WOMEN'S PSEUDONYMS IN RUSSIAN MODERNISM

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this research was to explore the phenomenon of a literary pseudonym in different countries with the main focus on Russia at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. This thesis also discussed in depth the pseudonyms taken by Russian female writers of the Silver Age, the reasons for having the pseudonyms, and how their pseudonyms affected their lives and literary careers. This study highlighted the three examples of pseudonym-creation during the said period: it demonstrated the cases of Elizaveta Dmitrieva (the pseudonym "Cherubina de Gabriak"), Zinaida Gippius (the pseudonym "Anton Krainii"), and Anna Gorenko (the pseudonym "Akhmatova"). The results showed that each pseudonym manifested itself in the works of each writer as well as in their personal and professional lives in quite different ways and that both the pseudonym and the real name played a significant role in the creative activity of the three female writers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Скажите мне, кому нужна
Такая дань карикатуре,
И надо ль портить имена,
Чтоб место взять в литературе?
… Скажите: правда или нет,
И так ли я сегодня понял,
Что чем бездарнее поэт -
Тем заковыристей псевдоним?
(Dmitriev, "Skryvshiie svoe imia" 48)

[Tell me who needs
Such tribute to caricature,
And is it necessary to spoil names
In order to take a place in literature?
… Tell me: is it true or not,
And did I understand it right
That the more talentless a poet is,
The catchier his pseudonym is?][1]

Every Russian writer consists of a body, soul and a pseudonym.
Georgii Plekhanov[2]

The end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century in Russian literature is marked by a wave of writers who took literary names to sign their poetry, prose, and criticism. Self-fashioning, mystification, discontent with real names – these are just a few reasons why writers decided to adopt fake names. The focus of my research lies in exploring the phenomenon of pseudonyms taken by Russian female writers.

Determining why women writers of the Silver Age took on pseudonyms is an intricate task, as there is no one common reason for that. In fact, each female writer had her own motive for hiding her true name under a nom de plume. It is important to note,

[1] All translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

[2] Quoted from Georgii Plekhanov, *Slovar' ukrainskikh psevdonimov i kriptonimov*. Kiev (1969): 16

however, that the use of pseudonyms by female writers had a relationship to the expectations of the time and the position of women in the given culture. As Charlotte Rosenthal claims, "women's writing in Russia began to flourish in the second third of the 19th century […] in conjunction with the rise of Sentimentalism and Romanticism. [...] Women writers stopped speaking in their own names and aspired to become just writers" (251).

By the end of the 19th century, however, pseudonyms, especially masculine pseudonyms, were no longer in use, according to Rosenthal. At the beginning of the 20th century in Russian Modernism pseudonyms became popular again among female writers; some women "resorted to masculine pseudonyms when they wrote criticism as though to imply that critical analysis required a 'masculine mind,' most notably Zinaida Gippius" (Rosenthal 251). Not all women writers of the Silver Age took male pen names, as Gippius did. Some women chose foreign names as their pseudonyms, such as Elizaveta Dmitrieva ("Cherubina de Gabriak"), Poliskena Solovyova ("Allegro"), and Nadezhda Buchinskaya ("Teffi") – but even their reasons for choosing such pen names vary greatly. In order to understand why women writers of Russian Modernism used pseudonyms, it is crucial to look at the historical and social background of this phenomenon and state the main reasons why writers in general took on pseudonyms.

The phenomenon of a literary pseudonym

A pseudonym (from Greek "pseudonymos" – bearing a false name, "pseudos" – false, pretending and "onyma" – name) is a fictitious name which is used to conceal an author's true identity and to sign his or her work or art (*World English Dictionary* 467). Its synonyms are nom de plume, literary name, and pen name – the terms that will be

used in this work. The history of this phenomenon goes back to the ancient times; it gained popularity in the literary world in the 18th century and is still in vogue nowadays among workers of art.

All pseudonyms can be divided into those that are related to the real name of an author and those that are not related to it. Pseudonyms of the first type include names that are hidden in different ways and can or cannot be easily deciphered. The second type of pseudonyms is distinguished by the functional meaning: some pseudonyms characterize one side of an author or another; other pseudonyms describe what an author is actually not – "literary masks"; and the third kind of pseudonyms only serves to provide anonimity (Dmitriev, "O psevdonimakh i ikh klassifikatsii" 21).

Certain pseudonyms appear without an author's knowledge or participation. Those are nicknames that become literary pen names; polemical names that are used to bring out an author's literary and ideological opponents; imaginary pseudonyms that appear in signatures of plagiarists; and pseudonyms that occur due to editors' errors.

Reasons for using pseudonyms

All pseudonyms can also be classified by the reasons why writers choose to have *noms de plume*. It is of great importance to state those reasons to further analyze specific examples of female writers' *noms de plume*. Out of all reasons discussed in literature, I single out the ones that are most relevant to my research.

Fear of persecution

One of the main reasons for taking a literary pseudonym or to write anonymously was to avoid persecution for accusatory works of art (Dmitriev, "Skryvshiie svoe imia" 9). In France, for example, in the 18th century Pierre Sylvain Maréchal published his

political and historical novel *Travels of Pythagoras* anonymously because of the lack of the freedom of speech. In his work, Maréchal criticized all forms of rules, especially monarchy, with the exception of republican rule. In Russia at the beginning of the 19th century Maréchal's novel was translated, but without indicating the name of either the author or the translator.

The first book that exposed the horrors and barbarity of serfdom in Russia, *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* was published in 1790 without the author's name. Nevertheless, Alexander Radishchev, the author of the book, was found, arrested, exiled to Siberia by Catherine II. Many of the Russian revolutionaries of the 19th century either published anonymously or invented pseudonyms: Wilhelm Kuchelbeker, Pushkin's lyceum friend, used the pseudonym V. Garpenko to publish his ballad *Kudeyar* and other poems; another Decembrist, Gavriil Batenkov, sometimes signed as $\sqrt{-1}$, a symbol of an imaginary unit which Batenkov himself seemed to be during Nicolas's rule because he was deprived of all the rights, imprisoned for 20 years, and subsequently exiled to Siberia (Dmitriev, "Skryvshiie svoe imia" 28).

Keeping their real names a secret made a big difference for writers. Nikolai Mikhailovskii wrote in 1875 that the inviolability of a pseudonym was an elementary concept of respectable literary society. "It is quite natural for various reasons for a writer to sign under a false name... Neglecting elementary moral standards can lead to very bad consequences" (Dmitriev "Skryvshiie svoe imia" 38). By bad consequences the publicist meant government persecution. In 1904 Alexander Amfiteatrov, who had several pseudonyms such as "Old Gentleman," and "Moskovsky Faust," agreed that a

pseudonym is like a defensive weapon that protects a writer from societal and governmental pressures, especially where there is no freedom of speech (Dmitriev 39).

Another Russian revolutionary and poet, Pyotr Yakubovich, never published under his real name. He recalled that censorial need made him, as well as the majority of Russian writers, resort to various compromises: “put blanks, write dots, weaken expressions, attribute his own poems to foreign authors, sometimes absolutely imaginary” (Yakubovich 43). Yakubovich used such authorial identities for himself as the Irish poet “O'Connor” and the Italian “Cesare Nikkolini.”

Additionally, when Zinaida Gippius was hiding under the male name Anton Krainii, Russian revolutionary Anatoly Lunacharsky, while debating with her, signed as “Anton Levy” or “Anton Novy” in order, first, to conceal his identity and, second, to mock Gippius for creating such a provocative pseudonym.

Finally, a well-known example of hiding under a pseudonym was Samuil Marshak who published his criticism of Belogvardeitsy (the Whites) while he was located on their territory during the Civil War. He chose “Doctor Friken” as his pen name. During those dangerous times, Marshak's pseudonym saved his life. As the times changed and fake names were no longer necessary, some writers did not wish to give them up because their readers already knew them by their pen names (Dmitriev, “Skryvshiie svoe imia” 46). Thus, writers sometimes attached their well-known pseudonyms to their real names.

Prejudice against “sochinitelstvo”

Another reason why pseudonyms were taken was prejudice against “sochintelstvo” (writing). In the 19th century Russia “sochinitelstvo” was considered an undignified activity for high-ranked personalities. Consequently, the members of

Nicolas's I family published their works in 1830 mysteriously entitled "*Муравейник. Литтературные листы, издаваемые неизвестным обществом неученых людей"* ("*The Anthill. Litterary sketches published by an unknown society of uneducated people"*) signed by either initials, asterisks, or anonymously.

Sometimes an author's relatives did not wish to see their names in print due to their prejudice against writing (Dmitriev, "Skryvshiie svoe imia" 50). As a result, "Molière" and "Voltaire" were the pseudonyms of Jean-Baptiste Poquelin and François-Marie Arouet, respectively. Women writers especially hesitated to use their fathers' names because female writing was treated even more negatively. For example, in the 19th century Anna Korvin-Krukovskaya (pseudonym "Yury Orbelov") had to use a male pen name due to her relationship to general Korvin-Krukovsky and his conservative views on writing. In the 20th century Boris Bugaev's father, a Moscow mathematics professor Nikolai Bugaev, did not want his son's poems to be published[3]. Thus, he took the pseudonym "Andrei Bely." Similarly, the 20th century female poet Anna Gorenko took her great-grandmother's name Akhmatova due to her father's discontent with her writing poetry.

Fear of the first failure

Quite a number of writers in different countries tried to mask their first attempts at writing by signing under pseudonyms or publishing anonymously. Ivan Rozanov, a historian of Russian poetry and bibliographer, wrote that the natural order is as follows: "first, a poet writes poems dreaming of fame but does not wish to be published; then he appears in print but humbly, sometimes under the initials or a pseudonym, and only then

[3] The question how and why Bugaev chose this exact nom de plume will be discussed in section 3 of Chapter 1.

– under his real name" (54). As if to follow this order, a well-known British writer Walter Scott published his first historical novel *Waverley* (1814) anonymously; his second novel *Kenilworth* he signed "Author of *Waverley*." Another British author Charles Dickens's journalist pieces were published as *Sketches by Boz* – Boz being a family nickname of his brother.

In the same century in Russia, twenty-year-old Nikolai Gogol wrote *Hans Kuchel-Garten*, a rhymed idyl, under the pseudonym "V. Alov." Gogol later bought the rest of copies of the book and eliminated them because of the negative reviews it received (Dupuy 346). Nikolai Nekrasov signed his first book of poems, *Mechty i zvuki* (*Dreams and Sounds*), with only his initials "N.N." He burned them after Zhukovsky and Belinsky responded disapprovingly. Even the provocative and daring Silver Age poet Vladimir Mayakovsky published two of his first poems in 1907, *Vesennyaya kartinka* (*Spring Picture*) and *Polno plakat nad nim* (*Enough of Crying Over Him*), under the sign "-ъ". For his later poems of 1912, however, published in *Poshscechina obshestvennomu vkusu* (*A Slap In The Face of Public Taste*), Mayakovsky signed under his real first and last name. Sergei Esenin also published his first poems under the pseudonyms "Meteor" and "Ariston" (Dmitriev, "Skryvshiie svoe imia" 68).

Namesakes

One of the main reasons to take a pseudonym was the existence of namesakes. It was particularly a problem when both personalities with the same last names were related to the literary world. For example, the little-known 19th-century Russian poet Alexei Zhukovsky used the pseudonym "E. Bernet" in order to not be confused with his famous contemporary, Vasili Zhukovsky. In the 20th century, journalist Ippolit Vasilevsky was

famous under the pen name “Bukva” (a “letter”), so his namesake feuilletonist Illia Vasilevsky chose the pseudonym “Ne-Bukva” (“not a letter”).

Even though the initials of namesakes often varied, writers still preferred to take on pseudonyms or at least add another name to their “popular” last name. For instance, besides the well-known Mikhail Sholokhov there was the Soviet writer Georgy Sholokhov who added “Sinyavsky” to his last name so that readers would not mix the two writers up. Sholokhov-Sinyavsky chose his pseudonym because of the village Sinyavsky where he was born (Dmitriev, “Skryvshiie svoe imia” 77).

Dissatisfaction with the “autonym”[4]

At times, writers considered their real names to be ordinary or were dissatisfied with the dissonance of the name; they therefore took on pseudonyms in hopes of more elegant or mystical pen names. They often chose foreign words, keeping Roman letters or transliterating them. For example, Nadezhda Buchinskaya, younger sister of the poetess Mirra Lokhvistkaya, chose “Teffi” as her pseudonym after a foolish boy whom she knew named “Stepan” and whom everybody called “Steffi” (Trubilova 14). After her first success with the public, however, during the interview with critics she could not admit her silly choice and agreed with a journalist's suggestion that she took it from Rudyard Kipling's book (“Taffy” from *Just-So Stories*).

Among the decadents, fanciful pseudonyms were in vogue. Lev Kobylinsky was known by the name of “Ellis,” Stefan Petrov chose “Grail Arel’sky” as his pen name, and Poliksena Solovyova, sister of the renowned Vladimir Solovyov, hated to be compared to her brother and to be constantly introduced as his sister, so she picked the musical term “Allegro” (Gippius, “Poliksena Solovyova” 118).

[4] one’s real name

Diplomatic considerations

Another reason why writers preferred to hide under pseudonyms was their artful prudence. For instance, Valeriy Bryusov published his poems in *Russkie simvolisty* (1894-95) under various pseudonyms ("V. Darov," "Zinaida Fuks," "K. Sozontov," and "V.A. Maslov") for the purpose of making an impression that there were a lot more poet-symbolists than there were in reality. Nikolai Gudzy said about Bryusov's pseudonyms that "the literary faces of Bryusov were caused by his desire to show that the young poetic school was represented by a great number of names, that it was not a whim of two-three poets, but a school, a literary movement that grouped around itself a sufficient amount of adherents" (187). On the other hand, writes Gudzy, this many-facedness related to the variety of Bryusov's styles that he tried to mask by means of using fake names (187).

