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THE “RESPONSIVE POETICS” OF VJAČESLAV IVANOV

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THE “RESPONSIVE POETICS” OF VJAČESLAV IVANOV

MICHAEL WACHTEL

1.

From the very inception of his literary career, Vjačeslav Ivanov’s penchant for archaisms, complicated syntax, and esoteric allusions gave him the reputation of a “difficult” poet.¹ While these elements undoubtedly perplexed numerous contemporaries (one went so far as to deem his verse a “philological nightmare”),² there is little reason why they should remain stumbling blocks for today’s scholars. To begin with, poets such as Pasternak, Mandel’štam, Chlebnikov, and Cvetaeva have inured Slavists to difficulty. To the careful and systematic reader, Ivanov’s verse yields its mysteries more readily than that of many other modern Russian poets. His often convoluted syntax, for example, can be deciphered given sufficient patience and intellectual curiosity. His archaisms and obscure allusions can be traced through a host of dictionaries and encyclopedias (which, it might be noted, the *poeta doctus* Ivanov was himself not above consulting).³

It seems to me that for today’s readers, the most fundamental difficulty in Ivanov’s poetry lies elsewhere. Numerous memoirists recall Ivanov as an extraordinary conversationalist with a rare ability to comprehend and develop his interlocutors’ ideas. Ivanov’s poetic practice, I would argue, is linked to a similar impulse. With astonishing regularity, he uses his verses to *respond*: both to his contemporaries (the numerous personal dedications that precede individual poems give ample testimony to this) and to his “eternal companions” (as evidenced in the frequent epigraphs from the poets and thinkers who comprise his own highly selective canon). When Ivanov directly names

his interlocutor, he supplies essential information, which allows, even invites, the reader to reconstruct the context. The more exactly one can establish this “missing half” of a conversation (or, to use a slightly different image, this point of departure), the easier it is to comprehend the poem.

Particularly thorny problems arise when the interlocutor remains unnamed. In such cases, the reader may not even be aware that a discussion is underway. In other words, if – according to Goethe’s celebrated dictum – every poem is an “occasional poem” (“Gelegenheitsgedicht”), then Ivanov’s would-be interpreters are often in the unenviable position of having the poem, but not the vaguest notion of the occasion that inspired it.

Ivanov himself conceived of literary history as a conscious process of evolution: “Every poet finds poetry on a certain level of development. He tries either to move it further, or, if he finds that it has been moving in the wrong direction, to change its direction.”⁴ As a rule, Ivanov belonged to the first category. His relationship to Dante, Goethe, and Puškin was not one of rivalry, but rather an eager desire to continue their cause. We find in Ivanov’s poetics far less patricide than we do ancestor worship. It is true that Ivanov’s attitude toward his contemporaries – even within the Symbolist camp – was hardly uncritical. Yet by clinging to his policy of “unity in necessity”,⁵ he either avoided direct disagreements altogether or kept his polemics well hidden.

Whether inspired by approbation or disagreement, Ivanov’s poetry is fundamentally reactive, and it is in the poems without explicit outside referent where Ivanov tends to be most inscrutable. For the present, I can only suggest the extent of this phenomenon. However, I hope that a close investigation of a few instances will make clear its importance. My aim is not simply to identify previously unrecognized sources, but to examine Ivanov’s approach to them and thus reach a better understanding of his creative process.

2.

The image of a “tender mystery” (“nežnaja tajna”) is unquestionably central to Ivanov’s poetry, yet no one has ever inquired as to its origin. In the verse from the years 1908-1912, this phrase becomes a mantra of sorts. It first appears in a poem in the second part of *Cor Ardens* and then serves as the title of an entire book of Ivanov’s verse, where the phrase recurs in numerous poems and contexts. In 1924, twelve years after this book appeared, Ivanov was to tell his student Elena Millior: “Mir – èto Nežnaja Tajna. Razve ne nežny solnečnye luči? Razve priroda ne nežna? Razve ne nežno pokoitsja zarodyš v čreve materi?”⁶ (“The world is the Tender Mystery. Are not the rays of the sun tender? Is nature not tender? Does a child not rest tenderly in its mother’s womb?”). Such insistent repetition of a single image suggests

