

Petrarch and Vjačeslav Ivanov

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In the article we analyse the elements of the connection between Petrarch and V. Ivanov—a connection which has so far not been investigated—and seek to establish whether an important Petrarchan influence on the poetry of Ivanov does exist.

Ivanov's knowledge of Italian and of Italian literature is well documented. This knowledge was considerable even at the time of his visit to Italy.¹

It is also known that Ivanov translated, in collaboration with M. O. Geršenzon, a selection of poems from the *Canzoniere*.² Those translations, along with his translations from Aeschylus, Pindar and Novalis,³ have, however, been viewed as merely a sporadic exercise in technique and erudition. This exceptional collaboration between Ivanov and Geršenzon—perhaps better known for their famous *Перенушка из двух углов*⁴—led me to suspect that the rôle of the Petrarch translations in Ivanov's poetry had been undervalued. In addition they do not represent the only important example of Petrarch's influence. In particular, the article 'Il lauro nella poesia del Petrarca'⁵ reveals Ivanov's knowledge not only of the *Canzoniere* and of the *Trionfi*, but also that of Petrarch's

¹ V. Ivanov first went to Italy in 1892 and settled with his family in Rome. Already in 1889 Ivanov was speaking of Dante and of Italian art.

² F. Petrarca. (Russian translation by M. O. Geršenzon and Vjač. Ivanov) (1915).

³ Ivanov made a very large number of occasional translations. These include versions from the originals by Dante, Michelangelo, Novalis, Goethe, Byron and Baudelaire. A few of the translations appeared in *Cor Ardens*, but most of them were published separately in various literary journals and in newspapers and have never been collected. Ivanov's translations from Greek are the following: 'Первая Пифийская ода Пиндара' (1899), *Тезей, дифирамб Бакхилида* (1904), *Алкей и Сафо* (1914). Ivanov's translations from Aeschylus (the Oresteia, Persae, and Septem contra Thebas), in the metres of the originals had been accepted for publication by Sabašnikov and were in the press in 1917, when the Revolution caused them to be abandoned.

⁴ M. O. Geršenzon & V. Ivanov (1921); on this work, see section 5.

⁵ V. Ivanov (1932). (The original article is in Italian.)

Latin works and of literary criticism concerning the Italian poet.⁶ Moreover—and this is of the utmost importance—this article clearly demonstrates that Ivanov found in Petrarch's poetry the highest paradigm of the search for the Apollonian—a concept which was the final stage in Ivanov's poetics.

The influence of Petrarch is indeed a constant factor in the evolution of the poetry of Ivanov. This influence is already present in the poems reflecting the dualism Dionysus–Apollo⁷ and in Ivanov's attitude toward culture; it is still present in his later poetry, where the search for eternity is envisaged in an Augustinian manner.⁸

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Let us first consider Ivanov's translations from the *Canzoniere*. We shall not examine them in detail.⁹

The general conclusion emerging from a thorough reading is that very little has been transformed as far as terminology and syntax are concerned.

⁶ In: *Il lauro nella poesia di Petrarca*, scholars, such as De Sanctis are mentioned, not to speak of Latin and Italian works by Petrarch, such as *Africa*, *Secretum*, *Canzoniere*, *Trionfi*. Even Russian authors interested in Petrarch are mentioned, such as Puškin, Solov'ev, Veselovskij.

⁷ Nietzsche was anticipated by Schelling in introducing the dualism Dionysus–Apollo into aesthetics. Whether Nietzsche was aware of this is not known. As for Ivanov, R. Wellek writes in "Russian Formalism" (1976): "Ivanov's formulations Dionysus–Apollo seem to me very close to Schelling's exaltation of a religion of art [...]." Already in his early collection of poems, *Кормчие звезды* (1902), Dionysus appears as the symbol of the generating passion and, in the meantime, of the generating death. In this religion of the suffering and resurrecting god, Ivanov constructs his mystic poetics, in which paganism and Christianity flow into a single poetic mystery together. This complex process harmoniously evolves through most of Ivanov's poetic work. Worthy of note are Ivanov's historical and theoretical studies on the religion of Dionysus and on mysticism. See among them: *Ницше и Дионис*, (1904); *Дионис и Прадионисийство* (1921), *Dostojevskij, Tragödie, Mythos, Mystik* (1932).

⁸ In Ivanov, the Dionysian element flows into a Christian current of thought, by converting the pagan suffering and laceration into a mere Christian tribulation in the light of the Augustinian pattern of thought. O. Deschartes writes in "Être et mémoire selon V. Ivanov" (1957): "le Dionysisme, comme méthode, est un des aspects du Christianisme; l'Apollinisme en est un autre". And V. Ivanov wrote (1916): "Faith is the instrument enabling us to affirm ourselves beyond the limits of our ego."

⁹ An analysis of a few translations has been carried out in my paper: "V. Ivanov translator of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*", 1982 (unpublished). The translations I have analyzed are the following: *Canzoniere* LVII, CCLXIX, CCCXII.

What Ivanov did perhaps not completely succeed in rendering is the non-naturalistic character of Petrarch's poetry. By calling the poetry of Petrarch non-naturalistic we direct attention to those visions which are left suspended out of space and time and which preserve the immateriality of the image perceived in the Apollonian vision. In the poetry of Petrarch there occurs what can be observed in the pictures of a great contemporary and friend of our poet: Simone Martini.¹⁰ As Petrarch opposes the popular and collective ethos of Dante, Simone Martini in the same way opposes the epic naturalism and historicism of Giotto.

To Petrarch and Simone Martini "pulchritudo" is important, not naturalness: the images are without any corporeal weight, they are almost dissolved in a sea of light. Everything is desire for and aspiration to something even higher but unattainable perfection. Petrarch by means of the word, Simone Martini by means of line and colour—states G. C. Argan¹¹—express an analogous inspiration towards the new, in fact to something which is beyond modernity, towards a spirituality which is out of time.

This tension expressed through imperceptible nuances and the whole semantic and phonic texture form the inimitable quality of the poetry by Petrarch and make the translation and imitation of his poems for the translators and the Petrarchists of all times a very arduous task.

