fashionable person. Maksim Gor'kii (1923/1988) remembers Blok's nice-looking clothing, although he states that the poet's fashion was somewhat conventional.

Походка его на первый взгляд кажется твердой, но, присмотревшись, видишь,

что он нерешительно качается на ногах. И как бы хорошо ни был он одет,—
хочешь видеть его одетым иначе, не так, как все. Гумилев даже в каком-то
меховом костюме лопаря или самоеда кажется одетым, как все. А Блок требует
одежд необычных. (pp. 465-466)

Russkie Dendi (Russian Dandies)

Regardless of his temperament as a dandy, Blok's perspective about his own self-fashioning changed as his aesthetics went through transition. His opinion about dandyism demonstrated its relation to the two distinctive world views, decadence and symbolism. In his *synthesis* period, Blok criticized his decadent self-creation and even considered that the decadent phase was a "low point of his life" (Chukosvkii, 1924, p.28; as translated in Vogel, 1982, p.79):

Он не любил в себе литератора и считал это слово ругательным. Только в минуты крайнего недовольства собою называл он себя этим именем.

“Был он только литератор модный,
Только слов кощунственных творец —”

осудительно сказал он о ком-то. Я спросил у него: о ком? Он ответил: о себе.

Была такая полоса его жизни, когда он чуть не стал литератором. Он всегда ощущал ее как падение. (Chukovskii, 1924, p. 28)

Blok's essay, "O sovremennom sostoianii russkogo simvolizma" ("On the Contemporary State of Russian Symbolism"; 1910) also demonstrated his critical view of his decadent period. In his analysis of the three stages of his world, thesis, antithesis and synthesis, Blok depicted the time of antithesis as that of a puppet theater. In that puppet-theater where life becomes art, Blok (1910/1962) noted, the poet sees the *unknown lady (neznakomka)*, a symbol of decadent aesthetics as characterized by dead puppet-beauty:

Итак, свершилось: мой собственный волшебный мир стал ареной моих личных действий, моим "анатомическим театром," или балаганом, где сам я играю роль наряду с моими изумительными куклами (ессе homo!). . . . Иначе говоря, я уже сделал собственную жизнь искусством (тенденция, проходящая очень ярко через все европейское *декадентство*). Жизнь стала искусством, я произвел заклинания, и передо мною возникло наконец то, что я (лично) называю "Незнакомкой": красавица кукла, синий призрак, земное чудо. Это—венец антитезы. (Vol. 5, pp. 429-430)

Blok's essay "Russkie dendi" ("Russian Dandies"; 1918/1962) more clearly demonstrates

how the later Blok perceived decadent dandyism in general as well as how he viewed his former decadent experience. In a literary gathering Blok meets a youth named Valentin Stenich (concerning Stenich's dandyism, see Vainstein, 2006, p. 525), who tells the poet about his faith in art-for-art's sake in opposition to such commercial and political interests as revolution, work, money and socialism.

Но если осуществится социализм, нам останется только умереть; пока мы не имеем понятия о деньгах; мы все обеспечены и совершенно неприспособлены к тому, чтобы добывать что-нибудь трудом. Все мы—наркоманы, опиисты; женщины наши—нимфоманки. Нас—меньшинство, но мы пока распоряжаемся среди молодежи: мы высмеиваем тех, кто интересуется социализмом, работой, революцией. Мы живем только стихами. (Blok, 1918/1962, Vol. 6, p. 55)

Calling the young man a dandy, Blok notes that the dandy defied conventional and vulgar reality in favor of the principle of art-for-art's sake, and in doing so, dismissed such important values as utilitarianism, humanism and philanthropism (see page 5-6 of this dissertation). In particular, Blok deplores the impact of the spirit of dandyism imported from Western aesthetic

traditions on the culture of the Russian young generation.

К нам от “москвича в Гарольдовом плаще” оно потянулось подсушивать корни,
превращая столетние клены и дубы дворянских парков в трухлявую дряблую
древесину бюрократии. Дунул ветер, и там, где торчала бюрократия, ныне—
груды мусора, щепы, валежника. Но огонь не унимается, он идет дальше и
начинает подсушивать корни нашей молодежи. (Blok, 1918/1962, pp. 56-57)

In the essay, Blok does not explain fully the values that dandyism undermined; he merely comments on such terms as utilitarianism, humanism, tradition and philanthropism. His other writings, however, suggest the limitation of dandyism and the principle of art-for-art’s sake. He notes that aestheticism and dandyism are deprived of the principle of *unity*, more precisely, the combination of the ethical (*pol’za*) and the aesthetic (*krasota*). Also, in explaining the two terms, he presents the concepts of *prekrasnyi* and *krasivyi*—the former connoting the ideal state of art where its aesthetic part does not contradict its moral side, and the latter, the absolute apotheosis of beauty. In addition, as examples of the ideal state of art, he presents those of *narod* (the people; see Blok, 1962, Vol. 5, p. 51) and of specific cultural periods such as the Western Renaissance

(see Blok, 1963, Vol.7, pp.360-363).His 1919 diary contains the poet's idea of unity, *narod*, and beauty.

В стихах и прозе—в произведении искусства—главное—дух, который в нем веет; это соответствует вульгарному “душа поэзии,” но ведь—“глас народа—глас божий”; другое дело то, что этот дух может сказываться в “формах” более, чем в “содержании.” Но все-таки главное внимание читателя нужно обращать на дух, и уже от нашего умения будет зависеть вытравить из этого понятия “вульгарность” и вдохнуть в него истинный смысл, который остается неизменным, так что “публика” в своей наивности и вульгарности правее, когда требует от литераторы “души и содержания,” чем мы, специалисты, когда под всякими предлогами хотим освободить литературу от принесения пользы, от служения и т.д. Я боюсь каких бы то ни было проявлений тенденции “искусство для искусства,” потому, что такая тенденция противоречит самой сущности искусства и потому, что, следуя ей, мы в конце концов потеряем искусство; оно ведь рождается из вечного взаимодействия двух музык—музыки творческой

личности и музыки, которая звучит в глубине народной души, души массы.