that the "tender mystery" should be understood as a symbol in Ivanov's special sense of the word, i.e., an element within the phenomenal world that also participates in the transcendent world. Because the symbol is by its very nature multi-valent, it can refer to several different things, which are all related in some macrocosmic scheme.⁷ In the Millior citation, for example, the tender mystery is associated with several images, all of which suggest the interpenetration of the phenomenal and the noumenal: the sun's rays, nature itself, and the as yet unborn child. Like many of Ivanov's fundamental symbols, the "tender mystery" has an autobiographical dimension as well as a literary and philosophical function: in the words of Ol'ga Deschartes, the book *Tender Mystery* "celebrates the communion of the living with the dead and the 'tender mystery' of birth"⁸ – that is, Ivanov's contact with the deceased Lidija Dmitrievna Zinov'eva-Annibal and, through her daughter, Vera Švarsalon, the birth of a son. It is noteworthy (and characteristic of the Russian Symbolists' generous interplay between the biographical and the literary spheres) that people close to Ivanov were well aware of the personal significance with which he endowed his symbols. In his memoirs, for example, a close friend of Ivanov and his family speaks of the "nežnaja tainstvennost'" ("tender mysteriousness") of Ivanov's relationship to Vera Švarsalon, and expresses amazement that Michail Kuzmin could have failed to understand this.⁹

Because a number of the poems in the collection *Tender Mystery* are explicitly linked to German poetry, I always suspected that the title itself reflected German influence. This idea was indirectly encouraged by Sergej Averincev, who, in response to my query during a 1988 discussion, commented that the phrase "tender mystery" – while unproblematic when translated into other languages – had always struck him as sounding slightly odd in Russian. Now, almost a decade later, I can lend support both to my own hunch and to Averincev's intuition.¹⁰

Among Schiller's epigrams, there appears the following two-line poem:

Der Homeruskopf als Siegel

Treuer alter Homer! Dir vertrau' ich das zarte Geheimnis,
Um der Liebenden Glück wisse der Sänger allein.¹¹

(The Seal in the Form of Homer's Head

Loyal old Homer! To you I entrust the mystery tender,
Only the singer should know all that the lovers enjoy.)

Several aspects of these verses are noteworthy. Their form, which I have preserved in translation, is that of the distich, a modern stylization of a favorite meter of antiquity. The distich appears with some frequency in Schiller's work. The present example owes its existence to the *Xenien*, a

joint project of Schiller and Goethe, originally intended as a series of epigrams directed at literary enemies. In time, however, the poets became carried away by the rich possibilities of the form and began to compose distichs on a wide variety of subjects. Recognizing that many of these miniatures had little or no polemical thrust, Schiller ultimately removed a few dozen and published them in a loosely knit collection entitled *Tabulae votivae* (*Votive Tablets*). While these poems are unabashedly minor, they are far from obscure, and there can be little doubt that Ivanov was familiar with them. One can even show evidence of such an acquaintance: in *Transparence* (*Prozračnost*; 1904), Ivanov included ‘Einem Weltverbesserer’ (‘To one who wishes to improve the world’), a poem dedicated to A.S. Jašenko.¹² His German title unambiguously recalls Schiller’s own ‘An einen Weltverbesserer’, a poem included in the *Votive Tablets*.

‘The Seal in the Form of Homer’s Head’ has few pretenses to profundity. Rather, it treats the eternal theme of love in a somewhat light-hearted fashion. The “tender mystery” in Schiller’s verses is nothing more than an amorous missive to the beloved, which the poet is in the process of sealing. The fact that Homer is asked to bear sole witness to this “secret” produces a humorous effect. Homer appears here less as the progenitor of Western poetry (although that may play a secondary role), but rather because he is loyal, old and – most importantly, like love itself – he is blind. Since he cannot see there is little chance that he will betray the letter writer, his fellow poet.

With Schiller’s epigram in mind, we turn to Ivanov’s first poem explicitly dedicated to the theme of the “tender mystery”. Entitled ‘Sub Rosa’, it is found in ‘Rosarium’, the fifth and final book of *Cor Ardens*.

Sub Rosa

Тайна, о братья, нежна: знаменуйте же тайное – розой,
Нежной печатью любви, милой улыбкой могил.¹³

(Brothers, the secret is tender: the rose is the name of this secret,
Tender impression of love, smile so dear of the graves.)

