

Nina Scherbak

**RUSSIAN LITERATURE: SILVER AGE
(1890 – 1930)**

Нина Щербак

**Серебряный век
в русской литературе и культуре**

Учебное пособие

УДК 82
ББК 83
ISBN 978-5-905963-90-2

Рецензенты: д.ф.н., доцент, зав. кафедрой иностранных языков ФГАОУ ВО «Санкт-Петербургский государственный электротехнический университет «ЛЭТИ» им. В.И. Ульянова (Ленина)» А.А. Шумков; д.х.н., профессор Института философии человека Российского государственного педагогического университета им. А. И. Герцена И. С. Дмитриев; к.ф.н., доцент каф. иностранных языков ФГАОУ ВО «Санкт-Петербургский государственный электротехнический университет «ЛЭТИ» им. В. И. Ульянова (Ленина) О.А. Преображенская.

Nina Scherbak. Russian Literature: Silver Age (1890 – 1930) // Нина Щербак. Серебряный век в русской литературе и культуре (1890-1930). Учебное пособие.- Чехов: Центр образовательного и научного консалтинга. – 2021. -188с.

В учебное пособие включены результаты исследований, выполненных на материале английского и русского языка при анализе произведений поэтов, писателей, философов серебряного века. Данная работа выполнено в рамках серии исследований в области лингвокультурологии, лингвистики, англистики, нарратологии, истории литературы и страноведения филологического факультета СПбГУ. В учебном пособии представлены исследования, посвященные структурно-семантическому, сравнительному анализу художественных произведений русских авторов серебряного века и западных писателей модернистов. Рассматриваются проблемы, связанные с постструктуралистской трактовкой знака.

Учебное пособие предназначена как для широкой аудитории, так и для исследователей-германистов, исследователей русской культуры, литературоведов, студентов и аспирантов, изучающих английскую, американскую, русскую культуру, страноведение Великобритании и США, русскую историю, лингвистику, лингвокультурологию и является частью учебно-методического комплекса по лингвокультурологии и анализу дискурса, разработанного на кафедре английской филологии и лингвокультурологии СПбГУ.

Учебное пособие состоит из основной части (двенадцати глав), вступления и заключения. Учебное пособие написано на английском языке.

ISBN 978-5-905963-90-2



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PREFACE

This book is based on the materials of a lecture course that aims to study the creative heritage of Russian symbolist poets and writers. Each chapter is devoted to one of the poets or writers of the Silver Age, his or her biography, theoretical and poetic views. The twelve sections contain a selection of poems by Russian symbolist poets Alexander Blok, Andrey Bely, Valery Bryusov, prosaic and critical works by Zinaida Gippius, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Konstantin Balmont, Marina Tzvetaya, Vladimir Nabokov, as well as comments on their poetic texts and philosophical views.

The main points of biographies, details of creative meetings, author's reminiscences are highlighted, poetic allusions are analyzed. The book is intended for a wide audience, as well as for researchers, literary critics, students and postgraduates studying Russian and American literature, linguistics, linguoculturology, and is part of the educational and methodological complex on narratology developed at the Department of English Philology of St. Petersburg State University. The book consists of twelve chapters. References are provided at the end of each chapter.

INTRODUCTION

RUSSIAN WRITERS OF THE SILVER AGE

The book starts with a brief analysis of the works by Ivan Bunin, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1933. His role in the development of Russian literature is similar to that of Leo Tolstoy and Feodor Dostoevsky. Ivan Bunin is a modernist writer, whose short stories not only inspired the generation of writers but started a different kind of prose style. He paid close attention to the sound of the word, its acoustic properties. His most tender novellas and stories are always about love and passion, tenderness suffering. A great deal of his prose is devoted to the mystical aspects of love, its relation to one's childhood, the time when realize you are not here forever. This motif allows Ivan Bunin (together with other Russian classical writers) to view life in a different way, better understand every detail of our existence.

Major part of Ivan Bunin's archive is currently in Leeds, UK.

The book includes chapters on Alexander Block, Andrey Belyi, Valeriy Brusov, famous Russian symbolists. Their poetry and views form the basis of the cultural heritage of the Silver Age writing. Their love affairs inspire one's imagination allowing the contemporaries to see to what extent people's relationship are difficult, deeply rooted, influenced by feelings, and internal connections.

Vyacheslav Ivanov stands aside as a person who not only established symbolism but organized famous "Wednesdays" at the Tower on Tavricheskaya, in St. Petersburg. Here he welcomed famous literary critics, painters, poets and writers. Sometimes, Ivanov's idea on symbolism are difficult to grasp. The definition of a symbol is deeply rooted in Ancient Greek philosophy with its different modifications, adaptations and later influence of mystical nature and Dionisian interpretation.

Zinaida Gippius and Dmitry Merezhkovsky are another famous couple whose heritage is well known. They are associated with severe literary critique and deep philosophical works. Their home in St. Petersburg where the fate of many literary destinies were decided is the Muruzi House. It opened its doors to most famous poets. The famous "adrogene" type of relationship among the Silver Age writers and poets is well observed in this couple, as Zinaida Gippius was a feminist of her time, and Dmitry Merezhkovsky was a very feminine type of a character. Their

marriage was unconventional. Their spiritual connection (yet not physical) was exceptional. Merezhkovsky's heritage consists of 26 volumes of books on philosophy and historical novels. Most of them are dedicated to the formation of the Third Testament, that could combine Paganism and Christianity.

Georgy Ivanov and Irina Odoevtzeva are also famous Silver Age writers. Gergiy Ivanov is a demon of his time and is famous for his most beautiful poetry and terrible character. His attachment to Ancient Greece as well as his experiment with style made him the most sensitive poet of the time. Their life in Paris is described by Irina Odoevtzeva in her two volumes of memoirs, *Na Beregah Nevi* [On the Banks of the Neva], *Na Beregah Seni* [On the Banks of the Siene], in which she recalls meeting with famous contemporaries.

Marina Tzvetseva and Konstantin Balmont are also poets of the Silver Age. The former was very famous in Russia due to her most piercing and touching poetry. Balmont turned out to be a Russian Oscar Wilde, very bright and humorous in his glamour. Apart from their poetry, both translated English, German, French poetry.

Vladimir Nabokov, so famous for *Lolita*, invented his own language, in which he takes into account the play of words, pays close attention to interwoven motifs in Russian, English, American, French, German literature. His post-modern fiction is sometimes compared to chess playing experience, as there are so many puzzles and endless amount of possibilities for everything. Word and plot interpretation and story lines are endless.

The book ends with a story by another famous Russian émigré writer, Nina Berberova and is based on her book "the Iron Woman" about Zakrevskaya-Benkendorf-Budbert, a double agent, an interpreter who had managed to create a myth about herself. Zakrevskaya was the lover of Lockart, the English Ambassador in Moscow, just before the Revolution. She was the lover of D.H. Wells, the English writer. She was the secretary of Maxim Gorky, a Russian writer, who worked in Russia, started a significant educational campaign during the Lenin times, spent a lot of time in Italy, on Capri.

The image of Zakrevskaya is like the image of Greta Garbo, so strong in surviving the difficult times, not perishing to the men she loved. Nina Berberova herself is a renowned Russian classic, who wrote books on the poet Alexander Blok, on the Masons. Her book of memoirs *My*

Italics allows to see the life of the Russian émigré writers in Paris, America, back in Russia.

SYMBOLISM

Symbolism is a term, related to the Silver Age, is a literary movement originated in the late 1880s - early 1890s in Europe, in the late 1890s — early 1900s in Russia. Representatives of symbolism in France — A. Rimbaud, Mallarmé, P. Verlaine, Charles Baudelaire. The main principles are the rejection of academic tradition, the heavy Alexandrian verse. It is the manifestation of the emotional side of poetry, the arousal of unconscious states of the soul, the appeal to the mood. Western symbolists understood themselves as "neo-Romantics", and their struggle with more academic poetry is somewhat similar to the clash and mutual attraction of the early Romantics and Classicism. It is characterized by attention to the formal side of the poem, an interest in recreating the most subtle, elusive, mysterious aspects of life. "Some shades captivate us, not the colors — their color is too strict" (P. Verlaine). Like the Romantics, man is seen as a part of nature, the cosmos. Everything can be filled with beauty, in any experience you can find an almost mystical experience. Symbolists are "priests of the invisible altars of their own souls" (P. Verlaine).

At the heart of symbolic thinking is the idea of a sign, an insight. Therefore, in poetry, not rational, logical, but intuitive thinking should prevail. Poems are like music, their content is vague, but their very form carries a special "message" to the reader. Poems are like a spell, a ritual and magical text, so phonetics and sound recording are especially important in them. Any fleeting impression, fantasy can become the subject of an inspired lyrical meditation. It is characterized by instantaneous switching from one sphere to another. The poetry is dominated by the atmosphere of "half-sleep", incoherence (this corresponds to such frequent images as "haze", "fog").

For some symbolists, along with this, there is a specific motif of the "search for light" (this theme may have a Christian religious and philosophical subtext). But at the same time, in the poetry of symbolists, romantic images of poetized evil are extremely common in their origins (the famous cycle of poems by Baudelaire is called *Flowers of Evil*), "Faustian" pathos and the theme of the knowledge of good and evil, total

irony and god-fighting, reaching in some cases to more blasphemous forms than it was with the Romantics. Music is fundamentally important for symbolists. As a complex philosophical topic and as a kind of model for poetry in the art world.

In Russia, symbolists are divided into senior (V. Bryusov, F. Sologub, D. Merezhkovsky and "young symbolists" (Viach. Ivanov, A. Bely, A. Blok, and others). The older symbolists mainly developed the traditions of Western symbolists on the Russian cultural soil. For the "young symbolists", symbolism was not just a style, an aesthetic position, but a religious and philosophical worldview: they were adherents of the teachings of the philosopher and poet V. S. Solovyov. The literary organs of the "young symbolists" were the magazines *Libra* and *Golden Fleece (Zolotoye Runo)*. In the 1910s, symbolism gradually declined, it completely exhausted its artistic and spiritual possibilities and gave way to other styles. "Symbolism recognizes in reality a different, more real reality, which reveals in the symbol the objective truth about what exists" (Vyacheslav Ivanov).

From the point of view of the "young symbolists", the purpose of the symbol is to express higher-order realities. A symbol is an image, but changed and as if illuminated by life experience. It belongs to the form in so far as it remains an image; but at the same time it is an essence, in so far as it opens the way to the knowledge of what is hidden behind the surface of things. By its very birth, the symbol simultaneously generates an entity that is inseparable from it. In true art, form is inseparable from content; it is content. It is no coincidence that it was Andrey Bely who first began to seriously study the peculiarities of Russian rhythmic. Finding rhythmic diversity in the development of the same meter in different poets, he discovered a direct connection between the rhythmic denouement of the poem and its internal development. For White, there is a duality in a work of art: its visible, external side, and its internal, hidden side:

... The symbolism of modern art does not deny realism, just as it does not deny either Romanticism or Classicism. It only emphasizes that Realism, Romanticism, and Classicism — the threefold manifestation of the single principle of creativity. In this sense, every work of art is symbolic.

The category of music is particularly characteristic of the poetry of symbolism, for the poetic form the most important factor is the "musicality of rhythm", the freedom of verse, experiments with the form of versification. "All art is symbolic — the present, the past, the future," writes Nina Berberova. - What is the meaning of modern symbolism? What new information did he give us? Nothing." The school of symbolists only reduces to unity the statements of artists and poets that the meaning of beauty is an artistic image, and not only in the emotion that the image arouses in us; and not at all in the rational interpretation of this image; the symbol is indecomposable neither in emotions nor in discursive concepts; it is what it is.

School of symbolists pushed the limits of the notions of artistic creativity. Of particular importance to them was the philosophical teaching of V. S. Solovyov about the world "unity" and about Sophia (Eternal Femininity and Divine Wisdom). Sofia — "the soul of the world", it reflects the Deity. Therefore, the earthly gaze of a person is able to catch a glimpse of the Divine.

Through symbolic thinking, the poet reveals the metaphysical secrets of the universe. The very concept of a symbol in the "young symbolists" goes back to the teaching about Sophia. A symbol is an image that simultaneously expresses the fullness of the concrete, material meaning of phenomena, and at the same time reveals their "secret" meaning, going far "vertically", "up and down". Only such a symbol can serve the utopian and grandiose task of transforming the world that the Russian symbolists set themselves. They called their activities "theurgy" (i.e., "priesthood").

It is natural that the "young symbolists" are characterized by an attitude to "life creation", to the synthesis of life and art, to the poetization and mythologization of their biography — "the way of the Poet". This tendency is characteristic of A. A. Blok. This trend is characterized by the mythologization of history, including pronounced apocalyptic moods. An important event for symbolists, of course, was the revolution of 1905, which was experienced in direct connection with the inner world of the poet and at the same time with the otherworldly ("mystical", "astral", "supra-worldly") plane of being. "The Revolution took place not only in this world, but also in other worlds," it was one of the manifestations of the events that we witnessed "in our own souls." This statement of A. Bely is fully applicable to the poems of A. Blok *Retribution* and

The Twelve. The idea of a "national soul", a national soil, is also essential for the Russian "young symbolists". "Symbolism is not dead. In Russia - a great ground for its prosperity. People's world, the language of Pushkin — here are the data for creating Russian symbolist poetry" (Sergey Solovyov).

The symbol is "an experience of the forgotten and lost heritage of the national soul", "an unconscious immersion in the element of folklore" (Vyacheslav Ivanov). That is why symbolism has had an exceptional impact on Russian culture. The consciousness of the symbolist poets became open to a variety of cultural-historical, philosophical, and poetic concepts. So it was with the philosophical views of R. Wagner and F. Nietzsche, the poetry of V. Bryusov. According to critics, for example, the image of the antonymous, dual Log Fire in Wagner (*The Ring of the Nibelungs*), like almost all the mythological images used by Carlyle, is somehow marked by Blok (for example, the emphasis in Blok's argument about the rise of the "public spirit" at the beginning of the Revolution; similarly, in 1902, Blok records the idea of the antinomy of the light (divine) and dark (diabolical) principles).

Such a dual nature of the element is particularly consonant with the "music of the revolution" in the poem *Twelve*. With regard to the questions of mysticism and Christianity, perhaps the main difficulty is the reconciliation of Christianity and Paganism. For example, Alexander Blok was much criticized for the fact that his poetry was too deeply directed to himself, which, in all likelihood, led to a pagan interpretation of Christianity. "The supreme significance of transcendence in the world of Blok is not questioned," but its status is "questioned," and the proper divination of the poet's way of crucifixion is questioned. Such doubts about the experience of self-knowledge, which puts "knowledge" rather than "faith" in the first place, gave grounds to reproach. Blok was reproached for "demonism" by Orthodox priests Paul Florensky.

All of them warned about the dangers lurking in godless mysticism and leading to the loss of the criterion for the "test of spirits", to the confusion of the spheres of "spiritual" and "carnal" and the impossibility of their "reconciliation" with the spiritual experience of the Christian tradition. For many symbolist poets, therefore, the poet's and the artist's own position prevails over political, as well as religious, ideas. Often this is an attempt to accept the power of Christianity, which is replacing the ancient worldview.

CHAPTER ONE

IVAN BUNIN (1870 – 1953) AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Ivan Bunin was born on October 23 (10), 1870 in Voronezh. The impoverished landowners of Bunina belonged to a noble family, among their ancestors – Vasily Zhukovsky and the poet Anna Bunina. Bunin's mother, Lyudmila Alexandrovna, always said that "Vanya was different from the rest of the children from birth", that she always knew that he was "special", "no one has such a soul as he has". It is no coincidence that much later Bunin describe your childhood experience incredibly accurately and movingly in his autobiographical novel *the Life of Arseniev* (*Zhizn Arsenyeva*):

Remember: one autumn night, I somehow woke up and saw a light and a mysterious twilight in the room, and large an open window, pale and sad autumn moon stood high, high above the empty courtyard of the estate, so sad and filled with such unearthly delights from my sadness and loneliness, and my heart squeezed some incredibly sweet and bitter feelings, the same as if that and she felt that this pale autumn moon. But I already knew, remembered, that I was not alone in the world, that I was sleeping in my father's study – I cried, I called, I woke my father... Gradually, people came into my life and became an inseparable part of it.

In the village, little Vanya "heard enough" of songs and fairy tales from his mother and the yard staff. Memories of his childhood, from the age of seven, as Bunin wrote, are associated for him "with the field, with the peasant huts" and their inhabitants. He spent whole days wandering around the nearest villages, herding cattle with the peasant children, driving at night, and making friends with some of them. Imitating the podpasks, he and sister Masha ate black bread, radish, "rough and lumpy cucumbers" and at this meal, "without realizing it, they shared the earth itself, all that sensuous, material things from which the world was created," as Bunin wrote in *The Life of Arsenyev*.

Even then, with a rare power of perception, he felt, by his own admission, the "divine splendor of the world" – the main motive of his

work. It was at this age that he discovered an artistic perception of life, which, in particular, was expressed in the ability to portray people with facial expressions and gestures, he was a talented storyteller even then. At the age of eight, Bunin wrote his first poem.

At the age of eleven, he entered the Yelets Gymnasium. He studied well at first, everything was easy, he could memorize a whole-page poem from one reading, if he was interested in it. But from year to year, the study went worse, in the third grade, he stayed for the second year. The teachers were mostly gray and insignificant people. In high school, he wrote poetry, imitating Lermontov, Pushkin. He was not attracted to what is usually read at this age, he read, as he said, "whatever".

He did not finish high school, and then studied independently under the guidance of his older brother. Since the autumn of 1889, he began working in the editorial office of the newspaper "Orlovsky Vestnik", often he was the actual editor; he published his stories, poems, literary and critical articles and notes in the permanent section "Literature and Print". He lived by literary labor and was in great need. His father went bankrupt, in 1890 he sold the estate in Ozerki without a manor, and having lost the manor, in 1893 he moved to Kamenka to his sister, his mother and Masha - to Vasilyevskoe to Bunin's cousin Sofia Nikolaevna Pusheshnikova. The young poet had nowhere to wait for help. In the editorial office, Bunin met Varvara Vladimirovna Pashchenko, the daughter of the Yelets doctor, who worked as a proofreader. His passionate love for her was sometimes marred by quarrels. In 1891, she got together with Bunin, but they lived without getting married: her parents did not want to give their daughter to a poor poet. This youthful novel of the writer formed the plot basis of the fifth book *The Life of Arsenyev*, which was published separately under the title "Lika".

Many people imagine Bunin dry and cold. Vera Muromtseva-Bunina wrote: "True, sometimes he wanted to appear so – he was a first-class actor, "but," who did not know him to the end, he can not imagine what tenderness his soul was capable of." He was one of those people who didn't open up to everyone. He was very strange in his nature. There is hardly another Russian writer who would have expressed his feelings of love with such abandon, so impetuously, as he did in his letters to Varvara Pashchenko, combining in his dreams the image with all the beautiful things that he found in nature, as well as in poetry and music.

In June 1898 Bunin moved to Odessa, where he married Anna Nikolaevna Zacny. Their family life did not go well, and in early March 1900 they separated. Their son Kolya died on January 16, 1905. The 1900s were a new frontier in Bunin's life. He repeatedly traveled to the countries of Europe and the East. And in the literature of the decade that began, with the release of new books, Bunin won recognition as one of the best writers of his time. He performed mainly with poems that he himself (unlike some critics!) I really appreciated it. Nina Berberova recalled her meeting with Bunin in Paris. "And you don't like my poems, of course?" he asked. "No, I do ... but much less your prose," she replied, writing the following in her memoirs: "It was his sore spot, I didn't know it then. But a year later, he returned to the topic of poetry and prose, the most pressing issue of his life, and said: "If I wanted to, I could write any of my stories in verse. I felt uneasy, but I said I believed it..."

In early 1901, a collection of poems *Listopad* (Leaves Fall) was published, which caused numerous reviews from critics. Kuprin wrote about the "rare artistic subtlety" in the transfer of mood. The block for *Listopad* and other poems recognized Bunin's right to "one of the main places" among modern Russian poetry. *Listopad* and the translation of *The Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow were awarded the Pushkin Prize of the Russian Academy of Sciences, awarded to Bunin on October 19, 1903.

Since 1902, the collected works of Bunin began to be published in separate numbered volumes in Gorky's publishing house "Znaniye". On November 4, 1906, Bunin met Vera Nikolaevna Muromtseva in Moscow, at the home of the writer and critic Boris Konstantinovich Zaitsev. On April 10, 1907, Bunin and Vera Nikolaevna went from Moscow to the countries of the East – Egypt, Syria, Palestine – and on May 12, having made their "first long journey", they went ashore in Odessa. Their life together began with this journey. About this journey – a series of short stories *The Shadow of a Bird* (1907-1911). They combine diary entries-descriptions of cities, ancient ruins, monuments of art, pyramids, tombs - and legends of ancient peoples, excursions into the history of their culture and the death of kingdoms.

The role of a hospitable host was not to his liking, although in a limited circle he always performed this role with brilliance and with his usual verbal generosity poured out all sorts of witticisms and epigrams (how infinitely annoying that no one bothered to write them down). More

than once I had to witness how he played caricatures on acquaintances and friends, and, first of all, portrayed colleagues in the pen: always aptly, sometimes evil, no one maliciously. He was a first-class actor in general, and it is not surprising that in his time Stanislavsky persistently suggested that he join the troupe of the Art Theater. However, in this case, Stanislavsky was not a subtle psychologist: Bunin and theater, Bunin and discipline are two incompatible things."

Bunin's temper was heavy. Nina Berberova recalled that "he was not only irritated or angry, he was furious and furious when someone said that he looked like Tolstoy or Lermontov, or some other nonsense, but he himself objected to this with even more absurdity:" I am from Gogol. No one understands anything. I came out of Gogol." The surrounding people were silent, frightened and uneasy. Often his rage would turn suddenly into comicality, and this was one of his most endearing traits: "I'll kill you! I'll strangle you! Shut up! I'm from Gogol!"

In 1933, Bunin was awarded the Nobel Prize, as he believed, primarily for *The Life of Arsenyev*. When Bunin arrived in Stockholm, he was already recognized by sight. Bunin's photos could be seen in every newspaper, in shop windows, on the cinema screen. On the street, the Swedes, seeing the Russian writer, looked around. Bunin pulled his sheepskin cap down over his eyes and grumbled: "What is it? The perfect success of a tenor."

Vera Nikolaevna's patience was boundless. She took care of her husband, supported him, and printed his works. Odoevtseva once asked Bunin after a conversation about love and Georgy Ivanov: "Ivan Alexandrovich! Do you also love Vera Nikolaevna?"

"No," said Bunin. "That's different. Even to compare is wild. Do I love her? Do I love my arm or my leg? Do I notice the air I breathe? And cut off my arm or leg, deprive me of air – I will bleed, suffocate – I will die."

At some point, the Bunins' family life was disrupted. At the behest of Ivan, in his definitive "let it be" in the family "on the third element" in the face of a young writer Galina Kuznetsova. This disturbed not only the conventions accepted by the "light", no matter how scanty, but also the domestic balance.

Galina Nikolaevna Kuznetsova was born on December 10, 1900 in Kiev, in a cultured old noble family. Her childhood was spent in the suburbs of Kiev. In 1918, in the same place, in Kiev, she graduated from

the first women's gymnasium Pletneva, having received a completely classical education. I got married quite early because of difficult relations in the family. Already in the early autumn of 1920, Galina left Russia with her husband, a white officer-lawyer Dmitry Petrov, sailing to Constantinople on one of the steamers filled with a motley crowd of people in despair and despair leaving their homeland torn by the bloody innovations of the October Revolution.

At first, the Kuznetsovs settled in Prague, where they lived in a hostel of young emigrants – "Svobodarna", but then, due to the poor health of Galina Nikolaevna, in 1924 they moved to France. Here is how Nina Berberova wrote about her first meeting with Galina Kuznetsova: "The first time Khodasevich and I were invited to the Bunins' for dinner was in the winter of 1926-1927. His books, recently published, were on the table in the living room. One copy ("The Roses of Jericho") he wrote to me and Khodasevich, the other he immediately sat down to sign G. Kuznetsova. That evening I saw her for the first time (she was with her husband, Petrov, who later went to South America), her violet eyes (as they said at the time), her feminine figure, her childish hands, and heard her speak with a slight stutter that made her even more vulnerable and charming.

Bunin's inscription on the book was incomprehensible to her (he called it "Riki-tiki-tavi"), and she asked Khodasevich what it meant. Khodasevich said: "This is from Kipling, such a lovely little animal that kills snakes." At the time, it seemed to me all porcelain (and I, to my chagrin, considered myself cast-iron). A year later, she was living in the Bunin's house. She was especially charming in summer, in light summer dresses, blue and white, on the beach at Cannes or on the terrace of the Grasse house. In 1932, when I was living alone on the sixth floor without an elevator in a hotel on the Boulevard Latour-Maubourg, they both came to see me one evening, and he said to her: "You couldn't do that. You can't live alone. No, you can't do it without me." And she answered softly, "Yes, I could not," but something in her eyes said otherwise. For Bunin, love for Kuznetsova was akin to a sunstroke.

Bunin was attractive not only because of the rich nature, the brilliance of his mind, deep spirituality, delicacy in understanding of the feminine nature, but also there was something else about Bunin that fascinated and powerfully hypnotized Galina. She constantly felt as if she was "stunned" by him. Helplessly, she obeyed the magical, beautiful

hardness of his eyes. It was as if she was drowning in it entirely. I waited for meetings at the train station, in cafes, in the Bois de Boulogne, in the theater, in the concert hall. In a small room with green silk on the walls and a window on the garden wall of the Tuileries. In Galina, empathy was very strongly developed. Psychologists clearly and strictly define such a property of a person as "the ability to experience and lose in your life only other people's emotions." Not their own, alas! Their emotions are then hidden, "squeezed" too deeply.

And are there any? Not to have a strong inner life of your own, to live and feel only as a "stranger", all this is a trait of soft, plastic natures, easily yielding to someone else's will.

The "adoption" (as this fact was officially called when going to Stockholm to receive the Swedish prize) of this woman, far from a teenager, and her introduction to the Bunin apartment turned out to be a heavy blow for Vera Nikolaevna, which she endured with amazing dignity. Here is how she wrote in one of her letters: "If a woman does not live by ambition and other pleasant aspects of a creative person and wants attention to her personality, then she will never get it from a creative person. Such a person is greedy, everything is not enough for him, he likes to take from everyone, and gives himself only in creativity, not in life".

"Bunin and Kuznetsova's" indecently tempestuous affair was soon the talk of the whole emigrant-secular Paris.

Everyone got "nuts" in these gossips: the gray-haired friends of the writer who had completely lost his head, and his wife, dear Vera Nikolaevna Muromtseva-Bunina, who allowed such an unheard-of scandal and meekly accepted all the ambiguity of her position. Leonid Zurov, another "household member", a complex and mentally unstable person, was in constant despondency, which only aggravated the general heavy atmosphere in the house: "Z. told me yesterday," Kuznetsova wrote in her diary, "that he sometimes has a terrible melancholy, that he does not know how to cope with it, and it stems from what he learned, saw in Paris, from thoughts about emigration, about the writers to whom he so aspired. And I understand him."

An old family friend Ilya Isidorovich Fondaminsky, editor and publisher, was also divided shelter with Bunnie and therefore perfectly understood what was happening, their visits to visit and talk earnestly and constantly, and exalted his woes already troubled soul Kuznetsova: "captive soul can toughen up, somewhere to go, but I think will still be

curved, not bloom freely, will not give such fruits as in freedom. ...You could drop everything. But I know you're taking the harder path. In suffering, the soul grows. You've developed a little late. But you have the intelligence, the talent, everything to be a real person and a real woman," he told her, firmly offering to keep for her a part of the fees paid to her in a separate bank account, without the knowledge of Ivan Alekseevich. Galina agreed reluctantly, but already realizing that she simply had no other choice.

Kuznetsova was confused not only and not so much by her personal "lack of freedom of a woman and a man". The situation was aggravated by the fact that the young writer was still virtually deprived of the opportunity to work and improve her skills. "...You can not sit down at the table if there is no such feeling, as if you are in love with what you want to write. I now almost never have such moments in my life when I like this or that thing so much that I want to write", "... you can't feel younger all your life, you can't be among people who have different experiences, different needs due to age. Otherwise, it creates a psychology of premature fatigue and at the same time deprives the character, independence, everything that makes a writer. "I feel hopeless. I haven't been able to work for several days. I quit the novel", " I feel lonely, like in the desert. I did not get into any literary circle, I am never mentioned anywhere in the "friendly enumeration of names"

For a while, the nervous situation in the house was partially relieved by a new face: Fyodor Augustovich Stepun became a frequent guest here. Under the charm of his personality, all the household members fell: "He is, as always, brilliant. He has a rare combination of a philosopher and an artist: he is simple in his treatment, inexhaustible..." – this is the characteristic of Vera Nikolaevna.

Stepun, a philosopher, critic, writer, a brilliant debater, who was closest to the symbolist authors, in particular Blok, Beluy with his "Petersburg", seemed to be fencing with Bunin on purpose, disagreeing with him in everything. On December 24, 1933, Vera Nikolaevna wrote in her diary: "Jan and F. A. (Stepun) switched to "you". His sister Marga lives with them. Strange big girl singer. She laughs well."

What happened in December 1933 is not very well known. If you believe the memoirs of Irina Odoevtseva, who was close friends with Galina Nikolaevna, the "tragedy" occurred immediately:

Stepun was a writer, he had a sister, his sister was a singer, a famous singer - and a desperate lesbian. Here we go. And that's where the tragedy happened. Galina fell in love terribly - poor Galina: drink a glass - a tear rolls: "Are we women in control of our own destiny"? Stepun was imperious, and Galina could not resist...

Margarita Augustovna Stepun was born in 1895 in the family of the chief director of the famous Russian stationery factories. Her father was a native of East Prussia, her mother belonged to the Swedish-Finnish Argelander family. Apparently, Marga received a brilliant education - the family was not only very, very wealthy, but also "enlightened". She inherited her love of music from her mother.

According to the memoirs of Fyodor Augustovich, there was "a lot of music in the house, mainly singing. My mother and her often visiting friend sing." History and literary studies now have, alas, more than scant information about the life of Marga before meeting Kuznetsova. Judging by the fact that in Paris she took part in meetings of the Moscow community and spoke at evenings with "Moscow memories", it can be assumed that before the revolution she lived in Moscow. In exile, she often performed solo concerts (in Paris for the first time in 1938), where she performed works by Schumann, Schubert, Brahms, Dargomyzhsky, Saint-Saens, Tchaikovsky, and Rachmaninoff with her strong, "divine contralto". Most likely, it was the music and the beautiful voice of Margarita Augustovna that charmed Galina Nikolaevna. Anyway, Kuznetsova finally had a "friend - a brilliant musician". Who knows, perhaps, after several years under the same roof with the despotic egoist Bunin and the gloomy neurotic Zurov, Galina Nikolaevna couldn't allow herself the luxury of falling in love with a man!

After returning to Grasse, life there is completely different. Zurov and Bunin were in a state of constant, hidden quarrel with Kuznetsova. Vera Nikolaevna noticed this, but did not really understand what was going on: "Galya began to write, but she is still nervous. ... She has a correspondence with Marga, which we are waiting for at the end of May." At the end of May 1934, Margarita Stepun arrived in Grasse. Here's what I wrote about her Vera Nikolaevna in her diary:

Marga is quite complex. I think she has a difficult character, she is proud, ambitious, has a very high opinion of herself, of Fyodor

(Stepun) and the whole family. ... But it fits our house. Everyone is well affected by her calmness. ... Ian had suddenly become submissive to events, at least in appearance: (June 14, 1934)". "At home with us: not happy. Galya somehow will not find himself. She quarrels with Ian, and he quarrels with her. Marga with us: (July 8, 1934).

Our house is not good. Galya, that look, will fly away. Her adoration of Margie is strange. ... If Ian had had the nerve, he wouldn't even have talked to Galya during this time. And he can not hide the resentment, surprise, and therefore they have unpleasant conversations, during which they, as it happens, say too much to each other: (July 11, 1934).

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But no matter what his contemporaries said, Bunin experienced this parting deeply and passionately. In addition, it so happened that after the beginning of the Second World War, Galina and Marga, by the will of fate and circumstances, were forced to live in Grasse, all in the same The Monastery of the Muses. Completely break off the relationship did not work. Vera Nikolaevna was sincerely attached to Kuznetsova, and she liked Stepun very much. Bunin had to come to terms with the existence of this couple. But it seemed strange and absurd to him. He did not understand and did not forgive Kuznetsov. His notes dedicated to her are full of indignation, bitterness and regret ("The main thing is a heavy sense of resentment, a vile insult: In fact, he has been mentally ill for two years, - mentally ill...", " What came out of Galina! What stupidity, what callousness, what a meaningless life!"). Kuznetsova, however, seems to have been happy. She lived with Marga until the very end (out-living her by five years).

In 1949, they moved to the United States, and from 1955 they worked in the Russian department of the United Nations, with which they were transferred to Geneva in 1959. Their last years were spent in Munich. The last years of Bunin's life were spent in terrible poverty and disease. His relationships with other people - especially with writers - were increasingly bitter and aggressive. He published his caustic, acrimonious "Memoirs", vilifying everyone and everything, and especially Yesenin, Blok, Gorky, Voloshin, Merezhkovsky, and, it seems, sincerely hated the whole world. There were absurd rumors about him; Bunin was mostly accused of pro-Soviet sympathies, perhaps because of Leonid Zurov, who, while continuing to live in Grasse and the Bunins' Paris apartment, became an active participant in the "Soviet patriots" movement after the war. The latter, unable to find the strength to lead an independent life, remaining with the Bunins until the very end, lived a creatively unproductive life. He suffered from a severe mental disorder, many years of fruitless work on the unfinished novel "The Winter Palace", and - as a finale - a rich legacy in the form of an extensive Bunin archive, which is now in the UK, in the library of the University of Leeds. "Damned Days" Bunin - bitter memories of the last days of his life, but also very truthful, capacious... From Bunin's diary: "December 20, 1940. Gray, very cold. The cold in the house is unbearable. All morning I sat in the lantern, with the electric light on, without pulling back the curtain. We eat very sparingly. I've been hungry all day. And there is nothing - which seems very strange: I have never experienced this before. Unless only in June, July 19, in Odessa, under the Bolsheviks"

Bunin, indeed, was not very optimistic... One of the Parisian friends of our family, Inna Brazol' (her daughter-in-law, Elena Brazol, by the way, is a great-great-granddaughter of Alexander Pushkin!), who at the time we met, was already 90 years old, recalled how her husband, one day, in those early years, lent, along with his friend their car to Bunin! Inna Mikhailovna repeatedly saw Bunin, and often said how he constantly complained, saying the same phrase:

"Vanya wants to eat! Vanechka is hungry! His poor wife was so ashamed of him!"

Bunin asked to borrow a car from Inna Brazol's husband. Just for one day! And returned it only two weeks later, and even without gasoline! Just during the German offensive on Paris, when everyone was fleeing and had to leave to die.

Bunin, by the way, did not forget this story, briefly mentioning this episode in the *Cursed Days*:

We were in Paris, because young Gavronsky was working on my lower front teeth. And the alerts became more frequent and more frightening (although they made almost no impression on me). Finally, she left – in a car with Zhirov, at 6 pm on May 22. **The car was not his and the other driver, his friend Brazol, son Poltava provincial leader of the nobility**, is it not amazing – the same one who presided over the provincial assemblies in Poltava, when I was a librarian in the provincial Council (22. 07. 1940).

An interesting story, isn't it?

In one of his short stories (*Night*), Bunin, talking about the fullness of feeling, love, death, I think he writes about the most important thing in himself. The story ends like this:

But here it is again, this sigh, the sigh of life, the rustle of a wave rolling on the shore and spreading, and behind it-again a slight movement of air, sea freshness and the smell of flowers. And I'm definitely waking up. I look around and stand up. I run down from the balcony, walk through the garden, crunching the pebbles, so I run down the cliff. I walk on the sand and sit down at the very edge of the water and deliciously plunge my hands into it, instantly lighting up with myriads of luminous drops, countless lives.... No, no, my time has not come! There is still something that is stronger than all my thoughts. Even as a woman I long for this watery night bosom... God, leave me alone!

CHAPTER TWO

THE TOWER OF IVANOV

VYACHESLAV IVANOV (1866, MOSCOW – 1949, ROME)

From the memoirs of Olga Deshart: “Vyacheslav Ivanov loved the myth of Arion, who was saved by dolphins”. The singer was saved for the song.

Vyacheslav Ivanov was born in the family of a surveyor. After graduating from the First Moscow Gymnasium, he continued his studies first at the Faculty of History and Philology of Moscow University, then at the University of Berlin, where, in addition to philology, he studied a lot of history, as well as philosophy. In 1896, his dissertation was accepted, but Ivanov did not pass the oral exam for the academic degree. In 1894, the poet met Lydia Zinovieva-Annibal, a poet and translator, who five years later became his wife.

There were legends about Lydia Zinovieva-Annibal. When she appeared in an unfurnished room, with orange carpets draped over the pillows, and a flaming red tunic draped over her shoulders, the eyes of the people turned eagerly to her, catching every word she uttered. She received the name of Diotima-divine in beauty and wisdom of the woman from the famous dialogue of Plato *Feast*. N. Berdyaev called her the soul of the Ivanov's "Wednesdays": "She did not talk very much, did not give ideological solutions, but created an atmosphere of gifted femininity, in which communication took place. She was eccentric, proud, independent, and defiantly intelligent.

Vyacheslav Ivanov's "Wednesdays", "Ivanov Tower" - significant milestones in the history of the "Silver Age". Poets and musicians close to the "new" trends in art, friends of Vyacheslav Ivanov gathered in the famous Ivanov "Tower" on Tavricheskaya Street, 25. This was one of the ideological centers of Russian symbolism, the "creative laboratory" of poets; in the literary "Wednesday" Ivanov saw the prototype of "Cathedral" communities.... Here the guests were met by the hostess of the house.... When it seemed to her that the conversations at the "tower" were coming to a dead end, she interrupted them with a cheerful joke, brought those present back to earth, deliberately destroying the "ghostly-transparent spirituality" of these meetings.

The Tower was the center of the spiritual life of St. Petersburg. Ivanov seemed to infect others with his inspiration. To one he will suggest a theme, to another he will praise, to a third he will condemn, sometimes excessively; in each he awakens dormant forces, leads behind him, as Dionysus leads his priests. It inspires people not only in creativity, but also in life. They go to his fiery cave with a confession and for advice. His daily routine is unusual: he gets up at two o'clock in the afternoon, and receives guests in the evening and at night. And it works at night. But he didn't have much work that winter (Lidiya Zinovieva – Annibal).

Here is how Boris Zaitsev recalls this time:

He was considered more of a driver, a teacher. Then he lived in St. Petersburg, in an apartment on the top floor of a building in the city center. In this apartment there was a kind of ledge outside, like a lantern, but, of course, according to the then fashion for "special" it was believed that he lived in the "tower", and he himself was a "master" (how many of these masters of "short stature" had to see later in life! But it is ringing, chic, and sounds solemn to the uneventful ear. What to do! In Moscow, Bryusov was considered a "magician" - this magician was in charge of the kitchen department in Liter. a mug). That was the time. "I like lush decadent names," a literary friend in Moscow told me. The word "master" I always could not stand, but I must say that Vyacheslav Ivanov really approached the appearance of a certain mentor in a deep sense.

He led a strange life. He would get up around six in the evening, stay awake at night, and in the evenings he would have meetings on this very "tower" (! - also snobbery), and young poets and writers like me would look into his mouth, and not for nothing: you could really learn something from him. And in general, I already mentioned it - he was an exceptional conversationalist.

In the veins of Lydia Zinovieva-Annibal flowed the blood of the *Black Man Peter the Great*, among the ancestors were Serbs and Swedes,

relatives belonged to the dignitaries of St. Petersburg. The artist Margarita Sabashnikova left a verbal portrait of her: "a strange pink glow of blonde hair, bright whites of gray eyes against the background of dark skin. Her face resembled Michelangelo's Sibyl - the lion-like set of her head, the slender strong neck, the determination of her eyes; the small ears paradoxically increased the impression of this lion-like appearance: "Such a one will throw any Dionysus under her feet."

Contemporaries mentioned her extraordinary attention "to man", the understanding that man is not only a great value, unique and irreplaceable, but also a shrine. Her "frankness and responsiveness" (G. Chulkov), "wise understanding" (S. Auslender), "special talent for communicating with people" (A. Tyrkova) were striking. She was able to listen with equal benevolence to the witticisms of an English gentleman, to the refined symbolist reasonings of a Petersburg aesthete, to the fervent incoherent plea of a country woman.