Not only did Bryusov hide under various pen names in *Russkie simvolisty*, he also published his works in *Vesy* using such pseudonyms as "D. Sbirko," "Garmodii," "Pentaur," "Turist," "I. Smirnov," and "Enrico" (spelled in Roman letters).

Female pseudonyms taken by male writers

Some male writers took female names ("pseudogynyms") for the sake of mystification. For example, Voltaire had a great number of female pen names: "Fatéma," "Catherine Vadé," "Anne Dubourg," and others (Cushing 578). In 1913 Russian writer Valeriy Bryusov published a book of poems entitled *Stikhi Nelli (*Poems by/of Nelli*).* It opened with Bryusov's sonnet addressing a poetess: "Твои стихи – печальный опыт страстей ненужных, ложных слав…" ("Your poems are a sad experiment of unnecessary passions, false glory..."). With these ambiguous lines the readership as well

as critics could not decide whether poems were written by a new poetess ("Nelli") or devoted by a poet to her. In the meantime, Bryusov had an affair with Nadezhda Lvova ("Nelli," as Bryusov called her).

The truth was that these poems were written by him and dedicated to her, but Bryusov decided to publish them under an unknown name. The public was tricked and Bryusov was satisfied with the reaction, as Khodasevich wrote in his *Nekropol* (48). Khodasevich himself took on the female pen name "Elena Arbatskaya." Finally, Vladimir Nabokov was for a quite long period of time "Vladimir Sirin" – "sirin" being the name of a bird of paradise with a woman's face (Benchich 123).

Foreign names

Some foreign pseudonyms were taken as part of mystification – those are called "pseudoethnonyms," and they were used to mask the true nationality of writers. Soviet poet Daniil Yuvachev used English last names such as "Kharms" and "Charms," sometimes German ("Schusterling"), and sometimes French ("Chardame," "Dandan"). Elizaveta Dmitrieva used the Franco-Spanish pen name "Cherubina de Gabriak," while Yuri Slezkin published his novels under the pseudonym "George de Larme" ("of tears"), the French translation of his real name (Dmitriev, "Skryvshiie svoe imia" 148).

Male pseudonyms taken by women writers

Female writers have historically had very strong reasons for hiding under fake male names ("pseudoandronyms"). 19th century female British and Russian writers were afraid of editors' rejection of the work that belonged to a woman; they were also afraid of being harshly criticized for the same reason. In bourgeois society of that time there was a negative attitude towards women's literary work. A woman was supposed to serve as a

muse for a male's creative activity and nothing else. In 19th century Britain, the Brontë sisters took on the male pseudonyms "Currer," "Ellis" and "Acton Bell" because of critics' prejudice against women writers; another female novelist Mary Ann Evans took "George Eliot" as her pseudonym for the same reason.

In France, Aurore Dupin was the renowned "George Sand;" for her pseudonym, she took part of her friend Jules Sandeau's name (Dmitriev, "Skryvshiie svoe imia" 162). In 19th century Russia, as well, women tended to use male names. Catherine II, for example, was published in satirical journals under such pseudonyms as "Patrikey Pravdomyslov," "Pyotr Ugadaev," and "Lyubomudrov iz Yaroslavly."

Even though by taking male pseudonyms women writers managed to hide their sex, critics still noticed the femininity of their writings. About Russian prose writer Elena Apreleva (male pseudonym "E. Ardov") literary historian Semyon Vengerov said: "The talent is typically feminine... By dwelling upon little things of secondary importance, she forgets to motivate the main points of her story... It completely lacks the ability to argue convincingly" (374).

In the 20th century, as Barbara Walker writes, "the notion of a female poet could be seen as an offense against good taste in Russian modernism" (Walker 67) as women were supposed to have traditional domestic roles of wives and mothers. Svetlana Boym agrees that "the 'poetess' was considered inherently undignified, an 'unconscious parody' of the poet" (Boym 194). Women writers signed even their critical essays under male pseudonyms: Vera Inber used the pen name "Stary John" in her articles about theater in *Novy Zritel*; Marietta Shaginyan was published under "P. Samoilov" in *Zhizn' iskusstva*;

and finally, Zinaida Gippius used the male pen name “Anton Krainii” to publish her critical essays (Walker 68).

The common reason for the variety of pen names in the Silver Age

After the Russian October revolution the fashion of having a nom de plume still existed and expanded with the emergence and development of the Russian Symbolist movement. The Symbolists believed that the elements of symbolism should be decipherable in the writer's signature. According to Naum Sindalovskii, acquiring a pseudonym became an element of self-fashioning for Symbolists:

> At the turn of 19th-20th centuries, a pseudonym would be taken by the followers of a new literary movement – Symbolism, and mainly by poets who raised the second name to the rank of a sign, a symbol, that is easily read, remembered and recognized not only by the contemporaries, but also [...] distant descendants. We know them all well ...: Andrei Bely, Sasha Cherny, Maksim Gorky, Artem Vesely and many others – the list is endless. (Sindalovskii 217)

Truly, the word combination “Boris Bugaev” compared to “Andrei Bely” could not evoke many associations that “Bely” could. Although the last name “Bely” was chosen by Solovyov due to a simple play on sound, as mentioned above, the color served the poet right in bringing all kinds of symbols with it: “The rich symbolism of white embodied the pseudonym with plenty of [...] meanings,” Benchich writes (122). “The white color is, first and foremost, an absolute color that lacks nuances and symbolizes everything timeless, unchangeable and eternal” – all that the Symbolists sought in poetry (Benchich 122).

The real name “Alexei Peshkov” lost hands-down to its pseudonym “Maksim Gorky.” As Benchich notes, Peshkov’s pen name “Gorky” matches the main themes of his early prose which “[…] describes the bitter fate of underclass tramps of Russia”

(Benchich 121). Nevertheless, attitudes towards the trend of ubiquitous pseudonym-creation were not always positive. In 1938 an unknown author under the pseudonym "Poet without a pseudonym" wrote in the journal *Krasnaya nov*:

> Among contemporary poets [...] pseudonym-creation is strongly developed. Time and again, in the same town we meet such pseudonyms as "Bytovoi" ("Domestic"), "Bezbrezhnyi" ("Boundless"), "Buinyi" ("Wild"), "Surovyi" ("Severe"), "Khmelnoi" ("Drunk"), "Khmuryi" ("Frowning"), and "Neschastnyi" ("Miserable"). One author even signed "Monokl diavola" ("Monocle of Devil"). This pseudonym-creation seems to be somewhat frivolous, caricatured, even unhealthy." (Dmitriev, "Skryvshiie svoe imia" 48)

Russian philosopher Sergei Bulgakov supported this critical view and expressed his indignation at the use of fake names:

> […] In literary pseudonym-creation there is no "spiritual catastrophe" of renaming, on the contrary, it is being simulated. It is based on the objective lie and pretense: the change of a name is not at all motivated, it happens randomly and deceptively. We are dealing with an actor who <...> by simulating his transformation remains himself behind this mask and is aware of his pretense. (Benchich 117)

Combining these two opinions, it can be concluded that during the Silver Age there was no extreme need to have a pseudonym, especially for male writers who, in fact, tended to employ one, two or even more noms de plume for various reasons. The common ground for having a literary name for both men and women was that pseudonym-creation fit right into the environment of *mifotvorchestvo* (myth-making) which in one way or another touched all poets and poetesses of the Silver Age.

The focus of the next three chapters is on three women writers of the Silver Age who took on pseudonyms and how those pseudonyms affected their life and literary career: Elizaveta Dmitrieva as "Cherubina de Gabriak," Zinaida Gippius as "Anton Krainii," and Anna Gorenko as "Akhmatova." All three poetesses intended to create a

certain image associated with their chosen pseudonym, yet their life stories had quite different outcomes as the pseudonyms had different effects on their creative activity. The pseudonym “Cherubina de Gabriak,” for instance, was the opposite of its owner, Elizaveta Dmitrieva, starting with the very name and ending with the image that it created around itself. “Anton Krainii,” on the contrary, matched perfectly the androgynous personality of Zinaida Gippius. Finally, “Akhmatova” was the pseudonym taken in the hope of a more poetic and promising name than the birth name of Anna Gorenko.

CHAPTER II

ELIZAVETA DMITRIEVA AS "CHERUBINA DE GABRIAK"

Я до осени жила лучшие дни моей жизни. Здесь родилась Черубина.
(De Gabriak 25)

[I lived the best days of my life until the fall. Cherubina was born here.]

Где Херувим, свое мне давший имя,
Мой знак прошедших дней?
Каких фиалковых полей
Касаешься крылами ты своими?
(De Gabriak 41)

[Where is the Cherub who gave me its name,
The sign of past days?
Which violet fields
Are you touching with your wings?]

The story of Elizaveta Dmitrieva/Cherubina de Gabriak was one of the most extraordinary examples of mystification of the Symbolist era. The poetess Cherubina de Gabriak appeared in Russian literature in 1909 and, according to Marina Tsvetaeva, September-November of 1909 in Russian literature became the era of Cherubina. The fall of a new literary "star" happened as fast as her appearance. The pseudonym was revealed and behind it was a woman that did not meet the expectations of the literary audience. Later on, Cherubina's poetry started to be considered secondary to the literary scandal that surrounded her name (Tsvetaeva 12).

The origin of the Franco-Spanish pseudonym "Cherubina de Gabriak" had little to do with its bearer Elizaveta Dmitrieva. Born into a poor noble family, Dmitrieva had no Spanish blood; her father was half Swede and her mother was half Ukrainian. Until she was 16, Elizaveta suffered from numerous sicknesses; she used to spend months in unconsciousness. "My first memory in life: the return to life after hours of fainting –

mother's face leaning on me with her amber eyes and the sound of a chime," Dmitrieva wrote in her autobiography (De Gabriak 267). After being sick with diphtheria, Elizaveta lost her sight almost for a year; then she had tuberculosis of the bones that left her limping for the rest of her life. All these misfortunes caused a young poetess to mature very soon, especially inwardly, and to start having thoughts of death:

> In my childhood, at the age of 14-15, I dreamed of becoming a saint and I was glad to be sick with a dark, unknown disease and to be so close to death. I was immersed in darkness for ten months, I was blind, I was nine years old. I wasn't at all afraid of death and I am not now. I wanted to die at seven to see God and Devil. And I still feel the same. The other world is forever attractive to me. (De Gabriak 268)

Elizaveta Dmitrieva was "raised" by diseases – hence her inclination to mysticism, dreaminess, immersion into her inner world, and responsiveness to the suffering of others. At an early age, she was absorbed in books, for the most part Spanish and French. Sickness and loneliness made her inner world extremely complicated and provided her poetry with the motifs of life, death, and God. Dmitrieva started writing poetry in 1904 but to publish her first poems was not yet possible. In St. Petersburg, she attended public art exhibitions, lectures, listened to performances of poets and met the man who was destined to play an important and, at the same time, fatal role in her life – the poet, critic, and artist Maximilian Voloshin.

Voloshin together with Dmitrieva made up a complicated pseudonym as well as an image of a mystical poetess. Here is what Voloshin wrote about the emergence of the name Gabriak:

> Gabriak was a sea devil found in Koktebel, on the shore, opposite the Cape Malchin. He was pulled out by the waves from the root of the vine and had one arm, one leg, and a dog's face with a kind expression. He lived with me in the office, on a shelf with the French poets, until I gave it to Lilia (*Elizaveta Dmitrieva*). The name was given to him in Koktebel.

> We dug through the devil's calendar, and finally settled on the name "Gabriakh." It was the devil to protect from evil spirits. This role fit the good-natured expression of our devil's face. That summer Lilia wrote nice simple verses, and it was then that I gave her Devil Gabriak. (Voloshin 141)

It was almost symbolic that Voloshin presented the crippled devil to Dmitrieva. She herself was not an attractive woman, as noted by many of her contemporaries: "She was a little girl with thoughtful eyes and a bulging forehead. She limped since her birth and treated herself as a freak since her childhood" (Voloshin 10); "A humble school teacher, Elizaveta Ivanovna Dmitrieva, with a small physical disability – as far as I remember – she was limping" (Tsvetaeva 20); "She walked into the room, limping a lot, a short, quite stout, dark-haired woman with a big head, extremely budging forehead, and truly scary mouth with fanged teeth. She was unusually unattractive" (Makovsky 265).

Voloshin's gift to Dmitrieva, and later a lucky charm that they used to sign her first published works, was in no way offensive for the poetess. On the contrary, Dmitrieva was used to having such "toys": "In her childhood, all her toys had one leg because her brother and sister said: 'Since you are limping, you should have limping toys'" (Voloshin 24). Therefore, the imp matched her looks and her own perception of herself. Only later, in 1909, Gabriak became her new identity.

In 1909, the editor of the famous "Apollon" was Sergei Makovskii who rejected Elizaveta Dmitrieva – a humble, not elegant and limping poetess that could not meet his needs. Marina Tsvetaeva wrote in her *Zhivoe o zhivom* (*Live about the Live*) about women's chances of being published during those times:

> This discrepancy, which she could not but realize and from which she suffered, made others suffer as well: George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte, Julie de Lespinasse, Mary Webb and other unattractive favorites of gods. […] The ugliness of her face and life cannot but interfere in her talent, her free

> self-revelation. The confrontation of two mirrors: notebooks where her soul lies, and mirrors where her face and her life are. Notebooks in which she looks like what she is, and mirrors where she does not resemble herself. […] The beautiful are loved; the ugly are not. That is the law […] of the editorial desk of Petersburg's "Apollon." (Tsvetaeva 30)

Tsvetaeva indicates that the true personality of a poetess lies within and does not show outwardly: "Notebooks in which she looks like what she is, and mirrors where she does not resemble herself." As Tsvetaeva claims, the editorial office of "Apollon" could not discern a talented and passionate poetess behind Dmitrieva's unremarkable appearance – and that prevented her from self-revelation (30).