Великое искусство рождается только из соединения этих двух электрических токов;

Сознательное устранение политических оценок есть тот же гуманизм, только наизнанку, дробление того, что недробимо, неделимо; все равно что сад без грядок; французский парк, а не русский сад, в котором непременно соединяется всегда приятное с полезным и красивое с некрасивым. Такой сад *прекраснее* красивого парка; творчество *больших* художников есть всегда прекрасный сад и с цветами и с репейником, а не красивый парк с утрамбованными дорожками. (Blok, 1963, Vol. 7, pp. 364-365)

In this way, Blok's symbolist aesthetics could not countenance dandyism, because of its separation of beauty from truth. This does not mean that the symbolist Blok endorsed a politically oriented aesthetics. For Blok, both the utilitarian view of art and the apotheosis of art are equally far from the genuine spirit of the unity of art and life, as Eikhenbaum (1921/1979) notes:

Среди вслушивания в мистическую музыку Революции и речей “за Катилину” Блок

с ужасом видит “узкий и страшный колодезь дэндизма” и на дне его тоже свое отражение: как властителя чувств. Вместо вожделенного слияния искусства, жизни и политики—жуткое по своей “нераздельности и неслиянности” сопоставление : символизм, максимализм и...дэндизм. (Eikhenbaum, 1921/1979, p. 23)

The symbolist Blok rejected dandyism, not just because of his symbolist aesthetics but also because of his fear of dandyism’s popularization. The late 1910s was a period when dandyism’s popularity grew and when different types of dandy culture as shown in fashion journals and the cabaret started to appear. In 1910, the periodical, *Dendi* with the subtitle, *the Journal of Art and Fashion*, published its first edition (Vainstein, 2006, p. 516), and followed a year later by the debut of the literary cabaret *Brodiachaia sobaka* (The Stray Dog). The dandy culture which formerly existed only within literary circles was now open to the public, and imitators of dandyism gradually increased (Demidenko, 1990, p.82).

Just as the demonic decadent dandies did not welcome the popularization of dandyism (see page 71-72 of this dissertation), so too Blok did not accept the vulgarization of dandyism. Blok even felt guilty that he was previously fascinated with the culture. Thus, Blok confessed that

he could not argue when Stenich blamed him for the prevalence of dandyism.

Молодой человек как бы сразу откликнулся на мою отчужденность:

- Вы же ведь и виноваты в том, что мы—такие.

- Кто—мы?

- Вы, современные поэты. Вы отравляли нас. Мы просили хлеба, а вы нам давали камень.¹⁹

Я не сумел защититься; и не хотел; и.... не мог.(Blok, 1918/1962, Vol. 6, p. 56)

At the end of the essay, Blok even contended that the recent popularization of dandyism came to be an act of “revenge” against him (Blok, 1918/1962, Vol. 6, p. 57). Blok realized that as a former dandy, he was responsible for the dandy’s negative impact on the culture of the young generation.

¹⁹ In his diary, Blok (1963) employs different metaphors in quoting Stenich’s words: Нам нужна была каша, а вы нас кормили амброзией. (Vol. 7, p. 324)

The Pierrot-Dandy

Blok's autobiographical persona reflects only one dimension of his decadent self-creation; his literary personae demonstrate his dandyism from another perspective. Of Blok's varied decadent personae, the harlequin and the pierrot are most representative of Blok as the decadent dandy.²⁰ They embody an aesthete who searches for beauty: in Blok's work, both harlequin and pierrot follow the beautiful woman, Columbine. In addition, they are often depicted with an emphasis on their external appearance. Because of their buffoon roles, they decorate themselves with make-up and extravagant, unusual costumes.

Blok's harlequin-pierrot is related to the dandy in another sense. He searches for beauty as a new ideal when he has become disillusioned by certain pre-existing (mostly, religious or political) ideals. Yet this new ideal of Beauty turns out to be an anti-ideal; the lady Columbine whom Blok's jesters pursue is a beautiful yet dead puppet that symbolizes the illusoriness of the Solov'evian

²⁰ Blok's harlequinade theme can be seen in the play *Balaganchik* (1906) and the poems—"Ia opiat' na podmostkakh (1899)," "Svet v okoshke shatalsia (1902)," "Iavilsia on na stroinom bale (1902)," "Ia byl ves' v pestrykh loskust'iakh (1903)," "Dvoinik (1903-4)" and "Balagan (1906)." See Soboleva (2008).

ideal. Considering the dandy is an aesthetic being who embodies himself as an anti-ideal and searches for beauty as an anti-ideal (see Chapter 1 of this dissertation), the analogy of Blok's jester and the dandy becomes clearer. Thus, as the dandy seeks beauty as a product of complete artificiality, not as the imitation of Nature or God, harlequin and pierrot pursue the puppet lady Columbine, an artificial aesthetic existence created from the parody of God and Nature. (It is for this reason that the later symbolist Blok pursued the world of nature and life as personified by *Russia* in defiance of the decadent antinature world)

Another significant characteristic that Blok's jester shares with the dandy is theatricality. The jester is presented as an actor who should wear a mask and act in front of people. The jester's theatrical character is accompanied by alienation from the crowd. As the dandy is a lonely and theatrical character who is aloof from the vulgar masses, the jester, misunderstood by people, hides his sadness and solitude and performs a comedy in front of the people. His 1903 poem, "Ya byl ves' v pestrykh loskust'iakh" ("I was all in motley rags") shows how Blok presents his relationship to the world through the symbol of the jester.