V. Ivanov's story about her last moments is heartfelt. It is preserved in the works of M. Voloshin:

Vyacheslav "lay down with her on the bed, picked her up. She held him, lay down on him, and died on him. When they removed her body from him, they thought that he was lying unconscious. But he got up on his own, calm and happy. Her last words were: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, for Christ is born". Then new details were revealed. "Then I said goodbye to her," said V. Ivanov. "I took her hair. I gave it to her in my hands. He took a ring from her finger - this one with grape leaves, the Dionysian one - and put it on his hand. She couldn't speak. Her throat was tight, swollen. She only said the word, "I bless you." She looked at me. But the eyes did not see. That's right, there was paralysis. Blinded. She said: "That's good."... So I got engaged to her. And then I put on my forehead the crown that was sent to her: I took the schema..." The funeral was held a few days later in St. Petersburg. On the wreath from her husband, the inscription - "We are two hands of the same cross"

Reflection on the possible causes of Zinovieva-Annibal's death come below. Vyacheslav Ivanov was insanely worried about the death of his wife. The cross for Ivanov was a significant symbol, the beginning of

life. Lydia Dmitrievna remained alive for him. In all his wanderings, her portrait, painted after her death by Margarita Sabashnikova, was next to him. For many years, she appeared to him in dreams and visions, talked to him, gave him advice. So, in one of these "visits", "bequeathed" to him her daughter, Vera Shvarsalon: "My gift to you is my daughter, I will come in her" - which determined the subsequent personal fate of Ivanov, his marriage to his stepdaughter, the birth of his son Dmitry. Soon after her death, the poet made a vow: to write forty-two sonnets and twelve canzons - "according to the number of years of our life and the years of our life together."

Their acquaintance took place in 1895, when Zinoviev-Annibal, "golden-haired, greedy for life, generous," with three children, fled from her husband abroad and there, wandering around Europe, met "a narrow-shouldered German schoolboy-dreamer, secretly composing strange poems, and took him, dragged him, dragged him." This meeting, according to Ivanov himself, "was like a mighty spring Dionysian thunderstorm, after which everything was over ... it has been renewed, blossomed, and turned green." And never again was this "life romance" allowed to "freeze in calm, friendly and marital relations". At first, it seemed to the poet that his feeling was a criminal, dark, demonic passion, but it was a love "that was destined to happen ... only grow and deepen spiritually." The sudden death of Zinovieva-Annibal shocked everyone.

In addition to the fact that she was the brightest woman of her time, who cemented the bonds of friendship of such various people as A. Blok, M. Voloshin, K. Somov, S. Gorodetsky and others, she was also an outstanding writer. Following Blok, many could repeat: "What it could give to Russian literature, we can not imagine." She felt herself on the verge of great things. "I'm all about life and some distant and bright achievements. I can't calm down and grow old," she wrote shortly before her death.

The birth of Zinovieva-Annibal as a writer took place after a meeting with Vyacheslav Ivanov. "We found each other through each other - each of us found ourselves. And not only in me, for the first time, the poet opened up and realized himself, freely and confidently, but also in her," he recalled. Unfortunately, the talent of the writer in this woman was not seen by everyone, especially by symbolists. A. Bely, who disliked Zinoviev-Annibal, considered her mannered, pretentiously extravagant, convinced the reader that the author, having succumbed to the

trends of fashion for eroticism, did not cope with "the most complex riddles and contradictions of existence". Even more irreconcilable was V. Bryusov.

In a letter to Z. Gippius, he, persuading her to take up reviewing, shared his impressions: "to keep cool" when reading such literary works (there was also a play by Zinovieva-Annibal "The Singing Donkey") "is not quite easy", since "under transparent pseudonyms" events from the life of the "environment" circle are retold. In Bryusov's indignation there was irritation and, in the opinion of modern critics, envy. Irritation at the unheard-of boldness with which the participants of the "tower" vicissitudes exposed their relationships. Envy of the freedom of a naturally lived feeling. Zinoviev-Annibal, indeed, lived every minute. We read her confession in one of the letters: "I live as always with one minute and drink it until the end, without looking ahead for a minute".

One of the works of Zinovieva-Annibal caused a flood of criticism. We are talking about the *Thirty - Three Freaks* – at first glance, a declaration of lesbian love-the worship of another woman, which forces the main character, in the end, to commit suicide. This work was not dedicated to a woman, but more on that later.

Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius responded to the request of the editor of "Libra" and ... wrote a devastating article on *Thirty-Three Freaks*, as a mediocre and therefore "innocent" work, finding a reason to venomously praise the author: "Even a moralist will not feel any "nasty things" there, he will not have time - so he will feel sorry for Mrs. Zinovieva-Annibal. And why would she write all this? By God, she is a clever, beautiful, simple woman, and she can even write quite well..."

The discontent of Zinaida Gippius was dictated by a different (oh, different!) interpretation of passion than that of Zinovieva-Annibal. Gippius was convinced that any feeling of dissatisfaction disappears when falling in love - a feeling unlike any other, not striving for anything definite. Gippius saw in love a sign of "from there", a promise of something that can make our "soul-body being" happy. The pretentious conclusions of Zinovieva-Annibal could not find a response...

The men liked the work. Vyacheslav Ivanov especially liked it. According to V. Ivanov, it was a work "about the tragedy of the artist's life, deceived by the object of his art, which was not at the height of the creator's plan". "Faith is fantastic and beautiful", V. Ivanov admired the image of the heroine, - "here is the true language of passion, and it can

not but shake everyone" The fact is that in *Thirty-Three Freaks* the themes of love, creativity, beauty, guilt, power, sacrifice and redemption are closely intertwined.

The heroine of the novel, the actress Vera, who converts her beloved to her "faith" - the worship of the beautiful. And, in order to perpetuate the beauty, she allows thirty-three artists to capture her beloved appearance on canvass. The result is terrible! Splitting the beauty of her chosen one into thirty-three images that are in no way identical to the original, turns out for Vera the collapse of hope for the possibility of preserving Beauty and Love in this life. Her phrase becomes providential: "Everything, and the highest, is not solid." Faith creates her beloved, as Pygmalion created Galatea. But the work given to the crowd, to the viewer, no longer belongs to the creator and ceases to exist. Faith perishes....

The truth of life was that the work was dedicated to Ivanov and was addressed to him personally, as if it were a warning about the possible outcome of the Dionysian experiments. In the family union of Ivanov and Zinovieva-Annibal, there were also "third parties" for some time": the poet S. Gorodetsky, and the wife of the poet Voloshin Margarita Sabashnikov. Vera, the heroine of Zinovieva-Annibal gives her beloved to others, but does not stand the test and commits suicide. A similar story happens with Zinovieva Annibal herself. What is written, sometimes, is carried out according to strange inexplicable laws.... She "burns up", literally overnight, from fleeting scarlet fever....

Margarita Sabashnikova, wife of the poet M. Voloshin, who often came to "Wednesdays" and to the Tower, writes:

It soon became clear to me that Vyacheslav loved me... I told Lydia so, adding, 'I must go.' Lydia, on the other hand, behaved rather unusually in this story. There are no scenes of jealousy, no reproaches. "You have to choose," she allegedly said, "you love Vyacheslav, not him." "Yes," Sabashnikova confirmed, "I loved Vyacheslav, but this love was such that I did not understand why Max should be excluded from it." The apartment was located in a tower, and the walls in all the rooms were rounded or sloped. Lydia's room is covered with bright orange wallpaper. Two low couches, a strange, brightly colored wooden vessel — here she kept her manuscripts, rolled up in scrolls. Vyacheslav's room is

narrow, fiery-red, and you enter it like the mouth of a red-hot furnace... The arrangement of their life is quite extraordinary. All the women in our circle keep at least a cook.

After the sudden death of Zinovieva-Annibal in 1907, Vyachslav Ivanov went deep into theosophy and mysticism. In 1910, he married his stepdaughter Vera Shvarsalon, daughter of Zinovieva-Annibal; from this marriage, a son, Dmitry (1912-2003), was born. In 1921, Vyacheslav Ivanov and his whole family went to Baku, where he lectured on classical philology, but in 1924 he left for Italy. In Rome, he gave a public lecture in Italian. Those who have heard say that he read excellently, scattering all the luxury of the old, even old-fashioned Italian language. Apparently, this immediately gave a foothold, connections were made, and he was invited to read in Pavia, and then became a professor at the University of Rome. In 1926, he converted to Catholicism. The result of Ivanov's literary work was a collection of poems "Evening Light", published posthumously in Oxford in 1962.

SYMBOLISM AND POETRY

In 1939, Vyacheslav Ivanov decided to use the *Sovremenniye Zapiski* (Contemporary Notes) in Paris to print a separate book *Man*, and then publish the entire collection. He finally selected and distributed all the songs and poems written in Russia and in Italy. He hesitated between the titles *Purgatory* and *Closed Paradise*. The war broke out. When, after 1944, Vyacheslav Ivanov decided to include his *Roman Diary* in the book of lyrics, he began to doubt the accuracy of the previously found titles, finally agreeing on *Evening Light*.

Before the Revolution they gathered at Vyacheslav's Ivanov's Tower every week. St. Petersburg. Tavricheskaya, 25, (35). Zinaida Gippius, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Michail Kuzmin, Feodor Sologub, Valeriy Bryusov, V. Khlebnikov, S. Gorodetsky, V. Meyerhold. Writers, poets, painters.

Main idea of symbolism was "Memory of Life before Birth", ideas of "Ascent", "Descent", "Chaos". Symbolists attached special attention to the notion and meaning of the Word. For V. Ivanov the word was sometimes a symbol, the notion far more complicated than a word,

“dark in its last depth”. This attitude also implied looking at iconic properties of the word. Mystical experience, dreams, "automatic writing", "collective body", unification of Christianity and Paganism, Christ and Dionysus.

Ascending in this philosophy is pride, cruelty, and not only to others, but also to yourself. And if it is cruel, it is sad. This is a tragic path to the height, a break with the ground, death. If the ascent does not entail a descent, it is fruitless, because it is above the world.

The descent is a symbol of the rainbow, a smile, love for the earth, which has preserved the memory of the sky. His theory of ascent and descent in the world. Ivanov applies it to the artistic, creative process. In order to record your achievements during the ascent, you need to go down to the ground. The descent for the artist is the search for a word, a means of expression.

The third principle is chaotic, or Dionysian. This is a break in the personality, a split. And in ascending and descending, the personality is destroyed, but this destruction only strengthens it more. According to Goethe, if you want to strengthen your personality, destroy it! Every experience of the aesthetic order expels the spirit from the facets of the personal. The rapture of ascent asserts the superpersonal.

The poet Blok wrote about the book of poems "Transparency" (1904): "The book of Vyacheslav Ivanov is intended for those who have not only experienced a lot, but also changed their minds a lot." "This is a necessary caveat, because it is difficult to find in all modern Russian literature a book that is less understandable for people who are slightly 'wild', removed from cultural sophistication, although, perhaps, they have experienced a lot."

"Poetry Is Real Life. Ivanov's works can be called "learned" and "philosophical" poetry. At least - with the exception of a few poems that are purely lyrical and transparent as rock crystal (for example, *The Lily*) - those that bear the stamp of a deep penetration into the style of ancient Greece most attract attention."

"The symbol has a soul and an inner development, it lives and is reborn." The path of symbols is a path along forgotten tracks, where the "youth of the world" is remembered.

In this connection, a famous Russian critic Michail Bachtin writes about the "Cross of Evil", he mentions that there are Three Crosses —

the crosses of Christ and the two robbers. How to understand the connection of the symbol of evil with the cross? This means that the cross is the beginning of all life, of all becoming. For Viach. Ivanov this symbol is very expanded. For him, the Cross is the beginning of all life. Everything that becomes, and everything that lives is attached to the cross. And not only good, but also evil.

Referring to the philosophy and practices of that circle, a contemporary researcher Etkind in his work *Whips* (a religious sect), says that a lot of people didn't enjoy the religious gatherings of that time at all. Wife of Rozanov, another famous writer, took promise from her husband and daughter no longer to go there. Stepdaughter of Rozanov objected to the sacrifice, saying that it was brought "early" and therefore it is "blasphemy". He condemned the meeting at Minsky (a famous gathering place of the time): "blasphemy [...] rejoicing" was "bad and painful". Zinaida Gippius comforted her in a letter: "You went without knowing (without knowing I would have gone)." Andrei Belyi in his memoirs used this case as an example of the degradation of the era: "In some salon, someone was stabbed with a pin and blood was squeezed into wine, calling idiocy 'participation' (Ivanov's word)."

The question of how to display the domain of the spirit, "which does not leave in the memory of phenomenal referents", was raised by St. Augustine. Is Personality a sign? Does the poet dream of signs? Or is "znamenyé" (a sign from above) a poet?

"If there is a symbol, it works thanks to printing. The seal is an integral part of the symbol. According to Ivanov, symbolism is determined by the degree of imprinting (by the Spirit)".

Andrey Belyi, a famous poet of the time: "According to Ivanov, the word is a symbol, a metaphor; it grows from the experience of utterances, prayers, like a flower from the ground; in the mind it is a memory of the event space of life, etched in people's character, making the memories of us on the event of cosmic life, and the grain of the myth".

S. S. Averintsev, a contemporary Russian literary critic and philosopher about the characters of V. Ivanov: "Symbolic poetry (in the simplest and primary sense) is poetry, in which the symbol is not a decorative attribute that creates an "atmosphere", but the foundation on which the building is built. The symbol as a "category" of poetics obscures the symbol as the reality of poetry.

The researcher Averintsev considers the system of symbols of V. Ivanov as vaults, closing, converging from different sides. The scientist writes about domes: "the dome is a word that has become flesh." For all its civility, Ivanov's poetry is stubborn, untamed poetry, and this ensures its power of survival when the carnival time of the "Tower" recedes into the distant past.

The young man of that time, another famous poet Osip Mandelstam had reason to write to Vyacheslav Ivanov: "You are the most incomprehensible, the darkest, in everyday usage, poet of our time—precisely because you are more loyal to your element than anyone else — consciously entrusting yourself to it."

Here is an example of V. Ivanov's poetry:

Infancy (1913-1918):

Here is life's long minea, / Memoirs palimpsest,
Its unified idea — / Amen to all lives — a cross in roses. /
Is the song harmonious and original.

The most important word here is "palimpsest", it allows to imagine the imprint, see how in infancy we could still remember the eternity, have traces of it in our mind.

Mythological reflections of ancient ideas about sacred marriages have become a part of life on the Tower of Vyacheslav Ivanov. He himself wrote a lot and talked about it in connection with the influence on him of V. S. Solovyov's ideas about the androgynous nature of man. His contemporaries - D. S. Merezhkovsky, N. A. Berdyayev and other thinkers made this problem one of the cardinal ones in the culture of the Silver Age.

The vision of the ladder as an image of initiation is also revealing. It symbolizes the ascent (the image of the driver — "the Spirit of God") and the descent (the image of the guide - "the spirit of darkness"), which depict the mystical death and new birth. The metaphor of the ladder, according to the Gnostic teachings, to which the ideas of the Rosicrucians go back, is "at the same time the passage of the inner cosmos, that is, the structure of the soul itself".

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CHAPTER THREE

SYMBOLISM AND ALEXANDER BLOK (1880-1921)

Among Russian poets and writers of the Silver Age (that is the Russian Modernism) there are many famous and less famous ones. Some of them left after the Revolution, like Ivan Bunin, Marina Tzvetaya, Vladimir Nabokov. Some of them stayed, like Anna Akhmatova. All the writers are famous worldwide. Most of them formed their school of thought. Symbolism was the most famous and most influential one. Yet there were many other schools of poetry and thought, including imaginalists (like the famous Sergey Esenin, at some point the husband of the American ballet-dancer Isadora Duncan), or futurists, like V. Hlebnikov, or Vl. Mayakovsky, who introduced completely different style to writing and versification.

Private love stories of the Silver age writers and poets are extremely interesting for a reason. For a Silver age writer, the word of poetry or novel was life itself. That was the philosophy and the style of living. For poets and writers of the “Golden Age of poetry”, for Pushkin, for instance, it is different. There is a story to it. The famous Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, a classic, the author of *Eugene Onegin*, quite by chance didn't get to Sennatskaya Ploshad, where there was Decembrists' Riot after which a lot of officers got into exile. There is a legend that Pushkin didn't get there only because he met a hare on the way. But, as a lot of researchers agree, there are only two witnesses to the story. The hare. And Pushkin. Thus the example shows that the world of real life and poetry for the 18th century Russia was different. The two worlds formed different systems.

Silver Age is different. The word becomes life. Poets and writers are not scared of experiment, for the sake of their writing. They try to explore the potential of feeling, emotion. This helps to even re-invent religion. Dmitry Merezhkovsky will be talking about the Third Testament, in the attempt to combine pagan religion and Christianity. A task not really possible.

Alexander Blok, a Russian poet of the Silver age, is famous for his love story, and above all for his poetry. Gentle, beautiful. Overwhelming.

I first met Blok in the spring of 1907, in Petersburg. High forehead, slightly curly hair, transparent, coldish eyes and the general appearance of a young man, a page, a poet. He wore low turn-down collars, showed his neck openly and that suited him. He read poems with his own nuances. He was foggy to himself, as if he was getting drunk, -

wrote Boris Zaitsev (writer and translator) about the poet of the Silver Age Alexander Blok.

Among other poets of the Silver Age Blok stands out as one of the most attractive characters, with lots of mystery, romanticism around his beautiful figure. And intelligent restrained man with his endless lyrical poetry, such a vivid example of Russian Modernism, with its innovations, acute hearing of Revolution with its turmoils.

Alexander Blok was born in St. Petersburg on November 16 (28), 1880. From birth, he was surrounded by his grandmother, great-grandmother, aunts, nannies... Boundless adoration. His friends claimed that he had never known anyone dearer than his mother: the ties that bound them together were never broken, as was their mutual concern and sometimes anxiety. For Blok, the attitude towards each woman was an echo of the "insecurity" and youthful tenderness that was so naturally expressed in a children's poem written at the age of five:

Hair grey, hair cute,
I love you.
For you, in the garden
I'm saving up my cabbage, —

and years later, it may have led to a sense of vulnerability and emptiness. In 1897, when Blok was seventeen, he went with his mother to Bad Nauheim, a water resort in Germany. He was very good-looking, thoughtful and silent, somewhat old-fashioned. He has never been characterized by curiosity, thirst for knowledge. He was not interested in other people's thoughts, but rather in his own feelings. In Germany he met Xenia the Sadovskaya, a woman much older than him. In the pleasant surroundings of a social resort, he experienced his first love. However, Blok's youthful poems are often banal, too dreamy. And only by 1898, he discovered the

poetry of Vladimir Solovyov, inextricably linked with the image of Eternal Femininity.

By the time of his meeting with Lyubov Mendeleeva (the daughter of the famous Russian chemist Dmitry Ivanovich Mendeleev), Blok was deeply involved in mystical teachings. Once, when he was in a state close to a trance, he saw her, the beloved woman, on the street, walking from St. Andrew's Square. Blok followed her, trying to remain unnoticed. Then he described this walk in the poem *Five Bends Hidden* - about the five streets of Vasiliievsky Island, along which she walked. Then another meeting by chance. This time – on the balcony of the Maly Theater. For any mystic, coincidences are not just accidental, they are a manifestation of the divine will. That winter Blok wandered around St. Petersburg in search of a great love.

The real image of the beloved girl was idealized by him and merged with Solovyov's idea of Eternal Femininity. This was evident in his works, which were later collected in the collection *Poems about a Beautiful Lady*. Such a fusion of the earthly and the divine in the love of a woman was not the invention of the poet. Before him there were famous precursors like Dante, Petrarch, the German romantic Novalis. But only Blok managed to really connect with his beloved. And understand from his own experience what a tragedy this can lead to.

Lyubov Dmitrievna herself, in contrast to her idealized image, was a sober and balanced person. It was even said that although she was beautiful, she was "too ordinary". She remained a stranger to mysticism and abstract reasoning, and in her character was the absolute opposite of the restless Blok. When he tried to instill in her his ideas about the "unspeakable", she could calmly say: "Please, no mysticism!" (The famous poet, the clever writer and critic of the time Zinaida Gippius, could not keep silent about the poet's favorite word "unspeakable". She would say: "I wanted to pull the "unspeakable" by the ears and put it on the ground!" In general, Blok found himself in an unfortunate situation: Lyubov Dmitrievna, the one whom he made the heroine of his mythology, refused to play the role intended for her. This continued until November 1902.

On the night of November 7 to 8, the students arranged a charity ball in the hall of the Noble Assembly. Lyubov Dmitrievna came with two friends, in a Parisian blue dress. As soon as Blok appeared in the hall, he did not hesitate to go to the place where she was sitting. After the

ball, he proposed to her. A small university church is still located in the Main Building of the University on the Mendeleevskaya Line. Alexander Blok got engaged here. The young poet lived in the Rector's house from childhood, and when he decided to marry, he wrote a petition to the rector, his grandfather: "I have the honor to humbly ask Your Excellency for permission to marry Lyubov Mendeleeva. Second-year student of the Faculty of History and Philology Alexander Blok".

In January 1904, six months after the wedding, the young couple moved to Moscow. They all seemed like a friendly couple. One day, an elegant young lady and a curly-haired young man with a "tightly bound waist" rang the doorbell of the apartment where the poet Andrei Belyi lived with his mother. A true citizen of St. Petersburg, a secular, somewhat inhibited Blok was ushered into the living room, where, making unnecessary fuss, bouncing, bending all over, now growing larger, now shrinking before their eyes, they were noisily greeted by a Andrey Belyi. After a year of constant correspondence, two years in which they exchanged poems, the poets immediately became close friends, spiritual "brothers". According to the old custom, they even exchanged shirts, and now Andrey Belyi was walking around in a beautiful shirt embroidered with swans, which Lyubov Dmitrievna had embroidered for her husband. She was the center of mutual attention. In her slightest actions, both friends saw a prophetic meaning. Was she wearing red today? Did you change your hair? In general, everyone fell in love with Lyubov Dmitrievna supporting the cult of Eternal Femininity and the image that Blok created with his own poems.

Andrey Belyi was distinguished by a rare spontaneity. Simply and soberly, he confessed his own sins, realized his main weakness – the inability to say "yes" or "no". And he was also in a hurry to confess to Blok his feelings for Lyubov Dmitrievna. The atmosphere was thickening. The harmony was broken, but the friendship did not break up. The summer passed. Before leaving, Andrei Bely poured out his heart with endless explanations. All Blok could advise was to put an end to falling in love as soon as possible. Andrey Belyi promised.

And Blok was already twenty-six years old. In his letters, poems, articles, there was a constant melancholy. Beautiful Shakhmatovo landscapes, dirty intersections of St. Petersburg served as a painful background for his new poems. In this atmosphere, he met another woman, a Stranger. This time accessible, whom everyone could see, touch, love.

Blok was seriously attracted to Natalia Volokhova, an actress of the Meyerhold Theater. *Snow Mask* and *Faina* are poems dedicated to her.

Blok is carried away again and again. About his women, he openly, even in a somewhat childish way, he wrote to his mother: "Mother... I spent an extraordinary night with a very beautiful woman... I found myself at 4 o'clock in the morning in a hotel with this woman, and returned home in the ninth." Since 1906, Blok often attended "Saturdays" at the Komissarzhevskaya Theater, and Lyubov Dmitrievna received an engagement, performed with part of the company in the province. Blok wrote *The Little Show*, his first play, in which the Beautiful Lady is already made of cardboard, and the sad Pierrot is waiting for his Columbine, who is taken from him by Harlequin. Now Blok and Lyubov Dmitrievna lived "each his own life". The meetings at their house, however, continued, but were already deprived of their former charm. Blok was often absent-minded, often drunk, his visits to Belyi did not please him, and his family life was in disarray. Lyubov Dmitrievna confessed to Belyi that "she suffered a lot in the previous year, and that she does not know how she survived." Blok, on the other hand, spoke bitterly about that "they've crossed the rubicon."

Despising old-fashioned conventions, Lyubov Dmitrievna and Natalia Volokhova got along well with each other, even openly admitted that they were good friends. The provincial Muscovite Belyi did not like this at all, he believed that Blok had turned his life into a theater. Belyi and Blok often quarreled, 1906-1907 is a time of constant discord and reconciliation.

Once Belyi even challenged a friend to a duel, then demanded an explanation in order to forgive and get forgiveness.

Ozerki... Ozerki is one of the historical districts of St. Petersburg to this day, now very well-maintained, with the metro station of the same name. But at the beginning of the 20th century, this place was functioning only as a modest country village, where there was not even a railway station. And yet it was here that Alexander Blok often strolled. From a letter written by the poet in the summer of 1911:

Suddenly I saw a poster in Ozerki: a gypsy concert. I felt that here is fate... - I stayed in the Lakes. And, indeed, they sang, God knows what, and completely tore my heart out; and at night in St. Petersburg, in the pouring rain, on the platform, the gypsy

woman, in whom, in fact, the whole thing was happening, gave me a kiss on her hand – a dark, long – fingered hand, all in armor of prickly rings. Then I staggered on the street, dragged myself wet to the Aquarium, where they went to sing, looked into the eyes of a gypsy woman and trudged home.

The Lady Unknown

Of evenings hangs above the restaurant
A humid, wild and heavy air.
The Springtide spirit, brooding, pestilent,
Commands the drunken outcries there.
Far off, above the alley's mustiness,
Where bored gray summerhouses lie,
The baker's sign swings gold through dustiness,
And loud and shrill the children cry.
Beyond the city stroll the exquisites,
At every dusk and all the same:
Their derbies tilted back, the pretty wits
Are playing at the ancient game.
Upon the lake but feebly furious
Soft screams and creaking oar-locks sound.
And in the sky, blase, incurious,
The moon beholds the earthly round.
And every evening, dazed and serious,
I watch the same procession pass;
In liquor, raw and yet mysterious,
One friend is mirrored in my glass.
Beside the scattered tables, somnolent
And dreary waiters stick around.
"In vino veritas!" shout violent
And red-eyed fools in liquor drowned.
And every evening, strange, immutable,
(Is it a dream no waking proves?)
As to a rendezvous inscrutable
A silken lady darkly moves.
She slowly passes by the drunken ones
And lonely by the window sits;

And from her robes, above the sunken ones,
A misty fainting perfume flits.
Her silks' resilience, and the tapering
Of her ringed fingers, and her plumes,
Stir vaguely like dim incense vapping,
Deep ancient faiths their mystery illumines.
I try, held in this strange captivity,
To pierce the veil that darkling falls
I see enchanted shores' declivity,
And an enchanted distance calls.
I guard dark secrets' tortuosities.
A sun is given me to hold.
An acrid wine finds out the sinuosities
That in my soul were locked of old.
And in my brain the soft slow fluttering
Of ostrich feathers waves once more;
And fathomless the azure glittering
Where two eyes blossom on the shore.
My soul holds fast its treasure renitent,
The key is safe and solely mine.
Ah, you are right, drunken impenitent!
I also know: truth lies in wine.

(Translated by Babette Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky)

In Russia, the 19th century became a century of tragic fates, and the 20th – the century of suicides and premature deaths. There are no calm faces among Russian poets. Somebody died of a broken heart, somebody died of a bullet. Kondraty Ryleev was hanged. On the verge of death at the age of seventy, A. Fet tried to open his stomach. Apollo Grigoriev died of poverty and drunkenness. According to Nina Berberova, the famous émigré writer:

"Blok's drunkenness was strikingly different from Grigorievsky's. Grigoriev drank bitter water to forget his poverty. Blok's head was always clear. It wasn't the wine that was destroying him, but despair. In his poems, letters, articles, diaries, and even

photographs, there is an ever-increasing, mortal, persistent melancholy, as if all the twenty-four years of his life were a constant mental anguish. His laughter faded, and so did his smile."

Symbolism, like other trends in poetry and literature of the early 20th century, created a new model of life and culture, but "the paradox was that this same culture testified to the sinking of the century into darkness." Poets suffered, feeling death, while accepting death, as well as the tragic feeling of being "last in a row". According to Blok, "there was a man – and there was no man, there was only rotten, flaccid flesh and a smoldering soul." Perhaps this was also explained by what Anna Akhmatova wrote in her 1911 poem "I came here, you idler...". "Secret-wise idleness," grandiose metaphysical idleness, is the reverse side of poetry. However, is not such a recognition of themselves by poets. A desperate cry for themselves, who selflessly sacrificed themselves to their art? The task set by the symbolists is grandiose in its scope – not only to introduce a new direction in versification, but to invent a system of symbols that would recreate reality not with simple words (taking into account the direct meaning), but with symbols.

... Lyubov Dmitrievna spent more and more time on tour. On rare free days, she came to St. Petersburg, where her husband was waiting for her. He prepared, bought flowers, "put things in order in his soul." His wife appeared lively, and they chatted and dined merrily until nightfall. But sometimes he waited in vain. "Something infinitely difficult happens in my life all the time. Lyuba is deceiving me again," Blok wrote at the time. During the years of her absence, he often visited the Theater of Musical Drama. Here he met the Delmas. Tall, thin, with red hair, green eyes, and an unusual posture. Blok fell in love with her at first sight, dedicated to the singer his *Carmen*, one of the parts of the third book of poems. This love was unlike any of Blok's previous infatuations. If with Natalia Volokhova it was mainly gypsies, madness, music, breakup (they parted without even saying goodbye), now instead of crazy passions he found devoted friendship, peaceful walks, quiet evenings.

In July 1916, Blok was taken into the army. About ten kilometers from the front, he commanded a division of sappers. Then the Revolution. Lyubov Dmitrievna was with him, but he still felt more and more lost, growing older.

Women still admired him. Delmas visited him, friends, strange ladies wrote letters. Every night, strange female shadows loomed under the windows. But they no longer interested him. "L. Delmas sent Lyuba a letter and a flower. On the occasion of my birthday tomorrow. Yes, personal life has already turned into one humiliation, and this is noticeable as soon as the work is interrupted," Blok wrote.

In the era of the destruction and death he has remained true to himself. According to his contemporaries, he even forced himself to hear the "music of the Revolution", and Russia became his new lady of the heart. In the poem *The Twelve*, Blok describes with strange zeal not only the soldiers (who at that time really marched through the streets, destroyed, killed, raped), but "puts in front of them" the same "feminine ghost". Not a woman or Eternal Femininity, but this time - Jesus Christ.

"In a white crown of roses – in front – Jesus Christ," the poem ends. Zinaida Gippius, with her characteristic insight, believed that Blok "did not even understand the blasphemy of his poem", "he could not even be blamed for it". Many contemporaries were so outraged by Blok's revolutionary lyrics that they stopped greeting him. Seeing Zinaida Gippius in the tram, Blok asked: "Will you give me your hand?" Only in person. Not socially, " she replied.

There were other opinions about the poem. Boris Zaitsev, for example, wrote:

The appearance of Christ leading his twelve murderous apostles, Christ not only "wearing a white crown of roses" but also with a "bloody flag" - there is a certain "yes". You can think like this: there are twelve destroyers of the old (and sinful), also sinful, covered in blood, dirty. Yet they are led – though blind - by some spirit of truth. They themselves will perish, but they will perish for a great cause, for the liberation of "these little ones" - and Christ blesses this. He will forgive them blood and murder, as He forgave the robber on the cross. Therefore, they are "yes" and "yes" to their cause. What is not a thought and what is not a theme for a poem?"

Vladislav Khodasevich recalled how Blok was present at one of the evenings, in the "House of Writers", where they held a celebration in memory of Pushkin. The speeches were preceded by brief statements

from various organizations about the form in which they intend to celebrate Pushkin Days in the future. Among the delegates was an official representative of the government, a certain Christie, ex officio-head of the so-called academic center. When he was given the floor, he stood up, blushed, and said the following:

"Russian society should not assume that in everything that concerns the perpetuation of the memory of Pushkin, it will not meet with obstacles from the workers' and peasants' authorities."

Laughter rippled through the room. Blok lifted his face and looked at Christy with a wry smile. He was the last to read his inspired speech about Pushkin. Khodasevich recalled that he was wearing a black jacket over a white sweater with a high collar. All wiry and dry, with a weather-beaten, reddish face, he looked like a fisherman. He spoke in a hollow voice, chopping off words with his hands in his pockets.

Turning his head in Christie's direction, Blok said, "The officials are our rabble, the rabble of yesterday and today." A white-faced Christie fidgeted in his chair, and before he left, he said loudly: "I didn't expect such tactlessness from Blok." According to Khodasevich, "in the mouth of Blok, the speech sounded not tactless, but deep tragedy, partly repentance. Russian society and Russian literature were bequeathed by the author of *the Twelve* to preserve the last Pushkin legacy-freedom, at least "secret". And as he spoke, it felt like the wall between him and the hall was collapsing. In the ovation that accompanied him, there was an enlightened joy that always accompanied reconciliation with a loved one.

In his Pushkin speech, exactly six months before his death, Blok said:

Peace and freedom. They are necessary for the poet to liberate harmony. But peace and will also take away. Not external peace, but creative peace. And the poet dies, because he can no longer breathe: life has lost its meaning.

Blok was exceptionally truthful, and it was even said that he "reeked of truth." The surrounding life was for him, according to contemporaries, unsaid, not finished, incomprehensible. Perhaps this is why

he invented his own language, the meaning of which is not in words, but "between or near words".

Alexander Blok enjoyed great respect and influence among contemporary poets. Sergei Yesenin asked for his recommendations to the literary world, Georgy Ivanov constantly borrowed money from him, many stayed in his house. Russian poets idolized his work. The last years of Blok's life were terrible. He was very ill. As contemporaries said, it seemed that he "did not have enough air." It was as if after *Twelve* there was darkness and emptiness. In one of his speeches (at the Communist Press House), he was directly shouted: "Dead man! A dead man!" after which he did not live long. In August 1921, a mourning poster appeared in the window of the Writers' Shop on Nikitskaya Street: "Alexander Alexandrovich Blok has died. The All-Russian Union of Writers invites you to a memorial service in the Church of St. Nicholas on the Sands, at 2.30 pm." According to Boris Zaitsev, "this poster looked to the south, to the sun. The young ladies of Moscow looked at him sadly from the street."

Ironically, or rather, by divine design, perhaps, the name of Blok is associated with the lightest, purest, most beautiful in Russian poetry. His image remained the strange, mysterious, tragic shadow that his poems were.

A blizzard sweeps the streets,
Coiling and staggering.
Someone gives me a hand,
Someone smiles at me,
Leads me until I see a deep,
Enclosed by somber granite,
And this deep flows and sings,
And calls like an accursed spirit.
I draw near, I withdraw,
I stand stock-still, atremble,
— If I but cross the boundary strip,
I shall be among murmuring springs...
He whispers (not to scare me off) —
Already annulled, my will —
"Grasp this—die skillfully,
And you exalt your soul.

Understand this — you are alone,
How sweet are the secrets of the cold.
Look deep into the cold current
Where everything is young forever.”
I run. Get out, accursed spirit!
O do not try or torture me.
I’ll go out in the fields, the snow, the night,
And hide beneath a willow tree.
For there the will than all wills freer,
Will not impede the free man,
And the pain worse than any pain
Will turn from its devious ways!

(Translated by Geoffrey Thurley)

CHAPTER FOUR

POEM *TWELVE*: REVOLUTION AND MYSTICISM OF HEART

In this chapter we explore the main motive and the nature of *the Twelve* poem by Alexander Blok, look at the main ideas, images and symbols of the poem, as well as the aesthetic means that are the core of the poem's construction. The article also explores the negative reviews it received. The pagan versus Christian paradigm is paid attention to, with a focus on the notion of music, Revolution, the irrational that are revealed and explored in the poem.

The famous quotation from the Bible is: "There is another who bears witness of me" (John 5: 32-33). Yet Alexander Blok in his diary wrote, "But do you need the Other?" (A. Blok). Blok didn't refer to the psychological image, yet to devil, meaning he wanted to see the positive side in everything, that is why image of Christ notoriously appeared in his poem where it was not supposed to be.

The poem *The Twelve* was written by Alexander Blok in January 1918, almost a year after the February Revolution and two months after the October Revolution. The poem *Twelve* was not included in the last lifetime edition of the collection of Blok's poems, but was repeatedly published in Soviet Russia, and was known in Europe and the United States by translations. There are many opinions, hypotheses, early and later, about the interpretation of the poem. If in earlier reviews of the poem, critics decided whether it was "Bolshevik" or "anti-revolutionary", then over time, the ideological approach gave way to a deeper analysis of the figurative system of the poem. The lyric-metaphysical image of Christ has always prompted critics and readers to look for a universal ethical meaning in it.

The plot of the poem is not particularly complex. Snowy streets of the revolutionary city. Briefly painted portraits of the main characters – a priest, a rich woman in a doodle, an old woman. On the streets of Petrograd there is a patrol squad of revolutionaries of twelve people, who talk about their comrade Vanka, who got together with the "street girl" Katka. When the patrolmen see the cart on which Vanka and Katka are riding, they attack the sledge, and Katka is killed by a shot from Petrushka, one of the twelve Red Army soldiers. The patrol moves on. They are followed by a dog, which is driven away with bayonets. At

some point, a vague feminine image appears in front of the Red Army soldiers - Jesus Christ.

The poem was printed, published as a separate book, and it was read aloud for the most part by Lyubov Dmitrievna, and occasionally by Alexander Blok himself. Nina Berberova, however, notes that at some point the recitation of the poem became the main source of income for the poet (Berberova 1991, 217). Immediately after the publication and the first concerts, the work was accepted literally with hostility by the majority of representatives of the Russian intelligentsia. Ivan Bunin, attending a meeting that Moscow writers arranged for the reading of the *Twelve*, spoke with the words

"...Blok went over to the Bolsheviks, became Lunacharsky's personal secretary, after which he wrote a pamphlet *The Intelligentsia and the Revolution*, began to demand: "Listen, listen to the music of the Revolution!" and composed *Twelve*, writing in his diary for posterity a very pathetic fiction: that he composed *Twelve* as if in a trance, "all the time hearing some noises - the noises of the fall of the old world" (Bunin 1991).

Reading Blok's *Twelve*, even his close and genuinely sympathetic old friends simultaneously experienced surprise and fright, even complete rejection of the unexpected and new position of the poet. The poem is well known for the criticism of Zinaida Gippius, expressed in poems in which she addressed the poet very peremptorily: "I will not forgive, / your soul is innocent. / I will never forgive her." Then they would meet in an empty carriage by chance, and Zinaida Gippius would give him her hand, in her own words — "personally", but not "socially" (Gippius 1925, 5-70). Alexander Blok's close friend the poet Andrei Belyi was also shocked, writing to Blok in a letter dated March 17, 1918:

Scythians (poem) - huge and epochal, like *Kulikovo field* ... In my opinion, You are too careless to take other notes. Remember — You will not be "forgiven", "never"... I do not sympathize with some of Your feuilletons in the "Banner of Labor", but I am amazed at Your courage... Be wise: combine it with courage and caution."

Nikolai Gumilev claimed that Blok, by writing *Twelve*, served "the cause of the Antichrist" — "crucified Christ a second time and shot the tsar once more" (Orlov 2001, 533-534).

Vsevolod Ivanov, in his memoirs, writes about his alleged meeting with Admiral Kolchak and conveys his words, which also indicate not in favor of Blok: "Gorky and especially Blok are talented. Very, very talented... And yet both, when we take Moscow, we will have to hang... " (Orlov 2001, 540). The poem *Twelve* did not receive approval from the authorities. L. Trotsky, for example, writes: "Of course, Blok is not ours. But he lunged at us. Rushing, he broke down" (Trotsky 1991,102). A vivid illustration is also a poem by A.V. Lunacharsky, written in response to the *Twelve*: "So they go at a stately pace, /And at a distance you, the poet, / Behind the blood-red banner, / Singing along to their verse. / Their cruel romance / Bribed you with tragedy. / There is little chance of victory, socialism is alien to you — /But you are infected with their trembling and anxiety, / And you are walking on the road, / Touched, weak, fascinated" (Lunacharsky 1961, 202).

Such a reaction perfectly confirms not so much the depth of Blok's philosophy or even his intelligence, but the purity of the heart, a certain naivety, which clearly testifies in favor of the "spirit-creating" interpretation of the poem, clearly illustrates its strong, powerful figurative dominant, which is impossible not to recognize, even despite the wise and sometimes cynical critics.

Two images connected together draw attention to themselves, which give the poem strength. Put it in a special place in history. Make it incredibly relevant at all times, especially for the Russian reader. The image of Russia, which is drawn against the background of the figurative motifs of "world catastrophe", "world music", "hum", "wind" and the image of Christ, is put together. According to critics, one of the possible keys to understanding the poem can be found in the work of the famous chansonnier and poet M. N. Savoyarov, whose concerts Blok attended in 1915-1920.

Not only the text but also the presentation of the poem by Lyubov was associated with "low", "folk" Savoyarovsky style. Viktor Shklovsky was one of the first to feel this and then defined it: *Twelve* is an ironic thing. It is made of the "thug" style. The style of a street verse like Savoyarovsky (Shklovsky 1990. 175). This motif of "nationality" correlates

with the fact that Blok himself repeatedly writes in his articles, discussing, living through the problem of the relationship between the intelligentsia and the people. For example, in the article *The People and the Intelligentsia* Alexander Blok gives a detailed picture of his own idea of the ambiguity of their "points of contact":

Since Catherine's time, the love of the people has awakened in the Russian intelligentsia, and since then it has not been impoverished. Have been collecting materials for the study of "folklore"; cluttering up bookcases collections of Russian songs, epics, legends, incantations, laments; investigate Russian mythology, rituals, weddings and funerals; petalouda about people; go to the people, executed by hope and despair; finally, die, go to death and starvation for the people's cause.

