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## VASILII ROZANOV ON THE SEXUAL ANOMALIES OF GOGOL' AND THE JEWS

And here we have that peculiarity that inventions do not destroy truth, fact...

V.V. Rozanov, „Letter to E. Hollerbach XXIV“, 536.

From him came what is repellent and terrible in the soul of a Russian, something without parallel... Gogol' can only be conquered by a *righteous man*.

V.V. Rozanov, „Sakharna“, 136.

„Jews in Russian literature“ will have their role to play, and they are now providentially and far-sightedly preparing for this „role“... God preserves, and Heine has not yet made an appearance – Heine-Gogol' – in pursuit of whom all Russians would undoubtedly run and will run (if they get the chance).

V.V. Rozanov, „Mimoletnoe (What is transient)“, 435.

Gogol''s writings and personality have been subjected in literary criticism to an interpretation directed at his „peculiar“ sexuality. This is linked with two types of „peculiarity“ – homosexuality (and its repressed variant – asexuality) and necrophilia. Simon Karlinsky and Daniel Rancour-Laferrière<sup>1</sup> have given the most detailed commentaries on Gogol''s homosexuality. At the same time, ideas about the inorganic nature of Gogol''s homunculi-characters gained wide currency in literary criticism even earlier, thanks to Vladimir Nabokov's „Lectures on Russian literature.“ Karlinsky and Rancour-Laferrière commented on the pioneering work of Vasilii Rozanov<sup>2</sup> (1856-1919) in approaching Gogol' by way of the mystery of

<sup>1</sup> Both authors provide a detailed bibliography of works on Gogol' which have a biographical or psychoanalytical focus on his sexuality. Simon Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge, 1976); Daniel Rancour-Laferrière, *Out from under Gogol's Overcoat: a Psychoanalytic Study* (Ann Arbor, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Karlinsky and Rancour-Laferrière cite only Rozanov's early works on Gogol', from „Appendices“ (1891) to „The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor“ (1894). In his lecture, „Nikolay Gogol (1809-1852)“ (first published in 1944), Nabokov calls Gogol''s characters „homunculi“ (19) and, discussing their sexuality, comments „... Chichikov (who otherwise was as impotent as all Gogol''s subhuman heroes ...“ (27). Note that Nabokov develops the idea of searching for clues to the subconscious at the same time as he makes fun of Freud's method. Vladimir Nabokov, *Nikolay Gogol (1809-1852). Lectures on Russian Literature* (London, 1982), 15-54.

his sexuality, and Nabokov, although reluctant to acknowledge his sources, maintained a Rozanovian attitude in interpreting Gogol' as a writer who created a whole host of dead men and women.<sup>3</sup> In an article devoted to Rozanov and Gogol' (1987), Viktor Erofeev attached the term necrophilia to Rozanov's evaluation of Gogol''s secret obsession.<sup>4</sup> He also expressed the view that any attempt to establish a typology of Rozanov's interest in sexuality is a waste of effort, inasmuch as Rozanov, unlike Freud, did not construct an ordered system: „Rozanov's theory did not find expression in any logical system, since Rozanov and a logical system are two things that are incompatible.“<sup>5</sup>

In accordance with the growing tendency of the most recent commentators to systematize Rozanov's paradoxes,<sup>6</sup> I attempt here to establish a typology and construct a system from his views on Gogol' and sexuality. As I have shown elsewhere,<sup>7</sup> Rozanov's writings are constructed on the principle of parataxis, in which a typology is assembled from diverse excerpts and opinions which were expressed non-contextually, but which still yield a single unified meaning.<sup>8</sup> The topos of the whole of Rozanov's creative writing is not only the theme of sex, but also the theme of Jewry, and an amalgamation of the two themes into one. Jewishness was the material from which Rozanov constructed an archeology of knowledge. The essence of Rozanov's philosophy of life was the construct of a unity, a continuum, consisting of a thought experienced as something lived physically through the body.<sup>9</sup> Thus, sexuality was interesting to him as a corporeal experience, and Judaism as a collection of ideas and laws carried out in a lived ritual. The anthropologically centred culture of his day concerned itself with a quest for material in exotic locales, but, while archeological discoveries led his contemporaries to make journeys to Egypt and India, Rozanov's imagination, stimulated by the life of the Orient, selected the Jews, whom he regarded as the most ancient and exotic of all

<sup>3</sup> John Foster, *Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism* (Princeton, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Viktor Erofeev, „Rozanov protiv Gogolia“ („Rozanov against Gogol'“), *Voprosy Literatury*, 8, 1987, 146-175. Cf. „Rozanov insisted on the connections between the metaphysical enigma of Gogol and the sphere of sexuality. In parallel with Freud he developed the theory of the dependence of the spiritual life of human beings on the individuality of their sexual structure (see, in particular, his book, *People of Moonlight*). Rozanov's hypothesis on Gogol''s predisposition to necrophilia may well horrify the reader ...“ (167).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Stephen Hutchings, „Breaking the Circle of the Self: Domestication, Alienation and the Question of the Discourse Type in Rozanov's Late Writing,“ *Slavic Review* 52, no.1, Spring 1993, 76-86.

<sup>7</sup> See Efim Kurganov and Henrietta Mondry, *V.V. Rozanov i evrei*, St. Petersburg 2000.

<sup>8</sup> I use „parataxis“ in the sense it is used in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (trans. Walter Trask, Princeton 1973), where he defined it as a methodology to compose the text on gaps without apparent logical subordination to narrative. Lacunae are filled through exegesis.

<sup>9</sup> On the subject of Rozanov's phenomenological position, see Mondry, „Beyond the Boundary: Vasilii Rozanov and the Animal World,“ *Slavic and East European Journal*, 43, no. 4, Winter 1999, 651-673.

peoples.<sup>10</sup> The Jews thus became the object of his self-styled archeology and generic anthropology.

Rozanov's cognition and interpretation of his material was two-sided: on the one hand he read the Talmud, the Bible, and stories by Jews who had been converted to Christianity, and held intimate discussions with Jewish men and women in his own special way;<sup>11</sup> and, on the other hand, he projected his intuitive insights by way of commentaries on texts unconnected with the Jewish theme.<sup>12</sup> The narratological parataxis of Rozanov is found in his obsessive repetition of ideas, and in the persistence of motifs which he himself was happy to call his „idées fixes.“<sup>13</sup> This constant return to certain themes and motifs connected with Jewish body – circumcision, *mikvah*, the attitude of the Jews to blood, laws in Leviticus such as regulations for *kosher* and prohibitions on incest – forms a schematic whole, in which the ideas, as I will show, do indeed lend themselves to systematization.

In all of his work on Gogol' (from 1901 till 1909), Rozanov pays repeated attention to a single motif from *A Terrible Vengeance*, Gogol's tale of the incestuous love of the pan father for his daughter Katerina. It is significant that he refers to the very same excerpt in his other writings, including „Judaism“ (1903). Rozanov develops a link between Gogol's interest in incest and the writer's own deviant sexuality. Moreover, on the basis of the alleged Jewishness of the incestuous father from Gogol's story, and Gogol's ability to express the incestuous plot, Rozanov creates an affinity between Gogol' and his character. This affinity manifests itself in Rozanov's convergence of Gogol' and his „Jewish“ character, which leads to further parallelism between Gogol' and Jew. The interesting dynamics which Rozanov establishes between Gogol' and the Jews is further revealed in parataxically dispersed fragments throughout his various writings over a span of some eighteen years, where Gogol's sexuality is dealt with in the same thematic framework as Jewish sexuality.

The trajectory of Rozanov's attitude towards the sexualities of Gogol' and the Jews (a) treats them as parallel with each other and (b) depends on Rozanov's evaluation of their role in the history of Russia. In his early work on Gogol' (from 1901 to 1909) and his early work on the Jews (1904) Rozanov evaluated Gogol' and the Jews in the framework of his philosophy of sexuality in positive terms.

<sup>10</sup> On Rozanov's place in the antisemitic culture of Russian modernism, see Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and Modernity in fin-de-siècle Russia*, Ithaca 1992.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Z.N. Gippius, „Zadumchivyi strannik,“ V.V. Rozanov: *Pro et Contra*, St. Petersburg 1995, I, 143-185.

<sup>12</sup> The mechanism of Rozanov's projection, seen from the point of view of the Lacanian psycho-analysis, is demonstrated in Mondry, „Performing the Paradox: Vasilii Rozanov and the Dancing Body of Isadora Duncan,“ *Essays in Poetics*, 24, 1999, 91-116; and as seen from the Freudian psycho-analytical method, in Harriet Murav, „Rozanov's Aristocratic Aesthetics of Disgust,“ *Essays in Poetics*, 24, 1999, 117-142.

<sup>13</sup> For example: „(the womanish nature of the Jews is my idée fixe)“ (95), Rozanov, „Opavshie list'ia,“ *Izbrannoe*, München 1970, 81-217.

