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Vyacheslav Ivanov's Translations of Dante

By PAMELA DAVIDSON

As a movement, Russian Symbolism tended to be syncretic in its approach to other cultures, and one of the principal means which the Russian Symbolists adopted in order to incorporate the legacy of other cultures into their own tradition was that of translation. Dante, as a representative of the mystical tradition in love and in poetry, was a figure of primary importance to the Russian Symbolists. It is not altogether surprising therefore that, despite the wide variety of Russian translations of Dante's works which already existed at the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the younger generation of the Russian Symbolists should have tried to produce new translations of Dante's works of their own.¹ It was no longer enough simply to have a Russian Dante, as for example Min's translation provided; it was necessary to have a new Russian Symbolist Dante who would reflect all of the characteristics with which the Symbolists invested their image of Dante.

It is for this reason that we find Bryusov, Ellis, Sergey Solov'ev, and Vyacheslav Ivanov all engaged on translations of Dante's works at various stages of their literary careers. Ivanov's translations from Dante are very much a phenomenon of their age, and yet at the same time they are extremely revealing of the highly idiosyncratic way in which Ivanov adapted Dante to fit into the framework of his own particular spiritual outlook. Ivanov's translations, like any other translations, are the product of an act of understanding which is at the same time an act of transformation and assimilation.

Amongst Ivanov's unpublished papers we find evidence that Ivanov worked on translations of parts of Dante's three major works in the order of their composition: the *Vita Nuova*, the *Convivio*, and the *Divina Commedia*. In this article we shall examine each of Ivanov's translations of Dante's works in turn, starting with an outline of the general history of the project, and continuing with the text of the translation, and an analysis of its merits, shortcomings, and particular characteristics.

¹ Bibliographical details of published Russian translations of Dante's works can be found in V. T. Danchenko, *Dante Alighieri: bibliograficheskii ukazatel' russkikh perevodov i kriticheskoi literatury na russkom yazyke 1762-1972* (M., 1973), 26-48.

1. *Vita Nuova*

At one stage or another of their development, all of Ivanov's projected translations of Dante's works were linked with the Sabashnikov brothers' publishing-house. In 1910 this publishing-house decided to found a new series, entitled 'Pamyatniki mirovoi literary'. It is clear from the original plan for this series, drawn up in 1910, that Dante was one of the authors who was to be represented among its publications; the series was to include five sections, 'Antichnye pisateli', 'Narodnoe tvorchestvo', 'Slavyanskii mir', 'Klassiki mira', and 'Vozrozhdenie Evropy'; Dante's name figures twice, amongst the authors listed in the last two sections of the series.²

Ivanov's first involvement with the Sabashnikov series was as a translator of the Greek classics. In 1911 Ivanov undertook to translate Aeschylus's tragedies and poems by Alcaeus and Sappho for the series.³ Two years later, having established himself as one of Sabashnikov's translators in the field of classical antiquity, Ivanov sought to widen his scope and to turn to the translation of Dante's works. The reasons for this were partly economic; as Ivanov wrote to M. V. Sabashnikov from Rome on 20 January 1913, he found that he worked better in Italy than in Russia, and therefore wished to stay on in Italy beyond the autumn, for longer than he had originally planned; this decision entailed sacrificing the income from a course of lectures which Ivanov would have read in St. Petersburg had he returned to Russia. Ivanov was therefore looking for extra translations to take on in order to make his extended stay in Italy financially feasible. In his letter, he made the following suggestions to Sabashnikov:

As for poetic translations, I am attracted and even inspired by a great deal which would fit into your programme naturally. I am not just speaking of poets of classical antiquity. I would be happy for example to translate at some point Dante's *Purgatory* and particularly his *Paradise*, his *New Life*, and, in the field of classical antiquity, to show that I am capable of providing a faithful and harmonious translation of Aristophanes.⁴

Although Sabashnikov did not take up Ivanov's offer of a translation of part of the *Commedia*, he did react positively to the idea that Ivanov should translate the *Vita Nuova*. On 10 March 1913 Sabashnikov sent off a definitive reply to Ivanov's proposal in the form of a letter and contract which Ivanov signed and returned to him on 21 April 1913.⁵

² See A. L. Panina, 'Arkhiv izdatel'stva M. i S. Sabashnikovykh', *Gosudarstvennaya biblioteka im. Lenina, Zapiski Otdela rukopisei*, vyp. 33 (1972), 91, and M. V. Sabashnikov, "'Vechnye knigi"—pervonachal'nyi proekt serii "Pamyatniki mirovoi literary"' (1910), *Gosudarstvennaya biblioteka im. Lenina, Moscow, Otdel rukopisei [GBL], fond 261, k. 9, ed. khr. 105*.

³ M. V. Sabashnikov, Letters to V. Ivanov, 6 Apr. 1911 and 16 Mar. 1912 (GBL, *fond 109*). (Dates throughout this article are given in Old Style before 1 Feb. 1918 and in New Style thereafter.)

⁴ GBL, *fond 261, k. 4, ed. khr. 25*.

⁵ M. V. Sabashnikov's letter to Ivanov is in GBL, *fond 109*; the contract is in GBL, *fond 261, k. 8, ed. khr. 7*.

The contract repeated the agreement which Ivanov had concluded two years previously with Sabashnikov to translate all of Aeschylus's tragedies, and added to this the translation of Dante's *Vita Nuova* and of further poems by Sappho. According to the terms of the contract, Ivanov undertook to complete all these translations within the next two years.

We know that Ivanov did indeed send his additional translations of Sappho to Sabashnikov from Italy in the spring of 1913,⁶ and that the manuscript of his translation of *Agamemnon*, the first part of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* trilogy, was completed on 1 June 1913 in Rome and received by Sabashnikov in Moscow at the end of the month.⁷ However, Ivanov did not keep to the contract's deadline as far as the translations of Aeschylus's other tragedies and of Dante's *Vita Nuova* were concerned. Ivanov's complete translation of the *Oresteia* was only ready for printing in 1916, and we know from Ivanov's autobiographical letter written in Sochi in January and February 1917 that his main current occupation at that time was still working on his translations of Aeschylus's other tragedies and of Dante's *Vita Nuova*.⁸ The printing of Ivanov's translation of the *Oresteia* was made impossible by the heavy damage caused by the fire which occurred in the building of the Sabashnikov publishing-house in 1917; it is possible that the project of publishing Ivanov's translation of the *Vita Nuova* was also dropped at this stage for the same reason. Although in 1926 Ivanov did return once more to the question of Sabashnikov publishing his translation of the *Oresteia*, we find no further reference to the publication of the translation of the *Vita Nuova* in Ivanov's and Sabashnikov's correspondence.⁹

Ivanov's interest in the translation of the *Vita Nuova* continued during the years which he spent at the University of Baku (1920-4). We know that during this period Ivanov introduced an Italian language course for beginners into the university curriculum.¹⁰ One of Ivanov's

⁶ Izdatel'stvo M. i S. Sabashnikovykh to Ivanov, 8 Nov. 1913 (GBL, fond 109).

⁷ The date of completion of the translation of *Agamemnon* was marked by Ivanov on the manuscript of his translation. The manuscript is in Ivanov's archive in Rome and was kindly shown to me by Dimitry Vyacheslavovich Ivanov. M. V. Sabashnikov wrote to Ivanov that he had received this translation on 25 June 1913 (GBL, fond 109).

⁸ Vyacheslav Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii* (hereafter *SS*), edited by D. V. Ivanov and O. Deschartes (Brussels, 1971-), ii, 22.

⁹ The information on the history of Ivanov's translation of the *Oresteia* is taken from the preface which Ivanov wrote to his translation in Rome in October 1926, and which is located together with Ivanov's translation of Aeschylus's trilogy in Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literaturny i iskusstva [TsGALI], fond 225, op. 1, ed. *khr.* 29. On 9 Aug. 1926 Ivanov wrote to M. V. Sabashnikov from Rome requesting the latter either to publish his translation of the *Oresteia* or to pass it on to the publishing division of Akademiya khudozhestvennykh nauk (GBL, fond 261, k. 4, ed. *khr.* 25).

¹⁰ N. V. Kotrelev, 'Vyach. Ivanov—Professor Bakinskogo Universiteta', *Trudy po russkoi i slavyanskoi filologii*, Literaturovedenie, xi (*Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gos. universiteta*, vyp. 209) (1968), 327.

former students who attended this course recalls that Ivanov used the *Vita Nuova* as his basic language teaching text during the second semester of this course; the students would read aloud and translate from the *Vita Nuova* into Russian, and Ivanov would correct their Italian pronunciation and improve their translation.¹¹ It is possible that Ivanov's choice of the *Vita Nuova* as a language teaching text was linked to his own interest in translating the *Vita Nuova*, and that he wished to use the class as a forum for discussing techniques of translation of this work.