Thus, Voloshin and Dmitrieva decided to invent a nickname and send her poems in a letter to Makovsky. The letter was written in a sophisticated style in French, and as a pseudonym they took "Gabriak" for luck. In order to sound more aristocratic, the devil indicated his name with the first initial "Ch." ("chort" – an imp), and the last name had an additional particle "de" in the French manner: "Ч. де Габриак" ("Ch. de Gabriak"). Eventually, the "Ch." was revealed and Voloshin and Dmitrieva had to find a female name that would start with a "Ch" – Elizaveta recalled Bret Harte's character "who lived on the ship, was a sweetheart of many sailors, and had the name Cherubina" – so the choice was made (Voloshin 57). Truly, there was a story written by an American author Bret Harte (1836-1902) entitled *A Secret of Telegraph Hill*. The heroine that Elizaveta Dmitrieva remembered was a young girl that, in fact, was characterized by quite different features from that of Dmitrieva:

> "My daughter Cherubina, Mr. Bly."
> The fair owner of the rustling skirt, which turned out to be a pretty French print, had appeared at the doorway. She was a tall, slim blonde, with a shy, startled manner, as of a penitent nun who was suffering for some conventual transgression – a resemblance that was heightened by her short-cut hair, that might have been cropped as if for punishment. A

> certain likeness to her mother suggested that she was qualifying for that saint's ascetic shawl – subject, however, to rebellious intervals, indicated in the occasional sidelong fires of her gray eyes. Yet the vague impression that she knew more of the world than her mother, and that she did not look at all as if her name was Cherubina, struck Bly in the same momentary glance. (Harte 146-147)

Compared to Cherubina in Harte's short story, Dmitrieva did not possess the slimness or blondness that the young girl had, though the poetess did have bright eyes that were noticed by people around her: "[…] shining, clear, untiringly asking eyes […] the same look, resistant and unblinking" (Voloshin 5). Nonetheless, Dmitrieva, by choosing the name of an opposite character and appearance, was aware that the pseudonym and associations with it would start an intricate and perhaps dangerous mystification.

Beside the initial reason for changing "Ch." into a female name, it can be argued that not quite at random did Dmitrieva choose "Cherubina" as the first name of her complex pseudonym. Regardless of Harte's character, the name "Cherubim" (in Russian "херувим") which served as a derivative for "Cherubina" has its own meaning and power. Cherubim (the singular form is "Cherub") in the Bible were heavenly beings that were believed to rank higher than angels. In this regard, the description and meaning of the name "Cherubim" were given by Kliment Aleksandriisky:

> The name of Cherub means "great knowledge." All together they had twelve wings as an indication of the sensual world, twelve Zodiac signs, and the course of time defined by them. The depiction of the Cherubim has a symbolic meaning: the face is a symbol of soul, the wings mean actions of the forces from left and right, and the mouth means the hymn of glory in eternal contemplation. (71)

Even though Dmitrieva seemed to disregard the etymology of her pseudonym at first, later in her poems it is obvious how the name gets woven into her life, poetry and

destiny. Coming from the original idea of "Ch." being an initial letter of "chort" (devil), further on to a female character who did not resemble Dmitrieva either in looks or in character, combining that with the oxymoron of "god" and "devil" in one name – the heavenly Cherubim and the imp Gabriak, the pseudonym "Cherubina de Gabriak" made the life of Elizaveta Dmitrieva as complicated and conflicting as was her pen name.

Under the supervision and guidance of Voloshin, Dmitrieva wrote poems using her mysterious pseudonym, representing herself as a proud beauty and passionate Catholic, who was sinfully in love with Christ. She allowed herself to write passionately as it was not expected from the ordinary school teacher Lilia Dmitrieva. In 1909, the collection, sent by mail to "Apollon," struck its editor, Sergei Makovskii and the poems were immediately printed.

Makovskii himself was deeply interested in and intrigued by the rising star. After reading Cherubina's first received poem, he said to Maximilian Voloshin: "Now you see, Maximilian Alexandrovich, I always told you that you pay too little attention to women of high society. Look at the poems that I received from one of them! Such collaborators are needed in "Apollon!" (Voloshin 44). Little did Makovskii know that Voloshin had paid attention to Dmitrieva, the complete opposite of "svestkaia zhenshina," and was directly related to the creation of one under the name of Cherubina. The mystification gained momentum as more readers acquainted themselves with Cherubina's poetry and imaged a captivating beauty that would match her works. Barry Scherr notes,

> […] as word of Cherubina de Gabriak filtered out to others on the *Apollon* staff, everyone was infatuated with both the mysterious figure and her unusual poems. The alacrity with which male writers came to believe in the image of a brilliant and beautiful "unknown poetess" made the hoax more successful than either Voloshin or Dmitrieva could have imagined. (483)

Along with winning male writers' zealous attention, Cherubina was printed in the same journal as then prosperous Bruisov, Bal'mont, Ivanov, Annenskii, Sologub, and Kuzmin. Moreover, the foreign pseudonym triggered various and at times ridiculous assumptions about Cherubina's life. Makovskii, for instance, claimed that he could determine the fate and a person's character by their penmanship:

> "Would you like me to tell you what I have found out judging by yours (*penmanship*)?" He said that Cherubina's father was French from southern France; her mother was Russian and she was raised in the monastery in Toledo and so on. Lilia was amazed at how he could know all that. Thus, we learned a lot of information about Cherubina's biography which we subsequently stuck to. (Voloshin 46)

For Voloshin, it was an amusing game and a personal victory over the preconception of his contemporary male writers and critics. Dmitrieva, however, felt the pressure of this extremely intense masquerade and her feelings were revealed in a number of Cherubina's poems.

In general, Cherubina's poetry is characterized by the eclecticism of her mystical suffering. Being the heroine of her own poems, she sees visions and hears voices, and also undergoes various metamorphoses. At times, she is "цветущий папоротник" (a blooming fern), then she is a reflection in the mirror, in the slough, or in the well; and sometimes she is a lonely tsarina. On the whole, the image of Cherubina incorporated a romantic character, demonically proud, shocking, passionate, and tragic at the same time. Among these poetic traits that Cherubina possessed and forms that she took, there was an apparent duality of personality that occurred in Dmitrieva's early poems (1909-1910). For "Apollon's" editors this duality simply added a veil of mystery to the image of a Spanish-Catholic diva. For Dmitrieva, however, this was a torturous battle between her

true self and the female character that she created. The pseudonym appears in the poem *"С моею царственной мечтой" ("With my royal dream,"* 1909-1910) as if it is meant to be the name of another person that Dmitrieva talks about:

> С моею царственной мечтой
> Одна брожу по всей вселенной,
> С моим презреньем к жизни тленной,
> С моею горькой красотой.
> Царицей призрачного трона
> Меня поставила судьба...
> Венчает гордый выгиб лба
> Червонных кос моих корона.
> Но спят в угаснувших веках
> Все те, кто были бы любимы,
> Как я, печалию томимы,
> Как я, одни в своих мечтах.
> И я умру в степях чужбины,
> Не разомкну заклятый круг.
> К чему так нежны кисти рук,
> Так тонко имя Черубины? (De Gabriak 68)
>
> [With my royal dream
> I am walking alone along the universe,
> With my contempt towards perishable life,
> With my bitter beauty.
> Into a tsarina of an illusory throne
> I was made by fate…
> The proud curve of my forehead
> Is crowned with my black hair.
> Yet in faded centuries
> All that could be loved are sleeping,
> Like I, they are sad,
> Like I, they are lonely in their dreams.
> And I will die in the foreign land,
> Won't unlock the sworn circle.
> Why are the wrists so gentle,
> Why is the name of Cherubina delicate?]

The lyrical persona of this poem is experiencing utter loneliness and alienation from the whole world. In the first four lines, Dmitrieva herself can be recognized by the mentioning of her looks ("bitter beauty") and disappointment with life ("With my

contempt towards perishable life"). She is lonely because no one is able to understand what suffering she is destined to endure in order to pretend to be someone she is not: "Into a tsarina of an illusory throne | I was made by fate..." Thus, at first it seems that Dmitrieva is hiding behind the mask of Cherubina, but in the last stanza she all of a sudden talks about Cherubina as if she was another woman also present in the poem. Dmitrieva's destiny is to die and be forgotten ("And I will die in the foreign land, | Won't unlock the sworn circle") whereas Cherubina will remain beautiful and an eternal mystery ("Why are the wrists so gentle, | Why is the name of Cherubina delicate?"). It is clear that the poetess fears being neglected and that the only thing that will be remembered is her delicate pseudonym ("тонко имя Черубины"), yet the physical feature of another woman ("the wrists") is the evidence of Dmitrieva's inner fears and perhaps even paranoia. This claim can be supported by another Dmitrieva's poem of the same period "*В слепые ночи новолунья*" ("*In the blind nights of the new moon")*:

В слепые ночи новолунья,
Глухой тревогою полна,
Завороженная колдунья,
Стою у темного окна.
Стеклом удвоенные свечи
И предо мною, и за мной,
И облик комнаты иной
Грозит возможностями встречи.
В темно-зеленых зеркалах
Обледенелых ветхих окон
Не мой, а чей-то бледный локон
Чуть отражен, и смутный страх
Мне сердце алой нитью вяжет.
Что, если дальняя гроза
В стекле мне близкий лик покажет
И отразит ее глаза?
Что, если я сейчас увижу
Углы опущенные рта
И предо мною встанет та,
Кого так сладко ненавижу?

Но окон темная вода
В своей безгласности застыла,
И с той, что душу истомила,
Не повстречаюсь никогда. (De Gabriak 80)

[In the blind nights of the new moon,
Filled with a mute anxiety,
Bewitched by a sorceress,
I am standing by a dark window.
The candles, doubled by the glass,
Shine both before and behind me,
And the strange appearance of the room
Threatens with the chance of a meeting.
In the dark-green mirrors
Of the ice-covered, ramshackle windows,
Not mine, but someone's pale curl
Is barely reflected, and a vague fear
Constricts my heart with a crimson thread –
What if a distant thunderstorm
Should show me a familiar face in the window
And reflect her eyes?
What if I shall presently see
The lowered corners of the mouth,
And before me will stand that woman
Whom I hate so sweetly?
But the dark water of my windows
Has frozen in its silence,
And that one who has exhausted my soul,
I shall never meet.][5]

In this poem, the lyrical persona is frightened from the very beginning: "Filled with a mute anxiety." She is scared to see someone she does not know yet ("Threatens with the chance of a meeting"; "Not mine, but someone's pale curl"); at the same time, the heroine is filled with contradictory feelings towards the stranger and cannot help but be anxious to see someone familiar: "What if a distant thunderstorm | Should show me a familiar face in the window | And reflect her eyes;" "And before me will stand that woman, | Whom I hate so sweetly." Judging by this poem, it can be argued that Dmitrieva

[5] Translated by Temira Pachmuss, *Women Writers in Russian Modenism. An Anthology*. Univeristy of Illinois Press (1978): 259.

feels “sweet hatred” towards her pseudonym as well as the poetic image that became her second “I” because, on the one hand, she secretly desires to meet Cherubina and, on the other hand, the fear of seeing this imaginary person made her feel the urge to end this prolonged deception.

Voloshin’s memoirs confirm this argument: “Lilia, who was always terrified by ghosts, was shocked. It seemed to her that she should meet a live Cherubina who will demand an answer from her” (Voloshin 17). Therefore, Dmitrieva perceived her pseudonym as an autonomous living being that had the power of frightening and torturing its owner. Even though Cherubina’s poetry turned out to gain high recognition in the era of Symbolism due to its otherworldly motifs and a great amount of symbols, its cost was Dmitrieva’s mental disorder and internal suffering.

In Cherubina de Gabriak’s early and later poems there can be found yet another manifestation of the pseudonym. The union of God and Devil in one name resulted in the creation of verses about God and Devil. Some poems convey Cherubina’s mystical, almost criminal, love for God. She was openly sensual and consciously striving for a sin. Cherubina almost declared herself a bride of Christ (*Твои руки – Your Hands* 1909):

Эти руки со мной неотступно
Средь ночной тишины моих грез,
Как отрадно, как сладко-преступно
Обвивать их гирляндами роз.
Я целую божественных линий
На ладонях священный узор...
(Запевает далеких Эринний
В глубине угрожающий хор.)
Как люблю эти тонкие кисти
И ногтей удлиненных эмаль.
О, загар этих рук золотистей,
Чем Ливанских полудней печаль.
Эти руки, как гибкие грозди,
Все сияют в камнях дорогих.

Но оставили острые гвозди
Чуть заметные знаки на них. (De Gabriak 74)

[Amidst my reveries' nightly silence
These hands with me remain;
To entwine them with roses is so
Delightful, so forbiddenly sweet.
I kiss the sacred pattern
Of divine lines on the palms…
(While in the depths a menacing choir
of distant Erinyes begins to sing.)
How I do love these slender hands
And the enamel of the lengthy nails.
Oh, the tan of these arms is more golden than
The sadness of noon in the Levant.
These hands, like pliant clusters,
Still shine in costly stones.
Although they bare the scarcely
Visible traces of sharp nails.] (Scherr 490)

In this poem, the name of Christ is not mentioned but is explicit: "I kiss the sacred pattern | Of divine lines on the palms;" "Although they bare the scarcely | Visible traces of sharp nails." Cherubina imagines herself with Christ face to face – not as a submissive disciple, but a lustful lover who dared to touch and even kiss Christ's hands in "sweet-criminal" passion ("To entwine them with roses is so | Delightful, so forbiddenly sweet"). Her love for Christ is physical and possessive: "Amidst my reveries' nightly silence | These hands with me remain;" "How I do love these slender hands | And the enamel of the lengthy nails;" "These hands, like pliant clusters." For Dmitrieva, with her humble and fearful character, it was almost impossible to create such poems; Cherubina de Gabriak, however, could challenge the religious norms with her blasphemous verses just as much as her name combined both angelic and devilish characteristics.

