



Misandry in Helene Druskowitz (1856–1918)

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Helene (von) Druskowitz in *Pessimistic Cardinal Propositions*, takes a position of a radical criticism of men and the male-structured world. The lowliness and repugnancy of men, in Druskowitz's eyes, is a logical consequence of her ontological structure. She describes the wholeness of reality as a Platonic dichotomy that is actualized in a perpetual tension between the "Over-Sphere" (*Übersphäre*) and matter. The Over-Sphere is a realm of pure perfection, the world at its best, which can be grasped by humans only speculatively (Druskowitz 1905, 1988: II *passim*), but its inner structure is beyond human comprehension (Druskowitz 1905, 1988: II.8). Matter, on the other hand, is characterized in a contradictory opposition to the Over-Sphere (Druskowitz 1905, 1988: III.6). In the central chapter "Man as a logical and moral impossibility and a curse of the world. Wiping out man", Druskowitz identifies the material aspect of reality with the male-dominated "real world" and all male iconography of theism. Man is "an intermediate link between human and beast" (Druskowitz 1905, 1988: IV.4), both physically and morally inferior to woman in all respects, responsible for all the hardships of social injustice. The only possibility of transcending the baseness and vulgarity of existence in the real world she sees in a "lowing critique of man" (Druskowitz 1905, 1988: IV.1). Men, if they ever become conscious of their imperfections and detrimental existence, should withdraw from any public sphere and let women rule the world. In a Druskowitzian world men and women live separately until their almost complete extinction (Druskowitz 1905, 1988: IV.36); she concedes that only a few people should be left living in distant and hidden "valleys" (Druskowitz 1905, 1988: IV.3).

Druskowitz's misandry can be understood as a reaction to the raging misogyny of the late nineteenth century. For example, her statement that man is an intermediate link between human and beast reflects Schopenhauer's infamous "definition" of women as "[...] a kind of intermediate stage between the child and the man, who is a human being in the real sense" (Schopenhauer 1974: 614–615). Agatha Schwartz (2005, 2007, 2008a, 2008b) saw Druskowitz as an advocate of the "third voice", besides misogyny and feminist/suffragette movements, that emerged from the turbulent *fin-de-siècle*. Although Druskowitz's views resonate in later radical feminists' misandric positions, there is no evidence that she

directly influenced the radical feminist movements of the twentieth century. However, as a sort of a prophetess of times to come, Druskowitz can be seen as presaging positions such as Solanas's *S.C.U.M. Manifesto*: "The elimination of any male is, therefore, a righteous and good act, an act highly beneficial to women as well as an act of mercy." (Solanas 1971: 36-37).

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