Я был весь в пестрых лоскутьях,

Белый, красный, в безобразной маске.

Хохотал и кривлялся на распутьях,

И рассказывал шуточные сказки.

Развертывал длинные сказанья

Бессвязно, и долго, и звонко—

О стариках, и о странах без названья,

И о девушке с глазами ребенка.

Кто-то долго, бессмысленно смеялся,

И кому-то становилось больно.

И когда я внезапно сбивался,

Из толпы кричали: “Довольно!”(Blok, 1997, p.153)

The literary persona of the poem plays the role of a jester, wearing a mask and costume.

The crowds are presented as people who do not understand or value the jester’s effort to

communicate. Many of Blok's works present the poet as similar to a jester, often with the emphasis on costumes, though the symbol of the jester is not clearly implied. Most of the poems about this theme touch on the gap between the jester's *outer* appearance and *inner* self.

Среди гостей ходил я в черном фраке.

Я руки жал. Я, улыбаясь, знал:

Пробьют часы. Мне будут делать знаки.

Поймут, что я кого-то увидал...

Ты подойдешь. Сожмешь мне больно руку.

Ты скажешь: "Брось. Ты возбуждаешь смех."

Но я пойму—по голосу, по звуку,

Что ты меня боишься больше всех.

Я закричу, беспомощный и бледный,

Вокруг себя бесцельно оглянусь.

Потом—очнусь у двери с ручкой медной,

Увижу всех... и слабо улыбнусь. (Blok, 1997, p.168)

Hence, Blok's jester is a being who hides his inner self and expresses himself solely through a mask (smile) and costume. In this sense, Blok's utilization of the symbol of the jester is certainly different from its original sources, that is, the *Commedia dell'arte* and the Russian popular theater. Those texts focus more on the comic, carnival element of the characters. Yet Blok's world places more emphasis on the jester's lyrical feature (Ahn, 2002a, p. 48). This ironic character wanders around the city, frequenting social gatherings with a melancholy mask and fashionably dressed.

Of course, it was not just Blok who employed the symbol of the harlequin-pierrot. As Olga Soboleva (2008) notes, the harlequin and the pierrot were the representative models of *art nouveau*, that is, decadence (p. 26). Most *fin-de-siecle* artists used the harlequin and the pierrot as an aesthete, dandy, or poet, as Clayton (1993) notes:

As the century wore on, the Pierrot theme became more and more divorced from the flea-pit theater of its origins, and more and more the property of the aesthete and the poet, a convenient pose with overtones of dandyism and perversion, innocence and cruelty. (p. 36)

Belyi also employed a jester as one of his literary figures.²¹ Interestingly, however, Belyi's jester turned out to be a bit different from Blok's. Belyi placed more emphasis on the demonic harlequin than on the victimized-jester, pierrot (see Chapter 3 of Soboleva, 2008). As many of his contemporaries remember, Belyi always saw himself as an earthly embodiment of the demonic Harlequin. His poem, "V letnem sadu" ("In the summer garden"; 1906) shows the harlequinade figure, Domino, as a cynical transgressor and demon.

В летнем саду

Над рестораном сноп ракет

Взвывается струею тонкой.

Старик в отдельный кабинет

Вон тащит за собой ребенка.

Над лошадиною спиной

²¹ Belyi's harlequinade theme can be seen in these poems; "Vakkhanaliia" (1906), "Arlekinada" (1906), "V letnem sadu" (1906), "Maskarad" (1908), "Prazdnik" (1908). See Soboleva(2008).

Оголена, в кисейной пене,—

Проносится—ко мне, за мной!

Проносится по летней сцене.

Процелкает над ней жокей—

Процелкает бичом свистящим.

Смотрю... Осанистый лакей

С шампанским пробежал пьянящим.

И пенистый бокал поднес...

Вдруг крылья яркокрасной тоги

Так кто-то над толпой вознес—

Бежать бы: неподвижны ноги.

Тяжелый камень стекла бьет—

Позором купленные стекла.

И кто-то в маске восстает

Над мертвенною жизнью, блеклой.

Волнуются: смятенье, крик.

Огни погасли в кабинете;—

Оттуда пробежал старик

В полузастегнутом жилете,—

И падает,—и пал в тоске

С бокалом пенистым рейнвейна

В протянутой, сухой руке

У тиховейного бассейна;—

Хрипит, проколотый насквозь

Сверкающим, стальным кинжалом:

Над ним склонилось, пролилось

Атласами в сиянье алом—

Немое домино: и вновь,

Плеща крылом атласной маски,

С кинжала отирая кровь,

По саду закружилось в пляске.(Belyi, 1966, p. 237-238)

In contrast, Blok's 1902 poem, "Svet v okoshke shatalsia" ("Light wavered in the window"), presents a harlequin distinctive from Belyi's:

Свет в окошке шатался,

В полумраке—один—

У подъезда шептался

С темнотой арлекин.

Был окутанный мглою

Бело-красный наряд

Наверху—за стеною—

Шутовской маскарад.

Там лицо укрывали

В разноцветную ложь.

Но в руке узнавали

Неизбежную дрожь.

Он—мечом деревянным

Начертал письма.

Восхищенная странным,

Потуплялась Она.