This arduousness was experienced even by Ivanov, although his translations are correct, literally faithful and expressed in a beautiful Russian poetical language. They are, however, much more than a good example of scholarly translation: their rôle is important for at least three reasons:

- a) They are almost the only artistic activity of Ivanov during the years preceding the Revolution;¹²
- b) They are the result of the collaboration between Ivanov and Geršenzon and constitute the point of departure of the debate on culture—

¹⁰ Simone Martini (1285–1344) is the beginner, with Giotto, of Italian and European gothic art. He died in Avignon where he met and made friends with Petrarch, for whom he painted a portrait of Laura.

¹¹ G. C. Argan (1970) (2nd vol.).

¹² After *Нежная тайна*, published in 1912, Ivanov did not publish any collection of poems for several years. In 1916 and 1917 he published some essays. During the period of the translations, however, Ivanov worked on a long poem *Младенчество*, published in 1918, and on a tragedy *Прометей*, published in 1919. During the revolutionary period he wrote a famous cycle of poems *Зимние сонеты* (published only in 1921 in Germany). We can also mention the collection of poems *Человек*, published in 1939 in Paris, which was written much earlier, perhaps—but this is uncertain—in 1914.

developed by the two Russian writers¹³—which had an important place in the writings of Ivanov.

- c) They contributed to enlarge Ivanov's remarkable knowledge of Petrarch. In addition to the deeper knowledge of the original texts involved in translation, Ivanov probably took advantage of the exceptional familiarity of Geršenzon with the writings of Petrarch.¹⁴

3

A second point to be examined is the link between the poetics of Petrarch, Nietzsche and Ivanov.

Ivanov was attracted to archaic Greek mythology through his scholarly activity. His approach to archaic Greek thought developed out of his philological work on the classical world.

In the same way Nietzsche built his work in philosophy upon the basis of his work as a classical philologist.

What struck both of them are the manifold and contrasting forces operating in life. In their eyes, nature in its essence consists of a sequence of acts which human rationality is unable to understand. According to them the forces generating life, inspiration and joy, or their opposites—death, decay, desolation—cannot be rationally explained. Both argue that Greek tragedy succeeds in portraying all the instinctive forces in life arising from Chaos. It is here that Nietzsche and Ivanov make use of Dionysus as the god of the uncontrollable forces of nature.

Apollo, on the contrary, is a symbol of eternity,¹⁵ the ultimate perfection of immortality.¹⁶

¹³ See section 5.

¹⁴ See M. Geršenzon (1899), M. Geršenzon & V. Ivanov (1915).

¹⁵ Dionysian and Apollonian art are different aspects of the human tendency towards "eternity". We read in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "[...] the eternal phenomenon of Dionysian art made clear to us, which gives the impression to the will in its omnipotence, as it were, behind the *principium individuationis*, the eternal life beyond all phenomena, and despite all annihilation". "[...] here Apollo vanquishes the suffering of the individual by the radiant glorification of the eternity of the phenomenon [...]" (English translation by W. M. A. Haussmann, p. 127, in O. Levy, ed., vol. I (1909).)

¹⁶ "The meaning of the name 'Dionysus' changes during the course of Nietzsche's works. In *The Birth of Tragedy* it stands for the emotional element in art and life and is the antithesis of 'Apollo' which stands for the form creating force [...]. Greek tragedy is conceived of as the result of Apollo's harnessing of Dionysus, and this metaphorical (or mythological) idea is subsequently, in Nietzsche's later works, transformed into a psychological one: Apollo's harnessing of Dionysus then becomes the "self-overcoming" of the

Ivanov, accepting the theory enunciated by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, formulates in this way the inspirational process undergone by the artist.

According to Ivanov, the great artist in his approach to artistic creation must pass through two essential phases: a phase of ascent, when beauty is revealed to him, and then a phase of descent when the poet objectifies the revealed reality and transmits it to others. Each of these two phases possesses various stages of epiphany and syntheses of Dionysian and Apollonian moments in order to achieve the work of art.¹⁷ The Apollonian state of being is not simply the antithesis of the Dionysian moment, nor the final end of the process of creation. The real goal is the synthesis of the Apollonian and Dionysian principles—the transformation of “forma formans” into “forma formata”.¹⁸ This synthesis is reached through a complex sequence of passages and cannot be expressed in the absence of the Apollonian mediation.¹⁹ The Dionysian tension is to be transformed into the Apollonian vision, and the subsequent Dionysian “musical wave” is to be translated in the Apollonian

“animal” man; and since from Zarathustra onwards, Nietzsche recognizes only one force in the human constitution, the will to power, he now calls the entire phenomenon by a single name, that which formerly stood for the emotional forces now subsumed under the rubric ‘will to power’, and the name is therefore synonymous with *Übermensch*, the man in whom the will to power is sublimated into creativity [...].” Translation by R. J. Hollingdale (1977).

¹⁷ “Esaminiamo più da vicino il processo per cui hanno origine l’epifania mistica dall’entusiasmo erotico, e dall’epifania mistica la concezione spirituale, accompagnantesi con una serena accalmia dell’anima arricchita e beata e da questa accalmia la nuova agitazione musicale, generatrice del sogno poetico, nel quale i ricordi sono soltanto il materiale per la formazione dell’immagine apollinea, che deve riflettersi nel verbo come l’armonico corpo d’una creazione ritmica, – fino a che, finalmente, dal desiderio acceso dalla contemplazione di questa immagine apollinea, non scorgi la sostanza, verbale del sonetto.” (V. Ivanov (1947 a), p. 453.) ‘Let us draw nearer to examine the process through which the mystic epiphany originates from the erotic enthusiasm, and the spiritual conception from the mystic epiphany, which goes along with a serene calm of the soul made rich and happy. From this calm a new musical agitation rises, generating the poetic dream, in which the remembrances are only the material for the formation of the Apollonian image. The Apollonian image must reverberate in the word as a harmonic body of a rhythmic creation until—at last—from the desire enkindled by the contemplation of this Apollonian image, the verbal substance of the sonnet springs out.’

¹⁸ See V. Ivanov’s article (1947 b).

¹⁹ V. Ivanov exemplifies his theory through a scheme:

Line of ascent 1–3 Conception of the work of art:

1) Dionysian excitation

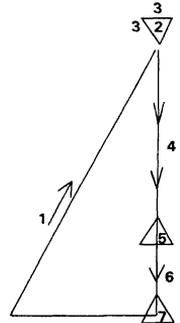
“incarnation”.²⁰ The more the Apollonian vision is experienced, the more the musical wave sensed by the artist results in a completed artistic creation. This is Ivanov’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s view of the process of the formation of the work of art.