After this point we find no more evidence of Ivanov working on his translation of the *Vita Nuova*. It is difficult to say, on the basis of the evidence which has survived, whether or not Ivanov ever completed his translation, for only fragments of it survive, and it is not clear whether these represent the total of Ivanov's work on the *Vita Nuova* or only a part of it. It seems likely, however, in view of the lack of coherence among the fragments which have survived, that these do not represent the whole of Ivanov's work on the *Vita Nuova*, but only a random selection of surviving passages.

The fragments which have survived come from six different chapters of the *Vita Nuova*. Only one of these fragments has ever been published; this is Ivanov's translation of almost the whole of the third chapter of the *Vita Nuova*; this passage came to be published because it was used by Ivanov as the basis of his celebrated essay on the aesthetics of Symbolism, 'O granitsakh iskusstva', first written and delivered as a lecture in 1913, and published in *Trudy i dni* in the following year.¹² Apart from this passage, all the surviving fragments of Ivanov's translation are to be found in the Manuscripts Department of the Lenin Library in Moscow. In Ivanov's archive, there is a sheaf of eight foolscap sheets, boldly headed in Ivanov's handwriting 'Dante: *Novaya Zhizn'*'.¹³ These sheets contain the draft of an introductory note by Ivanov on the significance of the *Vita Nuova*, and the text of Ivanov's translations of various parts of this work. These consist of the following passages: Chapter I, the opening introduction to the *Vita Nuova*, in which Dante announces his intention to recount his memory of the events which occurred after the beginning of his new life, and their meaning; the first half of Chapter V, which contains the account of the way in which, when Dante was sitting in church staring at Beatrice, the people present mistook the object of his gaze for another woman who was sitting between Beatrice and Dante; the sonnet from Chapter VII (of which Ivanov gives four different versions), in which Dante describes his distress at the departure of this lady (who had

¹¹ Conversation with Viktor Andronikovich Manuilov, Komarovo, Leningrad, 30 Apr. 1978.

¹² *Trudy i dni*, 1914, no. 7, pp. 81-106.

¹³ GBL, *fond* 109.

served as a cover for the object of his true love) from the city, and details the trials and torments of love; the whole of Chapter XX, in which Dante describes how a friend of his requested him to write a sonnet treating of love, and then gives the text of the sonnet which he wrote and a prose explanation of its meaning; and finally, the whole of Chapter XXI, in which Dante describes how he wished to write more on the subject of love, and how Beatrice by the effect of her eyes and gaze was capable of evoking love not only in people in whom love was dormant, but also in those from whom love was totally absent; a sonnet on this subject, followed by a prose explanation of its meaning, concludes the chapter.

The first three of the passages described above are in the form of a rough draft written out in pencil, whereas the last two passages (Chapters XX and XXI) are written in ink in a much more finished version. The text of Ivanov's translations of the two sonnets from these last two chapters is given below; since these translations are finished versions rather than rough drafts, they will provide us, together with the published fragment of Ivanov's translation, with a useful basis upon which to draw certain conclusions about the general tendencies reflected in Ivanov's manner of translation.

Ivanov's translation of the sonnet beginning 'Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa' from Chapter XX of the *Vita Nuova* reads as follows:

Любовь и сердце высшее—одно:
 Был прав мудрец, сих слов провозвеститель—
 С душой разумной разум разлучить ль?
 Не разлучить и тех двоих равно.

Природою влюбленною дано
 Царю-Амуру сердце, как обитель.
 И долго ль, нет ли, спит в чертоге житель;
 Настанет срок—подвигнется оно.

Женой смиренномудрою предстанет,
 Взор мужеский пленяя, Красота.
 Желание родится. Не устанет

Тревожить сердце нежная мечта,
 Доколе не разбудит властелина.
 Так и жене достойный лишь мужчина.

The next translation is of the sonnet beginning 'Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore', from Chapter XXI of the *Vita Nuova*:

Любовь сама в очах мадонны светит;
 И на кого воззрит,—преображен.
 К идущей мимо каждый притяжен;
 Но обомрет, кого она приветит.

Потупит взор, кто взор небесный воззрит;
 Укором тайным в сердце пристыжен,
 Поник гордец. Как чтить ее? Из жен
 Участливых, какая мне ответит?

Кто слышал дивной тихие слова,
 Так помыслов смиренномудрых сладость[;]¹⁴
 Блажен царицу видевший едва.

Кому ж цвета ее улыбки радость,
 Любовь чудо знает, что ни изречь
 Устами нельзя, ни памяти—сберечь.

If one begins to compare Ivanov's translations from the *Vita Nuova* with the text of the original, one rapidly becomes aware of the fact that they are full of minor distortions and inaccuracies. By 1913, the year in which the contract for the translation of the *Vita Nuova* was signed, Ivanov had already spent many months residing in Italy, and his knowledge of Italian was fluent. It was not therefore a question of Ivanov failing to catch the meaning of the original; it was more a question, as we shall see, of his attempting to bring Dante more firmly into the orbit of Symbolist attitudes by investing the text of his works with features which were characteristic of his own particular understanding of Dante and the medieval world-view as precursors of the Symbolist mode of thinking. Ivanov's translations of Dante's works are acts of interpretation, which allow one to see with particular clarity some of the distinctive ways in which Ivanov adapted Dante to fit into the Symbolist spiritual outlook and aesthetics.

The first, most general, tendency which emerges from Ivanov's translations of Dante is one which is endemic to the nature of Symbolism as a movement, and which derives from the Symbolists' view of the role of the Symbolist artist in society and the nature of his art. Ivanov's ideas on this subject can be found in two essays which he wrote in 1904, 'Poet i chern' and 'Kop'e Afiny'.¹⁵ Ivanov's spiritual and artistic golden age was the classical world of Ancient Greece, in which man had been in touch with the mystical essence of the universe and when it had been possible for '*bol'shoe*' or '*vsenarodnoe iskusstvo*' to exist in the form of universal myths. This ideal unity of man and the universe had, however, been broken, and in the present day '*bol'shoe iskusstvo*' was no longer possible. Man could only strive to create '*maloe iskusstvo*' of which one particular type would eventually lead him back to the ideal of universal art. This was '*keleinoe iskusstvo*', a form of art in which the artist

¹⁴ Square brackets are used here and elsewhere to indicate punctuation or parts of words which have been omitted from the original.

¹⁵ *SS*, i, 709-14 and 727-33.

acknowledged the fatal split between himself and the world, and retired to meditate in solitude in order to create an intuitive, personal, and mystical art whose symbols would be the seeds of future myths.

The present stage of Symbolist art was identified by Ivanov with 'keleinoe iskusstvo'. In this scheme Dante played an extremely important role. On the one hand, he was held up as the last true representative of 'bol'shoe iskusstvo'; the Middle Ages were seen as the last period in history when a collective, unified spirit had informed a society and its culture. On the other hand, Dante's art was also seen to contain features of 'keleinoe iskusstvo', and as such was presented to the Symbolist as a model to imitate in order to travel the path back to ideal universal art. This is the reason why Ivanov chose the following lines from the *Purgatorio* (XXVII, 88–90) as the epigraph to his first collection of poetry, *Kormchie zvezdy* (1903):

Poco potea parer li del di fuori
Ma per quel poco vedev'io le stelle
Di lor solere e più chiare e maggiori.¹⁶

For Ivanov these lines expressed the spiritual stance of the Symbolist artist, looking out from his isolation to the transcendent spiritual truths of the universe which for the moment might simply be private symbols, but would eventually become universal myths. Ivanov later repeated this tercet in 'Kop'e Afiny', calling it the symbol of the mystical soul of 'keleinoe iskusstvo'.¹⁷ Blok took up Ivanov's epigraph in an essay on the poetry and aesthetics of Ivanov, and used it to justify the isolation and obscurity of Symbolist verse which would eventually, in his and Ivanov's view, lead to a purer art of universal myth.¹⁸

While Symbolism was still at the stage of 'keleinoe iskusstvo', the process of artistic creation was naturally viewed as one in which the poet retired from the crowd in order to meditate on his own before producing a work of art which would be obscure and unintelligible to the masses. In 'Poet i chern', Ivanov linked this view of the process of artistic creation to two poems by Pushkin, 'Poet' and 'Poet i tolpa' (originally entitled 'Chern'). Ivanov wrote:

Трагичен себя не опознавший гений, которому нечего дать толпе,
потому что для новых откровений (а говорить ему дано только новое)
дух влечет его сначала уединиться с его богом. В пустынной тишине,
в тайной смене ненужных, непонятных толпе видений и звуков должен
он ожидать 'веяния тонкого холода' и 'эпифании' бога. Он должен
воссесть на недоступный треножник, чтобы потом уже, прозрев иным
прозрением, 'приносить дрожащим людям молитвы с горней вы-

¹⁶ Ibid. 513.

¹⁷ Ibid. 729.

¹⁸ Aleksander Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh* (M.-L., 1960–3), v, 10–11.

шины'. . . И Поэт удаляется—'для звуков сладких и молитв'. Раскол совершился.

Бежит он, дикий и суровый,
И звуков, и смятенья полн,
На берега пустынных волн,
В широкошумные дубровы.

