

Shishkin, Andrei (ed.) *Vjačeslav Ivanov: poesia e sacra scrittura. Europa Orientalis*, 21, 2002, 1: 2. Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici et Letterari, Università di Salerno, Avellino, 2004. 413 and 398 pp. Illustrations. Tables. Notes. Appendices. Indices. Price unknown.

THESE two volumes feature the proceedings of the Eighth International Conference organized by the Viacheslav Ivanov Consortium, now sadly depleted by the loss not only of the last representative of Ivanov's immediate family but of the author of the opening article of Volume One, Sergei Averintsev. Based largely on archival research in St Petersburg, Moscow, Baku and in the exceptionally reader-friendly conditions of the last Ivanov home in Rome, the articles range over a wide spectrum of the poet's involvement with European Christian Humanism and with the Ur-text of the last two millenniums of our culture, the Bible. It is impossible to do justice to all twenty-six individual authors, articles and publications. Since it is the reviewer's prime duty to inform readers of what may interest them in a compendium of this kind, I shall attempt to encapsulate the content rather than the value of each contribution. It should nevertheless be clearly said that the standard is of the highest, the editing and polygraphy excellent and that the two volumes contribute to our knowledge of Ivanov's relationship with the Roman Catholic Church and with contemporary Christian journals as well as of his sources and his ability to transform pagan myth and legend into Christian literary constructs.

The languages are Russian, Italian and English but for the sake of uniformity I have translated the titles of papers into English.

Averintsev's 'The strategy of quotation in Viacheslav Ivanov's poetry' demonstrates how Ivanov implements his holistic world view through the use

of traditionally hallowed words and phrases in classical, pre-Christian and modern, secular contexts, obviating the need for discursive argument. The poet, Averintsev points out, uses his awareness that everything worth saying has, in a sense, already been said to create an echo-chamber of reference which gives a positive sense of depths, thus avoiding the self-conscious intertextuality so often deployed by postmodernism.

Ivan Golub's 'Holy Writ and Ivanov's poetry: man as the Image of God' stresses the distinction between Word and Language, the play of singular and plural in the biblical account of Creation and the importance, in a poetry focused on the divinization of Man and the Incarnation of God, of enracinement in mother-earth and mother-tongue.

Andrei Arkhipov, in 'Viacheslav Ivanov as commentator of the New Testament; preliminary thoughts', presents a clear and detailed account of Ivanov's commission from the Papal Institute for the Affairs of the Eastern Church (probably his most widely read, albeit anonymous work) and the differences between his commentary, that of his German model Konstantin Rösch and the 1980 republication revised by Father Alexander Men'.

Vincenzo Poggi's 'Ivanov in Rome' gives a full factual account of the Russian poet's relationship with the Pontifical Institute Orientale (Russicum) in the years after his retirement from his teaching-post in the Collegio Borromeo in Pavia, when his advanced years and non-party status prevented a possible new appointment at the University of Florence. Russicum not only employed Ivanov as part-time lecturer, literary consultant, commentator and translator, but negotiated a modest Papal pension to give him leisure to complete work on 'Svetomir'.

Michael A. Meirson's approach in 'Self-transcendence through art in Viacheslav Ivanov' is more Jungian than theological. Ivanov, he points out, differs from Jung in that, for him, Christ is not just one possible Archetypal figure but *the* true divine Other, a universal rather than cultural concept, in communion with Whom the individual Ego is transcended and filled with living content.

Pamela Davidson, in 'Viacheslav Ivanov's ideal of the artist as prophet: from theory to practice', pursues an ongoing enquiry into the concept of 'artist as prophet', which she sees as peculiarly generic to Russian culture and rooted not only in biblical, messianic but in the classical Apollonian or Pythian tradition which Ivanov, in his poetry, sought to synthesize. However, in the course of the long exile during which he strove to 'obratit' pustyniu v pustyn' ('to turn the desert into a hermitage' quoted from a 1934 letter to Khodasevich p. 194), she points out that Ivanov came to draw a clear distinction between poetry and prophecy — as in his 1937 lecture on the good and the beautiful in Pushkin.

Maria Kandida Gidini, writing in Russian on Ivanov and Jaques Maritain, outlines the different provenance of the former's Platonic and Eastern Christian tradition and the latter's Aristotelean neo-Thomism. Both, however, were essentially ontological. Both had imbibed from Bergson and Nietzsche a similar view of the cultural crisis engendered by the collapse of the great rationalist systems such as positivism and both distinguished between artistic inspiration and mystic revelation. The article ends with reproductions of four inscriptions by Maritain on books gifted to Ivanov.

'The antinomial principle in the poetry of Viacheslav Ivanov' which penetrates 'the molecular structure of the linguistic matter of Ivanov's verse' and, according to the author L. A. Gogotishvili, can be said to form the 'linguistic base' of his prosody (p. 113), is an analysis of the architectonics of his symbolism. The antinonyms work like the two sides of an arch fused into curving vaults which open onto perspectives of reconciliation and catharsis but avoid the naming of names, the uncovering of the Face.

Denis Mickiewicz gives a deeply satisfying exegesis of the poem 'Apollini', highlighting 'the principle of Ascent' and how, by dint of assimilation of a multiplicity of subtexts, Ivanov invests a lyrical sonnet with the choral fullness we associate with the genre 'Hymn'.