What is the rôle of Petrarch in this context? Ivanov gives us a clear answer to this question in his article on Petrarch.²¹ Ivanov maintains that the antithesis, contained in the *Canzoniere*, between “lauri” (laurels, the symbol of Apollo) and “sospiri” (sighs, the symbol of Dionysus) results in the synthesis of art—mythically described as the mystery of the transformation of Daphne into laurel before the eyes of the lamenting Apollo.²² According to Ivanov “this synthesis, merely aes-

- 2) Dionysian epiphany—intuitive contemplation or understanding
- 3) catharsis, conception.

Line of descent 4–7 Birth of the work of art:

- 4) Dionysian excitation
- 5) Apollonian dream—reflection of the moment of intuition in the memory
- 6) Dionysian excitation
- 7) embodiment in art. The World Soul agrees to accept the intuited truth through the medium of the artist’s creation (synthesis of Apollonian and Dionysian principles).



²⁰ “La creazione delle forme si manifesta conseguentemente in tre punti: a) nell’epifania mistica dell’esperienza interiore, che può essere o la chiara visione o visione intuitiva della realtà suprema ancora fuori dei limiti del processo artistico-creativo in senso proprio; b) nella visione apollinea dell’ideale puramente artistico, che è appunto la visione della fantasia poetica il che i poeti sono soliti chiamare i propri ‘sogni’ creativi; c) nell’incarnazione definitiva dei sogni nel verbo, nel suono, nella sostanza visibile o palpabile. Ognuna di queste tappe di formazioni si raggiunge con l’esperienza dell’agitazione dionisiaca, eguale per sostanza ma di aspetto diverso e di diversa violenza.” V. Ivanov (1947 b p. 454). ‘The creation of the forms takes place in the three following stages: a) in the mystic epiphany of the internal experience, which may be either a clear vision or an intuitive vision of the supreme reality which is still beyond the limits of the artistic-creative process in its proper sense; b) in the Apollonian vision of the purely artistic ideal, which is just the vision of the poetic fantasy, which poets are used to call their own creative “dreams”; c) in the definitive incarnation of the dreams in the word, in the sound, in the visible or palpable substance. Each of these formation stages is reached through the experience of the Dionysian excitation which is the same in content, but different in aspect and violence.’

²¹ “Il lauro nella poesia di Petrarca” (1932).

²² Ivanov writes: “Neppure le rare nuvole di lotte spirituali s’accigliano abbastanza fosche da rompere l’incanto di una intima felicità simile a quello di un convalescente e scaturiente da un presentimento d’infinita possibilità sonnecchianti nello spirito che scopre se stesso. E quei dolci pianti della ‘valle chiusa’ somigliano piuttosto ai sussurri dell’aria mite nei rami sempre verdi: senza quei battiti d’ale della vaga Psiche immobile sarebbe e quasi pietrificato sembrerebbe il sacro bosco di ‘dolci allori’, al pari del mondo pacato dal

thetic, of the two contradictory terms, is the formula of the new art of Petrarch, which gives him the 'estetica consolazione' (aesthetic consolation)—that which in our times was sought by the author of *The Birth of Tragedy*, who also invoked the 'Apollonian dream', refusing any other 'illusion against the universal grief' ".²³

In his article "I limiti dell'arte"²⁴ Ivanov quotes a sonnet of Petrarch as a model of Apollonian vision:

Levommi il mio pensiero in parte ov'era
 Quella ch'io cerco e non ritrovo in terra.
 Ivi, fra lor che 'l terzo cerchio serra,
 La rividi più bella e meno altera.

Per man mi prese e disse: in questa sfera
 Serai ancor meco, se 'l desir non erra;

canto d'Orfeo. Tale difatti inneggiavano alcuni lirici greci l'ideale di assoluta armonia statica che il culto di Apollo opponeva alla furia dionisiaca. E dopo tanti secoli il Petrarca sembra stare con loro in quell'antica lotta fra la lira e il flauto, fra la setta dei portatori del ramo d'alloro e il tirso dei tirsofori entusiastici cinti di edera. Nei versi 'ed era il ciel all'armonia si intento / che non si vedea in ramo mover foglia, / tanta dolcezza avea pien l'aere e il vento' (son. CXXIII), echeggiano ancora quegli inni 'esicastici', mentre la virtù affascinatrice di Orfeo viene attribuita a Laura ('ed udii sospirando dir parole / che farian gir i monti e stare i fiumi'). ("Il lauro . . .", 1937. Number CXXCIII is a mistake in Ivanov's text, since the lines quoted belong to sonnet CLVI of the *Canzoniere*.) 'Not even the rare clouds of spiritual struggles become too threatening to disrupt the enchantment of an inner happiness similar to that of a convalescent, a happiness springing from a forefeeling of infinite possibilities drowsing in the spirit which is discovering itself. And those sweet cries of the "Valchiusa", resemble the whispers of the mild air passing through the evergreen branches. Without the fair Psyche's thrusts of wings the sacred wood of 'sweet laurels' would be motionless and look almost petrified, similarly to the world made quiet by Orpheus's song. Such was the ideal of absolute static harmony, praised by some Greek lyrics; harmony which the cult of Apollo counterpoised to the Dionysian fury. And after so many centuries, Petrarch seems to support them in that ancient struggle between the flute and the lyre, between the sect of the laurel branch holders and the thyrsus of the enthusiastic thyrsifers wreathed with ivy. In the verses "and the heavens were so intent upon the harmony that no leaf on any branch was seen to move, so much sweetness filled the air and the wind" (son. CXXIII), those 'esicastic' hymns still echo, while the fascinating virtue of Orpheus is attributed to Laura "and I heard amid sighs words that would make mountains move and rivers stand still".

²³ F. Nietzsche (1872). See in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "[. . .] the aforementioned Apollonian illusion through the influence of which we are to be delivered from the Dionysian obstruction and excess." (Translation by W. M. A. Haussmann, p. 165, in O. Levy, ed., 1 (1909).)

²⁴ V. Ivanov: *Опыты эстетические и критические* (1916). A revised version of the article has been written by Ivanov himself in Italian and published in *L'estetica e la poetica in Russia* (E. Lo Gatto, ed.) (1947). We refer to this edition in quoting the article.