They were markers of mysterious sexualities, which were signifiers of what he termed the noumenal character of sex, and carried the plus sign. In the years of „Solitary“ and „Fallen Leaves“ (1911-1913), when Rozanov argued against revolutionary theories, and especially during the Beilis Affair (1912-13), when Rozanov produced his infamous book in which he expressed a firm belief that a Kiev Jew Beilis ritually murdered a Christian boy Jushchinskii, both Gogol's and Jewish sexualities were treated with extreme hostility. They became signifiers of anomalous sexualities, which were made synonymous with their political anti-Russian attitudes. In Rozanov's work written after the 1917 revolution, especially in the *Apocalypse of Our Times* (1918), when Rozanov's own political views had an overt anti-Russian character, he also changed his evaluative attitude towards Gogol' and the Jews. Their alleged anti-Russian feelings were praised by Rozanov, and their special prophetic gifts and their special role in history were once more linked to their special sexualities. This time Gogol's and Jewish sexualities were again assigned the plus sign.

In this paper I will establish the trajectory of Rozanov's evaluation of Gogol's and Jewish sexualities, show the mechanism of his convergence of the two, and will contextualise Rozanov's attitude towards Gogol's and Jewish sexualities within the framework of their ethnic alterity. I will argue that it is not only Gogol's alternative sexuality, but also his ethnicity that played a role in Rozanov's establishing a convergence between him and the Jews. At the conclusion of this paper, the Otherness of Gogol' and the Jews vis-à-vis Rozanov will also be explored in connection with Rozanov's identification/rejection with/of Gogol' and the Jews. It is hoped that the result of my investigation will contribute to a better understanding of Rozanov's position in the context of turn of the century discourse on sexual pathology and ethnic/gender stereotypes. My approach is underpinned theoretically by work on body politics, which investigates perceptions of sexuality as ideologies based on the defensive position adopted by a dominant group in the framework of a hegemonic culture.<sup>14</sup>

### Articles on Gogol': the dialectic of interpretation of *A Terrible Vengeance*

Let us follow the chronological development of the theme of „Gogol' and incest“ and its mutation into the theme of „the sexual anomalies of Gogol' and the Jews“. Rozanov first highlighted the sorcerer plot in *A Terrible Vengeance* in a 1901 article – „M.Iu. Lermontov“. Here he develops the notion of a link between

<sup>14</sup> I refer to work done by historians of culture who are engaged in a search for stereotypes of a pathological and dangerous Other, when Jews are perceived as blacks or coloureds, and by the law of analogy fall into the same category as gender Others – women and homosexuals. In particular, Gilman Sander, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness*, Ithaca 1985, Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Bloomington 1994.

certain writers and mysticism, and advances the idea of the „biographism“ of literary themes, that is, the connection between a writer's biography and his literary creation. Biographism is presented not as literature mirroring the events occurring in the writer's real life, but as an unrealized thought, a desire taking hold of the writer. Rozanov thus approaches the literary text as a manifestation of unconscious desires or latent impulses, and, for him, the world of the unconscious doubles as the world of mysticism, an atavistic call. Furthermore, he understands atavism as a biological phenomenon, in which biology in its turn is seen as a mystical category.<sup>15</sup> The theme of incest is not yet articulated, Rozanov for the moment confining himself to a description of the metamorphosis of Katerina's father, who changes from a Cossack into a sorcerer at the sight of an icon. Making bold use of the device of „parallelism“ („M.Iu. Lermontov“, 73), Rozanov argues a similarity between Gogol' and Katerina's father on the basis of the portrait resemblance of Gogol' and the sorcerer:

But here too Gogol''s parallelism will help us ...

When the esaul lifted up the icons, suddenly the cossack's whole face changed: his nose grew out and bent to one side, instead of dark brown eyes, green ones popped out, the lips turned blue, the chin began to tremble and grow more pointed, like a spear, a fang shot out of the mouth, a hump grew up behind the head and the cossack turned into an old man. (*A Terrible Vengeance*)

How like Gogol' this is – Gogol', who had already started to make fun of the whole of the highly respectable reading public, did a cossack dance in the tales of „Rudy Panko“, and when everyone was expecting him to toss out more of the same, suddenly a hump shoots up on the cossack's back, he turns into an old man, grows thin ... and finally in „Correspondence with friends“ ... starts saying the most fantastic things ... („M.Iu. Lermontov“, 73)

Using the method of „parallelism“ in establishing what Katerina's father and Gogol' have in common, Rozanov makes a claim for the biographical nature of the motif. This is taken to be the zone where realism and fantasy are blurred: „However you try, you cannot escape the impression that Gogol''s knowledge of Katerina's father is not merely that of an author, but rather more that of someone related to him ... It is too subjective, too biographical. This is something that was, not something invented“ („M.Iu. Lermontov“, 74). Rozanov posits the idea of the writer's „possessed and inspired quality“ („obladaemost'“, „vnushaemost'“, 75), concomitant with his natural talent („odarennost'“, 75). The reason Gogol' has been chosen and thus endowed is that he is especially loved by God – the Jewish god, „Adonai“ (75). As yet the theme of incest has not been articulated,

<sup>15</sup> In „The Ages of Love“ (1900), Rozanov writes of „mysteries of biology“ (132). Rozanov, „Vozrasty liubvi,“ *Vo dvore iazychnikov*, Moscow 1999, 130-135.

but the link between semitism and the incest plot (and the plot's creator), has been generated implicitly, based on the supposed „parallelism“: It is the Jewish God that gave Gogol' the gift to penetrate the mysteries of sexuality; it is an unchristian Cossack to whom Gogol' is biographically linked.

In „Gogol“ (1902), Rozanov returns to *A Terrible Vengeance*. Again he examines the character of Katerina's father, and significant for my argument is the fact that he chooses for comment an extract in which reference is made to the father's peculiar dietary habits. He selects this fragment from the text like an anthropologist, homing in the ritual symbolism connected with characteristic dietary habits:

„Why, father, do you refuse to eat dumplings? They are christian food, eaten by all God's Holy Saints.“ But the pan father frowned and, pushing away the cossack food, took a silent swig from his flask of some sort of black liquid. („Gogol“, 123)

Mary Douglas has demonstrated in her influential anthropological study on the meaning of rituals in various cultures, that it is precisely those rituals related to digestion and sexual activity that are particularly rich in symbolic meaning.<sup>16</sup> The rituals, rites and taboos connected with the categorization of food and the grouping of sexual partners have a symbolic character which is both limiting and protective in its implications.<sup>17</sup>

Rozanov's quasi-anthropological quest led him to study the laws of Leviticus, and he devoted a wide range of commentaries to the rules for kosher practice. His interest in the rituals of the Jews peaked in his articles on *The Olfactory and Tactile Relationship of the Jews to Blood* (1913-1914), written during the Beilis trial (1913). In these, he subverted the main principle of kosher practice – the avoidance of blood in food – and used it to demonstrate a peculiar relationship of the Jews to blood and, „in parallel“, used it as evidence for the ritual murder of Andrei Iushchinskii by Mendel Beilis. It is profoundly significant that in regard to Gogol's sorcerer, who breaks the incest taboo on love between father and daughter, Rozanov emphasises his non-christian diet. He presents him as an exotic Other, and takes further the orientalist fantasy begun by Gogol'. Gogol's own orientalist myth essentially turns the pan into a Muslim, but Rozanov's interpretation in „The Riddles of Gogol“ and „Gogol's Magical Page“ (both 1909) is that the Sorcerer's refusal to eat pork judaizes him.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London 1980.

<sup>17</sup> Douglas gives a summary of various interpretations of such Judaic rites as circumcision, and of laws like the rules of kosher. For explanations of the laws in Leviticus by Jewish interpreters of Judaism: Lawrence Hoffmann, *Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism*, Chicago 1996.

For the purposes of establishing the development of Rozanov's evaluative trajectory it is of note that this treatment of the sorcerer post-dates Rozanov's article, „Judaism“ (1903), that is, when he had become familiar with the Talmud and writings by baptized Jews on the rituals and way of life of the Jews. In „Judaism“ he quotes a considerable number of gastronomic extracts describing Jewish dishes and, in connection with his descriptions of the spiciness of Jewish food, introduces the term „olfactory“ as a characteristic feature of the Jewish attitude to the world.<sup>18</sup> The judophile nature of Rozanov's sentiments regarding the love felt by Jews for every living thing (the antithesis of the Christian cult of what is dead) extend to rites connected with the sexual sphere of activity – circumcision and *mikvah*. In the article, Rozanov makes use of Gogol's *A Terrible Vengeance*, together with Jewish sources, to accentuate two anthropologically significant themes – incest and restrictions on food – which he associates with Judaism. His approach involves examining a taboo as a structure with symbolic meaning. He makes the claim that proscriptions on food are divisive, and he furthers this point by turning to two sources – Tacitus, and the subject of Gogol's story. „Parallelism“ again figures as his method of analysis:

It has always been observed, noted even by Tacitus, that this people has an ‚odium humani generis‘, and, conversely, that all peoples have experienced the same uncontrollable feeling of separation from the Jews. ‚Not ours, not ours!‘ ‚Not us, not us!‘ What kind of parallel is one to draw for this mutual feeling of aversion?