John Malmstad looks at Ivanov's treatment of the 'Rose of Byzantium' in the Cathedral of St Mark in the context of Russian poetry about Italian architecture. The inference is drawn that Ivanov's 1910 poem celebrating the complex origins and history of the Venetian cathedral prefigures the poet's reconciliation of Orthodoxy and Rome in his 1926 conversion to Catholicism of the Eastern Rite.

Robert Byrd, writing in Russian on 'Catharsis-Mathesis-Praxis', the mystic triad of which Ivanov speaks in the conclusion of his article 'On the Russian Idea' and which describes the descent of the soul from the summit of visionary inspiration through 'purgation', 'apprenticeship' and 'action', traces the origin of the terms to Aristotle and explains how they were understood by Ivanov's contemporaries in Russia, Europe and America.

Nina Segal (Rudnik) examines the sources for 'The Image of St Christopher and its significance in the work of Viacheslav Ivanov', ranging from his childhood love for the oxymoronic verses at the end of Matthew 11 about the 'easy yoke' and 'light burden' of Jesus Christ to Catholic hagiography, particularly Jacobus de Veraguine's *The Golden Legend*. She emphasizes the importance of the trial to which Christopher, identified in his mythological, immensely strong yet animalistic 'dog-headed' image with the Russian people, is subjected — and the possibility of failure.

V. A. Ustinov, in 'Traditions of Plato and Dante in the poetic consciousness of Viacheslav Ivanov' gives us another 'take' on the multigenesis of the poet's concept of man as microcosm with diagrams of Dante's and Plato's cosmogony.

Vasilii Rudich looks at 'Virgil as perceived by Viacheslav Ivanov and T. S. Eliot', pointing out the importance of the common source where there is no evidence of mutual influence or, indeed, acquaintance and, at the same time, the differences in their approach to a Virgil perceived from a Christian perspective.

A. Dudek's 'The ideas of St Augustine in the poetic understanding of Viacheslav Ivanov' returns to the 'transcende te ipsum' (pp. 358 et seq.) which figures in several other articles and contextualizes Ivanov's personal devotion to the Saint.

Fedor Poliakov publishes 'Viacheslav Ivanov's crown of sonnets "Life and Death"' in the translation of Wolfgang Groeger' and an interesting 1922 letter from translator to author, while Alessandro Maria Bruni quotes the same work in full with an Italian parallel translation and commentary.

Volume Two contains the indices to both volumes and three sections: 'In the circle of contemporaries', 'Publications' and 'Instrumenta studiorum'.

Here, Margarita Pavlova gives an account of the complex relationship between Ivanov and Fedor Sologub engendered by their participation in the curious 'mystery' enacted at the home of N. Minskii on 3 May 1905 and involvement in the theory and practice of dramatic experiment around 'Fakely' in 1906. Predictably, Sologub appears to have understood Ivanov's dream of a revival of the Dionyssean mysteries in terms of black magic, even Satanism.

In 'Publications', Marco Roncalli studies the letters to Ivanov from his patron Guiseppe de Luca, an archivist friend of Leopoldo Riboldi's at the Pontifice Istituto Orientale, and documents the care and respect accorded the Russian poet by his Italian colleagues. The article contains so much valuable material one wishes the correspondence could have been given in Russian translation in the footnotes, as are the letters in German exchanged between Ivanov and the editors of the Catholic journal *Hochland* (1903-41), published by Michael Wachtel. These are important in that they situate Ivanov in the European context of the struggle for Christian Humanism against the Nazi threat. Wachtel makes use not just of the Rome archive but of that of the journal and of Karl Muth's family.

N. A. Bogomolov, relying primarily on unpublished Russian sources, gives a fresh, well documented account of Ivanov's relationship with Mintslova and his 1910 journey to Italy, where her plans for his initiation into an esoteric Secret Society were frustrated by a breach of secrecy and he instead consummated his long-maturing romance with his stepdaughter Vera.

Andrei Shishkin bases an account of Ivanov as teacher in the poetry circle he ran from February 1917 to early August 1920 in Moscow on the verbatim report of a young poet Feiga Kogan presented to Dmitrii Viacheslavovich at the time of his accreditation to Russia as a journalist and a letter from Ivanov to Lunacharskii asking for his good offices in the publication of a collection of poems by O. M. Mochalova, a particularly promising pupil.

Philipp Vestbrok (Westbrook? — the name appears only in Russian) publishes a 'Fragment of Viacheslav Ivanov's unfinished tragedy "Antigone" as a supplement to the projected trilogy "Tantallus" (1904), "Niobe" (begun at same time but not finished) and "Prometheus" (two attempts dating to 1915 and 1919)'. He points out the Church-Slavonic and biblical references which, here as elsewhere when Ivanov tackles classical subjects, invest Ancient Greek myth with Christian significance.

In 'Folk-lore sources of the Tale of Tsarevich Svetomir' A. L. Toporkov provides a colourful investigation of how the poet invests folk-forms and folk-memory with prophetic Christian content, taking as a trope for the process the carving of a cross and shrine from the blasted oak, sacred to Perun the God of Thunder, which once marked the sacred spring around which much of the action of the Tale revolves.

The 'Instrumenta studiorum' consists of G. N. Obatin's laborious (and entertaining) reconstruction of Ivanov's many 'moves' and the lists of books he or his helpers made on each occasion, an invaluable insight into his tastes, interests and available sources.