Отсюда—уединение художника,—основной факт новейшей истории духа,—и последствия этого факта: тяготение искусства к эзотерической обособленности, утончение, изысканность 'сладких звуков' и отрешенность, углубленность пустынных 'молитв'.¹⁹

It is natural, given this view of the nature of the creative process, that when Ivanov came to start work on his translation of the *Vita Nuova*, he should have been struck by the analogy between his own views and Dante's account of the way in which he used to write poetry. In particular, Chapter III of the *Vita Nuova* provided a strong parallel. In this chapter Dante describes the way in which, when he was out on a walk, he encountered Beatrice, whose greeting made him so happy that he retired to his room in order to reflect in solitude upon this experience. In his room, Dante has a dream in which he sees a vision of Amor holding a figure wrapped in a crimson sheet whom Dante recognizes as Beatrice; Amor wakes the sleeping Beatrice in order to make her eat Dante's glowing heart which he holds in his hand. Amor's happiness then changes to sorrow, and he departs. Dante awakes in anguish from his dream, reflects upon it, and then composes a sonnet in which he describes his vision and asks other poets to interpret it for him.

It is easy to see how this passage with its clear sequence of events—moving from an initial experience to withdrawal for solitary meditation, followed by a vision which culminates in the artistic creation of a poem not comprehensible to all—could have been seen by Ivanov as the perfect illustration of his own theory of the nature of artistic creation. Ivanov accordingly began the essay which he wrote in 1913 on the nature of the creative process ('O granitsakh iskusstva') by quoting almost the whole of the third chapter of the *Vita Nuova* in his own translation, and then proceeded to derive his argument from this passage. This translation, and the use to which it has been put by Ivanov, provide us with a particularly clear example of the constant process of cross-fertilization which took place between Ivanov's Symbolist mode of thinking and the text of Dante's works. For, if we look closely at Ivanov's translation of this passage, we can see that in the very manner of his translation, Ivanov is already remodelling Dante to make him accord more closely to his aesthetic theories.

¹⁹ SS, i, 711.

To illustrate this 'remodelling' process, we can take the sentence in which Dante describes how he retired to his room after experiencing the joy of Beatrice's greeting. The original text reads: '... presi tanta dolcezza, che come inebriato mi partio da le genti, e ricorsi a lo solingo luogo d'una mia camera, e puosimi a pensare di questa cortesissima'. Ivanov has translated this as follows: '... ya ispytal takuyu sladost', chto, kak p'yanyi, ushel iz tolpy. Ubezhav v uedinenie svoei gornitsy, predalsya ya dumam o milostivoi'.²⁰ There are a number of significant alterations in Ivanov's translation which derive directly from his own view of the nature of the creative process; first, instead of 'da le genti', he writes 'iz tolpy'. This change has no foundation in Dante's text; Beatrice is accompanied by two other women, and no other people are mentioned in the chapter. Ivanov has clearly introduced the idea of the crowd to make the text more consonant with his interpretation of Pushkin's poems (the word 'tolpa' occurs twice in the passage quoted above from 'Poet i chern'). Secondly, Ivanov has translated 'ricorsi' as 'ubezhav'; apart from changing the form of the verb, he has changed its meaning—from one of simply withdrawing to that of running. This again is clearly to bring Dante's text closer to Pushkin's poem 'Poet' from which Ivanov had quoted the line 'Bezhit on, dikii i surovyi' in support of his argument. Finally, instead of the straightforward Italian word 'camera', which in Russian would be 'komnata', we have the unusual and archaic word 'gornitsa', a chamber. It is clear that this word, with the added emphasis which it places on seclusion, is designed to evoke an association with the idea of the 'kel'ya' to which the Symbolist poet retires in order to create 'keleinoe iskusstvo'.

By dint of introducing these small changes of emphasis, Ivanov succeeds in making a passage from Dante's *Vita Nuova* read like a manifesto for his own brand of Symbolist aesthetics.

At the end of the passage quoted above from 'Poet i chern', Ivanov defended the right of contemporary Symbolist art to be esoteric and obscure. We have seen that this characteristic of Symbolist art was directly linked by both Ivanov and Blok to Dante as a representative of 'keleinoe iskusstvo'. It follows from this general attitude that Dante was regarded by the Symbolists as a rather obscure, esoteric artist. This led to some considerable distortion of Dante. To the medieval mind the transcendent world was a reality which could be experienced in a concrete way; the mysteries of life after death could be described by Dante in terms of a real journey, conveyed through lucid, visual images. For the Symbolists, however, the transcendent world was

²⁰ For the text of Ivanov's translation of Chapter III of the *Vita Nuova*, see SS, ii, 628-9. All quotations of Dante's works are from Dante Alighieri, *Tutte le opere*, ed. Luigi Blasucci (Florence, 1965).

something much more distant and abstract, to be recovered through an act of the imagination and intellect, rather than simply apprehended as a reality; its mysteries were viewed as esoteric and inaccessible truths which could only be intuited from a distance, and expressed through vague images whose very obscurity was designed to safeguard the otherworldly character of the truths they were hinting at.

The Symbolists, wishing therefore to see in Dante a precursor of their own spiritual outlook, tended to invest him with an uncharacteristic aura of otherworldliness and obscurity. It is for this reason that Ivanov made so much of Dante's plea to the reader to note 'la dottrina che s'asconde/sotto 'l velame de li versi strani' (*Inferno*, IX, 62-3), and appended these lines as an epigraph to his long and obscure poem written in terzinas, published in *Kormchie zvezdy*, 'Sfinks'.²¹ It is hardly surprising therefore that, in an attempt to make Dante fit in with this general image, Ivanov should have endowed his translations of Dante's works with an obscurity and complexity which is characteristic of his own language, but not of Dante's. Throughout Ivanov's translations of Dante's works, we find a marked preference for replacing the simple and straightforward by the complicated, for using archaic or obsolete terms in place of normal, everyday words, for substituting more involved syntax for simple sentence structure.

If we start by examining the way in which Ivanov has translated some of the terms referring to language in the *Vita Nuova*, we shall see this general tendency to replace the simple by the complex at work. In Chapter III, the 'parole' spoken by the lordly figure who represents Love become '*glagoly*' in Ivanov's translation; a simple Italian word (which could have been translated as '*slova*') becomes archaic and ponderous in the Russian translation. The simple phrase 'lo dir presente' which occurs in the sonnet of this chapter becomes '*svitok sei*' in Ivanov's rendering, introducing classical and esoteric connotations which are entirely foreign to the original. In the same way, in the sonnet from Chapter XX quoted above, the rhetorical '*sikh slov provozvestitel*' replaces the straightforward 'in suo dittare pone'.

Ivanov not only changes the phrases by which Dante describes language in order to make the function of language appear more obscure than it is in reality, he also changes the language of the original for the same general purpose. In Chapter III Dante uses the verb 'apparve' for the appearance of Beatrice; Ivanov translates this verb by '*predstala*', which has a much more ceremonial, majestic resonance to it. Likewise we find the simple phrase 'appare manifestamente ch'ella fue' as '*yavstvuet, chto predstalo ono*'. The simple 'in

²¹ SS, i, 643-60.

mezzo a' becomes 'promezh', an archaic version of 'mezhdū', which would have been the obvious translation. When Dante seems to see a cloud in his room, he writes factually: 'me pareva vedere ne la mia camera una nebula di colore di fuoco'; this becomes 'budto zastlalo gornitsu ognetsvetnoe oblako'; the verb 'zastlalo' is entirely absent from the original, and reveals Ivanov's typical desire to add extra connotations of obscurity to Dante's text. In the same way, when Amor departs, Dante writes at the end of the sonnet in the same chapter: 'appresso gir lo ne vedea piangendo'; this is rendered by Ivanov as 'I s plachem vzmyl v nadzvezdnye kraya', which introduces an unusual verb (*vzmyt'*) in place of a simple verb indicating upwards motion, and adds a typically Symbolist abstract development of the concise Italian word 'ne'.

In Ivanov's translation of the sonnet from Chapter XX we notice similar features. The simple Italian conjunction 'tanto . . . che' is rendered by the archaic Russian 'dokole'. Dante's 'spirito d'Amore'—which has a quite precise meaning for the medieval mind—becomes a vague reference to a 'vlastelin'.

