

# *Creating Life*

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The Aesthetic Utopia  
of Russian Modernism

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## Viacheslav Ivanov: From Aesthetic Theory to Biographical Practice

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Viacheslav Ivanov occupies a secure place in Russian literary history as the leading theoretician of the Symbolist movement. This reputation, while undoubtedly justified, has led to a one-sided reception of his work. Ivanov's theoretical essays have continually attracted critical attention while his poetry has been accorded a secondary position. Biographical materials (diaries, letters, etc.) constitute the most neglected area of Ivanov's legacy. Many scholars appear to share a tacit assumption that personal documents contribute little toward understanding such a "cerebral" figure. Yet, in the Symbolist context, all facets of a writer's life have relevance to his work. Ivanov's biographical writings, no exception in this regard, are fundamentally linked to both his theoretical work and his poetry.

The dearth of studies that integrate Ivanov's life and work in a meaningful way can be partially attributed to a paucity of sources.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of Ivanov's personal writings remain unpublished and inaccessible. The present emphasis, on a single period in Ivanov's life (1907–10), has been dictated in part by the availability of a number of "personal" documents from these years. Yet this pragmatic reason alone neither explains nor jus-

tifies the emphasis. The period under consideration marked the height of Ivanov's fascination with *zhiznetvorchestvo*, the Symbolist longing to fuse life and literature. These years also coincide with the ideological culmination of the entire Symbolist movement. Afterwards, the so-called "crisis of Symbolism" hastened the disintegration of the movement as such.

Between 1907 and 1910, Ivanov produced two major theoretical essays, "Two Elements in Contemporary Symbolism" ("Dve stikhii v sovremennom simvolizme," 1908) and "The Testaments of Symbolism" ("Zavety simvolizma," 1910). Originally written as lectures, they can be considered belated manifestos, intended to clarify basic Symbolist positions. In the retrospective "Testaments of Symbolism," Ivanov declared: "[Russian] Symbolism did not want to be and could not be 'only art.'"<sup>2</sup> This terse statement expressed a central tenet of Symbolist thought: the insufficiency of aesthetics. According to Ivanov, art was inextricably linked to all aspects of human endeavor. Symbolism should therefore seek to transcend the merely aesthetic and act upon life itself.<sup>3</sup> Such a goal not only claimed for the artist a position of utmost prominence and even responsibility but also necessitated a redefinition of traditional notions of art.

Ivanov was by no means the first to make such grandiose claims for Symbolism. However, he went further than most of his coevals in offering a consistent philosophical grounding for his slogans. Following Vladimir Solov'ev, he embraced the notion of "theurgy," which called upon the artist to "re-create existing reality" (*peresozdat' sushchestvuiushchuiu deistvitel'nost'*).<sup>4</sup> "Theurgic art" had radical implications, yet Ivanov, in the theoretical writings, kept his discussion within carefully defined parameters. In "Two Elements in Contemporary Symbolism," he offered his strictest delineation of this concept: "We think that the theurgic principle in art is the principle of the least force and the most receptivity. The highest testament of the artist is not to impose his own will on the surface of things, but to see through and spread the word of the secret will of essences."<sup>5</sup> Ivanov stressed the necessity of transformation, but only in response to a certain transcendental imperative. Indeed, Ivanov's entire philosophical

system was predicated on the existence of an omnipresent objective truth. By demanding that the artist recognize this truth and change the world accordingly, Ivanov left no room for the subjective will of the individual artist.

