

Unmasking the Invisible: Russian and Japanese Cultural
Exchanges from 1890 to 1917

By

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Abstract

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Focusing on the symbolic and ideological meanings of Japan in the Russian cultural imagination from 1890 to 1917, this dissertation seeks to define Russian literary *japonisme* and to explore the presence of Japanese art and aesthetics in Russian Modernist literature. In this study, modernism is divided into four distinct stages: the 1890s, the period of the rise of *japonisme* in Russian literature; 1904-05, the cataclysmic years of the Russo-Japanese War; 1906-09, the period in which writers described the war's lingering effects; the 1910s, a decade that not only offered a retrospective account of the war, but that also reclaimed the pre-war Russian fascination with Japanese themes and motifs. While historical events serve as a backdrop to my study and help to shape its direction, this dissertation deals expressly with culture. It points to the images, metaphors and symbolic language that were used to describe Russian and Japanese relations at both the beginning and height of Russian Modernism. Even as this study draws from the rich body of scholarship that explores Russia's relationship to Japan and examines many of the same issues—the war, Russian *japonisme*, Russia's constantly shifting perception of Japan—its primary emphasis remains the aesthetic collision between the East and West.

The chapters are chronologically arranged and provide a glimpse into the role that Japan played in the literature and images produced by the Russian cultural imagination. Chapter One points to the symbolic image of the geisha in both Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with a Little Dog" and Fedor Sologub's *The Petty Demon* to illustrate Russia's fin-de-siècle aesthetic fascination with Japan. In the second chapter, I offer a "panoramic" view of the phantasmagoric Russo-Japanese War, highlighting the common symbolic language that appeared in various visual and verbal representations of the event. Chapter Three focuses on the war's aftermath and the collective trauma, or "wound," that was articulated in the post-war essays and literature of Aleksandr Blok, Dmitry Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius. The final chapter of this dissertation offers an analysis of Russia's literary return to *japonisme* in the decade following the Russo-Japanese War. I argue that, as the war faded into the past, writers like Andrei Bely, Konstantin Bal'mont and Mikhail Kuzmin began to reengage with Japanese art, even adopting Japanese aesthetic principles into their writing.

In 1905, Bely famously compared Japan to a mask, and the aim of this dissertation is to "unmask" Russia's Japan—that is, to explore the shifting symbolic meanings of the image of Japan in the Russian cultural imagination between 1890 and 1917.

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If my life had turned out as I had dreamed it would in my childhood, I would now be in a sparkling gown on a stage in Los Angeles reaching my hand out to accept a golden statue. While there is sadly no such glamour in dissertation writing—the triumphant moment is strangely quiet—I *am* grateful that I can now thank those who have helped me to ascend this imaginary stage without having to worry that an orchestra will cruelly cut me off in mid-speech. On these pages, I have the ability to thank, at leisure, the many people to whom I have come to owe a debt of gratitude in the past seven years:

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Introduction

Мысленно пропускаю я перед собой ряд образов: лики современных поэтов: Бальмонт, Вячеслав Иванов, Валерий Брюсов, Андрей Белый, Александр Блок— длинное ожерелье японских масок, каждая из которых остается в глазах четкостью своей гримасы. – Максимилиан Волошин¹

Mentally, I make a number of images move before me: faces of contemporary poets: Bal'mont, Viacheslav Ivanov, Valerii Briusov, Andrei Bely, Aleksandr Blok—a long beaded necklace of Japanese masks, each of which has a distinct grimace that is preserved in my eyes. –Maksimilian Voloshin

The Symbolist poet and critic Maksimilian Voloshin (1877-1932) began his review of Aleksandr Blok's *Nechaiannaia radost'* [Unexpected Joy, 1907] with these words, demonstrating the strong hold that the Japanese aesthetic had on the Russian imagination. In Voloshin's vision, the leading poets of the day are not simply rendered metaphorically, but are simultaneously transformed into enigmatic, foreign and, most importantly, artistic creations. They become decorative emblems of Japan, the country that had conquered Russia first with its art in the 1890s and again with its military prowess in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. Given the artistic and political nature of Russian and Japanese relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we may wonder why Voloshin compared his contemporaries not just to masks, a popular fin-de-siècle symbol of lurking danger, the seductive appeal of the unknown and the ever-present performative potential of life,² but to *Japanese* masks specifically.

Was he, through his choice of metaphor, engaging with Bely's well-known statement from April 1905 that Japan is a mask behind which lurk the invisibles?³ If so, why do these Russian Symbolist poets become a part of the invisible plurality that Bely's metaphor suggests? Voloshin's language may also have been intended to highlight the fragile boundaries existing between several binary oppositions used in the Russian modernist period: words and images, self and Other, face and mask, East and West. But even as Voloshin's metaphors showed themselves not to be static and to contain various possibilities as to the poets' identities, I suggest that we cannot discount the significance of the initial comparison to a necklace of Japanese masks.

Voloshin was no stranger to Japanese motifs and art, having written about them in the first issue of *Vesy* [The Scales] in January 1904. In "*Skelet zhivopisi*" [The Skeleton of Painting], he praised Japanese artists for "their fine and sharp artistic eye."⁴ He also, like other art critics

¹ "Aleksandr Blok. 'Nechaiannaia radost'," *Liki tvorchestva*, ed. V.A. Manuilov (Leningrad: "Nauka," 1988) 484. This review was originally published in the newspaper "*Rus*" on 11 April 1907.

² In a recent study, Mark Steinberg conducts a semiotic study of masks in Russian Modernism, particularly in both the life and literature of St. Petersburg; see "Masks," *Petersburg: Fin de Siecle* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2011) 84-118.

³ Andrei Bely, "Apokalipsis v russkoi poezii," *Vesy*, No 4 (1905) 14.

⁴ "Skelet zhivopisi," *Liki tvorchestva*, ed. V.A. Manuilov (Leningrad: "Nauka," 1988) 213.

both before and after him,⁵ used his article to express the debt that numerous European artists in the second half of the nineteenth century owed to Japan. Voloshin claimed that pre-modern Japanese *ukiyo-e* [art of the floating world] artists like Hokusai (1760-1849), Utamaro (1753-1806), Haranobu (1725-1770) and Hiroshige (1797-1858) had taught French artists and writers, from Edward Manet (1832-1883) to the de Goncourt brothers, a new way of seeing the world—one that used asymmetrical perspective and vibrant colors to depict the ephemeral beauty of the world and its many pleasures. The sheer novelty of the Japanese approach to art first captivated France in the early 1850s and soon led to a craze for all things Japanese in the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, America and, by the 1890s, Russia.⁶ This craze was so widespread that, in 1872, the French author and art collector Philippe Burty coined the term “*japonisme*” to create a field of study dedicated to the arts of Japan.⁷ A popular term in the late nineteenth century, *japonisme* quickly outgrew this definition. In both Russia and the West, it came to refer to a fascination with Japanese art, as well as to Japanese cultural influence; since my focus is on art and aesthetics, I use this definition, rather than Burty’s, throughout my dissertation.

When Voloshin was writing about Japanese art in 1904, he clearly saw Europe as still being very much under the influence of *japonisme*. He observed that, “Культурное влияние Японии на Европу было так громадно, благотворно и радикально, что мы, еще переживающие его, не можем оценить всю его грандиозность”⁸ [The Japanese cultural impact on Europe was so tremendous, beneficial and radical that, still experiencing it, we cannot appreciate its enormity]. Voloshin’s claim invites us to see Western engagement with Japan as one of the cornerstones of European Modernism (given his use of the collective “we,” it is also clear that, in the realm of artistic influence, Voloshin considered Russia to be a part of Europe). Thus, it is possible that when Voloshin called his fellow Symbolists Japanese masks three years later, he had achieved enough distance to begin to articulate where the Japanese impact could be found in Russia.

This dissertation picks up where Voloshin left off. The aim of this study is to show the symbolic and ideological meanings of references to Japan and *japonisme* in both the Russian literature and popular press of the modernist period. Focusing on the overarching presence of Japanese art and aesthetics in Russian discourse from 1890 to 1917, this study divides modernism into four distinct stages: the 1890s, the period of the rise of *japonisme* in Russian literature; 1904-05, the cataclysmic years of the Russo-Japanese War; 1906-1909, the period in which writers described the war’s lingering effects; the 1910s, a decade that not only offered a retrospective account of the war, but that also reclaimed the pre-war Russian fascination with Japanese themes and motifs. Although historical events serve as a backdrop to my study, this dissertation deals expressly with culture, pointing to the images, metaphors and symbolic language that were used to describe Russian and Japanese relations at both the beginning and height of Russian Modernism.

⁵ As to past art critics, I am primarily referring to Igor Grabar’, whose art criticism I discuss in Chapter One in relation to Fedor Sologub and Anton Chekhov. Later twentieth-century scholarship also examined the influence of Japanese art on Impressionism and early modern painting; see Klaus Berger’s classic study, *Japonisme in Western Painting from Whistler to Matisse*, trans. David Britt (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge UP, 1992); Lionel Lambert, *Japonisme: Cultural Crossings between Japan and the West* (London: Phaidon, 2005).

⁶ Lambert 6; it must be noted that Lambert’s study of *japonisme* includes only a brief mention of Russia. His primary area of study is Western Europe.

⁷ *ibid.* 6

⁸ Voloshin, “Skelet zhivopisi,” 215

From 1890 to 1917, Russian literature saw the rise and fall of several different artistic movements: Decadence, Naturalism, Symbolism, Neorealism, Acmeism and Futurism. While this dissertation largely attends to the first four, in this study Symbolism emerges as the movement most closely connected to *japonisme*. In fact, the very same Symbolist writers that Voloshin compared to Japanese masks dominate my narrative. But because the story would be incomplete without several other Russian authors who wrote about Japan, the East and the Russo-Japanese War, this dissertation includes a broader cast of characters than Voloshin's Japanese mask metaphor allowed for. Many metaphors comparing Japan to masks appear in this period and, because of their prevalence in modernist discourse, I use the metaphor of Japan as mask to describe my own study of Russia's cultural construction of Japan. Throughout this dissertation, I examine the different shapes the "masking" of Japan takes in literary and journalistic discussions from Russian modernism. I focus on symbolic and metaphorical representations of Japan, commenting on the myths, fears, prejudices and abiding fascination with Japanese art that informed them.

The nature of Russia's relationship to the East [*Vostok*], or, as it is sometimes called, the Orient, has long plagued and fascinated the Russian imagination. This is due, in part, to the contentious question of where Russia belongs geographically.⁹ As Petr Chaadaev famously wrote, Russia, bordering Asia on one side and Europe on the other, rests on the cusp of two distinct civilizations, which results in its ambiguous self-identity.¹⁰

History has also not helped to clarify Russia's place in the world. When the Mongols conquered Rus' (parts of modern-day Russia, Belarus and Ukraine) in the thirteenth century, this event seemed to solidify a lasting Eastern influence within what would later become Russia—one that continued even after the Mongols were forced out in the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380. Then, in the seventeenth century, Peter the Great (1672-1725) decided to purge all traces of Russia's past; according to standard interpretations of Russian cultural history, his goal was to modernize his country and, to achieve this, he forced the Russian gaze westward. Both of these events resulted in historical and cultural ruptures, whose ramifications could be felt throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Peter the Great's decision to align Russia with the West was one of the sources of debate between the Slavophiles (Ivan Kireevsky, Aleksei Khomiakov, Konstantin Aksakov) and the Westernizers (to name only a few of the figures who espoused "Westernism," Chaadaev, Ivan Turgenev, Vissarion Belinsky and Aleksandr Hertsen) about where Russia belonged. While the Westernizers obviously saw Russia's destiny as resting in the West, the Slavophiles were more concerned with temporality than geography; they longed for a return to a pre-Petrine state. Similarly, the Mongol invasion, although an event from Russia's distant past, continued to haunt the Russian cultural imagination. At the end of the nineteenth century, the philosopher and poet Vladimir Solov'ev used poetry to usher in fears of a new Mongolian uprising (in this later evocation, the Mongolian enemy became the Chinese and Japanese) with a movement he called Pan-Mongolism. These fears would contribute to early twentieth-century artistic and literary conceptions of the East.

⁹ See Mark Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space," *Slavic Review*, 50.1 (Spring 1991) 1-17.

¹⁰ Petr Chaadaev, "Pervoe filosoficheskoe pis'mo," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannyye pis'ma*, ed. T.I. Ouzerman (Moskva: Nauka, 1991) 329.

A further complication stems from how we define the East, a concept that, in Russia, has always been somewhat unstable. Many “Easts,” internal and external, have existed in the Russian imagination: the Caucasus, the Southern “East” of the early nineteenth century¹¹; Central Asia, the East of Fedor Dostoevsky’s late nineteenth-century imperialist aims¹²; the nations of the Far East [*Dal’nii Vostok*], Manchuria, China and Japan. Even Russia, despite Peter the Great’s ambitions, would sometimes fall into this category, recognizing the continued presence of its own Asian roots. At other times, Russians would also do more than identify with the East; while abroad, artists like Sergei Diaghilev, who took the West by storm with his Ballet Russes, would exploit the ambiguity in the Russian identity by reinforcing Western European beliefs about Russian exoticism.

Recent scholarship on Russian Orientalism has argued that Russia’s recognition of its Eastern characteristics prevents it from falling into the model proposed by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978),¹³ his seminal study of the power dynamics between the East and West¹⁴ (in the Saidian model, the terms East and West refer almost exclusively to the Middle East and to Europe; both Russia and the Far East are essentially excluded from his study). In this study, Said famously claimed that the West had transformed the Orient into a feminized and mysterious Other in order to justify its imperialist aims and to assert its authority over it. While to some extent the same can be said of both Russia’s treatment of its many “Easts” and its own imperialist hopes, Russia’s position is complicated by the factors I discussed above, as well as by its loss to Japan in the Russo-Japanese War, which was generally considered a failed imperialist venture in the Orient.

Russian and Japanese relations—particularly those surrounding the Russo-Japanese War—have been garnering a lot of scholarly attention in the past twenty-five years. One of the first studies to approach this event offers a dual perspective, exploring both Japanese and Russian social, political and literary responses to the war; although a historically oriented study, the editors of the volume are interested in the war’s “polyphonic nature” and “symbolic meaning.”¹⁵ A more recent two-volume study has ambitiously sought to examine the Russo-Japanese War in a broad and international context, terming the event “World War Zero.” It demonstrates the effect the war had on the world at large; articles on geography, military history, and the economics of war are featured next to literary and visual studies.¹⁶ Another unique feature of this collection is the range of voices it provides access to; within one study, Russian and Japanese materials are combined with German, French, Korean, English and Chinese sources. Other studies have approached Russian and Japanese relations through the Russian cultural and literary imagination, although the war, the point of collision between the two

¹¹ See Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge UP, 1994); Harsha Ram, *Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

¹² Fedor Dostoevskii, “Geok-Tepe: Chto takoe dlia nas Aziia?,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh*, v. 27 (Leningrad: “Nauka,” 1984) 32-5.

¹³ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York: Penguin, 1995).

¹⁴ One recent study that attempts to define Russia’s specific brand of Orientalism is David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 2010).

¹⁵ *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective*, ed. David Wells and Sandra Wilson (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999) xi.

¹⁶ *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero, Volumes 1 & 2*, ed. John W. Steinberg, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David Wolff and Shinji Yokote (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

countries, features prominently within them.¹⁷ While the centennial collection edited by Dany Savelli concentrates on the literature produced during the Russo-Japanese War in England, Germany, Russia and Japan, Barbara Heldt's chapter in *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters* traces the Japanese presence exclusively in Russian literature of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; similarly, Vasily Molodiakov treats Japan through three of the literary figures who helped to shape Russian modernism: Vladimir Solov'ev, Vasily Briusov and Andrei Bely. Susanna Lim's monograph goes even further than the previously mentioned volumes, for it not only begins in the seventeenth century, but also seeks to show the connections between geopolitics, literature, Orientalism, artistic and cultural trends, intellectual history and religious thought.

In addition to these literary and historical investigations of the war, recent scholarship has also been devoted to the visual images—often satirical, racial and propagandistic—that the war inspired.¹⁸ These images, like literature, play on the imagination; as one scholarly work proposes, they are “illusiv and may be subject to multiple interpretations [...] visual representations have a life of their own, influencing the mind of their beholders, and often not in conformity with the intentions of their creators.”¹⁹ This statement does not just apply to propagandist war images; instead, it proves equally important for Russian *japonisme*, the fascination with and study of Japanese art that I discussed in the first section of the introduction.²⁰ Both Rosamund Bartlett and Elena Diakonova have traced the development of *japonisme* within late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russia; Bartlett, however, is especially interested in showing the ways in which the Russo-Japanese War helped to transform Russian *japonisme* into something more than mere artistic enchantment. She calls Russian *japonisme* a “home-grown [...] and distinctive phenomenon”²¹

While this dissertation draws from the rich body of scholarship that explores Russian and Japanese relations and even examines many of the same issues—the war, Russian *japonisme*, Russia's constantly shifting perception of Japan—its primary emphasis is the aesthetic collision between the East and West. In this, the present study is heavily indebted to Jan Walsh Hokenson's work on the Japanese artistic influence on nineteenth- and twentieth-century French literature, *Japan, France and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000*. Hokenson argues that, for the French, Japanese art acted as a catalyst for artistic renewal, opening up new

¹⁷ *Faits et imaginaires de la guerre russo-japonaise, 1904-1905*, ed. Dany Savelli (Paris: Kailash, 2005); *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters*, ed. J. Thomas Rimer (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995); Vasilii Molodiakov, “*Obraz Iaponii*” v *Evrope i Rossii vtoroi poloviny XIX–nachala XX veka* (Moscow: RAN, 1996); Susanna Soojung Lim, *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685-1922* (New York, London: Routledge, 2013)

¹⁸ See Yulia Mikhailova, “Images of Enemy and Self: Russian ‘Popular Prints’ of the Russo-Japanese War,” *Acta slavica iaponica*, XVI (1998) 30-54; Stephen Norris, “Illustrating the Racial War: Images from the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905,” *A War of Images: Russian Popular Prints, Wartime Culture, and National Identity, 1812-1945*. (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois UP: 2006) 107-34.

¹⁹ *Japan and Russia: Three Centuries of Mutual Images*, eds. Yulia Mikhailova and M. William Steele (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2008) 2.

²⁰ See Rosamund Bartlett, “Japonisme and Japanophobia: The Russo-Japanese War in Russian Cultural Consciousness,” *Russian Review* 1 (2008) 8-33; Elena Diakonova, “*Japonisme* in Russia in the Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Japan and Russia: Three Centuries of Mutual Images*, eds. Yulia Mikhailova and M. William Steele (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2008) 32-46; Susanna Lim devotes a chapter of her recent book to this phenomenon as well.

²¹ Bartlett 33

visual and perspectival possibilities, as well as a new relationship with nature.²² This monograph does not just survey Japanese references in French novels and poetry, but attempts to define French literary *japonisme* by demonstrating the ways in which Japanese images are incorporated, both formally and stylistically, into French literary tradition. While my goals in this study are similar—I explore Russian literary *japonisme* and point to moments in which formal and stylistic principles of Japanese art are present in Russian modernism—I also largely pursue another, related goal: to show symbolic and ideological meanings attached to the images of Japan and to Russian modernists' involvement with *japonisme*. Another way that my approach differs is that it takes into account additional factors such as Russia's unique relationship to and fear of the East(s) and also the war with Japan in 1904-05. The war and its lingering effects on the cultural imagination help to shape the trajectory of my study; although a conflict that began on 26 January 1904 and essentially ended with the Japanese victory at Tsushima on 15 May 1905, Russia's war with Japan affected how Japanese themes were depicted in the Russian literary tradition, both during and after the event.²³ More importantly, the war allowed for the development of a different kind of literary *japonisme* in Russia, one based equally on artistic fascination and historical trauma.

Chapter One explores the rise of *japonisme* in Russian literature through Anton Chekhov's *Dama s sobachkoi* [The Lady with the Little Dog, 1899] and Fedor Sologub's quasi-Naturalist, quasi-Decadent *Melkii bes* [The Petty Demon, 1907].²⁴ These two texts employ the symbolic image of the geisha and, as I argue, engage with Japanese aesthetics and critical discourse on Japanese art. In Chekhov's story, Sidney Jones' popular British operetta, *The Geisha, or The Story of a Tea House* (1896) serves as a backdrop to the love affair between Dmitry Gurov and Anna Sergeevna, and in *Melkii bes* one of the characters is transformed into a living *objet d'art* when he attends a provincial masquerade dressed as a geisha. The literary images of Japan that we find in these texts were mediated by both domestic and foreign treatments of Japanese themes; in the case of Chekhov, Japan was viewed through the lens of Edwardian musical theater, whereas for Sologub, the French Decadence of J.K. Huysmans may have influenced his novel's representation of the foreign femme fatale. A study of these texts also demonstrates the ways in which different artistic genres overlapped during the period of Russian Modernism. The Japan that entered the Russian cultural imagination in the 1890s came alive through various forms of art: literature, painting, operetta, popular images, theater, etc. In particular, I focus on the relationship between literature and the Japanese motifs used in images from artistic and popular journals of the fin de siècle. Early modernist perceptions of Japan in Russia and Western Europe turned this country into a prisoner of its own artistic popularity; viewed primarily through the aesthetic construct of *japonisme*, Japan became an erotically charged and enigmatic nation that seemed to capture the imagination of all who encountered it.

Chapter Two moves away from Russia's fascination with *japonisme* in the 1890s and turns exclusively to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. The organizing principle of this chapter comes from a statement that Sologub made about the panoramic potential of war in 1905. In a review of an exhibition devoted to the Russo-Japanese War, Sologub claimed that Russian artists lacked the imagination to depict the war properly and were missing the opportunity to capture

²² Jan Walsh Hokenson, *Japan, France and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004) 55.

²³ Throughout this dissertation, all dates follow the Julian calendar.

²⁴ Although the novel was not published in full until 1907, it was written during the 1890s. A full publication history is given in Chapter One.

the “splendid panorama of beautiful movements, expressions and poses”²⁵ that the conflict with Japan offered to them. Like Sologub, I approach the war metaphorically, using an image of an artist’s blank canvas to trace the various symbols and emblems that made up the artistic and literary landscape of 1904-05. I create my own “panorama” of the war in this chapter, showing how visual and verbal representation worked together to create an overarching portrait of this event. In addition to focusing on the interplay between words and images, I highlight the common symbolic language that appeared in a variety of genres and discourses: personal documents (letters and diaries), essays, and both popular and high art, including Symbolist poetry. In these different texts, the war becomes a seemingly unreal event—the result of an all-encompassing phantasmagoria.

Chapter Three shows the continued hold that Japan had on the Russian imagination in the years immediately following the Russo-Japanese War. In this chapter, I argue that the war and the revolution that took place in its wake gave rise to a collective trauma, which manifested itself, among other ways, in the images of a rupture—or “wound”—that dominated artistic works and public discourse in the years 1906-1909. This lingering trauma is felt most prominently in the post-war essays and literature of Aleksandr Blok, Dmitry Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius: respectively, “*Bezvremen’e*” [Timelessness, 1906], “*Griadushchii kham*” [The Coming Boor, 1906] and “*Net vozvrata*” [No Return, 1909]. Each of these works exhibits a preoccupation with both the damaged bodies of modernity and the apocalyptic thinking prevalent in early twentieth-century Russia. By placing these texts within their larger historical context, I demonstrate their engagement with the fears and anxiety expressed in popular cultural mythology, including visual images.

The fourth and final chapter of this dissertation offers an analysis of Russia’s literary return to *japonisme* after the war. I focus on Andrei Bely’s “*Pesnia zhizni*” [The Song of Life, 1908], which claims that modernists had used Japanese art to shape both their age and their artistic principles.²⁶ Although Bely addressed only aesthetics in his article, I argue that the political and artistic interactions between the Russians and Japanese helped to shape the modernist period in Russia. The Japanese, from the early 1890s onward, were constantly present in the Russian cultural and literary imagination. My analysis of Russia’s continued fascination with Japan centers on the decade following the war, when Russian writers began to reengage with Japanese art, from its use of an asymmetrical perspective to its celebration of nature and life’s ephemeral moments. Japanese art reflects the Eastern belief that the potential for artistic creation is always present in life; it exists in wind blowing over a mountain, in leaves falling from a tree, in the size and shape of different snowflakes. Starting with Andrei Bely’s *Peterburg*²⁷ [Petersburg, 1913-4, 1916, 1922], I investigate the presence of Japanese artistic principles in his modernist novel and how they contribute to the different conceptions of the East that the novel explores. Then, moving away from Bely, I turn to Konstantin Bal’mont’s poetry from his travels in Japan (1916) and Mikhail Kuzmin’s poem, “*Fuzii v bliudochke*” [Fuji in a Saucer, 1917], showing that, as the 1910s progressed, the war was largely forgotten as literature began to favor a return to earlier forms of *japonisme*. Ultimately, this chapter illustrates that

²⁵ Fedor Sologub, *Sobranie sochinenii, t. 2: roman, rasskazy, skazochki, stat'i* (Moskva: NPK “Intelvak,” 2001) 542.

²⁶ Andrei Bely, “*Pesnia zhizni*,” *Arabeski: kniga statei* (Moskva: “Musaget,” 1911) 51.

²⁷ Throughout this dissertation, I supply the English translation of Russian titles, but primarily use their transliterations.

Russian *japonisme*, despite the war, remained pervasive in the early twentieth century, especially in Russian Symbolism.

As a whole, this dissertation focuses on several distinct moments of Russian and Japanese cultural exchange during the Silver Age. In this period, perceptions of Japan were constantly changing; it was at once an object of fascination and political fear, of literature and artistic discourse, of high and low art. Because of the numerous shifts in its perceived identity, Japan became the enigmatic and threatening country of Bely's famous metaphor: it was "a mask behind which were the invisibles." Using the metaphor of the mask as a springboard, the aim of this dissertation is to "unmask" Russia's Japan—that is, to explore the shifting symbolic meanings of the image of Japan in the Russian cultural imagination between 1890 and 1917.

Geishas Come to Life: The Rise of *Japonisme* in Russian Prose

The Japanese Geisha, famed in song and story, forms part of that mysterious glamour, which has for many centuries hung over the Land of Flowers, and which has hardly been dispelled by the invasion of Western civilization.¹

In 1899, Fyodor Sologub (1863-1927) contributed an article to the early Symbolist and artistic journal, *Mir iskusstva* [The World of Art] to commemorate the centennial of Aleksandr Pushkin's birth.² Because this article, "K vserossiiskomu torzhestvu" [To the All-Russian Celebration], coincides with the period during which Sologub worked most intensely on *Melkii bes* [The Petty Demon, 1898-99],³ scholars often cite it as informing the Pushkinian motif that runs throughout the novel.⁴ But by focusing so intently on the Pushkin mania that marked this year, critics do not note the following detail: this article was juxtaposed with a reproduction of *Muzhskoi portret* [Male Portrait], a painting by the little known nineteenth-century artist Anton Legashov⁵ (1798-1865) (Figure 1.1). In the center of this painting, a dark and brooding man sits on a couch, looking off to the side. The room is sparsely decorated: to his left there is a hookah and, on the wall behind him, a portrait of a woman in the flowered robes of the Far East. This smaller portrait beckons to the viewer (see Figure 1.2 for a close-up) and the image of the reclining woman, caught in the feminine act of brushing her hair, contradicts the staid severity of the central male figure. Her presence lightens the portrait; to a certain extent, her allure even makes a mockery of the painting's title. She draws our gaze from the man. Although placed in the background, hers is the portrait that we strain to see. It seems to present a door to another world.

The juxtaposition of this painting with Sologub's article is most likely coincidental—nothing more than an editorial decision on the part of *Mir iskusstva*. But even if so, it still contains emblematic value. It should be noted that in 1899, Sologub, because of his close

¹ Frederic William Unger, *Russia and Japan: and a Complete History of the War in the Far East* (Philadelphia, 1905) 267.

² This article was published in v. 13-14 of *Mir iskusstva*. For more on the history of this journal, its practices and cultural influence on the development of Modernism and Symbolism, see Jonathan Stone, "Mir iskusstva and the Gathering of Russian Modernism," *Conceptualizing "Symbolism": Institutions, Publications, Readers and the Russian Propagation of an Idea*, Dissertation, UC Berkeley (Ann Arbor: Proquest/UMI, Fall 2007) 94-105; John E. Bowlt, "The World of Art," *Moscow & St. Petersburg, 1900-1920: Art, Life and Culture of the Russian Silver Age* (New York: Vendome, 2008) 161-200.

³ For a history of the novel's creation, see Margarita Pavlova, "Tvorcheskaia istoriia romana 'Melkii bes'," *Melkii bes*, ed. Margarita Pavlova (Sankt Peterburg: "Nauka," 2004) 643-753. (707)

⁴ *ibid.* 707

⁵ It is even surprising that a painting of Legashov's made it into the high-brow *Mir iskusstva*, for Aleksandr Benois, in his study of nineteenth-century Russian art, mentions him only in a footnote. See *Istoriia russkoi zhivopisi v XIX veke* (Moskva: Izd-vo "Respublika," 1995) 44. Legashov, however, is a figure worthy of more critical attention, particularly due to his personal connection with the East and adoption of the Chinese aesthetic. In 1831, he travelled to China as a member of the Russian Ecclesiastic Mission in Peking and would stay in this country for ten years. His participation in this mission helped to shape his career and, even after his return to Russia, Chinese themes and images were often featured in his work. For more information on this painter and his experiences in China, see Elena Nesterova's study of the artist, "The Russian Painter Anton Legashov in China: From the History of the Russian Ecclesiastic Mission in Peking," *Monumenta Serica* 48 (2000) 359-427.

relationship with the “miriskusniki,”⁶ became increasingly interested in the visual arts. And Legashov’s portrait, much like the Pushkin centennial, served as a symbolic emblem of the cultural and artistic world that Sologub found himself in the midst of during his most productive period of writing *Melkii bes*. I would also suggest that this painting could function as an illustration, or a visual metaphor, of the novel itself. Considering it in the context of *Melkii bes*, we could see this dark man as Peredonov and the woman as the beautiful Liudmila Rutilova, who basks in the smells, colors and fauna of the East.

Legashov’s painting, after all, is organized around a set of binary oppositions similar to those in the novel: East vs. West, female vs. male, lightness vs. darkness, freedom vs. restraint. Even the portrait’s structure is suggestive of the way that Sologub depicts his characters. While Peredonov is the novel’s central figure and the character to which the title refers, Liudmila and Sasha (the young male student who actually wears the kimono) are secondary and offer us relief from the corrupt world of *peredonovshchina* [Peredonovism].⁷ In a 1908 critical review, Aleksandr Blok, who was very much taken with *Melkii bes*, aptly described the enchanting quality of Liudmila’s and Sasha’s role in the novel:

Когда читаешь о том, как веселятся и играют Саша и Людмила — оба молодые и красивые, как они душатся духами, как напрягаются, как смеются, как целуются, как над буднями уездной крапивы празднуют праздник лёгкой плоти, — когда читаешь, кажется, смотришь в весеннее окно [...] Здесь всё чисто, благоуханно и не стыдится солнечных луч.⁸

When you read about how Sasha and Liudmila play and enjoy themselves—both young and beautiful, how they spray themselves with perfume, how they dress up, how they laugh and kiss, how surrounded by the humdrum existence of district nettles they celebrate the flesh—when you read, it seems that you’re looking into a spring window [...] Here everything is clean, pleasant-smelling and not ashamed of the rays of the sun.

This metaphorical “spring window” both tempts and seduces the reader. Celebrating the body and a harmless eroticism, it functions like a peep show into a hedonistic world. The plotline involving Sasha and Liudmila revolves around a playful fascination with beauty and nature—what is more, I would suggest these images are connected with the colorful and charming world of *japonisme*.

Japonisme, as I mentioned already in my introduction, came to Russia via France, where the art collector Philippe Burty coined the term in 1872 to “designate a new field of study of artistic, historic and ethnographic borrowings from the arts of Japan.”⁹ Sweeping across Western Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, this phenomenon celebrated the artifice, delicate colors, asymmetrical perspective and craftsmanship associated with the Japanese

⁶ Pavlova, “Tvorcheskaia istoriia romana,” 708

⁷ Ivanov-Razumnik, one of Sologub’s contemporaries, remarked that, “For F. Sologub, Liudmila and Sasha were not only an episode, but one of the main points of the novel, since Sologub, namely in ‘beauty’, wanted to find an exit from Peredonovism. He wanted to overshadow the dreary, grey and senseless world with a cult of the body [...],” “Fyodor Sologub”, *O smysle zhizni: F. Sologub, L. Andreev, L. Shestov* (Bradda Books, Ltd.: Letchworth, 1971) 50.

⁸ Aleksandr Blok, “O realistakh”, *SS v 8i tomakh, t. 5*, eds. K.I. Chukovskii, V.N. Orlov and A.A. Surkov (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1962), 127.

⁹ Lionel Lambert, *Japonisme: Cultural Crossings between Japan and the West* (London: Phaidon, 2005) 6.

painting and woodblock prints that were in vogue. The Western preoccupation with Japanese art quickly evolved from artistic fascination to an omnipresent aesthetic influence; in France in particular, *japonisme* permeated almost every sphere, from Impressionist painting to Naturalist and Decadent prose, and helped to shape popular and high tastes alike.¹⁰

While *japonisme* quickly became a fixture in Western European art and literature after Japan opened itself to the West in 1854, scholars have traditionally dated its presence in Russian literature as culminating only during and after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05.¹¹ This is not to suggest, however, that scholars—even those same scholars who propose this dating—do not locate moments of *japonisme* in Russian literature before the war. Rather, it is that these instances are often perceived more as a reflection of Russia's growing fascination with the East than as serious engagement with Japan.¹² Yet, as I hope to show in this chapter, significant moments of *japonisme* were already present in Russian literature of the late 1890s and early 1900s. Anton Chekhov's 1899 story, "Dama s sobachkoi" [The Lady with the Little Dog], contains a Japanese subtext that makes use of Sidney Jones' popular operetta, *The Geisha, or The Story of a Tea House* (1896). *Melkii bes*, a quasi-Naturalist, quasi-Decadent novel whose final pages are dominated by the presence of a living *objet d'art*, a guest at a masked ball dressed as a geisha, was conceived well before the war. Sologub began writing the novel in 1892 and drafts show that he put his pen down—besides minor edits—exactly one decade later.¹³ Despite this writing timeline, the significance of the novel's use of Japanese symbols is somewhat problematized by its publication history; *Melkii bes*, although partially serialized in *Voprosy zhizni* [Questions of Life] in 1905, was not published in full until 1907. Although Sologub's novel and Chekhov's story were published in different decades, both were ultimately products of the 1890s. More importantly, these two texts share a common feature; they each employ the suggestive symbolic image of the geisha and, as I will argue, engage with Japanese aesthetics.¹⁴

In this chapter, my discussion of *Melkii bes* and "Dama s sobachkoi" will center on unraveling their engagement with literary *Japonisme* through a series of inter-art¹⁵ and close readings. These early literary descriptions of Japan, although largely based on the artifacts of an Orientalized cultural imaginary—labels on perfume bottles and operatic geisha that were themselves imported from the West—reveal much more than just Russia's

¹⁰ Jan Walsh Hokenson, *Japan, France and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004).

¹¹ See Rosamund Bartlett, "Japonisme and Japanophobia: The Russo-Japanese War in Russian Cultural Consciousness," *Russian Review* 1 (2008) 24; Barbara Heldt, "'Japanese' in Russian Literature: Transforming Identities," *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters, 1868-1926*, ed. J. Thomas Rimer (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995) 173.

¹² In addition to Bartlett and Heldt, see Susanna Soojung Lim, *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685-1922: To the Ends of the Orient* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013).

¹³ In her study of the novel's evolution, Pavlova shows that the masquerade was one of the first things that Sologub planned as he began to craft his novel in 1892. She also remarks that, as Sologub's conception of the novel expanded, the masquerade scene remained largely the same, undergoing only minimal correction, Pavlova, 743-57.

¹⁴ For historical and anthropological studies of the geisha, see John Gallagher, *Geisha: a unique world of tradition, elegance and art* (London: PRC Publishing, 2003); Unger, 267-83; Peabody-Essex Museum, *Geisha: beyond the painted smile* (New York: George Braziller, 2004).

¹⁵ The definition that has informed my own inter-art study goes beyond simple visual/verbal dynamics. Broadening our basic understanding of ekphrasis as the verbal representation of the visual, Claus Cluver redefines it instead as "the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system." This allows ekphrasis to encompass music, popular art (posters, mass-media) architecture, etc. See "Ekphrasis Reconsidered: On Verbal Representations of Nonverbal Texts," *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media*, ed. by Ulla Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund and Erik Hedling (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997) 26.

growing interest in Japanese art and culture. I will show that they contain clues about Russia's perception of Japan's rise to power in the *fin-de-siecle*, as well as about *japonisme*'s significance for the early years of Russian modernism.

Chekhov's "Lady" as *The Geisha*: Exotic and Erotic Suffering

In the well-known climactic scene of "Dama s sobachkoi" (1899), Dmitrii Gurov contrives to meet Anna Sergeevna at a performance of *The Geisha, or The Story of a Tea House*, Sidney Jones' comic operetta of hidden identities and star-crossed lovers set in Japan. The operetta focuses on the British naval officer, Lieutenant Reginald "Reggie" Fairfax, who, while stationed in Japan, has a flirtation with the geisha Mimosa-san. Lady Constance, an Englishwoman and friend of Reggie's fiancée, Molly Seamore, witnesses their encounter and reports the incident to Molly. Molly's discovery of her fiancé's bad behavior arouses her jealousy and takes her to Japan, where she schemes to win back Reggie's love. With the help of Lady Constance and Mimosa San herself (it must be noted that she has no designs on Reggie since she is in love with the Japanese soldier Katana), Molly decides to masquerade as a geisha, Roli Poli-San, to entice Reggie. After much confusion and the near marriage of Molly/Roli Poli to a Japanese Marquis, the operetta ends happily; each character is paired with his/her beloved. Incredibly popular in Europe in the late 1890s, *The Geisha* was first performed in Moscow in 1897 and was then restaged in 1899 in both Moscow and several provincial Russian towns.¹⁶ These productions were accompanied by a variety of advertisements featuring demure, beautiful women clad in brightly colored kimonos—some natively Japanese and some Western (see Figures 1.3 and 1.4).

Gurov encounters one such advertisement in the train station when he arrives in "S" from Moscow. He recognizes that the staging of the operetta in this small, provincial town would constitute an event and that Anna would undoubtedly be there.¹⁷ True to his expectations she attends the performance and, upon entering the theater, possesses his imagination fully:

Вошла и Анна Сергеевна. Она села в третьем ряду, и когда Гуров взглянул на неё, то сердце у него сжалось, и он понял ясно, что для него теперь на всём свете нет ближе, дороже и важнее человека; она, затерявшаяся в провинциальной толпе, эта маленькая женщина, ничем не замечательная, с вульгарною лорнеткой в руках, наполняла теперь всю его жизнь, была его горем, радостью, единственным счастьем, какого он теперь желал для себя; и под звуки плохого оркестра, дрянных обывательских скрипок он думал о том, как она хороша. Думал и мечтал. (10: 139)

Anna Sergeevna came in. She sat in the third row, and when Gurov looked at her, his heart was wrung, and he realized clearly that there was now no person closer, dearer, or more important for him in the whole world; this small woman, lost in the provincial crowd, not remarkable for anything, with a vulgar lorgnette in her hand, now filled his whole life, was his grief, his joy, the only happiness he now wished for himself; an to the

¹⁶ It is believed that Chekhov himself saw *The Geisha* in Yalta in September 1899, Anton Chekhov, *PSS v 30-i tomakh, t. 10* (Moskva: Nauka, 1977) 431.

¹⁷ In her article, Bartlett discusses the popularity of this opera and its production history in Russia, where it premiered in Moscow in 1897, 18.

sounds of the bad orchestra, with its trashy local violins, he thought how beautiful she was. He thought and dreamed.¹⁸

This passage offers a tender glimpse of Anna Sergeevna through Gurov's eyes, yet also leads us to question his love for her. Who, after all, *is* Anna Sergeevna and what, for Gurov, does she represent? She appears to be nothing more than the object of his gaze—a pleasing, yet unremarkable vision that leads him only to “think and dream.” While many critics praise this story's realistic and emotional depiction of a love affair,¹⁹ this scene demonstrates the possibility that Gurov's adoration of Anna could largely be a product of his imagination and heightened senses. He is at the opera, yet there is no word about its actual contents, the songs that are sung, its staging. For him, Anna is the spectacle to observe and their love is the drama that takes center stage. *The Geisha* is merely the ideal backdrop for Gurov and Anna to play out the dynamics of the affair that was set in motion in Yalta, in Anna's room that itself smelled of Japan: “было душно, пахло духами, которые она купила в японском магазине” (it was stuffy, it smelled of the perfumes that she had bought in a Japanese store, 10: 131).

Gurov's language reinforces the idea that their romance both supersedes what takes place on stage and takes on elements of *The Geisha*. The realization of his love—portrayed in a chain of perfective verbs (*voshla, sela, vzglianul, ponial*) that express punctuated moments—is heightened and borders on the melodramatic. In a way, Gurov becomes the story's counterpart to the dashing hero of Jones' *The Geisha*, the British officer Reginald Fairfax who, despite his engagement to Molly, teaches the beautiful Mimosa-San to kiss. Gurov and Reggie are both characterized as men who arouse strong feelings in the women they love and leave.²⁰ Just as the narrator tells us about Gurov's various liaisons at the beginning of the story, Reggie and his fellow naval officers allude to their own romantic successes when they sing pithily of Jack Tar, a symbolic officer of the British Royal Navy: “As he goes aboard his ship,/While the girls are fit to break their pretty hearts/For he loves them by the score/When he gaily comes ashore.”²¹ This surface similarity aside, even Gurov's internal monologue, slowly building upon his initial understanding of his feelings for Anna and accompanied by the music of the bad provincial orchestra (“и под звуки плохого оркестра, дрянных обывательских скрипок”), invites us to view him as taking on the role of an operatic hero. While the Chekhov scholar Aleksandr Chudakov observes that this scene is characteristic of Chekhov's prose style and presentation of interiority,²² we can also read Gurov's monologue as the equivalent of an aria. An elaborate and melodious song for a solo singer and the orchestra, an aria helps to propel the plot forward, lend insight into a character's emotional state and temporarily relieve the dramatic tension of the action.²³ That his thoughts might resemble an aria should come as no surprise, for if we look

¹⁸ Anton Chekhov, *Stories*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (Bantam: New York, 2000) 372. Further citations from this translation will be given in text.

¹⁹ To give just a sample of the positive critical reception of the story, Chekhov's contemporary, I.I. P-skii, in “The Tragedy of Feeling: A Critical Study”, wrote that Chekhov's talent lay in his “masterfully drawn picture of the birth of love in Gurov”, qtd. in Chekhov, *PSS*, 428. Also, in his recent study of Chekhov's poetics, Michael Finke remarks that “Dama s sobachkoi” is “the one Chekhov story that can properly be called a positive and affirming love tale,” *Seeing Chekhov: Life and Art* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005) 145.

²⁰ In his recent study of Chekhov, M.N. Zolotonosov makes a similar observation in a footnote, briefly remarking that “several lines taken from the operetta could succinctly describe the plot of Chekhov's story,” *Drugoi Chekhov: po tu storonu printsipa zhenofobii* (Moskva: “Ladimir”, 2007) 118-9, note 47.

²¹ Sidney Jones, *The Geisha: A Story of a Tea House* (London: Hopwood & Crew, 1896) 26.

²² See *Poetika Chekhova* (Moskva: Nauka, 1971) 160.

²³ “Aria,” defs. a & c., *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. 2000, Print.

back at the end of the story's first chapter, we see that it has prepared us for Gurov's operatic turn. When telling Anna about his life, Gurov mentions that, he “[...] готовился когда-то петь в частной опере, но бросил [...]” [...had once prepared to sing in a private opera, but had quit..., 10: 130]. Quite possibly, Gurov's past experience has informed this moment with Anna in the provincial opera house; we know that not only is he familiar with the genre and its requirements, but also that he may have played the operatic hero before.

It is worth noting that this is not the only scene in which Gurov gives voice to his burgeoning emotions. Particularly in the lead-up to his impromptu trip to see Anna, he seems to be overtaken by the need to air his feelings—to “sing” of his love.²⁴ Gurov's wife both hears and responds to him, providing a counterpoint to his romantic posturing:

[Ему] приходилось говорить неопределённо о любви, о женщинах, и никто не догадывался, в чём дело, и только жена шевелила своими тёмными бровями и говорила:

— Тебе, Димитрий, совсем не идёт роль фата. (10: 137)

He found himself speaking vaguely of love, of women, and no one could guess what it was about, and only his wife raised her dark eyebrows and said:

“You know, Dimitri, the role of fop doesn't suit you at all.” (370)

With these words written in an entirely different tune, she wants to silence him, to show him the empty nature of his ramblings. More importantly, she reminds him that he is not the kind of man who will fall prey to the perils and raptures of love. He is playing a role and one that is trite. But even in the face of his wife's criticism and his colleague's refusal to respond to his emotional outpouring by instead discussing the quality of the surgeon (10: 137), Gurov cannot abandon this role.

His most important “performance” takes place at the operetta after he comes face to face with Anna.²⁵ The music of *The Geisha* again serves as the background to their meeting; similarly heightening this moment of dramatic tension, all eyes are seemingly focused on them: “Запели настраиваемые скрипки и флейта, стало вдруг страшно, казалось, что из всех лож смотрят” [The tuning up of the violins and flutes was beginning and it suddenly became frightening; it seemed that from all the boxes people were watching them, 10: 139]. Despite the music, all the formerly verbose Gurov can offer is a weak “hello”—one that is met with silence. Sound has momentarily been trumped by the visual; rendered mute, both characters look at each other, while the crowd looks on. Occurring during the first intermission of *The Geisha*, this scene itself hangs as if suspended²⁶ and serves as a brief intermission to the story's action. The dual pause adds to the impression that *The Geisha* functions as more than just an overt cultural reference; it is yet another example of how the characters' lives mirror art—of the operatic *mise-en-abîme* that informs this story.

²⁴ In his study of Chekhov, Donald Rayfield notes that Gurov's life at home is marked by “unspoken irritation,” *Understanding Chekhov: a critical study of Chekhov's prose and drama* (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 1999) 210.

²⁵ This scene is often compared with Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* when Anna creates a scandal at the opera. While certain similarities are present, by focusing only on Chekhov's polemic with Tolstoy, the majority of critics have neglected to take into account the existing connection between the production of *The Geisha* and Chekhov's story.

²⁶ Chudakov 201

Once this “intermission” is over and Anna and Gurov flee the theater to talk, it is now Anna’s turn to sing. She embraces this role, emphasizing the suffering that marks her character throughout the story like a musical refrain:

—О, как вы меня испугали! Я едва жива...
 —Я так страдаю! [...]
 —Я никогда не была счастлива, я теперь несчастна и никогда, никогда не буду счастлива, никогда! Не заставляйте же меня страдать ещё больше! (10: 140).

“Oh, how you frightened me! I’m barely alive...”
 “I’ve been suffering so! [...]
 “I’ve never been happy, I’m unhappy now and I’ll never, never be happy, never! Don’t make me suffer still more!” (373)

Observed by avid spectators—by both Gurov and, unbeknownst to her, the two students standing above—Anna, with her pale face and the fan she carries, brings to mind none other than Mimoso-San.²⁷ It is as if a new geisha has taken the stage. Perhaps serving as Anna’s inspiration, during the first act the beautiful and mysterious Mimoso-San sings of her suffering in the solo, “A Geisha’s Life”: “A geisha’s life imagination tints/With all the charming color of the rose,/And people won’t believe her when she hints/Its beauties are not quite what they suppose.”²⁸ While not a profound piece of music by any stretch of the imagination,²⁹ this song provides an additional, somewhat humanizing layer to a character who otherwise seems merely to represent the simultaneously exotic *and* erotic charms of Japan. Her suffering, in fact, challenges the orientalizing, Western perception of Japan with which the opera both begins and ends: it is a “happy” country, a “garden of glitter!/Flower and fun/Flutter and flitter.”³⁰ However, even though this challenge *is* present, it constitutes only an ephemeral musical moment—one that quickly fades into the fast-paced and colorful lyrics that, at all turns, assert a British cultural and racial superiority over the Japanese.

We must also pause and consider how the operetta’s characterization of the geisha as a beautiful, yet unhappy creature reflects discussions taking place in Western artistic journals circulating in the 1890s. One such instance of this is Alexandre Benois’ “Khudozhestvennaia khronika” [The Artistic Chronicle] commemorating the death of the Dutch painter Félicien Rops (1833-1898), in which he remarks that, “японцы внесли в эротическое искусство элемент страдания; это было ново...”³¹ [“The Japanese brought an element of suffering into erotic art [i.e. portraits of women]; this was new...”] Benois highlights the way that Western artists like

²⁷ Donald Rayfield also notes Anna’s resemblance to the geisha, suggesting that there is “not only something geisha like about Anna’s passivity, vulnerability to her seducer and her bondage to the lien (von Diederichs) who is her husband, but phrases from the operetta about ‘two parrots kept in separate cages’ are echoed in Chekhov’s comparison of the lovers to parted ‘male and female migratory birds,’” “Anton Chekhov” *Reference Guide to Russian Literature*, ed. Neil Cornwell (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998) 222.