Beyond the striking repetition of the key phrase “tender mystery”, there are several similarities that link Ivanov’s poem to Schiller’s. To begin with, Ivanov’s laconic verses are written in the identical form: a distich. In Ivanov, as in Schiller, the “tender mystery” refers to love. Ivanov even borrows Schiller’s image of the seal for closing letters (the German “Siegel”), making it into a figurative seal of love (in Russian, “печат”). Through its Latin title, ‘Sub Rosa’ (literally “under the rose”, but meaning “in secret”) recalls the Roman tradition (the source of the phrase *tabulae votivae* and the whole genre of *Xenien*).

It seems clear that Schiller’s distich served as the initial impetus for Ivanov’s own. However, it is essential to pay attention not only to the myriad links to Schiller, but to the equally striking differences, for Ivanov’s poem is ultimately distinct in both tone and message. Most importantly, Ivanov adds the rose, one of his central symbols, to Schiller’s distich. ‘Sub Rosa’ is itself part of the ‘Anthology of the Rose’, a group of 21 distichs in which Ivanov’s basic strategy consists of taking a scene from literature or myth and then grafting a rose onto it. This procedure is characteristic of ‘Rosarium’ as a whole, for the entire book reflects Ivanov’s fascination with the rose in any number of cultures and civilizations. In this poetry, the significance of the rose cannot be limited to love.¹⁴ Like all true symbols, the rose contains a variety of potential significations. While Schiller’s distich can easily be construed as a love poem, Ivanov’s ‘Sub Rosa’ defies such simple categorization. Ivanov equates the tender mystery with a rose, then defines the rose in terms of the seal of love (“nežnoj pečat’ju ljubvi”), but also with an unmistakable image of death (“miloj ulybknoj mogil”). His distich does not describe a love intrigue, but concerns the profoundly mystical relationship of love and death (a pairing familiar to the reader of *Cor Ardens* from the title of the fourth book, the one that directly precedes ‘Rosarium’). Rather than addressing his statement to a blind poet of antiquity, he speaks to certain nameless “brothers” (“brat’ja”), thereby adding a certain religious gravity to his statement. In short, while borrowing extensively and – it would seem, unambiguously – Ivanov completely alters the spirit of his source, turning a minor poem (in the erotic tradition) into a serious philosophical statement. In subsequent treatments of the “tender mystery”, the themes of death, birth, and love are invariably intertwined and placed in an expressly Christian context, with Schiller’s input receding increasingly into the background.

It is worth briefly considering the expanded version of ‘Sub Rosa’, the eponymous title poem of the 1912 collection *Tender Mystery*. This poem is longer (twenty lines) and considerably more complex, yet one can still recognize its debt to Schiller. Once again, the poem is in distichs and, in the final lines, the seal of love recurs in an almost verbatim repetition of ‘Sub Rosa’.

Тайна, о братья, нежна: знаменуйте же Тайное Розой,
Тихой улыбкой могил, милой печатью любви.¹⁵

(Brothers, the secret is tender: the Rose is the name of this Secret,
Smile so quiet of graves, dear the impression of love.)

Moreover, Ivanov makes clear – in a way only implicit in both ‘Der Homerkopf’ and ‘Sub Rosa’ – that his underlying image is that of a signet ring.¹⁶

В сердце, разлуки кольцом, вписала Любовь благовестье;
Смерть, возврата кольцом, запечатлела обет.

(Love with the ring of parting wrote into the heart its good tidings;
Death with the ring of return, placed its own seal on the oath.)

In these verses, the familiar seal (“pečat”) is supplemented by repeated references to a ring (“kol’co”). This fuller context is of course fraught with religious significance (e.g., the word “blagovest’e”), only hinted at in Ivanov’s earlier distich, and, of course, completely absent from Schiller’s model. In this way, Ivanov integrates Schiller’s suggestive imagery into a larger and symbolically richer context. It is crucial to recognize that Ivanov does *not* treat Schiller’s distich polemically. He accepts it fully, but also *responds* to it, expanding its potential.

The larger question still remains – what is the value of recognizing the source? Schiller’s poem may not be essential to a valid interpretation of Ivanov’s specific text, but it adds considerably to our understanding of his poetic practice. To begin with, it reveals a pattern of formal continuity fundamental to Ivanov’s conception of verse. Simply put, one distich inspires another. Yet it also demonstrates Ivanov’s freedom, his “poetic license”. Ivanov borrows a basic motif from his predecessor, but alters it according to his own spiritual convictions, allowing a fleeting detail to become a genuine “Symbol”. Schiller’s unassuming little poem thus becomes part of the arch-symbolist ‘Rosarium’ project, in which Ivanov synthesizes concepts and beliefs bequeathed to him by earlier civilizations, subsuming them under the infinitely suggestive symbol of the rose. The tender mystery is only one of many minor images in *Cor Ardens*, but it emerges to take a central place not only in Ivanov’s subsequent poetry, but even in his worldview.

