THE POETRY AND AESTHETICS OF
INNOKENTY ANNENSKY.

by

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of Philosophy of the University of
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INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russian literary scene was dominated by the novel in which were reflected the social conflicts of that time. Poetry, with the exception of the civic lyricism of Nekrasov, lay relatively unnoticed. The subjective lyrical poetry of Tyutchev, the quiet flow of Fet's impressionistic verse seemed little in key with what was happening in the literary arena at large. The 1870's and 1880's were marked by the appearance of a decadent verse, the uneven poetry of Polonsky, Apukhtin and Minsky. Then, in the early years of the last decade of the century, the influence of European poetic modernism began to be felt in Russia. Wearied out by the storm of polemics which seemed to be destroying the very fabric of Russian literature, a generation of young Russian poets dedicated themselves to a regeneration of Russian lyricism, drawing their inspiration and technical rigour from the poetry of Baudelaire, Verlaine and Mallarmé. The subversive quality of this poetry had a peculiar relevance to the Russian
literary situation. Here was a verse that attacked the very foundations of material reality, that pointed the way towards a region of the abstract in which the poetic was the sovereign of its drifting worlds, where the soul found its correspondences amidst the systematic dissolution of nature. The poetry of Sologub and Merezhkovsky, but, above all, that of Bryusov, who gave himself up wholly to the tireless analysis and assimilation of symbolist aesthetics, was the fruit of the new poetic sensibility which covered Russia as the century closed. The storms of Baudelaire's visions, the lightnings of Rimbaud's illuminations replaced for these poets the seemingly interminable struggle between right and wrong which filled so many agonised pages of prose. The social revolution became for them an aesthetic one.

This aestheticism could not survive in its 'western' form for long, however. Local, national interests and preoccupations could not simply be ignored. The art of the 'Silver Age' reveals an amazing tightrope spun of the most refined aesthetic sensibility and poetic achievement over an abyss of social upheaval. In the west, the art of Wilde, Régnier, Valéry found its place against a background of social stabilisation. There the revolution had died in 1848. In Russia, revolution stood at every street corner, rose in every remotest village.
Alternatives to the argument over the 'common weal' which had become so intolerable to the new Russian poets suggested themselves in a bewildering variety of forms: the apocalyptic socialism of Blok, Bely's theosophy, Ivanov's theurgism. These were mystical solutions to a problem which seemed insoluble. Yet although some of these paths seem strange, even ludicrous now, the poetry itself never broke finally under the strain, and it continued to be marked by that feature of Russian literature which gave Russian modernism its peculiar quality: a sophistication of language and style wedded to a constant faith in and respect for the language and style of Russian folk art and literature. The paths of Blok, Bely, Ivanov and Gumilev led ultimately to the emergence of such poets as Tsvetaeva, Mandel'shtam, Akhmatova, to the painting of Tatlin, Malevich, Kandinsky, Goncharova, to the music of Stravinsky and Prokofiev— an art fated, after a brief period of relative freedom, to suffer under the blows of a new tyranny.

In the history of Russian modernism, Innokenty Fedorovich Annensky occupies a strange, secluded place. His poetic art contains within it in miniature all the dilemmas, the confusions, the struggles which characterized the development of Russian literature in his time. How is one to find this lonely, tormented figure amidst all the storms of the past which still come raging as soon as one draws one's eyes towards that most
complex period of Russian literary history? The question may appear unexpected, odd, yet it poses a very real problem in the study of Annensky. The confusions and storms of his time bit so deeply into him that his artistic personality became torn and divided. There remains only the elusiveness of a shadow, a dark line obscuring and twisting our view of the poetry that was written in Russia at the turn of the century. Annensky's problem is one of identity: where is the poet, who was he? This is the question which makes the reading of Annensky's poetry so difficult; his name so frequently heard, his work so often unknown. The man who seriously contemplated the publication of a first book of poems which was to contain only a handful of originals, the rest consisting entirely of translations, can have had little literary ambition. The man who could write Nikto as a pseudonym at the head of his Tikhie pesni can hardly have expected a large audience. Yet the scope of Annensky's work is vast: it comprises some 320 lyrical poems, around 70 translations of poems by poets ranging from Horace, through Goethe, Heine to Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Corbière and Jammes; a complete verse translation of the tragedies of Euripedes with lengthy introductions; a set of four original verse dramas; countless critical essays on Russian, classical and European literature, only some of which
are included in the Knigi Otrazhenii; writings on symbolist aesthetics; numerous articles on problems of education, published in pedagogical journals; and, together with all this, a life-long activity as schoolteacher and scholar of the Greek and Latin literatures and languages.

Looking through Annensky's literary and personal archives housed in TSGALI at Moscow it is difficult to persuade oneself that one man could have had the time and energy to produce such an enormous body of work. There are draftings and redraftings of essays, long unpublished poems, such as Magdalina, which consists of some 4000 lines, lecture notes for dissertations which were given but never published, the innumerable and infinitely varying versions of lyrical poems. If it were not for the characteristic handwriting which trails like an impassable barbed wire across sheet upon sheet of paper one would come to the conclusion that this was the work of at least two men, one a poet and the other a schoolmaster, if not more. The early Annensky-poet seems quite unrelated to the later; what relation do these piles of test-sheets and pencilled examination questions have to the author of Starye estonki? There is here the trace of a crisis of personal identity, the sign of an inner dislocation.

We have little, practically no biographical information
about Annensky which sheds any light on the man. The Italian diaries, which record Annensky's visit to that country, contain a few characteristic observations on Italian street-scenes, far removed from the endless descriptions of churches and art-galleries which fill, unfortunately, most of the small black notebooks. There are some letters which the poet wrote to his wife at the time of the visit: these are devoid of personal interest and contain for the most part descriptions similar to those found in the diaries, except that these are if anything even less colourful. The archive is characterised by an all-pervasive obscurity, a sense that the man is hidden, that only his shadow remains. But is this not also characteristic of Annensky's poetry which, together with some critical essays and the Knigi Utrazhenii, forms the most concrete and most readily available testament of the man? Annensky hid his broken identity from the world because he had translated it into art. 

"...Ne dumat' o Gamlete, dlya menya po krainei mere, inogda znachilo by ot kazat' sya i ot myslei ob iskusstve, to est' ot zhizni", Annensky writes in Problema Gamleta. (1) The ghost of Hamlet's father was the ghost of Annensky's life, a life which struggled towards the ascendancy of art.

Annensky's lyrical poetry belongs to none of the poetic

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movements of the Russian avant-garde of the 1890's. Annensky was much older than Bryusov or Blok when he published his Tikhi pesni. His absorption of west European symbolism took place much earlier, possibly at some time during the 1870's. Annensky worked independently of any group, literary or otherwise. His only allegiances were to education and poetry.

How can Annensky's lyrical poetry, the contents of Tikhi pesni, Kiparishovy larets and Posmertnye stikhi be characterised? It is a poetry that quite clearly belongs to the main tradition of Russian lyrical verse from Derzhavin and Pushkin, through Baratynsky and Lermontov, to Tyutchev, Fet and Nekrasov. The intellectual qualities of Baratynsky's poetry in particular, the fine impressionism of Fet, the neoromanticism of Tyutchev find an expression and a continuance in the writing of Annensky. Like Tyutchev, Annensky contemplates the triad of nature, love and death; like Tyutchev, Annensky longs to fuse with the elemental fabric of existence, to absorb the world entirely into himself; but Annensky lived and worked later than Tyutchev, and was subject to influences unknown in Tyutchev's time. Two factors in particular determine some of the peculiar quality of Annensky's verse: one is the poet's strong self-identification with the aesthetics and poetic methods of the poetry which flourished in France from the time of Baudelaire until the last decade of the nineteenth century, the
poetry of symbolism and decadentism - Annensky experienced this poetry quite independently of Bryusov and the Russian symbolists, in his own quite personal way. If Baudelaire could carry his love of Poe to the extent of embracing the latter poet's essay The Philosophy of Composition as his own work, Annensky seems to have undergone a similar process of self-duplication as regards the poetry of Verlaine. The shifting monochromes of Verlaine's poems, their self-lacerations, the surreal movements of the chanson grisé affected Annensky's poetic universe so deeply that he was able to exclaim in one poem (Ne mogu ponyat', ne znam', 187)?

Это сон или Верлен?...

Annensky translated a number of Verlaine's poems in a style so individual that the original poem disappeared, its essence alone reincarnated in Annensky's personal language (see, for example, Pesnya bez slov, 268). This close, purely poetic relationship of Annensky with Verlaine is one of the aspects of Annensky's work which complicates any analysis of it.

The other determining factor in Annensky's individuality is his introduction of techniques commonly associated with narrative prose writing into the elaboration of his verse.

Annensky does not write the narrative poem: he uses the psychologism of a Tolstoy or a Dostoievsky (he drew perhaps more from the latter) outside any narrative schema to illuminate the instant in the intensity of the lyric. We can see this technique most clearly in a poem such as Preryvistye stroki (168), where a scene, an instant is seen not from outside but from within a painful subjectivity, a consciousness free but intolerably alone. Yet there is another way in which Annensky's psychologism is reflected in his verse: nature itself becomes in these poems a mind, filled with intertwining images of itself, the subjectivity of correspondences amidst which the poet's anguish moves and is directed. Characteristic examples are the poems Avgust (104), Sentyabr' (72), Toska otshumevshoi grozy (119). It is worth citing the latter poem in its entirety, as it illustrates one of the most significant aspects of Annensky's poetic art:

ТОСКА ОТШУМЕВШЕЙ ГРОЗЫ

Сердце ль не томилося,
Желанием грозы,
Сквозь вспышки бело-алые?
А теперь влюбилось
В бездонность бирюзы,
В ее глаза усталые.
Всё, что есть лазурного,
Излилось в лучах
На зыби златощёвные,
Всё, что там безбwróного
И с ласкою в очах, —
В сады зелёновёвые.

В стекла бирюзовые
Одна глядит гроза
Из чуждой ей обители...
Больше не суровые,
Печальные глаза,
Любили ль вы, простите ли?...

Is there an image of a woman here, in the 'weary eyes' of the poem? It is difficult to decide: the interplay of human identity and nature is so subtle, so elusive that the two elements fuse, coincide. What we may say with certainty is that here, as in other poems, Annensky creates a presence, a self without clearly-defined form (the 'eyes' of the poem are seen in isolation) and contracted within a nature which is the self's infinitely extending appearance. Valéry described the Belgian poet Émile Verhaeren as 'inventeur de soi-même', the inventor of himself(1). Perhaps we may describe

Annensky as the inventor of a Self, a transcendental person constructed in art to defeat the horror of an existence without beauty, a death-in-life (this is surely the central justification of Annensky's all-pervasive death imagery), an intolerable reality.

Beauty and personal identity are synonymous in Annensky's aesthetic. In the degree that the poet achieves the creation of beauty, he achieves the creation, the possibility of a personal reality. For Annensky suffered from a prolonged and tormenting loss of identity, an inability to exist as a person. It was in terms of this disability, this sickness that Annensky conceived his pedagogical and poetic task. Annensky believed that the sickness from which he suffered had its origin in the condition of the society in which he lived. His brother, Nikolai Fedorovich, was an active member of certain populist circles during the last decades of the nineteenth century. His sister, A.F. Annenskaya, was a schoolmistress and writer of books for children. Annensky himself became a schoolteacher not simply in order to earn a living, but in order to change the nature of the society in which he was living. There can be no doubt that Annensky had a vivid and keen perception of the social evils that surrounded him. The series of prose poems entitled Autopsia shows this as well as any other
evidence. And the Pedagogical Letters, also dating from the 1890's, are a desperate appeal to a society which seemed to Annensky intent on destroying the last vestiges of human self-respect in the very places where that self-respect needed to be most fostered - the schools. Annensky dedicated himself to his pedagogical task with great single-mindedness; he won the love and admiration of his pupils. But he had many rivals: the last years of his life are a story of professional hostilities, petty jealousies. In those years Annensky began to lose faith in the power of an enlightened form of education to change the character of the society in which he lived. The spectacle of L.N. Tolstoy and his populist evangelism was a demoralising factor. With courage and determination Annensky tried to tear himself away from the daily task of teaching and correcting which took up so much of his time in order to write the poems which had for so long lain in his head. It was in poetry that his great idealism was to find its ultimate expression. The poetry that Annensky wrote in those years, the first years of this century, carries the scars of the conflict which marred the poet's life. The tendency towards darkness and pessimism, the detailed description of death and its trappings, the singing of anguish and misery - all this is the inevitable testament of a man who knew the most profound
depression, the keenest anxiety, a man who had not long to live and who struggled against enmity, illness and despair in order to write of the Self which he believed could alone redeem the desert which surrounded him.

It is a strange poetry, this finely-spun web of appearances, tensions, anxieties, oddly dated at times with its levkoi and fenol, its chinoiseries, its Moreauesque forms and interiors. It is a poetry of the closed room, the home, the sickbed, an enclosed space which at times has the aspect of a prison, at times the form of an identity. How different Annensky's poetry appears from that of the symbolists, whose work his own superficially resembles. A fear of what he called 'cynicism' kept Annensky away from the controversies and intrigues of the symbolists: and the 'decadents', in which he saw only another manifestation of that sickness which characterised, he thought, the development of Russian literature and society from their beginnings. Nonetheless, Annensky did have friendly relationships with individual symbolist and 'decadent' poets, including M. Kuzmin, F. Sologub and V. Ivanov. He took a keen interest in the poetry which seemed to have taken the place of his own, and welcomed it.

If we make a brief comparison between Annensky and a poet with whose work his own seems to have certain affinities, we can see something of what divided Annensky from his contemporaries.
Blok, too, felt the limitations and irritating aspects of the literary groupings which sprang up in Petersburg at the turn of the century. But while Blok sought liberation, release in an ultimate self-identification with the fate of Russia, the Russia which was moving slowly towards revolution, and used up all his strength in creating the poetry of that country and that revolution, Annensky sought out the confines of the self, a modest, domestic aim which had none of the fire and thunder of Blok's poetry. Blok's *Khudozhnik* is the most complete expression of that poet's conception of the poetic task. The creation of the poem is the freeing of a caged bird in quest of the absolute:

В жаркое лето и в зиму метельную,
В дни ваших свадеб, торжеств, похорон,
Жду, чтоб спугнул мою скуку смертельную
Легкий, доселе не слышанный звон.

Вот он — возник. И с холодным вниманием
Жду, чтоб понять, закрепить и убить.
И перед зорким моим ожиданием
Тянет он еле заметную нить.

С моря ли вихрь? Или сирены райские
В листьях поют? Или время стоит?
Или осыпали яблони майские
Снежный свой цвет? Или ангел летит?
Длятся часы, мировое несущие.
Ширятся звуки, движения и свет.
Прошлое страстно глядится в грядущее.
Нет настоящего. Жалкого — нет.

И, наконец, у предела зачатия
Новой души, неизведанных сил,
Душу оражает, как громом, проклятие:
Творческий разум осилил — убил.

И замыкаю я в клетку холодную
Легкую, добрую птицу свободную,
Птицу, хотевшую смерть унести,
Птицу, летевшую душу спасти.

Вот моя клетка — стальная, тяжелая,
Как золотая, в вечернем огне.
Вот моя птица, когда-то весела,
Обруча ксаает, поет на скне.

Крылья подрезаны, песни заучены.
Любите вы под окном постойть?
Песни вам нравятся. Я же, измученный,
Нового жду — и скучаю опять. 1)

Annensky is at home in his 'cage', it is the Self, the identity he has created in the face of overwhelming odds:

Пусть травы сменятся над капищем волненья,
И восьмой в гробу забудется рука,
Мне кажется, между вас одно недоуменье
Всё будет жить мое, одна моя Тоска...

Нет, не о тех, увы! кому столь недостойно,
Ревниво, бережно и страстьно был я мил...
С, сила любящих и в муке так спокойна,
У женской нежности завидно много сил.

Да и при чем бы здесь недоуменья были —
Любовь ведь светла, она кристалл, эфир...
Моя же безлюдная — дрожит, как лошадь в мыле!
Ей — пир отравленный, мошеннический пир!

В венке из тронутых, из вянувших азалий
Собравшись пять она... Не смолк и первый стих,
Как маленьких детей у ней перевязали,
Сломали руки им и ослепили их.

Она бесполая, у ней для всех улыбки,
Она притворщица, у ней порочный вкус —
Качает целый день она пустые вызки,
И образок в углу — сладчайший Иисус...
Я выдумал её — и всё ж она виденье,
Я не люблю её — и мне она близка,
Недоумелая, мое недоуменье,
Всегда веселая, она моя тоска.

/Моя тоска, 171/

Blok's poetry covers a wider diapason, flies to broader horizons than that of Annensky; yet the achievement of the two poets is equal. Both are modernists, in the strictest sense of the word: they have experienced the reality of their time in a place where that reality is at its most terrible, and they have turned it into art. Blok's poetry is the more heroic, the more extravagant; Annensky's the stranger, the more personal and disquieting.

Annensky's influence on the poets of twentieth century Russia has been claimed by the poets themselves, in particular by Akhmatova. 1) It is not difficult to see the superficial traces of Annensky's imagery and poetic style in Akhmatova's poetry, particularly in her early work. The lyricism of Marina Tsvetaeva, the technical

intricacies of Mandel'shtam's work, Pasternak's humanised nature, the strictness and discipline of Gumilev's poetry may all be traced back in some way to Annensky's experiments. According to Akhmatova, even the Russian futurists were influenced by such poems of Annensky as Kek-uok na tsimbalakh (176) and Kolokol'chiki (207). Yet the achievement of Annensky's verse, the construction of an infinite poetic self within a dark prison, is unique: one can understand Akhmatova's claim if one thinks of the history of Russian poetry in the twentieth century, and the experience of certain Russian poets in that time; but social reality has made the total assimilation of Annensky's aesthetic impossible - what he dreamed of never took place.

My thesis centres round a study of Annensky's dreams and nightmares. Annensky's 'tragedies', the lyrical dramas Melanippa-filosof, Tsar' Iksion, Laodamia, and Famira-kifared are a separate, complex area of his work. They do not achieve the brilliance of his lyrical poetry, yet they are the record of the struggle he endured throughout his life. Annensky taught classical literature. In his translation of Euripides he attempted to bring the work of the classical dramatist alive, to present it in modern, colloquial Russian. As an extension of this creative and educative task, Annensky

attempted to revive the forms of the ancient classical drama in his own way. The four tragedies are a strange interweaving of the two outwardly opposing but inwardly related tasks of Annensky's life. In order to do these works justice, a lengthy study would be necessary, a study which I do not think could be included within the limits of a university thesis. I have concentrated solely on Annensky's lyrics, and the aesthetic implications which are inevitably a part of them, in the hope that somehow I have succeeded in throwing some light on that problem which is central to all Annensky's work, the problem of identity.

My thesis is in two parts. In the first section I have attempted a close textual analysis of the two books of verse which Annensky conceived as books. Krivich's edition of the posthumous verses seems to me to heterogeneous, containing poems from periods of Annensky's too far apart from one another for the poems to be treated as a coherent whole. In my textual analysis I have concentrated on the problem of meaning in Annensky's lyrics: many of the poems are tantalizingly unclear and ambiguous. I have tried to expose some of the ambiguities and where possible to explain them. In the second section, I have attempted a description of the aesthetic of identity and beauty which I perceive in the poems. This task was
a difficult one, and I was compelled to abandon more conventional forms of literary criticism for a psychological structuralism, more adequate to the many-layered and extremely subjective character of Annensky's poetry. This structuralism tries to uncover inner forms, chains of association in the poetry: it tries to uncover a matrix by which the poems may be characterised together, and which is the sum of the poet's aesthetic. This section draws to a large extent on Annensky's critical and aesthetic writings.
ANNENSKY AND HIS CRITICS

Annensky has suffered a kind of critical neglect which is comparatively rare in literary history. Acknowledged by critics and poets alike as one of the most important influences on the development of Russian modernism in literature, he has nevertheless remained an obscure figure, and details about his life and a thorough critical examination of his work have been conspicuously lacking. There are several good reasons why this should have been so: the fact that Annensky published only one book of poems during his lifetime, and even then under a pseudonym; the scarcity of biographical material about him; the location of most of his manuscripts and letters in one central archive, and the difficulty of obtaining photocopies or microfilm of them - these are all factors that have played an important part in maintaining his obscurity. And yet the texts of the poems themselves have always been available. It is surprising, therefore, that even after the publication of A. Fedorov's fiftieth anniversary edition of 1959, only two full-length critical studies should have appeared.
These studies are those of Eridano Bazzarelli(1) and Vsevolod Setchkarev(2). Setchkarev's book is almost entirely descriptive in character, representing a survey of all the biographical and bibliographical material about Annensky available to the author at the time of writing. It consists of four long chapters. The first of these, entitled 'Biography', is a successful attempt to draw together all the biographical evidence about Annensky into one continuous account. Setchkarev's main source is the biographical article by Annensky's son Valentin Krivich(3) - but he makes reference to Fiedler(4), Zelinsky(5), Makovsky(6), and others. The second chapter, 'Poetry', is divided into five sections: 'Main themes', 'Chief poetical devices', 'Annensky's colorism', 'The poems in prose', and 'The translations'. There is little or no attempt to draw a coherent and unified picture of Annensky's poetry.

Setchkarev enters into great detail in his discussion and analysis of Annensky's imagery, but his treatment of the themes must be criticised as being too general and schematic. (The 'themes' are presented as 'Poetry', 'Life', 'Beauty', 'Time', and so on.)

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The discussion of colour, on the other hand, is very interesting and useful. Setchkarev shows, for example, that Annensky's most frequently-used colours are white and black, each taking up about 14% of his 'palette'. Yellow and blue, with all their different shades, take about 17%, the reds 14%, and the colour green 6%.

Another chapter is devoted to a scene-by-scene retelling of Annensky's tragedies, and a final one to a précis of the poet's literary criticism. The bibliography included at the end of the book is probably the most complete in existence. As a source of information about Annensky, this book is extremely valuable, but as a work of literary criticism it is perhaps somewhat unimaginative. The tone is rather strange at times: 'The combination of a wise skeptic, an erudite scholar and a sensitive poet is certainly unusual. But is not this paradoxical combination perhaps one of the highest forms the nature of man can reach?' 1)

For a really serious critical study of Annensky, we must turn to Bazzarelli's work. This was completed in 1965, two years after the publication of Setchkarev's book, although Bazzarelli appears to have been ignorant of the latter book's existence. Bazzarelli's study consists of five chapters:

1) Nota biographica; 2) Caratteri e fortuna della poesia di

1) Setchkarev, op. cit., p 50.
Annenskij; 3) Il mondo poetico di Annenskij; 4) L’arte di Annenskij; 5) Appunti sul teatro di Annenskij.

The first part of the critical analysis (chapter 2) begins with an attempt to decide the difficult question of Annensky’s relation to the two main poetic movements of his time, those of ‘decadence’ and ‘symbolism’. Bazzarelli points to the astonishing difference between the Annensky of the early period and the writer of Tikhie pesni and Kiparisovy larets:

"I repeat that the confrontation between the poems of the ‘true’ Annensky and the poems of his prehistory is quite astounding, because it seems as if we were reading the works of two different men. The reality is that Annensky was not a pioneer and, in order to find his own authentic path, had to wait until the experience of modernism had entered and colonised Russia too, that experience which is known as ‘symbolism’ or ‘decadentism’ (decadentismo). When we speak of decadentism (which is surely distinct from ‘decadence’ in the accepted negative usage of this word) we refer above all to a poet’s consciousness. A consciousness of crisis, of existential crisis. Annensky is exquisitely decadentist in the sense that for him the crisis is the collapse of nineteenth-century values, the ever-present backdrop of his poetic explorations, realised above all in his anguished quest for his own I, or for the confirmation of its division. Certainly, these
elements of decadentism as the fruit of a crisis are to be seen in Russian literature some way before Annensky, and before the flowering of decadentism. They are present in Dostoeievsky, in Turgenev, in Garshin. But for the decadents, and for Annensky in particular, they become the central, even exclusive object of the poetic quest. Decadentism is, therefore, above all an event of consciousness: one which in the reality of artistic expression assumes various modes, at times extremely distant from one another. The consciousness of crisis is a matrix, and those poets who set out from it subsequently take different directions, create diverse myths. In Italian literature we can discern in the area of symbolism crepuscolarismo, pastoral humilitas (or alexandrine pastoralism), the Dannunzian cult of the superman. And in Russia we can discern now the intimate, twilit, refined and sad Muse of an Annensky, now the will to power of a Gumilev, or the myths of a Blok. But among the symbolists, and with Blok in particular, there is a tendency towards the creation of universal myths, while in Annensky it is the subjective moment of the existential crisis that prevails, conceived as the impossibility of perceiving, of fixing the unity of one's own I and the existence of the world - a subjective moment which becomes in his work the clearest expression of decadentism in its most
precise definition. But decadentism is also the index of a
tonalinity: and, in fact, the consciousness of such crises never
attains the absolute cry of anguish, but expresses itself rather
in tones of quiet grief, in which the aesthetic quest can be
temporarily and illusorily comforting. Decadentism is also
a certain landscape, a certain décor: thus we find in Annensky
a love for melting things, for mist and shadows; on the
stylistic level, a tendency towards diffuseness. And also a
certain satisfaction with one's own weakness, a satisfaction
that is another characteristic element of decadentism:

Я — слабый сын больного поколенья
И не пойду искать алпийских роз,
Ни ропот волн, ни рокот ранних гроз
Мне не дадут отрадного волненья.

Но миль мне на розовом стекле
Алмазные и плачущие горы,
Букеты роз увядших на столе
И пламени вечернего узоры.

Когда же сном об’ят’a голова,
Читаю грез я повесть небылую,
Сгоревших книг забытые слова
В туманном сне я трепетно целую.

“Exhausted states of mind, a love of pallid lilies and faded
roses, of mysterious shadows, of the 'lament' of things, of
nature, a love of the lanterns which are lit in the evenings: these are all elements of the decadentist décor. But Annensky also uses some procedures which are proper to symbolism, although in his poetry they have no 'realiora' to reveal. His symbols, his allegories conceal the same reality: the crisis of a consciousness. Some of the features of symbolism were typical of him: a certain hermeticism, a fascination for the obscure or the suggestive, rather than the descriptive or narrative phrase. And he was also fond of experiments, expressive explorations. But all this was not a screen behind which an absence of poetry or a poverty of inspiration might fraudulently conceal itself, not a smokescreen or a conjuring trick. He himself, in a critical essay, tried to justify the tendency towards obscurity in the new poetics, and to distinguish between the easy logical evidence, which might or might not be poetry, and poetic 'transparency'...

"His poetic autonomy, with its values and its limitations, played an important part in cracking the crystallised armour in which the most orthodox symbolist dogma is clothed; and so the acmeists, and Gumilev above all, considered him a precursor and a master. For these reasons it is also erroneous to define him as 'a poet of the first generation of symbolists',
if we do not wish too didactically, and for purely didactic ends, to identify this first symbolist generation with a certain decadentist protosymbolism and the 'second' with the symbolist-theurgists. He was as I have already observed a poet who in the sensuous delight of 'reflections' sought the revelation of phantoms, of the irreality of the world, of the reality of suffering, and the comfort at times that such a revelation can bring. Ivanov, as we shall see shortly, called Annensky's poetry 'associative symbolism', but he had in mind more than anything else the procedures, the structures of Annensky's poetry (or rather, of certain lyrics). Annensky expresses a 'decadent' situation, and uses 'decadentist' and 'symbolist' instruments: hence such contrasting definitions."

Bazzarelli seems very concerned to find a suitable 'definition' of Annensky. He lists several such 'definitions': Gumilev called Annensky neznyi i zloveshchii; Bryusov described the poetry as 'a presentiment of poetry, but not poetry itself'; Ivanov called it 'associative symbolism'. Bazzarelli points out that other critics have tried to define Annensky as an impressionist, but have failed. Why this is so Bazzarelli shows in a comparison of Fet, the true impressionist, and Annensky, the symbolist poet using impressionistic techniques. "In Fet

1) Bazzarelli, op. cit., p. 19.
the images-states of mind indicate the calm and aesthetic abandonment of the poet, an abandonment very slightly rippled by a pleasant melancholy, to the rhythm of a landscape-memory—this is done in brief phrases, evocative, nominal, and separated from one other by commas. The fragmentariness of these phrases is not a 'symbol' of the fragmentariness of the world, does not reveal an incurable laceration. The play of shadows is without any other implications. It is a pure and authentic impressionism... From the point of view of technique as an impressionist Fet tends to replace the aesthetics of outline with a poetics of the 'point': Annensky, too, loves the 'point', as I will show later on. But while the point of Fet remains a descriptive and evocative element, never transcending the pictorial-sentimental, in Annensky the point becomes one of the many modes of representing the phantom-like quality of the universe-mirage."

In chapter three, Dazzarelli lists what he calls 'the three fundamental attitudes (atteggiamenti) of Annensky as a poet. These are 1) "The search, on the part of the lyrical hero, for his own I... Since in Annensky the I is also identified with the vocation of the poet, this search is easily transferable onto the plane of the search for authenticity as a poet, a search which constantly moves between the poles of hope and delusion. And the I of Annensky is an attempt at the uni-

fication, continually crushed and continually reattempted, of various elements, which are memories of the past, the consciousness of the present as pain, the illusion of a mirage.

2) "To test the consistency of the world, and to arrive at a negative conclusion; to perceive so many correspondences between the I and the world, and to realise that the world is none other than a reflection of the painful consciousness which the I has of itself: to see in things the eloquent and terrible mirror of one's own destiny; like men, things exist in so much as they are symbols of suffering. And here there is an original development of the decadent theme of the lament of things."

3) "The poet tries... to bring back into play the reality from which he cannot escape, through illusions: but it is a question of light, shadowy illusions, the shadows of illusions, not heroic illusions: to the degree that Annensky is never able to rise to the contemplation of eternal Nothingness, his illusions are never heroic, but only attempts at illusions, fleeting points of light which vanish without giving joy for more than a moment; and illusion is also refuge in shadow, almost a desire to flee one's destiny by trying to hide from oneself. The third moment of Annensky
is this, one of illusions and the shadows of illusions. And it is perhaps the moment at which the poet largely succeeds in realising himself as a poet, in reaching a more elevated level of literary and often poetic emotion. It is precisely in the lyrics of this third intonation, one which is both sentimental and thematic, that the poet finds his most elevated accents."

1) Bazzarelli claims that, out of 234 lyrics, 180 can be categorised under one of these three 'atteggiamenti', but does not really prove this. The chapter is rather digressive in character, but there are many penetrating insights into Annensky's poetry. Perhaps the best method of describing these is simply to quote some of them:

a) "The world of life and the world of death are not opposed to one another in Annensky's poetry, because the world of life consists of illusions which are too weak and fantastic to make the poet forget about death, and death is none other than one of the moments, one of the aspects of this phantom-like quality (fantomicità). The passage of late evening to night is certainly less strong than the passage of night into day." 2)

b) "Annensky's I makes me think of Chekhov's three sisters, especially as they appear in the last act of the play." 3)

1) Ibid., p. 39. 2) Ibid., p. 40. 3) Ibid., p. 40.
c) "But it should always be remembered that even the choice of a certain subject by a poet is a poetic act: insufficient in itself, certainly, but participating in that complex activity which is called poetic creation. I mean that even though the theme may remain indifferent if considered in the abstract, the choice of theme, the attitude of the poet towards it, his emotion, are elements inseparable from a realised poetic unity. On the other hand, in many of Annensky's poems it is precisely the theme that predominates, signifying the reduction of the lyrics to description, to documents, in which the synthesis of image and emotion is not poetically actuated. Thus, famous lyrics such as Stal'naya tsikada or Budil'nik are dramatic for their significance, but weaker poetically: we are confronted here by true allegories." 1)

d) "The poems (of Tikhie pesni) interest me as a document of a constant attitude of the poet towards himself as a poet." 2)

e) "The philosophy of Annensky, is not, in fact, 'the world exists in so far as I think', but rather 'the world exists (perhaps) in so far as I suffer it.'" 3)

f) "'I am a ghost', the poet says in V zatsvetayushchikh sirenyakh, but he recognises himself in the moth which cannot

1) Ibid., p. 37. 2) Ibid., p. 51. 3) Ibid., 51.
tear itself away from the gas-mantle where it will meet its death (Babochka gazza). Because, besides the sadness of having lost his own past, there is always the hope of finally living in reality, and no longer in a kind of dream: it is interesting in this connection to examine the lyric Muchitel'ny sonet, a poem whose artistic merit, the power of whose inspiration needs to be brought to light: the poet leaps consciously from image to image, from desire to desire, up to the (despairing) cry of the last line. In the sonnet are listed a great many 'illusions', and at the same time these illusions are dispelled by the poet who only in the last tercet recognises their phantom-like quality, or rather his own incapacity to live them out." 1)

Bazzarelli has a great deal to say about the technical aspects of Annensky's poetry, and the chapter entitled "L'arte di Annenskij" is extremely thorough and detailed. It would be impossible to give an adequate account of all the remarks made by Bazzarelli: perhaps the most interesting observations are those which concern Annensky as an 'epigrammatic' poet. Bazzarelli perceives an 'internal construction' in Annensky's lyrics which he believes can be defined as the epigram: "...in that internal construction, in that mode of making oneself interior (almost a spiritual syntax, a harmonic union of sentiments and artistic predilections),

1) Ibid., p. 56.
Annensky has reached an elevated level of his existence as an artist. Annensky is not a poet of 'odes', nor is he a pantheistic poet, desiring to immerse himself in the vast sea of nature and thus attain a state of joy; there is with him no attempt at kozmizatsiya; he is not a poet of 'historical tragedies', although he did experience the drama of the Russian people in his time... I do not mean the satirical epigram, but the epigram as it is conceived, for example, in German poetry: 'forme brevi' (short forms) - which may assume the external structural aspect of the sonnet, of the odisina, of the lyric of three or four quatrains - in which the tonality is discursive, the emotion quiet, which in the particular grace and choice of the images and decorations in the syntactical intonation, find a unity of style. From this point of view we can consider 'epigrams' (and here, apart from German poetry, we have in mind the examples of classical Greek and Roman poetry, which Annensky knew beyond question) lyrics which we have already examined, such as Tretii muchitel'ny sonet, Muchitel'ny sonet, Toska minol'nosti, Sentyabr', Sputnitse, for the grace and the validity of the images and the conception, and for the calm but profound melancholy of the signification." 1) It is unfortunate that Bazzarelli does not develop further this

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1) Ibid., p. 96.
concept of the epigrammatic nature of Annensky's poetry, instead of trying to illustrate its limited definition in relation to one poem (Тоска медленых купел').

The last chapter of the book is a short essay on Annensky's dramas. Bazzarelli begins by saying that he is going to approach these in so far as they throw light on the lyrical poetry, but it is not at all clear that such a relationship is established. In fact, the chapter is mostly devoted to a description of the tragedies similar to the one contained in Setchakarev's book. Only perhaps in the last paragraph is Bazzarelli's intention partly realised. He writes:

"There is one element which the four heroes, the protagonists of Annensky's dramas, have in common: the striving towards an ideal, considered to be the centre of life, willed with all one's strength, and at the cost of one's own life or of the most atrocious sufferings: Melanippa, who defends her sons and also her own conception of the world; Ixion who, if by his first crime (the murder of his father-in-law), makes himself irrevocably guilty, nonetheless acts out of a need for justice (the old man's greed must be punished, and thus also his lack of faith in facts), and is ready for eternal punishment for what for him is everything; a moment of love with the wife of Zeus; Laodamia, with her tender and desperate love for Protesilaus; and Thamyras, the poet who longs to
express with his lyre the absolute, and who does not know that man, beyond a certain limit, arrives at a no-man's land, at the 'threshold of the abyss', the experience of which is unrepeatable."

1) This theme of suffering as the centre, even the basis of life is certainly present in Annensky's lyrical poetry.

Bazzarelli's study of Annensky is the only full-length and serious critical analysis of the poet's work as a whole. In it the author sets Annensky against his time and tries to arrive at an understanding of the quality of the poet's work. His conclusion may be summarised briefly as follows: it is precisely the quality of Annensky's lyrics that is the most important thing about them. Bazzarelli talks of the 'tone' (intonazione) of Annensky's poetic voice as a powerful means by which the poet transcends the world of concepts and abstract symbols, setting the reader in direct connection with the music of poetic language itself, a music that is lyrical and at the same time haunted and tormented.

1) Ibid., p. 154.
The long critical article entitled *Poeticheskoie tvorchestvo Innokentiva Annenskogo* by A. Fedorov, which forms the preface to the 1959 Leningrad edition of Annensky's poetry and tragedies 1) must also be discussed here as one of the major studies of the poet's work. Fedorov's approach is, broadly speaking, in line with that commonly adopted by Soviet literary critics towards the literature of the 1890's and early 1900's, and he examines Annensky's work from a sociological point of view. Like Bazzarelli, Fedorov considers that Annensky must be regarded as a 'decadent' poet with symbolist leanings, but his reasons for doing so are quite different. For Fedorov, the characteristic features of decadentism are a predilection for mystical-aesthetic themes, a profound pessimism, a preoccupation with death and dying, and a desire to imbue the poetic word with as many meanings as possible. He sees all these features in Annensky's work, but adds that 'nonetheless there is much in Annensky's work which cannot be accommodated within the ideology and aesthetic of decadentism.' 2) Fedorov claims that, like Blok and Bryusov, Annensky did not limit himself to the exploration of purely individual states of mind, but was also aware of the conflicts and tensions in the world around him. If for Bazzarelli Annensky represents the purest essence of decadentism as an

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expression of existential crisis, for Fedorov Annensky is a symbolist and decadent at the roots of whose work lies a profound awareness of social crisis. Unfortunately, this assertion is never fully developed in the course of the article. Fedorov picks out certain social 'moments' in Annensky's work, such as the set of prose-poems grouped together under the collective title of Autopsia, and the obvious examples of poems like Starye estonki (216), V doroge (74), and Peterburg (199), but nowhere is there a real attempt to discuss these poems in relation to the others. Nevertheless, the point is made that Annensky's poetic is not entirely subjective, that it contains a concrete, environmental element. Fedorov makes some penetrating comments about the interrelation between the two contrasting features of Annensky's poetic psychology: 'It is true that the feeling of protest is almost stifled by a consciousness of the inability to escape, and the sense of personal isolation... becomes even sharper, while the consciousness of one's own responsibility for the suffering of other people becomes more and more painful. The external world is turned into a phantasm, where animate man and inanimate nature are no longer separate, and the compassion of the poet spreads itself equally over suffering people and stones, flowers, a doll thrown into the water - over objects animated by him... And the attempt to arrive at a social theme, at the world of
'the real effects of life' turns out to be only the more agonizing for the poet, provoking in him even more tragic experiences, sharpening even more within him the consciousness of the impossibility of breaking out of the limits of his psychic world, a world which is doomed." And also: "Russian decadentism and symbolism are closely associated with idealistic philosophy. That sense of a split between the external world and the inner world of the poet which is so typical of Annensky also characterises a group of other poets - his contemporaries. But Annensky, as distinct from so many of them, does not regard his I as something independent from the rest of the world." 2) To support this statement, Fedorov quotes from the poem Poetu (219):

В раздельной четкости лучей  
И в чадной слитности видений  
Всегда над нами — власть вещей  
С её триадой измерений.

И грани ль ширишь бытия  
Иль формы вымыслом ты множишь,  
Но в самом Я от глаз Не Я  
Ты никуда уйти не можешь.

In his examination of Annensky's tragedies, Fedorov spends a great deal of time describing the 'democratic' nature of the plays, the way in which the human characters are offset in a positive position against the arrogant and indifferent

1) Ibid., p. 34. 2) Ibid., p. 37.
There is also an interesting comparison between Annensky's Lacedamia and the tragedies by F. Sollogub and Bryusov on the same subject.

The rest of the article is devoted to a discussion of Annensky's style and imagery, and of his verse translations. Fedorov shows how Annensky is able to step inside the mind of the poet whose work he is translating, and how he frequently 'Russifies' the originals so that they become new poems.

The rest of the critical literature about Annensky consists for the most part of short articles which have appeared from time to time in literary journals and almanachs both inside Russia and in the west. A comprehensive survey of by far the greater part of these articles may be found in the second chapter of Eridano Bazzarelli's monograph, and so I shall restrict myself here to a few remarks about a question barely touched upon by Bazzarelli, that of the relation of the poet's critics towards his work. At the end of his extremely penetrating essay about Annensky, 1) the critic Aleksandr Buldeev writes that 'anyone who wishes to understand Annensky must take on for a while the task of becoming the poet's second I — his alter ego — otherwise the reader will perhaps be compelled to shut the book in annoyance.' I think this statement carries a good deal of truth. It also ties in with a belief expressed

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by Annensky himself a few years before his death. "Моя
dеценция может быть понятна только людям, живущим
минутами бледных беезам", Annensky wrote in a letter
to B. Nakhina in 1907. ¹)

In many of the critical articles, the totality of
Annensky's poetry, a complex intermingling of imagery and
thematic actions, contrasts strongly with the often
schematic patterns of the critical approach. Isolated
elements of Annensky's poetry and personality are re-
lected in these studies, but seldom is there any real
sense of a relation between them. It is true that Voloshin,
in his obituary article for Apollon ²), points to Annensky's
многогранный, but the emphasis tends to be laid on the
difference between the facets and not on how they might be
connected to one another. Even Vyacheslav Ivanov, who
clearly perceived the 'associative' character of Annensky's
poetic thought, does not go beyond a comparison with
Mallarmé. ³) Often the critical approaches reflect individual
preoccupations. This would not be a hindrance were it not
for the fact that so often the preoccupations overshadow the
poetry. Thus, Khodasevich turns Annensky into an incarnation
of Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich in his essay Об Annenskom. ⁴)

¹) TSGALI, f. 6, o. 2, ed. Khron. 5. ²) N.Voloshin: Лики творчества:
I.F.Annensky-лирик, Apollon, ⁴, Khronika, pp. 11-16. ³) V.Ivanov:
O poezii I.F.Annenskogo, ibid., pp. 16-24. ⁴) V.Khodasevich:
Беседа, 1922, No. 3, pp. 34-56.
The themes of death and dying are singled out by Khodasevich as having supreme importance in Annensky's poetry. Or again, both Makovsky's essays about Annensky 1) are fixed on an assumption (as yet unfounded in biographical fact) that the poet's work reflects a life-long fascination for an unknown woman. For A. Gizetti, Annensky is 'the poet of world discord' 2) "Annensky, like every poet, speaks of the eternal, the great and the profound, of that which hides beneath the storms of life, that which constantly creates our soul. But more than that, even more than anything else, he is near to us, to the people of today, precisely because he speaks of contradictions, of discord, of the complex and irreconcilable conflicts that lacerate the soul with unhealable wounds."

All these approaches describe only one aspect of Annensky's poetry. Each correct in so far as it goes, none attempts a synthesis of all the aspects into a picture of Annensky's poetic universe. Apart from Buldeev's essay, the study by E. Malkina, a review of A. Fedorov's 1939 edition of Annensky's selected poems 3), is the only one written from a supposedly 'objective' standpoint which tries to provide such a synthesis.

Malkina begins by characterising the poet's attitude towards his environment: "Innokenty Annensky was strongly influenced by his brother N.F. Annensky - a well-known populist, and one of the leaders of the Soyuz osvobozhdeniya. But the populist ideals of the elder brother could not attract the younger, who belonged to another generation formed in the years when 'Pobedonostsev stretched his owl's wings over Russia' (Blok). The 'unctuous years', as Annensky characterised the period of populism's decline into liberalism, provoked a deep revulsion in him. Hardly having begun to live, he turned away from life and right up to the end, to death, he maintained a defensive position towards the reality that surrounded him. Life was for him sharply divided in two. One was the life which flowed on in the sight of all, consisting in 'the dreary business of duty' (postyloe delo sluzhby): it was to this life that he applied the words of Dobrolyubov in one of his letters:

Мы сознали в грязной луже
Мы давно стоим,
И чем далее, тем хуже
Всё себя грязним.

The other life, invisible to the majority of people, took
place in the world of poetic creation and was jealously guarded from the eye of the outsider. Over the long years Annensky remained a poet for himself and for a few people close to him.

Speaking of Annensky's reticence as a poet, Malkina writes: "Annensky's poetic reticence really did demand a moral strength, but it involved something else as well, something that Blok noticed immediately. 'Is there not an all too morbid anguish (nadryv) in this modest dereliction', he wrote in his review of Tikhie pesni.

'And so it was: in this poetry lies concealed a profound human unease. 'We sense a human soul wasted away by an overwhelming anguish, a soul that is wild, lonely and furtive', wrote Blok. Nevertheless, in Annensky's persistent loneliness there was no trace of indifference towards life. On the contrary, he was morbidly sensitive to its slightest abrasions; in his eternal restiveness, his intense sensitivity, his agonised reflections about existence he was very close to Blok, and it is not surprising that Blok, who became acquainted with Kiparisov's larets after Annensky's death wrote to Annensky's son V.I. Krivich: 'An improbable closeness of experience, which explains to me much about myself.'"

After characterising the quality of Annensky's Muse in this way, Malkina proceeds to talk about some of the
poet's central preoccupations. First there is the problem of conscience: Malkina shows how Annensky, as distinct from many symbolist poets, never aestheticizes his compassion and his feelings of guilt. "On the contrary, he condemned himself for their inactive character, as may be seen from a poem like Starye estonki:

Ты жалел их... Но что ж твоя жалость
Если пальцы руки твоей тонки
И ни разу она не сжималась?"