As well as this general tendency to detract from the lucid simplicity of Dante's language in favour of a more abstract, rhetorical style, Ivanov's translations from the *Vita Nuova* reveal other features which are equally characteristic of his approach to Dante. Two of these features are linked to the particular characteristics of Ivanov's interpretation of the figure of Beatrice. The first of these is to make Beatrice into an erotic figure rather than a purely spiritual one. This follows on naturally from Ivanov's view that the essence of all religious experience is to be found in the Dionysian cult of Eros. The heart of the Christian mystical experience thus has its roots in a pagan cult, and the Christian concept of love contains within itself the Dionysian ideal of Eros.²² Dante's Amor accordingly acquires features of the Dionysian Eros, and Beatrice, as the object of these feelings of love, naturally becomes endowed with certain erotic characteristics besides her more usual purely spiritual ones. We can see this reflected in Ivanov's translation of Chapter III of the *Vita Nuova* in which Dante has a vision of Amor bearing Beatrice in his arms, and feeding her Dante's heart. Dante writes: 'Ne le sue braccia mi pareva vedere una persona dormire nuda, salvo che involta mi pareva in uno drappo sanguigno leggeramente'; Ivanov renders this as 'I budto na rukakh ego spyashcheyu vizhu zhenu naguyu, edva prikrytuyu tkan'yu krovavo-aloyu'. The difference between these two passages is small but significant; whereas

²² These ideas were expressed by Ivanov in a series of lectures, first published under the title 'Ellinskaya religiya stradayushchego boga' in *Novyi put'*, 1904, no. 1, pp. 110–34, no. 2, pp. 48–78, no. 3, pp. 38–61, no. 5, pp. 28–40, no. 8, pp. 17–26, no. 9, pp. 47–70, and then, under the new title of 'Religiya Dionisa', in *Voprosy zhizni*, 1905, no. 6, pp. 185–220, no. 7, pp. 122–48.

Dante has Beatrice fully but lightly covered, Ivanov presents her as *scarcely* covered. Similarly, in the sonnet, the Italian reads 'e ne le braccia avea/madonna involta in un drappo dormendo', while the Russian becomes '*I Gospozhu, pod legkim pokryvalom,|V ob"yatiyakh vladyki vizhu ya*'. Again, the same added emphasis on the lightness of the covering recurs, and Beatrice is found in the *embraces* of a 'ruler', rather than simply carried in the arms of Amor.

The second of the features peculiar to Ivanov's interpretation of Beatrice is the linking of Beatrice to the figure of Sophia, as described in the teachings of the philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev. This was a common tendency among the Russian Symbolists, who sought to combine two different traditions associated with the expression of a poet's mystical love of woman—on the one hand, the Western European medieval tradition of courtly love, culminating in Dante's love of Beatrice (associated in the popular imagination with the Catholic cult of the Virgin Mary), and on the other hand, the Russian, Solov'ev-inspired tradition of worship of Sophia, the spirit of Divine Wisdom, often represented in Russian iconography and later in Solov'ev's poetry as a woman or '*tsaritsa*' figure. The Symbolists were helped in making this identification by the fact that Solov'ev's Sophiological poems, '*Vsya v lazuri segodnya yavilas' . . .*' (1875), '*U tsaritsy moei est' vysokii dvorets . . .*' (1876), and the famous '*Tri svidaniya*' (1898), in which Solov'ev describes his three encounters with Sophia, appeared together with Solov'ev's own translation of a sonnet from the *Vita Nuova* in Solov'ev's first published collection of verse.²³ The language and imagery of Dante's and Solov'ev's verse blended into one in the Symbolists' poetic imagination, and became a single, common source for the expression of their intuitions of mystical love.

This is reflected in Ivanov's translations of the two sonnets from Chapters XX and XXI of the *Vita Nuova* quoted above. In both of these sonnets one can sense the influence of Solov'evian ideas on the language which Ivanov has used in his translations. In the first sonnet, '*Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa*', Dante describes the way in which the potentiality of love, always dormant in the heart, is made actual by the sight of the beauty of a wise woman ('*saggia donna*'). Ivanov's translation subtly alters Dante's presentation of his subject, and gives it a distinctly Solov'evian flavour. In Ivanov's translation we read '*Zhenoi smirennomudroyu predstanet,|Vzor muzheskii plenyaya, Krasota*'. Beauty here is not the concrete beauty of a wise woman, but an abstract, personified Beauty which will manifest itself in the guise of a wise woman. The use of the word '*zhena*' rather than '*zhenshchina*' for 'donna' immediately evokes an association with Solov'ev's descrip-

²³ Vladimir Solov'ev, *Stikhotvoreniya* (M., 1891).

tion of Sophia. In the introduction to the third edition of his poems, written in 1900, Solov'ev identified the '*zhena, oblechennaya v solntse*' described in Revelation (12:1) with the incarnation of '*Vechnaya krasota*' or Sophia, and this subsequently became a commonplace among the Symbolists.²⁴ Ivanov's translation loses the subtle transition from visual perception to the feeling of love which is so important a part of Dante's poem; instead of describing on a simple, literal level the process which occurs when a man sees a beautiful woman, Ivanov's translation takes us into a symbolic, abstract realm, in which Beauty appears to man as Sophia. In this respect Ivanov's translation is very reminiscent of his earlier poem '*Krasota*', published at the beginning of his first collection of poetry in 1903.²⁵ This poem describes a vision in which Beauty appears as a woman to a traveller and reveals her nature to him. Beauty is clearly identified with Sophia (she serves Adrastia, whose cult is explicitly linked with wisdom by Ivanov in a note which he provides to the poem),²⁶ and, to make the point even clearer, the poem is dedicated to Vladimir Solov'ev. This general parallel between '*Krasota*' and the translation of Dante's sonnet, resting on the link which Ivanov draws in both cases between Beauty and the figure of Sophia, is reinforced by textual similarities—the verb '*predstat*' and the noun '*obitel*' are used by Ivanov in both texts.

In the sonnet described above, the link was drawn not between Beatrice and Sophia, but simply between a female personification of Beauty and Sophia. The next sonnet, however, from Chapter XXI, deals specifically with Beatrice, and in his translation of this sonnet Ivanov describes Beatrice with a term usually applied to Sophia. To express the idea that the person who sees Beatrice is blessed, Dante writes '*... è laudato chi prima la vide*'; Ivanov translates this as '*Blazhen tsaritsu videvshii edva*', substituting for the simple pronoun '*la*' the word '*tsaritsa*'. For the Symbolist poets this word had special connotations, deriving from its use in Vladimir Solov'ev's Sophiological poems as a way of referring to Sophia. It would be quite out of character for Dante to refer to Beatrice by any such term. This, coupled with the fact that in the immediately preceding line Ivanov had introduced another word absent from the original, also carrying Sophiological associations,—referring to the '*pomyслов smirennomudrykh sladost*' of Beatrice's speech—lends a distinctly Solov'evian aura to the depiction of Beatrice in this sonnet.

Ivanov's translations from the *Vita Nuova* can therefore be seen to reveal in the manner of their execution some of the major characteristics

²⁴ Idem, *Stikhotvoreniya* (M., 1921), xiii.

²⁵ *SS*, i, 517.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 859.

Although the idea of the project may have originated in Italy in 1913, it seems unlikely that Ern actually started work on his translation until some time after May 1914. When Ern left Italy in May 1913, he returned to his home-town, Tiflis, and apparently settled down to work full-time on his dissertation. On 18 February 1914 he wrote to his friend the critic and literary historian A. S. Glinka that he hoped to finish his dissertation within the next two months, and then to take it to Moscow and submit it.³⁰

The translation of the *Convivio* was evidently under discussion in the spring of 1914, for we know from a letter from Pavel Florensky that the question of whether or not a translation of the *Convivio* by Vyacheslav Ivanov and Ern would be commissioned by the Sabashnikov publishing-house for the 'Pamyatniki mirovoi literatury' series was still undecided by mid-May 1914.³¹ From a letter which Ern wrote to Glinka in two parts on 26 May and 1 June 1914 we learn that Ern was now in Moscow, staying with Vyacheslav Ivanov and associating with Pavel Florensky, having finally submitted his dissertation on 25 May.³²

At some point before mid-June, Ern moved from Ivanov's flat in Moscow to Anapa, a coastal resort in the Caucasus, not far from Novorossiisk. It was here that Ern began work on his translation of the *Convivio*. On 8 July 1914 he wrote to Ivanov from Anapa, informing him that he had sent him his translation of the *Convivio* on the previous day by registered post. The letter is worth quoting in the original, because it is written in a mock-Dantesque style which evidently had the status of a private language between Ern and Ivanov. Ern writes:

Сообщаю Вам, что Анапа—прескверный городишко с очаровательным морем, очень способствующим размышлениям об Афродите Урании, переводу Пиршества и писанию 'Писем об имеславии'—как раз то, что нужно для моих 'почек' и для моей грешной души. Кроме того сообщаю, что выслал вчера заказною бандеролью Convito и те 25 р[ублей], кот[орые] с великой заботливостью сунул мне в боковой карман некий великий муж, когда я уезжал из дома, с столь беспредельным гостеприимством ютившего меня в дни моих странствований по Москве. Нужно ли говорить, что сердце моё приспособлено самой глубокой благодарности e che nel libro della memoria mia siano scritti con lettere d'oro tutti i dettagli del mio soavissimo soggiorno nell' Arcadia dell' amistà, imperocchè voi tutti quanti Gattamori e Gattamorette siete proprio principi, principesse e principessine dell'amorosa amistà.³³

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ I am very grateful to N. V. Kotrelev who has had access to Florensky's private archive for making this information known to me.

³² TsGALL, *fond* 142, *op.* 1, *ed. ktr.* 313.

³³ GBL, *fond* 109.