Another example of Cherubina's sinful love for God is the poem "*Мечтою близка я гордыни"* (*"In my dreams I am close to arrogance"*) (1909-1910). In this poem, Cherubina does not abandon the dream of being physically intimate with Christ:

Мечтою близка я гордыни,
Во мне есть соблазны греха,
Не ведаю чистой святыни…
Плоть Христова, освяти меня!
Как дева угасшей лампады,
Отвергшая зов Жениха,
Стою у небесной ограды…
Боль Христова, исцели меня!
И дерзкое будит раздумье
Для павших безгласная дверь:
Что, если за нею безумье?..
Страсть Христова, укрепи меня!
Объятая трепетной дрожью, —
Понять не хочу я теперь,
Что мудрость считала я ложью…
Кровь Христова, опьяни меня! (De Gabriak 73)

[In my dreams I am close to arrogance,
Within me – are the temptations of sin,
I do not know chaste blessedness…
The flesh of Christ, sanctify me!
Like the maiden who extinguished the icon lamp,
Rejecting the Bridegroom's summoning,
I stand at the heavenly fence…
The pain of Christ, heal me!
And the mute door will arouse
A daring thought in the fallen ones:
What if beyond it there is insanity?...
The passion of Christ, strengthen me!
Overcome with an anxious tremor –
I now do not wish to accept
That I considered wisdom a lie…
The blood of Christ, intoxicate me!][6]

The sin ("grekh") and holiness ("sviatynia") interlace in the desire of the lyrical persona to become Christ's bride: "Like the maiden who extinguished the icon lamp, |

[6] Translated by Temira Pachmuss, *Women Writers in Russian Modenism*. *An Anthology*. Univeristy of Illinois Press (1978): 256.

Rejecting the Bridegroom's summoning, I stand at the heavenly fence." Cherubina realizes the impudence of her intentions yet she wants nothing less but Christ as her lover: "And the mute door will arouse | A daring thought in the fallen ones: | What if beyond it there is insanity? | The passion of Christ, strengthen me." Her burning, almost animal-like, passion gets control over her as she finishes: "Overcome with an anxious tremor […] The blood of Christ, intoxicate me!" Thus, the pseudonym seems to have completely taken over the poetess's mind and soul and allowed her to translate her secret dreams into words. One might think that it is yet again Cherubina who is capable of having such strong feelings and expressing them so openly, and not Dmitrieva. Even so, it is important to note that Elizaveta Dmitrieva at a very early age dreamed of being close to God, as discussed at the beginning of the chapter: "[…] I wanted to die at 7 to see God and Devil. And I still feel the same. The other world is forever attractive to me" (De Gabriak 318). Therefore, it can be concluded that her love for God turned into something more intimate and bold as she was growing up and she could voice it only under the suitable pseudonym of Cherubina de Gabriak.

Despite Cherubina's sensational appearance and audacious poetry, her demystification caused the poetess deep emotional trauma and estrangement from the poetic world and Maximilian Voloshin. She let go off her pseudonym that had brought her an instant of fame and the eternity of grief. In her 1925 poem "*Где Херувим, свое мне давший имя"* (*"Where is the Cherub who gave me its name"*) she feels abandoned even by her second "I", her double, her "reflection in the mirror," as the scandal around her mystification denigrated her true name and cast doubt on the authorship of her poems:

> Где Херувим, свое мне давший имя,
> Мой знак прошедших дней?

Каких фиалковых полей
Касаешься крылами ты своими?
И в чьих глазах
Опять зажег ты пламя,
И в чьих руках
Дрожит тобой развернутое знамя?
И голосом твоим
Чьи говорят уста, спаленные отравой?
Кого теперь, кого ведешь за славой?
Скажи мне, Херувим.
И чья душа идет путем знакомым
Мучительной игры?
Ведь это ты зажег у стен Содома
Последние костры! (De Gabriak 177)

[Where is the Cherub who gave me its name,
The sign of the past days?
Which violet fields
Are you touching with your wings?
And in whose eyes
Did you light the flame,
And in whose hands
Is your open banner trembling?
Whose poisonous mouth is speaking
With your voice?
Whom now, whom are you leading toward glory?
Tell me, Cherub.
Whose soul took the familiar path
Of a torturous game?
It was you, after all, who at the walls of Sodom
Burned the last fires!]

By admitting that she took the pseudonym and was involved in a “torturous game”, Dmitrieva comes to the realization that the name was more of a devil than an angel. The “Kheruvim” that was supposed to protect her with its wings (Where is the Cherub who gave me its name, […] Which violet fields | Are you touching with your wings) turned out to be a deceitful creature that led to fame (“Whom now, whom are you leading toward glory”) and brought her to misfortune (“Whose soul took the familiar path | Of a torturous game”). Moreover, the “kheruvim” punished Dmitrieva for her sins – just

like God burned the city of Sodom for its sinful habitants ("It was you, after all, who at the walls of Sodom | Burned the last fires!").

In the story of Elizaveta Dmitrieva the pseudonym played a fatal role from the beginning till the end of its life. "Cherubina de Gabriak" was created in the minds of the two poets, became part of Dmitrieva's identity, produced a sensation among readers and critics, became the symbol of literary mystification and even marked the era of Symbolism in Russia, but most importantly, it showed how dangerous and destructive games with one's true self could be – just like the danger of uniting the antithetical in one name.

CHAPTER III

ZINAIDA GIPPIUS AS “ANTON KRAINII”

> Она несомненно искусственно выработала в себе две внешние черты: спокойствие и женственность. Внутри она не была спокойна. И она не была женщиной.
> Nina Berberova (Nikolukin 256)

> [She has undoubtedly artificially elaborated two external features in herself: calmness and femininity. On the inside she was not calm. Nor was she a woman.]

> Мне всегда казалось, практичнее самые дорогие мне мысли высказывать под меняющимся псевдонимом, под чужим именем (в крайнем случае осторожно «внушать» постороннему лицу). Только в этих случаях можно надеяться услышать беспримесную оценку их (а в этом, порою, очень нуждаешься), или даже надеяться на прочтение. Ведь полусознательно мы прокидываем почти все, подписанное женским именем.
> Zinaida Gippius (“Zverebog. O polovom voprose” 17)

> [It always seemed to me that it was more practical to speak the most precious thoughts under a changing pseudonym, under someone else's name (at least, carefully “instilled” into the third party). Only in this case one can hope to hear their unalloyed evaluation (you really need this at times), or even hope to be read at all. Because subconsciously we overthrow almost everything signed by a female name.]

The question of gender identity took a central place in Zinaida Gippius’s personal life and literary career. Masculinity and femininity were intertwined throughout her life leaving readers and critics in confusion regarding Gippius’s works and private affairs. Even though as a poetess Gippius kept her real name, as a critic she used numerous male pseudonyms. Moreover, in poetry Gippius played with gender, as well, using feminine forms of verbs and adjectives in some poems and masculine in others, or both in one poem. Gennadii Evgrafov writes in the introductory part of Krainii’s *Literaturny dnevnik* (*Literary Diary*):

> She loved wearing men's clothes, like Jeanne d'Arc [...]. In her poems and articles she talked about herself in the masculine gender and signed under male pseudonyms [...]. Many were annoyed by that, some were

> intimidated, and others were repelled by that. And she, never paying attention to any of them [...] was the only one, the one she could be: externally calm and feminine, attracting men and women, internally restless, drawn to the mysticism of "sex," solving the problems of "metaphysics of love," and meditating on God. (18)

It is true to say that in her life Gippius often wore masks – adopting male and female costumes, having relationships with both men and women, entering into a love triangle between her, Dmitrii Filosofov, and Dmitrii Merezhkovskii – masks that misled people around her. Those "masks", however, were not false images of Gippius; rather, they all fit into her complex personality and revealed themselves in her works as well as her male pen names.

To try to understand why Gippius chose male pseudonyms to sign her critical works and so often switched gender in poetry, it is significant to take a look at her article *Zverebog* (*Beast-god*), written in 1908, where the answer to the gender question could be found.

In her article *Zverebog*, Gippius expresses her view on sexuality and gender. Gippius believes that in every individual, regardless of their sex, there are both femininity and masculinity:

> There are two principles: Masculine and Feminine. In reality no human individual is the medium of either principle exclusively: i.e. there is no pure man or pure woman. Every living human being is an uneven mixture of these two principles [...]. A personality is a product of some harmony of the two principles in one individual, and, perhaps, we will find that the extent of a personality's perception depends on the extent of this harmony; but we will in no way decide to claim that an individual with the prevailing masculinity will necessarily be a more outstanding personality or even a more creative power. On the contrary, a too "masculine" individual is removed from being a "Personality" as far as a too "feminine" one. (Gippius, "Zverebog. O polovom voprose" 50)

For Gippius, the harmony of the masculine and the feminine makes for a complete personality. The poetess, nonetheless, does not accept a "gendered view of artistic creation. Instead, she encouraged the view of writers as individuals with complex personalities and rejected the idea of evaluating writing along gender lines" (Rosenthal 140).

In this respect, Gippius also discusses in her *Zverebog* why one of her poems was unfairly criticized and essentially called "pornography"[7]: "If this poem was written by anyone, only a male, nobody would think of looking for "sex" here, and consequently pornography. [...] But a woman! A woman and sex are inseparable, they are one" (Gippius 51). Gippius, unlike other female poetesses of her time, used a pseudonym only for her criticism – and not for poetry. Her poems, however, would be published under an ambiguous name as well. Gippius wrote in a letter to Nina Berberova: "[…] my signature is, of course, Z. Gippius; I have never signed as 'Zinaida' in my life" (Gippius, "Pisma k Berberovoi i Khodasevichu" 8). Indeed, Gippius chose to reveal only her last German name "Gippius" that could have both masculine and feminine grammatical gender in Russian as if to emphasize that she did not wish to be perceived as a woman or a man but as a personality. Therefore, she intended to gain a foothold in the literary world as a poet, critic, and polemicist, to be heard and treated as equal among male writers. While her male-looking signature was soon deciphered, the pseudonyms that she used for her critical writings kept her identity in secret for a longer period of time.

It is well-known that Zinaida Gippius used various masculine names as her pseudonyms to sign her critical essays. She was not the only one. As Charlotte Rosenthal

[7] About a poem *Боль* (*Pain*) written in 1906 (http://rupoem.ru/gippius/krasnym-uglem-tmu.aspx)

says, “at the turn of the century it was still so accepted that ‘rationality’ and ‘objectivity’ were ‘masculine’ attributes that when writers such as Zinaida Gippius, Larisa Reisner, Nadezhda Pavlovich, and Avgusta Damanskaia wrote literary criticism, they used masculine pseudonyms: ‘Anton Krainii,’ ‘Leo Rinus,’ ‘Mikhail Ivanov,’ and ‘Arsenii Merich,’ respectively” (134).

Zinaida Gippius had quite a number of male pen names. Here are the examples of her most famous ones: А.; Роман Аренский (Roman Arenskii); Никита Вечер (Nikita the Evening); В. Витовт (V. Vitovt); З. Г. (Z.G.); Алексей Кириллов (Aleksei Kirillov); Антон Кирша (Anton Kirsha); Кр. (Kr.); Антон Крайний (Anton Krainii); Лев Пущин (Lev Puschin); Н. Ропшин (N. Ropshin); Товарищ Герман (Comrade Hermann); Х; Г-с (G-s); Денисов, Л (Denisov, L.); Кр., А (Kr. A.); Крайний, А. (Krainii, A.); and Мережковский, Д. (Merezhkovskii, D.). Among those, Anton Krainii was the most successful and memorable.

The reason behind her choice of this particular combination, Anton – Krainii, could lie in the very meaning of the adjective “krainii” – extreme, last, utmost, on the outside, supreme. In critical essays “he” always made harsh remarks without hesitation and sometimes imposed an extreme (“krainii”) sentence on literary phenomena or writers. As Irina Odoevtseva remembers, Anton Krainii was “a merciless who judged and punished modern prose and poetry. Anton Krainii was feared as much as Bryusov. His verdicts were deadly. His critical essays were full of such attributes as ‘red-haired mediocre,’ ‘an idiot,’ ‘a slink,’ and ‘a cretin.’ Anton Krainii was quite stingy with praise. Even to *Poems about a Beautiful Lady* he responded no more than frostily” (Odoevtseva 25). Valeriya Novodvorskaya agrees with Odoevtseva and writes in her book *Poets and*

tsars: “She was feared by the whole literary *beau monde*. She possessed a devilishly sharp non-feminine mind. But she did not seem to be a feminist, like George Sand. She was […] pure and untouchable” (Novodvorskaya 43).

Journalist, critic and contemporary of Gippius, Nikolai Asheshov, wrote about A. Krainii in his article *Из жизни и литературы* (*From Life and Literature*):

> The leader of the Literary Criticism department in the journal is Anton Krainii. Anton Krainii is a man (if he is a man) who is bold, rollicking, jolly, *sans fa ons* (brusque) […]. Anton Krainii wants nothing and wishes nothing because he is dissatisfied with everything: all, absolutely all, current literature cannot satisfy the fiery critic. And that is why almost every month he raids all the camps and punishes all his enemies. (Asheshov 138)

This description of Anton Krainii’s character is fully connected with the meaning of the first name, as well. According to Russian etymological dictionaries, “Anton”, from ancient Greek “anteo”, means “engaging in battle” or “opponent” (Superanskaia 112). Thus, both first and last name create an image of the “extreme opponent” that Anton Krainii truly was.