Восхищенью не веря,

С темнотою—один—

У задумчивой двери

Хохотал арлекин.(Blok, 1997, p.117)

The harlequin of this poem is depicted as solitary, thoughtful, and even reminiscent of the pierrot who seems resigned to the love affair of a man and a woman, that is, Harlequin and Columbine. At times, Blok directly presents the pierrot as his persona rather than as the lonely and thoughtful harlequin. His 1902 poem, “Iavilsia on na stroinom bale” (“He appeared at an elegant ball”), depicts a melancholy and passive sufferer, the pierrot:

Явился он на стройном бале

В блестяще сомкнутом кругу.

Огни зловещие мигали,

И взор описывал дугу.

Всю ночь кружились в шумном танце,

Всю ночь у стен сжимался круг.

И на заре—в оконном глянце

Бесшумный появился друг.

Он встал и поднял взор совиный,

И смотрит—пристальный—один,

Куда за бледной Коломбиной

Бежал звенящий Арлекин.

А там—в углу—под образами,

В толпе, мятущейся пестро,

Вращая детскими глазами,

Дрожит обманутый Пьеро. (Blok, 1997, p.126)

Significantly, Blok's pierrot is depicted as a holy fool (*iurodivyi*) who grasps the ultimate truth of the world. In the poem above, the pierrot lamenting under the icons gives an image of a

holy sufferer (Soboleva, 2008, p.153).

Just as the focus of the two poets varies, the color of harlequin/pierrot's fashion in Blok's world differs from that of Belyi's harlequin. In Belyi's works, the harlequin usually wears a red costume (along with the black mask), signifying that he is a demon (Soboleva, 2008, p. 123). In "Vakkhanaliia" ("Bacchanalia"; 1906), the harlequin wears a "огненный хитон" ("fiery tunic"; and "маска черная" ("black mask") and places a camellia in the buttonhole of a tail-coat (Belyi, 1966, p. 232). Also, the harlequin of the poem "Maskarad" ("Masquerade"; 1908) is a "стройный черт,—атласный, красный" ("a slender devil with smooth red satin"; Belyi, 1966, p. 222).

In contrast, in Blok's works, the harlequin wears not only red clothes, but he also attires himself in white. The harlequin put on a "бело-красный наряд" ("white and red garment") in "Svet v okoshke shatalsia" ("Light wavered in the window"; Blok, 1997, p. 117). In "Ia byl ves' v pestrykh loskust'iax" ("I was all in motley rags"; 1903), the jester depicts himself as "в пестрых лоскустьях /белый, красный, в безобразной маске" ("in motley rags, white, red, in a hideous mask"; Blok, 1997, p.153).

Thus Blok's decadent persona was a special figure who incorporated Christian elements.

He is presented not only as a decadent jester-dandy but also as a *iurodivyi* (holy fool). As his convergence with the *iurodivyi* (holy fool) dandy implies, Blok was never interested in the superman theory of Nietzschean philosophy that fascinated other decadents (Bristol, 1986, p. 150). Furthermore, he never favored Wilde as other modernists did. Rather, he was concerned with the Nietzschean idea that emphasized the Dionysian conflation of the self with the collective force (Bristol, 1986, p. 150). During the whole decadent and symbolist period, Blok's primary theme was the individual's union with the world.

For that reason, characteristically, Blok's *iurodivyi*-dandy places himself within this world, as though he were a fallen angel who chose the earth rather than heaven. Blok's *iurodivyi*-dandy later evolves into such literary personae as a drunken man and *brodiaga* (vagabond). Just like his literary persona, Blok performed the role of the *iurodivyi*-dandy in real life. Many people remember the dandy Blok not merely at social gatherings but also on the streets.

Душевная тоска и тревога гнали его из улицы в улицу, из кабака в кабак. Он стал много пить. Любовь к жизни, к ее нищим радостям и пленительным мелочам, жалость к несчастным, обиженным судьбой людям, глухая ненависть

к тому, что унижало людей и калечило жизнь,—все сплеталось воедино, надрывало сердце и разъедало душу. И когда охватывало отчаянье, хотелось забыться, заглушить вином тоску и треводу.

Тщательно одетый, стройный и крепкогрудный молодой человек с непроницаемо-строгим лицом постаивал за стойкой у Чванова (был такой популярный ресторан средней руки на Петербурской стороне), одиноко посиживал в грузинском кабачке.(Orlov, 1978, pp. 336-337)

As Vladimir Orlov's (1978) depiction of the poet's decadent period makes clear, the dandy, Blok, the symbol of beauty, situated himself inside the vulgar world of the street. As the last Romantic prince and as a *iurodivyi*-dandy, Blok attempted to find beauty in the mundane world rather than in heaven.

Blok and Baudelaire

Blok's dandyism thus shares certain characteristics with Baudelaire's. Although it is unclear whether Blok was affected by Baudelaire's dandyism, both poets' dandyism lies in placing oneself within the fleeting and transient world as exemplified by the crowd and city where absolute ideals and truth no longer exist. In addition, their dandyistic attitude is an expression of the gap between the poet and the world. As Baudelaire's black attire symbolizes his alienation from the world, Blok's preference for black signifies his conflict with the world. Also, for the two dandies, the color black represents camouflaging the self within the vulgar world.

The comparison with Wilde's dandyism provides a better understanding of the characteristics of Blok and Baudelaire's self-creation. While Wilde's dandyism is mainly used to subvert established conventions through public performance and excessive self-advertisement, Baudelaire and Blok's aesthetic self-creation focuses more on self-effacement with an ascetic attitude (see Chapter 1 of this dissertation). While Wilde was an anticonventional iconoclastic harlequin, Baudelaire and Blok were melancholy and ascetic pierrots who hid themselves within the world.