The last part of the letter which is in Italian is a parody of the opening chapter of the *Vita Nuova*; the term *Gattamori* (*gatta* 'cat', *amore* 'love') is perhaps intended as a parodic allusion to Can Grande (*cane* 'dog'), the famous lord of Verona who provided Dante in exile with generous hospitality and patronage, a fact which Dante acknowledged by dedicating the *Paradiso* to him.

Six days later Ern wrote again to his friend Glinka, describing the feeling of bliss which he experienced when working on his translation of the *Convivio* for the Sabashnikov publishing-house. This letter was interrupted by the outbreak of war, and so was Ern's translation of the *Convivio*, as transpires from the second half of the letter, resumed on 21 August 1914. In this part of the letter Ern writes that he had only succeeded in translating half of the *Convivio*.³⁴ The text which Ern had posted off to Ivanov a few days before beginning this letter must therefore have been the text of the half-completed translation of the *Convivio*. Since we find no further evidence that Ern was able to do any work on his translation before his death in 1917, we can surmise that the text he sent to Ivanov was passed on by Ivanov to Sabashnikov, and is the same text as the one which is now in the Sabashnikov archive in the Manuscripts Department of the Lenin Library. As this manuscript is written entirely in Ern's handwriting, Ern must have already had Ivanov's translation of the *canzone* with him when he left Ivanov's flat in Moscow for Anapa in the summer of 1914, and have written it out, incorporating it into the translation of the prose part of the *Convivio* which he completed while he was in Anapa. This dates Ivanov's translation of the *canzone* from the *Convivio* to some time before June 1914; possibly it was done by Ivanov in May 1914 while Ern was staying with him in his flat.

Having outlined the background to the project, we can now turn to the translation itself. Dante's *Convivio* consists of four tractates; the first of these serves as an introduction to the purpose of the work, and the following three each consists of a *canzone* followed by an exposition of the meaning of the *canzone* in prose. As we have seen, Ern only succeeded in completing the translation of the first half of the *Convivio*, in which there is only one *canzone* at the beginning of the second tractate, 'Voi che 'ntendono il terzo ciel movete'. This is the text which Ivanov has translated, and which we shall examine below.

The subject of the *canzone* is the struggle which is taking place in Dante's heart between his past love for the dead Beatrice, who is now in the heavens, and his new love for another woman. While Beatrice represents the contemplative, mystical way which leads through faith to truth, the second lady, as Dante explains in his prose commentary

³⁴ TsGALI, *fond* 142, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 313.

(*Convivio*, II, xv), represents Philosophy, the path which leads through rational understanding based on the evidence of the senses to truth. The *canzone* thus dramatizes, both through its explicit subject and through the tension in its form between poetic beauty and rational sense, an inner debate between the mystical and rational aspects of man's soul. This theme was one which held a place of special importance in Ivanov's world-view, and, as we shall see, it is presented by him in a characteristic way in his translation.

The text of Ivanov's translation of 'Voi che 'ntendono il terzo ciel movete' is as follows:

О вы, чей разум движет сферу третью!
 Услышьте тайный помысл мой сердечный!
 Зане другим сказать бы я не мог
 Столь новых дум. Свод неба быстротечный
 Влекомый вами, жизнь мою, как сетью,
 Своим круговращением увлек.
 Итак сколь долу горестен мой рок,
 Достоинно вам поведаю, благие
 И мудрые бесплотные! Молюсь
 Внемите вы, какой тоской томлюсь
 И как душа стенает и какие
 Ей прекословя, речи говорит
 Тот дух, чей звездный лик меж вас горит.

Бывало сумрак сердца оживляла
 Небесная мечта. Ее державе
 Владыки вашего святил я в дань.
 Жену я видел в лучезарной славе.
 Столь сладко горний свет мечта являла[,]
 Что дальнюю душа рвалась грань
 Переступить. Но враг подьмет брань.
 Душа бежит гонителя. Владеет
 Мной деспот новый, и волнует грудь.
 Он на жену другую мне взглянуть
 Велит. 'Кто зреть спасенье вожделеет',—
 Так шепчет он—'пусть в очи смотрит ей
 Коль не страшится вздохов и скорбей['].

Но с помыслом губительным враждует
 Умильная мечта, что говорила
 Мне о жене, увенчанной в раю.
 Душа, чью боль она заворожила,
 Осиротев [,] мятется и тоскует,
 Утешную зовет мечту свою.
 Корит глаза: 'Разлучницу мою
 В который час [,] мятежные [,] узрели?

И вас она? О новой сей жене,
 Ослушные [,] не верили вы мне!
 Мечи для душ таких, как я, горели
 В очах убийственных. Я не могла
 Те очи скрыть от вас—и умерла!

—‘Нет, ты не умерла, но ужаснулась
 Внезапности, душа, и возропала’—
 Ей молвит некий друг, любви посол:
 [—‘]Прекрасную узрев, иной ты стала.
 Преобратясь, почто же содрогнулась,
 И малодушный страх в тебя вошел?
 Смири мятеж и победи раскол!
 Сколь мудрая приветно величава,
 Сколь благочестна, кротости полна!
 Отныне госпожа твоя—она.
 Окресть ея чудес столь многих слава [,]
 Что скажешь ты: “Вотще была борьба
 Господь любви, се аз, твоя раба!”[’.]

О песнь моя! согласным одобреньем
 Принять могущих весть твою—немного[;]
 Твой смысл доступен, ведаю, не всем.
 Коль темная ведет тебя дорога
 Ко встрече с равнодушьем и бореньем[,]
 Утешься, и кому глагол твой нем[,]
 Ответствуй на вопрос его: зачем?
 Твое вещанье странно и неясно?
 —‘Пусть весть темна, но я ль не сладкогласна?’

From the point of view of form, Ivanov's translation is faithful to the original. It keeps exactly to the number of lines of Dante's *canzone*—four parts of thirteen lines each, followed by an *envoi* or *tornata*, as Dante calls it, of nine lines. Ivanov has used iambic pentameters throughout, and has successfully reproduced Dante's rhyming scheme.

However, formal perfection in a translation can sometimes only be achieved at the expense of exactitude in reproducing the meaning of the original; there are instances in Ivanov's translation where a line or phrase has been added quite gratuitously, without any basis in the Italian, evidently in order to make up an extra line or to preserve the rhyming scheme. For similar reasons, there are some omissions.

As in the case of Ivanov's translations from the *Vita Nuova*, these additions and omissions tend to reflect features of Ivanov's own spiritual outlook. There is the same tendency to prefer the complicated to the simple. On the syntactical level, this takes the form of the introduction of *enjambements*. Whereas there are no *enjambements* in

of Ivanov's approach to Dante which derive directly from Ivanov's spiritual outlook and Symbolist aesthetics; Dante is presented through the prism of Ivanov's translations as a writer who has retired from the crowd in order to compose obscure, archaic verse, devoted to a Beatrice who combines erotic features with Sophiological ones.

Let us now turn to Ivanov's translations of Dante's other works and see what aspects of Ivanov's understanding of Dante are revealed in them.

2. *Convivio*

The next translation of a work by Dante in which Ivanov became involved was a joint project; in 1914 he cooperated with the philosopher Vladimir Frantsevich Ern (1881–1917) in a translation of the *Convivio*, which the Sabashnikov publishing-house was interested in printing. The project was never completed and only survives in the form of a manuscript text of the translation of the first half of the *Convivio*, which is in the Sabashnikov archive of the Manuscripts Department of the Lenin Library in Moscow.²⁷ Although this manuscript is entirely in Ern's handwriting, it is clear from various sources that Ivanov was responsible for the translation of the *canzone* which occurs in the first half of the *Convivio*.

The friendship of Ivanov and Ern dates back to 1904; as a young man, Ern used to stay with Ivanov in the *bashnya* when visiting St. Petersburg.²⁸ It seems likely that the seeds for the project of translating the *Convivio* were sown many years later on Italian soil. In the late autumn of 1912 Ivanov and his family moved from Switzerland to Rome where they remained until their return to Russia in the autumn of 1913. Ern had been living in Italy, based in Rome, since 1911. In December 1912 he moved back from his country retreat near Rome to the city itself, and remained in Rome until his return to Russia in May 1913.²⁹ Ern was thus in Rome with Ivanov during the period from January to May 1913 when Ivanov started corresponding with Sabashnikov about his translation of the *Vita Nuova* and signed the contract for this project. It seems probable that Ern would have been interested in Ivanov's project, and that Ivanov might have subsequently suggested to Sabashnikov that he should also plan to publish a translation of the *Convivio*, and recommended Ern to him as a translator. Ern must have agreed to translate the prose parts of the *Convivio*, but asked Ivanov, with his reputation as a poet and experience of translating poetry, to deal with the verse parts of the work.

²⁷ Dante Alighieri, "Pirshestvo". Perevod "Convivio" sdelannyi V. F. Ernom. Kantsona na str. 43–5 perevedena Vyach. I. Ivanovym' (GBL, fond 261, k. 10, ed. khr. 10).

²⁸ See O. Deschartes's note in SS, iii, 833.