Perhaps, at last, they even understood the soul of the people; but how did they understand? Does it not mean to understand everything and to love everything - even that which is hostile, even that which demands the renunciation of what is most dear to oneself - does it not mean to understand nothing and to love nothing? This is on the part of the "intelligentsia". It's not like she's always been idle. She put her will, heart, and mind to the study of the people. But on the other hand, all the same easy smile, same silence "canny", that "thank you" for "teaching" and an apology for his "darkness," which felt "until time" <...> There is between the two camps - between the people and the intelligentsia - a kind of hell where you converge and conspire those and others.

There was no such connecting line between the Russians and the Tatars, between two camps that were clearly hostile; but how thin is this current line-between camps that were secretly hostile (Blok, 1909).

In the articles written by Blok, the topic of nationality is developed, thought out, and most importantly - felt and lived through. In the poem *Twelve* the motif of "nationality" is realized in a slightly different way, more succinctly, accurately. It is actualized, first of all, by including the image of Katka, a vivid image of Russia itself, which became a "street girl", who was killed, but was loved.

Katka's face first appears in the historical prologue - a portrait of "old Russia", which, according to I. A. Novikov, "is necessary to see where this blizzard came from and from which national element the poet takes this (i.e., twelve)" (Novikov 1956, 160). Katka is a variant of the Russian national female type, which is reflected in many images of literature. Her face — "this is the face of character from Dostoevsky, and Grushenka, and Katerina from *Thunderstorm*, and "red woman" from *Silver Dove*. Yes, and Katyusha Maslova. <... > These are different faces of the same image"¹ (Novikov 1956, 160-161).

The portrait of a Russian girl so clearly and acutely delineates the image of Russia of that, and any, for example, of today, that we can, in our opinion, say that the suffering, lamentations and questions of Blok were not so much realized in an ironic manner, as they were emphatically seriously embodied in the poem, which, in fact, caused fierce attacks and criticism.

Analyzing the articles, V. Khodasevich writes:

In the period between 1907 and 1913, Blok wrote a series of articles: *Religious Quest of the people*, *People and intellectuals*, *Nature and culture*, *Irony*, *Child of Gogol*, *Flame*, *Intelligentsia and revolution*. They are remarkable for the fact that in them Blok not only predicts a future revolution, but speaks of it as an event already taking place, the sound of which is already intelligible to him: Gogol and other Russian writers liked to imagine Russia as the embodiment of silence and sleep; but this dream ends; the silence is replaced by a distant and increasing hum, unlike the mixed hum of the city.

In the same way Gogol imagined Russia as a flying troika... That hum that grows so fast... and there is a wonderful ringing of the bell of the troika... Rushing to the people, we throw ourselves right under the feet of the rabid troika to certain death. The "distant hum " referred to here must, of course, be classified as a dream that gradually becomes reality.

¹ Famous characters from the novels by Andrey Beliy, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy

But Blok continues: this reality in turn as something which is a dream compared to what will occur in the more distant future, can "already imagine how it is in nightmares". Thus, for Blok, the past is a dream of the present, but the present itself is a dream of the future. The reality of each preceding minute is a dream of the next. We live in a dream and in reality at the same time " (Khodasevich, 1996).

V. Khodasevich's statement allows us to note another important point. For Blok, it is the name of Gogol (there is a detailed analysis of Blok's Notes on Belinsky's "Letter" to Gogol, made by researchers of the Pushkin State Research House) that is inextricably linked with the concept of Russia. Gogol in the poet's mind is united with the future Russia, the one that was seen, according to Gogol, only with "spiritual eyes".

In parallel with the formation of the concept of the crisis of humanistic culture, the names of Gogol and Belinsky acquired in Blok's critical work the meanings of opposing tendencies in art and were connected with each other by "tense antithetical relations" (Obatina, 1998). The correlation of Russia (the vision of its future) and Jesus Christ together is a creative position, which in Blok's poem is still not supported by new aesthetic means, as it will be later, in the post-avant-garde era, for which the "denial of artistry" will be more obvious.

In literary work, the gesture or life of a fool, for example, will become a conscious denial of beauty, a refutation of the generally accepted ideal of beauty, a rearrangement of this ideal and the elevation of the ugly to the degree of aesthetically positive (Epstein 1989, 223). At this stage, the most important thing for Blok is not even the new aesthetic means of implementing the image, but its blurriness and diversity, similar, perhaps, to the personal position of the poet and the artist.

The meaning of the poem is the image of the wind, that is, the element that most accurately conveys the feeling of the spirit, whether it is holy, which in religious literature is often compared to the wind, because it "breathes" when and where it wants (compare the statement of Blok in 1909: "Those who are filled with music will hear the sigh of the universal soul, if not today, then tomorrow"). Destructive? The hum in Alexander Blok's poem is an echo of the elements, the sound embodiment of world music.

Interestingly, just before the creation of the poem *Twelve*, Blok makes such notes in his notebook on January 3 and 6, 1918: "In the evening — a hurricane (a direct satellite of coups)"; "In the evening - a cyclone" (Averin, Dozhdikova 1987, 115). It is appropriate to mention that one of the features of Blok's worldview is that his consciousness was open to a variety of cultural-historical, philosophical and poetic concepts. So it was with the philosophical views of R. Wagner and F. Nietzsche, the poetry of V. Bryusov, the English philosopher and critic T. Carlyle. According to critics, the image of the antonymous, dual Log Fire in Wagner (*The Ring of the Nibelungs*), like almost all the mythological images used by Carlyle, is somehow marked by Blok.

For example, the emphasis in Blok's argument on the rise of "public spirit" at the beginning of the revolution, which Carlyle partly explains as a "Plutonic-Neptunian" myth: "According to Plutonic-Neptunian geology, the world rotted from the inside, gave remnants and now with an explosion will collapse and be created anew." (Averin, Dozhdikov 1987, 95). Similarly, in 1902, Blok, in a form close to Carlyle's mystical constructions, writes down the idea of the antinomy of the light (divine) and dark (diabolical) principles [Averin, Dozhdikova, 1987: 98]. Such a dual nature of the element is particularly consonant with the "music of the revolution" in the poem *Twelve*.

The category of music in recent years at the Blok is also associated with the theme of the people. At this time, the question of the attitude of the people to culture and the idea of culture as a "musical rhythm" are especially important for him. The bearer of the musical principle of the world, the people play a decisive role in the historical and cultural process: "The barbarian masses turn out to be the guardian of culture, possessing nothing but the spirit of music, in those epochs when a de-winged and discordant civilization becomes the enemy of culture, despite the fact that it has all the factors of progress at its disposal" (Averin, Dozhdikova 1987, 116).

About the image of Christ, Blok writes: "That Christ is before us is certain. It is not a question of "whether they are worthy of him", it is terrible that He is with them again, and there is no other yet; but it is necessary – the Other?" (Berberova 1991, 217). The variants of the "Other" here, perhaps, are Lenin and Satan (the first thing that comes to mind, as an interpretation). The first interpretation could make the poem

a naive, visually realistic narrative, alien to the poetry of symbolism by definition. The second would be banal.

Blok creates an image of Christ – an image of light, salvation, forgiveness, and the future. Blok, in this case, like many poets of the Silver Age, sees in any human soul that grain of the divine, which, by definition, is inevitably present in it under any circumstances. However, Blok was criticized mainly for the fact that his poetry was too directed deep into himself, which, in all probability, led to a pagan interpretation of Christianity. The supreme significance of transcendence in the world of Blok is not questioned, but its status is questioned, and the proper divination of the path of the poet's crucifixion is questioned.

Such doubts about the experience of self-knowledge, which puts "knowledge" rather than "faith" in the first place, gave grounds to reproach Blok with "demonism" by Orthodox priests Paul Florensky, George Florovsky, members of the "Solovyov Brotherhood". All of them warned about the dangers lurking in godless mysticism and leading to the loss of the criterion for "testing the spirits", to the confusion of the spheres of "spiritual" and "carnal" and the impossibility of their "reconciliation" with the spiritual experience of the Christian tradition" (Grykalova 1998: 102).

Returning to the early work of Alexander Blok, it should be noted that, despite the fact that the poem *The Twelve* is mostly considered a new stage in the poet's work, certain ideas inherent in Blok's poems, written under the influence of the ideas of Plato and ancient philosophy, are clearly expressed in the work we are considering. One of the manifestations of Blok's metaphysics was what he called "numeracy" in his own language. This concept is not unambiguous.

In the most general form, "to number", according to Blok, means to actively contemplate, think, comprehend with the inner eye the deep essences of the world and being, to plunge into a special mystical state. But often Blok put into this concept a purely numerical specificity (already directly in the spirit of the Pythagoreans), when he thought about combinations of numbers. For the young Blok, everything was not only "full of gods", but also full of signs, hints, symbols. He expected the fulfillment of certain events of a universal scale, and at the same time he was tormented by a persistent thought about the vicissitudes of his passionate "unearthly" love for L. D. Mendeleeva (Bystrov 1998: 10).

In relation to the poem *The Twelve*, these ideas are very relevant because, while declaring the theme of Christianity in the image of Christ, Blok, nevertheless, at the same time leaves the reader the opportunity to choose in favor of the ancient interpretation, especially since Christ in the poem is not a crown of thorns, but a "crown of roses". The image, in some sense, very similar to the familiar mystical aura that pervades the poetry Unit, as figure 12, which can be interpreted not as the correlation of the red army and the apostles, and, perhaps as a combination of numbers (e.g., sum of pairs of digits one and two give an odd number that, according to the Pythagorean wisdom, a symbol of extremity, complete, total") (Bystrov 1998: 11).

Another important point that critics note is the fact that *the Twelve* and the Christ in the poem are separated, that is, they are in opposition:

It is necessary to point out another extremely important fact. <..
.> The twelve shoot at Christ. This is evidenced by the logical connection of the lines-threats: "- Hey, comrade, it will be bad, / Come out, let's start shooting! - and the verse "And from the bullet unharmed". Why would the poet mention that Christ is not taken by a bullet, if they did not shoot at him? The appearance of Christ is not unexpected and not unnatural only if he again ascends to Calvary (Stanisic 1987).

No less important for the interpretation of the poem *The Twelve* is the experience of A. Blok in relation to the creation of a symbolist drama, which at that time "began to gravitate towards a monodramatic construction" (Gerasimov 1987, 21). In the symbolist monodrama, the "mask" was each of the actors, internally united by the drama of the author's consciousness. Through "masks" - lyrical characters, the author expressed his experience of belonging to the mystery of universal existence.

Such a monodrama taught readers (viewers) to see everything that happens in it through the eyes of the author and had to unite them with the all-human "I" and with the highest world will. It did not have the ethical coordinates inherent in the tragedy (Gerasimov 1987, 21-22). For the poem *Twelve*, in our opinion, it is not the ethical side of the issue that is particularly important, but the association, the pairing of different characters and motives that reveal the experiences, the search for the au-

thor himself. According to researchers of the Pushkinskogodom (Institute of Russian Literature), we can talk about how the attitude of Blok to the Revolution changed after January 1918, that is, after the poem *Twelve*. Information about Blok's moods at this time can be gleaned from an entry in a notebook dated April 4, 1918: "After the January raptures, I have a vile sclerotic lethargy and stupidity." In the following years, the poet's notes will repeat the idea of the end, the end of the revolution.

In May 1919, in a notebook, he asks: "Who ruined the revolution" and specifies "the spirit of music" in parentheses. And in the lecture of 1920, it will sound: "... In Russia, the revolution ended two years ago." So, after January 1918, the poet's mind takes root with the idea that the "spirit of music" that was saturated with the October Revolution, the spirit that was supposed to transform civilization into culture, is gradually disappearing. It is important that Blok, analyzing the development of the revolution, distinguishes several stages: when the rapid movement is replaced by a slowdown and "the decline of creative hops, the music that sounded at the end of 1917 and in the first half of 1918" becomes noticeable (VI, 390) (Obatina 1998).

Thus, for Blok, his own position as a poet and artist prevails over political, as well as religious, ideas. The poem *Twelve* is not a deep philosophy of the mind, but rather a manifestation of the education of one's own soul, embodied in creativity. In this sense, the image of Jesus Christ is much in tune with the author because of the deliberate focus on criticism and the search for "my own self", and not a painful tendency to interpret and condemn the surrounding political, religious, and poetic worlds.

The focus of the lyrical "I" in the poem best demonstrates the ethical and aesthetic norms of the poet himself. The feminine image of Christ replaces, grows out of the image of a Beautiful Lady, *Eternal Femininity*. There is little naivety here, just as there is no naivety in trying to accept the power of Christianity, which is replacing the ancient worldview. In January 1918, Blok wrote: "I gave myself up to the elements for the last time no less blindly than in January nineteen-seven or March nineteen-fourteen. That is why I do not renounce what was written then, because it was written in accordance with the elements (with the organic sound of which he was the exponent all his life), for example, during and after the end of the *Twelve* I felt physically, audibly, a great

noise around me — a combined noise (probably the noise from the collapse of the old world).

Therefore, those who see in the *Twelve* political. Poems are either very blind to art, or sit up to their ears in political dirt, or are possessed by great malice—whether they are enemies or friends of my poem" (Fokin, Polyakova 2008, 257-258). Perhaps both of them forget that the path of the lyrical hero of the Blok "through the circles of hell" to "becoming human" also includes a period of temptations.

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CHAPTER FIVE

A CAPTURED SPIRIT AND A DEMON

ANDREY BELIY (1880 — 1934) AND GLIMPSES OF BIOGRAPHY

Andrey Belyi is another famous name among the famous literary giants of the Silver Age. He is very famous in the West among academic circles mainly for his very precise, yet quite difficult theory of a symbol. I have talked to a number of researchers who studies his works in archives at the University of Trier (Germany). His heritage allows to get to the notion of a “symbol”, as well as to compare it with music. The ability to see the connection between literary language and language of music owes a lot to the studies by Andrey Belyi.

My own St. Petersburg University lecturer once said that he couldn't forgive Andrey Belyi for inviting Lyubov Dmitrievna Mendeleeva to the railway station to leave (I think that was for Moscow), and he never turned up. That was very typical of Belyi who enjoyed being seductive but got so offended when he was nearly seduced! That was his character!

At some point I met a Russian émigré, Marina Alexeeva Dzhordaniya. It was in Paris, about 20 years ago. She was telling me an episode of how she participated in the Beauty Contest in Hôtel des Invalides when she was young, and how Andrey Belyi, who was present at the Ball, approached her “jumping”, as was his usual manner! She didn't win the contest (it was won by Gidionova from Egypt, quite a famous aristocratic name!). Andrey Belyi told Marina that he had voted for her, not Gidionova! In a way, I bear this “trace” of Andrey Belyi in me, though it was brought to me not by means of a book, but through Marina's story!

During the years of emigration, Zinaida Gippius, the famous Russian critic of that time, recalled:

It was an amazing creature, Borya Bugaev! The eternal "boy's play", the slanted eyes, the dancing gait, the stormy waterfall of words, all "yes-yes-yes", but the eternal lies and constant betrayal. At the same time, he was very cute and sweet, you just

had to know his nature, not be surprised at anything in him and not be indignant at anything. I will add, to finish him off, that he had a great deal of erudition, which he used rather absurdly. The word "talent" is somehow little applied to it. But in the incredible pile of his endless writings, there are some glimpses of genius.

Boris Nikolaevich Bugaev (pseudonym Andrey Bely) is a Russian writer, poet, critic, philologist, philosopher, and symbolist theorist. He was born in Moscow in a "professorial" family on October 14 (26), 1880. Bugaev's father was an outstanding mathematician, in 1886-1891 Dean of the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics of Moscow University, the founder of the Moscow Mathematical School, who anticipated many of the ideas of Konstantin Tsiolkovsky and the Russian "cosmists". As Andrey wrote, his mother was engaged in music and tried to contrast the artistic influence with the "rationalism" of his father. The essence of this parental conflict was constantly reproduced by Andrey Bely in his later works.

Professor Bugaev used to say at that time: "I hope that Borya will come out with a face like his mother, and with a mind like mine." (Echoing B. Shaw in some ways). Behind these jocular words was a serious family drama. The professor was not only eccentric, but also very ugly. Once at a concert (already in the early 1900s) Nadezhda Bryusova, the poet's sister, nudged Andrey Bely and asked him: "Look, what a man! "This is my papa," he replied, with that most gracious, broadest smile of perfect pleasure, almost of happiness, with which he liked to answer unpleasant questions. Andrey Bely's mother was very pretty. At one of the celebrations of Turgenev, according to the memoirs of Vladislav Khodasevich, "Moscow beauties were planted near the famous writer: Ekaterina Letkova and Alexandra Bugaeva. They are sitting next to each other in the famous painting by K. E. Makovsky *Boyar Wedding*, where Alexandra Dmitrievna herself is painted young, and Ekaterina Pavlovna — one of the friends."

Andrey Bely was afraid of his father and secretly hated him (no wonder potential or actual crimes against his father form the basis of many of his works). He pitied his mother and admired her almost to the point of sensual delight. But these feelings, while retaining all their sharpness, became more complicated over the years and came into conflict with the opposite ones. Hatred for the father, mixed with reverence

for his mind, with reverent amazement at the cosmic spaces and mathematical abstractions that were suddenly revealed to the son through him, turned into love. Falling in love with her mother, on the other hand, went hand in hand with an unflattering idea of her intelligence.

According to Khodasevich's apt remark, "every phenomenon, falling into the Bugaev family, was subjected to opposite assessments on the part of the father and on the part of the mother. What was accepted and approved by the father was rejected and condemned by the mother — and vice versa."

Women worried Andrey Belyi much more than people usually think. "His tactics," Khodasevich recalled, "were always the same: he charmed women with his charm, almost magical, appearing to them in a mystical halo, which in advance seemed to exclude any thought of any sensual harassment on his part. Then he would suddenly give way to these advances, and if the woman, startled by the surprise, and sometimes offended, did not return his love, he would become furious. Back again: whenever he managed to achieve the desired result, he felt defiled and tainted, and also became furious. It also happened that at the last minute before the "fall" he managed to escape, like the beautiful Joseph — but then he was twice as indignant: both for being seduced, and for not being seduced after all."

Andrey Belyi could not stand it first and simply stopped communicating. Khodasevich recalled how Nina Petrovskaya suffered for simply becoming his lover. After the breakup, she, like a real woman, tried to attract the attention of other men, and not without success. However, driven by a fierce desire to take revenge on the "angel-like", she did not achieve results. The poet was not inclined to jealousy and did not intend to go against public opinion at all.

Some time after the breakup, Andrei Belyi gave a lecture on literature at the Polytechnic Museum. Slender, inspired, he stood at the pulpit and spoke of his most passionate love — symbolism. Nina quietly opened the door to the auditorium, softly and imperceptibly, like a cat, came close to him. The poet saw three dilated pupils in front of him. Two belonged to the huge eyes of his former mistress, and the third belonged to the muzzle of a revolver pointed at him. Nina fired. The revolver misfired. Later, Petrovskaya sadly said to her friend and poet Vladislav Khodasevich: "God is with him. After all, the truth is, I already killed him back in the museum."

In 1904, Andrei Bely met the young poet Alexander Blok. Their personal and literary destinies were linked forever. Alexander Blok came to Moscow with his young wife, Lyubov Mendeleeva, who was familiar to some Moscow mystics and was already surrounded by their enthusiastic worship, in which the suppressed eroticism bubbled under the seductive and partly hypocritical cover of mystical service to a Beautiful Lady. Andrei Bely immediately succumbed to the general mood, and the wife of a new friend became the subject of his close attention. This attention was patronized by the mystics and only inflated by them. However, there was no need to inflate it — the attention turned into love, which, in fact, gave the impetus to the break with Nina Petrovskaya.

The brotherly feelings originally proposed by Andrey Bely were received favorably by Lyubov Mendeleeva. He, who had once been ironic about the marriage of Alexander Blok, now almost openly identified Lyubov Dmitrievna with Eternal Femininity. "Here she sits with a sweet and clear smile, as if there is nothing mysterious about her, as if the great insights of poets and mystics do not concern her," he wrote in the article "The Apocalypse in Russian Poetry."

But when Andrey Bely, as usual, passed from brotherly feelings to feelings of an occasional shade, his task became very difficult. Perhaps it would have been completely unsolvable, if not for his dazzling charm, which, it seems, was impossible not to succumb. Their passionate relationship lasted for two years, in 1906, Alexander Blok reflected them in his famous play *Balaganchik*. And here is how Nina Berberova wrote about the relationship of this triangle:

1906 — 1907. An endless, confusing series of quarrels and reconciliations between Blok and Bely. The meetings-almost always at the Bely's insistence - were painful. Blok was quite in control of himself: cold, polite, never trying to offend, he says pleasantries in a slightly arrogant tone. The white man — nervous, breathless, burning with love and hatred-challenges him to a duel, then demands an explanation in order to forgive or receive forgiveness. He is aware of his utter uselessness in Blok's life, and at times becomes quite obnoxious, imposing his presence; Blok tolerates him out of pity, sympathizing with a genius that has never been realized, and is also disarmed by the sincerity of

Bely, who blames himself for all his sins, is ready to admit any guilt, never mentioning his many merits"

Alexander Blok agreed to these meetings, but he did not seek them himself. One day Andrey Bely made a date with him in a restaurant. He came with Lyubov Dmitrievna. Andrey Bely was delighted, everything can still work out! But a few days later, the situation became tense again. On Nevsky Prospekt, Alexander Blok, lost in thought, haughty, impenetrable, passed by without noticing Andrey Bely. It was like a "blow to the heart"! "Instead of the soul of Alexander Alexandrovich, I saw a hole," he wrote in his memoirs. He wanted to flee to Moscow forever, and he demanded an explanation from Lyubov Dmitrievna, but she only laughed at his tragic appearance.

Andrei Bely then did not dare to leave. Instead, he began a literary struggle with Alexander Blok. In Moscow, in the Bryusov journals, he fiercely criticized the new Blok, but the latter only smiled calmly in response. With surprising frankness in his memoirs, Andrei Bely told how he tried with all his might to divorce Lyubov Dmitrievna from her husband. According to Nina Berberova, he tried everything to achieve a loud and final break. But neither intrigue, nor attacks, nor impertinent letters brought any result. Having parted with his dream, depressed and abandoned, Andrei Bely finally went abroad.

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There is, however, another version of events given by Vladislav Khodasevich. When the harassment of Andrei Bely was close to being crowned with success, the poet's inescapable duality, as always, broke out. He had the folly to assure himself that he had been misunderstood and "misunderstood," and he declared the same thing to the lady, who must have suffered a great deal before agreeing to it. The consequence of the retreat is not difficult to imagine. Lyubov Dmitrievna was seized with anger and contempt, and she repaid Andrei Bely, according to Khodasevich, "a hundred times more offensive and painful than Nina Petrovskaya." But he was famous for his love of contradictions. From

that moment on, he fell in love with Lyubov Dmitrievna truly, with all his being and forever.

Andrei Bely lived abroad for more than two years, during which he created two collections of poems dedicated to Blok and Mendeleeva. Returning to Russia, in April 1909, the poet became close to Anna Alekseevna Turgeneva, known as Asya. Together with her in 1911, he made a number of trips to the Middle East and North Africa, described in the *Travel Notes*. In 1912, in Berlin, they met Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy. Andrei Bely became his disciple and gave himself up to his apprenticeship.

In fact, having moved away from the former circle of writers, he now worked on prose. All the friends and admirers of his talent were afraid that he would lose his identity as an artist, that the originality of his colors and the brightness of his language would be lost. All this caused him unnecessary suffering and forced him to spend his strength to prove the opposite. When the war broke out in 1914, Steiner and his students moved to Dornach, Switzerland. On March 23, 1914, a civil marriage was concluded between Boris Bugaev and Anna Turgeneva in Bern.

In 1916, Andrei Bely, who was called up for military service, arrived in Russia by a roundabout route through France, England, Norway and Sweden. But Asya did not follow him.

Autumn

My fingers slipped out of your hands.
You're walking away with a frown.
Look how the birch trees have strewn
red leaves with the rain of their blood.
Pale autumn, cold autumn has spread
itself over us, reaching up high.
A barren plain stretching around us
breathes a cloud into clear sky.

Translated by Max Thompson

The second departure of Andrei Bely abroad was not planned, although he had been thinking about it since 1919. It was rumored that the poet was going to run away, and he was even sometimes asked:

Khodasevich believed that Andrei Bely had long wanted to leave, but the Bolsheviks did not let him go, and only after the death of Alexander Blok and the shooting of Nikolai Gumilev, he was urgently issued a foreign passport.

Andrey Bely left Russia in early September 1921. He met with Asya, who suggested that he leave. She decided to leave her husband forever and remained in Dornach, devoting herself to serving the cause of Rudolf Steiner. She was called an "anthroposophical nun". Being a talented artist, Asya managed to maintain a special style of illustrations, which were added to all anthroposophical publications. Andrey Bely was left completely alone. He dedicated a large number of poems to Asa. Her image can be found in *Katya* from *The Silver Dove*.

Life in exile was not successful. As Vladislav Khodasevich recalled: "... the whole of Russian Berlin became a curious and angry witness to his hysteria. She was seen, she was welcomed, she was mocked by too many. I'll tell you more about it. It was expressed mainly in drunken dances, which he indulged in in various Berlin Dielen. It was not that he danced badly, but that he danced terribly. In the monotonous throng of foxtrots, he introduced his "variations" - a distorted reflection of the unchanging originality that he showed in everything he undertook. The dance he performed turned into a monstrous mimodrama, sometimes even obscene. He invited a stranger to the ladies. Those who were bolder went to amuse themselves and amuse their companions. Others refused — in Berlin, it's almost an insult. The third was forbidden by their husbands and fathers. It wasn't just a drunken man's dance: it was, of course, a symbolic violation of the best in oneself, a blasphemy against oneself, a diabolical grimace to oneself."

Before returning to his homeland, Andrei Bely was in a state of complete insanity. However, according to the same Khodasevich, this was largely dictated by the cunning inherent in the poet. Fearing that his intimacy with emigrants and semi-emigrants might be blamed on him, he began to sever his foreign ties. I chased away a girl to whom I owed a lot. He made senseless slanders against his publisher. Returning to Russia in October 1923, Andrey Bely married Klavdia Nikolaevna Vasilyeva. He had no feelings of love, but he held on to her as if she were his savior. Quiet, submissive, caring Klodya, as the writer called her, became the wife of Andrei Bely on July 18, 1931. He died in her arms on January 8, 1934, in Moscow.

ANDREY BELIY AND SYMBOLISM

It is always difficult to describe symbolism. As was stated by V. Ivanov a symbol is a word, dark in its final depth. It is about the potential of a word to get to the very essence of the world, and yet, on the surface, reveal its ambiguity.

Andrey Bely always provides a very thoroughly done scheme of his ideas. For instance, when describing Vlyacheslav Ivanov and his theory of symbols, A. Bely draws triangles of three sisters: Feeling, Will, Thought. They can't accept the "spiritual I", and that is the point when the act of "spiritual work" comes into play (Gluhova 2006, 115-116). Bely explains that the three powers of soul (Mind, Will, Feeling) are the usual conditions and powers of the soul. He refers to Vlyacheslav Ivanov's state as not being the Apollonian state but Dionysian state (Will, Mind are still at the top of the triangle, but Feeling is in Chaos) (ibid.). This quite difficult and complicated scheme allows to combine the work of soul (spiritual dimension), mind and feeling, see its limitations and qualities. At the same time it connects the work of one's mind to the word and its potential.

Paul Florensky goes further. In his work *Iconostasis* Pavel Florensky writes that the icon painter does not repeat the visible upper world, but fixes with the help of paints "the invisible world that appears in front of him." The transfer of an image from the invisible world to the visible space means that the image or form is given from outside to such a thing, which previously had no form:

And the same is true about mysticism. The general law is the same everywhere: the soul is enraptured from the visible and, having lost sight of it, is enraptured into the invisible — this is the Dionysian breaking of the bonds of the visible. And, having soared up into the invisible, it descends again to the visible, and then the symbolic images of the invisible world appear before it - the faces of things, ideas: this is the Apollonian vision of the spiritual world. There is a temptation to take it for the spiritual, those dreams that surround, confuse and seduce the soul when the path to the other world opens before it. It is the spirits of this age that are trying to keep consciousness in their world (Florensky 1995, 102).

In this regard, the organization of space and time relations becomes extremely interesting. Florensky's concept perfectly and organically connects the most traditional organic understanding of the image and sign with the most modern understanding of time and space. Contemplating the icon, we enter its temporal and spatial sphere. The chronological order of the present, past and future is reinterpreted within the framework of the reversibility of the icon's time – in the light of the state of salvation that is already realized in that sphere. This sphere only seems timeless, in fact it is only outside of chronological time, in the sense that in the sphere of icon time, the past, present and future are lined up in new rows.

For Andrey Bely (as it is for many poets of the Silver Age), the image of space is relevant. Space is emptiness and infinity, "empty space", and for Florensky, space is not just a uniform structureless place, but an organized reality itself, which has an internal order and structure.

In his development of the concept of "man-orchestra", "individual-community", "polyphonic personality" A. Bely is not alone. He believes that "activity is contained in the process of dynamic self-discrimination – self-identification of the self with a number of “faces” imposed on the individual from the outside." Pavel Florensky is against the application of the law of identity (similarity of external signs) to the person, the person can identify himself only with his divine prototype, with his ideal "I" (hence the provisions on the path of life, more understandable quotes, such as "we love a person not as he is, but as God intended him").

Even more explicit confirmation of the ideas of Pavel Florensky, agreement with his rejection of the mundane reading of the text, is the study of A. Shishkin and comparison of the provisions of Pavel Florensky with the works of Vyacheslav Ivanov. For V. Ivanov and P. Florensky, the symbol permeates all planes of existence, both horizontally, in time, and vertically – in space. As an example, it is enough to recall his essay *The Point* (1922), where P. Florensky builds two meanings of “the point”: positive, existential, and non-existential (from the symbolic meaning of the beginning, the entrance to another world to death). Here Florensky applies the idea of the symbol's many meanings (V. Ivanov's thought), as well as its refraction in different spheres of consciousness, which, gathered together, make up the hierarchy of the planes of the divine unity. The highest symbol is the Eucharistic Gifts, which are wheat and wine, which at Liturgy, according to the Christian creed, turn into the Divine Body and Blood.

The Holy Gifts are the "alpha and omega of the world", the "absolute point of the world". Similarly, V. Ivanov speaks of a Symbol (with a capital letter), that is "The Flesh of the Word", "the mystical flesh of the Word born in eternity", and a symbol with a small letter, "becoming flesh, but not being able to become it, if it did, it would no longer be a symbol, but the reality itself".

The contemporary Russian researcher Averintsev considers the system with the symbol of Vyacheslav Ivanov as vaults, closing, converging from different sides. The scientist writes about domes: "the dome is a word made of flesh." According to the philosophical thoughts of Pavel Florensky, art occupies only an intermediate position between the symbols of the lower and higher order. The upper limit is formed by the Cross, the Name of Jesus, the Sign of the Cross, the essence of the scheme of the human spirit, in which the highest reality is revealed, and as our heart is purified, the schematic character of these symbols is increasingly condensed into a realistic one.

Thus, what is stated above in relation to the interpretation of the symbol by V. Ivanov and the views of Pavel Florensky can be reduced to the following position: the sinful mind tends to observe the lower limit of these symbols, and the spiritual mind – the upper limit.

Any sign (and language, in particular) has a wide range of acquired meanings, while it can be both a symbol and an iconic sign, as well as any other, including an icon. Only a special angle of vision, and accordingly, a certain context allows you to see the transcendental coordinate of the symbol, which can be manifested in any situation, but much more often occurs when implementing an icon or a symbol that is capable of materialization. The tendency of an individual to interpret a sign in its "lower or upper spectrum" of meanings is determined only by the desire and aspiration for further personal and spiritual growth. A sign can carry the entire range of meanings.

VALERY BRUSOV AND HIS DEMON

Valery Bryusov was born on 1 (13) 1873 in Moscow. He lived on Tsvetnoy Boulevard. In the family house, he had his own apartment, where he lived with his wife, Ioanna Matveevna, and with his sister-in-law, Bronislava Runt. The small office was lined with bookshelves. Extremely attentive to visitors, who did not smoke at that time, Bryusov

always kept matches on his desk. However, just in case, as a warning to the absent-mindedness of the guests, a metal matchbox was tied on a string! In this apartment, the famous "receptions" and "evenings" took place, where the fate of Moscow modernism was decided. At the same time, it was not customary to analyze the poems of Bryusov himself at these meetings. They should have been accepted as commandments.

Bryusov's sense of equality did not exist. According to Khodasevich's apt remark, this was influenced by the philistine environment from which the poet came:

The philistine is not an example of easier to bend his back than, for example, an aristocrat or a worker. For this reason, the desire to humiliate another person on occasion overwhelms the happy philistine more than the worker or the aristocrat. Bryusov could either command or obey.

The poet even had a remarkable way of offering his hand. It had a strange effect. Bryusov held out his hand to the man. He was holding out his own. At the moment when the hands were supposed to touch, Bryusov quickly pulled his own back, gathered his fingers into a fist and pressed the fist to his right shoulder, while he himself, slightly baring his teeth, glared at the hand of an acquaintance hanging in the air. He didn't like people because, above all, he didn't respect them. The only woman he really liked was Zinaida Gippius.

In the early 1900s, Bryusov was interested in the occult, spiritualism and black magic. It was at this time that he met Nina Petrovskaya, the future mistress of Andrey Bely. She wasn't pretty, but in 1903 she was young — and that was enough. Nina Petrovskaya, according to Khodasevich, "was hysterical, and this, perhaps, especially attracted Bryusov." But what became the center of her life for Bryusov was another series of "moments". In his book *Necropolis* Vladislav Khodasevich accurately defined the atmosphere of the era of that time:

Love opened for the symbolist or decadent a direct and shortest access to an inexhaustible storehouse of emotions. It was enough to be in love — and a person became provided with all the objects of the first lyrical necessities: Passion, Despair, Exultation, Madness, Vice, Sin, Hatred... So everyone was always in love: if not

really, then at least they assured themselves that they were in love; the slightest spark of something like love was fanned with all their might.

When all the emotions from this hobby were extracted, Bryusov began to write *The Fire Angel*, a book in which he, with a certain conventionality, depicted their entire history. In the novel, he cut all the knots of the relationship between the characters, but with the death of the main character, the feelings of a real person, Nina, did not dry up at all. Bryusov was increasingly engaged in literary affairs and meetings, besides, he was drawn to the home, because he was married. Nina tried several times to resort to the proven means of many women-she tried to keep Bryusov by arousing jealousy. However, it was all in vain. Bruce lost interest. She vainly had recourse to the cards, and then to guilt. Finally, in 1908, she tried morphine. Then she made Bryusov a morphinist, and this was her real, though unconscious, revenge. In the autumn of 1909, she almost died, and then went, as it was decided, abroad, "in exile". Petrovskaya survived the First World War in Rome, in appalling poverty. She did hate Bryusov.

At some point, Andrei Bely entered the life of Petrovskaya. Then he was very young, golden-haired, blue-eyed and charming. Everyone admired him, fell in love with him, and it was even said that people seemed to change in his presence. The general admiration, of course, was transmitted to Nina Petrovskaya, and soon the feeling turned into love, and then into love. But if for Bryusov Petrovskaya was a source of emotion, then she "had to love Andrei Bely in the name of his mystical vocation," in which they both forced themselves to believe. Nina even wore a black string of wooden rosaries and a large black cross on her black dress. The same cross was worn by Andrey Bely. But her new chosen one was famous for being "pure". Therefore, he did not stop loving, but simply "ran away from temptation", so that too earthly love would not stain his pure robes. Nina Petrovskaya, on the other hand, felt abandoned and insulted. In the spring of 1905, Andrei Bely gave a lecture in the small auditorium of the Polytechnic Museum. Nina Petrovskaya came up to him and she fired the browning at point-blank range. The gun misfired, and he was immediately snatched from his hands. Nina Berberova recalled the first time she saw Petrovskaya:

...dark, in warts face, short and wide body, rough hands, dressed in long, rustling dress, a huge black hat with an ostrich feather and bouquet of black cherries, seemed very old and old fashioned... Renata in *the Fire Angel*, the love of Bryusov, Beliy's girlfriend — no, not as I imagined her...

When she kissed me, I could smell tobacco and vodka coming from her. She treated me with curiosity, as if she wanted to say: and there are people in the world who live as if nothing had happened: not Bryusov, not 1911, not shooting at each other, not medieval witches, not Martel's cognac, in which he once bathed his despair with her, not their whole decadent saga. Of this, only cognac was now available, but I refused to drink cognac with her, I did not know how to do it. She came often, sat for a long time, drank and smoked, and talked about him all the time. But Bryusov did not answer her letter."

The affair with Nina Petrovskaya was painful for both of them, but Nina was the one who suffered most. After finishing the *Fire Angel*, Bryusov dedicated the book to her and in the dedication called her "who loved a lot and died of love", but he himself, however, did not want to die. The first novel flashed and went out, leaving an unpleasant residue in her soul.

In 1913, Bryusov fell in love again. This time his passion was the aspiring poet Nadezhda Lvova, a Moscow student. The age difference between them was great. Bryusov became young, sought the company of young poets, wrote a book in the spirit of Igor Severyanin and dedicated it to Nadia. But to some extent, the story of Nina Petrovskaya repeated itself with her. Lvova could not come to terms with the duality of Bryusov's life and the fact that he was married. Bryusov systematically taught her to think about death and suicide, and then even gave her a browning — the same one that Nina used to shoot at Andrei Beliy eight years ago. At the end of November, in the evening, Nadezhda called Bryusov and asked him to come. He refused. She tried calling a few other people, but they were all busy for some reason.

At 11 p.m., she shot herself. The day after the funeral, Bryusov fled to St. Petersburg, and then to Riga, where he soon started a new novel. Vladislav Khodasevich, who wrote the most vivid, though short,

article-biography about Bryusov, ends it by giving very accurate, succinct facts of the last days of the poet's life, as if trying to justify him:

Lonely, exhausted, he found, however, and unexpectedly joy. At the end of his days, he took care of his wife's little nephew and nursed him with the tenderness of a kitten. I returned home loaded with sweets and toys. He spread out the carpet and played with the boy on the floor... When I read the news of Bryusov's death, I thought that he had committed suicide. Perhaps, after all, it would have been so, had not death itself warned him.

When one tries to analyze the difference, or at least the image, the famous people leave, you see that Andrey Bely was more about light and brightness. He spoke about the mystical side of love, explored its potential, as most writers of the Silver Age did. Valeriy Brusov, a great specialist in verse, was more about Faust, darkness, Dionisyan vision. This is the reason, perhaps, why Sergey Prokofiev's music was so powerful. The world beyond "good" and "evil", an attempt to reconcile the pagan and the Christian, is the core principle of many Silver age writers, very similar to the ideas expressed by the forthcoming Gippius and Merezhkovsky, the famous couple, the founders of an Intelligencia Circle in St. Peterburg (and later in Paris), who formed the tastes of philosophical and religious beliefs of the time.

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CHAPTER SIX

ZINAIDA GIPPIUS (1869 – 1945): ESSAYS, PROSE, POETRY

Contemporaries wrote a lot about Zinaida Gippius. Often referred to as "the green-eyed naiad, the sataness, the mermaid, the lady with the lorgnette." Her sharp, critical mind did not tolerate excessive warmth of words. Nina Berberova recalled that Gippius "artificially developed two qualities in herself: femininity and calmness, but there was little feminine in her, and inside she was not calm!"

Surprisingly, the epistolary genre is such that negative characteristics are selected and perceived by readers much better, especially offensive ones. "Zinaida Gippius exactly wasp in human growth, if not the skeleton "of penicillinic" (the pen of Aubrey Beardsley)," – says Andrey Bely, –

swollen red hair harbored a very small and crooked face; powder and glitter from lornette, which inserted greenish eyes; pawing faceted beads, staring at me, pat the flames lips, shattering the dust; from the forehead, just shining eyes, hanging stone: on a black stand; with behrudy chest rattled with a black cross; and was hit with a glitter buckle shoes; toe to toe; a plume of white bodycon dresses threw; the beauty of her bone, bezbokova the skeleton resembled prichastnye, deftly captivates Satan.