About her male pseudonym, Zinaida Gippius wrote in her *Literaturny dnevnik* (1903):

> The Moscow magazine “Russian Word” attacked me. How can one be Anton Krainii? “To hell” with Anton Krainii! […] At first, I was surprised by the correspondent’s fury – but it became all clear in a moment: the note was signed “Anton Srednii” (“Anton the Middle”). And how can “the middle one” not resent “the extreme one?” The middle does not stand anything but itself, and allows for extremeness only in polemics where it knows no shame. So be it. It is good enough that the middle one signs as the middle. Or maybe it is just due to naiveté? (Krainii, “Literaturny dnevnik” 84)

By mocking another critic under a pseudonym, Gippius is yet again convinced in the right choice of her pseudonym and the position it took on the literary arena – being against the modern society and challenging the public opinion.

As a result, Zinaida Gippius created two personalities with two different names – Gippius as a poetess and prose writer and Krainii as the author of critical essays, and the two were compared by her contemporaries as soon as the pseudonym was revealed. Nikolai Kadmin, whose real name was Nikolai Abramovich, claimed that in her short stories

> […] there is a live spirit of the original and persistent thought […]. In her book of articles, however, there is a lot of dryness and half-death. […] Anton Krainii seems to me less talented and interesting than Z. Gippius. But her stories […] were never popular whereas Anton Krainii's sharp and witty essays provided him with great popularity in magazines and journals. (37)

Nikolai Lerner expressed a contrary opinion: "The critic in her gets the better of both poet and novelist; and peculiar, sophisticated yet always burning and talented articles by Anton Krainii […] made her readership talk about him and not forget him for a long time" (Panova E. 124).

Writers, critics, and readers either admired or despised Gippius/Krainii but were never indifferent. This divide of opinions resonated with the duality of Gippius's personality as she herself could not decide what she was more – a woman or a man: "I do not desire exclusive femininity, just as I do not desire exclusive masculinity. Each time someone is insulted and dissatisfied within me; with women, my femininity is active, with men – my masculinity! In my thoughts, my desires, in my spirit – I am more a man; in my body – I am more a woman. Yet they are so fused together that I know nothing" (Pachmuss 77). Now that it has become more or less clear about Gippius's gender-games,

let us look at her critical essays, prose and poetic works to see how her pseudonym manifests itself in her creative activity.

As a critic, Gippius put on a masculine mask to judge her contemporaries in the most unmerciful way. For example, Gippius occasionally used her husband's name – Dmitrii Merezhkovskii. She signed her criticism of Blok under this pseudonym where she accused Blok of his decadent sentiments: “Most gentle Blok is singing to himself about ‘The Tsarina’ or ‘Lady’ who visits only him and can be seen by him alone. He sees himself with her and writes hymns for them” (Koroleva 281).

Another male pen name of Gippius’s was “Tovarishch German” (“Comrade Herman”) which she used to bluntly comment on Blok’s critical essays on literature: “The article is signed under the pseudonym which, as a rule, was used in Gippius’s most polemical publications” (Koroleva 281). Tovarishch German accused Blok of the lack of clarity, logical harmony, and intellectual “muscularity” – the features that were characteristic of Gippius’s manner of writing. The majority of her criticism was signed under the name Anton Krainii which brought her an infinite fame – and this pseudonym is the main focus of this chapter.

Zinaida Gippius, under the pseudonym of Anton Krainii, was published in the best known journals of that time, such as “Mir iskusstva,” “Vesy,” “Russkaia mysl’,” “Obrazovanie,” “Novaia zhizn’,” “Golos zhizni,” “Russkoe bogatstvo,” “Literatura i iskusstvo” and others. Anton Krainii was an advocate for symbolism and “art for art’s sake.” He raged against poetry at the service of the state, a new type of literature that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, the degrading taste of Russian readers and spectators, and the vanishing poetic imagination of new Russian writers.

As Temira Pachmuss claims, Anton Krainii was annoyed with plays by Chekhov and Gorky, with their atmosphere and general mood, with how they pictured life without passion, beauty, or heroic deeds (Nikolukin 782). For example, this is what Anton Krainii says about Chekhov and Gorky (1903):

> Chekhov and Gorky, two writers so dissimilar in their talents, have dragged the Russian theater to its end, to its final death. What really does happen in this "temple of art"?
>
> Nothing in particular, perhaps just this: it rains; leaves fall down onto the ground; the people, terribly bored, drink tea with preserves, and play solitaire. Then a little tippler sings and immediately thereafter laughs for a very long time, in a very low voice. Then all of them become bored once more. At times, a man experiencing sexual desire begins to court a woman; he calls her a "voluptuous woman!" Then they again drink tea and at last die, sometimes from illness, but they may also shoot themselves […]. We may have a somewhat different picture.
>
> The people on stage have no money for tea with preserves; so they lie on the boards and curse with various words, or discuss at great length the fact that they are the people; that this fact is excellent in itself; and that nothing else is important. Thereafter they beat one another; scald themselves with boiling water; one of them may even hang himself out of foolishness, whereupon all other people lie down again on the boards and resume their conversation to the effect that they are indeed the people, and that, if they so desire, they may fight with one another often, and for any necessary length of time.[8]

The accusatory tone and the choice of blunt and shameless vocabulary were the major attributes of Krainii's style and the means of expressing his extreme ("krainie") views: "dragged the Russian theater to its end, to its final death"; "a man experiencing sexual desire"; "one of them may even hang himself out of foolishness." Along with cynicism, Krainii was known by his sarcasm: "[…] if they so desire, they may fight with one another often, and for any necessary length of time."

Here is what Anton Krainii writes about Leonid Andreev's stories (1907):

[8] Translated by Temira Pachmuss, "Anton Chekhov in the Criticism of Zinaida Gippius. Études Slaves et Est-Européennes." *Slavic and East-European Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1/2 (1966): 37

> *The Life of Man* by L. Andreev is undoubtedly the weakest, the worst of all of this talented novelist's works. […] Fantastic plots and "mystical setting" do not serve L. Andreev right: his primitive crudity and, as a result, helplessness particularly show up as soon as L. Andreev wishes to break from real forms of life. As a matter of fact, he is very talented, much more talented than Gorky. Still, Gorky possesses the harmony between talent and contents of talent. One cannot ask for much from Gorky.
>
> L. Andreev cannot cope with the questions which he himself has raised; he is suffocating in the dark chaos reigning in the drama. When he wants to utter a conscious word, he becomes involved in incredible and shameless falsity.[9]

While lashing out at Andreev for his "poorly written" works, Krainii did not fail to pique Gorky again. Moreover, Krainii seemed to have every right to become an "advisor" to his contemporary writers and tended to give his open opinions to every work that was newly published, regardless of the current status and recognition of the author: "Fantastic plots and "mystical setting" do not serve L. Andreev right: his primitive crudity and, as a result, helplessness particularly show up."

Even Chekhov, who by that time had gained high prominence, Anton Krainii accused of being blind and not understanding anything (1904):

> Chekhov knows nothing; there is a devil in his soul […] But Chekhov does not even suspect that the devil exists […]. He is always sad and bored. […] He is a blind man who knows the warmth of the sun, but does not have any clear idea of the sun itself because he simply does not want to see, does not want to understand anything. What can he then love, being poisoned by the devil's nausea?[10]

At the end of the article *O poshlosti* (*About Triteness*) Anton Krainii pronounces a sentence on Chekhov: "But Chekhov is not a "prophet," thank God. He is only a slave who has gained ten talents, deep trust – yet he did not justify this trust, perhaps

[9] Translated by Temira Pachmuss, "Leonid Andreev as Seen by Zinaida Gippius." *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1965): 144

[10] Translated by Temira Pachmuss, "Anton Chekhov in the Criticism of Zinaida Gippius. Études Slaves et Est-Européennes." *Slavic and East-European Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1/2 (1966): 41

unconsciously, which is why he is suffering and bored" (159). Krainii was not at all over-cautious about his choice of words: "there is a devil in his soul"; "He is a blind man"; "poisoned by the devil's nausea" – on the contrary, the more scandalous and direct they sounded, the more responses Krainii received to his essays. Thus, his severe criticism stimulated more polemics and provided him with more attention.

One of the most famous critical works by Anton Krainii, that also caused a number of articles in response, was *Polet v Evropu* (*Flight to Europe*) (1924). In this "literaturnaia zapis" (literary note) Anton Krainii is contemplating the demise of Russian literature and the emergence of "гады" ("obscene reptiles/bastards"[11]) that attempted to replace the old literature:

> And a bowl of Russian literature was thrown out of Russia. It tipped and everything that was in it scattered over Europe. It is hard for me to talk about literature in Russia under these circumstances. […] I might as well remember the eggs from which "cleaners" tried to hatch their own literature. But I want to talk about art, about aesthetics. Obscene reptiles were hatched out of the eggs […]. I shall note that nothing else could have been hatched from these eggs. […] Never has the world seen such absolute, such empty, such stinking ugliness. … Earth is for the first time abused by it. (101)

By disparaging the new writers, Krainii exalted those who had to emigrate from Russia in the 1920s, including Gippius herself, and in this short excerpt his attitude toward both is evident. Elevated, metaphorical language is used to describe the émigré writers: "a bowl of Russian literature"; "It tipped"; "it scattered"; whereas writers who stayed in Russia and continued their creative activity in accordance with the new political regime are given the most downgraded, disgusting characteristics that Anton Krainii was known for: "Obscene reptiles"; "such absolute, such empty, such stinking ugliness"; "Earth is for the first time abused by it."

[11] The Russian word "gady" (гады) has these two meanings.

Aside from Gippius's critical essays where her male pseudonym proved itself to the utmost, Gippius could not help but let her masculine half seep into her poetry and prose. It was expressed in two ways: first, the use of masculine grammatical gender that she was so fond of and second, Krainii's extremeness and harshness of tone which were always present in his criticism.

According to David Thomson, the reason for the appearance of the male "I" in her poems and prose was a "psychological need" connected with Gippius's inclination towards a nontraditional sexual orientation and with her complicated relationship with Dmitrii Filosofov, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Elizabeth Overbeck and others: "'Male modus' was most explicitly (if not provocatively) expressed in the lyrical persona of her poetry or the narrator of her prose who were known to be identified with the masculine grammatical gender" (Thomson 138).

Gippius's poem *Words of Love* (*Слова любви*, 1912) is the demonstration of her poetic conception of love. This is also an example of the lyrical persona being male:

> Любовь, любовь... О, даже не ее —
> Слова любви любил я неуклонно.
> Иное в них я чуял бытие,
> Оно неуловимо и бездонно…
> Живут слова, пока душа жива.
> Они смешны — они необычайны.
> И я любил, люблю любви слова,
> Пророческой овеянные тайной. (Gippius, "Stikhotvoreniia i poemy" 27)

> [Love, love… Oh, not even love itself –
> I loved love's words undaunted.
> In them I sensed a different existence,
> Elusive and unfathomable…
> Words live only while the soul is alive.
> They are amusing – they are unusual.
> I loved, and still love love's words,

Pervaded with their prophetic mystery.][12]

Another vivid example is the poem *You* (*Ты*) where the grammatical gender changes with almost every line:

Вешнего вечера трепет тревожный —
С тонкого тополя веточка нежная.
Вихря порыв, горячо-осторожный —
Синей бездонности гладь безбережная.
В облачном небе просвет просиянный —
Свежих полей маргаритка росистая,
Меч мой небесный, мой луч острогранный —
Тайна прозрачная, ласково-чистая.
Ты — на распутьи костер ярко-жадный —
И над долиною дымка невестная.
Ты — мой веселый и беспощадный, —
Ты — моя близкая и неизвестная.
Ждал я и жду я зари моей ясной,
Неутомимо тебя полюбила я...
Встань же, мой месяц серебряно-красный,
Выйди, двурогая, — Милый мой — Милая... (Gippius, "Stikhotvoreniia i poemy" 52)

[An alarming trembling of a vernal evening,
a tender little branch from a thin poplar,
an ardently gentle gust of a whirlwind,
limitless smoothness of blue bottomlessness.
An outpouring of shining light through a break in a cloudy sky,
a dewy daisy of fresh fields,
my heavenly sword, my sharp-faceted ray,
a transparent, caressingly clean secret.
You are a brightly greedy bonfire at a crossroads
and a bridal haze above a valley.
You are my cheerful and merciless one.
You are my near and unknown one.
I waited and waited for my bright dawn.
I have fallen in love with you untiringly…
Arise, my silvery-red crescent,
come out, my double-horned one – My dear, my darling…][13]

[12] Translated by Temira Pachmuss, *Women Writers in Russian Modenism. An Anthology*. Univeristy of Illinois Press (1978): 34

[13] Translated by Jenifer Presto, *Beyond the Flesh*, The University of Wisconsin Press (2008): 225.

In this poem, the symbol of the moon takes two forms – feminine "luna" (moon) and masculine "mesyats" (crescent) which makes it difficult to decide whether "ty" (you) is male or female. The continuous interchange of adjectives also does not make it clear if the lyrical persona addresses "luna" (моя близкая и неизвестная) or "mesyats" (мой веселый и беспощадный) – or both in one form. Furthermore, the grammatical gender of the verbs changes from one line to another: "Ждал я и жду я зари моей ясной, Неутомимо тебя полюбила я... ." The shift of gender throughout the poem seems to result in complete confusion about who is talking to whom and how many characters there are in the poem. Thus, Gippius plays with gender as though she takes pleasure in making her poem a riddle for readers and critics. Although she did not hide her name and sex when she published her poems, she made sure to keep the ambiguity of her gender identity.