I' son colei che ti diè tanta guerra,
E compiei mia giornata inanzi sera.

Mio ben non cape in intelletto umano:
Te solo aspetto e quel che tanto amasti,
e là giuso è rimaso, il mio bel velo.

Deh, perché tacque ed allargò la mano?
Ch'al suon de' detti si pietosi e casti
poco mancò ch'io non rimasi in cielo.²⁵

Ivanov's analysis of this poem shows the rôle of the Apollonian vision and describes the process of communicating that vision with words as a "sacrifice of incarnation", as a typical act of "descent", according to Ivanov's theory of artistic creation.²⁶

²⁵ *Canzoniere*, Poem CCCII: "My thought lifted me up to where she was whom I seek and do not find on earth; there, among those whom the third circle encloses, I saw her more beautiful and less proud. | She took me by the hand and said: 'In this sphere you will be with me, if my desire is not deceived; I am she who gave you so much war and completed my day before evening. | My blessedness no human intellect can comprehend: I only wait for you and for that which you loved so much and which remained down there, my lovely veil.' | Ah, why did she then become still and open her hand? for at the sound of words so kind and chaste, I almost remained in Heaven." (Translation by R. M. Durling (1976).)

²⁶ Ivanov writes: "Comunque è pienamente percepibile lo stato fino ad un certo punto estatico che precedette il suo sogno apollineo. Se questa semiastasi non gli diede che forme abbastanza vaghe, tanto più plastica e viva si presentò al suo spirito la visione apollinea, raccogliendo in sé, come in un cristallo trasparente, i raggi della sua entusiastica contemplazione delle anime amorose del terzo cielo. Questa visione apollinea assurta davanti a lui sulle alture nello atto della preghiera, è così bella che il suo rivestimento nella carne immacolata della parola si sente come un sacrificio d'incarnazione, che le toglie qualcosa d'inesprimibile se non colla favella degli angeli. Il poeta stesso riconoscendo che non si sarebbe risvegliato nella carne se non si fosse taciuta l'armonia che egli percepiva, testimonia che la comunicazione dell'esperienza per mezzo della parola terrena è da lui concepita come discesa. Così il Petrarca si proclama come discendente in qualità di artista, e se, tuttavia noi ci sentiamo innalzati nelle alte sfere, rapiti al disopra della terra sotto l'azione del suo canto ed incanto e ci sembra di vedere quell'ineffabile, illuminato dal raggio celeste e penetrato della celeste armonia, cui egli non può che accennare; ciò è normale e significa soltanto che l'artista discende per poter indicare a noi il sentiero dell'ascensione." (I limiti dell'arte, op. cit.) (The quasi-ecstatic state preceding the Apollonian dream is fully perceivable. If this semi-ecstasy gave him but fairly vague shapes, yet all the more plastic and alive did the Apollonian vision show to his spirit, reuniting in itself, as in a transparent crystal ball, the rays of the enthusiastic contemplation of the amorous souls of the third sky. This Apollonian vision, which appeared to him on the heights, while praying, is so beautiful that its embodiment in the immaculate flesh of the word is felt as a

What emerges is that Petrarch is the model for Ivanov. Ivanov considers Petrarch's poetry as the highest example of the Dionysus–Apollo synthesis; Petrarch's poems are viewed as a paradigm of the universal process of artistic creation, as the "human dream of perfection" invoked in Nietzsche's philosophy and in Ivanov's poetics. A related observation can be made: that the search for Apollo—shared by Petrarch, the early Nietzsche and Ivanov—is a response, expressed in mythical terms, to a problem which is the focus of the three authors: the eternal struggle between life and death, the fear that death and transience will overcome life, and finally the search for eternity.

Nietzsche already deals with this problem in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where the tragic is considered as the synthesis of contrasting forces possessing in themselves life and death. The tragic is itself understood as an all-embracing cosmic principle; the contrasting forces are named as Dionysus and Apollo.²⁷ To know this cosmic principle is equivalent to perceiving the tragic, because the object of this knowledge is the sorrow

sacrifice of incarnation, which cannot be expressed but with the language of the angels. The same poet acknowledges that he would not have come back to the flesh if the harmony he perceived had not been silent and testifies that the communication of the experience by means of the earthly word is envisaged by him as a descent. So Petrarch defines himself, descending in his quality of artist, and if, on the contrary, we have the sensation of being elevated to the high spheres, enraptured above earth under the action of his song and enchantment and we seem to perceive that ineffable thing which, illuminated by the celestial ray and penetrated by the celestial harmony, a harmony only hinted at,—all that is normal, and signifies solely that the artist descends in order to show us the path of the 'ascent'.)

²⁷ "The tragic artist", Nietzsche says, "is not a pessimist. It is precisely he who affirms all that is questionable and terrible in existence" (*Twilight of the Idols*). Dionysus—according to the tradition—is an ambiguous god: god of the exuberant profusion of life, god of Death. Nietzsche quotes Herakleitos: "HOUTOS DE AIDES, KAI DIONYSOS" ("The same is Hades and Dionysos"). Apollo is the god of dream, the god who creates images; Apollo is untouched by death; he is "the marvellous divine image of the 'principium individuationis' whose gestures and glances make all the pleasure and wisdom of the appearance, together with its beauty, speak to us" (*The Birth of Tragedy*). The Apollonian opposes all the Dionysian and vice-versa; the two contrasting forces oppose and destroy each other, but they constitute a 'brotherhood', coexist in the same cult; "Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo, and Apollo speaks, at last, that of Dionysus". According to E. Fink (1960) "their fight, their discord is also—in a certain sense—a harmony, they are united as the fighters; the Apollonian world of the Greeks—and the fact that it has chosen and wanted the measure—is supported by the basis always alive, only slackened, of the titanic boundlessness; the Dionysian is the underground, upon which the shining world is based; the enchanted mountain of Olympus has roots in the Tartarus. Behind the world of the beautiful appearance there is Medusa."

