

Title: Russian Modernist 'Life-Creation', its 'Decadent' Milieu and Cultural Roots. Self-fashioning Strategies in the Context of the Silver Age.

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The proposed presentation will briefly examine the most characteristic exempla of eccentric personal behaviour of several Russian cultural figures that were active in the period of 1895-1922 and compare it to their Western antecedents (Byron, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Wilde). (See Erasova 2006). The main object of the presentation will be to study the Silver-Age 'zhiznetvorchestvo' (life-creation) through the lens of comparativist and cultural studies research agenda.

The past 15 years have seen much valuable scholarly work on these 'diverse subjects' that dealt with the Silver Age life-creation in its various contexts and applications. (See Grossman 1994; Ioffe 2005; Schahadat 2004). There are, however, some less debated issues that still need to be explored. I hope that this examination of the aesthetics of the conceptual life-behaviour demonstrated by the Russian modernists will illuminate several aspects in this area of research.

The accent will be given upon the unifying attitude of the discussed cultural figures to the problem of 'corporeality', the new ways of 'using the body' in the perplexed Modernist culture. The main ikons of Russian life-creation which will be mentioned include Aleksandr Dobroliubov, Valery Briusov, Andrei Bely, Viacheslav Ivanov, Aleksandr Blok, and the 'radical Modernists' of the Avant-Garde – Velimir Khlebnikov, Vladimir Maiakovsky, Natalia Goncharova. Some of them were already discussed in the context of 'life-creational' interest. (See for just a limited number of such explications: Grossman 1994; Ioffe 2006; Wachtel 1994). In my presentation they will be cogitated in a framework of the Western post-Romantic creative force that sometimes is termed with an apt German word of '*Lebenskunst*' (See Schahadat 2004).

The Russian Symbolist decadents and their successors of the Avant-Garde were taking further the Western (mostly French and English) existing aesthetical paradigm, landing on the remote shores of what I'd like to term as 'new somatics', focused on building up of 'Homo Somaticos' of their own culture. (See Bykhovskaia 2000). That point was developed further in the ideas brought about by the early Russian Revolution, propagating the notions of a 'life-building' (*zhisnestroitel'stvo*) needed in order to facilitate the emergence of a New (Soviet) Man. (See Gutkin 1994). In my work I am relying on the methodological approach of Yuri Lotman who postulated the possibility of studying cultural behaviour of a certain historical figure as if it were 'text', applying the principles of perceiving cultural artifact as a sign-code, analyzing the problem within a paradigm of semiotic research.

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