²⁸ Jones 64-5

²⁹ As one music critic states, “Jones’s music, eschewing satire and verbal ingenuity, concentrates much more straightforwardly on romance and the exotic...*The Geisha* remains a lightweight if charming period trifle, with neither words nor music leaving any trace on the modern musical consciousness,” Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001) 266.

³⁰ Jones 6

³¹ Alexandre Benois, “Pis’ma iz Miunkhena II: Felis’en Rops’”, *Mir iskusstva* 3-4 1899: 32.

Rops borrowed from the Japanese, and also how they perceived them; the Japanese were considered to be innovators, admired for their representation of a suffering cloaked in an erotic and submissive beauty. The geisha, as both a symbol and the character Mimosa-San, is the consummate example of this, for her suffering ultimately emerges as just another facet of her erotic appeal.

In a way, this is not all that different from how Anna's suffering functions in "Dama s sobachkoi." Throughout the story, the narrator continually emphasizes her unhappiness; descriptions of her suffering are intertwined with those of her physical charms. And strangely enough, it is this very suffering that draws Gurov to her. If we recall one of his early impressions of Anna, we see that from the start her external beauty is combined with an indefinable, yet visibly pitiful quality: "Вспомнил он её тонкую, сладкую шею, красивые, серые глаза. 'Что-то в ней есть жалкое всё-таки,' подумал он и стал засыпать" (10: 130) ["He recalled her delicate, sweet neck, her beautiful grey eyes. 'There's something pitiful about her all the same,' he thought as he fell asleep."]. This pitiful quality seems to prepare not only us, but Gurov as well, for Anna's later admission of unhappiness and suffering. In fact, without this "что-то жалкое," Anna Sergeevna would simply resemble all of the women who had come before her.

Only through her suffering and the accompanying grey quality that it casts over the story (i.e. Anna's grey dress, her grey eyes, Gurov's greying hair) does Anna rise above Gurov's description of women as the "низшая раса" [the lowest race, 10: 128]. This derogatory phrase,³² which uses "race" as a replacement for "sex," represents an important moment in the text and one that, as I argue, helps to strengthen the relationship between Chekhov's story and Jones' operetta. Occurring only twice in the text—in both Parts I and IV—and, with its implicit message of a Nietzschean³³ male superiority, "низшая раса" serves as the textual equivalent of the lyrics of the song that I briefly discussed above, "Happy Japan", the opening and closing number of *The Geisha*. The major difference between the two is that, whereas in the operetta the same version of "Happy Japan" is sung jubilantly at its beginning and end, Gurov's view of the "низшая раса" changes as his love and sympathy for this intriguing "dama s sobachkoi" grow. What he pronounces with disdain at the beginning eventually transforms itself into a phrase that he utters only to keep up appearances and protect his relationship with Anna from the suspicions of others. By the story's end, Gurov has come to see a new side of this "inferior race"; namely, how underneath the surface lies something that is not inferior at all and that, if embraced, can instead act as a catalyst for change and bring about spiritual rejuvenation. Given the textual parallels, how can we interpret the relationship between the conflict of Chekhov's "Dama s sobachkoi" and the one in Jones' popular Orientalist melodrama, *The Geisha*, which Chekhov clearly evokes?

Reading Anna and Gurov against the main characters from the popular operetta, we discover new significance in their situation. Throughout the story, Chekhov recasts the initial relationship of his characters. This effect is achieved not so much by transforming the female (in fact, I would suggest that both the geisha and the "lady with the dog" remain only vague and static secondary characters), but by creating a shift in the male character. Chekhov alters the

³² In the next chapter, I will return to this racist phrase—often leveled at the Japanese—and its variations when I discuss the war and popular phantasmagoria.

³³ Rayfield comments that, "In 'The Lady with the Little Dog,' Nietzsche is a serious subtext. Gurov's initial philosophy 'Lower race!' echoes Nietzsche's conviction that 'woman is for the warrior's recreation', that 'if you go to woman, don't forget your whip,'" *Understanding Chekhov*, 212.

opinion of the *perceiver* (Gurov, projected onto Captain Fairfax), the seemingly superior male figure who gazes at the Other. The man, exposed to the Other (the woman as a person of "inferior race," which applies to Anna and, still more so, to the Japanese geisha), proves able to rise above his formerly held beliefs. As a result of this shift in Gurov's perception, Anna grows in importance, and the outcome of their encounter is transformed. In recognizing Anna's goodness and admitting his love, Gurov is forced to look beyond himself and to accept the Other as something more than a member of an "inferior race."

The story, in fact, does more than recast the characters of the popular operetta. It also reframes and elevates its plot. Unlike the operetta, which uses Japanese themes as popular comic entertainment, "Dama s sobachkoi" employs *japonisme* to engage with larger themes of mortality and human frailty, which, as one scholar contends, is an essential condition in the creation of Japanese art.³⁴ We see an example of this during the scene in Oreanda when Gurov and Anna, after their first night together, observe the landscape:

В Ореанде сидели на скамье, недалеко от церкви, смотрели вниз на Агоре и молчали. Ялта была едва видна сквозь утренний туман, на вершинах гор неподвижно стояли белые облака. Листва не шевелилась на деревьях, кричали цикады, и однообразный, глухой шум моря, доносившийся снизу, говорил о покое, о вечном сне, какой ожидает нас. Так шумело внизу, когда еще тут не было ни Ялты, ни Ореанды, теперь шумит и будет шуметь так же равнодушно и глухо, когда нас не будет. И в этом постоянстве, в полном равнодушии к жизни и смерти каждого из нас кроется, быть может, залог нашего вечного спасения, непрерывного движения жизни на земле, непрерывного совершенства. Сидя рядом с молодой женщиной, которая на рассвете казалась такой красивой, успокоенный и очарованный в виду этой сказочной обстановки -- моря, гор, облаков, широкого неба, Гуров думал о том, как, в сущности, если вдуматься, всё прекрасно на этом свете, всё, кроме того, что мы сами мыслим и делаем, когда забываем о высших целях бытия, о своем человеческом достоинстве.

Подошел какой-то человек -- должно быть, сторож, -- посмотрел на них и ушел. И эта подробность показалась такой таинственной и тоже красивой. (10: 133-4)

In Oreanda they sat on a bench not far from the church, looked down on the sea, and were silent. Yalta was barely visible through the morning mist, white clouds stood motionless on the mountaintops. The leaves of the trees did not stir, cicadas called, and the monotonous, dull noise of the sea, coming from below, spoke of the peace, of the eternal sleep that awaits us. So it had sounded below when neither Yalta nor Oreanda were there, so it sounded now and would go on sounding with the same dull indifference when we are no longer here. And in this constancy, in this utter indifference to the life and death of each of us, there perhaps lies hidden the pledge of our eternal salvation, the unceasing movement of life on earth, of unceasing perfection. Sitting beside the young woman, who looked so beautiful in the dawn, appeased and enchanted by the view of this magical decor—sea, mountains, clouds, the open sky—Gurov reflected that, essentially, if you thought of it, everything was beautiful in this world, everything except for what we ourselves think and do when we forget the higher goals of being and our human dignity.

³⁴ Hokensen 32

Some man came up—it must have been a watchman—looked at them, and went away. And this detail seemed such a mysterious thing, and also beautiful. (366-7)

In this lyrical passage, we are explicitly told that nature serves as a magical, fairy-tale like backdrop (*skazochnaia obstanovka*) for Anna and Gurov. The fantastical Yalta landscape seems to overcome them both, although we are privy only to Gurov's thoughts. His description of the scene takes on a highly impressionistic quality as Yalta itself fades to the background and his thoughts shift to life, death and beauty. The way the scene is rendered calls to mind the visual arts, particularly the popular landscapes of Japanese painters with their evocative depictions of mountains, clouds and the sea. Considering that Sergei Kitaev (1864-1927), a naval officer who had acquired an impressive collection of Japanese artwork during his many trips to Japan, organized the first exhibition of Japanese prints and paintings at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts in 1896 and then a second in Moscow in 1897 at the Historical Museum, it is possible that Chekhov's description of Oreanda drew—whether consciously or unconsciously—on the Japanese style.³⁵

This style, according to an 1897 study in the popular weekly *Niva* [The Field] by one of the first Russians to study Japanese art, the painter and art historian Igor Grabar', relied on a subjective interpretation of nature: "Японцы открыли глаза на субъективизм художественного произведения. Теперь только поняли, что такое значит для художника умение «не все сказать», дать намек там, где это подсказывает натура и артистическое чутье"³⁶ [The Japanese opened our eyes to the *subjectivity* of an artistic work. Only now did we understand what the ability "not to say everything" means for an artist, to give a hint there, where nature and artistic flair suggest it]. If we look at this scene closely, Gurov's subjectivity permeates it, influencing the way we encounter the landscape. Nature becomes a reflection of his interiority—his fears, his realizations, his perception. Everything, from the landscape itself to the appearance of the watchman, is imbued with a sense of beauty and mystery; in this moment, nature, the eternal, unchanging image, has become holy. It holds Gurov in its power, just as Anna Sergeevna does with her sadness and goodness. The scene at Oreanda colors their romance, leading to Gurov's transformation and entrapment in a difficult and untenable situation.

We, the readers, experience—just as Gurov does—the proof of this entrapment when he sees himself in the mirror and reflects on his love for Anna:

И только теперь, когда у него голова стала седой, он полюбил, как следует, по-настоящему—первый раз в жизни.

Анна Сергеевна и он любили друг друга, как очень близкие, родные люди, как муж и жена, как нежные друзья; им казалось, что сама судьба предназначила их друг для друга, и было непонятно, для чего он женат, а она замужем; и точно это были две перелетные птицы, самец и самка, которых поймали и заставили жить в отдельных клетках. (10: 143)

And only now, when his head was gray, had he really fallen in love as one ought to—for the first time in his life.

³⁵ For more on Kitaev's role in Russia's discovery of the Japanese, see Elena Diakonova, "Japonisme in Russia in the Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Japan and Russia: Three Centuries of Mutual Images*, eds. Yulia Mikhailova and M. William Steele (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2008) 32-46.

³⁶ Igor Grabar, "Upadok ili vrozozhdenie: ocherk sovremennykh techenii v iskusstve," *Niva* No. 1 (1897) 57.

He and Anna Sergeevna loved each other, like very close, dear people, like husband and wife, like tender friends; it seemed to them that fate itself had destined them for each other, and they could not understand why he had a wife and she a husband; and it was as if they were two birds of passage, a male and a female, who had been caught and forced to live in separate cages. (376)

Anna and Gurov are now equals, united in their mutual affection and suffering. Strikingly, this metaphor employs the language of Jones' operetta: "Now they live in isolation. Two, two, two really very wretched little birds."³⁷ Chekhov, in the story's final scene, leaves us with a lingering impression of the operetta and underscores his story's connection to *and* deviation from it. Whereas Jones' characters break free and the operetta ends with a joyful rendition of "Happy Japan," the last page of Chekhov's tale offers a bleaker outlook for his—Russian and supposedly "real-life"—Mimosa-San and Captain Fairfax: a world saturated in grey and with no easy solutions to the dilemma that haunts them. Real life, the story seems to imply, is not an operetta. The characters, too, rise above their operatic counterparts. In *Oreanda*, we realize that the story is interested in more than star-crossed lovers, and our final glimpse of Anna and Gurov reinforces this impression, highlighting the story's engagement with themes of human mortality and the passage of time. We understand that theirs is an autumn romance set against the grey backdrop of wintry Moscow; it reflects the very color of Gurov's hair, a sign of his increased age. Despite the scene's greyness and its portrayal of their love's frailty, hope nonetheless remains for Anna and Gurov—and perhaps for the reader as well. Ultimately, the story shows that perception and circumstances are not static. Proof of this rests in the story's most telling transformation—in Gurov's ability to overcome his preconceptions and view Anna Sergeevna, the story's Japanese geisha, as something besides a member of an "inferior race."

Perfume Bottles, Painting and Living *Objets d'art*

In one of the many forwards to *Melkii bes*, Fedor Sologub stated that his novel's skillful construction provides a balance between two opposing forces: «Этот роман – зеркало, сделанное искусно... Уродливое и прекрасное отражаются в нем одинаково точно»³⁸ [This novel is a mirror, skillfully fashioned. The deformed and the beautiful are reflected in it with equal precision³⁹]. Sologub's description of his artistic method uses language similar to Igor Grabar's 1897 definition of Japanese art in *Niva* [The Field]: «искусство [японца] есть причудливое, капризное зеркало, в котором природа отражается так, как он ее понимает и любит»⁴⁰ [the art (of the Japanese) is a whimsical, capricious mirror, in which nature is reflected as he understands and loves it]. The metaphor of the mirror serves to highlight the verisimilitude inherent in Japanese art, as well in Sologub's novel. But even as both mirror metaphors provide a link to realism, they also undercut their connection to it. For Sologub, the mirror is a way of representing the freakish and the beautiful equally; there seems to be no middle ground here—

³⁷ Jones 168

³⁸ Fedor Sologub, *Melkii bes*, ed. M. Pavlova (Sankt Peterburg: «Nauka,» 2004) 6. Henceforth, all citations from the novel will be given in text.

³⁹ Fyodor Sologub, *The Petty Demon*, trans. S.D. Cioran (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1983) 27-8. All future citations from the novel will be given in text.

⁴⁰ Grabar', 55

only extremes, while, for Grabar', the mirror's capricious, whimsical nature distorts what it depicts. It is colored by the artist's interpretation and feeling; as Grabar' further qualified the Japanese artist and his methods in the same article: "он чужд всякого реализма, далек от узкого фотографирования природы"⁴¹ [he is foreign to any realism, far from a close photographing of nature]. This characterization of the Japanese artist could apply to Sologub and his poetics in *Melkii bes*, as well as to his treatment of nature in the novel.

We encounter one example of this "foreignness to realism" in a lyrical passage devoted to Peredonov's perception of nature. The world that he sees is warped, tainted by his fear and melancholy:

Опять была пасмурная погода. Ветер налетал порывами и нес по улицам пыльные вихри. Близился вечер, и все освещено было просеянным сквозь облачный туман, печальным, как бы не солнечным светом. Тоскою веяло затишье на улицах, и казалось, что ни к чему возникли эти жалкие здания, безнадежно-обветшалые, робко намекающие на таящуюся в их стенах нищую и скучную жизнь. Люди попадались, - и шли они медленно, словно ничто ни к чему их не побуждало, словно едва одолевали они клонящую их к успокоению дремоту. Только дети, вечные, неустанные сосуды божьей радости над землею, были живы и бежали, и играли, - но уже и на них налегла косность, и какое-то безликое и незримое чудовище, угнездясь за их плечами, заглядывало порою глазами, полными угроз, на их внезапно тупеющие лица.

Среди этого томления на улицах и в домах, под этим отчуждением с неба, по нечистой и бессильной земле, шел Передонов и томился неясными страхами, - и не было для него утешения в возвышенном и отрады в земном, - потому что и теперь, как всегда, смотрел он на мир мертвенными глазами, как некий демон, томящийся в мрачном одиночестве страхом и тоскою. (74)

Once again the weather was overcast. The wind blew in gusts and swept up dusty whirlwinds along the streets. Evening was approaching and everything was illuminated with a mournful light filtering through the murky overcast and seemingly from a source other than the sun.

A melancholy lull hung over the streets and it seemed that the pitiful buildings, hopelessly decrepit, timidly hinting at the impoverished and boring life lurking within their walls, and originated for nothing. People appeared from time to time and even they were walking slowly as though without motivation, as though they were barely succeeding in overcoming the somnolence that was inducing them to stillness. Only the children, those eternal, tireless vessels of God's delight in the earth, were lively and ran and played. But sluggishness was even settling over them by now, and some faceless and invisible monster, nestling at their shoulder, peered from time to time with eyes full of menace into their faces which were suddenly growing listless.

In the midst of this langour in the streets and in the houses, in the grip of this alienation from the sky, through this sullied and impotent earth strolled Peredonov, languishing from indistinct fears. And for him there was no solace in the heavenly and no joy in the earthly, because even now, as was always the case, he looked at the world

⁴¹ *ibid.* 55

through deathly eyes like some kind of demon who was languishing in gloomy solitude out of fear and melancholy. (97)

This scene foregrounds a weak impression of light, one that, in its sadness, almost appears not to be there; because of its seeming absence, an overwhelmingly dark and dismal quality permeates the landscape. In the shadows of this deadened landscape, nothing is safe. The darkness hides a “faceless and invisible monster” (*bezlikoe i nezrimoe chudishche*) that lurks in the background and threatens the town's children. This, at least, is how Peredonov, the “petty demon” of the novel's title, perceives nature, for he has become estranged from it and sees the world with “deathly eyes.” In Peredonov’s estrangement from the natural world, we find the deformity that Sologub alluded to in his forward to the novel. But nowhere in this passage is there evidence of what Grabar’ described as the Japanese love of nature. In fact, beyond its “foreignness to realism” (a shared quality of Sologub’s novel and Japanese art), this scene could even be said to represent the antithesis of Japanese painting: there is neither color nor lightness, neither beauty nor pleasure. To find examples of this pleasure, lightness and love of nature, we must look to the side of the mirror that reflects the beautiful in Sologub’s novel—that is, to the plot of Sasha and Liudmila.

For these two characters, beauty exists in the foreign and unknown—in ancient Greece, in Egypt, in the flora, fauna and art of Japan. Despite these competing influences, Japanese art seems to rise above the others. As one art critic described Japanese aesthetics in *Mir iskusstva*,

Искусство японцев это апофеоз тонкости пяти чувств, апофеоз зоркости глаза, гибкости мышц, тонкости нежных пальцев. Искусство японцев невероятно, это не человеческое искусство. Его объектом служить жизнь природы [...] Мир узора, извилистости линий, воздушности света и нежности нюансов [...] Ни мысли, ни чувства нет в японском искусстве. Японское искусство—это фантастика ощущения.⁴²

The art of the Japanese is the apotheosis of the refinement of the five senses, the apotheosis of the vigilance of the eye, the flexibility of the muscles, the refinement of loving fingers. The art of the Japanese is inconceivable, it’s not human art. Its goal is to serve the world of nature [...] The world of design, of convoluted lines, of lightness of color and of the tenderness of nuances [...] In Japanese art there is neither thought, nor feeling. Japanese art is the fantasy of feeling.

If we consider Sasha’s and Liudmila’s relationship in light of this description, we see that there is common ground between the two; both are based on the “fantasy of feeling” (*fantastika oshchushcheniia*) and on the glorification of an all-encompassing sensory experience. It is even possible to say that Sasha’s and Liudmila’s time together in her room is intended, like Japanese art, “to serve the world of nature” (*sluzhit’ zhizn’ prirodoi*)—to create beauty for beauty’s sake; their rendez-vous themselves are artistically crafted, a series of “paintings” that celebrate the natural world. Given these similarities, I suggest that Japanese art constitutes the main aesthetic source informing their plotline in *Melkii bes*.

Although numerous references to the Japanese style run throughout the novel (Liudmila’s perfumes, the decorations in her room, her love of artifice and beauty) and Sasha eventually

⁴² P. Nikolaev, “Srednevekovaia poeziia v miniaturakh,” *Mir iskusstva* (Dec. 1904) 123.

masquerades as a geisha, critics only fleetingly touch upon this theme. The geisha, in fact, is often secondary to discussions of Peredonov and the symbol of the *Nedotykomka*, or of the novel's complicated and elusive structure.⁴³ For both Sologub's contemporaries and current scholars, *Japonisme* seems to be nothing more than the embodiment of the beautiful in the novel. One early twentieth-century critic observed that, "тут под маской японки, под нелепым костюмом, в которой мальчик кажется девушкой, встаёт и высится, побеждает и зовёт на восторг красота человеческая."⁴⁴ ["Here under the mask of the Japanese girl, under the absurd costume, in which the young man seems a girl, human beauty stands up and grows tall, conquers and calls for ecstasy."] Similarly, in several recent studies, one literary scholar comments that the novel's use of Japanese themes represents beauty in a dismal world, while another argues that the wearing of the geisha costume serves as an "aesthetic and erotic challenge" to the provincial mob.⁴⁵ My aim in this section is to explore whether something more—something beyond beauty—lurks beneath the geisha mask and costume that Sasha wears to the masquerade.

As a means of probing this question, I would first like to turn to the scene in which the narrator describes the making of Sasha's costume:

Тотчас же решили, что Сашу надо нарядить гейшею. Сестры держали свою затею в строжайшей тайне, не сказали даже ни Ларисе, ни брату. Костюм для *Гейши* Людмила смастерила сама по ярлыку от корилопсиса: платье желтого шелка на красном атласе, длинное и широкое; на платье шитый пестрый узор, крупные цветы причудливых очертаний.

Сами же девицы смастерили веер из тонкой японской бумаги с рисунками, на бамбуковых палочках, и зонтик из тонкого розового шелка на бамбуковой же ручке. На ноги - розовые чулки и деревянные башмачки скамеечками.

И маску для *Гейши* раскрасила искусница Людмила: желтоватое, но милое, худенькое лицо с неподвижной, легкой улыбкою, косо-прорезанные глаза, узкий и маленький рот. Только парик пришлось выписать из Петербурга, черный, с гладкими, причесанными волосами. (221)

It was immediately decided that Sasha would be dressed up as a geisha girl. The sisters kept their venture a strict secret. They didn't even tell Larisa or their brother. Liudmila herself created the costume for the geisha girl from a label on a bottle of corylopsis: a dress of yellow silk on red satin, long and wide; a colorful pattern sewn onto the dress and large flowers of marvelous design. The girls themselves created the fan out of bamboo sticks and delicate Japanese paper with drawings and the umbrella was fashioned of delicate pink silk on a bamboo handle as well. For the feet—pink stockings and flat wooden sandals. The masterful Liudmila painted the mask for the geisha girl: a yellowish, but sweet, rather thin face with a passive gentle smile, slit eyes, and a narrow and small mouth. It was only the wig that they had to order from Petersburg: a black one with smooth, combed hair. (250)

⁴³ In her critical survey of the scholarship written on "Melkii bes," Pavlova offers no less than twelve different scholarly interpretations of the novel, ranging from "a novel, reflecting the break of cultural epochs" to "neo-mythological text," from "a grotesque in a romantic and modern understanding" to "novel-cum-linguistic experiment," 721.

⁴⁴ Evgenii Anichkov, "Melkii bes" in *O Fyodore Sologube: kritika, stat'i i zametki* (SPb: Nav'i Chary, 2002) 338.

⁴⁵ See Heldt 176 and Lim 140.

With its close attention to detail and use of a color-coded description, this passage serves as an ekphrastic moment in the text, for it invites the reader to visualize the garment that was lovingly fashioned for Sasha. One potential reason for the inherently visual quality of this scene is that the inspiration for Sasha's costume comes from a “ярлык от корилопсиса,” which we can assume, due to the mention of “корилопсис” (winter hazel), references one of Liudmila's many bottles of perfume.⁴⁶ What this seemingly insignificant detail offers to the reader is twofold: 1) In its combined appeal to both one's visual and olfactory senses, it performs a synesthetic role in the text, and 2) it acts as an emblem of the mass-media images incorporating elements of *Japonisme* that were circulating in Russian culture throughout the 1890s and early 1900s⁴⁷: from pictures of geisha to rooms decorated with flowers and fans (See figures 1.5 and 1.6).

Most important in this scene, however, is that through Liudmila's appropriation and reproduction of this mass-produced image, she herself becomes both an artist and a creator. She is, in the words of the narrator, a master and expert [искусница; note that Sologub used the adverbial form of this word to describe his novel's construction]; her talent lies in the creation of beauty and artifice. Despite her acknowledged skills, Liudmila's art remains only a copy, and one that reveals the provincial limitations placed on her decadent escapism and aesthetic experiments.⁴⁸ Far removed from the world of high art and using the only sources available to her in the small town of Sapozhok, Liudmila, before the eyes of the reader, begins to bring this perfume label—this flattened, still image—to life.

Going beyond Sologub's novel, we can see that modernist art and criticism were preoccupied with the enlivening of images—with the potential of a character or text to find new sources of artistic life. Rather than imitate reality and offer a lesson or moral to the reader/viewer, like realism, modernism sought to blur the boundaries between art and life, testing the limits of different artistic genres and of the imagination. Its appetite was all-consuming; it would try on many faces (or masks) and employ a broad range of sources. We encounter this kind of experimentation in J.-K. Huysmans' *A rebours* (1884), a novel whose chapters are devoted to different forms of aesthetic escapism, from the cultivation of flowers to the study of high art.⁴⁹ This novel, in fact, has much in common with Sologub's *Melkii bes*,⁵⁰ not least of

⁴⁶ Olga Kushlina discusses this book in her comprehensive study of the flowers and perfumes of the *fin de siecle*, *Strastotsvet ili Peterburgskie podokonniki* (SPb: Izd-vo Ivana Limbakha, 2001); see specifically, pages 111-117 for her reading of *Melkii bes*. In a recent volume of Sologub scholarship, Mariia Pirogovskaia revisits this topic in her article, “Parfiumernyi kod v romane Fyodora Sologuba ‘Melkii bes’”; M.M. Pavlova, ed., *Fyodor Sologub: Biografiia, tvorchestvo, interpretatsii* (SPb: Pushkinskii Dom, 2010) 354- 71.

⁴⁷ See Bartlett 16.

⁴⁸ For various interpretations of Liudmila's role as a decadent ideal, see Judith Mills, “Expanding Critical Contexts: Sologub's *Petty Demon*,” *SEEJ* 28.1 (Spring 1984) 15-31; Charlotte Rosenthal and Helen Foley “Symbolic Patterning in Sologub's *The Petty Demon*” in Fyodor Sologub's *The Petty Demon*, trans. S.D. Cioran and ed. Murl Barker (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1983) 324-32; Harriet Hustis, “Wicked Tongues and Alternative Lifestyles: Lyudmila, Peredonov and the Role of Language in Sologub's *The Petty Demon*” *SEEJ* 40.4 (Winter 1996) 632-48.

⁴⁹ *A rebours* was not published in Russian translation until 1906 (see Pavlova, “Tvorcheskaia istoriia romana”, 674) and M.M. Pavlova offers that it is unlikely that Sologub would have read the novel in its original French due to the unreliability of the two journals in which foreign novels were published, *Velikie luki* (1885-89) and *Vyterg* (1889-92), which often lagged behind schedule; see M.M. Pavlova, *Pisatel'-Inspektor: Fedor Sologub i F.K. Teternikov* (Moskva: NLO, 2007) 162-8. However, considering that Sologub taught himself French in 1885, and that critics have noted many textual connections between the novels, from their use of perfumes and flowers, it appears likely that Sologub, even if he did not read the novel in its entirety, would have known, at least from critical reviews or the various literary evenings he attended in Petersburg, its plot, as well as some of its more famous scenes.

which is its treatment of the Japanese aesthetic as one of the highest, most erotic forms of art.⁵¹ While Huysmans' novel does not bring a Japanese geisha to life within its pages, it does feature a seemingly animated Salomé in the erotic fantasy of des Esseintes,⁵² the Decadent (anti-) hero who contemplates Gustave Moreau's famous painting, *Salomé dansent devant Herode* (1876):

La face recueillie, solennelle, presque auguste, elle commence la lubrique danse qui doit réveiller les sens assoupis du vieil Hérode; ses seins ondulent et, au frottement de ses colliers qui tourbillonnent, leurs bouts se dressent; sur la moiteur de sa peau les diamants, attachés, scintillent [...] des Esseintes voyait enfin réalisée cette Salome, surhumaine et étrange qu'il avait rêvée. Elle n'était plus seulement la baladine qui arrache à un vieillard, par une torsion corrompue de ses reins, un cri de désir et de rut [...] Elle devenait en quelque sorte, la déité symbolique de l'indestructible Luxure, la déesse de l'immortelle Hystérie, la Beauté maudite, élue entre toutes par la catalepsie qui lui raidit les chairs et lui durcit les muscles; la Bête monstrueuse [...]⁵³

Her face set, solemn, almost majestic, she begins the lascivious dance, which will awaken the slumbering senses of the aged Herod; her breasts quiver and, with the rubbing of her swirling necklaces, her nipples harden; diamonds, stuck on her moist skin, glitter [...] des Esseintes at last realised that superhuman, uncanny Salome he'd dreamed of. She was no longer just a dancer who, through the depraved gyration of her loins, wrested a cry of desire and lust from an old man, who could break the spirit and wear down the will of a king through the rise and fall of her breasts [...] She had become, in some sense, the symbolic deity of indestructible Lust, the goddess of immortal Hysteria, an accursed Beauty, exalted about all others by a catalepsy that stiffens her flesh and hardens her muscles; a monstrous Beast [...].⁵⁴

In des Esseintes' rendering of Salome, his decadent imagination—one colored by perversity, egocentricity and his self-imposed isolation—is the principal force at play. Before the enlivened artistic object performing on the canvas, he realizes the extent of the Judean princess' power: the beautiful (la Beauté maudite) and the monstrous (la Bête monstrueuse) combined in one, a foreign, feminine beauty that can evoke lust and bring destruction in its wake. Considering that, in *Melkii bes*, the geisha, who is a product of Liudmila's perverse imagination, exercises a similar power at the masquerade, we can view the scene with Salomé as a demonstration of the female image's omnipotence, as well as an example of the many ways that Sologub's novel is in dialogue with *A rebours*.

⁵⁰ For a study on the similarities between *Melkii bes* and *A rebours*, see Galina Selegin, *Prekhitraia viaz' (Simvolizm v russkoi proze: "Melkii bes" Fedora Sologuba)* 90-2, 111-18.

⁵¹ Hokensen 95

⁵² Critics often note the imaginative flight of fancy that informs des Esseintes' study of the painting. Pamela Genova, "Japonisme and Decadence: Painting the Prose of *A rebours*," *Romantic Review* 88 (1997) 267-90; Charles Bernheimer, "Visions of Salome" *Decadent Subjects: the Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the Fin de Siecle in Europe*, ed. T. Kline and Naomi Schor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2002) 104-39; Natasha Grigorian, "The Writings of J.-K. Huysmans and Gustave Moreau's Painting: Affinity or Divergence?," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 32.3-4 (Spring-Summer 2004) 282-97.

⁵³ J.-K. Huysmans, *Oeuvres complètes*, v. VII (Paris: G. Cres et co., 1928) 81-4.

⁵⁴ J.-K. Huysmans, *Against Nature*, trans. by Brendan King (Sawtry, UK: Dedalus, 2008) 82-4.

Another potential source for both the scene in which the perfume bottle image comes to life and the novel as a whole is a 1901 performance of a Japanese drama troupe in St. Petersburg. Even the title of the troupe's production, "*Geisha i rytsar*" evokes characterizations in *Melkii bes*: Sasha, obviously, represents the geisha, while Peredonov, whose very name invites readers to see him as the Russian Don Quixote (as one scholar points out, he is the "Don done over"⁵⁵), plays the role, however strangely, of a knight-errant in a picaresque novel. Although it is unclear whether Sologub attended this performance himself, he undoubtedly knew about it. Igor Grabar' provided a detailed description of this artistic spectacle in *Mir iskusstva*'s *Khudozhestvennaia khronika* [The Artistic Chronicle]:

В большей публике существует мнение, будто японскому искусству неизвестен натурализм, будто у них все надумано, сочинено, не похоже на жизнь. Тот, кому пришлось побывать на недавних представлениях японской труппы в Петербурге, имел превосходный случай оценить именно натурализм этого искусства. Как все это похоже на то, что мы давно уже знаем из японских рисунков, ваз, скульптуры и в особенности из гравюр на дереве. Мне казалось, что я видел обворожительный волшебный сон. Все герои Утамаро, Хокусая, Хоккея, Иейсена, казалось, сошли с пожелтивших гравюр и ожили. Маленькие кокетливые женщины с очаровательными улыбками, в костюмах, выдержанных в тончайших, необычайно гармоничных красках, прогуливались по сцене; рыцари с ожесточением продолжали биться в страшных поединках и искры сыпались из их мечей. И ссоры, и драки, и смерть, и смех, и слезы—все казалось настоящим, неподдельным, не бутафорским. Хотелось смеяться и плакать, становилось больно и страшно, и весело и грустно. [...]⁵⁶

In the greater public exists the opinion, as if naturalism is unknown to Japanese art, as if everything of theirs is fabricated, invented and does not resemble life. He who happened to attend the recent performances of a Japanese troupe in Petersburg had the perfect opportunity to evaluate the naturalism of this art precisely. How all of it resembled that which we have long known from Japanese drawings, vases, sculpture and in particular from woodcuts. All the heroes of Utamaro, Hokusai, Hokkei, Yeisen, seemed to emerge from the yellowed woodblocks and to come alive. Small flirtatious women with charming smiles, in costume, self-possessed in the most subtle, extremely harmonious colors, walked across the stage; knights with great zeal continued to struggle in terrible fights and sparks shot from their swords. And the quarrels and fights and death and tears—all seemed real, genuine, not a sham. One wanted to laugh and cry, became pained and scared, and happy and sad. [...]

The most telling moment in Grabar's description appears towards its end, when he draws a comparison between the actors in costume on the stage and the figures from the woodblock prints of Japanese *ukiyo-e* [images of the floating world] masters. His interpretation of the events on the stage conflates art and reality, as well as two different forms of art— theater and woodblock prints. In this, the Japanese aesthetic, like modernism itself, appears to defy

⁵⁵ Bruce T. Holl, "Don Quixote in Sologub's *Melkij bes*," *The Slavic and Eastern European Journal* 33.4 (Winter 1989) 539.

⁵⁶ Igor Grabar', "Iapontsy," *Mir iskusstva* v. 7, no. 1-6 (1902) 32-3.

boundaries; it takes the same forms in all genres, employs the same figures (small flirtatious women, knights with great zeal; see Figure 1.8 for one of Hokusai's drawings of a Japanese girl) and enlivens them with a dream-like touch of reality. As Grabar portrayed it, the whole spectacle seemed to burst with life, provoking in viewers a series of contrasting emotions. He himself was so moved by the events on the stage, in fact, that at the end of his article he challenged the standard Russian perception of Japanese art at this time, asking: “Неужели и это детство?”⁵⁷ [Really this is childhood?]. Grabar's words suggest that Japanese art, although beautiful and seemingly innocent on the surface, hides something dark within itself; there is more to it than meets the eye. Perhaps it is this layered complexity that helped to draw Sologub to Japanese themes in his novel.

In light of Grabar's exploration of Japanese art, if we now return to the passage from *Melkii bes* that I introduced earlier in this section, the sentence describing the geisha mask takes on a new and darker meaning: “И маску для *Гейши* раскрасила искусница Людмила: желтоватое, но милое, худенькое лицо с неподвижною, легкою улыбкою, косо-прорезанные глаза, узкий и маленький рот” (221). With its separation of the adjectives “желтоватое” and “милое” by the conjunction “но”, this statement is rather suggestive. Containing a hint of the “yellow peril” existing in Russian culture in the 1890s—one that was rooted in Vladimir Solov'ev's alarmist writings about the rising power of the Far East⁵⁸—the geisha's description poses a threat. It even mirrors an earlier one of Sasha, the very character for which the costume and mask are intended: “У него кожа была желтоватого, но, что редко бывает, ровного, нежного цвета” (209). But striking in both cases is that immediately following the use of the pejorative “желтоватое” (as yellow is a color often associated with madness, as well as negative racial stereotypes pertaining to Jews and Asians), it is as if the narrator takes pains to reassure his readers by immediately undercutting the Otherness of their yellow skin. Although visibly marked, these potentially dangerous foreign figures—an androgynous boy⁵⁹ and a Japanese geisha—are instead transformed into innocent and beautified creatures.

Regarding the geisha in particular, the narrator seems to remove any lingering threat existing in the reader's imagination through a chain of *aestheticizing* adjectives that strip her face of agency. She becomes only a living portrait, a culturally constructed mask.⁶⁰ Through her near expressionlessness, she embodies what the art critic P. Nikolaev describes as one of the underlying features of Japanese representations of human beings:

У японцев и люди — агломераты красок и линий, воплощенные фантомы божественного движения, прелестные цветы дивной природы. И люди — очаровательные физиологические организмы, нежные, нервные—без мысли, без чувства.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Grabar, “Iapontsy,” 34

⁵⁸ See the introduction to this dissertation for a discussion of V. Solov'ev.

⁵⁹ For discussions of androgyny in Russian literature and culture, see Olga Matich, “Androgyny and the Russian Religious Renaissance,” *Western Philosophical Systems in Russian Literature: a collection of critical studies*, ed. by Anthony M. Mlikotin (Los Angeles: U of Southern California Press, 1979) 165-75; “Androgyny and the Russian Silver Age,” *Pacific Coast Philology* XIV (October 1979): 42-50.

⁶⁰ In his whimsical and largely imaginative study of Japan, *Empire of Signs*, Roland Barthes discusses Japanese theatrical masks and how, in lacking expressivity and writing/signifying nothing, they essentially erase themselves. See “The Written Face,” trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982) 88-94.

⁶¹ Nikolaev 123

The people belonging to the Japanese—are agglomerates of colors and lines, embodied phantoms of divine movement, lovely flowers of wondrous nature. And the people—charming physiological organisms, tender, nervous, without ideas and feelings.

Without concretely expressed thoughts and feelings of her own, the geisha is a blank slate, subject to any interpretation. From her delicate and foreign features to the suggestion of an immobile and light smile on her small, narrow mouth, her beautiful and erotic image has the potential to fulfill any of the viewer's fantasies or fears.

The ambiguous rendering of the geisha reaches its peak when Sasha finally puts on the costume and attends the masquerade.⁶² At first, not only the other masqueraders, but also Sasha himself, are enthralled by his appearance:

Саша, опьяненный новым положением, кокетничал напрапалую. Чем больше в маленькую гейшину руку всовывали билетиков, тем веселее и задорнее блистали из узких прорезов в маске глаза у кокетливой японки. *Гейша* приседала, поднимала тоненькие пальчики, хихикала задушенным голосом, помахивала веером, похлопывала им по плечу того или другого мужчину и потом закрывалась веером, и поминутно распускала свой розовый зонтик. (226)

Sasha, intoxicated with his new situation, became the complete coquette. The more tickets that were thrust into the geisha's hand, the more cheerfully and provocatively glittered the eyes through the narrow slits in the mask of the coquettish Japanese. The geisha would curtsy, raise her delicate little fingers, titter in a *choked* (translated amended) voice, wave her fan, tap one man or the other on the shoulder and then hide behind her fan. Every minute she was opening and closing her pink umbrella. (256)

This detailed description paints an image of the geisha that fully brings her—the *objet d'art*—to life. No longer the still and demure image on the perfume bottle, the geisha, as incarnated by Sasha, moves seductively, giggling and waving her fan suggestively. Like des Esseintes' Salome and the geisha in the Japanese troupe's 1901 production, she performs; her beauty is a weapon that she uses to enchant those around her. But is the geisha as lovely and innocent as she seems? Can we even trust appearances in this world of degraded beauty (*porugannaia krasota*)?

It would seem that we cannot, for one of the most compelling features in this scene is that, as the geisha comes to life, it is as if the life *ebbs out* of Sasha. Although just a costume that he wears, the geisha nonetheless seems to usurp his identity, which turns this spectacle into something perverse and macabre.⁶³ During this exchange between life and art, Sasha, in the act of becoming the artistic object, can barely breathe. He laughs with a strangled voice (хихикала

⁶² Many critics remark on the ambiguity that surrounds Sasha's character; J. Ivanits suggests that the masquerade allows the characters to dress up and reveal their true selves; for her, Sasha's geisha costume alludes to his uncertain gender. See "The Grotesque in Fyodor Sologub's Novel," *The Petty Demon*, trans. S.D. Cioran and ed. Murl Barker (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1983) 321-2. For Rosenthal and Foley, Sasha's sexual ambivalence represents a Dionysian cult of beauty; they argue that both the geisha costume and his connection to Dionysus connect Sasha to the East, 326.

⁶³ Stanley Rabinowitz argues that Sasha's beauty becomes questionable in this scene due to what he terms the geisha's aggressive behavior. See *Sologub's Literary Children* (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1980) 84.

задушенным голосом), the very fate that was foreshadowed in what seemed to be only a playful misunderstanding during his first meeting with Liudmila:

—Хотите, я вас душить буду? —живо спросила Людмила, —хотите?
 —Вот вы какая! —сказал Саша, —уж сразу и задушить! За что такая жестокость?
 Людмила звонко захохотала и откинулась на спинку кресла.
 —Задушить! —воскликнула она, —глупый! совсем не понял. Я не руками вас душить хочу, а духами. (130)

“Do you want me to atomize you?” Lyudmila asked in a lively tone. “Do you want me to?”
 “You’re a fine one!” Sasha said. “Right away you want to atomize me! What did I do to deserve such cruelty?”
 Lyudmila burst into ringing laughter and threw herself against the back of the chair.
 “Atomize!” she exclaimed. “Silly! You misunderstood me. I want to atomize you with perfume.” (156)

His initial fear, however, eventually comes to pass. Towards the novel’s end, Liudmila’s perfumes both smother and transform him. The effects of the Japanese aesthetic—the delicacy, fragility and overwhelming beauty of it—play (and perhaps also *prey*) on his senses, as well as on his body. He is intoxicated by his new position and this same intoxication seems to take control of the crowd, which leads to the scene of attempted violence at the masquerade. The crowd, itself both literally and figuratively drunk, turns on the geisha after she wins the masquerade’s award for best female costume (ironically, the prize is a fan; an emblem of *japonisme* is rewarded with its standard accessory), desiring to know her true identity and what lies beneath her mask.

In its effort to unmask her, the mob falls upon the geisha and begins to tear her apart in what is, ultimately, a failed Dionysian ritual:

— Заставьте её снять маску!
 — Маску долой!
 — Лови её, держи!
 — Срывайте с неё!
 — Отымите веер!
Колос кричала:
 — Знаете ли вы, кому приз? Актрисе Каштановой. Она чужого мужа отбила, а ей — приз! Честным дамам не дают, а подлячке дали!
 И она бросилась на *Гейшу* [...]
 Какой-то свирепый молодой человек вцепился зубами в гейшин рукав и разорвал его до половины. *Гейша* вскрикнула:
 — Спасите!
 И другие начали рвать ее наряд. Кое-где обнажилось тело. Дарья и Людмила отчаянно толкались, стараясь протиснуться к *Гейше*, но напрасно. Володин с таким усердием дергал *Гейшу*, и визжал, и так кривлялся, что

даже мешал другим, менее его пьяным и более озлобленным [...]

Наконец *Гейша* вырвалась, - обступившие ее мужчины не устояли против ее проворных кулаков да острых зубов. *Гейша* метнулась из зала. В коридоре *Колос* опять накинулась на японку и захватила ее за платье. *Гейша* вырвалась было, но уже ее опять окружили. Возобновилась травля.

— За уши, за уши дерут, - закричал кто-то.

Какая-то дамочка ухватила *Гейшу* за ухо и трепала ее, испуская громкие торжествующие крики. *Гейша* завизжала и кое-как вырвалась, ударив кулаком злую дамочку.

Наконец Бенгальский, который тем временем успел переодеться в обыкновенное платье, пробился через толпу к *Гейше*. Он взял дрожащую японку себе на руки, закрыл ее своим громадным телом и руками, насколько мог, и быстро понес, ловко раздвигая толпу локтями и ногами. (231-2)

“Make her take her mask off!”

“Off with the mask!”

“Grab her, hold her!”

“Take the fan away!”

The Wheat Sheaf cried:

“You know who they gave the prize to? To the actress, Kashtanova. She took someone else’s husband away and they gave her the prize! They won’t give it to decent women, but they gave it to that vile creature!

And she rushed at the geisha [...]

Some fierce young man had fastened onto the geisha's sleeve with his teeth and had torn it in half. The geisha screamed:

“Help me!”

Others started to tear at her costume as well. Her body was bared in a few spots. Daria and Liudmila were pushing and shoving desperately, trying to squeeze through to the geisha, but to no avail. Volodin was tugging at the geisha, screeching and clowning around with such energy that he was even getting in the way of others who were less drunk and more furious than he [...]

Finally the geisha tore free—the men surrounding her couldn’t withstand her nimble fists and sharp teeth.

The geisha dashed out of the hall. In the corridor the Wheat Sheaf once again fell on the Japanese girl and grabbed her by the dress. The geisha was about to tear free, but once more she was surrounded. The persecution was renewed.

“The ears, they’ve got her by the ears,” someone shouted.

Some lady grabbed the geisha by the ear and tugged at it, emitting loud triumphant cries. The geisha started to howl and somehow broke free, striking the spiteful woman with her fist.

Finally, Bengalsky, who meanwhile had managed to change into his ordinary dress, forced his way through the crowd to the geisha. He took the trembling Japanese girl in his arms and, using his enormous body and his arms as much as possible to protect her, quickly carried her off, deftly scattering the crowd with his elbows and feet. (260-2)

We see from this passage that, despite the crowd's efforts and its brutal persecution of the geisha, it does not penetrate the mystery of her identity. Although she suffers much abuse, in the end she remains a masked and unknown figure. Nobody suspects Sasha of being the face beneath the mask; the mob believes that the geisha could be none other than the actress Kashtanova, a woman who enjoys great success with the town's men. In this way, the mob attack resembles a purely symbolic act—a battle against the erotic/exotic beauty of the “unclean woman”/the geisha.

But it is also worth noting an additional layer in this scene. Although throughout the mob attack the narrator refers to the geisha primarily as “*Гейша*,” there are moments when a slippage occurs and the art object becomes culturally coded and is given a national identity.⁶⁴ Twice the word “японка” appears instead of “*Гейша*”. Similar to the earlier description of the mask and its yellowish tint, it would seem that this shifting perception of the geisha contains a note of the “yellow peril.” Representing a fear of both the Other and the unknown, the costume activates not only the crowd’s sense of sexual morality (as it is associated with Kashtanova’s promiscuity), but also its growing national fears of a Japan whose power, both politically and culturally, was on the rise during the 1890s. By having won the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5), Japan had both literally and figuratively stepped onto the world stage. Thus, these slippages may indicate that the crowd’s need was *not* to unmask the figure before them, but instead to unravel the mystery of the Japanese nation.

Based on the novel’s symbolic use of the geisha, *Melkii bes* enjoys a unique position in Russian and Japanese relations. It is easy to imagine that early readers in the 1890s and early 1900s—his friends and fellow writers—would have perceived the use of the geisha as a way of engaging with Japanese art; for them, Sasha’s turn as geisha may have enacted the enlivening of a character out of a Japanese woodblock print. Then, during the novel’s incomplete publication in *Voprosy zhizni* in 1905, readers were never even exposed to the chapters featuring the geisha, although, based on the popularity of *japonisme*, they most likely recognized the novel’s incorporation of its other distinguishing features. For readers in 1907, for whom the war would have served as an immediate context in which to view the novel, Sologub’s geisha may have embodied the aestheticized Oriental femme fatale that had only recently threatened their world⁶⁵; in images from the war, caricaturists often employed the geisha as a symbol of Japan (see figures 1.8 and 1.9). Whatever Sasha’s costume may have signified for early readers of *Melkii bes*, it is clear that the Sologub’s treatment of *japonisme* was informed not only by Huysmans’ novel, but also by early Russian discourse about Japanese aesthetics. In fact, the novel’s transformation of a beautiful image on a perfume bottle into a living, masked seductress allows us to see the ways in which Japanese aesthetics were incorporated into Russian modernism, particularly into a novelistic “mirror” with seamless boundaries between both reality and art and the beautiful and the perverse.

⁶⁴ As the geisha is a Japanese figure, this slippage is perhaps an insignificant detail. However, geisha is a term associated with artistry (芸者; these *kanji*, when placed together, mean “artistic person” or “artist”), while the term “японка” [Japanese girl] is a gendered expression of the Japanese national identity; they are not interchangeable.

⁶⁵ Although the typical “femme fatales” of Modernism are Cleopatra and Salome, I propose that the Japanese geisha, particularly in early twentieth-century Russian literature, falls within the literary tradition of the femme fatale. See Virginia Allen, *The Femme Fatale: erotic icon* (Troy, NY: Whitson Publishing, 1983).

From Chekhov's refashioning of Jones' operetta to Sologub's use of the geisha and Japanese themes in his novel, in this chapter I have explored two manifestations of *japonisme* in Russian literature from the turn of the century. In their treatment of the geisha, both texts engage with early Russian discourse about Japanese aesthetics: its reliance on human frailty as a principle of art, its impressionistic nature, its simultaneous evocation of contrasting extremes. These two texts also highlight the geisha's erotic appeal. For Chekhov, Anna Sergeevna, his "lady with the little dog", is an emblem of female sexuality and suffering—a geisha who, unlike her operatic counterpart Mimosa-San, overcomes her status as the inferior race when she wins the hero's love. Sologub, on the other hand, takes a darker and more symbolic approach to the geisha. She serves as a symbol of beauty in a perverse world, yet it must be noted that she too contains hints of the *urodlivoe* (deformed/freakish) that permeates provincial Russian life. Sologub's geisha appears to be a product of modernism itself—a still image enlivened in the vein of Huysmans' Salome or of the woodblock prints of Japanese *ukiyo-e* artists.