Ivanov's theurgy was thus not as radical as it may at first appear. It was essentially a theory of discovery, not invention.<sup>6</sup> Condemning subjectivity (which he called "idealism"), he praised instead a "fidelity to things" (in his own terminology, "realism"). Since divine will cannot ordinarily be verified empirically, Ivanov attributed to the artist special abilities of perception. He accepted the possibility of mystical experience and coined the term "mystical realism" to designate (approvingly) this basic creative impulse.<sup>7</sup>

On a theoretical level, these ideas are consistent and understandable (once the reader accustoms himself to Ivanov's penchant for creating idiosyncratic terminology).<sup>8</sup> Yet Ivanov did not conceive of his work as being purely theoretical. In addition to elaborating a philosophical system, he sought to offer practical guidelines. In "The Testaments of Symbolism," he discussed the "thesis" of Russian Symbolism, emphasizing the necessity for theory *and* practice: "Artists were confronted with the problem of completely incarnating in their life as well as in their work (absolutely in the 'agon' of life as in the 'agon' of work!) the worldview of 'mystical realism' or (according to Novalis) the worldview of 'magical idealism.'"<sup>9</sup>

This account of Symbolism rests on two important propositions. The first maintains the inseparability of life and work (in a word, *zhiznetvorchestvo*). The second equates "mystical realism" (Ivanov's own term) with "magical idealism" (Novalis's celebrated formulation). It is worth considering why the name Novalis appears in a crucial passage about Russian Symbolism. For Ivanov, the phrase "magical idealism" was synonymous with the entirety of Novalis's thought.<sup>10</sup> In a lecture of 1909, Ivanov stated: "*Novalis* is that *living [element]* which ties us to Romanticism. . . . He calls his worldview *magical idealism*. His ideal is a *theurgic ideal*."<sup>11</sup> By defining "magical idealism" in terms of theurgy, Ivanov identifies Novalis as a proto-Symbolist.

To understand Ivanov's fascination with Novalis, another factor must be considered: biography. Like the Symbolists, the romantics strongly believed in the indivisibility of life and art. For more than a century after Novalis's death, numerous "biographers" consciously transformed his life into myth. The central role in these life-dramas was played by Novalis's fiancée, Sophie von Kühn,<sup>12</sup> whose early death inspired his greatest poetry ("Hymns to the Night") and, putatively, his death (from grief).<sup>13</sup> Such an account, possessing an undeniable appeal to the reading public, glossed over several significant facts. To name only the most salient: Novalis became engaged to another woman after Sophie had passed away. The marriage to this second woman never took place because of Novalis's own death (of tuberculosis, not grief). Such details lessened the romantic effect of the Novalis legend and were therefore played down or completely ignored.<sup>14</sup> In Ivanov's time these mystifications still represented the reigning tendency in scholarship.

Ivanov, who suffered the unexpected death of his own beloved (his second wife, Lidiia Dmitrievna Zinov'eva-Annibal) in October 1907, was clearly attracted by the image of a poet devastated by the death of his great love. It is noteworthy that the first explicit references to Novalis in Ivanov's work occur in 1908 ("Two Elements"). In 1909, Ivanov's fascination led him to translate Novalis's entire significant poetic output. In a lecture he gave shortly afterwards, Ivanov summarized Novalis's biography, repeating the traditional legend: "After the death of his fiancée he spent the remainder of his life in grief for her and in the joy of meetings, when it seemed to him that she was with him."<sup>15</sup> Whether Ivanov was aware of the inaccuracy of this statement is of little consequence.<sup>16</sup> What is crucial is the fact that this description of Novalis's existence after Sophie's death accurately depicts Ivanov's own state in 1909.

In the years that followed Lidiia's death, Ivanov went through a prolonged period of grief. During this time, his literary output consisted of programmatic and theoretical essays, two books of poetry—*Love and Death* (*Liubov' i smert*) and *Rosarium*, which were eventually published as the second part of *Cor Ardens* (1912)—

and the Novalis translations. In addition, Ivanov produced a number of curious biographical writings. These include diaries, which he kept intermittently; many short and mysterious jottings (mostly written in Latin and addressed to Lidiia); and letters to the mystic Anna Rudolfovna Mintslova (which have survived only in fragmentary form). In all of these writings (with the partial exception of the essays), Ivanov's energies were directed toward a single goal: reunification with Lidiia. The notion of theurgy, so carefully elaborated in the essays, becomes central not only in the poetry, but also in the biographical writings. The miserable state of Ivanov's own existence, as it were, forced him to try his hand at *zhiznetvorchestvo*.