In connection with Annensky's preoccupation with death, Malkina writes: "Everything evoked in him thoughts about death: the zigzags of falling leaves were associated for him with the fear of death, and August spoke to him 'in the bronze tongue of funereal languor', and in the fading daylight he saw 'the luxuriance of the flowerbeds where decay has set in'. And yet Annensky was tormented not only by a fear of death but also by a consciousness of the egoism of this feeling: 'the fear of death is deeply egoistic', he wrote. From this consciousness of egoism grew again the same feeling of guilt, a semi-mystical awareness that by avidly holding on to life, he was taking it away from others:
"We can sense a profound personal agitation in Annensky's words about the integrity of Lermontov and about how 'even a little time ago people were able to love life without being alienated from it...and now they have not a single personal resource to fall back on, except for the circumstance that everyone is afraid of his own death.' Annensky, too, had not a single resource on which to fall back, and his own personal world inevitably became more and more the principal object of his poetry. In his lyrical dramas on subjects from antiquity, in his critical articles he was invariably drawn towards the agonised soul of contemporary mankind — towards his own soul."

This parallel of Annensky's personal anguish with the anguish felt by a whole generation is a profound insight which would not apply to any of the symbolists except Blok. And yet Malkina is strangely inconsistent when she states that Annensky's anguish reflects the misery of the time in which he lived only indirectly, through the imagery of obida, and that 'social conflicts were not directly reflected in his work.' Surely such poems as Garmonnye vzdokhi (203),
Peterburg (199), Nervy (163), Starye estonki (216) do reflect a discordant reality with a directness which lends them their strangeness and originality – the actuality and violence of their imagery shatters the isolated dream in which the poet is imprisoned.

Penetrating though Malkina’s article is, it does not approach the stature of what must be described as the only critical statement about Annensky to fulfill the requirement of subjective self-identification located by Buldeev (apart, of course, from Buldeev’s own article). This is the passage devoted to Annensky in Mandel’shtam’s essay O prirode slova. 1) As a poet, Mandel’shtam was strongly influenced by Annensky. It is not surprising, therefore, that his remarks about Annensky should be profound and illuminating. The essay is an attempt to explain the peculiar quality of the Russian literary language, and to link that quality to the concept of a specifically Russian destiny. Mandel’shtam’s thesis is that Russian is a ‘hellenistic’ language: “As the result of a whole series of historical circumstances, the living forces of hellenistic culture, leaving Latin influences to the west and for a long time dallying with childless Byzantium, rushed into the lap of Russian speech, lending it the assured mystery of the hellenistic world-outlook, the

mystery of free incarnation, and thus the Russian language became resonant and speaking flesh." This concept of 'hellenism' is a rather elusive one: Mandel'shtam goes on to define it as follows: "The hellenistic nature of the Russian language may be identified with its everyday quality (bytiistvonnost'). In the hellenistic conception the word is active flesh, resolving itself into an event. For this reason the Russian language is historical in itself, since in all its totality it is a heaving sea of events, a constant incarnation and activity of a rational and breathing flesh. No other language resists with the strength of the Russian the nominative and attributive designation. Russian nominalism, i.e. the concept of the reality of the word as such, gives life to the spirit of our language and connects it to hellenistic philological culture — not etymologically and in a literary context, but through the principle of inner freedom, typical of both languages." 1) Mandel'shtam goes on to attack the symbolists, and Bely in particular, for degrading the Russian language, for attempting to make it serve a theurgical or anthroposophical purpose. In Mandel'shtam's conception the Russian language is alien to all kinds of utilitarianism, whether scientific or mystical. It is a network of living events that surrounds those who

1) Ibid., p. 294.
speak it, and each word is a historical artefact, a tiny Acropolis of light and civilisation which will survive aeons of chaos and destruction. Mandel'shtam sees the upholders of this understanding of language in the Acmeists. He admits that the Acmeists are technicians rather than sublime poets, but states that the future will be built "not by Mozart, but by the stern, severe master-craftsman Salieri, who stretches out his hand to the builder of things and material values, the constructor and producer of the concrete world." 1)

In this strange synthesis of culture, history and linguistics, Mandel'shtam picks out for special attention two figures in Russian literature, contrasting with one another, but united by a common essence. The first of these is Rozanov, the domestic philologist. For Mandel'shtam, philology means the study, the private room, the cell - literature is the lecture-hall, the auditorium, the street. In philology, Rozanov sought the 'nut' of Russian hellenism, the four walls of the plain and linguistic Russian acropolis, driven as he was by a desire for a national identity, for an identifiable civilisation: "Like some other Russian thinkers, such as Chadaev, Leontev, Gershenzon, he could not live without walls, without an Acropolis. Everything around is unstable, soft and yielding. But we want to live historically, we are filled with the thirst 1) loc. cit.
for whatever this nucleus may be called, state or society, a
thirst for a nut, whatever this nut may symbolise. This nut
of a wall determines the whole fate of Rozanov and once and
for all acquits him of the accusation of unprincipled
behaviour and anarchism."

Like Rozanov, Annensky sought the acropolis in the domestic
sphere. But Annensky was a poet: "While in our literature
Rozanov is the representative of the hellenism of God's
fool and the beggar, Annensky represents heroic hellenism,
militant philology. The poems and tragedies of Annensky may
be compared to the wooden fortresses or citadels which the
independent princes carried far into the steppes for defence
against the Pechenegs, against the night of the Khazars." 2)

What Mandelshtam has to say about Annensky practically defies
any attempt at précis: Annensky is seen as a bird of prey,
gathering elements of both ancient and west European cultures
in his claws, only to scatter all these riches to the winds
from a great height, leaving in his talons "only a handful
of dried grass". Mandelshtam is surely correct when he
writes that "everyone was asleep when Annensky kept his
vigil. The bytoviki snored. Vesy did not yet exist. The
young student Vyacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov was studying with
Mommsen, writing a monograph about Roman taxes in Latin. And
at this time the director of the Academy at Tsarskoe Selo
was struggling through the long nights with Euripides,

1) loc. cit. 2) loc. cit.
absorbing the venom of the wise hellenic speech, preparing an infusion of such bitter, fiery and strong verses as no one before or after him has written."

For Annensky's poetic and aesthetic sensibility was formed in the twenty years which preceded the first symbolist publications in Russia, a period that was marked by the absence of any vital school of poetry, or indeed of any vital poetry. Annensky belonged to no school of poetry, his work, like that of Rozanov, was done at home: 

"For Annensky too poetry was a domestic affair, and Euripides was for him a domestic writer, all quotation and quotation-marks. For Russian poetry Annensky's universal poetry does not represent a process of hellenisation, but rather an inner hellenism, suited to the spirit of the Russian language, as it were, a domestic hellenism."

This concept of domestic hellenism is perhaps the most precise definition of the quality of Annensky's poetry that has been offered, for it takes into account all the aspects of the poet's character - his preoccupation with philology, his refusal to inflate the poetic language with abstract expressions, his obsession with the everyday, the ordinary, and above all his desire to make poetic speech a means of attaining the absolute, the totality of man and universe: "Hellenism is the pot on the stove, the oven prongs, the earthenware pitcher of milk, it is the

4) loc. cit. 2) loc. cit.
domestic utensil, the vessel, the complete environment of the body; Hellenism is the heat of the oven that is felt like a sacred thing, a visible property, communicating a part of the external world to man; it is every kind of clothing, it is laid on everyone's shoulders... Hellenism is a system in the Bergsonian sense of the word, a system which man unfolds around him like a fan of phenomena, freed from their dependence on time, subordinated now to an inner connection through the human soul.

The critical literature about Annensky is rather small, and of widely varying quality. In this survey I have tried to summarise the best of it. It consists of three kinds - the scholarly-analytical (Setchkarev), the exegetic (Bazzarelli, Fedorov, Malkina), and the subjective-aesthetic (Buldeev, Mandel'shtam). I have indicated my preference for the latter kind as being most closely suited to the special quality of Annensky's poetry.

1) loc. cit.
PART ONE

Thematic Analysis
The title of Annensky's first collection describes the subdued, low-keyed quality of his verse; it is also an allusion to Lermontov's angel, who 'sang a quiet song' to the poet's soul, filling it with an anguished longing for the Ideal and instilling it with a profound dissatisfaction with earthly existence:

Из заветного фиала
В эти песни пролита,
Но увы! не красота...
Только мука идеала.

This epigraph amplifies the suggestion and allusion of the title. Annensky's world is not one of realised dreams or imagined beauty: bound on all sides by the realities of material existence, it is a world of torment and pain, the pain of an absent Ideal
and the unsuccessful attempt to achieve it. It is a tragic universe, but the tragedy is not played out in grand gestures and heroic speeches - it is enacted by a single character who speaks in an undertone and whose identity is uncertain, the lyrical I of the poet, remaining anonymous, "Nikto".

The fifty-three poems that make up the collection are arranged in a loose, not quite cyclic manner. Nonetheless, the features of a unified cycle can be discovered upon a close examination of the work. Between the first and last poems of the book there is an unmistakable progress of the poet's consciousness through a metaphysical landscape, the regions of which correspond to clearly defined experiences and locations in reality. I wish to explore these regions as fully as possible, and to establish a metaphysical 'geography' of Annensky's universe as it appears in this work.

The key-notes of Annensky's poetry is anguish - muka, toska - that anguish which is felt before the unknowable and unattainable in human existence, and before the futility and meaningless of experience. But this anguish is expressed not in generalised statements about life, but in concretely expressed situations, situations which are at once syntheses (pictures of experience) and analyses (pictures of the subjective consciousness). I shall discuss this technique of Annensky in more detail further on. At the moment I want to concentrate on his conception of creation as anguish, and the concrete expression of this concept-
ion in the poems of *Tikhie pesni*.

The first two poems concern the problem of the poet and poetry. The theme is treated here in a rather stylised fashion: the capital letters, the archaisms remind us of Tyutchev’s poetry, while the dream-like landscape evokes the poetry of Vladimir Soloviev. In *Poezii* (65), poetry is an aethereal female being who is an object of worship to the poet. Annensky is aware of his alienation from the literary climate of his time, and in this sense the poem may be read as a profession of artistic faith — he seeks the beautiful, the creative moment not in the azure of incense, the pomp of a temple or the vainglory of the priest (images which in some ways recall Blok’s *Stikhi o Prekrasnoi Dame*), but prefers to search for the traces of 'Her' sandals...

... в океане мутных далей,
В безумном чайаньи святинь

" *Poezii* 65

and amidst the sand-dunes of the deserts – deserts, because life without poetic inspiration is a desert for the poet. Thus poetic experience is seen here as a fleeting moment which demands much suffering from the poet before he can realise its promises. Poetry is a brief glimpse of the Ideal. The same idea is expressed in the second poem of the book, *Beskonechnost* (65), which again concerns a female creature representing poetic experience, although here the allegory is more ambiguous: 'ona' refers to infinity, but used throughout the poem gradually insinuates the idea of a 'She'.

'Her' emblem is like a figure 8 turned on its side - a simile which gains in meaning as the poem progresses. She is a delightful lie - delightful because poetry gives the poet delight, a lie, because for Annensky poetry can never tell the truth about reality, since the ideal it seeks can never be attained. Her promises are fulfilled in the circle of enamelled minutes - a fanciful way of saying that poetry takes time to write, and exists only in time. This is also why it can never transcend material reality. But although his art is long and time-consuming, the poet does have a fleeting chance of encountering the Ideal. In the split-second moment of inspiration 'drobimy molniei muchen'ya', poetic insight stops the flow of time, and the 8 on the face of the clock turns on its side to indicate Infinity.

At other times, however, no such consolation can be found by the poet. At such times, existence seems meaningless, and art powerless to redeem its meaninglessness. *Ideal* (69) presents a picture of a public library in the evening. The gas lamps splutter and flash above the heads of the readers. Empty tables emanate a 'black infection' of boredom. The poet, too, sits among the readers in this library, trying to fathom 'the repellant rebus of existence' on the faded pages of ancient books. Existence is a library in which the individual tries to derive some meaning from the vast mass of apparently unrelated information which surrounds him. This analogy is made by Annensky in a
thoroughly concrete fashion. The poem exists on two planes: on the factual plane, as an impressionistic picture; and on the symbolic plane, as a statement about the poet’s attitude towards reality. The two planes fuse in the last line of the poem: ‘Postyly rebus bytiya’.

Vyacheslav Ivanov wrote about this poem: 'The straightforward meaning of this poem, the solution of its rebus (and it is a rebus because the whole of life is a "repellent rebus") is — a public library; the ultimate meaning and "causa finalis" is a new riddle glimpsed in the already-guessed — the riddle of the fragmentariness of the Ideal and its embodiment and of the impossibility of finding a ratio rerum in the res themselves: it is only in the reflections of the spirit, creatively accompanied by human thought, reflections which once burned in the spirit, but which today are buried like mummies in dusty volumes, that it is revealed, the secret of Isis — and will be revealed once again? (1)

The fragmentariness of existence to which Ivanov refers is vividly expressed in the 'separate' quality of the imagery. The image of popping gas is followed directly and without any transition by the image of the readers' heads, and so on. In fact, the poem consists of eight separate images — the gas, the readers' heads, the 'black infection of boredom', the empty tables, the green faces of the readers (sickly with dim light, boredom and fatigue), the poet himself, concealing his 'anguish of familiarity' with the place,

(1) V. Ivanov: "O poezii I.F.Annenskogo" (Apollon, 1910, Khronika, p. 16).
the people, the books; the faded pages of the books; and the repellent rebus of existence itself. This is an analytical technique, in which psychological and emotional tensions are harnessed to sense impressions, so that the boundary which separates the poet's feelings from external reality is broken down.

From the three poems we have examined, we can already deduce something of Annensky's conception of poetry and its function. The poet seeks the Ideal. But since he is bound on all sides by the Real, which seems hateful and repellent by comparison, he is permitted only fitful glimpses of his goal, moments of poetic insight filled with anguish and 'split by the lightning of agony'. Creation is torment, because it entails two contradictory phases: in the act of writing the poem, the poet rises above his immediate situation and is thus made for an instant more aware of his limitations. After the moment of ecstasy comes the return to earth, and the consciousness of this inevitable return is present even in the act of departure for the transcendent, colouring the poet's words with pain and remorse. Thus the poet suffers from an inner duality, a division between the joy of his apprehension of the Ideal and the ugliness and boredom inherent in the Real. Like Baudelaire's albatross, he is master of the skies; but on earth he is sick, a weak creature destined to suffer. His flight is tinged with this awareness and his poems show the marks of his duality.

This tension between the simultaneous joy and agony of the
Ideal forms the subject of several of Annensky's poems concerning the nature of poetry and the relation of the poet to his work. Two closely-related sonnets, Nenuzhnye strofy (73) and Tretii muchitel'ny sonet (91) illustrate this theme clearly enough. In them, Annensky speaks of his poems as his 'children', a familiar simile. But these children are the offspring of the poet's agonising struggle with the Ideal: as such they are far from flawless, they bear the traces of his suffering, and are marred by sickness and despair. But even so, they are beautiful, because behind their scarred and delicate exterior they contain the shadow of the Ideal, however faint. In the late prose poem Sentimental'noe vospominan'ye (Posmertnye stikhi, p. 99) Annensky wrote, concerning his earlier work: "Это были плохие стихи, совсем плохие стихи, то была даже не стихотворная риторика, а что-то еще жалче.

Но, боже мой, как я их чувствовал... и как я любил радугу... Мои банальные рифмы, мой жалкие метафоры!

Отчего я не могу воскресить вас, с бедными нимфы с лилово-розовым кушаком на белой кисе чехлов, с жидкими, но гладко приглаженными косами, с мечтательными глазами и в веснушках, предательских жёлтых веснушках на тонкой петербургской коже..."

It is these consumptive nymphs who are the subject of Nenuzhnye
strofy. The sonnet opens with a negation: the poet's verses are not 'pearls' - they are born of suffering, hurled from the 'black orifice' of the Real. They are not destined to last, but will fade like 'consumptive foliage'. These verses are the ones which the poet must cast aside, since they are too weak - but their fate is a special one. In the sestet of the poem, Annensky transfers his metaphorical drama to the interior of a temple, in which a ritual accompanies the death of the unnecessary verses. From a black niche, a 'radiant' god smiles and beckons to them.

И дети бледные Сомненья и Тревоги
Идут к нему приять пурпуровые тоги.

Ненужные строфы 73-74

In these lines, the verses' fate is expressed in a 'mythic' fashion, by means of allegorical elements. The myth, in its metaphorical expression, beginning with the suggestion of religious imagery in the last line of the sestet, might be interpreted as follows: although the rejected verses are poor, weak beings which cannot hope to survive long, there is nonetheless a chance of redemption for them. The radiant god is the presence of the Ideal, which can consecrate the memory of the poet's heroic, if unsuccessful attempt to reach it. Thus the verses, which have struggled so valiantly in order to express the Ideal, are adorned with the purple togas worn by Roman consuls in time of victory. Defeat becomes a kind of triumph; failure a kind of achievement.

A similar idea is expressed in the sonnet complementary to
Nenuzhnye strofy, Tretii muchiteln'y sonet, subtitled Strofy. In the first line of the poem the same qualities of simplicity and asceticism are stressed: 'Net, im ne suzhdeny krasa i prosvetlen'e...'. In his affirmation of poetry as the expression of the suffering human spirit walled in by the limits of a vulgar, terrifying existence, exemplified in the image of suffering children, Annensky reveals what Osip Mandel'shtam called the poet's 'domestic Hellenism'. (1) Annensky's muse is an ascetic one, and the images she inspires are familiar, everyday ones. The tone of this sonnet is far removed from the broad flow of the poems of Cor Ardens or Stikhi o Prekrasnoi Dame, for example. It is an urgent, personal tone: Annensky addresses the reader quietly and straightforwardly. The poem is about pain and joy, and their fusion in the creative experience. The poet delves into his experience and produces words and phrases from a forgotten past:

Я повторю их на память в полусне,
Они — минуты праздного томления,
Перегоревшие на медленном огне.

Again the image of fire appears as it did in the first sonnet, the fire of suffering mingled with the flame of love. Inspiration

may be a wonderful zapoi, intoxicating the poet's senses - but it is also the cause of much labour and suffering, 'truda koshmarnogo nad grudoiu listov'. Yet the poet loves this experience all the same, and without it he would be at a loss. He loves verses, with a love which is mingled with anxiety:

Так любит только мать, а лишь больных детей.

So much longing, so much melancholy, so much pain and regret make the poet's verses 'sick' - there is a strong element of compassion in Annensky's attitude towards his creations. His poems are children of suffering, 'flowers of evil'.

Yet sometimes the creative act may bring with it no vision of love, no apprehension of the Ideal. Sometimes it is merely 'koshmarny trud' and little else. This is the theme of the poem Mukhi kak mysli, which strikes a note more despairing even than that of Apukhtin's original. In Annensky's poem the correlation between 'lies' and 'thoughts' is more obscure, more shifting. Apukhtin simply draws the parallel between unbearable thoughts and unbearable flies. It is built of two stanzas. In the first the flies are likened to thoughts ('Mukhi kak chernye mysli ves' den' ne dayut mne pokoi...') with a great deal of realistic imagery ('sgonish odnu so shcheki, a na glaz uzh uselas' drugaya'). At the end of the stanza the poet longs for night to come, when he will be rid of the nuisance. In the second stanza the stress
passes from the flies to the thoughts. Darkness having come at last, the poet is unable to sleep because of tormenting thoughts. This time the torture is not physical, but mental ('Tol'ko progonish' odnu, a uzh v serdtse vpilaya drugaya'), and instead of praying for night in the ordinar sense, now the poet is driven to beg for eternal night - or death.

The imagistic parallel is immediate, direct and obvious, and passes through the whole poem. There is, however, no such neat division in Annensky's poem, which extends and develops Apukhtin's metaphor to include the act of poetic creation. The 'flies-thoughts' parallel is compressed by Annensky into a bifurcated image, operating at both the physical and the metaphysical level. The poem begins with a declaration of the poet's world-weariness, an anguish and lassitude which he would like to dispel by the writing of verses:

Я устал от бессонницы и снов,
На глаза мои пряди нависли,
Я хотел бы отравой стихов
Одурманить неносные мысли.

So far, it is only unbearable thoughts that torment the poet. Looking at his life, he asks himself if it is really impossible to 'untie the knots', if all that he has done is a mistake? Then,
without any warning, his attention is distracted by the flies:

Поздней осеней мухи так элы,
Их холодные крылья так липки.
"Мухи как мысли" 90

In this sudden transition, the 'flies' element broadens the poem's dimensions, giving it a seasonal location – in late autumn – and depicts a definite situation. The poet, seated at his desk, worn out by fatigue and nightmare, becomes aware of black flies which crawl on his skin. And suddenly, the handwriting on the sheet of paper in front of him seems like hundreds of tiny black flies – he is seized with revulsion:

О, как, мертвые, гадки они...
Разорви их, сожги их скорее.

Somehow the flies and thoughts become inextricably bound up with one another so that the description is not quite a realistic one. Waking nightmares and words intertwine with one another to make a statement about the horror and the struggle which underlie the process of creation. No distinct parallel between flies and thoughts is drawn – rather, the poet's consciousness is brushed now by one image, now by the other, so that a psychological picture is built up in stages.

In the absence of the Ideal, the act of creation is a repellent, arduous task (zapoi often giving way to otrava, or durman). But
often the vision of divine beauty itself can also be painful and nightmare-ridden. In the two *fortep'vannye sonety* (77 and 92), with their evocations of maenads and moonlit gardens, Annensky shows the gradual transition of the poetic dream into the nightmare of existence. In the first sonnet moonlight, a garden, gentle colours, silver, emeralds, a keyboard combine to create an impression of nocturnal transparency and beauty. In the tercets, however, a subtle change takes place in the enchanted garden. The maenads disturb the poet — they are *tak besheno gordy*, although *cristalline-pure*. They ensnare the poet in their chains.

Thus the ecstatic apprehension of beauty becomes a nightmare, a prison. The contrast between this shining music and the poet's own anxiety-torn existence is too strong, the longing for beauty too powerful, the consciousness of its absence too omnipresent. In the second sonnet, the maenads appear in brilliant sunlight. Again, there is something inhuman, indifferent in their dancing. These visions are invulnerable — the wasps sting them, but no tears of pain come to their eyes. Quietly and serenely, they continue their dance:

И с пляской чуткою, под чашей голубой,
Их равнодушные сливаются напевы.
Perhaps the fullest account in *Tikhie pesni* of Annensky's conception of the poet and his art is given in the *Yubileinsaya kantata*, dedicated to the Pushkin centenary, and entitled *Rozhden'e i smert' poeta* (88). The dramatic, or 'cantata' form in which the poem is cast may seem anomalous at first. But it should be noted that although this is an occasional piece, designed to celebrate a specific event (like the speech *Pushkin i Tsarskoe Selo*), it was written *ne dlya konkursa*, and in a sense may be regarded as a parody of the kind of 'official' verse usually served up on such occasions, verse which was nearly always far removed in its stuffy rhetoric from the work of the poet it professed to celebrate. Annensky's cantata is a tribute to his own vision of Pushkin, extended to embrace the concept of the poet in general, and has little connection to the 'state-owned' Pushkin.

The poem opens with a 'traditional' paean of praise, put into the mouth of the legendary mediaeval poet Bayan, and written in a style reminiscent of the *byliny*. Bayan greets the birth of the poet in conventional imagery: the poet is *dusha-solov'yunshka*, whose singing arouses the birds and beasts, and affects all men:

Малы детушки по выжкам разыгрелися,
Молодые-то с крылечек улыбаются,
А и старые по кельям пригорелись.

Bayan's recitative is followed directly by *Odin golos*, which contradicts the sentiments expressed so far. The voice demands
that this 'sobbing of grey strings' (outworn clichés and formulae) should cease:

О нет, Байя, не соловей,
Певец волшебно-сладострастный,
Нас жгёт в безмолвии ночей
Тоской нежной и напрасной.

Here Annensky stresses what is so important to the new poetry - the poet is not a 'nightingale' but a man. (There may be a reflection of Annensky's desire as a pedagog to free 'official', dead culture from its chains in the conception of the whole poem.) His poetry does not dispel the problems of human existence. Rather he is the agency through which an awareness of those problems is transformed into a magical expression of itself. The poet is a prisoner of the world:

И не душистую сирень
Судьба дала ему, а цепи,
Снега забытых деревень,
Неволей выжженные степи.

but he pours his 'dumb tears' into 'pure pearl', and scatters roses amidst graves and betrayals. This picture of the poet as a doomed creature, whose 'captivating dreams' are 'lovingly lent wings by a god' is developed by the second voice (ll. 38-52). The poet's works are a 'feast', and reading them, the reader feels himself curiously out of place and awkward, 'like a guest at a feast in clothing not suitable for a wedding'. For although
the poet's creation is beautiful; it nonetheless reflects the pain of the struggle for the Ideal:

Там ночи туманной
Холодные звезды,
Там вещего сердца
Трехдневные муки...

In the last six lines of this section, Annessky includes an allusion to Pushkin's own play Kamenny gost', from the Malen'kie Tragedii. The poet is likened to Don Juan. Fate, like the statue of the Commodore (tomitel'ny prizrak), spreads its black veil, the veil of Donna Anna (a curious telescoping of imagery) over his pillow, and gently mocks him. This is a remarkable image: Donna Anna is the unattainable Ideal, a beauty barely glimpsed, and marred by the limitations of a world hostile to the poet and his dreams.

Yet although the poet is the slave of this unattainable Ideal, others may find in his singing a pointer to the transcendental reality. The poem ends with an exhortation from the chorus. The poet needs no mourning:

Над ним горит бессмертный день
В огнях лазури и кристалла,
И окровавленная тень
Там тенью розовой стала...

but rather we ourselves, above whom 'night spreads its canopy with sad regularity', men who are lost in a dark night of ignorance. The chorus pleads with the poet to become 'a star of Bethlehem',

Более не нужен плач;
Мы смертны, и над нами
Ночь, Море, и тень ночной
И, как в ночной тьме,
И в тени, где плачут звезды...
so that men may follow him to the 'house of God'. Ordinary mortals do not have the privilege of seeing their suffering transformed into azure and crustal, their wounds into a 'pink shadow' - the poet's anguish is divine, and by following him a little of the way man can leave the 'dumb steppe' of mortality for a moment and travel

Туда, где воля,
Туда, где счастье,
Туда, где мысли
Простор желанный!

2.

From the poems we have examined, it can be seen that a basic duality underlies Amensky's conception of the poet and his task. While the poet is permitted brief glimpses of the Ideal, he is nonetheless ensnared by his mortality. The resulting conflict creates anguish in him.

Kotory? (67) identifies the moment of creation with a state of semi-consciousness between waking and dreaming. This is the poluson of Tretii muchitel'ny sonet:
Когда на бессонное ложе
Рассыплются бреда цветы,
Какая отвага, о боже,
Какие победы мечты!...

In this state of consciousness, the poet senses himself being
liberated from the restrictions imposed on him by everyday life,
he can now throw aside the mask he shows to others (perhaps
Annensky is speaking here of his own mask, that of the Tsarskoe
Selo Academy director), and his lyrical ego pours itself into
the волшебная сказка of creation and the world:

Там всё, что на сердце годами
Пугливо таил я от всех,
Рассыпляется ярко звездами,
Прорвется, как дерзостный смех...

and Night, 'burning with the fire of an otherworldly passion',
talks quietly to him. Darkness and twilight are often associated
in Annensky's poetry with creation. But the further the night
progresses, the nearer dawn comes, with its 'pink wound' of
anguish

И пьяный от призраков взор
Читает там дерзость обмана
И едващейся мысли позор.
The arrival of the dawn with its intimation of another day of deceit and pretence makes the poet wonder which is his true self: is he what he is at night, a victor of the imagination, a creator of magical images, or is he after all only another human being, fated to wear the *dokuchnaya maska* of everyday existence?

О царь Недоступного Света,
Отец моего бытия,
Открой же хотя сердцу поэта,
Которое создал ты я.

*Na Poroge* (тридцать шесть строф) (68) discusses the same problem, but here it is dealt with from a slightly different angle. In a 'mythological' setting the Muse gives life to the imagination of the poet; in so doing she divides the world for him into 

**Here** (the consciousness of the immanent and transient), and 

**There** (the consciousness of the imaginative world, of the Ideal).

And although the 'Invisible One' makes the poet want to live more and more the older he gets, there seems to be no judgement from above as to which is the true I – the physical or the matephysical. It seems he will die, and that when 'She' comes back for him, he will not be there, for he doubts in the possibility of a life after death. The Muse is seen as a cruel agency, imparting glimpses of the Ideal to creatures who can never attain it.
The theme receives another treatment in the poem "Proba" (66). The room of a dead person is described in separate, vivid images, which evoke a sensation of meaninglessness, disjointedness. Are these fragments, these remains of an existence all that is left of the dead man? Are we all only this *uzhas tela*? Or is there another solution to the problem which we cannot see, has the 'secret of existence' come to enhabit 'this abandoned shelter of a being shunned by all'?

The poet's awareness of this duality is expressed most strongly and coherently, perhaps, in *Dvojnik* (66). The confusion into which the poet's mind is thrown in the presence of this consciousness is brought out in the shifting pronouns of the first two lines:

Не я, и не он, и не ты,
И то же, что я, и не то же...

At the root of his personality there is a blur which prevents him from recognising his true self - 'poet' and 'man' were once so like one another that their features have become confused, and it is impossible to distinguish between them. In the poet, the Ideal and the Real are hopelessly intertwined - he must seek for the solution of this *postyly rebus* in the reality which surrounds him. Until he can find that solution, he is tormented by the anguish of the Other, his double, his mortal self or his immortal
spirit:

Лишь полога ночи немой
Порой отразит колыханье
Мое и другое дыханье,
Бой сердца и мой и не мой...

And when death comes for him, which of his two selves will survive? Will he simply decompose in the grave, or will there be another life for him?

И в мутном круженьи годин
Всё чаще вопрос меня мучит:
Когда наконец нас разлучат,
Каким же я буду один?

Listy (68) provides yet another way of looking at the problem. At first sight this poem looks like a philosophical reflection on the connection between death in nature and death in human life. And in a sense it is — but with an additional twist. The scene is a park in autumn. The sunlight is fading, and in the alleys leaves fall in trembling, zig-zag patterns. The leaves linger in the air, spinning round and round, as if they were afraid to touch the earth, where they will decompose and die. Their 'fear', expressed in their reluctance to touch the ground, seems to the poet at first to be a reflection of our own fear
of death:

0, неужели это ты,
Всё то же наше чувство страха?

Or is there another conclusion which can be drawn from the sight? Suspended in the air, the leaves seem as though they might stay there indefinitely. Perhaps another parallel may be drawn: perhaps the self never dies, perhaps there are no limits to the ego after all, perhaps the ego is fused in some mysterious way with nature, and is fated to hang suspended in anguish into all eternity:

Иль над обманом бытия
Творца веленье не звучало,
И нет конца и нет начала
Тебе, тоскующее я?

Perhaps there is no life after death, but only a perpetual existence prolonged infinitely in pain and torment. It is typical of Annensky that in his poems concerning death there should be no certainty about anything – the end of a poem is always a question. The spinning leaves are not used as a simile – they are our feeling of terror. By this kind of extended metaphor, Annensky animates nature with human feelings – It is not a question of the poet standing outside nature and feeling from time to time the reflection of some aspect of
human experience in it: the poet is nature, and nature is the poet, the two working together... In fact there is no clear distinction between the I of the poet and the manifestations of nature.

In order to understand this better, it is necessary to examine a certain aspect of Annensky's aesthetic. Annensky perceives experience as essentially fragmentary. This much we have already seen in the poem Ideal (69), where sharply juxtaposed images convey a sense of disconnectedness, of the arbitrary and seemingly senseless aspect of existence. The Ideal itself is only to be found by discovering some kind of link between concrete phenomena and our apprehension of them, and between apparently contradictory phenomena. While such a unification is absent, the poet can only analyse the disparity of individually-perceived impressions. This gives rise to a kind of vertigo which is expressed in Annensky's poetry by symbols of torment and captivity, as we have already seen. The act of creation is an act of self-inflicted torture, since it implies the forcing of an artificial homogeneity on a heterogeneous nature:

Я хотел бы распутать узлы...
Неужели там только ошибки?
Поздней осенью мухи так злы,
Их холодные крылья так липки.

Мухи как мысли, 90
The result of the painful act of creation is of course a poem, and this is pain made transcendental - chisty zhemchug, etc. But the suffering is always a part of the process of creation, and is even present in the finished work:

Но я люблю стихи — и чувства нет святей:
Так любит только матерь, и лишь больных детей.

Третий мучительный сонет, 91

Each poem is the crystallization of an agonizing failure. In order to create, the poet must seek a unity in disorganised nature - only this struggle produces a tension equivalent to that of the external world; and it is a struggle which can never be successful, but which does produce glimpsed possibilities, unexpected collisions, exciting contrasts, in other words - poetry. An inner anguish and an external disunion in the world coincide. Annensky's situation is expressed clearly in the poem Toska (93). The pale pink flowers on the wallpaper of the poet's sickroom seem to be an intimation of a higher reality, perhaps symbols of the 'explanation' of existence itself. But this sensation is contrasted with another, the consciousness that such a vision is only an illusion, born of delirium, that what
seem to be the 'naked facets of existence' are after all only vulgarly painted flowers. Nonetheless, the poet's imagination has been stimulated, and he creates diamonds involuntarily between the stages of anguish. Thus poetry grows often from horror and vulgarity, out of the nauseating emotion which Annensky calls Toska.

Thus the poem is created from the submerging of the poet's anguished consciousness in reality. This is a familiar technique in much of modern poetry, but it was Annensky who introduced it first into Russian poetry, just as Baudelaire discovered it in France some fifty years earlier. Annensky writes in his essay Chto takoe poeziya? of Baudelaire's sonnet Spleen (Pluviôse, irrité contre la ville entière):

Если захотите видеть в этом сонете галерею "образов", то из поэтического перл не обратится в какую-то лавку au bric-à-brac.... Я не знаю о чем думаете вы, читатель, перечитывая этот сонет. Для меня, он подслушан поэтом в осенней капели. Достоевский тоже слушал эту капель и не раз: "Целые часы, говорит он, проходили таким образом, дремотные, ленивые, сонливые, скучные, словно вода, стекавшая звучно и мерно в кухне с залавки в лахан" /Господин Про- харчин. Соч. Дост. 1,174, изд. 1886 г. /

Сонет Боделера есть отзыв души поэта на ту печаль бытия, которая открывает в капели другую, звучную себе мистическую печаль. Символы четырнадцати строк Боделера

(1) I. F. Annensky: Apollon, 8. 1911, p. 53-54.
это как-бы маски или наскоро наброшенные одежды, под которыми мелькает тоскующая душа поэта, и желая, и боясь быть разгаданной, ища единения со всем миром и вместе с тем невольно тоскуя о своем потревоженном одиночестве.

The external images of a poem are in fact only crystallizations of the poet's anguish. His lyrical I is soaked in reality, so that his sensibility and the outside world become equivalent. This notion is developed further by Annensky in his essay Bal'mont lirik, from the First Book of Reflections. He writes: (1)

Для людей, которые видят в поэзии не пассивное самоуслаждение качанья на качелях, а своеобразную форму красоты, которую надо взять еще возбужденным и настроенным вниманием, я г. Бальмонта не личное и не собирательное, а прежде всего наше я, только со- знанное и выраженное Бальмонтом.

And further on: (1)

This rastworenie of the I in nature is the basis of much of Annensky's poetry. The poem is not a copy of nature, but rather an imitation of it, in which the poet's individuality breaks down into images, supplying the energy necessary to vivify and direct the separate impressions of objects and phenomena. The poet's consciousness moves like a continuous

(1) Ibid. p. 182.
thread through all kinds of images and symbols, casting light on obscure areas of experience. Flowers, interiors, gardens, landscapes flow into one another — nothing is whole, nothing is stable. Even human beings are represented only by some attribute, or are fused together with nature in some way. The sleeping labourers in 

In Traktir zhizni (76) the presence of people is suggested by sensations and material objects:

Муть вина, нягие кости,
Пепел стынуших сигар,
На губах — отрава злости,
В сердце — скуки перегар...

We have already seen how in the Fortep’yanne sonety a girl playing the piano is reduced simply to the image of her fingers moving over the keyboard, and to the associations which this image has for the poet.

In this flux and movement of imagery, Annenaky creates an artificial ordering of experience, which will simultaneously embody and transcend the anguish brought about by the conflict
of 'Spleen' and 'Ideal' in the Baudelairean sense of the words. Before we examine the characteristics of the humanised and re-ordered nature, it is necessary to examine some more aspects of Annensky's own peculiar anguish.

3.

I have already discussed those poems in which the poet's anguish at the physical fact of death is expressed. But there are also a number of poems which relate to another kind of death, i.e. the presence of death in life. These poems are sometimes nightmarish in quality: this is especially true of the two related poems Traktir zhizni and Tam (76 and 77). The first of these is a variation on the Telega zhizni, Doroga zhizni type of poem found in Pushkin and Baratynsky, among others. But in his poem Annensky far surpasses the allegorical nature of his models. Indeed the allegory is hardly noticeable at all: Annensky is more concerned to give an impression of the horror and squalor of existence by means of direct and vivid images. Life is a dirty inn, where the 'travellers' hide from the cold of death and nothingness, trying to forget it in 'alcohol and hashish'. But outside, the 'coffinmaker' counts up the bill by the light of a melting candle - death waits all the same.
Horror and revulsion are also evident in the second poem. The statue of Psyche is here replaced by that of Eros, an Eros, moreover, without wings, 'amidst artificial azaleas'. Again the theme is man's attempt to escape from the consciousness of death by immersion in earthly delights. But the laughter of the guests is zastyly (l. 13), the wine is 'fiery poison', and death is present even in this defiance of it. In the last two lines the words 'infinite' and 'mournful' suggest that the feast will last late into the night — but the night may also be an allegorical one, signifying death.

The two poems are both extremely 'black' in tone; but they are more than just portraits of human vice. They express the poet's horror before the Real, which seems to have no higher significance, but simply to open on Nothing (le Néant). Less intense, but imbued with the same sense of emptiness, is Pod zelyonym abazhvyrom. Under a green lampshade, the poet plays patience. The cards fascinate him with their bystro mel'kajukschii krap, and their suggestion of golden distances and guessed fortunes. But although once upon a time the cards did promise golden distances, now they only lie laid out in rows on the table, indifferently repeating 'Yes' or 'No' to the poet. Hope has gone with the years. Now the cards are incapable of guessing anything beyond the 'Yes' of continuing existence and the 'No' of death. Either answer seems the same — Nothingness
has invaded the poet's life, filling it with anxiety and dread.

Three allegorical poems display the anxiety which Annensky feels to be so much a part of existence in different images. 

_Şehîrî şerîn şerîn şerîn şerîn_ (78) shows life consisting of four stages. At each stage human beings reach for the 'cup of life'. At the last stage, the hand grasps the cup absent-mindedly, forgetting that it is empty. The image of the cup is, of course, drawn from Lermontov, and indeed the whole poem is reminiscent of Lermontov's style. In _Şehîrî şerîn şerîn şerîn şerîn_ another Lermontovian poem, love is seen as a destructive force, leading only to jealousy and corrupution. _Molot i Iskry_ (87) compares life to a hammer which beats on the poet's shoulders. There are no sparks of beauty under this hammer, the poet's dreams have faded away, and there is only a future filled with despair.

All these poems are nightmares, nightmares of the poet's self and his consciousness of its frailty. And in a sense they are also complaints - the poet is complaining about the conditions of his existence, which seem to him intolerable and senseless. This is a most important aspect of Annensky's poetry, and underlies its tone, a tone which seems at first curious and difficult to pin down. Once we realise that very often Annensky is railing in a very gentle, lyrical manner against fate, we can understand much of the irony which fills his lyrics. Dreams become crystallizations of anxiety, an anxiety which breaks out into
images and thus becomes creative, the mainspring of the poet's work. In Opyat' v doroge (79), the nightmare ends in the symbol of the Wall, which as life draws to its close, grows higher and higher, cutting off the light. In Utro (81) there is a terrifying confusion of death and nightmare - the dream centres round the image of dva muchitel'no čehrykh kryla which seems to choke and stifle the poet. V doroge (74) describes the nightmares of the poet's conscience in the picture of the sleeping peasants. The influence of certain poems of Baudelaire, especially Les Petites Vieilles, is noticeable here, in the way that the poverty and wretchedness of the peasants correspond to an equivalent sense of moral poverty on the part of the poet. The koshmary snov muzhich'ikh blend with the poet's own agonizing analysis of his conscience.

Perhaps the poems in which the poet's anxiety finds its purest expression are those which deal with the theme of insomnia, one which is widespread in Russian lyrical poetry. Annensky deals with the experience of insomnia in his own way, extracting from it tensions and images which suit his own aesthetic preoccupations. The world of insomnia is a strange, nocturnal one, in which the poet's senses grow distorted with weariness, producing unusual and almost visionary images in his brain. We have already seen, in the poem Kotory?, for example, how important nocturnal impressions are to the poet, helping him
to 'free' his ego into the skazka of creation. In the state of sleeplessness the psychological processes of his mind become linked to the creative ones, assisting in the curious interaction of analysis and synthesis which is at the root of Annensky's art. Thus, in the first poem of the cycle Bessonitsy (63), Bessonitsa rebënska, Annensky describes how, in a child's confused and sleepless mind, physical sense-impressions mingle with psychological progressions of association, producing creative fantasies: the neotvyanne slova which rustle in his brain are lines of poetry, and they are connected to the natural world in a mysterious way:

И я лежал, а тени шли,
Наверно знал и скрывая,
Как гриб выходит из земли
И ходит стрелка часовая.

These finely observed details carry with them a sense of collusion, of collaboration with nature: at night the poet's mental processes, his thoughts and inspirations, are paralleled in the outside world, and thus the desired equilibrium (or correspondance) between perception and object is achieved.

But in his insomniac state, the poet is not always so fortunate. Often sleeplessness produces only waking nightmares. The second poem of the cycle, Parki - bab'e lapan'tane, inspired by Pushkin's Stikhi, napisannye v vremya bessonitsy, is a sonnet
which depicts the experience of insomnia through the prism of a more mature stage of the poet's life. While previously sleeplessness brought him thoughts, inspiration, creative dreams, now 'the pages of white May have long since faded' (a reference to the connection in the poet's mind between nature and poetic creation), and in the long sleepless nights he is aware only of the humming loom of the Parcae, mysteriously weaving the strands of his destiny, while their bab'e lepetan'ë, the confused words which formed the beginnings of poems, is cut off by the humming of the loom:

- и как ручей,
  Задавлен камнями обвала,
  Оно уж лепет обрывало...

Insomnia now brings him into contact with a consciousness of the limitations of his existence, an awareness of the boundaries which prevent him from ever attaining his Ideal of free creativity. In this position between sleeping and waking, the self is given a surreal dimension, where its dreams and aspirations are transformed into the nightmare of existence. In Daleko... daleko (84), nightmares caused by the poet's skin-disease crystallise on the one hand in the sinister figure of an old woman dragging a feather over his skin, and on the other, in the image of the same tormenting quill as the instrument of
poetic creation. Once again, we see how the elements of suffering and nightmare are inextricably bound up in Annensky's aesthetic with the idea of art.

But it is in the poem _Svechka gasnet_ (82) that the whole significance of the insomniac state is revealed. Lying in bed, unable to sleep, the poet watches the candle beside him burn itself out. In the dying flame, fiery sparks gently flicker - it is a moment of transition from the twilight of semi-consciousness into the darkness of sleep. The poet's being identifies itself with the dying flame. Just as he himself would like to sleep, but cannot, so the candle burns on, interminably delaying the moment when its flame will recede, leaving only blackness. There is something terrifying in the oncoming darkness, and sleep frightens the poet:

Да страхат набеги сна,
Как безумного желанья
Тихий берег умиранья
Захлестнувшая волна.

He feels himself between two areas of nightmarish experience: on the one hand, the agonising predicament of sleeplessness; on the other, the fear that sleep will bring nightmares, even death. And the anxiety of this dilemma is reflected in the image of the candle, which in its turn has inspired the poem.
This is an excellent example of what Annensky means by *ras-tvorenie* - the dissolution of the self in nature. We must now look more closely at Annensky's attitude towards nature, as it is expressed in the poems of *Tikhie pesni*, in order to see just how far Annensky carries the process.

4.

The epigraph to *Dekoratsiya* (82) reads: На меня действует только та природа, которая похожа на декорацию. And indeed, Annensky's nature is very frequently a 'decoration', a stylised representation of the physical world. This is not to say that the poet tries to escape from the natural into the artificial and dreamlike; rather the reverse - through his reconstructed and reorganised nature he penetrates the ultimate reality: the human consciousness. "The phenomena of nature are interwoven with one another to form decorative fabrics, whose colours and movements correspond in their complexity to the experience of the lyrical I. The same technique is to be found in the work of many symbolist and post-symbolist poets: Maeterlinck's *Serres Chaudes* depict the almost hysterical anxiety of an imprisoned soul in a series of poems which describe the interior of a hothouse - the obscure growth of terror and desire is
is reflected in the vegetable growth of the strange plants and flowers in the place. In Stephan George's Buch der hängenden Gärten, a mysterious relationship between the poet and his beloved is expressed in the flowering and withering of a vast garden. We shall see how Annensky develops this technique in an entirely new direction when we come to examine the poems of Kiparisovy Larets. In Tikhie Pesni, Annensky is still very much under the influence of poets like Maeterlinck and George, and his vision of nature as shown in this collection is also a very private one, registering a 'closed' world of parks, alleys, gardens, in which a change of colour, the position of the sun, or a certain type of landscape may accompany an attendant state of mind.

In Votkrytye okna, the state of mind is boredom, ennui, which passes with the coming of twilight, when

beseda umolkaet,
Nas tyaet serdca glubina,
A golos sobственныеyy pugает...

