

Title: Nervous Attacks and Severed Heads: Intermediate Sexualities in Chekhov and Wilde
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This paper offers a comparative analysis of how nearly simultaneously, the possibility of a third sex is allowed and then foreclosed in A.P. Chekhov's 1888 short story, "Pripadok," and Oscar Wilde's experimental play *Salomé*, intended for production simultaneously in London and Paris in 1894. Focusing on the young law student who visits the redlight district with friends on the fateful night and the younger generation of Salomé's Jerusalem, this paper will assess these experimental, fragile identities, emerging in two very different fin-de-siècles, using Edward Carpenter's 1908 view of the "intermediate sex." Focusing on the orientalized setting of Wilde's play, which invites us to imagine a world in which, albeit briefly, a youthful alternative exists to the heteronormative monstrosity of adulthood, and on the use of a liminal Muscovite space, this paper suggests that there is a spatial and cultural othering by the authors, which serves as the groundwork for alternative genderings. Especially striking is the "eccentric" setting of each work (Lotman). Chekhov rarely sets his short stories in Moscow, preferring instead to invoke his own rural Taganrog for his metropolitan audience. This story is an exception. Similarly, although Wilde does fashion exotic settings, from Renaissance Italy to contemporary Russia, his primary framework is the fashionable London in which he functions as the Irish insider/outsider. This paper will explore these two characters' subversions while placing them cultural and politically within the three frames of Wilde's London, Wilde's Paris, and Chekhov's Moscow.

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