– I don't like these dumplings, said the pan father, – they have no taste. And he put down his spoon ...

– I know that *Jewish noodles are better for you*, Danilo thought to himself.

– Why, father of my wife, – he continued aloud, – why do you say that *the dumplings have no taste*? Is it that that they are badly prepared? There is nothing to be squeamish about: this is christian food! All God's holy people, all God's saints eat dumplings.

The father said not a word: pan Danilo was silent too.

Roast boar with cabbage and plums was served. – I don't like pork! – said Katerina's father, raking out the cabbage with his spoon. – Why don't you like pork? – said Danilo, – only Turks and Yids don't eat pork.

The father frowned even more sternly. All he had to eat was some gruel with milk. *Instead of vodka, from a flask in his bosom he took a swig of some black liquid* (A Terrible Vengeance, Ch. 4).

(„Judaism“, 114-115)

<sup>18</sup> „The inhalation of cloves is remarkable. What is a sense of smell? What is an aroma? Here we have a category not included in the register of subjects for philosophy, one which artistically has no school of its own.“ („Judaizm“, 163) Rozanov, *Iudaizm in Taina Izraila*, St. Petersburg 1993, 105-227.

Here, Rozanov's falsification lies in the fact that he develops the Jewishness of Katerina's father on the basis of two mutually contradictory facts: on the one hand, he points to the law of taboo broken by the pan-father (incest) and, on the other, he points to the law which the pan-father observes (kosher). In the first instance the Sorcerer observes the law in Leviticus XVIII: 6-20, and in the second he breaks the law in Leviticus XI: 7.

In order to accomplish his overall task – to establish the Jewishness of the sorcerer and, via „parallelism“, to present Gogol' himself as a Jew on the basis of his subconscious penetration into the mysteries of Judaism, Rozanov emphasises those parts of the text which suit his preconceptions. He ignores Gogol's authorial irony in endowing Ukrainian food – dumplings and roast boar – with Orthodox correctness, and sharpens the focus in the direction of an exotic Other, the ethnicity of which in Gogol's text is deliberately fantasized, combining within it the exoticism of the Muslim Orient and the demonism of black magic.<sup>19</sup> In the phrase „Yid noodles“(„zhidovskaia lapsha“), the word „zhidovskaia“ could be, for Gogol', synonymous with „foreign“,<sup>20</sup> whereas Rozanov gives a specific ethnic connotation to the Gogolian metaphor.<sup>21</sup> Rozanov is aware that he is resorting to a subterfuge here, and after the excerpt quoted above he inserts the following comment, which permits him to construct a parallelism between the sorcerer and Gogol':

The reader will at once laugh at us and the rapprochement we are trying to make. The subject of *A Terrible Vengeance* is monstrous: nothing like this could have occurred to Pushkin, Kol'tstov, Tolstoi ... The imagination of strange Gogol' not only took hold of it, but also embellished it with wondrously fantastic colours, with a kind of fear, but at the same time a kind of attraction. („Judaism“, 115)

Rozanov's romanticized approach to Gogol' in „Judaism“ is manifest in his positive evaluation of his own fantasies about Gogol', the plot of Gogol's story, and the Jewishness of incest. To put this in the context of his general ideology, Rozanov is here preaching his „sermon of sex“, the purpose of which is to reveal the mystical essence of sexuality. At the present stage of his argument he finds it necessary to use pseudo- archeological investigations to teach „Aryan“ peoples

<sup>19</sup> Karlinsky notes the geographical vagueness about the place of the Sorcerer's travels – it might be Moslem Turkey, it might be Catholic Poland – and uses it as evidence of the fact that Gogol' is creating a xenophobic and heathen subtext around the Sorcerer's demonism. Karlinsky, *op.cit.*, 42-44.

<sup>20</sup> On the variety of connotations of the word *zhid* in Russian literature, see Henrik Birnbaum, „Some Problems with the Etymology and the Semantics of Slavic *Zhid* ‚Jew‘“, *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 7, 1985, 9.

<sup>21</sup> On the intermingling of the Moslem and Jewish Orient in Russian Orthodox consciousness, see Leonid Chekin, „The Godless Ishmaelites: The Image of the Steppe in Eleventh-Century Rus'“, *Russian History* 19, nos. 1-4, 1992, 9-28.



the secrets of semitic knowledge („Judaism“, 117).<sup>22</sup> But several years later, with the onset of a political crisis, his positive evaluation of the scheme of thought he has developed is turned on its head. The Gogol'/Jew dyad, with its semantic load of incest, ambivalent sexuality and other „strangeresses“ (115), will be given a pogrom racist reading. Rozanov's political anthropology, with its profoundly unscientific interpretations and dilettantish symbolic production, will take on the form of dangerous body politics.

In his 1909 writings on Gogol', Rozanov continues to use the same extracts from *A Terrible Vengeance* to illustrate his quasi-anthropological discoveries. At the same time Gogol', by virtue of his being made synonymous with the sorcerer, also undergoes a process of judaization or semitization. In the first of the 1909 articles, „The Riddles of Gogol'“, the transformation of Katerina's father from a Zaporozhian cossack into a hunch-backed wizard is presented as a metaphor for the constantly metamorphosing essence of Gogol' himself.<sup>23</sup> He resolves Gogol''s ambivalent sexuality by using the trope of androgyny, and Gogol' is shown to be the same kind of werewolf in sex as the sorcerer is in his metamorphosing body:

And it was only in the coffin that he appeared as he really was, in this sepulchral and terrible unnatural form. Something that S.T. Aksakov noted in his well-known reminiscences corresponds with this ...

Gogol' stood before me in the following fantastic dress: instead of boots he wore long woollen stockings coming to above his knees; instead of a frock-coat, over a flannel camisole he wore a velvet spencer; round his neck was wound a large multi-coloured scarf, and on his head was a crimson velvet *kokoshnik* (peasant woman's head-dress), very much like the Mordvinian women's headgear. He was busy writing, absorbed in what he was doing ...

Once again, just as the dead Gogol' reminds one of the witch in „Vii“, so the living breathing Gogol' reminds one of the pan-wizard in *A Terrible Vengeance*, going about, in spite of his cossack origins, in Turkish get-up. („The Riddles of Gogol'“, 336)

Furthering the notion of Gogol''s mutating and androgynous nature, Rozanov exoticizes him by comparing him not only with the orientalized body of the sorcerer, but also with a Jewish body. In this connection, Rozanov's choice of

<sup>22</sup> Cf. „... that from an Aryan point of view it is precisely a ‚black liquid‘, but out of the ‚black‘ of this ‚liquid‘ our Lord came forth; and, as was already told to Abraham: ‚All nations shall be blessed with thy seed‘. The history of Israel is the history of a holy seed ...“ Rozanov, „Judaizm“, *op.cit.*, 117.

<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, in his book on Gogol' published in 1909, D.S. Merezhkovskii also draws a parallel between the sorcerer in *A Terrible Vengeance* and Gogol' himself, but, unlike Rozanov's semitizing interpretation, here the sorcerer-Gogol' is christianized by Father Matfei. Cf. „This seems to prefigure Gogol''s own fate; the sorcerer and the monk are Gogol' and his spiritual advisor, Father Matfei Rzhnevskii.“ D.S. Merezhkovskii, „Gogol'. Tvorchestvo, zhizn' i religii“, *op.cit.*, 262.

words to describe Gogol's face as he lay in his coffin is quite striking: "... a kind of smoothness („gladkost'") and sense of being clipped („obrezannost'"), long pointed nose ... " („The Riddles of Gogol", 335). What strikes one in this description is the deliberately incomprehensible and ambivalent nexus of „obrezannost'" and „long pointed nose". Since it is not clear what „obrezannost'" refers to, its meaning is transferred to the nose, which Gogol himself phallicized in his story *The Nose*. In this close proximity the nose as a metonymy for Gogol' changes into a metaphor for his „obrezannost'" („circumcision").<sup>24</sup> Posing the question of Gogol's religion („Is he a Christian?", 334), Rozanov not only orientalizes Gogol', but also specifically semitizes his body by presenting it as circumcised, where circumcision is a trope for emasculation/ feminization and ambivalent sexuality. Being well familiar with Otto Weininger's (1903) discussion of the effeminised/bisexual nature of Jewish men,<sup>25</sup> Rozanov also suggests the reading of the „long nose" as a Jewish feature. Like circumcision, which in the medical literature in *fin de siècle* was linked to a belief in the deformed shape of Jewish male genitalia, long noses were seen as markers of the pathology of the Jewish body.<sup>26</sup> Rozanov's allusions thus have a „scientific" underlay that helps to reinforce his parallel between Gogol's and the wizard's latent Jewishness on the basis of their transgression of sexual normality (incest and transexuality). That both of these sets of behaviour constitute prohibitions in Leviticus (XVIII: 6-20;

<sup>24</sup> Sander Gilman (1992), following Freud, has shown that circumcision as practised by Jews was perceived in European consciousness as a form of castration; and in addition to this prejudice there was a widespread belief in a causal-sequential link between the length of a Jewish nose and the shortness of a castrated penis. The „smoothness" of Gogol's face and its „obrezannost'" („clippedness", i.e. clipped by circumcision) are tropes of the fantasies about the Jewish body in antisemitic discourse. In this description, the notion of the archetypal physique and physiognomy of a Jew carries all the hallmarks of anthropological science at the turn of the century. Gilman shows that in medical and anthropological literature, the nose was seen as an organ which acted as an indicator of degeneration. Sander Gilman, *The Visibility of the Jew in Diaspora: Body Imagery and Its Cultural Context*, the B.G. Rudolph Lectures in Judaic Studies, Syracuse University, May 1992.