Through the open window, the poet can see vague colours, the clours of the sunset, reflected in the darkened natural world - the ryzhie volokna of the poem, which suggest tree-roots, branches, strands of foliage. In the third stanza a metamorphosis takes place: the reddish fibres suggest burning coals, and the boredom
of the past day becomes transformed into a 'Cyclops', made sleepy by the golden heat, a monster which is also the growing shadow, and into the darkness of whose unseeing eyes a burning coal of red light seems to be aimed. Thus an abstract feeling is embodied in a semi-concrete fantasy, composed of various elements of nature, a dreamlike fusion of personal anguish with concrete reality. The use of a mythological image is significant here: in a sense all the nature poems are 'myths' in which the outward forms of nature constitute the 'characters' of a drama, the drama of the poet's self. This is closely connected to the narrative form of much of this poetry - Annensky does not describe, he narrates, imposing a psychological 'plot' on reality. The same technique may be observed in Mai(69), the first of a series of poems relating to the seasons, a kind of verse calendar.

In Mai the poetic materials are very simple: a window-pane, a gleam of golden sunlight. It is evening: as the sun sets, it casts a golden shimmer onto the window-pane, a shimmer which in its beautiful ephemerality, seems to the poet an incarnation of the Ideal: 'that world which we once were, or shall be in eternal transfiguration'. It should be noticed that in this poem, as in the preceding example, nature appears in the evening, a time of transition and fading. The gleam of light pours itself into the 'scale of the evening' with an anguished note (perhaps in imitation of Verlaine, Annensky confuses sense-impressions
like this quite frequently), which lingers on above the twilit landscape, above the real world which will soon be plunged into darkness, 'not understanding' that it, the flashing window-pane, is only a momentary illusion of transcendence, a trick performed by 'the golden illusion of May'. The wonderful moment will pass, the night will come, blotting out all the hopes of happiness and revelation, and

Только зарево едва
Коробит розовые стекла.

In this poem we can see how Annensky likes to give human attributes to nature - the glass 'does not understand', it seeks 'happiness'; we sense a note of pity, of compassion for a landscape which must submit to earthly laws, and be engulfed in darkness. This is another example of the rastvorenie of the self and its feelings in nature - the poet's feelings of loss are transferred to nature itself. The loss is beautiful, yet agonizing - and this is expressed in the toskuyushchaya nota of the golden reflection. The subject of the poem becomes its meaning. Instead of having to explain his simile, Annensky makes the whole poem explain itself. This concrete quality is a feature of Annensky's best poetry.

Not all the nature poems in Tikhie pesni are as concentrated or as concrete, however, as the ones we have just discussed. The two poems in the cycle Xul', for example, are written in a fairly
straightforward idiom. The first, a sonnet, describes the
delight felt by the poet during a summer shower, in language
and imagery reminiscent of Tyutchev. The second poem, another
Baudelairean piece, expresses anguish in the face of human
poverty and distress. The sun's vertical ray becomes a symbol
of accursedness - kakikh-to dikikh sil poslednee raskih'e,
soldering together attributes of a debased humanity into a
monstrous line of thin legs, beards and torn hats. The poet is
seized by a deed anguish, as he realizes that this is what life
does to people, distorts and coarsens them out of all recognition:

Подумай: на руках у матерей
Всё это были розовые дети.

Once again, it should be noticed how Annensky, in depicting
people in his landscape, does not paint a complete picture of
them, but rather suggests their presence by the use of separate
images and references (abris _nog_ khudykh, etc.). Used here, this
technique emphasizes the almost inhuman aspect of the sleeping
miners.

Nature continues to serve as a vehicle for the poet's comments
on human existence in the cycle _Avust_. In _Khrizantema_ (71),
the image of a flower expands to embrace the whole futility of
death and the sadness which the poet feels at the death of a
particular person. The chrysanthemum leans hopelessly towards
the lid of the coffin, as if it wanted to say something to the
dead person. Two curled petals fall onto the running-board of the hearse, and they suggest to the poet the two golden earrings which a woman in mourning has thrown away. There is something helpless and pathetic about the way in which the two petals are depicted - one senses a feeling of pity in the words neznnoi and beznadezhno (ll. 13 and 15), a pity and compassion which is directed not so much at the dead person as at the suffering world he leaves behind him. The comparison of the chrysanthemum to a woman could seem a little over-stylized and pretentious, if it were not for the fact that the whole poem is written with the utmost economy of means and great simplicity. The scene is most certainly a stylized, artificial representation of nature, but it is animated by a sense of suffering and pity.

Elektricheskii svet v allee (72), which forms the second part of the cycle, is another expression of anguish and compassion in nature. Here the 'active' element of life's cruelty is a ray of electric light sweeping here and there through the darkness, disturbing the poet's reflections and meditations, focussed in the image of a maple tree. The branch is 'ashamed of its exposed thoughts' (exposed by the light) and 'the tears of autumn' (raindrops) tremble in its gold-tinted leaves. There is a similar suggestion of nightmare in the famous poem Sentyabr' (72). Again the scene is autumnal. Autumn had a special attraction for most of the so-called 'decadent' poets of most countries. In
Annensky's poetry, however, the fading and decline of nature are described personally, psychologically. The whole landscape of withering parks and gardens has something sinister about it, and the black, bottomless ponds are an invitation to suicide. We sense that the poet is trying to delay the moment of self-annihilation for as long as possible, letting himself be intoxicated by the 'stealthy aroma' of autumn.

*Novabr'* (72) illustrates Annensky's attitude towards winter. Just as in *Iyul* (1) the poet finds consolation in an unattractive season, so in this poem he seeks liberation from discomfort and ugliness. In *Iyul* the pain is of heat and bright light; here it is the mournful and desolate view from a window that disturbs the poet:

_Как сети ветвей в оконной раме_  
_Всё та же сегодня, что вчера..._

Annensky often uses the image of the window-frame in his nature poems. In a sense all his poetry is one of rooms and solitude - the poet lives an indoor life, which is influenced by the manifestations of nature that come to brush against the window of his privacy, altering his moods and feelings in a subtle way. Here he expresses a desire for a more active participation in nature. Winter is a miserable season if he experiences it only from the shelter of his house - the only
consolation to be found is possibly in the beautiful patterns made by the frost on the window-panes. Precision and clarity: these are the only positive attributes of winter. The frost makes everything hard and sharply-cut. In his comparison of the frost-patterns on the window-pane with 'the fine work of a pen', Annensky touches for the first time on a type of description which recurs in other poems, such as O-fort (132) and Nezhiyava (131), and which the critic S. Karlinsky has likened to the type of Japanese-styled graphics popular in Russia around the beginning of the present century. (1) But the 'graphic' quality of winter is, although, beautiful, repellent to the poet. It suggests zastylost', loss of movement, indifference, qualities which contradict his love of flowing, gradually-changing perceptions which set free his imagination and assist in the dissolution of the self. Above all, there is no mark of human existence in winter — everything is dead, impersonal, frozen. The poet's reaction to this aspect of nature is similar to his attitude towards the dancing maenads of the Fortep'yannye sonet'. The images of winter are hermetic, isolated in a vacuum of fixity. In the mist

the sun is high in heaven (1. 9). And the poet longs for the
liberating stimulus of a sleigh-ride over the limitless ex-
panses of the snowfields, when everything would be freedom and
motion, change and uncertainty, corresponding to the state of
being he desires:

Скорей бы сани, сумрак, поле,
Следить круженье облаков, —

Да, упивалось медным свистом,
В безбрежной эйбности снегов
Сколзить по линиям волнистым...

This sonnet is typical of Annensky's poetic art. In a series
of juxtaposed images is invoked the spirit of liberation from
an imprisoning situation. We have already seen the horror which
closed and seemingly inevitable situations inspire in the poet,
whether they are connected with the concrete fact of death, the
cruelest of an indifferent and unfeeling beauty, the boredom of
prolonged illness. Such situations are the attendants of spleen,
toska. They oppose those fleeting glimpses of the Ideal which
alone can satisfy the poet, and which are only to be found in
moments of change and uncertainty.

In Veter (73) the poet expresses his love for the wind.
The wind gives him the sense of animation and aimless motion from which the possible is born: the wind's touch on a lake, on a field of rye, its devastation of the sails of ships at sea, its fragmentation of clouds— all these are near to him. They exemplify what is most essential to his art— the destruction of the solid and the immobile into the fluctuating and unpredictable. But, typically, he prefers above all else.

Тот ветер теплый и игривый,
Что хлещет жучер крапивой
По шапкам розовым дедов.

In this violent and vivid image there emerges a familiar characteristic: the attraction of a suffering nature, corresponding to the innermost feelings of the poet. The pink burdock exists in an aura of pain and brilliance, defenceless, lashed by a playful and tyrannical wind. Something of the same quality underlies many of Van Gogh's paintings, an artist whose conception of nature shows many parallels with Annensky's own, especially in the discovery of the material world as a psychological experience. And while the work of many of the Russian symbolist poets reflects an interest in the mystical aspect of the world, in the revelation of superhuman forces at work in nature, for Annensky it is the psychological inquiry which is most urgent.

The similarity to Van Gogh's painting which some of Annensky's
poems suggest is found very strikingly expressed in the strange sonnet Konets osennei skazki (80). The whole poem has something of the quality of Van Gogh's Cypress with Stars in its sense of nocturnal obscurity finally emerging as an expression of pain and difficulty. The purple eye of the moon burning above the valley, the spider's web softly breaking, the glittering of malachite in the wet soil, the undulations of mist white as cotton-wool—all these images finally culminate in the presence of a black shrub, in which red berries show brightly at intervals.

...точно гвозди
После снятого Христа.

The suffering of nature is somehow linked in the poet's consciousness with the image of crucifixion—the whole scene is a myth, skazka chernaya, in which the poet's psyche, lost somewhere between reality and dream, creates a poem.

This fusion of reality and dream in the skazka, the enchanted world of the poem, is the subject of another nocturnal piece, Na vode (80). The musical alliterations and repetitions help to interlace the moonlight and the surface of the lake with the poet's dream—his senses are bathed in silver light, and he feels like a ball hurled into space.
Dekoratsiya (82) again evokes a moonlit nocturnal scene. Once more the moon is present as a 'mask' in the 'theatrical' clouds of the tale. This is the moon of Laforgue, all-seeing and sickly:

Так уныла, жёлта и больна...

Dream is hopelessly confused with reality: is the moon real, or is it an enchanted mask? The poet will never find out. The moon seems to remind him of a face, he seems to see eyelids moving almost imperceptibly, but

Дальше... вырваны дальше страницы.

Eshchё один (78) is another skazka. There are two protagonists: Day, the 'proud warrior', and Shadow. The poem describes the melancholy inspired by the passing of day. The last stanza, with its image of the brown rim of the sun on the horizon, and the comparison of this with 'the unrepeatable confession of a burnt letter', exemplifies all the bitterness and futility of parting - again, a human experience is mirrored in
The same atmosphere is evoked in the sonnet *Toska vozvrata* (87), where the sunset is filtered through the stained-glass windows of a church. Day lingers in the quiet air of the church, before 'Night has sung vespers', and languishes 'svoim grekhom neotmolennym'. This is not just an allegorical 'Day', but a real day which the poet has lived through. Again the natural and psychological are fused in a narrative.

The theme of the *skazka* is very important in Annensky's work, and I have discussed it elsewhere in this thesis. Its presence is one of the signals showing that Annensky's concern is above all with literature, with the poetic word. The poem as an organism of words is linked both to the natural world and to the poet's psyche - it operates as a focal node for these two elements, unifying them and making them interpenetrate. The poem is the concentrated expression of the *I*, an *I* which is not only that of the poet, but also that of the world. The word is *I* and world. Annensky himself expresses this best in a passage from his article *Chto takoe poeziya?* (2) where he writes:

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2) see p. 269 *et seq.*

2) *Apollon*, 6, pp. 51-57. The article was originally intended as an introduction to the unpublished collection *Iz pesychery Polifera*.
Вместо скучных гипербол, которыми в старой поэзии условно передавались сложные и нередко выдуманные чувства, новая поэзия ищет точных символов для ощущений, т.е. реального субстрата жизни и для ощущений, т.е. той формы душевной жизни, которая более всего роднит людей между собой, входя в психологию толпы с таким же правом, как в индивидуальную психологию.

Стихи и проза вступают в таинственный союз.

Символика звуков и музыка фразы занимают не одних техник поэзии. Синкретизм ощущений, проектируясь в поэзии затейливыми арабесками, создает для нее проблему не менее заманчивую, чем для науки и, может быть, более назревшую...

Растет словарь. Слова получают новые оттенки, и в этом отношении погоня за новым и необычным часто приносит добрый плоды. Создаются новые слова и уже не сложением, а взаимно-проникновением старых...

Поэт вслед за живописцем входит в новое, чисто эстетическое общение с природой... Мир, освещаемый правдивым и тонким самоанализом поэта не может не быть страшен, но он не будет мне отвратителен, потому что он - я.

That Annensky brings an aesthetic sensibility to nature can hardly be contested - he is fascinated by the beauty of nature in all its aspects. But, as he points out in the passage I have just quoted, this beauty is passed through the filter of
human experience, with all its doubt and suffering, so that it finally emerges as an expression of those attributes of the human condition. Beauty is never the Ideal itself, but the struggle for the Ideal. And this attitude towards the beautiful gives rise to a whole series of contrasts in the imagery of Annensky's poetry, as we have seen. The indifferent beauty of the maenads, the immobility and sterility of winter landscapes, scarlet roses, bright colours—all these are alien to the poet in their completion, their perfection. He prefers the agonising frailty and intoxicating scent of the lily (Lilii - 84-85), the decline of autumn, faded roses, 'fabulous hyacinths', 'Lilies, weeping at window-panes' (Parallel, 92).

Thus, Annensky remains faithful to his epigraph. There is no praise of beauty to be found in this intimate set of poems, only the expression of suffering and doubt in the name of the beautiful, for the sake of the Ideal. Zhelanie (93), the last poem of the collection, describes Annensky's intentions best: the melting wax from the dying candle is cast onto cold granite, just as the poet's life melts into death. But this death is beautiful, the only way in which the individual can transcend himself, seeing the struggle of his existence for what it is: futile and yet heroic -
Когда к ночи усталой рукою
Допашу я свою полосу,
Я хотел бы уйти на покой
В монастырь, но в далеком лесу,

Где бы каждому был я слуга
И творенья господнему друг,
И чтоб сосны шумели вокруг,
А на соснах лежали снега...

А когда надо мной зазвонит
Медный зов в беспросветной ночи,
Уронить на холодный гранит
Талый воск догоревшей свечи.
Annensky's second collection of poems represents a marked stylistic, aesthetic and structural advance on the relatively straightforward conception of *Tikhie pesni*, although there is no evidence to prove that the advance is also a chronological one. In this respect we can only point to the fact that in *Kiparisovy larets* Annensky displays a profound and extensive preoccupation with themes, images and ideas, many of which are only hinted at in the earlier book, together with a more acute sense of form. Indeed, when compared with *Kiparisovy larets*, in spite of the cyclical unity discussed in the previous chapter, *Tikhie pesni* gives an impression of embryonic activity, of preparation for a deeper exploration of the poetic, rather than one of assured creation.

Perhaps the most striking feature of *Kiparisovy larets* is to be found in the structural and organisational principles that underlie the book. It should be remembered that of the three books of Annensky's verse, only *Tikhie pesni* carried the author's approval, since only this work was published during his lifetime.
The poet died before he could decide on the final form his second collection was to take. The work of collating the miscellaneous contents of the (real) cypress chest in which the poet kept his writings was undertaken by him with the help of his son, Valentin Krivich. This collaboration was, however, short-lived. Krivich writes:

Собранную книгу для "Грифа" вечером, Анненский передал мне весь рукописный материал "Ларца", состоящий частью из подлинников, частью из различных, иногда не вполне проверенных списков, вместе с указанием относительно распределения и плана сборника, просил подготовить книгу для окончательного ее просмотра, и... скончался в тот самый вечер, почти в тот самый час, когда я начал порученную мне работу... К составлению книги я приступил в самом непродолжительном времени после кончины Анненского, составил ее в точном и строгом соответствии с его указаниями и отметками... (1)

Thus it is not at all clear how much of the book is the work of Krivich, and how much that of Annensky himself. For our present purposes, it will be as well to assume that the first edition of the book which appeared in 1910 represents the poet's

intentions the most fully. In this I am following the example of the editors of the Leningrad (1959) edition.

The confusion in the ordering of the poems which Krivich refers to above is reflected very clearly in the overall structure of the book. Evidently Annensky intended to build the work on a numerical basis. It would consist of trilistniki, tripartite microcycles, skladni, or bipartite microcycles, and razmetannye listy, or poems which either stand on their own or which could not be grouped under the other two categories. Unfortunately, as it was not clear to anyone, probably not even to the poet himself, just how many poems would go into the fabric of the book, the final result is one of incompleteness and imbalance. Only in the trilistniki section does Annensky seem to have achieved his purpose in a series of twenty-five microcycles. The pairs in skladni are only three in number, four poems remaining structurally unaccounted for. The final section, though thematically unified, again seems curiously out of proportion to the rest of the book. Nonetheless, Annensky's intention is plain, and it is in the way in which the structural principle is linked with the poetic and existential content of the book that our interest must lie.

The trilistniki are the three-leaved clover of everyday existence. Casting about in this field of familiar situations and objects, the poet finds strange and improbable associations between them, discovers a metaphysical dialogue among them. The
skladni concern the poet's relation to the Other, to the Second. The razmetannye listy deal with the problem of isolation, with the underlying uniqueness of things.

2.

The trilistnik is a genre almost wholly peculiar to Annensky's poetry. (Bal'mont's Goryashchie zdaniya of 1903 contains a set of three poems entitled Trilistnik, but it is not clear who influenced whom.) As I pointed out above, the name suggests everyday experience. It also designates an extremely unusual means of thematic organization. In twenty-five miniature cycles, Annensky crosses a vast range of different moods and experiences. Each cycle is a 'leaf' made up of three 'lobes' connected by a 'stalk' of meaning and allusion. The stalk, or thematic key, is given in the title of the cycle. Thus we find Trilistnik ognenny, Trilistnik vagonny, etc. Within the microcycle there may be much variation in tone and imagery (cf. Trilistnik sentimental'ny (101)), with only a very fine strand of meaning to connect the various elements. This intracyclical variation and connection is reflected on a broader scale in the thematic interpenetration of individual poems belonging to different cycles (cf. Kulachishka (114) from Trilistnik proklyatiya.
and *volshebnuju prizmu* (115) from *Trilistnik pobedny*, two contrasting poems which are structurally linked.

The *trilistnik* enables Annensky to achieve a much higher unity of conception than in *Tikhie pesni*. The significant titles, both of the cycles and of the individual poems are all-important, indicating changes of mood and thematic relationships, and above all providing landmarks which serve to illuminate Annensky's poetic world - fire, nightmare, mourning, railway trains, ice, paper, and so on. These are all thematic indices, rather than merely themes, marking different moods and areas of experience. We are already familiar with a similar technique in Mallarmé's poetry, where words like *azar, éventail, stérile, verre, fenêtre* have definite connotative functions. But in Annensky's poetry these functions have become much more tightly connected with one another - the very organization of the poems in sequences is determined by them. The *trilistniki* represent an entirely new cyclic form. While existing as autonomous entities, they may be placed in any order without upsetting the structure of the whole cycle, so great is the degree of unity obtained from the fact that the 'clover leaves' all grow from the same poetic soil: the liberated ego of the poet, dissolving itself in the phenomena of existence. This structural mobility frees the cycle as a whole from any necessity for narrative - the reader can
concentrate his attention on the concise, intense expression of the individual lyrics, while at the same time remaining conscious of a unity extending into other planes, the unity of the microcycle and the unity of the cycle taken as a whole.

In the following analysis of the *trilstniki* I shall employ the thematic method which I used in my discussion of *Tikhie pesni* but I shall also keep in mind a) the individual lyrics, b) the relationships, thematic and structural, of the lyrics to one another within the microcycle, c) the relationships of the microcycles to one another within the framework of the cycle as a whole, d) the relationships of individual lyrics to one another within the cycle as a whole.

Any discussion of the *trilstniki* must take into account the relationships of the microcycles to one another. For although, as I have pointed out, Annensky has provided his poems with thematic indices, the outside observer discovers, upon a study of the whole cycle, that these indices themselves are related to one another, forming more or less clearly-defined groups. It is on these thematic groups that I shall base my analysis; but it should not be forgotten that these are distinctions made from outside - transcending them are Annensky's own thematic-structural inventions, inherent in the cycle as a whole.
Very roughly, then, it is possible to divide the poems contained in the *trilistniki* into two basic categories: a) poems of anguish and death, and b) poems concerning the relation of nature to human existence. Of course, it must be stressed that this distinction is quite often an arbitrary one. Poems from one 'category' often seem to fall under the other. Also, upon close examination, a third category emerges (that of the relation of material objects to human experience). Nevertheless, the division is not completely arbitrary: in studying the connotative qualities of the index-titles which Annensky has fixed to each *trilistnik* we do become aware of a fundamental division between the poems which relate directly to existential phenomena, and those which relate to the reinterpretation of existential problems through the mediation of nature.
Poems of Anguish and Death.

These are laments, questions, ironic commentaries, sober statements all relating to immediate problems of existence. At the centre of these problems there is a physical fact, that of death. Yet it is not correct to say that Annensky is obsessed by death. He is rather concerned with the implications which the consciousness of human mortality have for the existing individual, concerned with life rather than with death, with a consciousness of his own despair rather than its cessation. Søren Kierkegaard wrote that 'the torment of despair is precisely this: not to be able to die', and that despair is a sickness in which 'the last thing is death': '... to be sick unto death is - not to be able to die.' In this passage Kierkegaard goes on to distinguish between two forms of despair: despair at not willing to be oneself, and the despair of willingly despairing to be oneself - defiance. Annensky's despair certainly belongs to this latter category.

'But this too is a form of despair: not to be willing to hope that an earthly distress, a temporal cross, might be removed. This is what the despair which-wills desperately to be itself is not willing to hope. It has convinced itself that this thorn in the flesh gnaws so profoundly that he cannot abstract it....and so
he is willing to accept it as it were eternally. So he is offended by it, or rather from it he takes occasion to be offended at the whole of existence. This is precisely Annensky's condition. His poetry is filled above all with a sense of the immediacy of existence, of natural and man-made objects, perceived within a context of obida - of disgust and injury. The Ideal must always remain unattainable for the poet, for if it were attained, he would give up his own individuality and exchange it for another. This he is unwilling to do:

Я жил и не боюсь. Своим бодрящим шумом
Она дает гореть, дает светиться думам.

/Прелюдия, 138/

The 'life' referred to here is, of course, the poet's own life, and not a generalized concept. The poet's works are the songs of 'the torment of the ideal'. Pain and disgust inspire him to write, and he would not give up this inspiration for anything in the world:

Но я люблю стихи - и чувства нет святей:
Так любит только мать, и лишь больных детей.

/Третий мучительный сонет, 91/

Trilistnik traurny (117-119) illustrates clearly what I have been saying. As might be expected from the title of the cycle, all three poems are about funerals, possibly even about the same funeral. The first poem, Pered panikhidoi, describes the feelings aroused in the poet by the sight of a dead man lying in a coffin:

Два дня здесь шепчут: прям и нем
Всё тот же гость в дому,
И вянут космы хризантем
В удушливом дыму.

Death is a guest in the house, replacing the presence of the living person with a host of doubts and uncertainties. Death extends into life. The dead man may lie in peace now, but his corpse presents a problem for those who remain alive. Is this the visible form of death which the poet sees in front of him? Or is it simply the wall of a 'stinking prison', the door of which has slammed shut for ever? As if in reply to these questions the real world itself becomes transformed into a claustrophobic cell in which the spectral shapes of Fear and Horror loom through the stifling haze of incense:
Лишь Ужас в белых зеркалах
Здесь молит и поет
И с поясным поклоном Страх
Нам свечи раздает.

What is remarkable about this poem is the way in which Annensky animates the deathly scene: death is a 'guest', a 'prison', Horror 'prays and sings', Fear bows deeply and hands candles to those present. Death is represented in the poem as static, irrelevant to human beings in so far as it is a physical fact:

Гляжу и мыслю: мир ему,
Но нам-то, нам-то всем ...

With the physical reality of death, existence ('death-in-life') comes to an end. This is the point that Tolstoy makes at the end of Smert' Ivana Il'icha:

- Кончено! - сказал кто-то над ним.
Он услыхал эти слова и повторил их в своей душе.
"Кончена смерть, - сказал он себе. - Ее нет больше."
'Konchena smert': these are the most important and significant words in the entire story. For Ivan Il'ich's life has been a constant attempt to evade the inescapable fact of death; towards the end he becomes totally obsessed with death, so that he is barely alive at all. 'Death' ends, paradoxically, with its arrival.

Thus Annensky, as a poet, is concerned to explore the regions of the anguish of 'death-in-life', rather than simply to describe the physical fact of death. His descriptions of death, of funerals and burials are all reinterpretations of that physical fact in terms of lived experience. Ballada, for example, is full of rich and vivid imagery: the mist of early morning, the street-lamps smoking and flickering, the abandoned dacha, the yellow dog that follows the poet and his friend as they set off for the funeral. The drays are 'exhausted by the masquerade of sadness', a very Tolstoyan expression. The last stanza of the poem depicts a moment of terror:

...Будь ты проклята, левкоем и фенолом
Равнодушно дышащая Дама!

In order to equate himself with the dead woman, the poet must destroy himself. This he cannot do, and the enigma of death continues to spread its influence over every facet of experience. In *Svetly nimb* (118), the last poem of the cycle, the poet's attention is riveted by the sight of the dead woman's hair gleaming in the candlelight as she lies in her coffin. The hair seems like an aureole or halo: this is a hopeless beauty, of a kind particularly dear to Annensky. The 'bright nimbus' of hair shines in brilliant contrast to the 'chadnoe more molenii i slëz' associated with death. Indeed, the poem laments the unattainability of the Ideal rather than the dead person lying in the coffin. The Ideal is shattered by the poet's spleen, a spleen which is after all only a sense for the real and immanent limitations of human existence.

The relation between spleen and Ideal, between death-in-life and life-in-death, can be seen clearly in two connected cycles: *Trilistnik proklyatiya* (114-115) and *Trilistnik pobedny* (115-117). The former is concerned with spleen and anguish.
Yamby is a poem about playing-cards, a theme already familiar from *Tikhie pesni* (*Pod zelënym abazhurom*). Here, however, the cards are seen in a much more sinister light. They are a stupefying drug, which both revolts and excites the poet:

Зеленое сукно — цвет малахитов тины,
Весь в пепле туз червей на сломанном мелке...
Подумай: жертву накануне гильотины
Дурманят картами и в каменном мешке.

Again, the theme of poison and intoxication is present; but here it acquires another dimension. Existence itself is likened to a game of cards in which chance is the dominant factor. Chance excites, offering glimpses of the Ideal, but it also kills, very slowly, as it frustrates every aspiration towards that Ideal.

Another kind of death-in-life is described in *Kulachishka*. This is a rural byt, familiar from the writings of Gogol and Ostrovsky:

Цвести среди немолчного ада,
То грузных, то гулких шагов,
И стонущих блоков и чада,
И стука бильярдных шаров.
The father brings up his daughter to toady to Pomykan'ya i zloby in a coarse, brutalized environment, just so that there will be enough money in the family for her to be able 'to walk, hunchbacked, with an umbrella' beside his coffin at his funeral. The poem is a picture, carefully conceived in every detail, and at the same time a moral observation.

The last poem of the cycle, O net, ne stan, points a way out of the 'noisy hell' of existence. It is perhaps one of the best poems which Annensky wrote, with its subdued, gloomy rhetoric and its highly-coloured, glittering imagery. The poem is addressed to an unknown woman. The poet rejects her physical charms, and retains only the memory of the 'cold serpent of suffering' concealed behind them. In the banal and brightly-coloured ballroom of the world, where a trite waltz jangles and whines, he summons up visions of a more heroic suffering:

Зову мечтой я звуки Парсифаля,  
И Тень, и Смерть над маской короля...

The poet rejects the woman because he is unwilling to yield to the vulgar temptations of an earthly love, which can only wound him fatally. And yet, a knowing doubt haunts him: what if the vulgarity and triviality of this world are only the exteriorized symptoms of man's longing for the Ideal? -
This profound and disturbing thought lies at the very heart of Annensky's poetic world-outlook. Evil may be simply the desire for Good. But if this is so, then Good must exist in a superhuman, transcendent reality, for it can only be achieved through the permanent cessation of suffering, brutality and anguish. The victory of the Ideal implies the defeat of the Self. This is the fundamental significance of the next trilistnik, which forms the corollary to the one we have just discussed.

_В волшебную призму_ (115) depicts the poet holding in his hands a crystal prism. As he turns the prism, he sees changing shapes and colours within it. The magic is threefold: it is possible to look through the prism from three angles. Looking through it from the first angle, the poet sees hands pressed together in torment over the flame of a fire. Turning the prism again, he sees pale hands outstretched in anguish, surrounded by abysmal gloom. Looking through the third side he sees

Ни сжатых, ни рознятых рук,
Но радуги нету победней,
Чем радуга кончных мук!...
What is the meaning of this poem? It is, surely, that the poet, convinced that life is only 'the torment of the Ideal' (*muka ideala*), can conceive of the Ideal only in terms of 'finished torments', that is, in terms of death, a death which appears as a bright rainbow. The more far-reaching consequences of this idea will be seen later on in this discussion. For the moment, it is enough to note that for Annensky the Ideal no longer represents a positive goal - he rather conceives of it as a perpetual negation of human existence. The perception of the Ideal is also the perception of death-in-life. This is an advance on the notion of the Ideal put forward in *Tikhie pesni*.

Absence, and the icy fire of detachment - these are the things the poet prizes most. Only these enable him to withstand the onslaughts of fate. But they also deaden him, burn him up. *Troe* represents the fulfilment of a dream expressed by the poet in *Trilstnik prizrachny* (123-125):

O, daj'mnie tylko mig, no v žizni, ne vo sне,
Chтob mog я стать огнём или сгореть в огне!

Мучительный сонет, 125

In *Troe*, Annensky uses 'mythological' and allegorical imagery in order to stress that the event he describes is an imaginary one, that he is not the *on* of the poem, and that 'he' is only in
the dream of the Ideal. The poet is consumed by the fire of the Muse's torch and dies, leaving only the 'flame' of his poetry burning in the aether, a symbol of hopeless love. Only the Muse and poet's art remain - the torment of existence is cancelled out:

Да на ложе глубокого рва,
Пенной ризой покрыта до пят,
Однокая грезит вдова —
И холодные воды крият...

Yet even in this imaginary picture the colours are dim, the landscape stark and depressing. The fulfilment of the Ideal means the farewell to life, the 'lonely widow' of the poem.

Probuzhdenie (116), employing a kind of extended metaphor much used by Mayakovsky in later years (compare this poem with Mayakovsky's Oblako v shtanakh, section 1, lines 137 et seq.) illustrates yet another kind of death. The fires of love have consumed the poet's heart:

В сердце, как после пожара,
Ходит удушливый дым.

In the second stanza the poet summons up courage with which to face his situation. Although the emotional stability of his life has been destroyed, and his heart seems like a smouldering
ruin, he believes that he can find his way through the smoke and fumes towards an understanding of the delusions which lead him to this catastrophe. There follows an extraordinary image: the sun, shining through the mist, seems to the poet like an invalid risen from his sickbed, with a yellow moon-face. This image of the risen sun is a symbol of hope. And yet the victory is a negative one:

Хребий, о сердце, твой понят —  
Старого пепла не тронь...  
Больше проклятый огонь  
Стен твоих черных не тронет!

The poet will renounce love in the future, fearing it is a destructive force. Thus he will live on in anguish and submit to a kind of living death.

The consequence of this negation, however, is that the poet can remain his own master, and that, although he may suffer, at least his suffering is not born of deceit and delusion, but rather of a desire for truth and self-consciousness. This idea appears frequently in Annensky's critical writing. In Bely ekstaz (1) he writes: Искусство всегда эгоистично, — и оно радуется самой живой и непосредственной радостью. Итак осталась одна неразрешимость муки.

(1) Kniga otrazhenii II, p. 41.
In this context we may also cite part of the late prose-poem *Mysli-igly* (PS p. 97). The firtree's needles fall 'with pain and torment' to the ground – they are the poet's thoughts and images, and he exhorts them: Падайте же на всеприемлющее черное лоно вы, мысли, ненужные людям! Падайте, потому что и вы были иногда прекрасны, хотя бы тем, что никого не радовали... The act of creation, although it may be futile and agonizing, is nevertheless valid. Art is torment; and as it is the process of suffering, it can never enter the sphere of the passive, the complete. The joy of creation lies in the apprehension of incompleteness, even though that incompleteness may imply the most intense sufferings for the poet. Creation is authentic, it represents the poetic ego in a self-conscious state dissolved in the phenomena of existence. Thus the Ideal in itself can never represent a victory – if it were attained, the poet's authenticity would be negated. Art is the process of the struggle for the Ideal, which can never be attained, or which can be reached only in death. It is wrong to attribute a death-wish to Annensky, as some of his critics have tried to do (notably V. Khodasevich and G. Chulkov). His poetry is constantly rebelling against that final solution of all problems, and is turned instead towards existence, concerning itself with the tensions and psychology of the poetic I dissolved in the phenomena of experience.
Annensky discusses all this in his article *Yumor Lermontova* in which existence is reduced to the interplay between the demands of two complementary forces: *Pokyanie* and *Zhalost*. I cite the whole passage:

The importance of these words for an understanding of Annensky's poetry can hardly be overemphasized. The 'dirt' of the surrounding world is also the poet's anguish; and just as his consciousness of the world is determined by his relation towards it, by the *zhalost* which he feels for all things, and by the remorse and repentance, the *pokayanie* which the consciousness of his own guilt before others brings, so his anguish is

(1) *Kniga Otrazhenii* II, pp. 23–24.
split in two, becoming the active projection of these two complementary emotions. The temptation to escape from this agonizing duality is very strong. The poet has to realize that nothing can help him transcend a reality which is himself and which he has created. This is the fundamental theme of Kiparisovy larets, and we shall see it reflected in the next group of poems.

Death and anguish are contrasted in Trilistnik koshmarny (112-114). To i eto, the last poem of the cycle, is a difficult poem, but it contains an idea which is important not only to the trilistnik itself, but also to the whole of the Larets. The poet is lying in bed, suffering from a fever, in a half-waking state. He is aware of the thick, impenetrable darkness that surrounds him, darkness which is like a stone:

Ночь не тает. Ночь как камень.

In contrast to the unmelting darkness, the ice outside in the street melts and flows, a pure consciousness and emotion:

Плача тает только лед.

But there is ice in the poet's room, the ice which is placed on his forehead in order to calm his fever. This ice melts too, but for a different reason:
The poet thinks of the fate of the pieces of ice - they melt in vain, for they cannot hope to quench the fire of the poet's delirium. They are doomed to fall as liquid onto the burning surface of his skin - the kosteř of the third stanza. There follows an extraordinary superimposition of images:

Если тоген луч фонарный
На скользоте топора.

The sense of these lines must be interpreted as follows: the pieces of ice which cool the poet's fever are hacked from the street by an ice-breaker outside. As long as the poet's illness continues (his nausea), they must continue to fall under the ice-breaker's axe. Some of them will find their way to the poet's house, where they will serve the same purpose as before. The poet feels an innate contrast between the 'suffering' of the ice and his own agony. In fact, the ice does not weep; it only melts - the fact that it melts from the heat generated by his suffering, and not from purely natural causes, does not make it any more human. The ice is not dying - it will come again next year, and melt again next year. The poet prays only that the fusion of
himself with the ice does not occur in reverse fashion, that
the nightmare will not turn to real death: everything will
pardon the ice if it is only This, i.e. Nightmare, and not That,
or Death. (Compare this poem with Nebo zvězdamí v tumane (154).)

The second poem of the cycle also takes up the correspondence
between death and nightmare. This time the nightmare is a
waking one, or rather, perhaps, the memory of a waking experience
distorted through the lens of fever and hallucination. The
poet dreams that he is wandering through the labyrinth of the
catacombs, unable to breathe the airless atmosphere. Someone,
perhaps a priest, gives him some of the water 'from the cross'
to drink... He asks if the end of the passage is in sight, and
is told that it will come soon. But the journey underground
goes on and on, and suddenly the labyrinth becomes a symbol of
human destiny:

Нет, не хочу, не хочу!
Как? Ни людей, ни пути?
Гасит дыханье свечу?
Тише... Ты должен ползти...

The tension between life and death is made plain. Life is in fact
the inability to die, the unfulfilled desire to which Kierkegaard
refers.
Perhaps the strangest treatment of the subject comes in the poem *Koshmary*. It seems that the genesis of the poem lies in the story *Klara Milich* by Turgenev: Annensky's interest in this story is already evident in his essay *Umirayushchii Turgenev* from the first Book of Reflections (1). In general, Annensky's preoccupation with dead women (or a particular dead woman) is surprising. We have already noticed it in such poems as *Khrizantema* (71), *Svetly nimb* (118) and *Ballada* (118). Why should this be? Is it only one more aspect of Annensky's continual insistence on a personified beauty? In *Simvoly krasoty u russkikh pisatelei* (2) Annensky makes the point that Russian writers have always conceived of beauty in a female aspect. Or is there a biographical reason? As Setchkarev points out (3), there is no evidence from what we know of Annensky's life to suggest some deep-rooted and long-lasting affair with an unknown woman, such as Makovsky suggests. (4) And yet the recurring image of a woman permeates the whole of Annensky's poetry, and much of his criticism. There can, obviously, be no simple answer. In the present context one can only point to the fact that very often Annensky tends to liken life to a

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woman (cf. the essay Bely ekstaz(1), for example), and that nightmare, anguish and general unease are often synonymous with human existence in his poetry. In the essay Simvoly krasoty u russkikh pisatelei which we mentioned above all these associations are found together. It is necessary to quote here at some length (2):

Поэзия возникает из мечтательного общения человека с жизнью. Отсюда понятно, что идея красоты не может оставаться в ней одной чистой идеей. Красота обращается в чувство и в желание поэта и живет в поэзии, как нечто гораздо более конкретное, сложное, и, главное, более узкое, чем в словаре, чем в мысли.

Стенда́ль где-то назвал красоту обещанием счастья (la promesse de bonheur). В этом признании и можно найти один из ключей к пониманию поэтической концепции красоты вообще. Красота для поэта есть или красота женщины, или красота, как женщина.

Во всяком случае именно этой красоты мы невольно ищем в поэзии, и как раз в этом смысле красота составляет противовес к идеям муки, самоограничения, жертвы, которые, как мы уже видели, тоже питают поэзию. Жизнь, составляя предел для поэтической грезы и делая ее не только содержательной, но серьезной и глубокой, а главное живой и заразительной, - эта жизнь как-бы заботится о рав-

новесии в душе человека, когда душа воспринимает поэзию. Отрицательная, болезненная сила муки уравновешивается в поэзии силой красоты, в которой заключена возможность счастья. При этом идеи муки и красоты иногда сближаются, их сочетание их вызывают при этом своеобразные символы, но мы не перестаем и тогда чувствовать их исконное противоречие друг другу. В поэзии, как в жизни, красота и мука не нейтрализуются, - они дают только более или менее интересные сплетения.

It is one of these bolee ili menee interesnye spleteniya which appears in the poem Koshmary. The poet embraces life, anguish and beauty in the aspect of a woman. Creation and nightmare are linked in the lines

Поймите: к вам стучится сумасшедший,
Бог знает где и с кем всю ночь провёдший,
Оборванный, и речь его дика,
И камешков полна его рука;
Того гляди — другую опростает,
Вас листьями сухими закидает...
But is the woman real? Is she not also somehow fused with this stuttering madman? The poet wonders whether she is not waiting for him at all, but for some second person. Is this perhaps the spectral Klara Milich, and is her lover the dead Aratov? The poet, while he makes love to the real woman, is conscious of her other, ghostly aspect. Afterwards, like Aratov, he knows that he has been visited by a super-terrestrial being:

И вдруг я весь стал существо иное...

This is a typical example of Annensky's poetic technique. The poet projects himself and his environment into a symbol which is steeped in suffering and beauty. Then he brings back his I thus dissolved, and transforms reality. There are many examples of this process in the *trilistniki*.

The will to suffering, in Annensky's view the only way for the poet to retain his self-mastery, displays itself very forcefully in two more microcycles: *Trilistnik sentimental'ny* (101-103) and *Trilistnik shutochny* (145-146). The poems in the first *trilistnik* seem to be totally unrelated at first sight. *Oduvanchiki* concerns a slight episode observed by the poet at the seaside, *Staraya sharmanka* expresses an idea very similar to that expressed in *Smychok i struny* (*Trilistnik soblazna* (99-100)) and *Verbnaya nedelya* is an extraordinary poem about the advent
of spring. Let us first analyse the individual poems.

There is little that can be said about the first poem of the cycle. The poet watches a young girl at the seaside trying to 'plant' some dandelions she has picked in the sand on the beach. The dandelions will not stay upright in the soft sand, so the girl's mother removes the stalks from the flowers, and places the flowers on the surface of the sand. Now at least they look as if they have been planted, and the child is satisfied. The poem is perhaps a reflection on the easiness with which deceit and illusion are accepted by children - in the light of Annensky's other poetry, we cannot avoid comparing this simple illusion with the much greater and more serious illusions of later life. The nursery-rhyme formulae and consciously naive expression of the piece conceal a certain irony and banality.

Staraya sharmanka (102) is a poem about a musical instrument. The resemblance to Smychok i struny is immediately apparent, but in the poem now under discussion symbolism, rather than allegory, is the fundamental element. A tedious and difficult spring follows a hard, long winter. In the languor of a May sunset an old street organ grinds out its music, music which seems filled with bitterness and resentment. Yet it will never stop playing, for the very act of 'singing' (or existing) is automatic - suffering, creation and life are inextricably connected;
Once again, in this poem we see revealed the connection which often exists in Annensky's poetry between objects and pity. The street organ is certainly a symbol—and Annensky uses the symbol so as to make it extend into two related but polar spheres of consciousness. In one sense, the street organ is the pain of life, of creation, of love, indeed of all activity; but in another it is a helpless, pathetic object, doomed to exist. This is a good example of Annensky's psychological technique: we feel with the street organ, we identify ourselves with it, but we also feel for it, we step outside ourselves and witness our own helplessness as though through the eyes of another. The object acts both symbolically and as a real entity: this duality relates, it must be pointed out, to Annensky's preoccupation with the duality of human nature, which we have already seen expressed in poems like *Dvoïnik* (66), *Kotory?* (67), *U groba* (66), etc.

Of *Verbnaya nedelya*, the critic S. Karlinsky has written that it is a rare and strange example of surrealism in Russian poetry, and that there is nothing like this even in contemporary verse.
until Mayakovsky's shestipalaya nepravda or some of Poplavsky's poems. Certainly, the imagery of the second stanza, with its 'hollow-eyed icons' and 'Lazaruses forgotten in dark pits' is extraordinary, even for Annensky. But we should not overlook the fact that this imagistic extremism is not used simply for effect, but serves to express, perhaps more forcefully than in any of the other poems on this theme, the poet's profound horror of the forces set into motion by the advent of spring in nature and man. Again and again in his poems on this subject, the poet stresses the disparity between nature in its natural rebirth and man's sense of mortality and frailty in beholding it. Spring is often associated with images of Christianity, especially of resurrection, a concept which Annensky clearly believes cannot withstand the hideous, all-powerful resurrection of nature in spring. Once again, we are confronted with a final image which expresses the anguish of the immanent and the material—spleen:

И за всех, чья жизнь невозвратима,
Плаки жаркие слезы по вербе
На румяные щеки херувима.

The image is strange; it is also 'precious' in the sense that the sonnet Toska vozvrata (87) is best described by this adjective. And it is the 'preciosity' of the image that

characterises the whole cycle. The unifying principle of the \textit{trilstnik} is not a theme here - it is a mood, a whim, even a poetic device - the deliberately invoked connotations of 'sentimentality'. The poet welcomes his anguish as the prerequisite of creation. Here it is painful and real because it is clothed in a children's rhyme, an image from Wilhelm Müller, and the extravagant banality of a surrealistic landscape - but these enable the poet to distance himself from emotions and nightmares which might otherwise engulf him altogether.

There is something of the same objectivity in \textit{Trilstnik shutochny} (145-146). The \textit{trilstnik} is composed entirely of sonnets, and this is significant perhaps, indicating an intensified preoccupation with problems of form and style. The first two sonnets are concerned with the associations which different metres and rhythms have for Annensky. The 'joke' here consists in the creation of enjambements which split words into different syllables, one of which acquires a dual meaning:

\begin{quote}
Узнаю вас, близкий рампе,
Друг крылатый эпиграмм, Пэ -
- она третьего размер.