Another one of Gippius's poems written in 1897, *Лестница* (*Staircase*), is dedicated to Elizabeth Overbeck and their constantly changing and unusual relationship:

> Сны странные порой нисходят на меня.
> И снилось мне: наверх, туда, к вечерним теням,
> На склоне серого и ветреного дня,
> Мы шли с тобой вдвоем, по каменным ступеням.
> С неласковой для нас небесной высоты
> Такой неласковою веяло прохладой;
> И апельсинные невинные цветы
> Благоухали там, за низкою оградой.
> Я что-то важное и злое говорил...
> Улыбку помню я, испуганно-немую...
> И было ясно мне: тебя я не любил,
> Тебя, недавнюю, случайную, чужую...
> Но стало больно, странно сердцу моему,
> И мысль внезапная мне душу осветила,
> О, нелюбимая, не знаю почему,
> Но жду твоей любви! Хочу, чтоб ты любила! (Gippius, "Stikhotvoreniia i poemy" 59)

[Strange dreams I have sometimes.
I dreamed about how upstairs, towards evening shadow,
At the end of the gray and windy day,
We were walking together up the stone steps.
From the heavenly height, unkind to us,
The coolness was blowing;
And orange innocent flowers
Were blossoming there, behind the low fence.
I was saying something important and mean…
I remember a smile, frightened and mute…
And it was clear: I did not love you,
You – most recent, accidental, unfamiliar…
But it felt strange as my heart hurt,
And a sudden thought enlightened my soul,
Oh, unloved one, I do not know why
I am awaiting your love and want you to love me.]

The lyrical persona is again of masculine gender and filled with conflicting emotions: "тебя я не любил" […], "Но стало больно, странно сердцу моему, И мысль внезапная мне душу осветила" […], "Но жду твоей любви." Just like Gippius and Overbeck's relationships, these lines express the uncertainty and inconsistency of Gippius's feelings about her own sexuality and about the other woman. There are two more poems devoted to Elizabeth Overbeck, *Прогулка вдвоём* (*A Walk Together,* 1900) and *Конец* (*The End,* 1901), in which Gippius is also presented as a male:

Иду всё наверх, одинокий...
Я бросил ее на пути.
Я знаю: я должен идти.(Gippius, "Stikhotvoreniia i poemy" 65)

[I am going up the stairs, alone…
I left her on the way.
I know: I must keep going.]

Мне было не грустно, мне было не больно,
Я думал о том, как ты много хотела,
И мало свершила, и мало посмела;
Я думал о том, как в душе моей вольно,
О том, что заря в небесах — догорела... (Gippius, "Stikhotvoreniia i poemy" 75)

[I did not feel sad, I did not feel pain,
I thought about how much you wanted,
And how little you did, and how little you dared do;
I thought about how free my soul is,
About the dawn that burned out…]

In both poems, the lyrical persona is explicitly a man who denies and deserts a woman forever because she did not deserve "him." For Gippius, it did not matter who was in love with whom. The union of soul and body constituted a personality with feelings, passions, and doubts regardless of whether they were physically male or female.

Not only did Gippius switch genders back and forth in poetry, as shown in the examples above, in her short stories she sometimes exposed her characters to shocking and unexpected experiences. For instance, in the short story *You – Are You* (*Ты – Ты*) written in 1927, the main character falls in love with a young woman in a mask:

> Только что это случилось — я понял, почему не мог от нее оторваться: потому, что был влюблен, да, влюблен, именно в нее, и ни в кого больше. Именно она и была тайной радостью, которой я все время ждал. Мне казалось, что я уже видел где-то ее лицо; должно быть, оно мне снилось.[14]
>
> [As soon as this happened, I understood why I could not tear myself away from her – I was in love, yes, in love, with her alone, and no one else. It was precisely she who was the mysterious joy which I had awaited all the time. It seemed to me that I had already seen her face somewhere; I must have seen it in my dreams.][15]

At the end the main character finds out that she is actually a man in disguise:

> Это были те же глаза, те же губы, то же тело, к каждой клеточке которого влеклось мое. Секунда недвижности — это как будто холодная проволока проскользнула. Проскользнула... и не изменила — ничего.

[14] From *Мемуары Мартынова* (*Martynov's Memoirs*), 1927 http://gippius.com/lib/short-story/memuary-martynova.html

[15] Translated by Temira Pachmuss, *Selected Works by Zinaida Hippius*, University of Illinois Press (1972): 221

Опять вместе, в один и тот же миг мы это почувствовали, стеснив объятия.

— Марсель, не бойся... Не думай. Разве не все равно? Разве не все равно, если ты — ты? [16]

[These were the same eyes, the same lips, the same body to which every fiber of my own had been attracted. A second of hesitation – it was as though a cold wire had slipped through me. Slipped through… but changed nothing.

We felt this at one and the same instant, again together, while tightening our embrace.

"Marcelle, don't be afraid… Don't think. Isn't it really all the same? Isn't it really all the same, if you – are you?"][17]

After a short hesitation, both understand that falling in love does not depend on a person's sex and "you" remains "you" no matter what: "Разве не все равно, если ты — ты?" Gippius signed neither her poetry, nor prose under her male pseudonym Anton Krainii; yet the tendency toward male-gendered characters can be traced in her short stories and poems.

Finally, the other side of her masculine pseudonym – the extremeness ("krainost") of Anton Krainii's character, was reflected in Gippius's poetry, as well, especially with the advent of the Russian revolution of 1917. It is fascinating to see how Krainii's style of writing and straightforwardness can be found in the two poems about the Revolution, both written in the same year and signed under Gippius's real name, and to compare them with two excerpts from Anton Krainii's *Литературный дневник (Literary Diary)* written in 1904 and 1907.

In 1904, in his *Literary Diary*, Anton Krainii discusses the question of religion and how religious values were drastically changed at the beginning of the 20th century.

[16] From *Мемуары Мартынова* (*Martynov's Memoirs*), 1927 http://gippius.com/lib/short-story/memuary-martynova.html

[17] Translated by Temira Pachmuss, *Selected Works by Zinaida Hippius*, University of Illinois Press (1972): 226

Krainii does not mention the Revolution yet, but he feels that in writers' and thinkers' minds the ideas of religion undergo their own revolution: "The unbelievable statement: as if stench could be holy. […] Is there anything more disgusting or terrible for human than the stench of smolder? The most nominal and at the same time real name of the devil is Stench" (Krainii, "Literaturny dnevnik" 117).

In October of 1917, Gippius writes a poem *Тли* (*Aphids*) where the motif of "smolder" (тлен) and "aphids" (тли) echo those of Krainii's essay of 1904.

> Припав к моему изголовью,
> ворчит, будто выстрелы, тишина,
> запекшейся черной кровью
> ночная дыра полна.
> Мысли капают, капают скупо,
> нет никаких людей...
> Но не страшно... И только скука,
> что кругом — все рыла тлей.
> Тли по мартовским алым зорям
> прошли в гвоздевых сапогах.
> Душа на ключе, на тяжком запоре.
> Отврат... тошнота... но не страх. (Gippius, "Stikhotvoreniia i poemy" 47)

> [Silence, having bent over my pillow,
> grumbles like gunshot;
> the nocturnal void is filled
> with clotted black blood.
> Thoughts drip, drip gingerly;
> there are no people…
> But this is not frightening… It is only boring,
> for I am surrounded by aphid snouts.
> Aphids wearing hobnailed boots
> passed by in the scarlet dawns of March.
> The soul is locked and is under a heavy bolt;
> I feel disgust… nausea… but not fear.][18]

The stench of the Revolution coming from clotted black blood ("clotted black blood") corresponds to the stench coming from the Devil in the essay. Even though the

[18] Translated by Temira Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius. An Intellectual Profile*. Southern Illinois University Press (1971): 200

poem “Aphids” is directly related to the Revolution and not the religious question, it can be noticed that Anton Krainii’s vocabulary and harsh tone imbue the poem and even bring its content to an extreme: “It is only boring, for I am surrounded by aphid snouts”; “disgust… nausea… but not fear.”

Even more so, Gippius’s other famous poem about the Revolution *Веселье* (*Joy*) bears Anton Krainii’s stylistic features.

> Блевотина войны — октябрьское веселье!
> От этого зловонного вина…
> Как было омерзительно твое похмелье,
> О бедная, о грешная страна!
> Какому дьяволу, какому псу в угоду,
> Каким кошмарным обуянный сном,
> Народ, безумствуя, убил свою свободу,
> И даже не убил — засек кнутом?
> Смеются дьяволы и псы над рабьей свалкой,
> Смеются пушки, разевая рты...
> И скоро в старый хлев ты будешь загнан палкой,
> Народ, не уважающий святынь! (Gippiu, “Stikhotvoreniia i poemy” 48)
>
> [The vomit of the war, this wild joy of October,
> That comes from this offensive, stinking wine…
> Your hangover disgusts me on this morning after.
> O poor and sinful, pitiable land of mine!
> What devil and what dog did you attempt to humor?
> What nightmare held you helpless in its breath?
> Your people in their madness murdered their own freedom,
> Not even murdered… but flogged it to death.
> Devils and dogs laugh at the melees of enslaved men.
> The cannons laugh with all mouths opening…
> And soon a stick will drive them into some old lean-to,
> Those who have lost respect for sacred things!][19]

This poem almost mirrors Anton Krainii’s essay written in his *Литературный дневник* (*Literary Diary*) in 1907:

> Nobody is being burned; nobody will be put to the torch again, yet vain thin smoke from the fires of martyrs has been fretting our eyes. Christianity in Europe is no longer burning… but smoldering. Eyes hurt;

[19] Quoted from *Anthology of Russian Poetry* by Yelaina Kripkov, p. 44

> the acid burning smell tickles the throat, and there is nothing else. We do not notice this little discomfort, yet by not noticing it we accept it. […] Life has become ugly, the atmosphere of Christianity – poisonous, human – sick and split. The longer these invisible chains rub against each other, the harder it is to breathe and live. […] In history, the wave, having risen, crashed from the human towards the lowest bestiality – final, blind, deaf, mute, only mooing and stinking. (134)

Both the poem and the excerpt from the essay raise the theme of the decline of religion and the desecration of holiness: "Those who have lost respect for sacred things"; "Your hangover disgusts me on this morning after, O poor and sinful, pitiable land of mine!" – in the poem, and "Christianity in Europe is no longer burning… but smoldering"; "Life has become ugly, the atmosphere of Christianity – poisonous" – in the essay. Additionally, the image of a "beast" ("зверь") is present in both examples described as the devilish and filthy creature representing the total degradation of a human and its turning into a devil-beast: "What devil and what dog did you attempt to humor"; "Devils and dogs laugh at the melees of enslaved men" (in the poem) and "towards the lowest bestiality – final, blind, deaf, mute, only mooing and stinking" (in the essay).

From the four examples discussed above, it can be concluded that by signing her poems under her feminine name, Zinaida Gippius still retained the masculine traits of her pseudonym Anton Krainii that showed in all its force in the most terrible times for Gippius – during the Revolution. After all, Gippius herself wrote that "In my thoughts, my desires, in my spirit – I am more a man; in my body – I am more a woman."[20]

In conclusion, as Koroleva notes, without Anton Krainii there would be no literary epoch of the Silver Age:

> Anton Krainii's contemporaries could treat disrespectfully his polemical performances, but without his short, witty, direct characteristics one could

[20] Quoted from Pachmuss, "Contes d'amour." *Between Paris and St. Petersburg. Selected Diaries of Zinaida Hippius*. University of Illinois Press (1975): 77

> hardly imagine the literary epoch in full: he was attacked, criticized, argued, but he was heard as an equal, regardless of his "femininity," he was heard as a person who had made his "human choice." (Koroleva 286)

This pseudonym did not only serve as part of Zinaida Gippius's identity, but also became the nominal name of a critic who could match Gippius's polemical talent and boldness. Although Gippius herself indicated that her initial choice of a masculine pseudonym was due to common prejudice towards female writing, as mentioned in the epigraph of this chapter: "It always seemed to me that it was more practical to speak the most precious thoughts under the changing pseudonym, under someone else's name […]. Only in this case one can hope to hear their unalloyed evaluation, […] or even hope to be read at all. Because subconsciously we overthrow almost everything signed by a female name" (Gippius 28), Anton Krainii blended into her personality quite naturally and was not a mask but another side of her complex nature.

CHAPTER IV

ANNA GORENKO AS “AKHMATOVA”

Какую власть имеет человек,
Который даже нежности не просит!
Я не могу поднять усталых век,
Когда мое он имя произносит.
Anna Akhmatova (“Putem vseia zemli” 68)

[How much power has this man
who does not even ask for tenderness!
I cannot lift my tired eyelids
when he says my name.]

The motif of a name (имя) appears in numerous poems by Anna Andreevna Akhmatova. It is sometimes her own name: “При имени моем ты будешь вспоминать | Внезапную тоску неназванных желаний | И в городах задумчивых искать | Ту улицу, которой нет на плане” (Akhmatova 128) [Hearing my name you will remember | A sudden anguish of unnamed desire | And in pensive towns you will be searching for | The street that isn’t on the map]; sometimes the names of her loved ones: “Я подымаю трубку – я называю имя, | Мне отвечает голос – какого на свете нет... <…>” (Akhmatova 210) [I lift the receiver – I say the name, | The voice answers me – which does not exist in this world]. In one of her poems she also mentions her mother’s name – Inna Erazmovna Stogova:

И женщина с прозрачными глазами
(Такой глубокой синевы, что море
Нельзя не вспомнить, поглядевши в них),
С редчайшим именем и белой ручкой,
И добротой, которую в наследство
Я от нее как будто получила, –
Ненужный дар моей жестокой жизни...(Akhmatova 298)

[And a woman with translucent eyes
(Of such deep blue, that to gaze into them
And not think of the sea was impossible),

With the rarest of names and white hands,
And a kindness that as an inheritance
I have from her, it seems –
Useless gift for my harsh life…] (Hemschemeyer 509)

Most importantly, several times Akhmatova alludes to her great-grandmother's name which she took as her pseudonym which will be discussed in more depth throughout this chapter.