3.

My first inquiry into Ivanov’s “responsive poetics” was limited to a fixed form of two lines – the distich. My second comes from a fixed form of fourteen lines: the sonnet. Ivanov has always been recognized as a master of the sonnet. He turned to it repeatedly throughout his poetic career, using it in a variety of contexts, from the early Roman impressions in the “Italian sonnets” (*Pilot Stars*) to the celebrated “Roman Sonnets” of his final pilgrimage to Rome in 1924. It also served as the medium for his great love sonnet to Lidija Dmitrievna and later as the poetic outlet for his profound grief over her untimely death. The poem that I wish to examine is likewise commemorative, written on the occasion of the death of the composer Aleksandr Skrjabin. As he attested in numerous essays and poems, Ivanov con-

sidered Skrjabin a true artist-theurgist and perhaps the most powerful force in contemporary Russian culture. He explicitly compared Skrjabin to both Novalis and Orpheus¹⁷ – which, coming from Ivanov, was high praise indeed. In keeping with the concerns of this paper, I will focus on the specifically poetic dimensions of Ivanov’s sonnet, leaving its broader philosophical implications to others.¹⁸

Twelve days after Skrjabin’s unexpected death, Ivanov published a sonnet on the subject in the newspaper *Russkoe slovo* (*The Russian Word*). Given the proximity of dates, it would be logical to understand Ivanov’s poem as an unmediated response to what he perceived as a personal, national, and even universal tragedy.

Памяти Скрябина

Осиротела Музыка. И с ней
Поэзия, сестра, осиротела.
Потух цветок волшебный, у предела
Их смежных царств, а пала ночь темней

На взморие, где новозданных дней
Всплывал ковчег таинственный. Истлела
От тонких молний духа риза тела,
Отдав огонь Источнику огней.

Исторг ли Рок, орлицей зоркой рея,
У дерзкого святыню Прометея?
Иль персть опламенил язык небес?

Кто скажет: побежден иль победитель,
По ком, – немея кладбищем чудес, –
Шептаньем лавров плачет Муз обитель?¹⁹

(In Memory of Skrjabin)

Music has been orphaned. And
Her sister Poetry was orphaned with her.
The magical blossom has died at the border
Of their adjoining kingdoms, and night has fallen darker

On the shore, where the mysterious ark of newly-created days
Has surfaced. The raiment of the body has smoldered
From the refined lightning-bolts of the spirit,
Having given up its fire to the Source of fires.

Did Fate, hovering like a keen-eyed eagle, tear away
 The sacred object from daring Prometheus?
 Or did the language of the heavens set the earth afire?

Who can say: conquered or conqueror
 Of him, whom – falling silent in the graveyard of miracles –
 The abode of the Muses mourns with the whispering of its laurels.)

This particular sonnet can serve as a worthy illustration of Ivanov's technical mastery. In the octet, which features a number of expressive enjambments (most strikingly, between the fourth and fifth lines), Ivanov places the emphasis less on Skrjabin's death than on its effect on Music and Poetry, here personified as sisters. (It should be recalled that Skrjabin's final unfinished work – known as the 'Predvaritel'noe dejstvie' ['Preparatory Act'] – combined music and poetry, and that Ivanov viewed this as the crowning achievement of the Symbolists' much-desired synthesis of the arts.) While Music and Poetry mourn, the "raiment of the body" (presumably Skrjabin's body) dissolves from the "lightning of the spirit". Joining microcosm with macrocosm, the body has given its individual fire back "to the Source of all fire" ("Istočniku ognj"). In the sestet, the motif of fire is developed when Skrjabin is likened to Prometheus, the titan who stole fire from the gods and gave it to man. In moving from the octet to the sestet, the poet's intonation shifts from indicative to interrogative. Ivanov essentially asks how Skrjabin's death should be interpreted. Did Fate steal back the fire from Prometheus, thus marking a setback for mankind? Or did the language of the heavens burn the earth, cleansing it with fire? The former would of course be a defeat, the latter a victory, since in his final work Skrjabin had expressly eschatological aims. In the eleventh line, Ivanov relies on a series of double meanings that relate the specific to the general. In the word "jazyk", he combines a purely metaphorical depiction of otherworldly speech ("jazyk" as "language") with a pictorial representation of lightning (as in the Russian "jazyk ognja" – a "tongue of fire"). In "perst" he refers specifically to the "dust" of the deceased Skrjabin, but also to the earth in general (as opposed to the heavens). Ivanov poses the question: "Who can say whether Skrjabin was conquered or conqueror?" But in his references to the graveyard of mysteries and the whispering of laurels, one senses that the question is rhetorical. In some way, Skrjabin has indeed emerged victorious.