Вы играли уж при мер -
- цаньи утра бледной лампе
Танцы нежные Химер.
\end{quote}
But the joke acquires a grimmer aspect in the last sonnet, "Chelovek. Here also there are phonetic 'tricks', assonances, alliterations - but they are closely linked to the extremely personal ideas expressed in the poem. The poet depicts his fate as the unrewarding struggle of a blind automaton to 'split the rays from transparent planets' into da i net, na akhi i bya! and to live in agitation before an Ideal which does not seem to exist. If his spirit were freed from the limitations of the Real, it would no longer be a spirit - he would himself be a god. In the last two lines of the poem Annensky gives a verbal picture of the absurdity and conflicts which he sees in himself and around him in the world. The words pil' and 'tubo' suggest a vision of life as a perpetual hunt, with the individual as the prey of the Ideal; 'tyu-tyu' and 'bo-bo', expressions from children's language, imply the same idea. In the constant alternation of the consonants 'b', 'kh', and 'd' throughout the poem Annensky stresses the limitations of words, their incapacity to express the Ideal. Finally, as is implied in the title, the whole of human existence is seen as an unequal struggle between the gods on the one hand, and man, armed with inadequate tools and weapons, on the other.
We have already seen something of Annensky's negative attitude towards love. And indeed, it is in the field of human relationships that spleen and anguish pose the greatest problems. Before going on to discuss these problems, essential to Annensky's poetry, it is necessary to discuss Trilistnik soblazna (99-101), as it is here that anguish and love are seen to conflict so as to produce desolation and despair. In the first poem, Maki, some poppies in a field suggest lips 'full of temptation and poison', but 'like a hungry impotence', and 'like the unfolded wings of scarlet butterflies'. (This last simile is astonishing in its accuracy and vividness - Osip Mandel'shtam, especially in his earlier poetry, surely owes something to Annensky in this respect.) The erotic flavour of the poppies is inextricably connected with impotence. The garden is empty and desolate - the dried-up poppies stand in blistering light and heat.

как головы старух,
Осенены с небес сияющим потиром.

The voluptuousness of the poppies entails their own destruction and agony - love is cruel and wasteful, making an arid waste of life. The variant (99) adds little to the first version of the poem. The poppies are 'wings of scarlet batiste, which have unfolded and do not quiver', and they assume a more actively menacing
And the image of old women acquires a religious edge.

*Smychok i struny* presents the connection between love and anguish by means of an allegorical narrative. The allegory, however, is never pointed, never explicitly stated — it is left to the reader to sense the meaning concealed behind the words and images. The opening of the poem is tinged with a fantastic, dreamlike quality:

Какой тяжёлый, темный сон!
Как эти выси мутно-лунны!

These lines are reminiscent of the poem *Kotory?*(67), with its undertones of ecstasy and desire, and also the sense it creates of a world stretching far above and beyond the intimate world of the poet as an individual. Indeed, this poem, like *Kotory?*, may be interpreted as an allegory describing the creative process, although it is doubtful whether Annensky would have placed it in a cycle called *Trilistnik soblazna* had this been his intention. In lines three and four the subject of the allegory
is presented - someone has opened a violin case which has lain closed for many years. The bow and the violin start to think and talk: the bow does not recognize the strings of the violin at first, for although it has touched them in the case for years, it has not been able to 'see' them. In the second stanza the bow wonders who it is who has come to play the violin. A fine example of the way in which Annensky is capable of simultaneously combining subjective monologue with detached description appears in the sentence: Кто зажег/Два желтых лики, два унылых... The bow is aware of the sad picture which it and the violin must present to the eyes of the man who has opened the case. By this technique Annensky is able to make the reader feel pity for inanimate objects, a feature of his work which is most marked in the trilistniki. In the third stanza the violinist begins to play, and the violin and bow come together again:

"О, как давно! Сквозь эту тьму
Скажи одно: ты та ли, та ли?"
И струны ластились к нему,
Звяня, но, ластясь, трепетали.

In the last line of this stanza the first elements of doubt appear. The bow longs for a joyful consummation of the long-awaited union - but the violin cannot share this joy. The
fourth stanza begins with another question from the bow. This time the violin answers yes, but in its heart it feels pain. The bow understands, the violinist stops playing, and the echoes of the bow's questions go on reverberating inside the violin. What had been music for others was in fact only torment for the bow and the violin. The torment is not over, however, for the violinist begins to play again, and does not stop until morning. When the daylight enters the room it finds a scene of desolation and death:

lijke solnce их нашло без сил
На черном бархате постели.

Thus, just as in Maki, ecstasy leads only to suffering and annihilation. The allegory is clear: the bow and the violin are a man and a woman, and the music is that of their love for one another, a love which is irretrievably bound up with suffering.

The third poem V marte is perhaps less striking original than the other two. In its vocabulary and imagery it recalls the type of romance cultivated by such poets as Nadson and Polonsky in the decade before Annensky began to write the poems he is remembered for. There is a possibility, although it must inevitably remain only a hypothesis, that this poem, together with one or two others in the Trilistniki — notably Traumerei (107) and Rômans bez muzyki (122), was written earlier than most of
the others in the cycle. Certainly, those of Annensky's poems written before 1890 which we do know show definite similarities to the poems named above (compare Kak ya lyubil ot gorodskogo shuma - 12 - with Traumerei). This must, I repeat, remain pure speculation, since the chronology of Annensky's poetry has yet to be established. It would not be surprising, nevertheless, if Annensky had decided to admit at least a few of his 'bednye nimfy' into a work which he knew would eventually reach the light of day.

V marte has a clear thematic connection with the other poems in the trilistnik. Like them, it describes a transition from ecstasy into desolation. The poem concerns a garden, the garden of the poet's love for an unknown woman, and the motivic relationships hinge on a skilful interplay between the consciousness of human mortality and an awareness of nature's eternity. Then poet tells his beloved not to forget the morning of their love for each other (since toloko utro lyubvi khorosho, and toloko raz byvayut v zhizni vstrechi), and the vision of the 'brightly-black breast' of the earth in springtime. There is a direct parallel between the love of two people and the awakening of the earth in spring:

Меж лохмотьев рубашки своей снежной
Только раз и желала она,-
Только раз напоил ее март огневой,
Да пьянее вина!
But for the earth, the expression 'tol'ko raz' is inappropriate, since it will have other awakenings, other springs. For the two lovers there is only time for one such 'spring' - they are mortal and will grow old. The contrast is brought out with great brilliance in the last stanza, where the words 'tol'ko raz' are repeated with a monotonous fatalism until the last line:

Только раз... в этот раз...

Witnessing the spring, the two people shiver and are stricken with envy. They leave the garden.

Thus even love proves inadequate against the all-pervading tide of the poet's anguish. But there is a danger here - the anguish of despairingly retaining one's identity may lead to isolation and the rejection of existence altogether. *Trilistnik toski* (119-121) pinpoints the problem:

Мне всегда открывается та же
Залитая чернилом страница.
Я уйду от людей, но куда же,
От ночных мне куда схорониться?

Все живые так стали далеки,
Всё небытое стало так вято,
И слились позабытые строки
До зари в мутно-черные пятна.

Весь я там в невозможном ответе,
Где миражные буквы мачут...

...Я люблю, когда в доме есть дети
И когда по ночам они плачут.
The nightmare of creation may serve only to isolate the poet from his fellow beings. This is also the idea expressed in Toska belogo kamnya: the white stone of the city in summer fills the poet with anguish. Even the people in the streets seem lifeless, turned to stone. The poet can no longer distinguish between objects and people:

И не всё ли равно вам:
Камни там или люди?

And he escapes into a poetic dream which is at once одур' and kolybel'ya-temnitsa. Imprisoned here he may never be able to return to the world of the living again:

Так, устав от узора,
Я мечтой замираю
В белом глянце фарфора
С ободочком по краю.

Trilistnik odinochestva (148-149) carries the argument still further. The first two poems of the cycle describe the poet's love of solitude: when he is alone he can forget the chary yarkoi prelesti - he sees only ognei netlennye tsvety. A dream of distant hands changes from an ecstatic invocation of beauty into a destructive fantasy:

Но знаю... дремотно жмёлел,
Я брошу волшебную нить,
What is the connection which Annensky sees between isolation and destructiveness? Perhaps it is best expressed in the essay on Dostoievsy entitled *Mechtateli i izbrannik*, which begins with a statement about existence: Кроме подневольного участия в жизни каждый из нас имеет с ней, жизнью, лично свое, чисто мечтательное общение. (1)

This 'traumatic' relationship with life is divided into two categories - there is that of the daydreamer, and that of the poet. The difference between them is that while the dreamer loves only himself, imagining himself to the ruler of the universe, the poet is беззаветно влюблен в самую жизнь. Поэту тесно в подполье и тосно, тосно от зеленой жвачки мечтателей. (2) The dreamer mistakes his isolation for a moral and spiritual superiority, his basement room for an imperial palace. The poet, on the other hand, is conscious of his own insignificance. He, however, is not content simply to experience dreams of transcendence - he also wants to record them. And while "высокое и святое в мечте становится в словах мечтателя пошлым и жалостно-мелким", "алмазные слова поэта прикрывают иногда самые грязные желания, самые крохотные страстишки, самую страшную память о падении, об оскорблениях". (3)

(1) Kniga otrazhenii II, p. 3. (2) Ibid., p. 6. (3) Ibid., p. 6.
While the dreamer escapes, or thinks that he escapes, from the world which hinders him, the poet involves his immanent, most personal experiences in his 'diamond' dreams which emerge as poems. Indeed the poet is not really isolated at all, in the sense that the dreamer is isolated from his fellow human beings. This is the keynote of Tristnik tolp (138-139), the counterpart to Tristnik odinochestva. The title reminds us of Pushkin's battle with the chern' - and in fact Annensky reinterprets Pushkin's formulation of the conflict in an entirely new way. The chern' is, for Annensky, the daydreamer.

Prelogudiya (138), the opening poem, is quite explicit:

Я жизни не боюсь. Своим бодрящим шумом
Она дает гореть, дает светиться думам.
Тревога, а не мысль растет в безлюдной мгле,
И холодно цветам ночами в христале.

It is interesting to note how frequently Annensky introduces the metaphor of flowers in crystal to denote states of isolation. Here, of course, the metaphor is used in a different way - isolation may often be be negative', 'the flowers are cold at nights in their crystal'. Yet although he rejects the notion of the poet as recluse,Annensky does have one reservation. Unlike others, he is sometimes frozen with anguish in the midst of his daily
activity. From such moments his poems are born:

Ho в праздности моей рассеяны мгновенья,  
Когда мучительно душе прикосновенье,  
И я дрожу среди вас, дрожу за свой покой,  
Как спичку на ветру загородив рукой...

Thus Annensky's attitude towards the crowd is a gentle one: self-effacing, the poet is aware of himself in the community of men. At certain moments he lets himself be absorbed into that community, into the world at large. When it is returned to him it is utterly transformed. The slow return to normality is also the process of creation, as the mixture of external reality with the poet's \[ \text{rubs itself off} \] on the page. Annensky reserves his condemnation for the daydreamer. It is not the fashionable ladies at a recital (Posle kontserta) nor the society ladies visiting a Buddhist ritual as detached spectators (Buddiiskaya messa v Parizhe) who are at fault; their lack of sensitivity is only sad, and indeed, were it not for their lack of perceptiveness how could the poet find anything interesting to write about? It is the hermit in each one of us that Annensky attacks. For although a poet may live alone all his life, his poetry will nevertheless connect him to others, since it is expression, speech. The dreamer who lives alone, who constructs for himself a purely imaginary world of fantasy, soon becomes the dictator and
tyrant. Annensky coincides with Dostoeievsky on this point.

Nonetheless, isolation is seen by Annensky as a fundamental problem of human existence. Later we shall see how he deals with this problem. For the moment, let us examine some of the ways in which Annensky dissolves his poetic I in the world.

3.

‘Object’ Trilistniki.

The Trilistniki contain many examples of the way in which Annensky connects the world of inner, subjective emotions and tensions with the world of material objects and phenomena. In his hands, the material does not simply become a correlative for the spiritual moment; rather the material world is fused with the poet’s psyche, is indistinguishable from it. Flowers, gardens, musical instruments, winter landscapes appear in the poems with intense clarity and vividness, they seem to exist in themselves — and yet always there is the insight and psychological experience of the poet. The violin and the bow, the doll tossed about in the stream, the amethysts, all these are.
not simply objects or representations of objects - they are also statements. They acquire a new dimension, are extended into a space which is a conflict between reality and ideal, between actuality and transfiguration. This technique of extension is in many ways similar to Rimbaud's method of 'opening out' objects, of letting them float loose in the consciousness:

- O buffet du vieux temps, tu sais bien des histoires
Et tu voudrais conter tes contes, et tu bruis
Quand s'ouvrent lentement tes grandes portes noires.

Yet Annensky goes even further than Rimbaud as regards the representation of objects. Whereas Rimbaud eventually abandoned the description of the material world altogether, preferring finally to cross the threshold of pure abstraction and visceral experience, Annensky remained faithful to the figurative elements of his art. He made the object into a narrative - he tells the 'contes' of Rimbaud's sonnet.

The poems of Trilistnik obrechnosti (108-110) are some of the darkest that Annensky ever wrote. Two of them are concerned with time in its most immediate and concrete aspect - the clock and the watch -, and the third depicts a presentiment of death. Each poem is extremely compressed. Each is
original too, in spite of the subject matter—compare Stal'naya tsikada with poems by Rollinat and Sully Prudhomme on the same theme, both entitled La Montre.

Budil'nik, like the poem which follows it, is clear in its essentials, but somewhat obscure in its details. The poet describes his alarm-clock, which he detests:

Обручена рассвету
Печаль ее рулад...
Как я игрушку эту
Не слушать был бы рад...

In the second stanza of the poem, he complains of its monotony—each morning the process is the same: first, the loud, smooth ringing of the bell which, as the mechanism runs down, soon becomes a dull, jangling sound. The 'grebënka' of line 11 refers to the bell itself—situated on top of the clock, it reminds the poet of a cockscomb. Line 13 takes us back to the street-organ with its 'tsepkii val'. (Incidentally, one of the projected titles of the poem was Arefina šarmanka.) The ringing of the alarm bell is like 'a story made of incoherent phrases'—clutching at the tiny gvozdochki of the mechanism, the bell (or the 'story') seeks a 'full-stop', that is, tries to stop ringing. The story is kosnovazychny bred o chëm-to nedobore, a tiresome murmur of grief at the prospect of years still to be lived. The last two stanzas present some difficulty. If we accept razmináya (line 25) in its present
form, the clause beginning *gde net ni slëz razluki* (line 21) does not make sense. What does *razminaya* refer to? Does it refer to *mashinka* (line 24) - but then why 'I' at the beginning of the last stanza? It seems necessary to read *razminayu* in order to restore some clarity to the whole sentence beginning *Tseplyayasya za gvozdochki* (line 13) that is, to treat the last stanza as a separate sentence in itself: 'And tediously I unwind the spring for half an hour, where lies a ludicrous and superfluous beauty'. However even this reading is not entirely satisfactory. If one is prepared to admit the 'I' at the beginning of line 26 as being necessary to fill out the metre, and being otherwise superfluous, the *pruzhina* now relates to *mashinka dlya chudes* (line 24), a reading which makes more sense. By the second last stanza, the poet's heart has become identified with the clock - it is *schëtchëik muki* (line 23). Thus we might paraphrase the poem in the following manner: The poet complains about the monotonous ringing of his alarm-clock every morning. The roulade reminds him of an incoherent story, a story about his own future, when his heart will become like the alarm-bell. It too will pour out its anguish in the incoherent stammerings of poetry, poetry filled with a consciousness of tedium and of its own beauty, a beauty which is superfluous when compared to the approach of death.
Stal'naya tsikada also hinges on the heart-mechanism parallel. The poem concerns a visit to a watch-maker's. The poet's watch has stopped, and he takes it to the watch-maker to have it repaired. Watching the opened watch under the watch-maker's fingers, the poet is struck with a sudden thought: the steel 'wings' and 'cicadas' remind him of his own heart, a heart which has stopped beating. For the moment he is as if dead. Time stands still and Anguish vanishes temporarily. But he knows that the watch-maker will 'fasten the steel heart's quivering to the wings' chirping, and again unfasten them'; he will set the mechanism in motion once more, and the unbearable conflict between the inhuman, 'eternal' ticking of the steel springs and wheels and the beating of the poet's heart will make itself known as Anguish again:

Молча сейчас вернется
И будет со мной — Тоска.

There is also an implied parallel between the watch-maker and God. This is the basis of the poem, at any rate. A more detailed examination reveals that Annensky has intentionally 'confused' the meaning in order to convey the impression that for the few moments of silence in the watch-maker's shop the steel mechanism and the poet's heart have fused into one. Thus, in the third
stanza, the poet addresses the 'cicadas' - but he is also addressing his own heart:

Жадным крылом циклады
Нетерпеливо бьют:
Счастьем ли, что близко, рады,
Муки ли конец зовут?...

These lines convey a sense of unbearable tension, as if the poet felt himself on the point of a heart attack - Annensky did in fact suffer from heart disease, and eventually died of it.

These two poems illustrate, once again, Annensky's ability to 'exteriorise' highly complex states of mind. The alarm-clock and the watch are seen from a detached, objective viewpoint - but they are also deeply felt objects, imbued with a symbolic or allegoric significance which far transcends everyday reality. From the trivial and the commonplace, Annensky descends into the darkest recesses of the subconscious. These 'diamond words' certainly conceal samuyu strashnyu pamyat' o padenii, ob oskorbleniyakh.

The third poem, Chery siluet, is less immediately striking than the other two, but it also conveys a strong sense of terror and anguish in the face of passing time. Life is filled with the 'anguish of growing terror'. People lie to one another, in order to delude themselves and to hide from the awful truth of death. Life is a room: through its frozen window the
shadow of illness peers, the watchman of human existence. The riddle of life remains unsolved, although sometimes the poet feels that if he could only grasp the present moment in its entirety, the Ideal would give up its secrets to him. But every moment passes before he has time to get about catching it. It is always replaced with the black silhouette of disease and death at the window-pane:

А сад заглох... и дверь туда забита...
И снег идет... и черный силует
Захолодел на зеркале гранита.

The 'objects' of *Trilistnik vagonny* (128-130) are all the physical aspects of railway travel - the trains, the smoke, the sleeping-divans, the stations, and so on. Anguish emerges in a particularly painful and immediate aspect in the poem *Toska vokzala*. Here Annensky concentrates on the details of a repellant scene, the station at midday, hot and overwhelmingly stifling, some half-dead flies on a billboard. The short bursts of images, like snapshots, emphasize the fragmentary nature of existence for the poet. The whole scene is frozen and sterile - once again, Annensky uses the curious word *tochka* to emphasize that the 'story' has been stopped, that in the shimmering of midday life has died. Anything is better than this fixity, even the greasy, belching locomotive which comes to
take the poet away against his will. The last stanza seems to envisage self-annihilation as the only way out of this hell:

Уничтожиться, канув
В этот омут безликий,
Прямо в одурь диванов,
В полосатые тики!...

The poet's consciousness collides and disintegrates against the striped ticking of the divan.

V vagone describes the poet's impressions while travelling. Travel is a state of suspension - whatever problems are tormenting the poet are temporarily in abeyance:

"До завтра, - говорю тебе, -
Сегодня мы с тобой квиты".

It seems to the poet that the dawn affirms that his beloved has pardoned him.

The third poem, Zimnii poezd, resumes the strong veshchestvennost of the first. This picture of a train hurtling through the darkness is a work of Expressionism in the same tradition and spirit as, for example, Ernst Stadler's Fahrt Über die Kölner Rheinbrücke bei Nacht or Heym's Die Dämonen der Städte. The terrifying image of Midnight in the poem expands to embrace the whole of existence:
Annensky stretches allegory to its uttermost limits here - Midnight and Dawn are not so much allegorical figures as symbols charged with dread and anguish. There is no escape from the nightmare - dawn brings its own suffering. And Annensky uses a very effectively down-to-earth image with which to denote the awakening to a painful reality after a night of fevered nightmares:

И стойко должен зуб больной
Перегрызать холодный камень.

The poems in Trilistnik v parke (133-134) all concern statues. Bronzovy poet is finely constructed, but otherwise relatively conventional in style and content. At twilight the poet walks in a park. A sense of the limitations of human life seizes him. As in Dekoratsiya, and elsewhere, Annensky refers to experience as a book:

Не знаю, повесть ли была так коротка,
Иль я не дочитал последней половины?..
The image of someone sitting on a park bench acquires a sinister aspect as the shadows lengthen and night approaches. It is an image which recurs several times in Annensky's work (see, for example, Osen' - 153). But finally everything fuses together in the darkness, the poem is ready to be written and symbolically the statue of a poet seems about to leap from its pedestal onto the dew-covered grass.

The importance of this poem is that in it Annensky emphasizes the life-like quality of the statue, its latent vitality. This emphasis is present in Annensky's attitude towards beauty. He prefers a beauty which is alive and incomplete, not one perfect and dead. This emerges very clearly in the remaining two poems of the trilistnik. Ya na dne, a surrealistic piece, shows the poet drowned, the broken-off hand of a statue in the water of a fountain. This dreamlike situation corresponds to the poet's actual situation, one of total alienation:

Я на дне, я печальный обломок,
Надо мной зеленеет вода.
Из тяжелых стеклянных потемок
Нет путей никому, никуда...

As he lies on the base of the fountain, he remembers that above him stands the statue of Andromeda, who yearns for him
Thus the fusion of the poet's spiritual state with the object is complete: while the statue itself is influenced by the poet's anguish and alienation — it is crippled — nonetheless that anguish and alienation are transmuted into something beautiful in the evocation of the marble form. Suffering becomes beauty, the poet is allowed to draw a veil of dignity for one moment over самые грязные желания, самую стршную память о падении.

This is also the theme of the last poem, *Pace*, although Annensky carries the identification of beauty with anguish to its conclusion here. The disfigured statue of a young girl, representing peace, attracts the poet with its pathetic isolation and dignity. Although the rain and wind have scarred her, the girl still stands proudly among the other statues of the Tsarskoe Selo park — so proud does she seem that no one even scythes the grass surrounding her. It is the fatal connection between beauty and injury, innocence and cruelty, Ideal and Spleen which the poet deciphers in her:

Люблю обиду в ней, ее ужасный нос,
И ноги сжатые, и грубый узел кос.

Особенно, когда холодный дождик сеет,
И нагота ее беспомощно белеет...

Yet he is not seeking immortality. On the contrary, even if
immortality were offered him he would not accept it. He is concerned rather to attain the bearing of the statue which, although it suffers, is indifferent to suffering:

О, дайте вечность мне, — и вечность я отдам
За равнодушие к обидам и годам.

Human beings, unfortunately, can never reach this indifference, however. Beauty for them is always suffering because it can be only a temporal beauty which is doomed to fade and die.

It is perhaps questionable whether *Trilistnik iz staroi tetradi* (134-137) should be discussed under the heading of this section, for the poems which belong to it are not all strictly concerned with material objects. Nonetheless, the conception of the *trilistnik* — that of an 'old notebook' belonging to the poet — does suggest the opening up of new dimensions in an unremarkable object. The poems all seem to be accounts of momentary impressions, perhaps belonging to an earlier period of the poet's life.

*Toska mayatnika* is an obvious relative of *Stal'naya tsikada* and *Budil'nik*. Lying in bed, perhaps unable to get up because of illness, the poet becomes fascinated by the regular ticking of the pendulum in an old clock. On the face of the clock a luxuriant rose has been painted — a strange and grotesque
contrast to the fateful oracle of the pendulum. In the poet's fevered imagination the pendulum begins to walk all over the house like a madman (compare this poem with Koshmary). It is a maniac of precision, measuring and testing existence at every stroke:

Ходит-машет, а для такта
И уравнивая шаг,
С злобным рвением "так-то, так-то"
Повторяет маниак...

Kartinka again represents a moment of anguished insight into reality, but this time the moral aspect of the situation is stressed. Travelling by carriage in filthy weather, while the rain drums on the roof, the poet tries to sleep. He dozes off, and on awakening finds himself staring at a young girl of about seven, dressed in rags, who is walking beside the carriage and looking in the window. This amazonka, this peasant girl, whose life is equivalent to the mud and water of the road, catches all the poet’s attention. He sees a direct and simultaneous parallel between the filth of the landscape, his own anguish, and the hideously deprived existence of the young girl. The streaming rain and the mud fuse with his consciousness, and in the image of the girl the world is revealed as an unforgettable incarnation of human guilt:
Всё поплыло в хлебь и смесь,
Пересмякло, поспилилось...

The approaching dawn is only a transitory moment for the poet, however, it is simply a disgusting moment. For the girl this dawn is a symbol of her wasted youth, of the cruelty which the world has wrought on her life:

И щемящей укоризне
Уступило забытье:
"Это — праздник для неё."
Это — утро, утро жизни".

Staraya usad'ba describes the poet's return to (perhaps) the home of his childhood. He is in search of some kind of continuity between past and present. But the house is in ruins, the ponds are filled with mud, there is nothing but waste and decay. The poet seems to hear the voices of the past accusing him, jeering at him. They want him to leave them in peace. The whole scene suddenly fills the poet with revulsion: he is forced to realize that the past cannot be resuscitated, that each moment of our experience is an isolated cell which can never be regained:

Иль истомы сердцу надо моему?
Тени дома? Шум сада?.. Не пойму...

The poem is interesting from a structural point of view. Built in elliptical fashion, the lines mirror one another in pairs. Sometimes there is phonetic imitation within the line itself:

Что утрат-то!.. Брат на брата... Что обид!...
Прах и гнилость... Накренилось... А стоит...
Annensky uses objects to exteriorize moods and psychological tensions. So far we have seen examples in which the process is fairly straightforward: from a definite 'world' of objects the poet draws essences. Now we must examine a process which is almost the reverse. In Trilistnik balaganny (140-142) and Trilistnik bumazhny (131-132) Annensky imposes objects onto nature - we see the world through, in one case, the imagery of the puppet theatre, in the other through the associative qualities of paper. It is a surrealist technique - the dream influences the reality, discovers in it new possibilities, unexplored dimensions and shapes.

The subject matter of the first poem of Trilistnik balaganny, Serebryan polden', shows that Annensky was aware of the attempts made by Blok and some of the other symbolists to resuscitate the form of the puppet theatre as a serious art genre. Annensky, however, uses the puppet theme in his own original way. Serebryan polden', like the other two poems, is very impressionistic in character: it would appear that the poet, seated at his writing-desk, and suffering from an attack of temporary asphyxia, is looking out over the mist in the garden of his house at midday. The flecks of sunlight which penetrate the mist from time to time seem like coloured balloons, jostling and chasing the sun. But a mist also covers the poet's eyes, a mist of disease. He sees that
the objects, the ideals of his life, represented by the belaya pompa byuro, must fade like the sun in the mist. At last he dreams that Harlequin and Pierrot come to stand by his coffin holding candles — the illness is so closely connected with the impressions of the outside world that the outside world, filtered through a hallucination of comedy and puppet-like animation, fuses with the poet's consciousness. Harlequin and Pierrot are thus the only symbols which can represent the poet's sense of approaching death.

Shariki detskie (141) develops the theme from a social angle. Here the balloons represent the anguish and longing of the balloon-seller for freedom and justice:

Два часа потом глазей, да в оба!
Хорошо ведь, говорят, на воле.
Чирикнуть, ваше степеньство, что ли?
Прикажите для общего восторгу,
Три семьдесят пять — без торгун!
Ужели же менее
За освободительное движение?

It is interesting to speculate as to the influence this poem, and Nervy (163) may have had on Blok's The Twelve. Annensky's poems display the same features of dramatization, speech-rhythms, colloquial language and sociological insight.
The theme of *Umiranie* (142) is again personal. The sun which hangs above the poet all day as he lies ill in bed seems to him like an enormous balloon held on a string and floating above him. As twilight approaches, the poet longs for night:

Хоть бы ночь скорее, ночной!
Самому бы изнемочь,
Да забыться примириенным,
И уйти бы одуренным
В одуряющую ночь!

Yet before this oblivion sets in, the poet asks the deep-scarlet balloon of the setting sun to linger for a while over his bed, so that he can fuse himself, identify himself with it.

Paper is associated with winter in Annensky's poetry. We have already seen in the poem *Noyabr'* (72) how the winter landscape reminds the poet of 'the work of a fine pen', with its clarity, its immobility and its remoteness from human existence. All this emerges very clearly in *Trilistnik bumazhny*(131-132). In *Sputnitse*, the poet stands at sunset with his companion before a widespread landscape of snow, blue sky and trees. His companion greets the scene as if it were a memory - after all, the fading colours combined with such clarity and precision of contour are beautiful. But the poet perceives a threat in this stainless purity:
В пустыне выжженного неба
Я вижу мертвую зарю
Из незакатного Эреба.

There is a fear in the poet's mind that the world may prove to
made of paper, that everything may congeal into a hideous limbo
of perpetual fading. He turns to go:

Уйдем... Мне более невмочь
Застылость этих четких линий
И этот свод картоно-синий...
Пусть будет солнце или ночь!...

Nezhaiyava shows a reed in winter trying to assert the fact
that it is alive against the overpowering deadness of winter.
Nature is a menacing, sterile cage of lines and paper:

На бумаге синей,
Грубо, грубо синей,
Но в тончайшей сетке,
Разметались ветки,
Ветки-паустинки.

The frost on the reed begins to melt - the drops of liquid are
like tears. But tears are warm, they flow. There is no room for
emotion in the savage detachment and isolation of winter:
Qfort makes the winter landscape-drawing parallel obvious.
The tolling of bells seems to have frozen above the icy land¬
scape. The poet senses himself drawn forward by a nightmarish
clarity into the frozen lines, which seem to have been produced
precisely but coarsely, like strokes made by vodka spilt on bronze.
Even thought, for Annensky the most precious faculty of all, is
petrified in this wilderness:

И она была язвима —
Только ядом долгих зим.

5)

Nature.

In the trilistniki, Annensky's nature imagery assumes an almost
symbolic aspect; by this I mean that one can observe throughout
the nature poems an almost systematic unity of artistic purpose. As in Tikhie pesni, Annensky uses nature as an instrument with which to project and define different areas of experience and sensation. Many of the characteristics of the former book are carried over into the trilistniki: the concept of the skazka in nature, the 'decorative' element, the varied significance of the seasons. But whereas in Tikhie pesni these features are more or less unorganized, with perhaps only the significance of the seasons emerging in a coherent sequence of poems, in the trilistniki the psychological and material preoccupations of the poet become thematically grouped. This is to a great extent due to the nature of the trilistnik itself. Annensky groups the poems according to elements and aspects of nature: Trilistnik ognenny, Trilistnik dozhdevoi, Trilistnik zamiranniya, and so on. Only two of the nature trilistniki bear 'seasonal' titles: Trilistnik osennii and Trilistnik vesennii.

Each trilistnik represents a set of variations on a particular state of mind suggested by a condition of nature. But the poems do not simply reflect nature and its relation to the poet's I—when surveyed as a group, they constitute a definite statement about existence. In my analysis I shall try to reconstruct that statement from its individual elements.

The basis of the symbolic myth which Annensky constructs in the
nature poems is a transition from permanence, daylight, frozen substantiality into flux, shadow, movement. This transition is indicative of the poet's own hatred of fixity, which impedes creation and the flow of ideas necessary to creation. Flux is anguish, while fixity is death.

The winter landscape embodies these polarities. The zastylost' chëtkikh lini (Trilistnik bumazhny - Sputnitse (131)) appears on bumage sinei, grubo, grubo sinei. This landscape is stylized - it is a drawing, repellent in its fixity and clarity, done on paper, the sky. Even twilight lends no charm to this immobility: the poet feels imprisoned, longs for annihilation and death: Pust' budet solntse ili noch'. Annensky stresses the coarseness of the scene:

А вдали рисунок четкий -
Леса синие верхи,
Как на меди крепкой водкой
Проведенны штрихи.

Офорт, 132

and also the connections he sees between this coarseness and his own extinguished thoughts:

Неподвижно в кольца дым
Черной души врезан дым...
И она была язвима -
Только ядом долгих зим.

Офорт.

Winter is the sterility of the poet's inner life. Opposed to this sterility are the eyes of an unknown woman 'who meets the fading of sunset clouds and the grey-pink reflections like a memory' (Sputnitse); the dead reeds which waits for the airy embrace and green dresses of May, and whose tears are flecks of
of melted ice against a ferocious blue sky (Nezhivaya); the 'black thought' of Ofort. All these are symbols of anguish - the only escape from the all-pervading mesh of lines and branches. In these symbols feeling is expressed, feeling which is valid and necessary, even though it may be painful. If it were not present, the poet's world would freeze and crystallize around him into sterile immobility.

Ledyanaya tyur'ma/expresses a similar notion. The sun has melted a hole in a stretch of ice - it is midwinter, and so the ice has melted in vain, it will be frozen again. To the poet, this frozen patch seems like a dream of the ice, a dream of spring. And this futile melting is sympathetic to him - it is more attuned to the nature of human existence than spring itself. For in spring there is no chance of dreams - the thaw is a brute fact which simply inspires horror, recalling chaos and death. So the poet appeals to the melted ice not 'to preserve its azure prison for the magic of the spring':

Но не желай свидетелям безмолвным
До чар весны сберечь свой синий плен...
Ты не мечта, ты будешь только тлен
Раскованным и громозвучным волнам.

It will be better if the ice melts prematurely and in vain, rather than let itself be destroyed in the apocalypse of the spring. At
least the poet can find a reflection of his own dreams in it now -
later, the universal destruction will repel him.

Melting is equated with feeling in another poem, Sneg. Flakes
of wet snow are like 'flocks of innocent dreams' in the mist. Melting snow appears in Muchitel'ny sonet (125):

Мне нужен талый снег под желтязной огня,
Сквозь потное стекло светящего устало...

And from this poem it is clear that melting snow is closely
connected in the poet's mind with the idea of poetic creation.

It is the moment before the advent of spring that the poet
seeks out, not the spring itself. Melting snow and ice are sad,
they excite the poet's pity. Spring is self-assured and brutal,
a barbaric awakening of forces which are essentially hostile to
human beings. This is the meaning of the poem Doch'Iaira (127),
which contrasts the gentle act of Christ in raising a girl from
sickness with the cheerless savagery of spring. In Chernaya vesna
(143) spring is even seen as a kind of death. A grim funeral
procession meets spring on the way to the graveyard:

Да тупо черная весна
Глядела в студень глаз —
С облезлых крыш, из бурых ям,
С позеленелых лип...
If winter portrays the physical aspect of death, then spring represents for Annensky the convulsions of the death-agony. The only sympathetic moments are those of fading and dying. It is in the sensation of falling that he finds his aesthetic equilibrium.

Twilight appears in Trilistnik sumerechny (97-98) as a phenomenon which is both natural and psychological. A late-romantic and symbolist convention becomes in Annensky's hands a highly original symbol of the peculiar anguish and heightened perceptiveness of the I suspended between two opposed states of being. This mood is the thematic 'stalk' which unites the three poems of the cycle. In the poems it varies from a suicidal longing (Sirenevaya mgla), through a sense of neutral calm inspired by an evening in late summer (Toska mimolëtnosti) to the experience of a shadow-world before the candles are brought into a dark room (Svechku vnesli) already expressed in poems like V otkrytye okna (68) and Svechka gasnet (82). Sirenevaya mgla presents a winter landscape - the street outside the poet's house, which is covered in drifting snow. As is frequently the case in Annensky's poems, the scene is viewed from indoors. Alone in his room at nightfall, the poet notices that the snow outside has turned lilac in the fading light. The 'lilac gloom' becomes
personified and 'looks in' the window:

Я молил ей, сиреневую мглу:
"Погости-побудь... со мной в моем углу..."

But the lilac gloom answers that if the poet really loves her, then he must follow her 'gde nad omutom sineet tonkii lěđ', a clear invitation to suicide. In this poem the gap which separates the poet from the natural world, the gap which is represented by the window-pane, can only be bridged by death. This is an idea familiar from the poetry of, for example, Eduard Morike, but Annensky gives it a new dimension in the incorporeal, hardly real image of the 'lilac gloom', in itself merely the reflection of fading light on snow. It is interesting to observe here once again how a dreamlike state of mind can so easily become, in the world of Annensky's poetry, a nightmare, destructive and malicious:

"А у печки-то никто нас не видал...
Только те мои, кто волен да удал".

In Toska mimolūtnosti the moment of twilight appears not so much as an invitation to self-destruction, but rather as a moment of neutrality, corresponding to a similar condition in the poet's psyche. The poet stands at his window from which other windows, 'helplessly flung open', are visible, together with 'white, unseen' walls. This might be a description of an early painting of Chirico. The moment of twilight seems to be a point between
two despairs:

Там всё, что прожито, - жаланье и тоска,
Там всё, что близится, - унылость и забвенье.

And for a heart 'где ни стрел, ни слез, ни ароматов', in one which is devoid of all feeling, the dreamlike hesitancy of the black and stifling clouds provides a better accompaniment than any golden or rose-coloured sunset.

In both the poems discussed here, the moment of twilight is accompanied by the creation of a dreamlike 'world' of definitely coloured psychological areas: in the first poem, the lilac gloom; in the second, the overcast gloom of a summer evening. In the last poem, Svechku vnesli, the poet concentrates all his attention on this aspect of the twilight experience:

Не мерещится ль вам иногда,
Когда сумерки ходят по дому,
Тут же возле иная среда,
Где живем мы совсем по-другому?

The emphasis here, however, is not so much on a world which corresponds to a state of mind, but rather on the presentiment of a secondary, mysterious world. This is the other aspect of twilight - it brings the consciousness to a heightened awareness, to a second self. We have already seen this in poems like Bessonitsa reběnka (83) and V otkrytye okna (68), but it is given a much more consistent expression here. Above all, the impression
which the poet has at twilight is one of unity - the shadows fuse together gently, and so do people:

С тенью тень так мягко слилась,
Там бывает такая минута,
Что лучами незримыми глаз
Мы уходим друг в друга как будто.

The experience of fading is examined in another cycle - (146-147) Trilistnik zamiraniya. / The poet loves 'all those things which in this world have no resonance, no echo', the lilac sky of a winter morning, the dying-away of echoes after a troika has passed through a wood. This is the nearest he can come to the Ideal - at least that which is dying or already dead cannot disturb him with annoying parallels. (Ya lyublyu...) The second poem, Zakatny zvon v pole, shows once again the poet's fear of zastylost'. Chimes floating through the air at evening seem to promise peace and freedom; but perhaps the poet is mistaken, perhaps these sounds will freeze 'like the pearl of the islands in blue inlets'. This is a highly concrete poem, the 'meaning' of which is difficult to extract with any great degree of precision. One can only point to the transition from liquid flux to pearly coldness which takes place throughout the three stanzas. This is an excellent example of Annensky's manipulation of psychological tensions, using purely natural imagery. The poem cannot be paraphrased because of this. The last poem depicts the disappearance of all hope.
There is a beautiful contrast here (and also perhaps a connection) between the 'pale luminary' which 'barely gilds the cupola above us' and the 'poison of betrayals' and 'torment of dissolution'... The beauty which now appears is seen as the result of a hard and bitter struggle against evil and suffering, a struggle which is never finally won.

If ice represents the passive, complete element in Annensky's poetic universe, fire is the element which occupies the opposite pole. Fire has the power to inspire the poet, to bring the Ideal within his reach:

О, дай мне только миг, но в жизни, не во сне, Чтоб мог я стать огнем или сгореть в огне!

/ Мучительный сонет 125 /

Refracted in the bright facets of the amethyst, the glaring light of midday becomes distilled into a severe gloom through which only the glimmering of a candle penetrates from time to time. This lilac, wavering flame reassures the poet:

Что где-то есть не наша связь, 
А лучезарное сиянье.

Thus the element of fire is seen as an aid towards movement, creation and the Ideal. In Sizy zakat the rising sun represents a kind of hope:

Вдруг — точно яркий призыв, 
Даль чем-то резко раз'ялась: 
Мягкие тучи пробив, 
Медное солнце смеялось.
Rain and clouds are generally symbols of release. Perhaps 'symbol' is the wrong word in this connection, for the interpretation of these aspects of nature depends to a great degree upon the poet's immediate, sensuous reaction to them. This is true, indeed, of all Annensky's 'symbolism' — it is essentially concrete, and relies on sense-association just as much as on purely intellectual and aesthetic elements.

The three poems of Trilistnik dozhdevoi (121-122) illustrate this very well. Rain lashes the 'asphalt' city. The falling of the rain is beautiful:

Как масло в руке святотатца,
Глазеты вокруг залила.

But it is also impudent, and even threatens the poet's identity:

О нет! Без твоих превращений,
В одно что-нибудь застывай!
Не хочешь ли дремой осеньей
Окутать кокетливо май?

Thus the poet calls for zastylost', a quality which is repellent to him. Annensky sees man's place in nature as a subsidiary one. Man is constantly threatened by extremes, he himself is weak and fearful. The rain eventually stops,
however, and the poet, if he wants to, can find happiness in the wet asphalt. In *Oktyabr'skii mif* the rain is likened to the tears of a blind man who presses his eyes to the windowpane.

The flux of nature is also the flux of human existence. The bare and muddy spring, with its last dirty-white patches of snow, its miserable rutted tracks, looks into the eyes of a corpse and finds its own image mirrored in the cold jelly of the dead man's eyes:

О люди! Тяжек жизни след
По рүтьвинам путей,
Но ничего печальной нет,
Как встреча двух смертей.

/ Черная весна 143 /

The life-size doll lost in the waves of the Imatra is a symbol of human isolation:

И в сердце сознанье глубоко,
Что с ним родился только страх,
Что в мире оно одиноко,
Как старая кукла в волнах...

/ То было на Валлен-Коски 104 /

Isolation, then, is the central theme of the *trilistniki*, and of the entire *Kiparisovy larets*. The very conception of the book shows this: the poet's soul, immured in a cypress chest of
external necessity, examines itself, tries to find its relation
to the rest of humanity, a relation which is its identity.
Annensky found the establishment of this relation very difficult,
at times even impossible. His own life was extremely fragmented
between the exigencies of his work as a gymnasium director and
scholar of the Greek and Roman classics on the one hand, and
the aspiration towards a freedom from those exigencies in the
métier of poetry. An unusually frank letter to an acquaintance,
A.V. Borodina, of 1905, reveals some of the inner contradictions
which perplexed the poet:

Вы не можете себе представить, что приходится
переживать... Если Вы читали когда-нибудь пародии
Добролюбова, то, может быть, примените ко мне по этому
случаю его знаменитое:

Мы сознали: в грязной луже
Мы давно сидим,
И чем далее, тем хуже
Все себя грязным.

Вы спросите меня: "Зачем Вы не уйдете?" О,
сколько я думал об этом... Сколько я об этом мечтал...
Может быть, это было бы и не так трудно. Но знаете,
как Вы думаете серьезно? Имеет ли нравственное
право убежденный защитник классицизма бросить
его знамя в такой момент, когда она со всех сторон окруженъ злым неприятелем? Бежать не будет стыдно? И вот мое сердце, моя мысль, моя воля, весь я разрываясь между двумя решениями. Речь не о том, что легче, от чего сердце дольше будет исходить кровью, вопрос о том: что благороднее? Что менее подло? Чтоб выразиться скромнее, какое уж благородство в службе! (1)

Here is another extract from a letter, this time to a close friend of the poet, E. Mukhina, dated 19th May 1906:

Боже мой, как мне скучно. Дорогая моя, слышите ли Вы из Вашего далека, как мне скучно?.. Я сделал все, что полагалось на этот день. Кроме того, я исправил целый ворон корректуры, я написал три стихотворения, и не насытил этого зверя, который смотрит на меня из угла моей комнаты зелеными

(1) TSGALI.
кошачьими глазами и не уйдет никуда, потому что ему некуда уйти, а еще потому, что я его прикармливал и, кажется, даже не на шутку люблю... (1)

The poet and literary critic M. Voloshin, writing of Annensky in an obituary for Apollon in 1910, records the fragmented impression which he formed of the poet over several years:

В начале девяностых годов в беседе о прискорбных статьях Н.К.Михайловского о французских символистах: "Михайловский совсем не знал французской литературы – все сведения, которые он имел, он получал от Анненского". Тогда я подумал о Ник. Фед. Анненском, и только гораздо позже понял, что речь шла об Ин. Фед.

Года два спустя, еще до возникновения "Весов", Вал. Брюсов показал мне книгу со статьей о ритмах Бальмонта. На книге было неизвестное имя – И. Анненский. "Вот уже находятся, значит, молодые критики,

(1) TSGALI.
которые интересуются теми вопросами стиха, над которым мы работаем", говорил Брюсов.

Потом я читал в "Весах" рецензию о книге стихов "Никто" /псевдоним хитроумного УлиссаК, который избрал себе Ин. Фед./. К нему относились тоже как к молодому, начинающему поэту; он был сопоставлен с Иваном Рукавишниковым.

Когда в 1907 году Ф. Сологуб читал свою трагедию "Лаодамия", он упоминал о том, что на эту же тему написана трагедия И. Анненским. Затем мне попался на глаза толстый том Еврипиды в переводе с примечаниями и со статьями И. Анненского; помнится какие-то заметки, подписанные членом ученого комитета о этого же имени, то в "Гермес", то в "Журнале Министерства Народного Просвещения", доходили смутные слухи о директоре Царско-Сельской гимназии и об окружном инспекторе Петербургского учебного округа.

Но можно ли было догадаться о том, что этот окружной инспектор и директор гимназии, этот поэт-модернист, этот критик, заинтересованный ритмами Бальмонта, этот знаток французской литературы, к которому Михайловский обращался за сведениями, этот переводчик Еврипиды — все одно и то же лицо? (1)

This inner isolation and fragmentation which tended to keep Annensky apart from other poets of his time found a profound expression in his poetry. The second and third

(1) М. Волошин: Liki tvorchestva, Apollon, 1910, 4, Khronika, p. 12.
sections of *Kiparisovy larets* examine the problem of isolation, and even find a kind of solution to it.

**Skladni.**

The poems in this section are nearly all concerned with human relationships. Annensky concentrates all his attention on attitudes towards the other in its human form - a marked contrast to the majority of the poems in the *Trilistniki*, which in general reflect the inner consciousness of the poet in moments of anguish and isolation, the realization of the other in objects and landscapes, the search for identity in the extension of the self towards its own perceptions. The theme of the *Skladni* is perhaps to be found in the dilemma discussed earlier in relation to those poems dealing with isolation and communion. *Trevoga*, a *ne mysl' rastět v bezlyudnom mgle*: creation is impossible if the poet is walled in by the endless chain of concrete phenomena, the meaningless succession of daily trivia which only mirror himself; the black handwriting on the page
is a nauseating mass of insects unless 'children cry in the house at night'. Solitude is necessary for creation, but it can only be the solitude of a moment - the flaring of a match shielded from the wind by a hand. And in that moment there must be achieved the luchezarnoe sliyan'e of the poem Ametisty (110).