Anna Akhmatova was interested in her own genealogy and wondered from whom she might have inherited her poetic talent. In her autobiographical essay she wrote: "[…] In my family nobody […] wrote poetry, except the first Russian poetess Anna Bunina was my grandfather Erazm Ivanovich Stogov's aunt […]" (Suvorova 448). To find an answer to this question, Akhmatova did a thorough study of her roots and wrote a great deal of commentaries on what she found in her memoirs. Modern historians have researched Akhmatova's genealogy as well and claim to have discovered factual errors among the poetess's records. True or not, Akhmatova's own vision of her ancestors shaped the creation of her poetic image and served as a pretext to the choice of her pen name. So who were Anna Gorenko/Akhmatova's ancestors?

Anna Akhmatova's great-grandfathers on her paternal side were of common origin and became part of the nobility through military service. Her great-grandfathers on her maternal side, however, were born noblemen. Their names were Ivan Dmitrievich Stogov and Egor Nikolaevich Motovilov. The Stogovs were distant relatives of Novgorod boyars. This fact was revealed by Akhmatova in a 1916 poem "*Приду туда, и отлетит томленье"* ("*I will go there and weariness will fly away"*):

Спокойной и уверенной любови
Не превозмочь мне к этой стороне:

Ведь капелька новогородской крови
Во мне – как льдинка в пенистом вине. (Akhmatova 22)

[My tranquil and trusting love
Of this place will never be conquered:
There's a drop of Novgorod blood
In me – like a shard of ice in frothy wine.] (Hemschemeyer 210)

Akhmatova paid particular attention to her ancestors and their homeland (Родина) in her early poetry. Even a little drop of Novgorod blood meant a lot for the poetess: "There's a drop of Novgorod blood | In me […]." Thus, Akhmatova was proud of her diverse background. Nonetheless, Akhmatova was not quite interested in her father's ancestry as much as she was fascinated by her great-grandmother's origin. Egor Motovilov was a well-known and wealthy landowner (помещик) and his wife Praskovjia Fedoseevna had the maiden name Akhmatova. The poetess chose her great-grandmother's name as her literary pseudonym; she created an image of "babushka-tatarka" and introduced it into her poetry, for example, in the poem *Сказка о черном кольце* (*The Tale of the Black Ring,* 1917-1936):

Мне от бабушки-татарки
Были редкостью подарки;
И зачем я крещена. (Akhmatova 170)

[My Tatar grandmother
Rarely gave me gifts;
And because I was baptized.] (Hemschemeyer 277)

This surname "Akhmatova" amazed Anna; it reminded her of khan Akhmat, the last khan of the Horde's yoke, and convinced her that the blood of the Golden Horde's warriors flowed in her veins. Akhmatova believed in being affiliated with those ancient peoples and wrote about it in her autobiographical essay *Будка* (*Shed*):

I was named Anna after my grandmother Anna Egorovna Motovilova. Her mother was related to Genghis khan, a Tatar princess Akhmatova whose

> surname, without realizing that I would be a Russian poet, I made my literary name. <…> My ancestor, khan Akhmat, was killed in his marquee by a bribed killer, and this marked the end of the Mongolian yoke in Russia, as Karamzin narrates. <…> This Akhmat, as it is known, was related to Genghis Khan. (Akhmatova www.akhmatova.org)

According to Vadim Chernykh, who did a profound study on Anna Akhmatova's ancestry (1992, 1993), Praskovjia Fedossevna Akhmatova was not a Tatar princess; in fact she belonged to Russian aristocracy as the Akhmatovs were an old noble family that had some ties with Tatars but shortly became russified (Chernykh 71). Based on Chernykh's research, there were no accounts of the Akhmatovs family descending from either khan Akhmat or Genghis Khan. Nevertheless, the historian also noted that Praskovjia Akhmatova's mother had the maiden name Chegodaeva – the name came from the Tatar princes the Chegodaevs (Chernykh 74). Therefore, Anna Akhmatova had some reason to believe that she was an ancestor of Genghis Khan.

Along with Tatar origins, Akhmatova supposedly had Greek roots. According to the family story, Anna's grandfather on her father's side, Anton Gorenko, was married to a Greek woman from whom Anna inherited her distinctive facial profile. In her *Записные книжки* (*Notebooks*), Akhmatova wrote: "Ancestors: Genghis Khan. Akhmat (the last khan of the Golden Horde) […]. Ancestors – Greeks, most likely pirates" (Suvorova 81). Although Chernykh questioned this assumption as well, Akhmatova took the family story and her own associations seriously and made it part of her poetic work and self-fashioning; with her great-grandmother's name and Greek origin she was one of the most exotic figures of the Silver Age. As Lada Panova claims, "Akhmatova's narcissism was reflected both in her poetic self-descriptions and in her constant concern with images of her by other poets […]. Akhmatova's husbands, lovers, and fellow writers painted her

exotic appearance (Greek, or, perhaps, Greek-Tatar) […] and described her exceptional position in Russian women's poetry using Queen imagery […]" (Panova L. 516). Therefore, the "Queen" could in no way bear the last name Gorenko. By choosing "Akhmatova" instead, the poetess added a veil of mystery and extraordinariness to her poetic image.

Her pseudonym attracted attention – which she received in full – much more than her father's ordinary name Gorenko. In fact, the meaning of the name "Akhmat" matched the idea of success: "Akhmat" comes from the Turkish name Akhmet and Arabic Ahmad, which means "commendable, distinguished, the most glorious" (Grushko, "Entsiklopediia russkikh familii" 34). There is no doubt that Akhmatova achieved success and became "Anna of all the Russias"[21] and her pseudonym played an important role in her poetic career.

Even though Akhmatova's choice of her literary name is quite clear, it is of great importance to mention what motivated the young Russian-born poetess Anna Gorenko to forever abandon her father's Russian name and adopt a foreign one. Akhmatova's close friend and contemporary Lidiia Chukovskaya wrote in her memoirs:

> I asked who made up her pseudonym. – Nobody, of course. Nobody took care of me then. I was a sheep without a shepherd. And only a 17-year-old naughty girl could have chosen a Tatar name for a Russian poetess. This surname belonged to the last Tatar princes from the Horde. I decided to take a pseudonym because my father, once he found out about my poems, said: "Do not disgrace my name." – "I do not need your name," I said. (Chukovskaya 49)

From Akhmatova's response it seems as though she unhesitatingly refused to be Gorenko any longer, which proves that the father and the daughter did not have a bond that could maintain their relationship. Indeed, when Anna was 18 her parents got

[21] This is what Marina Tsvetaeva called Akhmatova in a poem *Zlatoustoi Anne – vseia Rusi* (1916).

divorced and Akhmatova rarely saw her father after this. Two years before the divorce, Akhmatova planned to marry her first husband Nikolai Gumilev and wrote a letter to Sergei fon Stein: “What do you think my father will say when he learns about my decision? If he is against my marriage, I will run away and marry *Nicolas* secretly. I cannot respect my father, I never loved him, so why would I listen to him?” (Chernykh 82). This letter is the evidence of Akhmatova’s enmity towards her father. Therefore, in order to change her name she simply needed the last straw – her father’s words: “Не срами мое имя” (“Do not disgrace my name”).

Thus, the literary world of the Silver Age acquired a Russian acmeist with a Tatar name. In different periods of Akhmatova’s creative activity, she treated her name differently. For example, in her 1913 *Эпические мотивы* (*Epic motifs*) she wrote:

> В то время я гостила на земле.
> Мне дали имя при крещенье – Анна,
> Сладчайшее для губ людских и слуха.
> Так дивно знала я земную радость. (Akhmatova 90)
>
> [At that time I was a guest upon the earth.
> At baptism they gave me the name – Anna,
> Sweetest of names on people’s lips and to their ears.
> So marvelous to me were earthly joys.] (Hemschemeyer 501)

As a matter of fact, the first name “Anna” embodies positive connotation. According to the Russian etymological dictionary and *The Oxford Dictionary of First Names*, “Anna” derives from a Hebrew word “Hanna” meaning “He (God) has favored me” – thus “Anna” denotes “favored” or “blessed” (“благодатный”) (Grushko, “Slovar imen” 410 and Hanks 61). As Akhmatova writes, her first name brought her joy: “So marvelous to me were earthly joys,” whereas the Tatar name brought her grief:

> Татарское, дремучее,
> Пришло из никуда,

К любой беде липучее,
Само оно – беда. (Akhmatova 280)

[Dense, Tatar,
It came out of nowhere,
Sticking to any possible disaster,
It itself – is disaster.] (Hemschemeyer 446)

Judging by these two fragments, it can be said that Akhmatova was aware that for her literary name she combined two names, first and last, from two different cultures ("And only a 17-year-old naughty girl could have chosen a Tatar name for a Russian poetess"). Yet this contradictory combination, on the one hand, frightened her ("Sticking to any possible disaster, | It itself – is disaster"), and, on the other, excited her imagination. Although Anna Gorenko never returned to her true last name and became well-known under a catchy and mysterious name, Akhmatova, her fate brought her more grief ("gore") than happiness. Throughout her poetic works it is obvious how "gore", from which Gorenko derives, and the mystery of her pseudonym are constantly intertwined. Since most of Akhmatova's poems have elements of autobiography, further analysis of her poetry is needed in order to determine if her choice of a pen name affected her life in any way.

In Akhmatova's early works (1910-1913), the lyrical persona is delighted to live and create; she also devoted her verses to her great-grandmother:

Весенним солнцем это утро пьяно,
И на террасе запах роз слышней,
А небо ярче синего фаянса.
Тетрадь в обложке мягкого сафьяна;
Читаю в ней элегии и стансы,
Написанные бабушке моей.
Дорогу вижу до ворот, и тумбы
Белеют четко в изумрудном дерне.
О, сердце любит сладостно и слепо! (Akhmatova 47)

[This morning is drunk with spring sun,
And on the terrace the smell of roses is louder,
And the sky is brighter than blue faience.
The notebook is bound in soft Morocco leather;
In it I am reading elegies and stanzas
Written to Grandmother.
I can see the road up to the gate, and the posts
Stand out white against the emerald lawn.
Oh, the heart loves sweetly and blindly!] (Hemschemeyer 90)

From this poem, it is clear that she keeps the memory of her ancestors in her heart and notebooks ("In it I am reading elegies and stanzas | Written to Grandmother"), and she seems entirely satisfied now that both her first and last name root from her mother's side of the family, as Anna was also the name of her grandmother, the wife of Erazm Stogov (Chernykh 84). Similarly to her *Эпические мотивы*, in this poem the lyrical persona is enjoying her life and being alone with her memories: "Oh, the heart loves sweetly and blindly!" which again attests to Akhmatova's appreciation of her past.

Three years later, however, the lyrical persona's mood changes toward a depressive tone and the feeling of a loss of the loved one:

А ты письма мои береги,
Чтобы нас рассудили потомки,
Чтоб отчетливей и ясней
Ты был виден им, мудрый и смелый.
В биографии славной твоей
Разве можно оставить пробелы?
Слишком сладко земное питье,
Слишком плотны любовные сети.
Пусть когда-нибудь имя мое
Прочитают в учебнике дети,
И, печальную повесть узнав,
Пусть они улыбнутся лукаво...
Мне любви и покоя не дав,
Подари меня горькою славой. (Akhmatova 71)

[But save my letters
So that our descendants can decide,
So that you, courageous and wise,

Will be seen by them with greater clarity.
Perhaps we may leave some gaps
In your glorious biography?
Too sweet is earthly drink,
Too tight the nets of love.
Sometime let the children read
My name in their lesson book,
And on learning the sad story,
Let them smile slyly…
Since you've given me neither love nor piece,
Grant me bitter glory.][22]

Akhmatova's name in this poem is directly linked to grief: "And on learning the sad story, […] Grant me bitter glory." She admits that her poetry will go down in history, yet it will be "bitter glory" once her descendants find out about her "sad story" and judge her for that. Therefore, the pseudonym will not be able to overshadow the meaning of her true birth name "Gorenko" ("gorkoiu slavoi"). Although the overall tone of the poem is dramatic, Akhmatova is hopeful that her name, despite the bitterness of glory, will be remembered: "Sometime let the children read | My name in their lesson book." The motif of "a glorified name" will once again penetrate her later poems.

In the meantime, the events that were happening during Akhmatova's early poetic career defined the tone and main themes of her poems. In 1912 Akhmatova's son Lev was born. In 1915 she wrote *Колыбельная* (*Lullaby*) for him into which her biographical facts slip.

Далеко в лесу огромном,
Возле синих рек,
Жил с детьми в избушке темной
Бедный дровосек.
Младший сын был ростом с пальчик,
Как тебя унять,
Спи, мой тихий, спи, мой мальчик,
Я дурная мать.
Долетают редко вести

[22] Quoted from *Anthology of Russian Poetry* by Yelaina Kripkov, p. 209

К нашему крыльцу,
Подарили белый крестик
Твоему отцу.
Было горе, будет горе,
Горю нет конца,
Да хранит святой Егорий
Твоего отца. (Akhmatova 181)

[Far off in the enormous forest,
Near the dark blue river,
There lived in a dark hut with his children
A poor woodcutter.
The youngest son was as big as a thumb –
How can I calm you,
Sleep, my little boy, sleep, my quiet one,
I'm a bad mother.
News rarely flies
As far as our porch,
On your father they bestowed
A little white cross.
Sorrow behind, sorrow ahead,
Sorrow without end,
Now St. George watches over
Your father.] (Hemschermeyer 296)

While the beginning of the lullaby refers to Charles Perrault's *Hop-o'-My-Thumb* (*Мальчик-с-пальчик*), the rest of it is about her husband and World War I. In 1915 Gumilev was at the front and Akhmatova was left alone with her 3-year-old son: "News rarely flies As far as our porch, | On your father they bestowed | A little white cross." The grief visits the home of the lyrical persona again and the word "gore" is repeated three times: "Было горе, будет горе, | Горю нет конца <…>" ("Sorrow behind, sorrow ahead, | Sorrow without end"). As if subconsciously, Akhmatova surrenders to the cruelty of fate and forgets the fearless essence of the Tatar name that she created for herself. Moreover, it is interesting to notice how "gore" rhymes with "Egorii" which was a name of St. George given to him in Russia – Egorii Khrabryi (Egorii the Brave). In fact, Gumilev was awarded the St. George Cross during the war that is supposed to protect

him in the poem: “Now St. George watches over Your father.” Ironically, “gore” and “St. George” rhyme as though there is no way out of this grief.