The contrast between literary and biographical writings requires explanation. For present purposes, one central distinction should be considered: "literary" texts are produced for publication, while their "biographical" counterparts are intended for a select audience or, conceivably, for no one except the author himself. In terms of style and artistic organization, these two types of texts can be remarkably similar. Like the Symbolists in general, Ivanov actively sought to dissolve the dividing line between personal and public genres. Victor Zhirmunsky's description of German romanticism is in this respect entirely applicable to Russian Symbolism:

The letters of the Romantic poets bear a remarkable resemblance to their creative works. Not only because their works are characterized by psychological naturalism and not simply because these poets wish their works to be a poetic diary of their experiences, but also because in their letters, experience is already stylized in accordance with a literary model. Life and poetry come together; the poet's life resembles his verses.<sup>17</sup>

Ivanov's biographical writings, like the romantics' letters, rely on the same principles as the author's published work.

Before examining biographical writings from the period immediately after Lidiia's death, it will be helpful to turn to a work Ivanov wrote many years later about this period. Though the piece was originally part of a letter of 1939, Ivanov himself chose

to publish it as a separate essay in 1946 under the title “An Echo” (“Ein Echo”).<sup>18</sup>

It was about thirty years ago: some stars had just become visible on the twilight sky when we sailed out of a mountain ravine onto the coastline of the Black Sea. There I perceived, amidst the chatter of my travel companions, like a soft summons from my hidden tranquility—or was it a spiritual echo of the distant sound of the waves?—some Latin words, so unexpected that I at first could not grasp their meaning. Yet they became all the more meaningful after deeper and deeper meditation. Those words, which impressed on me with gentle insistence something that I had somehow thought about earlier, possessed such a clear palpableness that they had on me the effect of newly attained genuine knowledge. “Quod non est debet esse; quod est debet fieri; quod fit erit”—these were the words. (“What is not, should be; what is, should become; what becomes will be.”)

True to my habit of shaping rhythmically what moves me deeply, I attempted to mount my secret jewel on the golden ring of a distich:

Quod non est, Pater esse iubet fierique creatum,  
Spem iusso fieri Spiritus afflat: “eris.”<sup>19</sup>

The continuation of this passage (in which Ivanov replaces “being” with “beauty” and analyzes it in terms of Theodor Haecker’s aesthetic theory) has no relevance to present concerns. However, the incident itself reveals salient elements of Ivanov’s own theurgic ideal as well as his state of mind after Lidiia’s death.

The actual experience Ivanov records can be dated to 1908.<sup>20</sup> Taken at face value, the passage illustrates Ivanov’s notion of theurgy based on maximum receptivity. The poet, in the midst of a magnificent natural scene, hears a voice apparently inaudible to his companions.<sup>21</sup> This voice expresses in essence the ideal of *zhiznetvorchestvo*—it prophesies change, promising existence for what does not yet exist. Ivanov’s activity is limited to giving poetic form to this message (putting the jewel into the appropriate setting, according to the metaphor he supplies). He thus remains true to his own artistic ideal; rather than forcing his subjective will onto nature, he observes and spreads an insight that originates in nature.