The editor of the Northern Herald, L. Ya. Gurevich, recalled her as follows:

Thin, narrow, with a figure that was later called decadent, in a half-short dress, with a sharp and delicate face, as if consumptive, in a halo of lush golden hair falling behind a thick braid, with light narrowed eyes, in which there was something inviting and mocking, she could not help but attract everyone's attention, seducing some, confusing and irritating others. Her voice was brittle, childish, and defiant. And she behaved like a spoiled, slightly broken girl: she bit off pieces of sugar with her teeth, which she put "for an increase" in a glass of tea for guests, and said childishly frank things with a defiant laugh.

A very famous episode is given by Irina Odoevtseva, retelling the story told by Gippius herself:

I once, at a dinner of the Free Philosophical Society, said to my neighbor, a long-bearded and long-haired hierarch of the Church: "How boring! They all serve the same thing. Veal again! Tired of it. I wish they served a fried baby at least once"! He turned purple, and almost choked with indignation. He never sat next to me again. He was afraid of me. I was called the White Devil.

Men were often afraid of Gippius, although they secretly admired her unfeminine mind and demeanor. Sergei Yesenin is a boy could not forgive Gippius, which she aptly called him a "gigolo". But Pavel Florensky, a religious philosopher and a man who judged people extremely strictly, recalled Zinaida Nikolaevna with surprising insight, emphasizing not the "theatricality" of the writer, but her inner honesty, sincerity, and fear of falsehood:

Although I only saw her for a few hours, I understood a lot about her, and above all, that she is immeasurably better than she seems. I know that if I saw her only in society, she would excite some annoyance and perplexity. But when I saw her in an intimate circle of friends and family, it became clear that, after all, what can excite annoyance is simply the result of internal purity-external fracture-a manifestation of the internal fear of falsehood... I am well aware that there are some people who, fearing the unnatural, put on a mask of it – such an unnatural that does not distort the true nature of the person, but simply hides it.

THE MURUZI HOUSE IN ST. PETERSBURG

In St. Petersburg at the beginning of the 20th century, the name of Zinaida Gippius was too well known to need recommendations. The poet, who belonged to the "senior symbolists" together with Merezhkovsky, N. M. Minsky, I. F. Annensky, V. Ya. Bryusov, F. K. Sologub, K. D. Balmont, who took the main blow in the struggle for the restoration of the rights of the aesthetic principle in poetry. The "junior symbolists"

of the generation of Alexander Blok and Andrei Belyi have returned to the positions already won by their older brothers.

The name Anton Krayniy (Extreme), the usual pseudonym of Gippius, is a critic who has written under other male pseudonyms that change rapidly for the purposes of literary tactics. Master of accurate literary characteristics, Gippius in a light, rapidly attacking manner, honing the idea to the formula, to the aphorism, ironically serious tone wrote about all the more or less remarkable phenomena of current literature, participated in many polemics, often started by her.

The literary life of the beginning of the century consisted of various circles — home, friendly, formed around publishing houses, almanacs, magazines, many of which in turn arose from circles. Zinaida Nikolaevna was a participant of the editorial evenings of the magazine "World of Art", "Sunday Parties" of the writer and philosopher V. V. Rozanov, the famous "Wednesdays" at the Tower of the poet V. I. Ivanov, "Fridays" of Polonsky, "Sundays" of Sologub. For some time (from 1902 to 1904), the editorial board of the magazine "New Way" was a kind of literary circle, in which Zinaida Nikolaevna attracted a lot of literary youth to cooperate. At the beginning of the century, Gippius is a recognized master in literature, and for novice writers of the symbolist circle, the difficult procedure of personal acquaintance with her becomes mandatory. Blok's poetic debut took place with her active assistance in the magazine "New Way".

The first articles of P. A. Florensky were also published here. She wrote the first review of the poems of the unknown Sergei Yesenin. Of the symbolists, it was Gippius who took part in the fate of the novice O. E. Mandelstam.

Later, the Merezhkovskys' apartment in the Muruzi house became an important center of religious, philosophical and social life in St. Petersburg, a visit to which was considered almost mandatory for young thinkers and writers. All visitors to the salon recognized the authority of Gippius and for the most part believed that it was she who played the main role in the initiatives of the community that developed around Merezhkovsky.

“I have been wounded by death and love”

Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius was born on November 8 (20), 1869 in the town of Belev, Tula province, in the family of the famous lawyer Nikolai Romanovich Gippius. The early childhood of Zinaida Nikolaevna was nomadic: because of the constant official moves of her father, the family did not live in one place for a long time – they temporarily lived in Saratov, then in Tula, then in Kharkov. They also lived in St. Petersburg, because Nikolai Romanovich, a talented man, an outstanding personality, an excellent speaker, before reaching the age of thirty, was appointed chief prosecutor of the Senate. However, not for a long time. Nikolai Romanovich, in the damp climate of the capital, immediately began to fall ill, and he had to urgently leave with his family to the south, to Nezhin, to his new place of service, as the chairman of the local court.

Because of her mother's excessive tutelage, home schooling became the only possible path to learning for Zinaida. She had never been interested in the exact sciences, but from an early age she began to keep diaries and write poetry-first jokes about family members. She adored her parents. Her attachment to them was so strange that when, at the insistence of her father, she was sent to the Kiev institute, she could not bear the separation, fell ill and spent almost all the time in the institute hospital. Separation for her is worse than death, wrote about her secretary Vladimir Zlobin. "The living, be afraid of earthly separations!"

All the children inherited from their adored father a tendency to consumption. It was this insidious disease that brought Nikolai Romanovich to the grave too soon and madly terrified Anastasia Vasilyevna with the vague ghost of new losses. It took time to heal the wounds. "I have been wounded by death and love since childhood," Zinaida Gippius noted in 1922, in her "Closing Speech". And in the book about Merezhkovsky, talking about her father, she writes: "I loved him so much that sometimes, looking at his tall figure, at him in a short fox coat, leaning back against the stove, I thought: "What if he dies? Then I'll die too."" He died when she was barely eleven years old.

MARRIAGE

Relatives strongly invited Anastasia Vasilyevna and the children to go with them to the dacha in Borjomi. They returned there exactly a year later, in 1888. It was here, at a modest dacha, that Zinaida met her future husband, the twenty-three-year-old poet Dmitry Merezhkovsky,

who had just published his first book of poetry and was traveling in the Caucasus. He differed from the swarm of Zinotchka's admirers in that he was serious, kept silent a lot, and when he did speak, one day accompanying her on a walk, he unexpectedly advised her to read the works of the English philosopher Spencer. The beauty was stunning. Usually the cavaliers offered to read only their helpless poems to her, or hurriedly reached for a kiss. Before meeting Merezhkovsky, all her "novels" ended with a sad entry in her diary: "I'm in love with him, but I can see that he's a fool."

With Merezhkovsky, there was a feeling that their acquaintance had lasted for a thousand years. A few days later he made an offer, and Zinaida Nikolaevna accepted it withing doubts.

Morning walks deep into the gorge, almost peaceful, always interesting conversations" gradually, as if in spite of the desire of both "interlocutors", turned into something more than just "acquaintance". Fate dominates their actions – they only obey the inexorable course of things (Researcher Yuri Zobnin).

"She has been in love before, and more than once," her secretary, V. A. Zlobin, comments on Gippius "memoirs", she knew what it was, but this is something completely different.

That's what she says: "And so, for the first time with Merezhkovsky here, something completely different happened to me." For almost six months - until the wedding in January 1889 - she is in a state of "either calmness or stupor", events occur without any participation of her will, "as in a dream". Merezhkovsky "happily avoids the very romantic "Caucasian duel", already as a groom enters the family of the chosen one, in September sees everyone off to Tiflis and from there goes to St. Petersburg to arrange things in view of the upcoming wedding."

At the wedding, on January 8, 1889, there were no witnesses, no crowd of acquaintances, no flowers, no wedding dress. Only the family and two best men – just to hold the crowns over your head. After the wedding, Zinaida Nikolaevna went to her home, and Dmitry Sergeyeovich - to the hotel. They met only in the morning, in the drawing-room, at tea, at the house of yesterday's bride, where it was announced to the unexpected guest-governess that "Zinotchka got married yesterday!" Then they returned to the capital — first to a small but cozy apartment on

Vereyskaya Street, 12, rented and furnished by a young husband, and at the end of 1889 - to an apartment in an apartment building Muruzi, which was rented for them, offering as a wedding gift, the mother of Dmitry Sergeevich. The union with D. S. Merezhkovsky "gave meaning and a powerful incentive to all ... gradually accomplished internal activities" to the novice poetess, soon allowing "to break out into the vast intellectual expanses".

It is widely known that Gippius herself claimed that the couple lived together for 52 years, "without being separated for a single day." Contemporaries argued that the family union was primarily a spiritual union. "The physical side of marriage was denied by both," but both "had infatuations" It is generally believed that Gippius "liked to charm men and liked to be charmed"; moreover, it was rumored that Gippius specifically "fell in love with married men" in order to get wedding rings from them as proof of passion, from which she then made a necklace. In reality, however, as Yu. Zobnin notes, " the case ... has always been limited to elegant and very literary flirtation, copious epistolary cycles and the trademark jokes of Zinaida Nikolaevna."

But this is not quite true. In Merezhkovsky's attachment to Gippius there was sometimes something desperate, painful, (notes Yu. Zobnin) - the fear of the possibility of being completely and completely alone after all the losses of the late 1880s.

When in 1890 Gippius suffers a serious illness-recurrent typhus, Merezhkovsky "completely lost his head."

"Zina has been much worse for the third day now. Yesterday the temperature reached 40 degrees! " - he writes in a note to M. V. Watson.

"The doctor says it's a relapse of typhoid fever caused by her careless behavior ... I do not go out even on the most necessary matters and literally do not leave Zina for a single second..."

Contemporaries did not separate Merezhkovsky and Gippius from each other, perceiving them as a single being. At the same time, the number of versions and explanations of their relationship is limitless. Here is how Gippius secretary Vladimir Zlobin assesses the possible outcome of the events:

What would have happened to them if they had not met? He would probably have married a merchant's wife, had children, and written historical novels in the style of Danilevsky. She...it's

harder to talk about it. Thanks to her masculinity and dynamism, she has more opportunities. <...> she likes to take risks and tries to reach the end in everything. Just what he is completely incapable of. As it is said in his passport: "He was declared unfit to serve military service.

Maybe it would have remained motionless for a long time, like a bomb that has not exploded in the sand. And suddenly it would explode uselessly, from an accidental jolt, killing several innocent babies. And maybe exploded would be: some "technician", "would have saved her relax spiritually, she continued to be nice to spend time in the company of students and young poets..." On this subject you can dream without end. But one thing is certain: her marriage to Merezhkovsky, whatever one may think of it, was a saving one: it saved them both from falling into insignificance, from metaphysical nothingness.

THE HEAVY SOUL

In the 1890s, Gippius had an "affair" with N. Minsky and the playwright F. Chervinsky, a university acquaintance of Merezhkovsky. Minsky was passionately in love with Gippius; she, as she commented, was in love "with herself through him." In a letter from 1894, she wrote to Minsky:

I light up, I die of happiness at the very thought of the possibility... of a love full of renunciation, sacrifice, pain, purity and boundless devotion ... Oh, how I would love a hero, someone who would understand me to the bottom and believe in me, as they believe in the prophets and saints, who would want this, all that I want... You know that there are serious, strong attachments in my life that are as dear to me as health. I love D. S. — you know better than anyone how — without him I could not live for two days, he is as necessary to me as air... But that's not all. There is a fire that is available to me and necessary for my heart, a fervent faith in another human soul that is close to me — because it is close to pure beauty, pure love, pure life — everything to which I have given myself forever.

Piercing words.

From the memoirs of V. Zlobin:

It was a strange creature, as if from another planet. Sometimes it seemed unreal, as is often the case with very great beauty or excessive ugliness. Brick blush all over her cheek, dyed red hair that looked like a wig... Her dress was complicated: some shawls, furs – she was always cold-in which she was hopelessly confused. Her clothes were not always successful and not always befitting her age and rank. She was making a scarecrow of herself. It made a painful impression, repulsive.

Summing up in his book the complex relationship between Z. Gippius, D. Merezhkovsky, the modern researcher Y. Zobnin observes that "not one only "long-bearded and long-haired Hierarch of the Church" after meeting with "pranks" Gippius was a strong desire to "never sit down" with Zinaida Nikolaevna – not so much because of "ethical", but because of the "aesthetic" of disgust: here too blatant bad taste and bad manners, and "Merezhkovsky something was forced "to sit next"".

Further in the book there are proofs supported by quotations of famous contemporaries of that time:

"Merezhkovsky is a European, a well-bred person in the best image in which we imagine a foreigner," M. M. Prishvin testifies.

M. A. Aldanov writes more extensively about the same thing:

His personal charm, what the French call spagt, was generally very great... This was due to his vast culture and his rare oratorical talent... His eternal intense mental work was felt by everyone and gave a rare spiritual aristocracy to his appearance.

Yu. Zobnin sums up the quotes, rightly noting that "it is difficult to combine this with "Martian clothes" and "fried babies", and with the absurdly dirty stories that often turned into "hoaxes" by Hippius, it is generally psychologically impossible". The researcher rightly writes that" the "eternal enmity" of the spouses did not in the least cancel out the mutual love of the indubitable, and in Gippius-reaching to the point of frenzy." Then you have the proofs.

In a letter to V. V. Rozanov dated October 14, 1899, Merezhkovsky confessed: "Zinaida Nikolaevna... is not another person, but I am in another body." "After all, we are one being," Gippius constantly explained to her friends. "This is both incomprehensible and unpleasant, but there is a certain reality behind it," Zlobin explained, with further clarification, –

And if you imagine Merezhkovsky as a kind of high tree with branches going behind the clouds, then the roots of this tree are her. And the deeper the roots grow into the ground, the higher the branches reach into the sky. And now some of them already seem to touch paradise. But no one suspects that she is in hell.

An example of the respect with which poet Alexander Blok addresses Zinaida Gippius (letter dated June 14, 1902, Shakhmatovo):

Dear Zinaida Nikolaevna. I still want to justify my thoughts, which I expressed to you last time.

I think you will agree with me if I am more precise: as far as I understand you, you were talking about a certain "white" synthesis that should combine and "purify" (approximately): aesthetics and ethics, eros and "love", paganism and "old" Christianity (and then-along the same path). I argued with you only about the possible 'reality' of this combination, because it seems to me that it not only still constitutes a 'pure possibility', but that the final paths to it are still completely hidden from our 'logic'.

What topics are covered, as stated. Sometimes it seems that, due to the lack of such subtlety in other critics, biographers, correspondents of Z. Gippius, her surprisingly feminine, human essence remains in oblivion.

In his exceptionally detailed book *The Heavy Soul*, published in Paris in 1950, five years after the death of Zinaida Gippius, V. A. Zlobin, the personal secretary and keeper of the archive, among other things, describes in detail the relationship of Gippius with Dmitry Filosofov, a Russian publicist, art and literary critic, a cousin of S. P. Diaghilev. Much later, after the break with his cousin, Philosophers will accept the offer of Gippius and Merezhkovsky to go with them to Paris, becoming for

many years their friend and colleague. All participants will live in the same apartment.

The Merezhkovskys had a habit of "saving" their friends (from spiritual death, of course) (V. Zlobin notes). They "saved" the Merezhkovskys even when the "dying" did not want it at all, being convinced that they were doing a good deed. The Merezhkovskys could not, of course, be indifferent to the fate of Filosofov, who was under the influence of Diaghilev and his circle. They believed that the atmosphere of this circle should have a corrupting effect on a person of weak character, such as Filosofov. And so Gippius begins to make plans for his "salvation", not without a secret hope to tame him.

On the same page of the diary where she just spoke about his dislike for her, she writes: "I also feel sorry for the Philosopher who is in such a narrow darkness. There (at Diaghilev's) it will disappear, well, of course. Everything is clear to me. I need to do what I can. I had such thoughts... " More than a year passes. During this time, the Merezhkovskys made a second attempt to "save" Filosofov, as fruitless as the first. In one of the frank letters of Filosofov to Gippius given by V. Zlobin (and her answers on 30 pages), it appears:

I read your letter again this morning, in the light of the sun, with a fresh head — and I was horrified! O, not by the content, not by the facts set forth in it, not by the internal and external events about or about which this treatise is written, but by this very "O".

And today, in the light of the sun and with a fresh head (which, of course, does not deny the possibility of thinking differently in the light of the witch-moon) I insist; Zina, take care. Beware of the charms of speculation! Be especially careful, because in the end, somewhere in the recesses of the soul, these subtle speculations, these straining of mental mosquitoes, give you pleasure. Oh, I don't mind playing chess, and with you, your whole game turns into an improved bullfight. Without danger and without wounds, the game does not exist for you?

For Gippius, however, her love for Philosopher is not at all and not only speculation, it is her only hope for deliverance, happiness, and spiritual need. "If you could see all this, really look inside," she tries to explain what the unloving person will not understand anyway — " you

would understand without surprise how and why the pitiful sparks, the brief moments of my holy feeling for you were immeasurably dear to me."

Talking about the endless number of letters Gippius, commenting on her memories and words, V. Zlobin writes: "And she makes a confession, which she will later recant: "We don't want to suffer. But we want what we cannot achieve without the greatest suffering. You can't take a step." Let's be fair: few people in their lives have suffered from love as much as she did. Why did she not only gain nothing, but lose everything?"

The break between Gippius and Filosofov occurred only at the end of 1919. And the Merezhkovskys learned about the death of Filosofov not from Taffy first (whose memories of how the Merezhkovskys reacted indifferently to this news are very well known), but from Ya.M. Menshikov. In the "agenda" Gippius recorded on August 22, 1940:

I met Menshikov, who said that Dima died on August 4.

Moreover, Gippius acknowledges the last two lines of his "farewell" poem: "But wherever you are — I am with you, And I love you as before" (from the book by V. Zlobin)

UNUSUAL MARRIAGE

In the 1890s, thought, Gippius had several love affairs, the content of which she describes in the autumn of 1897 in a letter to Z. A. Vengerova:

Just think: both Flexer and Minsky, as if others, do not consider me a man, but only a woman, bring me to a break because I do not want to look at them as men – and do not, of course, need me from the mental side as much as I need them... I come to the sad conclusion that I am more of a woman than I thought, and more of a fool than others think.

Merezhkovsky's reaction to Gippius "'quest" and feelings was a cold personal alienation. "In the life of every person there are moments of terrible loneliness, when suddenly the closest people become distant,

relatives-strangers," he writes to one of his "confidantes" and again repeats the fatal: "The enemies of a person are his home".

Zinaida Nikolaevna in 1905 writes to Dmitry Vladimirovitch Filosofov:

Do you know, or can you clearly imagine, what is a cold person, a cold spirit, a cold soul, a cold body – all cold, all being at once? This is not death, because there is a feeling of this cold, its "burn" – I can not say otherwise.

Dmitry is such that he does not see someone else's soul, he is not interested in it... He's not even interested in his own soul. He is "alone" without suffering, naturally, naturally alone, he does not understand that there can be torment here...

What a disappointing formula, but much more definite and rigid than the impotent arguments of some biographers about "unusual love and unusual marriage"

From the endless details of the biography, one can only draw a conclusion about how important nuances, shades of feelings and relationships were for these people. How much they valued the human, tried to get into someone else's soul, understand it, accept it and love it. In these details, there is both respect and a desire to be close. The most terrible revelation of our time now, the schematicity of codes, relations, causes and effects, primitivism.

TRAVELLING TO ITALY

And then they began to travel a lot. The couple had long and desperately planned to make a small trip to Italy, it was necessary for them for a new very serious work of Dmitry Sergeevich: a novel about Leonardo da Vinci. They managed to earn money together, but the lion's share of the royalties belonged to Zinaida Nikolaevna, her brilliantly sharp critical articles became quickly known! Soon the Merezhkovskys were traveling in a sleeping car on the Orient Express: Florence, Rome, Mantua, Genoa. They met in Italy with Anton Chekhov and Alexey Suvorin, who were passing through Florence and Rome, and were surprised at their unimaginable haste: hurry, hurry away from the primordial beauty, spread in everything, even in the sky! The feeling of admiration

for Italy at the time of her happiest, young years is spilled in every line of the memoirs of Zinaida Gippius! A very funny moment is the episode of the so-called "hoaxes".

One of the stories that took place in Venice is described by Boris Zaitsev in his book about Chekhov. He writes that Zinaida Gippius looked at everything with "mermaid eyes" and told Chekhov that for a table and an apartment "here" they pay 18 francs a week, and then it turned out that in fact as much as 18 francs a day! Boris Zaitsev notes that "in her youth, she was just as confused as in her old age, in Paris." But V. Zlobin laughs at this story, and claims that in fact nothing Gippius did not make a mistake, but misled Chekhov quite deliberately, that is, she decided to play a joke on Chekhov, the good opportunity presented itself! The fact that Chekhov admired everything foreign, in particular cheapness, not only amused her, but also slightly irritated her! One of the frequent victims of such hoaxes Z. N. often became Merezhkovsky...

So, in the libraries of Florence, she made careful and extensive extracts from the ancient folios that were brought to Dmitry Sergeyeovich on carts at his request: they were so heavy and huge! In Florence, Merezhkovsky first came up with the complex idea of a united church – in other words, it was in his head that the beginning of the ecumenical movement, so popular later, was born.

RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL MEETINGS

At the beginning of the century, the Merezhkovskys 'apartment in the" house of Muruzi " in St. Petersburg (the corner of Liteyny Prospekt and Panteleimonovskaya Street) was one of the centers of the literary, artistic, religious and philosophical life of the capital. The doors of the house were open to a wide variety of guests — poets, writers, artists, philosophers, religious and political figures. "Here... they truly created culture. Everyone here once studied," wrote Andrey Bely. Gippius is not only the hostess, entertaining guests, but also the inspiration, the organizer, the living spirit of these gatherings. It was Gippius who conceived the idea of the famous Religious and Philosophical Meetings (1901-1903), which played a role in the Russian Religious Renaissance at the beginning of the century. She was one of the founding members and an indispensable participant in all meetings, the verbatim reports of which were published by the magazine "New Way". With the blessing of the

Holy Synod, the creative intelligentsia for the first time met face-to-face with representatives of the church – bishops, priests, theologians, teachers, students.

Spiritual Academy for frank discussions about faith, discussion of "sick" issues of life and culture and how the church looks at them, whether it is ready to solve them together with the intelligentsia, feels their religious acuteness or considers them religiously indifferent. Dmitry Sergeyevich enthusiastically spoke about the community of human souls, that God is actually one for all. In the end, however, the Meetings were banned by the Synod. Later, in 1906, N. A. Berdyaev created the St. Petersburg Religious and Philosophical Society, which existed until 1916. Gippius became a member of this Society, where she made several presentations.

The topic of the "whips", that is, the religious sect that organized the night "radeniya" is very tempting to discuss, especially since there is a detailed book by Alexander Etkind devoted to this issue. The attitude of Gippius and Merezhkovsky to the whips was another attempt to adhere to the strictness of the rites. Having visited the sectarian places on the Light Lake, Merezhkovsky and Gippius then reacted to this short walk to the people with delight. "For the first time in our lives, we felt how our most private, secret, lonely thoughts could become universal, popular" According to fresh impressions, Gippius wrote to Blok in July 1902:

everything that we saw there is so unexpected and beautiful that we still can not come to our senses [...] I have traveled a lot in Europe, but no trip has ever made such a stunning impression on me.

In this letter, Gippius specifically emphasized not only the creative, but also the "business" results of the trip. The sectarians understood them better than the intellectuals; and the couple "vowed [...] to seek for these seekers and, if we find them, to return to them forever."

They could not return; but then they had a quite romantic sense of unity with the people. "We sat together, on the same land, different in everything: in custom, in tradition, in history, in clothing, in language, in life - and no one noticed the difference; we had one essence, one important thing for us and for them," she recalled seeing the schismatics on the Bright Lake. A few years later, in a remote Kostroma village, the

sectarians, however, told Prishvin, who passed by the same way: "Our Merezhkovsky, he spoke to us in parables."

And, here, for the Volga 'non-Poles' (a sect of the 19th century, which appeared in the bowels of the Old Believers, as one of the reactions to the adherence to the rites, not agreeing with him in theological matters) considered Merezhkovsky too literal in mysticism. It is curious what a complete turn history makes: from the point of view of the 'people', the symbolist writer read the texts too literally, the illiterate mystic demanded from him even more metaphorical!

Gippius was a recognized master in literature, and for novice writers of the symbolist circle, the difficult procedure of personal acquaintance with her becomes mandatory. More than one of them later, becoming famous and even famous, recalled how he did not sleep the night before the day when he would be introduced to Zinaida Gippius. She actively participated in the literary destinies of her contemporaries. Blok's poetic debut took place with her active assistance in the magazine "New Way". The first articles of P. A. Florensky were also published here.

She wrote the first review of the poems of the then unknown Sergei Yesenin. Of the symbolists, not Bryusov, not Blok, and not Andrei Bely, but Gippius took part in the fate of the novice O. E. Mandelstam.

A VERY INTELLIGENT WOMAN

Gippius was not just an intelligent woman, but a very intelligent one. Not the kind of mind that can construct logically consistent syllogisms, although logic, even male logic, is hard to deny. And with the mind that sees further, sees higher. It attracts people not only by its appearance and poetic fame, but also by the charm of its originality, the sharpness of critical flair, and the depth of thought. Her keen interest in new people was quickly replaced by a contemptuous indifference, which she did not hide. To defy people, to provoke them, to throw them in the paint – her favorite pastimes, and with her mind it was not difficult to do it. There are many examples of such jokes and fun, and the insults she inflicted are innumerable. Gippius herself was indifferent to the innumerable insults addressed to her, to which, in particular, critics and feuilletonists were not at all stingy, just as she was generally indifferent to literary opinions and to her literary fame.

Gippius was especially fond of being called a "witch". It was as a reward for her diligence, as a recognition that the demonic image that she had instilled in the minds of her contemporaries had been assimilated by them. It would have given her considerable pleasure if she had heard the hero of her memoir essay, V. V. Rozanov, once cautiously say: "This, I will tell you, is not a woman, but a real devil – both in mind and in everything else, God be with her, God be with her, let's leave her...". According to N. Osmakova, there is no doubt that Gippius deliberately created all these "outrages" around her. But there is a feeling that by resorting to the "game", so valued by her for "unselfishness" and "mystery", she deliberately switches attention, leads to a false trail, distracts from herself, hiding her true face under the "literary mask", which he doesn't want to discover. In her letters to V. F. Khodasevich, the word "immunity" flashes in one of the early diaries of Gippius there is such an entry: "I think I will not live long, because, despite all my willpower, life still insults me unbearably. I say without certain facts, they, in fact, do not exist. The pain of the insult is deeper, the more disgusting, it is like the nausea that should be in hell. My soul is uncovered, the dust settles on it, the litter, scratches it with everything small and invisible, and I, wanting to remove the speck, widen the wound and die, because I do not know how not to suffer."

Gippius' diaries show how hard she learned this, how she did not just create a system of psychological protection for her so vulnerable soul – from the "scratches" of life, from people, how she broke herself, how she tried to remake it, and how bitterly she experienced defeats. By the way, in Russian poetry, the closest poet to her was Lermontov. Over the years, he learned to control yourself to perfection. Knowing perfectly well the bad qualities of her character (and there were also wonderful ones), she skillfully smoothed them out. And people who first met her in her mature years saw Gippius, which, in the exact words of A. A. Akhmatova, "has already been done." Only her poems and diaries gave her away. In the diaries of 1917-1919, she told how they lived, how Russia lived, how the pace of history increased, embodied in irreparable events that dragged Russia into the abyss. Day after day, Gippius keeps a chronicle of the days and events that were fatal for Russia, and from its brief fragmentary records, an electric current hits, so powerful is the energy charge in Russia.

In her diaries can be traced, how did what she called "the physical killing of the spirit," the use of labour, compulsory and meaningless, for stupefying person distortion of the meaning of "traditional words" Russian speech lies and demagoguery, the Jesuit regulation of life, which is cultivated about virtue, methodically freeing man from the "extra" – from conscience, dignity, compassion, surrounding primordial fear and building adaptive instincts the Supreme human values.

The Gippius diaries have their own names. Blue Book, Black Book, Gray Notebook. One of the most truthful and frank documents of the revolutionary events can be called small, poorly sewn black notebooks, in which an elegant handwriting, ink, heavily diluted with water, was recorded day after day chronicle of the life of the Merezhkovsky couple in the red post-October Petrograd. Very few researchers of Russian history take the liberty of quoting the harsh, bitter, horrifying truthfulness and frankness, pain and despair of the diaries of Hippus:

December 22, 1917... Yesterday was an unheard-of snowstorm. Petersburg is covered with snow, like a village. After all, the snow is no longer cleaned, the janitors are in responsible positions, in ministries, as directors, inspectors, etc. Please note that I am not exaggerating, this is a fact. The minister Kollontai appointed a janitor of the same women's educational institution as the inspector of the Catherine Institute. The city of Bel, Nem, is buried in the snow. Trams barely move, the current is low (today some newspapers could not get out). We are becoming more and more isolated. The Bolsheviks are shouting that they will wage a holy war with the Germans. No war, thanks to their deeds, I think, can no longer be waged, so this is some kind of move before the inevitable, inescapable, bawdy world...

All who had a soul in them-and this without distinction of class or position-walk like the dead. We do not resent, we do not suffer, we do not resent, we do not expect. We are not used to anything, but we are not surprised at anything. We also know that those who have not been in our circle themselves will never understand us. When we meet, we look at each other with sleepy eyes and say little. The soul is in that stage of hunger (and the body!), when there is no longer an acute torment, there comes a

period of drowsiness. Passed. Rolled over. What does it matter why we have become like this? And because the soul has become sick, dried up, and because the body has dried up, phosphorus has disappeared from the body, the brain is drained of blood... From that and another together... It's impossible to live here. The soul is dying.

PARIS

They left Russia in 1920, having survived two pogromous searches, a complete sale of all portable things, the shooting of friends, the death of acquaintances from starvation. They moved-legally, a miracle! "the Polish border in a dilapidated, broken sleigh, and with the scantiest luggage imaginable: a pair of suitcases with worn-out underwear, a torn dress, and a pile of manuscripts and notebooks at the bottom.

In Paris, they were waiting for them, gray with dust, uncomfortable with the uninhabited spirit, with straw furniture, but their own apartment, from which no one could evict them for the most important sign of bourgeoisism – an abundance of books. They began to arrange their own, still complex, now – forever-emigrant, but quite free, human life. They made friends and tried to support them with everything they could and could do.

In this apartment, the green-shaded lamp soon shone comfortably again, and the sounds of heated, "irreconcilable" arguments between the spouses, which were feared by the uninitiated and watched with a smile by long-time friends, were heard again. Once again, literary work began to boil, once again Zinaida Nikolaevna kept her extensive diaries at night, correspondence with readers and publishers of Dmitry Sergeyevich, which he always entrusted to her, because he found that she had more than him a fascinating talent for communicating with people. She was meticulous and meticulous in her approach to everything, always sorting her letters by urgency, and never leaving a single one unanswered. She went out every day to pay visits, and took care of dinners and evening teas, which could have been attended by more than twenty people at once. And then her hand got tired of pouring tea, even though she was helped by her constant friends-literary secretaries, such as Dmitry Filosofov or Vladimir Zlobin. They, and many others, certainly and with a sweetly sly smile, the inhabitants in this apartment, the green-shaded

lamp soon shone comfortably again, and the sounds of heated, "irreconcilable" arguments between the spouses, which were feared by the uninitiated and watched with a smile by long-time friends, were heard again. Once again, literary work began to boil, once again Zinaida Nikolaevna kept her extensive diaries at night, correspondence with readers and publishers of Dmitry Sergeevich, which he always entrusted to her, because he found that she had more than him a fascinating talent for communicating with people. She was meticulous and meticulous in her approach to everything, always sorting her letters by urgency, and never leaving a single one unanswered. She went out every day to pay visits, and took care of dinners and evening teas, which could have been attended by more than twenty people at once. And then her hand got tired of pouring tea, even though she was helped by her constant friends-literary secretaries, such as Dmitry Filosofov or Vladimir Zlobin. They, and many others, certainly and with a sweetly sly smile, visitors to the Paris salon immediately recorded in the lovers of Zinaida Nikolaevna.

THE GREEN LAMP LITERARY SOCIETY

Nina Berberova recalls the Paris years: "After the report, the guests went to the dining room, where they were waiting for dinner. Zinaida Nikolaevna could not see or hear well, and her laughter was her protection — she played with her lorgnette and smiled, sometimes pretending to be more short-sighted than she really was deafer. Sometimes asking questions that she understood perfectly. Between her and the outside world there was a constant struggle-a game. She, the real her, took refuge in irony, whims, intrigues, mannerisms from the real life around and in herself."

Nina Berberova noticed that there was much in Gippius that was in Gertrude Stein, the same legendary writer, whose salon was sought by famous publishers, artists, writers of the pre-war period, and who is described in such detail by Ernest Hemingway in his novel *The Moveable Feast*. Gippius, according to N. Beberova, had, -

the same tendency to quarrel with people and then somehow put up with them and only forgive other people their normal love, in the soul of all normal slightly despising and, of course, not understanding normal love at all.

The same trait is to close your eyes to the reality in a person and put your own speculations about him under the microscope, or ignore the bad books of a person who is close to her (and to D. S.). Just as Stein ignored Joyce, so Z. N. didn't talk about Nabokov and didn't listen when others talked about him. Stein has a scathing but unfair definition of the generation "lost" (as if sanctioning this loss); Z. N. believed that we all (but not she and D. S.) fell "into the gap of history", which was both wrong and harmful, and gave the weak the opportunity to justify weakness, while at the same time testifying to her own deafness to her age, which is not a gap, but something just the opposite of a gap.

There was a strong desire in her to surprise, first-in her youth-with white dresses, loose hair, bare feet (as Gorky described), then-in emigration-with such lines in poetry as "Very necessary!" or " All the same!", or with such stories as "Memoirs of Martynov" (which no one understood when she read it at the tea table, one Sunday, except for two listeners, including me. And Khodasevich only asked in perplexity: venereal disease? - about the riddle at the very end). To surprise, to amaze, that is, to a certain extent to be an exhibitionist: look at me, what I am, like no one else, special, amazing... And sometimes you look at it and think: during this time, so many special things have happened in the world, so many different things and so many really amazing things that-excuse me, excuse me-but we are not up to you!

NINA BERBEROVA

In 1927, Zinaida Gippius dedicated the poem *Eternal Femininity* to Nina Berberova, it was included in her book *Radiances* (1938). Here is another poem by Gippius, similar in mood:

Helplessness

I look at a sea – the greedy one and fervent,
Chained to the earth, on the depleted shore...
Stand by a gulf – over the endless heavens,
And could not fly to azure, as before.

I didn't decide to join or slaves, or rebels,
Have no a courage nor to live, nor – die...
I feel my God – but cannot say my prayers,
I want my love – but can't find love of mine.

I send to sun my worship and my groan,
I see a sheet of clouds, pale and cold...
What is a truth? It seems to me, I know, –
But for the truth I have not the right world
(Translated by Yevgeny Bonver, November, 2000)

A year later, Gippius stayed with Berberova for three whole days,
in Torran, above Grasse, and gave her a piece of paper with three poems
written in those days:

Freedom

I hate to submit to the people's desire.
Who likes a yoke of a slave?
Trough whole our life we're in permanent trial,
After – we lay in a grave.

I can't submit to the Heavenly Low
If Lord are my love and my light.
He gave me the ways on the earth, I've to go,
How I can step aside?

I break all nets by which people are drawn –
Dreams, deepest sadness and bliss.
We are not slaves, we are children His own,
Children are free as He is.

I pray my God, who produced all the living,
Using the name of His Son:
Father, let our unambiguous willing
Ever be righteous and one!

(Translated by Yevgeny Bonver, November, 1904, 2000)

“I DON’T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING”

Gippius and Merezhkovsky lived like this until the death of Dmitry Sergeyeovich, not parting for a single day or a single night. They had never known the boredom that destroys the best marriages, and they had managed to preserve their own individuality, not to be influenced by each other. They were far from the stereotypical, ideal married couple who looked at everything with the same eyes and expressed the same opinion about everything.

From the memoirs of Irina Odoevtseva:

Gippius and Merezhkovsky were an absolutely extraordinary sight on the street. As you know, Parisians are rarely surprised by anything. They look indifferently at the Chinese with a long braid – there were still such Chinese then – at the Oriental people in turbans, at the Japanese women in chrysanthemum-embroidered kimonos, with three-tiered hairstyles, at the maharajah and others. But it was rare for anyone not to turn and stop and look after them as they walked arm-in-arm through the streets of Passy Gippius and Merezhkovsky.

They walked arm in arm – or rather, Merezhkovsky, almost broken in half, helpless and somehow lost, not only leaned on Gippius's arm, but hung directly on it. Gippius, on the other hand, in a wide – brimmed hat of an intricate, completely unfashionable style – then they wore small "cloches" pulled down to the eyebrows – with a monocle in her eye, carried herself exaggeratedly straight, with her head held high. In the sunlight, the whitewash and blush stood out even more sharply on her face. On her shoulders always lay a red fox, decorated with a rose, and after the visit of the Merezhkovskys to King Alexander of Serbia – the Order of Sava II degree."

As you know, Bunin could not stand the sight of death and never, no matter how close the deceased was to him, did not go to anyone's funeral. V. N. Bunina wrote in her diary on September 9, 1945, how, after learning about the death of Gippius, she came to her apartment. She came alone, without Bunin: "A minute later the bell rang, and I saw the white coat of Jan (as Vera

Nikolaevna called her husband). I was a little scared. He was always afraid of the dead, and he never went to any memorial services or funerals. He came in very pale, approached the saumier on which she was lying, stood for a moment, went out into the dining-room, sat down in an arm-chair, covered his face with his left hand, and began to cry. When the funeral service began, he entered the salon... Ian prayed fervently as he knelt down. At the end, he approached the deceased, bowed to her on the ground, and kissed her hand. He was pale and very fit."

In the last months of her life, Gippius sometimes spoke (in 1945) about events, but always ended with the same thing: "I don't understand anything." In this "I don't understand anything" more and more sounded the rejection of life, the hopeless gap between man and the world, death, not life... "I try to understand, but I can't understand. There was no content in this "I try" and "explain": the wall kept growing between her and everything else and finally separated her forever.

PROSE, ESSAYS, POETRY

In Russian literature, Zinaida Gippius has a place, first of all, as a strong and strict master of verse. Her poems, weighed on the thinnest scales of consciousness, are characterized by a special rhythmic structure, recognizable intonation, and the manner of connecting images. The main theme of her poetry is the ineradicable spiritual duality of a person tormented by inner lack of freedom, the loss of the meaning of life and its highest justification. Her poetic cosmos is charged with contrasts, constantly interspersed and not finding resolution. In it, there is a sharp struggle between individualistic self-assertion, fearlessness before life - and humility, renunciation of one's own will; between striving for the ultimate test of the fullness of life, love, happiness - and the fundamental rejection of the real realization of dreams, hopes (fear of the "weight of happiness").

The elation of the flight is constantly replaced by breakdowns, falling into the dust, into the dust, into defeat. The unsteadiness, the instability of the double inner world, the "pendulum" swing between the polar states cause almost physical nausea, turning the efforts to transform

the soul, to find inner wholeness, no longer into a metaphysical problem, but into a condition of survival.

These themes and moods are more or less characteristic of all the poetry of Russian symbolism, but in Gippius they are not softened by irony, nor by aesthetic play, nor by the poetization of a refined spiritual fracture. K. D. Balmont's statement about the poetry of Gippius is characteristic: "It gives the basic formulas of those moods that we all develop".

Once upon a time, the line Gippius "I need something that is not in the world" flew all over reading Russia and brought her poetic fame. These poems and these lines were very much loved by Alexander Blok. And another line: "... I love myself as God " added an element of scandal to this glory. These shocking formulas of hers gave rise to "inappropriate applications": languid young men and maidens appeared, declaring their desire for "what is not in the world". Recognition of the poetry of Gippius went ahead of knowledge:

She

In her despicable and shameless wickedness
She is, as ashes, grey or grey as dust.
And I am perishing from just her nearness,
From bonds that solidly connected us.

She is a coarse one, she is a prickly one,
She is a cold one - she is a snake.
With her repulsive scales she had a cruel fun:
She makes me constantly be sternly baked.

If only I can feel a sharpness of the sting!
She is such clumsy, dull, such still as beef,
She is such massive thing; she is such languid thing;
I haven't access to her - she's deadly deaf.

And she inflexibly with her repulsive rings
Always caresses me and strangles at all.
And this unreal thing, this black and awful thing,
This black and monstrous thing - is just my soul!

(Translated by Yevgeny Bonver, December, 1995)

"I never knew how to write poetry," Gippius shared with Khodasevich in 1926. – That's very true: she didn't know how. Just like I don't know how to bridge a street. If she did, it was always, as Bunin put it, "with great tears, Papa. When there was no escape." The poems were written by themselves. But with prose it was different. Gippius knew how to write prose, as well as criticism, it was her daily bread, her craft. She wrote novels, novellas, and short stories, a significant part of which, not included by her in separate publications, remained in pre-revolutionary and emigrant magazines and newspapers.