This brief paraphrase of Ivanov's sonnet should suffice to introduce what I consider the immediate source of his poem: *not* Skrjabin's death, but Brjusov's sonnet on that very subject. It should be emphasized that Brjusov's poem appeared in print eight days before Ivanov's own.

На смерть А. Н. Скрябина

Он не искал – минутно позабавить,
Напевами утешить и пленить;
Мечтал о высшем: Божество прославить
И бездны духа в звуках озарить.

Металл мелодий он посмел расплавить
И в формы новые хотел излить;
Он неустанно жаждал жить и жить,
Чтоб завершённым памятник поставить,

Но судит Рок. Не будет кончен труд!
Расплавленный металл бесцельно стынет:
Никто его, никто в русло не двинет...

И в дни, когда Война вершит свой суд
И мысль успела с жатвой трупов сжиться, –
Вот с этой смертью сердце не мирится!²⁰

(On the Death of A.N. Skrjabin

He did not seek to amuse for [only] a minute,
To console and captivate through tunes;
He dreamed of the highest: to praise Divinity
And to illuminate in sounds the abysses of the soul.

He dared to melt the metal of melodies
And wanted to pour them into new forms;
He constantly sought to live and live,
In order to create a monument through his accomplishment,

But Fate judges. The work will not be finished!
The molten metal cools idly:
No one, no one can set it in motion...

And even in the days, when War makes its judgment
And our thought has had time to grow accustomed to the harvest of
corpses, –
With this death our heart cannot be reconciled!)

In the history of the sonnet, there is a special subgenre known as the “sonetto di risposta”, or the “responsive sonnet”.²¹ The basic idea is that one poet writes a sonnet, and another answers it by writing a different sonnet using the same rhymes. We know that this type of technical challenge enjoy-

ed popularity among the poets who frequented Ivanov's "Tower". *Cor Ardens* itself includes such sonnets, in which Ivanov answered models created by Verchovskij, Kuzmin, and Gumilev.²²

I would argue that Ivanov's poem 'In Memory of Skrjabin' represents a different kind of "sonetto di risposta". In terms of form, Ivanov departs from the rhymes and even the rhyme scheme of his predecessor.²³ Yet the content is in every respect an answer to Brjusov's poem. The most deliberate signal is of course the word "Fate" ("Rok"), written by both poets with a capital letter and placed in the identical position of the ninth line.²⁴ But this is only the first of many striking resemblances.

Close examination reveals that virtually every aspect of Ivanov's sonnet is meant as a rejoinder to Brjusov's. In both poems, the intonation of the octet contrasts with that of the sestet. By moving from declarative to interrogative, Ivanov subtly questions Brjusov's shift from declarative to exclamatory. Brjusov's octet praises Skrjabin's lofty intentions, while his sestet bemoans the fact that the composer failed to achieve his goals. In this sestet, one finds the first hint of the fire imagery that Ivanov will subsequently develop, for Brjusov compares Skrjabin's task to working with molten metal. (The specific image recalls Vulcan and thus paves the way for another mythological figure – Prometheus – who appears in Ivanov's sonnet.)²⁵ In Brjusov's view, Skrjabin's death is most definitely a conclusion. "Nikto ego, nikto v ruslo ne dvinet..." ("No one, no one can set it in motion..."). To this emphatic "nikto" ("no one") of Brjusov's eleventh line, Ivanov answers in line twelve with an interrogative "kto skažet?" ("who can say?") – thereby throwing into doubt the certainty with which Brjusov evaluates Skrjabin's failure.