To a reader familiar with the larger context of Ivanov’s work,

the “echo” motif calls forth a number of important associations. Ivanov’s first collection of verse, published in 1903, contains a metapoetic poem called “The Alpine Horn” (“Alpiiskii rog”), which concludes with the line, “Blessed is he who hears the song and the echo.”<sup>22</sup> This poem serves as the epigraph for a later essay entitled “Thoughts on Symbolism” (“Mysli o simvolizme,” 1912), where Ivanov expounds a theory of Symbolist poetry based on his own conception of echo.<sup>23</sup> Ivanov contends that the true poet must force his audience to respond not in unison but in counterpoint: “If my listener is only a mirror, only an echo . . . then I am not a *symbolist* poet.”<sup>24</sup> In short, Ivanov conceives of Symbolism as a process through which a poetic impulse inspires a *complementary* echo in the audience.<sup>25</sup>

On first glance, “An Echo” seems simply another variant on this metapoetic theme. Yet a number of elements differentiate it from both “The Alpine Horn” and “Thoughts on Symbolism.” The title itself poses an immediate interpretive problem. The “echo” apparently refers to the mysterious Latin phrase that Ivanov overhears, but does it express a transcendent truth or Ivanov’s own convictions? In other words, is the echo’s source external (the objective truth in which the Symbolists so firmly believed) or internal (the poet’s personal credo)? Ivanov himself makes no effort to resolve this ambiguity: the voice was “like a soft summons from my hidden tranquility—or was it a spiritual echo of the distant sound of the waves?”<sup>26</sup> One might seek to reconcile these alternatives by invoking Ivanov’s beloved concept of “anamnesis,” the Platonic doctrine that external knowledge resides “a priori” within every individual. Yet even “anamnesis” cannot explain why the Latin language is required to transmit transcendent truth. If this voice truly originates in a world beyond, why should it speak Latin? Does the transcendent communicate only with those who have had the benefit of a rigorous classical education?<sup>27</sup>

The message itself demands closer scrutiny: “What is not, should be; what is, should become; what becomes will be.” *What* is it that “should be”? *Everything* that is not? Should the poet await further instructions before attempting to interpret these

cryptic words? Such questions remain unanswered. In turning the statement into a distich, Ivanov creates his own idiosyncratic echo. Although he claims merely to give the voice poetic form, he actually expands considerably on the original. He adds mystical/religious actants (“Pater,” “Spiritus”) and, in the pentameter line, a new concept: a spirit breathing hope. This image, a representation of “inspiration” in its most direct sense (the word is etymologically derived from the Latin *inspirare*, “to breathe into”) evokes a traditional literary topos, absent in the original statement.

There is no need to decide whether Ivanov’s experience was a “mystical initiation”<sup>28</sup> or an instance of self-delusion. It is enough to recognize several details that make the scene paradigmatic for Ivanov’s life and work in the period after Lidiia’s death. First and foremost, “An Echo” assumes the possibility of contact with the transcendent world. Ivanov frequently posited the existence of this world in his theoretical essays; indeed, it forms an essential tenet of Symbolist (and all Neoplatonic) thought. Yet “An Echo” is not written as philosophical hypothesis; it claims to be a record of actual experience (a scene from the “real life” of Viacheslav Ivanov). A second crucial element is the other world’s reliance on Latin. Foreign languages, used frequently in Ivanov’s writings, often obtain a symbolic function in this period. They signal an epiphany, Ivanov’s temporary escape from his immediate (Russian) surroundings.<sup>29</sup> Finally, one should note that the contact with this other world is directly linked to theurgy, the need to create “what is not,” or, in other words, to transform what is.

After the death of Lidiia, Ivanov’s desire to achieve contact with the world beyond gained special urgency. He was convinced that his wife had become a part of the transcendent world and, therefore, that it should be possible to communicate with her. For expert spiritual guidance in these matters, he turned to Anna Rudolfovna Mintslova. Mintslova, a devotee of occultism, is one of the most enigmatic and eccentric figures of the period.<sup>30</sup> She appears to have lived in a fantasy world of her own creation, touching base with reality only long enough to post letters and telegrams, an activity she performed with the same indefatigable