However, Baudelaire's dandyism differs from Blok's just as Russian dandyism is distinct from its Western counterpart. For Baudelaire, the dandy transcends the Romantic myth, which considers the poet as a bearer of the mission of Truth. As Wohlfarth points out, Baudelaire's dandyism takes place at the point where he ceases to be a Romantic poet.

Perte d'Auréole, certainly, registers the demythologization of the poet. He is not merely compelled to look at himself and the world "with sober eyes," but, making a virtue of necessity, gladly points out his indistinguishability from his fellow-mortals. . . . More specifically, however, the poet's halo is not so much a feudal reality as a bourgeois illusion. It belongs to the whole myth of the Artist (with a capital letter) developed by nineteenth-century European Romanticism, and it is this Romantic myth, implicit in the initial words and surprise (or mock-surprise) of the poet's interlocutor that is the immediate object of his sly humor. . . . Its protagonist disconcertingly relishes hell, looks forward to prostituting himself and thereby subverts the myth of the fallen angel by radicalizing it and really falling. (Wohlfarth, 1970, p. 533)

In contrast, the dandy Blok embodies a Romantic poet who bears Truth and clashes with the mundane world. He himself embodies a site where unification with ideals (real self) will take place. For that reason, Blok's harlequin and pierrot feel despair when their aesthetic ideal, Columbine, turns out to be a dead puppet. Even after Columbine disappears, the pierrot waits for her next coming. In contrast, Baudelaire's dandyism is not based on a tragic view of the world. Although Baudelaire's attitude toward the world is ironic, Baudelaire's dandy no longer grieves about the world without ideals.

Because of his aesthetic that was focused on its truth-commitment, Blok had to face conflict with director Vsevolod Meierhol'd in the interpretation of his play *Balaganchik* (*The Fairground Booth*; 1906). While Meierhol'd emphasized the features of the mask and theatricality in his direction of the play, Blok regarded the mask as a negative element that conceals the truth:

Театр,—говорит Мейерхольд,—есть игра масок ; “игра лиц,” как возразил я, или “переживание,” как назвал то же самое он,—есть, по существу, то же самое, это только—спор о словах.

Утверждая последнее, Мейерхольд еще раз подтвердил, что ему не важны слова.

Я понимаю это, он во многом прав. *Но*, думаю я, за словами стоят мнения, за мнениями—устремление ума—устремление сердца, а сердце—человечье. (Blok, 1963, V.7., p.187)

In his late period, Blok strongly fortifies his negative viewpoint of theatricality. In his essay “O teatre” (“About the Theater”; 1908), Blok insisted on the separation of the real theater from life. To Blok, the actor should perform his role only in the real theater and never merge his theater with life. The symbolist Blok, it seems, no longer accepted the idea of life-creation, which was an attempt to create life into art (theater).

Но в жизни иные законы, чем на сцене. И потому, когда героизм или злодейство переносятся в жизнь, то здесь они называются другими именами. Героизм Макбета в современной жизни—есть прежде всего необразование, полная остановка духовной жизни и, может быть, грубая сила, которая в лучшем случае бездейственна, потому что—корыстна и только телесна. Итак, может оказаться, к прискорбию, что талантливый Лир или Ромео в жизни ничем, кроме безграмотности, пьянства и буянства—не может проявиться. (Blok,

1908/1962, V. 5. p.249)

In this way, Blok's aesthetics were mixed with the symbolist vision that approves of such absolute values as God, Truth, or Nature. And, Blok's dandy took on the feature of a Romantic hero who holds the (potential) connection with Providence. However, it does not mean that Blok's decadent dandyism was completely based on Romantic heroism. More precisely, during the period he calls decadence, Blok vacillated between a demonic decadent dandy and a Romantic/symbolist hero. His vacillation between the two worlds can be seen even in his later symbolist period. Bristol notes that regardless of his attempt to divide his world into the three stages, Blok's later period was not completely different from his decadent aesthetics. In his later period, Blok vacillates between the Dionysian vision and the symbolist view (Bristol, 1986, p. 154). Thus, we may say that Blok's self-creation as a dandy was not related to any specific period. His relation to the world as a jester-dandy was constant, regardless of the change in his aesthetics. Hovering on the border between a jester-dandy and an *iurodivyi-prorok* (*prophet*), Blok created a special self-image.

The distinctive characteristic of Blok's dandyism can be used to interpret his preference

for the color *black*. First, his *black* attire symbolizes his relation with the world as a decadent dandy. But his *black* needs to be differentiated from other forms of *black*. Dobuzhinskii (1987) described the black color that fascinated most poets during Russian modernist period:

С Блоком, как и со многими другими нашими поэтами, я тоже познакомился на средах у Вячеслава Иванова зимой 1906-1907 года. Это был у Блока период “Прекрасной Дамы” и “Незнакомки”. . . . Сам Блок как личность мне казался в полной гармонии с его поэзией. Он был в те годы юн и строен, с гордо поставленной головой, в ореоле выющихся волос и с лицом молодого Гете. Он был более красив, чем на довольно мертвенном портрете Сомова. Как Вячеслав Иванов, Бальмонт, Брюсов, Волошин и другие, Блок носил тогда черный сюртук и черный шелковый галстук бантом (и в отличие от других, “байроновские” отложные воротнички). Это сделалось как бы формой поэта того времени. Традиция еще держалась. (pp. 279-280)

Blok as well as other demonic decadents (Konstantin Bal'mont, Valerii Briusov and Aleksandr Dobroliubov) and even the symbolist Ivanov shared black as their symbol of

antivulgarity in favor of beauty. However, as examined in Chapter 2, black had a different meaning for each person. Like that of the demonic decadents, Blok's black signified the search for beauty as an anti-ideal. Yet the poet shares with the symbolists the vision of the synthetic world where Truth and beauty are combined. Blok's decadent persona, the jester, is clothed in white as well as in black or red.