Once we recognize that Ivanov's interrogative intonation is meant to question the entire thrust of Brjusov's poem, we can see that the polemic extends even to the titles. Brjusov's 'Na smert' A.N. Skrjabina' ('On the Death of A.N. Skrjabin') emphasizes death, finality, ending. Ivanov's 'Pamjati Skrjabina' ('In Memory of Skrjabin'), by placing memory in the central position, is a statement of continuity, for, in Ivanov's conception, "Nad smert'ju večno toržestvuet, / V kom pamjat' večnaja živet" ("He in whom eternal memory lives, / Eternally triumphs over death.")²⁶

Why did Ivanov react so strongly – and so swiftly – to the sonnet of his erstwhile comrade in arms? Most probably, he was upset not simply by what he viewed as Brjusov's misunderstanding of the meaning of Skrjabin's death, but even more by the fact that Brjusov dared to speak about Skrjabin at all. Brjusov had hardly known Skrjabin and barely appreciated his artistic goals, whereas Ivanov had worked closely with the composer and championed his cause. Skrjabin represented precisely the kind of theurgic symbolism that Ivanov desired, whereas Brjusov had always insisted that theurgy had nothing whatever to do with Symbolism. As is well documented, this very issue

was at the center of the crisis of Russian Symbolism, and it contributed toward the dissolution of the movement. The uncharacteristic speed with which Ivanov published this particular sonnet strongly suggests that he was using it to "correct" Brjusov's own sonnet and thereby claim for himself the position of authority that was rightfully his. There is in Ivanov's poem one detail that makes this point exquisitely: Prometheus. On the most basic level, the artist-theurgist Skrjabin can himself be understood as a Prometheus figure: in Ivanov's view, both mediated between man and the gods, and both were ultimately sacrificed for their gift to mankind. In addition, though, the figure of Prometheus has important intertextual dimensions. Besides developing Brjusov's own mythological referent (Vulcan), Prometheus also supplies a convenient link to Skrjabin himself, since 'Prométhée; le poème du feu' numbers among the composer's most celebrated works. Most crucial, however, is that fact that this mythological figure forges a direct link between Skrjabin's work and Ivanov's own, i.e., his recently completed drama *Prometheus*, the product of years of labor. In other words, through the image of Prometheus, Ivanov at once establishes his own spiritual kinship with Skrjabin while dismissing any such claims of Brjusov.²⁷

4.

Once again, Ivanov responds to a poem by using the identical poetic form. If in the example of the "tender mystery", Ivanov's relationship to his source was one of appropriation and development, his relationship to Brjusov's sonnet is most definitely polemical. In the first instance, one could more or less understand Ivanov's poem without recognizing its source. But in the latter case, the reader unaware of Brjusov's sonnet misses out on several crucial elements.

It may be argued that Ivanov did not really care whether we recognize his sources – if he had felt that this was essential, he could have noted them explicitly. This is to a certain extent true: it is a fact that Ivanov often pointed directly to his sources by appending epigraphs to his poems. But the question is not whether Ivanov desired it or not, but whether discovering the source allows us better to understand his poetic method. I believe that formal continuity is at the heart of Ivanov's poetry and that, by revealing his "models", we enrich our knowledge of his art. Ivanov's poetry, like his philosophy, is marked by syncretism, and it is essential to recognize the way images and concepts from precursors and contemporaries enter into his creative and combinatory consciousness.