Whether operatic geisha or perfume labels come to life, the Japan of the 1890s that these texts depict comes alive through art. A prisoner of its own artistic popularity and the beautifying aesthetic construct of *japonisme*, this Japan is erotically and sexually charged, as well as enigmatic. It has yet to be either unraveled, or, to borrow from Sologub's metaphorical rendering of Japan, *unmasked*. These pre-war texts present Japan through a largely fascinated gaze, although, with Sologub, the threat that Japan may signify begins to transform mere fascination into violence. This transformation continues during the Russo-Japanese War, when Russia's perception of Japan shifts from the feminized version of the 1890s to a masculine, gun-wielding nation. The focus of Chapter Two will be to trace this shifting perspective, as I explore the effects of popular phantasmagoria on Russian *Japonisme*.

“Painting” the Russo-Japanese War: “A Splendid Panorama of Beautiful Movements, Expressions and Poses”

On 29 May 1905, shortly following Russia’s defeat at Tsushima, Fedor Sologub’s “Vrazhda i druzhba stikhii” [The Enmity and Friendship of the Elements], a strange and symbolic meditation on Russia’s loss to Japan in the Russo-Japanese War, appeared in *Birzhevye vedomosti* [The Stock-Exchange Gazette]. According to Sologub, Russia, in having alienated nature, had brought about its own fate:

Солнце, огонь, пламенное, страстное светило, источник света и тепла. Мы упрямо отвращаемся от солнца. От света. От всякого света. Просвещение наше в упадке [...]

Мы не любим стихий, и справедливые стихии не любят нас. Они благосклонны к нашему врагу и помогают ему в великой исторической борьбе, потому что платят ему любовью за любовь.

Посмотрите на японские картины. Сколько света, какое живое солнце чувствуется в них! Эмблемою своего государства взяли японцы восходящее солнце.[...] И японцы радостно греются в лучах своего солнца...Радостно открывают они солнцу своё тело.¹

The sun, fire, ardent, passionate light, a marker of light and warmth. We stubbornly move away from the sun. From the light. From any light. Our enlightenment is in decline [...]

We don't love the elements and, in return, the elements don't love us. They are inclined towards our enemy and help them in this great historical battle because they pay back love with love.

Look at Japanese paintings. How much light, what a lively sun is felt in them! The Japanese have taken the rising sun as their national emblem...And the Japanese happily bask in the rays of their sun...Happily do they reveal their bodies to the sun.

This excerpt advances Sologub’s somewhat surprising idea that Russia was unable to compete with the Japanese, who, by basking in the elements, shared a loving and reciprocal relationship with nature. Cementing this bond was their inherent connection: the fact that the Japanese nation’s chosen symbol—or as Sologub calls it, “emblem”—is the rising sun. Because of it, the Japanese emerge as nature’s darling, an idea that the mysterious epigraph of this article, taken from Sologub’s personal correspondence, reinforces, “Ветер и солнце были за японцев и против нас” [The wind and the sun were for the Japanese and against us, 2: 546].

Most striking, however, in Sologub’s description of the Japanese is that, even in the face of Russia’s loss, he expressed admiration for them. During this moment of lament and political upheaval—Tsushima had been lost—Sologub reveals his fascination with Japanese painting when he makes a strange request: he asks the Russian people to look at Japanese art to see the error of their ways. For him, the darkness of Russian society must make way for the light.

¹ Fedor Sologub, *Sobranie sochinenii, t. 2: roman, rasskazy, skazochki, stat'i* (Moskva: NPK “Intelvak,” 2001) 547-8. All future citations from this volume of articles will be in text.

Having turned away from nature and the elements, Russia's enlightenment had begun to dim. Only by considering the art of the enemy, by *learning* from and imitating the Japanese, could Russia hope to emerge from its impending historical decline.

These thoughts had clearly been germinating in Sologub's consciousness for some time, for this is not the first piece of writing that he used to reflect on the the state of Russian culture² and the Russo-Japanese War. About two months earlier, on 17 March 1905, his article "Polotno i telo" [The Canvas and the Body] was published in *Novosti* [*The News*]. Concerned with similar themes, this article seems to be a precursor to "Vrazhda i druzhba stikhii." In fact, it might be said that these articles would best be read in tandem; both set forth the idea that the Russian body, by hiding from nature, hinders the possibility for spiritual and cultural growth. This deficiency becomes clear to Sologub after he attends an art exhibition that, although not lacking in artistic technique, nevertheless leaves him cold:

Был на выставках. Впечатление смутное... Ни с одного полотна не повеяло победительным обаянием высокого искусства.

Отчего? Не знаю. Многие полотна написаны с превосходною техникою. Есть картины с очень выдержанным настроением. Есть содержательные картины. Красивые пятна, цветовые эффекты, колорит, перспектива, настроение, современность, идея—все на месте. И все в общем безрадостно. Не война ли виновата? Не её ли зловещее влияние бросает на все тусклую тень уныния и бессилия? (2:541-2)

I was at the exhibitions. A vague impression. Not from a single canvas was there the whiff of the triumphant charm of high art.

Why so? I do not know. Many canvases were drawn with excellent technique. There were paintings with a very self-restrained mood. There were meaningful pictures. Beautiful spots, colorful effects, color, perspective, mood, modernity, idea—all were in place. And all generally bleak. Is the war not guilty? Does it not cast a sinister influence on all the dim shadows of sadness and helplessness?

Sologub cannot quite put his finger on what so disturbs him about this technically sophisticated exhibition. Marring his recollection of the experience is his uncertainty about whether his negative impression was produced *by* the paintings themselves or if it originated in something completely *external* to both him and them. Namely, the omnipresent war and its accompanying gloomy pall.

This is not surprising since the primary subject matter of these paintings *was* the war; describing the paintings in detail, Sologub walks us through the exhibition. On this gallery tour, we receive fragments told through stream of consciousness. Sologub is not concerned with the names of artists or the titles of paintings³; instead, his interest lies in the pat images on which these paintings rely—the symbols (or, again, *emblems*) through which the horrors of the war are made known to their viewers:

² I am referring to Sologub's novel, *Melkii bes*, which I discuss at length—focusing on its symbolic use of a geisha—in the previous chapter.

³ Interestingly, even the *primechaniia* lack this information, nor did there seem to be any information about this kind of exhibition in the popular press or journals devoted to art from this time period.

Немало картин, посвященных войне. Идут в атаку, впереди раненый священник с крестом; у солдат у всех глазах скошены в сторону, к зрителю, — очевидно, враг там, за спиною зрителя [...]

Другие полотна: казаки налетели на японцев, рубят их [...] провожают офицера на войну [...] сестра милосердия на площадке вагона [...] «мужики в глубокой думе слушают» чтение газеты (конечно, о войне) [...] встреча в семье вернувшегося с войны офицера с повязанною рукою [...] лазарет [...] видение Христа тяжело раненным...” (2: 542).

A lot of paintings devoted to the war. They go on the attack, ahead of the wounded priest with a cross; the eyes of the soldiers are slanted to the side, to the viewer, —obviously, the enemy is there, behind the viewer [...]

Other canvases: Cossacks descend on the Japanese, cut them [...] they escort an officer to war [...] a sister of mercy in a platform car [...] “peasants in deep thought listen” to the reading of the paper (of course, about the war) [...] a reunion of a family with an officer returning from war with a bound hand [...] the hospital [...] a vision of Christ grievously wounded...

Although these paintings may depict the very real horrors of the war, Sologub took exception to them, suggesting that there’s a lack of “taste” in the faces of the soldiers that are depicted. There is, he asserted, a certain naïvete to this type of artistic treatment. In its simplicity, it falls short of its potential: “Удручает эта робость воображения: были битвы, раны, смерти, проводы, встречи, —вот и все это и рисуем. Это—война” [This timidity of imagination is depressing: there were battles, wounds, deaths, send-offs, meetings—that is all we will draw. This is war]. Perhaps what Sologub most resisted in these paintings is their purported realism; he did, after all, introduce the concept of imagination (highlighting the artists’ lack of it) into his critique of the exhibition.

For him, imagination seems to be central to artistic success, particularly when depicting war. To promote his own idea about war’s creative potential, Sologub even went so far as to invent a dialogue between himself and the contemporary artists whose works he viewed:

—Это—война,—говорят художники своими полотнами. —Так они воюют.
—Это—не война,—хочется ответить. —Так не воюют.

Война—чрезмерность насилия, буйство тела, организованное в подвиг, крайнее напряжение силы, разлитой в плоти. Мерзость перед Господом, зло между людьми, —для живописца война—превосходная панорама прекрасных движений, экспрессий, поз. Праздник тела, соединенный с самопожертвованием. (2:542)

This is war—say the artists with their canvases. Such is how they fight.
This is not war—I want to respond. Such is not how they fight.

War is an excessiveness of violence, rampage of the body, organized into a feat, an extreme tension of strength, poured into the flesh. Abomination before the Lord, evil among men, —for the painter—war is a splendid panorama of beautiful movements, expression and poses. The celebration of the body, coupled with self-sacrifice.

In this imagined dialogue, Sologub came to the conclusion that war provides the artist with a

natural occasion to promote and celebrate the body. Not only did he highlight the artistic potential of the human form at war, but he also offered a compelling definition of war itself.

As Sologub defined it, war, for painters, is a “splendid panorama of beautiful movements, expressions and poses.” This phrase aestheticizes and beautifies war, transforming it from mere historical reality to something noble and worthy of artistic depiction. Even more noteworthy here is how Sologub, with these words, reconceptualized the panorama. Referencing a type of painting that is, by its very definition, concerned with an overview of spatial terrain,⁴ Sologub challenged traditional conceptions of the panorama.⁵ He shifted its artistic focus from the portrayal of a broad and sweeping landscape that would dwarf any individual within it to a kind of detailed portraiture; in short, he privileged the specifics of the individual over geographic scope. Thus, for him, the focal point of war painting should be the human body, whereby an individual’s physical form and emotional responses become the narrative, or, to frame this in “panoramic” terms, the object whose vastness it is the artist’s job to capture. In this way, war evolves into something that is less historically factual—where this or that battle was fought or where this or that soldier stood—and more concerned with personal experience (expressions) and its effects on the body (movement/poses). Eliciting emotions and provoking the imagination, war becomes the stuff of art. It is a “canvas” on which writers and artists can paint their impressions of the war, of the enemy and of themselves.

Using the metaphor of the canvas, in this chapter I will trace the various symbols and emblems that made up the artistic and literary landscape of the Russo-Japanese War. My aim is to show how visual and verbal representation worked together to create an overarching portrait of this event—even seeming at times to feed off and be in dialogue with each other. Through a selection of personal documents (letters and diaries), essays, popular literature, Symbolist poetry and popular and high art, I hope to demonstrate the various ways in which the war inspired the Russian imagination and becomes, in one scholar’s words, “refracted and reflected through the consciousness of writers.”⁶ This chapter approaches the war’s effect on the imagination through a metaphorical artistic lens—the war as canvas.⁷ Creating my own “panorama” of the war, I will pay particular attention to the various perspectives from which the Russo-Japanese War was

⁴ The *Slovar’ sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka* gives no less than six definitions of “panorama,” all of which focus on a broad overview of space, from “a terrain viewed from an elevated place” to “painting or drawing that creates the illusion of spaciousness, t. 9 (*P-pnut*)”, eds. N.Z. Kotelova and G.A. Kachevskaja (Leningrad: Nauka, 1959) 112-13.

⁵ For a discussion of the history of the panorama as art, see Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (New York: Zone Books, 1997). For more literary discussions of panorama, see Molly Bruson’s discussion of Lev Tolstoy’s *Voyna i mir* [*War and Peace*] in *The War (and the Peace) between the Verbal and Visual in Russian Literary and Painterly Realism*, diss. University of California, Berkeley, 2009, 163-71.

⁶ Barry Scherr, “The War in the Russian Literary Imagination,” *World War Zero: The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective*, ed. John W. Steinberg, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David Wolff and Shinji Yokote (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 426.

⁷ Recent scholarship has examined the Russo-Japanese War in relation to its role in culture and the imagination; see *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero, Volumes 1 & 2*, ed. John W. Steinberg, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David Wolff and Shinji Yokote (Leiden: Brill, 2005), particularly the chapters written by Richard Stites, Tatiana Filippova and Barry Scherr (19, 20 and 21); *Faits et imaginaires de la guerre russo-japonaise, 1904-1905*, ed. Dany Savelli (Paris: Kailash, 2005); *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective*, ed. David Wells and Sandra Wilson (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999); *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters*, ed. J. Thomas Rimer (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995); Susanna Soojung Lim, *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685-1922* (New York, London: Routledge, 2013).

approached, to the interplay between the word and image and, most importantly, to the common symbolic language that these different depictions shared.

Part I: War, or the First Rumbings of an “Elemental Storm”

On 26 January 1904, the Russo-Japanese War broke out after a surprise attack on Russian naval forces at Port Arthur, shocking both Russia and the world. It was incomprehensible that an Eastern nation—one that, as I showed in Chapter One, the Russian cultural imagination associated primarily with erotic beauty and aesthetics—would attack a “Western” power. For Russians, it was doubly implausible that Japan would emerge victorious in this war. In these uncertain times, in fact, the only certainty seemed to be that the war had captured everybody’s attention. As news poured in from the front, the war quickly became a topic of public interest and conversation; the proliferation of news about battles being waged in the Far East led to a series of mixed emotional responses: fear, anger, disbelief, surprise, malaise, grief. Beyond emotions, the war also gave rise to a wide range of generic responses in which the personal became intertwined with politics: from personal documents (diaries and letters) to essays about art and history. In this section, I will investigate several early responses to the war: the diary of Sof’ia Andreevna Tolstaia, the letters of Anton Chekhov and Valerii Briusov’s essays, as well as articles and images from his Symbolist vehicle, *Vesy* [The Scales, 1904-09]. Linking these seemingly disparate figures together, I will show the various forms the war took in the Russian imagination.

The Grieving Mother

In her diary, Sof’ia Andreevna Tolstaia (1844-1919) underscored the need that people felt to be kept informed of the latest news (*svezhie novosti*) about the war. As she presented it on 3 February 1904, the war with Japan was both unexpected and unwanted, an interruption of domestic life:

Дня три назад он [Лев Николаевич] долго не возвращался. Является в шестом часу, и мы узнаем, что он съездил в Тулу взад и вперед, чтоб купить последнюю телеграмму и иметь свежие вести о войне с японцами. Война эта и в нашей деревенской тишине всех волнует и интересует. Общий подъем духа и сочувствие государю изумительные. Объясняется это тем, что нападение японцев было дерзко-неожиданное, а со стороны России не было ни у государя, ни у кого-либо желания войны. Война *вынужденная*.⁸

Three days ago he [Lev Nikolaevich] didn’t return. He appears at six o’clock, and we learn that he had gone to Tula, there and back, so as to buy the last telegram and to have fresh news about the war with the Japanese. This war, even in our provincial quiet, worries and interests everybody. The general elevation of spirit and sympathy for the sovereign are surprising. This can be explained by the fact that the attack of the Japanese was audacious and unexpected, and on the Russian side there had been no wish for war, neither by the sovereign, nor by anybody else. The war is *forced*.

⁸ S.A. Tolstaia, *Dnevnik v dvukh tomakh, t. 2: 1901-1910 (ezhednevnik)*, ed. S.I. Mashinskii (Moskva: “Khudozhestvennaia literatura,” 1978) 101. All future references to these diaries will appear in text.

Seemingly in one breath, Sof'ia Andreevna captured the national mood in this entry; she demonstrated how the Russian people, at this moment, were united—in both their sympathy for the tsar and their shock at the audacious behavior of the Japanese. Her impression also highlights the disruptive nature of history: how it *forces* itself upon one brutally, neither heeding nor acknowledging the wishes of those it impacts. If we recall the entry's beginning, which focuses on Lev Nikolaevich's absence from home, we see that even the familial microcosm falls victim to history's far-reaching powers when war intrudes upon its domestic peace.

In the months that followed the first mention of war in Sof'ia Andreevna's diary, the national mood progressively worsened. It quickly became apparent that, despite Russian expectations, the quick end to the conflict that they had envisioned was nowhere in sight. The Japanese proved themselves to be not only a shrewd enemy, but also one whose military prowess had been grossly underestimated. They won battle after battle—from Chemulpo Bay (9 February 1904) to Motien Pass (17 July 1904), with only a few being deemed inconclusive.⁹ By August 1904, Sof'ia Andreevna was preparing to send her son, Andrei L'vovich (Andriusha, who enlisted willingly), to war.

She described this moment in painstaking detail. For her, it was the moment when war came to her doorstep and truly made itself known. And for us, it is the powerful firsthand glimpse of a woman's—and a *mother's*—perspective on the war. In a way, this diary entry is a companion piece to Lev Tolstoi's well-known article, *Odumaites'* [Bethink Yourselves, 1904],¹⁰ which argues for pacifism and explores the damaging effects of war. But unlike Tolstoy's polemical writing, Sof'ia Andreevna's diary does not seek to persuade or to teach; it simply offers a glimpse of a mother's emotions as she sends her child away:

Когда мы сели с ней в протелку, мы увидели издали идущего толпу. Это были солдаты, сопровождаемые толпой родных и просто любопытных. Что-то было такое мрачное в грянувшей музыке и барабанном бое. Военная старушка моя [...] услышав музыку, тотчас же начала рыдать. Выехали и ординарцы верхами, и мой Андрюша впереди всех в светло-песочной рубашке, такой же фуражке, на своей прелестной кобыле. Так все запечатлелось в моей памяти: завязанные чем-то белым ноги кобылы, прекрасная посадка на лошади Андрюши, и слова старушки: “На лошади-то как сидит ваш сынок—картина, точна у себя в кабинете.” (2: 104-5, 8 August 1904)

When I sat down with her on the *protelku*, we saw from afar the moving crowd. There were soldiers, being seen off by a crowd of relatives and the simply curious. There was something gloomy in the crashing music and drum fight. My old military woman, after having heard the music, immediately started to weep. They came out, orderlies on horseback, and my Andriusha was in front of everybody in his light sandy shirt, in the same colored cap, on his lovely mare. Everything was so engraved in my memory, the legs of the mare sinking into something white, Andriusha's lovely seat on the horse and

⁹ For more on the history of specific battles of the Russo-Japanese War, see the centennial collection, *Russko-iaponskaia voina, 1904-1905: vzgliad cherez stoletie*, ed. O.P. Airapetova (Moskva: “Tri kvadrata,” 2004).

¹⁰ This article was first published abroad in the *London Times* (27 June 1904) and later appeared in Russia in a series of pamphlets. For the complete text, see Lev Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh*, t. 36, ed. V.G. Chertkov (Moskva—Leningrad: “Khudozhestvennaia literatura,” 1936) 100-48.

the words of the old woman: “The way your son is sitting on the horse—he looks as comfortable as if he were just sitting his study!”

This scene offers the kind of panorama that Sologub would have approved of: Sof’ia Andreevna watches her son carefully, paying attention to his posture and bearing as he sits atop his horse. The departure of the soldiers, at first noisy and dramatic (let us not forget Sof’ia Andreevna’s weeping companion either), soon fades into a peaceful calm. All that matters is the vision on which Sof’ia fixates; it is the memory that will carry her through the war. Since it may be the last time she sees Andriusha, the moment, grand and triumphant, is colored by her maternal pride. Even her companion noted that she had a reason to be proud—Andriusha, on his horse, makes a fine picture; the act of sitting on his horse is compared to how he would sit in his study. In this metaphor, war blurs seamlessly with an imagined scene of cozy domesticity, highlighting the surreal quality of the moment. But we might also imagine that the blurring of these two seemingly disparate images of Andriusha—at war and at home—helps to soften the blow that the war represents; it acts as a temporary salve to the reality of the scene taking place before the women’s eyes, as well as to their grief.

The image of the grieving mother became embedded in the narrative of the war; in the December 1904 issue of the popular periodical *Beseda* [The Conversation], the journal featured the famous realist painting of Ivan Kramskoi (1837-87), *Neuteshnoe gore* [Inconsolable Grief, 1884]. Interestingly, rather than refer to the painting by its original title, the journal referred to it as *Neuteshnaia mat’* [Inconsolable Mother], thereby transferring the inconsolability of an emotion to the inconsolability of the bereaved female figure who dominates the painting (see figure 2.1). The woman’s steadfast gaze seems to reach out of the painting and invite the viewer to take part in her grief. In this way, the painting’s representation of this grieving woman becomes an all-embracing image of every mother. It is easy to imagine that her emotions are intimately known and felt by the women living through the horror of the Russo-Japanese War. With Kramskoi’s painting, the journal seems to capture the prevailing mood of the period—its hopelessness, despair and the quiet suffering of the mothers who watched their children head to the front.

Sof’ia Andreevna gave voice to this grief in her diary when she described her thoughts in the wake of Andriusha’s departure. As soon as her son faded from her watchful gaze, she was overcome by fear of what might come next. She was reminded of the ephemeral nature of all living things and, driven by her maternal feelings, she was moved to comment upon war’s needlessness:

Что-то еще раз оборвалось в моем сердце. [...] Что такое война? Неужели один глупый человек, Николай II незлой, сам плачущий, мог наделать столько зла?

Мне вдруг представилось, что война, как буря—явление стихийное, и мы только не видим той злой силы, которая так беспощадно и несомненно крушит насмерть столько человеческих жизней. Когда человек палкой раскапывает муравейник и муравьи погибают, таскают яйца свои и разный сор, они не видят ни палки, ни руки, ни человека, разоряющих их; так и мы не видим той силы, которая произвела убийство войны. (2: 106-7)

Something was broken again in my heart. What is war? Is it possible that a stupid man, Nicholas II, not malevolent, himself weeping, could bring about so much evil?

I suddenly pictured the war as a storm—an elemental phenomenon, and we only don't see the evil force, which so mercilessly and undoubtedly crushes to death so many human lives. When a man with a stick unearths an anthill and the ants are killed, their eggs and other litter are dragged away, they see neither a stick, nor a hand, nor a man, destroying them; such that we do not see the force, which brought about the murder of war.

For Sof'ia Andreevna, the only way to make sense of the war is to metaphorize it—to see it as nature at its worst, inexplicable and omnipotent. This “elemental storm” sweeps in, the work of a force greater than the (stupid, but ultimately harmless) Tsar and of mankind in general. In her vision, strikingly similar to one Tolstoy offers in *Voina i mir* [War and Peace], human beings are no better than ants, subject to the whims of those who unwittingly step upon them.¹¹ The force that murders goes observed; it performs its evil insidiously.

Although herself a victim of this “storm,” Sof'ia Andreevna returned to the topic of the war only upon Andriusha's return in January 1905. In his absence, there is no speculation about his fate, or about what is going on in the Far East; in fact, it is as if, without him, her very ability to write disappeared. She is rendered quiet by the war. The last entry of 1904 (17 August; mere days after Andriusha's departure) highlights her broken spirit: “ужас войны [...] вспыл с страшной силой [...] и захватил меня всю” [the horror of the war [...] revealed itself with fearsome strength [...] and took all of me, 2:107].

When she again picked up the thread of her personal narrative, it was only to mark the restoration of the family. In a way, this mirrors the first entry in which she discusses the war: through the return of a loved one, news of history sweeps into the domestic realm, transforming the prosaic. Whereas earlier the war was just an external phenomenon—fresh news that everybody wanted to know—the son that returned brought physical traces of it with him. On 14 January 1905, Sof'ia Andreevna noted his condition, highlighting his mental, rather than his physical state: “Он болен головой и нервами. [...] Война оставила свои следы” [He is sick in the head and from nerves. [...] The war has left its mark, 2:108]. Mentally “disfigured” by the war, Andriusha stood as both a living symbol of the war's horrors and a testament to the words with which Sof'ia Andreevna ended this entry, “Вообще времена смутные и тяжелые” [In general, these are uncertain and trying times, 2:109]. As we can see, even with the safe return of her son, there could be no consolation for Sof'ia Andreeva. Her private observations evoke the chaos of both the war and the revolution that followed, as well as the mother's role in these events: to watch from the sidelines and to give voice to the ensuing pain and grief of war. The themes that she addressed in the confines of her journal offer only a preview of those that literature would pick up in the coming months.

Inscribing the Self into War

Anton Chekhov was not immune to the hope that dominated the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War. In the letters from the last months of his life, he made various remarks about it. Closely following events in the press—his favorite reporter was V.M. Sobolenskii of *Russkie vedomsti* [*The Russian News*]¹²—Chekhov was almost certain that the Russians would emerge

¹¹ For the full citation, see Lev Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh, t. 12: Voina i mir, t. 4*, ed. V.G. Chertkov (Moskva-Leningrad: “Khudozhestvennaia literatura,” 1928) 211.

¹² In a letter to Ol'ga Knipper Chekhova from 8 March 1904, he wrote that “[...] в «Русских вед<омостях>»

victorious: “наши побьют японцев” [“ours will beat the Japanese, ”12:54, 3 March 1904]. But despite his persistent belief in a Russian victory, there are moments in his letters that betray the war’s simultaneously disheartening effect on him.

Having become the focal point of Russian life, the war, as Chekhov portrayed it, left little room for any other occupation. Due to the “diverted attention of the public,”¹³ a charity production of one of his plays was canceled in the planning stages. People were not interested in the theater—or, at the very least, not in *traditional* theater. As one scholar described the period immediately following the breakout of the war, Russians were flocking to popular musical productions, where actors read out and performed the news.¹⁴ Popular titles from this period were *The Heroes of Chemulpo*, *Port Arthur*, *War with Russia*, as well as *Glory to All for the Faith, the Tsar and the Fatherland*, which was performed before a huge map of East Asia.¹⁵ Seeing the insidious way in which war was working its way into every nook and cranny of Russian life, Chekhov noted the war’s negative effect on the public in a letter dated 20 February 1904: “...как-то странно и в газетах, и в обществе; вранья много, курс упал, интерес ко всему, кроме войны, иссяк у общества” [it is somehow strange in the newspapers and in society; there is a lot of lying, the rate of the ruble has fallen and society’s interest in anything besides the war has dried up, 12: 40). Interestingly however, he too fell victim to this torpor, complaining to Olga Knipper-Chekhova about the futility of writing during wartime, “Я работаю, но не совсем удачно. Мешает война [...] Все кажется, будто по случаю войны никто читать не станет” [I am working, but not all that successfully. The war disturbs me [...] It now seems, as if because of the war nobody will read, 12: 72, 26 March 1904].

Around the same time, he also fell victim to something even more surprising: a desire to take part in the war. He first mentions this to his wife in early March and, then with greater frequency, to other correspondents, but always with the condition: “если буду здоров” [If I will be healthy, 12: 84, 13 April 1904; 12: 87, 13 April 1904]. We can read the desire that Chekhov expressed to go to the front as a doctor in several ways. One possibility is that he wanted to do his part for his country; while the former is likely, it is also possible that, being ill and without an occupation, Chekhov simply wanted to return to *life*. A great historical event was taking place around him; although he could do nothing about it, he was confronted with it everyday, in small talk and the news alike: “все говорят только о японцах” [everybody is talking only about the Japanese, 12:56, 6 March 1904]. This event gave him something on which to focus his energies; through the war he could imagine a return to health and, even more importantly, a future. As Chekhov imagined it, this future lay in the Far East, the place of happier and healthier past

чудесно излагается война, особенно морская, неким В.М. Ты приучи себя, читай ежедневно и скоро войдешь во вкус. В.М. как оказывается, это не моряк-адмирал, как я думал, а простой думский статистик... Он гадает—и выходит верно [in the *Russian News*, the war is wonderfully described by a certain V.M. See for yourself, read it daily and soon you'll be in fashion. V.M., it would seem, is not an officer, as I thought, but is a simple government statistician. He guesses and it turns out right], *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridtsati tomakh, t. 12 (1904): darstvennye i drugie nadpisi* (Moskva: “Nauka,” 1983) 58.

¹³ About the staging of a play to help the women’s medical courses, Chekhov wrote to P.I. Kurkin, “теперь война, у публики отвлечено внимание, она не станет платить вдвое за места,” [now there is war, the public’s attention is diverted, it will not pay double for seats, 12: 31, 7 Feb. 1904].

¹⁴ Richard Stites, “Russian Representations of the Japanese Enemy,” *World War Zero: The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective*, ed. John W. Steinberg, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David Wolff and Shinji Yokote (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 399.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 400

travels.¹⁶ It is almost as if he could just return to the exotic landscape of his past, he would be transformed into a man whose life seemed to spread boundlessly before him; in short, as if by reclaiming the past, he might have been able to gain a future.

Despite Chekhov's fantasy of returning to the Far East, the longer the war went on, the more his health worsened. Soon, almost as if his mood were influenced by his declining health, he took to stating aphorisms about the war: “все на этом свете кончается, кончится и война...” [Everything in this world ends, so will the war, 12: 97, 29 April 1904]. Whether Chekhov intended this to be an optimistic or a pessimistic statement, it is impossible to know, but regardless of his meaning, the war seemed inextricably linked to his fate. He followed coverage of it faithfully, even in his final days in Badenweiler. As he wrote to the reporter V.M. Sobolevskii on 12 June 1904, “Вам спасибо за «Русские ведомости», которые я получаю здесь с первого дня приезда и которые действуют на меня, как согревающее солнце” [Thank you for the *Russian News*, which I've been receiving here from the very first day of my arrival and which act upon me as a warming sun] (12: 120). The news seemed to have some kind of ameliorating effect on him or, at the very least, seemed to help bolster his spirits. We must also pause on Chekhov's striking description of the news itself; as a “warming sun,” it serves as yet another metaphor of both the light and the elements that dominated the discourse about the war.

In the case of Chekhov, the elements must have been on his side, for he never lived to see the humiliating Russian defeat. He died on 2 July 1904, well before the fall of Port Arthur and Tsushima. And although he never did make it back to the Far East himself, Chekhov did figuratively “go to the front.” He was forever inscribed into the war when Leonid Andreev dedicated his *Krasnyi smekh* [Red Laugh, 1905] to him. For many Russian intellectuals, in fact, Chekhov's death seemed to be a harbinger of the things to come; an era had ended and a new one was beginning—with the ghost of Chekhov looming over it.¹⁷

¹⁶ Chekhov reminisced in a letter to B.A. Lazarevskii: “Когда я был во Владивостоке, то погода была чудесная, теплая, несмотря на октябрь, по бухте ходил настоящий кит и плеская хвостиком, впечатление, одним словом, осталось роскошное—быть может оттого, что я возвращался на родину. Когда кончится война (а скоро кончится), Вы начнете разъезжать по окрестностям; побываете в Хабаровске, на Амуре, на Сахалине, по побережью, увидите тьму нового, неизведанного, что потом будете помнить до конца дней, натерпится и насладитесь и не заметите, как промелькнут эти страшные три года [...] В июле или в августе, если здоровье позволит, я поеду врачом на Дальний Восток” [When I was in Vladivostok, the weather was wonderful, warm, although it was October, in the bay went a whale, splashing its tail, the impression, in a word, remained luxurious—perhaps because I was returning to my homeland. When the war will end (and it will end), you will begin to travel around the surrounding area; you will be in Khabarovsk, in Amur, on Sakhalin, along the coast, you will see the darkness of the new, of the unknown, that you will later remember until the end of days, you will endure and enjoy much and not notice how quickly these terrible three years pass by [...] In July or August, if health permits, I will come to the Far East as a doctor, 12: 86-7, 13 апреля 1904].

¹⁷ This idea is largely inspired by an article in the 3 July 1905 issue of *Zritel'*, “Pamiati A.P. Chekhova” [Memories of A.P. Chekhov] in which the author connects Chekhov's death with the historical events that followed it, highlighting not only the effect his death had, but also the darkness of the times surrounding it. It is also important to note that this article was not devoid of the apocalyptic thinking that marked Russian letters at this time, for an “angel of death” is present: “Чехов умер [...] Через две недели после его смерти была еще смерть. Год тому назад смерть Чехова поразила нас своего ожиданостью. И умер Чехов, быть может, с сумрачным сознанием, что надежды на обновление нет [...] что над русской действительностью пролетает ангел смерти. Ближайшее грядущее казалось для него темным и хмурым” [Chekhov has died [...] Two weeks after his death was yet another death. A year ago the death of Chekhov shocked us with its unexpectedness. And Chekhov died, perhaps, with the gloomy realization that there is no hope for renewal, that over Russian reality flies an angel of death. The near future seemed to him dark and gloomy], 11.

Glimpses of “The Yellow Peril”

I love Japanese art—but let it fall
in ruins. I’m for the barbarians,
I’m for the Huns, I’m for the Russians!
-Valerii Briusov¹⁸

While the kinds of statements that we encounter in letters and diaries present the war as a horrible event that was far-reaching in its effects, the Symbolist journal *Vesy* [The Scales] largely appeared to ignore the conflict. It may seem impossible to us now that one of the leading journals of the day would have turned a blind eye on something that was attracting so much publicity, but *Vesy* viewed itself to be above politics. Despite the journal's supposedly lofty position, however, it was not against taking a political stance; it simply chose to do so in an insidious way—by mixing politics and art, or, rather I should say, by using art to achieve political ends.

For the writers at *Vesy* and specifically for its editor Valerii Briusov (1873-1924), in the case of the Russo-Japanese War, art and politics were anything but strange bedfellows. This idea first emerges in Briusov's review, “V zhurnalakh i gazetakh” *Vestnik Evropy* (№ 4):

Великие события, переживаемые нами, объединили в одном общем чувстве всю Россию. Русским людям всех направлений понятно, что ставка идущей теперь борьбы: будущее России. Ее мировое положение, вместе с тем судьба наших национальных идеалов, а с ними родного искусства и родного языка, зависит от того, будет ли она в XX веке владычицей Азии и Тихого океана. Каковы бы ни были личные симпатии того или другого из нас к даровитому народцу восточных островитян и их искусству, эти симпатии не могут не потонуть в нашей любви к России, в нашей вере в ее назначение на земле.¹⁹

The great events, being experienced by us, joined in a common feeling all of Russia. By Russian people of all types it is understood, that the stakes of the battles now being waged: the future of Russia. Its world standing, together with the fate of our national ideals, and with them our native art and language, are dependent on whether it will be the ruler of Asia and the Pacific Ocean in the twentieth century. No matter what the personal sympathies of one or another of us towards the gifted little nation of Eastern islanders and their art, these sympathies cannot but drown in our love for Russia, in our faith in its purpose on earth.

Although the title of Briusov's article places it in the generic category of a review, it seems to function more as a political manifesto about Russia's destiny. Like Dostoevsky, who in his “Geok-Tepe: Chto takoe dlia nas Aziia?”²⁰ [Geok-Tepe: What is Asia to Us, 1881] argued that Asia—in this case, Central Asia—was Russia’s exodus, Briusov, in the twentieth-century,

¹⁸ Valerii Briusov, qtd. in Joan Delaney Grossman, *Valery Bryusov and the Riddle of Russian Decadence* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1985) 269.

¹⁹ Valerii Briusov, “V zhurnalakh i gazetakh. *Vestnik Evropy* (№ 4),” *Vesy* No. 4, 1904: 73.

²⁰ Fedor Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh*, v. 27 (Leningrad: “Nauka,” 1984) 32-5.

expanded upon Dostoevsky's vision, seeing Russia's glory as lying in the Far East. What seemed to complicate his imperial hopes was his realization that Russia had become rather close to Japan—in fact, perhaps too fond of it; Russian appreciation of Japanese art represented a potential weak spot in Briusov's eyes. This may be why, even as he acknowledged the gifted nature of Japan, Briusov used the word “*narodets*,” a diminutive that contains a note of condescension, to refer to it. The Japanese were just islanders to be conquered by the mighty Russians; nothing, not even aesthetic appreciation, could get in the way of that belief. Love of the Fatherland was expected to exceed love of the Japanese masterpieces.

Notwithstanding Briusov's (and, by extension, *Vesy*'s) call to let Russian feelings about Japan and its art “drown,” Japanese art ironically became the journal's sole means of engaging with the conflict. It was the symbol that they latched onto, for it allowed them to discuss the war on their own terms. These terms were aesthetic, almost entirely stripped of military references. Focusing on Japanese art also provided a diversion; they could ignore Russia's poor showing at the front and at sea, instead offering de-militarizing visual and verbal “portraits” of the Japanese nation and its people. These visual portraits consisted of unnamed Edo-period drawings and engravings, from playfully drawn cats to carefully rendered landscapes (see figures 2.2 and 2.3), in the October 1904 edition (no. 10) of the journal.²¹ With the verbal portraits, however, the journal's tone took a racist turn, one that was clearly intended to tug on more than the heartstrings of patrons of the arts.

Vesy used racist articles translated from French and German (perhaps so that the journal's responsibility for its negative political content could be deflected, or so that it could show its alliance with the West²²) to undercut Japanese military and naval triumphs, as well as Japanese civilization itself. Pyotr Sidorov's “O Iaponii” [About Japan], from the October 1904 issue, underscores this:

Помещая в этом № «Весов» ряд воспроизведений японских рисунков (частью с оригиналов, принадлежащих редакции), мы хотим напомнить читателям о той Японии, которую все мы любим и ценим, о стране художников, а не солдат, о родине Утамаро, а не Ойамы. За последние месяцы все иностранные журналы почти в каждом № посвящают статьи русско-японской войне. Из них отметим заметку Реми де Гурмона в *Mercur de France*. (№ 3) “В этом единоборстве,” пишет Гурмон, “я чувствую, что дело русских как бы мое личное дело. Русские на Востоке—представители всех европейских рас. Это очень почетно для них, но оно и очень тяжело. Необходимо, чтобы победителями остались они, и чтобы эти слишком ученые обезьяны, убежавшие из того цирка, каким сделалась Япония, были возвращены в свое первоначальное состояние. Пусть они расписывают веера; у них так много дарований для этого! Это низшая раса, народ ремесленников, которому нельзя оставить ни малейшей надежды, что он будет принят среди господ.” [...] Может быть, вместо ремесленников надо поставить художников, но мы разделяем чувство, продиктовавшее эти строки.

²¹ A note under the journal's table of contents describes them only as: “Обложка по японской акварели. Верхние заставки (стр. 1, 6 и 16) по японским акварелям. Виньетки—воспроизводят рисунки японских художников из японской «Азбуки стиля» и др. изданий” [Cover by Japanese watercolor. The top headpieces (p. 1, 6, 16) are Japanese watercolors. The vignettes reproduce paintings by Japanese artists from the Japanese “Alphabet of style” and other Japanese publications] *Vesy* No 10. (October 1904).

²² Joan Grossman weighs in on the presence of these translated texts as well, calling them “crude anti-Japanese propaganda” that made it into *Vesy* under the “guise of surveying foreign journals,” 269 n.15.

Как дополнение к рисункам, помещаем мы еще перевод небольшой статьи «Лишенная чарь Япония» из одного из последних № Берлинского журнала “Das neue Magazin” (№ 15, 8 октября) и заметку о женских типах японского художника Гарунобу (1718-1770 г., изобретатель многокрасочной гравюры).²³

Including in this issue of *Vesy*, a number of published Japanese drawings (in part from originals, belonging to the publication), we want to remind readers about that Japan, which we all love and value, about the country of artists and not soldiers, about the homeland of Utamaro and not of Ōyama. These last months all the foreign journals, almost in each issue, have been dedicating articles to the Russo-Japanese War. Of those, we will highlight a short article by Remy de Gourmont, “I feel as if the Russian matter is my own business. The Russians in the East are the representatives of all the European races. This is a great honor for them, but it’s also very burdensome. It’s necessary that they remain the victors and that these overly learned monkeys, running from the circus that Japan was made into, were returned to their original condition. Let them paint fans; they have a great gift for that! This lowest race, a people of artisans, for whom it is impossible to place the smallest hope that it will be accepted by gentlemen.” Perhaps, instead of artisans, we must classify them as artists, but, regardless, we share the feeling articulated in these pages.

As an addition to the drawings, we are including yet another translation of a short article “Japan, Robbed of Charm” from one of the last issues of a Berlin journal, *The New Magazine* (No. 15, 8 October), and the short commentary about the feminine types of the artist Harunobu (1718-1770; creator of multi-colored engravings).

Although Sidorov was largely parroting the Symbolist poet and critic Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915) in this short article, he was also voicing thoughts that most likely belonged to both the editorial board of *Vesy* and other members of the Russian intelligentsia.²⁴ His article does not represent a personal opinion; we must note that he continuously used the collective form, we (*my*), to make his points. The collective mission of all involved parties was to assert Western dominance over the East, as well as to show that, while they might admire their work as “artists and artisans” (interestingly, the one point on which Sidorov and de Gourmont do not agree), they could not see the Japanese as anything more than that. Interestingly, the Japanese identity was

²³ Petr Sidorov, “O Iaponii,” *Vesy* No. 10 (Oct. 1904): 39.

²⁴ Another example of the intelligentsia’s paradoxical combination of a sincere cultural appreciation with blatant racism occurs in Aleksandr Benois’ memoirs, in which he wrote: “Подумайте. Эти нахалы япошки, макаки желтомордые, и вдруг полезли на такую махину, как необъятное государство Российское с его более чем стоимиллионным населением. У меня и у многих зародилось даже тогда подобие жадости к этим “неосторожным безумцам”. Ведь их разобьют в два счета, ведь от них ничего не останется, а если война перекинется к ним на острова, то прощай все их чудесное искусство, вся их прелестная культура, которая мне и друзьям особенно полюбилась за последние годы. Полюбилась она настолько, что многие из нас обзавелись коллекцией японских эстампов, а Хокусай, Хиросиге, Куниоси, Утамаро стали нашими любимцами. [Think. These bastard Japs, yellow-faced monkeys, suddenly crawl onto a mountain, like the boundless Russian empire with its population of over one hundred million. Even now many others and I have something like pity for these “reckless madmen.” After all, in two runs they will be killed, after all nothing will remain of them, but if the war finds itself on their island shores, then goodbye to all their marvelous art, all their delightful culture, which I and many others have enjoyed these last years. We enjoyed them so much that many of us acquired collections of Japanese prints, and Hokusai, Hiroshige, Kuniyoshi and Utamaro became our favorites]. Aleksandr Benois, *Moi vospominaniia* (Moskva: Nauka, 1990) 396.

limited by the very thing that had helped to catapult it into the Western world—its artistic skill. When it came to Japan, the West appeared to be strangely trapped in a time warp; the country that it so claimed to love was not the Japan of the twentieth century, but the fantastical Japan of the Edo Period (1603-1863), when artists like Utamaro (1753-1806) lived. In the Western imagination, it seemed that these two Japans could not exist concurrently.

The short articles and Japanese prints included in the October 1904 edition of *Vesy* illustrate the highly fanciful and romantic nature of Russian and Western perception of Japan. Sidorov's translation of an article by the German historian and journalist Herman Wendel (1884-1936) demonstrates just how far these illusions went:

Мы, всегда [...] говорили «Япония», как если бы говорили: орхидей. Как если бы говорили: нильская лилия. Как если бы говорили: сказка и детство [...] Наивно-радостные, но детски-ясные люди, с сильно развитым пониманием стиля, в шелковых, цветных одеждах, вкушающие жизнь, как сок дорогих плодов. Гибкие, стройные женщины, с глубокими бархатными глазами, с узорными веерами, украшенными живописью Гокусаю. Качающиеся фонарики, с матовым светом, на ароматных челночках из цветов.

Мы всегда стоявшие несколько в стороне говорили: «Япония» с лёгкой благоговейной дрожью, с улыбкой, чуждой действительности [...] И всё это наполняло душу нежным, экзотическим, слегка пьянящим блаженством, словно слабое влияние гашиша, словно беззвучный полёт чудесной птицы.

Теперь приходится произносить «Япония»--иначе [...]

Наша Япония умерла, утонула в море. И нам жаль её.²⁵

We, always [...] said «Japan,» as if we were saying: orchids. As if we were saying: Nile lily. As if we were saying fairy-tale and childhood. Naively joyful, but childishly clear people, with a strongly developed understanding of style, in silk, colored robes, tasting life, like the juice of expensive fruits. Flexible, slender women, with deep velvety eyes, with patterned fans decorated with a painting of Hokusai. Swinging lanterns with a matte light on aromatic shuttles of colors.

We have always stood somewhat apart saying «Japan» with easy, reverent trepidation, with a smile, alien to reality [...] And all that fills the soul with a gentle, exotic, slightly intoxicating bliss, like the weak influence of cannabis, like the silent flight of a marvelous bird.

Now we have come to pronounce «Japan» differently [...]

Our Japan has died, drowned in the sea. And we feel sorry for it.

Wendel's description of Japan relies heavily on a series of metaphors that evoke the senses: Japan is a flower (scent, sight); the Japanese “taste” of life; the “sound” of the word “Japan” contains different shades of meaning; Japan works on the body like a drug [*gashish*]. Also, using words like “tender” and “exotic,” his language attempted to reinforce a cultural construct existing at this time that negatively portrayed the Japanese.²⁶ It made them racially inferior

²⁵ Sidorov 40

²⁶ For a more complete discussion of the various perceptions Russia had of Japan during this period, see Rosamund Bartlett, “*Japonisme* and Japanophobia: The Russo-Japanese War in Russian Cultural Consciousness,” *Russian Review*, Jan. 2008: 8-33.

objects of both cultural appropriation (note that he says “our Japan”) and the sexual gaze. As Wendel portrayed it, Japan represented an escape from reality, one that, trapped in the wonders of its own artistic output, had become no more than a delightful commodity to be enjoyed by art connoisseurs everywhere. This situation to a large degree stemmed from the widespread phenomenon of *japonisme* that I discussed in Chapter One. But what is different here is that, unlike during the attack of Sologub's geisha in *Melkii bes*, this time the enemy succeeds in killing—with words—a symbolic representation of Japan: by the end of Wendel's article, Japan, or rather their fantasy of Japan, has symbolically drowned²⁷ (*utonula v more*; note that this image of a drowned Japan resembles Briusov's call to drown one's sympathy for Japan in love of the Fatherland). In light of this metaphorical death, Wendel claimed that he and his contemporaries “felt sorry for Japan,” but I would suggest that this sentiment rings false. Wendel seemed to feel not sorry for Japan, but for himself and those who were suffering the death of this fantasy. They, after all, were the ones in mourning, since they could not reconcile the Japan represented in art and the militaristic Eastern nation that had attacked Russia.

At stake in this battle between East and West was European civilization itself. As de Gourmant wrote, the Russians, the “representatives of all the European races” (*predstaviteli vsekh evropeiskhix ras*) in this conflict, were again being called upon to prevent the “Mongolian horde” from reaching mainland Europe.²⁸ This, in fact, was how many perceived the Russo-Japanese War. As early as March 1904, after the sinking of the Petropavlovsk, Briusov called the war “наша новая борьба с Монголами” [our new battle with the Mongols].²⁹ And, as the war progressed, Briusov came to be even more interested in the potential aftermath of this historical battle; in an essay that would go unpublished, Briusov wrote about the yellow peril at the beginning of 1905: “Meterlink-uteshitel' (O 'zhyoltoi opasnosti') [Maeterlinck-the Soothsayer (On the “yellow peril”)]. Briusov used this essay to respond to Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), the Belgian playwright and essayist who, in Briusov's words, had once been a “master of thought” (*vlastitel' dum*), but was now no more than an ex-prophet (*eks-prorok*).³⁰ The reason for Maeterlinck's “fall” was that Briusov took exception to his hasty and unfounded claims about the Eastern threat in his collection of essays, *Le double jardin* (1904):

«Уже много столетий,—пишет он,—занимаем мы эту землю, и самые страшные опасности—все уже в прошлом. Каждый проходящий час увеличивает наши шансы на долгую жизнь и победу. Общая сумма культурности на всем земном шаре никогда не была так высока, как теперь. [...] Ныне, если не считать желтой опасности, которая, кажется, не серьезна, уже невозможно, чтобы нашествие

²⁷ For more on the symbolic violence to which the war gave rise and its relationship to both politics and aesthetics, see Dany Savelli, “L'appel à la violence de Valerij Brjusov en 1904 et 1905,” *Faits et imaginaires de la guerre russo-japonaise, 1904-1905*, ed. Dany Savelli (Paris: Kailash, 2005) 129-50.

²⁸ In her dissertation, Kirsten Lodge treats Briusov's essays on the war as a reflection of what she calls the “Roman Paradigm” in Russian Decadence; she aligns the Japanese with the “barbarians” and the Russo-Japanese War as the beginning of yet another collapse of empire—in this case, of Moscow, the Third Rome, *The Peak of Civilization on the Brink of Collapse: The “Roman Paradigm” in Czech and Russian Decadence*, diss. Columbia University, New York, 2006, 180-198. See also her “Russian Decadence in the 1910s: Valery Briusov and the Collapse of Empire,” *Russian Review* 69 (2010): 276-93.