Notwithstanding, Blok's black itself is not a direct manifestation of his symbolist vision. In other words, Blok did not express the symbolist worldview with his use of the color black. Thus Blok's fashion was not juxtaposed with the color *white*, unlike the case with Zinaida Gippius. Blok's fascination with *black* focuses more on the Romantic dandy's relationship to the world than it does on the symbolist vision of a synthesis of the demonic and angelic. In that sense, Blok's black is similar to that of Baudelaire. However, his aesthetics differ from Baudelaire's. While Baudelaire's black signifies an absolute obliteration of the self, particularly, the self of the Romantic hero, Blok's black does not quite signify such a complete removal of the self. His black embodies that of a Romantic prince-dandy who has lost his ideals and believes in their eventual restoration.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

I have examined three cases of Russian decadent dandyism, which is characterized by the expression of an iconoclastic defiance of accepted cultural norms through the medium of idiosyncratic appearance and behavior. The demonic decadents, as exemplified by Aleksandr Dobroliubov, Valerii Briusov, and Konstantin Bal'mont expressed their idea of beauty by fashioning themselves in the image and likeness of the demonic. They pursued absolute emancipation from morality and championed the artist's right to explore his or her demonic side.

Mikhail Kuzmin represents one major offshoot of (demonic) decadent dandyism. Like all demonic decadents, he rejected ascetic religious world and endorsed the apotheosis of beauty. Yet he advocated *harmonious* beauty, where religion does not contradict the sensuous world. In terms of self-creation, Kuzmin defied his predecessors' *serious, intense* self-fashioning as amoralistic demons and fashioned himself as a *joyful, nonchalant* dandy who worships the balanced world of sense and spirit. His orange jacket symbolizes the poet's desire for a Hellenic world that approves of (his) homosexuality as well as the unified world of religion and beauty.

Blok exemplifies another offshoot of Russian decadent dandyism. He shared the decadent

worldview as characterized by pessimism over the loss of ideals and a defiant rejection of the antiaesthetic vulgar world. However, his decadent aesthetics were combined with a symbolist vision that acknowledges both the ethical side of art (*pol'za*) and its aesthetic element (*krasota*). Based on this aesthetic, Blok fashioned himself as a jester-dandy who performs a comedy in front of people while hiding his sorrow. He was not a rebellious figure like the demonic decadents, but a passive self-effacing dandy who lives in the world and grieves for the loss of ideals. Also, he is an *iurodivyi*-dandy who maintains a (potential) connection with ideals.

I have also compared the three types of Russian decadent dandyism with their Western counterparts, particularly that of Baudelaire and Wilde. Russian decadent dandyism shares a similar structure with that of the European modernists; the Russian demonic dandies were fascinated with Baudelaire and Wilde's project of merging their lives with art. Kuzmin also showed the influence of Wilde's aestheticism through his literary characters, many of whom are aesthetes and dandies. Blok's dandyism is also analogous to Baudelaire's in its focus on a man's search for beauty at a time when ideals are lost. Also, both Blok and Baudelaire's dandy played the role of the "incognito prince" who gives up that role and opts to mingle with the masses.

However, Russian decadent dandyism differs from its Western counterpart in its adoption of a Romantic heroism. The Russian demonic decadents emphasized the *unity of art and life* in dandyism instead of the dandy's antiheroic self-parody. For example, they emphasized Wilde's anticonventional, *great ego*, and his conflict with societal constraints. In his theory of decadent self-creation, Briusov stressed Baudelaire's passionate intensity for exploring the self, whereas Baudelaire's aesthetics are in fact characterized by their ascetic and impassionate, cold beauty.

The Hellenist-dandy Kuzmin also deviates from Western dandyism. While Kuzmin's Hellenic perspective is based on the unity of beauty and religion, Wilde's dandyism is characterized by the separation of the ephemeral from the spiritual with the emphasis on the former. Furthermore, Blok's dandyism is distinctive from Baudelaire's in its relation to Romantic heroism. Baudelaire's "incognito prince" attempts to completely erase the *heroic self* by hiding himself in the transient and fleeting world. But Blok's dandy, even among the crowds, is depicted as a Romantic prince who allied with Providence, which marks him as a *iurodivyi* (holy fool).

In this way, while Russian aesthetics and dandyism are oriented toward the *center* (the Hero, Truth, life and spirit), the focus of Western aesthetics and dandyism was on *de-centering*

those idealistic values. However, as pointed out above, this does not mean that Russian decadent dandyism can be reduced to a form of Romantic heroism. More precisely, Russian decadent dandyism is characterized by the tension between a decentering antiheroic dandyism and the centering mode of self-creation characteristic of Romantic heroism. The (Russian) demonic decadent dandy seeks to become a Stavrogin-like man who creates self and life by freeing himself from any established conventions. Yet the demonic decadent dandy continually associates his demonism with such Romantic narratives as the unity of life and art and martyrdom. Kuzmin's dandyism also borders on the Hellenistic and Hellenic worlds. Although he prioritizes the Hellenic over the Hellenistic, his focus keeps changing between the world of sense and spirit. As E. V. Ermilova (1989) in particular points out, Kuzmin's *veshchizm* is located between a focus on the fleetingness of this-worldly objects and the potential for relating to the symbolic. Blok also vacillates between decadence and symbolism. His decadent dandyism neither sinks to the level of blasphemy nor reaches the heights of symbolism. Such hybrid aesthetics as Kuzmin and Blok's, characterized by a synthesis of the two contradictory worlds, sense/spirit and *krasota/pol'za*, are involved with the tension between the *decentering* feature of

dandyism and the *centering* element of aesthetics.