As is well known, Rozanov read works by late nineteenth century psychiatrists, especially R. Krafft-Ebing, a typical representative of the psychiatry of his time. In his book *Sexual Psychopathy* (1886), there are pages devoted to the parallelism between the pathology of the nose and that of the genitalia: „According to [Dr Mackenzie's] observations, there exist infections of the nose which are stubbornly resistant to all treatment until complaints in the sexual sphere, which exist at the same time (and are the cause?) are eliminated. We find interesting confirmation and expansion of our information regarding the „narium et genitalium" link (the olfactory and sexual spheres) in various writers." (48) R. Krafft-Ebing, *Potovaia Psikhopatiia*, Moscow 1996, 48.

<sup>25</sup> Rozanov often discusses Weininger's *Sex and Character*, but claims that, independently of Weininger, he also conceived of the feminine nature of the Jewish men in connection with the race/gender link. On Rozanov and Weininger see N. Eliseev, „Otto Veininger i Vasilii Rozanov: problemy samonenavisti," *Stupeni*, no. 10, 1997, 94-101. On Weininger and the Jews in the context of racism and sexism see Nancy A. Harrowitz and Barbara Hyams (eds), *Jews and Gender: Responses to Otto Weininger*, Philadelphia 1995.

<sup>26</sup> Gilman cites Mantegazza on „long noses" as a feature of the physiognomy of the oversexed Jews. „Sigmund Freud and the Sexologists: A Second Reading," in Sander L. Gilman et al (eds) *Reading Freud's Readings*, New York 1994, 47-66, 48.

23) serves, by Rozanov's logics of reversal, as an argument for the essentially Jewish nature of these anomalies. The link between gender and race has been reinforced, and Gogol' the Orientaliser emerges as an Orientalised semite.

In Rozanov's next work on Gogol' in the same year – „Gogol''s Magical Page“ (1909), his anthropological and „archeological enthusiasm“ („Nekrasov“ (1908), 253) is evident in overt praise of incest and an apologetic for it. In addition, Rozanov finds a way to apply the theme of incest to Judaism – a connection he himself established as a result of his way of drawing parallels with opposites. The epigraph at the head of the article is in itself evidence of the „research work“ he had carried out on incest. It is taken from Clement of Alexandria's book *Stromata*,<sup>27</sup> and Rozanov, referring to his source as *The Magi*, by Xanthus, tells his readers that „the Magi shared their bed with their mothers and daughters and it was also considered permissible to be intimate with one's sister ... and this took place not as a result of anything underhand, but by mutual consent“ („Gogol''s Magical Page“, 383).

Characteristically for his method of argumentation by analogy, the alleged parallelism between the theme of *A Terrible Vengeance* and material taken from an Alexandrian source is then used by Rozanov to promote his conflation of the Magis and Gogol''s wizard. Of equally doubtful logic and historical validity is the line of argument he adopts on the very first page of the article, where the theme of sex is carried over into the world of the Old Testament and the Jews. As well as referring to the Magi, he makes use of the Song of Songs and the Talmud. Rozanov needs Jewish sources to introduce the subject of sex and to propagandize the idea of early sexual maturity, and so he pursues this particular fantasy of incest, interpreting ancient Jewish sources in his own way. He turns to the Old Testament story of Lot and his daughters and offers an explanation of a fact he finds exciting: that the Talmud permits the story of Lot to be read aloud in the synagogue. That Judaic law does not prohibit the telling of this story of incest is seen by Rozanov as evidence that the story's subject matter is not taboo and, therefore, neither is the act of incest itself. As interpreted by Rozanov, Gogol' merely took the subject of Lot further in his creative writing, and was able to do this because he himself belonged to the order of wizards. Rozanov again links Gogol''s special gift as a seer with his mysticism and he explains the gift by connecting it with the mystery of Gogol''s sexuality. It is notable that Rozanov chooses the word „atavist“ to describe Gogol' („Gogol''s Magical Page“, 400), thereby advancing the idea of Gogol''s body as rudimentary, as expressed in his bi/asexual androgyny.

<sup>27</sup> Kablukov provides evidence that Rozanov looked through Clement of Alexandria's book while he was working on the 1909 article on Gogol'. S.P. Kablukov, „O V.V. Rozanove (iz dnevnika 1909 g.)“, V.V. Rozanov: *Pro et Contra*, op.cit., 200-227, 201.

Returning to Gogol's text, Rozanov highlights codes that he finds connectable with the Jewish theme<sup>28</sup> – the theme of pork (again) and fantasized Kabbalistic signs in wizard's room. He connects the codes to the theme of incest, which then permits him to characterize it as a Judaic and Jewish phenomenon. The first argument he must put forward in this chain of reasoning is that Katerina's father is a secret Jew. From this will follow the proof that incest is a Jewish practice. Rozanov highlights two excerpts from the text of *A Terrible Vengeance* which are the basis for his main argument for the essential Jewishness of incest and, linked with this, the notion that Gogol's talent is associated with the sexual sphere:

*There is not even a candle in the room, but it is light. All over the walls there are weird signs; weapons are hanging there, but they are all strange: such weapons are not carried by Turks, Crimeans, Poles, Christians, nor the famous Swedish nation.*

This is a long way from us, a long way! ... It is beyond the bounds of Christianity; *before* Christianity, *to the side* of it ... If one takes our present time, it is something „antichrist“ that is, it destroys all Christ's work that is here now on earth, all His testament, all His word ... Gogol' has expressed this quite awkwardly by means of „alien, strange weapons, *not of our time* hung all over the walls.“ Talking about the „passport“, when it's obvious „from the mug“.

... It's him, it's the wife's father, whispered the Cossack and went down further. („Gogol's Magical Page,“ 413)

Rozanov himself realizes to what extent he is on shaky ground in interpreting Katerina's father as a Jew merely on the basis of the strangeness and antiquity of the weapons and the incomprehensibility of the signs on the walls. Rozanov connects the vagueness of the meaning in Gogol's text with the fact that, for Gogol' himself, what is shown to him might have remained at the level of something neither realized nor rationalized. According to Rozanov, Gogol' failed to articulate properly knowledge granted to him by a power not of this world, a power which possessed him against his will. We recall that he characterized Gogol's creative gift as the passive expression of a supernatural power controlling him and, as it were, prophesying through him: „...writer[s] clearly energized; ... possessed“ („M. Yu. Lermontov“, 1901, 75). The notion of passivity reinforces the effeminate essence and ambivalent sexuality of the writer – another step towards the conflation of gender and race.

Finding himself in such a shaky position, where the text under analysis failed to furnish material providing reliable proof, Rozanov resorts to a source which was

<sup>28</sup> Gogol's attitude toward the Jews is a separate subject which has received some attention. The opinions of commentators vary from negative to neutral evaluations: Felix Dreizin, *The Russian soul and the Jew: Essays in Literary Ethnocentrism*, Lanham 1990; Gavriel Shapiro, *Nikolai Gogol and the Baroque Cultural Heritage*, Pennsylvania 1993.

just as authoritative in his methodology – life experience. He introduces an abridged version of a popular antisemitic saying: „one is beaten for one's mug, not one's passport“ – that is, Jews are immediately identifiable by their faces, regardless of what their passports say – , thus using a piece of folk „wisdom“ as his authoritative source.<sup>29</sup> Even out of context and with the word „beat“ omitted, the reference retains its judophobic connotations. Further, Rozanov thus reinforces the concept of the Jews as a biological people with the fully defined and differentiating physical features of Other. Implied also is the common folk belief that the Jews were devious, changing their surnames in official documents as an attempt to conceal their true identity and ethnicity.<sup>30</sup> Significantly, he stamps the Jews with the mark of secrecy and mystery and, in so doing, supports the dominant antisemitic myth. He takes the stance not only of a quasi-anthropologist, but also of a missionary, whose task is to reveal and expose the mysteries of Jewry.<sup>31</sup> The main thrust of all his utterances on the subject of the Jews continue to be that of a preacher-exposer,<sup>32</sup> fanatically convinced of the existence of the mystery of Israel. However, his archeology will ultimately prove to be politically compromised; the politicization of his pseudo-anthropological and archeological discoveries will reach its climax during the Beilis trial, when he will make a statement on the existence of mysteries among the Jews, one of which is the blood libel („Do the Jews have „mysteries“? Reply to a statement by 400 rabbi“, 1911).