²⁹ Valerii Briusov, “K neschast'iu s Petropavlovskom,” compiled by V.E. Molodiakov, *Valerii Briusov. Mirovoe sostiazanie: politicheskie kommentarii, 1902-1924* (Moskva: AIRO-XX, 2003) 82.

³⁰ Valerii Briusov, “Meterlink-uteshitel' (o zhyoltoi opasnosti),” compiled by V.E. Molodiakov, *Valerii Briusov. Mirovoe sostiazanie: politicheskie kommentarii, 1902-1924* (Moskva: AIRO-XX, 2003) 84.

варваров погубило в несколько дней наши существенные завоевания. [...]

[Откуда эта самоуверенность тона? И откуда это сытое самодовольство? Оправдывают ли их история и события дня?] А [...] не ирония ли Случая, что эти самоуверенные и самодовольные слова прозвучали именно в дни Ляоянских боев?³¹

“For many centuries,” he writes, we have occupied this land and the worst danger is already in the past. Every passing hour increases our chances of a long life and victory. The total amount of culture around the globe has never been as high as it is now. [...] Now, with the exception of the yellow peril, which does not seem serious, it is already impossible that the invasion of barbarians would have destroyed our substantial gains in a few days.

[From where is this self-assured tone? And whence is this well-fed complacency? Do history and the events of today justify them?] And [...] is there not irony in the case that these self-assured and self-satisfied words were heard namely in the days of the Battle of Liaoyang?

To Briusov, Maeterlinck’s tone was not only overly flippant given historical precedent, but also blind to the reality of the war being waged around them. Published during the Battle of Liaoyang (11 August – 21 August 1904), yet another Russian loss at the hands of the Japanese, Maeterlinck’s essays seemed to ignore Russia’s plight. Aware of the delusional quality of Maeterlinck’s claims, Briusov questioned him, ultimately dismissing his views as an inflated and archaic view of Western power.

Instead, Briusov seemed much more sympathetic to the ideas of Vladimir Solov’ev and Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1941), whom he called “sincere seers” (*iskrennie prozorlivtsy*). These two men—and other shrewd individuals like them—seemed able to read the many signs that history had been offering. As Briusov described it, the Russo-Japanese War was but one event in a series of historical collisions that had led to the current moment:

«Желтая опасность»! Выражение успело опошлиться и принять комический оттенок. Предостерегали от «желтой опасности» и искренние прозорливцы, как Вл. Соловьев, и просто сметливые люди, как император Вильгельм. События кричали прямо в уши: за японско-китайской войной следовало боксерское движение, за ним наша война с Японией. И все же до сих пор громадному большинству кажется нелепой, невозможной мысль, что Восток может поработать Европу.³²

“The yellow peril!” The expression had time to become vulgar and to acquire a comical tone. Sincere seers, like Vladimir Solov’ev and shrewd people like Kaiser Wilhelm II, warned against the “yellow peril.” Events shouted right into our ears: after the Sino-Japanese War followed the Boxer Rebellion, after it, our war with Japan. Yet so far to the vast majority it still seems an absurd, impossible idea that the East could do work on Europe.

While Briusov wrote that many believed the yellow peril to be “an absurd and impossible idea”

³¹ Ibid. 84-5

³² ibid. 89

(*nelepaia, nevozmozhaia mysl'*), he himself viewed it as a historical inevitability. His whole essay, a response to what he perceived as Maeterlinck's faulty arguments, aimed to prove the existence of the Japanese threat and to suggest that the Russo-Japanese War would not be the final manifestation of it; in fact, it may have been just a preview of what could still come. The West, however, was both blind and deaf to this threat. Much to Briusov's dismay, the "yellow peril" had stopped being something that was capable of inspiring fear, for it had been trivialized and given a comical character.³³ Briusov implied that such representations undercut the seriousness of this very real threat. We find an example of the kind of comic treatment to which Briusov took exception in a 1904 cover of the daily satirical journal, *Budil'nik* [Alarm Clock] (see figure 2.4).

This caricature takes female figures representing the war's major players—respectively, Italy, France, Spain, England and Germany (Russia is noticeably absent)—and shows them cowering beneath War [*Voina*], a monstrous yellow creature with red eyes. At first glance, War appears to be an ambiguous hybrid—perhaps half-witch and half-warlock; its strange combination of long hair and a red frock with a bulbous nose and straining muscles throws its gender into question. But the horrific appearance of the folkloric monster-witch aside, what really merits our attention is the cover's central image, the bright yellow cup that War holds between its two hands. White foam seems to be pouring out of it, just beginning to bubble over the top; upon close inspection, the liquid in this cup very much resembles beer. A symbol of Germany, the foaming beer may suggest the transformation of the German emperor's longheld fear of the coming yellow peril into a threat that has finally arrived (we must recall that the coining of the term, the "yellow peril", is sometimes attributed to Kaiser Wilhelm). The white foreigners below are safe as long as the cup stays upright, but it is getting closer and closer to tipping over and overflowing with each passing minute. In fact, there is nothing subtle about the image's message; it functions as a "warning" [*preduprezhdenie*]³⁴—the same word that acts as a caption to the illustration.

Does this kind of caricature, as Briusov suggested, really trivialize the war and the Eastern threat? Or does it, much like the articles and images in *Vesy*, serve a similar purpose? Like *Vesy*, *Budil'nik* did use art (in this case, popular rather than highbrow) to undercut the enemy and to express racist sentiment (the war as an advent of a new *outpouring* of the yellow peril). One of the major differences between *Budil'nik* and *Vesy* seemed to be that they targeted different audiences and achieved their political ends through different means. *Vesy*, although under the editorial leadership of a man who was clearly invested in the war's outcome, rarely mentioned Russo-Japanese War directly. When it *did* engage with the conflict, it would mask its coverage of the topic, either hiding it within reviews of other journals, using translations of foreign texts to give voice to its sentiments about Japan, or by writing about and including examples Japanese art. The drawings and prints featured in *Vesy* helped to hold Japan prisoner to the whims of the Russian imagination; they constituted a symbol of Russia's elaborate fantasy of "its Japan"—a land of whimsical pictures, beautiful landscapes and delicate women—which they were now grieving. While *Vesy* essentially limited itself to discussing the war through references to art, a journal like *Budil'nik* had nothing to hide, nor did it have room for subtlety. Instead, as a vehicle of the popular press, it relied on blatant, over-the-top caricatures that openly fed into

³³ Tatiana Filippova explores the way that the satirical press engaged with the yellow peril in her article, "Images of the Foe in the Russian Satirical Press," *World War Zero: The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective*, ed. John W. Steinberg, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David Wolff and Shinji Yokote (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 411-424.

Russian paranoia and fear during 1904-05. For both publications, the threat that Japan represented was real, although imagination played a key role in how this threat would manifest itself on their very different pages.

From essays about art to actual drawings and caricatures, we begin to see how words and images worked together to create some of the initial artistic perceptions of the war. This perception was complex and multi-faceted—at once fearful, nationalistic, disdainful, admiring and racist. And it was only the start of the hold the war would have on the Russian imagination. Literature soon joined the cacaphony of voices covering the war. In January 1905, shortly after the Japanese took Port Arthur, Leonid Andreev's *Krasnyi smekh* [The Red Laugh], the first piece of literature to explore the war, came out.

Part II: Popular Phantasmogoria: Dreams of the Japanese

Год прошел...тяжелый, скорбный, мрачный, кровавый. Ужасный год! [...] Горел и гремил маскированный бал [...] 26-го января вспыхнула война, полилась кровь, стали падать, как колосья под серпом усердного жнеца, доблестные русские люди, начались бесконечные бои, поражения, отступления—вплоть до Вагангоу, до Лаояна, до Мукдена—и с замиранием сердца следило и следит русское общество за неумолкавшим грозами на Дальнем Востоке и за триумфом смерти [...] Не до обычного сна было русскому обществу [...] и когда заколебались кошмары, стали таять призраки, судорожная улыбка торжествующей смерти перестала наводить на нас ужас [...] «Проснись, русский народ!— Проснись!»³⁴

The Apocalyptic Laughter of an “Artist-Neurosthenic”

Leonid Andreev's *Krasnyi smekh* embodies the horror that the Russo-Japanese War left in its wake. A fragmented tale divided into two parts, the first relates an unnamed soldier's experience during the war and his descent into madness, while the second explores the aftermath of this soldier's death through his brother's increasingly mad eyes. Although it may appear, on the surface, to be rather simplistic, the story is complicated by the fact that the first part, despite offering a seemingly firsthand account of the front, is *actually* being narrated by the soldier's brother. Adding to the confusion permeating this text is that the world and both the people and things populating it are abstractions—unrecognizable and unknown beings:

Я тщетно искал в этой толпе растерянных людей знакомые лица и не мог найти. Эти люди, беспокойные, торопливые, с толчкообразными движениями, вздрагивающие при каждом стуке, постоянно ищущие чего-то позади себя, старающиеся избытком жестикуляции заполнить ту загадочную пустоту, куда им страшно заглянуть, - были новые, чужие люди, которых я не знал. И голоса звучали по-иному, отрывисто, толчками, с трудом выговаривая слова и легко, по ничтожному поводу, переходя в крик или бессмысленный, неудержимый смех.

И все было чужое. Дерево было чужое, и закат чужой, и вода чужая, с особым запахом и вкусом, как будто вместе с умершими мы оставили землю и перешли в какой-то другой мир - мир таинственных явлений и зловещих

³⁴ “Sankt-Peterburg, 1 ianvaria 1905.” *Beseda* No 1 (January 1905) 1.

пасмурных теней. Закат был желтый, холодный; над ним тяжело висели черные, ничем не освещенные, неподвижные тучи, и земля под ним была черна, и наши лица в этом зловещем свете были желты, как лица мертвецов. Мы все смотрели на самовар, он потух, отразил на боках своих желтизну и угрозу заката и тоже стал чужой, мертвый и непонятный.³⁵

In vain I looked for a familiar face in this group of disconcerted men—I could not find one. These men, restless, hasty and jerky in their movements, starting at every sound, constantly looking for something behind their backs, trying to fill up that mysterious void into which they were too terrified to look, by superfluous gesticulations—were new, strange men, whom I did not know. And their voices sounded different, articulating the words with difficulty in jerks, easily passing into angry shouts or senseless irrepressible laughter at the slightest provocation. And everything around us was strange to us. The tree was strange, and the sunset strange, and the water strange, with a peculiar taste and smell, as if we had left the earth and entered a new world together with the dead—a world of mysterious phenomena and ominous sombre shadows. The sunset was yellow and cold; black unilluminated, motionless clouds hung heavily over it, while the earth under it was black, and our faces in that ill-omened light seemed yellow, like the faces of the dead. We all sat watching the samovar, but it went out, its sides reflecting the yellowishness and menace of the sunset, and it seemed also an unfamiliar, dead and incomprehensible object.³⁶

The narrator's perception of his surroundings depicts the defamiliarizing quality of war. The sunset, yellow and cold (*zhyoltyi, kholodnyi*), is cast as evil, making the faces of the soldiers resemble those of corpses. Is this the same "enemy sun" that Sologub claimed caused the Russians to lose the war? Or is this the sun of the fading European powers, simply foretelling their death (see figure 2.5, which shows the sun setting over Europa in the West, while a bear, a symbol of Russia, lays dead in the East)? This world, after all, seems to be backwards; as if he has fallen through the looking glass, the narrator finds everything to be "alien" (*chuzhoi*) in this "some kind of other world" (*kakoi-to drugoi mir*). But it is not just the narrator and the other soldiers in this scene who are experiencing this event through a defamiliarized lens. Due to the text's overall lack of specificity, the war also becomes somewhat defamiliarized for its readers. We do not know who is fighting whom or where and when this deadly battle is taking place; even when the enemy makes an appearance in the text, he is referred to only as a "неприятельский солдат" [the enemy's soldiers]. This ambiguity imbues the text with a timeless, distanced quality; in its vague impressionism, it is as if this could be any war.³⁷ And this, in fact, seemed to be Andreev's point: imagination was central to his artistic vision. In a well-known letter to Maksim Gor'kii (1868-1936) from mid-November 1904, Andreev responded to his critique that the facts were more important than his relationship to the war, "Моя тема: *безумие и ужас*. [...] Факты войны всегда приблизительно одинаковы, и

³⁵ Leonid Andreev, *Sobranie sochinenii v 6i tomakh, t. 2*, Eds. E.G. Andreeva, Iu.N. Verchenko and V.N. Chuvakov (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990) 30. All future quotations from this story will appear in text.

³⁶ Leonid Andreyev, *The Red Laugh*, Trans. Alexandra Lindem (New York: Hippocrene, 1989) 39-40. All future citations will be given in text.

³⁷ The story was originally titled *Voina* [War], but eventually became, after many months of working on it, *Krasnyi smekh*.

только отношение к ним меняется. Наконец, *мое отношение* также факт, и весьма немаловажный”³⁸ [My theme: *madness* and *horror*. [...] The facts of war are always roughly the same, and only the relationship to them changes. Finally, *my relationship* is also a fact, and of no small importance].

One effect of the lack of concrete detail in this work’s impressionistic descriptive passages is that it can become too abstract and seem to lack depth, preventing readers from achieving any lasting connection to the story and the characters. One scholar claims that this quality constitutes the essence of Andreev’s style: “The half-shades, the *chiaroscuro* of real life, which are alone capable of calling forth a genuine human response to the events described, are totally absent in the text.”³⁹ Even though this statement rightly employs painting terminology to underscore Andreev’s treatment of the events taking place in the text, it also stops short of discussing the intensely visual component of the novella. *Chiaroscuro* can be defined as “the treatment or disposition of the light and shade, or brighter and darker masses, in a picture” and what we encounter in this story is precisely that—a two-tone world, soaked in red with notes yellow creeping in.⁴⁰ These two colors comprised the palette of the Russo-Japanese War and would appear in many texts from the period—from *Melkii bes* to Bely’s *Peterburg* [Petersburg], which I will discuss at length in Chapter Four. But to return to *Krasnyi smekh*, red, inscribed in the title, is the most important color in the work, as well as the one that dominates it:

Да, они пели - и все кругом было красно от крови. Само небо казалось красным, и можно было подумать, что во вселенной произошла какая-то катастрофа, какая-то странная перемена и исчезновение цветов: исчезли голубой и зеленый и другие привычные и тихиецвета, а солнце загорелось красным бенгальским огнем.
- Красный смех, - сказал я. (2: 29)

Yes, they sang, while all around them was red with blood. The very sky seemed to be red, and one could have thought that a catastrophe had overwhelmed the universe—a strange disappearance of colors: the light-blue and green and other habitual peaceful colors had disappeared, while the sun blazed forth in a red flare-light.

“The red laugh,” said I. (34)

The colors that we have come to expect in reality—a blue sky, green grass, a yellow sun—have disappeared; red slowly overtakes this world, coloring even emotional experience.

We can see the color red as symbolizing death and destruction, as well as the coming apocalypse with which Russian literature was preoccupied at the turn-of-the-century. Regarding the red laughter in Andreev’s text, this image seems to suggest the reign of chaos, as well as the absurdity of war. I would also argue that, for Andreev in particular, laughter, especially *red* laughter, evoked the body in distress—one that is not only at war with itself and its uncontrollable emotions, but also subject to the cruel uncertainties and hysteria of the modern world. In this novella, war acts as one of these uncertainties; as if without boundaries, it dwells in the narrator’s consciousness, it lurks in the landscape and it damages all who experience it.

³⁸ *Literaturnoe nasledstvo: Gor’kii i Leonid Andreev, neuzdannaiia perepiska*, v. 72, ed. I.I. Anisimov (Moskva: “Nauka,” 1965) 244 (17-18 November 1904).

³⁹ James Woodward, *Leonid Andreyev: A Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 106.

⁴⁰ “chiaroscuro/chiaroscuro, noun 2” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online, Oxford University Press, 30 Nov. 2007 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50038016?>>).

The image of the red sun functions as one example of the war's influence on the narrator's description of his surroundings. If we look at a series of drawings from the popular monthly journal, *Beseda* [The Conversation], the images that *Krasnyi smekh* verbally suggests are visually present before us (see Figures 2.6, 2.7, 2.8). Each portrayal of a Japanese soldier contains an image of the Japanese flag; in Figure 2.6, the Japanese soldier is sounding a trumpet from which the Japanese flag dangles; in Figure 2.7, a tiny Japanese soldier, who is about to be kicked over by a Russian bear, has a flag hanging from his weapon; in Figure 2.8, Mars, the god of war, looks at a battalion of marching Japanese soldiers who carry the Japanese flag in the middle of their unit. The prevalence of the flag in each image demonstrates its significance; it emblemizes Japan's identity as the "Land of the Rising Sun." Japan's sun, however, is not the yellow orb of the West, but the deep red sun of the East. This sun, especially during the war, seemed to symbolize the political ascent of Japan and the beginning of a new world order (recall Figure 2.5 and the sun setting over Europe). While I am not suggesting the direct influence of these particular images on Andreev's story, I would point out that despite their generic differences, they share a common language in their symbolic use of the red (Japanese) sun. Depictions of the war, in literary, visual and journalistic culture alike, seemed to rely on a series of repeating symbols.

In the case of Andreev, the resemblance of *Krasnyi smekh* to both media coverage and the mass-produced images of the war was, for some critics, the story's saving grace. The critic V. Botsianovskii observed in *Rus'* that,

Леонид Андреев, ничего не измышляя для воспроизведения сложившейся у него в душе кровавой батальной картины, передает нам, только в красках и жизненно, те же факты, которые знаем все мы, но которых мы, по недосугу или по отсутствию чуткого воображения, не представляем себе реально ... Измышлять Леониду Андрееву было совершенно излишне. Телеграммы и подробные корреспонденции, приходящие с войны каждый день, дают такой материал, какого не исмыслит самое пылкое воображение⁴¹

Leonid Andreev, fabricating nothing for the reproduction of the bloody battle painting that assembled in his soul, gives us, only in colors and realistically, those same facts, which we all know, but which we, due to a lack of time or to the lack of a sensitive imagination, don't imagine to be real... For Leonid Andreev, fabricating was perfectly unnecessary. The telegrams and other correspondences coming from the war every day give such material, which even the most fervid imagination couldn't contrive.

Botsianovskii's interpretation of the story invites us to see Andreev's often highly symbolic and turgid prose to be based on the facts—the facts that everybody already knew. While he did mention that these facts obviously worked upon Andreev's sensitive imagination, Botsianovskii's point is that that Andreev cannot himself be accused of having fabricated them. Andreev, in a way, was just the interpreter, the man who attempted to make artistic sense of the wide range of material being delivered from the front. What resulted from his efforts to make sense of it all was a "painting" (*kartina*), an artistic and imaginative depiction of the war that resonated with many who followed it avidly in the press. Certainly something about *Krasnyi*

⁴¹ Qtd. in A.V. Bogdanova, "Kommentarii," *Leonid Andreev: Sobranie sochinenii v 6i tomakh, tom vtoroi* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990) 517.

smekh must have spoken to both the Russian imagination and Russian readership at that time, for it enjoyed great success after its publication, selling roughly 60,000 copies.

Not everybody was convinced or enthralled by the story, however. Vikentii Veresaev (1867-1945), who went to the war as a doctor, recalled reading *Krasnyi smekh* at the Manchurian front with the other soldiers and laughing. He and the soldiers saw it as an overwrought, highly stylized account of the war: “произведение большого художника-неврастеника, больно и страстно переживавшего войну через газетные корреспонденции о ней”⁴² [a story of a great artist-neurasthenic, badly and passionately experiencing the war through the news correspondences about it]. This, in fact, is an apt description of the story, particularly when you consider the manner in which Andreev wrote it: fevered, in a nervous condition and afraid to be left alone in his room.⁴³ But one thing that we cannot discount that, even if Veresaev found the story to be ridiculous, he saw the press as being guilty of generating material that led to false interpretations of the war.⁴⁴ Also falling into Veresaev's camp was G. Staryi, who issued a challenge to Andreev in his review of the story: “Поезжай, как писатель, на войну, увидай ее живыми глазами, а не сочини ее себе...”⁴⁵ [Go, as a writer, to the war, see it with your living eyes, but don't create it for yourself...]. This call for realism and live coverage—to see the war with one's living eyes (*zhivymi glazami*) stood in direct contrast to Andreev's mission, which I mentioned earlier: to represent an attitude *towards* the war, not the war itself.

But ironically, Andreev was misunderstood by almost everybody. In a letter to O. Дымов, Andreev wrote that,

Некоторые – немногие впрочем, - упрекают меня, что я взялся изображать то, чего не видел, такой упрек представляется мне положительным недоразумением ... И особенно странно такое недоразумение теперь, когда над вкусами публики царят Беклин и Врубель. Почти всякий, кто знает меня и знает, что я не был на войне попервоначалу относится к рассказу с недоверием, а кто меня не знает, уверяет, что я на войне был, и очень разочаровывается, узнав правду.⁴⁶

Several—not many, though—reproach me for taking it upon myself to depict that which I haven't seen, such a reproach appears to me a complete misunderstanding [...] And especially strange is such a misunderstanding now, when Böcklin and Vrubel' are ruling over the tastes of the public. Almost everyone who knows me and knows that I wasn't in the war relates to the story at first with distrust, while those who don't know me are convinced that I was in the war, and are very disappointed after they learn the truth.

Besides the confusion that swarmed around Andreev's tale and the question of his participation in the war, it is striking how Andreev picked up on the strange reception of his story. Why were people so eager for facts and disappointed when they discovered that Andreev was not an actual eyewitness to the events at the front? And how could they have mistaken Andreev's blatant

⁴² Ibid. 517

⁴³ Ibid. 510

⁴⁴ Laura Engelstein discusses the relationship between newspapers and decadence, showing how, from the 1890s onwards, they engaged in the same “exchange of fantasy and market in desire” as literary texts, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992) 368.

⁴⁵ Qtd. in A.P. Bogdanova, 516

⁴⁶ Ibid. 517-8

symbolism for reportage from the field of action? His letter both speaks to and reveals the sensational quality of the war. For the Russian imagination, it seemed that anything could happen at the distant Manchurian front—the war itself was far enough away so as to seem unreal. The age in which he was writing was dominated not only by a fervid imagination, but also by the popularity of the highly symbolic and demonic paintings of Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901) and Mikhail Vrubel (1856-1910).

Andrei Bely, one of Andreev's early defenders, reacted to critiques of *Krasnyi smekh* in his famous “Апокалипсис в русской поэзии” [The Apocalypse in Russian Poetry, 1905], writing that “Упрекают Л. Андреева в субъективизме: вместо того чтобы описывать массовое движение войск или бытовую картину войны, он будто грезит: но в этом его проникновение в современность”⁴⁷ [They condemn L. Andreev for subjectivism: instead of describing a mass movement of troops or a domestic scene of war, it is as if he is dreaming: but in this is his penetration into modernity]. For Bely, dreams—the place where reality and the imaginary merged—signified the landscape of modernity; both the age and the war in which the Russians were fighting took on a surreal quality.

In the same article, Bely offered a more comprehensive view of the Russo-Japanese War itself:

Безнравственное приложение науки создает ужасы современной войны с Японией—войны, в которой видим явившийся нам символ встающего хаоса. Просматривая брошюра Людовика Нодо «Они не знали», узнаем, что все наши военные операции—сплошной оптический обман. Япония—маска, за которой—невидимые. Вопрос о победе над врагами тесно связан с перевалом в сознании, направленного к решению глубочайших мистических вопросов европейского человечества.⁴⁸

Immoral application of science creates the terrors of the modern war with Japan—a war in which we see the symbol of rising chaos manifesting itself to us. Looking through the brochure of Ludovic Naudeau, “They Did Not Know,” we recognize that all of our war operations are a continuous optical illusion. Japan is a mask, behind which are the invisibles. The question of victory over our enemies is closely related with the crossing in the consciousness directed to the solution of the deepest mystical issues of European mankind.

As we can see, Bely’s symbolic treatment of the war closely resembles Andreev’s, and, in fact, may even have been influenced by the language and imagery he found in *Krasnyi smekh*. There is the symbol of rising chaos (*vstaiushchii kaos*), as well as signs that Bely himself may be “as if dreaming” and prone to neurasthenic perceptions of the war. Influenced by the brochure of the famous French journalist Ludovic Naudeau (1872-1949), Bely viewed the war as an “optical illusion” (*opticheskii obman*)—a distortion of reality. Japan, too, was highly illusory—a “mask behind which lurked the invisibles” (*maska, za kotoroi—nevidimye*). This perplexing metaphor establishes both the desperate need that Russians felt to understand the enemy and the way in which Japan did not seem real or even fathomable to them. Taking the form of a mask, one of the prevailing symbols of the day, Japan was hidden from view; sheathed in secrecy, it represented

⁴⁷ Andrei Bely, “Апокалипсис в русской поэзии,” *Vesy*, No 4 (1905) 15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 14

an enigmatic and omnipresent plurality (note that Bely did not use the singular invisible, but its plural form) that lurked in their midst.⁴⁹ Buried within Bely's words was the question that was undoubtedly on every Russian's mind: who *were* the Japanese? But Bely also seemed to imply that there was no answer to this mystery; while underneath a mask one usually finds an identifiable face, underneath the metaphorical mask of Japan lay innumerable possibilities. To truly unmask such an entity seemed impossible, but, as Bely presented it, it was necessary. Triumphant over the mask, i.e. Japan/the East, was tied into the mystical and decisive question about the fate of European humanity.

A disciple of Vladimir Solov'ev's, Bely was susceptible to viewing the war as a prophetic battle between the East and the West. The war, however, was less a series of battles than a spectacle, or, as he called it, inspired by Solov'ov: a "...мировой маскарад, участниками которого мы являемся" [world masquerade, of which we are appearing as participants]. Popular in fin-de-siècle Russia, masquerades were a symbol of lurking danger and the seductive appeal of the unknown, as well as the ever-present performative potential of life. With the war, yet another masquerade had been set in motion, which we can see in the image from *Budil'nik* on the next page (see figure 2.9). In the middle of a ballroom stands a smiling Japanese man (it is unclear whether he is masked or unmasked, although it should be noted that the size of his head is unusually large in relation to his body), who seems to be wearing a soldier's jacket. On all sides, he is surrounded by figures dressed as goats and sheep; while they convincingly represent the animals they are dressed as, we know that they only wear costumes from the clear presence of human fingers wrapped around their champagne flutes. These masked individuals all appear to be celebrating this foreigner, basking in the glow of his toothily smiling presence; note that the caption refers to them as admirers [*chestvovateli*]. Although it is perhaps a stretch of the imagination (but one that the nature of the material necessitates), this image brings to mind the "Judgment of the Nations" ("The Sheep and the Goats"), in Matthew 25: 31-46, which signals the end of days:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all his angels, he will sit on a royal throne. The people of all nations will be brought before him, and he will separate them, as shepherds separate their sheep from their goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Certainly, this image does not replicate the scene described in Matthew. For example, there is no throne, nor do the sheep appear on the right and the goats on the left, although they are divided by gender (women are sheep and men are goats). Despite these differences, the Japanese man (or figure wearing a Japanese mask) does fulfill The Gospel of Matthew's prediction that, "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (24:27). There is still yet another possibility in this image: we can interpret the Japanese man as the *false* Son of Man, or perhaps even as an embodiment of the Solov'evian Anti-Christ from "Tri razgovora" [Three Conversations, 1900], who will deceive many and rule falsely. The various possibilities at play in this one image highlight the instability of the symbols that the popular press used as it bombarded the public with images of the Japanese enemy.

The unearthly power of the East had placed both the Russian imagination and world

⁴⁹ In the recent *Petersburg: Fin de Siècle*, Mark Steinberg devotes a whole chapter to the semiotics of masks, exploring the role they played in the life and letters of Petersburg. See "Masks," *Petersburg: Fin de Siècle* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2011) 84-118.

under siege. As Ludovic Naudeau, the author of the brochure that Bely quoted in *Vesy*, described it:

В современной войне всё таинственно, рассеяно, далеко, невидимо, отвлечено. Это - борьба жестов, воздушной сигнализации...Вы постоянно обмануты фантазмагорией. [...] Кто взял Ляоян? Японская армия? Да, конечно, японская армия, но с помощью кошмара.”⁵⁰

In the current war everything is secret, scattered, far away, invisible, abstract. This is a battle of gestures, full of air signaling. You are continually deceived by phantasmagoria. [...] Who took Liaoyong? The Japanese army? Yes, of course, the Japanese army, but with the help of a nightmare.

Everything in this description is heavy-handed; Naudeau’s language simulatenaously works to inspire panic and sound an alarm. As he rendered it, the Russo-Japanese War symbolized phantasmagoria. Nightmarish and fantastic, the war contained a threat of the apocalypse that was so strong that it embedded itself in the landscape of Russian dreams.

In his real life, Andreev fell victim to such dreams and nightmarish visions about the war, although, as he lamented to Maksim Gorky (1868-1936), “Мне все время снились патриоты” [I’ve always dreamed of patriots].⁵¹ These patriots were dull and lacking in the imaginative scope of Gorky’s more colorful dreams, which he envied. In letters to Andreev, Gorky would describe how in his dreams he would ride on the back of a Pneumatic Inhaler (*Ingaliatorii Pnevmaticheskii*), with which he would go and boast of an easy victory over the Japanese (*shapki sobrali, chtob iapontsev zakidat’*)⁵² and even how he and Andreev came to marry Japanese girls with the permission of the censor:

Снилось мне потом, что будто мы с тобою, Леонидка, —с разрешения цензуры—вдруг женились на японках и у нас через неделю было сорок штук ребят. Услыхав об этом факте и чудесном и полезном, сам японский император трое суток хохотал! А потом всех нас с семейством посадил в ингаляторий и взорвать его на воздух высочайше повесел.

Ну, и — взорвали, конечно, мы с тобою разорвались, а потом нас снова сшили и – ужасно неудобно! Мне пришили твою ногу, нос твой тоже мне пришили и два чьих-то лишних уха прикрепили на спине.⁵³

Then I dreamed that you and I, Leonidka, with the permission of the censor, suddenly married Japanese girls and in a week we had forty pieces of children. When he heard of this marvelous and useful fact, the Japanese emporor himself laughed for three days! And then he placed all of us with our families in the Inhaler and His Majesty ordered us to be blown up into the air.

Well, they blew us up of course, you and I were blown up, and then they sewed us together again—and very inconveniently. They sewed your leg on to me, they also sewed

⁵⁰ Qtd. in Bely, 15

⁵¹ *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 200 (16 February 1904)

⁵² *ibid.* 197 (12-14 February 1904)

⁵³ *ibid.* 198 (12-14 February 1904)

your nose on to me, and attached two extra ears belonging to somebody else to my spine.⁵⁴

Most striking in this reported dream is the speed with which Andreev and Gorky procreate with their Japanese wives. The children proliferate quickly, their number growing to forty within the course of a week. Although from the early days of the war (12-14 February 1904), Gorky's letter that reports the dream seems to forewarn of the "invisibles" that Bely would later describe as threatening Russia. There is something both superhuman and supernatural about the rapidity with which these families grow. And what can we make of the mixing of Russian and Japanese blood, the "marvelous and useful fact" that catches the attention of the Japanese emperor? Why is he moved to blow them up? Quite possibly, Gorky's subconscious was both recalling the surprise attack at Port Arthur and the way in which, with the blink of an eye, Japan was transformed from friend (laughing) to foe (ordering violence). The image, too, of being "sewed together again" seems to demonstrate the damaging effects of war. In this dream, Andreev and Gorky appear to be a stand-in for the Russian nation itself, at the mercy of an enemy who was in the process of tearing them apart and reconfiguring their very identity. Given the grotesque form that Gor'kii's body takes after the Japanese piece it together, can it be that at the heart of this reported dream lurks the suggestion that the war, itself monstrous, may just make monsters of them all?

To return now to *Krasnyi smekh*, I propose that Andreev, in his novella, sought to answer this question. While Andreev's description of his simple dreams of patriots may have lacked the distinctiveness and colorfulness of Gorky's, his fictional ones not only exceed the horror of the deformed bodies Gorky described, but also seem to borrow from them.⁵⁵ For example, before the red laugh makes its final appearance, the narrator (the soldier's brother) has a frightening dream that foreshadows its arrival and finally gives shape to the lurking presence of evil:

Эти дети, эти маленькие, еще невинные дети. Я видел их на улице, когда они играли в войну и бегали друг за другом, и кто-то уж плакал тоненьким детским голосом и что-то дрогнуло во мне от ужаса и отвращения. И я ушел домой, и ночь настала, - и в огненных грезах, похожих на пожар среди ночи, эти маленькие еще невинные дети превратились в полчище детей-убийц.

Что-то зловещее горело широким и красным огнем, и в дыму копошились чудовищные уродцы-дети с головами взрослых убийц. Они прыгали легко и подвижно, как играющие козлята, и дышали тяжело, словно больные. Их рты походили на пасти жаб или лягушек и раскрывались судорожно и широко; за прозрачную кожей их голых тел угрюмо бежала красная кровь - и они убивали друг друга, играя. Они были страшнее всего, что я видел, потому что они были маленькие и могли проникнуть всюду. (2: 60)

Those children, those innocent little children. I saw them in the street playing at war and chasing each other, and one of them was already crying in a high-pitched, childish voice—and something shrank within me from horror and disgust. And I went

⁵⁴ *Letters of Gorky and Andreev, 1899-1912*, ed. and trans. by Peter Yershov (London: Routledge, 1958): 60.

⁵⁵ Andreev finished writing *Krasnyi smekh* on 9 November 1904 and, as he wrote to Veresaev, he completed his novella in nine days; see Woodward 98. Considering that Gor'kii's reported account of his dream appeared in a letter from mid-February 1904, it is likely that this description stuck with Andreev and continued to haunt him.

home; night came on—and in fiery dreams, resembling midnight conflagrations, those innocent little children changed into a band of child-murderers.

Something was ominously burning in a broad red glare, and in the smoke there swarmed monstrous, misshapen children, with heads of grown-up murderers. They were jumping lightly and nimbly, like young goats at play, and were breathing with difficulty, like sick people. Their mouths, resembling the jaws of toads or frogs, opened widely and convulsively; behind the transparent skin of their naked bodies the red blood was coursing angrily—and they were killing each other at play. They were the most terrible of all that I had seen, for they were little and could penetrate everywhere. (146-7)

A transformative quality is at play in this literary dream, for the young and innocent children the narrator formerly saw playing in the street now take on surprising features, becoming “children-killers” (*deti-ubiitsy*). The grotesque impression that their adult heads and childlike bodies create is one of nature having gone awry—of the children having been defiled by the evils of war. After reading the story, Gorky suggested to Andreev that he cut this section out because it weakened the story’s overall strength. It seems that, for Gorky, dreams—personal, imaginative accounts—were not the material of stories. Rather, Gorky wanted facts and thus proposed that Andreev use a newspaper clipping to illustrate his point, one that he was including in his letter to Andreev. Gorky argued that the contents of the clipping resembled the scene in his story, but offered a less symbolic and heavy-handed account of the war⁵⁶:

A children’s game. In the district near Cheliabinsk, according to the *Samara Gazette*, the following terrible event took place:

Some youngsters had decided to play “war”; they divided up and formed two camps: “the Russians” and “the Japanese.” Finally, “the Russians” won and the leader of the “Japanese,” “Kuroki”⁵⁷ was taken captive... Passions ran strong...

“What will we do with the prisoner?” they asked; they held a “council of war” and immediately passed a resolution:

“Kuroki is to be hanged!”

A rope was found, soon a gallows was set up...

This “game,” to tell the truth, had a terrible end: a death rattle was heard in the throat of the boy who had played the part of “Kuroki.” He had fallen into the noose. The boys became frightened and ran away, and at that very instant the unfortunate child died...⁵⁸

But Andreev, while acknowledging that there were certain merits in Gorky’s critique, ultimately disagreed with him.⁵⁹ In his response, he wrote that he had known of the clipping before Gorky had sent it to him and that he also knew of several others that would have worked just as well. He confessed that he had even written about media coverage of the war, but, upon further reflection, had removed this section from his story. Andreev, it seems, truly did prefer the

⁵⁶ See *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 243 (16-18 November 1904), and *Letters of Andreev and Gorky*, 64-5.

⁵⁷ This name refers to General Tamemoto Kuroki, who enjoyed a series of victories in the Russo-Japanese War, most notably, the Battle of the Yalu River and the Battle of Liaoyang.

⁵⁸ *Letters*, 66. The quote from the clipping is available only in the translation of the letters; the Russian original offers only a footnote about the clipping that Gor’kii included in his letter to Andreev, not an account of the clipping itself; see 244 n.1.

⁵⁹ *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 245 (17-18 November 1904)

impressionistic and the phantasmagoric world of imagination to facts. For him, the game that these children engage in is about more than “playing at war.” It is about the battle for humanity itself and the senseless degradation that war has brought upon it. The journalistic account of the children’s “game” paled in comparison to what Andreev could achieve by taking the events in the clipping and retelling them through a literary dream.

With dreams, he could amplify the horror and, indeed, the whole scene of the narrator’s dream evokes the apocalypse. The narrator of *Krasnyi smekh* compares the children to goats (*kozliata*), the sinners who, as I discussed earlier in relation to Figure 2.9, will be present at the end of days, and also to either toads or frogs (*zhaby ili liagushki*), which recalls The Book of Revelation:

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (16: 13-14).

Beyond their apocalyptic connotations, frogs were also one of the many dehumanizations used to represent the Japanese enemy during the war (the other favorite was monkeys; see figures 2.10 and 2.11). We can see one example of this in the image on the next page, “The Foolish Frog at Port Arthur” [*Liagushka dura y Port-Artura*, Figure 2.12], which takes I.A. Krylov’s famous fable (*basnia*), “Liagushka i vol”⁶⁰ [The Frog and the Ox] and applies it to the war.⁶¹ In this propagandistic pairing of word and image from March 1904, the frog in the meadow is transformed into one that is prepared for war; it stands with erect posture and, in its hands, carries a sabre and a gun. Most importantly, the image shows the frog’s belly to be full of air, for it is readying itself to blow over the much larger “ox” (Russia) of which it is envious. The frog, however, grossly overestimates its abilities. Its foolish actions lead to its death, while the ox never even feels a thing. The intended message of this image is clear: Japan should take heed and not pick fights with its larger and supposedly much stronger enemies, for, in doing so, it would be hurting only itself. But by the time Andreev was writing, reality had already disproved the message that this image propagated. Japan was perhaps as small as a frog, but a frog could, it turned out, blow over an ox.

From a red sun to murderous frog-like children, the textual fabric of *Krasnyi smekh* invites confusion, horror and disbelief. It simultaneously presents dual possibilities to the reader; it is a narrative about the Russo-Japanese War, as well as about *any* war. It is also, at once, highly symbolic and realistic—the product of Andreev’s imagination *and* the stuff of newspapers. Incorporating and distorting material from the media and popular symbols associated with the war, Andreev’s novella *plays at war* just as the children did in newspaper clipping that Gorky sent to Andreev in a letter and the dream of the narrator. In this game, however, the enemy is war itself and its many manifestations, the most threatening of which is the one recognized by all: the phantasmagoric and dangerously omnipresent red laugh that accompanies the enemy’s advance from the battlefield to the domestic sphere.

⁶⁰ The text of the image is almost the same as Krylov’s fable; only the last four lines are missing: *Sochineniia, t. 2: Basni, stikhotvoreniia, p’esy*, ed. S. Chulkov (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969) 11.

⁶¹ Yulia Mikhailova discusses the way that Krylov’s fables were incorporated into the popular prints from the war. See “Images of Enemy and Self: Russian ‘Popular Prints’ of the Russo-Japanese War,” *Acta slavica iaponica*, XVI (1998) 30-54.

Banzai: Profiling the Enemy as if Through a Dream

In the opening pages of Aleksandr Kuprin's "Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov" [Staff-Captain Rybnikov, 1906)], urgency and chaos reign, for the news that Tsushima has fallen has reached the Russian capital. Unlike Andreev, Kuprin (1870-1938) did not defamiliarize the war for his readers; his story is very much set in the aftermath of its specific moment. We should not, however, allow these gestures towards realism to fool us.⁶² This is nothing like Kuprin's earlier story of the war, "Poedinok" [The Duel, 1905], that excoriated the Russian military. Beyond the historical detail of Tsushima, "Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov" deviates from fact, using the uncertainty of the days following Russia's fateful loss to present a war narrative that is quasi-realistic, quasi-phantasmogoric. In a way, it is almost as if Kuprin picked up where Andreev, a fellow member of Gorky's *Znanie* school, left off. Although both authors, due to their association with *Znanie*, were purported to be realists, we see that their (neo)realism has limits, relying heavily on impressionistic descriptions and symbols. For example, just as in *Krasnyi smekh*, in Kuprin's story, the enemy is introduced through a reference to a dream. The journalist Shchavinsky, who narrates the first part of "Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov," observes about the mysterious staff-captain: "Точно я его во сне видел", - подумал Щавинский"⁶³ [It's exactly as if I saw him *in a dream*, thought Shchavinsky, my italics]. Unlike the formless and encroaching enemy in Andreev's tale, the enemy with which we are now confronted—the eponymous hero of this work—is entirely real. He has penetrated the domestic sphere and he even moves freely within certain circles of Petersburg society, which only adds to the ambiguous air surrounding his identity.

The story begins with Shchavinsky picking up on Rybnikov's strangeness almost inadvertently. As a reporter, his job is to observe and to make sense of the world surrounding him, but Rybnikov seems to escape even Shchavinsky's powers of perception:

Пока он [Штабс-капитан] говорил, Щавинский внимательно наблюдал за ним. Все у него было обычное, чисто армейское: голос, манеры, поношенный мундир, бедный и грубый язык. Щавинскому приходилось видеть сотни таких забулдыг-капитанов, как он. Так же они осклаблялись и чертыхались, расправляли усы влево и вправо молодеватыми движениями, так же вздергивали вверх плечи, оттопыривали локти, картинно опирались на шашку и щелкали воображаемыми шпорами. Но было в нем и что-то совсем особенное, затаенное, чего Щавинский никогда не видал и не мог определить, - какая-то внутренняя напряженная, нервная сила. Было похоже на то, что Щавинский вовсе не удивился бы, если бы вдруг этот хрипящий и пьяный бурбон заговорил о *тонких и умных вещах, непринужденно и ясно, изящным языком*, но не удивился бы также какой-нибудь безумной, внезапной, горячечной, даже кровавой выходке со стороны штабс-капитана.

В лице его поражало Щавинского то разное впечатление, которое производили его фас и профиль. Сбоку это было обыкновенное русское,

⁶² In his study of the story, Stites suggests that the psychological nature of the story—namely, the verbal sparring that takes place between Shchavinskii and Rybnikov—hides the story's less than believable qualities, 434.

⁶³ Aleksandr Kuprin, "Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov," *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*, t. 4, Eds. N.N. Akopova, F.I. Kulshov and K.A. Kuprina (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1971) 229. All future citations from this story will be given in text.

чуть-чуть калмыковатое лицо: маленький выпуклый лоб под уходящим вверх черепом, русский бесформенный нос сливой, редкие жесткие черные волосы в усах и на бороденке, голова коротко стриженная, с сильной проседью, тон лица темно-желтый от загара [...] Но, поворачиваясь лицом к Щавинскому, он сейчас же начинал ему кого-то напоминать. Что-то чрезвычайно знакомое, но такое, чего никак нельзя было ухватить, чувствовалось в этих узеньких, зорких, ярко-кофейных глазках с разрезом наискось, в тревожном изгибе черных бровей, идущих от переносья кверху, в энергичной сухости кожи, крепко обтягивавшей мощные скулы, а главное, в общем выражении этого лица - злобного, насмешливого, много, пожалуй, даже высокомерного, но не человеческого, а скорее звериного, а еще вернее - лица, принадлежащего существу с другой планеты. (4: 229; *my italics*)

While he spoke Shchavinsky observed him closely. Everything in him agreed with the conventional army type: his voice, manner, shabby uniform, his coarse and threadbare speech. Shchavinsky had had the chance of observing hundreds of such debauched captains. They had the same grin, the same ‘Hell take ‘em,’ twisted their mustaches to the left and right with the same bravado; they hunched their shoulders, stuck out their elbows, rested picturesquely on their sword and clanked imaginary spurs. But there was something individual about him as well, something different, as it were, locked away, which Shchavinsky had never seen, neither could he define it—some intense, inner, nervous force. The impression he had was this: Shchavinsky would not have been at all surprised if this croaking and drunken soldier of fortune had suddenly begun to talk *of subtle and intellectual matters, with ease and illumination, with elegant language*; neither would he have been surprised at some mad, sudden, frenzied, even bloody prank on the captain’s part.

What struck Shchavinsky chiefly in the captain’s looks was the different impression he made full face and in profile. Side face, he was a common Russian, faintly Kalmuck, with a small, protruding forehead under a pointed skull, a formless Russian nose, shaped like a plum, thin stiff black mustache and sparse beard, the grizzled hair cropped close, with a complexion burnt to a dark yellow by the sun [...] But when he turned full face Shchavinsky was immediately reminded of someone. There was something extraordinarily familiar about him, but this ‘something’ was impossible to grasp. He felt it in those narrow coffee-colored bright eagle eyes, slit sideways; in the alarming curve of the black eyebrows, which sprang upwards from the bridge of the nose; in the healthy dryness of the skin strained over the huge cheekbones; and, above all, in the general expression of the face—malicious, sneering, intelligent, perhaps even haughty, but not human, like a wild beast rather, or, more truly, a face belonging to a creature from another planet.⁶⁴ (*my italics and translation amended*)

What most perplexes Shchavinsky about Rybnikov is the tension that exists between his external image and the inner-turmoil (*vnutrennaia napriazhyonnaia, nervnaia sila*) that his body seems to mask. Through Shchavinsky’s gaze, we see that there is something both *too* polished and *too* ordinary about the Shtabs-kapitan for him to be just another Russian soldier. Adding to the

⁶⁴ Alexander Kuprin, “Captain Ribnikov,” *The River of Life and Other Stories*, trans. S. Koteliensky and J.M. Murry (Boston: John Luce & Co., 1916) 49-50. All future citations from this translation will be given in text.

impression that something is not quite “right” are the competing ethnic characteristics comprising the Shtabs-kapitan’s visage. Shchavinsky examines Rybnikov as he would a work of art, studying the composition of his face and profile (*fas i profil’*) to see how the disparate pieces work together. For him, physiognomy appears to be the only way of determining the truth about his identity.⁶⁵ But even as he is able to separate and consider each part of Rybnikov’s face in isolation, Shchavinsky ultimately cannot put them together to make a complete and recognizable whole. There are limits to surface perception—to the knowledge of self that the body makes accessible to another. Shchavinsky’s description of Rybnikov underscores not only this, but also the central question of the text: Who is this mysterious Shtabs-kapitan and where does he come from?

Despite the urgency of this question, it seems that Shchavinsky is not yet in a position to articulate the truth that hovers on the surface of his observations,⁶⁶ for even as this passage sets the mystery in motion, I suggest that it may also reveal the secret of the text. If we closely examine the language that Shchavinsky uses when he considers Rybnikov’s confusing persona, “Было похоже на то, что Щавинский вовсе не удивился бы, если бы вдруг этот хрипящий и пьяный бурбон заговорил о *тонких и умных вещах, непринужденно и ясно, изящным языком,*” we see that this is the language of *japonisme*. In articles that discussed Japan and its culture, both during the war and in the immediate post-war period, writers sometimes used the word “*iziashchnyi*” to demonstrate the artistic elegance evident in daily Japanese life; for example, geishas are “*iziashchnyi i umny*”⁶⁷ [elegant and smart]. Tea houses, too, are filled “*s iziashchnymi ornamentami*”⁶⁸ (with elegant ornaments). Within Rybnikov, Shchavinsky senses a similar potential to beautify and elevate his surroundings (although, in the case of Rybnikov, this ability is currently dormant). To communicate with “elegant language” and to discuss “subtle and intelligent topics” is not only to embody the aesthetic principles of Japanese art, but also to *be* yourself a work of art. This, in fact, is exactly what Shchavinsky makes Rybnikov as he visually studies him; he alone represents an object of fascination in the dull crowd of Russian soldiers (in a way, this scene could be the celebration of the body that Sologub had been longing for in artistic depictions of the war). And who in this text besides Rybnikov, a character who will soon be openly accused of being a spy, is better suited to participate in what one critic describes as being at the core of Japanese art, “*жизнь искусственна, как изящная пьеса*”⁶⁹ [life is artful, like an *elegant* play, *my italics*]?

Despite his latent potential to transform himself into a living embodiment of *japonisme*, Rybnikov fails to reach these heights, for he is instead surrounded by drunkards and speaks only clichéd Russian. This latter trait in particular causes Shchavinsky to doubt his rising suspicions

⁶⁵ In a recent dissertation, Thosaeng Chaochuti traces the history of physiognomy and “body reading,” exploring the role that they play in both urban fiction and detective novels, “What Evil Looked Like: The Practice of Reading the Criminal Body in 19th- and 20th- Century Europe, diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 2008.