of the world facing its decay. Sorrow is the universal experience—the experience of transience.²⁸ Sorrow and fear are the basis of tragedy, but man has constantly opposed them. The distinction between body and soul—and, in general, the transcendental nature of values—has been the traditional way of reacting to transience. Nietzsche scorns this approach, but does not abandon the struggle. And so, in *The Birth of Tragedy* and more explicitly in *Human, All Too Human*,²⁹ in *The Dawn*³⁰ and in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*³¹ man is clearly seen to be the key to reach the essence of being, transforming all ontological problems into problems of value.³² Nietzsche begins his search for eternity³³ by eradicating the bond which human existence had with the “ideal world”—an ideal world based on religion, metaphysics, endowed with the task of driving out of man his potential forces. Human potentiality possesses a dimension of eternity of its own and man must discover eternity through his very transience and by means of his human values: expressions of the eternal recurrence and of the “will to power”.³⁴

²⁸ Sorrow has its counterpart in pleasure; in fact, sorrow is linked with time and with the vanishing of entities. Pleasure goes deeper and further in this cognition of values: in fact, it knows eternity in the end of time. Sorrow, pleasure, world, time, eternity are inseparable. Nietzsche writes in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*:

O man! Take heed!
 What saith deep midnight's voice indeed?
 “I slept my sleep —,
 “From deepest dream I've woke, and plead: —
 “The world is deep,
 “And deeper than the day could read.
 “Deep is its woe —,
 “Joy—deeper still than grief can be:
 “Woe saith: Hence! Go!
 “But joys all want eternity —,
 “—Want deep, profound eternity!”

English translation by Th. Common, in O. Levy, ed., 11 (1911).

²⁹ F. Nietzsche (1878–9).

³⁰ F. Nietzsche (1881).

³¹ F. Nietzsche (1883, 1885).

³² In his wish to pass from the problems of Being into the problems of value, Nietzsche wants to eliminate the theoretic dogmatism of values. His going back to life becomes the beginning of a new foundation of values. See on the matter: E. Fink (1960), ch. IV.

³³ See footnote 36.

³⁴ By the death of God, Nietzsche wants to demonstrate the dissolution of the ontological hierarchy typical of Christian cosmology and the creation of a new cosmo-centric horizon where time loses its historical dimension to acquire a mythic one, where there is total

However, what is more interesting for our purpose is that Ivanov, while accepting Nietzsche's idea of overcoming the dualism between life and death through the "eternal recurrence", modifies the original concept and transforms it into a complex poetics in which we find many elements of Petrarch which are not present in the thought of the German philosopher.

4

We shall now examine how Ivanov—in the works produced during his Roman period—develops the search for eternity, in the same direction as was followed by Augustine and by Petrarch in the *Trionfi*. It seems useful to observe here that, even before that period, Ivanov's poems dealing with the problem of "overcoming" death reveal a clear and important Petrarchan influence, more evident than that of Nietzsche.

In this connection, the collection of poems *Cor Ardens* is in particular to be examined because of its biographical origins. Its leit-motif is a search for immortality. This work contains many elements reminiscent of Petrarch, despite the considerable differences between the styles, themes and characters of the two poets. In addition, Ivanov makes a series of explicit references to Petrarch, especially in the second volume of *Cor Ardens*. The title of the first group of poems in that second volume has a Petrarchan matrix. This consists of more than a mere similarity between the themes of these poems and those so beloved by Petrarch. The cycle of poems is introduced by a quotation of the first eleven lines from Poem CCLXVIII (the first "canzone in morte di Laura"),³⁵ and it is to this "canzone" that the whole cycle "Любовь и

immanence, that is to say where there is eternity of the world (eternal recurrence). In his book, *Lo scriba del caos* (1978), pp. 193–4 F. Masini writes: "The tragic myth counterpoised to Christian Logos and consequently to its Hegelian secularization is the substance of Nietzsche's historical position . . . In this sense even the world of the 'will to power' becomes a mythical metaphysical sublimation of the great world infinity, interpreted in the cosmic monogramme of the Ring."

³⁵ Poem CCLXVIII:

Che debb'io far? che mi consigli, Amore?
Tempo e ben di morire;
Ed ho tardato più ch'i' non vorrei
Madonna e morta ed ha seco il mio core;
E volendol seguire,
Interromper conven quest'anni rei,

смерть” is related with regard to its themes, images and prosodic patterns.

After the first lengthy poem—appropriately called “канцона”—the cycle continues with a rare type of poem, unusual after Petrarch—a “sestina”,³⁶ a “Венок сонетов”, followed by a second “канцона” and a cycle of sonnets “Голубой покров”, in all of which the search for eternity is explicit: the “proemion” of this cycle has a meaningful subtitle in Italian “Ora e sempre”, calling to mind some famous verses of Petrarch, in particular the “Trionfo dell’Eternità”:

Quel che l’anima nostra preme e ’ngombra,
 « Dianzi, adesso, ier, deman, matino e sera »
 Tutti in un punto passeran com’ombra.
 Non avrà loco « fu », « sarà » ned « era »;
 Ma è solo, « in presente », ed « ora » ed « oggi »
 E sola eternità raccolta e ’ntera.³⁷

Other Petrarchan topics emerge from the same cycle of poems.

Instead of examining many poems of the collection *Cor Ardens* and working separately on each phrase of the line, let us concentrate on the first cycle of poems collected under the name of ‘Golden Veils’ (Золотые Завесы) in *Cor Ardens*, vol. II, and, more particularly, let us examine the first poem of the collection.

The first thing to be noted is the epigraph set at the beginning of the cycle. It is not by chance that Ivanov chose a sonnet by Petrarch. The poem in question is sonnet CXXIX (Di pensier in pensier, di monte in

Perché mai veder lei
 Di qua non spero, e l’aspettar m’è noia.
 Poscia ch’ogni mia gioia,
 Per lo suo dipartire, in pianto è volta,
 Ogni dolcezza de mia vita è tolta.

(What shall I do? What do you counsel me, Love? It is surely time to die, and I have delayed more than I would wish. My lady is dead and has my heart with her, and if I wish to follow it I must break off these cruel years, for I never hope to see her on this side, and waiting is painful to me, since by her departure my every joy is turned to weeping, every sweetness of my life is taken away.)

³⁶ In romance metrics the ‘sestina’ is a special form of ‘canzone’ formed by six stanzas, having six hendecasyllables, all linked to each other by the repetition of the six words ending the six lines of the first stanza. The ‘sestina’ ends with a valedictory of three hendecasyllables.