Gippius's prose heritage is extensive and artistically unequal. Along with the indisputable successes, there are things that are very average. Despite the depth and seriousness of the idea, her prose works often suffer from outright carelessness in execution. The artistic fabric of the narrative is thinned in places and the reinforcement of the mental framework appears through it, revealing that the narrative does not unfold according to the laws of free art, but moves by the will of the author.

At the same time, in her prose, a rather integral and original system of views emerges. In his early work, Hippius insistently asserts the idea of the self-lawfulness of the world of human desires and ideal aspirations, vague, unclear, elusive. The soul lives and feeds on them. Abandoning them and yielding to "real" life, a person lives the habit of living, condemning himself to early old age (the story "Miss May", 1896).

In the story *Twilight of the Spirit* (1902), a peculiar metaphysics of *Love for the Third* is set forth – you need to love not for yourself, not for another, and not for joint happiness, but for the sake of God, finding in love spiritual vision, "infinity". The novel *The Devil's Doll* (1911), where Gippius addresses the study of "the psychology of evil", continues the Russian tradition of the ideological novel with a gallery of social types. The disintegration of Russian reality is shown through the perception of the hero generated by this decomposition, a charming, captivating handsome man who professes a vulgar version of Nietzschean morality.

In the novel *Roman Tsarevich* (1912), in which the influence of Dostoevsky's *Demons* is noticeable, Gippius models a popular-religious revolution, where social and religious ideals are united; a non-religious revolution, according to Gippius, is doomed to defeat even in the event of its apparent victory, since, not being rooted in the highest order of things, it is not able to embody those social ideals under whose banners it was conceived.

But in the story *The Creature (Tvar')* there is an amazing sense of femininity, almost like in Bunin's *Light Breathing*. The statement is something feminine, contrary to common sense and the storyline. One officer, Alexander Mikhailovich, leads a young boy, Neil, to Sasha, a girl, in his opinion, fallen, but very attractive, special, explaining that it is to her that he wants to bring this young man. And then suddenly starts angry, just gets mad, says she's like a beast, because "the animals don't drink," "beasts don't need anything before, to kill, to strike, — and we, the people, must", "must first man to starve, to oberplatte and the beast one will — well, then you can", "so go, sinful ... nothing then." And why does this officer say that about women, and about Sasha?

Yes, because every time she, this girl, loves her men! This is what the officer cannot forgive her. Here is such a story, and it ends so simply, like a woman, when this "commander" leaves, she embraces the young man and says, repeats the tender words, as usual: "God be with him, drunken man," she said with one hasty sigh, and immediately, all hot, tender, with lightened eyes, senselessly transparent, bent down and pressed her lips to Neil's lips. They were his first kisses. They were long, long, and between them, taking her mouth off for a moment, Sasha whispered with blissful impatience: "Darling... Oh, honey... oh, my darling."

... Interesting, important for understanding the work of Gippius, again, the words of V. Zlobin about the theme of evil in her work. Zlobin analyzes in detail a story from one of her books *Moon Ants*. The story is called *He is white*. The story begins with an epigraph from John of Damascus: "He is not evil, but good, for he was created by the Creator as a bright and very brilliant Angel, and as a reasonable one — free." All the power of these words is concentrated for Gippius in one word: "free". The story tells the story of a student Fed, who dies of pneumonia and sees a devil in front of him. First the mater, then the "beautiful, very beautiful" one. "Instead of a rough, old devil, there sat before him a gloomy and beautiful creature, dressed a little theatrically, in a red cloak..."

This trait is transformed an infinite number of times, and then it becomes winged, then the wings fall off, and in front of Fedya sits himself, an elderly gentleman in glasses, in a shabby frock coat; and already so weak, so ape-like. At the end of all these transformations, the devil says to Fedya: "You will know Me and you will be a shadow around Me. Great is your suffering, and only Mine and the human will be greater than

yours. I send you, walking freely to earth, in dark clothes. To My throne, ascend white as you are. But for them, you are dark until the Doom's Day, and you do not know about this day. Go on."

In general, there is a large share of devil worship, which, and distinguished that crazy era, otherwise, apparently, it was impossible to survive or figure out what to believe. In a similar way, perhaps, Eckhart writes that a person who finds himself "in hell" actually finds himself before God. His suffering is due to the fact that he appeared before the Creator, and it is not the Creator who torments him, it is what torments him, in the place of which there should have been Divine Grace. In the fields of Meister Eckhart Andrey Korobov-Latyntsev, "Topos" from 08/12/2017).

From the memoirs of Zinaida Gippius, especially the famous "Living Faces", in which in detail, accurately, intelligently told about Alexander Blok, Andrei Bely, Anna Vyubova, George Rasputin, the entourage of Nicholas II. In the heartfelt essay *My Lunar Friend*, Zinaida Gippius writes about Blok, about his ability to see, to feel the "ineffability", about his subtlety and talent. And Alexander Blok, not only Gippius, had a tendency to combine the divine and the diabolical.

Especially famous is the merciless criticism of Zinaida Gippius, expressed in verses in which she addressed Alexander Blok very peremptorily, accusing him of the poem "The Twelve", in his decision to put Jesus Christ ahead of the 12 Red Army soldiers: "I will not forgive/ Your soul is innocent / I will never forgive her." Then they would meet in an empty carriage by chance, and Zinaida Gippius would give him her hand, in her own words— "personally", but not "socially".

At some point in his diaries, Gippius again suddenly writes about love, how unbearable it is in life, close to death. But personal recollections cannot overshadow the flight of spiritual or poetic thought. Poetry is closer to the divine ideal, which makes up for earthly impossibilities, tragedies, bloodshed, murder, poverty, complete loneliness and frustration. In her work, the poetess finds reconciliation for everything. Part of the inevitable tragedy of the Silver Age, and part of the salvation, is that its representatives tried to combine Christianity and Paganism, and that for them life with its horrors was as important as the details of personal relationships, feelings and creativity. It all became one at some point.

The Spiders

My world is like a chamber, narrow, –
It's very low, very small.
In four its corners sit four fellows –
Four spiders, diligent in all.

They are all fat, adroit, and dirty,
And always spin and spin the web...
And it is awful – their portly,
Monotonous and even step.

With four their webs, when they were ready,
They spun the immense one, at last.
I watch their fat backs' movement, steady,
In darkness of the stinking dust.

My eyes – under the webbing's level:
It's gray, and soft, and sticky, yet.
And they are glad with gladness, evil, --
Four spiders, fat.

(Translated by Yevgeny Bonver, November, 1903, 2000)

CHAPTER SEVEN

DMITRY MEREZHKOVSKY (1865-1941) AND THE THIRD TESTAMENT

In their memoirs, writers who knew the Merezhkovskys intimately did not always mention them warmly. Andrei Bely, for example, wrote that " Merezhkovsky wore shoes with pom-poms, and these pom-poms define Merezhkovsky's entire life. He talks with pom-poms and thinks with pom-poms." The definition is not accurate, but, in any case, unfriendly. According to Teffi, "he was a "POM-POM""! Alexey Remizov called Merezhkovsky "a walking coffin", and about Zinaida Gippius spoke as "all in bones and springs – the device is complex – but to a living person in any way". "Cruel and wrong," Taffy commented on such memories.

K. I. Chukovsky interpreted Merezhkovsky as a "scribe" who "is alien to the human soul and human personality to the terrible limits", and Ivanov-Razumnik declared him, "a dead writer", "the great dead man of Russian literature, whose soul is increasingly being eroded by the coffin worm".

For Merezhkovsky himself, this state of affairs, which hurt him in the first years of his literary activity as a kind of annoying "misunderstanding", eventually turned into what can be called a "familiar tragedy". And in the first place, he was inclined to blame himself.

"I am terribly shy, incredibly timid, stupidly shy, " he confesses ruefully in one of the letters of the most "lyrical" of his epistolary cycles – correspondence with L. N. Vilkina. – And that's what makes me seem so insincere to you." "I can't talk about my deepest self at all."

In another letter he continues:

I feel that I might have become 'careless' and even, perhaps, "defenseless". But for this you need to believe me, and secondly, you need to believe in me, in my existence, believe that I am. And you didn't believe it until now. You wrote to me that you didn't know me at all. Why don't you want to know me? Am I so little curious, even apart from my attitude towards you, just as a person, well, just as a writer? Understand, I want you to see me, and for that you need to look at me. You have hitherto looked past

me, through me, at the other thing behind me. I'm nothing to you.
It's sad...

A philosopher and a martyr, priest Alexander Men writes about Merezhkovsky in a completely different way:

He was a small man, fragile, shorter than his wife, very graceful — he did not give the impression of some powerful creator or thinker and was not such, but still aspired. In this fragile body, in this little man, great passions raged.

It is often said or written that Dmitry Sergeyevich Merezhkovsky was lonely all his life, and especially after the death of his mother (two months after his marriage to Zinaida Gippius, in March 1889). But it is, in the words of Alexander I, and was not alone. Thanks to Zinaida Gippius, their long-lasting union, real, true love, unity. Dmitry Sergeyevich, who had no spiritual intimacy with any of his relatives, would have been left alone with the weight of grief over the loss of his mother, if not for his young wife Zinaida Gippius. She may not have been very skilful – she considered herself a very impractical hostess – and she took touching care of him. He was deeply grateful to her for this, he perceived himself as one with her, knowing that even when arguing, she understood him and shared with him the main thing in his views, thoughts, hopes, plans. She just immediately, after all the necessary but infinitely painful cemetery ceremonies, took the devastated Merezhkovsky to the Crimea, to Alupka, to the dacha she had rented, where the April roses were already in full bloom.

"Dmitry, in these favorite places, has cleared up a little," wrote Gippius. –

Special Crimean smells, laurels and roses, both familiar to us, especially cute to him... He showed me the Alupka Palace, where as a boy he kissed the hand of a contemporary of Pushkin. The quiet ruins of Oreanda, and there, on a height, a white colonnade... It was difficult for us, in the midst of all this, and even in our youth, to think about death... There, in the Crimea, Dmitry Sergeyevich tried to return to work on essays about Ancient

Egypt, about Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, met with acquaintances and friends.

How did they get married? How did you meet?"

She has been in love before, and more than once, "her secretary, V. A. Zlobin, comments on the memoirs of Gippius," she knew what it was, but this is something completely different." That's what she says: "And so, for the first time with Merezhkovsky here, something completely different happened to me." For almost six months-until the wedding in January 1889 - she is in a state of "either calmness or stupor", events occur without any participation of her will, "as in a dream". Merezhkovsky "happily avoids the very romantic "Caucasian duel", already as a groom enters the family of the chosen one, in September sees everyone off to Tiflis and from there goes to St. Petersburg to arrange things in view of the upcoming wedding."

From the memoirs of Z. Gippius:

In the church (cold) we found our best men, witnesses and two aunts — the wife (and her sister) of the deceased uncle. The witnesses were their acquaintances, some lawyers. We also found the groom. He was wearing a frock coat and a so-called "Nikolaev" greatcoat (many of them were then worn), with a cape and a beaver collar. It was St. Petersburg - it was also useful for the harsh Tiflis winter. However, it was impossible to get married in a greatcoat, so he took it off. He said later that he did not feel the cold, because it all lasted so short. Of course, there were no choristers, or even, I think, a deacon, and the famous "let a wife be afraid of her husband" passed completely unnoticed.

There were no strangers, but there were bright and long rays of sunlight from the upper windows-all over the church. We stepped on the pink mat together and-carefully, because we weren't wearing white shoes — from the street, and all this comes after the priest. How different was this wedding from Tolstoy's, which he described in "Anna Karenina" in Kitty's wedding! When they gave us to drink from one vessel in turn, I, for the second time, wanted to finish, but the priest whispered in fear: "Not all, not all!" - The groom had to finish. After that, the ceremony continued with the same speed, and now we are on the porch, talking to

the witnesses. "I don't think anything special has happened," I tell one.

He laughs: "Well, no, it's really, really happened, and it's serious." Then we also went on foot to our house, and the witnesses went to their rooms. At home, we were waiting for an ordinary breakfast, but I don't know who, my mother or my aunts, decided to celebrate a wedding, although not a magnificent one, and champagne appeared during breakfast... It became fun, however, and before no one was sad (except for my mother, maybe — after all, separation!)"

Then the guests—the aunt and the best man—went home, and our day passed like yesterday. Dmitry Sergeevich and I continued to read yesterday's book in my room, and then we had lunch. In the evening, at tea, my former French governess happened to drop in. You can imagine that she almost fell out of her chair from surprise when her mother, pouring out tea, remarked briefly: "And Zina got married today." Dmitry Sergeevich went to his hotel quite early, and I went to bed and forgot that I was married. I forgot so much that the next morning I barely remembered when my mother called out to me through the door: "You're still asleep, and your husband has already come. Get up!" "Husband? What a surprise!"

A hundred years have passed, writes Alexander Men. A hundred years have passed since this slightly funny event. You see how strange it is: a marriage that somehow took place imperceptibly, casually, so that Zinaida Nikolaevna did not even remember the next morning that she was married, turned out to be not only strong, but super-strong. For 52 years, they have never been separated for a single day. They think in unison. Constantly in spiritual communion. And in history, in literature, in philosophy, they are inseparable, so whenever we talk about Merezhkovsky, we involuntarily talk about Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius. And this is completely unfair. They never parted for a single day, supporting the debate "in public", theatrically and grotesquely discussing all new ideas.

Merezhkovsky left 24 volumes of his works. They include: poems, translations from all European languages, translations of ancient tragedians, short stories in the spirit of the Italian Renaissance; the trilogy

"Christ and the Antichrist", his first major work of fiction, consisting of novels: *The Death of the Gods (Julian the Apostate)*, *The Risen Gods (Leonardo da Vinci)* and *The Antichrist (Peter and Alexey)*. Another trilogy is *The Kingdom of the Beast (The Beast from the Abyss)*, consisting of the drama *Paul the First* and two novels: *Alexander the First* and *December the Fourteenth*, published already during the revolution. *The Kingdom of the Beast* - about the crisis of the Russian monarchy, culture, people, the future of Russia, tragic fates... Next, Merezhkovsky has a novel about the Egyptian pharaoh, written already in the West.

There is a very interesting, brilliantly written book *Napoleon*. Then, curious, but very controversial trilogy about the religious destinies of Europe, the origins of which were looking for in ancient times: *Tutankhamun in Crete* polarman; *the Mystery of the Three* — about Babylon, Egypt, and Crete, and *Messiah*; the book caused quite widely reported in the West, it is called *Jesus the Unknown* — a large two-volume book is about the life of Christ and of His Personality; the cycle of biographies of Saints, East and West: the Apostle Paul, Augustine, Spanish Mystics, Teresa of Avila, Juan de La Cruz, Joan of Arc. More recently, books have been published about Western Saints: about Luther; about Little Theresa, a French Saint, a Carmelite nun who died at a young age.

Merezhkovsky was best known as a thinker and critic, but a very peculiar thinker. His thought is capricious, subject to schemes. The most striking book is *Leo Tolstoy and Dostoevsky*. A priest and philosopher A. Man writes that he can not find words to characterize these books of his, the genre is not clear: these are biographies of writers, these are philosophical, religious, even theological thoughts, this is a brilliant literary criticism. This is some kind of synthetic genre of huge essays. He was an essayist and a brilliant master of quotation. In the history of Russian criticism, no one has ever had such a great command of a quote: sometimes it seems that he juggles them like an experienced circus performer, always finding the right place at hand.

Some critics accused Merezhkovsky that he too often returns to its themes, but this is the style of the century, a desire, which was the Andrey Belyi, as if to repeat music mood, musical phrase, starting with one and ending with the same, constantly returning to the same themes.

Merezhkovsky traveled a lot, and he not only knew how to tell vividly about his travels to his girlfriend, and then to his wife — he knew how to describe it. And maybe not the best, but... the beautiful things in

his work are the essays, which he later combined under the general title *Eternal Companions*. He describes his visit to Greece, the Parthenon. He was forever fascinated by the beauty of ancient Greece: the blue sky, the white columns, the beautiful, perfect world. Of course, it was a myth — a myth that came from somewhere in the eighteenth century. But he lived by this myth. The light of the Christian faith was never extinguished in him.

Interpreting the work of Merezhkovsky, I would like to refer not even to the views of, for example, Natalia Bonetskaya, who in her essay *Merezhkovsky and the Revolution* (Journal "Star", No. 1, 2019) describes the connection of the Third Testament (the church and the teachings that Merezhkovsky preaches) and the revolutionary movement, Nietzscheanism and the ideas of Lev Shestov, but the ideas of the article by Alexander Men about Merezhkovsky (A. Men. "Dmitry Sergeyeovich Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius"). Alexander Men does not make connections with the revolution, very accurately and succinctly he defines how impossible it is to combine Christianity and Paganism, and it is this task that the Silver Age often tries to solve. Of course, without success. My argumentation and attempt to analyze the works of Merezhkovsky will thus often have as its basis the position of Alexander Men.

Here comes Merezhkovsky's first novel. The first novel is called *The Death of the Gods* - about the decline of paganism. Two abysses, as Merezhkovsky liked to call it: the abyss of Heaven and the abyss of Earth, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Beast. Paganism is leaving. The Emperor Julian (4th century), in the face of the coming and already triumphant Christianity, is trying to turn history back, trying to establish a renewed, transformed paganism in the empire under his control-under the sign of the cult of the Sun, which has absorbed all the eastern and ancient religious traditions.

Merezhkovsky shows the Christian youth of Julian. The brutality of the Christian imperial court; what the young Julian saw - all this is drawn in sharp lines. Julian was a man of genuine religious consciousness. And the fact that he came to paganism is not accidental. A. Men writes that Merezhkovsky, who traveled a lot in Italy, saw everything through the prism of completely clear subjective ideas.

Yes, Julian and his entourage had reason to blame the Christians for many things. Yes, the novel shows, for example, a church Cathedral,

where theologians and clerics bicker with each other with a heavy, unpleasant, repulsive bitterness.

The Emperor Julian enters the meeting of the Council and looks gloomily, with a satisfied smile, at this crowd of bishops and theologians, and then, when silence fell, everyone saw the emperor enter, who burst into a bitter ironic speech: "Here is your Christianity! .."

Yes, continues A. Men. But there is no Christ in this novel! Julian's contemporaries were great, noble figures in the history of the Church: Merezhkovsky mentions them, but only in passing.

The trilogy was to be called *Christ and the Antichrist*. Julian was not the Antichrist. It was a suffering soul, a tragic character, a loser who tried to go against history. A biased, biased book, writes A. Men. But the question it raises is an important one: does Christianity really reject the flesh? Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev, who had been close to Merezhkovsky for some time, replied to him as follows: "In our ecclesiasticism, in fact, there is too much flesh, too much earthiness, too much everyday life, and not too little." And there was no need to portray antiquity as a hymn to the flesh. Everything that is one-sided, everything that has an extremely negative attitude to the body, to matter, to life - everything came to Christianity from paganism."

A certain degree of misinterpretation. In ancient Greece, the body was considered to be a "tomb". Why a tomb? Yes, because, according to Plato and the neo-Platonists, the spirit is enclosed in the body, as in a tomb. It's a coffin, something negative. A follower of Plato, who lived several centuries after him, Plotinus (3d century) was even afraid to undress, he was ashamed of his body! While the Apostle Paul called the body the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the Bible never had contempt for the body. For the body is created by God, like all Creation, it can be beautiful. Of course, there was something else in paganism, and in art there was, indeed, the chanting of the body. But those pessimistic, gloomy, life-denying elements that Merezhkovsky is trying to impose on Christianity — they were parasitic on it and were more inherent in paganism. The antithesis, A. Men emphasizes, was false.

The second novel *The Resurrected Gods* is about Leonardo da Vinci. Merezhkovsky traveled a lot in Italy, knew the art and history of the Renaissance very well. But he did the same violence to history, because he portrayed the representative of the true Christian Renaissance, the preacher Savonarola, in the manner of some madman: here, they say,

this is ascetic Christianity. A Savonarola was one of the greatest sons of Italy, a poet, a cultural figure. He was a monk, but an absolute defender of democracy. Savonarola died on the scaffold, defending the ideals of Christian freedom, he was one of the great cultural geniuses of his country

The main character, writes A. Men, Leonardo da Vinci, is drawn on the model of a certain abstract model that Dmitry Sergeevich read from Nietzsche: Leonardo da Vinci is a man who lives on the other side of good and evil. He draws with equal interest the beautiful faces and bared mouths of the crowd gathered around the bonfires where great works of art are being burned at Savonarola's instigation. Yes, it was Nietzsche's influence.

His third novel, which was written, was called *The Antichrist*. This is a novel about Peter the First. It is a theological, philosophical, and serious novel. A heavy, painful book. All the black things that can be said about Peter are collected and said there with great knowledge. Here, at last, he managed to show the Antichrist. But Christ was not there. For all his desire to show Christ in the person of those who opposed Peter's reform, he could not. The old believers? — he couldn't draw them, though he was very interested in them. Tsarevich Alexey? - Yes, in Merezhkovsky he appears as a bearer of faith. He talks to the philosopher Leibniz, the famous German philosopher, who says: "Why is everything so bad in Russia?" And Alexey answers: "Well, yes, we are drunk, poor, naked, but Christ is in us." But this is not the case in the novel. There is a terrible scene when the prince, dying in the dungeon, in the presence of his father, Peter the First, cursing his father, predicts that for this his family, his dynasty will die in blood.

Leo Tolstoy and Dostoevsky poses the same problem about Christianity and paganism. Leo Tolstoy. The clairvoyant of the flesh—this is how Merezhkovsky represents him. And Dostoevsky is a clairvoyant of the spirit. Again, the same simplified scheme. Thesis: flesh, paganism — in this case, is Leo Tolstoy. The antithesis: the spirit that shakes the flesh — in this case, it is Dostoevsky. Synthesis? - synthesis is ahead. There was the Old Testament. The Old Testament spoke of the flesh (of paganism). The Son of Man came, gave the New Testament, but He only spoke of the Spirit. A Third Covenant is needed, in which the sacred fullness of divinity is fully revealed. Absolutely impossible ideas!

Merezhkovsky set foot on the path of some strange theology, writes A. Men. It seems, as the philosopher further comments, that it was not without Rozanov that he came to the idea that the love of a man and a woman is a prototype of some divine mystery. Very similar ideas, as you know, were set out in the famous and well-known book "The Meaning of Love" by Vladimir Solovyov. Perhaps, in the broad theological sense of the word, this is so. The plan of God is the union of the divided in the world. But not a mixture, but a compound. Everything that breaks up and divides is satanic, death. And harmony, unity — is divine. Therefore, love is the greatest power, writes Alexander Men.

I can, he continues, say, compare it to the internal forces that hold matter together. They must be huge, and it is not for nothing that they give such a colossal destructive effect when they are released. If such colossal power is needed to unite matter together, then no less power is needed to unite the human spirit, the human personalities.

But Merezhkovsky in his theology transferred this mystery to the Trinity incorrectly. He seized on the fact that in Hebrew, in Aramaic, the spirit ("ruach") is feminine. And for him it became the mystery of the Three: The Spirit who, united with the divine Father, gives birth to a Son. In the triangle of father-mother-child (son) reflected the eternal mystery of the Trinity. In every way, in all his works, he returns to this idea. There is very little theological and philosophical justification in it — these are hints, emotions.

Alexander Men defines the problem very precisely further. The birth of a person is not the fruit of love; the fruit of love is the unity of souls, which was, for example, with Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Nikolaevna. The birth of a human being can take place, as well as the birth and conception of any living being, without love. And besides, it doesn't have to be three — there can be a lot of children. This analogy does not work at all.

Then Merezhkovsky has the idea that the old world must be destroyed, and in order to bring the third Testament closer, a revolutionary transformation of the world is necessary. It further embodies the idea of a religious, theological justification of the revolution. "The Coming

Ham" - the title of this book by Merezhkovsky already deserves attention. In it, he attacks historical Christianity.

Merezhkovsky constantly lived abroad, where he wrote his last novels, in particular *The Kingdom of the Beast* - about the destruction of the empire. The mad Paul I is a controversial figure. The second part - *Alexander the First* tells about the Decembrists and was written under the strong influence of Dostoevsky. The most powerful is *December the Fourteenth*, also influenced by Dostoevsky. The canvas of those events, reminiscent of many things, as in the mirror of the era...

At that time, in the Merezhkovsky circle, more hopes were placed on religion than on literature. About this position, one literary employee wrote with irony in July 1903, speaking about the unsuccessful, from his point of view, experience of the magazine "New Way»: "Why do we need it, when we rely primarily on a certain "schism" in Orthodoxy, of course, generated by us and from us?" Much later, secretary Gippius Zlobin quoted a dark entry in her diary for 1893: "I will go to x-tam. After all, I am recorded in the duma"; he deciphered this dark place as an indication that Hippius belonged to the whips and some of their ruling body. It seems, however, doubtful that the whips had a "duma", and that the very young Hippius belonged to it; probably, this record allows for some other interpretation. Still, the confidence of Zlobin, who knew his patrons and their circle of interests well — however, he knew them much later than this record-in itself speaks volumes.

Having visited the sectarian places on the Light Lake, Merezhkovsky and Gippius then reacted to this short walk to the people with delight. "For the first time in our lives, we felt that our most private, secret, lonely thoughts could become universal, nationwide."

According to fresh impressions, Gippius wrote to Blok in July 1902: "everything that we saw there is so unexpected and beautiful that we still can not come to our senses [...] I have traveled a lot in Europe, but no trip has ever made such a stunning impression on me." In this letter, Gippius specifically emphasized not only the creative, but also the "business" results of the trip. The sectarians understood them better than the intellectuals; and the couple "vowed [...] to seek for these seekers and, if we find them, to return to them forever."

They could not return; but then they had a quite romantic sense of unity with the people. "We sat together, on the same land, different in everything: in custom, in tradition, in history, in clothing, in language, in

life - and no one noticed the difference; we had one essence, one important thing for us and for them," she recalled seeing the schismatics on the Bright Lake. Along the way, however, Hippus expressed a very negative opinion about the narodniks, who all tried to dress like the people and feed the people, but ignored their spirit. There is the populism of the belly, which degenerates into materialism and revolutionism, and the populism of the spirit. Only the latter leads to a mystical and political union between the spiritual part of the intelligentsia and the spiritual part of the people. The dissenters of all sects are addressed "to us by that single point in which true 'fusion' is possible." And that one point is everything. The source of everything, " wrote Gippius.

A few years later, in a remote Kostroma village, sectarians told Prishvin, who had passed by the same way: "Our Merezhkovsky, he spoke to us in parables." But the Volga ' non-Poles '(a sect of the 19th century that appeared in the bowels of the Old Believers, as one of the reactions to the adherence to the rites) did not agree with him in theological matters. For them, Merezhkovsky was overly literal in his mysticism. It is curious what a complete turn history makes here: from the point of view of the 'people', the symbolist writer read the texts too literally, and the illiterate mystic demanded from him even more metaphorical.

Together with Filosofov, V. V. Rozanov, Mirolyubov and V. A. Ternavtsev, the Merezhkovskys organized "Religious and Philosophical meetings" in 1901, the purpose of which was to create a kind of platform for "free discussion of issues of the church and culture... neo-Christianity, social structure and the improvement of human nature." The organizers of the Meetings interpreted the juxtaposition of spirit and flesh as follows: "Spirit — Church, flesh-society; spirit-culture, flesh-people; spirit-religion, flesh-earthly life...".

On the Fontanka river is the hall of the Geographical Society — the narrow building, which at the time was made by Semenov-Tian-Shansky and other famous travelers. There was a long, narrow hall, where there was a huge statue of the Buddha, a gift from one of the Eastern people. And there they set up a long table, covered it with green cloth (as it was done in public places). At the head sat a bishop who had recently become a bishop, a 40-year-old man with glasses and a long beard. This was Sergius, our future patriarch, who was already elected during the war, in 1943 — Patriarch Sergius of Starogorod. Next to him is the

rector of the Academy, a young associate professor of the Academy Anton Kartashov, the future Minister of Culture of the Provisional Government, later abroad—the largest historian of the Russian Church. The hall was full.

Officially on these ... only members of the Society could go to debates (but, of course, everyone who wanted to). The main thing is that there was no bailiff, and in the old days, in those days (do not forget that this is the beginning of our century), the bailiff had to be in every public meeting, and if the speaker suddenly began to say something wrong, he had the right to interrupt him and silence him. There was no bailiff here. There was only the Buddha, who, in order not to be tempted by the Orthodox, was wrapped in calico, and he stood like some kind of stuffed animal wrapped up.

Berdyayev later recalled: suddenly, in a corner of St. Petersburg — freedom of speech, freedom of conscience! "just for a little while." These meetings lasted a little more than a year. Then Pobedonostsev realized that they were saying such free speech that it was necessary to close it. 22 Meetings Were Held. And I must tell you that, although this was later forgotten, all the movements of Russian religious thought somehow came out of these Meetings created by Merezhkovsky, or rather, by Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Nikolaevna (this was her idea, and she carried it out all the time, although she did not speak at Meetings, mostly men spoke). They were professors of the Theological Academy, clergy, representatives of literature, critics — the entire cohort of the "World of Art": Sergei Diaghilev, Leon Bakst, Alexander Benois. They came extremely interested — a new religious world opened up to them!

Sergei Makovsky, later a literary critic and art critic (he wrote the book "On Parnassus of the Silver Age", it was published in Munich in the early 1960s—, also went to these meetings. The silver Age! - the age of Andrei Bely, Florensky, Berdyayev, Diaghilev, Golovin, Bakst, the age of such publishers as "Libra", "Scorpion") ... Makovsky recalls that at the very first meeting, a young first-year student, Florensky (the first year of mathematics), was sitting. He had not yet chosen his path, but his presence at these Meetings (where he only remained silent and listened) certainly influenced his future life and spiritual development. Until now, these Meetings have not been evaluated and insufficiently studied, although after 1905, when the pressure of censorship stopped, target socie-

ties named after Vladimir Solovyov were created in Moscow, in St. Petersburg, in Kiev... But the beginning of everything was laid by Merezhkovsky.

The history of the Religious and Philosophical Society began in April 1903, when Metropolitan Anthony of St. Petersburg ordered the closure of religious and philosophical meetings. In 1907, the Religious and Philosophical Assemblies were revived as the Religious and Philosophical Society, which lasted until 1916. Merezhkovsky, who opened its first meeting, continued to develop here ideas related to the concept of the "kingdom of the Spirit", but (mainly through the efforts of Z. Gippius and D. Filosofov). The society, as many noted, soon turned into a literary and journalistic circle.

So, the Merezhkovskys created a "special group", which met at their home and set its task as something like interfaith communication, the search for a new religious synthesis. For censorship reasons, this group was called the "section for the study of the history of religions". In the winter of 1909-1910, every Saturday, secular intellectuals met here with sectarians, on the one hand, and liberal priests, and teachers of the Theological Academy, on the other. The Old Believer bishop Mikhail, the sectarian Pavel Legkobytov, the sectarian writer Pimen Karpov, as well as Kartashev, Prishvin, Skaldin and many others visited there. The poet Alexander Blok and his wife also came to this section.

The Merezhkovsky "section" continued to function as a kind of "home church", where the concepts of practical construction of the "church of the Holy Spirit" were developed. This "new religious act" at home was purchased from the perspective of outside observers weirder, "mystical" in nature and was filled with rituals and "prayers", which outside observers seemed extremely doubtful, and even sinister. A. N. Benoit told about the episode with the "feet-washing"; E. P. Ivanov is on shocked many people act, when some "young musician of Jewish... pushed, stretched the "cross" cut the vein under your palm, draw some blood into a Cup of wine and started to drink the circle...".

The Merezhkovskys often went abroad and sometimes returned, briefly, to Russia. This somewhat separated them from social life, from philosophical life, and from the Church. They had a little secret (almost no one knows about it). It is almost not reflected in the literature. This was invented by Zinaida Nikolaevna. She said: Since the historical

Church is so imperfect, we will create a new Church. Such a thought could only have been born in the mind of a lady!

And they began to create at first a small circle, where the best people of the era came: Berdyaev, Kartashov, Rachinsky and many others. Then she created a very intimate circle: Dmitry Sergeyeovich, Dmitry Filosofov, their closest friend. At home, they began to perform a kind of small divine service. Wine, flowers, grapes were placed, some impromptu prayers were read — it was like the Eucharist.

When Berdyaev found out about this, he, as they write, "absolutely... he went mad", and this was the reason for his final entry into Orthodoxy. He said that he was Orthodox and could not have this home-grown church ... endure. As if from the opposite, he was pushed to the Church by these peculiar events.

Merezhkovsky's creative work, criticism, and philosophical research are extensive. Criticism met Merezhkovsky rather coolly, people often did not understand his problems. Andrey Bely in the book "The Beginning of the Century" gives a grotesque picture of Merezhkovsky's speech in the hall of the Moscow University. His revelations seem ridiculous to philosophers and professors, and he himself is simply ridiculous in his satirical portrayal of Andrei Bely.

This grotesque vision of Merezhkovsky's speech in Moscow shows how alien he was to the academic environment. They really didn't understand him, and he didn't understand where he was going. It was two worlds: the classics of the 19th century — and he, turned to some future dawns, as they liked to say then.

Merezhkovsky took the offense of the revolution quite unambiguously. Of all the Russian religious writers and thinkers, he was the most implacable anti-Soviet. In 1920, they left Russia, met Boris Savinkov, and at one time were close to him and to the circles of the Social Revolutionaries. Then they moved away from them. They were constantly looking for a political haven. Even Mussolini! Even Mussolini, when they lived in Italy, gave the Merezhkovskys hope. Dmitry Sergeyeovich wrote: "Caesar" promises to accept me ("Caesar" is the conditional name of Mussolini). But "Caesar" also disappointed them.

The central book of Merezhkovsky, written in exile, abroad, published in 1932-1933 in Belgrade — is *Jesus Unknown*. One of the strangest and most original works on the gospel theme. The writer tries to give a new light to the mystery of Christ, using a huge arsenal of apocrypha.

No one had ever attached such importance to them before. And what an amazing name - "Jesus Unknown". The world did not understand Christ, the world did not know Him. It is true that these are the words of the gospel, but nevertheless, although the Gospel says that "He was in the world, the world did not know Him", but someone accepted Him and someone knew Him. For Merezhkovsky, Jesus is not understood by either the Church or the world. One of the Parisian critics called the review of this book "The Church is forgotten" (Jesus is Unknown, and the Church is forgotten). If the spirit of Christ had not been realized in the Church, there would not have been what Christianity gave to the world.

Merezhkovsky knew all the New Testament historical literature perfectly, at the level of the greatest scientist. The book is written vividly, very subjectively. This is a huge three-volume essay that begins with a description of what his personal Gospel, which he carries with him from Russia, looks like, battered, but he is afraid to bind it, because he does not want to part with it for a single day. Merezhkovsky was left with the secret of gender. He, as Alexander Men writes, found in one of the apocrypha the words of Christ: "When will the Kingdom be? Then there will be one thing: the female will be male, the male will be female."

In those days, at the beginning of the century, which defined the philosophical thinking of Merezhkovsky, there was a popular, not quite mentally healthy Austrian writer who committed suicide, Otto Weininger, who wrote the book "Gender and Character" (the book, writes Alexander Men, "was translated in those years and was very popular"). Merezhkovsky talked a lot about the polarity of the two sexes, that in every person lies, some part of the opposite sex (if he's a man — it is the element of the women, if it is a woman — there is an element of men). This has been much debated since the moment when Vladimir Solovyov wrote the book "The Meaning of Love".

In fact, as Alexander Men writes, Merezhkovsky got lost between simple things. Because gender is not an eternal phenomenon. And the fullness of a person is able to open up in everything. And if it is an individual who belongs, say, to the male sex, it is not at all necessary that he should also carry a female element. Spiritually, man is above the sex, so the Apostle Paul says that in Christ there is neither man nor woman. But for our unity, for our love for each other, there must be a difference: in character, in the type of thinking, in the type of emotional life. But in

fact, this is not so important that you can write about it and think about it all your life.

The truth about the earth-it was something that is really worthy of the legacy of Merezhkovsky. He was right that during the past twenty centuries, it often happened that Christians and the leadership of the Churches did not pay enough attention to the problems of life, the problems of this world. This can be understood and forgiven, because people wanted to preserve and develop their inner strength, the strength of the spirit, in order to go into the world, but in the process of developing the spirit, they then forgot why this was done. And they didn't go into the world. Alexander Men explains the way out of this situation surprisingly clearly and succinctly.

"Probably, many of you know about Saint Seraphim of Sarov. He lived in seclusion for many years, he did not communicate with people for many years, but when the spiritual power, the power of the Grace of the Spirit of God, matured in him, he opened the door of his hut to people. He carried his heart, filled with the Holy Spirit, to the people. This is the dialectic of Christianity, which does not deny the world and does not accept it indiscriminately

It is not easy to tell about the Merezhkovskys. According to Taffy, "both of them were very special, very special. You can't go up to them with the usual measurement. Each of them - Dmitry Sergeyeovich and Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius-could be the central face of a great psychological novel, even if you completely erase their literary talents, but simply consider them as people who lived and were. Their extraordinary, almost tragic selfishness could be understood if the key to it was found. This key is a complete separation of themselves from everyone, an organic separation, in which they did not feel guilty."

It was said that when Merezhkovsky was told: "Dmitry Sergeyeovich, war has been declared," he quite calmly remarked: "Well, after all, the trains will run." The Merezhkovskys, indeed, lived strangely and to such an extent did not understand real life. From the mouth of Merezhkovsky, it was even strange to hear such simple words as "coal", "boiling water", "pasta".

According to Taffy, "ink" - it was easier to bear - after all, this word has to do with writing, with an idea!". However, such an attitude to the world may be present in the life of any writer. The Merezhkovskys not only communicated with all the famous literary figures, organized

literary evenings, but were also connected with them internally: by common creativity and the search for new forms and ideas. For example, in the spring of 1904, before their next trip abroad, they visited Leo Tolstoy in Yasnaya Polyana.

"On the morning of our departure," Gippius recalls, "L. Tolstoy, going up the inner staircase to the dining room for tea with Dmitry Sergeevich, said to him: "How glad I am that you have come to see me. I thought you had something against me." "And he looked at me surprisingly well," Dmitry Sergeevich later told me, "with his gray eyes, already blue, like those of old people and small children."

"L. Tolstoy, it turns out, read everything – not only about himself, but in general everything that was written and printed at that time. Even our "New Way" read it. Probably, he also knew the debates in the assemblies about his "excommunication", and he also knew Dmitry Sergeevich's book "L. Tolstoy and Dostoevsky".

For a long time, the Merezhkovskys were friends with the writer Dmitry Filosofov, a cousin of Sergei Diaghilev. "Back in the summer (1905)", Gippius said, "Dmitry Sergeevich expressed the idea that it would be good for the three of us to go abroad for a year or even two or three, where we could get along together and learn something new, then suitable for business in Russia. Dmitry Sergeevich was interested in Catholicism, and not only it, but also the movement of "modernism", about which we heard something in a deaf voice, because due to censorship, certain news did not reach us... We were all interested in our Russian "revolutionaries" who were in exile... From here begins a special period of our lives, the three of us in Paris. It lasted, with brief absences from Paris – to Brittany, to Normandy, to the Riviera, or to Germany - for about two and a half years, until our return to St. Petersburg in July 1908."

This strange relationship was also not easy. Ideas about the life of 'three's company', the mutual penetration, separation. The writer Taffy recalled how strangely Merezhkovsky reacted to the news of the death of Filosofov. When word got out about the writer's death, Taffy immediately thought: "We'll have to tell the Merezhkovskys about it after all." On the same day, she met them on the street: "Do you know the sad news about Filosofov?" Is he dead? " asked Merezhkovsky. "Yes." "You don't know why? Merezhkovsky was surprised and, without waiting for an answer, added: "Come on, Zina, or we'll be late again and all the best dishes

will be sorted out." We're having lunch at a restaurant today." However, this episode is interpreted in a different way. The couple knew already at that time about the death of Filosofov, they did not want to expose their feelings, to show them.

It often seemed to the Merezhkovskys that they lived poorly, writes Taffy further. Especially in Biarritz. Taffy thought that "it was probably especially hard for them, because they took every everyday disorder as a personal insult." At that time, the refugees were given a magnificent hotel, the Maison Basque: each a beautifully furnished room with a bath for ten francs a day. But the Merezhkovskys didn't pay for it: they considered it an injustice.

They were not very comforted by the fact that the affairs were managed by the secretary Vladimir Zlobin, a touchingly devoted friend, a talented poet who even abandoned literature, giving himself entirely to the care of them. On Sundays, they received acquaintances. In the large dining room, guests sat around an empty table and joked peacefully. At the other end of the room, Merezhkovsky was lying on a chaise longue, angry. He greeted the guests with a loud shout: "No tea. We don't have any tea."