⁶⁶ The feuilletonist Shchavinsky seems to have a privileged role in the text, for Kuprin, who worked as a journalist before turning to literature, greatly esteemed the craft. He noted about the function of a journalist: “Репортер, как и беллетрист, должен знать всё, уметь всё, и писать обо всём...Художник часто становится репортером, а репортер поднимается до уровня художника,” Oleg Mikhailov, *Zhizn’ zamechatel’nykh liudei: Kuprin* (Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia, 1981) 29.

⁶⁷ D. Sladen’, “Zabavnaia Iaponiia: Chainye doma i geishi,” *Beseda* No. 8 (August 1904) 807. These sketches (*ocherki*) were translated from the English into Russian by M.N. Dubrovin. The first sketch from this series appeared in May 1904 and, in a footnote, the editor of the journal explained that they were preparing these sketches for a book that would be published later.

⁶⁸ *ibid.* 810

⁶⁹ P. Nikolaev, “Srednevekovaia poeziia v miniat’iurakh,” *Mir iskusstva* No. 12 (December 1904) 121.

about Rybnikov's true identity, which he has tentatively begun to formulate to himself is a Japanese spy:

А что, если я сам себе навязал смешную и предвзятую мысль? Что, если я, пытливый сердцевед, сам себя одурачил просто-напросто закутившим гоголевским капитаном Копейкиным? Ведь на Урале и среди оренбургского казачества много именно таких монгольских шафранных лиц. (4:236)

“Suppose I've forced myself to believe in a ridiculous preconceived idea? Suppose I, a keen observer of the human heart, have just let myself be fooled by a disreputable Gogolian Captain Kopeikin? Surely there are any number of saffron yellow Mongolian faces in the Urals or among the Orenburg Cossacks.” (60, translation amended)

Just as quickly as the idea of espionage strikes Shchavinsky, he realizes he may be letting his imagination play tricks on him. Given both his uncertainty and suspicions, we can see him as being a victim of the popular press and its coverage of the war. In various periodicals from the time of the war, we find images of Japanese spies lurking in Russia. One image (see Figure 2.13) from *Beseda* [The Conversation], a journal that used images from both the foreign and Russian press, shows a Japanese soldier hiding underneath a Russian soldier's military coat, while in another (see Figure 2.14) a Japanese spy is discovered hiding in a latrine; the caption beneath this image highlights the ubiquity [*vezdesushchnost'*] of the Japanese spy. Yet another image (see Figure 2.15) features a Japanese spy being shocked by the discovery of his identity since, in his own words, “И как это меня узнали и догадались, что я шпион! А уж я ли не нарядился!” [How did they guess and recognize that I was a spy! I had not even dressed up yet!]. This image suggests that the spy could walk down the streets in any Russian city and perhaps go unnoticed; he does not expect to be caught, for he thinks that he blends in. Clearly, the press helped to spread paranoia about the Japanese enemy's hidden presence within Russia; in their portrayal of the Japanese, they were small and easily able to hide. As these images suggest, they could, in fact, be anywhere—under one's clothes, in one's toilet and lurking on a street corner waiting to disguise themselves. But even in light of the widespread nature of these fears and Shchavinsky's obvious susceptibility to them, he also realizes that the mystery of Rybnikov's identity does not have to be so complicated as to entail his being a Japanese spy in disguise. Kuprin has Shchavinsky again consider the possibility that Rybnikov, with his “Mongolian, saffron yellow face” is not a foreigner, but a native of the Russian East, subject to a unique form of cultural hybridity. Because Russia is both a geographically vast and ethnically diverse country, the very concept of “Russianness” becomes a liability in this novella. As one scholar observes about the world of “Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov”:

“the state is overextended, and its inhabitants are a mixture of races not to be trusted.”⁷⁰

We see evidence of the ethnic tension that existed during the war when Shchavinsky, again convinced that Rybnikov is a spy, attempts to manipulate him into betraying himself by grossly slandering the Japanese. To do so, he paints an exaggeratedly negative and dehumanizing portrait of Japan in a lengthy monologue:

⁷⁰ Barbara Heldt, “‘Japanese’ in Russian Literature: Transforming Identities,” *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters, 1868-1926*, ed. J. Thomas Rimer (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995) 176.

- Да, но все-таки жаль мне бедных макаков! - говорил он с ироническим сожалением. - Что там ни рассказывай, а Япония в этой войне истощила весь свой национальный гений. Она, по-моему, похожа на худенького, тщедушного человека, который в экстазе и опьянении или от хвастовства взял и поднял спиной двадцать пудов, надорвал себе живот и вот уже начинает умирать медленной смертью. Россия, видите, это совсем особая страна - это колосс. Для нее маньчжурские поражения все равно что кровесосные банки для полнокровного человека. Вот увидите, как она поправится и зацветет после войны. А Япония захиреет и умрет. Она надорвалась. Пусть мне не говорят, что там культура, общая грамотность, европейская техника. Все-таки в конце концов японец - азиат, получеловек, полуобезьяна. Он и по типу приближается к обезьяне так же, как бушмен, туарег и ботокуд. Стоит обратить внимание на камперов угол его лица. Одним словом - макаки. И нас победила вовсе не ваша культура или политическая молодость, а просто какая-то сумасшедшая вспышка, эпилептический припадок. Вы знаете, что такое *gartus*, припадок бешенства? Слабая женщина разрывает цепи и разбрасывает здоровенных мужчин, как щепки. На другой день она не в силах поднять руку. Так и Япония. Поверьте, после ее героического припадка наступит бессилие, маразм. Но, конечно, раньше она пройдет через полосу национального хвастовства, оскорбительной военщины и безумного шовинизма. (4: 240)

“Still, I’m sorry for these poor Japs,” he said with ironical pity. “When all is said, Japan has exhausted all her national genius in this war. In my opinion, she’s like a feeble little man who lifts a half dozen hundredweight on his shoulders, either in ecstasy or intoxication, or out of mere bravado, and strains his insides, and is already beginning to die a lingering death. You see Russia’s an entirely different country. She’s a Colossus. To her the Manchurian defeats are just the same as cupping a full-blooded man. You’ll see how she will recover and begin to blossom when the war is over. But Japan will wither and die. She’s strained herself. Don’t tell me they have civilization, universal education, European technique: at the end of it all, a Japanese is an Asiatic, half-man, half-monkey. Even in type he approaches a Bushman, a Touareg, or a Blackfellow. You have only to look at his facial angle. It all comes to this, they’re just Japs! It wasn’t your civilization or your political youth that conquered us at all, but simply a fit of madness. Do you know what a seizure is, a fit of frenzy? A feeble woman tears chains to pieces and tosses strong men about like straws. The next day she hasn’t even the power to lift her hand. It’s the same with Japan. Believe me, after the heroic fit will follow impotence and decay; but certainly before that she will pass through a stage of national swagger, outrageous militarism and insane Chauvinism.” (67-8)

Strikingly, Shchavinsky’s words echo the sentiments that I explored earlier in my analysis of *Vesy*: the Japan that he describes has exhausted itself (*istoshchila*) and its national genius (art). Drunk (*v op’ianenii*) on its own success with the West, it allowed itself to engage in this war, thereby guaranteeing what Shchavinsky predicts to be its desolate future (*zakhireet i umret*). In his description of a typical Japanese, he is slowly stripped of his humanity: first, he is the ethnic Asiatic (*aziat*), then the “half-man” (*poluchelovek*) and finally the “half-monkey”

(*poluobez'iana*). Even in the face of their decisive victory at Tsushima, the Japanese are still perceived to be no better than animals. Compared to Shchavinsky's vision of a barbaric and weakened Japan, Russia, however, will manage to renew itself in the face of adversity. To bolster his prediction, Shchavinsky likens Russia to mighty Colossus (*koloss*)—to the statue of the ancient Greek sun god, Helios, that once stood over Rhodes. Like the “sun,” Russia, too, will rise, overcoming the darkness that the Japanese have brought upon their nation.

In the story, this moment may come to pass sooner than anticipated. After mocking Captain Rybnikov relentlessly, Shchavinsky attempts to make amends by taking him to a local brothel. The captain goes upstairs with a prostitute, Clothilde (her real name is Nast'ia), who is also struck by Rybnikov's ambiguous appearance and tells him that he looks not just Japanese, but also like the Mikado (4:249). After they are intimate, Rybnikov falls asleep in her bed and Nast'ia, picking up where Shchavinsky left off (she now plays the role of narrator), watches him:

Тяжелая дремота сковывала и томила его тело... В голубоватом полумраке его лицо еще больше пожелтело, обострилось и было похоже на мертвое...

Он со стоном повернулся на спину, и странные дико звучащие, таинственные слова чужово языка быстро побежала с его губ.

Женщина слушала, перестав дышать, охваченная тем суеверным страхом, который всегда продолжается бредом спящего... И вдруг женщина услышала произнесенное громко, ясным и твердым голосом, единственное знакомое ей из газет японское слово:

- Банзай! (4: 251-2)

A heavy slumber enlocked his body... In the bluish half-light his face grew sharper still and yellower, like the face of a dead man...

He turned on his back with a moan, and there came in a stream from his lips mysterious, wild-sounding words of a strange language.

The woman held her breath and listened, possessed by the superstitious terror, which always comes from a sleeper's delirium... Suddenly the woman heard the only Japanese word she knew, from the newspapers, pronounced aloud with a firm, clear voice:

“Banzai!” (87-8)

What she sees is a man who transforms into somebody else. In sleep, Rybnikov becomes even more yellow (*bol'she pozheltele*) and takes on the look of a dead man. Certainly, he is no longer in control of his body; sleep has made him vulnerable, and we cannot know whether his behavior is now careless or genuine. While awake, he can control his speech and gestures, but, in the middle of a dream, words slip out unknowingly. This dream gives the captain away, for he reveals himself by shouting “banzai,” a Japanese battle cry that means “ten thousand years.” Here, physiognomy becomes secondary; the self makes itself known through the sound that escapes from within. In a way, this scene takes the earlier metaphorical dream of Shchavinsky (“as if in a dream”) one step further, for it actualizes it. The suspicions that the former had awoken seem to be proven by the real dream of the captain. Dreams, not only in Kuprin's tale, but also in others texts about Japan, emerge as a space of unquestionable truth, as a way of seeing into a person's masked self—or so the text would have us believe.

Going beyond both this surface assumption and what seems to be overwhelming proof, there still remains room for doubt. Can we really be certain that the captain is Japanese? Is shouting the word in one's sleep decisive evidence of ethnic identity? The prostitute does, after all, recognize the word from the newspapers; by the time Tsushima fell, it was undoubtedly known by *all* Russians. Andreev and Gorky used it often in their letters; Gor'kii, who welcomed the Russo-Japanese War because of its role in bringing about the Revolution of 1905,⁷¹ was especially fond of ending his letters to Andreev with "long live Japan!" (a more figurative meaning of *banzai*). In this story, however, this one little word, regardless of how common it had become, takes on a wealth of meaning and leads to the story's murky resolution.

While Rybnikov sleeps, Clothilde, a patriotic prostitute, goes to tell Lyon'ka, the secret agent who frequents the brothel, what she has witnessed. This sets a flurry of activity in motion and, in the story's final pages, Rybnikov, sensing that he is in danger, attempts to escape. Clothilde foils his plan, however, and he falls off the balcony. At this moment, Lyon'ka charges into the room and jumps off the balcony, throwing himself onto Rybnikov. The story ends with the following image:

Штабс-капитан не сопротивлялся. Глаза его горели непримиримой ненавистью, но он был смертельно бледен, и розовая пена пузырьками выступала на краях его губ.
— Не давите меня,-сказал он шепотом,-я сломал себе ногу. (4:258)

The captain did not resist. His eyes burned with an implacable hatred. But he was pale as death, and a pink froth stood in bubbles on his lips.

"Don't crush me," he whispered. "My leg's broken." (98)

The captain gets the story's final words, but what they convey is, literally, a broken man, who no longer even looks Japanese; his eyes glitter with hatred, but the yellowness of his face has seeped out of him. Instead, he is now "pale as death" (*smeretel'no bleden*). This, then, is the fearsome Japanese spy whose identity had been generating interest throughout the text? It is worth noting that, as readers, we are never definitively told what the truth is. I would even propose that, in the story's final moments, Rybnikov's identity no longer even matters. *What* matters here is that the story's ending enacts a Russian fantasy that reverses the story's beginning—the loss of Tsushima. In this Petersburg brothel, war has come to the homefront and Russians, *not* the Japanese, are victorious. With Rybnikov's fall from the balcony and Clothilde's and Lyon'ka's heroic actions (the narrator makes sure to stress that Lyon'ka is an "undoubtedly brave man," 4:258), it is as if the Colossus has been reborn (see Figure 2.16).

There is something comically pathetic about this ending, however. Is it possible to take national pride in such an action? After all, what kind of a Colossus is this to have had to ambush the enemy while he sleeps in a brothel and to capture him only with the help of a prostitute—and a conveniently broken leg? The whole scene seems a little too convenient, not to mention ironic. L'yonka's excessive display of masculinity, in turn, may even produce an undesired effect: it works to humanize Rybnikov. With the pink froth on his lips and the way he whispers in this final scene, his pain is palpable. It is the first time that we see him as a man, rather than as a

⁷¹ John E. Bowl, *Moscow & St. Petersburg, 1900-1920: Art, Life and Culture of the Russian Silver Age* (New York: Vendome, 2008) 190.

Russian or a Japanese. In a way, we cannot help but pity him; in his pain, he appears to be no different from us.

Because of the unresolved question “Is he or isn’t he?”, the story “Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov” ultimately operates on two planes. Firstly, it invites its readers to identify themselves with Rybnikov and to see the supposed enemy in a new light—as a victim of Russian prejudice. Secondly, the story serves to magnify the cultural paranoia that the war introduced to the popular imagination. What does it mean that Rybnikov, perhaps both a Japanese spy and “half-monkey” can successfully appropriate a Russian “linguistic mask” and infiltrate Russia based on his ambiguous physical appearance? Does it then not follow that Russians should question their relationship to the East, the prejudices informing it and, consequently, to look in the mirror themselves? It would seem that “Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov” represented the necessary mirror for contemporary readers. The story reinforced the idea that the popular press had helped to plant in their minds: that spies could be lurking in their midst. This possibility forced them to understand that, in order to recognize others, they first had to be able to recognize themselves—regardless of the reflection possibly awaiting them in the mirror.

In a review of *Krasnyi smekh* that would have perhaps been better suited to “Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov,” the Symbolist poet and critic Viacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949) used a mirror metaphor to characterize the effects of Russo-Japanese War: “Здесь мы—на пороге тайны и мистики [...] Мы как бы глядим в зеркало—и видим ответный взгляд. Но не живое ли зеркало—мы сами, и наше зрящее око не есть ли только ответ и отражение иного живого ока, вперенного в нас?”⁷² [Here we are on the threshold of mystery and mysticism. [...] We are as if looking into a mirror—and we see an answering gaze. Is the mirror not alive—are not we and our maturing eye only the glare and reflection of another living eye that pierces us?]. Although couched in the complex language of Symbolism, Ivanov's metaphor stresses that the war has given Russians cause to examine themselves more closely—to ponder the figure on the other side of the looking glass and to question the very truth that the mirror offers. In Ivanov's vision, just as in Kuprin's story, what is reflection (what one thinks one is seeing) and what is truth (what one is actually seeing) become blurred. An image from February 1906 (see Figure 2.17 below) seems to capture the dilemma that both writers brought to light: a half-human/half-monkey with a Russian face looks into a mirror (note the amount of facial hair that he has; the Japanese are most frequently depicted either without facial hair or with only a moustache. The Russians, on the other hand, frequently have a beard). The hybridity of the Russian identity is the reflection that greets him. In this image, nothing separates the Colossus from the half-monkey. The war has brought them closer together, and, because of it, they are for perhaps the first time truly seeing that they might just be one and the same.

Through a close reading of these two popular stories, we see how news of the war, as it moved slowly from the battlefields of Manchuria to the streets of Petersburg, gripped the Russian imagination and manifested itself in different ways. The common thread and common symbolic vocabulary running throughout these various manifestations was phantasmagoria, which helped to reinforce the impression that the thin line between self and other—between dreams and reality—had been breached. Consequently, in visual and verbal portraits of the war, the event was transformed into an apocalyptic nightmare from which Russians could not seem to

⁷² Viacheslav Ivanov, “О ‘Красном смехе’,” *Vesy* № 3 (March 1905) 47.

wake up. With their descriptions of red suns and Japanese spies, Andreev and Kuprin gave voice to popular Russian fears, while also capturing the war's phantasmagoric quality by interweaving the real with the oneiric.

Part III: The Shades of Tsushima

The final nightmare of the war took place in mid-May 1905 when Tsushima, after a two day battle, fell. This event not only constituted the unofficial end of the war, but also signified the end of Russia as it had heretofore been perceived. As Valerii Briusov characterized the state of affairs in a letter to the poet and critic Georgii Chulkov (1879-1939) on 18 May 1905: “Пошла ко дну вся старая Россия (ныне и я *должен* признать это)” [Russia has sunk (now I *must* admit it)].⁷³ The loss of this battle was shocking; the sheer unfathomability of it brought the previously silent Symbolists as if back to life. Within a matter of months, it generated several literary responses. In the previous section, I explored the way that Tsushima was used in popular phantasmagoric literature and, in this section, I will turn exclusively to poetry, showing the different “shades” Tsushima took in the Symbolist imagination.

Of Ships and Symbols

Viacheslav Ivanov was the first to respond to Tsushima. Written on the same day that Briusov was lamenting to Chulkov that all was lost, Ivanov's “Tsusima” [Tsushima] contains a note of hope in the face of disaster:

«Крейсер «Алмаз» прорвался через цепь
неприятельских судов и прибыл во Владивосток.»
-Из военных реляций

В моря заклятые родимая армада
Далече выплыла...—последний наш оплот!
И в хлябях водного и пламенного ада—
Ко дну идет...

И мы придвинулись на край конечных срывов...
Над бездной мрачною пылает лютый бор...
Прими нас, жертвенный костер,
Мзда и чистилище заблудшихся порывов.—
О Силоам слепот, отмстительный костер!...

И некий дух-палач толкает нас вперед—
Иль в ночь могильную, иль в купину живую...
Кто Феникс, — возлетит! Кто Феникс, —изберет
Огня святыню роковую!

⁷³ Qtd. in P.G. Anatol'skii, “Kommentarii,” *Valerii Briusov: Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh, t. 1*, (Moskva: “Khudozhestvennaia literatura,” 1973) 630.

Огнем крестися, Русь! В огне перебори
 И свой Алмаз спаси из черного горнила!
 В руке твоих вождей сокрушены кормила:
 Се, в небе кормчие ведут тебя цари.⁷⁴

The cruiser «Diamond» broke through
 the chain of enemy ships and arrived in
 Vladivostok. –From the war reports

The Russian armada sailed further
 Into enchanted seas...—the last of all our hopes!
 And into chasms of hellish fire and water
 Now sinks to the depths...

And we have come to the brink of final conflicts...
 The cruel battle blazes over the grim abyss...
 Accept us, fire of sacrifice,
 Reward and purgatory of misspent energies,
 O Siloam of blindness, revenging fire!...

And some executioner spirit pushes us forward
 Into the night of the grave, or into the burning bush...
 Let the Phoenix fly up! Let the Phoenix choose
 The fateful holiness of fire!

Rus', baptize yourself with fire! Burn,
 And save your *Diamond* from the blackened pyre!
 In the hands of your leaders your helms are shattered:
 See, in the heavens there are greater helmsmen yet.⁷⁵

In this poem, hope exists on several levels. Using an image from mythology, the poem likens Russia to a Phoenix that will rise out of Tsushima's ashes. The flames that engulf the armada will lead to its rebirth. As one scholar remarks, the fire here is purifying; it is a "literal baptism"⁷⁶ in enchanted seas (*v moria zakliatye*). Working together, the elements of water and fire destroy only to create something stronger and more spiritually sound. In Ivanov's conception of the battle, the elements, although destructive, at last seem to be on Russia's side.

An even more important symbol than the Phoenix, however, is the *Diamond*, which Ivanov introduced in the poem's epigraph: "The cruiser «Diamond» broke through the chain of enemy ships and arrived in Vladivostok." It is interesting to note how this symbolically and biblically charged poem evolves from an excerpt from a war report (*reliatsiia*). Fulfilling Ivanov's mission statement for *Cors Ardens* (written from 1904-11 and published in 1911-2), the collection in which it appeared, we can see "Tsushima" as achieving a "synthesis of higher and

⁷⁴ Viacheslav Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii, t. II*, eds. D.V. Ivanova and O. Deshart (Brussels: Foyer Oriental Chrétien, 1974) 252.

⁷⁵ The translation of the poem is from Wells 118. The translation of the epigraph is mine.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 118

lower reality.”⁷⁷ In Ivanov’s hands, the war report transcends its genre and becomes poetry; routine battle details are imbued with spiritual meaning. Also significant is Ivanov’s focus on this particular ship. Why does he mention only the *Diamond* (*Almaz*) when two other destroyers also made it back to Vladivostok?⁷⁸ I propose that Ivanov chose the *Diamond* because of both its literal and figurative meanings. Deriving from the ancient Greek “*adamas*” (unbreakable), which Ivanov, the consummate classical scholar, surely knew, the *Diamond* constitutes a tangible manifestation of the Phoenix, for it *does* “rise” from the ashes. Against the odds, it makes its way back to Vladivostok, fulfilling the promise of its name. Like Russia, it proves itself to be “unbreakable.” It manages this only with the help of mythical *Rus*’, which, at the request of the poet in a moment of apostrophe, willingly sacrifices itself in the fiery blaze so that the Russia of the past can give way to the Russia of the future.

Reflecting this triumphant moment, the poem, in its last stanza, reveals its odic ambitions according to Harsha Ram’s definition of the genre.⁷⁹ Its final line rises on a vertical axis and gestures towards a higher power—towards the greater helmsman that is at work in the heavens. We should not forget, however, that although a greater power may hang over the poem, Ivanov is ultimately its true helmsman (*kormchii*). He is in charge of this poetic portrait of the battle of Tsushima, (re)painting history with the fiery and redemptive brush of Symbolism. In the “Tsusima” of Ivanov’s imagination, the war’s disastrous final battle is given a regenerative hue when, like Andreev before him, he turned the news into a symbolic poetic vision.

Unlike Ivanov, it took Briusov several months to respond to the Tsushima catastrophe; his “Tsusima” is dated 10 August 1905, although he would later revise this date, changing it to June. Through the act of redating the poem, it is as if Briusov turned it into an actual newspaper report of the poem. Whether this was to give the poem a stronger sense of immediacy and legitimacy or to reflect a state of political engagement in the face of claims that he was apathetic to the events rocking Russia in the summer of 1905, we can only speculate. But from a letter that he wrote to Pyotr Pertsov, a former editor of *Mir iskusstva*, in late September, we do know that Tsushima continued to haunt him long after it happened:

Шестнадцатидневный бой под Мукденом и погибель целой армады у китайских берегов — эти беспримерные события только потому, как неотступная галлюцинация, не овладели воображением всех, что у «всех» этого самого воображения давно нет.⁸⁰

The battle on the sixteenth near Mukden and the destruction of an entire armada off the Chinese coast—these are unparalleled events only because, like a persistent hallucination, they have not captured the imagination of everybody, the imagination of “everybody” has been long gone.

⁷⁷ Maria Pavlovsky, “*Cors Ardens*,” *The Reference Guide to Russisan Literature*, ed. Neil Cornwell (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998) 407.

⁷⁸ J.N. Westwood offers a detailed account of the battle of Tsushima in the penultimate chapter of *Russia Against Japan, 1904-1905: a New Look at the Russo-Japanese War* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986) 137-51.

⁷⁹ Here I have in mind Harsha Ram’s reading of the ode, which presents the genre as existing on a vertical axis. Its function is to move upward and take flight, leading to a state of exaltation, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 2003) 50, 65.

⁸⁰ Qtd. in P.G. Antokol’skii, ed., “Kommentarii,” *Valerii Briusov: Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh, t. 1*, (Moskva: “Khudozhestvennaia literatura,” 1975) 632 (24 September 1905).

For Briusov, there is no hope, no image of a fleeing *Diamond*. In this battle, he saw only the complete destruction of the armada. Through Briusov's comparison of Tsushima to a relentless hallucination (*neotstupnaia galliutsinatsiia*), we again encounter the theme of phantasmagoria. Although a horrific event, Tsushima does not seize the Russian imagination, for, in Briusov's eyes, there is no imagination left to seize. Imagination has encroached upon reality, and to find the way out of his labyrinth seems impossible. The very borders separating them have become unclear.

Turning to the poem itself, we encounter the same tension between reality and the world of dreams of which Briusov wrote in his letter and which we saw early in my discussion of Andreev and Gorky:

Великолепная могила!

-Пушкин

Где море, сжатое скалами,
Рекой торжественной течет,
Под знойно-южными волнами,
Изнеможен наш флот.

Как стая птиц над океаном,
За ним тоскующей мечтой
По странным водам, дивным странам
Стремилась мы к мете одной.

И в день, когда в огне и буре
Он, неповинный, шел ко дну,
Мы в бездну канули с лазури,
Мы пили смертную волну.

И мы, как он, лежим, бессильны,
Высь — недоступно далека,
И мчит над нами груз обильный,
Как прежде, южная река.

И только слезы, только горе,
Толпой рыдающих наяд,
На стрелах солнца сходят в море,
Где наши остовы лежат.

Да вместе призрак величавый,
Россия горестная, твой
Рыдает над погибшей славой
Своей затеи роковой!

И снова все в веках, далеко,
Что было близким наконец,—
И скипетр Дальнего Востока,

Magnificent grave!

-Pushkin

The ocean, trapped between the cliffs,
Flows like a mighty river.
Under the sultry southern waves,
Exhausted lies our fleet.

And we followed it in a dream,
Over the sea like a flock of birds,
Across strange waters and fabulous lands
We hastened to the fateful spot.

And on that day, when in storm and fire
The ship sank innocent to the depths,
We too dropped from the sky into the abyss,
We too drank in the fatal wave.

And we, like them, lie powerless.
The heights are out of reach.
And above us the ample weight
Of the southern river surges as before.

And only tears, and only grief,
Like a throng of sobbing nymphs,
Come down to the sea on the rays of the sun,
To the place where our bones rest.

And your majestic shade,
Russia, o sorrowful one,
Sobs over the lost fame
Of its fateful mission!

And everything again is in the future
That was finally so close,
Both the sceptre of the Far East,

И Рима Третьего венец!⁸¹
10 August 1905

And the crown of the Third Rome!⁸²

The second stanza introduces the idea, for there is an enchanted quality to the scenery. As if in a dream (*za nim toskuiushchei mechtoi*), the Russians are compelled to move forward, crossing strange waters and fabulous lands (*po strannym vodam, divnym stranam*). The way Briusov presents the scene in this stanza, we could almost imagine ourselves in the midst of a beautiful landscape painting, not in a verbal painting of a decisive and fiery battle. However, the epigraph from Aleksandr Pushkin's "Napoleon" (1821), "Velikolepnaia mogila!" [Magnificent grave!], shatters this illusion of peace in its insinuation of death.

This death arrives in the third stanza. Not quite the cleansing blaze of Ivanov's "Tsushima," the fire here burns quickly and unremarkably. The greater significance of the sinking armada is that, as it goes underwater, the Russians, metaphorized as a flock of birds eagerly watching from the vantage point of the sky (*kak staia ptits nad okeanom*) in the second stanza, fall from above into an abyss (*my v bezdnu kanuli s lazuri*). If the ode is, as Harsha Ram suggests, a vertical trajectory to the imperial sublime, then Briusov in his poem reverses this trajectory, instead focusing on Russia's fall from imperial heights. Because of the loss of Tsushima, these "heights are now out of reach" (*vys'—nedostupno dalyoka*).

Everything in the poem now moves downward—to Russia's new position below, where it can relive the "ample weight" (*gruz obil'nyi*) of its history of being vanquished by the East. The East hangs over it "as before, the southern river" (*kak prezhd, iuzhnaia reka*), which alludes to Russia's loss at Kalka, the scene of the thirteenth-century battle between the Mongols and several principalities of Rus'. Briusov did, as I pointed out in my earlier discussion of the yellow peril and *Vesy*, conflate history, viewing the Russo-Japanese War as the "new battle with the Mongols." With Russia's fateful loss at Tsushima, history seemed only to prove him right, for it was repeating itself. Russia had again been debased.

Briusov appeared to predict both Russia's and the West's diminished status in his article about Maeterlinck. There he wrote, in relation to the threat of the yellow peril, that,

... На нас наступила нога великана, а наши исповедники-утешители, различающие только его ступню, успокаивает нас: «[...] великанов больше нет, какой же это великан, где же его голова». Бедняги! Поднимите глаза выше.⁸³

The foot of a giant has stepped on us, and our confessor-comforters, discerning only his foot, soothes us: "[...] there are no more giants, what kind of a giant is that, where is his head." Poor souls! Raise your eyes above.

Alarmingly, the leg of the giant is upon them; the East makes its way westward and is in sight. Briusov's suggestion that the "poor souls" raise their eyes higher suggests that they are not only small, but also so far removed from the world of giants that they must strain their eyes to catch a glimpse of one. This is a far cry from the image with which Briusov's earlier poem about the war, "K Tikhomu Okeanu" [To the Pacific Ocean, 27 January 1904], ends:

⁸¹ Valerii Briusov, *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh, t. 1*, ed. P.G. Antokol'skii (Moskva: "Khudozhestvennaia literatura," 1975).

⁸² Translation from Wells 115

⁸³ "Meterlink-uteshitel' (o zhyoltoi opasnosti)," 90

Брат океан! Ты – как мы? Дай обнять
 Братскую грудь среди вражеских станов.
 Кто, дерзновенный, захочет разнять
 Двух великанов?

Brother ocean! You are like us? Let us embrace
 Your brotherly chest among the enemy camps.
 Who, daring, will want to separate
 Two giants?

At this stage of the war—its beginning, in fact—Russia was a giant (*velikan*) too, whom it seemed nobody could stop from “embracing,” or expanding territorially into, the Pacific Ocean. Nothing would tear these two giants apart.

The permanence of their eternal embrace, however, is challenged as the war becomes more serious and lasting. Eventually, as “Tsusima” shows us, there is nothing left for the Pacific to hold onto. Its Russian brother has disappeared. The poem shows us this symbolically: while Japan's emblem, the sun, continues to shine over the ocean, Russia's light has faded. It has transformed into a spectre (*prizrak*) of its past glory. Its legacy now awaits it in the future—“the sceptre of the Far East and the crown of the Third Rome” (*I skipetr Dal'nego Vostoka, /I Rima Tret'ego venets*). But before it can claim it, it must first reclaim its lost status and the heights from which it has fallen. If the last lines of the poem are any indication, Russia will again rise from the dead, and the East may be Russia's yet. Clearly, the imagination that Briusov claimed had given way to a relentless and hallucinatory reality lived on.

In these two poems that touch upon the tragedy of Tsushima, we see a complex interplay of hope and loss, a shared language of fire, destruction and renewal. Each poem plays with space, using it to reflect Russia's emotional, as well as imperial, status. Of the two, Ivanov's poetic vision is the most literal and hopeful. Through the symbol of the *Diamond*, the poem highlights Russia's unbreakable spirit. As the Phoenix, Russia will triumphantly rise again. Briusov, on the other hand, engaged with this battle in a more subtle way. His “Tsusima” offers a layered account of Russian history, in which Tsushima and the Battle of the Kalka River become one and the same. History repeats itself, showing Russia, a former giant, as having fallen from its lofty position. Briusov's account is not entirely pessimistic, however; it suggests only that its imperial aims have been postponed until the future. More importantly, in these two accounts of the battle at Tsushima, both Ivanov and Briusov engage with history as reported in the news. Ivanov's poem stems from a war report, while Briusov, haunted by reports of the battle that he compared to a hallucination, dated his poem to make it look like he had directly responded to it. Ultimately, what these two very different “Tsushima poems” show us is that the disaster of Tsushima itself became a symbol; embedded in it were Russia's past, present and future—its rise and descent. The legacy of Tsushima constituted the war's final dream-like hold on the Russian cultural and literary imagination.

Closing the Circle: The Panorama's End

In this chapter, I have looked at several artistic responses to the Russo-Japanese War, from its beginning to its end, showing the shapes and colors that it took, the symbols that

emerged and the questions that the theme of the war raised. In popular and high art and in personal documents of the literary milieu, the war was described as a destabilizing force that the Russians often viewed as elemental; nature had as if turned against it. The war, more importantly, forced Russian artists to take a hard look at themselves and to see where they stood in the world. Were they the giants of Briusov's verse, meant to embrace the Pacific and spread eastward? Or were they the saffron-yellow faces that, in the world of Kuprin's "Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov," hovered on the edges of the Russian empire, confusing Russian conceptions of self? The literature that the war produced offers no definitive answers.

Instead, it presents possibilities: Russia falls, Russia rises and borders—between self and other, East and West—are obliterated. They all blend, as if seamlessly. Imagination and reality, too, merge; their combination creates what may have been the reigning principle of the day: phantasmagoria. The war seemed to deny "realism" on almost all fronts. Newspapers, journals, popular images and other brochures worked together to provide highly symbolic accounts of the war that both informed literature and were distorted by it. Japan was a "mask," a "red laugh" was hovering over a Russia as if full of murderous children and the war was, according to some, no more than an "optical illusion." In this world, vision could not be trusted, nor could physiognomy. Given the instability that the war created, there is no single image to settle upon.

A seemingly unreal event, the war invited various metaphors; to name only a few that we have encountered in this chapter: Sof'ia Tolstaia's "elemental storm," Andreev's nightmare, Briusov's hallucinatory reality. Metaphor, in fact, seemed one of the only means available to writers to make sense of the conflict. Despite the range of metaphors that I work with here, a common symbolic language exists within these different texts. Keeping this common feature in mind, if we return now to Sologub's initial definition of the panorama, I propose that we can take the texts and images that I explored in this chapter as a fluid portrait of a war that was, with each battle, being amended and reconceptualized. Moving through personal documents, images, popular literature and Symbolist poetry, I hope to have shown that, in the Russian cultural imagination, it was as if there were two wars: the very real battle being waged in the Far East and the war being reimagined in literary responses from afar.

Wounded By the War

Part I: Aching Melancholy

The Russo-Japanese War did not fade quickly from the Russian imagination. Instead, it continued to linger, haunting writers and casting a shadow over Russia. We see traces of the war's enduring hold in Aleksandr Blok's "*Bezvremen'e*" [Timelessness], which appeared in the literary journal *Zolotoe runo* [The Golden Fleece] in November 1906. This article, which had taken Blok almost a year to finish, describes the world—the ruins, really—that remained in the wake of both the Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Revolution of 1905. While Blok mentioned neither historical event explicitly, their imprint can be felt in the phantasmagoric quality of his prose:

Наша действительность проходит в красном свете. Дни все громче от криков, от машущих красных флагов; вечером город, задремавший на минуту, окровавлен зарей. Ночью красное поет на платьях, на щеках, на губах продажных женщин рынка. Только бледное утро гонит последнюю краску с испитых лиц.

Так мчится в бешеной истерике все, чем мы живем и в чем видим смысл своей жизни. Зажженные со всех концов, мы кружимся в воздухе, как несчастные маски, застигнутые врасплох мстительным шутком у Эдгара По. Но мы, дети своего века, боремся с этим головокружением. Какая-то дьявольская живучесть помогает нам гореть и не сгорать.¹

Our reality passes in a red light. All the days are louder from the cries, from the flapping of the red flags; in the evenings, the city, dozing off for a minute, is bloodied by the dawn. At night, the red sings on the dresses, on the cheeks, on the lips of the prostitutes. Only the pale morning chases the last bit of color from their emaciated faces.

So everything rushes in the frenzied hysteria, with which we live and in which we see the point of our existence. Burned from all sides, we spin through the air like the unfortunate masks, taken by surprise by Edgar Allen Poe's vengeful jester. But we, the children of our age, fight with this vertigo. Some devilish persistence helps us to burn and not be consumed.

According to Blok, hysteria served as the reigning mood of the day. This unhealthy emotional state influenced Russian perceptions of reality, giving rise to an attendant feeling of helplessness. Blok, using the masquerade imagery that was common in modernist prose and poetry, articulated this helplessness when he strikingly compared both himself and his contemporaries to the "unfortunate masks" (*nechastnye maski*) that spin through the air in Edgar Allen Poe's "Hop-Frog; or, The Eight Chained Orangutans" (1849).² Why this particular story

¹ Aleksandr Blok, "Bezvremen'e," *SS v vos'mi tomakh*, t. 5, eds. K.I. Chukhovskii, V.N. Orlov and A.A. Surkov (Moskva, Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1962) 71. All future citations from this article will be given in text.

² Poe's story first appeared in Russian translation in 1885 in «Повести, рассказы, критические этюды и мысли» under the title «Гоп-Фрог.» In current translations, it is known instead as «Прыг-Скок,» see commentary to Blok's *PSS*, 268.

figures in Blok's description of modern society remains unexplained, but we can surmise that the dwarf whom the cruel King nicknames "Hop-Frog" might just serve as a stand-in for the Japanese enemy who had helped to create the political turmoil overtaking the Russian state. Hop-Frog is small, foreign, cunning and unable to hold his liquor—all characteristics associated with Japanese stereotypes circulating in this period³—and, after being constantly belittled and insulted at court, seeks revenge on the unsuspecting King. He succeeds, convincing the King and several of his powerful allies to dress up as orangutans for an upcoming masquerade; then, while they are chained together (this, as Hop-Frog explains to them, is a necessary part of the ruse) at the gathering, he lights them on fire and watches, much to the horror of the King's guests, as they burn to death. For Blok, this metaphor may have resonated with the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War, mirroring the way that Russian mockery of the "little man" quickly turned into horror in the face of Japanese victory. With this victory, it seems that the fiery apocalypse had finally arrived at Russia's door.

The only thing keeping the apocalypse somewhat at bay, as Blok pointed out, is that something seems to be helping the Russians both "to burn and *not* be consumed." They, the children of their age, hover between two fates—forever burning, yet never being relieved of their suffering. This endless cycle reflects the title of Blok's article, "*Bezvremen'e*," which evokes not only a state of timelessness, but also the emotional weight of time. "*Bezvremen'e*" signifies a period of adversity, unhappiness, and failure.⁴ Woe and calamity are embedded in its very meaning. Beyond the semantic implications of "*bezvremen'e*," Blok's use of the term is also connected to *The Book of Revelation*. When Blok, earlier in the article, wrote that, "Радость остыла, потухли очаги, Времени больше нет» [Joy has cooled, the hearths have dimmed, Time is no longer, 5: 70], he echoed the apocalyptic language of Revelation 10:6: "[...] времени уже не будет"⁵ [there should be time no longer]. In Blok's vision, apocalyptic time arrives on the heels of two catastrophic historical events that have broken the thread of linear temporality. Overcome by chaos and conflagration, Time (*Vremia*) with a capital T has stopped marching forward. Like the dangling, burning bodies Hop-Frog delights in, the world now endlessly circles round and round with no semblance of order. As a result, life has become joyless and empty.

In this void, everything seems to be confused, falling victim to the general, all-encompassing hysteria that informs artistic representations of Russian modernity. As it appears in Blok's descriptions, this world could be the fictional setting of Andreev's *Krasnyi smekh*⁶ or even of Kuprin's "Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov." After all, as we saw in the previous chapter, these two popular texts embodied phantasmagoria. Not only did they blur the boundaries between reality and the imagination, but they also gave voice to the hysteria that the war produced; the image of the red laugh represents the distressed body's response to the absurdity of war, while in

³ See Chapter Two for a full discussion of the reptilian imagery that the Russians used to mock and belittle their Japanese enemy.

⁴ "Bezvremen'e," *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo russkogo iazyka Vladimira Dalia* (Sankt-Peterburg & Moskva: M.O. Vol'f, 1903) 148.

⁵ *Bibliia* (Moskva: Sinodal'noe izdanie, 1989) 282.

⁶ Blok did read the "Red Laugh," and, although he was initially impressed by its dire prediction of Russia's fate, he quickly changed his mind, which he wrote to S.M. Solov'ev in January 1905: "Читая «Красный смех» Андреева, захотел пойти к нему и спросить, *когда* всех перережут. Близился к сумасшествию, но утром на следующий день (читал ночью) пил чай" [Reading Andreev's *The Red Laugh*, I wanted to go to him and ask, *when* they would cut us all down. I approached insanity, but on the day after in the morning (I read during the night), I drank tea] Aleksandr Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh, t. 8: pis'ma*, eds. K.I. Chukhovskii, V.N. Orlov and A.A. Surkov (Moskva & Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1963) 117.

Kuprin's tale the possibility of Japanese spies lurking within the state evinces the paranoia of wartime Russia. Although commonplace in the modern period, the dominance of the color red also unifies these three texts. Red was most closely associated with the chaos brought on by the war, and Blok, in his article, foregrounds this color.⁷ His focus on red seems to suggest that, while time as we know it may have ruptured, the red sheen marking the world serves to connect the immediate past and the present, from Bloody Sunday to Tsushima to now. This red stain stands as one of the identifying features of the age (“*nasha deistvitel'nost' prokhorit v krasnom svete*”). It both reflects the conflagration overtaking the world and symbolizes a metaphorical death or wound—imperial, political, emotional—that will simply not stop bleeding.

This wound, in part, is inflicted upon Russia itself:

Открытая даль. Пляшет Россия под звуки длинной и унылой песни о безбытности, о протекающих мигах, о пробегающих полосатых верстах. Где-то вдаль заливается голос или колокольчик [...] Нет ни времен, ни пространств на этом просторе. Однообразны канавы, заборы, избы, казенные винные лавки, не знающий, как быть со своим просторным весельем, народ [...] выводящий из хоровода девушку в красном сарафане. Лицо девушки вместе смеется и плачет [...] Времени больше нет.

Вот русская действительность—всюду, куда ни оглянешься, - даль, синева и щемящая тоска неисполнимых желаний. (5:74-5)

Open expanse. Russia dances to the sounds of a long and mournful song about the lack of domestic life, about the continuing moments, about the running striped *versts*. Somewhere in the distance spills out a voice or a little bell [...] There are neither times nor spaces in this expanse. There are monotonous ditches, fences, huts, state-owned liquor stores, the *narod* not knowing what to do with its spacious revelry [...], leading out of the dance a girl in a red peasant dress. The face of the girl is together laughing and crying [...] Time is no longer.

Here is Russian reality—everywhere, no matter where you look - distance, blue and the aching melancholy of unfulfillable expectations.

Blok's language in this passage invites us to see Russia's open expanse as a space of absence. The land is as if lacerated; broken open, neither times nor spaces (Blok strangely used the plural form of both) can exist within it. Instead, time(s) and space(s) have seemingly seeped out through a gap—what I would call a metaphorical wound. In their absence, hysteria reigns, especially amongst those who inhabit this land. Evidence of this rests in the description of the girl in the red peasant dress, who is clearly overcome by the same morbid excitement that we encountered in Andreev's story. In fact, her face, torn between laughing and crying, may betoken the next stage in the red laugh's evolution. The girl does not just convulsively laugh at the madness that has overtaken the world; she simultaneously mourns it. The dual nature of her emotional response helps to transform her into a symbol of this post-war, post-revolutionary world and its accompanying hysteria. Following the account of her fit, Blok again offered the same apocalyptic pronouncement that accompanied his earlier description of Russian reality: “*времени больше нет.*” With the arrival of apocalyptic time, we find emotional discontent, what Blok referred to as “the aching melancholy of unfulfillable expectations.”

One scholar portrays the period about which Blok was writing as suffering from a deep

⁷ Blok originally intended to call this article, “*Kraski i slova*” (Colors and Words), but, as he worked on it more, he changed the title. He instead used this title for a different article on painting.

and inescapable melancholy (*melankholiia*).⁸ In his study, he attributes this melancholy to the disappointment resulting from the Revolution of 1905 and the social and political upheaval that came with it.⁹ More importantly, this scholar stresses the significance of Russia's emotional mood, suggesting that writers, journalists and other thinkers from this period believed that truth stemmed not from the visible world, but rather from one's inner world; in other words, from one's emotional feeling (*chuvstvovanie*).¹⁰ *Chuvstvovanie* opened the door to understanding; by emotionally engaging with their surroundings, writers could express some form of truth—personal, historical and perhaps even national. It is important to note that this truth was colored by the dominant emotions of modernism, from hysteria to melancholy, all of which bordered on the pathological and reflected the degenerative themes paramount to symbolizations of the period.¹¹

Using the idea of *chuvstvovanie* as a springboard, in this chapter I propose to investigate the emotional climate that was reflected in literary evocations of Russia in the years immediately following the Russo-Japanese War. To achieve this, I will build upon Blok's idea of "timelessness" which, as a reference to the end of days, is central to the period ranging from 1906-1909. This impression of timelessness prevents any sense of movement beyond the rupture of 1904-05, and I will argue that this seeming temporal gap—a wound in time—allows fictional and essayistic recapitulations of the war to continue to reverberate in the Russian cultural imagination. In my analysis, the Russo-Japanese War itself comes to resemble an aching bodily and psychological wound. Through an examination of intersections between high and popular art, I aim to show the ways in which several texts from this period attempted to give voice to this metaphorical wound.

Part II: Dmitry Merezhkovsky and the Fear of Yellow Blood

While it took some writers several years to articulate their thoughts and feelings about the Russo-Japanese War after peace was settled in September of 1905, this was not the case for Dmitry Merezhkovsky (1865-1941).¹² In his "Griadushchii kham" [The Coming Boor] of the

⁸ Mark D. Steinberg, "Melancholy and Modernity: Emotions and Social Life in Russian Between the Revolutions," *Journal of Social History* 41.4 (Summer 2008) 813-841. While the title of the article states that melancholy was the ruling mood of the day, this word, as Steinberg points out, was rarely heard in the early twentieth century. Other descriptors were used instead to capture the essence of this emotion: "fear and sadness," "a gloomy, pensive, discontented temper," and "world- and self-loathing" (813).

⁹ Interestingly, any mention of the Russo-Japanese War is lacking in this study. This absence can perhaps be explained by the author's focus on both the civic and domestic discontent that the Revolution created, as well as the fact that the end of the Russo-Japanese War was overshadowed by the revolution. I would suggest, however, that the Russo-Japanese War, having created a certain emotional "mood" of its own, figured into the melancholy that continued to dog the state in the years between the two revolutions.

¹⁰ *ibid.* 818

¹¹ Max Nordau's critical study, *Degeneration* [Entartung, 1892-3], describes the art of European modernism as a product of pathology. In his study, the artist becomes a dangerous force that infects society with his/her fantasies and emotional excesses. See *Degeneration* (New York: H. Fertig, 1968). For studies of Nordau's influence on Russian literature, see Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 5-7; Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin De Siècle* (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 2005) 13-6.

¹² The authors I have in mind here are Zinaida Gippius, Maksim Gor'ky and Andrei Bely. I will discuss Gippius in the next section of this chapter, and Bely's *Peterburg* will comprise a large part of the final chapter of this dissertation. Gor'ky's "Zhaloby," however, will not make an appearance in my study since his aim, in the first part of the four-part story seems to be to make a political statement about Russia's negative politics. In this chapter, my

following year,¹³ Merezhkovsky predicted that the war was only the continuation of a greater, ongoing threat to come from Asia to the West. He seemed especially troubled by the Eastern hold on the West, stating that, “Япония победила Россию. Китай победит Европу, если только в ней самой не совершится великий духовной переворот”¹⁴ [Japan defeated Russia. China will defeat Europe, only if in [Europe] there takes place no great spiritual transformation]. If the unthinkable had happened in Russia, which Merezhkovsky blamed in part on Russia's weakening Orthodoxy, then, as he saw it, it was only a matter of time for Europe; without a return to religious faith and a renewed interest in cultural growth, the East would vanquish them all.

It must be noted that these ideas about the East were not exclusively Merezhkovsky's, nor was this the first piece of writing in which he was proclaiming them. In a way, «Griadushchii kham» stands as both a testament to the period in which it was written and a reflection of various ideas that had been voiced about the East—in Russia and Europe alike—during the nineteenth century. The essay's engagement with the post-war and post-revolutionary period manifests itself in the style of Merezhkovsky's essay. There is an unmistakable note of apocalyptic foreboding that colors his language, as well as openly racist remarks about the Japanese; in one passage, Merezhkovsky referred to them as “*pereodetye obed'iany*” (dressed monkeys, 14:11), showing himself to be no stranger to the prejudices prevalent in both popular and high culture at the time. The essay's relationship with nineteenth-century ideas, however, is somewhat more complicated than Merezhkovsky's blend of racism and scaremongering, though the two were nevertheless connected. In the following discussion, I will show how Merezhkovsky recasts nineteenth-century perceptions of the East in the anxiety-ridden symbolist discourse of early twentieth-century Russia.