³⁷ “Trionfo dell’Eternità”, verses 64–69.

monte | mi guida Amor . . . From thought to thought, from mountain to mountain Love guides me . . .) and the motivation of the choice seems emblematic to me. Love is the spur for the whole cycle, and not simply love but Petrarch's love for Laura and the philosophy built on this woman. Laura is not simply a real loving passion, nor a mere allegory. She is the only firm thing in a world flowing and precipitating; Laura's beauty is the "centre of permanence" of the poet. The figure of Laura is for Petrarch what the figure of Lidija is for Ivanov. On this ground, accepting this dualism that Petrarch and Ivanov built on their love for a woman, the interpretation of the first poem of the cycle follows a Petrarchan pattern.

Лучами стрел Эрот меня пронзил,
Влача на казнь, как связня Севастьяна;
И, расточа горючий сноп колчана,
С другим снопом примчатся угрозил.

Так вещий сон мой жребий отразил
В зеркальности нелживого обмана . . .
И стал я весь — одна живая рана,
И каждый луч мне в сердце водрузил

Росток огня и корнем врос тягучим;
И я расцвел — золотоцвет мечей —
Одним из солнц, и багрецом текучим

К ногам стекла волна моих ключей . . .
Ты погребла в пурпурном море тело,
И роза дня в струистой урне тлела.

The first line: "Лучами стрел Эрот меня пронзил" was translated by using the first line of Petrarch's poem CXXXIII: "Amor m'ha posto come segno a strale" ('Love has set me up like a target for arrows'). Line 4, "С другим снопом примчатся угрозил" recalls poem LXXXVI, 2 "onde Amor m'aventò già mille strali" ('from which Love has by now shot a thousand arrows at me'). Line 7: "И стал я весь— одна живая рана" recalls poem CLXXV, 6: "solfo et esca son tutto, e 'l cor un foco" ('I am all sulphur and tinder, and my heart is a fire'). The Petrarchan atmosphere was so pregnant with meaning that I tried to make an Italian translation which could repropose the Petrarchan topics and, at the same time, not betray the original thought of Ivanov.

Amor m'ha posto come segno a strale
 Che mi consuma ed in languir martira;
 Della faretra spenta l'igneя spira,
 D'altre saette a minacciar m'assale.

Premonitore specchio un sogno frale,
 Non falso inganno, al mio destin s'ispira . . .
 Viva piaga son tutto, ed ogni mira,
 Al core, gemma ardente, spinge l'ale,

E se reclina qual radice al vento.
 Solitario crisantemo di brace
 Fiorii del sole; e fluido paramento

Ai piedi delle fonti l'onda giace . . .
 Sepolta è in mar di porpora tua spoglia
 E del giorno la rosa un'urna sface.³⁸

Along with Petrarchan topics we can find explicit quotations such as that preceding the poem “Мощь новую приемлют надо мной”:

E le stelle migliori acquistan forza.³⁹

Similar Petrarchan influences can be discovered in other cycles of poems,⁴⁰ though to a lesser degree.

³⁸ D. Mureddu (1982).

³⁹ *Canzoniere*, poem CXXVII, line 31: (and the better stars gain power).

⁴⁰ See, for example, the poem “The Eternity and the Instant” where the dichotomy Time–Eternity is the subject of the whole poem and which easily recalls the recurrent theme of the *Trionfi*, not to speak of many poems of the *Canzoniere* and many Latin works by Petrarch.

Вечность и миг

Играет луч, на гранях гор алея;
 Лучится дум крылатая беспечность . . .
 Не кровью ль истекает сердце, млея?
 Мгновенью ль улыбнулась, рдея, Вечность?
 Лобзаньем ли прильнуло к ней Мгновенье? . . .
 Но всходит выше роковая млечность.

Пугливый дух приник в благоговенье:
 Гость бледный входит в льдистый дом к Бессмертью,
 И синей мглой в снегах легло Забвенье . . .

Молчанье! Вечность там одна со Смертью!
 (*Кормчие звёзды* — Ореады; 1902)

We have dealt with the influence of the thought of Nietzsche and Petrarch on Ivanov as far as the urge for eternity is concerned. But beyond the observed link between the three thinkers it is evident that there is a substantial difference between Nietzsche, as a non-Christian thinker, and Petrarch and Ivanov willing to accept an all-embracing divinity. Although the theory of the "eternal recurrence" and in general the philosophy of Nietzsche have not always been considered in complete contrast to the Christian longing for eternity,⁴¹ what is interesting for our purposes, is the similarity of search in Petrarch and Ivanov. They both perceive that eternity cannot be found in human things: beauty, love, fame are ephemeral values. It is therefore necessary to Petrarch and Ivanov to seek eternity elsewhere and they find it in the acceptance of "the Other". An Augustinian influence appears here to be evident on the two authors. The search for "the Other" is a passage worked out in the *Confessions* by Augustine⁴² and a direct influence of the *Confessions* has been acknowledged by both Petrarch⁴³ and Ivanov.⁴⁴

In the *Confessions* the central theme is the search for God. God is everywhere, "in front or behind us", but the way to Him is a difficult one, since human life is "temptation" both in good and evil. Man is tempted and we all are, in the course of our life, subject to temptation, but thanks to it we are enabled to find our way to God.

In the struggle against evil, man experiences the "tribulationes". According to Augustine, through the "tribulationes" man becomes aware of his sin, and, in objectifying it, he is able to find God. The

⁴¹ In particular, M. Heidegger, in *Holzwege* maintains that Nietzsche remains imprisoned in Metaphysics, as he accomplishes, in a personal way, its fundamental tendencies. Cf., on this theme, E. Fink (1960). It is interesting to quote one among the meaningful Dionysus-Dithyramps (1888): Fame and Eternity, where Nietzsche says:

"O loftiest crown of Life! O shield of Fate!
That no desire can reach to invoke,
That ne'er defiled or sullied is by Nay,
Eternal Yea of Life, for e'er am I thy Yea:
For I love thee, Eternity."

(English translation by G. T. Wrench in O. Levy, ed., 17 (1911).)

⁴² *Confessiones*, 10.

⁴³ See *Familiares* 4, I, where Petrarch quotes St. Augustine's words in the *Confessions*. "And men go about wondering at mountain heights and the mighty waves of the sea and broad flowing streams and the circuit of the sea and the wheeling of the stars: and to themselves they give no heed." (English translation by E. Wilkins (1961).)

⁴⁴ Consult O. Deschartes' article (1957-58), especially the poems 'По звездам' and 'Время'.

