

MOUNT HOLYOKE

Mount Holyoke College
Department of French
115 Ciruti Center for Foreign Languages
50 College Street, South Hadley, MA 01075-6430
tel 413-538-2074 fax 413-538-3437

July 14, 2014

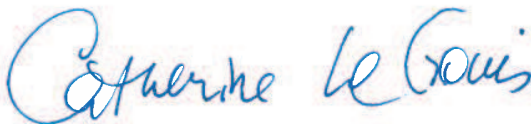
Dissertation evaluation of Liu In, *The Artistic Evolution of E.A. Nagrodskaya in the Context of the Philosophical and Aesthetic Ideas of the 1910s*, directed by Professor Maria Mikhailova, Moscow State University.

Liu In's thesis is dedicated to the ideas and work of the Silver Age writer Evdokia Apollonovna Nagrodskaya, a figure best known for her sensational novel of 1910, *The Wrath of Dionysus*. This writer has been explored by critics in the USA and Western Europe as an avant-garde artist notable for exploration of gender roles (she is sometimes linked to such figures as Lydia Dmitrievna Zinovieva-Annibal). Among the critical and scholarly works marking the upswing of interest in Nagrodskaya are a recent dissertation from the University of Colorado (2010) and a translation of *The Wrath of Dionysus* into English (Indiana University Press, 1997).

This study is remarkable for its deep emphasis on cultural context. It goes beyond a focus on gender to consider in detail Nagrodskaya's intellectual and philosophical background. Coming from a highly intellectual family, her art was marked by her knowledge of classical literature and culture, her Masonic studies, her critical interpretation of feminist ideas, and her fascination with the cult of Dionysianism. The dissertation displays a strong grasp of these varied currents of Silver Age culture: the individual chapters tease out the way in which Nagrodskaya's multi-faceted works are influenced by classical and contemporary figures, and in turn enrich and transform their ideas and elements. Particularly noteworthy are the careful attempt to examine the evolution of the writer's art in light of traditional gender stereotypes and early twentieth-century feminist ideas, and the bringing to bear on Nagrodskaya's novels and stories of the influence of Gothic literary traditions and the recent discoveries of Freud.

In sum, the thesis shows a command of both Nagrodskaya's works and of intellectual history. It will be a great contribution not only to the study of women writers and Silver Age culture but also more generally to our understanding of *fin de siècle* European culture, as the varied interests here (feminism, gender studies, nascent modernism, psychoanalytic ideas, mysticism, the endurance of the Gothic, the role of the sacred) intersect neatly with those of contemporary scholars of the period.

Respectfully submitted,



Catherine Le Gouis
Professor