fanaticism that she brought to her mystical endeavors. Her voluminous letters to Ivanov begin before Lidiia's death and continue until 1910, when she disappeared from Moscow, never to be seen or heard from again. These letters concern mystical topics and, in the early period, often summarize Rudolf Steiner's lectures (without acknowledgment). In the years after Lidiia's death, the letters become more frequent and less coherent. For example, Mintslova's side of the correspondence from January 1–22, 1908, covers 99 pages.<sup>31</sup> On January 21, she seems to have set a personal record by sending Ivanov three letters (notated as “morning,” “afternoon,” and “night,” respectively) and two telegrams. The contents as well as the quantity of these writings offer ample evidence that Mintslova was not entirely sane. Yet her considerable influence on Ivanov cannot be disputed. Evgeniia Gertsyk, who spent the summer of 1908 with both of them, testifies to this in her memoirs.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, in a series of letters to Mintslova, Ivanov addressed her as “dear teacher” (*dorogoi uchitel'*), and the tone as well as the subject matter was obviously serious. These fragmentary letters were written over a two-week span in January, most probably in 1908.<sup>33</sup> They record Ivanov's efforts, through occult means, to rejoin Lidiia.

The following passage, dated “The night of January 26” and quoted in its entirety, can be considered representative:

Breve aevum separatum  
 Longum aevum coniugatum  
 In honorem Domini  
 Quidquid terram est perpeßsum  
 Veniet tua [vi]ta fessum  
 In dies sacramini.<sup>34</sup>

Dear teacher, here is a Latin poem in medieval style that I just heard from Her during midnight prayer, when I conversed with Her, and She consoled me in separation, responding to my request “Take me” with the words “I am already taking you”—and I felt that She was filling my soul with herself and proclaiming “Let it be your will.”<sup>35</sup>

It should be emphasized that this letter could not have been conceived as an elaborate literary hoax. Ivanov never made any

attempt to publish it. On the contrary, its very survival must be considered fortuitous since it was not among the papers Ivanov took with him when he left Russia in 1924. Yet Ivanov reports such unusual “realia” in such a stylized manner that he forces the reader to understand the letter as a literary text (which, strictly speaking, it is not).<sup>36</sup>

For all of its peculiarities, this passage bears an obvious resemblance to the roughly contemporaneous scene described in “An Echo.” In one sense, Ivanov appears even more “receptive” in his letter than in the essay. In “An Echo,” he heard a Latin statement and gave it verse form. This time Ivanov hears a Latin poem *directly*. (Ever the scholar, he momentarily interrupts his mystical revelation to make a formal observation—that the poem is medieval in style.) Ivanov presumably does not know the speaker of the Latin words in “An Echo.” In the letter to Mintslova, however, he immediately recognizes the voice as that of his recently deceased wife. While Ivanov expresses his individual will (“Take me”), his desire appears to be in complete harmony with that of Lidiia (as reflected in her response: “I am already taking you”).

Both passages describe contact with a world beyond. “An Echo” takes place at twilight, the border between day and night. The present scene occurs at midnight, traditionally the time of mystical experience.<sup>37</sup> Once again, Latin serves as the medium through which the world beyond communicates.<sup>38</sup> In both cases, the transcendent voice promises to transform reality. Yet there is a crucial difference. While the “echo” expresses a general philosophical statement, Lidiia’s words specifically concern Ivanov.

Did Ivanov truly experience an epiphany (theurgy as receptivity), or did he create this vision in accordance with his own needs (theurgy as an expression of subjective will)? Rather than answering this question directly, it will be helpful to turn to Olga Deschartes’s description of this same incident:

Once in the winter of 1908, V.I. sat at his desk, busy with his usual work. Suddenly he heard a voice, slowly and clearly pronouncing some Latin words. Without attempting to understand them, he started to write them down. The voice dictated in a monotone, steadily, and then became silent. V.I. read what he had written down:—verses.