How can this fusion, this sliyan'e be achieved on the human plane? Love is no answer - love is a series of hallucinations which can easily become a nightmare, destroying mind and soul, a purely subjective experience which involves only the hope and disillusionment of the individual. Another relationship must be found, one which perceives each individual as a separate entity and which at the same time provides a basis for communion between subject and subject. In our examination of the Skladni and also of Razmetannye listy we shall see the implications of the search for this sense of a personal identity in nature and the world.

The first Skladen',Dobrodetel' (151-152), is a relatively slight composition, nervously humorous, yet at the same time significant if we are to understand the nature of the problems which torment the poet in his relations with others. The two poems are most probably addressed to the poet's wife, and they
concern the conflict which the poet feels between the duties and activities of everyday life and the moment of poetic insight and vision. They are essentially domestic poems, and they fit Mandel'shtam's description of Annensky very well. (1) The first poem, Rabochaya korzinka, depicts a domestic interior. The woman in the room is weaving a basket of straw, and the grey threads she draws together seem to draw all things into their fabric: the needle becomes a symbol of the poetic consciousness, searching out a unity in the semi-darkness, achieving the sliyan'e of phenomena necessary for creation. The poet's only desire is that his companion too should share the moment of perception, when 'Virtue fell asleep amidst the confused and tender skeins'. Why does Annensky introduce the word Dobrodetel' at this point? What is its significance? There can be no ready answer to these questions. In the latter years of his life Annensky was very much preoccupied with the relation of life to art, with the possibility that art might be a destroyer of the moral and purely human relations of life. This preoccupation was linked to a personal tragedy in Annensky's private life - we know very little about it, as yet. It found its expression in an intense

desire to grasp the meaning of Shakespeare's Hamlet. This much can be deduced from certain notes and jottings among Annensky's papers, and in the extremely fragmentary passages to be found in the fourth tetrad of Kiparisovy larets. For the moment I can only point out that the word Dobrodetel' in the poem under discussion has a positive connotation, that it reflects a personal integrity and sense of identity under pressure from an imperfect and tortured artistic experience. That it 'falls asleep' in the poem means that identity, relation to the other are momentarily destroyed.

The same problem is treated in the second poem of the Skladen', where Dobrodetel' appears in a very slight but intense aspect of family responsibility. If the poet's wife gets out of bed she may awake her sleeping child. The poet tells her not to waken it, but simply to come out into the garden with him and share in the perception of the moment between darkness and light when

В голубых фонарях,
Меж листов на ветвях,
Без числа
Восковые сиянья плывут,
И в саду,
Как в бреду,
Хризантемы цветут...
The essence of this moment of insight is that the poet feels it is meant not just for himself, but for another too: 'Dlya tebya ozhivil ya mechtu'. If his companion does not come out in a few minutes, the dream will be lost. The evanescent landscape demands a human presence - without it it will wither and die.

Kontrafaktsii (153) show a nature entirely personalized, but agonizingly split in its identity. May 'watches' the birch-tree burst into green, a process described allegorically by Annensky in a tiny dramatic scene (Vesna): a youth seizes a girl's bonnet and hangs it on the birch-tree. Some of the techniques commonly associated with the poetry of Boris Pasternak are already to be found in such 'animistic' poems of Annensky.

In stark contrast to the gay and animated scene of Vesna is the strange and sinister movement of Osen'. The park is seen at night - the moon is invaded by shreds of cloud like smoke and, dimly perceived, someone sits dozing on a bench. Towards dawn this figure gets up and hangs a 'distortedly-sinister and tormentingly-black pod' on a branch of the birch-tree. The pod is 'the size of a human being'. This strange and startling image vividly describes the black and bare part of the tree where the wind has torn away some leaves. It is important to observe here how nature in Annensky's poetry is so often a scenario or 'decoration', a backcloth on which
the conflicts of human existence are acted out in concrete images. Here the question is raised: what kind of a nature is it that can change so frightfully and so swiftly from one aspect to another? Does the 'contrafaction' not point to a corresponding duality in human identity, even between individuals? This thoroughly Tyutchevian idea lies at the foot of Annensky's attitude towards nature.

Skladen' romanticheskii (154-155) takes this notion of a fundamental isolation of individuals a little farther. As in Trilistnik sentimental'ny these poems have a definite colouring, a surface of superficiality. Nebo zvëzdami v tumane is a sentimental romance, built around a Christmas scene, with Christmas-trees at the windows of houses, and snow falling. Milaya is an imitation of a folk ballad, with suitable syntactic, rhythmic and imagistic conventions. It is behind such avowedly artificial constructions that Annensky sometimes conceals - or rather muffles - emotional pressures which would otherwise destroy the sozvuchiya which are such a striking feature of his tormented, yet low-keyed and restrained poetry. In the first poem of the sklade1 natural and human movements are fused successfully. There are no stars in the sky, only the lights from the Christmas trees at the windows. The poet stands face to face to a woman whom, possibly, he loves, but
who does not return his love. Snowflakes fly between them, preventing them from looking one another in the eye. As the flakes melt on the woman's eyelashes they seem like tears, yet tears uninspired by any grief, like stars, yet stars 'tired of burning'. Thus nature provides at once a connection and a barrier to the emotions of the two people. The poet envies the snowflakes because his beloved 'weeps' with them— if only he were the cause of the tears! Above all, there is the sense of a deep divide—the melting flakes, the false tears prevent the woman from seeing into the poet's eyes, from seeing the real suffering which must surely be reflected there.

*Milaya*, although on a much simpler level, also reflects the division which can grow between people. The 'milaya' peasant-girl answers her mother in a circumlocutory fashion, only after much questioning admitting that she has murdered her uncle. The whole idea is, typically for Annensky, extremely nasty—the romantic ballad becomes an image of rural horror and backwardness.

The two poems *Dve lyubvi* and *Dva parusa lodki odnoi* (155) challenge the very notion that love can be an effective means of communication between people. Annensky seems to think
that love divides people, makes them more conscious of their own separateness and remoteness from one another. This, at any rate, is the significance of Dva parusa lodki odnoi. The two people are seen as 'sails' fused by the 'storm of desire'. Yet, while everything else flows together in 'the night of the starless south', alone the two sails of the ship are not permitted to touch one another – their function is to be separately together. Dve lyubvi is a little more obscure: the general sense of the two stanzas seems to lie in an expression of desire to be the whole: 'to be like smoke, yet eternally young', 'to be like a shadow, but also night and day', although the distinction between the two kinds of love is not made as clear as it might be. Why are there two kinds of love?

On i ya (157) illustrates the old problem of the double in a new light. Listening to the murmur of piano-music, the poet feels his self, his I being carried upwards in an ecstasy of alienation until it becomes an on, a he – symbol of the poet's transcendent self. Yet the consciousness of this alone is not enough: like a piano-tuner, the poet must pick out all the notes of the piano which is his identity, let them die away one by one without echoes into the night. This represents an advance on the old idea that the poet begins to attain the
Ideal when he begins to write poetry - now the poet and the transcendent self are seen as opposites also. Poetry is somewhere between existence and essence - it lies in an intermediate position and watches and records the workings of the poet's soul. It is also anguish. How different from the creative process as described in Blok's Khudozhnik, where the moment of creation is envisaged as a moment of supreme liberation, which although when it crystallizes into verse must die, is nonetheless a means of transcendence. For Annensky the creative moment is a descent, an analysis of the self and its tensions, a return to rock-bottom, to the ground, the everyday, the 'three-leaved clover' of life. Annensky's sense of his own difference from the mainstream of Russian symbolism is clearly expressed in the poem Drugomu (156). This is yet another development of the 'isolation' theme: the poet senses himself divided from other poets by his very nature. The muse of the second generation of symbolists is very different from that of Annensky:

Твои мечты — менады по ночам,
И лунный вихрь в сверкании размаха
Им волны кос взметает по плечам.
The poet admires this bezumný porýv; but he realizes that the two types of poetry cannot coexist. Annensky deciphers the 'hieroglyphs of prophetic dreams', like the symbolists, but instead of writing the dreams down, as do his opposite numbers, he prefers to write his own tortured uzornye frazy. He has little enthusiasm for the fire and ecstasies of the symbolists, although he admires the passionate involvement and sophistication which they bring to their art. One obtains a similar impression from a reading of Annensky's long tripartite article about his symbolist contemporaries, published in the journal Apollon in the year of his death. (1) Although poets like Bal'mont, Sologub and Gippius are given almost unqualified praise, one feels a certain restraint in the passages dealing with Blok and Bely, in particular. Annensky sees his own poetry as crystallized anguish, awkwardly down-to-earth and intimate (the image of Andromache as a very ordinary woman wearing an ornate hairstyle is striking), and yet musical at the same time. He feels himself the odd man out at the 'feast' of Russian Symbolism, and indeed he was. At death, the remains of the unknown symbolist will be carried away 'amidst the petals of

a perfumed wreath'; Annensky's corpse will simply be hauled off in a hearse.

At this point in the poem the statement which Annensky is making becomes more complex. Aware of the singularity, the oddity of his poetry, aware of its rootedness in the I of experience, the poet realizes that there is not much chance of its being read after his death. Nonetheless, he believes that one day someone, another poet,

ее полюбит тень
В нетронуто-торжественном уборе...

When this discovery occurs the 'ghost' will live again, and will again live among people who 'cannot hear' 'its dumb flight'. But there is a danger here. If the reincarnation of the poet's spirit is once again to involve its isolation, there is a chance of his I simply being repeated throughout eternity - and this Annensky would find intolerable. If his 'brother and magus' is simply the poet 'lish' podnovlenny 'v nichtozhestve' then this will mean an infinite series of tortures and anguish for the poet's spirit. He will spend his life in a purgatory of eternal renascence. This is a dark thought, one which pervades much of Annensky's verse - isolation not simply as something which will pass, but as a
permanent condition of existence.

Razmetannye listy.

In this section groups of poems give way to single poems, the 'scattered leaves' of the title. Isolation is the pre-dominating theme here.

Nevozmozhno (158) is an invocation of solitariness and separateness. The letters of the word nevozmozhno have an almost magical significance for the poet: as he waits for his female companion by a battered gate, a memory the woman years earlier becomes confused with the barkhat ushedshie zvuki. Impossibility is desired by the poet because it is again a symptom of the limited, transient nature of things: word dies away after word, impression after impression, face after face:

"Если слово за словом, что цвет,
Упадает, белее тревожно,
Не печальных меж павшими нет,
Но люблю я одно — невозможно."
Sestre (159) also shows a moment frozen in the poet's memory, this time with extraordinary vividness. The strength of the affection makes him remember with great clarity: we see the green playroom with its low ceiling, the dull German book, the old nurse darning a stocking by a melting candle. Yet even in this close memory there is a flaw: the poet even read the title on the cover of the book were it not for the mist which clouds his eyes, the mist of distance and isolation. The scene 'lives on in the heart', but as a separate entity, a single piece of reality which the poet has managed to salvage from destruction and oblivion. The same idea is given expression in Zabvenie (159). While for the poet, and for other men, there can only be the forgetfulness of a soft autumn day in which the sun shines as if through stained-glass windows, only a sense of weariness and guilt, the face in the portrait remains eternally young, a moment transfixed eternally. Notice how Annensky does not simply contrast the portrait with the forgetfulness of the autumn day - the two are fused syntactically:

А оно уйдет, как дым,
Пережито, но осталось
На портрете молодым.
Stanz's nochi (160) seems to suggest that the best that any contact with another person can bring the poet is 'a few symbols', or perhaps only one: the presence of the poet's wife is replaced by a symbol of creativity:

Но не я томился и желац:
Сквозь фонарь, забытый на березе,
Тающий воск и плашал и пшлад.

In Mesyats (160), the poet seems to fear that there may be some demonic force, here represented by the moon, trying to prevent human beings from coming into contact with one another, trying constantly to sever with its yellow sickle, the bonds which tie reality together. Again and again the poet sees the essential fragmentation of nature and existence: two raindrops are likened to two melting lives connected 'hopelessly'... (Toska mediennykh kapel', 151). Looking around at the many phenomena of nature, the poet can find only a few that please him in any way: looking at the clouds at dawn, he is reminded that he was once young; looking at the clouds at evening, he knows that he will only be able to retain the 'ash' of their fire in his brain, ash which will yield nightmares. Finally he concludes that he loves only night
and flowers - notice how the image of flowers in crystal is introduced here in a positive sense. In Prëlyudiya (138), the image denoted sterility, isolation - here it represents a human presence:

Потому что - цветы это ты.
Тринадцать строк, 161

The loneliness of the flowers is now seen as the common lot of all men. Men can only perceive one another in a consciousness of each other's isolation.

And yet human beings can never accept this. They strive constantly for fusion and integration - in Annensky's poetry this striving is a positive force, it is anguish. Suffering and blindness are the conditions of existence. Man constantly rails at his fate, yet can never accept it. His spleen constantly shatters whatever chance he has of reaching an Ideal.

The poem Sredi mirov (165), clearly linked in language and style with the first two poems of Tikhie pesni, situated as it is comes as something of a surprise. Yet, read in the context of Razmetannyë listy, it is clearly related to the thematic emphasis of the poems which surround it. The 'She' of Sredi mirov is the Ideal, also sliyan'e. It is possible to read Poeziya (65) and Beskonechnost' (65) in a similar
sense. The 'others' (1. 4) of Sredi mirov are contrasted with the Ideal of intersubjective fusion: they are the reified, objective aspect of the poet's relationship with other people. It must be noted, however, that never does the poet fully escape from the 'thingness' of his existence: his life is a perpetual struggle to attain the Ideal - to transcend the meaningless limitations of the isolated, individual consciousness in purely physical contact with other people for an intersubjective collectivity. This struggle is the poet's anguish.

Two contradictory forces pull at the poet's I. One - spleen - drags it back from its aspirations into the cage of isolation; the other - Ideal - draws it towards other I's. The contradiction is folded back on itself, however, as the progress towards the Ideal is depicted in Annensky's poems only in the light shed by spleen and anguish. Thus, while in the poem Mirazhi (165) the poet's activity is seen as a reflection of other I's, in Garmoniya (166) it appears as a destroyer of them. The latter poem portrays the reflections of the poetic consciousness as similarly isolated entities: there is a suggestion that as long as the poet's I remains solitary and inward-looking it will harm other people. The kind of experience described in Preryvistya stroki (168), for example, is
not harmful to the poet alone - it also damages others.

These thematic elements are the ones which dominate the conclusion of [Kiparisov] larets in the poems Deti (170) and Moya toska (171). Both these poems are marked by a fierce rhetoric and a strangeness of imagery almost bordering on the eccentric. Deti in particular seems almost naïve at a first reading, with its cries of 'Lyudi! Brat'ya!', and its insistence on 'the innocent tears of children' - yet it is among the most important of all the poems written by Annensky. The same is true of Moya toska. The first question that must be asked by the reader is: who are the 'children' that appear in both poems? In Deti, is Annensky talking about real children, or have they a certain symbolic significance? The answer is to be found in between these alternatives. In Deti the emphasis is most certainly on the 'real' aspect of the children: Annensky is talking in this poem about injustice, exemplified in the suffering of children:

Ну, а те, что терпят боль,
У кого как нитки руки...

The poem centres on the problem of moral responsibility for the sufferings of others. In a world where children can be
subjected to atrocious suffering and insult, where injustice affects the innocent lives of those who are least able to resist it, there can be no peace of mind for the individual: 'pokoi nash tol'ko v muke'. It is clear that Annensky traces the anguished tenor of his own poetry back to the real world, that to suffering and injustice he can only reply with an art which makes them into its justification, its aesthetic. The 'children' are, in fact, both real children and the poet's creations, his verses. We have already seen references to poems as 'sick children' (Tretii muchitel'ny sonet), as 'the pale children of Doubt and Anxiety' (Nenuzhnye strofy); Deti represents a rationalization of this metaphor, its incorporation into the poet's aesthetic.

In koya toska (171), the poet's anguish is seen as the 'mother' of his poems which are the 'children' of the context:

В венке из тронутых, из вянувших азалий
Собралась петь она... Не смолк и первый стих,
Как маленьких детей у ней перевязали,
Сломали руки им и ослепили их.

But there is another element to be taken into account here,
one which is not present in _Deti_. Toska, anguish, must be interpreted in some degree as being the poet's 'beloved'. This rather surprising assertion can be substantiated if we examine the poem. After stating that, when he has left the world, the anguish that is expressed in his poems will live on after him, the poet begins to discuss the problem of love. It is not the expression of his unsuccessful love for women which will survive, for his own will has not proved strong enough to sustain the torments imposed by this emotion.

While he admires the strength of women he has loved, a strength which has helped them to withstand these afflictions, he himself doubts whether he can really call the emotions he has felt in such relationships by the name of 'love'. After all, love is traditionally something brilliant and astounding: 'ona kristall, efir...', and the degradations and injuries he has suffered in the course of his own life have been quite the opposite of all this:

Моя ж безлюбая — дрожит, как лошадь в мыле!
Ей — пир отравленный, мошеннический пир!

It is at this point that we become aware that Annensky has intentionally confused the idea of 'love' with that of 'anguish'...
and that the result is a metaphoric figure incorporating a kind of 'anti-love'. The 'moya' that begins line 11 flows imperceptibly towards the 'Ei' of line 12 - and thereafter the metamorphosis is sustained right to the end of the poem. Annensky is not talking about love, but rather about an elision of love with anguish in his personal experience which has given birth to a new and disturbing emotion - Toska. Toska is a sexless woman whose children (the poet's poems) have been mutilated and crippled. It is also an aggregate of the poet's striving for the Ideal, represented by 'love', and of his tormented existence. The combination of these two elements constitutes the poet's Muse, a Muse which he himself has invented from the material of his own experience and without which creation is impossible. In fact, the Muse is veselaya (l. 24) because it is connected in this way with creation.

The blur or shift which takes place in this poem between the subjective experience of the poet and the Other is the resolution of the contradictions between I and It which form the subject-matter of Skladni and Razmetannye listy. Within the context of Anguish the poet smashes the walls which separate him from others. Like Baudelaire, he is both the victim and the hangman, the wound and the knife. Indeed, the masochistic
imagery of Baudelaire is not out of place here: for in Annensky's poetic statement of the world relationships between imply suffering and evil. By at once loving and hating, creating and destroying himself within the polarities of Anguish Annensky can create an art which is adequate to the events of the outside world.

In my analysis of Liparisovy larets I have stressed one theme in particular - the poet's relationship with other people. It may be felt that my stress is too exclusive, that to give one theme prominence over all the others in this way is to simplify Annensky's book too much. And yet, as I have tried to show, it seems to be undeniable that the poems taken together describe the passage of the poet's isolated I through the prism of the material world and through the contradictions of personal relationships towards the resolution of those contradictions in Anguish. I have also tried to indicate that there is a structural logic to this process, revealed in the grouping of the poems in
various cyclical forms. Annensky seems to be searching for a new means of organizing lyrics within the framework of a book, and his search is surely a part of that broader quest for new poetic forms of which he speaks in his study of Al'mont. The following passage from that essay reflects in my opinion the subject-matter and formal preoccupations of Kinarisovy larets:

Мы никак не хотим допустить, что старые художественные приемы, которые годились для Манфреда и трагического Наполеона, вся эта тяжелая романтическая арматура мало пригодна для Меттерлинковского я: там была сильная воля, гордая замкнутость натуры, там было противопоставление себя целому миру, была условная определенность эмоций, была и не всегда интересная поэтически гармония между элементарной человеческой душой и природой, сделанной из одного куска. Здесь, напротив, мелькает я, которое хотелось бы стать целым миром, раствориться, разлиться в нем, я — замученное сознанием своего безвыходного одиночества, неизбежного конца и бесцепенности существоования; я в колпаке возвратов, под грузом наследственности, я — среди природы, где, наконец, незримо упрекая его, живут такие же я, я среди природы мистически ему близкой и кем-то больно и бесцепленной с его существованием.
Для передачи этого я нужен более беглый язык намеков, недосказов, символов: тут нельзя ни понять всего, о чем догадываясь, ни объяснить всего, что прозреваешь или что болезненно в себе ощущаешь, но для чего в языке иногда не найдешь и слова. Здесь нужна музыкальная потенция слова, нужна музыка уже не в качестве метронома, а для возбуждения в читателе творческого настроения, которое должно помочь ему опытом личных воспоминаний, интенсивностью проснувшейся тоски, неожданностью упреков, восполнить недосказанность пьесы и дать ей хотя и более узко-интимное и субъективное, но и более действенное значение. (1)

(1) Kniga otrazhenii I, p. 185.
As far as is known, Annensky wrote some thirty-one poems in prose. Twenty-seven of these, grouped together under the title *Autopsia*, seem to date from an intermediate stage in the poet's development (around 1890, the year of the Italian tour), although there is no concrete evidence to confirm this. The other four are stylistically closer to the later verse poems, and relate to the last years of the poet's life: they were, in fact, included by Krivich in his edition of *Posmertnye stikhi*.

The first question we must ask in connection with these works is a familiar one: what is a prose poem? The very name of the genre has a paradoxical ring to it, and yet the prose poem is an important genre in literature, with its roots in the French eighteenth century. Indeed, it was in France that the prose poem became a genre at all. For an account of that process we are indebted to the French scholar Suzanne Bernard. Her enormous thesis, *Le Poème en Prose de Baudelaire jusqu'à Nos Jours* (Paris, 1959), is the first systematic study of the genre.

Above all, the prose poem is an extension of traditional
lyrical verse forms. I quote from Dr Bernard: "Tout l'effort de la poésie française, depuis le romantisme, a tendu à faire éclater le carcan des conventions et des préceptes dans lequel s'étouffait l'esprit poétique: la rime, la métrique, toutes les règles du vers classique, les règles de la grammaire et de la logique usuelles. De même que le vers romantique et plus tard que le vers libre des Symbolistes, le poème en prose est né d'une révolte contre toutes les tyrannies formelles qui empêchent le poète de se créer un langage individuel, qui l'oblige à verser dans des moules tout faits la matière ductile de ses phrases." And she adds: "Mais le poème en prose a rejété plus complètement les lois métriques et prosodiques; il a refusé obstinément de se laisser codifier. La volonté anarchique, qui est à son origine, explique son polymorphisme et la difficulté qu'on éprouve à le définir." 1)

This question of definition is practically insoluble. When we examine the traditional verse forms, or even the eroded forms of vers libre, we can pick out characteristic features. In the case of the former, for example, we can establish principles that serve to distinguish the sonnet from the ode, the elegy from the epigram. But, as Dr Bernard states, "le poème en prose veut aller au-delà du langage,

et il se sert du langage; briser la forme, et il crée des formes; échapper à la littérature, et le voilà devenu un genre littéraire catalogué. C'est cette contradiction interne, cette antinomie essentielle qui lui donnent le caractère d'un art icarien, tendu vers un impossible dépassement de soi-même, vers une négation de ses propres conditions d'existence - et par la même, sans doute, hautement représentatif des efforts de toute la poésie française depuis le XIXᵉ siècle. Et sans doute une telle tentative comporte l'abandon par le poète des valeurs admises, des lois normales, des règles sociales et humaines... et tend à en faire l'explorateur insolite des régions inconnus, interdites.  

What Dr Bernard says here about the nature of the prose poem, its basis in a profoundly anarchistic, negating attitude towards society and the accepted norms of a language which has grown sterile and oppressive, we may surely apply to Annensky's own experiments in the genre. Degrees vary, of course: a sketch for a lyrical verse poem such as *Andante*, for example, can hardly be compared with the revolutionary cries of *Pesnya zastupa* or *Nad bresh'yu*. But nonetheless, in all Annensky's essays in the genre we can pick out the characteristics indicated by Dr Bernard: "Cette recherche,  

c'est précisément celle d'un ordre et d'une méthode. Il ne faut pas oublier que Bertrand impose à ses couplets une forme savante et préméditée; que Rimbaud voit dans le poète 'le suprême savant'... Le poème en prose suppose... une volonté consciente d'organisation en poème; il doit être un tout organique, autonome. Ce qui permet de le distinguer de la prose poétique (laquelle n'est qu'une matière, une forme du premier degré si l'on préfère, à partir de laquelle on peut construire aussi bien des essais, des romans, des poèmes); ceci nous amènera à admettre le critère de l'unité organique: si complexe soit-il, et si libre en apparence, le poème doit former un tout, un univers fermé, sous peine de perdre sa qualité de poème." 1)

This distinction between the organic unity of the prose poem and the inorganic diversity of the prose material is essential to Dr Bernard's (and indeed to every) definition of the genre: "Si j'ajoute que le poème est une organisation esthétique distincte, et qu'il n'est ni la nouvelle, ni le roman, ni l'essai (si 'poétiques' que puissent être ces derniers), j'aurai l'air de dire une chose évidente, et d'enfoncer des portes ouvertes: en fait, les limites sont ici très difficiles à tracer, et il peut arriver par exemple qu'un poème soit intitulé Conte.... Admettons, cependant, que d'une façon générale un poème ne se propose aucune fin en dehors de lui-même, pas plus narrative que démonstrative; s'il peut

utiliser des éléments narratifs, descriptifs... c'est à condition de les transcender et de les faire travailler, dans un ensemble et à des fins uniquement poétiques... nous avons là un critère de gratuité." 1)

In addition to these two characteristics of unity and gratuity, Bernard discerns a third: brevity. "Plus que le poème en vers, le poème en prose doit limiter les digressions morales ou autres, les développements explicatifs - tout ce qui le ramènerait aux autres genres de la prose, tout ce qui nuirait à son unité, à sa densité." 2) The poem in prose, finally, is rhythmic prose, whose characteristic features are an uneven dynamism, an effect of assymetry or expressive rupture, and a dislocation of the sentence.

Having attempted, with Dr Bernard's help, to characterise the genre, we must look briefly at its history. The first great master of the prose poem in France was Aloysius Bertrand. His lyrical extensions were written in the couplets of, for example, Gaspard de la Nuit, groups of two related phrases:

Les petits Savoyards sont de retour, et déjà leur cri interroge l'écho sonore du quartier; comme les hirondelles précèdent le printemps, ils précèdent l'hiver.
Octobre, ce courrier de l'hiver, heurte à la porte de nos demeures. Une pluie intermittente inonde la vitre offusquée, et le vent jonche des feuilles mortes du platane le perron solitaire.

Gradually the severity of this form became softened by the logic of the genre itself, as Dr Bernard has pointed out. In Le Spleen de Paris and the Petits Poèmes en Prose, Baudelaire conveyed "l'idéal obsédant" that is born from "la fréquentation des villes énormes", and "du croisement de leurs innombrables rapports." These poems are landscapes of the city, psychic and metaphysical promenades of a solitary dreamer among the shocks and violences of the industrial dawn. Here the rhythms are freer than with Bertrand, the perspectives vastly grander and more terrifying. With Rimbaud, the prose poem reaches an apotheosis: here indeed there is a turning of the poem upon itself to such an extent that the poet vanishes in the whirlpool at times, leaving only the roar of words. But still the urban theme is uppermost.

Annensky, who was well acquainted with the work of Baudelaire, must have read Le Spleen de Paris. The 'urban' emphasis in the Autopsia set is quite strong. Yet the decisive influence on the writing of Autopsia, and even of the later group of prose-poems seems to have come, not from Baudelaire directly, but from the Baudelaire-influenced examples of the genre in the Russian language, in particular the prose-poems of Turgenev. The only exception to this general rule is the prose-poem Koya dusha (pp. 103-107 of Posmertnye stikhi), which is easily
comparable with works of Baudelaire, perhaps even of Rimbaud.

Turgenev's *Stikhotvorenija v proze* were really sketches for projected narrative prose-works. As such, Dr. Bernard's stipulation of gratuit as one of the essential qualities of any work written in the genre would certainly not apply to them. Nevertheless some of the pieces do have a certain autonomous aspect, and represent a technical extension of the lyrical verse-forms which Turgenev himself used as a poet. Let us take as an example the poem *Starik*:

Настали темные, тяжелые дни...
Свои болезни, недуги людей милых, холод и мрак старости... Всё, что ты любил, чему отдавалась безвозвратно, - никнет и рарушается. Под гору пошла дорога.
Что же делать? Скорбеть? Горевать? Ни себе, ни другим ты этим не поможешь.
На засыхающем, покоробленном дереве лист мельче и реже - но зелень его та же.
Сожмись и ты, уйди в себя, в свои воспоминания, - и там, глубоко-глубоко, на самом дне сосредоточенной души, твоя прежняя, тебе одному доступная жизнь блеснет перед тобою своей пахучей, всё еще свежей зеленью и лаской и силой весны!
Но будь осторожен... не гляди вперед, бедный старик!

The tone is emotional, the poet in fact seems almost to be talking to himself, as if he were the *starik* of the poem. Yet even here the central figure appears not so much as a poetic image as an idea, perhaps a preparatory sketch for a character. All that saves this piece from becoming, like so many of the *Stikhotvorenija*, a scene from a story, is its
determined structure, the paragraphs forming stanza-like cadences in the manner of a lyrical verse poem. Let us now compare Turgenev’s poem with Annensky’s poem of the same name:

Молись, ты один. Какая мысль тихой стопой привела тебя сюда, бледный старики? Может быть, в темном храме с тобой говорит сам Бог, пугающий тебя велениями, несчастливый, родной Бог.

В твоем уме проходят вереницы мрак и копоть древнего храма и твоя суровая мужицкая голова: жизнь раба и нищего.

С грудью отлетели осыпавшиеся надежды, очарования твоей далекой и одинокой юности.

И ты верил, когда-то, и у тебя когда-то на сердце и тебе на скитальческом пути бодрящей струей во-рвался в душу свежий и благородный гимн первой любви. Она полюбила тебя за враждебную и горькую судьбу, которая огнула под ярмо твою гордую голову, за твою печальную, осмеленную юность, за твои реальны лохмотья, полюбила и пошла за тобой по жизненной дороге. Это—маленькая блондинка, и точно луч сияло на лице ее сальное и благострастное сердце. Она раз-делила с тобой бремя труда, мучения и стыд бедности и презренную людскую милостыню. И потом...

уснула. Потухшие глаза закрылись, под твоим поцелуем она сделалась такой крохотной. Куда она скрылась? В какую пучину бездонную или в высокую тучку на небе спряталась твоя нищая подруга, твоя влюбленная блондинка?

Молись, ты один. Медленным шагом привела тебя сюда грустная душа.

Ты—дрожащий старики.

Может быть, с тобой в темном церкви говорит твой грозный владыка, который все же дал тебе ее улыбку среди твоих злоключений.

Миновали и, затишье и бури.

Твой день теперь навсегда склонится к вечеру. Здесь у тебя ничего не осталось.
The resemblance to Turgenev's poem is striking. Annensky's starik is also seen looking to his past. But the subjective implications of this search in the past are different in each case. Whereas Turgenev's character finds in his past only misery and destitution, something to be forgotten if life is to continue, Annensky's old man has love in his past. This love may have been futile and doomed from the outset, but its memory illuminates the destitute past with a gentle light, softening miseries and contours. Turgenev never goes beyond the equation of his central character with the fear of death. Annensky opens his image like a symbol, letting his own subjectivity intertwine with it. The result is purely poetic: it fuses to one, to the text which is ordered rhythmically, resting on refrains, suspensions and repetitions (for example, Molis', ty Odin). What we read is a poetic transformation of the old man's life, not the poet's fear of death. Such a result is so much more vivid and striking than that achieved by Turgenev, whose poem by comparison looks rather dim, and, to put it bluntly, obvious: the juxtaposition of the writer and his character cannot become a symbol, releasing other symbolic interiors, but remains only an identification, a spiritual equation.
To make the comparison on a more general plane: Turgenev's beggars and peasants frequently tend to be the reflection of a tired and anxious old age. Annensky's workers are much more alive, and are the struggle against poverty, both spiritual and material. Nevertheless both writers share a preoccupation with 'populist' themes, and Annensky most certainly came under the influence of Turgenev in this respect. We must ourselves judge whether this is in fact the case by making a comparison of the two texts, for there is no documentary evidence available to support my claim. But let us look away from the question of influences and purely circumstantial connections to Annensky's prose-poems themselves.

I want to begin with a study of the four late prose-poems included in Krivich's edition of Posmertnye stikhi. In these, the 'populist' theme is more or less absent, although it does appear once (as the Persian porter of Nova dusha) in a very strange and disturbing form.

Andante (P.S., p.95) is, according to Krivich, 1) most probably a sketch for a verse poem. The drifting, hesitant phrases convey a thankfulness for the passing of day, for the gentle progression of a horse and carriage into night and oblivion. There are obvious parallels here with such verse-poems as Romans bez muzyki (122), Minuta (212) and others. But there seems here

1) Posmertnye stikhi Innokentiya Annenskogo pod redaktsiya V. Krivica, Petrograd 1923, p. 161.
to be little of the formal organisation which characterises many of the other prose pieces. It is, in fact, a preparatory phrasing of a verse-poem (probably never written) in prose.

Mysli-igly (P.S., pp. 97-98) comes much closer to being a poem in its own right. Here, as in the case of Starik, we are confronted with an image as the driving-force behind the prosodic movements of the poem:

Я - чахлая ель, я - печальная ель северного бора.

The poet is a withered fir-tree. His poems are emblems of futility, fir-needles that fall on ears which cannot understand such thoughts. He is the king of nothingness, *le roi d'une ténèbreuse vallée*, as Merrill's line states in the epigraph. Yet there is a hope that transcendence may come in the form of a new tree, a new poet who may grow in place of the old one:

И узнаешь - ли ты, что среди них были и мои, те самые, с которыми уходит теперь последняя кровь моего сердца, чтобы они создавали тебя, Неизвестный...

The conception of the poem is in fact very closely related to that of Drugomu (156), where the poet expresses a similar hope of a successor.

In Mysli-igly we can discern a pseudo-stanzaic, or even a couplet-like arrangement, a phrasing of the type noted by Suzanne Bernard in Bertrand's poems. Thus, the last section of the poem (from O, gordoe derevo to chto nikogo ne radovali) moves in two 'stanzas' phrased into two couplets.
Sentimental'noe vosproimyvan'ie (pp. 99-102) continues in the tragic key of the set. The poet talks of his Muse, of how his life has been a game of chance in which the prize is the glittering poem:

Человек целую ночь напролет били карты, а бледная улыбка всё не сходит с его уст, и всё ещё надеется он угадать своё счастье в быстро-мелькающем крае колод, не замечая даже ядовито-зелёной улыбки наступившего рассвета.

Passages like this explain much about the origins of such verse poems as Yamby (114) or Pod zelënym abazhurom (90). The glimpse of Beauty is infrequent; the poet must spend most of his life in the anguished search for the Ideal. And in the agony and misery of that search a dilemma is implied: is art the conscious and inspired victory over misery, or does its enchantment lie в бессознательной тоске человеческого духа, который не видит выхода из круга пошлости, убожества или недомыслия и трагически осужден казаться самодовольным или безнадежно фальшивым? (p. 102)

The latter alternative certainly seems to have more meaning to the poet in Nova dusha (pp. 103-107), certainly the finest and most demanding poem in the set. Nova dusha is a descent into hell. The poem is on a level with the blackest pages of Une Saison en Enfer, with the most savage self-reproaches of Baudelaire. In this poem Annensky goes further into the darkness of his anxiety than anywhere else in his work. It is
tempting to speculate about the source of the epigraph to the poem, so personal, almost as if taken from a letter:

Нет, я не хочу внушать вам сострадания. Пусть лучше буду я вам даже отвратителен. Может быть, и себя вы хоть на миг тогда оцените по достоинству.

The idea expressed here quite clearly echoes the alternative posed in *Sentimental'noe vospominan'ye*. The poet does not see himself as capable of compassion, or of receiving it: compassion implies love, and in love there is a lie— the poet seeks truth. And truth is most often hideous, especially the truths about oneself, which are almost impossible to transmute into art. 

*Moja dusha* seeks the truth about the poet's personality, as a human being and as an artist.

The poem's structure is easily definable, and relates easily to the symbolic and aesthetic intention of Annensky. On the surface, this is an account of a nightmare. Writing about the problem of defining the prose poem as a genre in connection with surrealist prose, Suzanne Bernard has pointed out that one of the difficulties in determining whether a prose poem is a poem at all is that an account of a dream may seem to have the character of a poem. For a more detailed discussion of this problem we can read the section of Dr Bernard's book beginning on page 444. But it is interesting to note that Annensky's poetic style in this poem does resemble that of
surrealism. His poem, however, is certainly a poem, tightly organised into interrelated sections. We may distinguish ten such sections:

1) The poet asleep in his cabin. "Ya spal... dushu."
2) The first dream of the soul as a Persian porter glimpsed on the quayside. "Svezhee goluboe utro... vorsom."
3) The poet half-awake in his cabin. "Ya ne sovsem... plakat."
4) The poet's dream of his soul as a pregnant woman. "I opyat'... serdtsa".
5) The poet awake in his cabin. "Poet...sny".
6) The second dream of the soul as the Persian porter and as a pregnant woman. "Nosil'shchik...spinu."
7) The poet's soul as a canvas bag for refuse. "Net, simvol... imенно в люк!"
8) The poet's soul, mixed with all kinds of refuse, is paper, from which love-letters are made. "Net... O proklyatie!"
9) The poet's soul described as 'an instructive pamphlet'. "Moyu sud'bu...parusiny."
10) The poet's conclusions. "A ved' etot meshok... nedelimaya muka."

The element of interrelation between all these paragraphs and paragraph-images is always present as the interior lyrical exclamation of the poet. Thus, the first major transition
(between 2 and 4) is made through the exclamation "Tucha nabezhała, chto-li? Mne khochetsya plakat'." Another example of transition (between 5 and 6) is: "Moya dusha byla uzhe zdes’ so mnoi, robkaya i pokladlivaya, i ya dodumal svoi sny." These transitions are always lyrical interjections between the brutal and vivid symbols of the poem, fusing those symbols with the poet's subjectivity.

In fact, we are confronted here by the fundamental moral synthesis of Annensky's aesthetic, a synthesis which takes place most evidently in the prose poems. Annensky seems to have felt very strongly that it is the artist's duty to reflect the outside world truthfully. As I pointed out above, that truth is nearly always far from pleasant. But what does Annensky mean when he talks in Moya dusha as "'to edinstvennoe, chem ya zhivu, chem ya khochu byt' bessmerten"?

I do not think he is merely expressing his hopes and fears for immortality. Surely this poem (and in particular this phrase), just as much as Moya toska, represents a confrontation of the poet's I with poetry, with his own poetry, the poetic word of the Muse. And thence, ultimately, to a confrontation with the outside world, to which poetry belongs by right. The poet writes his poems for people; some, perhaps most people will not understand them (that is one of the thoughts expressed in Mysli-igly), but that is a reflection on people, on the world, and not only on poetry.
in many ways

The society of Annensky's time was a vicious and unhappy one. He seems to have felt this very acutely, to have experienced it as a personal crisis. (This is not to say that the crisis might not have overlapped and intertwined with others, more intimate, at certain periods of the poet's life.) The literary evidence, Annensky's literary and philological work, shows that a moral-aesthetic synthesis existed in Annensky's mind, that for him the concept of Beauty and the Ideal was related to and determined by the moral value of the existing world of men. Elsewhere in this thesis I have discussed that synthesis at some length. But perhaps the most interesting, the most striking evidence of this fusion of poetic vision with a social consciousness is represented by the cycle of prose-poems grouped together under the title of Autopsia (the title already suggests the notion of self-analysis and conscience-racking). From the refuse and canvas-bag of Моя душа there is a transition to the factories and screaming machines of Autopsia.

The twenty-seven poems which comprise the cycle have a thematic unity which may be illustrated by a division of them into four basic thematic and stylistic groupings. Essentially, the keynote of all the poems is, typically for Annensky, anguish, anxiety, but it is expressed in several

2) Autopsia, и другие стихотворения в прозе. Черновые редакции. Автограф. ЦГАЛИ ф. 6, о. 1, ед. хр. 57.
1) See my chapter "The White Ecstasy".
different ways. The groupings I have made are necessarily only approximate, and there are many overlappings and connections between them. As a beginning, then, it is possible to pick out the following types: a) Poems which concern the problem of the poet's task, his unhappiness and his fate, and which constitute a miniature story, a kind of narrative-lyrical picture. The poet's persona in this narrative is a young factory-girl who writes poetry and loves a young worker. Her poems express the misery, both material and spiritual, of her existence, the hopelessness of her love, and above all her defiance of these torments. b) Pictures of factory life. Here the personal aspect of anguish takes a secondary place, and the dominant mood is one of collective indignation, the anger of the factory workers. In many cases these poems have a hymn-like, declamatory character. c) and d) Lyrical interludes and miniatures which reflect the themes and conflicts of the main 'action' indirectly, through impressions of nature and personal observations.

In describing the poems of the first group, I pointed to their 'narrative' character. This is not to say that we can discern any particularly narrative style of exposition in them. It is true that in some poems a short scene is described, sometimes with two or more 'characters' (Fior di plebe is one example), but fundamentally the impulse behind these, as behind the other
poems is a lyrical, rather than a narrative one. To refer again to Suzanne Bernard's distinction, we may say that while Annensky makes use of poetic prose, he organizes it in such a way as to create prose poems, and not prose narrative. The poems turn upon themselves and depict no progression, spatial or temporal, of the type that we commonly associate with the short story or the novel. Each poem is an independent whole; and while the poems are thematically related to one another, each poem represents a different attitude or approach towards the central theme. The technique is reminiscent, in fact, of that used in the lyrical poem - and each of these prose poems is an extension of the lyrical form, an extension through the medium and characteristics of prose. This not to say that the 'story' element is absent from the poems. Elsewhere in my study of Annensky's poetry I have examined the importance of povestvovatel'nost' in his lyrical style. The prose experiments of Autopsia and Posmertnye stikhi have a more than peripheral significance to an understanding of Annensky's verse: they are the most obvious expression of that constant striving for poetry as story (skazka) that lies at the heart of the poet's aesthetic.

In the first poem of the cycle, Annensky introduces nearly all the thematic material used in the others. There can be

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1) See my chapter on 'The Word as a Mediator between the Real and the Ideal in Annensky's Aesthetic.'
no doubt that a scene is described, but the conditions of
the 'action' are far from realistic: tormented to death
by a life of misery and unfulfilled love, the 'heroine' of
the cycle is laid on the autopsy table, a corpse now, and
speaks to the 'fat doctor' who is tearing her to pieces.
It is a scene which is at once concrete and very symbolic:
the vividness of the conception brings the symbols to life.
Thus the doctor may be seen as an embodiment of the anguish
of existence, and of the poet's disgust at reality. The dead
girl invites the doctor to tear away all the veils from her
past; she will reveal everything about herself:

Долой покровы, режь, пили, полосуй, терзай без устали
и не разжимая губ. Усладись моими внутренностями,
насуть. Над моим продажным телом издевайся с
зловечьей улыбкой. Да и что тебе до меня? Я
падаль.

The poems that follow, we understand, will contain the girl's
(and also the poet's) confessions about her past.

Two elements are fundamental to the composition of the
girl's anguish. One is material poverty, homelessness, misery:

Я выросла на уличных камнях, и у меня никогда не
было ни дома, ни родителей. Выросла, без платья и
без имени я скиталась как тучи и ветер.

The other is hopeless love:
Я знала и бессонные ночи и беспокойные мысли, что будет на завтра, я знала бесполезную любовь и скрытое отчаяние, и дни без хлеба, я познакомилась с самым грязным, тяжелым трудом, и с темной нищетой.

It is important to notice that these two elements, nishcheta and bespoleznaya lyubov', are very often confused and even identified with one another in the remaining poems of the set. The latter theme is perhaps more strongly emphasised in the first poem, which is a lyrical cry of defiance and despair. Passion destroys the human being with its demonic flame:

Страсть срывает с тела его девственный цвет. Эта страсть — жгучее лобзание твоего ножа.

But the same passion has the strength to resist, morally if not physically, the degradation wrought by its excesses:

Я еще смотрю на тебя стеклянными зрачками и ты меня не забудешь, потому что на моих губах, точно последняя попытка страсти, клошет хриплое проклятие.

It is quite clear that Annensky is already developing poetic ideas here which later find their way into verse poems such as Probuzhdenie (116) and Ya dumal, chto serdtse iz kamnya (212). Sometimes the parallels are quite striking, as for example the image of death as a black bird:
This is clearly an anticipation of the poem *Utro* (87), where Annensky writes:

Эта ночь бесконечна была,
Я не смеялся, я боялся уснуть:
Два мучительно-черных крыла
Тяжело мне ложились на грудь.

Thus the poem in prose is more than a dramatic or narrative scene. It is a poem, in which a lyrical emotion (defiance) is expressed more freely than it might be in another form.

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between the first poem of *Autopsia* and the three verse poems I have mentioned is the fact that while in the latter the poet's *I* is reflected directly through the use of the first person singular, in the former it is the girl who speaks for the poet. There is a reason for Annensky's use of this device: it is connected with the unusually (for Annensky) 'democratic' spirit of many of the prose poems, with a stylistic tendency towards realism, about which I shall say more later.

Пока я заживу — и после Там! introduces a new element into the image of the girl: she is also a poet. This clearly identifies her with Annensky's own *I*. The girl's poems are
sad and anguished. A friend tells her:

"Ты не знаешь смеха. Проклятие с стихом твоим не расстается. Ты незнаком с песней, где ревнится радость, и в солнечных лучах дрожит, музыка лобзаний..."

and asks her:

"Где ты родилась, поэтесса рокового несчастья, какая ненависимая сила заворожила тебя еще в колыбели?"