“tribolationes” can be “primae and secundae”, according to the level of the interior examination which we have submitted our soul.

This process of interiorization through the “confession” ought to be lived through ceaselessly in order to perceive God whom we bear in us.

God is timeless, in fact we cannot find in him any before or after, but only eternal present. “Past and future can only be thought of as present: ‘past’ must be identified with memory and ‘future’ with expectation, memory and expectation being both present facts.”⁴⁵ We can understand that memory is already a reflection of the timelessness of God and it is working in all our sensations. E. Gilson writes: “Now, what is memory if not one of the clearest manifestations of the spirituality of the soul. What happens in matter would vanish into nothingness as soon as it happens.”⁴⁶

We can therefore state that memory, being that divine element irradiated by God, is an endless source of our ascent towards purity. Its contribution to our ascent towards spirituality and purity is linked with our “tribolationes”.

Once Petrarch and Ivanov have understood that eternity is to be found in “the Other”—God all-embracing and annihilating every human value—they try, nonetheless, to recover man as a possible medium towards eternity; and this attempt is the leit-motif of their late poetry.⁴⁷ Apart from the Christian myth of the resurrection at the last day,⁴⁸ the Italian and the Russian poets find two reasons for restoring the dignity of man: the divine presence in the human soul and the presence of human attributes in the divinity.

The divine presence in the human soul is envisaged following Augustine’s message: if man has the courage and humility to seek divinity in himself, by exposing and examining his own self to a rational and ruthless psychological introspection and laying his soul bare layer after layer—God enters his soul, his mind, his body. In this process of divine irradiation in man—which inspires the letters of Petrarch⁴⁹ rather than his poetry—memory plays a central rôle. In Augustine, memory is a

⁴⁵ B. Russell, ch. 4, p. 373 (1946).

⁴⁶ E. Gilson (1955) p. 75.

⁴⁷ With regard to Ivanov, see the cycle *Свет вечерний*, poem “На кладбище”. As for Petrarch, check the *Trionfi*, the last poems of the *Canzoniere* and the book *Secretum*.

⁴⁸ The resurrection of the last day is important to Petrarch because Laura will acquire again her worldly features, and is important to Ivanov for just the same reason, because he will see his beloved again.

⁴⁹ See: *Familiars*, 4, 1, in (1968).

“great power”, “something terrifying”, a “profound and infinite complex”, and finally “a spirit”:⁵⁰ a receptacle of boundless amplitude, where sensations, cognitions, abstract concepts, sentiments, oblivion and even God are reflected.⁵¹ Petrarch gives importance to the memory of great and noble deeds—“Fame”⁵²—, which is, however, destroyed by “Time”; but, beyond the concept of “Fame”, Petrarch accepts the Augustinian idea of memory, as we can see in the well known letter describing his excursion on Mont Ventoux.⁵³

In the writings of Ivanov memory is a fundamental theme and is connected to the myth of Mnemosyne,⁵⁴ the mother of the Muses.

To Ivanov memory is something which is in between memory as conceived as “Fame” in the *Trionfi* by Petrarch; memory understood as “Hellenism”, following the spirit of Greek Paideia, and the Augustinian memory with its divine irradiation.

La Mémoire, c'est notre arme contre le temps,
mais, c'est aussi sa propre arme secrète pour
se defendre contre lui-même.⁵⁵

In fact, according to Ivanov, Mnemosyne is equal to eternal memory, which concept involves a continuous fluid intercourse between the spiritual richness of those who died and those who are alive. Culture is the culture of those who are no more and eternal memory is the soul of the liveness of culture based on tradition.⁵⁶

Ivanov writes to Geršenzon in *Перепуска из двух углов*, a written discussion on the problem of Humanism and the culture in a modern world: Для меня же она культура — лестница Эроса и иерархия благоговений . . . благоговения же мои свободны и каждое осчастлививает мой дух . . . Культура есть память не только о земном и Внешнем лице отцов, но и о достигнутых ими посвящениях . . . В

⁵⁰ Augustine, *Confessiones* 10, 8–17.

⁵¹ *Ibidem* 10, 17, 20.

⁵² See Petrarch's *Africa* and *Trionfo della Fama* (Triumph of Fame).

⁵³ See the already quoted letter by Petrarch (*Familiars* 4, 1) where the poet resorts to the text of Augustine to praise memory and the human soul (*Confessiones* 10, 8).

⁵⁴ See “Сон Мелампа” in *Cor Ardens*, and “Деревья” in *Свет Вечерний* (1962).

⁵⁵ Deschartes (1957). (Memory is our weapon against time, but it is also its own secret weapon to defend itself from itself.)

⁵⁶ “Мнемозина Вечная Память . . . Культура — культ отшедшие, и Вечная Память — душа её жизни . . .” V. Ivanov to M. O. Geršenzon (1921), Letters 3, 5, 7.

ЭТОМ СМЫСЛЕ НЕ ТОЛЬКО МОНУМЕНТАЛЬНА КУЛЬТУРА, НО И ИНИЦИАТИВНА, В ДУХЕ . . .⁵⁷

As far as the presence of human attributes in the divinity is concerned, we can observe an interesting similarity between Petrarch and Ivanov. This presence is not possible in the all-embracing divinity and therefore the two poets transfer human attributes to the intermediary, the Virgin Mary.

It is interesting to note the influence exerted on a whole generation of Symbolists—among them Ivanov—by the Hymn to the Virgin through Solov'ev's translation.⁵⁸ Ivanov, particularly, shows this influence in many poems written before and after his exile⁵⁹ and the theme of "Maria" is one of the most important elements in his work.⁶⁰

5

A further point relevant here is the similarity in Ivanov's and Petrarch's attitudes to past culture and, more generally, to the concept of *Paideia*.⁶¹ We have here not a direct Petrarchan influence, but rather similarity of attitude. This analogy is generated by an interior urge to recuperate the past, and perhaps by a similarity between the historical conditions in Petrarch's period and those of the first decades of the XXth century in Russia.⁶²

Ivanov began as a scholar in classical antiquity and this cultural background was to influence all his later activity, his poetry included. Ivanov's knowledge of antiquity influenced his poetry in three different ways:

- i) as a source of poetic subjects (themes, images, inspiration);
- ii) as a "forma mentis", providing a philological approach to the subjects of his poems;
- iii) as a linguistic matrix of archaic words and names, allowing a peculiar

⁵⁷ V. Ivanov & M. O. Geršenzon, *Пепенуска* . . . op. cit., Letter 9 (1921).