BREVE AEVUM SEPARATUM  
 LONGUM AEVUM CONIUGATUM  
 IN HONOREM DOMINI  
 QUISQUIS TERRAM EST PERPESSUS  
 VENIET TUA VITA FESSUS  
 IN DIES SACRAMINI.<sup>39</sup>

This version, presumably transmitted by Ivanov himself, contains a number of departures from the original text. Most striking are the omissions: Deschartes mentions neither Mintslova (Ivanov's "dear teacher") nor Lidiia. The substitutions are also noteworthy. Ivanov, no longer conversing with the dead or reciting midnight prayers, is involved in mundane activities, utterly unprepared for the revelation that occurs.

The difference between these two versions reflects more than a desire to portray Ivanov in a less peculiar light. (Had this been the intention, the entire scene could have been omitted.) Deschartes's account rewrites the letter to Mintslova in order to align Ivanov's biography with his philosophy. By depicting a poet who suddenly and unexpectedly confronts the transcendent, it "corrects" the original version, in which the poet forces this confrontation. Ivanov appears as the astonished recipient of transcendent knowledge, a striking contrast to the letter, where he eagerly participates in occult practices. Attentive editing (whether on the part of Ivanov or Deschartes is secondary) thus brings the entire scene within the parameters of Ivanov's discussion of theurgy.

The significance of the mysterious Latin verses extends beyond the issue of theurgy to the question of genre. Their promise of a long reunification after a short separation has obvious relevance to *Love and Death*, the fourth book of *Cor Ardens*. In this book, a poetic protagonist, bereft of his beloved, repeatedly strives to overcome the separation caused by death. The link between "Breve aevum separatum" and *Cor Ardens* is both thematic and intertextual. The same Latin poem appears—without attribution and with minor textological changes—as the first of two stanzas that open *Love and Death*.<sup>40</sup> Ivanov further accentuated the significance of these verses by concluding *Cor Ardens* with Mikhail Kuzmin's musical setting of this same Latin poem.

The midnight prayers (a “biographical” text) thus left a palpable trace in Ivanov’s poetry (“literary” work). However, Ivanov supplied no commentary to these verses—their supernatural origin remains a mystery to the reader of *Cor Ardens*.

The 1909 diaries offer a wealth of supplementary material for an investigation of Ivanov’s theurgic practice. In this quintessentially Symbolist document, quotidian reality mixes freely with dreams, visions, and personal intrigue. A knowledge of Ivanov’s theoretical positions often clarifies specific diary entries. For example, on August 10, 1909, Ivanov writes, “Kuzmin continues to play Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. During the last movement, one felt the closeness and almost the voice of Lidiia.”<sup>41</sup> The mystical role attributed to music in much Symbolist theory renders this event less surprising than it might otherwise be. Yet this passage has a more specific referent; in his philosophy of art, Ivanov accorded a privileged place to Beethoven’s setting of Schiller’s “Ode to Joy.” As early as 1904, in *The Hellenic Religion of the Suffering God* (*Ellinskaia religiia stradaiuschchego boga*), he lauded Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony for re-creating in modern times the spirit of the Dionysian dithyramb.<sup>42</sup> Ivanov understood Dionysian myth as a paradigm of death and resurrection (death not as an end but as a means of rebirth). It thus becomes consistent that the modern equivalent of the dithyramb should “resurrect” Lidiia. In regard to the diary entry, one must ultimately question the theurgic power of Beethoven’s music since Ivanov’s experience appears overdetermined by his prior philosophical convictions.