For the moment, however, in his 1909 article, Rozanov indulges in an archeological fantasy by working on the incest/ kosher dyad, creating archetypes of the anthropology of the Jewish body:

In Gogol's story it is the actual technique which comprises its magical side; the minutiae, the details of the story.

„Why, – Burul'bash says to his wife's father, the wizard, – Why don't you like pork: – only Turks and Jews don't eat pork?“ The father frowned even more sternly.

All he ate was some gruel with milk. Instead of vodka, from a flask in his bosom he took a swig of some black liquid.

The word „Jew“ („zhid“) appears briefly in Gogol's story: the only word he inevitably had to include ... This is the „Jewish essence“ ... Incest is the „Jewish essence ...“ („Gogol's Magical Page“, 416)

<sup>29</sup> The saying „B'it po morde, a ne po pasportu“ is part of the repertory of antisemitic folklore.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Verner, „What's in a Name? Dog killers, Jews and Rasputin,“ *Slavic Review*, 53, no. 4, Winter 1994, 1046-1070.

<sup>31</sup> It is worth noting that Rozanov was fully aware of the belief in a worldwide conspiracy of Jews, an idea he mocked in his 1906 „V russkom podpol'e“ (In the Russian underground).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. „Further denial of sex by Christians will have as its consequence the greater triumphs of Jewry. That is why I began to preach sex at such a timely moment. „Opavshie list'ia,“ *Izbrannoe*, 81-426, 132

The wizard's diet acquires a further symbolic significance in the context, established by Rozanov's exegetical filling in of the gaps in Gogol's text: combined with the ban on pork, the function of the black liquid is to concretize his demonic quality, making the power of darkness synonymous with Jewry.

The vogue at that time for archeology based on „organic synthesis“ is revealed in the way Rozanov creates a single continuum of the culture of incest, which he presents as the whole of the pre-Christian Orient: „... apart from primitive popular fear, another kind of curiosity sprang up in him, another vision was revealed, a new one, a completely precise one, forcing him to locate the occurrence of incest where appropriate: in the Orient! In the depths of Assyria, Egypt, Persia, of the ancient magi!...“ (417). The connection between Judea and the pre-Christian Orient enables Rozanov, in the manner of a dilettante, to ascribe a commonality and continuum to the cultures of the whole of the Ancient Orient. As a result he was able to justify the parallel he drew between the magi-wizards and the Judaic world, using his Clement of Alexandria source as evidence for Jewish sexual practices. An identical method of parallelism allowed him to establish the synonymy of Gogol's atavistic body and the rudimentary body of the Jews. It is precisely in this interpretation, by virtue of the phenomenon of his peculiar sexuality, that Gogol turns into a mystical writer. It is in the sexual sphere that Gogol's talent may best be understood. The idea that Gogol was a passive writer, writing in a trance and transmitting subconscious knowledge, is once again given a phylogenetic aspect:

... what is interesting is the fact that he wrote with inspiration and in the Little Russian folk style, but without his knowing it, by means of his remarkable genius or his atavism he was carried into the central mysteries of Egypt, Assyria, and Iran, and even simply solved these mysteries! („Gogol's Magical Page“, 417)

Rozanov simultaneously orientalizes Gogol and makes culture specific the orientalist fantasy created by Gogol, with its characteristic theme of incest.<sup>33</sup> As developed in European discourse, this aspect of orientalism was a way of projecting the sexual fantasies of Europeans onto an orientalist Other.<sup>34</sup> As Said has demonstrated, the psychological model of an orientalist projection is bivalent. On the one hand the mechanism expresses the desire to become synonymous with

<sup>33</sup> The orientalization of Gogol is linked to his southern ethnicity. He came from the Ukraine, a place where the South and the East are locales confused in Russian Orientalism. Rozanov uses Gogol's orientalist image as a step towards his semitization. For the sources of Gogol's Orientalism in Arabesques: Melissa Frazier, „Space and Genre in Gogol's Arabeski,“ *Slavic and East European Journal*, 43, no. 3, 1999, 452-470.

<sup>34</sup> It is ironic that Russia itself was an object of European Orientalism and the theme of incest. Otto Rank in his monumental study of *The Incest Theme in Literature* (1905, 1912) in his discussion of the father-daughter incest refers to the story „The Russian King's Daughter“, Hagen 1850. Otto Rank, *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Criticism*, trans. by Gregory C. Richter, Baltimore 1994, 315-316.

an exotic Other that has access to a world of sensual pleasures, and, on the other, expresses the urge to demonize the Other by finding it guilty of sinful behaviour. The latter is linked with sublimation of and purification from evil thoughts and desires.<sup>35</sup> In his work at this time, Rozanov was inverting the psychological subtext of Gogol's orientalist Other, revealing its positive side. However, this trend came to an end by 1911, when Stolypin was assassinated by a Jew and the Beilis affair began. Notwithstanding his earlier positive evaluations of the rituals and laws of Judaism, Rozanov now reinterprets his orientalist view of the Jew as Other. The themes of incest and blood – the main taboos of Judaism, which Rozanov depicted as mysteries, are now painted in demonic shades, and in accordance with Rozanov's „parallelism“, the demonization of Gogol' takes place simultaneously with the demonization of the Jews.

### From „love“ to hatred: the demonization of Jewish sexuality and of Gogol'

In the articles written during the Beilis trial (1911-1913), included in the book *The Olfactory and Tactile Relationship of the Jews to Blood*, Rozanov develops further all those themes which he had already applied to the anthropology of Judaism and the Jewish body. However, he now turns from apologist to denunciator of the Jews and Judaism. A simple change in emphasis allows him to reveal the symbolic significance of Judaism's (supposed) rites in a negative light. Notable here is the course he adopts, one which had been used before by others. When preoccupied with his apologetic of the rituals of Judaism, Rozanov projected on to Judaism his own fantasies, which comprised simultaneously the essence of his philosophy of sex. The „transcendental character of sex“ (*Marriage and Christianity*, 119) is the fundamental theme of Rozanov's writings, and his entire „archeological“ search can be reduced to a search for illustrations of this idea. He took up the cliché by which, in Christian anthropology, Judaism is perceived as a religion of flesh and blood. Judaism and the people of Israel were perceived by the church fathers as the embodiment of the idea and practice of physical and carnal being, whereas Christianity was presented as a religion of the transcendental and the exalted. In the dualism „flesh/spirit“ and „carnal/spiritual“, Judaism and Jewry were made synonymous with the carnality so despised in the taxonomy of ascetic Christianity.

In his attempt to rehabilitate carnality, Rozanov had tried to create a monistic continuum between what, in his terminology, was called transcendental and earthly, noumenon and phenomenon, physics and metaphysics – hence his creation of synthetic concepts like „transcendental sex“.<sup>36</sup> In his search for archeological

<sup>35</sup> Criticism of the concept of orientalism and the construct of the Other was begun in the work of Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1979.

<sup>36</sup> Rozanov formulated his terminology of the philosophy of sex in the essays included in *V mire neiasnogo i nereshennogo* (1901).

illustration, he turned to sources connected with the rituals and taboos of Judaism. A duality is concealed in his very choice of material, for by selecting Israel as the object of his study, his starting point was the position of Christian anthropology. Developing as a religion of rejection and repudiation of Judaism, Christianity's interpretation of Judaism was to assign stereotypes to the people of Israel, stereotypes based on the category of an Other. In the dualistic structure of this category carnality and sexuality were assigned to the Other, so helping the subject projecting this image to conquer and sublimate the temptations of the flesh.

Rozanov manipulated the taxonomy of dualism embodied in the concept of „carnal Israel“. Understanding the whole essence of the carnality of Israel worked out by Christian anthropology and the church theologians,<sup>37</sup> he could choose to act as apologist or denunciator of Israel. During the Beilis trial, laying bare the ancient strata of the central Christian myth of Jews as vampires who fed on the blood of Christian infants, he became a denunciator of Jewry. It is notable that he presented himself as an expert authority on the Talmud and Jewish sources, a specialist with knowledge of archeology and anthropology – of ancient written sources, of language, of rite, of ritual. In fact, such was Rozanov's dilettantism that his knowledge of the Hebrew language went no further than a familiarity with the Hebrew alphabet, and as sources he used secondary material, relying on histories written by baptised Jews,<sup>38</sup> these often being duplications of well-known anti-semitic forgeries.

<sup>37</sup> As Daniel Boyarin has shown, the Church Fathers stamped Judaism with the mark of carnality, thereby distinguishing it from Christianity, placing it at the opposite pole in the spirit-body, exalted-earthly dichotomy. Boyarin notes, for example, „In his ‚Tractus adversus Judaeos‘, Augustine lays the following charge against ‚the Jews‘: ‚Behold Israel according to the flesh (1 Corinthians. 10: 18). This we know to be the carnal Israel; but the Jews do not grasp this meaning and as a result they prove themselves to be indisputably carnal. (vii, 9).“ Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*, I, Berkeley 1993.