NOTES

- ¹ For an overview of this issue, see Pamela Davidson, 'The Legacy of Difficulty in the Russian Poetic Tradition: Contemporary Critical Responses to Ivanov's *Cor Ardens*', *Cahiers du monde Russe*, Vol. XXXV (1-2), 1994, pp. 249-267.
- ² From a 1910 review by Al[eksandr] Voznesenskij, cited in Pamela Davidson, *Vjacheslav Ivanov: a reference guide*, New York 1996, p. 32.
- ³ It is often erroneously assumed that Ivanov "knew everything" and was therefore intimately familiar with every possible primary source of a given myth or motif. Yet Ivanov, trained as an academic, was well aware of the value of secondary literature and did not hesitate to take advantage of it. To give but a single telling example: in a letter of 28/15 March 1900 (GBL f. 109, k. 9, ed. chr. 33) Ivanov asks M.M. Zamjatnina to look in *Pauly's Real-Encyklopädie des klassischen Alterthums* to see whether there is anything connecting the myth of Niobe to Dionysus and, if so, to write down for him all of the relevant works. This request suggests quite a bit about Ivanov's approach to myth (i.e., using scholarship to confirm creative intuitions) as well as about his unfinished drama *Niobe*, but for present purposes, I would simply emphasize Ivanov's impulse to examine – for artistic, not scholarly, purposes – the most authoritative encyclopedia available. Vladimir Markov has noted that, in order to understand Ivanov's mythological references, it is often necessary to consult the *Pauly* (Vladimir Markov, 'Vyacheslav Ivanov the Poet: A Tribute and A Reappraisal', in Robert Louis Jackson and Lowry Nelson, Jr. [Eds.], *Vyacheslav Ivanov: Poet, Critic and Philosopher*, New Haven 1986, p. 56). This is not surprising, since Ivanov himself was quite possibly relying on this very source!
- ⁴ M.S. Al'tman, *Razgovory s Vjačeslavom Ivanovym*, Sankt-Peterburg 1995, p. 24.
- ⁵ Such was his slogan in a letter to Brjusov of 6/19 September 1904, *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 85 (Valerij Brjusov), Moskva 1976, p. 459.
- ⁶ E.A. Millior, 'Besedy filosofskie i ne filosofskie', *Vestnik Udmurtskogo Universiteta*, special'nyj vypusk, 1995, p. 15.
- ⁷ Vjačeslav Ivanov, *Sobranie sočinenij*, Brussels, Vol. 2 (1973), p. 537.
- ⁸ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1 (1971), p. 137.
- ⁹ S.V. Trockij, 'Vospominanija', published by A.V. Lavrov in *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 10, 1994, p. 66.
- ¹⁰ Honesty compels me to note that Averincev, generally skeptical of subtextual approaches to poetry, remains unconvinced by my conclusions (I refer to a private communication dated 7 February 1997, in which he responds to an earlier version of this paper, making several suggestions that I have gratefully incorporated).
- ¹¹ Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe*, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, Vol. 1, p. 182.

- 12 Ivanov, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, (1971), p. 788.
- 13 Ivanov, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, (1973), p. 504. Actually, as Robert Bird has generously brought to my attention, this is not the first time in Ivanov's poetry that the words "mystery" and "tender" are combined. Already in 'Love and Death', one finds the line "I Tajna vse nežnej" ("And the Mystery is always more tender" (*ibid.*, p. 400). However, in that instance the "tender mystery" is mentioned almost in passing, as part of a highly complicated series of visionary images. In contrast, in 'Sub Rosa', the phrase "tender mystery" is clearly spelled out and serves unquestionably as the poem's focal point.
- 14 In a comment of 1920, Ivanov criticized Bal'mont's poetry on precisely these grounds. He "took from the rose only one side – love" (F. I. Kogan, 'Kružok poëzii pod rukovodstvom Vjačeslava Ivanova', RGALI, f. 2272, op. 1, ed. chr. 33, l. 30).
- 15 Ivanov, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3 (1979), p. 30.
- 16 Annotated German editions of Schiller (including those of the nineteenth century that would have been accessible to Vjačeslav Ivanov) inevitably note a curious aspect of this poem: the "seal in the shape of Homer's head" refers to a signet ring that Schiller himself had ordered and that he was known to have used.
- 17 Ivanov, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3 (1979), pp. 175-176, 181.
- 18 For more on this subject, see Marina Kostalevsky's paper in this collection.
- 19 Ivanov, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3 (1979), p. 565.
- 20 Valerij Brjusov, *Sobranie sočinenij*, Vol. 2, Moskva 1973, pp. 200-201.
- 21 See M.L. Gasparov, *Russkie stichi 1890-ch–1925-go godov v kommentarijach*, Moskva 1993, p. 210.
- 22 Ivanov, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2 (1973), pp. 335, 336.
- 23 According to Gasparov's terminology (*op. cit.*, pp. 206-208), Ivanov uses the form of a French sonnet, while Brjusov's comes from the English tradition.
- 24 Demonstrating one-upmanship characteristic of the "sonetto di risposta", Ivanov underscores the importance of this word through anagrams: "Istorg li rok, orlicej zorkoj reja".
- 25 I am grateful to Nina Chruščeva for this insight.
- 26 From the poem 'Eternal Memory' ('Večnaja pamjat'), in Ivanov, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1 (1971), p. 568.
- 27 It is hard to imagine that Brjusov could have missed the polemical thrust of Ivanov's poem. Brjusov was well aware of Ivanov's drama *Prometheus*, since the two had discussed it more than a decade earlier (see their correspondence in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, No. 85, 1976, p. 498).