In the girl's reply to these questions the 'democratic' element that characterises many of the prose poems, and which forms their main peculiarity, is introduced. The 'dirt' and 'misery' of the girl's life is not merely a symbol of the poet's own spiritual unhappiness; the unhappiness has a physical aspect, too:

"Я родилась в лачуге, я выросла в грязи... На сердце у меня бешеный пурпурный дождь льется кровь тех избранников, которые положили свою жизнь за свободу, где она требовала живого оплота. Стоны несутся из рабочих домов, где возбужденная и тревожная серая масса полка страшного труда жадно бросается на хлеб. Из мрачных фабрик, где движутся стальные чудища, и диковатая медь, через норы, сосет их, ткачих, алую кровь."

The nenavisimaya sile of the girl's poems is the groaning of suffering workers. Her songs reflect their anger and
disgust at life. Thus the word *skorb* here acquires a collective, beyond a purely personal aspect:

Мимо пролетают радость, и красота, и свет пробуждевшегося утра и смелая страсть любви и безумство любований. Одна скорбь остается. Но эта скорбь края не уступит и не преклонится, скорбь которая в борьбе стремится к божеству, это та доблесть, которая поддерживала Прометей, привожденного к дикому утесу.

The girl fuses her own poverty and misery with that of the workers. In fact, she is Annensky's Muse. It is not a coincidence that much of the action of *Autopsia* takes place in a textile factory, and that the girl-poet is a weaver. Let us remember Annensky's poem *Drugomu*:

Мой лучший сон - за тканью Андромаха.

На голове ее эшафодаж,
И тот прикрыт кошетильно платочком,
Зато нигде мой строгий карандаш
Не уступал своих созвучий точкам.

The image of Andromache, the fanciful hairstyle, the coquettish kerchief are all contained in Annensky's earlier *poetessa*.

Always uppermost in these poems about the anguished Muse is the emotion of defiance. The girl laughs at poverty:
The second source of anxiety for the girl is her desire for a child. In Annensky's lyrical poetry, the theme of children is very often connected with the idea of poetic creation:

Весь я там в невозможном ответе,
Где миражные буквы малют...
...Я люблю, когда в доме есть дети
И когда по ночам они плачут.

Sometimes children become symbols of poems, especially suffering children:

Но я люблю стихи – и чувства нет святей:
Так любит только мать, а лишь больных детей.

In fact, the symbolic equation of poems and children becomes in Annensky's aesthetic a moral commentary on the function of poetry. The characteristic features of modernism—anxiety, fragmentation, nervous tension—are all a reflection of an intolerable state.
of affairs in the world outside, the world in general. All this is brought out with great clarity in the prose poems which form the subject of this chapter. If we accept the poem-child parallel of the type that is met in the lyrical verse poems, and apply it to such prose poems as *Sivite parvulos*, Ulichny mal'chishka, or even *Kolybel'nye pesni*, then it becomes clear that the girl is the Muse, the desired children are the poems that the Muse will bear, and the desperate poverty of the girl's surroundings is a reflection of a real and historic misery, the misery of the exploited and injured. The *gryaz'* and *nizost'* of Annensky's poetry is both a spiritual state of being, a 'dark night of the soul', and a real and material misery: the two are mutually related. And the poem is the child of their marriage:

Вот он идет по грязной улице, сам такой грязный и такой красивый, куртка вся в лохмотьях, рваные сапоги, капризное лицо. Когда я вижу его среди экипажей или на мостовой в дырявой обуви, как он бросает камни собакам под ноги, уже разбойный, уже развращенный и бесстыжий человек. Когда я вижу, как он прыгает, смеется, этот бедный цветок, распустившийся на тернии, когда я думаю, что его мать теперь где-нибудь за типографским станком; что его очаг холоден, а отец в тюрьме — страх за него сжигает мне сердце и я говорю себе: что будет с тобой, обманщиком и невеждой, как будешь ты жить без опоры и руководителя?

И чем ты станешь в двадцать лет, ты без умолку нечестивый солдат лачужек? Может быть, ты будешь халким и порочным шарлатаном, или усердным работником, или
I have quoted this poem in its entirety, because it contains most of the elements, thematic and symbolic, present in the *Autopsia* cycle as a whole. Annensky's preoccupation is with the human experience. As a poet he expresses that preoccupation as poetry. He is concerned, deeply and tormentedly, with the problem of human existence as such. But in his poems his doubts about the reality, the validity of life emerge in a text, an aesthetic fable of living symbols, dimly-glimpsed personae, the poetic fabrication of anxiety. All this is particularly evident in the prose poems. The necessity of a lie, which is the basis of the purely lyrical poem, is removed here. Because of the narrative tendency (not style, for that is the characteristic of the short story, the *povest*') of the genre, the images and symbols used by Annensky incline towards a certain realism. The ragged boy in the street is a 'real' person; the girl is the lyrical I of the poet, his Muse, but
she is also a reality. In some of Annensky's verse poems we sense a similar approximation to a real and concretely actualized situation (Nervy, 163; Preryvisty stroki, 168); but the situations change, have no constant underlying fable. In each poem the psychological realism of the poet is transformed into the lyrical dynamic of the poem itself, existing only for itself. The prose poems of Autopsia, on the other hand, have a constant fabular basis: the girl, her dreams and poems, her anguish, the factory where she works. And in these poems Annensky comes very close to writing a nightmare of society. The ragged boy in the street may grow up to become a hooligan, a distortion of humanity. And so may poetry, for poetry is produced by people, who live in society and are influenced by its movements and developments.

The whole conception of the prose poems of Autopsia is based on doubt, a doubt in the possibility of a tolerable future for the world as a whole. Annensky's pedagogical concerns were not incidental to his art. The prose poem Sipite parvulos contains the following lines (the girl is talking about the son she would like to have):

Вечером я сложу ему руки крестом и для него тихо стану повторять молитву лучших лет моей жизни. Я с краткой настойчивостью буду твердить слова,
возвращающие и укрепляющие душу, я сохраню для него ревнивую и зоркую нежность его умершей матери. Я скажу ему, что жизнь есть труд, и что мир надо искать во всепроении. Я соберу в его кроткой детской душе сокровище из всего, что справедливо, возвышенно и благо. Я перелю в его ум всю силу мысли, которую дал мне Бог, и около него спокойно ответствует моя жизнь, покаянная и бледная.

What is expressed here is not only the girl's desire to educate and strengthen her son, but also Annensky's own desire to make his art a source of enlightenment for the people who will live in the future. It is his faith in the pedagogical significance of the poetic word, a faith which, however, is continually besieged by doubt: doubt, the image of the age. That is Annensky's Ideal, fused with muka.

The 'realism' of the poems concerning the misery and poverty of the girl is broken at times in the course of the cycle by 'her' poems. These are lyrical interludes, also in prose, a circumstance which is significant for the organic unity of the cycle. The lyrical poems, like Pod sNEGOM, Tuchi, Nochi, Arabeskii kon', Naedine s toboi and others reflect the tensions and anxieties of the girl's life.

Я стражу. Так сонные тучи ползут с безмолвной равнины. На черных крыльях гордо прорезая туман, каркая пролетают вороны. Печальные остатки деревьев с мольбой подставили свои нагие ветви под укусы ветра. Как мне холодно. Я одна. Под нависшим серым небом
носятся стонь убогого, и говорят мне: "Приди, долина, одетая туманом, приди, скорбная, приди, разлюбленная!"

/ Тучи /

This nature is alive, like the nature of all Annensky's poems. In the verse lyrics we are often aware of a human presence glimpsed through the trees and gardens of Annensky's landscapes:

Всё, что есть лазурного,
Излилось в лучах
На зеби златовзвейные,
Всё, что там беззурного
И с ласкою в очах,-
В сады зеленовзвейные.

/ Тоска отдумевшей грозы, 119 /

Это - луная ночь невозможной мечты...
Но недвижны и странны черты:
-Это маска твоя или ты?

Вот чуть-чуть певельнулись ресницы...
Дальше... вырованы дальше страницы.

/ Декорация, 82 /
But in the prose lyrics the projection of the human form onto nature is much more direct: we know that the girl is present in these landscapes, a clearly-defined and perceptible human image. She is the shivering valley, hers are the tears that roll in the grass as dew (Nochi), it is she who lies in the field with her lover, expanding the fields and the sunlight into a vision of harmony and strength (Yazycheskoe lobzan'e). The poem Arabskii kon' expresses her desire to escape from the intolerable conditions of her existence.

The girl seeks work, art and beauty:

Two things impede this search, however: one is unhappiness in love, and the other a desire for children, a desire which is never fulfilled. The girl's unhappy love has one main cause: she loves too strongly, and the men who love her also love her strongly, too much. The poem Doch' naroda ends:
The reference to the beating of the heart here reminds us of poems like Koshmary (112), and the sensation is one of unbearable tension.

_Fior di plebe_ describes the girl's jealousy of an imagined rival. The strength of her feelings destroys her love altogether. The dramatic quality of the poem is reflected in Annensky's prose-style. In general, the piece has something of the character of a short story or tale. And yet the emphasis is too subjective for the poem to be anything other than a poem. That is to say, the monologue describes a circular movement within the words of the speaker alone; there is no comment from the poet, who has created the illusion of speech within the framework of an extended lyrical poem.

Misery, despair, anxiety may lead to self-annihilation; but they may have an opposite, and even positive aspect. _Pesnya zastupa_ describes how anguish may become defiance, the same
defiance expressed through the mouth of the girl in Poka ya zhivu. The spade is a symbol of all that is cruel and vicious in the lives of the poor, the destitute. But it is a two-edged blade:

Я - грубая шпага, и разрываю грудь. Я - сила и невежество, во мне скрежет голодна и блеск солнца. Я - нищета и надежда.

From the misery of suffering and poverty comes a desire for change, an impulse towards rebellion:

Я грешу о новой зоре, когда, как сельское победное знамя на солнце, что золотит воздух, в ясном блеске над вдохновенной толой, я восстаму над плодородной землей, сила жизнью и мощью... Под молоденкими ударами, раздавленная, умертвив ненависть, я с земли, насыщенной любовью, благоухающей розами, очищенной юным пылом, до самой небесной лазури будет доноситься шум грубыx человеческиh голосов, не то гимn, не то вопль:
- Мира, труда, хлеба...

Nine of the twenty-seven poems of the cycle describe the life of factory workers. It is true that 'proletarian' themes are not entirely absent from Annensky's lyrical verse (Lyul', 70, Garmonnye vzvokhi, 203-208), but there is nothing in it to equal the almost Gorkian vividness of prose-poems like Nad bresh'yu, Pobezhdenny, Ruka v mashine,
Mashina svistit. In these 'illuminations', toska becomes an industrial holocaust, a vision of human slaves of the machine:

Свисток машины. С ревом подымается торжественные и гулкие звуки, точно рассекает воздух несутся к золотым тучам.
Свисток машины — это дикие вопли человека, погибшего среди зубьев, молодой жизни, раздавленной ее жерновами.

The workers complain about their fate (Pobezhdenyye). But the girl, who works among them, observes their misery, and dreams of a new future:

Если иногда, поглощенной думой, я не внимаю твоим любовным речам, если мои глаза горят, а по лицу и губам разливается нептвичная бледность, если я всё забываю, и, склонив темнорусую голову, вся отдаюсь своим мыслям, не трогай меня, передо мной в эти минуты открывается огромный божественный мир... Не пьет больше крови скорбная земля.

Война, эта свирепая, непокорная колдунья, не наводит руеж и пушки, не разряжается больше яростными выстрелами, а на боевом поле не слышно военных песен.
Весь мир — одно отечество, и всех оживляет один священный энтузиазм, и песня торжественной и краткой любви летит с одного берега на другой.
Паровик дышит, плуг разрывает плодородную грудь земли, ревут и стучат машины, пылают очаги, и над этим диким львовым ревом земли, в брожении свобoda распустила свои белые крылья и гул их гордо разносится по ветру.

/ Не тревожь меня /

Вперед, вы которые идете счастье в труде! Вперед на честный бой, на благородное состязание пилы, заступа, кирки, топора!
Бас ожидает свободный век.
All this seems very far removed from the Annensky we know from a reading of Kiparisovy larets, the tragedies, even the literary criticism. And yet in these almost revolutionary poems we can still find traces of the Annensky familiar from the published texts. Annensky's aesthetic is built on a balance between Ideal and Nothingness. I have tried to show in my analysis of the Autopsia poems that the poet's aim is, as always, the discovery of a human image in an apparently sterile reality.
PART TWO:

Problems of Annensky's Aesthetics
The word as a mediator between the real and the ideal in Annensky’s aesthetic

1.

One of the most striking features of Annensky’s poetry is its psychologism. Throughout the lyrics we sense a poetic I which is profoundly divided, a self in search of identity and pursued by a double image. The constant appearance of alternatives (expressed in the recurrence of the word ili, or li, whose sound may in a sense be said to characterise the phonetic quality of the verse), the juxtaposition of death and nightmare (as in the poem To i Eto, 113), the flickering of shadows which seem to challenge the reality of material phenomena - all this is the expression of a duality, disturbing and in some ways obscure. Annensky writes about his double most explicitly, perhaps, in the poem Dvoinsk (66):
ДВОЙНИК

Не я, и не он, и не ты,
И то же, что я, и не то же:
Так были мы где-то похожи,
Что наши смешались черты.

В сомненьи кипит еще спор,
Но, слиты незримой четою,
Одной мы живем и мечтою,
Мечтою разлуки с тех пор.

Горячешний сон волновал
Обманом вторых очертаний,
Но чем я глядел неустанней,
Тем ярче себя ж узнавал.

Лишь полога ночи немой
Порой отразит колыханье
Мое и другое дыханье,
Бой сердца и мой и не мой...

И в мутном круженьи годин
Всё чаще вопрос меня мучит:
Когда наконец нас разлучат,
Каким же я буду один?

What is this **drugoe dykhan'e**, this heart which both belongs to the poet and does not belong to him? On the surface, the subject seems to be the conflict in the poet's mind between
a fear of final and irremediable death, and a hope of a spiritual existence after death. But this is not the most important question at stake. There is another, more complex meaning in Annensky's duality, one which goes beyond metaphysical self-questioning, and even beyond the kind of dualistic problems found in the work of the early Dostoievsky, which undoubtedly was of great significance for Annensky in the formulation of his own poetic task.

Annensky's poetic world is divided between two poles: the Real and the Ideal. The Real is agony (\textit{muka}), fragmentation and substantiality, embodied in the imprisoning totality of the thing. At the centre of the concept of the Ideal are wholeness and transcendence, present in the interrelated liberating agencies of the Dream and the Other.

The poem \textit{Toska voksala} (128) presents the Real with painful immediacy: the noise and bright colours of a railway station stifle and deaden the poet, making him incapable of any positive reaction save a fragmented consciousness of his environment. A series of abruptly placed images conveys this sense of fragmentation: some half-dead flies (\textit{blind, avid and deaf}) sticking to the billboard on a dilapidated kiosk; a railwayman's green flag; white jets of steam from a locomotive; a cripple standing by the station.
clock. The poet boards the train and loses himself in the materiality of the world, a materiality void of meaning and maliciously reductive:

Уничтожиться, канув
В этот омут безликий,
Прямо в одурь диванов,
В полосатые тики!

The experience of the ideal is encountered in the poem *Ametisty* (110). The corporeal, earthly aspect of the precious stones is forgotten: the poet allows his consciousness to dissolve in the 'cold gloom' of the amethysts, his eyes follow the flickering of a candle, transformed into liquid and fire by the translucent prisms. The dissolution of reality provides a sense of release, the self passes beyond the limitations of concrete reality towards pure consciousness. The thing is about to yield to the Dream. A secondary notion is contained, however, in the lines 'Что гдэ-то est' ne nasha svyaz',/ *A luchezarnoe sliyan'e*. We can detect here a desire for a collective consciousness, for communion with the Other.

I have chosen only two poems as examples; but the same polarity is apparent throughout Annensky's lyrics. The mythological aspect of this duality seems to me of
particular importance. For in a project according to which
the poetic I breaks away from an abhorrent and imprisoning
vision of the world, surpassing that vision for a transcendent-
real reality, what is the mediation through which the pro-
ject is effected? In the poem, the answer to this question
must be found in the form of a myth, since it is through symbolic
myth that the poet displays the intentionality of his
perceptions. In the poetry of Baudelaire, for example,
the transition between immanence and transcendence is made
through the mediation of the 'correspondences': ... 'tout
est hieroglyphique... qu'est-ce qu'un poète... si ce n'est
un traducteur, un déchiffreur?' (1) The poetic I, re-ordering the
universe and discovering hidden relationships in the
phenomena of existence, transforms itself into the totality
of those phenomena, a totality which is, however, removed
from the world of social experience, being situated in a
self-created void. This process of transformation, of
universal absorption, is the justificatory myth of Baudelaire's
poetry.

That Annensky's poetry is closely related to that of
Baudelaire, both technically and in spirit, is quite clear
after a comparison of the two poets. Like Baudelaire,

(1) Baudelaire, Oeuvres complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, p. 705.
Annensky undertakes a project of the dissolution of the self in reality:

Иль я не с вами таёами?
Не вьюшу с листьями на клёнах?
Иль не мои умрут огни
В слезах кристаллов растопленных?

/Когда бо смерть,- 202/

It is perhaps relevant in this context to refer to a remark of Annensky concerning a sonnet of Baudelaire (Pluviôse, irriété contre la ville entière). Discussing the poem in the essay Chto takoe poeziya?, Annensky writes:

Если вы захотите видеть в этом sonette галерею "образов", то из поэтического перла он обратится в какую-то лавку au bric-à-brac...

Сонет Боделэра есть отзвук души поэта на ту печаль бытия, которая открывает в капели другую, созвучную себе мистическую печаль. Символы четырнадцати строк Боделэра это как-бы маски или насворо наброшенные одежды, под которыми мелькает тоскующая душа поэта, и желаю, и боюсь быть разгаданной, ища единения со всем миром и вместе с тем невольно тоскуя о своем потревоженном одиночестве.

1) *Apollon*, 6, 1911, p. 53.
Although, as with much of Annensky's literary criticism, this statement tells us rather more about Annensky himself than it does about Baudelaire, the resemblance to Baudelaire as regards sentiment and quality of perception is remarkable.

Another poet with whom Annensky is sometimes compared is Mallarmé. In Mallarmé's poetry the Baudelairean myth undergoes some fundamental changes. The poetic tortured and appalled by a hostile reality, transforms itself into writing, into the written symbols and phrases of poetry and prose, and ascends in enigmatic silence towards the Book. The Book contains the whole of human experience, but de-collectivised and even de-personalised in the autonomous sign. With the ubiquity of the sign the reader (and thus the community of readers) disappears: 'Le Livre, où vit l'esprit satisfait, en cas de malentendu, un obligé par quelque pureté d'âbat a secouer le gros du moment. Impersonnifié, le volume, autant qu'on s'en sépare comme auteur, ne réclame approche de lecteur. Tel, sache, entre les accessoires humains, il a lieu tout seul: fait, étant.' (1)

In the silence of the letter, author and reader perish - only the Book remains, impersonal and empty of all human associations. Annensky's aesthetic is somewhat different.

(1) Mallarmé, Œuvres complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, p. 372.
Annensky was a philologist. As a student in the University of St. Petersburg, his main subject was comparative philology, together with Slavonic philology and classical studies. While at university, Annensky wrote the philological article *Iz nabýudenní nad yazykom russkogo Severa* (1883), his first published work. It is a systematic study of the concepts of hot and cold in Russian folk poetry, and represents an attempt to reach beyond the limits of a purely enumerative survey towards a broader conception of the real significance of this dualism inherent in the material discussed. Here already we can see Annensky’s proto-‘structuralist’ leanings.

Many articles followed this one. They include reviews, such as that of E. Barsov’s work on *Slovo o polku Ígorëve*; here Annensky raises the problem of the mythological substratum in the *Slovo*. There were longer works on contemporary Russian literature, such as *O formakh fantasticheskogo u Gogolya* (1890), *Ob esteticheskom otnoshenii Lermontova k prirode* (1891), and
Goncharov i ego Oblomov (1892). And, most important in the present context, there were the Pedagogicheskie pis'ma of 1892 and 1895. These stress a theme to which Annensky returned time and time again throughout his literary and academic career: the question of making classical and literary studies a matter of living creativity, and not of dry scholarship, a matter of making the literary past come alive, and not allowing them to grow stale in libraries, schools, and universities.

'Who does not know the tendency towards personification which the language of the Greeks and Romans contained? Let us recollect those winged words like Sleep, Fear, Death, Wrath, and Revenge in human forms.' Language is not merely a complex of grammatical and lexical forms: it is the living expression of existence itself, and of man's attempts to find a meaning in the millions of phenomena which surround him. Annensky calls this expression 'poetry', and he sees poetry at three levels: in everyday speech, which is full of metaphors and phraseological inventions; in folk literature, where those metaphoric and phraseological forms acquire a certain structural fixity; and in individual, 'artistic' literature.

Annensky is at pains to show how literary structures
consistently reflect and give shape to fundamental human strivings and needs. In our own time, linguists like Roman Jakobson, Ferdinand Saussure and Roland Barthes have explored this notion in great depth. Literary critics like Barthes, Gérard Genette, Georges Poulet and others have shown how the essential nature of a literary phenomenon like the French Baroque, for example, is manifested, not in abstract or absolute notions of 'Baroque', but in the reconciliation of supposedly antithetical forms in a paradoxical alliance of forms, that is, in the structural aspects of the literature. Annensky must be regarded, together with Proust and Mallarmé, as one of the precursors of this movement in the study of language and literature.

In the other letters, Annensky continues his argument to the effect that words and ideas are inextricably linked. Like an archaeologist, the scholar of antiquity must seek to discover not only ideas, but the nature of the forms in which those ideas have manifested themselves, forms which in the case of literary history will consist of words. Words alone preserve intact the living reality of ideas, and it is through the study of words that we can hope to acquire
a living understanding of the material and spiritual reality which created them. Thus Annensky arrives at a theory of historical philology which is both synchronic and diachronic. The diachronic approach is necessary in order to give historical perspective to the study of the literary past; but at the same time the philologist must strive to understand the interpretation of the world which is revealed in the systems of words and symbols he uncovers. In the mythological figure of revenge he will find beyond the allegory a real, lived revenge. The mythological substratum yields an empirical reality which exists outside history, and which can be understood at all times by all men. Annensky sees this last point as particularly important in relation to the sphere of education.

At the time the letters were written, Annensky was director of the Pavel Galagan College in Kiev, a private school in which Latin and Greek were taught. He had a particular interest, therefore, in the way in which the teaching of the classical languages and literatures was carried on, although his attempts to introduce pedagogical reforms based on his own theories met with a great deal of resistance on the part of the more conservative members
of the staff. He wished above all to give young people a creative understanding of literature. In the second letter, he suggests that pupils should be encouraged to write poems themselves, to act classical tragedies and to read classical poetry aloud. Every attempt should be made to relate the study of literature to the lives of the pupils, and to develop the 'aesthetic emotion' in them. Above all, poetic works 'are not examples for the theory of literature, nor are they illustrations for its history, but are incarnations of poetic ideals, to be studied independently.' 1)

From the letters there emerges a sense of Annensky's respect for the word, both spoken and written, as the only mediation between the reader and listener, held within the limitations of time and space, and the apprehension of a total and non-verbal experience. This preoccupation with literature as such, with 'the life of words', becomes very important when we turn to Annensky's conception of contemporary literature, and finally, of course, to his own original poetic work. The essay published in 1897, and entitled Iz nablyudenii nad yazykom Likofrona, indicates a turning-point in this direction.

Annensky is chiefly concerned with the phonetic aspects of the Greek poet's work, with the types of alliteration which appear in it. In themselves, the conclusions he reaches are not perhaps very remarkable; he points out that consonants are more liable to alliterative procedures than vowels in Lycophron's work, and that alliteration tends to occur more frequently at the end of lines than at their beginnings. What is striking about the essay is that the method of poetic analysis which is applied to Lycophron, a poet who wrote in the second century B.C., is identical to the one Annensky employs in his analysis of Bal'mont's poetry in the *First Book of Reflections*. Annensky's colleague, the classical philologist B. Varneke, was the first to point out the resemblance between the two essays, although he did not approve of Annensky's disregard for academic tradition in this respect. Indeed, Varneke's criticisms show how distant Annensky stood from the scholarly conventions of his day, and how it would have been impossible for him to be completely accepted by his colleagues as a 'serious' scholar. The enormous gap of time which separated Bal'mont from Lycophron was for Annensky a matter of irrelevance. What was important for him was the fact
that both were poets; both reveal a total and 'ideal' experience in their work.

In the course of this study I want to examine several ways in which the significance of the concept of the poetic word in Annensky's poetry is revealed. Starting from a discussion of Annensky's attitude towards Balmont, I shall continue by illustrating various areas of Annensky's work in which the 'philological', 'literary' preoccupation is particularly apparent.

3.

The Balmont essay (Balmont-lirik) is a remarkable work. In it the theme of the word as the only mediator between man and the Ideal emerges as the dominant one. Annensky attacks the attitude of the public towards the word, towards this "эстетически ценное явление из области древнейшего и тончайшего из искусств, где

(1) Kniga otrazhenii I, pp. 171-213.
The word has fallen into disrepute as the result of public neglect and abuse. Common sense is assumed to be the final arbitrator in every question, including poetry, and as a result the poetic word cannot be той капризной струей крови, которая греет и розовит мою руку, it is deprived of its individuality at the expense of a drab collectivity: Вы чувствуете, что горячая струя, питая руку, напишет тонкую поэму, нет, надевайте непременно рукавицу, потому что в ней можно писать только аршинными буквами, которые будут видны всем, пусть в них и не будет видно вашего почерка, т. е. вашего я.

There follows a historical digression. Annensky traces the origins of the decline of the word back to the reforms of Peter the Great, whose centralizing policies made, or tended to make, a monolithic whole of the Russian language, depriving it of many Church Slavonic words, and entailing the loss of any influence which might have been played by dialect words and words from popular oral culture. This process of crystallization and stagnation grew more intense during the second half of the nineteenth century, the era of journalism and civic poetry. Poets like Aleksei Tolstoy,

(1) Ibid., pp. 171-172.
Fet, Tyutchev and Polonsky went relatively unnoticed by public
taste, while lesser talents enjoyed the limelight because of
their ability to introduce the techniques of journalism into
poetry. Russian literature was paid lip-service during this
period, but no serious attention was even given to a poet like
Pushkin, whose services to the development of the Russian lan-
guage were greater even than those of Goethe to the German lan-
guage. And yet, Annensky complains, while in Germany there is a
'Goethe-Philologie', a call for a 'Pushkin-Philologie' in Russia
would be considered the height of eccentricity. Russian speech
is void of style. Different topics demand different ways of
writing, but in general 'литературная русская речь как-бы
висит в воздухе между журналным волапюком и говореньем,
t.e. зыбкой беспределностью великорусских наречий и под-
наречий. There is, however, hope in the movement of Russian
symbolism, since it is precisely this movement which has directed
the attention of the public towards the problem of poetic
speech.

The analysis of Bal'mont's work begins with a discussion of
the poem Я — изысканность русской медитативной речи. Annensky
starts by giving an opinion about the nature of poetry:

Для людей, которые видят в поэзии не пассивное само-
Thus the I in Bal'mont's poem is not the expression of an individual personality, but rather that of a shaping force which has dissolved itself in reality and which gives it direction. The section which follows is extremely important to an understanding of Annensky's situation as a poet, and I quote from it at some length:

(1) Ibid., p. 179. (2) Ibid., p. 180.
Да, поэт не называет моря, он не навязывает нам моря во всей громоздкости понтийского впечатления. Но за то в этих четырех словах символически звучит таинственной связи между игрой воли и нашим я.

Многоплодность — это налет жизни на тайне души, переплеск — беспокойная музыка творчества; а разорванная слитность — наша невозможность отделить свое я от природы и рядом с этим его непрестанное стремление к самобытности.

Далее. Стих поэта может быть для вас неясен, так как поэт не обязан спрашивать со степенью вашего эстетического развития. Но стих должен быть про- зрачен, раз он текуч, как ручей.

Он — ничей, потому что он никому и ничему не служит, потому что исконно, по самой воздушности своей природы, стих свободен, и потому еще, что он есть никому не принадлежащий и всех созидаемая мысль, но он ни от кого не прячется — он для всех, кто захочет его читать, петь, учить, бранить или высмеивать — все равно. Стих это новое яркое слово, падающее в море
вечно творимых.

Новый стих силен своей влюбленностью и в себя и в других, причем самовлюбленность является здесь как-бы на смену классической гордости поэтов своими заслугами...

Наш стих, хотя он, может быть, и не открывает новой поэтической эры, но идет уже от бесповоротно-сознанного, стремления символически стать самой природой, отображая и плавные уклоны лебедных белоснежностей, и все эти переплеты ее жизней и желаний, и самобытность камней, и все, что вечно обновляется, не переставая быть сном; наконец, все, что сильно своей влюбленностью: не любовью, с ее жертвами, тоской, упреками и отчаянием, а именно веселой и безоглядной влюбленностью в себя и во всех; и при этом поэт не навязывает природе своего я, он не думает, что красоты природы должны группироваться вокруг этого я, а, напротив, скрывает и как-бы растворяет это я во всех впечатлениях бытия...

Содержание нашего я не только зыбко, но и не-
опреде́лимо, и это делает людей, пристально его ана́лизирующих, особенно если анализ их интуитивен, — так сказать, фатальными ми́стиками...

Есть, конечно, и общие культурные и социальные причины, которые определяют разность в содержании нашего я в различные моменты его самосознания. Так возврат религиозных запросов в опустелую человеческую душу вызвал в нашем я тоску и тот особый мистический испуг, то чувство смерти, которое так превосходно изображается в произведениях гр. Льва Толстого, особенно начиная со второй половины романа "Анна Каренина". У Роденбаха мы можем проследить, как оригинально это чувство окрашивает и любовную эмоцию.

Художественное бесстрашие Достоевского в неве­довом до него поэзии совести развернуло перед нами тот свиток, который когда-то мерещился Пушкину в бессонные ночи...(1)

Taking their lead from writers like Tolstoy and Dostoievsky, the new generation of Russian poets, the symbolist generation,

(1) Ibid., pp. 181-184.
has proceeded to introduce the new flood of feelings and thoughts into its work. It is clear that Annensky is referring here to the influence of the prose technique of the interior monologue, the notation of complex processes of both subconscious and conscious feelings and ideas at every level of their manifestation. He remarks that the new poetry will be difficult to understand, since it will consist largely of allusions and hints, woven together in a shifting texture which will correspond symbolically to the shifting, confused nature of the contemporary I. He writes:

Здесь нужна музыкальная потенция слова, нужна музыка уже не в качестве метронаома, а для возбуждения в читателе творческого настроения, которое должно помочь ему опытом личных воспоминаний, интенсивностью проснувшейся тоски, нежданностью упреков, восполнить недосказанность пьесы и дать ей хотя и более узкого-интимное и субъективное, но и более действенное значение. (1)

(1) Ibid., p. 185.
The theoretical part of the essay breaks off at this point. The second part consists of an examination of some of Bal'mont's lyrics from a technical point of view. The most important idea in the first section is Annensky's concept of the 'contents' of the poetic I. For Annensky, the poetic word is an expression of the poet's I both in its isolated, 'subjective' form and in its communal, 'objective' one. Annensky shares the modern awareness that the relation of the I to reality is not simply that of a spectator to a picture held before him; rather, the I and concrete reality constantly mingle with one another, so that the line between them becomes blurred, even non-existent. The 'contents' of the I are the contents of what Annensky calls 'nature', that is, the totality of the moral and the physical world. In this awareness Annensky reveals the preoccupation with psychology which marked the development of all the arts and of philosophy around the turn of the century. It must be remembered that Bergson's Matière et Mémoire antedates the
The problems and enquiries that are raised in Annensky's aesthetic are reflected best of all perhaps in the development of the novel during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the earlier part of the present one. The crisis experienced by the novel at this time was to a great extent precipitated by a corresponding crisis in society and in the philosophy of history. The years of European revolution, both political and social, produced a reversal of traditional thinking about man and his situation in the world. Feuerbach could say that 'man ist, was er ist'. History was not even the revelation of an Absolute Idea, as it had been for Hegel, but rather the continuum in which man constantly created himself. Fichte wrote that 'men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past'. Fichte's I, as it emerges in the Doctrine of Science, is less a state of being than an act of becoming, an act which is determined by the phenomena of reality. With Fichte and Marx begins the age of the search for the motivations of human actions, born of a realization that human actions are rooted in a material reality, and not in an abstract, tran-
scentental sphere.

It followed that the novel, the modern successor to the epic, and thus by tradition at least a form of historiography, should reflect the upheavals and developments of the world outside. A growing preoccupation with psychological and sociological motivation, beginning in the works of Poe, Hoffmann, Balzac and Stendhal showed itself in the novels of Dickens, Flaubert, the earlier Dostoievsky, Tolstoy and others. It was the subjective, psychological explorations that were to play the greatest rôle in transforming the novel beyond anything which had gone previously. For since the I was no longer conceived as a fixed entity sharply divided from the rest of the universe but rather as a constant act of creation filled with the past and impregnated with the future, the concept of the hero began to undergo a fundamental change. The heroes of Tolstoy's novels are still recognizable as 'real' people, with a clearly recognizable external appearance and an 'inner' life which is their own. The distinction between reportage and dialogue, both inner and external, is therefore preserved relatively intact. But in Dostoievsky's novels there is no such clear-cut distinction between subject and object. The hero of the early Zvoznik, for example, suffers from a deep loss of
identity. This *povest' takes for the most part the form of an anguished dialogue between the two fragments of the hero's self. In Dostoievsky's later novels, the exploration of psychological motivation determines the structural conception profoundly. The Karamazovs are both heroes and elements of structural organization (connected to various speech-types, metaphors, symbolic clusters, etc.).

Proust's 'quest for lost time', written under the influence of the time theories of Bergson, Lukács and others, carried the disintegration of the conventional heroic stage further. Abandoning himself to the Bergsonian 'mémoire involontaire', the of Proust's novel loses itself in a myriad of associations and auto-suggestions, starting from the taste of a biscuit dipped in a cup of tea. In reading Proust we are aware of the enormous quantity of words the author uses, words which are the nerve-ends of experience, shifting tides of awareness, closely interconnected. The of the quest has become an encyclopaedic swarm, the smallest particles of which are remembered sensations.

In Proust's work the world becomes a text to be interpreted, a text which is at once the expression of the durée and its material coefficient. It is an essentially de-personalised world. Words are the means by which such de-personalisation is achieved. The text is all men and no man. And it is...
the text, the web of words, which redeems the I from the dangers of a total identification with reality - the words express both the alienation of the I from the subjective consciousness of the author, and the I in its pre-mimetic, individualised state. This mediatory function of the poetic word is not simply confined to the stream-of-consciousness novel, however. Symbolist poetry also shows a preoccupation with the verbal material of poetic art. Rimbaud's experiments with the 'alchimie du verbe' are clearly connected with a desire to lose the poetic I in a verbal typhoon (je est un autre). Mallarmé's *Variations sur un Sujet* stress the isolation of the word from its conventional semantic positions. Bal'mont's I is another step in this direction. What Annensky stresses above all in his essay on Bal'mont, however, is the new content of the contemporary I. Bal'mont's poetry is conspicuously lacking in 'content', and so when Annensky refers to 'the abysses and darknesses of this world' in discussing Bal'mont's poetry in its relation to contemporary Russian prose literature, it is quite clear that he is talking of his own aesthetics and his own poetry. There reference to Dostoievsky as the poet of the conscience is particularly revealing in this connection. It is Annensky, not Bal'mont, who introduces the psychological preoccupation into Russian poetry for the first time. Annensky is the first Russian poet
to attempt to cross the boundaries dividing prose literature from poetry, to introduce into poetry the kind of psychological and existential problems we find in the novels of Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoievsky. The concept central to this process of transition, of broadening the scope of the lyric, is the poetic word. For Annensky time is an enormous swarm of words: each word relates to a different sensation or experience. But there is the torment of the isolation of these remembered moments from each other. The poet's task is to find passages and channels between them, to lay bare in each moment the potentiality of others. This unity may be revealed through the musicality of word-combinations, or through the analysis and reproduction of everyday speech. Annensky outlines the significance of the poetic word in several letters to the poet Maksimilian Voloshin:

А разве многие понимают, что такое Слово у нас? Но знаете, за последнее время и у нас, ух! как много этих, которые нянчаться со словом и, пожалуй, готовы говорить о его культе. Но они не понимают, что самое страшное и властное слово, т. е. самое загадочное, может быть, именно слово будничное. (1)

Indeed, the vision of the world that we find in Annensky's work is a verbal experience. This 'verbalism' is revealed at several levels: in 'literary' imagery and symbolism, in the intentional 'literarisation' of experience; and in the conception of reality as a literary work. In the following sections I will try to illustrate what I consider to be the significance of these three categories.

5.

a) 'Literary' images.

These occur frequently in Annensky's poetry. The poem *Ideal* (69), for example, represents existence as a library, the poet as a scholar engaged in the crippling task of deciphering the sacred but enigmatic text:

И там, среди зеленолицых,
Тоску привычки затая,
Решать на выцветших страницах
Постылый ребус бытия.
Allusions to 'pages' and 'reading' are common in Annensky's poetry. A moonlit garden becomes 'kniga chudnaya' in Pervy fortep'yanny sonet (77). The dreamlike experience in which piano music, the player's fingers, and the hallucination of the 'maenads' all flow together is like the slow turning of pages:

Есть книга чудная, где с каждой страницией
Галлюсинации таинственно слиты...

In Eshchё odin (78), the fading of daylight and, symbolically, of hope, is like

обгорелого письма
Неповторимое признанье.

The mysteriousness of a moonlit night reminds the poet of a book from which pages have been torn. The meaning of the experience is yielding itself, but suddenly

Дальше...вырваны дальше страницы.

The experience of revulsion at the world produces an ambiguous image in Mukhi kak mysli (90). The hideous flies that torment the poet are also the letters his own pen makes on the paper. Insomniac recollections are 'zalitaya chernilom stranitsa' (Toska pripominaniya, 120). Memories
are lines of writing which may or may not transform themselves into poetry.

In Babochka gaza (167) we read:

С мерцающих строк бытия
Ловлю я забытую фразу...

Ego (182) contains the lines:

Когда же сном об'ята голова,
Читая грез я повесть небыльную,
Сгоревших книг забытые слова
В туманном сне я трепетно целую.

Sometimes existence is a skazka, the experience of someone reading a story:

Откинув докучную маску,
Не чувствуя уз бытия,
В какую волшебную сказку
Вольется свободное я!

In the same poem

Пьяный от призраков взор
Читает там дерзость обмана
И сдавшейся мысли позор.

Sometimes moonlight tells a story in which the poet feels himself mysteriously involved:

Ни о чем не жалеть...ничего не желать...
Только б маска колдуни светилась
Да клубком ее сказка катилась
В серебристую даль, на серебристую гладь.
**Konets osennei skazki** (80) begins

Неустойчивые длинной
Сказка черная лилась.

The sound of the alarm-clock in **Budil'nik** (108) is
tomitel'ny rasskaz. The atmosphere of **Konets osennei skazki**
returns in **Yanvarskaya skazka** (111):

Моя новогодняя сказка,
Последняя сказка, где ты ль?

Or again, in **Toska mirazha** (210) we read:

Что надое, безумная сказка,
От этого сердца тебе?

Sometimes works of literature are involved in subjective
experiences, as if the poet were unable to distinguish between
fiction and reality. Thus, for example, he asks in one poem:

Не могу понять, не знаю...
Это сон или Верлен?...

/Не могу понять — 187 /

Turgenev's work, which had a very strong influence on
Annensky's development as a poet, appears in a similar context.

**Koshmary** (112) contains a direct quotation from Turgenev's
Klara Milich:

Всё это "шелест крови", голос муки...

The poet identifies his love for a ghostly woman with the experience of Turgenev's Aratov. Turgenev appears again in the poem Kogda, vlacha s toboi banal'ny razgovor (182):

И он смешил тебя, как старый, робкий заяц,
Иль хуже... жалок был - тургеневский малыш
С его отрезанным для службы языком.

The reference here is to Turgenev's povest' entitled Pesn' torzhestvuyushchei lyubvi.

6.

b) The 'literarisation' of experience.

There is another way in which literature, understood as the act of reading or creating writing, determines the emotional climate of Annensky's poetry. With Annensky,
the lyrical ego is not only liberated from the conventional 'generalized' tendencies of romantic lyrical poetry (tendencies that emerge for example in some of Lermontov's lyrics, to such a degree that the reader can with little effort equate his own experience with the 'general' experience expressed in the poem) - the I is reorganised, as we have see, in a profoundly concrete fashion. Annensky's poems are only rarely general or proverbial in their bearing on reality: they present for the most part individual, concrete situations, of the type with which we are familiar in prose writing. The Soviet critic P. Gromov has shown how Annensky derived the technique of what he calls the rasskaz v stikhakh from the work of the 'transitional' poets of the 1880's like Apukhtin and Sluchevsky (Gromov does not point out that Baudelaire may have been an equally strong influence in this respect: c.f. Le Cygne or Les Sept Vieillards).

Apukhtin's S kur'erskim poezdom, for example, is a carefully-wrought attempt to render a subjective, 'lyrical' emotion in terms of a series of events. But Apukhtin succeeds only in writing a narrative poem. The attempt at psychological portraiture, the establishment of a 'backdrop' for the events described, is clearly inspired by the short story; one feels,

however, that Apukhtin has simply transplanted the techniques of the short story into his poem, rather than trying to fuse them with the techniques of verse. Annensky, in Gromov's opinion, carries the process of cross-fertilization between poetry and prose much further. Gromov writes:

"Annensky's narrative style (povestvovatel'nost') has for the most part a significance in relation to the contents of his poetry. A poem by Annensky is always a 'story in verse' (rasskaz v stikhakh), a lyrical account of a concrete event which concerns certain clearly-defined people. These people and events lend themselves to direct identification with the author and the perception of the reader just as reluctantly as the heroes and events of prose writing. For the creation of a 'prosaic' accuracy in relation to people and events, Annensky draws to a large extent on the experience, not only of Russian, but also of western prose. Annensky was famous as a connoisseur of western (in particular, of French) modernist poetry and translated from it a great deal, although he 'suppressed' the foreign originals to rather a great extent beneath his creative individuality. However strange it may seem at first, it is difficult to 'affiliate' Annensky as a lyric poet by analogy with any of the poets he translated. Establishing in his poems a detailed and
precise landscape, a backdrop for the action, the psychology of his heroes, concretizing and materializing all of this, Annensky fundamentally renews the Russian verse tradition... In the most general terms, one can say that for the imagistic 'material' of his verse Annensky draws on the experience of prose rather than on that of poetry. In this context it is most apposite to point to Annensky's contemporary Chekhov, from the Russian tradition; from the western tradition Annensky is obviously close to Flaubert and his school. But, as always, the question here is not simply one of traditions, but of a new content. *(1)*

Speaking earlier in the same chapter of the Ideal and the Real in Annensky's poetry, Gromov points out:

"Rejecting all artificial constructions, schemes of the human image, Annensky, following his own inner logic, arrives at a 'confrontation', an opposition between 'links' and 'fusions', between schematic 'wholeness' and an authentic integration which, according to Annensky, is unobtainable." *(2)*

*(2)* Ibid., p. 233.
It seems to me that, while it is true that Gromov does overemphasize the element of 'fragmentation' in Annensky's work, these words are applicable to the structural aspects of the poems. The theme of *svyaz'* and *sliyan*e runs through the whole of the poet's work. The poem itself is often a moment of transition between the Real and the Ideal, a kind of 'thoroughfare' for the poet's emotions and aspirations. Thus, the stories in verse to which Gromov refers are 'woven together' in the manner of prose constructions. But unlike narrative poems, they have no plot, no extended scheme of action. The events are very close together in time, and they flow arbitrarily, almost as in real life, and are apprehended in their Real form, severed from the Ideal: the poet depicts only the moment, severed from the continuum. (1)

Let us examine some poems where this tendency is particularly apparent. *Preryvistyestreki* (168) is an obvious example. As the poem unfolds we encounter the 'heroes' of the action. The poem concerns two people, a man and a woman:

Ну-с, проводил на поезд,  
Вернулся и соло, да!  
Здесь был ее кольчный пояс,  
Брошку лежала — звезда...

(1) Cf. Prince Mirsky: 'His (Annensky's) poems are developed on two interconnected planes — the human soul and the outer world; each of them is an elaborate parallel between a state of mind and the external world. Annensky is akin to Chekhov, for his material is also the pinpricks and infinitesimals of life'. (Mirsky: A History of Russian Literature, London, p. 448)
The man has left a woman he loves, one who is probably already married, at a railway station. The situation is one reminiscent of the one depicted in Chekhov's *Dama s sobachkoi*. In a series of sudden recollections, the man remembers insignificant details of the scene which has caused him so much pain. In his mind he tries to reconstruct the act of parting itself. Fragments of conversation appear, the preryvistye stroki of the title. The moment of parting itself comes into the man's consciousness suddenly, a torrent of uncontrolled emotion. The wailing motif of the opening reasserts itself, and the poem ends as it began:

И
Поезд еще стоял —
Я убежал...
Но этого быть не может,
Это — подлог...