<sup>38</sup> In addition to Jewish sources such as *Exodus* and *The Talmud* in the Russian translation by Pereferkovich, Rozanov makes reference in his article „Judaism“ to a book by the antisemitic A. Shmakov, *Evreiskie rechi (Jewish speeches)* (Moscow 1897), which he calls a „coarse, slanderous and uneducated“ book (121), as well as a work in manuscript by S.I. Tzeikhenstein, *Avtobiografiia pravoslavnogo evreia. S prilozheniem: Buket, ili Perevod talmudicheskikh rasskazov, anekdotov, legend (The Autobiography of an Orthodox Jew. With an appendix: The Bouquet, or Translation of stories, anecdotes and legends from the Talmud)*, written, according to Rozanov, in the 1840s or 50s. It is remarkable that Rozanov is concerned neither by the fact that the latter book contains anecdotal material nor by the fact that, as he himself observes, it was commissioned by Russian Orthodox priests („Judaism“, *op.cit.*, 130). It is also notable that Rozanov, justifying his source material, observes that he rejects sources which are marked by formal, educated and rational qualities in their manner of expression. It is a striking fact that in this „judophile period“ Rozanov states that he prefers the material provided by Tzeikhenstein, a baptised Jew, over that supplied by scholarly rabbi commentators on the Talmud: „When the article ‚Judaism‘ was printed, I received a number of private letters, some from Jews, some from Russians. The Jews asked me to correct some mistakes, even to rewrite the whole article, regarding it as inaccurate. But since these Jews were educated Russian rationalists I place no great faith in their judgments. Furthermore I would have no faith in rabbis; in the first place, on account of the notorious and historically natural tendency of Jews to ‚keep things in the dark‘, not to broadcast publicly the law and



The essential part of Rozanov's argument against Beilis lay in an interpretation of the laws of kosher which prohibit Jews from taking blood in their food. Perceiving in this prohibition evidence for the existence of a mystery, Rozanov inverts its meaning – if there is a rule of prohibition, there must be a breaking of it. His method here is analogous to the interpretation of incest that he had developed in his numerous readings of Gogol's *A Terrible Vengeance*. His argument is based on a proof derived from an opposite: if in Jewish law there is a prohibition of incest, that means that incest itself must exist. Since the subject of Lot and his daughters appears in the Old Testament, that means that there were real-life cases of a sexual relationship between a father and his daughters.<sup>39</sup> In Rozanov's 1909 work on Gogol', the story of Lot and his daughters was used as a lesson that one should give one's daughters in marriage early to prevent explosions of sexuality, but in his work at the time of the Beilis affair there is a dramatic reversal. From being an advocate of sex, Rozanov becomes a stern persecutor, finding the Jews guilty of a predilection for taboos due to their latent criminality: vampirism and sexual perversions forming a single continuum.

During the Beilis affair, Rozanov once again approaches the theme of the Jewish body and the body of Gogol', using the phylogenetic idea of atavism. He had earlier used this to explain Gogol's special talent for penetrating the secrets of Judaism and he uses it again now to explain the behaviour of the Jews of his time. Thus, just as Gogol' had been „passive“, „a slave to his mission“, „energized; possessed“ „by heaven“ („M. Yu. Lermontov“, 75), so too the Jews, possibly not even conscious of the fact, prove to be guided by their instincts. This is precisely the line of argument used by Rozanov in an article written at the time of the trial which was included in *The Olfactory and Tactile Relationship of the Jews to Blood*.

If there is no atavism or heredity, there is no unconscious, no unaccountable memories in the deep-seated primitive cells of the brain ... In the cells which are embedded more deeply and almost inactive, but not quite dead. And in the case of the Jews these old cells are preserved. In them memory, heredity and atavism are still active. („Telephone reminders“, 337)

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word they have been given... That is one reason. The second is this: rationalism, 'Greek education' (ancient Hellenism), and especially the vanity given by this education which the Jews themselves have so absorbed since antiquity that for them to give an explanation in the Greek spirit is the very crown of scholarliness and fame... Only the crowd, the herd of Jewishness still has its 'spirit', its 'sweat', its specific smell. For this reason the good Tzeikhenstein was a more reliable authority for me than any scholar." („Judaizm“, *op.cit.*, 227). Particularly striking with respect to Rozanov's anthropology is the way he treats the smell of the Jewish body as synonymous with its spirit.

<sup>39</sup> For Talmudic interpretations of sexual transgression in the Old Testament: Michael L. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Atlanta 1996.

The fact that atavism is common to both links them together and explains another „parallelism“ between Gogol' and the Jewish body – the „sodomism“ of both, understood as a particular kind of sexuality. I showed earlier that, simultaneously with the theme of incest, Rozanov developed the theme of Gogol's peculiar sexuality. This „peculiarity“ was to be found in the possibility of his homosexuality or a/bisexuality. It was also noted that Rozanov took asexuality to be a manifestation of homosexuality, calling it „spiritual sodomy“.<sup>40</sup> He took all the special features of non-normative sex to be the rudimentary, atavistic manifestations of its cosmic, supernatural character. He saw human sexuality as a copy of the sexuality of God, who, in his interpretation, was androgynous. Rozanov reminded his readers that the concept of Elohim is expressed in Hebrew by a word in the plural, and on this „philological“ basis („Ends and beginnings“, 87) he formed his conclusion on the (meta)physical androgyny of God.<sup>41</sup> Thus Jewish bodies, by virtue of their atavistic quality, carried inside them a memory of the bisexuality of the One in whose image and likeness they were made, and which was manifested in the homo-erotic tendencies of the Jews.

In his writings at the time of the Beilis trial Rozanov associates the Jews with sodomite practices. Once again he adopts the method of proof by opposite, as when he accuses the Jews of breaking the taboo on incest. But his earlier ameliorative approach to incest has by now turned into a denunciatory sermon. Rozanov „the Christian“ demonizes the orientalist Other:

... and I shall lead you, 'wonderful Endymions', through stench and blood, – I shall push you into Sodom as your native land, for in *Genesis XIII* it is said: „and Lot chose for himself (when he separated from Abraham, so that the flocks of the nephew and his uncle should not be mixed) *the valley of Jordan, where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were...*“ I shall show you that this is not an „allegory“, not „a matter of chance“, because of course you well remember that „your father“ showed himself to your mentor in the sodomite way, *modo sodomico* ... („What is transient“, 209)

The Jews approach the Russians with this sodomite smile of a bisexual being, with the soft step of a sodomite, and say: „What a talented nation you are“, „what broad hearts you have“, and beneath this is heard merely – „give me, empty person, everything you can“, „yield to me in everything, person without talent.“ („What is transient“, 259)

<sup>40</sup> In *People of Moonlight* Rozanov develops a theory of the androgynous nature of God and interprets sexual deviations as a manifestation of „muzhe-devstvo“ (male-maiden-ness), which in its turn may express itself in various ways, such as homosexual love or asexuality. He calls the latter „spiritual sodomy.“ Rozanov, *Liudi lunnogo sveta*, Moscow 1990, 99.

<sup>41</sup> It is to be noted that, in his article on Lermontov (1902), Rozanov draws parallels between Lermontov and Gogol' on the basis of the metaphysical qualities they have in common. There too he gives an interpretation of the duality of Elohim in number and sex, which is to become the main theme in his writings. On his method he has this to say: „A metaphysical problem may be solved by a philological one...“ Rozanov, „Kontsy i nachala, „bozhestvennoe“ i „demonicheskoe“, bogi i demony,“ *op.cit.*, 78-94, 87.

It is clear that Rozanov's anthropology of the Jewish body is akin to ideas disseminated in European racist discourse about the peculiar sexuality of Jews in general, and about their proneness to homosexuality in particular. The supposition that Jews have a tendency to bisexuality was part of the substrata in the mythology of the rudimentary essence of the Jewish body, based on Darwin's theory of the bisexuality/hermaphroditism of the first living matter on earth.<sup>42</sup> The purportedly homosexual propensities of Jews was a widely current topos in scientific discourse at the turn of the century, when there was a particular upsurge of interest in biology and race, and a causal-consequential connection was established between biology and psychology.<sup>43</sup> It is notable that, in the late nineteenth-century medical and forensic literature with which Rozanov was familiar, incest was likewise regarded as an inherited disease.<sup>44</sup> In this regard Rozanov's reading of Jewish sexuality as abnormal was in line with the modernist culture, which he „ennobled“ by giving it a metaphysical shade of meaning. However, this positive evaluation did not overlay the essentially racist tone of his anthropology of the Jewish body. The metaphysics of sex – the principal idea of Rozanov's philosophy of sex – could acquire either a positive or a demonized character as applied to the Jews. At the time of political persecution of the Jews in Russia from 1911 until the 1917 revolution, Rozanov used his construction of the peculiarity of the Jewish body to victimize the Jews. His politics of the Jewish body reached its climax in his accusing God („your father“) of sodomy and incest.<sup>45</sup>

The demonization of the Jewish body is accompanied by a demonization of the politics of the Jews. When Rozanov comes out against the destructive role of the

<sup>42</sup> It has been noted that Freud's self awareness as a Jew made him take a markedly different approach to the scientific experiments on eels, which Darwin believed were bisexual or hermaphroditic. Rather than analysing data pertaining to the eels' external characteristics or to measurements of sexual organs, Freud conducted histological analyses which proved that eels have male and female specimens. Ursula Reidel-Schrewe, „Freud's Debut in Sciences,“ in Sander L. Gilman et al (eds.), *Reading Freud's Reading*, New York 1994, 1-23.