While the essay expresses Merezhkovsky's long-held certainty that civilization continues to exist in a state of decline,¹⁵ it also serves as a vehicle for both a pedagogical tirade about the ills of society and a quasi-scholarly survey of ideas about the decline of the West. Merezhkovsky wove together quotations about the evils of the West's Sinicization (*kitaishchina*), quoting authors ranging from the philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) to Russia's own Aleksandr Hertsen (1812-1870). The article begins with an excerpt from Hertsen's “Kontsy i nachala” [Endings and Beginnings, 1864], which contains grave forebodings about the fate of Western civilization: “Мещанство победит и должно победить. Да, любезный друг, пора прийти к спокойному и смиренному сознанию, что мещанство – окончательная форма западной

interest lies in psychological texts and responses to the war, rather than in political critiques of military policy. For a brief study of “Zhaloby,” see Barry Scherr, “The War in the Russian Literary Imagination,” *World War Zero: The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective*, ed. John W. Steinberg, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David Wolff and Shinji Yokote (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

¹³ The title “Griadushchii kham” applied to a collection of essays that was published in St. Petersburg in 1906, and also to an eponymous essay featured in the collection. I will be discussing only the latter in this section. Also, it is worth mentioning that the title of Merezhkovskii's essay is perhaps both playing and polemicizing with Valerii Briusov's perplexing poem from the fall of 1905, “Griadushchie gunny.” See Valerii Briusov, *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh, t. 1* (Moskva: “Khudozhestvennaia literatura,” 1973).

¹⁴ Dmitrii Merezhkovsky, “Griadushchii kham,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii t. 14*. (Georg Olms Verlag: New York, 1973) 10.

¹⁵ Susanna Lim notes that Merezhkovsky's writings about the East reflected the ideas that he presented in “О причинах упадка и о новых течениях современной русской литературы” [On the Reasons for the Fall and On New Tendencies in Contemporary Russian Literature] (1893); see “Russia, East Asia and the Search for the ‘Real Europe’: Dmitry Merezhkovsky and Andrei Bely,” *Other Voices: Three Centuries of Cultural Dialogue between Russia and Western Europe*, ed. Graham H. Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2011) 60.

цивилизации” [Philistinism will defeat and should defeat. Yes, my kind friend, it's time to arrive at the calm and humble realization, that *Philistinism is the final form of Western civilization*] (14:5). According to Hertsen's description, *meshchanstvo* represents not only the end of Western civilization, but also a sign of the West's growing alignment with China.

In Western and, to a large extent, Russian thought (it must be noted that the Russian intelligentsia rearticulated the arguments of the West through a specifically Russian lens), this civilization had long been viewed as existing outside of history.¹⁶ Georg Hegel (1770-1831) was one of the first to formulate this vision in his *Philosophy of History* (the lectures were delivered in the 1820s and were first published in a collected volume in 1837), where he wrote about the lack of “spiritual religion” in the Celestial Empire and also of the “servile Chinese consciousness” that had held the country back from true historical progress.¹⁷ As if parroting Hegel, Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856) in his “Apologie d’un fou” (1837), a response to his disastrously received “First Philosophical Letter” (1836), referred to the East as docile; it was slumbering, unable to participate in either history or its own destiny. Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848) echoed the ideas of both Hegel and Chaadaev in a review of several books on Peter the Great (1672-1725) and Tsar Alexis (1629-1676) from 1840. For Belinsky, Peter’s greatest act was to connect Russia to Europe, a land of will and reason, rather than to Asia, a land of imagination and contemplation. Although Belinsky did credit Asia for being the “cradle of the human race,” he also remarked that it had yet to rise from the cradle. Asia, in short, had failed to grow and seemed forever trapped in a primitive and childish state.¹⁸ Writing almost twenty-five years after Belinsky, Hertsen most likely had these ideas in mind, as well as those of John Stuart Mill, when he discussed the stagnation that he encountered in the West and its resemblance to the Chinese condition. In the quotation from “Kontsy i nachala” that Merezhkovsky included in “Griadushchii kham,” Hertsen reiterated Mill's dire prediction that, as *meshchanstvo* gains a foothold in the West, “Англия делается Китаем” [England will be turned into China 14: 6], and, after a telling pause, commented, «Мы к этому прибавим: и не одна Англия» [We can add to that: and *not only England*, 14: 6]. With these italicized words, Hertsen (and Merezhkovsky) implicated Russia in a similar transformation into China, showing this to be emblematic of a larger trend in Western nations. We must also observe the role that geography probably played in Hertsen's fears; if Sinicization could befall England, a country leagues away from China, Russia, a country that Chaadaev described as “[...] между Востоком и Западом, опираясь одним локтем на Китай, другим на Германию [...]”¹⁹ [between the East and West, leaning one elbow on China and the other on Germany], was particularly vulnerable to *meshchanstvo*.

Following in the footsteps of Mill and Hertsen, Merezhkovsky, in “Griadushchii kham,” treated *meshchanstvo* as the root of both Russia's and Europe's problems. But even as he agreed with their diagnosis, he viewed *meshchanstvo* in different terms, defining it as the “religion of modern Europe” (*religiia sovremennoi Evropy*, 14:21), a false faith that was overtaking the western world (Merezhkovsky claimed that both Mill and Hertsen, despite their astute observation of the problem, suffered from this same affliction). In his eyes, the West had

¹⁶ In a recent study, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye explores the different definitions of the East existing in Russian thought. See *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 2010).

¹⁷ Georg Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. J Sibree (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger, 2007) 151, 156.

¹⁸ V.G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, v. 5 (Moskva: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1954) 98.

¹⁹ Petr Chaadaev, “Pervoe filosoficheskoe pis'mo,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pis'ma*, ed. T.I. Ouzerman (Moskva: Nauka, 1991) 329.

gradually turned away from God, replacing spiritual belief with a positivist understanding of the world.²⁰ But it is also important to note that, for him, this term also contained more pressing implications. As rendered by Merezhkovsky in the twentieth century, *meshchanstvo* entered into the sphere of biology, representing not only social and spiritual decay, but also bodily decline. The body informed Merezhkovsky's anxiety about the “yellow peril”:

«Желтая опасность»—внутри—не в том, что Китай идет в Европу, а в том, что Европа идет в Китай [...] лица у нас еще белые; но под белую кожей уже течет не прежняя густая, алая, арийская, а все более жидкая, «желтая» кровь, похожая на монгольскую сукровицу; разрез наших глаз прямой, но взор начинает косить, суживаться. И прямой белый свет европейского дня становится косым «желтым» светом китайского заходящего или японского восходящего солнца. (4: 10-11)

“Yellow peril”—it is internal—it is not that China is going to Europe, but rather that Europe is going to China [...] our faces are still white; but under this white skin already flows not the former—thick, scarlet, Aryan—but the constantly thinning “yellow” blood, resembling Mongolian ichor; the cut of our eyes is straight, but our vision is beginning to slant and narrow. And the straight white light of the European day becomes the slanted “yellow” light of the setting Chinese or rising Japanese sun.

His anxiety stemmed from the growing impression that everything in Europe was undergoing an Eastern transformation and turning yellow—from the white light of day to Aryan blood. Blood, in particular, concerned Merezhkovsky, for he saw Asian blood as thin and discolored in comparison with the scarlet, Aryan blood of the West. In fact, he likened Asian blood to Mongolian “*sukrovitsa*” (ichor), which creates a rather disturbing graphic image. *Sukrovitsa* is a yellowish discharge that flows out with the blood from infected, rotting bodily tissue,²¹ which connects to the metaphor of the wound with which I began this chapter. Given that Aryan blood has come to resemble this substance, it is as if it is no longer simply blood. Rather, it suggests the aftermath of a wound, one that festers internally, betraying bodily infection²²: in this case, the triumph of the East over the West and its accompanying decay.

Behind Merezhkovsky's idea of the East stands a common cultural mythology from the period, which manifests itself in texts as diverse as Vladimir Solov'ev's poem, “Pan-Mongolizm” (1894) and visual images from popular culture. The convergence of high (modern art) and the low (the popular press) was central to the propagation of the anxiety about the Eastern races. In the realm of high art, Solov'ev participated in this racist discourse, using his poetry to express the idea that, “a swarm of waking tribes prepares for new attacks” (*Gotovit' novye udary/Roi probudivshikhsia plemen*) in the East.²³ His vision of Pan-Mongolism invited

²⁰ According to one Merezhkovskii scholar, positivism and Philistinism represented similar evils to Merezhkovskii; positivism was “an unconscious religion” that originated in scientific thought and was replacing religion; Philistinism, on the other hand, reflected the petite bourgeoisie and the beliefs of that class, which, in essence, were positivist beliefs. See C. Harold Bedford, *The Seeker: D.S. Merezhkovsky* (Lawrence: U of Kansas Press, 1975), 123-5.

²¹ “Sukrovitsa,” *Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*, tom 14, So-siam. 1963. Print.

²² Another text that shows infection as coming from the East is Fedor Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), specifically from the novel's epilogue that features Raskol'nikov's dream. Given Merezhkovskii's scholarship on Dostoevskii, it is possible that this idea was partly influenced by this nineteenth-century novel.

²³ Vladimir Solov'ev, “Pan-Mongolizm,” *Stikhotvoreniia i shutochnye p'esy* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1968) 240.

readers to see all of Asia as existing under the same mantle; the conquering spirit of thirteenth-century Mongolians was reborn in the rising Asian nations of the late nineteenth century.

Due to the popularity of Solov'ev's "Pan-Mongolism," this idea penetrated the realm of popular culture. In "*Shut*" [The Fool, 1879-1914], a self-described popular "artistic journal with caricatures" that was both published and edited by R.R. Golike (the publisher of *Mir iskusstva* [The World of Art, 1904] in its final year, and also of several other artistic and political organs in the years that followed, from *Zhupel* [Bugbear, 1905-06] to *Apollon* [Apollo, 1913-17]), we find a two-page spread published in the early stages of the war (1 May 1904): "Pliaska smerti" [The Dance of Death; see Figures 3.1 and 3.2]. This image features a banner bearing the slogan "PANMONGOLISM" that hangs prominently above dancing representatives of various Asian nations. There is the Japanese soldier, a traditionally dressed Chinese and Korean, an Indian in a turban and a thin man who, based on both his hairstyle and bare feet, is also most likely Chinese. The background is also highly suggestive; the men stand before a tall mountain, which, given the whimsically drawn clouds that surround it, can only be Mt. Fuji. We must recall that Fuji had become a ubiquitous symbol of Japan—as ubiquitous as the country's moniker, "Land of the Rising Sun," which makes an appearance in the text below the illustration—due, in part, to Hokusai's famous drawings of the mountain (I will discuss both Hokusai and Fuji in more detail in the next chapter). Fuji's prominence reflects that of the Japanese representative, who carries a "delicious cake" resembling a bullet. The Japanese, with the help of this stone cake (*manit' ikh vkusnym tortom s nachinkoi iz lidita* [attract them with a delicious cake stuffed with Lydian stone]) seeks to tempt the other Asians to join him and his cause; as the text below the image suggests,

Восточные народы
Возбужены японцем,
Строят хороводы
Пред «восходящим солнцем».²⁴

The Eastern nations
Provoked by the Japanese
Form round dances
Before the «rising sun.»

Both word and image demonstrate that the Japanese soldier acts as the *provocateur* who will lead the march on the West and create an Asian brotherhood.

The threat of Asian unification under the banner of Pan-Mongolism was not the only manifestation of the danger rising out of the East. During the Russo-Japanese War, a popular political fear began to take root in the West: that all colonized countries, in light of a Japanese victory over Russia, would rise up against the nations they perceived as their "Western oppressors." In a way, this fear contains traces of Solov'ev's ideas, but was also much more expansive, falling instead under various headlines: Asia for the Asians (*Aziia dlia aziatov*),²⁵

²⁴ Car-de-rick, "Pliaska smerti," *Shut* No. 18, 1 May 1904, 8-9.

²⁵ It should be noted that, while Pan-Mongolism evoked fear in Russia and the West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a movement similar to it was later adopted by the East—specifically by the Japanese. They renamed it "Pan-Asianism" and it was one of the driving principles behind the Japanese expansionism (and fascism) that led to the Pacific War. See Alan Tansman, *The Aesthetics of Japanese Fascism* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2009);

Africa for the Africans (*Afrika dlia afrikantsev*), India for the Indians (*India dlia Indusov*), Australia for the Australians (*Avstraliia dlia Avstraliitsev*).²⁶ We can see a visual representation of this phenomenon in another political cartoon from “*Shut*,” “Скверный сон Джона Буля” (1904; see Figure 3.3), in which a sleeping John Bull, the cartoonish personification of the United Kingdom,²⁷ has a sweat-inducing nightmare about the native uprisings that he imagines will take place in light of Japanese victories over Russia. The message appears to be clear: first, Russia will fall to the Japanese, which will pave the way for the other nations, and then England, whose various territories are marked on the map above John Bull’s bed, will follow. In short, this nightmare foretells of the end of empire and the threat that looms over the West—not to mention of the ever-narrowing world for the Aryan race.

By the time Merezhkovsky was writing “*Griadushchii kham*,” the possibilities for the Aryan race had already narrowed significantly.²⁸ Pan-Mongolism was no longer the vague threat predicted by Solov’ev in the early 1890s; instead, as the East entered history and took its long neglected place on the world stage (the ahistorical space described in early nineteenth-century essays had disappeared), it began to pose a legitimate and insidious danger to ideas of Western supremacy and to the body of the modern man—from his blood to his face. While in Merezhkovsky’s vision, Western blood was already defiled, it is important to observe that the effects of its contamination were still only an internal phenomenon hidden from the naked eye. Merezhkovsky warned, however, that the transformation taking place beneath the skin of Westerners—note that this includes Russians since Merezhkovsky aligned Russia with the West²⁹—might not always remain a secret. Their bad blood might eventually tell, leading to their white faces turning yellow. Even more frightening than this physical transformation is the idea that Westerners themselves are somehow *inviting* this change; the East does not go to them, rather *they* go to the East. This is why the yellow peril, for Merezhkovsky at least, represents a homegrown illness, a desire to embrace and internalize ideals that will cause one to rot—to turn *yellow*—from the inside out.

The fears expressed in «*Griadushchii kham*» harken back to an earlier article Merezhkovsky wrote about the East, particularly about China: “*Zheltolitsye pozitivisty*”³⁰ [Yellow-faced Positivists, 1895]. This article masquerades as a review of Chinese literature, although in reality it acts more as a critique of what he specifically views as Eastern

Nina Cornyetz, “Fascist Aesthetics and the Politics of Representation in Kawabata Yasunari,” *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, ed. Alan Tansman (Durham: Duke UP, 2009) 321-354; John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

²⁶ Steven G. Marks argues that the Russo-Japanese War led to “self-conscious nationalist feelings” in British colonies; see “‘Bravo, Brave Tiger of the East!’ The Russo-Japanese War and the Rise of Nationalism in British Egypt and India,” *The Russo-Japanese War: World War Zero*, v. 1, ed. John W. Steinberg, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpenninck Van Der Oye, David Wolff and Shinji Yokote (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 609-27.

²⁷ John Bull was created by Dr. John Arbuthnot in England in 1712 and was soon appropriated by others in the popular press; he is usually depicted as jolly and middle-aged, although, in images from the period of the Russo-Japanese War that employ animal imagery, he often resembles a bulldog. For more on the figure of John Bull, see Tamara L. Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).

²⁸ Susanna Lim argues that Merezhkovsky’s use of the concept of race is not a wholly racist critique of the East; rather, it stems from and reflects class differences. She suggests that this was common in nineteenth-century European discourse, which combined studies of race and class; see Lim, 62.

²⁹ In general, this appeared to be Merezhkovsky’s stance on Russia’s relationship to the West; as he saw it, “to be a Russian means to be a European in the highest degree, to be universal,” qtd. in Bedford, 93.

³⁰ Dmitrii Merezhkovsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii t. 14*. (Georg Olms Verlag: New York, 1973) 40-59.

materialism. Germane to the discussion of Merezhkovsky's article are Vladimir Solov'ev's two studies of the East from 1890, "Kitai i Evropa" [China and Europe] and "Iaponiia" [Japan].³¹ Merezhkovsky wrote his article several years after the appearance of Solov'ev's, and I would argue that he built upon the ideas that Solov'ev expressed within these articles, particularly those in "Kitai i Evropa." In this article, Solov'ev wrote that the Chinese have no true religion and that "[...] и отрицание жизни, знания и прогресса - вот сущность китаизма [...]"³² [...a denial of life, knowledge and progress are the essence of Sinologism [...]]. While this view is clearly shaped in part by the ideas of Hegel, Belinsky and Hertsen that I discussed earlier in this section, Solov'ev also appeared to introduce a new concept to the ideas about the East that were circulating in Russia. Following a discussion of the stagnation and passivity that result from ancestor worship, Solov'ev referred to the Chinese as materialists who were interested only in their own (and their ancestors') earthly welfare.³³ Merezhkovsky expounded this idea in his own article, where he complained about the nineteenth-century obsession with "*pol'za, pol'za, pol'za*" (benefit, benefit, benefit, 14:40) that he attributed to the Western adoption of Eastern values. As he described them, positivism and materialism were spiritual problems that affected both the East and West:

[...] мы смотрим на древнюю монархию крайнего Востока, как на что-то чуждое нам, варварское, низшее. Но на самом деле мы гораздо ближе к Небесной Империи, чем думаем. Дух европейского узкого и мертвящего материализма есть дух Китая. (4: 40-1)

[...] we look at the ancient monarchy of the extreme East, as at something foreign to us, barbarian, lower. But in actual fact we are much closer to the Celestial Empire than we realize. The spirit of the narrowing and deadening European materialism is the spirit of China.

Merezhkovsky used this article to emphasize the ways in which the West resembled the East—perhaps even unknowingly. Reversing the usual dynamic of us (the West) vs. them (the East), he sought to highlight similarities that exist between them, as well as their spiritual proximity. It is also important to point out that, while Merezhkovsky described the West's proximity to the Celestial Empire, this closeness is not yet a fact; just as in 1906, it is still on the horizon. The threat of turning completely Chinese/Asian/positivist remains only an *approaching* (*griadushchii*) threat.

In fact, in 1895, there were limits to Merezhkovsky's belief that the West was turning into the East. The difference, as he perceived it, stemmed from temperament:

Нам кажется верхом нелепости и безвкусыя заранее определять меру и форму печали, радости, любви, благоговения, т.е. именно того, что есть в существе человеческом самого неопределимого, вольного и таинственного.

Не так смотрят на это китайцы: по их мнению, тот кто умеет себя хорошо держать, и думает, и чувствует хорошо. Не внутренним здесь определяется

³¹ See V. V. Solov'ev, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 6, eds. S.M. Solov'ev and E.L. Radlov (Sankt Peterburg: "Prosveshchenie," 1911) 92-150 & 151-73.

³² Solov'ev, "Kitai i Evropa," 122

³³ *ibid.* 149

внешнее, как у нас, а, наоборот, внешним—внутреннее. Здесь сказывается *глубокий бессознательный* материалистический темперамент народного гения. В сравнении с ним европейский материализм—только безобидная детская игра... Таковы дети Небесной Империи! Их ум не *выносит свободы*, как наш ум не выносит абсурда. (4: 50-1; first set of italics are mine)

It seems to us the height of absurdity and tastelessness to determine beforehand the extent and form of sadness, joy, love, reverence, that is namely that which in a human being is indeterminable, arbitrary and mysterious.

The Chinese do not look at it this way: in their opinion, he who is able to comport himself well, thinks and feels well. The external gives shape not to the internal here, as it does for us, but, on the contrary, the internal gives shape to the external. Here is told the *deep* and *unconscious* materialistic temperament of the national genius. In comparison with it, European materialism is only harmless child's play... These children of the Celestial Empire! Their mind does not *endure freedom*, as our mind does not endure the absurd. (first set of italics are mine)

Let us dwell for a moment on the tension between the internal and external that Merezhkovsky portrayed and the way they help to shape identity. China's greatest flaw appeared to be its “deep and unconscious materialistic temperament,” which echoes both early and late nineteenth-century ideas about the inherent somnolence of the East. Although Merezhkovsky, in “Zheltolitsye pozitivisty,” had not yet introduced the idea of blood into his perception of the East, this statement also seems to hint at the turn his future views would take. Merezhkovsky suggested that Eastern materialism is deeply ingrained in the Chinese identity (temperament), while Western materialism is nothing but “child’s play”—what we can perhaps view as a mask or identity that Westerners would try on, rather than as an inborn trait. Because of this difference, Western materialism remains a reversible trend.

But by 1906, it would seem that something in Merezhkovsky's conception of the issue had started to change, especially in relation to the formation of Eastern and Western identity. If we consider Merezhkovsky's image of Western eyes beginning to slant as the scarlet Aryan blood turns metaphorically “yellow,” we see that the “child’s play” of the past has had dire consequences: it has wormed its way inward and its effects are beginning to manifest themselves externally. The West has gradually gone East—physically, emotionally, spiritually. External conditions—the Russo-Japanese War, spiritual decay, the “yellow peril” and the uprising of Eastern nations—have helped to Sinicize it, infecting Western blood and turning it into something resembling Mongolian ichor.

This dissertation explores several texts that exemplify this gradual transformation. In Chapter One, we begin with a young boy putting on the costume of the geisha in *Melkii bes*—quite literally an example of “child’s play.” For Sologub's Sasha, the wearing of the kimono transforms him into a geisha who laughs and flirts with all the townsmen; considering that external conditions shape his actions and behavior, Sasha, according to Merezhkovsky's definition, resembles a typical European. Chapter Two complicates the seeming simplicity of the masquerade, showing how, during the war, a general sense of confusion permeated the world. This confusion, in turn, gave rise to an internal panic—one that itself generated phantasmagoria; even with this panic, we again encounter an example of the external world shaping the internal. But, in Chapter Four, we will end with the Mongolian blood that runs through all character's

veins in Andrei Bely's *Peterburg*. In a sense, Bely completed the transformation of the West (Russia) into the East that had been hinted at in the texts that preceded his. Thus, if we place Merezhkovsky within this trajectory, we see that he serves as a bridge between Sologub and Bely, falling somewhere between the two writers' visions of Russia's relationship to the East. "Griadushchii kham," after all, functions as a stepping stone to *Peterburg*, for, in Merezhkovsky's world, Westerners are only beginning to betray the tell-tale physical signs of their shifting identities. And, more importantly, in this world nothing is completely determined (*evropeitsy poka eshche nesovershennye belolitsye kitaittsy*, 4:10).

Merezhkovsky's view of Russia in 1906 may have been somewhat bleak, but he did not deny the possibility that Russia could reverse its turn to *khamstvo* [boorishness, an offshoot of *meshchanstvo* that was to be avoided at all costs] and save both itself and Europe. The path to salvation lay in a return to the fold of the Orthodox faith—to a faith with a *real God*—rather than to remain worshippers of positivism, a "*religiia bez Boga*" [religion without God, 4:16]. According to Merezhkovsky, Orthodoxy was the only way to save Russia and to turn the prophecy that Nikolai Danilevskii (1822-1885) voiced in *Rossii i Evropa* (Russia and Europe, 1868) into reality. This prophecy was based on a model of Pan-Slavism, the idea that all Slavic nations would band together and avoid the threat of Western decay; it held that, «Последние [i.e. the eternally belated Russians] становятся первыми.»³⁴ Paraphrasing these words near the end of his article (4:32), Merezhkovsky demonstrated his own faith in Russia's ability to rise triumphantly above the East. Orthodoxy would deliver them from both the destructive influence of positivism and the infection present in the thin yellow blood of the materialist East. In other words, for Merezhkovsky, the metaphorical wound delivered by the war and the revolution could still be healed.

Part III: The Impossibility of Return

At the beginning of "Net vozvrata" [No Return, 1909],³⁵ Zinaida Gippius (1869-1945) appears to play with the notion of hope. The story opens with a sense of anticipation as Petr Mikhailovich and his young daughter, Lelia, await the arrival of Grisha and Nadia—his two eldest children and her beloved siblings—who have been away at war: the former as a soldier and the latter as a nurse. The stage is set for both the triumphant return of two war heroes and the joyful reunion of a family.

However, the initial promise that the story seems to offer—that all will be as it was before—proves itself to be false in a matter of pages. We are informed that, although Grisha and Nadia are being sent home, the war has not even ended yet. Despite this important historical detail, the war remains in the story's background; events like the fall of Tsushima, that most decisive of battles, take place only on its periphery. For Petr, Russia's loss at Tsushima does not even cast a shadow on the homecoming of his children. His parental concern for their well-being trumps everything else:

—Война еще не кончилась, только что получены были страшные вести о

³⁴ Nikolai Danilevskii, *Rossii i Evropa*, ed. S.A. Vaigachev (Moskva: Kniga, 1991) 275.

³⁵ The story was first published in the journal, "Novoe slovo," in 1909, but then was reissued in Gippius' 1912 collection of stories, *Lunnye murav'i* [Lunar Ants].

Цусиме, —Леля долго не хотела верить и всплакнула,—а Петра Михайловича вести эти как-то не задели. Скользнули по душе, полной собственной радостью. Дети его, Гриша и Надя, выдержавшие осаду Порт-Артура и недолгий японский плен, —дети его уцелели, дети возвращаются! Душа, утомленная долгим страхом за них, сжатая привычной болью, отдыхала, расправлялась.³⁶

The war still hadn't ended, the horrible news about Tsushima had only just been received, —Lelia hadn't wanted to believe it and shed a few tears—while the news had hardly touched Petr at all. It slid in his soul, filled with his own joy. His children, Grisha and Nadia, having withstood the siege of Port Arthur and a short period of being a Japanese prisoner—his children were left whole, his children were returning! His soul, exhausted by a long-held fear for them, squeezed with a habitual pain, relaxed and smoothed out.

Petr regards the return of his children as a triumph; regardless of Russia's defeat, his family, on the brink of being reunited, seems to have emerged from the conflict victorious. Because Grisha and Nadia are externally whole, Petr assumes that their internal being reflects that same wholeness. But the story quickly shows the fallacy that exists in such an assumption, highlighting the ways in which appearances can be deceiving.

We become aware of the tension between the body and the soul (the exterior and the interior) almost from the very beginning. The hope of the opening paragraphs is complicated by the story's foreboding epigraph, which states:

Роет тихая лопата,
Роет яму, не спеша.
Нет возврата, нет возврата,
Если ранена душа. (4: 65)

The quiet shovel digs,
Digs a hole, not hurrying,
There is no return, no return,
If the soul is wounded.

The epigraph reminds the reader that an undamaged soul is an essential component of a true homecoming. Without it, death, as represented by the quiet digging of the shovel, bides its time, waiting patiently to announce its presence. Death does not have to hurry, for it already lurks within a victim whose should has been wounded—only without any tell-tale physical signs of injury. Both Merezhkovsky's and Gippius' texts seem to suggest that the true wounds of the Russo-Japanese War fester internally, in Western blood and in the disturbed souls of those who participated in the event. This internal wound trumps bodily injury—a gunshot wound or a missing limb—leaving a mark that can wreak havoc insidiously, for it is neither easily recognized nor easily healed.³⁷

³⁶ Zinaida Gippius, "Net vozvrata," *Sobranie sochinenii, t. 4* (Moskva: Russkaia kniga, 2001) 66. All future citations from this story will be given in text.

³⁷ One Gippius scholar writes that the story's original title was "A Hole in the Head," which demonstrates the text's interest in wounds—both the spiritual and bodily kind. The fact that Gippius went with the more ambiguous "Net

The issue of recognition constitutes one of the central concerns of Gippius' story. As soon as Grisha returns home, his presence unsettles his family:

Леля присматривается к брату, присматривается и Петр Михайлович, и все они оба как будто понять чего-то не могут. Петру Михайловичу, хотя он отлично знает, что это Гриша, вдруг начинает казаться, что это не Гриша. (4: 67)

Lelia looked closely at her brother, as did Petr Mikhailovich, and both of them as if could not understand something. To Petr Mikhailovich, although he knew perfectly well that this was Grisha, it immediately began to seem that this was not Grisha.

Confusion emerges as the dominant emotion in this encounter. It is as if the eyes of the characters cannot be trusted; knowledge, too, becomes suspect in the presence of this apparent stranger. While Petr intuitively recognizes the change that has taken place within his son (we find evidence of this in the impersonal verb of perception “казаться” [to seem, to look] that conveys his impression of Grisha), he remains reluctant to articulate his realization at this stage.

Everything Grisha does not only tests this reluctance, but also alludes to the psychological damage he suffered at the front. Aunt Dunia, the character most willing to admit the truth about Grisha openly, suggestively remarks to Lelia at the story's beginning: “Страшная вещь война, малая. Страшная” [War is a terrible thing, little one. Terrible.]. However terrible war might be, Grisha remains entrenched in the world that he left behind. Wholly unconcerned with what is happening around him, he instead animatedly converses “. . . о Японии, об Индии, о товарищах, потом опять об Индии [. . . about Japan, about India, about his comrades, then again about India, 4: 67]. Given his unrelenting interest in the East and constant recollection of his time there (he stopped in India on his return voyage), we can see Grisha as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder *avant la lettre*. The experience of war has rendered him mentally unstable.

In addition to his troubled mental state, there is yet another possible interpretation of Grisha's preoccupation with the East. Early in the story, we are told that Grisha had once been a captive of the Japanese during the war. Even physically free, he still appears to be a prisoner of war—both psychologically and symbolically. The truth of the story's title rests in his figurative imprisonment: there has been “no return.” Grisha has brought the Orient home with him—what is more, the Orient at war. Through Grisha, the home becomes as fraught and confused as the battlefield. Just as the story indicated, the war is not over—for either Grisha or his family.

Despite this obvious truth, the events in “Net vozvrata” show Grisha's fragile attempts to move beyond the war's destructive influence and fulfill his responsibilities within familial and marital institutions. In fact, the question “whom will Grisha marry?” serves as one of the overarching thematic concerns of his plot line—one that is not easily resolved. The first sign of trouble occurs when Grisha goes off to a picnic with several friends one day and returns home engaged. Not only is his family shocked by this unexpected turn of events, but they also cannot seem to grasp precisely *to whom* he has become engaged. That Grisha himself awkwardly

vozvrata” instead of “A Hole in the Head” reflects the message that the story seems to convey: a spiritual wound can be more damaging than a “hole in the head.” See Vladimir Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul: Zinaida Gippius*, ed. Simon Karlinsky (Berkeley: UC Press, 1980) 85.

introduces the matter is part of the problem; as he explains it, “Ездили мы пикником. Лидия Ивановна, Ракитины, еще кто-то, и Ольга Львовна... Ну, мы смеялись, шутили... Я сделал предложение” [We went on a picnic. Lidia Ivanovna, the Rakitins and somebody else, and Ol'ga L'vovna... Well, we laughed, joked. I proposed, 4: 68]. By all accounts—that is, by the logical organization of his rather concise courtship narrative—it appears that his bride will be Ol'ga L'vovna. But when his father asks him to confirm the identity of his bride, this simple questions leads to even more confusion:

-На Ольге Львовне?—в раздумье сказал Гриша. —Отчего на Ольге Львовна? А не на Марье Петровне?

-На ком же, Господи?—И Петр Михайлович беспомощно оглянулся кругом. —Так, значит на Марье Петровна? (4: 68)

To Ol'ga L'vovna?—said Grisha, deep in thought. Why to Ol'ga L'vovna? And not to Mar'ia Petrovna?

-To whom, God?—And Petr Mikhailovich helplessly glanced around. —So, that means to Mar'ia Petrovna?

The veneer of normalcy that the family strives for begins to collapse in this scene, but they continue to try to mask their fear of Grisha's strange speech patterns and behaviors by repeating only that, “он такой особенный!” [he is so special!, 4: 67, 69, 71]. The word “особенный” (*osobennyi*) is itself quite telling here, for it can mean either “special” or “peculiar” (suggesting difference). From his father to Manichka, the characters who use this word to describe Grisha seem to want it to reflect the former, rather than the latter, definition, even though they all seem aware of its potential to apply to him in both contexts.

After his engagement, Grisha goes with his father and Lelia to pick up Nadia in Odessa, where the truth about Grisha can no longer be ignored or masked by platitudes about his personality. Listening to Grisha recount his engagement to Nadia and several of their friends who have just returned from the front, his father can do nothing but look on in surprise:

-Да, вы рассмотрите хорошенько, чего я в Индии Ольге Петровне накупил! Нарочно выбирал! Она блондинка. Для невесты говорю, блондинки.

Петр Михайлович взрогнул. Какая Ольга Петровна? С Ольгой Львовной он, что ли, Маничку смешал? И какая она блондинка?

Рассматривал коробочки, Петр Михайлович сказал:

-Гриша, ты путаешь: ведь твою невесту зовут Марья Петровна.

[...] Гриша рассеяно обернулся.

-А! Да. Верно. Марья Петровна... Ужасно мила! И притом курсистка петербургская.

Опять! Курсистка? Какая де Маничка курсистка? Но Петр Михайлович уже не возражал.

-Yes, look well at what I bought for Ol'ga Petrovna in India! I bought it on purpose. She's a blonde. It's for my fiancée I say, a blonde.

Petr Mikhailovich gave a start. What Ol'ga Petrovna? Is he mixing up Manichka with Ol'ga L'vovna? What kind of a blonde is she?

Examining the boxes, Petr Mikhailovich said:

-Grisha, you're mixed up: after all, your fiancée is named Mar'ia Petrovna.

[...] Grisha absentmindedly turned around.

-Ah! Yes. That's right. Mar'ia Petrovna....Terribly cute! And in addition to that a student in Petersburg.

Again! A student? What kind of a student is Manichka? But Petr Mikhailovich had already stopped objecting.

We see how Grisha does not simply confuse his fiancée's name; rather, he fabricates an entirely new person out of the two women in whom he had expressed interest: the name Ol'ga Petrovna combines Ol'ga L'vovna's first name with Manichka's patronymic. In addition to his inability to differentiate between the two girls' names, he also cannot separate their personality traits. The story has already confirmed that it is Ol'ga who is the student, not Manichka. But by repeatedly distorting the facts, Grisha shows himself to be divorced from reality.

These surface details aside, this scene also drives home the realization—for Petr Mikhailovich, Lelia *and* the reader—that Grisha, although he looks like Grisha and functions, for the most part, just as the old Grisha did, has been irreparably damaged by the war. No marriage will take place between Grisha and either Manichka, Ol'ga L'vovna or any other woman. For Grisha, there will be no progeny; as the only son, the family line will stop with him. While the story does not address this issue directly, it paints Grisha, Nadia and their circle of friends as a “lost generation” for whom there can be no hope.³⁸ While at war, they crossed a line from which there could be “no return” and have been left mentally unable to fulfill their duty.

Images from the satirical press appear to be in dialogue with the popular idea that informs Gippius' story: that the war had stolen away eligible, young men on the verge of marriage, leaving Russia's young women with few options. In an image from the 24 April 1904 edition of *Shut*, “Zabotlivaia mamasha” [A Concerned Mother; see Figure 3.4], we see a witch-like older woman conversing with her attractive, but as yet unmarried daughter. While the daughter looks provocatively at the viewer, the mother stares off into the distance with a pinched expression as she ruminates about her daughter's fate on the dire Russian marriage mart. She fearfully predicts that the “cursed Japanese” (*prokliatye iapontsy*) will soon have conquered the world.³⁹ Because of their rising power, the mother suggests that the daughter has been a fool for not getting married before the war and that perhaps she will get married after all—only to a Japanese! She ends her diatribe with these words, suggesting that this outcome is the most likely since the “Japanese are, after all, desperate”⁴⁰ (*oni, ved', otchaiannye*). On both fronts—national and domestic—the mother may have genuine cause for concern. The joke works on several levels, playing upon popular fears. The most obvious thrust of the joke is that the war has deprived young women of husbands, but the joke also bitterly insinuates that the enemy is slowly conquering Russia—first its land, then its women, and finally, with the mixing of the blood, the purity of the Russian identity—and advancing its way into the body social of the nation.

Returning now to “Net vozvrata,” we can see that, while Gippius' story engages with popular fears from the period, it also offers a verbal portrait of the “real consequences” of the war, or at least what she herself had witnessed during her travels with her husband, Dmitry

³⁸ In *Erotic Utopia*, Olga Matich explores the role that procreation plays in the lives and works of Vladimir Solov'ev, Lev Tolstoi, Zinaida Gippius, Alexandr Blok and others.

³⁹ Khokhol, “Zabotlivaia mamasha,” *Shut* No. 17 (24 April 1904) 13.

⁴⁰ *ibid.* 32

Merezhkovsky, in 1905. In *Dmitry Merezhkovsky* (1951), Gippius recalled their surprise encounter with wounded soldiers returning from the Far East when they stopped in Odessa on their way back from Constantinople:

В Одессе нас ждала неожиданная встреча. Туда как раз пришел пароход с ранеными из Японии. Из разных мест, а в нашей гостинице, до отправки в госпиталя на север, поместили нескольких офицеров порт-артурских. Были и тяжелые, и всякие недолеченные. С одним, уже безногим, я подружилась и раз даже, когда его сестра милосердия куда-то ушла, а у него начались боли, я вспрыскивала ему морфий. Его, по его словам, «резали, да недорезали».

Но чего мы в их комнатах не рассмотрели! И такое осталось впечатление, что все эти «вернувшиеся» из огни войны—люди уже (или еще) ненормальные.

Д.С. говорил, что это-то и нормально, что они ненормальные. Что иначе и быть не может. Он ненавидел всякую войну всем своим существом...Видел в войнах угрозу гибели человечества.⁴¹

An unexpected meeting was waiting for us in Odessa. A ship with the wounded from Japan suddenly arrived there. They had placed several officers from Port Arthur in our hotel from different locations until they could be sent to a hospital in the north. They were grave and all were undertreated. With one, already without his legs, I became friendly, and one time I even gave him a shot of morphine when his nurse had gone off somewhere and his pains had started. In his own words, he had been “cut, but not all the way.”

What didn't we see in their rooms! And there remained such an impression that, all of these who had returned from the fire of the war—they were people who were already (or were still) not normal.

D.S. [Merezhkovsky] said, that it was normal that they were not normal. That it could not be otherwise. He hated any war with all of his being. He saw in wars the threat of the downfall of humanity.

Based on her personal observations, Gippius, with the help of Merezhkovsky, concluded that war brings irreparable damage to the individual and to the nation. The officers that she met are the “living dead,” for they exist in a state of limbo. As the crippled officer himself remarked to Gippius, “cut, but not all the way.” From this statement, we see that, while the end has not yet truly arrived, it is present all the same—a physical and psychological mark on the body. These are wounds that do not heal. Given the time lapse between her 1905 experience and when she published her memoirs about Merezhkovsky, this unexpected encounter may have left lasting traces. In a way, this memory represented her own war wound, one that she could not escape even years later. For Gippius as well as for the characters, the war seemed to have no end; it had helped to shape her understanding of the Russian modern age. As one contemporary critic described *Lunnye murav'i* [Lunar Ants], the cycle in which “Net vozvrata” appears: “Рассказы З. Гиппиус последнего периода, именно шестая книга, проникнуты какой-то очень *острой современностью*; почти все рассказы затрагивают те или иные явления

⁴¹ Zinaida Gippius, *Dmitri Merezhkovskii* (Parizh: YMCA-Press, 1951) 136.

послереволюционных настроений”⁴² [The stories of Z. Gippius from the last period, namely the sixth book, are permeated with such a *sharp feeling of modernity*; almost all of the stories touch upon these or other occurrences of the post-revolutionary moods] (my italics).

The post-revolutionary and, I would add, *post-war* mood placed under Gippius’ storytelling microscope in “Net vozvrata” characterizes psychological rupture. Gippius takes great pains to establish the various ways in which all of those returning—Grisha, Nadia, their friends—exhibit strange or unnatural behavior. The story demonstrates how their connection to society has been broken; the ability to converse normally escapes them. In the same scene in which Grisha cannot keep track of his fiancée’s name, we see Nadia talk about a dead monkey (a Chinese woman whose murder she witnessed), while the others make various random comments about their lives during the war (4: 75-6). Parlor talk, the pleasantries upon which social life is based, is transformed into a mindless cacophony. Nobody responds to or seems to understand anybody else; each character seems to exist in his or her own personal vacuum. Also, it is as if Petr and Lelia are not even there in the room with them. In a way, they are not, for they have no place in the conversation; they are outsiders from “another world.” As the text explains the condition of those who have returned:

Собственно о войне—совсем не говорили. Война была тем, что есть и без чего ничего нет. Война—просто воздух, которым дышишь. А кусочек земли, где они прожили все вместе,—в войне, как в воздухе,—отдельный мир, особая планета, своя. (4: 75)

As a matter of fact, about the war, they did not speak at all. The war was that which is and without which there is nothing. War is simply the air that you breathe. But that piece of the earth, where they had all been together—at war, as in the air—was a separate world, a different planet, their own.

The war had created a chasm between those who had been at war and those who had not. Even when placed back in their former habitat and routine, those who had participated in the war continue to exist in its specific time and space (the chronotope of the war). Without it, they cannot live; however strange it may seem, the very thing that wounded them also has come to serve as their main form of sustenance—as well as their *raison d’être*. Beyond this event, there is nothing. For them, the war acts as a barrier that prevents communication, understanding and, at its very heart, recognition.

In its exemplification of this trauma, “Net vozvrata” gives voice to the psychological repercussions of war through the theme of the wounded soul. The story shows that this invisible wound works insidiously, denying those who suffer from it the possibility of reintegrating into society. They are damaged, a lost generation that carries death within itself, or, as the narrator refers to them, *prizraki* [ghosts, apparitions, 4: 75]. Gippius’ story laments the metaphorical death of this generation of war participants, as well as the chasm that the Russo-Japanese War has opened in Russia. A tragic fate has befallen this land, one from which there is no easy recovery. Gippius ended her story concisely: “Не вернулись” [They did not return, 4: 80]. This stark phrase conveys that the wound from the past remains open.

⁴² A. Chebotarevskaja, “Z.N. Gippius. ‘Lunnye murav’i,’” *Z.N. Gippius: Pro et Contra*, ed. D.K. Burlak (Sankt-Peterburg: RkhGA, 2008) 432.

Part IV: The Inability to Heal

In this chapter, I have explored the period following the Russo-Japanese War and the Russian revolution, from 1906 to 1909, beginning with Blok's conception of Russia's temporal and spatial emptiness and his apocalyptic forebodings about the end of time, moving to Merezhkovsky's still impending anxiety about the threat from the East, and ending with Gippius' portrait of trauma: the war from which there is no return. All three artistic texts depict the consequences of the Russo-Japanese War through temporal and spatial categories. For Blok and Gippius, the end of time is upon them; the war has created a temporal wound from which they cannot recover. The apocalypse also lurks on the horizon (it is *coming*) in Merezhkovsky's text, but, unlike his contemporaries, he allowed that it could still be avoided by a return to religion. In terms of space, however, we again find common ground, for each text exhibits a preoccupation with the damaged bodies of modernity—the hysterical girl in Blok's essay, the infected Western/Aryan body of "Griadushchii kham," Grisha's wounded soul and the subsequent loss of his procreative potential in "Net vozvrata." By placing these texts within their larger historical context and demonstrating their engagement with fears expressed in popular cultural mythology, I show how they artistically represent Russia's cultural anxiety and fragile psychology after it lost the war against Japan.

This emotional unsteadiness is itself emblematic of the period, and I would argue that in it lies the key to understanding the art of these years. The war and the revolution that took place in its wake not only set a series of political and social changes in motion, but also constituted a rupture in the Russian artistic imagination. To attempt to make sense of this rupture, writers repeatedly explored both the historical event that had caused it and the trauma inflicted by its outcome. The victory of the Japanese in the Russo-Japanese War thus came to signify many things, but especially the penetration of the enemy into the individual and social body. We see this in Merezhkovsky's vision of yellowing blood and accompanying spiritual stagnation, and in the wound that festers within Gippius' characters. These artistic texts give voice to the emotional trauma plaguing Russia—one that bled steadily from the Revolution of 1905 to the decade beyond.

Chapter 4: The Return of *Japonisme* in Russian Symbolism

As the immediate wound of the war faded into the past, Russian writers again began to revisit Japanese themes in their novels, poems and theoretical works. The appeal of Japan remained strong in the Russian cultural imagination. In part, this appeal seemed to stem from its very inscription into modernist aesthetics. Andrei Bely, in “Pesnia zhizni” [The Song of Life, 1908], described the way that modernists had used Japanese art to shape their own artistic principles:

[...] Единое, звучащее, как ритм во времени, как тотальность в пространстве, как мелодия в причинности, — вот настроение первых символистов конца 19ого столетие: запела краска, полетела линия, рассеялись мысли: стали мыслить витражами 18 века и орнаментом; научная методология—стала символикой (наука не потеряла от этого; наоборот: выигала), религиозные догматы превратились в творческие лейт-мотивы, история культуры и история искусств обогатились ценными трудами, но интерес к историческим трудам возрос пропорционально утрате чувства исторической дали; едва для Гонкура запела японская живопись, как Эдуард Мане воскресил ее в своем творчестве: и появились затем труды Гонза, Ревона, Томкинсона и др., посвященные японцам, а Обри Бердслей в японцах воссоздал наш век, чтобы потом сблизить его с Ватто.¹

[...] A wholeness, sounding like a rhythm in time, like a totality in space, like a melody in causality,—this is the mood of the first symbolists at the end of the 19th century: color was singing, a line was flying, ideas were being dispersed: we began to think like the stained-glass windows and ornaments of the 18th century; scientific methodology—became a symbol (science did not suffer a loss from this; on the contrary: it won), religious dogmas were transformed into artistic leitmotifs, the history of culture and the history of the arts were enriched by valuable works, while the interest in historical works increased proportionally as it lost feelings of historical distance; the Japanese painting had barely started singing for Goncourt, and already Edward Manet resurrected it in his art: and then appeared the works of Gonza, Revon, Tomkinson and others, dedicated to the Japanese, but then Aubrey Beardsley in the Japanese recreated our age, in order to connect it with Watteau.

In this rather long sentence that suggests synesthesia (note that both painting and color sing), Bely’s ideas move from the mood of the early symbolists to the appearance of Japanese painting in nineteenth-century France. As he presented it, Japanese painting transcends history (as does Bely’s historical summary), acting as a gateway to the past; for modernists, it provided a window into the eighteenth century—to the colorful and theatrical world of the French Rococo painter, Antoine Watteau (1684-1721). Bely credited the British illustrator Beardsley (1872-1898), who

¹ Andrei Bely, “Pesni zhizni,” *Arabeski: kniga statei* (Moskva: “Musaget,” 1911) 51.

was greatly influenced by Japanese painting,² with using the Japanese to make this connection between the twentieth century and the eighteenth. In Bely's words, Beardsley had "recreated [their] age in the Japanese."

Although this statement's primary concern is turn-of-the-century art, I would suggest that we can also consider its implications within the broader context of the early twentieth century. Writing these words in 1908, Bely was providing a retrospective account of the preceding years. In light of the Russo-Japanese War and Russian attitudes towards Japan both before and after this event, we can say that, for the Russians, the Japanese helped to shape not only the aesthetic principles of the modernist period, but also its political climate and historical mood. From the early 1890s onward, "their age"—the age of Bely and his contemporaries—truly was "(re)created in the Japanese." What this statement meant, however, changed with the times. At first, "their age" looked like one that had happily fallen victim to the mass appeal of the Japanese aesthetic; then, during the war, "their age" descended into phantasmagoria as the yellow peril reached its peak; after the war, "their age" was affected by their traumatic loss to the Japanese, which continued to reverberate in the popular imagination. The Japanese, or, at the very least, the Russian conception of them, was constantly shifting, entrapped in an ongoing cycle of return.

The idea of Japan's return in Russian literature serves as the primary concern of this chapter. My analysis will focus on how, as the war continued to fade into the past, Russian writers again began to engage with their (and their age's) fascination with Japanese art. Starting with Andrei Bely's *Peterburg* (1913-4, 1916, 1922³), I will investigate how Bely not only adopted Japanese artistic principles into his modernist novel, but also used it to play with different conceptions of the East. Then, moving away from Bely, I will turn to two largely apolitical and seemingly ahistorical works—Konstantin Bal'mont's poetry from his travels in Japan (1916) and Mikhail Kuzmin's poem, "Fuzii v bliudochke" (1917)—to explore how, as the 1910s progressed, the war was largely forgotten as literature began to favor a return to earlier forms of *japonisme*.

Part I: *Peterburg* and a Loss of Perspective: "Она была настоящей японочкой"

And in this Russian setting it is somehow strange
to see gracious, elegantly dressed Japanese women
with their elaborate hairstyles and silk bows at their backs,
just as if they had walked in from those lively drawings we
had seen earlier in Japanese albums...Is this a dream or reality?
-Andrei Krasnov⁴

Andrei Bely's *Peterburg* [Petersburg], the second novel in his planned *Vostok ili Zapad* [East or West] trilogy,⁵ offers a historical perspective on the events of 1905, a year that marked a

² See Linda Gertner Zatlín, *Beardsley, Japonisme and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).

³ Although Bely's novel appeared in three different forms within nine years, the edition I will be quoting from is the 1916 version as published by "Nauka."