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During the war, the Merezhkovskys showed a deliberate aversion to the Germans. When out on the street, Zinaida looked around – you can't see any Germans, and, if seen, now shut the gate and waited to go, and in his free time drawing cartoons on them. The Germans, young students, treated the Merezhkovsky couple with respect, often came reverently to ask for an autograph, as they knew the writer from translations. At the same time, Merezhkovsky would say, "Tell them to bring cigarettes." Or: "Say there are no eggs." And Gippius added: "You're all like machines. You are commanded by your superiors, and you obey." Students were offended: "But we are soldiers. We have discipline. We can't help it," they replied. "You're still machines," she kept saying.

Taffy ends his memoirs of the Merezhkovskys with a curious episode. "I took a long and careful look at this strange man," she wrote. – I kept looking for something in him and didn't find it. And then one day, not long before his death, when the Merezhkovskys returned to Paris, disappointed in their German patrons, without money (they even had to sell a gold stylus given by Italian writers in Mussolini's day), the three of us sat together...» Taffy at one point said of one person: "Yes, he is very much loved." "Nonsense! Merezhkovsky interrupted indignantly. "Nonsense! No one loves anyone. No one, no one." His face darkened. "Dmitry Sergeyeovich! Why do you think so? You just don't see or notice people," Taffy said. "Nonsense. I see it and I know it," Merezhkovsky insisted.

Taffy was very upset. It seemed to her that there was both longing and despair in these words. "Dmitry Sergeyeovich! she continued. – You don't see people. I keep laughing at you, but I really love you." She said it as if she had crossed herself. He looked puzzled: "Well, yes, you just love my works, but not me." Taffy insisted: "No, as a human being, I love you, Dmitry Sergeevich." He paused, then turned and walked slowly back to his room. He returned and handed the writer his portrait with the affectionate inscription, which she kept all her life.

It all depends on the perception. Here is how Nina Berberova describes the Merezhkovskys: "They lived in their pre-war apartment, which means that when they left Soviet Russia in 1919 and arrived in Paris, they unlocked the apartment door with their key and found everything in place: books, dishes, linen. They did not have the sense of homelessness that Bunin and others had so acutely. In the early years, when I didn't know them yet, they visited French literary circles, met people of their own generation (which was declining in France), with Rainier, with Bourget, with France.

"Then they all got tired of us," said Dmitry Sergeyeovich, " and they stopped inviting us. "Because you were so tactless in scolding the Bolsheviks," she said in her petulant, raspy voice, " and they always wanted to love them so much." "Yes, I went to them with my complaints and my jokes," he said, burling, " but they wanted something else entirely: they found the Russian Revolution a terribly interesting experience, in an exotic country, and it was none of their business. And that, as Lloyd George said, you can also trade with cannibals."

And again "both in Hell" and "in Heaven". And yet... There are so many wonderful discoveries in Merezhkovsky's book "Jesus the Unknown" that it is impossible to retell! Here, for example, is a vivid episode of the analysis of the fact that the Resurrection will be not only in the Spirit (this is understandable!), but also in the Flesh. Here is the true and most important thought of Merezhkovsky. A clear and correct reading of the Gospel. The flesh will also be resurrected. But it will be a completely different property. This thought is especially important, it also gives understanding and hope, as it seems to us, for the interpretation of the power of the Divine, and the impact of the Word.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

MARINA TZVETAeva (1892-1941): "WHERE DOES THIS TENDERNESS COME FROM"

Where does such tenderness come from?
These aren't the first curls
I've wound around my finger —
I've kissed lips darker than yours.

The sky is washed and dark
(Where does such tenderness come from?)
Other eyes have known
and shifted away from my eyes.

But I've never heard words like this
in the night
(Where does such tenderness come from?)
with my head on your chest, rest.

Where does this tenderness come from?
And what will I do with it? Young
stranger, poet, wandering through town,
you and your eyelashes—longer than anyone's.

(Translated by Ilya Kaminsky and Jean Valentine)

"Every meeting starts with a grope, people go blind, and there are, for me, no worse times...." – wrote Tsvetaeva. According to the memoirs of contemporaries, Marina Ivanovna was short-sighted. Maybe that's partly why (as they assumed!) so often her bitter disappointments and tragedies inevitably ended in "myth-making". According to Maria Belkina (biographer of the poetess), she herself invented, or rather, created a person, "thinking out how he seemed to her, how she wanted him to seem, how she needed him at the moment..." The look of these "eyes of a night bird, blinded by daylight", was remembered for a long time. Wide open, very light, transparent and cold. No wonder they say that people with cold eyes have a cold soul. It's just that some people's eyes are connected to the mind, while others are connected to the heart.

Marina Ivanovna had a habit of sitting down half-turned to those present. Perhaps she thought that her profile was more significant. Perhaps she was even annoyed by the roundness of her own face, the "baby oval". This did not correspond to the romantic appearance of the poet as she had pictured him. She didn't eat much, and she was too thin. I tried to give some asceticism to my appearance. She cut her hair especially, covering her cheeks with her hair. She smoked heavily, cigarette after cigarette. I threw away my glasses. I forced myself not to slouch, to stand up straight, and not to try to see what I couldn't see with my nearsightedness.

Tsvetaeva spoke rapidly, and in her monologue there was flight. "The words did not keep up with the thoughts," Maria Belkina noted, "she did not finish a sentence and jumped to another one, thinking, probably, that she had already said everything to the end."

"The state of creativity is a state of obsession," Tsvetaeva said. The monologue was also an example of creativity. There is a well-known story about how Marina Ivanovna came to her friends' dacha in Paris. There were a lot of people. We were drinking tea in the garden. Marina village with a strange woman, and she began to talk about poetry, about art, about the eternal tragedy of life and was so fascinated that spoke to her before leaving for the city, said the landlady, that "for a long time she was not as attentive listener", not even noticing that the interviewee did not understand, as almost did not know the Russian language!

Vladimir Veydle (literary critic, historian of Russian emigration), however, described the meeting with Tsvetaeva in 1934 in a completely different tone:

She behaved simply, affably and modestly. She spoke in a deep voice, restrained and quiet. She was feminine. Her femininity could not be forgotten for a moment. But this is probably the answer to her dissimilarity with no one – and it was that femininity, or, even more crudely, femininity, did not just enter into an alliance with her poetic gift (as in Akhmatova) and did not renounce itself, yielding to it (as in Gippius), but with all its powerful impulse merged into it and inextricably merged with it. Hence, perhaps, the sharp difference between her early (girlish) poems and her mature ones – their pulse, impulse, and rhythm, above all:

what gurgles in them, gurgles in these, and, I dare say, the fantastic nature of her other infatuations, of which we have been informed – hardly prematurely, though posthumously published letters...

Marina Tsvetaeva was born in Moscow on September 26 (October 8), 1892, and began writing poetry at the age of six, not only in Russian, but also in French and German. In the winter of 1910-1911, Maximilian Voloshin invited Marina Tsvetaeva and her sister Anastasia (Asya) to spend the summer in Koktebel, where Marina met Sergei Efron. In Sergei Tsvetaeva saw the embodied ideal of nobility, chivalry and at the same time defenselessness. Her love for Efron was both an adoration, a spiritual union, and an almost maternal concern. Meeting with him Tsvetaeva perceived as the beginning of a new, adult life and as finding happiness: in January 1912, they were married. During the Civil War, Sergei Efron fought in the ranks of the White Army, and Tsvetaeva, who remained in Moscow, had no news of him.

Nina Berberova recalled:

Tsvetaeva's fascination with the White Army was ridiculous, it to some extent stemmed from her attachment to her husband, S. Efron, to whom she "promised a son" – she said to me: "I will have a son, I swore to Seryozha that I would give him a son." Undoubtedly, in Marina Ivanovna, this separation was all the more tragic because over the years she began to want to merge more and more, that her peculiarity gradually began to weigh on her, she outlived it, and in its place nothing appeared in return...

In Moscow, Tsvetaeva and the children struggled to make ends meet, starved. At the beginning of the winter of 1919-1920, Tsvetaeva gave her daughters to an orphanage in Kuntsevo. She soon found out about the girls' plight and took home the eldest, Alya, to whom she was attached as a friend and whom she loved passionately. In early 1920, the youngest, Irina, died of starvation. In 1922, Marina Ivanovna and Alya came to Berlin, and then moved to Efron in the Czech Republic, where they spent more than four years. In 1925, they had a long-awaited son, named George (home name – Moore). Tsvetaeva adored him. The desire to do everything possible for the happiness and well-being of his son was

then perceived by the growing Moore aloof and selfish; willingly or unwittingly, he played a tragic role in the fate of his mother. According to Nina Berberova, "in Prague, Tsvetaeva gave the impression of a person who put aside his worries, full of creative inventions, but a person who does not see himself, does not know his life (and women's!) opportunities. Tsvetaeva seemed to have succumbed to the old decadent temptation to invent herself: a freak poet, unrecognized and misunderstood, the mother of her children and the wife of her husband, the mistress of the young ephebus".

Tsvetaeva sincerely believed that with her spells, her loyalty, she saved Sergei's life, but family life was very difficult. Unsettled life became a real Calvary for Tsvetaeva. It was necessary to wash, cook, buy cheap food in the markets, patch up leaky clothes. "I live a home life, the one I love and hate—a cross between a cradle and a coffin, and I have never been a baby or a dead person," she wrote in a letter to one of her correspondents. But that was just the beginning. In the Czech Republic, she experienced a passionate and painful love for Sergei's friend, Konstantin Rodzevich. Happy, confident, earthly Rodzevich conquered Tsvetaeva, seeing in her not a poet, but just a woman.

He seemed to have little understanding of her poems, did not strive to be more subtle, and significant than he really was, and always remained himself. "I told you: / there is a Soul. / You told me: / there is Life." One of Tsvetaeva's most poignant poems, *The Poem of the End*, is dedicated to him.

There were other hobbies. In Prague, Tsvetaeva read Alexander Bahrach's review of her book *Craft*, and on June 9, 1923, she wrote him her first letter:

I do not know who YOU are, I do not know anything about your life, I am completely free with you, I speak with the spirit... I want a miracle from you. The miracle of trust, the miracle of understanding, the miracle of detachment. I want you, in your twenties, to be a seventy – year-old man—and at the same time a seven-year-old boy, I don't want age, counting, struggle, barriers... I have so many words... It's a magical game. It's a complete va banque-of what? – and so I thought: not the heart, it is too small in my life! – maybe I don't have it at all, but there's something

else, and there's a lot of it that I'll never spend – a soul?" I don't know his name, but I don't have anything else...

On September 20, there was another letter to Bachrach, this time completely different: "My dear friend, gather all your courage in two hands and listen to me: something is over. Now the hardest part is done, listen on. I love someone else – it can't be simpler, rougher, or more truthful."

And already on September 22, again a letter of Tsvetaeva to Rodzevich:

...Harlequin! So I'm calling you. The first Harlequin for a life that is beyond counting-Pierrot! I love a happy person for the first time and maybe for the first time I am looking for happiness, not loss, I want to take, not give, to be, not to be lost! I feel the power in you, this has never happened to me. The power to love not all of me-chaos-but the best of me, the main of me. I never gave a person the right to choose: either everything or nothing, but in this everything is like in the primordial chaos-so much that it is no wonder that a person was lost in it, lost himself and in total me.

Efron had a hard time with his wife's infatuation, for him it was a real torture of her throwing, her irritation, alienation. They were too close together, too much had been experienced, too alone in the world for him to leave her. But it was becoming increasingly difficult to live with an unbalanced, untruthful, exaggeratedly perceptive talented poetess. The scales at the decisive choice of Tsvetaeva still swung in the direction of Efron. She was able to move away from Rodzevich, but the relationship with Sergei never became the same.

Tsvetaeva had other novels, more, however, in dreams and letters. She just couldn't live without filling her soul with idols and admiration. When this source dried up, her creativity also disappeared, and therefore her life left her, because for Tsvetaeva, earthly existence was impossible without poetry. With her correspondents, Boris Pasternak and R. Rilke (the Austrian symbolist poet), to whom she wrote letters of stunning intimate frankness, she practically did not meet. A few painful meetings

with Pasternak and never with Rilke. Nevertheless, reading her lines today, it is difficult for an ordinary reader to believe this. Pasternak's wife, who had once forbidden correspondence in a fit of jealousy, did not believe her husband either. Speaking of Tsvetaeva's novels, we must not forget that she is, first of all, a Poet who needed the charm of this or that person just as the average person needed food and sleep, needed to stay in a high, self – burning heat of creative inspiration.

A similar story was, in particular, her youthful infatuation with Sophia Parnok (back in Russia, before Sergei left for the front). Maternal care, tenderness and a sudden flaring feeling for a rather flighty young person are reflected in the cycle of poems *Girlfriend*. Here is another example of her poetry, full of feeling and its contradiction:

from *An Attempt at Jealousy*

How is your life with that other one?
Simpler, is it? A stroke of the oars
and a long coastline—
and the memory of me

is soon a drifting island
(not in the ocean—in the sky!)
Souls—you will be sisters—
sisters, not lovers.

How is your life with an ordinary
woman? without the god inside her?
The queen supplanted—

How do you breathe now?
Flinch, waking up?
What do you do, poor man?

“Hysterics and interruptions—
enough! I’ll rent my own house!”
How is your life with that other,
you, my own.

Is the breakfast delicious?
(If you get sick, don't blame me!)
How is it, living with a postcard?
You who stood on Sinai.

How's your life with a tourist
on Earth? Her rib (do you love her?)
is it to your liking?

How's life? Do you cough?
Do you hum to drown out the mice in your mind?

How do you live with cheap goods: is the market rising?
How's kissing plaster-dust?

Are you bored with her new body?
How's it going, with an earthly woman,
with no sixth sense?

Are you happy?
No? In a shallow pit—how is your life,
my beloved? Hard as mine
with another man?

(Translated by Ilya Kaminsky and Jean Valentine)

Moving to France did not make life easier for Tsvetaeva and her family. Sergei Efron, impractical and unsuited to the hardships of emigrant life, earned little. Tsvetaeva was little printed, and her texts were often edited. In the second half of the 1930s, she experienced a deep creative crisis, there was a serious conflict with her daughter, who insisted, following her father, on leaving for the USSR. In September 1937, Sergei Efron was involved in the kidnapping of General Miller, one of the leaders of the White Movement, and the murder of Ignatius Reis (Nathan Poretsky), a former agent of the Soviet special services, who decided to stay in France. Zac Efron went into hiding and fled to the Soviet Union. After him, his daughter Ariadne returned to her homeland. Tsvetaeva stayed in Paris with her son.

According to the memoirs of Nina Berberova, her husband, the poet Vladislav Khodasevich, once mentioned that in his youth Marina Tsvetaeva reminded him of Yesenin: the color of his hair, the complexion, even the habits, even the voice. Berberova said that she had a dream of both of them, exactly the same, hanging in their loops and swinging: "In her, in the nature of her attitude to people and the world, this end was already lurking: it is predicted in all her poems, where she shouts to us that she is not like everyone else, that she is proud, that she is not like us, that she never wanted to be like us." Many emigrants in Paris believed that the death of Marina Tsvetaeva was their common sin, their common fault. Zinaida Shakhovskaya in her "Reflections" cited the words of Marina Tsvetaeva, uttered by her at their last meeting with a sigh:

"There is nowhere to go – emigration survives me." She was right – emigration really "survived" her, who needed love as in the air, with its utter indifference and coldness to her. In addition to the difficult relationship with emigration, Tsvetaeva's desire to connect with her husband and daughter was the reason that in 1939 she and her son returned to their homeland. At first, they all lived together in the state dacha of the NKVD, given to Efron. However, soon both her husband and Ariadne were arrested. After that, Tsvetaeva was "expelled" from almost everywhere. The functionaries of the Writers' Union turned away from her as the wife and mother of "enemies of the people". A collection of poems prepared by her in 1940 was not published.

Money was sorely lacking. Shortly after the beginning of the World War II, on August 8, 1941, Tsvetaeva and her son were evacuated from Moscow and ended up in the small town of Yelabuga. There was no work here either, and she had a quarrel with her son, who apparently reproached her for their painful situation. On August 31, 1941, Marina Tsvetaeva hanged herself.

Any suicide is a mystery, mixed up in unbearable pain. In the best case, a specific external push is known, which played the role of the trigger mechanism. But in external events alone, the key to the mystery is not to be found. Everyone who met Tsvetaeva in the six weeks that separated the day of her departure with her son for the evacuation from the beginning of the war agreed that her state of mind was extremely tense and depressed. "I have no friends, and without them – death," wrote Marina Ivanovna in a workbook back in May 1940. The situation has not changed in a year. On the very eve of leaving Moscow, she visited the

writer Ilya Ehrenburg, who returned from France a year ago. About the meeting, according to Moore, Dmitry Sezeman told in his book "Paris – Gulag – Paris": "Marina began to reproach Ehrenburg bitterly:" You explained to me that my place, my homeland, my readers are here, now my husband and my daughter are in prison, I am with my son without funds, on the street, and no one wants to print, and even talk to me. What am I supposed to do? What did Ehrenburg say to her?

"Marina, Marina, there are supreme state interests that are hidden from us and in comparison with which the personal fate of each of us is worth nothing."

"You're a scoundrel", she said, and left, slamming the door.

At the moment, there are perhaps three main versions of Tsvetaeva's suicide. The first was put forward by her sister Anastasia and replicated in multiple reprints of her *Memoirs*. Marina Tsvetaeva passed away wanting to save or at least ease the fate of her son. Convinced that she herself could no longer help him, moreover, hindered by the stuck reputation of the "White Guard", she made a fatal decision, cherishing the hope that without her, Moore would rather be helped. Especially if she leaves like this.

Another version was argued by Maria Belkina. On the one hand, Tsvetaeva was internally ready to leave her life for a long time, as evidenced by many of her poems and diary entries. But Belkin has made a further motive, without naming it directly and still spending it with enough pressure motif of mental illness Tsvetaeva, aggravated since the war began: "She's already there, in Moscow, has lost the will, could not make up her mind, swayed by anyone not already self-governed..." The third version, the most far-fetched and a hastily cobbled together, according to most critics, belonged to Cyril of Genkina. The author of "The Hunter Upside Down" claimed that Marina Ivanovna was repeatedly summoned by the local NKVD commissioner and offered to "help".

The last year of her life, Tsvetaeva lived in constant fear. Not for yourself, but for your loved ones. One day – the war had already begun – the manager came to the apartment without warning. Marina Ivanovna stood against the wall, arms outstretched, as if determined to do anything, tense to the limit. The manager left, and she just stood there... It turned out that the manager came just to check the blackout. But Tsvetaeva remembered too well the appearance of the commandant at the dacha in

Bolshev in the autumn of the thirty-ninth: each time such an appearance was accompanied by another search – and arrest.

Irma Kudrova, the author of the book *The Death of Marina Tsvetaeva*, who visited Yelabuga many years later, in 1993, found random people who happened to meet Marina Tsvetaeva shortly before her death. According to her, Tamara Petrovna Golovastikov, then very young, saw Tsvetaeva in the middle of the Bazaar:

It was impossible not to remember this unusual woman! Standing in the middle of a street bazaar, wearing a jacket that showed her apron, she was angrily talking to her handsome teenage son in French.

Tsvetaeva was smoking, and the gesture with which she threw off the ashes was also remembered – it seemed strangely beautiful to Tamara Petrovna. The son answered Tsvetaeva also angrily, in the same language; then he ran somewhere, apparently at the request of his mother. Tsvetaeva's face was as if carved out of bone and extremely exhausted, "as if burned"...

"My strongest passion is wounded and bloodied: justice," Marina Ivanovna wrote in her notebook. She could never help but take the trampling so much to heart. That was her heartburn. The immeasurable sharpness of reaction is a distinctive feature of her natural disposition and soul... The gigantic work of thoughts and feelings went on in Tsvetaeva continuously, and it seemed that even at night she could not rest. The tension she was constantly in was involuntarily transmitted to those around her. As if behind a deaf, impenetrable wall for the ear, for the eye, the beating of the ocean was felt, its tides and ebbs, calm, storm, the increase in points. And Marina Ivanovna was wholly subject to the laws of not external, but his inner world, and because it seemed that her eyes, "naturalnie some" look not on the outside, and inside, "her thing."

Irina Odoevtseva described her last meeting with Tsvetaeva in Paris in her book "On the Banks of the Seine". "Marina Ivanovna, are you happy to be returning to Russia?" Odoevtseva asked. Tsvetaeva shook her head:

Oh, no, not at all. If only I could go back to Germany, to my childhood. I would like to go there – there are such wide squares and old Gothic buildings. And in Russia, everything is now alien. And hostile to me. Even people. I'm a stranger to everyone there. Still, I'm glad I'm leaving Paris. I've outlived it. How much grief, how much resentment I endured in it. I've never been so unhappy anywhere. And once in Prague – where I was very bored - I dreamed how nice it would be in Paris. And in Paris, Prague began to seem almost like a lost paradise.... And now I'm going to Moscow. My son will be better off there. But me?"

The moon was shining brightly. Too bright. In the light of it all began to seem unreal. "And you are quite different from what I thought," Irina Odoevtseva told Tsvetaeva at the time. "So, another failed meeting is over. Be happy. And do not wish me any happiness or a happy journey. I don't need it."

from "The Desk"

Fair enough: you people have eaten me,
I—wrote you down.
They'll lay you out on a dinner table,
me—on this desk.

I've been happy with little.
There are dishes I've never tried.
But you, you people eat slowly, and often;
You eat and eat.

Everything was decided for us
back in the ocean:
Our places of action,
our places of gratitude.

You—with belches, I—with books,
with truffles, you. With pencil, I,
you and your olives, me and my rhyme,
with pickles, you. I, with poems.

At your head—funeral candles
like thick-legged asparagus:
your road out of this world
a dessert table's striped cloth.

They will smoke Havana cigars
on your left side and your right;
your body will be dressed
in the best Dutch linen.

And—not to waste such expensive cloth,
they will shake you out,
along with the crumbs and bits of food,
into the hole, the grave.

You—stuffed capon, I—pigeon.
Gunpowder, your soul, at the autopsy.
And I will be laid out bare
with only two wings to cover me.

In *The Story of Sonechka*, a work that Tsvetaeva herself loved very much, there are famous words addressed to the main character: "Sonia! I would like all men to fall in love with you after my story, all wives to be jealous of you, all poets to suffer for you... "

It seems to us that after reading Marina Tsvetaeva's poems, it is these words that are so clearly, acutely, screamingly addressed to her.

CHAPTER NINE

KONSTANTIN BALMONT (1867 – 1942): A RUSSIAN OSCAR WILDE

Episodes of biography

The light, slightly limping gait throws Balmont forward, into space. Or rather, it is as if Balmont falls out of the spaces on the ground – in the salon, on the street. And the impulse breaks in him, and he, realizing that he has got into the wrong place... puts on his pince-nez and looks around haughtily (or rather, fearfully), raises his dry lips, framed by a red beard like fire. And that's why his whole appearance is twofold. Haughtiness and impotence, grandeur and lethargy, boldness, fright – all this alternates in him, and what a fine whimsical scale passes over his emaciated face, pale, with wide-flaring nostrils! The vengeful genius of the thunderstorm, the demon of burning passion... the red-bearded Thor himself, but Thor, wandering wistfully through the Arbat on an October day, when the rain streams day and night are stretched over the city. He stops... and suddenly arrogantly stamps his foot on the wet asphalt: "I came to this world to see the sun!" -

this is how Andrey Bely captured the appearance of the poet.

Konstantin Dmitrievich Balmont was born on June 3 (15), 1867 in a noble family in the village of Gumnishchi, Shuisky uyezd, Vladimir province. According to family legends, the ancestors on the father's side were Scottish or Scandinavian sailors who moved to Russia. His mother, Vera Nikolaevna Lebedeva, came from an ancient Tatar family descended from the Prince White Swan of the Golden Horde (perhaps this is one more of the family myths, which, however, was confirmed by the poet's second wife, Ekaterina Alekseevna Balmont in her memoirs). The mother had a great influence on the formation of the personality of the future poet, who inherited from her not only "wildness and passion", but also the entire "spiritual system".

The most vivid impressions of childhood – the nature of the Central Russian strip.

In our places there are forests and swamps, there are beautiful rivers and lakes, reeds and marsh lilies grow on the barrels, sweet honeydew breathes, night violets conjure, -

the poet recalled in his autobiography of 1907. His literary tastes were formed under the influence of folk songs, Nikitin, Koltsov, Nekrasov and Pushkin. In his youth, he developed a penchant for foreign languages, which he mastered quickly and easily. This helped the poet to get acquainted with Western European literature in the original and translate Percy Shelley, Edgar Poe, Pedro Calderon, Christopher Marlowe, Oscar Wilde.

Later, Balmont wrote in his autobiography that he began to fall in love very early: "The first passionate thought about a woman – at the age of five, the first real love – at the age of nine, the first passion – at the age of fourteen," he wrote. "Wandering through countless cities, I am always delighted with one thing – love," the poet later confessed in one of his poems. This may sound a little far-fetched and grandiloquent, but it is also part of the portrait of Balmont, perhaps the most important, and, without any doubt, a reflection of that distant era, where talking about their own infatuations is almost the most important events.

Valery Bryusov, analyzing his work, wrote: "Balmont's poetry praises and glorifies all the rites of love, all its rainbow. Balmont himself says that by following the paths of love, he can achieve "too much – everything!"

In 1889, Balmont married Larisa Garelina, the daughter of a Shuisky manufacturer. In March 1890, an incident occurred that left an imprint on the rest of Balmont's life: he tried to commit suicide, threw himself out of a third-floor window, suffered serious fractures and spent a year in bed. It was believed that he was driven to such an act by despair from the family and financial situation: the marriage quarreled with Balmont's parents and deprived him of financial support, the immediate impetus was the "Kreutzer Sonata" read shortly before. The year spent in bed, as the poet himself recalled, turned out to be very fruitful creatively and led to "an unprecedented flowering of mental excitement and cheerfulness." It was in this year that he realized himself as a poet, saw it turned out to be very fruitful creatively and led to "an unprecedented flowering of mental excitement and cheerfulness". It was in this year that

he realized himself as a poet, saw his own destiny. In 1923, in the biographical story *The Air Way*, he wrote:

In a long year, when I lay in bed and no longer expected to get up, I learned from the pre-morning chirping of the sparrows outside the window, and from the moonbeams that passed through the window into my room, and from all the steps that reached my ear, the great fairy tale of life, I understood the holy sanctity of life. And when I finally got up, my soul was as free as the wind in the field, no one had any power over it anymore, except for the creative dream, and creativity bloomed with wild color...

Soon after his recovery, which was only partial – the limp remained for life – Balmont parted with Larisa Garelina. The first child born in this marriage died, the second - son Nicholas - later suffered from a nervous breakdown. Later, researchers warned against excessive "demonization" of the image of Balmont's first wife: having separated from the latter, Larisa Mikhailovna married the journalist and literary historian Nikolai Engelhardt and lived peacefully with him for many years. Her daughter from this marriage, Anna Nikolaevna Engelhardt, became the second wife of Nikolai Gumilev.

For some time after his illness, Balmont lived in poverty. He, according to his own recollections, for months "did not know what it was like to be full, and went to the bakeries to look through the glass at the rolls and loaves."

The beginning of literary activity was associated with many torments and failures. For four or five years, neither the magazine didn't want me to print. The first collection of my poems... was, of course, no success. Close people with their negative attitude significantly increased the severity of the first failures, -

he wrote in an autobiographical letter in 1903.

In 1896, Balmont married Ekaterina Andreeva. Ekaterina Alekseevna, a relative of the famous Moscow publishers Sabashnikov, came from a rich merchant family (the Andreevs owned shops of colonial goods). They were distinguished by rare education. Contemporaries also noted the external attractiveness of this tall and slender young woman

"with beautiful black eyes". For a long time, she was unrequited in love with Alexander Urusov, a well-known lawyer. Balmont, as Andreeva recalled, quickly became interested in her, but for a long time did not meet with reciprocity. When such a situation arose, it turned out that the poet was married: then the parents forbade their daughter to meet with her lover. However, Ekaterina Alekseevna, enlightened in the "modern spirit", looked at the rites as a formality and soon moved to the poet. The divorce process, allowing Larisa Garelina to enter into a second marriage, forbade her husband to marry forever, but after finding an old document where the groom was listed as unmarried, the lovers were married on September 27, 1896, and the next day they went abroad, to France.

In the late 1890s, Balmont did not stay in one place for long; the main points of its route were St. Petersburg, Moscow and the Moscow region, Berlin, Paris, Spain, Biarritz and Oxford. In 1899, Balmont wrote to the poet Lyudmila Vilkina:

I have a lot of news. And all good ones. I'm "lucky". It's written to me. I want to live, to live, to live forever. If you only knew how many new poems I have written! More than a hundred. It was crazy, a fairy tale, new. I am publishing a new book, not at all like the previous ones. It will surprise many. I changed my understanding of the world. No matter how ridiculous my phrase sounds, I will say: I have understood the world. For many years, perhaps forever.

In the early 1900s, in Paris, Balmont met Elena Konstantinovna Tsvetkovskaya, the daughter of the general, then a student of the mathematics department of the Sorbonne and a passionate admirer of his poetry. The latter, "not strong in character... with all her being, was drawn into the maelstrom of the poet's follies," every word of which "sounded to her like the voice of God." Balmont, judging by some of his letters, in particular to Bryusov, was not in love with Tsvetkovskaya, but soon began to feel the need for her as a truly loyal, devoted friend.

Gradually, the "spheres of influence" were divided: Balmont lived with his family, then left with Elena – for example, in 1905, they went to Mexico for three months. The family life of the poet finally became confused after in December 1907, Elena had a daughter, who was named Myrrh – in memory of Myrrh Lokhvitskaya, a poet with whom he was

connected by complex and deep feelings. The appearance of the child finally tied Balmont to Elena Konstantinovna, but at the same time he did not want to leave Ekaterina Alekseevna. Mental anguish led to a breakdown: in 1909, Balmont made a new suicide attempt, again threw himself out of the window and again survived. Until 1917, he lived in St. Petersburg with Tsvetkovskaya and Mirra, coming from time to time to Moscow to Andreeva and daughter Nina.

Unlike Ekaterina Alekseevna, Elena Konstantinovna was "helpless in everyday life and could not organize life in any way." She considered it her duty to follow Balmont everywhere: eyewitnesses recalled how she "left the child at home, followed her husband somewhere in a tavern and could not get him out of there for twenty-four hours."

"With such a life, it's no wonder that by the time she was forty, she looked like an old woman," Taffy noted.

In 1901, an event occurred that had a significant impact on the life and work of Balmont and made him "a true hero in St. Petersburg." In March, he took part in a mass student demonstration on the square near the Kazan Cathedral, the main demand of which was the abolition of the decree on sending unreliable students to military service. The demonstration was dispersed by the police and Cossacks, among its participants were victims. On March 14, Balmont spoke at a literary evening in the hall of the City Duma and read the poem *Little Sultan*, which in a veiled form criticized the regime of terror in Russia and its organizer, Nicholas the Second:

The poem went through the hands, it was going to be published in the newspaper "Iskra" by Vladimir Lenin. According to the resolution of the "special meeting", Balmont was expelled from St. Petersburg, having lost the right to live in the capital and university cities for three years. Balmont was a success. The most vivid memories of his fame, perhaps, relate to the period of his life in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Boris Zaitsev recalled the brilliant days in Moscow:

The Literary Circle, a club of writers, poets, and journalists, has just been founded in Moscow... The first meeting with Balmont was in this circle. He'd read about Wilde. Slightly reddish, with lively, quick eyes, head held high, high, straight collars (de l'époque), a pointed beard, a fighting look. (Serov's portrait perfectly conveys it.) Something fervent, always ready to boil, to

respond with sharpness or enthusiasm. If you compare it with birds, it is a magnificent chanticleer that welcomes day, light, life ("I came to this world to see the Sun...").

Then Balmont read about Wilde vividly, even passionately, somewhat defiantly: above the high collars, he arrogantly raised his head: try to contradict me. There were two layers in the hall: young and old ("philistines"). The young sympathized, the dentists, the elderly ladies, and the high school teachers disapproved. But nothing violent happened. Literary bohemians of the time, applauded, opponents hissed. A young lady with the face of a fox, slender and tall, with a beautiful friend of his fiercely approved, I, of course, too. A young man with a cock on his forehead that went down to his eyebrows jumped up on the stage and shouted something for Wilde. Balmont boiled, objected to his opponents haughtily, sharply and accurately, bowed to his friends in a friendly manner."

Balmont, according to Zaitsev, liked the noisy and cheerful young people who crowded around, which was especially appreciated by the female half (after *Let's be like the Sun* there was a whole category of young ladies and young ladies "balmont-admirers": different Zinochki, Lyuba, Katenka constantly jostled with us, admired Balmont. He, of course, unfurled the sails and blissfully sailed on the wind"). But he was also quite different. Quiet, even sad. I read my poems. Despite the presence of fans, he kept it simple – no theater.

Boris Zaitsev recalled how one greenish-lilac evening, or rather, at dusk, Balmont came to visit him and his wife at the Arbat apartment in a particularly lyrical mood. He took out a book – he always had spare poems in his side pocket. He looked at them all thoughtfully, there was no challenge in it, and said softly: "I will read you something from my new book." On some tender and thoughtful stanzas, his own voice, usually bold and even haughty, now moved, faltered. At the end, he suddenly straightened up, raised his head, and in his usual Balmontian tone concluded (from an earlier book):

The most striking, however, seems to us the phrase that Balmont threw to B. Zaitsev's wife, Vera:

Once, bending his head in the Balmont way, somewhat upward and sideways, Balmont said to my wife: - Vera, do you want the

poet to come to you, bypassing the boring earthly paths, directly from himself, to Boris's room, through the air? He had already tried such "air routes" once before, even before Ekaterina Alekseevna: he "went out", after some cordial quarrel, right out of the window. I don't know how I didn't crack my skull, but I seriously injured my leg and then spent my whole life walking on it a little bit.

One of her meetings with the poet in St. Petersburg, in "Stray Dog", the writer Taffy describes as follows:

The next meeting was already during the war in the basement of the "Stray Dog". His arrival was a sensation. How happy everyone was! "I've arrived! I've arrived! Anna Akhmatova exulted. – I saw him, I read him my poems, and he said that until now he had recognized only two poets - Sappho and Mirra Lokhvitskaya. Now he recognized the third one – me.

They were waiting for him, preparing for a meeting, and he came. He entered with his brow held high, as if he were carrying a golden crown of glory. His neck was twice wrapped in a black, Lermontov-like tie, which no one wears. Lynx eyes, long, reddish hair. Behind him is his faithful shadow, his Elena, a small, thin, dark-faced creature who lives only on strong tea and love for the poet.

They met him, surrounded him, sat him down, and read him poems. Now a hysterical circle of worshippers – "myrrh-bearing wives" has formed. "Do you want me to throw myself out of the window? Want some? Just say the word, and I'll throw myself right away", repeated the lady who fell in love with him with lightning speed. Mad with love for the poet, she forgot that the "Stray Dog" is in the basement, and there is no way to jump out of the window. It would only be possible to get out, and then with difficulty and without any danger to life. Balmont replied contemptuously: "Not worth it. It's not high enough here".

He didn't seem to realize he was in the basement either." Balmont loved the pose. Yes, this is understandable. Constantly surrounded by worship, he considered it necessary to behave as, in his opinion, a great poet should behave. He threw back his head and frowned. But his laughter betrayed him, good-natured, childish, and somehow defenseless. This

children's laughter has been discussed by many absurd things. He, like a child, gave himself up to the mood of the moment, could forget his promise, act rashly, renounce the true one. For example, during the First World War, when many Polish refugees flooded into Moscow and St. Petersburg, he expressed indignation at a meeting in his speech why everyone did not speak Polish. Russian students met him at the train station when he went to Warsaw after the war and, of course, greeted him in Russian. He expressed an unpleasant surprise:

"We are, however, in Poland. Why don't you speak to me in Polish?" The students were very upset: "We are Russian, we welcome Russian writer, quite naturally, what we say in Russian". When the poet got to know him better, he was forgiven for everything. Writer Taffy recalled that in exile Balmont settled in a small furnished apartment. "The window in the dining room was always covered with a thick brown curtain, because the poet broke the glass. There was no point in putting in a new glass-it could easily break again. Therefore, the room was always dark and cold. "It's a terrible apartment," they said. "No glass, and it blows."

In "a terrible apartment" Balmont lived with their young daughter Myrrh, being very original, often surprising with their eccentricities. Once when she was a child, she undressed, naked, and crawled under the table, and no amount of persuasion could get her out of there. The parents decided that it was probably some kind of disease, and called a doctor. The doctor looked closely at Elena and asked, "You are obviously her mother?" "YES..." He looked at Balmont even more closely: "Are you the father?" The doctor spread his hands: "Well, what do you want from her?"

Nyushenka also lived with Balmont, a gentle, sweet woman with a huge admiration-amused grey eyes. In the days of her youth, she fell in love with Balmont, and so remained with him until her death, surprised and delighted. Once very rich, she was quite poor during the emigration, and, consumptive, ill, she always embroidered and painted something, so that she could make gifts to the Balmonts with the pennies she earned. Taffy thought that Balmont had always been a poet. He spoke about the simplest everyday details with poetic pathos and poetic images. The publisher, who did not pay the promised fee, he called "the killer of swans". He called the money "ringing opportunities", and explained it to his wife Elena: "I am too Balmont to be denied wine."

His family also spoke to him and about him in a special way. His wife, Elena, never called him husband. She said "poet". The simple phrase "The husband asks for a drink" in their language was pronounced as "The poet wants to be satisfied with moisture". But Elena Konstantinovna was not the last love of the poet. In Paris, he resumed his acquaintance with Princess Dagmar Shakhovskaya (1893 – 1967), which had begun in March 1919. "One of my dearest, half-Swedish, half – Polish friends, Princess Dagmar Shakhovskaya, born Baroness Lilienfeld, Russified, more than once sang Estonian songs to me," Balmont described his beloved in one of his letters. Shakhovskaya Balmont gave birth to two children, George (1922 – 194?) Svetlana (b. 1925).

The poet could not leave his family; meeting with Shakhovskaya only occasionally, he often, almost daily, wrote to her, repeatedly confessing his love, telling about his impressions and plans; 858 of his letters and postcards have been preserved. In any case, it was not Shakhovskaya, but Tsvetkovskaya, who spent the last, most disastrous years of his life with Balmont; she died in 1943, a year after the poet's death. And his daughter Mirra Konstantinovna Balmont (in marriage – Boychenko, in the second marriage – Autina) wrote poetry and was published in the 1920s under the pseudonym Aglaya Gamayun. She died in Noisy-le-Grand in 1970. Taffy recalled that Balmont was "very ill" in the last years of his life. The financial situation was very difficult. We made preparations, arranged an evening to pay for a hospital bed for a poor poet. At the party, Elena was sitting in the back row, huddled in a corner, crying. Taffy had recited Balmont's poems that night, and had told her from the stage how the magic of those poems had once saved her.

It was in the midst of a revolution. Taffy was traveling at night in a car "packed with half-dead people." They sat on top of each other, stood "swaying like corpses, and lay side by side on the floor. They were screaming and crying loudly in their sleep." She was almost crushed by a terrible old man, leaning on her shoulder, "with his mouth open and the whites of his eyes swollen." It was "stuffy and smelly, and my heart was pounding and stopping." And suddenly "a poem began to sing in my soul, sweet, naive, childish": There was a merry ball in the castle, /The musicians sang... "In the early morning, our train stopped," Taffy wrote. - The terrible old man was dragged out, blue, motionless. He seems to have already died. And I was saved by the magic of the verse:"

POETRY

Konstantin Balmont left quite a large legacy, that is, a lot of poems, however, many poets, in particular, O. Mandelstam, said that the legacy is still small, there are not so many poems of Balmont, compared to the works of, for example, Alexander Blok or Marina Tsvetaeva. Even in the first post-revolutionary years, Osip Mandelstam stated: "From Balmont, with his burning buildings, world poems, superhuman audacity and demonic narcissism, there are only a few modest good poems left." And a little later, "from Balmont survived surprisingly little – just a dozen of poems. But what has survived is truly excellent, both in its phonetic brightness and in its deep sense of root and sound, it stands up to comparison with the best examples of abstruse poetry." Ivan Bunin, however, has long been merciless to symbolists, wrote a completely strange review: "He was an amazing man in general, - a man who, in all his long life, has never said a single word in simplicity, who has even mentioned in verse the secret charms of his lovers in an extremely bad way."

Even Marina Tsvetaeva, who was friends with Balmont, mentioned the "self-intoxicating, self-intoxicating bird", "an overseas guest in Russian poetry". On the one hand, on the other, M. Tsvetaeva says that, how much was done by Balmont: "Balmont wrote: 35 books of poetry, i.e. 8750 printed pages of poetry. 20 books of prose, i.e. 5000 pages, are printed, and how many more are in the suitcases! Edgar Poe - 5 volumes - 1800 pages, Shelley - 3 volumes - 1000 pages, Calderon - 4 volumes - 1400 pages". Why was Balmont so widely known? Thanks to his life path, so bright, catchy, bold in everything, in something completely shocking, and, of course, thanks to his environment, meetings with famous people of that era, writers, artists, and so on.