²⁹ Ern's movements can be plotted from his letters to A. S. Glinka of 18 Dec. 1911, 9 Dec. 1912, 28 Mar. 1913 and 20 May 1913 (TsGALI, fond 142, op. 1, ed. khr. 313).

Dante's *canzone*, Ivanov introduces them seven times in the course of his translation (at the end of lines 4, 9, 15, 19, 21, 23 and 40), and this naturally creates more tension in the text. Ivanov also introduces complicated inversions of natural word-order; whereas Dante very rarely departs from the natural order in his *canzone*, Ivanov frequently employs this device; one can look, for example, at the contrast between the complexity of the first two lines of the *envoi* in Ivanov's translation, in which nearly every word is put in a different order from the expected one, and the simplicity and straightforward sentence structure of the original:

Canzone, io credo che saranno radi
color che tua ragione intendan bene.

On the lexical level, Ivanov introduces numerous archaisms, such as 'zane' (l. 3) to translate the simple conjunction 'che', to quote but one example. Conversely, when Dante uses a disarmingly simple phrase such as 'lo stato ov'io mi trovo' (l. 6), Ivanov omits it.

The most characteristic feature of this particular translation by Ivanov from Dante's works is his treatment of the theme of the relationship of man to the cosmos. This theme is one of the cornerstones of Ivanov's world-view. There is some justification for introducing it into the translation, since Dante's *canzone* opens with an address to the angelic intelligences who move the third sphere, Venus, the planet of love, which is held responsible by Dante for the state in which he finds himself. Dante thus does link his own state to the activities of the cosmos. However, in Ivanov's translation, this link acquires a quite different resonance.

Ivanov viewed man as a microcosm, and the universe as the macrocosm. For Ivanov, the essence of the mystical experience was the act of self-transcendence, the breaking of the soul's boundaries, often achieved through an erotic experience of love. Through this act, the ideal of the mystical union of man, the microcosm, with the universe, the macrocosm, was achieved.³⁵

Ivanov's ideas on mysticism were influenced by Nietzsche, and he tended to impose his own concepts retrospectively on Dante's picture of the universe. In Ivanov's poem 'Dukh', published in the 'Poryv i grani' section of *Kormchie zvezdy*, we have a clear example of the way in which Ivanov projected his own vision of the universe on to Dante's; Ivanov's poem begins with an epigraph from the *Commedia* (*Paradiso*, XXXIII, 145):

³⁵ In 'Religiya Dionisa' Ivanov writes: 'The individual's awareness of his *I* outside its individual boundaries pushes the individual to deny himself and to pass into an area of *non-I*; this constitutes the essence of Dionysiac enthusiasm' (*Voprosy zhizni*, 1905, no. 7, p. 143).

L'Amor che muove il Sole e l'altre stelle
Dante, Parad. XXXIII

Над бездной ночи Дух, горя,
Миры водил Любви кормилом;
Мой дух, ширясь и паря,
Летел во сретенье светилам.

И бездне—бездной отвечал;
И твердь держал безбрежным лоном;
И разгорался, и звучал
С огнеоружным легионом.

Любовь, как атом огневой,
Его в пожар миров метнула;
В нем на себя Она взглянула—
И в Ней узнал он пламень свой.³⁶

The melodramatic post-Romantic flavour of this depiction of the individual's soul, scooped up and hurled into the cosmic wheeling of the planets, has little in common with Dante's measured ascent through the heavens of Paradise. We find a similar tendency reflected in some of the distortions of Ivanov's translation of 'Voi che 'ntendendo'. One can take lines 4–6 of the *canzone* as an example. In Italian they read as follows:

El ciel che segue lo vostro valore,
gentili creature che voi sete,
mi tragge ne lo stato ov'io mi trovo.

If we turn back to Ivanov's translation, we can see that for the simple 'el ciel' Ivanov has substituted '*svod neba bystrotechnyi*', introducing the idea of the cosmic spaces in '*svod*' and of movement in the adjective; '*vlekomyi*' implies a stronger force than 'segue'; '*kak set'yu, / Svoim krugovrashcheniem*' is a complete addition on Ivanov's part, contributing further to the idea of swirling, inevitable movement. These additions have been made at the expense of Dante's charming phrase 'gentili creature che voi sete', and of the important idea of the 'valore' of the angelic intelligences, as well as of the state in which Dante finds himself.

Whereas for Dante the starry spheres are a part of the real world, on which they exert a controlled influence, for Ivanov they are abstractions, '*blagie i mudrye besplotnye*' (ll. 8–9). Ivanov translates 'un spirto . . . che vien pe' raggi de la vostra stella' (ll. 12–13) as '*tot dukh, chei zvezdnyi lik mezh vas gorit*', which completely misses the point of the original; in Dante's vision and in medieval cosmology the rays of a planet were seen as the instrument of its influence on earth, as

³⁶ SS, i, 518–19.

Dante explains in his prose commentary to the *canzone* (*Convivio*, II, vi). Ivanov's translation substitutes for this precise concept a vague, undefined image.

Similarly, in the second stanza, the soul's simple direct statement 'To men vo' gire' is replaced by a lengthy paraphrase: '*Stol' sladko gornii svet mechta yavlyala|Chto dal'nyuyu dusha rvalasya gran'|Perestupit'*'. This paraphrase introduces typically Ivanovian themes: the abstract concept of the '*gornii svet*' (its counterpart, the '*dol'nii mir*' was also gratuitously introduced by Ivanov in line 8) and the idea of the soul bursting to transcend its limitations ('*rvalasya*' and '*gran'*' directly echo the title of the 'Poryv i grani' section of *Kormchie zvezdy*).

The vision of the cosmos which Ivanov presents in his translation is quite different from that conveyed by the original; instead of a sense of real celestial bodies, we have abstractions; instead of an organized system of influences, we have a chaotic universe in perpetual Dionysiac motion (the word '*myatezh*' is introduced by Ivanov in various forms at three points during the *canzone*, in lines 31, 34, and 46, although it does not occur in the original).

Ivanov's translation of this *canzone* from the *Convivio* can, therefore, be seen to reveal a characteristic combination of scholarly knowledge and understanding of the original text together with a generous measure of poetic licence in the adaptation of this text to the author's spiritual outlook.

3. *Divina Commedia*

It now remains for us to examine the evidence which has survived of Ivanov's plan to translate part of Dante's *Commedia*. The seeds of this project apparently date back to the beginning of the twentieth century. I. N. Golenishchev-Kutuzov recalls Ivanov telling him in Rome that at the beginning of the twentieth century in Russia there had been an agreement among the Symbolist poets to produce a collective translation of the *Commedia*; the plan was for Bryusov to translate the *Inferno*, and for Ivanov to translate the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*.³⁷ It seems likely that this agreement was part of the general plan, dating back to 1901, for the Brokgauz-Efron publishing-house to publish an edition of Dante's works in the series managed by S. A. Vengerov entitled 'Biblioteka velikikh pisatelei'.³⁸ Vengerov and Bryusov corresponded actively over this project from the end of 1904 until the end of 1905, when the project was dropped. At one

³⁷ I. N. Golenishchev-Kutuzov, *Tvorchestvo Dante i mirovaya kul'tura* (M., 1971), 467-8 and 484.

³⁸ In 1901, in the second volume of the series' first publication, *Sobranie sochinenii Shillera v perevoде russkikh pisatelei*, ed. S. A. Vengerov, 4 vols. (Spb., 1901-2), Dante was listed as one of the authors whose works would be among the forthcoming publications in the series.

stage during these negotiations, from April until September 1905, it was the plan that Bryusov would translate one of the *cantiche* of the *Commedia*, and that Vengerov would find other translators to deal with the other *cantiche*.³⁹ Bryusov expressed a clear preference for the *Inferno* at this stage, and it is extremely likely that Vengerov would have approached Ivanov about the translation of either the *Purgatorio* or the *Paradiso*, or both, particularly in view of the fact that Ivanov, like Bryusov, had already done some translations for Vengerov for the edition of Byron's works which had been published the previous year in the same series.⁴⁰

Apart from Golenishchev-Kutuzov's recollections, we do not, however, have any direct evidence that Ivanov was involved in the Brokgauz-Efron translation project at this stage. We find no indication of an interest in translating the *Commedia* among Ivanov's papers until 1913, when, as we have seen, Ivanov wrote to Sabashnikov from Rome and suggested that he should translate the *Vita Nuova*, the *Purgatorio* or the *Paradiso* for the 'Pamyatniki mirovoi literatury' series. Sabashnikov took up only the first part of Ivanov's suggestion, and it was not until seven years later, in 1920, that Ivanov once more returned to the idea of translating the *Commedia*. The first indication that Ivanov was again contemplating this project comes in a letter which Ivanov wrote on 12 May 1920 to the Society of Lovers of Russian Literature; this letter was a request for the Society to lend its official support to Ivanov's intention to travel abroad in order to finish his translation of Aeschylus's tragedies, write a monograph on Aeschylus, and translate Dante's *Commedia*.⁴¹ It is interesting to note that in 1920, as in 1913, Ivanov's translating activities continued to reflect his characteristic desire to combine the world of classical antiquity with that of medieval Christianity.