⁴ Andrei Krasnov, "Around the Islands of the Far East," *Russian Views of Japan, 1792-1913: An Anthology of Travel Writing*, ed. and trans. David N. Wells (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004) 174.

⁵ *The Silver Dove* is the first novel in the planned, but incomplete, trilogy.

time of confusion and chaos in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War and in the lead-up to the Russian Revolution.⁶ The world in which Russians now found themselves—a world in which, for the first time in history, a powerful Imperial and Western power was defeated by an Eastern nation⁷—was destabilized, causing them to question their very identity. The novel plays with this uncertainty, continually asking readers to decide where Russia belongs: in the West, in the East or perhaps somewhere in between? As soon as readers believe that they have found a stable answer to this question, however, the novel again shifts. Because of this instability, the novel resembles the phantasmagoric period in which it is set; from start to finish, chaos dominates *Peterburg*.

At the novel's beginning, we see how disorder permeates the Russian capital. Nothing, not even a nonsensical sound carried by the wind, can be taken at face value at this specific historical moment:

Таковы были дни. А ночи—выходил ли ты по ночам, забирался ли в глухие, подгородные пустыри, чтобы слышать неотвязную, злую ноту на «у»? Уууу-уууу-ууу: так звучало в пространстве; звук—был ли то звук? Если то и был звук, он был несомненно звук иного какого мира [...] «уууу-уууу-ууу» [...].⁸ (77)

Such were the days. Have you ever slipped off at night into the vacant plots of the city outskirts to hear the same importunate note «oo?» Oooo-oooo-ooo: such was the sound in that space. But was it a sound? It was the sound of some other world [...] «oooo-oooo-ooo» [...].⁹ (52)

This omnipresent “уууу-уууу-ууу,” which perhaps has its origins in Solov’ev’s “Vrag s vostoka” [The Enemy from the East, 1892] with its representation of the enemy as none other than the Eastern winds,¹⁰ runs throughout the novel. As a disciple of Solov’ev’s Pan-Mongolism, Bely used this sound to reflect the chaos that is tearing Petersburg apart, as well as to contribute to the impression of Russia having been overtaken by another world, “some other world” [*inoi kakoi mir*].

The impression of the East’s invasion via the wind is further compounded in a dialogue between the factory worker Styopka and a visiting gentleman:

⁶ For a full discussion of the context surrounding the novel, see Robert Maguire and John Malmstad, “The Translators’ Introduction,” *Peterburg*, ed. and trans. Robert Maguire and John Malmstad (Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1978) viii-xxii.

⁷ Rosamund Bartlett, “Japonisme and Japanophobia: The Russo Japanese War in Russian Cultural Consciousness,” *The Russian Review* 67 (January 2008) 30.

⁸ Andrei Belyi, *Peterburg*, ed. L. K. Dolgoplov (Sankt-Peterburg: “Nauka,” 2004).

⁹ *Peterburg*, ed. and trans. Robert Maguire and John Malmstad (Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1978) 52. All translations will come from this edition and will be marked in text by parenthetical citation.

¹⁰ Solov’ev’s description of the wind reads as follows: “Но прежде, чем такие опасения могут оправдаться, собственно нам, т.е. не всей Европе, а одной России, приходится еще встречать иного, особого восточного врага, более страшного, чем прежние монгольские разорители, и чем будущие индийские и тибетские просветители. На нас надвигается средняя Азия стихиною силою своей пустыни, дышит на нас изсушающими восточными ветрами” [But before such concerns may be justified, personally to us, that is not to all of Europe, but only to Russia, we have yet to meet a different, especially Eastern enemy more fearsome than the old Mongolian destroyers, and the future Indian and Tibetan enlighteners. Central Asia is coming to us with the elemental strength of its own desert, to breathe on us with the exhausting Eastern winds], *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 5 (Sankt-Peterburg: “Prosveshchenie,” 1911-3) 452.

« Барин вы хворый; и потому от табаку да от водки скоро вам—капут: сам, грешным делом, пивал: а таперича дал зарок. От табаку да от водки все и пошло; знаю то, и кто спаивает: японец!» [...]

«А про японца откуда ты знаешь?»

«А про японца так водится: про японца все знают... Еще вот изволите помнить, ураган-то, что над Москвою прошел, тоже сказывали—как мол, что мол, души мол, убиенных; с того, значит, света, прошлась над Москвою, без покаяния, значит, и умерли. И еще это значит: быть в Москве бунту.»

«А с Петербургом что будет?»

«Да что: кумирно какую-то строят китайцы!» (104-05)

“You're a sick man, sir. It won't be long till tobacco and vodka finish you off. I used to be a drinker, sinner that I am, but now I've taken the pledge. Everything started with tobacco and vodka. And I know who's behind it: the Japs!” [...]

“And how do you know about the Japs?”

“That's how it is with the Japs, everybody knows the way the Japs are. Don't you remember the cyclone that passed over Moscow. They said this and that about it. It was the souls of the slain, they said. Must be from beyond. They must have died unrepentant. Must mean there's gonna be a revolt.”

“And what will happen to Petersburg?”

“The Chinese are putting up some heathen temple or other.” (68)

This passage reflects the popular beliefs that Russian peasantry had about the Japanese enemy. In a popular consciousness colored by fears of the yellow peril, the Japanese became responsible for all that was bad, from tobacco and vodka to random acts of nature. The cyclone hit Moscow in June 1904—in the midst of the Russo-Japanese War—and, as Styopka demonstrates, the Japanese were clearly behind it. Various ideas about the East are floating in the air, much of which resembles hearsay. We see the gossipy tone of Styopka's speech as it builds, echoing several theories that he has heard about the cyclone that seemingly blew in from the East. This cyclone gradually acquires more superstitious meaning and becomes both the return of the Russian dead and a sign of the coming revolution. The cyclone thus functions as a symbol not only of the chaotic East that carried within itself the seeds of Russia's destruction, but also of the turmoil that existed at Russia's core. This turmoil stems from the penetration of the East into the West—of the sound “oooo” that taints the very air that Russians breathe. One Russian scholar observes that, in Bely's novel, the boundaries between the East and Russia have simply broken down: “Восток проник в самое сердце России.”¹¹

While there are many characters that are emblematic of the blurring taking place between Russian and Eastern identity (though not always specifically Japan), no one makes the penetration of the “East as Japan” into the Russian heart more apparent than Sofia Petrovna Likhutina. In her apartment the Japanese aesthetic reigns supreme and she surrounds herself with a variety of beautiful, foreign objects:

¹¹ L.K. Dolgoplov, “Tvorcheskaia istoriia i istoriko-literaturnoe znachenie romana A. Belogo “Peterburg,” *Peterburg*, ed. L. K. Dolgoplov (Sankt-Peterburg: “Nauka,” 2004) 601.

Софья Петровна Лихутина проживала в маленькой квартирке, выходявшей на Мойку; там со стены отовсюду упали каскады самых ярких, неугомонных цветов: ярко-огненных—там и здесь—поднебесных. На стенах японские веера, кружева, подвесочки, банты, а на лампах: атласные абажуры разведали атласные и бумажные крылья, будто бабочки тропических стран [...]

Софья Петровна Лихутина на стенах поразвесила японские пейзажи, изображавшие вид горы Фузи-Ямы, --всё до единого; в развешанных пейзажиках не было перспективы; но и в комнатках, туго набитых креслами, софами, пуфами, веерами и живыми японскими хризантемами, тоже не было перспективы: перспективой являлся то атласный альков, из-за которого выпорхнет Софья Петровна, или с двери слетающий, шепчущий что-то тростник, из которого выпорхнет все она же, а то Фузи-Яма—пестрый фон её роскошных волос; надо сказать: когда Софья Петровна Лихутина в своём розовым кимоно по утрам пролетала и из-за двери к алькову, то она была настоящей японочкой. Перспективы же не было. (60)

She resided in a small apartment on the Moika. From the walls tumbled cascades of the brightest, most irrepressible colors: there, very fiery; and here, sky blue. On the walls were Japanese fans, lace, tiny pendants, and bows, and on the lamps from satin shades fluttered wings of cotton fabric like tropical butterflies [...]

Sofia Petrovna Likhutina had hung small Japanese landscapes, all of them, without exception, depicting a view of Mt. Fujiyama. The landscapes had no perspective. And the rooms, jam-packed with divans, armchairs, sofas, fans and live Japanese chrysanthemums, had no perspective either. Perspective was provided by a satiny alcove, from which Sofia Petrovna would emerge in a flutter, and by a rustling weed portiere hanging in the doorway, from which Sofia Petrovna would emerge in a flutter, with Fujiyama as the background for her marvelous hair. It must be said that when of a morning Sofia Petrovna Likhutina, wearing a pink kimono, flew from behind the door to the alcove, she was the perfect image of a real Japanese girl. Still, there was no perspective. (39)

Due to the crowding of various fans, landscapes and pendants into this “квартирка,” the image we perceive becomes almost grotesque—a violation of the Japanese aesthetic itself. The very goal of Japanese art is to celebrate minimalism, or, as one contemporary of Bely's pithily defined its underlying aesthetic principle in 1906, “Ослепляющая задорная жизнь: правда великого в малом”¹² [A blinding playful life: the truth of the great in the small]. What Sofia Petrovna has achieved, however, appears to be the direct opposite of this. In its overcrowding, her apartment overwhelms the eye and crosses over into vulgarity—a fact that escapes neither the narrator's attention nor his ironic tone. Numerous critics, when writing about this passage, pick up on this feature of the text, remarking on its satirical treatment and parody of the obsession that Russians had with *japonisme* at this time.¹³ And in another recent study, one scholar reads this scene against Impressionist painting, looking for the sources of Sofia Petrovna's taste and finding them in such famous works of art as Claude Monets «La Japonaise, Madame Monet en costume japonais» (1876) or James McNeill Whistler's «Rose and Silver: La princesse du pays de

¹² N. Rerikh, “Na iaponskoi vystavke,” *Zolotoe runo*, Jan. 1906: 111.

¹³ See Bartlett 29, Heldt 177, et. al.

porcelaine (1863-4).¹⁴ But going beyond satire, parody and artistic prototypes, I would argue that there is also something more at stake here. In this passage, we observe that Sofia Petrovna does not merely *look* like a Japanese girl, she “была настоящей японочкой” [*was a real Japanese girl, my italics*].

This description stems, in part, from the artwork decorating Sofia Petrovna’s walls. There are several small Japanese landscapes depicting Mt. Fuji that hang in her apartment. (See Figures 4.1 and 4.2). These paintings, by the nineteenth-century Japanese artist Hokusai (1760-1849), or, as Sofia Petrovna constantly refers to him, Хадусай,¹⁵ only contribute to the distortion of her surroundings and identity. If we examine these paintings carefully, the eye does not know where to focus first, for, although these landscapes are supposed to represent *Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji* (1823-9), the famous mountain is either dwarfed by a wave (as in Figure 4.1) or cast off to the side in favor of an abstract rendering of the wind (Figure 4.2). Should the viewer focus on the mountain itself or on the landscape that surrounds it? While there is no definitive answer to this question, one thing that emerges as certain is that the lack of perspective (i.e. Western/linear perspective) in these Hokusai paintings is indicative of the same in Sofia Petrovna’s existence. To elaborate, in both, the natural focal point (i.e. the main object being described) is overshadowed by surrounding objects of secondary importance. This use of asymmetry distorts our perception of the scene and creates a scenario in which paintings of Mt. Fuji are no longer mere representations of Mt. Fuji, and Russian women who decorate their homes in the Japanese style are no longer simply Russian women. The surrounding landscape and focal point merge into one. Thus, being framed by the background of Fujiyama and wearing her pink kimono, Sofia Petrovna seems to be nothing more than a product of her environment.¹⁶

Yet the presence of the statement, “она была настоящей японочкой,” at the end of this descriptive passage also undercuts this assumption, for there is more occurring in this scene than a mere instance of artistically constructed cultural confusion. In using the copula “была” [*was*] to link Sofia Petrovna with a “настоящая японочка” [*real Japanese girl*], the narrator invites us to view her “Japaneseness” as an internal, as well as an external, phenomenon. She serves as an ironic example of *zhiznetvorchestvo* [*life creation*]¹⁷—the fusion of art and life that preoccupied the Russian Symbolists’ and served as one of the guiding aesthetic principles of Russian Modernism.¹⁷ The boundaries between the paintings on the wall and her being have collapsed, blurring into one. It is as if, surrounded by these foreign objects and the victim of a loss of perspective, Sofia Petrovna has somehow imbibed Japanese art and thereby the Japanese identity.

If we leave the question of identity behind for the moment, we could ask, in fact, if a similar lack of perspective occurs in *Peterburg* as a whole. Is the narrator’s perspective as torn between the East and West as Sofia Petrovna’s, who demonstrates Eastern proclivities in her

¹⁴ Susanna Lim, *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685-1922: to the Ends of the Orient* (New York: Routledge, 2013) 162.

¹⁵ In the commentary to the novel, it is not stated explicitly which landscapes Bely had in mind when describing Sofia Petrovna’s apartment, but given the fame of these two works by Hokusai, I offer them simply as an example of what *could* have been hanging on her walls. Regarding Bely’s general feelings on Japanese art, Dolgoplov remarks that he was deeply interested in it, 654.

¹⁶ If this moment in Bely’s novel echoes Sasha’s transformation into the geisha in *Melkii bes*, then the Peredonovian equivalent of this moment is the scene when Dudkin, who also seems to be a victim of his surroundings, imagines that a Mongol steps out of the yellow wallpaper in his room. Both characters are created by their environment.

¹⁷ See *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*, eds. Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994).

little apartment on the Moika? Has he, in his story-telling, combined the whimsical asymmetry of the East with the orderly linear perspective of the West? Does the combination of these competing perspectives help to create, both thematically and formally, the chaos and tension between the East and West that we encounter on almost every page of the novel?

It may be that even before we enter Sofia Petrovna's little apartment on the Moika, the novel lacks any definitive perspective; not only is the plot fragmented and told episodically, but its focal point is never entirely clear. Given the novel's reigning artistic principle, *mozgovaia igra* [cerebral play], this lack of clarity is not at all surprising. The text wants to be at once confusing, playful and mysterious; as the narrator remarks at the end of Chapter One:

Автор, развесив картины иллюзий, должен бы был поскорей их убрать, обрывая нить повествования хотя бы этой фразой [...] Мозговая игра—только маска; под этою маскою совершается вторжение в мозг неизвестных нам сил [...] (56)

The author, having hung pictures of illusions all over, really should take them down as quickly as possible, breaking the thread of the narrative, if only with this very sentence.

Cerebral play is only a mask. Under way beneath this mask is the invasion of the brain by forces unknown to us. (35)

This description of *mozgovaia igra* invites us to view the novel as a series of pictures that have been hung all over the place (just like the numerous landscapes on Sofia Petrovna's walls). The art of *Peterburg* privileges chaos—what we might call *organized* chaos, but chaos nonetheless.

In describing the novel's construction, the visual ultimately emerges as even more important than overwhelming chaos. The reference to the visual suggests more than mere coincidence, as does a statement that Bely would later make about his novel: “мой «Петербург»--только пункт грандиозной картины...”¹⁸ [My *Peterburg* is only one part of a grandiose painting]. Given this metaphor, we can see that Bely viewed the novel as being in dialogue with the visual arts. The idea that art played a role in the creation of *Peterburg* has been explored in recent scholarship on the novel; one study in particular focuses on how *Peterburg* both reflects and incorporates avant-garde aesthetics, particularly those of Kandinsky.¹⁹ Building upon this study I would like to propose another visual feature of the novel that has not been considered in Bely/*Peterburg* studies, and read the novel as experimenting with Japanese aesthetics.

One of the titles that Bely first considered for the novel evokes both Japan and *japonisme*. Before Viacheslav Ivanov suggested naming the novel *Peterburg*, Bely planned on calling it *Lakirovannaia kareta* [The Lacquered Carriage].²⁰ This potential title reflects a preoccupation with Japanese art, for lacquer was one of the many artistic objects that Russians coveted during the peak of their *japonisme*.²¹ The Western fascination with Japanese lacquer has its roots in the

¹⁸ Andrei Bely, “Iz ‘dnevnik pisatel’ A. Belogo,” *Peterburg*, ed. L.K. Dolgoplov (Sankt Peterburg: “Nauka,” 2004) 503.

¹⁹ Olga Matich, “Bely, Kandinsky, and Avant-Garde Aesthetics,” *Petersburg Petersburg: Novel and City, 1900-1921* ed. O. Matich (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 2010) 83-120.

²⁰ L.K. Dolgoplov, *Andrei Bely i ego roman “Peterburg”* (Leningrad: “Sov. Pisatel’,” 1988) 202.

²¹ Lim, 133

eighteenth century, when *chinoiserie* was at its peak (because of their resemblance, the difference between Japanese and Chinese artistic objects has sometimes proven to be unclear). Interestingly, Vissarion Belinsky commented on the popular association of Japan with lacquer when, in 1841, he wrote, “There are only two tranquil states in the world—China and Japan; but the best the former produces is tea, and the latter, I believe lacquer: nothing else can be said of them.”²² While Bely most likely did not know of Belinsky’s quote, his initial choice of the title seems to indicate deeply rooted associations and an enduring concern with Japanese art. We can find this concern primarily in the scene in Sofia Petrovna’s apartment. By invoking Hokusai both directly and indirectly, the novel demonstrates an acute awareness of and deep fascination with one of Japan’s well-known masters and his art.

A striking feature of Hokusai’s whimsical pictures is his unrelenting focus on one image—Mt. Fuji—and the multiple angles from which he approached it. In a well-known article on Japanese prints from 1915, the art critic Nikolai Punin (1888-1953) interpreted Hokusai’s landscapes in this way, focusing on Fuji’s symbolic status within them:

Хокусаи, действительно, создал в своих «Ста видах» небывалый до него по богатству и разнообразию цикл пейзажей, из которых ни один ни походит на другой, хотя все они изображают одну и ту же гору—священную Фуджи. Вот ее происхождение, ее мифология, ее история; первые века ее существования, извержение, затем ее виды при всяких условиях погоды и со всех сторон; Фуджи-Яма с моря, с горы, с полей, из ущелья, с моста, в растворенную ширму окна; Фуджи-Яма весною, летом, осенью зимой, утром, в полдень при луне, в тумане, в облаках, под дождем, в пелене снега, сквозь хлопья, сквозь ветви ив, пиний, вишен, сквозь тростник; Фуджи-Яма в безлюдье, с одикими путешественниками, с поэтом, с художником, с толпами крестьян, с волками или птицами; Фуджи-Яма в кольце бушующих волн [...] написанная на картине; Фуджи-Яма, сияющая в серебряной короне, под бледно пурпуровыми небесами; Фуджи-Яма, как символ, возносящийся над страной, подобный серебряной чаше, полной голубого и хрупкого счастья.²³

Hokusai, indeed, created in his "Hundred Views," a cycle of landscapes unprecedented in richness and in variety, of which none is like any other, even though they represent the same sacred mountain, Fuji. Here are its origins, its mythology, its history, the first century of its existence, the eruption, then during all kinds of weather conditions and from all sides; Fuji-Yama from the sea, the mountain, from the fields of the gorge from the bridge, in an open screen of a window, Fuji-Yama in the spring, summer, autumn winter, morning, noon, in the moonlight, fog, clouds, rain, in a shroud of snow, through the flakes through the branches of willows, pine, cherries, through the reed; Fuji-Yama in solitude, with lone travelers, the poet, the artist, with crowds of peasants, with wolves or birds; Fuji-Yama in a ring of raging waves [...] drawn in a picture, Fuji-Yama, shining in a silver crown, under pale purple skies; Fuji-Yama, as a symbol of the country ascends like a silver bowl full of blue and fragile happiness. (29)

²² V. Belinskii, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii v 13i tomakh*, t. 5 (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk, 1954) 146.

²³ Nikolai Punin, “Iaponskaia graviura,” *Apollon* 6-7 (August & September 1916) 29.

In his description of Hokusai's *oeuvre*, Punin emphasized the sheer number of prints devoted to the mountain. Hokusai, as interpreted by Punin, seemed obsessed by the visual possibilities that Fuji suggested to his artist's eye, by a need to explore it from every angle, in every existing setting, with different types of people surrounding it. The mountain itself is never foregrounded, lurking instead in the background, or off to the side; while it serves as the *thematic* focal point of each landscape, *formally* it acts only as a secondary image. As I mentioned earlier, Fuji's placement in Hokusai's prints reflects the Japanese preference for asymmetry. In Japanese aesthetics, an asymmetrical perspective indicates life, movement and a potential for growth, whereas the perfect harmony of symmetrical representation suggests an already deadened scene or object.²⁴ Considering Hokusai's asymmetrical treatment of Fuji in light of this definition, we can see that, for Hokusai, Fuji was very much alive and subject to change; it was "the symbol of [his] country" and had its own unique and continuously evolving mythology and history. Hokusai explored both of these in great detail, devoting two books to this iconic symbol—*Thirty Six Views of Mount Fuji* and *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji* (1834).

Given Bely's own preoccupation with Petersburg and his fragmented, "asymmetrical" treatment of the city in his novel, I would suggest that we can read *Peterburg* as a Russian version of Hokusai's project. Like the Japanese master, Bely creates what we could call *Eight* (as compared to Hokusai's *Thirty Six* or *One Hundred*) *Views of Petersburg* (the novel contains eight chapters, although, if we were to break the chapters down by subsections, we could very well end up with close to one hundred). In the novel, he examines the city relentlessly, playing with its history and mythology, from the Bronze Horseman to the more recent events of the Russo-Japanese War. The city is very much alive—as alive as Hokusai's Fuji—and, in addition to enlivening its many streets and monuments, Bely gives voice to its revolutionaries, politicians, factory workers and spies. There is little in the city that remains untouched. For Bely, Petersburg serves as the ultimate symbol, as the character that is always there; sometimes, it is shielded from our view, while, at others, it is at the forefront of the scene. Regardless of its placement, the city acts as a symbol of Russia's tenuous position between the East and West, as well as between reality and fantasy. Both formally and thematically, Bely's novel flirts with the East; premodern Japanese artistic principles appear to be inscribed into both its poetics (particularly in the scenes featuring Sof'ia Petrovna) and treatment of Petersburg itself, just as the theme of the East surfaces in descriptions of its characters and in their uncertainty of where they belong.

This uncertainty reveals itself in the novel's exploration of identity. *Peterburg* shows that the characters populating its pages often do not just resemble the enemy, they are—and always contain the potential to be—the enemy. The novel presents the inherent duality in each character's identity by playing with the tension between surface and depth. It insinuates that, regardless of physical appearance, there may be more to certain characters than meets the eye; in this, the novel actualizes Merezhkovsky's fearful predictions from 1906—that white Russian faces may belie the truth of the tainted Eastern (Mongolian) blood that runs through their veins.²⁵ We see proof of this in a dialogue between the spy Lippanchenko and the delusional revolutionary Dudkin:

-«Извините, Липпанченко: вы не монгол?»
 -«Почему такой странный вопрос?..»

²⁴ Jan Hokenson, *Japan, France and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004) 31.

²⁵ See Chapter Three of this dissertation for more on Merezhkovsky's theories on the decline of the West.

-«Так, мне показалось...»

-«Во всех русских ведь течет монгольская кровь...» (43)

“Excuse me, Lippanchenko: are you by any chance a Mongol?”

“Why such a strange question?”

“Well, it seemed to me...”

“Every Russian has some Mongol blood.” (27)

Their conversation suggests that the enemy exists within. Russian blood has been contaminated by the historically traumatic invasion of the Golden Horde²⁶ and by Russia’s geographic, cultural and spiritual (as Merezhkovsky would argue) proximity to the East. Because of these two forces, every Russian is subject to cultural hybridity.

In fact, it no longer even matters who represents which cultural identity, for this novel conflates them all, whether Jewish, Japanese or Mongolian:

Голос редактора остановил его на пороге:

«Понимаете теперь, сударыня, связь между японской войною, жидами, угрожающим нам монгольским нашествием и крамолой? Жидовские выходки и выступление в Китае Больших Кулаков имеют меж собой теснейшую и явную связь». (154)

A voice interrupted him on the threshold:

“Don’t you understand, madam, the connection between the war with Japan, the kikes, and the Mongol invasion? The antics of Russian kikes and the emergence of the Boxers in China are closely connected.” (105)

While what the voice of the editor offers as “the most subtle and obvious connection” between these three races remains elusive within the novel, it becomes clear when we consider Bely’s correspondence with Aleksandr Blok in June 1911. Trying to make sense of the past, Bely wrote to Blok:

[...] проблема Востока и Запада, Серебряный Голубь [...] наваждения над Россией: я нашел бодрость в том, что судьба моя, нечеловечески гадкое 1906-08 года, есть отражение наваждения над всей Россией: «злое око, Россию нанавидящее» (посылающее и монголов, и евреев).²⁷ (263)

[...] the problem of the East and West, *The Silver Dove* [...] hallucinations over Russia: I found courage that my fate, inhumanly nasty in 1906-08, is a reflection of the evils hanging over all of Russia: “the evil eye that hates Russia” (sent by the Mongols and the Jews).

²⁶ For a full discussion of the Mongolian invasion and its impact on Russian history and cultural identity, please see Nicholas Riasonovsky, “Asia through Russian Eyes,” *Russia and Asia*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover, 1972) 3-29.

²⁷ Bely – Blok. *Perpiska*, ed. V.N. Orlov (Moskva: Gosudarstvennyi literaturnyi muzei, 1940) 263.

In Bely's description of the period, national and personal history are blurred together. His fate mirrors Russia's, for both have suffered the same indignities. They have each fallen victim to mystical forces—to the “evil eye” that the Mongols and Jews had sent to destroy them. While Bely did not reveal the source of the quotation, “the evil eye that hates Russia,” he clarified its origins, pointing to nationalities that awoke in Russians a fear of the yellow peril. His letter to Blok not only corroborates the contents of *Peterburg* (particularly the racially specific passage above), but also suggests that racial prejudice was not limited to fiction. In his personal correspondence with a like-minded friend and fellow artist, Bely, speaking metaphorically, shows a lack of perspective similar to that of his character Sofia Petrovna.

Bely's novel represents a world in which chaos reigned: Russia had been vanquished by the East, making the world unrecognizable and unstable. But this chaos may not stem from historical circumstance alone; rather, I have suggested that *Peterburg* formally resembles one of Hokusai's landscapes as described by Bely—a chaotic image that contains “no perspective.” Just as Hokusai's collections of prints devoted to Fuji graphically display the mountain's history and cultural significance in Japan, Bely's novel tells, from various angles and through different characters, the story of Russia's former capital. This “asymmetrical” *Peterburg* comes alive and, speaking metaphorically, lacks perspective; this allows the identities of characters and nationalities to fuse: a Russian woman becomes a Japanese girl, the Japanese resemble the Golden Horde and Mongols seemingly emerge from wall paper and ride in cars. This is a world of blurred identity in which the real issue, as seen by Bely and his contemporaries, is tainted Russian blood—an imperceptible substance that lies beneath the surface. In the novel, this contaminated blood is as omnipresent a force as the sound of the wind. Both, in fact, are inescapable. The enemy presence has penetrated the very air of Petersburg and runs through every Russian's veins, creating the ambiguity in the Russian identity itself.

Part II: Imbibing the Spirit of the East: Bal'mont's Voyage to Japan

For the Symbolist poet, translator and scholar Konstantin Bal'mont (1867-1942), Japan became more than a distant reality when, in 1916, he traveled there on a two week tour of the Far East.²⁸ Although Japan was a new destination for Bal'mont, it must be noted that he had always been fascinated by the “exotic countries” that went beyond Western and Eastern European borders and traveled throughout them extensively at the beginning of the twentieth century. The countries that he visited ranged widely, from Egypt to Mexico, but his mission was always the same during his travels: to find what he termed “an interesting' person,” one who “differed from the ‘practical (*ot delovogo*) European.’”²⁹ As he described it, Bal'mont desired contact with those who maintained a “...свежесть мироощущения, 'невинность' и 'чистоту'” [freshness of disposition, innocence and purity].³⁰ In other words, we might say that he sought those untouched by Western development—people both more primitive and in touch with nature.

In Japan, Bal'mont's search seems to have come to an end, for the letters, poems and articles he wrote about this nation demonstrate his ecstatic appreciation of its offerings. In one of

²⁸ For a detailed account of Bal'mont's trip to Japan, see K.M. Azadovskii and E.M. D'iakonova, *Bal'mont v Iaponii* (Moskva: “Nauka,” 1991).

²⁹ Azadovskii and D'iakonova, 6

³⁰ *ibid.* 7

his first letters to his wife, Ekaterina Andreeva, from Japan, he presented his enraptured first impression:

Катя, милая, в ярком Солнце я увидел цветущий Ниппон, который ускользнул от твоих и от моих взоров 15 лет тому назад. От порта Цуруги поезд домчал до Иокогамы в течение дня. Я видел эти поразительные пространства, где поля как сады, а сады как видения. За несколько часов я полюбил Японию навсегда. И прекрасный лик Фудзи-Ямы.³¹

Katia, dear, in the bright Sun I saw the blooming Japan, which slipped from your and my view 15 years ago.³² From the port Tsurugi the train brought us to Yokohama in the course of a day. I saw these startling expanses, where the fields are like gardens and the gardens are like visions. Within a few hours I had begun to love Japan forever. And the beautiful image of Fuji-yama.

Vision plays a central role in Bal'mont's description of Japan; the sights he encounters from the train seem to resemble a series of travel photographs that are framed by the window. These snapshots overwhelm him, especially Mount Fuji, which, with the word *lik* [image or face], is almost personified. Bal'mont's fascination with Japan is somewhat surprising, given not only his desire for contact with a more primitive people (the Japanese, at this point, had heavily modernized their country), but also the feelings he harbored towards it in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War.

The war is referenced directly in the 1906 poem “Nash tsar” [Our Tsar] from the cycle, *Pesni mstitelia* [The Songs of an Avenger], where Bal'mont wrote,

Наш царь – Мукден, наш царь – Цусима,
Наш царь – кровавое пятно,
Зловонье пороха и дыма,
В котором разуму – темно.³³

Our tsar is Mukden, our tsar is Tsushima
Our tsar is a bloody spot,
The stench of gunpowder and smoke,
In which the mind is dark.

These lines express political sentiment, namely Bal'mont's anger at Tsar Nicholas II for having allowed Russia to fall victim to the Japanese not only in the war as a whole, but especially in these two pivotal and bloody battles. Bal'mont the avenger decried this needless bloodshed in his poem, listing the Tsar's crimes one by one. Although here the enemy is more the Russian political establishment than the Japanese, in personal correspondence Bal'mont was not shy about articulating his dislike of the Eastern enemy. In a letter to Valery Briusov dated 12 September 1907, Bal'mont explained the origins of both this poem and the cycle in which it

³¹ Qtd. in Azadovskii and D'iakonova, 74

³² Bal'mont is referencing here his plan to go to Japan with his wife in the late 1890s to visit her brother, who was working there at the time. The plans failed to come to fruition when the brother's house burnt down.

³³ Konstantin Bal'mont, *Stikhotvoreniia*, ed. V. Orlov (Leningrad: “Sovetskii pisatel',” 1969) 339.

appeared: "‘Песни мстителя.’ Это вопль мой, это отклик на 9-е января и на нашу чудовищную Цусиму, с которой примириться не могу, ибо люблю Славян и ненавижу уродливых Японцев"³⁴ [*The Songs of an Avenger*. This is my cry, this is the response to the ninth of January and to our monstrous Tsushima, with which I cannot reconcile myself, for I love the Slavs and hate the deformed Japanese].

But by 1916, it seems that Bal'mont, the first Silver Age poet to travel to Japan, had managed to overcome the animosity and anti-Japanese sentiments that lingered in the aftermath of the war. In fact, upon closely examining his writing about Japan, it is as if no war had even taken place. The first poem that he published about his travels, "К Iaponii" [To Japan], which appeared in the daily political and literary newspaper, *Dalekaia okraina* [Distant Outskirts],³⁵ illustrates Bal'mont's delight in the beauty of this foreign land:

Япония, Ниппон, Нихон,
Основа Солнца, Корень Света,
Прими от русского поэта
Его струны певучий звон

Мне люб твой синий небосклон,
И древо вишни в час расцвета
Твоя весна светла, как лето,
Резьба всего—узорный сон.

Что вышло из руки японца,
То в каждой черточке хранит
Любовь к труду, изящный вид.

Тебя благословило Солнце.
Для женщин сказочных твоих
Всю жизнь готов я петь мой стих.³⁶

Japan, Nippon, Nihon,
The Essence of the Sun, the Root of Light,
Take from the Russian poet
The melodious ringing of his strings.

Your blue sky is loved by me,
And the cherry tree in its blossoming hour,
Your spring is bright, like the summer,
A carving of everything—patterned sleep.

What came from the hands of the Japanese,
Preserves in each line

³⁴ *Briusov i ego korrespondenty v dvukh knigakh*, ed. N. Trifonov (Moskva: Nauka, 1991-4) 1: 88.

³⁵ It was originally published on 19 мая 1916, in № 2929, on page 3.

³⁶ Bal'mont, qtd. in Azadovskii and D'iakonova, 147

Love of work, an elegant look.

The sun has blessed you.
For your fabulous women
I am ready to sing my verse all my life.

In this poem, Bal'mont, a decadent, celebrates artifice; his description transforms the "living" landscape into an artistic artifact. From the sky to the season, nature seems to have sprung, like "carvings," from the talented hands of the Japanese. In this, we observe how Bal'mont conflated art and nature, i.e. the various landscapes of the Japanese masters that he undoubtedly knew as a member of Russia's cultural elite and those that he viewed firsthand as a traveler. Both his reaction and preoccupation with aesthetics indicate a seamless return to the pre-war fascination with Japan that I discussed in Chapter One. In the poetry from his travels, not only does Japan once more become a beautiful and artistically crafted land—one that is now the subject of Bal'mont's lyric ethnography—but Bal'mont also again revels in tropes of earlier Russian (and French and British³⁷) *japonisme*.

For example, in this first poem he sings the praises of the "fantastic Japanese women," "the *elegant* look" (as always, the word "*iziashchnyi*," a term that I would suggest functions as a catch phrase for *japonisme*, is used here) that the Japanese create in their art and the "dreamlike" experience of being in Japan. He also notes the Sun's blessing of the Japanese, highlighting their symbiotic relationship with both it and light.³⁸ This relationship may have represented the basis of Bal'mont's infatuation with Japan since, for him, the Sun (this word was always capitalized in both personal correspondence and his poetry) was an object worthy of reverence and a motif that he kept returning to in his writing.³⁹ Let us recall Bal'mont's 1903 collection of poetry, *Будем как солнце* [Let Us Be Like the Sun], that was published by Skorpion, and also how in 1905's *Литургия Красоты. Стихийные гимны* [Liturgy of Beauty. Elemental Hymns], he again returned to this symbol when he anxiously wrote that, "Люди Солнце разлюбили, надо к Солнцу их вернуть" [People have stopped loving the Sun, we must return them to The Sun]. But going beyond his use of classic symbols of *japonisme* and personal preoccupations, we can see that Bal'mont's poetry about Japan, by eliding recent history, both reclaims and depoliticizes symbols that, during the war, had been used to achieve a political end.

These symbols range from Japanese girls to geisha, as well as from the sun to the samurai. In Bal'mont's poetry, these topics become quaint objects of interest and cultural significance to the traveler. The two poems "Iaponke" [To the Japanese Girl]⁴⁰ and "Geishi"⁴¹ [Geishas] convey the Western man's fascination with the Other, the beautiful Eastern woman. In the first of the two poems dedicated to Japanese women, Bal'mont's lyrical "I" confesses simply: "Японка, кто видал японок,/Тот увидал мою мечту [...]" [The Japanese girl, he who has seen

³⁷ Lim, 140-1.

³⁸ This also reflects Sologub's interpretation of Japan's relationship to the sun, which I explored in the introduction to Chapter Two. It must be noted that while the Japanese kinship with the sun was a negative for Sologub *during* the war, it became a positive for Bal'mont *after* the war. I will say more about these reversals in the next paragraph.

³⁹ Konstantin Bal'mont, *Liturgiiia krasoty. Stikhiinye gimny* (Moskva: "Grif," 1905) 1.

⁴⁰ This poem was published simultaneously with "K Iaponii" in *Dalekaia okraina*.

⁴¹ "Geisha" was published with "V chainom dome" [In the Teahouse] on 12 June 1916 in *Birzhevye vedomosti*, № 15613. They were published under the common title, *Iz iaponskikh vpechatlenii* [From Japanese Impressions].

Japanese girls, Is he who saw my dream].⁴² Similarly, the latter poem continues to paint his fantasy of the young Japanese girls who embody his ideal female form:

Ах, зачем, когда я с вами
Праздник знал, который ал,
Ах, зачем я вас, как в храме,
Всех, вас всех не целовал.⁴³

Ah, why, when I am with you
Do I know a holiday, which is scarlet,
Ah, why did I not, as in a temple,
Kiss you all.

Although Bal'mont's lyrical persona seems to lust after these young girls—an earlier unquoted stanza of the poem describes "the rosy little breasts" of the fourteen-year-old geisha—the poem's final metaphor serves to temper his "scarlet holiday." By metaphorically placing himself in a "temple," Bal'mont imbues his greedy desire to kiss them all with a holy, worshipful feeling. He wants to pay tribute to these beautiful women and, in a way, we can read this poem as the written fulfillment of his desire; through his words, his lips reach their goal.

If we compare Bal'mont's simple tribute to the satirical poems that appeared during the war, we see how differently the poetry of 1904-05 presented the same subject matter. This poetry was often part of an ongoing series; in the artistic satirical journal *Shut*, for example, verse about Japan would appear in *Iaponskie kartinki*⁴⁴ [Japanese illustrations], a series intended both to mock the Japanese by playing on Russian prejudices and to give the Russian public insight into Japan. It covered a range of topics—Japanese girls, cherry blossoms, samurai, *hara-kiri* (ritual suicide by disembowelment), the yellow peril and monkey-soldiers—giving equal weight to standard emblems of *japonisme* (cherry blossoms, samurai and Japanese girls) and to popular perceptions and fears of the Japanese. In one poem from this series, "Musme⁴⁵ i Manchzhurets" [The Japanese Girl and the Manchurian], the poet *Zefir* [Marshmallow, clearly a pseudonym] described a beautiful Japanese girl,

Улыбается мусмэшка,
На губах ее усмешка.
Ах, Японии краса
Безподобна, хоть коса!⁴⁶

The young dear girl smiles
On her lips a smirk.
Ah, the beauty of Japan
Is unparelled, although a scythe!

⁴² Bal'mont, qtd. in Azadovskii and D'iakonova, 148

⁴³ *ibid.* 149

⁴⁴ As the war continued, it seems that this initial series was transformed into two others, *Vostochnye motivy* [Eastern Motifs] and *Vostochnye kartinki* [Eastern Illustrations].

⁴⁵ The Japanese word is "musume," which means a young girl, usually an unmarried one.

⁴⁶ *Zefir*, "Musme i manchzhurets," *Shut* № 10 (6 marta 1904) 3.

In this satirical rendition of a Japanese girl, her beauty, which is connected to Japan's, is given a dangerous edge (interestingly, an additional edge—this one sarcastic—is added by the poet's creation of a diminutive form of "*musume*" to preserve the poem's rhyme and meter). While the poet's rapture remains constant in both poetic tributes to Japanese girls—they each use the exclamatory "ah"—here the final metaphor contains a warning that beauty serves as a mask.

We observe this same kind of reversal in *Zefir*'s "Samurai i papakha" [The Samurai and the Caucasian Fur Hat] and Bal'mont's "Samurai." While the 1904 poem highlights the samurai's legendary strength on the battlefield, it also portrays him as falling victim to a Cossack on the battlefields of Manchuria.⁴⁷ Bal'mont's poem, however, focuses only on the samurai's legendary strength, paying homage to his animalic skill and grace: "Ты – тигр, ты – коршун, ты – змея./Банзай!"⁴⁸ [You are a tiger, you are a kite, you are a snake/Banzai!]. In this poem, he reappropriates the Japanese word, "Banzai," which I discussed at length in Chapter Two in relation to Aleksandr Kuprin's "Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov"; here this word acts neither as a sign of Japanese allegiance, nor as an indication of identity. As spoken by Bal'mont's lyrical voice, banzai is stripped of political meaning, becoming again simply a word—one that expresses hope for the prosperity of the Japanese nation.

Ultimately, we can see the differences between these diverging poetic treatments—one satirical, the other celebratory—of the same subject as stemming from politics. The poetry in *Shut* is clearly influenced by the ongoing war; at that historical moment, popular sentiment demanded that the Japanese enemy, even if beautiful, be portrayed in a negative light. Of Bal'mont, however, popular sentiment required something else in 1916. Considering that he was traveling in Japan and writing about it eleven years after the war had ended, the wound of the war had begun to heal. By 1916, relations between Russia and Japan had grown particularly friendly in light of their shared treaty against Germany during World War I.⁴⁹ Because of this historical shift, Bal'mont's *japonisme* was simpler, as well as more inclined to pay tribute. He could reclaim classic emblems of *japonisme* with eyes that were untainted by politics.

Bal'mont's interest in Japan proved enduring, lasting even after he returned from his travels. Immediately following his journey, Bal'mont undertook a translation of Japanese *tanka*, "short songs" of five lines and thirty one syllables (5/7/5/7/7), which he presented to the Russian public in *Birzhevye vedomosti* on 26 June 1916. Along with his translations, he included a short meditation on the art of *tanka*, in which he tried to make sense of the genre for the Russian reader. Comparing it to a snowflake [*snezhinka*] and a cherry tree [*vishnia*], Bal'mont claimed that *tanka* represents an "ideal form of Art," as well as an "ideal form of Nature."⁵⁰ *Tanka*'s ideal form stemmed from its ability to fuse art and life (nature). This description resembles Bal'mont's earlier treatment of the landscape in "K Iaponii," showing that his vision of Japan remained stable. For him, everything about this land is perfectly crafted. The careful hand of the male Japanese (*что вышло из руки японца*) creates artifacts out of its people and land in both the visual (prints and paintings) and literary arts (*haiku* and *tanka*).

As Bal'mont explained in his meditation on the genre, the Japanese *tanka* writer perceives the world, quietly processes it and then—and *only then*—does he allow himself to

⁴⁷ *Zefir*, "Samurai i papakha," *Shut* № 12 (20 marta 1904) 3.

⁴⁸ Bal'mont, qtd. in Azadovskii and D'iakonova, 152. The poem was originally published in *Dalekaia okraina*, № 2932, on 22 мая 1916.

⁴⁹ Lim, 140

⁵⁰ Bal'mont, qtd. in Azadovskii and D'iakonova, 162

speak or write about it. The process depends on the Japanese speaking only when they have something to say (Bal'mont compared this to the Western love of talking for the sake of talking). Japanese *tanka* poets must weigh their words carefully; not only is the economy of language crucial, but so too is the need to process lived experience and to transform it into art. As Bal'mont wrote, *tanka* does more than constitute the full spectrum of life:

Пятилепестковый цветок, японская танка,—сжатой своей силой, сгущенным духом ароматным, изысканным цветом, звоном своих маленьких колокольчиков, своею прочною связью с Землей, при устремленности в вольный воздух, к Небесам,—говорит всем пяти чувствам человеческой души. И так как от лепестков всегда исходит еще сияние, она говорит также шестому чувству человеческой души, которое можно назвать поэтическим, и мудро оставляя многое недосказанным, будит седьмое чувство—духовное.⁵¹

Pentapetalous flower, Japanese *tanka*,—compact with its strength, thickened with a fragrant spirit, exquisite color, the jingling of its little bells, its strong ties with the Earth, its tendency for the open air, for the Heavens,—it speaks to all five senses of the human soul. And just as a radiance always emanates from the petals, it [*tanka*] speaks also to the sixth sense of the human soul, which we might call the poetic [sense], and wisely leaving much unsaid, wakes the seventh sense—the spiritual.

Bal'mont's central metaphor compares the five-line *tanka* to a five-petaled flower, a product of nature that activates all five senses (taste, touch, smell, sound and sight). In his understanding of the genre, *tanka* offers not only a synesthetic evocation of life, but also a window into the extra-sensory world. By speaking to a sense of poetry and spirituality, *tanka* allows one to simultaneously celebrate and transcend the everyday; it privileges the mystical, the mysterious and the unspoken. In this, we may locate *tanka*'s appeal for Bal'mont—and not just *tanka*'s, but the whole world of Japanese art and letters as well: they are reminiscent of Symbolism. In fact, save for a few Japan-specific examples, Bal'mont's description of *tanka* reads almost like a Symbolist manifesto.

The connection between Symbolism and Japanese art and letters becomes more apparent in Bal'mont's final article on Japan, “Япония. Белая хризантема”⁵² [Japan. White Chrysanthemum], which appeared in December 1916. In the article, Bal'mont described a walk that he had taken through a snow-covered Moscow and how, as he looked around himself, he wondered what a Japanese poet would make of his surroundings. Surprised by the chain of his thoughts, Bal'mont wrote: “Почему же я, чужестранец, был так близок в секунде детям Японии? Я знаю. Нас обвенчало Солнце”⁵³ [Why was I, a foreigner, so close in this second to the children of Japan? I know. The Sun has married us]. In this brief moment—we must recall that the transitory was significant for the first generation of Symbolists—Bal'mont chooses to align himself with the Japanese, for he recognizes a strong sense of kinship between himself and the Land of the Rising Sun. We can even read Bal'mont's relationship with Japan as the fulfillment of his self-appointed mission, which he described in 1903's *Budem kak solntse*: “Я в

⁵¹ *ibid.* 163

⁵² This article appeared on 25 December 1916 in the compendium, *Utro Rossii* [The Dawn of Russia].

⁵³ Bal'mont, qtd. in Azadovskii and D'iakonova, 165

*этот мир пришел, чтоб видеть Солнце/...Я буду петь, я буду петь о Солнце*⁵⁴ [I came to this world, in order to see the sun/...I will sing, I will sing about the sun]. In his travels to Japan and in the verse in which he recorded his impressions, it is possible to say that Bal'mont literally saw and sang about a metonymic sun.

He takes their union even one step farther when he finds himself entranced by the snowflakes falling around him:

Я смотрю, как падают и вьются снежинки. Они все похожи и все различны. Они падают мне на руку и нежно тают. Воздушные кристаллики. Невесомые звездочки. Они падают на лицо мне, и не поймешь—обжигают слегка или слегка холодят щеку. Они касаются угла моих глаз. Ресницы мои дрожат, точно легкие крылья бабочки коснулись их. Или нет, точно маленькие маленькие феи не хотят целовать моих губ, но хотят целовать мои глаза. «Это хокку,— шепчу я себе,—это трехстрочные японские малютки хокку».

Я говорю себе: “Нужно написать хокку”. И в уме моем рождается троестрочие:

Дыханье ветра
Из белой тучки
Плетет ковер.⁵⁵ (165)

I look at how the snowflakes fall and twist. They are all alike and all different. They fall on my hand and tenderly melt. Light little crystals. Weightless stars. They fall on my face, and you will not understand—they burn slightly or chill slightly my cheek. They touch the corner of my eyes. My eyelids shudder, exactly like the light wings of a butterfly had touched them. Or no, exactly like little little fairies not wanting to kiss my lips, but kiss my eyes instead. “This is haiku,”—I whispered to myself,—“this is a three-line Japanese miniature haiku.”

I say to myself, “I must write a haiku.” And in my mind three lines are born:

The breath of the wind
From the white cloud
Weaves a carpet.

In this moment, nature activates Bal'mont's sixth (poetic) sense. The scene slowly overtakes him (it is *imperative* that he write this haiku), building to an instant of poetic expression. Like the Japanese poets who so fascinate him, he is compelled to compose a scene from nature, one that occurs directly before his eyes. The Japanese call this kind of creative act *shaseibun* (literary sketching), which was developed by the poet Masaoka Shiki in the 1890s.⁵⁶ *Shaseibun* required that the artist go into nature and portray the landscape; as one scholar describes it, through this act of observation, interiority and selfhood are born.⁵⁷ While we cannot say that this moment of poetic inspiration led to any kind of selfhood for Bal'mont, we can say that it allowed him, for a

⁵⁴ Konstantin Bal'mont, *Stikhotvoreniia*,

⁵⁵ *ibid.* 165

⁵⁶ It must be noted that although Masaoka Shiki is given credit for turning *shaseibun* into a literary school, examples of *shaseibun*-like poetry exist in pre-modern literature as well. See Alan Turney, “A Feeling of Beauty: Natsume Soseki's *Ichiya*,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 33.3 (Autumn 1978) 285-288.

⁵⁷ Karatani Kojin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) 24-5.

brief instant, to embody his artistic ideal. In this artistic fantasy, Moscow becomes idyllic Japan, the snow turns into dancing fairies and Bal'mont lives “po-iaponskii”⁵⁸ [in Japanese], transforming himself into a Japanese poet.