<sup>43</sup> Both Sander Gilman and Daniel Boyarin have investigated the problem of the perception in European discourse of Jews as feminine Others. Thus Gilman notes the widespread belief in medieval Europe that Jewish men menstruated. The idea of a feminized Jew was combined with a belief in the high incidence of homosexuality among male Jews. For their part, Jewish women were seen as manlike beings or, as a result of the weak potency of Jewish men, as having a tendency to prostitution. R. Krafft-Ebing and Otto Weininger – whose works Rozanov knew and referred to – were responsible for spreading these ideas in scientific and medical circles at the turn of the century. Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, London 1991; Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: the Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, Berkeley 1997.

<sup>44</sup> Krafft-Ebing devotes a chapter to incest in which he discusses it as a form of inherited disease. He gives examples not only from his own medical practice, but also from the case described by Lombroso. Note, in particular, the chapter „Sexual attraction to close relations (incest)“ in *Sexual Psychopathy*, 582-584.

<sup>45</sup> Here Rozanov turns inside out the idea of an androgynous God. In modernist discourses the idea of the Jews as bisexual beings was attached to the antisemitic myth of the degenerative nature of the Jewish body, in which castration, circumcision and hermaphroditism were joined together into a single fantasy about the peculiar shapes of the genitalia of Jews. Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, Princeton 1993.

Jews in literature, a parallel is produced between Gogol' and the Jews on the basis of their having in common a critical and negative attitude towards Russia.

### Rozanov's body politics of Russian literature and the Jews

As may be seen from the examples relating to the Jewish body, Rozanov took the atavism of the Jews to be a biological anomaly. The atavism of the Jewish body encompasses the notion that the latent layers of the human past can be revealed, a past which Rozanov himself fantasized as a time when there was no boundary between animals, human beings and gods.<sup>46</sup>

The atavistic anomaly of the Jewish body was purportedly manifested in its rudimentary/ criminal behaviour. As in the Cesare Lombroso school of criminal anthropology contemporary to Rozanov, atavism was perceived in the breaking of a taboo, in disease, and in sin which breaches social norms. According to Lombroso (1835-1909), atavism in criminals was often revealed in anomalous sexuality, in a thirst for blood, in a desire to inflict injury and torment on one's victim, and in cannibalism.<sup>47</sup> In addition to statistics on the crime rates among the various „savage“ tribes, the criminality of the Jews was used at the *fin de siècle* as a proof of the race specific nature of inherited criminality. Jewish incest occupied a prominent place in the statistics of sexual crimes in Western Europe, and belief in the tendency of the Jews to sexual perversity culminated in the pronouncement in a German newspaper in 1894 that Jack-the-Ripper was an East European Jew.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of Rozanov's criticism of Lombroso's theory in its application to the Russian criminal type,<sup>49</sup> his own Jewish body politics corresponded to the modernist anthropological and medical discourse which was steeped in the rhetoric of eugenics.<sup>50</sup> Well acquainted with the anthropometric approach adopted in criminal

<sup>46</sup> Henrietta Mondry, „Beyond the Boundary: Vasilii Rozanov and the Animal World,“ *Slavic and East European Journal* 43, no. 4, Winter 1999, 651-673.

<sup>47</sup> The influence of Lombroso's criminal anthropology methods on turn-of-the-century culture in general and on the fate of Jewry in particular is discussed in Stephen Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, Harmondsworth, 1984.

<sup>48</sup> Gilman shows that incest figures for Jews in the period from 1899 to 1916 were higher than in the previous decade. Gilman, *Reading Freud's Readings*, 49, 58.

<sup>49</sup> Towards the Lombroso school of thought Rozanov adopted a defensive attitude, while he referred to Tolstoi's attitude in *the Power of Darkness* as a humane one. As is well known, in his novel *Resurrection*, Tolstoi took issue with Lombroso's theory. For the Lombroso theory as „a monstrous teaching“ (285): Rozanov, „Pozdnie fazy slavianofil'stva,“ *Nesovmestimye kontrasty bytiia*, Moscow 1990, 282-303.

<sup>50</sup> Lombroso's Jewishness did not stop him criticising the Jews, in *Anti-Semitism and Modern Science* (1894), for their adherence to old superstitions and practices, including eating *matzot* for Passover, performing circumcision, putting *mezuzot* on the doorframes, that is, using all the markers of cultural difference as the source of European anti-Semitism. For a discussion on Lombroso's and Weininger's internalisation of anti-Semitic beliefs, see Nancy Harrowitz, „Weininger and Lombroso: A Question of Influence,“ *op.cit.*, 73-90.

anthropology,<sup>51</sup> he compiled his own statistics and system of data of the Jewish body. To the list of atavistic sexual anomalies constructed at the time of the Beilis trial and the years following was added the anomaly of bloodthirstiness and cannibalism. Rozanov accused Russian writers of the „Gogol' School“, and Russian men of letters who supported Beilis, of being prone to these tendencies. It is notable that he used the terms vampirism and cannibalism both in the direct and metaphorical sense, presenting democratic Russian literature as complicit in the crimes of the Jews and tainted with the same perversion. Thus, the cannibalism of the Jews is first presented as a physical fact by way of allusion to the vampirism of Beilis, who made Yushchinskii his victim, and then the cannibalism of the Jews acquires the sense of a political metaphor – „Our lovely little literature fed the youngster to the Jews...“ („What is transient“, 1914, 223), and – „The Jews know that things taste better with butter, they butter up the Russian citizen and the Russian writer before eating them“ („Sakharna“, 1913, 67).

In 1913 Rozanov represents Gogol', the founder of the critical method in Russian literature – which had political consequences for Russia, as a fellow traveller: „Poor little Gornfeld does not want anyone to claim that Gogol' was not a realist ... As a Jew, he is afraid to say on his own behalf that Russian life is *foul*, and he hides in the forest of the works of Gogol' ...“ („Sakharna“, 83). Rozanov presents Gogol' as politically akin to the Jews, asserting that if their own Heine appeared among them, that is, if there appeared on Russian soil a Jewish writer with a talent equal to that of Heine and Gogol' (a „Heine-Gogol'“), this would grant them the final victory in Russian literature. He defines this victory as an act of physical violence – „treading on the throat of Russian literature“ („What is transient“, 435).

The political aspect of the sexually anomalous Other, which is present in Rozanov's texts, was revealed in European discourses at a time of political instability, exposing the protective impulse by which the category of an Other is created. The terror of revolutionary change was expressed in a fear that the „master-servant“ dyad would be inverted.<sup>52</sup> The construction of this Other is akin to the rhetoric of a racial/colonial Other, a coloured slave, whose particular sexuality was equally dangerous and, like class hostility, had to be kept under strict control. In the real-

<sup>51</sup> It is remarkable that Rozanov refers to the method of anthropometrics in his „Judaism“. Making use of his favourite method of analogy, he draws a parallel between the symbolic force of numbers used by cabbalists and the nature of the thing measured: „Indeed, if I know its number, I know the thing.“ This is like what goes on in an anthropometric office: instead of noting down the first name and surname of criminals, they take hundreds of measurements of their heads, and, once they have noted them down, they are convinced: 'wherever you may go in the world, if you are caught again, we shall know you by your own special number.'“ „Iudaizm“, *op.cit.*, 202.

<sup>52</sup> Gilman shows how in the dialectics of Hegel's history, which was of such profound importance for the nineteenth century, the Jews appear as an anomaly, an atavistic survival of the past. The stereotypes of the Other included both the idea of excessive sexuality and that of class danger. S. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*.

life situation of political upheaval, when Stolypin was assassinated by a Jew (1911) and the democratic press emerged victorious in regard to the Beilis Affair (1913), there was the illusion that a real revolution had taken place, as a result of which the Jews might come to power as class Others.<sup>53</sup> It was at that time that the paranoid construct of a category of Other revealed itself, based on the fear felt by the creators of the Other category that they would be changed from the subjects to the objects of persecution. Inasmuch as Rozanov regarded Russian politics as synonymous with Russian literature, as, in his opinion, politics in Russia has been made by literature, he sees real danger in the possible appearance of a „Heine-Gogol“.