In addition, and without any doubt, Constantin Balmont is known for his translations. The poet translated the English Romantics by J. R. R. Tolkien, Byron, W. Wordsworth, S. Coleridge, P. B. Shelley, G. Rosseti, as well as W. Shakespeare, T. Eliot. Among his translations are the French poetry of Sh. Baudelaire, Spanish drama like Lope de Vega, numerous translations of representatives of German Romanticism, the bright founder of Weimar classicism Goethe and the romantic G. Heine, works of Polish, Georgian, Armenian, Lithuanian authors.

The coverage of translations, names, and topics is huge. The choice of Oscar Wilde is interesting and very clear. Modern researcher

E. L. Sushko draws attention to the fact that the formation of myth and myth-thinking in the literature of the Silver Age is traditionally associated with symbolism, the distinctive feature of which is the comprehensive mythologization of phenomena, historical, social and personal life. In this sense, the mythologization of Oscar Wilde's work in Russia is a peculiar phenomenon.

Russian Russian poets of the Silver Age actively translated the works of Wilde into Russian, only *The Ballad of Reading Prison* was translated 17 times, including the whole color of Russian poetry of the Silver Age: K. Balmont, V. Bryusov, N. Gumilev, M. Kuzmin, F. Sologub, even V. Mayakovsky. Moreover, V. Mayakovsky called the first chapter of the poem *About It - The Ballad of the Reading Goal*. Wilde's portraits were displayed in the windows of the capital's bookstores, his sayings were quoted, he was constantly referred to, he was argued about, he was imitated - including extravagant toilets à la Wilde. Russian Russian news, "Russian Thought", "The Modern World", and all the leading Russian magazines wrote about Wilde, even if they did not share the views of the Anglo-Irish classic. One of the first poets to openly admire Wilde was Balmont.

In November 1903, at a meeting of the Moscow Literary and Artistic Circle, Konstantin Balmont made a report *The Poetry of Oscar Wilde*, where he publicly stated: "Oscar Wilde is the most outstanding English writer of the end of the last century." The report was immediately published in the pages of the magazine "Libra" as an article *The Poetry of Oscar Wilde*, in which K. Balmont told about the first meeting with Wilde, in fact, presented to the Russian world a genius debunked at home, thereby mythologizing Wilde, creating the image of a mysterious genius, misunderstood by his country and rejected by it.

Balmont himself repeatedly recalls his own meeting with Oscar Wilde, as well as those occasions when he spoke about him with genuine admiration, while the British deliberately spoke casually about the writer and did not at all seek to continue the conversation about him, much less support any expression of delight in his address. Balmont's translation is both literal, that is, meticulous, attentive, and fluent. In *Salome* there are episodes of a freer interpretation of the text. In general, this attitude of Balmont to the translation caused criticism of S. Marshak and K. Chukovsky, but all the approval of B. Parsnip. It should be noted that one of

the translators of Rilke (according to the memoirs of the Silver Age, Boris Veydle *On Poets and Poetry*) said that it would be ridiculous to translate the complete works of Rilke, since you still need to fall in love with a particular poem.

A similar conclusion is drawn by B. Wedle when comparing two of the most famous translations of Goethe's poem, one by Lermontov ("Mountain peaks sleep in the darkness of the night"), and the other - "Over the height of the mountain silence" - by I. Annensky. The second option is more meticulous, and the first, as you know, almost surpasses the original. K. Balmont in this case, as a famous symbolist, feels the magic of the word, which itself carries a lot about the world. Like any symbolist (recall at least the numerous works of A. Bely on symbolism), Balmont, on the one hand, brings his poems closer to music, and on the other hand (very in the spirit of the philosophical tradition of M. Heidegger) feels the power of the word over man as a manifestation of a certain divine essence, something more than the pleasure of music or knowledge, a moment of creative exaltation.

K. Balmont translates S. Coleridge and Wordsworth. This is also no coincidence. Romanticism in English poetry (as well as German Romanticism) is unusually close to the image of Balmont and his tastes in poetry. S. Coleridge, as you know, writes the famous unfinished poem *Kubla Khan, A Vision in a Dream*, a work that only Byron helps him to publish, and of which he was insanely proud. Coleridge, Wordsworth, de Queensley (author of the acclaimed *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*) They live in the Lake District, and they live in Wordsworth's house. Walter Scott also comes here. This group of poets is joined by Mary Shelley, the same one who wrote *Frankenstein* at the age of 19, which completely surprised, just struck D. G. Byron, who noticed that the work was amazing for a girl of this age (dialectical thinking: the monster is both the victim and the executioner, Frankenstein's discoveries indicate both his mind and his limitations).

All these attributes of the English prose of the Romantic era (which is preceded, of course, by the "Gothic novel", and German Romanticism in the person of Goethe, Heine, Schiller, and so on) they fall on absolutely wonderful ground. Balmont is simply created to translate these works. It is difficult to draw parallels in life, but they just suggest themselves. Mary Shelley runs away with Percy Shelley (her future husband) abroad, at a time when his first wife commits suicide. For Balmont,

these "window jumps" are also a very common practice, as for other poets of the era.

The fact is that for Romantics it is a conscious rejection of the rationality of the 18th century, the deification of madness, passion, demonic manifestations. The search for the irrational is, in fact, the task of the artist, and this is how it was formulated by Goethe and Schiller, later and repeatedly by Hermann Hesse. It is enough to recall how Schiller advises Goethe to write the second part of "Faust" in a different way, which is why Mephistopheles turns out so nice, charming, lively. The authors are English, representatives of Romanticism die just as Balmont is born. He is a kind of continuer of those traditions. It is no coincidence that he so amusingly asks his wives to talk about themselves in the third person, and often calls himself a "poet".

The end of Balmont was surprisingly deplorable, his funeral, according to Marina Tsvetaeva, was very sad. He was in great need, and in besieged France, there were only a few people at the funeral, and the grave where the coffin was lowered, was half filled with water. The fate of Balmont is somewhat similar to the fate of Oscar Wilde, it is also deplorable, having reached the top of aestheticism, both fall down to the very bottom. There is a sense in this given by history, a path leading, perhaps, to repentance. For the poets of the Silver Age, and especially for Balmont, there is practically no difference between the way of life and poetry. Both the world we live in parallel and often overlap. The poet drew inspiration from literature, and, in fact, from his life, emotions, and the myth that he created about himself:

The light will burn and darken, then burn with stronger blaze...
The light will burn and darken, then burn with stronger blaze,
But unreturning darkens the sheen of youthful days.
Glow then, and be enkindled, the while thou still art young,
Let ever more undwindled the heart's loud chords be strung,
That something be remembered in waning years of woe,
That chill old-age be lighted by that decayless glow,
Born of exalted fancies, and headstrong youth's ado,
Heedless, but full of splendour, heedless and hallowed, too.

(Translated by Paul Selver)

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CHAPTER TEN

TRANSCENDENCE IN POETRY

GEORGIY IVANOV (1894- 1958)

Many poets of the Silver Age (Sergei Yesenin, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Anna Akhmatova) lived and died in Russia. Others spent the post-revolutionary years in exile, where, mostly in distress and overcoming difficulties, they continued to live, write, and publish their works. None of them parted with thoughts of their homeland. It is no accident that one of the most powerful poems of that time were dedicated to Russia.

Georgy Adamovich was a friend of the poet Georgy Ivanov. Georgy Ivanov later became the most famous Russian poet of emigration. Ivan Bunin, who criticized everyone and everything, caustically and often unkindly, considered Georgy Ivanov, although in the "rudiment", but "a real poet" in contrast to, say, Zinaida Gippius. Among the many amazing poems of George Ivanov, there are also words that the poet and singer Alexander Vertinsky later set to music.

We walk along the streets like in a dream...
We walk along the streets like in a dream.
We look at women, and we coffee drink.
But real words we still can not reveal,
And the approximate we do not feel.
What shall we do? Go back to Petersburg?
Or fall in love? Or blow the Operá?
Or simply lie in bed — which's cold,
Or close the eyes without waking up?

(Translated by Elena Dubrovina)

Georgy Ivanov, according to the memoirs of his contemporaries, was "a real demon". Oddly enough, but the vices that tormented him gave birth to the most beautiful poems of that time, and his wife was a radiant, light in her sometimes childlike spontaneity, a woman poet Irina Odoevseva.

They met in St. Petersburg. The master of Russian poetry Nikolai Gumilev introduced his student Irina to Georgy Ivanov as follows: "The youngest member of the "Poets' Workshop" and the most witty, he is called "public opinion", he creates and destroys reputations. Try to please him."

"Probably, he will make fun of my youth, my bow, my poems, my burr, my freckles," Irina Odoevtseva thought. Two or three casual encounters had come to nothing, and she had decided that he, with his snobbery and sarcasm, was not her type. Winter has passed. And in early spring, Gumilev suddenly announced to her: "And Georgik Ivanov likes you. But don't get your hopes up. He is a lazy and uncaring boy. He won't take care of you." And later, realizing how strong Georgy Ivanov's feelings were, Gumilev even asked Odoevtseva not to marry the poet – and not to understand, in jest or seriously, he asked. However, the master's warnings did not help.

Although Georgy Ivanov was married to a certain Frenchwoman (who studied with Georgy Adamovich's sister). She gave birth to a daughter, divorced him and went to France. Georgy Ivanov was free. On September 10, 1921, Irina Odoevtseva married him to live with him for 37 years until his last day. But even when he was gone, she, who knew him inside out, will think of him as an extraordinary creature of nature (as, indeed, in her memoirs, she used to write about everyone, not allowing herself to see in a person at least something not quite good!) "There was something very special about him," she would write, "indeterminate, almost mysterious. He often seemed to me not only strange, but even mysterious, and I, despite all our spiritual and mental closeness, was at a dead end, unable to understand him, he was so complex and multifaceted."

In the meantime, Irina Odoevtseva moved from "her Swimming Pool" to "his Post Office", to the apartment that Georgy Ivanov shared with his friend Georgy Adamovich. During the day, Adamovich wandered around the rooms, desperately bored. Both Georgy he spent their days doing nothing, and for extra work they spent their nights writing translations of poems. Odoevtseva did not understand such a pastime. Gumilev accustomed her to poetic work, akin to the work of a laborer. And both Georges assured that poems are born by themselves, and nothing special needs to be done. And one day, at morning tea, her husband suddenly said "wait-wait" and started:

The more the autumn wind is wicked...
 The more the autumn wind is wicked
 And the moon desperate, —
 The merrier we, vagrants, get
 With a bottle of wine.
 We wandered the whole day through
 The field, with a sleuth and a rifle...
 We are comrades — nothing more —
 Unacknowledging sorrow.
 What is love? Rapture, lips,
 The fervour of understatement...!
 Moderately gentle, moderately rough,
 You know how to be with me.
 You smoke a Finnish pipe
 And follow the wisp...
 Narrowing your mocking eye,
 Turning on your stomach!..
 What is love? A smouldering match, —
 Better things can be found:
 Between desire and habit
 There are paths of bliss.

(Translated by Robert Falk)

Odoevtseva was surprised, again admiring them. "The fact that these brilliant poems were created here, in my presence, instantly," she admitted, "seemed to me a miracle." It was a miracle. Many poets wrote with difficulty, giving all their strength to their work, George Ivanov composed easily, easily, as if reading poems from somewhere in the sky.

The departure of Georgy Ivanov to emigrate was accompanied by a number of rumors. During the quarrel between Georgy Ivanov and Khodasevich, as Yuri Terapiano wrote in one of his letters:

Khodasevich sent out such a letter to many writers and other persons: allegedly in St. Petersburg Adamovich, Ivanov and Otsup lured Adamovich to the apartment for a card game, killed and robbed a rich man, with whose money they then all went abroad. The corpse was cut into pieces, taken out and thrown into the ice-

hole on the Neva. Adamovich was allegedly carrying a head wrapped in a newspaper. You can imagine what a scandal there was; to this day, here and there, in Paris, in Nice, someone says "you know..."

Khodasevich swore that this was true, and that the Leningrad police had demanded the extradition of "criminals" from the Paris police, but "the Bolsheviks were refused, because the French thought that the extradition was required for political reasons." Fortunately for all three of them, by the time the Soviet authorities became concerned about this story, they were already far away.

This story is told in detail, and its plausibility is analyzed and evaluated (see, for example, the article of Andrey Aryev, a famous Russian literary critic, *When Despair and Anger Die Away*, Journal "Zvezda", 2008, No. 8). The rumors of a joint crime "here, there, in Paris, in Nice" had a strong effect on Ivanov's impulsive imagination, fed by bitter life experience. After all, he himself once derived the formula: "People, accustomed to hearing about something, get used to hearing rumors as a fact." Georgy Ivanov was so concerned about the rumors that he even invented a story about his participation in the murder of his best friend Adamovich and told it in writing to the novelist Roman Borisovich Gul. (Odoevtseva then asked Gul very much to return the "Memoir" (In letters dated December 12, 1958, October 17, 1959, Odoevtseva writes to Gul: "... please send me the File on Pochtamtskaya. I want to reread it, because Georges wrote it. I'll reread it and burn it myself...").

The important thing in the "memoir" is the second part, and the main thing to keep in mind is that Georgy Ivanov could not have witnessed the events described in the "second part" in any case. Everything told is fiction or a reworked story gleaned from the criminal chronicle. And what he heard from someone is a sufficient reason for Ivanov's fictional venture. And the idea was to talk about how the apartment on Pochtamtskaya street there was a murder!

A detailed story that incriminates Adamovich, even with a description of the main evidence — a box and pillowcases with the marks of V. S. Beley (the name of Adamovich's aunt, in whose apartment the friends lived, and where everything happened). "Whatever version today may seem more or less convincing to us, the text of Georgy Ivanov, the au-

thor's derogatory tone, the mocking "details" like "a bloody rag squelching on the floor" in the hands of "poor Adamovich", his good friend, is depressing! But this is a story, rather about the personality of Ivanov and his extraordinary abilities as a writer.

... So, "confident that the Bolshevik regime would not last long, both Georgy Ivanov and Irina Odoevtseva left for Europe imagining this voyage as a wonderful adventure, and in retrospect (according to Odoevtseva) – almost a wedding trip." (The honeymoon in Russia did not seem like a paradise to them). Georgy Ivanov received a ridiculous business trip to Germany - for "compiling the repertoire of state theaters", Irina Odoevtseva went to her father in Latvia, where she stayed for a short time, being carried away by the "*Prince of Lilac*" - a patron of the arts and a poet of the Northern sense Boris Bashkirov-Verin (it was he who initiated the publication of Georgy Ivanov's poems in emigrant periodicals, in the Helsingfor newspaper "New Russian Life").

After a brief visit to Odoevtseva in Berlin, Georgy Ivanov went to France. In Paris, he visited Constantin Balmont. However, the purpose of Georgy Ivanov's arrival in Paris was somewhat different – the first family. According to the literary critic Andrey Aryev,

it is difficult to assume whether the poet did not want or could not stay in Paris during this visit to France. In any case, on the second, Berlin edition of "Heather" in 1923, it is put: "Dedicated to Gabrielle". Given the dedication to Irina Odoevtseva, which was removed from the second edition of the Gardens at that time, it becomes clear that the two poets left Petrograd separately not only out of caution, for fear of attracting unnecessary attention to their departure.

At this point, however, the information ends. Gabrielle got married, but what happened to her daughter later, when George Ivanov settled in Paris, is unknown. Neither he nor Irina Odoevtseva ever mentioned her fate anywhere. In the questionnaire of 1952 in the column "children" the poet put a dash.

In Berlin, Georgy Ivanov and Irina Odoevtseva, by the will of fate, found each other again, and in 1923 they left for France. In addition to the wanderings, hardships and difficulties in France, the couple had very

tragicomic stories. Whether they are true or not is unknown, but there are many anecdotal cases in the memoirs of their contemporaries.

Adamovich came to Ivanov and Odoevtseva again, and again - with the happy news that his rich aunt had offered her nephew money for an apartment, so that the friends could again live together. Odoevtseva writes:

Aunt of Adamovich, stingy, never made in his life any more or less valuable gift to her nephew, suddenly decided to show incredible just breathtaking generosity — to buy in Paris apartment, furnish it and give it to him We found four large rooms in a new elegant house with a patio and pigeons.

Everyone was looking forward to a new happiness. Finally, Adamovich appeared with the money. For some reason, he was terribly nervous. Ivanov and Odoevtseva could not understand what was going on. The explanation came too late: Adamovich is playing and has already lost some of the money. He begged Odoevtseva to go with him to Monte Carlo and sit at the card table instead of him: "You will win, you won once and saved a man's life!" Indeed, someone in St. Petersburg once lost state money and was going to shoot himself.

Irina Odoevtseva went, acting quite intuitively, won back the loss and returned the money to the unsuccessful player. But this time, she firmly refused. However, Adamovich finally managed to persuade her. The three of them took the train to Monte Carlo. Adamovich spent a lot of money on the way, confident in Odoevtseva's lucky hand. Indeed, she won back part of the amount on the first day. The next day, the same thing happened again. The amount of winnings grew. But when she was ready to win back everything, Adamovich suddenly dismissed her: he said that he would do everything himself. And I let everything down again.

Nevertheless, they rented an apartment in a fashionable area of Paris, near the Bois de Boulogne, got luxurious furniture and even a footman:

"No, you are mistaken, my dear friend / We were living on a different planet then, /And too tired and too old /And for this waltz and this guitar.

Later came the years of real disasters. The war came to France. It was dangerous to stay in Paris, Odoevtseva and Ivanov moved to Biarritz, lived by the sea. In the famous book of memoirs *My Italics* Nina Berberova wrote: "Georgy Ivanov, who wrote his best poems during these years, made of his personal fate (poverty, disease, alcohol) something like a myth of self-destruction, where, having crossed our usual boundaries of good and evil, allowed (by whom?), he far left behind all the really living 'cursed poets'." However, the Ivanovs lived in Biarritz more or less comfortably (trying, of course, to the occupation standards). There was a private villa, an apartment was rented, until the occupation of Biarritz.

A. Aryev writes that "Society chronicles" (Carnets mondains) or La Gazette de Biarritz "was full of references to the Ivanovs in 1939-1940 — next to the names of the Russian aristocracy gathered on the south-west coast of France: Grand Duke Boris, Gagarins, Golitsyns, Naryshkins, Obolenskys, Yusupovs".

And then Georgy Ivanov and Irina Odoevtseva moved to HYÈRES. Below the old town, closer to the sea, a new area-boulevards, light-colored villas. In the old days, even the royal court used to go out in the winter HYÈRES .

"As wide as Nevsky Prospekt," said Georgy Ivanov. "You will admire the gold of flowering mimosas and white-pink almonds. The new part of the city reminded him of the Petersburg suburbs, something like Peterhof or Pavlovsk. A town surrounded, i.e. on three sides (the fourth is the sea) by three chains of mountains. On the first there are seven castles, from here Saint Louis went on a crusade.

The second chain is covered with pines and oaks. The third one is covered with snow. All three are visible from everywhere at once, -

Mr. Ivanov wrote. At first, he liked everything — both the fact that the city is sparsely populated ("perfect desert", and that there are no tourists (they will appear in the summer)).

Poplavsky said: "Paris is a wonderful city, but the French spoil it. So they don't spoil our Hyeres." It happened, however, that Ivanov called the innocent Hyers that gave him shelter — "god-abominable", for the

most part claiming all the same that "It's so good here that I don't want to die, although, perhaps, I will have to."

The "house" (old people's home), according to Vadim Kreid, was located on the Avenue de Belgique, in a newly decorated villa. Some said: not a villa, but a former palace. The house was surrounded by a lush garden with paths and flower beds. Hyeres had once supplied Paris with roses, and they grew everywhere. The house was for foreigners. The French were not allowed in it. Someone said that it was "for the international intelligentsia". When they began to worry about the arrangement in Hyers, George Vladimirovich was in his sixties, Irina Vladimirovna - fifty-ninth (according to her words).

Not quite the right age, both of them still were very young. Most of the inhabitants, almost two-thirds, were "red Spaniards." Franco won the Civil War, and they fled in 1938 across the Spanish-French border. There were also Russians living in the house, all older than Georgy Ivanov. About a month after moving to Yere, he wrote to the same novelist Roman Borisovich Gul, with whom he had been an epistolary friend for many years, in New York: "Could you send a bundle of old — what are there — issues of the New Journal to our Russian librarian, you will do a good job. There are twenty-two Russians here, all cultured people, and they will die without Russian books. Don't be lazy, do it if you can." It was there that Georgy Ivanov wrote his last poems, those that are all addressed to Irina Odoevtseva, the one who, despite everything, supported him all his life:

The window of their room looked out on the courtyard, where a palm tree grew. In hot weather, Irina Vladimirovna went there to sleep. Georgy Vladimirovich endured the heat poorly, and over the years, he did not tolerate it at all. Everything is the same — in the courtyard or in a hot room: "The night is like Sugar, like hell, hot." There were eight hundred francs for the food, more than two dollars, which was not bad in French money at the time.

Especially after the Parisian malnutrition and the cast-iron weight of concern about where to get lunch, medicine, and what to pay for a hotel room. "If you do not do high things, then it is still amazingly good here, after our hellish life of the last years," he wrote to Roman Gul, but this was only at the beginning. The disease, whatever it was, was sapping his strength. "Our world was created by some Dostoevsky, only not as brilliant as Fyodor Mikhailovich," he once said to Odoevtseva.

In the summer of 1955, Adamovich came to them, turning into Hyeres on his way to Nice. A year has passed since the "Georgians" reconciled. Adamovich led a completely different lifestyle. Having joined the French army as a volunteer in September 1939, he was interned, and became sympathetic to the USSR, and in the late 1940s he was published in pro-Soviet Western newspapers, and his book "The Other Motherland", written in French and published in 1947, was perceived by some Russian Parisians as an act of surrender to Stalinism. The breakup lasted fifteen years. But a bad world is better than a good quarrel, and Georgy Ivanov called their current relationship that way. However, the reconciliation turned out to be rather external. "Don't be bored, Georges and Madame," Adamovich said as he boarded the bus. And this place is a paradise, and it is in vain that you rush into the unknown."

Ivanov received modest royalties for his already well-known poems. They could only take a bus to nearby Toulon. At the same time, every check that came in the name of Georgy Ivanov or Odoevtseva had to be kept secret.... Whether Ivanov was offered to take French citizenship is also unlikely to be clarified. Until the end of his life, he remained with a Nansen passport, which was issued to emigrants before the war. When asked in the questionnaires, "what country are you a citizen of", he always answered: "Russian refugee". And on the refusal of the proposed French citizenship, a French official allegedly told Georgy Ivanov: "I understand and respect you."

Before his death, the only thing that Georgy Ivanov asked and asked for was completely, on the one hand, unexpected, and on the other, quite naturally, documented in an appeal to the Russian emigration:

I appeal before my death to all those who valued me as a poet, and I ask for one thing. Take care of my wife, Irina Odoevtseva. Worrying about her future is driving me crazy. She has been the light and happiness of my whole life, and I am infinitely indebted to her. If I really have readers who truly love me, I beg them to fulfill my posthumous request and bequeath to them the fate of Irina Odoevtseva. I believe that my will is going to be fulfilled.

Irina Odoevtseva will live without her husband for another 32 years. One of the few Russian emigrants, already at an advanced age, she, just as charming and cheerful, will still return to Leningrad.

IRINA ODOEVTZEVA (1895-1990)

The poet Irina Vladimirovna Odoevtseva (real name – Iraida Gustavovna Geinike) was born in Riga on July 15 (27), 1895 in the family of a lawyer. She was a member of the "Workshop of Poets" and a student of Nikolai Gumilev. In 1921, according to her memoirs, she married Georgy Ivanov. According to other information, they were officially married only in 1931, in Riga. In 1922, the poet emigrated and spent most of her life in Paris. Odoevtseva was familiar with many cultural figures of the Silver Age and Parisian emigration. The heroes of her memoirs are Nikolai Gumilev, Osip Mandelstam, Andrey Bely, Zinaida Gippius, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Ivan Bunin and many others.

In her youth, and throughout her life, Irina Odoevtseva was an exceptionally strong and at the same time, absolutely charming woman – a thin, elegant blonde. Men admired and adored her, and some ladies of the poetic world disliked her, simply envied her. After the death of her father, a well-known Riga lawyer, Irina Odoevtseva received a significant inheritance, just a fortune. Few people liked this either, since only Felix Yusupov managed to withdraw money to France. The wife of the poet Osip Mandelstam (according to oral stories) once mentioned that Georgy Ivanov married Odoevtseva for money. Nadezhda Mandelstam was probably the only person whom Irina Odoevtseva did not like!

Only the most famous and bright women could not speak very gently about Odoevtseva. They felt the inevitable competition. For example, the caustic and intelligent Zinaida Gippius. According to Andrey Aryev, "Gippius's obvious dislike of Odoevtseva (which also passed on to her husband) had at that time a much more 'uninteresting' lining." On December 1, 1939, Gippius wrote from Biarritz to a close friend, the Swedish theosophical artist Greeta Gerell: "I confess to you that I sometimes envy Ivanov and the Piglet, rich and worthless, I envy, despising myself, as well as her." Envy, simple envy.

On April 30, 1920, at the apartment of Nikolai Gumilyov, a literary reception took place - a rout in honor of Andrei Bely, who arrived in Petrograd. Among the guests – Irina Odoevtseva, and soon appeared and belated George Ivanov. Gumilev asked Odoevtseva to read her poems. She didn't know what to choose, flustered. Then Gumilyov suggested *The Ballad of Crushed Glass*. A few months ago, he rejected it

himself and hid it in a folder labeled *Mass grave of losers!* But the excitement passed, and Odoevtseva began to read. The eerie story of a soldier who decided to earn extra money on crushed glass mixed with salt, and who was mystically punished for the death of fellow villagers, shocked the audience with both the content and the original form of the extremely simplified verse. "Now every dog will know you," Gumilev summed up.

At that reception, when Irina Odoevtseva came to her literary fame, she first saw George Ivanov, who became her love. Odoevtseva wrote about their first meeting: "I silently give my hand to Georgy Ivanov. For the first time in my life. No. Without any premonition." Ivanov liked it so much that he, "the destroyer and creator of reputations", proclaimed "Ballad" a "literary event" and "a new word in poetry", and declared Odoevtseva herself the discoverer of the genre of modern ballads!

Irina Odoevtseva met Gumilyov, her literary teacher, much earlier, at the lectures of the "Living Word", held at the Tenishevsky School. Later, when Irina became "Odoevtseva, his student," as Gumilev proudly called her, he laughingly confessed what a misery this first "ill-fated" lecture on poetry was for him! Odoevtseva did not consider her poems something outstanding, never dreamed of fame.

From Odoevtseva's memoirs *On the Banks of the Neva (Na beregah Nevi)*:

How did our friendship with Gumilyov begin? But can our relationship be called friendship? After all, friendship presupposes equality. And there was no equality between us, and there could not be. I never forgot that he was my teacher, and he never forgot it. I'm going to close with Gumilev. I only think about how not to stumble, not to fall. It seems to me that my legs are incredibly long, as if I am walking on stilts, as in my childhood. Wings over your shoulders? No, I didn't feel any wings or the ability to fly that first day. All this happened, but then, not today, not now.

Gumilev then accompanied Odoevtseva home for the first time. She was so nervous that she was flushed and unable to move in terror! "You're nervous, and even too much," he said.

They often met and discussed literature, poetry, and philosophy. Gumilev often teased the novice poetess. Once, when he was going to a literary evening, he said: "I will wear a tailcoat to properly celebrate the Pushkin days." At the surprised look of Odoevtseva, he continued: "Now it is clear that you have not been to Paris. There at literary conferences, everyone is more or less in tuxedos and tuxedos." Odoevtseva thought: "After all, we are not in Paris, but in St. Petersburg. And at what time. Many people don't even have a decent jacket. They even go to the theater in felt boots."

To which Gumilyov complacently remarked: "I have a London tailcoat and a white satin waistcoat. I also advise you to wear an evening, low-cut dress. After all, you have a lot of them left after your late mother."

Shortly before his death, Gumilev, after their long conversation, said to Odoevtseva: "I swear, wherever and whenever I die, to come to you after death and tell you everything." This phrase haunted the poetess for a long time, but "he never kept his promise, did not appear." Nor did the small, thick parchment album that Gumilev gave to Odoevtseva at the beginning of her "apprenticeship" remain as a memento. The album was bought in Venice and was intended, according to Gumilyov, to "record poems dedicated to Odoevtseva there." After Gumilyov's arrest in August 1921, Irina Vladimirovna's family destroyed the album, along with a draft of his autobiography and all the books with signatures. This was done against the will of the poetess for fear of a possible search.

– Have you ever loved anything in this world? / – You must be laughing! / Of course I did. / What? - Wait. Let me think! Perfume, and flowers, /And more mirrors.../ I forgot the rest.

At some point, already in France, after the war, the band of fame came for Odoevtseva. She worked hard, writing plays, screenplays, and novels in French, and received even increased advances.

When there was no money left from the inheritance, the royalties for the novels became the main source of her and her husband's existence. They were staying at the Angletterre Hotel in Paris, in the Latin Quarter. One of Odoevtseva's scripts was accepted by Hollywood, and the plans were very rosy. But the Hollywood contract was never signed. Georgy Ivanov still did not work anywhere, wrote poetry only by inspiration, liked to sleep until noon and read detective stories. Nevertheless, as a

poet, he was very popular, he was even going to be nominated for the Nobel Prize.

Twenty years after the death of G. Ivanov, Odoevtseva remarried. Her husband was the writer Yakov Gorbov. A former Russian officer, a former civilian in the French army, even in a prisoner-of-war camp, when he got there seriously wounded, he did not part with her novel *Isolde*. Moreover, the bullet also injured the book that he always carried on his chest. Gorbov graduated from two engineering universities in France, but became a Parisian taxi driver and at the same time a writer. One by one, three of his novels, written in French, were published. Odoevtseva lived with Yakov Gorbov for four years, until his death. She was alone again, alone with her manuscripts.

This wonderfully wise and optimistic woman never gave up, always remaining young, radiant, full of plans and hopes. "Who among those who attended the St. Petersburg literary meetings does not remember on the stage a slender, fair, young woman, almost a girl with a huge black bow in her hair, chanting, cheerfully and hurriedly, slightly gracing, reading poetry, making everyone smile without exception, even people who were unaccustomed to smiling in those years," the poet Georgy Adamovich recalled.

After perestroika, Irina Vladimirovna enthusiastically made a rather rash decision, as she later admitted, to return to Russia. The Union of Writers of the USSR officially invited her to return to her homeland. And Odoevtseva accepted the offer, while accepting it immediately, which caused a storm in emigrant circles. The emigrants accused her of nothing less than treachery, despite the fact that she was returning to her homeland at the age of 92. And only Andrei Sedykh, Bunin's secretary, said: "Is Odoevtseva going? Ah, the wench! Well done!"

In Leningrad, Odoevtseva was given an apartment on Nevsky Prospekt, 13. She was greeted with a standing ovation. Odoevtseva's memoirs, those same memories, amazing, detailed, vivid, were finally published in the USSR in two hundred thousand copies, which surpassed the total circulation of all her books during the years of her emigrant life. She managed to see the publication of her works in her homeland. "I really live here with admiration," Odoevtseva wrote to her friend Ella Bobrova, paraphrasing a line from one of her poems. The state of her health was certainly deteriorating, making it impossible to return to the manuscript of the third book of her memoirs, *On the Shores of Lethe* (*Na*

beregah Leti), which had been started in France. In this book, Odoevtseva was going to tell "with complete frankness about herself and others," but the book remained unfinished.

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In her memoirs *On the Banks of the Seine* and *On the Banks of the Neva* (*Na berehah Seni, Na beregah Nevi*) Odoevtseva did not say almost a single word about herself. She also didn't write a single bad, unkind word about anyone. For which sometimes critics have tried to call her famous memoirs somewhat naive. These books about contemporaries were written with wisdom and with love, respect, and tenderness:

I write about them and for them. I try to talk about myself as little as possible and only what is somehow connected with them..... Yes, I admired them. I loved them. But love helps to know a person to the end-both externally and internally. To see in it what indifferent, indifferent eyes cannot see... When you love a person, you see him as God intended him to be.

POETRY AND FILMS

I think it is particularly interesting and memorable one television program that our film crew (to which I belonged, since I wrote the scripts and was the author) did on the TV channel "Culture". The program was part of the "Place and time. Small museums" cycle, each of which was dedicated to the life of a famous person, cultural figure, poet, artist, composer. The program was called after the first line of the poem by Georgy

Ivanov "It's cold to walk around the world" (co-authored with the writer Vladimir Sobol) and was just about Georgy Ivanov and Irina Odoevtseva. The program was filmed at the Museum of the Artist Isaac Brodsky, in St. Petersburg. We edited the story to infinity, trying to make it memorable. A. Y. Tolubeev played Georgy Ivanov in an absolutely incredible way. Unfortunately, the film was stored only in the archives and at my home, but I would like to tell you about this story.

The poet Georgy Ivanov was a very difficult man, in some ways diabolical. He could easily steal someone else's literary work, change the dedication. Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetaeva are much more famous poetesses, although the poems of George Ivanov, as many critics claim, are much stronger, of incredible beauty and depth, from somewhere or from the sky, or from the underworld, perfect in feeling, not even in rhythm, but in taste.

In one of the episodes of the program, G. Ivanov said goodbye to Nina Berberova, a well-known critic and writer. Berberova goes to America, and he stays in Paris, because they, with his wife Irina Odoevtseva, have just moved "permanently" to the "old people's home", like many emigrants, they are in poverty. Georgy Ivanov talks to Nina Berberova and tells her how hard it is to live, unbearable, that there are "cars, spider bugs", noises and fear, and that "our world was created by a kind of Dostoevsky, only not as talented as Fyodor Mikhailovich." Georgy Ivanov reads her his poem *It's cold to walk around the world, it's colder to lie in a coffin*, asks her to lend him ten francs, apparently for wine, and Berberova hands him a piece of her pie, which Georgy Ivanov carefully wraps "for poverty" and puts in his pocket.

Berberova looks perplexed, but understands something that is not said and says to him tartly: "You won't eat it, you'll throw it away on the way!", as if noticing a certain falsity, the theatricality of Georgy Ivanov, his diabolical, but well-thought-out remark. At this very moment, in the foreground, the viewer sees Tolubeyev's face. His face expresses everything. And the joy of life, and the quiet despair, and the otherworldly brilliance, and the understanding of something important. Georgy Ivanov was married several times in his life, almost killed an old woman (the aunt of the poet Georgy Adamovich, his friend), was, according to contemporaries, a dark and vicious man, and his poems are transparent, pure, in some ways even angelic. In addition, just before his death, Georgy

Ivanov suddenly shows himself from a completely different side, becomes touching and caring, appeals to emigration with a request to take care of his wife. The museum was dark, with only a little light and a camera. Time – ten o'clock, winter.

And, here, Andrey Tolubeyev looks into the camera and conveys these vague feelings of the poet, who has long been dead, in a few seconds, such nuances of the depth of the personality are noticed, expressed on his face.

St. Petersburg Winters by G. Ivanov was published in late July or early August, 1928. They were preceded by four years of work, more than forty memoir essays that appeared in periodicals from the middle of 1924. The work on the book for Georgy Ivanov turned out to be somewhat similar to the compilation of poetry collections. Even in his early youth, he turned out to be an inconsistent follower of Mikhail Kuzmin. "Do you think I should include these poems in the book? I ask Kuzmin. Kuzmin looks surprised. Why not include it? Why did they write it then? If you have written it, then turn it on."

Of the published essays, G. Ivanov took much less than half for the *Petersburg Winters*. The book opened with an epigraph (in the second edition, the epigraph is removed) – a poem by George Adamovich, one of his best, in something mysterious, about "pale fire" (the name that Nabokov will later take for his novel).

A majority of G. Ivanov's poetry is about transcendental. What is this fascinating light that "has no name"? It is, of course, about the atmosphere of spiritual freedom in which the youth of the generation following the generation of Blok passed. But the main character of *St. Petersburg Winters* is just the atmosphere of the era. It is more difficult to convey it than to draw a silhouette of a particular character. In Chapter VIII there are these amazing words:

There are memories like dreams. There are dreams – like memories. And when you think about the former so recently and so infinitely long ago, sometimes you do not know – where are the memories, where are the dreams.

Georgy Ivanov invents a lot in these memories, but much comes to life despite the fact that he came up with it, as if once he said it, he foresees fate. Writes, for example, that

snow is falling. After the heat of the train car, the damp chill of the thaw comes down, gets into the sleeves and down the collar. And what kind of idea is it to go to Tsarskoe at night? But there is nothing to do – we have arrived, and there is no return train.

It's funny, but this story was repeated with many people, and with our film crew, too, when we shot a program about the poets of the Silver Age in Pushkin. It even seems to me that the very bench that we found suddenly by chance in a thirty-degree frost in a night park was also seen by Georgy Ivanov when he met the poet Komarovskiy there one night. He told Ivanov that some other poet had shot himself on this very bench, and added that "this is the second case"! During our filming of the program about the Silver Age "City of the Muses", everything that happened in Pushkin, strangely reminded me of distant meetings and long conversations with emigrants in Paris, which were inexplicably connected with the filming and memories of the poets.

The mysticism associated with the poets of the Silver Age is constantly present. In some ways, it is akin to the feeling that haunts Hermann in Alexander Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades*. The lady keeps winking at him! They were not easy people, to put it mildly! (I have just read P. Luknitsky's memoirs about Anna Akhmatova, in which, allegedly, Fyodor Sollogub called Pushkin "a negro who threw himself at Russian women!")

So, Irina Odoevtseva says in her memoirs that Andrei Bely met her once on a bench in the Summer Garden, confided in her all night (everything is described in detail, as he told her about Blok, about Lyubov Dmitrievna), and the next morning he did not even know, and Odoevtseva was still waiting for a meeting:

"There won't be another time," Andrey Bely said. But I still hope. I go every day to the Summer Gardens, sit on that bench and wait. I've been waiting a long time. A whole week. I don't even go to the Writers' House. Gumilev is not happy. —What are you doing so busy? I called you yesterday — and you weren't

home, either. Where have you been? I blush, as I always do when I lie. — I'm going to see my aunt.

She got sick. Gumilev shrugs his shoulders. — Well, you're hardly a good nurse. You're wasting your time. In vain. Yes, he's right. And yet I can't stop this mindless waiting that torments me.

Several times Georgy Ivanov “smiled” at me. First, when a well-known and much-loved literary critic signed me his amazing, very detailed, carefully prepared, absolutely fascinating book about George Ivanov and set the date as the date-my father's birthday (by the way, my parents' wedding day, also September 10, as well as the wedding day of Odoevtseva and Ivanov). Another time, Ivanov smiled at me when my amazing student called me unexpectedly late in the evening, almost at night. An adult, successful, intelligent, not at all mystically inclined. He called and excitedly told me that he had just done “so-and-so”, and opened my volume of George Ivanov, and there were just three poems in a row about the same thing...

Mysticism was so natural for these poets that it is not even possible to believe and understand that it can be in any other way when communicating with them. Everything is connected to everything. Around each event and work – a real story and a story – otherworldly, with the involvement of other forces. While filming our TV is always on time snowing – once in a hundred years, but so as not to spoil the frames stay on the film, at the time there were texts and poems has been lost it seems as if the poets were curiously watching from above, from heaven, and what will be done if all time... Sergei Yesenin, by the way, I have not forgotten! I recently came to the Pushkin House, the Institute of Russian Literature, for the presentation of the amazing project Pushkin. digital, and the Institute had an exhibition of poets of the Silver age.

The first thing I saw was the table of Sergei Yesenin (whose book of poems I published a year ago with my comments). This very table stood in Angleterre, where Yesenin spent his last days and hanged himself, and at this very table was written the poem “Good-bye, my friend, good-bye.” On the line “my dear, you are in my chest, the intended parting promises a meeting ahead”, which I immediately read to myself in my mind, it even became a little creepy!

Georgy Ivanov has an impeccable taste in poetry. The exact sense of the word, its sound, its possibilities. Call your collection *The Decay of the Atom*, can you imagine?

Without pretentiousness, without self-love, without any ambiguities. To be simple and clear, as from God! So after Pushkin wrote. Plain and simple. That's why he's a genius. Genius is a kind of universal harmony, which may be very dissonant with something, but it is still completely organic. Naturalness. The most interesting thing is that all these tricks are Ivanovsky, this is also organic. Such is the sophistication of the mind.

Poetry is still a matter of taste, of course. How to say that such lines, here, are brilliant, and others, here, are not, not at all. How can I say that such lines as Ivanov's are very rare? That you need to live them, see them, to understand them. So precisely written, so wonderfully subtle and poignant. Despite the fact that the poet's life was such a very difficult one? And the clarity of mind and heart, despite the torments of both, remained impeccable. Some poets, for example, remembered themselves at the age of one year! On such comments, by the way, Leo Tolstoy even noticed that he remembers himself as a little goat! In general, to talk about the purity and transparency of the soul, it is not about the poets at all. Not about people, in general.