It is quite clear that there is no 'schema' here. The inspiration is purely lyrical - an isolated moment yields its drop of poison, and the poet transforms it into verse. But the evident characterization of the heroes, the way in which details of their appearance are suggested by descriptions of concrete objects (the brooch and the belt), and descriptive epithets, the fact that a distinct duality is created, a
duality of an almost dramatic nature - all these factors point to the 'prosaic' nature of the poem. The moment is transformed into a dialectical process, as in a short story. In connection with this poem at any rate, Chekhov does seem Annensky's most suitable prose counterpart.

This concretized duality makes itself felt in more subtle ways. The poem *Toska medlennykh kapel* (161), for example, presents a theme common in romantic poetry: the poet lies awake watching single drops of rain falling:

О, капли в ночной тишине,
Дремотного духа трещетка,
Дрока набухают оне
И падают мерно и четко.

Gradually a sense of tension builds up. In the second stanza the poet declares that he cannot bear the suspense of waiting for the next drop to fall. Looking out of his window, he fastens his attention on two drops which are about to fall. As they grow larger and heavier, and more snow melts, they seem like human lives, held apart from one another, but united by a common process of decay:
И мчится, я должен, таясь,
На странным присутствовать браке,
Поняв безнадежную связь
Двух тающих жизней во мраке.

Here there is no *sliyan'e*, only *svyaz*'. There is a clear attempt at 'characterization' even in this poem: a scene from nature is reformed into a conflict of human personalities. This is something more than anthropomorphism: nature is interpreted not simply in terms of man, but in terms of men, seen as individuals.

Sometimes the narrative technique is employed in a more conventional manner, as in the poem *To bylo na Vallen-Koski* (104). This is a straightforward story - but it is also a lyrical exclamation. The 'step by step' prose technique merely serves to heighten the terrifying image of alienation which occurs at the end of the poem. The poet sees in the lifeless doll which is thrown into the waterfall to amuse the tourists a mirror-image of himself, reduced and dehumanized by a reified world:

Бывает такое небо,
Такая игра лучей,
Что сердцу обида куклы
Обиды своей жалчей.
Elsewhere, Annensky transforms the world into a host of contradictory personalities, which emerge as almost allegorical figures, e.g. Nezrimaya, Lest', Mehta, Uzhas, Smert', Pomykan'e, Zloba, Zakat, Rassvet, Polnoch', etc. Yet these figures are not merely allegorical. As we have already noted, Annensky strove to preserve the meaning of the classical allegorical characters, such as Death, Revenge, etc., from the ossification and stagnation which they suffered at the hands of scholars and schoolmasters. The 'allegorical' figures in his own poetry illustrate this striving: he constantly endeavours to retain the associative qualities of his personae. Thus 'Death' is never a tag, a useful epithet – it is always accompanied by its attendant physical and psychological aspects, and is rooted in concrete reality. The figures of Uzhas and Strakh in the poem Pered panikhidoi (117) are no mere cardboard devils: they are involved in the overwhelming materiality of the deathroom:

Лишь Ужас в белых зеркалах
Здесь молит и поет
И с полным поклоном Страх
Нам свечи раздает.
c) Poetic experience as a work of literature.

The 'literary' element in Annensky's work lies deep at the heart of the poet's inspiration. This element is more than a mythology - it contains elements of 'myth' in the traditional classical sense as well as mythopoeic elements. But this 'literariness' is rather a justification of myth, an attempt to impart to a world fragmented from the consciousness of the subject at least a name which may serve to reunite subject and object. For the name, or 'text', has a duality: it contains both the consciousness of the subject and the impersonal totality of the object. By means of the name, the subject can both express its consciousness of the object and conceive of itself in an exteriorised relationship to it. This is what Annensky implies in his use of the term Slovo in his letters to Voloshin: the word is a mediator between the Realm (the experience of a fragmented, reified plurality) and the Ideal (the sliyan'e, or coming together of men).
If we examine some of the other aspects of Annensky's creative and critical work we can see that the same idea permeates them also. What are Annensky's 'translations', for example, if not attempts to recreate the text in the image of the subjective consciousness? Annensky's Euripides is not the Euripides of the textbooks, seen in a historical perspective but deprived of the subjective and intuitive moment of creation on the part of the reader which alone would make that perspective (the collapse of tragedy, linked to the dessication of reality) meaningful. Euripides appears in Annensky's hands as both text and essence, the text having remoulded itself around the essence in a new historical environment. Euripides' colloquial Greek becomes colloquial Russian; Euripides' choruses become lyrical 'symbolist' poems. We see a similar process in Annensky's treatment of the Horatian odes, and indeed in almost all of the translations.

Annensky translates not the meaning of the words, but their essential reality. The texts, revitalised and reshaped, 'speak themselves' in the manner of a Baroque poem. They reappear as simultaneously, not as cultural relics, but
apprehended as living things within a definite historico-cultural framework which is the age in which Annensky lived and wrote. Sometimes, as in the case of the Verlaine translations, the transfer is not even a historical one - it is rather the pure translation of one poet's consciousness and temperament into those of another. Verlaine's 'Il pleure dans mon coeur', for example, is unmistakably 'Verlainean'; any attempt at literal translation would provide only a pale shadow of the original. Annensky's opening line 'Serd'tse iskhodit slezami' (Pesnya bez slov, 268) is, on the other hand, unmistakably 'Annenskian': yet the subjective consciousness expressed by Verlaine in his poem is preserved intact, while the text re-forms itself according to new and unfamiliar directives. (1)

It is clear that such a technique demands the highest possible level of self-awareness on the part of the poet who has set himself the task of 're-creating' the original work. Annensky, with his artistic detachment and preoccupation with style as the living expression of the creative mentality, is able to carry out such tasks with ease. There can be

(1) In our own time the American poet Robert Lowell has made similar experiments (see Imitations, Faber & Faber). Particularly interesting is Lowell's version of Annensky's Chörnaya vesna.
no question of his 'stealing' the inspiration of other poets in order to clothe it in new garments and pass it off as his own; such considerations are where Annensky is concerned trivial and irrelevant - if anything, the translation is a mask for the poet's self-effacing spirit.

Annensky is concerned to present any poetic experience, wherever it may come from, and to whomever it 'belongs', with the immediacy with which it first entered the world. The Word is constantly evolving and changing, passing from mouth to mouth, from culture to culture, throughout time. It is the subjective and personal, and the objective and impersonal. The reader constantly recreates the work according to his position in time and social and cultural development.

Annensky's criticism is of course co-extensive with his translation work. Here again the emphasis is laid upon exegesis, conceived not as the extraction of 'themes' and 'recurrent ideas' or 'images' from literary texts, but rather as the re-structuring of the text in such a way as to reveal its inherent poetic essence. Annensky called his critical essays 'reflections'. In the introduction to the first Book of Reflections he explains his use of the term:
The 'reflections' are thus new works created in the image of the originals, unbroken extensions of them. In a recent essay the literary critic Jean-Pierre Richard has shown how the elements of liquidity and tangency in Sainte-Beuve's creative work relate to the same writer's literary criticism. Sainte-Beuve, according to Richard, conceives of the critical consciousness as a 'river' which hugs itself close to the 'rocks' and 'castles' which are the literary works themselves, imitating their every crenellation and contour. Annensky is obviously very close to Sainte-Beuve in this respect — сливан'е is a 'liquid' metaphor that describes the fusion of the critic with the work.

For Annensky, as for Sainte-Beuve, the text is not something

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(2) J.P. Richard, 'les Chemins actuels de la Critique',
static and given - it changes itself in the mind of the reader, and indeed the reader to a great extent controls the text, forcing it to comply with his own subjective and metaphysical inclinations. The critic, or rather the critic as conceived by Annensky, goes one step further than the reader: he writes about the text, and thus expresses his control over it in terms of structured signs, which make up a paralanguage. Like Proust, Annensky recreates the work as a work, and not as an appendix to a work. In the introduction to the second Book of Reflections, Annensky writes:

Я пишу здесь только о том, что все знают,

и только о тех, которые всем нам близки.

Я отражаю только то же, что и вы. (1)

The 'reflection' is thus the reader's subjective experience of the text given a new form, a form which derives from that experience, and not from a scheme of criteria imposed on the work from without. The process according

(1) Kniga otrazhenii II, p. 2.
to which such constructions are made is similar to the process of poetic creation. In the poem Mirazhi (166) we read:

Пусть я — радость отражения,
Но не то ли и вы, поэты?

Sometimes the new form assumed by the works considered is that of a discursive essay in which themes and images are selected from the original work, and then moulded into a loose combination which allows general remarks about aesthetic problems to emerge. Such, for example, is the essay Problemy Gogolevskogo yumora (Book of Reflections I, p. 1-27). But elsewhere, this discursive, speculative prose becomes something quite different, as in the essay about 'Klara Milich', or the 'Vignette on Grey Paper'. In these, the poet limits himself entirely within a subjective frame of reference, from which a new conception of the originals emerges. Thus Klara Milich appears as a combination of three mutually related ideas: tangibility, desire and concept. Dostoievsky's Dvoinik is seen as a revelation of the profound tragedy of human existence, Golyadkin's gradual loss of uniqueness and identity being interpreted as the universal fate of all men. But these interpretations
are made in concrete symbols and poetic prose, not in abstract, 'critical' language. The Golyadkin 'vignette' reproduces Dostoievsky's interior monologue, a device which permits Annensky to introduce the reader into his discussion. The text is always treated as a minimum requirement; the experience beyond the text, or revealed in the text, and its relation to the subject, understood as the reader, is always stressed to the maximum. Dostoievsky's words are symbols through which the reader may catch glimpses of an authentic, Ideal reality, and which are the only means by which we may become in some way connected to that reality.

We have seen how time and time again Annensky returns to the concept of the word as such, as perhaps the most important and potentially transfiguring force in human existence. At the beginning of this study, I pointed to the fundamental antagonism between the Real and the Ideal
which lies at the heart of the poet's aesthetic, and found analogies with this antagonism in the work of other symbolist poets, such as Baudelaire and Mallarmé. We are now in a position to decide just how Annensky's attitude towards this problem differs from others, and how in many respects it points beyond the metaphysical and aesthetic crisis of symbolist poetry.

It is typical of any discussion of Annensky's work that quite frequently evidence must be produced which at first sight seems to have little to do with the argument. In this case, the evidence derives from a series of critical essays by the poet devoted to the work of Gogol. Gogol had a very strong fascination for Annensky. It is easy to see Gogol's influence in such poems as Kartinka (136), Kulachishka (114), Chörnaya vesna (143) and others. Annensky's preoccupation with Gogol's dates from an early period in his literary career. The short article in Russkaya Shkola, published in 1890, and entitled O formakh fantasticheskogo u Gogolya is an attempt to reconcile Gogol's realistic literary technique with his frequent introduction of the fantastic element in Gogol's work not simply as an artistic device, but as the key to any real
understanding of the writer's work. He points out that in Gogol's work the fantastic serves an ethical purpose; the fantastic element in Nos is 'like a stick poked into an aquarium'. Out of millions of insignificant molluscs the runaway nose singles out one of them and displays the moral poverty, the poshlost concealed beneath the shell. The essence of Gogol's use of the fantastic in this story is slander. Nos, however, represents only one aspect of Gogol's art, the one which relates to the tragic-comic reality of everyday life. A story like Vii, on the other hand, shows how the unreal works towards an ethical goal in quite a different manner. The tone of Vii is mystical, almost religious. The story concerns the problem of fear, in this case the metaphysical fear of the unknowable, the fantastic. Khoma Brut is put through a number of hair-raising situations, ranging from the comic (the ride on the back of the witch) to the terrifying (Khoma Brut's death from fear). Again, the purpose is an ethical one: in the story fear is analysed not by Gogol himself, who according to Annensky simply presents concrete images of the fantastic, but by the reader, who must deduce the significance of these images, and judge it for himself. In Shinel, the fantastic element does not only indicate ethical
deficiencies, it also judges them and punishes them.

'The fantastic contradicts reality. What is reality? It consists in the fact that an upturned chair will lie there until I pick it up. But reality is an indispensable form for life only. Art approaches life not in reality, but in truth, that is in the differentiation of good and evil. And for the triumph of truth the fantastic serves as well, and perhaps even better than the Real.'

In his other writings on Gogol, Annensky follows up the idea, that art consists in the ethical differentiation between truth and reality, between Ideal and Real. In Estetika "Mértvykh Dush" (1911), Annensky states that human beings contain two personalities. One of these is that part of us which eats and sleeps, the tangible man, who can be described in terms of colour, poise, movement, and so on. The other is the 'twilight' man - that part of ourselves which we call our essence, that which makes us what we are, but which is indefinable and incommunicable.

'The first man eats, sleeps, shaves, breathes and ceases to breathe; the first man can be put into prison and hammered into a coffin. But only the second man can feel God.
within himself; only the second man can be reproached; only the second man can be loved; only upon the second man may moral demands be placed... Compare this statement with the poem Dvoinik (66) which ends:

И в мутном круженьи годин
Всё чаще вопрос меня мучит:
Когда наконец нас разлучат,
Каким же я буду один?

Annensky goes on to show how in Gogol's work the two 'men' have become separated from one another; the 'physical', 'tangible' man has been allowed to dominate, while the 'twilight', 'spiritual' man has shrunk into insignificance. But in the process something else has happened: the 'physical' man has appropriated the qualities of the 'twilight' man, and essential qualities are revealed in concrete images. Nozdrev is represented almost solely to allusions to hair; the public prosecutor is 'a man of eyebrows'; Petrushka is 'a man of odours'. Gogol has 'dipped into fathomless physicality the clear and rational, coquettish, lofty and airy Pushkinian word'.

In Gogol's art it is the word alone which has the

(1) Apollon 8, p. 51.
power to differentiate between the Real and the Ideal, between
the physical and non-ethical now, and the transcendental, ethically-based there. The speech that Annensky delivered
on the fiftieth anniversary of Gogol' s death (published
in 1902) elucidates this idea more precisely. In his speech,
Annensky declares that two worlds surround us: the world
of objects, and the world of ideas. In art, the world of
ideas achieves the greatest possible degree of domination
over the world of objects, having the power to reveal the
inner reality which underlies them, and to connect them to the
spiritual life of men. 'Out of all humanitarian and
ethical aims, art knows only two: the coming together of men
and their justification; everything else is boring alloy,
the worldly slag of art.' Gogol's 'punitive idealism'
is like a ray of sunlight 'falling on the molluscs and lice'
in a dark cellar. 'It does not matter whether poor Akakii
Akakievich enjoys there in raptures the poetry of his
chancery copywork or whether molluscs and woodlice swarm
around him. The ray of the sun will find its target even
in a stone, and be it only for one moment it will enable
the molluscs and woodlice to feel that they are children
of darkness, and the half-idiot Bashmachkin to realize in
himself the humiliated and defiled image of God. (1)

This ray of sunlight is the poetic word. In Revizor and Shinel it is a punitive word; but in Mertvye Dushi it is, to use Annensky's terminology, purely 'aesthetic'. That is to say, in Mertvye Dushi the ethical significance of the world is realized, not, indirectly, by a subjective 'judgement', but concretely and totally, by means of images, so that the world appears both in its 'fathomless physicality', and in its ethical, or Ideal, manifestation. The world in Gogol's poema is simultaneously Truth and Illusion, the two elements being contained in the poetic word, which is at once a revelation of transcendental reality and a manifestation of the concrete, limited world of the speaker. The implications of the Bal'mont essay are thus brought here to their ultimate conclusion.

What is the nature of Annensky's own 'poetic word'? How does it fulfil the twin function of 'the coming together of men and their justification'? Before answering these questions let us examine some of the fundamental traits of Annensky's aesthetic. For Annensky, poetry is torment. This notion is repeated again and again throughout the poems in different images and in different contexts. Thus, in Staraya sharmanka (102), for example, we read:

Но когда б и понял старый вал,
Что такое им с шарманкой участь,
Разве б петь, кружась, он перестал
Оттого, что петь нельзя, не мучать?

A similar idea is expressed in Smychok i struny (100):

И было мукой для них,
Что людям музыкой казалось.

To create poetry means to be aware of the profound injuries (obida) which the Real inflicts on human beings. The torture of poetic creation is also the torture of existence. For this reason, the poet's verses reflect the realities which surround him, and this is why the verses are 'sick children' (Tretii Muchitel'ny sonet), the 'pale children of Doubt and Anguish' (Nenuzhnye strofy). But the torture is not without a purpose: it is what Annensky calls muka Ideala, the striving for transcendence both in art and in life. This is the basic idea in the poem O net, ne stan (115):

Оставь меня. Мне ложе стелет Скука.
Зачем мне рай, которым грезят все?
А если грязь и низость — только муха
По где-то там сияющей красе...
But what is the nature of the Ideal? As I pointed out at the beginning of this study, Annensky does not seek a purely personal solution, an individual transcendence; he seeks sliyan'e with the world, he wants to dissolve his consciousness in reality. The Ideal is a cancelling of barriers, an escape from the closed rooms and gardens of the poet's existence. But any 'fusion' with the human world implies the assumption of an ethical, spiritual attitude towards others. The obman of the Real is not only aesthetic, relating only to the poet's task - the deceit is also ethical. Reality is both Untruth and Injustice.

The fragmentariness and relativity of reality is a constant offence to the poet, because it clashes with every effort he makes in order to achieve some kind of unity, and consequently some kind of moral integrity. Art is the poet's hope of finding this wholeness. In the torment of artistic creation, the poet may be able to turn the khlyab' i smes' of the world into sapphires and diamonds. Creation demands the self-induced poeticheskaya oprava, a state of semi-consciousness in which the forms and colours of reality mingle with one another and form structures of a higher, transcendent order. Yet such dreams of beauty are doomed to failure. The glittering
maenads in the enchanted garden only succeed in ensnaring the poet with their silver chains; the chains cut his heart, and return him to the blunt reality of suffering again. The dreams of amethysts, of autumnal landscapes and translucent prosvety are seen to be nothing but hallucinations. The poet cannot be a god, his feet are firmly placed on the earth, although his eyes may sometimes catch a glimpse of an unattainable ideal. The artist must take into account not only the insights of his own ego, but also the incontrovertibly real manifestations of the non-ego, of concrete reality itself:

И грани ли ширь бытия
Иль формы вымыслом ты множишь,
Но в самом Я от глаз — Не Я
Ты никуда уйти не можешь.

/ Посту /

Thus the act of poetic creation demands that the poet should be constantly alienated from himself, and be able to conceive of his own ego in its relation to the ego of others. In the poem Garmoniya (166), we see this process of self-estrangement in its most complete form. The poet is sitting by the edge of the sea on an autumn morning. He watches the spume on the shore, and the 'misty remnants of days' suggest themselves to him. But amidst the fiery spray and the enamelled colours of this poetic dream, a consciousness of others asserts itself.
There are other I's in the world besides the I of the poet. He is aware that as he sits entranced

что-то молодое за меня
кончается в тоске существование.

The dream has been shattered. The old offence, обида, has intervened in the form of the Other.

The process of self-estrangement described in this poem has counterparts in such poems as To bylo na Vallen-Koski and Чёрный силует (110). There is, however, an important difference to be noted. To bylo na Vallen-Koski, for example, depicts the replacement of the poet's I by a meaningless physicality - the doll is the poet's physical self deprived of any spiritual depth, and the compassion which he feels for it is the compassion which he feels for himself. The doll is fixity, sterility, non-I, but nothing more than this, although it parodies the human form. There is no attempt to reach beyond the walls of the self: the walls are simply seen from outside. In Гармония, on the other hand, the emphasis is laid not upon the meaninglessness of a purely temporal existence, but rather on the awareness of other 'souls', other essences, which enable the poet to stand back from himself in quite a different fashion. Now there is a sense of responsibility for others, in place of a suspicion that everything is reducible to the image of a lifeless doll. The Other is not merely
an impenetrable stone, but rather a person, seen in a state of decay.

The poet's consciousness is always a perception of the Other in a state of impoverishment or decay. In other words, it is a fusion of a concrete and living injustice with a consciousness of that injustice, and a sense of responsibility for it. Thus, in a poem like Iyul' 2, the sleeping miners are both pitiful and terrifying. The misery and dirt that surrounds them is at once an object of compassion and a nightmarish vision. The same is true of the poem V dorogе (74), where the theme of conscience is touched more directly. Here the nightmares of the sleeping peasants intrude on the poet's reverie, turning his dream into a feverish vision. Yet this nightmare is only the reality of the sleeping peasants, a reality which is impoverished, bare, terrifying:

Дед идет с сумой и бос,
Нищета заводит повесть:
О, мучительный вопрос!
Наша совесть... Наша совесть...

The same process of identification may be seen in most of the other poems which deal explicitly with the theme of conscience. The last lines of Kulachishka, for example, have a
nightmarish, grotesque quality which is closely connected to
the poet's own sense of shame and responsibility as he is
confronted with the scene:

Скормить Помыканным и Злобам
И сердце, и силы дотла —
Чтоб дочь за глазетовым гробом,
Горбатая, с зонтиком шла.

In the poem Deti (170), Annensky states that, in a world
where children are tortured (we think of Ivan Karamazov),
repentance (pokayan'e) cannot wipe away sins:

Потому что в них Христос,
Весь, со всем своим сияньем.

There is no redemption for this sin (typically, Annensky
rejects the idea of a resurrection). But instead of
'returning his ticket', Annensky prefers to state that the only
way of living with any measure of integrity is to confront
the anguish of reality at every moment, that pokoi nash tol'ko
v muke. Mere cognition of one's essential loneliness and
isolation is not enough; neither are interrelated emotions
of zhalost' and pokayan'e: in order to be able to face the
world with at least some dignity the individual must realise the depth of his guilt, realise that the nightmare that surrounds him is of his own making. At every instant man makes himself anew in the image of Strakh and Uzhas. This is the meaning of the poem Moya Toska (171).

Moya Toska is a kind of poetic creed. The poet's immortality will be his Anguish - it is this that will live after him, not his 'love', which in his eyes has simply been a miserable failure. He admires those who can love - they are 'peaceful even in agony', 'and there is much to be envied in the gentleness of women' - but his 'bezlyubaya' Anguish, which becomes a new emotion in the poem, related to love, but also to hatred, to aesthetic delight, but also to the sensation of ugliness:

В венке из тронутых, из вянуших азалий
Собралась петь она...

This persona is sexless; it is 'a pretender, has a smile for all', 'a vicious taste': it has murdered its own offspring, and yet hypocritically prays to a cheapened, vulgarised Christ:

Качает целый день она пустые зыбки,
И образок в углу — слащийший Иисус...

Into this extraordinary vision Annensky pours all the pain,
all the contradictions, the insults and horror of the world around him - and yet it is his world:

Я выдумал ее - и всё ж она виденье

The poet's nedoumen'e is also the nedorazumen'e of the world outside him, his own suffering and anguish and the suffering of others are fused in one symbol - Toska.

Anguish - Toska - is Annensky's style. And it is this style that brings about the 'coming together of men'. It is true that this coming together takes place within a framework of terror. But it is only through Anguish that the images of Annensky's poetry - the lilies in glass, the railway carriages, the watches and clocks, the mud, the funerals, the corpses (and consequently the whole universe) - are justified. Anguish is the force that hold Annensky's poetic world together, which gives the imagery and symbolism of that world a significance beyond the purely personal. Annensky's aesthetic purpose is very different from that of the majority of the other symbolist poets of his age, either in Europe or in Russia. Unlike them, he seeks neither a private solution (Mallarmé, Sologub) nor a universal one which is based on a desire for a metaphysical synthesis (Yeats, Blok, Bely). His task is an experiential one, and his goal is not an abstract
ideal, not 'le livre', not God but man. Man for Annensky is not a point of departure, but a point of arrival, as for Nietzsche. The word, and more precisely, the poetic word, is the means by which one may arrive at integration with others, and with the physical reality of the world. From his insomniac and fevered reading of the pages of the spoken and the written word, of the communications of a broken and anguished world, Annensky is able to produce some shreds of evidence which suggest that man's destiny is not one of eternal alienation and descent towards the thing, but of creativity and integration with others. Annensky could only conceive of this integration and communion within a context of terror. But although, for example, the 'Starye estonki' may be 'neotvyaznye chukhonki' in a fevered nightmare, barely recognizable as human beings, they have their presence in the poetic word: through the poem they speak to us, communicate with us and with our conscience, which Annensky equates with consciousness:

"Добротель... Твою добродетель
Мы ослепли для тебя, а вижу...
Погоди - вот накопится петель,
Так словечко придумаем, скажем..."
In the following study I want to draw attention to a number of thematic and symbolic areas in Annensky's lyrical poetry which, when seen as the interrelated elements of a structure, reveal an important aspect of the poet's imaginary universe. I am not concerned with making a thematic analysis of the poems; nor do I intend to extract from them a 'world-view' or 'philosophy'. Rather, I hope to throw some light on what I consider to be a basic structure or form underlying the totality of the poems contained in the three published collections. The critic Jean Rousset has written that 'there is no distinguishable form except where we can perceive an agreement or connection, a line of strength, an obsessive figure, a web of presences or echoes, a network of convergences', and calls 'structures those formal constants, those liaisons which betray a mental universe and which every artist reinvents.
according to his needs’. (1) The ‘formal constants’ of Annensky’s ‘mental universe’ are my central preoccupation in what follows.

2.

Let us examine three passages from Annensky’s writings. In each of them the pronoun ‘I’ has a different connotation and is used in a different way. The first passage is a stanza of the poem Kotory? (67). The second is taken from the critical essay Yumor Lermontova, included in the second Book of Reflections. The third is an extract from the poem Garmoniya (166). Here they are:

1
О царь Недоступного Света,
Отец моего бытия,
Открой же хоть сердцу поэта,
Которое создал ты я.

2
Господа, я не романтик. Я не могу, да вовсе не хотел бы уйти от безнадежной разоренности моего пошлого мира. Я видел совсем, совсем близко такие соблазнительные бездны, я посетил – и с вами, с вами, господа, не отговаривайтесь, пожалуйста, – такие соблазнительные угольки, что звезды и волны, как они ни сверкают и ни мерцая, а не всегда – то меня успокоят.

Example 1 presents the notion of subjectivity in an abstract form: *ya* is a noun here. Indeed, the whole poem is a fluctuation between two uses of the pronoun: as a signifier of the poet himself, and as an abstract concept. ('No ya bezuchasten pred neyu' and 'V kakuyu volshebnuju skazku / Vol'etsya svobodnoe ya'). Thus there is an alternation throughout the poem between a generalised, universal *I*, and the limited, confined *I* of the poet. The question posed in the last two lines of the poem is concerned with this alternative. The general, universal *I* is seen to have transcendental implications, while the isolated, particularised *I* is beset by 'derzost' obmana / I sdavsheisya mysli pozor'.

In example 2 the first person is used in a different way. Here *ya* is a personal pronoun. The situation of the passage
in the essay is significant. While the immediately preceding paragraph is lyrical and discursive (Skol'ko
nado bylo imet' uma, etc.), the extract in question follows with an effect of great power; the dramatic rhetorical tone and syntax contrasting strongly with what has gone before. The poet's I is injected into the movement of the prose, gathering around it the objectivity which has preceded its appearance. But, what is more important, the I of the author is identified with the somnitel'nye ugolki and soblaznitel'nye bezdny of the text: 'Ya ne mogu, da voyse ne khotel by uiti ot beznadezhnoi razorënnosti moego poshlogo mira.' Just as in the previous passage, the poet's I fluctuates between an isolated anguish and a sense of shared anguish (I s vami, i s vami, gospoda...). Annensky addresses the reader very dramatically as 'gospoda', as if he were addressing a speech to an audience, and the abysses and horrors of existence are treated both as the particular condition of the poet's own experience and as the condition of all men's experience. Once again the poet's I has two aspects: one solitary, individual and self-enclosed; the other collective, generalized and freely-moving.

Example 3 uses ya both as a pronoun and as a noun.
This time, however, the process of abstraction has been carried to a point where \( ya \) is completely alienated from the poet. Whereas in the previous two examples the abstract use of the first person singular implies a generalised, collective subjectivity, here instead is a consciousness of other individuals: \( ya \) is used as a noun in the plural.

It can be seen from these illustrations that for Annensky the concept of the I is a complex one, involving not only an individual consciousness which belongs to the poet alone, but also an intersubjectivity (Takie zh\_ya). In what follows, I intend to examine more closely, with the help of numerous examples, the way in which Annensky's poetic I inflects, according to whether it is situated in isolation or in the presence of other I's. I hope to show that this I is in a constant state of expansion, reaching out to all phenomena in order to include them in its context.

3.

The Isolation and Fragmentation of the I.

There can be no doubt that loneliness is one of the most pervasive themes in Annensky's poetry. Again and again we
observe the poet alone in a room, a garden, or a park. His world is a closed one, an interstice in the surface of reality from which his subjective consciousness looks out at the cosmic intensities of nature and death. The walls that surround him are the walls of his own. Boredom stares through the open windows of his room (V otkrytye okna, 68), reflected in the flashing of colours at twilight. The branches of the trees in November are like prison bars, hanging over the windowpane and obstructing his vision (Moyabr', 72). Suicide is denied to him for it requires the to break out of its narrow confines: 'Tol'ko te moi, kto volen da udal', 'says the lilac gloom (97). It only looks in at the window; the poet must follow it into the objectivity of nature if he wants to lose consciousness in it.

The poet's room is filled with reminders of the limitations that prevent the to break out of the confines of personal experience towards a transcendental Ideal. A clock sways its pendulum to and fro monotonously, and its tak-to, tak-to is like the mutterings of a maniac cripple, a horrible reflection of the poet's broken life (Toska mayatnika, 134). Another poem about a pendulum is Lira chasov (181). The clock is a tormenting counterpart to the poet's heart, tormenting because while the pendulum may easily be set back in motion when it stops, there is no such certainty as far as the 'mechanism' of the
human heart is concerned:

Найдется ли рука, чтобы лиру
В тебе так же тихо качнуть,
И миру, желанному миру,
Тебе, мое сердце, вернуть?

A similar comparison is made in Budil'nik (108). The flickering of a gas-mantle seems to the poet like the reflection of the hopelessness of his own dreams, the dreams which he pours into his creative work (Babochka gaza, 167). Like those dreams, the gas-flame seems to tug ceaselessly at the fabric of reality, but cannot break free. The pack of cards beneath the green lampshade (Pod zelënym abazhurom, 90) are condemned to go on year after year giving their indifferent 'yes' or 'no' to the miserable alternatives of the poet's existence. A wallpaper decorated with flower-patterns contains the secret of ennui, a secret which becomes clearer and clearer to the poet as he lies for weeks on end, ill in bed (Toska, 93). The flickering of a dying candle is the expression of a passionate desire which is doomed to extinction and frustration (Svechka gasnet, 82).

In the poet's garden the sense of restriction and isolation is just as strong. The garden is filled with shapes and faces
from the past, sometimes hideously distorted, as in the poem 
*Kvadratnye okoshki* (124). *Nox vitae* (123) describes the 
poet's sense of alienation as he stares at the garden where once 
everything was azure. Reminders of death are everywhere:

Как ночь напоминает смерть
Всем, даже выцветшим покровом.

*Pered zakatom* (75) reflects the damage wrought by life's 
experience in the poet's heart:

Щёлку желтую газона,  
На грязе цветок забытый,  
Разоренного балкона  
Остов, зеленью увить.

Топора обиды злые,  
Всё, чего уже не стало...  
Чтобы сердце, сны былие  
Узнавая, трепетало...

Loneliness and isolation are not completely negative in 
Annensky's poetic world, however. On the contrary, solitariness 
is necessary to him for the exercise of his art, and it appears 
in its most positive aspects in such poems as the ones included 
in the cycle *Lilii* (84). Here the lilies are symbols of the 
moment of creative isolation, fragile and slender, exuding
intoxicating essences from a vase of crystal. Similar symbols are amethysts (Ametisty 110 and 213), yellow light shining through a window (Stansy nochi, 160), and misty clouds (Oblaka, 144). Of these, the last two are present in Muchitel'ny sonet (125), which describes prerequisites for the experience of poetic creation:

Мне нужен тающий снег под желтозной огня,
Сквозь потное стекло светящего устало,
И чтобы прядь волос так близко от меня,
Так близко от меня, развившись, трепетала.

Мне надо дымных туч с померкшей высоты...

It is significant, however, that this poem ends with a plea for a kind of experience that art cannot give, an experience which will involve the whole of the poet's being, his body as well as his spirit:

О дай мне только миг, но в жизни, не во сне,
Чтоб мог я стать огнем или сгореть в огне!

And Prelyudiya, (138) contains the lines:

Тревога, а не мысль, растет в безлюдной мгле,
И холодно цветам ночами в хрустале.

The flowers in crystal thus have an alternative aspect: art can become something which forces the poet to remain apart
from life, stifling his natural desire for association with others. Prelyudiya is, in fact, an examination of the ambiguous situation of the artist in society. On the one hand, the poet is 'the rival of the Muses', solitary, tormented and blind to the outside world; on the other, he is a human being like other beings, living his life like others.

The theme is a familiar one: the dualism of Pushkin's Poet is here developed and elaborated by Annensky, who attaches great importance to zaboty suetnoro sveta. Life, meaning life lived among others, makes poetic ideas come alive and burn with great intensity. Nonetheless, in order to rival the Muses, the poet must withdraw at times from human intercourse: then he becomes quite another being, a stranger in the midst of the crowd. His active self quivers 'like a match in the wind protected by a hand'.

The moment of poetic insight is precisely a moment, snatched from the routine of everyday life with great difficulty. Maksimilian Voloshin describes this aspect of Annensky's art in an obituary article written for Apollon:

Вагон, возвал железной дороги, болезнь — всё мучительные антракты жизни, все вынужденные состояния безволия, неизбежные упадки духа между двумя периодами работы, неврастения городского человека, задавленного делами, который на минуту отрываеться от напряжения
Annensky stresses the painfulness of the creative moment for Annensky, and this is surely correct: the 'escape' from the everyday round brings no release in the sense of happiness — poetry is only torment and suffering; the tortured lines of ink on the page, sleeplessness, the fall into the abyss of neurosis and nightmare, and above all the agony of loneliness.

Artifice and Isolation.

Annensky's landscapes and interiors are highly contrived: they bear the mark of a cultured intelligence which has projected itself onto them. The galleries and steps of Prizraki (143) and Oreanda (162), the parks and statues of Trilistnik v parke (133-134), the 'precious', Samainesque cathedral of Toska vozvrata (87), the violin and bow of

(1) Apollon, 1910, 4, Khronika p. 15.
Smychok i struny (100) — all these bear witness to the 'aestheticising', decorative tendency of Annensky's poetry.

The epigraph to the poem Dekoratsiya (82) reads: 'Na menya deistvuet toli'ko ta priroda, kotoraya pokhozha na dekoratsiyu.'

The manifold artificiality, the stylization which characterizes Annensky's world is not accidental: it is a consequence of the loneliness and isolation of the poetic I that inhabits it. Cut off from other human beings, the I creates its own universe from books, statues, illustrations, paintings, decorated interiors. Thus for example the agony of evocative music becomes, in the poem Pervy fortеп'янь sonet (77)

книга чудная, где с каждой страницей
Галлюзинации таинственно слиты...

The statues at Tsarskoe Selo are the dumb substitutes for living human beings. Their pale forms are the signs of an imagination that has congealed round the poet, and from which he feels himself wholly estranged.

5

The Desire to Escape.

There are hints that the isolation of the creator may be
hostile to life. Dal'nie ruki (149), for example, ends with the lines:

Но знаю... дремотно хмеля,
Я брошу волшебную нить,
И мне будут сниться, альмея,
Слова, чтоб тебя оскорбить.

Many poems speak of a release from this intolerable situation. Besides the two I have already mentioned (Kuchitel'ny sonet and Prelyudiya) there are Toska pripominaniya (120), Ametisty (110), Zhelanie (93), Novabr' (73), Tol'ko myslei i slov (213), to pick out only a few examples.

Toska pripominaniya identifies poetic creation with loneliness and nightmarish labour. The zalitaya chernilom stranitsa is, of course, both the handwritten sketch of a poem and the poet's life. In the stanzas that follow, this idea is sustained and developed in such a way that the two meanings constantly overlap and elide. The dark night is both the anguish of the artist's existence and the real night which surrounds the poet as he writes until dawn:

И слились позабытые строки
До зари в мутно-чёрные пятна.

He has poured himself into the process of creation, so that he barely inhabits the world of reality any more: the 'mirage-like letters' of the Ideal have absorbed him entirely. There is something alien and inhuman in this activity: such isolation
and darkness are foreign to the poet, and he longs for the sound of children's voices in the house. Art appears here as hostile to ordinary human intercourse, locking the artist in a cell of nightmares and dreams. The artist is the prisoner of the Ideal, sacrificing earthly happiness to the agonizing lure of a mirage.

In Annensky's poetry a closed space, such as a room or garden very often denotes the act of creation itself. It is from closed situations that the poem arises, of necessity, the only possible release. When Annensky describes, for example, the desire to be free of the restrictions of everyday life, he is in fact describing the process of writing a poem. This is the case in a poem like Novabr', where the imprisoning now is present in the form of the mesh of branches at the poet's window. Release comes with the writing of the poem, described in the sestet:

В тихом солнце, как в неболе...
Скорей бы сани, сумрак, поле,
Следить круженье облаков,

Да, упиваясь медным свистом,
В безбрежной зыбкости снегов
Скользить по линиям волнистым...

Of course, this kind of juxtaposition reflects the fundamental ambiguity of the poet's I. The duality which involves the gap dividing the Ideal from the Real acquires, in Annensky's poetry, a psychological dimension. Poetry, or rather the
writing of poetry, brings with it movement and flow, properties which have the power to fuse the particularised now with a more general Ideal of shared experience. This is the theme of the Ametisty poems, especially of Ametisty (110):

И,лиловая и дробь,
Чтоб утвердил там силнье,
Что где-то есть не наша связь,
А лучезарное слияние...

Sliyan'e, or fusion, is the only way that the I can break out of its confines and establish a relation with the totality of phenomena, become a universal subjectivity. This ambiguity is expressed very plainly in the poem Toska mirazha, an account of a momentary, dreamlike experience in which the Ideal fuses with the poet's consciousness for a moment in the sound of troika bells, and then vanishes again:

Но ты-то зачем так глубоко
Двоишься, о сердце мое?
Я знаю - она далеко,
И чувствую близость ее.

Уж вот они, снежные дымы,
С них глаз я свести не могу:
Сейчас разминуться должны мы
На белом, но мертвом снегу.

Сейчас кто-то санки нам сцепит
И снова расцепит без слов.
It is clear that the theme of the divided self is closely linked to that of fusion and flow. The bezumnaya skazka that whispers through the winter landscape is a part of the poet's I, that part of it which is potentially transcendent, his spirit, his Muse, at all events — Another. Suspended from him, the fairytale invades his consciousness only occasionally — and at such times poems are created. We are familiar with other accounts of such visitations in Annensky's lyrics. Dvoinik (66) contains the lines:

Дишь полога ночи немой
Порой отразит колыханье
Мое и другое дыханье,
Бой сердца и мой и не мой...

Moi stikh (187) describes the moment of creation in similar terms:

Я не знаю, кто он, чей он,
Знаю только, что не мой,
Ночью был он мне навязан,
Солнцем будет взят домой.

The I is simultaneously driven outwards in an attempt to reach the Ideal, to participate in an intersubjective fusion
of consciousness, and held within the confines of the here and now in the conviction that such a contact is impossible. What we must now examine is the way in which the split I of the poet resolves the contradictions that torment it.

6.

The Fragmented Body.

The 'fragmented body' is clearly visible in Annensky's poetry. Its appearance is linked to the duality of the poet's I: as the the I leaves its hermetic isolation in order to discover itself as a situation in the world, it begins to emerge in imagery representing parts of the human body perceived in separation from one another; the 'split' character of the isolated I is carried over into imagery that reflects its position in external reality, as opposed to the abstract 'interstice' represented by the garden, the room and the park. The poet experiences himself now as Another, as the 'boi serâtsa i moi i ne moi' of Dvoinik. We see the experience of this Other in its most dramatic form in the poem Ya na dne (133). Here the process of alienation is twofold. The poet sees himself both as
a former unity of Real and Ideal, represented by the statue of Andromeda, and as a splinter of that unity — the hand of the statue in the water:

Я на дне, я печальный обломок,  
Надо мной зеленеет вода.

Bu more frequently the poet catches glimpses of the shattered Ideal in nature, in the guise of a woman's body. We never see the whole of this Muse — she is dismembered, fragmented, lost in the conflicts of growth and the seasons. She is also the fragmented I of the poet, which dissolves itself in nature in order to embrace it. Hands, a pair of eyes, an arm, a mouth — all these interweave with the imagery of nature so that the I loses itself in the concrete world. Here are some examples of this process:

a) Hands.

О сестры, о нежные десять,  
Две ласково дружных семьи...

/ Дальнeе руки, 149 /
Но, изумрудами запястий залита,
Меня волнует дев мучительная стая:
Кристально чистые так бешено горды.

/ Первый фортепьянный сонет, 77 /

Над ризой белой, как уголь волоса,
Рядами стройными невольницы плясали,
Без слов кристальные сливались голоса,
И кастаниетами их пальцы потрясали...

/ Второй фортепьянный сонет, 92 /

"Mouth, lips."

Те, скажи мне, завязнуть успели цветы,
Что уста целовала—ли, любя...

/ Молот и искры, 87 /

И созвучье из тепла
Губ, и меха, и сиреней.

/ Второй мучительный сонет, 166 /
Но дожнули розы плена
На замолкшие уста...

/ Не могу понять, не знаю, 187 /

Я из твоих соблазнов затаю
Не влажный блеск малиновых улыбок...

/ О нет, не стань... 115 /

c) Eyes.

Печальные глаза,
Любили ли вы, простите ли?

/ Тоска отшумевшей грозы, 119 /

Пережиты ли тяжкие проводы,
Иль глаза мне гладят неизбежные...

/ Облака, 144 /
Вот чуть-чуть шевельнулись ресницы

/ Декорация, 82 /

Она недвижна, она немая,
С следами слез...

/ Призраки, 141 /

d) Hair.

И чтобы прядь волос так близко от меня,
Так близко от меня, развившись, трепетала...

/ Мучительный сонет, 125 /

Он розовый... Вот косы отпустила.
Взвились и пали косы...

/ Кошмары, 112 /
Most of the poet's encounters with the 'fragmented body' take place in a curious dreamlike state of mind, between sleeping and waking (Poluson, polusoznane is the description in Dremotnost', 162). We may indeed characterise Annensky's poetry by this very dreamlike quality. But I want now to analyse the 'dream' - i.e., the interplay of subjective images and symbols within the psychological context of the poet's individuality. It is not a question of abstracting an overall 'myth' or 'schema' from the totality of the poems: when discussing Annensky's poetry we find ourselves constantly brought up against the most fundamental problems of how it is possible to treat a body of lyrical of poetry as a whole, and not as a series of separate lyrics. This is because of the essential psycholorism of Annensky's poetry.

The poems are the visible nodes of an internal dialogue.
between two opposing tendencies. These may be typified as a) the drive towards total subjectivity, hermeticism and silence, an anti-literary direction; and b) the drive towards expression, objectivity and sign – a literary direction. I have already discussed, with the help of various examples, the former tendency as it reveals itself in the poems. Isolation drives the poet in upon himself towards sterile invention, 'decoration' and a sense of moral inadequacy:

И стыдно стало грезы
Тут сердцу моему.

Тут стыдно стало страху
От скраденной луны...

/ Опять в дороге, 178 /

Communion, or at least identification with others, on the other hand, is nearly always connected to the quest for the Ideal. The presence of others implies both a sense of responsibility and a need to communicate, a need which for the poet becomes a literary need.

The conflict between these two tendencies is a psychological one: it involves a clash between despair - the pull towards silence and the stultification of all emotions - and a desire for life, which is simultaneously a desire for torture. In my opinion it is the latter tendency that is dominant in
Annensky's poetry.

The struggle is complex and difficult to follow. Our only means of observing it is to read the poems. But the poems are only the minimal expression of a profoundly personal experience. At a time when so much is talked of the literary function and the text is so often regarded as the only evidence worth considering, this statement may sound something of a heresy. All the same, it is important and, I believe, essential to take into account the particular situation of Annensky, not only of the text. I have often been puzzled by Annensky's poetry. On the face of it, we are confronted by a poet writing within the tradition, formal and aesthetic, of European symbolism. But we find in Annensky few of the characteristics of the symbolist outlook. Although Annensky's poetic vocabulary and syntax have an extreme individuality, there is little stylistic or structural innovation in his work - many of the poems are written in technical terms which would have been quite comprehensible to a contemporary of Pushkin. We might talk of Annensky's 'neo-classicism' - but such a term implies a conscious striving towards 'classical' aesthetic norms and values on the part of the poet, and we find little of this in Annensky's poetry. There is rather, in the plainness and modesty of the poet's mode of expression, a conscious rejection of all literary stamps and 'isms', a
disregard for the excesses and modishness of symbolist theory. This is not to say that Annensky was not a great craftsman of the word, or that his poetry is in any way anachronistic. The traces of poets like Mallarmé and Baudelaire are very strong in his work. It is rather the situation of Annensky's poems in Annensky's life that is the determining factor here. These poems are intensely existential, that is they are about what it is like to touch the fabric of one's own individual experience. They are diary notes, or at least have the quality of diary notes. They recount the experience of experience itself — and are therefore exclusively psychological. At the same time they exist as poetry.

We can point to other poets whose work shows a similar tendency — Baudelaire, for example. But in Baudelaire's poetry the psychological is only the nightmarish reflection of a spiritual struggle. Annensky relates the intolerability of his own experience only in terms of its immediate intolerability, and never as a hell which exists thanks to the reflected light of a forbidden Paradise. The I of Baudelaire suffers, but its suffering is cosmic, transcends the purely physical to become the pure gold of crucified innocence. Annensky's
The poetic I, on the other hand, is non-transcendent and exists only in relation to its own experience and the experience of others. These are the poles of its existence, and the poems are the visible traces of a movement between them. The movement is a nightmare, with recognizable images and repetitions. In the following section I shall try to describe the structure of the nightmare, and show how it is related to the concrete experience of the poet.