In the diaries, communication from beyond the grave takes various forms. Lidiia appears in dreams, as an apparition, and as a disembodied voice, and even makes her own diary entries (marked by a change of handwriting and a disregard for punctuation marks and word boundaries). She frequently uses foreign languages, primarily Latin and Italian, and invariably concludes her message with the Italian phrase *ora e sempre* (“now and always”). These words have strong religious overtones since they conclude a number of Italian prayers.<sup>43</sup> In addition, they have direct relevance to Ivanov’s poetry. In *Love and Death*, this phrase

serves as the epigraph to the introductory sonnet of the cycle “The Blue Veil” (“Goluboi Pokrov”).<sup>44</sup> The poem itself is framed by these words. It begins with the line “Byl O r a - S e m p r e tainyi nash obet” (“*Ora-Sempre* was our secret vow”) and ends with “Sempre, slyshish’?—Slyshu. Ora” (“Sempre, do you hear?—I hear. Ora”). In this poem, as in the earlier texts, a foreign language signals communication with a transcendent realm. In the context of the poem, the phrase’s eschatological implications stand out. The joining of *sempre* and *ora* corresponds to the synthesis of the momentary (*mig*) and the eternal (*vechnost’*). Once again, there is an intertextual relationship between a biographical document (the diaries) and the literature (the poetry). Lidiia’s cryptic “signature” (*ora e sempre*) appears to be the subtext for a poem about mystical experience. In short, a phrase with fundamental autobiographical significance becomes an integral part of a poetic text. While a knowledgeable reader of the poem may recognize the phrase’s religious dimension and even vaguely sense its autobiographical implications, he cannot possibly understand its full theurgic significance. In the biographical writings, the phrase testifies to Ivanov’s conviction that he and his wife have triumphed over death.

This intertextual connection adds a new dimension to Ivanov’s poetry. However, one could contend that such details are superfluous. After all, poets frequently rewrite “personal” experience in their works. This criticism would perhaps be valid if the interplay between biographical documents and literary texts were limited to the level of subtextual echoes. In the case of Ivanov’s work, however, it extends to the most fundamental sphere of his thought—the symbol. In 1908, Ivanov offered his most precise definition of this crucial concept: “In different spheres of consciousness the same symbol obtains different meaning. . . . Like a ray of sunlight, the symbol cuts through all planes of existence and all spheres of consciousness, signifying in each plane different things, filling each sphere with a different meaning.”<sup>45</sup> According to Ivanov, a symbol is not tied to a single meaning, but rather obtains a variety of significations depending on the “plane of existence,” or what one could probably call the “context.”

In Ivanov's poetry, the "burning heart" (or *cor ardens*) is one of a relatively small number of fundamental symbols. Its most obvious association is biblical (Luke 24:32), where it connotes religious fervor.<sup>46</sup> When, in 1906, Ivanov chose the image as the title of his book, he seems to have had primarily this meaning in mind. However, in the period after Lidiia's death, the burning heart takes on additional significance. In a diary entry from June 15, 1908, Ivanov records a dream: "I saw Lidiia with giant swan's wings. In her hands she held a burning heart, of which we both partook."<sup>47</sup> This scene, as Pamela Davidson has demonstrated, has a literary antecedent. It parallels with astonishing exactitude a passage from Dante's *Vita Nuova* (*New Life*), a work Ivanov knew intimately. In Dante, the burning heart serves as a link between Dante (the poet) and Beatrice (his dead beloved).<sup>48</sup>

The image of Dante and Beatrice, joined by a burning heart, recalls the pairing of Ivanov and Lidiia, also joined by a burning heart. Such an interpretation of the diary entry is supported by other writings of the period. In the dedication to *Cor Ardens*, written after Lidiia's death, Ivanov depicts both himself and Lidiia in terms of this very image. He speaks of his own "burning heart" (*plameneiushchee serdtse*) and Lidiia's "fiery heart" (*ognennoe serdtse*).

A similar usage can be found in extremely obscure biographical writings. Among Ivanov's papers in the Lenin Library there are 83 manuscript pages (written mainly in Latin) of what appears to be automatic writing.<sup>49</sup> As in the letters to Mintslova, Ivanov notes the month and day but not the year. Internal evidence strongly suggests that these jottings date from this same period. They are clearly connected to the automatic writing found in the diaries, often repeating key words and phrases (for example, *ora e sempre*). Like the letters and diaries, they record communication between Ivanov and Lidiia. The entry from August 7 contains the following assertion: "ardor cordis signum victoriae nostrae" ("the heart's flame is the sign of our victory"). Since *ardor cordis* is immediately recognizable as a variant of *cor ardens*, it becomes evident that a literary symbol has obtained personal significance. It is now a "sign of *our* victory," presumably over death.