Two days later, on 14 May 1920, Ivanov signed a contract with the Brokgauz-Efron publishing-house in which he undertook to translate the whole of the *Commedia* within the next three-and-a-half years.⁴² The contract consists of nine clauses specifying the conditions under which Ivanov's work is to be executed, and is signed by a representative of the publishing-house's management, A. F. Perel'man. Ivanov undertook to translate Dante's *Commedia* into Russian in two versions, verse and prose, and to provide necessary notes and commentaries to his translation.

³⁹ See N. Sokolov, 'V. Ya. Bryusov kak perevodchik (iz pisem poeta)', in: *Masterstvo perevoda: sbornik statei* (M., 1959), 368-88, and S. Belza, 'Bryusov i Dante', in: *Dante i slavyane*, ed. I. Belza (M., 1965), 69-94.

⁴⁰ *Bairon*, ed. S. A. Vengerov, 3 vols. (Spb., 1904).

⁴¹ GBL, *fond 207, k. 32, ed. khr.* 12.

⁴² I am extremely grateful to D. V. Ivanov for giving me a copy of this contract which is in Ivanov's archive in Rome.

We have evidence that Ivanov was indeed working on a translation of the *Commedia* during the following month, in June 1920, from two different sources. The first of these is the record kept by F. I. Kogan of the meetings of a poetry circle which met under Ivanov's direction.⁴³ At the fifteenth meeting of the poetry circle which, according to the author of the record, took place around 20 June 1920, Ivanov revealed that he was currently engaged in working on a translation of Dante's *Commedia*; this was in response to a comment of F. I. Kogan's about the Dantesque influence which she sensed in some of Ivanov's recent poetry.

The second source of evidence is *Perepiska iz dvukh uglov*, first published in 1921. This book contains the letters which Vyacheslav Ivanov and his friend the literary critic and historian Mikhail Gershenzon (1869–1925) wrote to each other from opposite corners of a room which they were sharing in a sanatorium near Moscow during the summer of 1920. In these letters the two friends carried on an intense philosophical debate about the role of culture in civilization. The fourth letter in this exchange, written by Gershenzon to Ivanov between 19 and 30 June (the dates of Ivanov's letters which precede and follow Gershenzon's undated letter), reveals that Ivanov was then working on a translation of Dante's *Purgatorio*. Gershenzon describes settling down everyday after dinner to listen to Ivanov reading out his morning's translation from the *Purgatorio*; Gershenzon would check Ivanov's translation against the original text and dispute it when he disagreed with it. Gershenzon accurately distinguishes two stages in Ivanov's translating method; first the complete intellectual understanding of the meaning of Dante's verses, and then the recreation of something new within the Russian tradition.⁴⁴

Gershenzon's description of Ivanov's translating activities is an integral part of his argument against Ivanov's tendency towards cultural obscurity and in favour of a return to an earlier simplicity of spirit. Gershenzon sees in the relationship between the original text of Dante's work and Ivanov's translation a concentrated expression of the gulf between the simplicity and directness of the medieval world-view and the obscurity of the modern mind, cluttered with the cultural heritage of many centuries. In Ivanov's translation Dante's language becomes heavy and obscure; although Gershenzon may experience a feeling of intoxication from the 'thick honey' of Ivanov's verse, it nevertheless renews his feeling of painful oppression concerning the state of modern culture. In his desire to divest Dante of Symbolist

⁴³ F. I. Kogan, 'Zapisi vyskazyvanii V. I. Ivanova na zanyatiyakh Kruzhka poezii, proiskhodivshego v techenie fevralya-avgusta 1920 goda', 12 Oct. 1953 (Institut mirovoi literatury im. Gor'kogo, *fond* 55, *op.* 1, n. 6).

⁴⁴ SS, iii, 387.

obscurantism and return to him the concrete directness of the medieval outlook, Gershenzon was anticipating the polemical, anti-Symbolist tendency of Mandel'shtam's *Razgovor o Dante* (1933).⁴⁵ Thus we can see from this passage the characteristic importance which could be attached to a translation from Dante as the expression of an entire spiritual outlook, and the way in which such a translation could assume a central role in current polemics over the relation of man to his cultural heritage.

We note from this passage that it is no longer Ivanov's translation of the *Commedia* which is being referred to, but simply Ivanov's translation of the *Purgatorio*. It seems clear that the nature of Ivanov's commitment to a translation of the *Commedia* changed from one of total responsibility—as envisaged in the contract described above—to one of partial responsibility. This emerges clearly from a letter which S. A. Vengerov wrote to Bryusov about seven weeks after the contract between Ivanov and the Brokgauz-Efron company had been drawn up. This letter reveals a return to the type of cooperative translating venture originally envisaged by Bryusov and Ivanov in 1905 for the same publishing-house. Vengerov's letter to Bryusov is dated 5 July 1920 and includes a passage in which Vengerov expresses his pleasure at the news which he had recently heard from A. F. Perel'man that Bryusov had decided to give 'them' (the Brokgauz-Efron publishing-house) his translation of Goethe's *Faust*. Vengerov goes on to inquire how Bryusov's work on his translations of Goethe's *Faust* and of Dante's *Commedia* is progressing, whether Bryusov is working simultaneously on both translations or concentrating on one of them. If Bryusov has finished any part of his work, this would allow Vengerov to reproach Vyacheslav Ivanov for his slowness; Vengerov is sure that Ivanov's translation will be a great literary feat, but finds it difficult to believe in its realization; Ivanov works very slowly, and in Vengerov's view, while having good faith in Bryusov, the publishers hold a gloomy view of the second part of the translation of the *Commedia*.⁴⁶

It is not surprising that Bryusov should have joined forces with Ivanov in the translation of the *Commedia*. As we have seen, Bryusov and Ivanov had already considered cooperating over a translation of the *Commedia* for the Brokgauz-Efron publishing-house as far back as 1905; since the failure of the original project, Bryusov had shown remarkable persistence in his attempts to get his translations from the *Commedia* published, approaching Vengerov once more on the

⁴⁵ Osip Mandel'shtam, *Razgovor o Dante* (M., 1967), 21–2.

⁴⁶ GBL, *fond* 386, *k.* 79, *ed. khr.* 39. Curiously, neither Sokolov nor Belza makes any reference to this stage of Bryusov's involvement in a translation of the *Commedia* in their articles mentioned in n. 39.

matter in 1915, and trying other publishers as well in 1913 and 1917.⁴⁷ During 1920 Bryusov and Ivanov came into frequent contact with each other as a result of the setting up of a Literary Department within the People's Commissariat for Education (Lito Narkomprosa),⁴⁸ and one can well imagine that Ivanov might have welcomed the idea of having his share of the burden somewhat lightened by Bryusov's participation in the project.

Although it is not clearly stated in Vengerov's letter just which parts of the *Commedia* Bryusov and Ivanov were each responsible for, it would seem reasonable to make the assumption that Bryusov was translating the part for which he had always expressed a clear preference in previous negotiations with the Brokgauz-Efron publishing-house, that is to say the *Inferno*. The 'second part' referred to in the letter by Vengerov as Ivanov's responsibility could be either the *Purgatorio*, or the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* together. Since no mention is made of the involvement of any other translator in this project, it seems likely that the latter version is the correct one.

We do not know whether or not Ivanov continued working on his translation of the *Commedia* during the three-and-a-half years which he spent at the University of Baku after leaving Moscow in August 1920. It seems likely that his interest in this project continued, for two of Ivanov's students from the Baku period recall that Ivanov had translated parts of the *Commedia*. At an evening dedicated to Ivanov as a translator held at the Writers' Union in Leningrad in January 1977, Moisey Semenovitch Al'tman recalled that Ivanov had translated part of the *Commedia*. Another of Ivanov's students, Viktor Andronikovitch Manuilov, accompanied Ivanov on his last trip from Baku to Moscow on his way to Italy in 1924. Manuilov recalls clearly that in Moscow, before leaving for Italy, Ivanov showed him the manuscript of his translations of certain passages from the *Commedia*; Manuilov was not, however, able to recall exactly which passages Ivanov had translated.⁴⁹

After Ivanov's emigration to Italy, references to his translation of the *Commedia* come to an end, with the exception of one isolated manifestation of interest.⁵⁰ It remains, therefore, to turn our attention to the text of the translation itself. The only part of Ivanov's translation

⁴⁷ See Belza, op. cit. (n. 39), 78-93.

⁴⁸ Bryusov's and Ivanov's joint involvement in Lito Narkomprosa is described in *Khudozhestvennoe slovo. Vremennik literaturnogo otdela NKP*, edited by V. Ya. Bryusov, 1920, no. 1, p. 62. Ivanov's 'Zimnie sonety' and Bryusov's review of Ivanov's *Mladenchestvo* were published in the same issue, pp. 10-12 and 57.

⁴⁹ See n. 11.