In 1917, Akhmatova employs folk themes in her poetic works yet again. She starts writing her *Сказка о черном кольце (The Tale of the Black Ring*) but does not finish it until 1936. The first two parts are of great importance as they both turn to Akhmatova’s origin and at the same time contain the traces of “gore” that never seem to leave the poetess.

1
Мне от бабушки-татарки
Были редкостью подарки;
И зачем я крещена,
Горько гневалась она.
А пред смертью подобрела
И впервые пожалела
И вздохнула: “Ах, года!
Вот и внучка молода.”
И, простивши нрав мой вздорный,
Завещала перстень черный.
Так сказала: “Он по ней,
С ним ей будет веселей.”

2
Я друзьям моим сказала:
”Горя много, счастья мало,” -
И ушла, закрыв лицо;
Потеряла я кольцо.
И друзья мои сказали:
”Мы кольцо везде искали,
Возле моря на песке
И меж сосен на лужке.”
И догнав меня в аллее,
Тот, кто был других смелее,
Уговаривал меня
Подождать до склона дня.
Я совету удивилась
И на друга рассердилась,
Что глаза его нежны:
”И на что вы мне нужны?

Только можете смеяться,
Друг пред другом похваляться
Да цветы сюда носить.”
Всем велела уходить. (Akhmatova 170)

1
[My Tatar grandmother
Rarely gave me gifts;
And because I was baptized,
She was bitterly angry.
But before her death she softened,
For the first time she was sorry
And she sighed: Ah, the years!
Here’s my granddaughter a young woman.”
And forgiving me my foolish ways,
She bequeathed her black ring to me,
Pronouncing: “It is for her,
With it she will be happier than I was.”]

2
[I said to my friends:
“There’s lots of sorrow, little happiness” –
And I left hiding my face;
I had lost the ring.
And my friends said:
“We looked for the ring everywhere,
In the sand along the sea
And in the meadow among the pines.”
And overtaking me in the alley,
One who was bolder than the others
Tried to persuade me
To wait until the waning of the day.
I was amazed at this advice
And I got angry at my friend
Because his eyes were tender.
“Why do I need any of you?
All you can do is laugh
And brag to each other
About bringing flowers.”
I sent them all away.] (Hemschermeyer 277)

The lyrical persona receives a black ring as a gift from her dying Tatar grandmother. “Babushka-tatarka” has willed that the ring should stay with her granddaughter because it fits her perfectly and her life will be happier with it. Despite the

grandmother's prophecy, the second part opens with the lyrical persona telling her friends that she has lost the ring: "I said to my friends: | 'There's lots of sorrow, little happiness,' | And I left hiding my face; | I had lost the ring." "Gore" intervenes in the happy life predicted by the Tatar grandmother and the granddaughter never finds the ring because it turns out to have been stolen (in the third part). Akhmatova keeps returning to the theme of her past and tries to revive memories in the poem – the memories she never had, hence the genre of a folkloric tale. Although she received a gift from her grandmother, just as she adopted her last name, she lost it and consequently remained unfortunate. As a result, Akhmatova's Tatar name does not bring about happiness and "gore" wins once more, as if she is destined to suffer from it.

In 1921, Akhmatova faced real grief as her first husband Nikolai Gumilev was executed. She wrote a poem on behalf of Gumilev in which the theme of a name comes up again.

> Я с тобой, мой ангел, не лукавил,
> Как же вышло, что тебя оставил
> За себя заложницей в неволе
> Всей земной непоправимой боли?
> Под мостами полыньи дымятся,
> Над кострами искры золотятся,
> Грузный ветер окаянно воет,
> И шальная пуля за Невою
> Ищет сердце бедное твое.
> И одна в дому оледенелом
> Белая лежишь в сиянье белом,
> Славя имя горькое мое. (Akhmatova 162)

> [I didn't mean to trick you, my angel,
> How did it happen that I left you
> Behind me, a hostage in bondage
> To every earthly, irremediable pain?
> Under the bridges, patches of open water stream,
> Over the bonfires, golden sparks gleam,
> The heavy wind howls like one of the damned,

And beyond the Neva the stray bullet
Searches for your wretched heart.
And alone in the icy house,
White, in white radiance you lie,
Praising my bitter name.] (Hemschermeyer 261)

This time the name of Gumilev is meant in the last line: "Praising my bitter name," but his wife is the one who is abandoned and has to grieve: "[…]I left you | Behind me, a hostage in bondage | To every earthly, irremediable pain?" The motif of a "glorified name" shows up again, but it is related to the bitterness of fate. Thus, this kind of glory cannot be rejoiced: "irremediable pain," "The heavy wind howls," "your wretched heart," "in the icy house," "my bitter name."

In general, following Gumilev's death, the vocabulary of Akhmatova's poems tended to include more words with the same root as her father's name than her pseudonym. For example, in the 1940 poem she starts with "*С Новым годом! С новым горем!"* ("*To the New Year! To new bitterness!"*):

С Новым годом! С новым горем!
Вот он пляшет, озорник,
Над Балтийским дымным морем,
Кривоног, горбат и дик.
И какой он жребий вынул
Тем, кого застенок минул?
Вышли в поле умирать.
Им светите, звезды неба!
Им уже земного хлеба,
Глаз любимых не видать. (Akhmatova 296)

[To the New Year! To new bitterness!
See how he dances, mischievous child,
Over the smoky Baltic Sea,
Bowlegged, hunchbacked and wild.
What kind of fate has he
For those beyond the torture chamber?
They have gone to the fields to die.
Sine on them, heavenly stars!
Earthly bread, beloved eyes,

Are no longer theirs to see.] (Hemschermeyer 666)

Akhmatova's dwelling upon the themes of grief, mourning, and misfortune is the refection of the atmosphere of those times – the beginning of World War II. The New Year celebration turns into the battle field: "They have gone to the fields to die." "Gore" appears in the very first line in the place of the traditional New Year's wishes: "С Новым годом! С новым счастьем!" ("Happy New Year! Happy new joy!"). Being the opposite of happiness ("счастье"), grief fills the air as the war approaches and gets closer to the Russian borders.

In the "Посвящение" ("Dedication") of Akhmatova's *Реквием (Requiem)* written in the same year, the image of "gore" reaches its peak by becoming stronger than mountains:

Перед этим горем гнутся горы,
Не течет великая река,
Но крепки тюремные затворы,
А за ними "каторжные норы"
И смертельная тоска. (Akhmatova 223)

[Mountains bow down to this grief,
Mighty rivers cease to flow,
But the prison gates hold firm,
And behind them are the "prisoners' burrows"
And mortal woe.] (Hemschermeyer 385)

Indeed, the grief doubles because of the imprisonment of Akhmatova's son. In the poem, both "gore" and "gory" share the same sound with two different semantics: "woe" and "elevated." By placing "gore" (woe) above "gory" (mountain) ("Mountains bow down to this grief"), Akhmatova enhances the power of grief over the immovability of mountains. Furthermore, by rhyming "gory" with "zatvory" (prison gates) and "nory"

(borrows), the poetess seems to fall into despair giving up to sorrow ("And mortal woe") as her birth name "Gorenko" becomes a prophecy of misfortune.

In the 1945 poem "*Меня, как реку, Суровая эпоха повернула"* ("*I, like a river, Was rechanneled by this stern age"*), after going through the two World Wars, the Civil War, repression, and the banning of her poetry, Akhmatova experiences a turning point of the epoch and her life: "Мне подменили жизнь. | В другое русло, | Мимо другого потекла она, | И я своих не знаю берегов" ("They gave me a substitute life. | It began to flow | In a different course, passing the other one, | And I do not recognize my banks"). The lyrical persona is lost and terrified in the face of the future. Here the theme of the name appears again:

> И женщина какая-то мое
> Единственное место заняла,
> Мое законнейшее имя носит,
> Оставивши мне кличку, из которой
> Я сделала, пожалуй, все, что можно. (Akhmatova 302)
>
> [And some other woman occupied
> The special place reserved for me
> And bears my legal name,
> Leaving me the nickname, with which
> I did, probably, everything that could be done.] (Hemschermeyer 514)

The lyrical persona has torn her ties with the world and abandoned hope to be heard or even recognized. Her name will not be remembered, and her "klichka" – the renowned pseudonym "Akhmatova" which now is just a nickname – can no longer serve her: "I did, probably, everything that could be done." It is as if she is standing aside and witnessing all that is happening around her. In this she is completely lonely; however, she has no regrets:

Но если бы оттуда посмотрела
Я на свою теперешнюю жизнь,
Узнала бы я зависть наконец... (Akhmatova 302)

[But had I observed from there
The life I am living today,
I would finally discover envy…] (Hemschermeyer 515)

The next year poem "*И увидел месяц лукавый"* ("*And the sly crescent moon"*) asserts the theme of falling into oblivion:

И увидел месяц лукавый,
Притаившийся у ворот,
Как свою посмертную славу
Я меняла на вечер тот.
Теперь меня позабудут,
И книги сгниют в шкафу.
Ахматовской звать не будут
Ни улицу, ни строфу. (Akhmatova 311)

[And the sly crescent moon
Hiding by the gate looked on,
As on that night I altered
My immortal glory.[23]
Now I will be forgotten,
And my books will rot on the shelf.
Akhmatova will be the name
Of neither street nor strophe.] (Hemschermeyer 696)

The name "Akhmatova" shows for the first and last time here among all her poems. She feels hopeless and hopeful at the same time. Although she is certain that she will be forgotten, there is a glimpse of her old ambition to make history: "Akhmatova will be the name | Of neither street nor strophe." It is crucial to note that she finally chooses her pseudonym over her real name Gorenko – in this poem "gore" is peculiarly absent. Therefore, it is only "Akhmatova" that could have become the name of the street and the Akhmatovian stanza could have gained recognition. Nevertheless, her "glorified

[23] In the original it is "posthumous glory" ("посмертная слава") rather than "immortal glory" as given in translation.

name" is destined to be erased from history: "Now I will be forgotten, | And my books will rot on the shelf" because her poetry is now banned, and it may only be remembered again posthumously ("my posthumous glory").

In 1959, Akhmatova seems to unite both her real and literary name in one short poem *Имя* (*Name*), which was mentioned above:

> Татарское, дремучее,
> Пришло из никуда,
> К любой беде липучее,
> Само оно – беда.
>
> [Dense, Tatar,
> It came out of nowhere,
> Sticking to any possible disaster,
> It itself – is disaster.] (Hemschemeyer 446)

With these four lines she puts an end to the long-lasting "battle" between her father's name Gorenko and her great-grandmother's name Akhmatova and makes the conclusion that her pseudonym brought her only grief: "Sticking to any possible disaster, | It itself – is disaster." Consequently, her birth name becomes her destiny in the two-line poem:

> Что таится в зеркале? – Горе...
> Что шумит за стеной? – Беда. (1965)
>
> [What is lurking in the mirror? – Grief…
> What is stirring beyond the wall? – Calamity.] (Hemschermeyer 766)

In the mirror, she sees the reflection of her birth name "Gorenko"; she is surrounded by grief. She could not deceive her fate by taking the pseudonym with the positive meaning "the most glorious." Although after the ban on Akhmatova's poetry was lifted, it was her pseudonym, and not her true name, that became famous and brought her the recognition she deserved.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

While in the 19th-centruy Russia women writers faced strong prejudice in society against female writing and consequently took on pseudonyms or were published anonymously, in the 20th century women had various reasons for making the decision to use a pen name. In the Silver Age in particular, it was the custom of the time to adopt a pseudonym for both men and women writers because creating a fake name seemed suitable for mystification and myth-creation processes. Men could use numerous literary names, yet they did not tend to hide their true identity behind them, whereas women writers often used pseudonyms to conceal their real names and gender, and thus gain recognition.

In the case of Elizaveta Dmitrieva, for example, the pseudonym "Cherubina de Gabriak" instigated the creation of an image of a mysterious poetess that did not resemble Dmitrieva and a poetic biography which did not belong to Dmitrieva. Consequently, the pseudonym became Dmitrieva's worst nightmare, although it gave the Russian literary world of the 20th century one of the most talented and extraordinary poets. Without the pseudonym and imaginary poetess, Dmitrieva's poetry would never be published. Therefore, the pseudonym played a most significant yet fatal role in Dmitrieva's life and poetic career.

As for Zinaida Gippius, her male pen name also had a great impact on her life: "Anton Krainii" was part of her identity and the male voice that she wanted to be heard. And she succeeded: "Anton Krainii" was treated as an equal among male critics and produced a great number of critical essays that took a high place in literary polemics.

Finally, Anna Gorenko chose her pseudonym “Akhmatova” due to her father’s discontent with her profession. With this pseudonym, she intended to create a unique image of a Tatar-Greek-Russian poetess and become glorified, just as the name “Akhmat” implies. Her fate, however, decided otherwise and brought her more grief than happiness as if reminding her of the impossibility of hiding from her birth name “Gorenko.”

The three poetesses lived and created in the same era. Their pseudonyms, however, differed from one another as much as their lives, works, and destinies. Moreover, the initial reasons for adopting pseudonyms also varied. For Dmitrieva, it was the editor’s rejection of her poetry; for Gippius, it was the expression of her masculinity and the desire to be treated equally as a critic; and for Akhmatova, it was due to her father’s discontent with her writing poetry under his name. The three examples of female writers prove that although there was a common tendency of having a pseudonym among writers of the Silver Age, each personality stood out for the uniqueness and complexity of character and each pseudonym affected their lives in different ways.

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