This peculiar construct demonstrates how closely he identifies politics in general with politics of the body. The „Heine-Gogol“ dyad is firmly supported by a subtext of the essential Jewishness of such a sexual anomaly as incest, which can be „proved“ by a biographical fact – namely that, in the folk beliefs of the Christians, the Jew Heine had an „incestuous“ passion for his female cousin(s).<sup>54</sup> Heine was singled out by Weininger (1903), and both Heine and Gogol' by Lombroso (1891) to illustrate the view that the link between creativity and madness lies in the zone of the primitive, abnormal sexuality, especially typical of the Jews due to their atavism. Lombroso devoted a sub-chapter to Gogol' in his *The Man of Genius* (1891), citing Gogol's sexual deviance – masturbation – as an illustration of his thesis that sexual forms of madness were common among literary geniuses.<sup>55</sup> The Heine-Gogol' construct stretches the boundaries of the Orientalist continuum, where the Ukrainian and the Jewish merge. It also reveals the link between the diseased nature of the Jews and their creativity – one of the dominant myths of ethnopsychology of the turn of the century.<sup>56</sup>

After the revolution, Rozanov returns to the role of apologist for the Jews and Gogol', and in parallel with the reversal in his approach in the political model Jews/Gogol' vs. Russia, there is an evaluative inversion of his anthropology of

<sup>53</sup> On the expulsion of Rozanov from the St. Petersburg Religious Philosophical Society: „Sud nad Rozanovym. Zapiski S.-Peterburgskogo Religiozno-filosofskogo obshchestva“, V. V. Rozanov: *Pro et Contra*, op. cit., 2, 184-215.

<sup>54</sup> Satlow, op. cit. discusses the part played by the Jewish practices of levirate marriage and marrying cousins in the perpetuation through European discourse of fantasies about Jewish incestuousness. Belief in brother-sister incest among the Jews was further reinforced by the Russian lexis – dvoiurodn-yi (-aia) brat (brother) and sestra (sister).

<sup>55</sup> „Nicolai Vasilyevitch Gogol (born 1809), after suffering from an unhappy love affair, gave himself up for many years to unrestrained onanism, and became eventually a great novelist.“ C. Lombroso, *The Man of Genius*, London 1891, 98-99.

<sup>56</sup> Lombroso and Weininger in *Sex and Character* viewed the link between Jewish creativity and primitive sexuality in a negative light, considering it to be a sign of the diseased psyche, while Otto Rank in *The Essence of Judaism* (1905) gave this link a positive treatment by explaining that, due to the primitive nature of Jewish sexuality, Jews have not yet reached the neurotic state of repression. S. Gilman, „Weininger and Sigmund Freud: Race and Gender in the Shaping of Psychoanalysis,“ in Nancy A. Harrowitz and Barbara Hyams (eds.), *Jews and Gender: Responses to Otto Weininger*, Philadelphia 1995, 193-120.

Russian and Jewish bodies. In 1918 he justifies Gogol' for his lack of faith in the Russian muzhik and praises him as the creator of „smelly Petrushka“ („Gogol' and Petrarch“, 658) – a trope for Gogol''s aversion to the smell of Russians, a marker of his own *odium humani generis*. In „The Apocalypse of Russian Literature“ (1918/19), Rozanov proclaims the end of the „ethnographic existence“ of the Russian state (448), which in his view is sinking into the past, that is, turning into an object for archeological study. Referring to the archeologization of Russia in the process of its decline, Rozanov continues to speak of Gogol' in the present tense: „This devil Gogol' is right“ (445). In the same year he affectionately writes of Gogol' and calls him a „khokhol“, „a little bit alien, a little bit foreign“ („Letter to E. Hollerbach XXXII“, 563). The Orientalisation of Gogol' goes on, as he is not only „inostranets“, but „inorodets“ – the word reserved mainly to denote the colonised Other – from the East and South of Russia. In his works of 1918 and 1919, a biological future is vouchsafed for the Jews, who, like Gogol', remain immortal in the physical-metaphysical continuum of Rozanov's philosophy. It is thus not surprising that, continuing to be an interpreter of the Jewish body until his death, Rozanov still pursues his anthropological fantasy, reserving for the Jews his themes of sexual peculiarity:

Live on, Jews. I bless you for everything, just as there was a time of apostasy (the unhappy time of Beilis) when I cursed you for everything. Of course in actual fact there is in you the „tsimes“ of universal history: that is, there is a „seed“ of the world, which „only we have preserved“. Live on *that*. And I believe, – *all* peoples will bless *them*!. („The Apocalypse of Our Time“, 510)

Symptomatic are the euphemisms Rozanov uses for „sperm“ – „tsimes“ and „seed“. He continues to construct a system from anthropological and ethnological edifices connected with food and sexuality, constantly switching from the concrete to the metaphorical, from the semantic to the symbolic, combining physiology with eschatology, contaminating the Old Testament and the Christian symbolism of the resurrection.

Having set up a model of acceptance / rejection of the Jewish body, before he died Rozanov allowed himself to be linked to that body. His „we“ in „we have preserved“ is profoundly significant. It is reinforced by the eschatological expectations of Rozanov himself: understanding the Jewish body as an essence frozen in time, he adopted the opinion of his „learned friend“ Pavel Florenskii on the resurrection of Israel (*The Olfactory and Tactile Relationship of the Jews to Blood*, 275).<sup>57</sup> According to Florenskii, who took Jewry to be a genetic, biological

<sup>57</sup> For the influence of Pavel Florenskii, referred to by Rozanov as his „learned friend“ at the time of writing *The Olfactory and Tactile Relationship of the Jews to Blood*: Efim Kurganov, „Rozanov and Florenskii. Problema messianstva“, *Zvezda*, 3, 1997, 211-220.

community, only Israel would survive the Apocalypse.<sup>58</sup> Having come to believe in a racist fantasy about a Jewish body which was genetically homogeneous and unchanged by evolution, Rozanov reserved for himself the choice of a fantasized salvation by forming an assemblage with this body.

Unlike Rozanov, who had an active part in creating the construct of the Other, the passive objects of his ideas had no choice. As Adorno has shown in his study of the ideologies of pogrom, both folk fantasies and scientific ideas about the atavism of the Jewish body consigned it to a lower species – to the category of animals and savages,<sup>59</sup> and represented it as the embodiment of physical, moral and spiritual degeneration. Following the logic of „analogy“, after the Jews homosexuals too came into the category of atavists. As Sander Gilman has shown, the aetiology and symptomatics are identical in scientific discourse on the sexually degenerate Other at the turn of the century. All ostracised Others form part of one group because they have in them some form of sexual anomaly, and because this pathology was expressed in sexual perversion.<sup>60</sup> Rozanov's claim for the sexual anomaly of Gogol' and the Jews is constructed on the same model: Gogol' and the Jews are carriers of a sexual anomaly because they inherited it. This atavistic anomaly expresses itself in the form of such sexual perversions as various types of sodomy, incest, sadistic tortures and cannibalism. The author who used the phrase „vulgar medicine“<sup>61</sup> and wrote „The Apocalypse of Our Time“ made his own contribution to the quasi-scientific fantasies about special types of body – fantasies which in the history of the twentieth century turned into a real Catastrophe for real bodies and souls.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Under the pseudonym of „Omega“, Pavel Florenskii published two articles anonymously in Rozanov's book, *The Olfactory and Tactile Relationship...*, in which he presented himself as an authority confirming the fact of ritual murder among Jews. In a tract, written in the form of a letter, „Iudei i sud'ba khristian (Pis'mo k V.V. Rozanovu)“, Florenskii writes: „All Israel will be saved. Not 'spiritual Israel', an idea with which church seminaries try to console themselves, alas not church. St. Paul speaks clearly of 'people related to each other by flesh' and confirms the fact that all former promises about being a chosen people are irrevocable. We are just incidental – we don't count. Israel is in fact the pivot of world history“ (366). Rozanov, „Oboniatel'noe i osiazatel'noe otnoshenie evreev k krovi,“ *Sakhar-na*, Moscow 1998, 276–403. In „Apokalipsis nashego vremeni,“ Rozanov repeats these words almost verbatim.

<sup>59</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott, London 1974.

<sup>60</sup> „The inherited diseases, whether masturbation, hysteria, neurasthenia, congenital syphilis, or even incest, all had one thing in common. In all cases the etiology and the symptomatology are identical. All begin with some type of sexual deviancy and result in sexual perversion.“ Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 215.

<sup>61</sup> V.V. Rozanov. Pis'mo Gollerbakhu XXXII, *Izbrannoe*, op.cit., 557–564, 559.

<sup>62</sup> For the way Rozanov's ideas were disseminated in Berlin in 1939 by his pupil, M. Spasovskii, and the ideological relationship between his ideas on Jewish sexuality and the rhetoric of Nazi antisemitism in fascist Germany, see Vadim Rossman, „Rozanov i Blavat-skia o tainakh iudaizma“, *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, 6, No.8, 1999, 38–41.



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