Because of its special position, Russian decadence often gives an impression of being “relatively more solemn and metaphysical (Bristol, 1985, p. 94)” when compared with European decadence. In fact, as noted in Chapter 1 and 2, both Russian decadent dandyism and Russian premodernist dandyism mix more easily with Romantic heroism. One of the reasons for such aesthetics is the special relationship that traditionally existed between the two cultures. Russian culture had a tendency to maintain a certain distance from Western culture in order to foster and create its own culture (see Polonsky, 1998, p.41-44). For that reason, the Russian perspective on Western culture may appear distorted, as can be seen in the Russian understanding of Western aestheticism.

Yet the main difference between the two cultural traditions lies in the distinctive meanings of *convention* and *beauty*. For Russian decadents, *convention* represents *meshchanstvo* or *poshlost'* (vulgarity, philistinism) usually connoting middle-class stagnation (Kline, 1986, p. xii). Moreover, the Russian decadents' concept of *convention* was associated with the clichéd realism of the preceding artistic generation, the realist-intellectuals. In a word, what Russian decadents sought to

subvert was utilitarianism and middle-class morality, not a Romantic myth of a poet/ego. Instead, for them, a Romantic ego was a model that could challenge both the philistine “shopkeeper mentality” and the realist-intellectuals’ moral-based aesthetics.

In contrast, in Western dandyism, *convention* represents the idea of the bourgeoisie, characterized by vulgarity, democracy, commercialism, professionalism, but also, significantly, the Romantic myth of a poet/ego. In European history, particularly in France, the bourgeois class embodied the teleological myth of a history and a genius/man’s mission to fulfill historical progress. The idea of the Romantic ego as a hero was thus a significant part of the myth of the bourgeois class. For that reason, Western dandies rejected bourgeois culture and its roots in Romanticism. Baudelaire’s dandyism originated in his departure from his former support of bourgeois liberalism. However, in the Russian cultural tradition, where the bourgeois and middle-class represented only “mediocrity and vulgarity,” a Romantic hero was as anticonventional as a postromantic dandy. Thus, Romantic heroism appears in the modernist period as a new mode of self-creation in its combination with dandyism.

The resurgence of the former mode of convention can also be seen in the Russian early

avant-garde cultural milieu: More specifically, Russian demonic decadent dandyism reappears in avant-gardist self-creation, which was opposed to the religious and political sympathies of the symbolists. Markov (1964) also notes that “ego-futurism is simply a revival of Russian Decadentism, especially the latter’s cult of individualism” (p. 404).

The most representative model of the ego-futurist dandies was Igor Severianin. He liked to wear an extravagant overcoat and, at times, put lilies into his buttonholes just as Wilde did. In a 1914 essay on the futurists, Chukovskii (1966) depicts the Petersburg ego-futurists, including Severianin, as a bunch of “Oscar Wildes” (p. 215). As Markov notes, Severianin’s aesthetic was a continuation of Nietzschean demonic decadent dandyism. Many of his works demonstrate the poet’s fascination with the Nietzschean *new man* philosophy: “Я—моя доктрина. Приносить все в жертву этой цели”(Severianin, 2005, p. 36). Zinaida Gippius (1925/1971), also with a derogatory tone, depicts Severianin’s imitation of Briusov.

Брюсовская обезьяна народилась в виде Игоря Северянина. Можно бы сделать целую игру, подбирая к чертам Брюсова, самым основным, соответственные черточки Северянина, соответственно умельченные, окарикатуренные. Черт

даже перестарался, слишком их сблизил, слишком похоже вылепил
обличительную фигурку. Сделал ее тоже “поэтом.” И тоже “новатором,”
“создателем школы” и “течения”. . . . через 25 лет после Брюсова. . . .
“Европеизм” Брюсова отразился в Игоре, перекривившись, в виде
коммивояжерства. Так прирожденный коммивояжер, еще не успевший
побывать в людях, пробавляется пока что “заграничными” словцами.. . .
Длинный бледный нос Игоря, большая фигура—чуть-чуть сутулая—черный
сюртук, плотно застегнутый. Он не хулиганил—эта мода едва нарождалась, да
и был он только э г о—футурист. Он, напротив, жаждал “изящества,” как
всякий прирожденный коммивояжер. (pp. 109-111)

Nikolai Gumilev was also a well-known dandy, particularly in his early years (see Auslander, 1943/2000, p. 267). He was well acquainted with the cultures of Western dandies. In particular, Wilde’s influence was enormous in shaping Gumilev’s aesthetics (Basker, 2006, para. 2). Along with Wilde, he found his model of dandyism in that of Theophile Gautier (Gasparov, 1992, p.327-336). Like Severianin, Gumilev was attracted by Nietzschean individualism and the

model of a superman. His fascination with the Nietzschean *new man* can be seen in his literary persona. In his first book of lyrics, *Put' konkvistadorov (The Way of Conquistadors)*, he sought to create the image of the poet as a warrior (Rusinko, 1994, pp. 87-88). As Gippius found Briusov in Severianin's dandyism, Briusov recalls his younger years in Gumilev's superman-dandyism:

1907. 15. Мая. Приезжал в Москву Н. Гумилев. Одет довольно изящно, . . . Говорили о поэзии и оккультизме. . . . Видимо, он находится в своем декадентском периоде. . . . Напоминал мне меня 1895г (Briusov, 2002, p. 157).