The burning heart is ubiquitous in Ivanov's work of this period. With each use, the image gains symbolic weight. Simultaneously, it acquires an increasing degree of "reality" since it is inextricably linked to the mystical experiences in Ivanov's personal life. This process is most clearly illustrated when the same burning heart finds its way into the Novalis translations. As has been suggested, Ivanov's sudden interest in Novalis in the period immediately following Lidiia's death was conditioned as much by biography as by poetry. Like the work of Dante and Petrarch (the obvious literary models for Ivanov's *Love and Death*), Novalis's poetry mourns the death of a beloved woman. In his extraordinarily free renditions of Novalis, Ivanov rewrote his own bitter experience of loss.<sup>50</sup> Although the image of a burning heart is foreign to Novalis's poetry, it creeps into Ivanov's translations five times. A single example should suffice to demonstrate the phenomenon. In the concluding stanzas of the fifth of the "Hymns to the Night" ("Hymnen an die Nacht"), Novalis writes of the path to eternal life: "Von innerer Glut geweitet/Verklärt sich unser Sinn." ("Broadened by an inner glow/Our sense is transfigured"). These lines, admittedly obscure, would challenge any translator. Yet Ivanov sidesteps the difficulties by ignoring Novalis's imagery and substituting his own. He writes: "I serdtsa plamen' tlennyi/Griadushchego zalog" ("And the perishable flame of the heart/Is the pledge of the future"). Novalis's text might allow for an image of an internal fire (*Von innerer Glut*), but it contains no suggestion of a heart. In the "flame of the heart," one immediately recognizes Ivanov's *cor ardens*. Furthermore, Ivanov interprets his own addition, stating that the burning heart is a "pledge of the future." Novalis's poetry is thus subsumed as part of Ivanov's own personal symbolic system. Ivanov the translator, like Ivanov the theurgist, clearly oversteps the boundary of objectivity. The burning heart, first an image of religious fervor, then a sign of personal victory, now becomes a promise of immortality. These significations are not mutually exclusive, but neither are they identical.

The hermeneutic implications of this phenomenon are considerable. In Ivanov's theory *and* practice, the symbol is a dy-

dynamic concept. Each new appearance modifies or broadens previous meanings. To understand the full significance of Ivanov's symbols, it is necessary to trace their usage through all of his writings. As the example of the burning heart indicates, Ivanov's practice does not distinguish between personal texts, lyric poetry, and translations from another poet. All genres of Ivanov's writings, whether biographical or literary, constitute parts of a single, indivisible Symbolist text.

In his writings from the period after Lidiiia's death, Ivanov seeks to annul any distinction between the personal and poetic spheres. Moreover, Ivanov's very behavior from this period—insofar as it can be reconstructed from the biographical writings—demonstrates the consequent application of this same principle. Yet this expansion of the symbol's sphere of influence, this coincidence of the personal and the literary, occurs at the expense of Ivanov's theurgic ideal. While Ivanov's theoretical statements demand maximum receptivity from the artist, his other works exemplify a more subjective view of the creative process. The years 1907–10 mark an atypical, particularly tragic chapter in Ivanov's biography. Nevertheless, his writings from this period represent an organic development of (and not a rupture from) his previous work.<sup>51</sup>

From a post-Symbolist standpoint, the behavior that accompanied the Symbolists' attempts to join life and art appears eccentric, at times even ridiculous. Yet this behavior cannot be ignored, for it forms part of a larger pattern. The Symbolists' biographies warrant critical attention because they offer the modern reader access to the movement's fundamental beliefs.