Bal'mont perceived the role of the Japanese poet in fairly simple terms: “Японцы не пишут стихи, а живут стихом, переживают его...” [The Japanese don't write poetry, but live poetry, experiencing it...]. To translate this into the language of Russian modernism, the Japanese practiced life creation [*zhiznetvorchestvo*], wherein there is no boundary between art and life, for the two are as if seamlessly connected. This impression, although it is not made explicit, remains steadfast throughout Bal'mont's descriptions of his travels and his reflections on Japanese poetics. While in Japan, he found art everywhere: in the face of Fuji, in the faces of the young Japanese girls, in the elegant look of the country as a whole. His fascination allowed him to see Japan with eyes that transcended recent history; he reclaimed and rearticulated the appreciation of Japan that the war had stolen from most Russians. In doing so, he became captivated, a living symbol of his own *japonisme*—one who wrote haiku and embraced Japanese artistic ideals. As Bal'mont's descriptions of Japanese *tanka* and *haiku* show, Japanese literature stands in for Symbolist aesthetics. It elevated nature, celebrated the mysterious and played with the boundaries of life and art. Bal'mont, in his travels, had set out to find and experience the world of the Other. In Japan, however, it seems that he had found an Other who, upon inspection, closely resembled himself.

Part III: A Saucer of Tea, Transformed

The image of Mt. Fuji, the quintessential symbol of Japan, continued to make appearances in Russian literature as late as 1917, when Mikhail Kuzmin's poem, “Fuzii v bliudochke” was published in the literary journal *Argus*.⁵⁹ Why Kuzmin turned to Fuji—and, by association, Japan—at this particular moment is somewhat puzzling. During the war, Kuzmin had been silent; in his diaries, articles and poetry from the first decade of the twentieth century, he voiced no opinion on the Russo-Japanese conflict, nor did he express any fascination with Japanese art in the same way that a majority of the Silver Age poets and *miriskusniki* did. One almost wonders if the topic first had to be stripped of its overwhelming popularity for it to become interesting to Kuzmin, or if he simply encountered Japanese art later than his contemporaries.

No matter what his motivating interest, Kuzmin's poem approaches Fuji in a refreshingly playful way:

Сквозь чайный пар я вижу гору Фузий,
 На желтом небе золотой вулкан.
 Как блюдечко природу странно узит!
 Но новый трепет мелкой рябью дан.
 Как облаков продольных паутины

⁵⁸ Earlier in the article, he used this phrase to describe his state of mind. See Azadovskii and D'iakonova, 164.

⁵⁹ Although the poem was not published until July 1917, it was dated 27 January of the same year. The poem again appeared in Kuzmin's 1923 collection, *Nezdeshnie vechera* [Otherworldly Evenings], in which it was the first in an eponymously named cycle. M.A. Kuzmin, *Sobranie stikhi II: poslerevoliutsionnye knigi stikhov* (Munich: Wilhem Fink Verlag, 1978) 205.

Пронзает солнце с муравьиный глаз,
 А птицы-рыбы, черные чайники,
 Чертят лазури зыблемый топаз!
 Весенний мир вместится в малом мире:
 Запахнут миндали, затрубит рог,
 И весь залив, хоть будь он вдвое шире,
 Фарфоровый обнимет ободок.
 Но ветка неожиданной мимозы,
 Рассекши небеса, легла на них, -
 Так на страницах философской прозы
 Порою заблестит влюбленный стих. (2: 205)

Through steaming tea I glimpse Mount Fuji
 Against a yellow sky a golden volcano.
 How oddly a saucer narrows nature—
 But a new tremor sends tiny ripples.
 Gossamer of fine-stretched clouds
 Pierced by an ant-eye sun,
 Black tea leaves—are they birds or fish?—
 Mask azure of trembling topaz!
 The vernal world *will be contained in the miniature*:
 Almonds will be fragrant, horn will blow,
 And all the cove—were it twice as broad—
 Would be *enveloped* by the porcelain rim.
 And yet a branch of unforeseen mimosa,
 Cleaving the heavens, falls across it all,
 So in pages of philosophic prose
 Sometimes will gleam a line of lovesick verse.⁶⁰

We see how the lyrical subject transforms the mundane and traditional experience of drinking a saucer of tea through a flight of fancy. The moment becomes transportive; the way that the lyrical subject perceives Fuji through the steam turns him into some kind of adventurer, who, like many travelers before him, glimpses the great mountain from a cloudy distance.⁶¹ Similarly, he plays with the mountain's volcanic identity, for the steam that lingers around the “golden volcano” could hint that it is on the brink of erupting. We also cannot overlook the color of the sky, yellow, which often contains a note of danger when used in relation to the East and could

⁶⁰ Mikhail Kuzmin, *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. by Michael A. Green and Stanislav A. Shvabrin (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005) 67. I have adjusted the translation where the verse is italicized.

⁶¹ In an excerpt of a travelogue written by an American and translated into Russian for *Vestnik Evropy* [The Herald of Europe], the American author G. Knorring stressed both his and his companions' awe at Fuji: “Кстати, в это самое время развеялся туман; мы любуемся чудной панорамой солнечного заката за высочайшей в Японии и очень красивой снежной вершиной Фуджи-Яма. Это—любимая гора японцев, совершенно правильной конической формы, и изображаемая ими на всех пейзажах” [By the way, at this same time the fog had dispersed; we admire the marvelous view of the sunset over the highest in Japan and the beautiful snowy peaks of Mount Fuji. It's the favorite mountain of the Japanese, with an absolutely correct conical form, and depicted by them in all their landscapes]; see “Iz Ameriki v Iaponiiu.” *Vestnik Evropy* № 2 (1904) 551.

clue the reader into a nefarious subtext. The poem reinforces the precariousness of the scene with descriptions of its instability: there is both a tremor (*novyi trepet*) and trembling yellowed azure (*zyblemyi topaz*). Is it possible that this saucer embodies the threat of the East, or is it just a prosaic object fulfilling its function?

These trembling movements, after all, could simply reflect the movement of the saucer as the lyrical subject is bringing it to his mouth. But it is also important to note that the poem works as a whole to distance both the lyrical “I” and the reader from this reality by defamiliarizing it. Nothing here is at it seems. As the lyrical subject remarks about the shifting scene before him, “How oddly a saucer narrows nature” (*kak bliudochka prirodu stranno uzit!*)! Even as he finds this representation odd, he also appears to relish its effect on him. He literally holds Mt. Fuji—the mighty, awe-inspiring mountain and oft-depicted subject of art—in the palm of his hand. This reverses the natural relationship between man and nature; whereas the latter usually dwarfs man, in this case man triumphs over nature.

This, in fact, may be the objective of Kuzmin’s poem. One scholar of comparative literature suggests that Kuzmin’s poem uses motifs similar to those found in the verse of the French poet and Oriental scholar Judith Gautier⁶² (1845-1917).⁶³ She claims that in Gautier’s verse, “the sinister chimeras depicted on a Chinese cup are chained and rendered harmless”⁶⁴ and that Kuzmin’s treatment of the East similarly strips it of its power. Her argument aligns Kuzmin with the Acmeists,⁶⁵ who, like the French Parnassian poets, preferred to assert their control over reality by presenting it in miniature form; this way of depicting the world opposes the Symbolist’s treatment of reality: embracing it as something both infinite and omnipotent, as well as embracing and exaggerating its more menacing qualities.⁶⁶

Although it is tempting to succumb to this Acmeist reading, I would suggest that it tells only half of the story of “Fuzii v bliudochke.” We must remember that Kuzmin was neither a Symbolist nor an Acmeist, although he interacted with writers from both schools; if he is more often associated with the Acmeists, it is only because of his *Zametki o proze: o prekrasnoi iasnosti* [Observations about Prose: On Beautiful Clarity, 1910], in which he called for literature to be “логичны в замысле, в постройке произведения, в синтаксисе”⁶⁷ [logical in conception, in the construction of a story, in the syntax]. While “Fuzii v bliudochke” may follow these artistic principles, I argue that this is where the poem’s connection to Acmeism ends. In terms of content, this poem resides in the realm of Symbolist discourse.

Even as the lyrical subject controls the Japanese landscape in the saucer, he is simultaneously overcome by it. Looking at the cup, his senses are activated; the experience of reconstructing the saucer goes beyond mere ekphrasis and becomes synesthetic. Not only is there the trembling I mentioned earlier, but there is also the promise of both the scent of almonds [*zapakhnut mindali*] and the sound of a horn [*zatrubit rog*]. These sensory details convey that the lyrical “I” has fallen under the spell of all that he sees. In this way, the poem functions in a

⁶² For more on Judith Gautier and her treatment of the East, see Hokenson, 92-110.

⁶³ Maria Rubins, “Dialogues across Cultures: Adaptations of Chinese Verse by Judith Gautier and Nikolai Gumilev,” *Comparative Literature* 54.2 (Spring 2002) 155.

⁶⁴ *ibid.* 155

⁶⁵ In a recent study, Stuart Goldberg describes Acmeism as a “sense of boundaries and equilibrium” that privileges architecture, Apollonian order, clarity and precision, *Mandelstam, Blok and the Boundaries of Mythopoetic Symbolism* (Columbus: The Ohio State UP, 2011) 12-3.

⁶⁶ Rubins 156

⁶⁷ М.А. Кузмин, *Proza, t. 10: kriticheskaja proza, kniga I*, eds. N. Bogomolov, O. Korostelev, V. Markov, A. Timofeev and Dzh. Sheron (Oakland: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1997) 30.

highly impressionistic manner, for the poetic voice merges with the artistic vision before him. Through the lyrical subject, the saucer comes alive; one Kuzmin scholar notes that “Fuzii v bliudochke” is part of a cycle that explores both the “aestheticization of nature through culture” [*estetizatsiia prirody cherez kul'turu*] and the “enlivening of pictures” [*ozhivlenie kartinok*].⁶⁸

The “enlivening of pictures” allows for art and life to blend together, and this is precisely what we encounter in the poem. In “Fuzii v bliudochke,” the prosaic is elevated by pure aesthetic enjoyment. What we see here is a return to *japonisme*, but a simpler, less fraught version than that which we witnessed in Sologub’s *Melkii bes*, in the articles on art from *Vesy* in 1904-05 and in Bely’s *Peterburg*. Unlike the *japonisme* that shapes the worlds of Sasha/the geisha, Sofia Petrovna Likhutina/the “real” Japanese girl and even Bal’mont’s lyrical persona, this, Kuzmin’s, form of *japonisme* is *transportive* rather than *transformative*. Holding the saucer, the lyrical subject is transported *beyond* himself, yet, intrinsically, remains himself. The last four lines of the poem illustrate this.

The revelatory moment occurs when the lyrical “I” metaphorizes the “branch of unexpected mimosa” [*vetka neozhidannoi mimozy*], comparing it to “a line of lovesick verse in pages of philosophic prose” [*vliublyonnyi stikh na stranitsakh filosofskoi prozy*]. We can interpret this metaphor as offering us meta-commentary on the poem’s function. It tells us that the poet is aware of what happened as he contemplated the saucer; he recognizes that he was so moved by the image of Fuji that his life, for one brief moment, had merged with art, becoming an act of *zhiznetvorchestvo*. Because art—both *his art* and the *objet d’art* before him—overpowered his senses, the self-awareness that he expresses at the poem’s end contains a playful note of self-mockery. As he reestablishes distance between himself and the image on the saucer, it becomes clear that the poem renders the lyrical subject’s own lovesick verse: he is sick with love for Fuji. “Fuzii v bliudochke” ultimately demonstrates that, even in miniature form, the legendary mountain still has the ability to enchant, just as *japonisme*, whose heyday was long over, was still able to inform and inspire Russian literature in 1917.

In this chapter, I have identified the various forms that late Russian *japonisme* took in the literature of the 1910s and explored the roots of Russia’s renewed interest in Japanese art. Beginning with Andrei Bely’s *Peterburg*, we see how this modernist novel both embraces and rejects the East; even as it adopts several Japanese artistic principles in its formal construction, the novel thematically expresses a deep and abiding fear of the East—one that defines the novel’s subjectivity. As time passes, however, we perceive an abrupt shift in Russia’s treatment of Japan. This attitude unfolds in the social context of increasingly friendly relations between the two countries, as well as the growing distance between the present historical moment and the Russo-Japanese War. Improved relations allowed Bal’mont to travel to Japan, where, in 1916, he encountered an elegant world that fascinated him. In Japan, Bal’mont found a country that represented a total work of art and, in his poetry and essays about his travels, he sang Japan’s many virtues, paying tribute to its crafted beauty. Similarly, Mikhail Kuzmin’s “Fuzii v bliudochke” focuses on the aesthetic pleasure that can be derived from Japan—this time, from a prosaic image: Fuji in a tea saucer.

⁶⁸ T.V. Tsiv’ian, “K analizu tsikla Kuzmina ‘Fuzii v bliudochke’”, *Mikhail Kuzmin i russkaia kul'tura XX veka: tezisy i materialy konferentsii 15-17 maia 1990 g.*, ed. G.A. Moreva (Leningrad: Sovet po istorii mirovoi kul'tury AN SSSR) 43.

The uniting feature of these varied literary works is the way in which they engage with their *japonisme*: each engagement with Japan results in its own form of *zhiznetvorchestvo*. In both Bely's novel and Bal'mont's poetry, the life creation that occurs is transformative. Sofia Petrovna's very being comes to reflect the many Japanese landscape paintings that she surrounds herself with, while Bal'mont begins to think "po-iaponskii" and to write Japanese-style verse. Of the three, only Kuzmin's lyrical subject escapes this transformation; for him, *japonisme* instead proves to be transportive. In the short poem, his life merges with art for but a moment when he succumbs to synesthetic rapture over the beautiful tea saucer before him. This analysis shows that, despite the war, *japonisme* not only remained pervasive in the early twentieth century, but also that its stamp was imprinted on the age. Having penetrated the imagination of Russian Symbolists, Japanese artistic principles, as the Symbolists saw them—asymmetrical perspective, the fusion of life and art, a celebration of nature—had become embedded in modern Russian discourse.

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Figure 1: *Mir iskusstva* v. 13-14 Anton Legashov's *Muzhskoi Portret*

[Courtesy of Bancroft Library]



Figure 2: Close up of the female portrait within *Muzhskoi Portret*
[Courtesy of Bancroft Library]



Figure 1.3: N. Denisov, advertisement for the production of *The Geisha*, Moscow, 1897

[Source: Rosamund Bartlett, "Japonisme and Japanophobia: The Russo-Japanese War in Russian Cultural Consciousness," *Russian Review* 67.1 (2008) 11.]



Figure 1.4: A Russian version of the original English advertisement for *The Geisha*

[Public domain]



Figure 1.5 This 1899 cover of *Shut* [The Fool] No. 7 displays a scene in a tea house between a geisha and a Caucasian soldier. Given the year, this image probably coincides with the staging of *The Geisha* that was taking place in Russia at this time.

[Source: The Slavonic Library, The National Library of Finland]

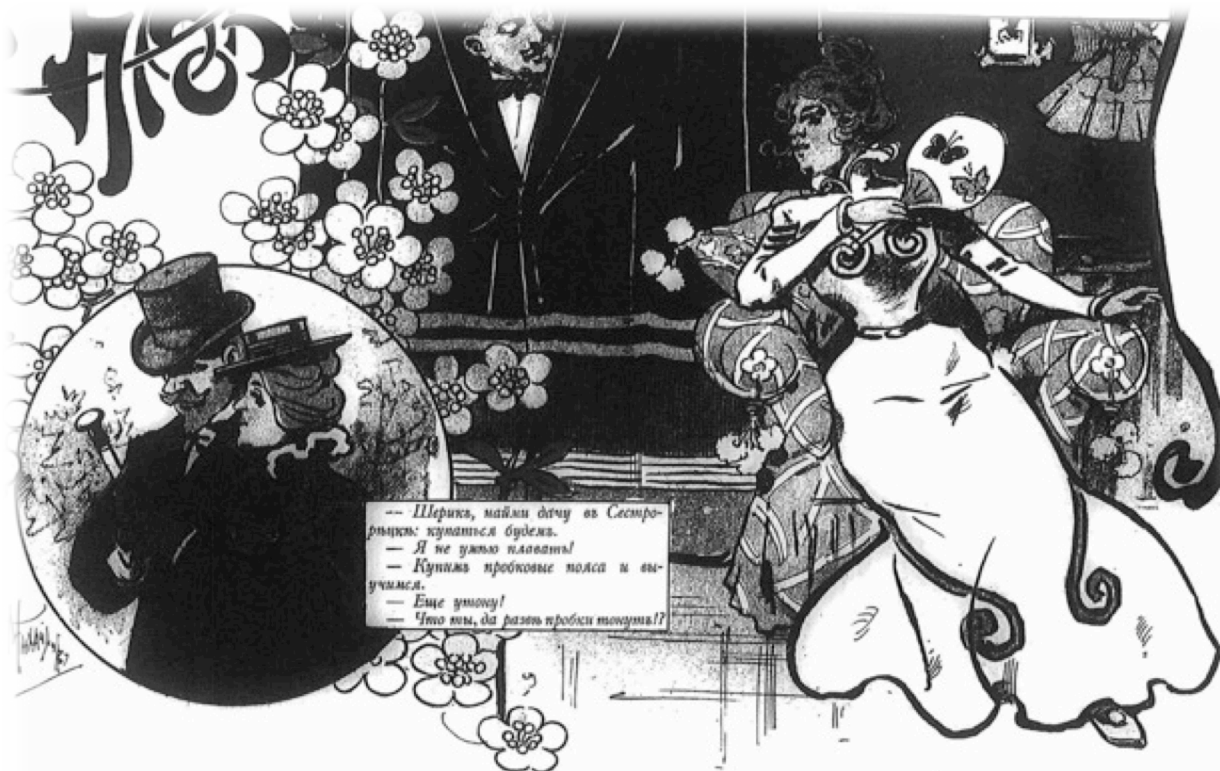


Figure 1.6 An illustration from *Shut* No. 23 (3 June 1900) demonstrates the penetration of *japonisme* into the Russian home; note the proliferation of flowers and the fan the woman holds in her hands.

[Source: The Slavonic Library, The National Library of Finland]



Figure 1.7 This illustration from *Mir iskusstva* 7, no. 1-6, is one of Hokusai's drawings of Japanese women that the journal featured in the same issue that Grabar's article, "Iapontsy," appeared.

[Source: The Slavonic Library, The National Library of Finland]



Figure 1.8 This caricature from the March 1904 issue of *Beseda* [The Conversation] shows a burly Russian precariously ice skating with a Japanese geisha and a Chinese man; the caption—clearly voiced by the Russian—warns the two Asian symbols to “get out of the way!”

[Source: The Slavonic Library, The National Library of Finland]



Figure 1.9: Drawing of a geisha in the satirical journal *Штык* [The Bayonet] №1, 1906

[Source: IMRC, Los Angeles]



Figure 2.1 *Neuteshnaia mat'* [The Inconsolable Mother], Ivan Kramskoi, *Beseda* 1904 no. 12 (December 1904)

[Slavonic Library, National Library of Finland]

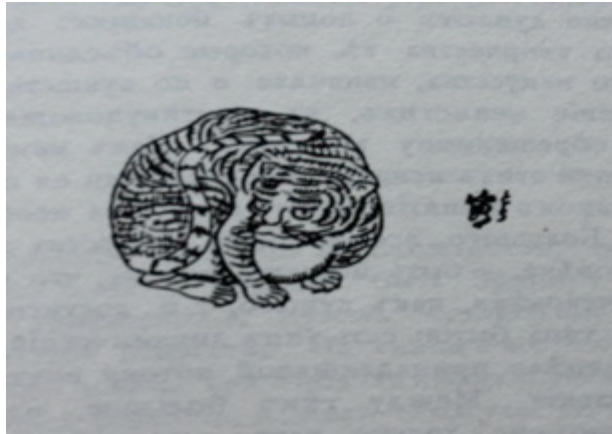


Figure 2.2 *Vesny*, No. 10 (October 1904) p.5



Figure 2.3 Cover of *Vesny* No. 10, October 1904



Fig. 1. Warning. Budil'nik, 1904, no. 38, front cover.

Figure 1.4 *Budil'nik* № 38 (1904)

[Image courtesy of Yulia Mikhailova]

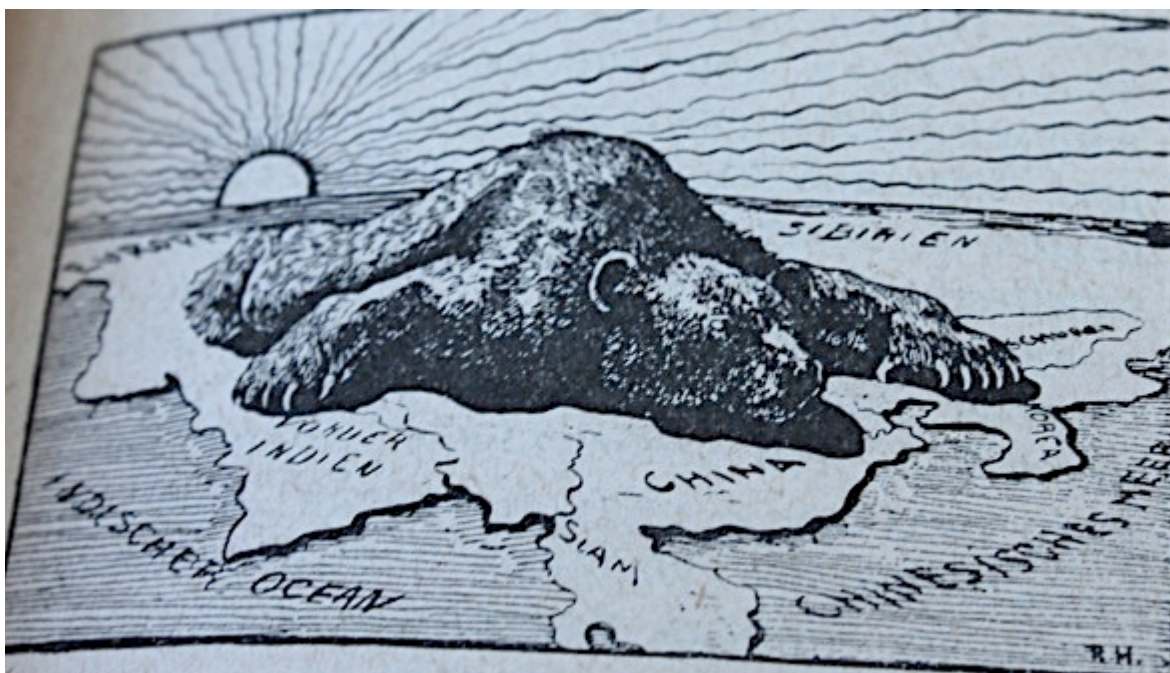


Figure 2.5 Image from *Beseda* [The Conversation], No. 6 (June 1904), p. 637

[Slavonic Library, National Library of Finland]



Figure 2.6 *Beseda* [The Conversation], No. 1 (April 1904), p. 380

[Slavonic Library, National Library of Finland]



Figure 2.7, *Beseda* [The Conversation], No. 1 (April 1904), p. 381

[Slavonic Library, National Library of Finland]



Figure 2.8 *Beseda* [The Conversation], No. 1 (April 1904) p. 398, originally published in *La Caricature*

[Slavonic Library, National Library of Finland]



Figure 2.9 Cover of *Budil'nik* [The Alarm Clock], No. 37 (1904)

[Image Courtesy of Yulia Mikhailova]

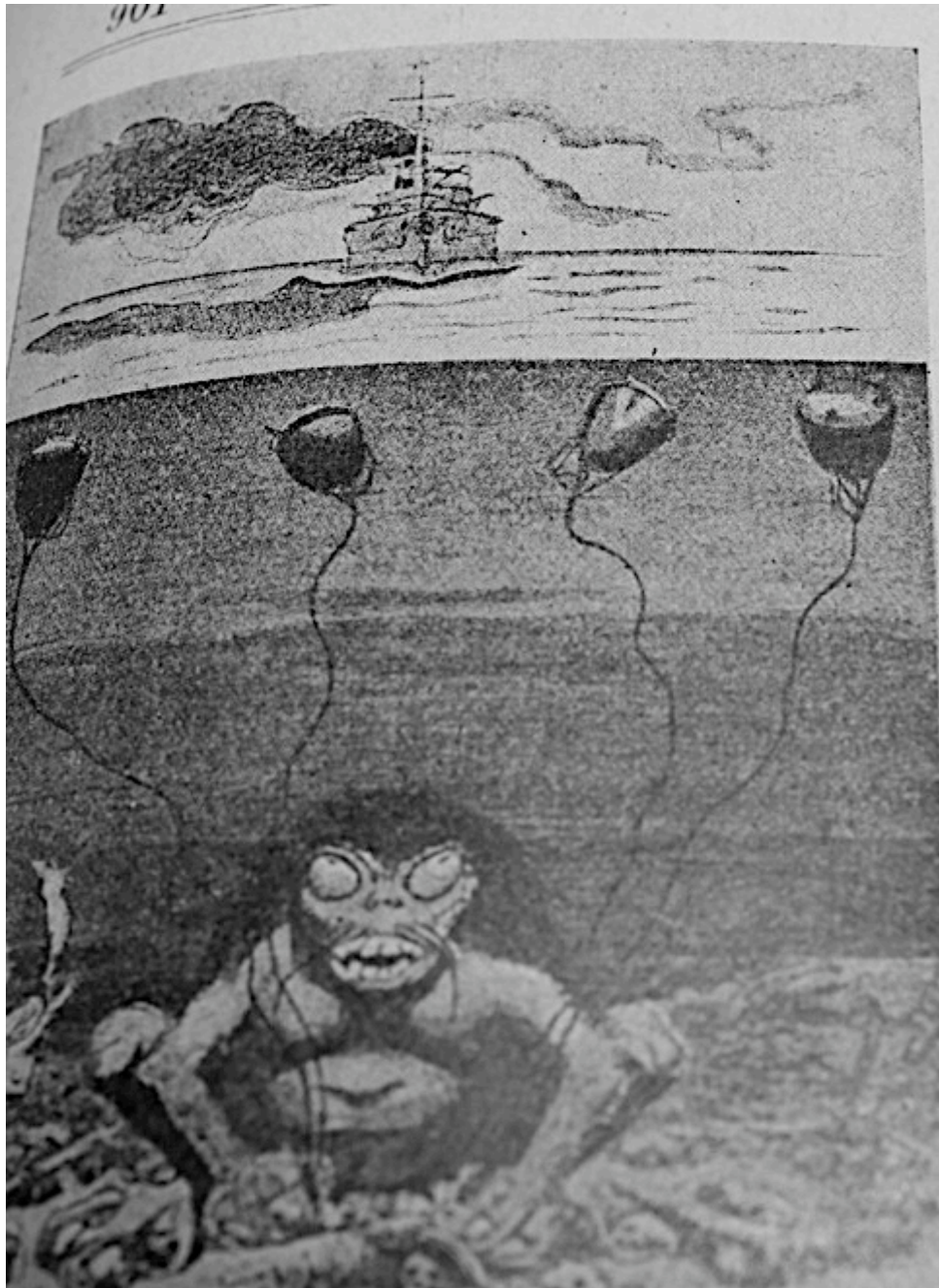


Figure 2.10 “Japan on the Edge of the Pacific Ocean,” *Beseda* [The Conversation] No 9 (September 1904), p. 901: A favorite image of the war, the dehumanized Japan is shown to be a grotesque frog, who crouches amongst the bones of the dead.

[Slavonic Library, National Library of Finland]



Figure 2.11 “Он был весьма любезный джентельмен,” *Beseda* [The Conversation], No 11 (November 1904), p. 1075: Another favorite image of the war is the Japanese monkey in western clothing.

[Slavonic Library, National Library of Finland]



Figure 2.12 *Liagushka dura u Port-Artura*

[Source: Frederick A. Sharf, *The Russo-Japanese War in History and Imagery: A Much Recorded War* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2005) 5.]



Figure 2.13 “The Japanese are everywhere”: A German caricature featured in *Beseda* [The Conversation] No. 7 (July 1904) p. 731

[Slavonic Library, National Library of Finland]

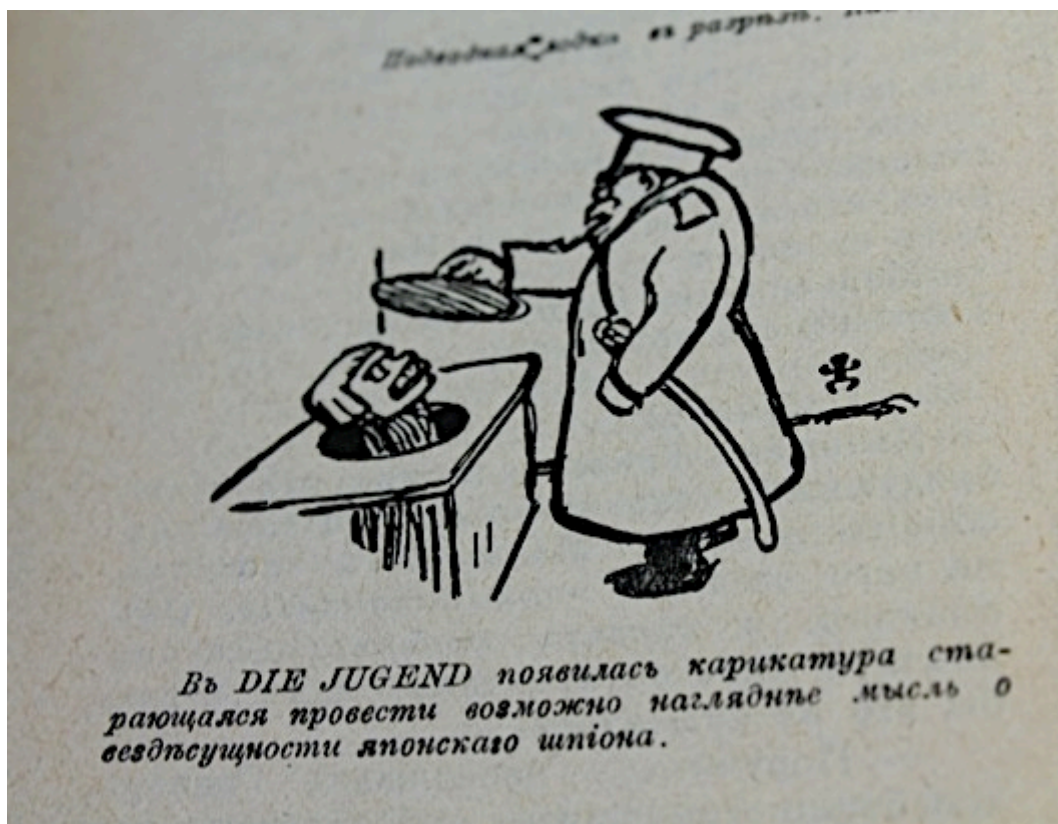


Figure 2.14 This image from *Die Jugend* highlights the possible omnipresence of Japanese spies; this one is hiding in the latrine, *Beseda* [The Conversation], No. 7 (July 1904), p. 723

[Slavonic Library, National Library of Finland]

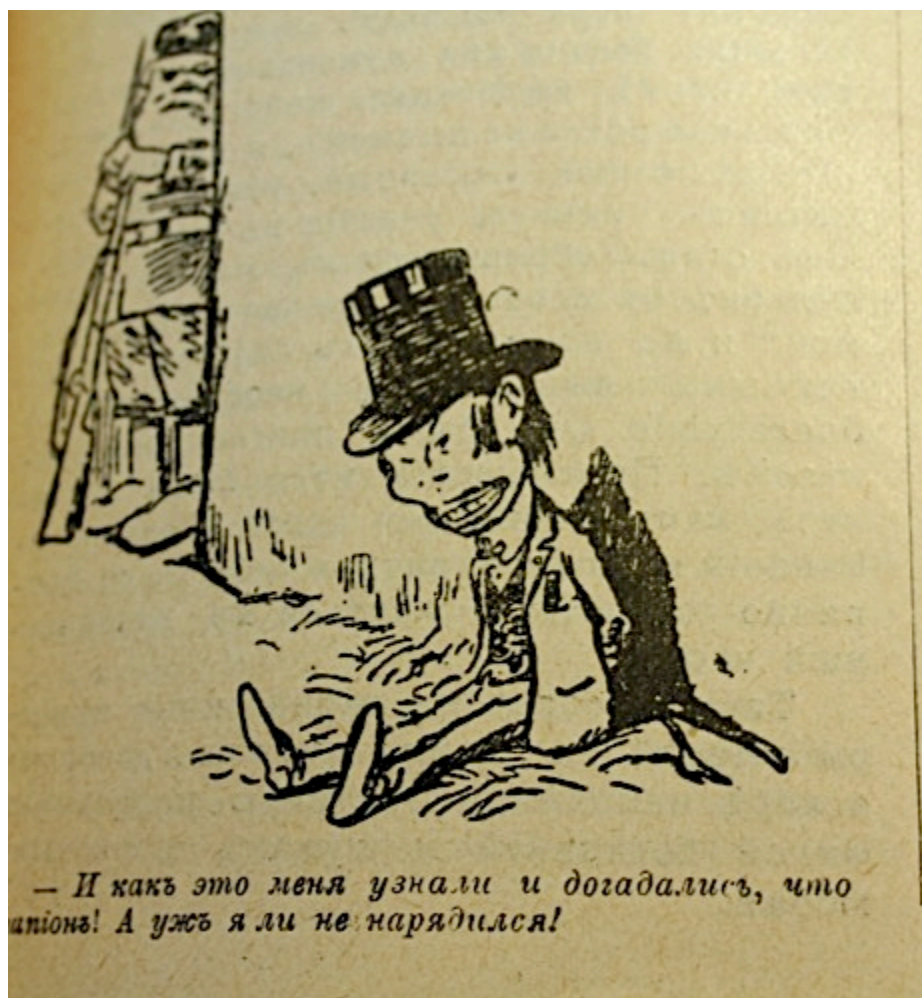


Figure 2.15 In this image a Japanese spy laments that his identity had been discovered.
Beseda [The Conversation], No. 7 (July 1904), p. 701

[Slavonic Library, National Library of Finland]



Figure 2.16 Georges Bigot, “Giant Russian Soldier Holding a Japanese Soldier,” 1904-05.¹ This was one of the French postcards from the war that helped to propagate the Western belief that Russia would be the victor of the war. The Japanese soldier was shown to be small and animal-like—the kind of thing that strong Russian men ate for dinner.

[Source: Frederick A. Sharf, *The Russo-Japanese War in History and Imagery: A Much Recorded War* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2005) 22.]



Figure 2.17 Figure of a Russian man/monkey-human hybrid sadly gazing into a mirror. “Маски” [Masks] № 4 (Feb. 1906), p. 4

[Source: IMRC]

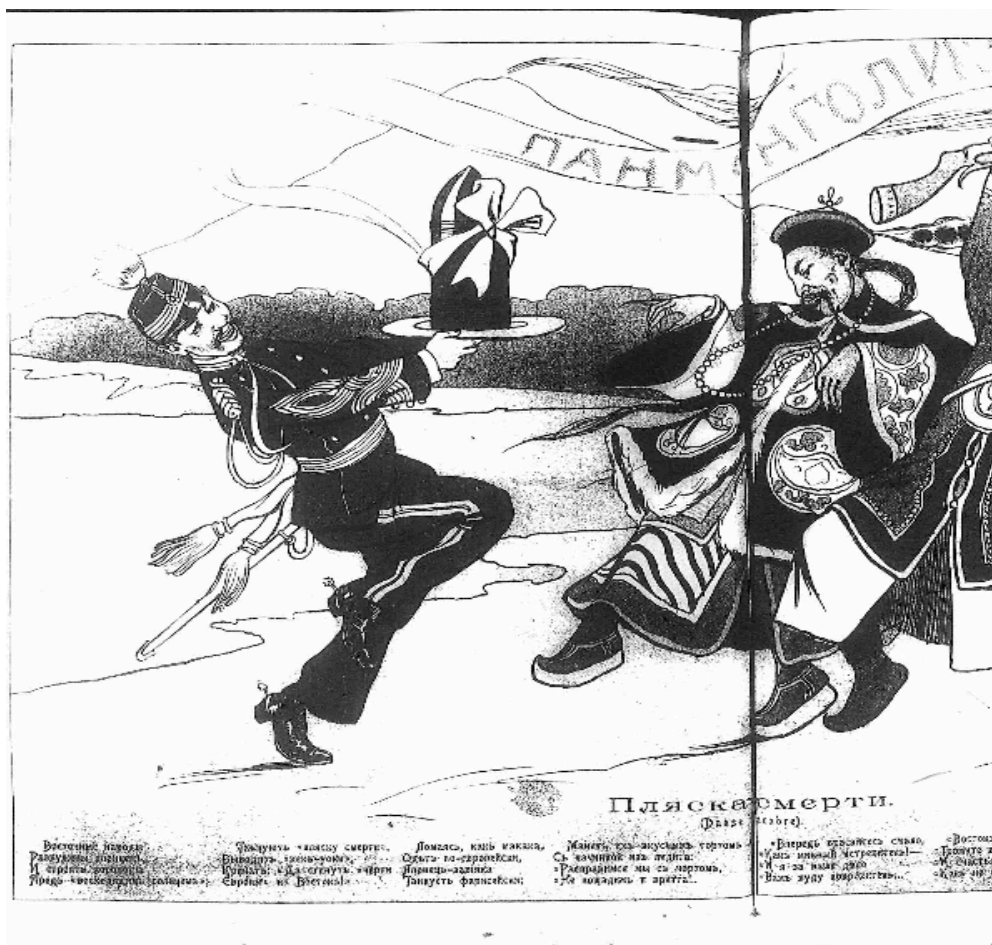


Figure 3.1 First page of a two-page spread, «Pliaska smerti»



Пляска смерти.
(Фразеологизмы)

Милитъ кля акусамъ торгомъ,
названой кля лодитъ,
исправленъ кля съ чиртокъ,
те пощадимъ и приталъ.

«Воскрье брѣскагъ съмъ,
къ миннѣ мѣстѣгъ,
къ е въ каву дѣло,
бѣмъ куду перерѣтѣтъ».

«Воскрье въ вырѣжѣ,
дѣмътѣ вѣмъ Россію!
къ мѣстѣгъ мѣстѣгъ,
къ мѣстѣгъ дѣмъ вѣмъ».

«Въ вѣмъ — не мѣстѣгъ,
Сѣмъ мѣстѣгъ,
«Старый вѣмъ, вѣмъ Сѣмъ,
Коль вѣстѣгъ мѣстѣгъ».

«Въ вѣмъ, въ вѣмъ мѣстѣгъ,
къ мѣстѣгъ мѣстѣгъ,
къ мѣстѣгъ мѣстѣгъ,
къ мѣстѣгъ мѣстѣгъ».

Figure 3.2 Page two of the two-page spread, «Pliaska smerti»

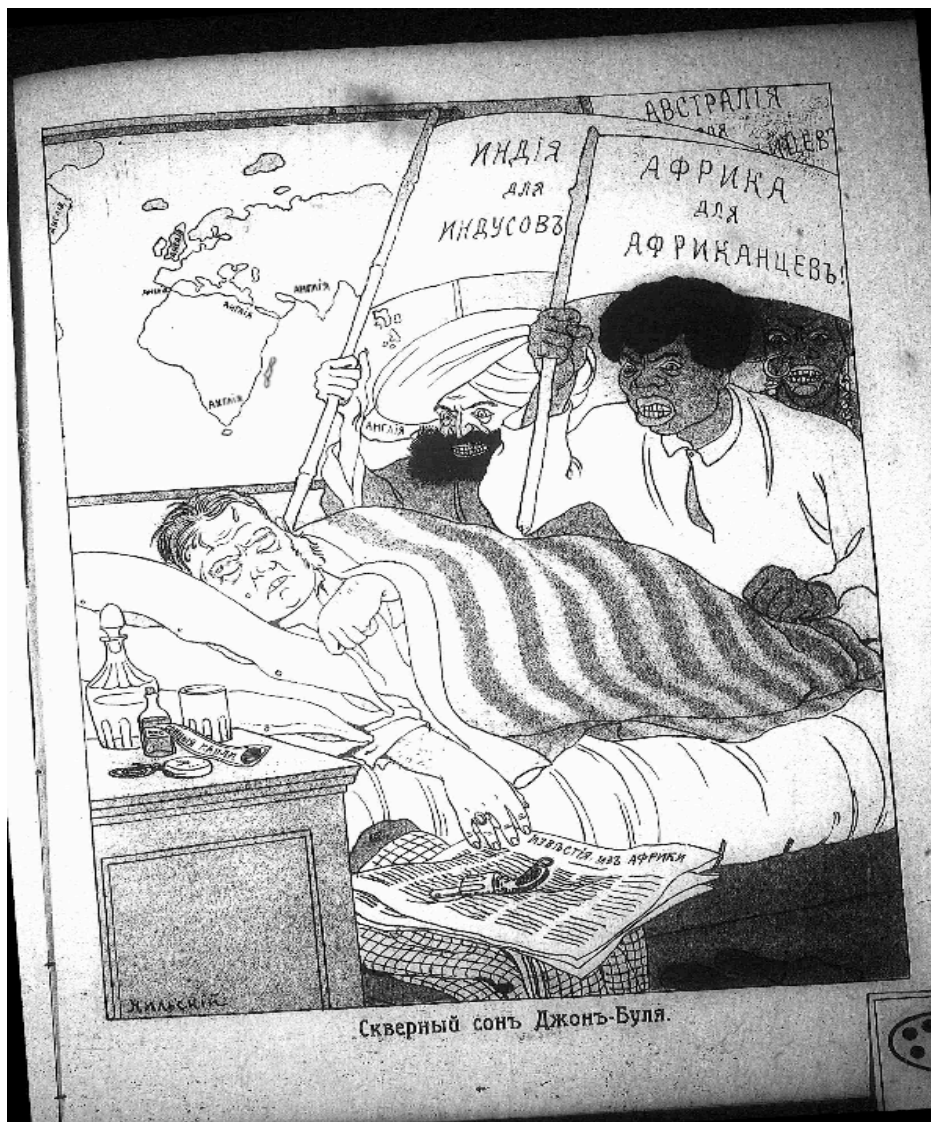


Figure 3.3 "Skvernyi son Dzhon-Bulia" (*Shut* № 22, 29 May 1904)

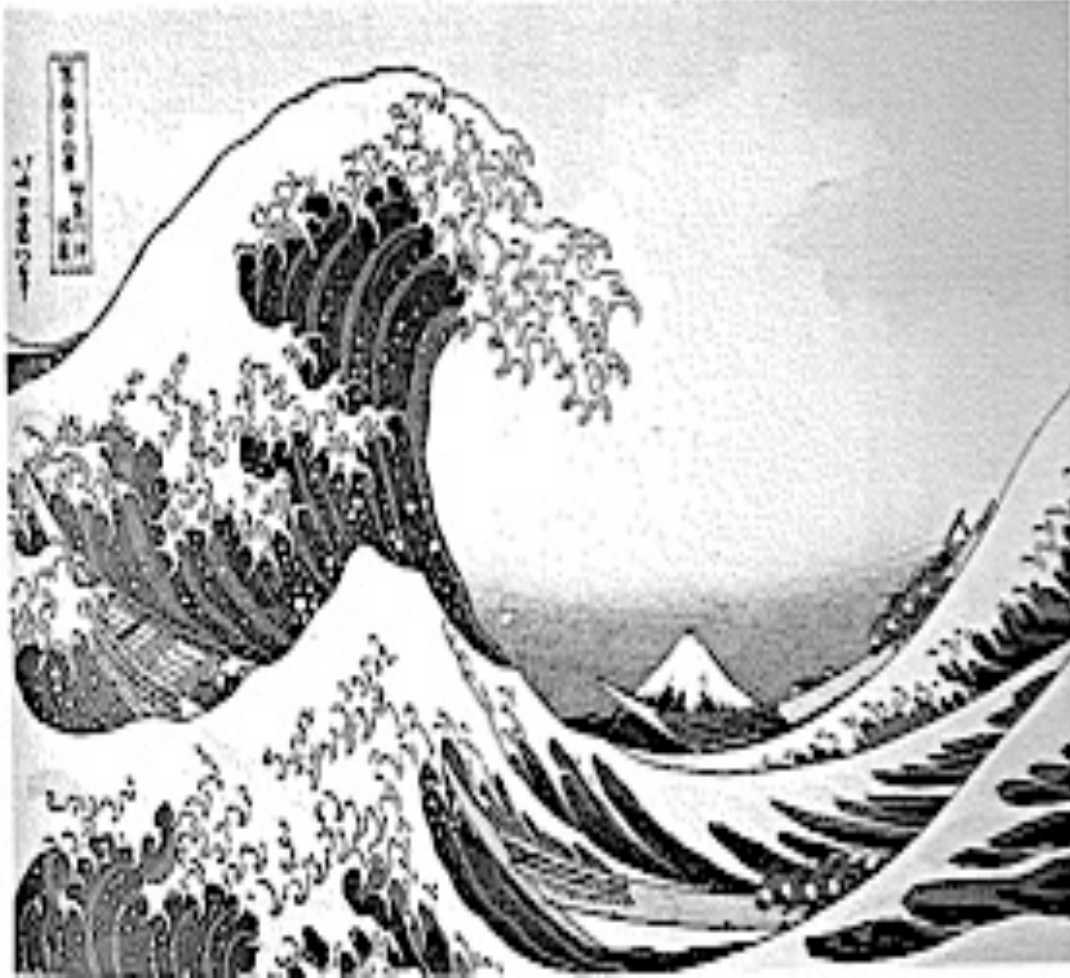


Figure 4.1: Katsushika Hokusai, *Beneath the Wave off Kanagawa (The Great Wave)* from *Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji* (1830-2)

[Source: Public Domain]

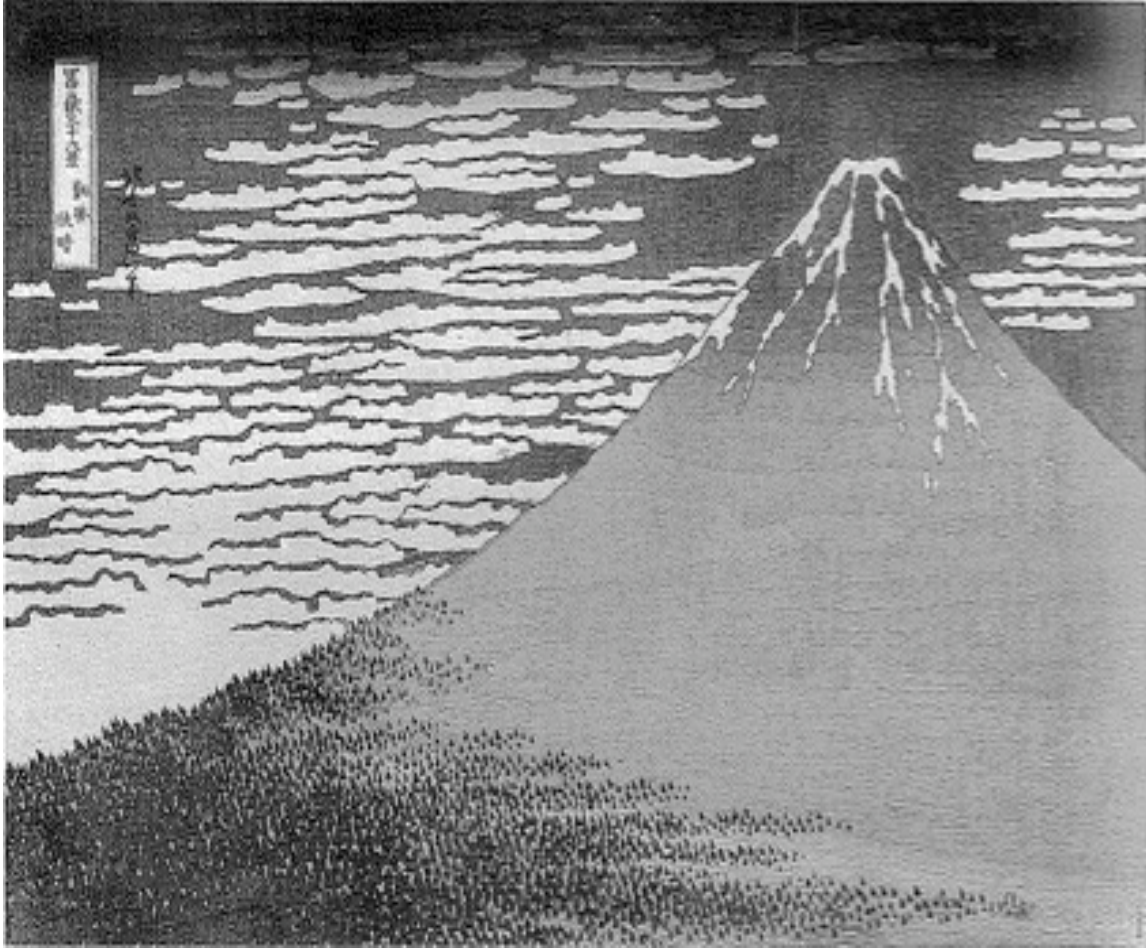


Figure 4.2: Katsushika Hokusai, *South Wind, Clear Dawn from Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji* (1830-2)

[Source: Public domain]