⁵⁰ On 7 March 1929, M. Gor'ky wrote to P. S. Kogan from Italy suggesting that the latter might like to publish Ivanov's translation of the *Inferno*; see *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, lxx (M., 1963), 213.

of the *Commedia* which appears to have survived is located among Ivanov's papers in the Rome archive, together with the Brokgaуз-Efron contract.⁵¹ It consists of four sheets of manuscript in Ivanov's handwriting. The first sheet carries the heading 'Chistilishche. Pesn' pervaya', and the following three sheets contain Ivanov's translation of lines 1-67 of the first canto of the *Purgatorio*. These lines are written in ink with very few corrections added. The impression is that of a final version. The text of Ivanov's translation (incorporating his corrections and with his numbering of the lines) reads as follows:

- 1 Для плаванья на благостном просторе
Подъемлет вдохновенье паруса:
Жестокое мой челн покинул море.
- 4 Пою второго царства чудеса,
Где дух, от скверн очистившийся, станет
Достоин вознестись на небеса.
- 7 Здесь мертвая поэзия воспрянет:
Коль ваш, святые Музы, я пророк.
Во весь свой рост Каллиопея встанет
- 10 Со звоном, что Пиерия сорок
В отчаянье поверг: напела лира
Соперницам безумным горький рок.
- 13 Цвет сладостный восточного сафира,
По первый круг сгущаясь в вышине
Чистейшего, прозрачного эфира,
- 16 Опять целил и нежил очи мне,
Так долго мертвым воздухом, без света,
Дышавшему в исхоженной стране.
- 19 Любви благосклонная планета
Гасила Рыб-сопутниц, веселя,
Прекрасная, свой край лучом привета.
- 22 Направо свод сияньем убеля,
Меж звезд искрились ясные четыре;
Их знал Адам и первая земля.
- 25 Тех пламеней нет радостнее в мире.
О Север, вдовый, южный их узор
Не блещет на твоей ночной порфире.
- 28 Уж Колесницы не мерцал собор
На супротивном полюсе вселенной,
Куда нескорю перевел я взор.

⁵¹ D. V. Ivanov kindly made a copy of this translation for me, and consented to its publication.

- 31 Мне старец предстоял достопочтенный,
Маститой убоился я красы,
Как пред отцом робеет сын смиренный.
- 34 Делились на две ровных полосы,
На грудь сбегая, с длинною брадою,
Ручьем черносеребряным власы.
- 37 Он осиян был силою святою
Звезд четырех, как будто бы в упор
Взирал на солнце прямо пред собою.
- 40 “Кто вы? Слепой реке наперекор,”—
Он рек, честное зыбля оперенье,—
“Как, узники, бежали на простор?”
- 43 Кто в долах тьмы давал вам уверенье
Стези надежной? Из темницы вон
Лампады чьей вело вас озаренье?
- 46 Что ж? Преисподней погран ли закон
Иль отменен уставом свыше новым?
Запретен осужденным сей притон.”
- 49 Касаньем рук, бровей движеньем, словом
Наставник мой вложил мне в мысль совет
Склонить колени пред судьей суровым.
- 52 Сам речь держал: “Моей тут мысли нет.
Сошедшая с небес в мои юдоли
Жена святая мне дала завет:
- 55 Сего путеводить. Но так как боле
Ты хочешь знать о путниках,—изволь:
Мой долг твоей послушествовать воле.
- 58 Он смерти не вкусил еще; но столь
Безумно жил он, что во тьме греховой
Блуждал на шаг от гибели,—доколь
- 61 Я не был послан благостью верховной
С ним разделить глубоких странствий труд:
Иной тропы нет в мир ему духовный.
- 64 Я показал ему проклятый люд;
Пусть узрит ныне, коих очищает,
К спасенью предназначенных, твой суд.
- 67 Повествовать мне время воспрещает [.]

Not surprisingly, we find many of the same tendencies reflected in this translation as in Ivanov's previous translations from other works by Dante. From the formal point of view, the translation is faultless;

Ivanov has created an unbroken succession of iambic pentameters with alternating masculine and feminine rhymes; there are no irregularities in the metre or rhyming scheme. However, as before, there is a general tendency to complicate the original. Ivanov uses *enjambements* where there are none in the original (at the end of lines 5, 9, 54, 58, and 60); he tends to invert natural word-order in order to create a more complicated form of syntax—compare, for example, lines 19–21 of Ivanov's translation with the same lines in the original; we also find the introduction of unusual archaic words in place of simple ones—for example, the expression '*na suprotivnom polyuse*' used for 'all' *altro polo*' (l. 29); when Cato is described, 'diss' becomes '*rek*', and 'movendo quelle oneste piume' becomes '*chestnóe zyblya operen'e*' (l. 41 of the translation); unusual verbs like '*popran*' (l. 46, for 'rotte') or '*poslushestvoval'*' (l. 57) create a sense of archaic obscurity which is absent from the original.

Ivanov also has a tendency to replace vivid concrete images with abstract paraphrases which make the meaning of the original much harder to grasp. One need look no further than the first tercet of the canto for an example of this. Dante's text reads as follows:

Per correr migliori acque alza le vele
 omai la navicella del mio ingegno,
 che lascia dietro a sé mar sì crudele . . .

Dante's image of the little boat of his poetic genius preparing to traverse the better waters of *Purgatorio* is one of the most celebrated passages of the *Commedia*. Ivanov has made the point of the image extremely hard to grasp; he has replaced the concrete image of 'migliori acque' with the abstract paraphrase '*na blagostnom prostore*', and he has also dropped the image of 'la navicella del mio ingegno' and reduced this to the single word '*vdokhnoven'e*'. It is consequently much more difficult for the reader to make the connection between the images of the two seas, one cruel, one better, and Dante's poetic genius as a boat which must traverse these two seas, although this connection is crystal clear in the original.

Apart from this general tendency towards abstraction and added complexity, there are further characteristic types of distortion which are also reflected in this passage. One of these is the tendency to add extra emphasis to the idea of the darkness of sin, contrasted with the transcendent realm. Ivanov replaces the simple 'si purga' with the much stronger '*ot skvern ochistivshüisya*' (l. 5), making the memory of sin much more forceful than in the original. In the same way, when Virgil is describing Dante's past life to Cato, Ivanov adds the words '*vo t'me grekhovnoi/Bluzhdal*' to his speech (ll. 59–60), whereas in the original there is just a brief reference to Dante's past folly. Similarly,

in lines 10–12 of his translation Ivanov contracts an entire line of the original ‘seguitando il mio canto con quel sòno’ into two words ‘so zvonom’, thus making his translation difficult to follow, and then introduces one-and-a-half lines of purely gratuitous additional material: ‘napela lira/Sopernitsam bezumnym gor’kii rok’—the themes of madness and of inevitable fate were close to Ivanov as a result of his interest in Greek myths and Dionysian passion, and they are here imposed on Dante’s text.

The concrete reality of Dante’s vision becomes fantastic and melodramatic in Ivanov’s version; whereas Dante simply announces his intention to sing of the second realm, Ivanov must add the word ‘chudesa’ to qualify the second realm (l. 4). Cato’s first appearance is unduly melodramatic in Ivanov’s rendering; instead of ‘vidi presso di me un veglio solo’ we have ‘*Mne starets predstoyal dostopochtennyi*’ (l. 31), ‘degno di tanta reverenza in vista’ becomes ‘*Mastitoi uboyalsya ya krasny*’ (l. 32), and the simple idea of the natural reverence a son owes his father is replaced by a humble son quailing before his father (l. 33). The same additional aura of trembling fear and melodrama which accompanied the appearance of Amor in the third chapter of the *Vita Nuova* discussed above is here applied to Cato.

In the same *Vita Nuova* passage we also saw how Ivanov introduced his concept of the poet as a Pushkinian, prophet-like figure, retiring from the crowd in order to have visions and write poetry. In his translation of *Purgatorio* I, he does this once more: Dante writes ‘o sante Muse, poi che vostro sono’; Ivanov changes the original completely in order to make Dante the carrier of his own Symbolist aesthetics—he writes: ‘*Kol’ vash, svyatye Muzy, ya prorok*’ (l. 8).

In conclusion, we can see that through his translations of Dante Ivanov succeeded in creating a text which reflected many of the features with which he endowed the figure of Dante in his spiritual world-view and Symbolist aesthetics. In Ivanov’s rendering, Dante becomes the carrier of a typically Ivanovian brand of mysticism, based on the Dionysian ideal of an experience of ecstatic self-transcendence, in which elements of sin and Eros play an important role. The image of Beatrice becomes part-erotic, part-Solov’evian in character. The transcendent realm is viewed as an esoteric abstraction which can only be hinted at in veiled, unclear verse; Dante is presented in this context as an obscure, complex poet who anticipates in his verse the fundamental features of Symbolist aesthetics. Ivanov’s translations of Dante provide us with a clear insight into one of the central problems of Ivanov’s spiritual outlook—the attempt to incorporate the legacy of pagan classical antiquity into the Christian tradition, to view Dante as the successor of Dionysus.