But the fact is that out of all this, spiritual, possible, different, sometimes perfection crystallizes. In this, the poetry of G. Ivanov is completely and radically different from many modern attempts to somehow approach it. And there can be no special irony in it, even, why? But, you know, if I wanted to talk about tenderness, about love, not just about Christian love, of course, I would probably repeat it like this. "Remembering", after all, is not only about a particular case, or a person. Here the "memory" is global, the lyrical hero of such a poem is in eternity, in this and, indeed, the combination of "life and death" in one instant of a flash of consciousness:

By the Sea

We went out of the stuffy room
Outside, the air languorous and sweet;
The lilac siblings of an indifferent family
Were staring from the balcony.

The piping of sea reeds
And rubies, tossed about the splashes...
We strolled aimlessly for a long while
In between rocks on the low coast.
The lacework of your dress —
So tender, wisply-subtle,
Like gauze on the foothills of a crucifixion,
Like the reveries and prayers of a child.
With the fire of unearthly revelations
Shone the distances of dusk,
And spears of unclear languor
Pierced the open soul.
The flame-coloured porphyry of dawn
Turned pale, languidly fading...
And it became misty and damp.
We hid behind the glass again.

(Translated by Robert Falk)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

VLADIMIR NABOKOV (1899-1977): POEMS AND PROBLEMS

In his introduction to the collected works of Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Karshan (2012) writes that "Nabokov, like Joyce, was originally a poet." Karshan refers to the very first lines of the book "Speak, Memory" (1967): "to restore the summer of 1914, in which I was seized by the numbing frenzy of versification, I just need to vividly imagine a certain "pavilion", or rather a gazebo."

Nabokov wrote poetry throughout his life, as mentioned in the introduction to the collection of poetic works *Poems and Problems*, which was published in 1970. As it appears in the footnotes in the book *Nabokov, Pro and Contra*, the collection of V. Nabokov's *Poems and problems* (New York; Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1971) includes 39 Russian poems with a parallel non-rhymed author's translation into English, 14 English poems, 18 chess problems with solutions and a bibliography compiled by the author. Nabokov himself writes about it this way: "Russian poems represent only a small part—hardly more than one percent — of the continuous mass of poems that I began to allocate in my early youth and continued to do so, with monstrous regularity, in the twenties and thirties, in the next two decades, running out, when the meager output of two dozen hardly exceeded the number of poems that I wrote in English"²

Many of these poems were never published, although some appeared in the first edition of *Poems*, published in 1916, when Nabokov was still in Russia, and some in 1918, together with the works of a school friend, Andrei Balashov. After the Revolution, the Nabokov family left for Western Europe in 1919. Nabokov continues to write poetry, first in Cambridge, where he studied from 1919 to 1922, and then in Berlin, where he reunites with his family and in a sense merges into the cultural world of Russian emigration, a fact that confirms the possibility of publications, especially in the Berlin newspaper "Rudder" (The Radder), which was first published by Nabokov's father. Nabokov's 36 poems are

² Quoted in Nabokov, *Pro et Contra*, Vol. 1, 228

published in the collection *Cluster*, a December 1922 ode, followed by 156 poems in *Empyrean Path*, in 1923.

Nabokov writes about the compilation of collections of poems and translation that it was less difficult to select the poems for this collection than to translate them. For the past ten years, he has been promoting the idea of literariness, that is, strict accuracy, in the translations of Russian poetry at every opportunity. Working with the text in this way is an honest and enjoyable activity, when the text is a recognized masterpiece, every detail of which must be truthfully translated into English. But what about truthfully anglicizing poems, written almost a quarter of a century ago?

Nabokov notes that you have to struggle with some embarrassment, you start to writhe and wince, you feel like a monarch swearing allegiance to himself, or a conscientious priest consecrating the water in his own bath. On the other hand, if you imagine for one crazy moment the possibility of paraphrasing and improving your old poems, a terrible sense of falsification makes you run headlong back and cling, like a baby monkey, to the rough truth.

Nabokov only made one small compromise: wherever possible. He rejoiced in the appearance of a rhyme, or its shadow; but he never twisted the tail of a single line for the sake of consonance, and did not keep the original size if it was necessary to change the meaning for this purpose (p.13-14).

The collection's English poems were all written in America and published in the most prestigious literary magazine, *The New Yorker*. According to Nabokov, they have a finer texture than the Russians, no doubt because they lack that inner verbal connection with the old difficulties and constant restlessness of thought that are characteristic of poems written in their native language, with the continuous parallel mutterings of exile and the never-resolved childish tugging at the most rusty strings" (p.14-15).

Some poems are provided with brief notes by the author. Poems *To Russia* and *Poets* (Modern notes. 1939. No. 69) were published under the pseudonym Vasily Shishkov with the aim, as Nabokov writes in the note to the publication of *Poets* in *Poems and Problems* (the author's translation of the note into Russian is in Nabokov's collection *Poems* (Ardis, 1979), "to trap the venerable critic (meaning G. Adamovich. "Latest news"), "who automatically expressed dissatisfaction with everything I wrote". The deal was successful: in his weekly report, Adamovith

greeted the appearance of the "mysterious new poet" with such eloquent enthusiasm that Nabokov could not resist extending the joke by describing his encounters with the non-existent Shishkov in a story that, among other gems, included an analysis of the poem itself ("The Poets") and the praises of Adamovich.

In this story *Vasily Shishkov* (Latest news 1939, 12 Sep.) Nabokov writes:

The poems were very good - I hope to talk about them in much more detail sometime. Recently, at my initiative, one of them was born, and lovers of poetry noticed its originality... To a poet who is so strangely eager for other people's opinions, I immediately expressed it, adding by way of correction that in some places small fluctuations of the syllable are noticeable-like, for example, "in soldiers' uniforms".

In the preface to the English translation of the story (Nabokov V. *Tyrants Destroyed and Other Stories*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), Nabokov adds that this story -

could be considered, depending on the degree of insight of the emigrant reader, either as an actual incident that happened to a real-life Shishkov, or as an ironic account of the strange case of the dissolution of one poet into another. Adamovich at first refused to believe the impatient friends and enemies who drew his attention to the fact that I had invented Shishkov; in the end, he gave up...

To pay tribute to Adamovich, Nabokov's "enemy" — in his book *the Solitude and Freedom* (New York, 1955), he again praised these verses: "Some of the poems it is beautiful in the full sense of the word, and it would be enough one such poem is *the Poets* or *Leave me Alone, I'm Begging you...* to cast reasonable doubt disappeared. How good everything is in them! How wonderfully good are these "phosphorous rhymes" with "the last barely visible glow of Russia" on them! Here the skill is inseparable from the feeling, one is merged with the other."

Nabokov's note at the end of the English translation of the poem: "The original, streamlined, mobile mechanism consists of a regular

three-stop anapest of the "choking" type, with alternating female and male rhymes. It has proved impossible to combine rhythm and precision [in English — alliteration: "lilt and literature"], except for a few passages (only the third stanza accurately imitates the form of the poem); and since the impetuosity of the original redeems its verbal ambiguity, my truthful, but shaky version is not as good as a prose carriage could be" (p.99).

In the bibliography that concludes the collection "Poems and Problems", Nabokov adds that it was reprinted in the collection *Poems* (1952) and *Poesie* (1962) in Italian, as well as in *Triquarterly* (winter 1970). Thomas Karshan clarifies that after 1926 Nabokov wrote significantly fewer poems that were exclusively individual, and in the 50s two thin collections were published, *Poems* (1929-1951), which had 15 Russian poems, as well as longer poems written in the 40s-50s, and in 1959 "Poems" were published, which included 14 poems written in English when Nabokov left for America (first published in the magazine *The New Yorker*, and were later reprinted in *Poems and Problems*, 1970), along with 39 Russian poems that Nabokov had specially translated for the publication. The posthumous collection *Poems* was published two years after the death of the writer, Vera Nabokova (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979).

Since the late 1980s, Nabokov's son Dmitry - an outstanding translator who worked with his father to translate many novels into English - has published translations of Nabokov's poems. For example, Dmitry Nabokov translated *The University Poem* (1927), which will be a significant addition to the collected works of his father. *Music*, a poem written in the summer of 1914, the Russian original was not printed for a long time. In one of the latest publications (Vladimir Nabokov. Collected poems. Edited and introduced by Thomas Karshan. London, Penguin, 2017) there are 9 poems that Nabokov did not include in "Poems and Tasks". The poems in this collection are not printed in chronological order, but are presented in three separate sections.

Critics write that Nabokov's poems usually have a familiar, even dusty setting, inherited from romanticism – a man sitting alone in a moonlit room, looking out of an open window, gripped by unresolved memories of a lost and unrecoverable past. Nabokov's verse form is usually traditional - poems are often written in iambic. Among Nabokov's recipients are the Muse, the poet, the angels, the "I", the heart, the soul, and, inevitably, Russia, memory. Nabokov does not approve of innovation and incorrect rhymes (he writes with disdain about the "sloppy"

style, verbose, illiterate. There is no better example of an eighteenth-century poet than Nabokov. But at the same time, Nabokov does not recognize the predictability and tightness of the verse, just like the American poet Eliot. His poems have a free flight, but at the same time have a strict form and rhythm.

Rain, like snow – is an important metaphor for Nabokov's poems. A rainstorm originates from its own vaporous atmosphere, a poem is like water, but a drop of rain can suddenly become a drop of mercury that falls from an overloaded leaf.

Or *Snow* (Berlin, 1930), in which sounds and memories are similar to those recreated in "Memory, Speak». In "Snow" (1930), a poet or lyricist trying to fall asleep hears someone crunching through the snow outside the window. These sounds inspire the memory of a child's sleigh, on which he can return through the years, like the hero of Proust's novels. There is also a Christian theme in Nabokov's poetry, which surprises those readers who know Nabokov from the novels *Pale Fire* and *Lolita*. Religious poems include *The Last Supper* (1920), *Easter* (1922), The question of the young Nabokov's attitude to Christianity, or, in general, to the faith, is complex and contested. In the introduction to *Poems and Problems*, Nabokov insisted that the apparently religious quality of some of his early poems was no more than a "Byzantine" literary style.

On the other hand, in her introduction to *the Poems*, the poet's widow Vera pointed to the "other world" as the "main theme" in Nabokov's "watermark" that runs through all of his writing and work. A sense of the other world is certainly not the same as a commitment to any religious doctrine, but it should be noted that Christian-sounding poems form only a small part of the many poetic expressions of faith that occur between the ages of 17 and 25. The Christ who appears in Nabokov's early poems is a child who teaches us to see the beauties of the earth, not to neglect them.

And touched the airy lenses. Instantly
A sunny shimmer traversed the world, flashed across distant,
Dreary lands, warming the blind, and cheering the sighted.

Here the similarity with the pre-Raphaelites, artists who at the end of the 19th century began to paint Christian subjects in a completely different way, for example, as Millet did when creating the painting *Christ*

in the *Parental Home*. Such simplicity of execution, attention to the smallest details – a certain evidence of the era. Not all of Nabokov's poems from the pre-1925 period resemble paintings, but in their simplicity they tend to static patterns – a single declaration, a small scene, a prayer, as Nabokov himself wrote in 1927, "history is as important to a poem as it is to a novel" and "the reader should start with curiosity and end with excitement" (free translation). The lyrical experience should be fun!

Compare Nabokov's phrase in *Lectures on Foreign Literature*: "The reader should notice the details and admire them. The cold light of generalization is good, but only after all the little things are carefully collected in the sunlight. To start with a ready-made generalization is to start at the wrong end, to move away from the book without even beginning to understand it. What could be more boring and unfair to the author than, say, to take up *Madame Bovary*, knowing in advance that this book denounces the bourgeoisie. We must always remember that in every work of art a new world is recreated, and our main task is to learn as much as possible about this world, which is opening up to us for the first time and is not directly connected with the worlds that we knew before. This world needs to be studied in detail-then and only then start thinking about its connections with other worlds, other areas of knowledge."

As you know, many of Nabokov's poems tell fascinating stories. The pejoratively erotically explicit "Lilith" served in many ways as a prototype of the dark side of the motives of "Lolita", and in its other, romantic form, the poem *Annabel Lee* by Edgar Poe became the basis of all possible manifestations of tenderness of the characters of the novel). As you know, Nabokov not only translates *Eugene Onegin* by A. Pushkin, but also writes extensive comments on the novel in verse. Here is how the prologue to *Eugene Onegin* sounds in English»:

Not thinking to amuse the haughty world,
having grown fond of friendship's heed,
I wish I could present you with a gage
4 that would be worthier of you —
be worthier of a fine soul
full of a holy dream,
of live and limpid poetry, (...)

Using the complex scheme of versification in "Eugene Onegin", Nabokov in 1926 wrote his own novella in verse *University Poem*. A poem about the vexatious years when he was a student at Cambridge – an image of sparkling time, transferred to the figure of Violet, with whom the main character leads an indecisive romance. So, Nabokov translated Pushkin's Eugene Onegin into English and wrote two volumes of commentaries, considering the historical and literary, everyday, stylistic and other features of the novel in the context of Russian and world literature.

Nabokov's writing is powerful, energetic, in its mental, vocal, and plot terms. Here is how researcher Karshan comments on Nabokov's skill: "What the reader lacks without the Russian language when reading "Eugene Onegin" is made up for by the virtuosity of the Onegin stanza – 14 lines in the Iambic tetrameter. Fortunately, the effect of this stanza is easily accessible, Nabokov reproduced it in two brilliant stanzas of his "On the translation of Eugene Onegin" (55), as well as comments on "Eugene Onegin" "(meaning, " V. Nabokov. Comments on "Eugene Onegin" by Alexander Pushkin)". Recall that the basis of the Pushkin stanza was a sonnet — a 14-line poem with a certain rhyme scheme. From the sonnet "English" ("Shakespeare"), Pushkin took the strophic structure (three quatrains and the final couplet), from the "Italian" sonnet — the principle of ordering the rhyme scheme.

However, unlike the sonnet tradition, in which the ordering of the rhyme went along the line of linking the quatrains together with rhyming chains, Pushkin ordered the very system of rhyming: in the first quatrain it is cross-linked, in the second — paired, in the third-encircling. "The evolution of meaning is in a sense the evolution of nonsense," Nabokov writes in *Prin*. The rich significance of a language is a fragile desire that depends on an almost infinite root system of hidden half-meanings, and this dense network, the source of poetry and drama, is ignored only at high risk of insanity or despair. Here, for example, is the poem *The River*.

Among the poems of Nabokov, we can separately distinguish those that are written by his characters. Even Humbert writes poetry! Meyer Priscilla, in her work *The Pale Fire by Vladimir Nabokov, Metaphysics: Ultima Thule*, says that the story "Ultima Thule" (one of the stories that formed the basis of the novel *Pale Fire*) includes a poem by an Icelander *Ultima Thule* (similarly, the novel *Pale Fire* includes Shade's poem *Pale Fire*). The story *Ultima Thule* is written in the form of a message from a certain Sineusov, addressed to his deceased wife.

The Sineus trying to learn otherworldly — like shade after her daughter's death. Sineusov is an artist, so he turns not to "advertising magicians", "palmists in masquerade turbans", "fortune tellers" and "spiritualists who fake unknown energy under the milky features of ghosts", but to "the consolation of [their] art". He continues to work on illustrations for an epic poem entitled "Ultima Thule", which he was commissioned by a "strange Swede, or Danish or Icelandic, God knows" — despite the fact that the customer, not saying a word to him, came to America: "...I... continued to work, where I knew no one would come, but because it seemed to me by the way, her Ghost is pointless nature, the lack of goals and rewards, took me to a related area with one in which for me are you the Ghost, my goal, my sweet, my such a sweet human creation" (125).

Writing a letter to his wife, Sineusov plans to leave the Riviera to "really get down to work" on "Ultima Thule", to portray this "island born in the desolate and dim sea of my longing for you" (126).

Sinewave unavailable meaning of the epic poem, which he illustrates, because it is written in an unknown language, but the author gave its General sense in French ("on which we've been talking"): "...his character — some of the Northern king, poor and lonely; ...in his state in the fog sea, in a sad and distant island, develop some political intrigue, murder, riots..." (125).

In conclusion, I would like to note that Nabokov is characterized by a multidirectional nature not only of the plot, but also an incredible diversity of genres. Nabokov's letters to his wife Vera were published and translated. Some of them Nabokov writes when Vera is ill, tries to distract her from sad thoughts, tells in detail about what he ate, what he is wearing today, what color his suit is. ("I am wearing my new dove-grey trousers today and the Norfolk jacket"). In 1937, the situation will change slightly. Vera and Dmitry will be in Berlin, and Nabokov will go to Paris to settle financial matters. At the same time, there will be meetings with Irina Gadanini, who lives in the French capital, together with her mother. Irina is a long-time fan of the writer, but the story quickly ends when Vera and Dmitry visit Nabokov again in Cannes.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

“THE IRON WOMAN”

THE ALGORITHM FOR CREATING A MYTH: M. I. ZAKREVSKAYA – BENCKENDORFF – BUDBERG

"You left, and flowers planted by you have been left."

(M. Gorky)

"She was and remains the character of the post-Garbo generation, of course, not the iron lady, but the one who was never destroyed by those whom she loved"

(Nina Berberova)

In the life of the writer Gorky, there was one completely extraordinary woman. A female legend. About Moore, Baroness Maria Ignatyevna Zakrevskaya-Benckendorf-Budberg, the famous writer-memoirist and literary critic Nina Berberova wrote in her book *The Iron Woman*: "She lived with M. Gorky for twelve years, but in Soviet literary studies there is no data about her: in three or four cases when her name appears in the text, a footnote explains that M. I. Budberg (the title of the baroness is not mentioned), nee Zakrevskaya, by her first husband Benckendorf, was at one time Gorky's secretary and translator-apparently a foreigner who lived and died in London all her life, Gorky dedicated to her his four – volume (unfinished, last) novel *The Life of Klim Samgin*, but even this dedication is never given a footnote."

The mistress of the English classical scholar H. G. Wells and the British ambassador to Moscow, Robert Lockhart, the so-called "iron woman", according to some sources, who worked for the Soviet and British intelligence at the same time, was a born writer. According to Nina Berberova, "everyone was deceived by Mura." She wasn't just lying. she was making it up. Not like a common mythomaniac or a half-witted fool, of course. Deliberately, intelligently, and in the high society of London, she was considered the smartest woman of her time. But nothing was given to her by itself, without effort, thanks to blind luck; to survive, she

had to be sharp-sighted, agile, smart and from the very beginning surround herself with a legend ... " She loved men, not only her three lovers, but men in general, and did not hide it, although she understood that this truth warms and irritates women and excites and confuses men. She enjoyed sex, she was looking for novelty and knew where to find it, and men knew it, felt it in her and used it, falling in love with her passionately and devotedly. Her hobbies were not crippled by moral considerations, nor by pretended chastity, nor by everyday ta-bu."

Many believed that Mura was the cause of the growing hatred of Gorky by Grigory Zinoviev, one of the Bolshevik leaders. Writer VI. Khodasevich (literary critic, husband of Nina Berberova) notes: "Shortly before my arrival, Zinoviev arranged a general search. At that time, information reached Gorky that Zinoviev was threatening to arrest some people close to Gorky. It is also likely that another blow was planned – one might say, right in the heart of Alexey Maksimovich." In these words, Khodasevich alluded to Mura. The reason for a possible arrest is simple.

Mura was for a long time the mistress of the British diplomat Robert Lockhart, who worked at the British consulate in Moscow and was known in connection with the "conspiracy" of 1918. That year, Lockhart was accused of blowing up bridges, intending to kill Lenin and other crimes, after which he was imprisoned for a while, and then was expelled from the country. In connection with the Lockhart case, Mura was arrested by the Cheka in 1918 in Petrograd, but soon released.

For a while, the storm passed. However, there were already discussions that in the future, in 1921, Gorky would go abroad "to treat his health" (this decision was approved by the entire "family council": both Gorky's spouses, and even Vladimir Lenin), Mura, with small interruptions, lived in Gorky's house in Italy until 1933 (before his final return to the USSR). When she went to Estonia or London, she continued, however, to tell him all the literary gossip, to amuse him, although she was in Sorrento only as a guest.

Looking through the memories of those years, at some point it becomes clear that all the participants in the events, all the relatives of Gorky, somehow miraculously constantly interacted, helped each other, without remembering past grievances. Apparently, the personality of the writer was so great that there was no question of simple showdowns or selfishness. And each of them had a very difficult life of their own.

Nina Berberova wrote: "Mura in that first Italian winter always seemed preoccupied, and there were many reasons for this. Sister Alla in Paris, Budberg (husband) in Argentina, the children in Tully-no-money could only partially muffle the constant anxiety. And Gorky's health: he was ill in January, when she was not there.

In parallel, in the 1920s, Mura constantly traveled to London, her relationship with Herbert Wells reached a new level, and by 1927 began an irregular correspondence. Mura was once again playing a big role in Wells' life. At the same time, his wife knew about this relationship. "The fact that he did not consider the night with Mura a trifle, which can be easily forgotten, is proved by the fact that he, after returning from Russia, bluntly told Rebecca (his wife) that he slept with Gorky's secretary," wrote Nina Berberova. Wells did not like refined expressions and called excessive delicacy hypocrisy. Rebecca, although she considered herself an advanced woman, cried for a long time." Wells did realize at some point that the lives of Mura and Gorky were coming to an end, especially when it became clear in 1928 that Gorky had decided to go to Russia again.

The circumstances of the death of Gorky and his son are considered "suspicious" by many, there were rumors of poisoning. Among other charges against Mr. Yagoda at the Third Moscow Trial in 1938 was the accusation of poisoning Gorky's son. According to Yagoda's interrogations, Maxim Gorki himself was killed on Trotsky's orders, and the murder of Maxim Peshkov was already his personal initiative. Berberova notes that, "if there can be doubts about the death of Gorky, whether he was poisoned at all and by whom, in the question of the death of Maxim, there can be no doubt that he died a violent death." Gorky's stay in Russia was carefully planned by Stalin, who planned to take possession of the three necessary archives: Kerensky, Trotsky, and Gorko. The latter was obtained through a deal with the writer.

Whatever the truth, perhaps the most important thing about Gorky was summed up by Vladislav Khodasevich, who drew the image of the writer, presenting him as a powerful block, a nugget, while a very sensitive and modest person. From the memoirs of Khodasevich: "From the Nizhny Novgorod shop worker Alexey Peshkov, who studied on copper money, to Maxim Gorky, a writer with world fame, there is a huge distance that speaks for itself, no matter how one regards Gorky's talent. It would seem that the consciousness of what he had achieved, and even in

combination with the memory of his "biography", should have had a bad influence on him. That didn't happen. Unlike so many others, he did not pursue fame and was not anxious to maintain it; he was not afraid of criticism, just as he did not feel joy from the praise of any fool or ignoramus; he did not look for reasons to make sure of his fame – "maybe it was because it was real, not puffed-up; he wasn't swaggering, and he wasn't playing the spoiled brat like so many celebrities. I have not seen the man who would carry his glory with great skill and grace, than Bitter. He was exceptionally modest-even when he was pleased with himself. This modesty was genuine. It came mainly from a reverent reverence for literature, and also from self-doubt."

Nina Berberova describes in detail the moment when in Italy, just before Gorky left for Russia, he decided where his archive, letters, and manuscripts should go, which he handed over to a country house in Gorki. But there was still another box in Sorrento, which contained papers that could not be sent to Russia. The papers were of four kinds – first, letters from emigrants (writers), letters from Khodasevich, M. Slonim, and Viach. Second, letters from writers and scientists, actors and artists who came from the USSR, letters from Babel, Olga Forsch, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich, Meyerhold and Reich.

Third, letters from people with political backgrounds who, despite Gorky's turn toward Russia and his triumphant trips there, continued to defend their own views. Fourth, letters from Rykov, Krasin, and Pyatakov to those who managed to break out of the circle of consolidation. This box was handed over to Mura, and the contents were placed in a suitcase, which was later seized from Mura under unknown circumstances. First, Mura traveled with this suitcase from Sorrento to London, then to Istanbul. At some point, Mura moved the archive to Moscow, and the documents were taken away from her.

The English ambassador to Moscow, Robert Lockhart, was the son of a large landowner of Scottish descent. When he first came to Russia, in 1912, Lockhart did not know the country at all, with the exception of Tchaikovsky's romances, Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and Chaliapin's Boris Godunov. Its main feature was a light-heartedness, merriment, cheerfulness. Very soon, he makes friends, has dinner with Alexey Tolstoy in the "Prague", is a guest in the Literary and Artistic Circle. He learned Russian faster than others. At home, he was always in order,

which was maintained by his wife, who well performed her duties as the wife of a diplomat.

Like many Englishmen, Lockhart is at one point fascinated by Russia. Russian Russian Russian children", as they are sincere and direct (details the episode about how one Russian did not see the other for many years, and when he saw him in a restaurant, rushed into his arms, alternately kissing him on both cheeks, while in England, even if the father saw the son, who returned from the war, he would greet him). his, but be sure to let finish the dinner!)

On the one hand, the British at all times were surprised, and even brought to internal indignation, by such ill-breeding and excess of feelings, and even for show, on the other hand, Russia caused delight, fell in love, contrary to common sense, conquered and attracted. However, for the English discoveries of this sort has happened in the East, in India, Kenya, anywhere, just not Prim and proper in England. And, lo and behold, Lockhart, like many of his contemporaries and predecessors, feels a pronounced and unexpected closeness to Russia, feels a sudden weakness for a woman with whom he suddenly falls headlong in love. This woman, of course, is Mura.

Such feelings, so strong, so seemingly impossible for modern times, on the one hand, are due to the fact that they are in principle possible (!), and, on the other hand, are the result of a certain British, or even all-German tradition of troubadours, who, for many centuries, glorified the love of a woman, admired her, loved her. In these feelings, brought up by an age-old tradition, there was no question of Mayakovsky's suicide, of frenzied and dark passions. Romance in Germany or in England is a very different phenomenon.

These feelings are light and sincere, but most importantly, the whole situation of falling in love is drawn from the history of chivalry, so fervent love does not impose any moral, material or even emotional obligations to a woman who at some point becomes her object or even an idol. In any form, such love is more characteristic of Westerners than of Russians.

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an idol. In any form, such love is more characteristic of Westerners than of Russians.

(The idea I picked up from the book "A Woman in Berlin", in which the main character, noble, aristocratic, intelligent, strong explains the unbridled behavior of Russian "bears" by the fact that "they" never had a tradition of respect for women, worship of her, which in Germany or in England was revered since the Middle Ages! - N. Shch.)

In Russia – it is a completely different matter. On the one hand, the revolutionary time, as Berberova notes, is a time of emancipation, sexual freedom, when there are no more bourgeois dogmas and false prohibitions. And, on the other hand, in addition to this kind of promiscuity (so surprisingly and sublimely ennobled by such representatives of history as Lilya Brik, who glibly ruined men with her ideas), there are also bright, in some sense, if you want, even pure, shining with silver or other precious metal, names like Vladimir Solovyov. His book "The Meaning of Love" so sunk or sinks into the soul that it created a whole philosophy of love, its own history.

This philosophy is about the cosmic power of love between a man and a woman, about passion, about sexual love, which makes a person, helps him to perform incredible miracles, giving him supernatural power. The cosmos of love between two complementary beginnings. The merging of people and their painful parting, so reminiscent of the power of divine forces, united together, not ready for separation. Love is the universal force, and at parting, as in the decay of the atom, energy is able to cause the entire planet to rotate. Love, which often does not give offspring, which is rarely mutual, but which, according to V. Solovyov, concentrates in itself an incredible potential of energy and divine revelation, representing a miniature of the entire structure of the world ...

Another, completely different book of the Silver Age comes to mind (to which, if not Mura herself, then Nina Berberova belongs). Dmitry Merezhkovsky's novel "The Unknown Jesus" tells not about passion at all, but about another, true love. The author reconstructs to the smallest detail what Jesus (Yeshua) was like, recreates his earthly path from the Apocrypha and memories. In particular, he writes that the body of Jesus was of a different, divine, non-human quality. Describes the properties of this extraordinary body. Touching him, the Apostles seemed to feel his divine origin, his light and power, as every person can

feel these properties of his (as well as the properties of his body) after Communion.

"Accept, this is my body and my blood" - these words mean something that is very difficult to imagine, namely, the ability of the body to change its chemical and physical composition, the ability to resurrect. In fact, the most important thing in Christianity is not the immortality of the soul, and it is the immortality of the body, its ability to resurrect, naturally, in an altered form ... It is this kind of love, with its spiritual and completely animal, carnal nature, which gives a person the possibility of complete rebirth, renewal, resurrection, that perhaps arises in Lockhart and Mura. So sometimes it seems...

... Here is what Lockhart wrote in his diary about his meeting with Mura on the very day they met: "Today I saw Mura for the first time. She went into the embassy. She is an old acquaintance of Hill and Gerstin, and a frequent visitor to our apartment. She's twenty-six years old... The most Ruthless of Russians, she treats the minutiae of life with disdain and with a steadfastness that is proof of the complete absence of any fear ... her vitality, perhaps related to her iron health, was probable and infected everyone with whom she communicated.

Her life, her world, was where the people dear to her were, and her philosophy of life made her the mistress of her own destiny. She was an aristocrat. She could have been a communist. She would never be able to be a housewife < ... > I saw in her a woman of great charm, whose conversation could light up my day» ...

Nina Berberova describes that time in detail, and although her memories sometimes have their own interpretation, it is obvious that the era is recreated thoroughly and in detail, it is no coincidence that "Iron Woman" once became insanely popular (and its heroine even more mysterious) when it was published in New York for the first time in 1981. Mura disappeared and left. From Moscow. From Sorrento. Berberova suggests that it could possibly be Estonia, where her children were, or St. Petersburg. Nothing is known for sure.

The situation in Moscow in 1918 is becoming increasingly complex. The red terror. The sharp attacks of the left essers against the Bolsheviks. (Opening of the V Congress at the Bolshoi Theater). Mass riots. The German ambassador, Count Mirbach, was assassinated by Esser Blumkin. Lockhart supports the ideas of intervention. Without success.

Then the murder of Volodarsky, which caused a wave of terror in Petrograd and Moscow. And against the background of detailed descriptions of events, an excerpt from Lockhart's diary of July 18, 1918: "Now I didn't care - just to see her, just to see her. I felt that now I was ready for everything, I could bear everything that the future had in store for me»

...

And here is what K. D. Nabokov, the first secretary of the tsarist embassy before and after the February Revolution, writes about Lockhart: "In the spring of 1918, a special representative of the British government, formerly managing the Consulate General in Moscow, Mr. Lockhart, was sent to Moscow. As far as I know, the instructions given to him can probably be compared only with the task to solve the squaring of a circle. It was necessary, for practical reasons, to have an " eye " in Moscow, to monitor the activities of the Bolsheviks and the Germans, and, as far as possible, to protect the interests of the British in Russia. Having no official knowledge, nevertheless conduct official negotiations with Trotsky”.

Nina Berberova knew Mura personally, and had seen and talked to her more than once. Nevertheless, it seems that this image of the legendary personality can only be judged by the fragmentary memories of the writer. At personal meetings, Mura often left, left, of course, rarely said anything. Here is how the meeting is described in 1925 in Sorrento, where in the evening a fireplace made of olive branches was burning, the Bay of Naples and Vesuvius were visible in the window, and Gorky, Mura and Khodasevich (the famous literary critic, the husband of Nina Berberova), smoking cigarettes, talked in low voices about the past:

"Did you know Cromie? What was he like?" And Mura, flicking the ashes into a jade ashtray (which later disappeared!), spoke with her English accent (which she had acquired so quickly!) in Russian, - "He was ... cute." And then silence. – "Did you know Peters?" What was he like? "He was ... kind." Berberova at the same time sat there, silent and listened, and looked at the pink cloud and smoke. – Did you know Reilly?" What was he like? She has now crawled into a deep armchair and is smiling at her eyes, playing at mystery, and Gorky is clearly admiring her. "He was ... brave."

Mura's English accent was artificial, and one of her habits was to translate literally from English or French, and sometimes from German.

She was known for translations, the number of which was at first completely fantastic, and then gradually decreased significantly, thus giving out another of the myths that she created around herself.

And then it was on September 2, 1918, when Lenin's government sent a note to His Majesty's government in London about the elimination of the conspiracy against the Soviet government, led by Anglo-French diplomatic representatives. Lockhart was offered to stay, but at some point his removal from Moscow was linked to an even larger mission, he was exchanged for the famous Russian diplomat Litvinov. Berberova describes this situation in detail, noting that Lockhart's associates remained in Moscow. That left Sadoul, the young Pierre Pascal. Hicks had married a young woman named Malinina, the niece of the Moscow mayor, Chelnokov, and was taking her away with him.

But Lockhart rode alone. On the eve Moore told him that he was "a little tricky, but not cunning, he's a bit strong, but not strong enough, and that he is a little weak, but not weak." A true Englishman. In those days, she had a very high fever, weakness, headaches. It was not just a separation, but a separation, as everyone understood, - forever. Already at the train station, where Mura was escorted by Lockhart, at some point he noticed that she could barely stand on her feet. The train was still standing

Lockhart went along the train, found Wardwell, and asked him to take Mura home. She didn't mind. Lockhart watched her go until she disappeared into the blackness of the station night. In his memoirs many years later, he will write that perhaps Peters, who several times suggested that he not leave Russia, "did not understand how I could leave Mura." A sense of duty? Power? Weakness? Everything is also an English upbringing.

When Mura is arrested at some point, she is released very quickly. Lockhart has no diplomatic immunity at all, and he has nothing to do with it. But she gets out of prison almost on the arm of Peters, an employee of the Cheka, does not go to Butyrskaya prison, as well as to Solovki, and over time and life, more and more often says that it was Gorky who saved her, who really saved her, but not in Moscow, in 1918, but in Petrograd, three years later... 3. Mura went to London in the mid-20s. In 1927, the old acquaintance with Wells was resumed. In the same year, she writes him a letter that she will visit him at the house in Essex, where he lived with his second, at that time ill wife Jane.

Since 1931, Moore begins to figure as a companion of Wells. In 1933, he even sets up a date with her in Dubrovnik, where the PEN Club congress is being held. At the same time, Wells leaves his home in the south of France and rents an apartment in London. His girlfriend Odette at one point writes unpleasant memories of him in an American magazine, to which he will then respond with novels. The well-known writer Somerset Maugham, who was famous for his purely English upbringing and refinement, will ask Moore around this time how she can love this completely worn-out, fat-bellied writer. And Mura will answer him: "He smells like honey" (according to the book by Ted Morgan, "Maugham", biography, p. 382"). Here, perhaps, the very fact of Mura's communication with Somerset Maugham is interesting, as is, no doubt, a completely sincere explanation! In this regard, Nina Berberova slightly does not believe her heroine, often not giving her a chance to be just a loving and feeling woman!

Mura seems to guess the role that she should play under Wells, to be a friend of the writer, a shadow of a man, a guardian angel. This way, writes biographer of wells Valsartan, was brought Welles times in his novels. He is not looking for a Victorian doll, or the mistress of the house, the mother of his children, but a constantly admiring shadow, " driven by himself in the direction in which his path to immortality lies."

He finds that shadow. The love and relationship between Moore and Wells was something of a game on the stage of an empty theater, a game, however, for each other. And yet all the energy and fire that these two people radiated, their mutual inspiration, comforted them and amused them. Wells was very pessimistic at the end of his life, which is so clearly indicated by his utopias, and about which Berberova writes in detail. And Mura continued to receive guests together with Wells in the Savoy, in London, where, by the way, she allegedly mentioned to Berberova that she was not going to marry Wells, and run his household! He at that time, according to the memoirs of the writer E. Bagnold, assured that falling in love with a young woman would be foolishness on his part (the discovery that he made, however, is too late!)

.. Some time after leaving Moscow, the *Memoirs of a British Agent*, written and published by Lockhart in England, became insanely popular, and it could not have been otherwise. Mura was the only person to whom Lockhart, now actively engaged in writing, decided to ask for his consent to the publication. To his utter surprise, Mura refused. This

is what Lockhart's diary says: "This morning was a shock to me – a letter from Mura, in which she demands a change in the part of my book that concerns her.

She wants to do things more matter-of-factly and matter-of-factly. She wants me to call her "Madame Benckendorf," from beginning to end. She's worse than a Victorian spinster. And why? Because I wrote that fourteen years ago, she had curly hair, while it "was always straight." So my description is false, frivolous, etc. and it's clear that the whole episode meant nothing to me? So: the whole love story-or nothing: This will be difficult to do. However, we will have to change something in the book. She is the only one who has the right to demand it» ...

Lockhart begins to write feuilletons about social life. He is still interested in communicating with Mura. In London, she has a huge circle of acquaintances-at various levels of society. However, he never talks to her about England or politics, only about Europe. In his diary he writes: "I had breakfast with Mura at the Savoy. She's going to Genoa today and then to Berlin. Talking about a new book by Arnold Bennett. Wells agrees with Max that this is rubbish. Mura says that Dorothy Chaston bored Bennett and he lost all inspiration after she forbade him to wear shirts with forget-me-nots. Poor Gorky earns no more than 300 pounds a year, cannot withdraw money from Russia, where his books sell 2,700,000 copies a year. He lives by feeling, not by the mind, and does not know how to be critical..." (October, 1930). Or a little later: "A letter from Mura... She writes sweetly and cheerfully. She is a woman of a broad mind and a broad heart." (January, 1931). "We had breakfast with Mura at the Eiffel Tower restaurant»

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Mura is well established in London, maintaining old ties and strengthening new ones. It is worth noting that for Russian emigration to stay in London, to be known there – quite rare. England is not quick to admit emigrants into high society, since their origin and manners determine their position in it. Few Russian emigrants lived there. Few people had any contact with Alexander Korda, the most famous director, Noel Coward, the most famous playwright, the whole world of English and American bohemia. At some point, Mura burned her papers. The ones that had accumulated after the Second war and were stored in her London apartment. She collected the early ones (1920-1939) and sent them to Tallinn, Estonia. They burned down during the German retreat and the capture of Tallinn by the Soviet army. One of the versions.

In several of her interviews, Mura deliberately or accidentally confused events and dates. She said that at some point she went on dates with Benckendorf, her husband, and wanted to admit that she loved someone else (Lockhart). Her husband was at war at the time, and she went to him at the risk of her life, just to tell him about it. He left her and was killed. The second story was connected with Gorky, who allegedly saved her from arrest twice (once for fleeing abroad, the second - for fake food cards - a story that happened when she did not know Gorky yet). The third story was related to Cambridge, where Mura allegedly studied. In fact, she only completed English courses for young foreign ladies.

It is worth noting that the admiration for this woman, as well as her restraint, inner strength and often silence, led many people to distort the facts related to her, to turn to her for help, to quote her words, to think out possible causes or consequences. In a sense, the famous book by Nina Berberova is both thoughtful and documentary, and, in part, also somewhat far-fetched, or, on the contrary, thoughtful. The "Iron Woman" who was loved by such famous and accomplished men was not just a shadow. And she really loved me.

Yuri Kovalev, a professor at St. Petersburg State University, a well-known specialist in American literature, once told lectures and even showed a letter that, as a student, he wrote to her in connection with Gorky, or perhaps another famous writer, and to which she, a student,

immediately replied. This was the way all the famous people did at that time. They wrote letters and answered them, communicated live, came, met, experienced, forgave, started life anew, every time she, barely noticeably eluded them, they caught up with her again. Nina Berberova ends her book by mentioning another myth invented by Mura. Her descent from the family of Peter the Great, a story that she composed in London. She was and still is the heroine of the post-Garbo generation, not an iron woman, of course, but one who was never destroyed by those she loved.

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CONCLUSION

There are many more names of poets and writers who form the Silver Age heritage of Russian literature. There are many more works on philosophy, poetry, music, art. They felt themselves as being the “last in the row”, the ones that lived their lives for the sake of writing, experiencing life for the sake of the word itself. Therefore, the word for them meant a lot. It could have revived or killed.

The depth of their understanding was the original aim, to get to the “roots of the matter”, to grasp the real, to get to the bottom of the Universe. This attempt was carried out against the background of fin de siècle turmoil, October Revolution, First World War, Second World War. The tragedies seemed to trigger enormous cognitive and emotional outcome with literary works that still form a big part of Russian culture.

Nina Scherbak

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(1890 – 1930)**

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Центр образовательного и научного консалтинга
(ИП Трусова Л.А.)
8-496-727-66-37
www.conseducenter.ru

Подписано в печать 01.06.2021. Формат 84х60Х1/16. Бумага офсетная.
Тираж 500 экз.

Отпечатано в ООО «Дизайн»
142300, Московская область, г. Чехов, ул. Полиграфистов, д.1
zakaz@oodizain.ru