Furthermore, Vladimir Maiakovskii typified the avant-gardist dandy. Particularly, as Benedikt Livshits (1933/1989) recalls in his memoir, Maiakovskii was famous for his yellow vest, and after Maiakovskii, the color yellow became a trademark of avant-gardist dandyism (see Demidenko, 2002, para.14-15).

Его популярность после спектаклей в Луна-парке возросла чрезвычайно. Одевайся он тогда, как все порядочные люди, в витринах модных магазинов, быть может, появились бы воротники и галстуки “Маяковский.” Но желтая кофта и голая шея были неподражаемы *par excellence*. (Livshits, 1933/1989, p.451)

Significantly, Maiakovskii and his fellow avant-gardists' predilection for *yellow* fashion demonstrates a particular relation to the preceding dandyism. They attempted to transcend decadent and symbolist dandyism as shown by the the latter's preference for *black and white*, both related to religious motifs. Furthermore, Maiakovskii sought to defy decadent and symbolist self-creation through playful parody. Together with the cubo-futurists, such as David Burliuk, Mikhail Larionov, and Ilia Zdanevich, Maiakovskii scandalized the public and published the manifesto *Pochemu my raskrashivaemsia?* (*Why Do We Paint Ourselves?*). And, the cubo-futurists parodied the cultural norm of decadents and symbolists at the time by putting radishes or wooden spoons into their buttonholes rather than flowers (Gray, 1986, p.115; as cited in Moeller-Sally, 1990, p. 466).

As the Soviet cultural milieu came to be dominated by social and political issues, avant-garde dandyism began to be criticized as bourgeois. Simultaneously, avant-gardist aesthetics became gradually attenuated by political issues. In opposition to politicized futurism, a group of new aesthetes called *imagists* emerged. The main members of the Imagist group, Anatolii Mariengof, Vagim Shershenevich, and Sergei Esenin, were well known for their dandyism. They

were influenced by Wilde and one of them, Mariengof, was even nicknamed “Wilde from Penza” (see Khuttunen, 2006). Blok was also an idol of Esenin and Mariengof. Blok’s symbol of the harlequin and pierrot were often employed as one of their literary personae, as Mariengof’s 1918 poem shows: “Мы! мы! мы всюду / У самой рампы, на авансцене, / Не тихие лирики, / А пламенные паяцы” (Mariengof, 2002, p. 206). Significantly, just as futurists attempted to parody the *lofty* religious world of the symbolists and decadents, the imagists challenged the futurists’ increasingly *serious* aesthetics. Imagists described themselves as *prekrasnye sharlatany* (great charlatans)

Мы родственники футуризма, но мы пришли сменить его, потому что наши души, распертые майскою радостью, не могут смотреть без смеха на жалкий плач и нытику футуристического искусства. . . .мы, имажинисты, дети прекрасного шарлатана Арлекина, всегда с улыбкой, брызжущею радостью и маем. Мы не знаем слова “грусть,” потому что даже наше отчаяние радостно и солнечно.(Shershenevich & Erdman, 1919, p. 66-67; as cited in Khuttunen, 2007, p.

30)

Their penchant for *frivolity* even featured anarchistic elements. By denying any ideological role in art, the imagists sought to transcend futurism and create completely *new* aesthetic (Khuttunen, 2007, p. 53). Yet the imagist anarchistic tendency did not develop any further. After Esenin's death in 1925, the group lost its aesthetic color and turned political (Khuttunen, 2007, p. 50). Moreover, the political situation during the period of war communism made the imagists' dandyism virtually impossible because of its extravagance (Khuttunen, 2007, p. 53-54).

Thus aestheticism and its extra-artistic practice saturated the Russian modernist milieu, even in the postrevolutionary period (see Vainstein, 2006, pp. 521-539). Particularly, the dominance of the utilitarian view on art was continually opposed by the idea of the restoration of beauty, art, individualism, and dandyism. However, in oscillating between their devotion to *pure* beauty and to didacticism in art, Russian modernist aestheticism and dandyism barely went so far as to marginalize such idealistic values as Hero, Truth, life and Nature; whereas the aesthetics of its Western counterpart are based on such marginalization.

It is still not clear whether imagist dandyism shared any *de-centering* elements with

European dandyism, or whether it was merely an avant-garde version of Russian decadent dandyism. Iurii Tynianov (1977) maintained that the imagists' attempt to create something completely new was simply a continuation of the culture of the preceding generation (p. 170; as cited in Khuttunen, 2007, p. 30). However, the feature of "anarchistic negation" that exists in the imagist dandyism is analogous to the complete defiance of Romantic heroism in Western dandyism. It would be productive to examine the comparison of Russian imagist dandyism with Western dandyism.

Along with imagist dandyism, the theater director and dramatist Nikolai Evreinov is one of the Russian modernist-dandies worth examining in future research. Like many Russian modernist dandies, Evreinov was called a "Russian Oscar Wilde" and was attracted by the Nietzschean *new man* theory. In particular, his theory of mask and theatricality was influential in shaping Russian modernist culture in regards to life/self-creation. Evreinov maintained that people should render their everyday lives into theater in order to renew their sensations of life (see Carnicke, 1989, p.49-69). Evreinov's principle of the aesthetization of life is nothing more than familiar decadent rendering of life into art. His idea of redeeming life through aestheticizing it

exemplifies the concept of life-creation and the dandyism that prevailed in Russian modernist culture. As in the case of imagists, the examination of Evreinov's theory through the prism of Western philosophy of dandyism could contribute to our understanding of both Russian modernist dandyism and its European counterpart.

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