⁵⁸ V. Solov'ev (1974).

⁵⁹ See, for example, the cycle of poems "Rosarium" in *Cor Ardens*.

⁶⁰ "La où une créature de ce monde rejoint son idée dans la Sagesse Divine, devient telle que Dieu l'a pensée, la est Sophie . . . Elle se sert du don de la Mémoire pour la transfiguration des hommes . . . Entre Platon et Augustin, le plus grand maître de la Mémoire fut le Christ." O. Deschartes (1957), p. 94.

⁶¹ W. Jaeger (1965).

⁶² See D. Mureddu (1981).

and natural choice of vocabulary so that his poetry possesses a spell of refined mystery.

These three influences are interconnected, and their combined effect is that the classical world becomes the constant focus of Ivanov's state of being and of his creative impulse: it is not simply a "classical environment" but rather a reality in which the artist recognizes more readily and more clearly his present situation.

The spirit of this re-creation of the Classics by no means represents mere imitation but is the typical humanistic approach to the ancient world. The ancient world is relived and absorbed by the artist. This attitude—shared by Ivanov and other Russian writers of the period—is also that which distinguished Petrarch and the first humanists in the 13th–14th centuries from the Medieval attitude. And, as in Petrarch, Ivanov's Classicism is not an aesthetic fashion, but sinks its roots in the very core of humanism, from which this type of classicism derives: Humanism as a synonym of Paideia—a concept of fundamental importance in the classical and Hellenistic world and the Renaissance.⁶³ It is interesting to note that the fundamental elements of Paideia—philology, appropriation and assimilation of the culture of the past, and education as the means of forming the "integral man"—are all present in Ivanov. Reference has already been made to Ivanov's philological background, while the remaining two aspects of Paideia are clearly observable in the works of the Russian poet, especially in *Перепуска из двух углов*⁶⁴ and *Кручи*.⁶⁵ Furthermore, we note that Ivanov revives the later tradition of the ancient Paideia, that is the Christian Paideia.⁶⁶

Let me start with the theme of the cult of the past culture and its role in modern society.

In *Перепуска из двух углов*, this theme is analysed and expressed dialectically in a debate between Ivanov and Geršenzon on two different approaches to culture.

On the one hand Geršenzon, although himself a great scholar, maintains his sceptical attitude toward the positive value of a profound knowledge of ancient culture.⁶⁷ On the other, Ivanov asserts the impor-

⁶³ On the classical inheritance in Russia, see D. Mureddu (1981), ch. 6.

⁶⁴ V. Ivanov (1921).

⁶⁵ V. Ivanov (1918).

⁶⁶ Jaeger (1962).

⁶⁷ M. Geršenzon was a famous historian and a rationalist. In *Перепуска* (1921) he writes: "I am tired of carrying this unbearable burden . . . I know too much. This knowledge will not become alive, it is something alien to me . . . What is this enormous knowledge for? . . . In the hour of my death I will not think of it . . ."

tance of the cultural tradition and its validity as a rich and fruitful source of inspiration, as a mould for the new generation. For him culture is quite the antithesis of something overrefined, dry and unproductive; rather it is something alive, something which, thanks to a continuous process of renewal functioning through the memory, is capable of moulding new forces.⁶⁸

Memory is viewed as something which actively keeps alive the cultural values of the past. Memory (mnemosyne)—as in Augustine and Petrarch—is a never-ending support to human experience.

After a thorough reading of *Переписка . . .*, we can appreciate the importance of culture—as an element of Paideia—for Ivanov. It is worth noting that this theme was a crucial point of discussion and reflection for Ivanov's contemporaries.⁶⁹

Some of the considerations expressed in *Переписка из двух углов* also take into account a third element of Paideia, that is education intended as the way of forming the "integral man". Culture, as the main component of education, is acquired and forms the very nature of man. It is not a label, a specific attribute of the learned man.⁷⁰ The central rôle attributed to culture—in expanding the richness of the human essence and in sustaining the full development of man—is confirmed in *Кручи*,⁷¹ in other later works by Ivanov and in certain moments of the life (the "pedagogic experiments") of the poet.⁷²

Even the concept of poetry in Ivanov's poetics is linked with this exigency of educating the "integral man". The rôle of the poet is not

⁶⁸ In the poem "Вечная память" (1902) we read:

"Над смертью вечно торжествует,
В ком память вечная живёт."

(He in whom the eternal memory lives triumphs eternally over death.)

⁶⁹ As we have seen, during the years preceding and shortly after the Revolution, the question of the value of the past and its culture—whether the keep to past alive or to begin everything from its very beginning—was the problem which mostly touched the members of the Russian intelligentsia. Geršenzon preached for the abandonment of the past; Ivanov, on the contrary, went back to the past with a sort of nostalgic love for it. Mandel' štam desperately fought to revalue the everyday quality of the past. Blok, the most sensitive of them, limited himself to expressing 'the music' of this turmoil in his verses. On this theme see D. Mureddu (1981), ch. 6, Appendix C.

⁷⁰ Culture, for Ivanov, is the result not only of a rational approach to knowledge, but of a spiritual choice by man; he wrote in letter IX of his *Переписка из двух углов* that culture is the remembrance of the fathers: "Culture is the cult of memory."

⁷¹ The synthesis of the article is the expression of man as the fusion of the whole of humanity in him. (*Кручи*, 1918.)

⁷² See O. Deschartes: Introduction to Ivanov (1971).

confined to that of living a personal aesthetic experience, but extends to the creation of the myths, and above all to the communication of their reality to the audience. As in the Greek tragedy, the audience is the final protagonist: Members of the chorus, the poets, the audience and the citizen share together in the richness of the culture captured in the myth, and a new man arises.

It should be noted that the concept of Paideia held by Ivanov is not so much that of the ancient Greeks as that developed by the Fathers of the Church. This Christian Paideia—as defined by W. Jaeger⁷³—leads more directly to the possibility of reconciling classical culture and the Christian faith. Ivanov deals with the theme of the “docta pietas” on several occasions,⁷⁴ but his whole work and life testify to this concern; a concern dear to Augustine and his follower Petrarch, the great humanist.

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