8.

Fixity, Mobility, Deadness.

The 'fragmented body' is only one aspect of the process by which the I of Annensky's poems situates itself in alienation from itself, perceives itself in the surrounding world. Another more complex stage in the process is the one in which the I arrives at an image of itself as a complete human form. This stage involves the poet's relation towards the world of others, a transition from the narrowly confined dream world of the poet to the world of social reality, the world of other people. The transition involves the interplay of what I designate here as three groups of images, each group relating to a different
area of emotional and psychological experience. The groups consist of a) images of fixity; b) images of mobility; c) "dead" images.

a) Images of fixity. The words тыцумая, неволя, плен recur in different contexts, but always in relation to a fundamental sense of constriction and helplessness. Thus:

Эта одурь была мне
Колыбелью-темницей.

/ Тоска белого камня, 120 /

В тумане солнце, как в неволе...

/ Ноябрь, 72 /

Если ночи тюремны и глухи

/ Старые эстонки, 216 /

И поневоле сердцу
Так жутко моему...
Эх, распахнуть бы дверцу
Да в лунную тюрьму.

/ Опять в дороге, 178 /
И, грубо лишенная мира,  
Которого столько ждала,  
Опять по тюрьме своей лира,  
Дрожа и шатаясь, пошла.

/ Лира часов, 181 /

Твоей тюрьмой горящей я смущен

/ Ледяная тюрьма, 125 /

Stone is the enemy of all feeling and association with others. It embodies the impenetrability of the Ideal and encloses the poet within it. Sometimes, when 'fusion' seems immanent, as during the act of poetic creation, the opaque surface may yield for a moment:

Скажите, что стало со мной?
Что сердце так жарко забилось?
Какое безумье волной
Сквозь камень привычки пробилось?

But, in general, the stone remains unbroken. It forms the kamenny meshok that imprisons the poet in Yamby (114). It
appears in the nightmarish vision of St Petersburg as a symbol of violence and misery:

Только камни из мерзлых пустынь
Да сознанье проклятой ошибки.

/ Петербург, 199 /

Here are some other examples of 'stone' imagery which speak for themselves:

Как листья тогда мы чутки:
Нам камень седой, ожив,
Стал другом, а голос друга,
Как детская скрипка, фальшив.

/ То было на Валлен-Коски, 104 /

Но мая белого ночей
Давно страницы пожелтели...
Теперь я слышу у постели

Веретено, — и, как ручей,
Задавлен камнями обвала,
Оно уж лепет обрывало...

/ "Парки — бабье лепетанье", 83 /
И стойко должен зуб больной
Перегрызать холодный камень.

/ Зимний поезд, 129 /

В трафарете готовом
Он — узор на посуде...
И не всё ли равно вам:
Камни там или люди?

/ Тоска белого камня, 120 /

И сад заглох, ... и дверь туда забита...
И снег идет... и черный силуэт
Захолодел на зеркале гранита.

/ Черный силуэт, 110 /

Sometimes stone is replaced by ice to designate the area of emotional aridity and sterility which is so important in Annensky’s poetry. Annensky’s 'winter' imagery, which
suggests restraint and the imprisonment of the I is reminiscent of Mallarmé's _rivres_ and _glaciers_. While Mallarmé's winter landscapes, however, are abstracted from nature, Annensky's are a good deal more realistic, although a certain stylization prevails. Nonetheless, they may be considered as 'mental landscapes' in the same sense as those of Mallarmé. It is the immobility of the winter landscape that the poet finds depressing and reminiscent of the limitations of human existence:

Полюбил бы я зиму,
Да обуза тяжка...
От него даже дыму
Не уйти в облака.  /Снег, 126/

Winter consists of hard lines, jagged _shapes_, dead desires. It is associated in Annensky's poetic language with words like _zastylost', rezannost'._ The frozen rigidity of winter offends life, stamps on it: the two related poems _Nezhivaya_ (131) and _El' moya, elinka_ (179) express this idea quite clearly. In the former, rather sentimental poem, the arid blue of frozen snow and sky torment the tender young sapling: it has desires and aspirations to live and grow; but the frost freezes even its tears. The second poem is also about a tree - this time an old fir tree. It is pointless for the fir tree to lament its lost beauty: the snow is falling
and will cover it like a shroud. This time it is clear that the poet identifies himself with the tree:

Нам с тобой, елинка,  
Забытье под снегом.  
Лучше забыть мы  
Не найдем удела.

The tree and the poet must reconcile themselves to failure and despair: the desires of their youth remain unfulfilled, and now oblivion waits:

Только — не желать бы,  
Да еще — не помнить,  
Да еще — не думать.

The 'coarseness' of the 'blue paper' mentioned in Nezhivaya is a typical attribute of Annensky's winter landscape. Ofert (132), for example, likens the blue tops of trees to 'scores made on brass by strong vodka'.

In Annensky's poetry, the fixity of blue sky and ice is offset by the 'fluidity' of clouds and water. Toska sinovy (191) shows this opposition well:

Что ни день, теплей и краше  
Осенен простор эфирный
 Jury

And in Ledyanaya tyur'ma (125) we read:

In the next section I shall examine the psychological
and emotional connotations of this type of 'fluid' imagery
within Annensky's aesthetic.
b) 'Mobile' Images.

The 'mobile' images are associated with the release of emotion, and in particular the attempts made by the poet to become involved with other human beings. In general, we may point to a single complex of 'mobile' images connected with the interaction of heat (usually in the form of fire or sun) with cold (in the form of snow or ice), although other combinations do occur.

The first thing to note is that the release of emotion in Annensky's poetry nearly always results in shock and despair. Love, as a means of uniting human beings, appears as totally inadequate. The negative qualities that Annensky perceives in love emerge very clearly in the poem S balkona (86):

Польбила солнце апреля
молодая и нежная ива.
Не прошла и Святая неделя,
Распустилась бледная ива
В жаркой ласке солнца апреля.
The flame which at first seems a source of kindness and warmth finally becomes a destructive force. Love destroys because it means possession by human beings of each other. Flame appears again in the poems Probuzhdenie (116) and 'Ya dumal, chto serdtse iz kamnya' (212), in a similar context. Both poems centre on the metaphor of the poet's heart as a burning building. The flames have been ignited by love, and they destroy the building entirely, leaving only a charred and smoking ruin. Probuzhdenie ends with a declaration by the poet that he will never again allow such a disaster to befall him; yet in 'Ya dumal', thinking that there is nothing left in his heart to burn, he gives himself half-heartedly to an emotional involvement with another – immediately the fire starts again, he extinguishes the harmful emotions, and the smoke rises once more, choking and stifling him.
The poems we have examined so far depict the outcome of the emotions connected with love. But many of Annensky's lyrics do not treat the theme in this relatively direct fashion, but rather allude to it, using the 'soft-hard' mythology which is the subject of this study. The most common variant of this interaction between hard and soft is the description of the thaw in spring. That the thaw is closely connected to emotional experience of one kind or another may be seen from poems like \textit{V marte} (100) where the swollen and renewed earth showing black beneath the last shreds of snow is a sad reminder to the two lovers of the impermanence of their relationship, or \textit{Vesennii romans} (164) which ends with the lines:

Через притворенную дверь
Ты сердце шепестом тревожишь...
Еще не любишь ты, но верь:
Не полюбить уже не можешь...

The association of the thaw with emotional release is brought out much more strongly in the poems \textit{Verbnaya Nedelya} (103), \textit{Ledyanaya tyur'ma} (125), and \textit{Doch' Iaira} (127).
i) Verbnaya Nedelya.

The surrealistic imagery of the poem gives it an intensity of feeling which is quite extraordinary. The important words in the first stanza are *zhily sumrak mрrtvogo aprelya*. The advent of spring is seen as a kind of death, from which there can be no escape. The funeral bells, the Lazaruses forgotten in black pits indicate an air of heavy finality. In the image of the melting ice-floe there is a suggestion of a fading life; this suggestion is borne out by the last three lines of the poem:

И за всех, чья жизнь невозвратима,  
Плыли жаркие слёзы по вербе  
На румяные щеки херувима.

The flood of emotion here is very closely connected with death - the *zharkie slezy* mourn the melting ice.

ii) Ledyanaya tyur'ma

In this poem Annensky describes his reaction to the sight
of prematurely melted ice. The hole in the ice is described as 'the dream of a spring that was once blue', and the dream is walled round by 'a prison of ice'. The poet is clearly expressing his own personal feelings in terms of highly original nature imagery: the moment of melting is equated with a moment of intensely felt emotion, a gleam of sunlight or 'dream of spring' in the 'winter' of the poet's own life:

Истомлена сверканием напрасным,
И плачешь ты, и рвешься треща,
Но для чудес в дыму полудня красном
У солнца нет победного луча.

Thus the very idea of spring is equated with suffering. The ice weeps and breaks, but spring is far away, and the red winter sun cannot perform the miracle of a thaw. The melted ice remembers another sun, other flowers, belonging to a spring that has passed and is not yet there again, and knows that it must freeze once more 'na serdtse bol'nogo' - here again suffering is implied. And finally, even when spring does come, there will only be more suffering, the dream will be transformed into a nightmare of vseosozhzhzen'e:

Ты не мечта, ты будешь только тлен
Раскованным и громозвучным волнам.
The implication is that any release of the poet’s feelings however much desired will only result in a pathological flood of destruction, a tormenting disintegration of his own personality. The 'prison of ice' is beautiful—it is nonetheless a barrier to feeling, it represents the 'heat in cold' of the maenad-visions which are aesthetically satisfying but emotionally arid. And yet, although this barrier can be surmounted, its destruction results in the ghastly heavings of an ugly, insurgent nature.

Doch! Laira

The destructiveness of emotion is the theme of this poem as well, and once again the subject is the tumult of nature in spring. Death is present once again:

Только мне в пасхальном гимне Смерти слышится призыв.

This statement, in this context, is clearly related to similar ideas expressed in poems like Verbnaya nedelya and Chërnaya vesna. An emotional barrier has to be
But the coming of the thaw is violent and coarse: the resurrection of nature which it brings is ugly and repellent to the poet, because it stirs old desires in him and yet dwarfs those desires into insignificance by the primordial strength of its upheaval. The resurrection of this monster has nothing in common with the resurrection of the Christian mythology; and Christ raised men from the dead gently, with compassion:

Однако горячий пламени,
Не застыл ветер ткани...
Подошел спаситель к спящей
И сказал ей тихо: "Встань".

Other poems show the 'melting' process in other contexts. The poem To i eto (113), for example, shows the association between emotional release and self-annihilation: here the setting is the old symbol of the impenetrability of an emotional block. There is a mysterious connection between night/stone and death, on the one hand, and between melting ice and nightmare on the other. As long as the ice melts,
sending its 'fantastic flight of flames' over the poet's body, there will be only the agony of fever and nightmare. But if the stone of the night dissolves, an overwhelming flood of feeling will be unleashed, the result of which will be the destruction of the poet's I.

c) 'Dead' Images.

The release of emotion, connected with images of melting and flux, leads to the symbolic and immanent appearance of death. It is at this point that the poet's consciousness awakens to an apprehension of the fathomless materiality of his existence. One of the poems in which this association of emotional freedom with death is seen very clearly is Ботоврёж? which we have already discussed in another context. The poet describes the release he gains from earthly considerations during a sleepless night:

Откнув докучную маску,
Не чувствуя уз бытия,
В какую волшебную сказку
Бьется свободное г!
His I is free - he is the master of his own existence, and he feels himself elevated above other men, he is immortal, a god. But this glimpse of a superhuman existence is only a glimpse: for a moment the Night speaks to him and burns 'ognem nezdesnei muchitel'noi strasti'; but then he becomes too aware of the gap that separates his physical self from this aethereal, spiritual reality:

И пьяный от призраков взор
Читает там дерзость обмана
И сдавшейся мысли позор.

The poem ends with a question. The poet asks his Muse which is his true nature? As a poet, is he really immortal, does the tormenting black fire of passion burn in him too? Or is he simply like other men, limited, guilty, and condemned to death?

The answer to the question is never given (...'nas nikto i nikogda ne primirit i ne rassudit': Na poroge, 68), but throughout Annensky's poetry there is a sense that the Real has triumphed over the Ideal, that the poet is doomed to spend his life languishing in agony for the desired...
spirituality, and await a horrible and inevitable death like the one described in U groba (66). Poems like this, and Dvoynik (66), Ballada (118), Perekhidoi (117) all suggest that, although it may be hard to accept, the end of life is simply the return to an unbroken 'thingness' - presented in these poems in the form of a corpse, or a human body. This 'thingness' is not only apparent in the portrayal of death, however. The mud and dirt of Kartinka (136), Chernoya vesna (143), Staraya usad'ba (136) and other poems, the meatless bones, stubbed-out cigars, frozen laughter of Tam (77) and Traktir zhizni (76), the green candles, yellow water and black tunnels of Kievskie peshchery (113) - all these are images of death in life, and all of them are filled with a sense of a futility and ugliness.

There arises the question of whether the poet should spend any emotion or feeling on this repellent 'rebus'. Sometimes it seems that it may be merely a cardboard farce, a world of paper and paste, as in Trilistnik buzhazhy (131-132), or an inane carnival (Trilistnik balagany, 140-142). In the poem Nova toska (171), Annensky calls his Muse bezlyubaya (line 11), and this is significant for his poetry as a whole. There is very little play on the feelings associated with love in Annensky's poetry, as if the poet were afraid that any emotional outburst of such a nature
might destroy him entirely. The dangers of emotional contact with others are so great, the risks of becoming involved with others so monstrous that eventually the poet arrives at a vision of the other as something lifeless, a doll without emotions, speech, movement. This we have seen in Kvadratnye okoshki:

Так страшно не разгадана,  
В чадре живой, как дым,  
Она на волнах ладана  
Над куколем твоим.

The bow and the violin find themselves dead and lifeless after a night of torment and passion:

Но человек не погасил  
До утра свеч... И струны пели...  
Лишь солнце их нашло без сил  
На черном бархате постели.  

The poem Decrescendo (200) indicates the gradual dying-away of a storm over the waves - the sonorous a's, u's and o's of the first stanza, and the frenzied i's, ɪ's and z's of the second pass into the softer intonations of the third and fourth, to be brought to an abrupt halt by the sharp and staccato velars of the last:

И вот чутч плецет, кружка осадок,  
А гнев иссяк...  
Песок так мягок, припек так гладок:  
Плесни - и ляг!

An emotional parallel to the storm and its aftermath is clearly implied.
The violent love-scene described in Koshmary (112) ends in a premonition of death, the association with Turgenev's Klara Milich making this doubly clear.

Thus all release of emotion merely succeeds in restoring the original 'immobility' and detested block, the stone, the darkness, the dead. The poetic dream has changed to a nightmare under intolerable pressures from a world which is material, violent and ugly, a world that wears hobnailed boots (sapozhishchi zhizni) with which to crush the individual's aspirations. But there is an alternative.

8.

The poem To bylo na Vallen-Koski (104) describes one of the situations mentioned in the previous section, a situation where the poet is becoming aware of the possibility that life is nothing but a puppet-play, the actors in the play dolls. The scene is a dismal Finnish tourist resort on a rainy morning. A group of tourists, the poet among them, is being conducted, unwillingly, and with the sleep of a cold, damp night still in their eyes, on a tour of a waterfall — one of the local beauty-spots. On a morning like this,
the place is anything but beautiful and, to amuse the bored tourists, the guides have thrown a lifesize doll into the water. The doll is carried towards the brink of the waterfall by the current and just at the moment when it seems to be about to fall over into the abyss, the guides lift it out of the water and put it down on the rocks. This 'comedy' is repeated again and again, and during these repetitions the poet begins to reflect on the scene. His reflections are contained in the last three stanzas of the poem:

Бывает такое небо,
Такая игра лучей,
Что сердцу обида куклы
Обиды своей жалней.

Как листья тогда мы чутки:
Нам камень седой, ожив,
Стал другом, а голос друга,
Как детская скрипка, фальш.

И в сердце сознанье глубоко,
Что с ним родился только страх,
Что в мире оно одиноко,
Как старая кукла в волнах.

These lines seem very remarkable to me. Let us forget for a moment about the 'allegorical' meaning of the poem and concentrate on its central image. There is an ambiguity here, reflected in Annensky's attitude towards the scene, an
ambiguity that seems to lie at the very heart of his poetry.

It expresses itself primarily in the lines *Chto serdtsu obida kukly / Obidy svoei zhalchei*. What has happened here is something quite complex. The poet says that he feels more compassion for the doll than he does for himself. At first sight this would appear to be an example of the poet's sense of alienation and of the thingness of the world around him. We associate the doll with the stone in *Nosha zhizni* (181), for which the poet feels the same kind of compassion. And indeed, significantly, the stone appears in *To bylo*: the grey rock seems to come alive, it is his friend, because it corresponds to his own feelings of stultification and deadness. But this 'friend' is deceitful: its voice, like the voice of a child's fiddle, is hollow and meaningless. And this is where Annensky goes beyond the kind of 'futile' compassion expressed in the context of poems like *Nosha zhizni*: the last stanza, instead of containing the usual transition from compassion into 'stone', or unfeeling, breaks into a frantic outpouring of emotion in the dramatic last stanzas. Far from identifying himself with something totally dead and thing-like, the poet finds himself in the doll, himself in his physical aspect, suffering and fated to suffer until he dies. The doll is his own body which he can at last observe
from outside, and with which he can have an emotional relationship. He has recognised himself in another, although that other, in this poem at least, is only barely recognizable as being fashioned in the likeness of a human being.

But there are other poems in which Annensky goes even further than this. To bylo expresses only the realisation that the image of the human being is possible for the poet, that he is not condemned to be eternally isolated from it. In this poem he is aware of his own isolation, but he has given it a form which is not hostile, not a stone or a wall, but a likeness of himself. The poem Op'yat' v doroge (178), on the other hand, describes a process in which the poet breaks out of his prison into an awareness not only of another, but of others. The poet is taking a solitary walk by moonlight. Above him the moon is like a copper shield, veiled by the night mist. The moon is a prison, and it corresponds very closely to the poet's own feelings of isolation and sterility:

И поневоле сердцу
Так жутко моему...
Эх, распахнуть бы дверцу
Да в лунную тьму!

In the presence of the lunar prison, he becomes more and
more disturbed by his own fantasies: the night seems sinister and ominous, and strange shapes float in the misty air:

По ведьминой рубахе
Тоскливо бродит тень,
И нараставают страхи,
Как тучи в жаркий день.

And then, suddenly, voices intrude on his poetic dream:

- Эй, дядя, поживее!"
Да человек идет...

The voices belong to peasants, who have seen their barin walking by himself on this cold night, and whose attitude towards the scene is one of bewilderment and amusement:

Без шапки, без лаптишек,
Лицо—то в кулакок,
М будто из парнишек..."
- "Что это — дурачок?"

"Так точно, он — дурашный...
Куда ведь забрался,
Такой у нас бесстрашный
Он, барин, задался.

Здоров ходить. Морозы,
А ни почем ему..."
Immediately, the dream is shattered, and the poet feels only a sense of shame and embarrassment for his private reverie. Real life has broken in, in the form of other human beings, and the moonscape is no longer deserted. The last stanza brings the point out:

Как знать?.. Луна высоко
Взошла – так хороша,
Была не одинока
Теперь моя душа...

Thus another possibility is realised. Certainly the nightmare is shattered, and reality has broken in. But it is not a dead, insensate reality. Rather, the poet is brought to realise that reality can consist of other people, other subjects like himself, as well as of objects, that he may not be unique in the world. Other poems show similar experiences, where the poet's narrow cell opens out onto the world, conceived in the image of other human beings. Starye astonki, the miners in Iyul' 2, the peasants of V doroge (74), the townspeople of Nervy (163), the peasant songs in Pesni s dekoratsiei (203), the amazonka in Kartinka (136), the kulachishka - all this is surely evidence of an element in Annensky's poetry which, rather than being something peripheral, is at the very centre of the poet's aesthetic. To talk of 'social conscience' in connection with this element might be misleading. I would
prefer to talk of the 'social content' of Annensky's poetic I. The poems are there, and I have tried to show something of the extremely complex process that leads Annensky to adopt this position of compassion and even indignation towards the sufferings of others. His disgust at the world, a disgust we have seen expressed in many poems, his anxiety, his terror of death - in these poems, all this becomes something trans-individual, a recognition of others, a feeling for them, since without them there will remain only nothingness and death.
The White Ecstasy: A STUDY IN ANNENSKY'S AESTHETICS

The generally-received view of Annensky's poetry is that it occupies a special position in the history of Russian poetry, and of Russian literature in general. Yet no-one, to my knowledge, has attempted to explain the aesthetic and literary-historical implications of this 'special position' which seems to accompany the poet's name whenever that name is mentioned. No-one, that is, except Annensky himself. I intend to devote this chapter to a search for Annensky's justification of his own art, and of his own poetic experience.

Russian literature, from its beginnings in the folk tale and in the cultural upheaval of Peter the Great's time until the present day has presented to the world a face of profound ambiguity. On the one hand, we may read this literature as a historical and social document; on the other, as an expression of literature as art. One might even say that we have no choice, that we must accept both readings together, since both are interdependent. In Russia, to write has generally meant to commit oneself to a social action of one kind or
another, to set oneself for or against the forces of reaction. Let Annensky, the subject of this inquiry, speak about that dilemma which has traditionally faced the Russian writer, as it is difficult for a westerner to describe a region where historical fact and aesthetic sensibility have become so darkly and inextricably fused. My quotations (they are lengthy, and necessarily so) are taken from Annensky’s article А.Н. Майков и педагогическое значение его поэзии, published in Russkaya shkola, 1898, February, pp. 40-61, March, pp. 53-56.

On page 53 of the second part of this article, Annensky considers the question of the Russian aesthetic sensibility in literature, especially poetry. He writes:

...
Обратимся ли к русским романам, везде эстетика оказывается на их страницах человеком лишним, бес-сильным, оторванным от почвы, нередко делаясь при этом объектом юмора и даже сатиры.

As examples, Annensky cites Verkhovensky and Raisky. About Russian poets he has the following to say:

Никто не будет спорить... что и стихотворная поэзия чисто эстетического характера не имеет у нас глубоких корней, и что ее любят только немногие. Анаксионизм привязал нам Пушкин, и он все-таки у нас не привился; не привилась и идея, а Майков, Фет, Алексей Толстой не могли сделать ее только "владетелями наших душ", но даже временными любицами читающей русской публики. Особенно грустную судьбу имел в этом отношении покойный Фет, несомненно искуснейший из наших поэтов после Пушкина.

Annensky sees two causes of the weakness of the Russian aesthetic sensibility:

В первой / причине / отразилась наша разобщенность с Римом, наследником всей эстетической и специально поэтической традиции, и исконная связь наша с Византией, где было мало поэтов. Вторая заключалась в том особенном, служило-didактическом характере, который установился с нашей поэзией начиная с петровских преобразований.

In Annensky's view, the influence of Horace, which was strong in the west, enabling poets to contemplate the surrounding reality from a purely aesthetic (or 'artistic', as Annensky expresses it) standpoint, was almost non-existent in Russia. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Russian satire was already laughing to
scorn the inheritance of the Horatian sensibility - classicism:

Если на романском западе вакваска лирической поэзии дана Горацием, то что же лежит в основе нашего творчества? С чего началась наша литература, наиболее чуткая и нервная ее ветвь — поэзия?

Византия дала нам повесть, аллорифическую легенду и проповедь, — литературу, бесцветно риторическую по стилю, часто символическую по форме, и нередко столь же мистическую по содержанию и аскетическую по духу. И это наследие сидит в нас не менее прочно, чем римские лирики, с их изданным эпикурейским в народах романского запада.

Мистицизм, закрывшей от людей солнце и стирающей краски, был неумолим по отношению к нашей поэзии: в его черный синодик записаны лучшие русские имена: Жуковских, Гоголя, Толстых и Достоевских — он заносил свою тяжелую руку даже над головой Пушкина, но был предупрежден пулей Дантеса. [55-56/]

Even more importantly, великий Петр сделал нашу письменность орудием своей преобразовательной деятельности: учебник, проповедь, служила сатира отменила первую половину прошлого века: во второй к ним присоединяется похвальная ода, дидактическая басня и служила иеже комедия. Под словом служила я разумею здесь не грубо официальную тенденциозность, а вообще тот вид гражданской литературы, который появился у нас одновременно с гражданской азбукой и который живет и развивается до сих пор, верный своим традициям, завещанным ему еще Петром: служению своей земле и постепенному движению" / 56 /

I have quoted from this article at some length, and shall quote from others just as extensively. In this case my reasons for reproducing such large extracts from Annensky's text are threefold: the text itself is relatively inaccessible; I believe it is only rarely possible to paraphrase Annensky's thoughts, so deeply are they embedded in the material of the Russian word; I can think of no more concise and penetrating analysis of the peculiar quality of Russian literature, and of Annensky's situation in that literature.
From what I have quoted it is evident that Annensky's attitude towards the development and history of Russian poetry is a deeply critical one. In fact, the poet experienced this attitude as a personal and aesthetic crisis, which is present in all his creative work. Annensky was not only professionally and intimately involved with the literatures of classical Greece and Rome; he was also thoroughly acquainted with the 'artistic' heritage of the *romanskii zapad*. His translations alone indicate his preoccupations. Not only Horace and Euripides are present in his anthology, but also Goethe, Heine, Longfellow, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Leconte de Lisle, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Francis James, among others. In Mandel'shtam's words: оригинальнейшей хваткой он когтил чужое, и еще в воздухе, на большой высоте, надменно выпускал из когтей добычу, позволяя ей упасть самой. И орел его поэзии, когтевой Еврипида, Малларме, Леконт-де-Лиля, ничего не приносил нам в своих лапах, кроме горсти сухих трав. 1)

Annensky found himself caught in the trap of a historical moment. One door of the trap was the materialist, 'nihilistic' and literary movement of the radical nineteenth century intelligentsia, a movement which, as Annensky points out, left no writer unscathed. The other was the shadow of mysticism, just as greedily utilitarian as its counterpart and origin. In between these snares lay - the aesthetic perception of reality, the perception of reality as human identity, a perception which could not hope to survive the

clash of two perfectly-fitting and sabre-toothed doors, a perception of which Annensky is perhaps the only great master in the whole of Russian literature, notwithstanding the examples, put forward by Annensky himself, of Pushkin and Fet.

To see this more clearly, we must examine Annensky's attitude towards what must have seemed to him at first as a great hope, and which subsequently turned to ashes before his eyes: the literary and poetic phenomenon known as Russian Symbolism. In a sense, it was a historical coincidence that brought Annensky face to face with a movement which appeared on the surface to echo many of his own poetic ideals, but which as a movement was ultimately to prove yet another stage in the development of слuzhilaya literatura. Annensky would have written the poems he did whether symbolism in its Russian form had existed or not.

It must have been with interest and also a certain amount of amusement that Annensky observed the first upsurge of Russian decadentism in the early 1890's. For here were poets, some of whom, like Bryusov, were only half his age, writing a poetry in a style and manner studiously imitated from the very western models which by this time had for Annensky become the only contemporary poetic models adequate to the age: the poetic works of Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud and Mallarmé. The desire to shock which came clothed in these borrowed garments must have seemed slightly comic to a poet who had had first-hand experience of 'the real thing' at a time in Russia when, as Mandel'shtam writes, хранели
Nevertheless, he was aware of a new group of Russian poets aflame with the zeal of the newly discovered French décadence, a zeal which drove them to reject the concept of reality for an imagined Ideal, an unreal Beauty. Or rather, he was aware of individual, gifted poets, but soon realised that the influence of the décadence was bound sooner or later to weaken and be replaced by a mysticism closer to the traditions of 'byzantine' Russia.

That mysticism repelled him. Refusing as late as 1909 an invitation from Bogdanovich to attend one of the Literaturnoe obshchestvo evenings, at which the writer Stolpner was to read a paper about Dostoievsky, he wrote in reply:

Взвесив соблазн видеть тебя и удовольствие поговорить еще, может быть, с несколькими интересными людьми, с одной стороны, и перспективу вечера, где Достоевский был бы лишь поводом для партийных перебранок и пикровок да для вытя на луну все-возможных Мережковских и Медяных пуделей, я решил всё же, что не имею права отнимать вечер от занятий. О, нет никаких сомнений, что если бы предстоял разговор о Достоевском, я бы приехал вероятно, стал бы тоже говорить. Но что Столпнеру Достоевский? Или Мякотину? или Блоку? Для них это не то, что для нас — не высокая проблема, не целый источник мыслей и загадок, а лишь знамя, даже менее, — орнамента, — и это еще в лучшем случае, — а то как и прямо-таки деталь в собственном отрадании, а том, что Я, вы понимаете, Я... Политиков все же нельзя не уважать. Это люди мысли, люди отвлеченности. Они бесмерно выше Мережковских уже по одному тому, что у них, у Мережковских, отвлеченности — то и нет, что у них только инстинкт да самовлюбленность проклятая, что у них не мысль, а золотое кольцо на галстуке. / ЦГАЛИ /

1) Mandelshtam, op. cit., p. 295.
Yet in spite of all this, the works of poets like Bely, Blok, Sologub and Ivanov were appreciated by Annensky outside all the internecine feuds as poetry. In his long articles Oni and Onye, published in Apollon in 1909, and in his unpublished and unfinished essay Poeticheskie formy sovremennoi chuvstvitel'nosti (TSGALI) he tried to characterise the poets of the Silver Age from a purely aesthetic standpoint. He removed the mystique surrounding the term symbolism:

Символизм, это — наименование немного неясное. Дву-
смысленность в нем есть какая-то...
В поэтике символ обычно противополагают образу.
Поэтический образ выражение хотя и давнее, но положительно удачное. Оно заставляет предполагать существование поэзии не только вне ритма, но и вне слова, потому что в словах не может быть образа и вообще ничего образованного.
Слова открыты, прозрачны; слова не только текут, но и светятся. В словах есть только мелькающая возможность образа... С другой стороны, но не ближе, подходит к поэзии и музыка. Пускай текучая, как слово, и как оно, раздельная, — музыка живет только абсолютами, и дальше оперного компромисса музыки с поэзией и включения речи в оркестр не мог почти даже Вагнер. В поэзии есть только относительности, только приближения — потому никакой другой, кроме символической, она не была, да и быть не может. 1)

If that is how poetry is to be defined, then all poets are Symbolists. Annensky transcends the futile battle of terminologies that still persists to this day (is Ivanov to be classified as simvolist or as simvolist-teurg? Is Annensky a simvolist or a dekadent?). Far more important than the name we give to a poet or a group of poets is the poetry itself. For Annensky, poetic sensibility is a constant. It is only the form of that sensibility which changes:

1) Apollon 1, p. 22, 1909.
Thus Annensky approaches the poets of the Silver Age just as he might approach the poets of Pushkin's time, or indeed the poets of any time. Lycophron is examined under the same lens as Bal'mont. Bryusov simply kazhetsya sukhoo-ironymnym. Samaya molodaya iz dush. (TSGALI) Оф Сологуб прихотливый, поэт и капризный, хоть нисколько не педант-эрудит. В нем чаще бывает даже нечто обнаженно-педагогически-ясное. 1)

Annensky comes to these poets as from a great distance. Yet there is no trace of arrogance in his approach, for he is not involved in their quarrels - he sees their work from a purely general, aesthetic standpoint.

It is an index of the 'byzantinism' of the Petersburg literary circles of that time, and of Annensky's extraordinary independence from them, that the publication of the first part of Oni in Apollon created such a scandal that Annensky was compelled to write a letter to Makovsky, the editor of the journal, explaining his intentions: Я поставил себе задачей рассмотреть нашу современную лирику лишь эстетически, как один из планов в перспективе, не считаясь с тем живым, требовательным настоящим, которого она является частью. Самое близкое, самое дразнящее я намерено изображал прошлым или точнее безразлично - пропадающим: традиции, срдосканархия, самолюбие, завоеванная

1) Oni, p. 39.
I do not think we should come away with the impression that Annensky was in any way indifferent to what was happening in the world around him. All his life he struggled for an Ideal which he knew to be unattainable, the Beautiful, the Identity, the "ya". In order to come as close to that Ideal as he could he was prepared to work in the real world: only thus, he felt, could he come to terms with beauty in its lived forms. In a sense all Annensky's activity, as a poet, critic, classical scholar and schoolmaster can be described as an aesthetic activity. To understand this, we must go back to a time when Annensky was unknown as a poet, or even as a literary critic, to the year 1892, when the first of the Pedagogicheskie pis'ma were published in Gurevich's journal Russkaya shkola. In the first letter Annensky makes some radical proposal concerning the teaching of foreign languages, both classical and modern, in the srednyaya shkola. He maintains that any language contains two elements: an active and a passive. С одной стороны, язык производится, творится нами: низший вид творчества в его сфере есть разговор, высший — поэзия. С другой стороны, язык воспринимается,

1) Apollon 2, р. 33. 1909.
It should be noted that Annensky stresses in these letters the living qualities of language, the power of words to change the person who speaks them. In the first letter he calls not for the stiff and artificial translation, but for creation in the written school exercise. The pupil should be free to use his native language in his translations as he wishes, and not according to some pre-ordained system. For "родной язык тесно связан с нашей мыслью и нашим чувством, а через них и с народным мироощущением; на родном языке я могу быть и оратором, и поэтом." /151-152/

It seems that Annensky hoped to cure the byzantinism of the Russian cultural environment through pedagogical activity: to encourage children to create, not simply to learn 'creation' as another category, the meaningless reading of texts without life, alongside 'arithmetic' or 'geography'. In the second letter (Russkaya shkola, November, pp. 66-88 1892), Annensky regrets the lack of aesthetic sensibility on the part of the Russian educated public in general and deplores the absence of a Doré, a Kaulbach who might illustrate the books that children read in school. He notes that in Russian schools the 'aesthetic'
feeling is 'taught' alongside the religious, national, patriotic feelings as something worthy and to be respected, but never illustrated with living examples, only with arbitrary and impersonal references to the Greek and Latin classics:

Конечно, в душе человека чувства эти (the national, patriotic, moral and religious) тесно связаны своей гуманитарностью, конечно, на школе лежат обязанности цельного и гармонического развития, подготовка будущего гражданина, но я думаю, что всякий курс должен преследовать прежде всего свои специальные образовательные цели, тогда-то настоящая гармония и получится. Кроме того, мне представляется существенно важным строго разграничить эмоцию эстетическую от чувства религиозного и национального и признать, что развитие чувства изящного играет не служебную, а самостоятельную роль в учебной жизни. Чувство религиозное связано с долгом и верой, эстетическое лежит в свободном и сознательном наслаждении красотой. Понятия красоты и благолепия весьма различны. Красота стремится к идеалу, благолепие походит на образцы, на традиции.

Again, I do not think that Annensky is arguing here for the idea of a Beauty without a shadow, removed from all moral and material concerns. We shall see later that in Annensky's aesthetic there is a very tenuous and shadowy link between all these; that in fact beauty comes to subsume, to absorb the ethical and practical aspects of reality. What is important in the letter quoted above is that there Annensky rejects the notion of beauty as something to be respected and admired, seeing it as something which must constantly be created.

What Annensky is calling for, in fact, is the aesthetic appreciation of literature as art; he is rejecting the confusion of literature with the extra-literary - the religious, ethical, or political. This was for him not
merely a question of poetics: it was a demand deeply connected with a pedagogical impulse, a desire to change the national consciousness by means of an educative process: the education of Beauty. In his writings, both pedagogical and literary-critical, Annensky time and time again returns to the question of the interpretation of the literary past, Russian and non-Russian. He wanted the past to be seen through the eyes of the new, the present which grows imperceptibly into the future: a creative appreciation of the cultural past in terms of the developing now. In his unfinished essay about the forms of aesthetic sensibility, he remarks how, in the works of Bunin, for example, the past appears as something frightening, a spectre which haunts the present and constantly erodes it:

Для Буина старина жила, чтобы теперь пугать и волновать его ночью в разоренном доме своим гробом — это цинизм. Сам Чехов, изображая господ, точно слушает их из передней — это у него чудаки, незрастеники, уроды. / ЦГАЛИ /

In the work of the Symbolists, Annensky sees an attempt to interpret the old world in terms of the new. But somehow this attempt is constantly frustrated, made futile by the poets' own continuation of the polemical, 'byzantine' past in their philosophical and poetic quarrels, and in their desire to shock, to appear original, fearsome, novel. He sees a similar failure in the work of Tolstoy and Dostoievsky:
In the grip of this cynicism the aesthetic sensibility weakens, grows insignificant.

Annensky finds the starting-point for his resurrection of the past in its aesthetic form, for the restoration of the imaginative experience to its proper, dominant rôle in the work of Turgenev. Not in the 'polemical' Turgenev, and certainly not in the protivnoe, esteticheskoe starchestvo "Stikhotvorenii v proze", s ikh rozami iz tabachnoi lavochki (TSGALI), but in Turgenev's ability to perceive and create the purely imaginative, the aesthetic.

This cynicism, this reduction of the poetic experience to a polemical wrangle, is contrasted with Turgenev's studlivost'.
It was in the last works of Turgenev that Annensky found the only complete expression of his own poetic sensibility (or rather, the only complete reflection of it). Annensky knew, of course, that this particular kind of sensibility would not have existed outside the imprisoning walls of 'byzantinism' and political radicalism. Mysticism and populism are most certainly present in the work of Turgenev, and also in the work of Annensky himself. This sensibility does not exist in a vacuum — it is, to a great extent, influenced by outside, non-aesthetic factors. But the main point for Annensky, and as he himself recognised, for Russian literary culture as a whole, was that such a sensibility existed at all, that there was after all a redeeming aesthetic particle in the organism of Russian literary culture, a particle which, if lost, would bring about the destruction of the educative function of literature as a creator of the human personality, the human identity. This last point is very
important: Annensky never for one moment thought that art could be divorced from life. For him art was an essential part of life, without which the human personality would decay and atrophy.

Of the late works of Turgenev, the most important for Annensky were the stories _Neschastnaya_, _Strannaya istoriya_, _Pesn' torzhestyayushchei lyubvi_, and _Klara Milich_. Annensky's 'reflections' of these works can be found in the unpublished essay from which I have been quoting, and in the essays _Umirayushchii Turgenev_ (Kniga otrazhenii I, pp. 61-73) and _Bely ekstaz_ (Kniga otrazhenii II, pp. 34-41), especially in the latter. It is on this essay, in fact, that I wish now to 'concentrate, for within it is contained a key to the understanding of Annensky's aesthetic.

The essay begins with a focus on three of Turgenev's female characters: Susanna, in _Neschastnaya_, Klara Milich, and Sof'ya, in _Strannaya istoriya_. Annensky sees a connecting quality shared by all these characters. They are all deeply passive, almost stone-like in their isolation (p. 33). They are all deeply afflicted by a suffering which in their personalities is transformed into beauty, a beauty which is inexpressibly pitiful. We are familiar with this image of suffering beauty in Annensky's lyrical poetry, in such poems as _Ya na dne_ (153), _Pace_ (154), _Dal'nie ruki_ (149). In his essay, however, Annensky concentrates on a literary example of this image in the form of Turgenev's Sof'ya. Sof'ya is the pale, stone-like
girl who leaves behind an intolerable household to become the slave of a mad yurodivy. In Annensky's essay, the yurodivy symbolises the poet and Sof'ya an earthly muse. Sof'ya is anxiety, toska, nedoumenie, but she is also a person. Turgenev's hero encounters her as a girl, and then later in her artistic transformation as the sputnitsa of the yurodivy. Sof'ya's faith is not a religious one: it is rather a faith in the existence of a created beauty, in the crazed utterances of her master, the poet:

Вы говорите: "У Софи была вера." То-то, была ли у неё вера? Может быть, и тогда-то она добивалась так жарко именно оттого, что прозревала всю недоступность чуда своего закрытого сердца?... Бедной Софи нечем было любить Бога. Она жила одним изумлением, одной белой радостью незыблемой, о которой люди говорили только ее молчанию... Может быть, в изысканном аскетизме этот незыблемый, в этой слившимся в массовой подвижнице следует видеть аскетизм высшего порядка?

Искание исключительной, выше наслаждения Ее и выше даже Ее понимания стоящей Красоты? / 39-40 /

In this image of Sof'ya we find the deepest expression of Annensky's aestheticism. Sof'ya has 'gone to the people', become, in one sense, a socialist. Her socialism is, however, purely metaphysical. She also 'believes in God': but her belief is mystical. Here we see it again, the polarisation of socialism and mysticism. And in the middle, between these two 'byzantine' extremes is poor Sof'ya herself, bewildered, tormented, yet infinitely beautiful. She is the negation of 'byzantine' struggle, she is belizna, nebytie, the struggle for the Beautiful, muka Ideala. She is Annensky's Muse,
a Muse not torn from the earth, but intimately part of it, a part of the грызь и нищета which is, after all, only the desire for the Ideal, for the Beautiful. She is also the quality of Annensky's poetry, a poetry which longs above all to express the Beautiful as любовь к близнему, все равно во форме мистической, какой выстрадали ее христиане, назвав любовью к Богу, или в форме мета-физической, какой признают ее социалисты, уча нас любить человечество. / 39-40 / Sof'ya transcends the categories of love, the categories of the human personality, in order to be their expression, at once ecstatic torment and briefly-glimpsed Ideal.

For Annensky, the human personality expresses itself as love for another: but this love in its turn is negated and transformed into creation, imagination, the world that lies beyond the immediate, everyday world. To live/constantly to create, and thus to be created. And creation, truly poetic creation, is the creation of the Beautiful:

А что вы думаете? Может быть, эта девушка, и в самом деле, разрешила для себя задачу высшего из искусств, искусства жизни. Она обретала взять мрамор, чтоб сделать из него кружево; или жилу, чтобы заставить ее петь,- она взяла материал самый упорный в мире и желанием вытравила из него все, на чем держалась его косность: она выжила из него маску и память. /40-41/
This is the white ecstasy: life lived purely aesthetically, without the banalities of physical love, without the horrors of memory. But such an existence is impossible in the reality which has produced this dream.

What better description than the characterisation of Sof'ya could there be of Annensky's own poetry? We can see a myth similar to the one enacted in Annensky's 'reflection' of Strannaya istoriya in the closing pages of Pamira-kifared, where the speechless Thamyris is confronted by the nymph, his Muse, transformed into a bird that sits on his shoulder. That 'reflection' was even more 'aesthetic', in that Annensky made the ancient myth into a drama, a work of poetry, and not into an essay.

"Пост всегда исходит из непризнания жизни"/ Белый экстаз 40 /. "Неприятие жизни — отражение жизни"
/
/ЦТВАИ/ Annensky's poetry is a reflection of the life he saw being crushed by the twin forces of mysticism and populism, a life which could be so brilliantly incarnated and preserved in art. Art could be a means of enlivening, of exalting the human personality. But there was only the oratory of the socialists and the droning of the mystics. Beauty, life was being lost. Perhaps Annensky was a prophet. In his Beauty there is both justice and divinity, for it has transcended these categories and subsumed them. But that transcendence lasted only so long as Annensky was there to warn of the awful consequences of its loss, the 'whiteness'
of 'stone', the agony of 'non-existence' without an aesthetic justification.

The historical watershed came, and Beauty was lost. That is why we cannot talk of Annensky's 'influence' on the poets who lived after him. 'Byzantine' Russia had caught up with Annensky and overtaken him. And for all the brilliance of their achievement, we cannot see the poems of Akhmatova, Gumilev, Mandel'shtam, in which the superficial mark of Annensky's poetic language is visible, as a continuation of Annensky's aesthetic. Annensky's poetic work was a short-lived and desperate attempt by the Russian consciousness to purge itself of the political intoxicant, the religious intoxicant, and to realise itself as personality, as Beauty. The attempt failed, and the darkness fell.
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2. Annensky Archive

The official description of the Annensky archive, held in the Central State Archive of Literature and the Arts (TSGALI) at Moscow, is to be found under the heading "I. F. Annensky" in the Archive’s Putevoditel (1965 ed.). It reads as follows:

Анненский, И. Ф.
Ф. 6; ед. хр. 462; 1872–1910 гг.
Анненский Иннокентий Федорович /1856–1909/ — поэт декадентского направления, переводчик.
Рукописи И. Ф. Анненского. Стихотворения, вошедшие в соб. "Из пещеры Полифема", цикл.
"Кипарисовый барец", "Тихие песни" / оригинальные
и переводы из Ш. Бодлера, Л. Верлена, Г. Гейне, Ш. Леконт де Лили, С. Малларме; переводы трагедий Еврипида /1894-1908/; историко-литературные и критические статьи, статьи и лекции по античной литературе /1892 и б. д./; "Педагогические письма" и др. статьи по вопросам педагогики /1885-1909/; дневники путешествия по Италии /1909/. Всего 279 рук.
Письма И. Ф. Анненского родным 17 /1890-1909/.
Диплом И. Ф. Анненского об окончании Петербургского ун-та /1880/; материалы о педагогической деятельности И. Ф. Анненского и об его деятельности в Петербургском литературном о-ве /1906-1907/; свидетельство о смерти /1909/.
Векрологи, письма и телеграммы с выражением соболезнования по случаю смерти И. Ф. Анненского /1909/.
This description is selective. There is much more apparently undocumented material in the archive. The officially described material was available to me during the four months I worked at TSGALI, with the exception of some of the letters to Annensky. I made particular use of the following material:

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SUMMARY.

The thesis is divided into two main parts. The first part is a thematic analysis of Annensky's two completed books of lyrical poetry, *Tikhie pesni* and *Kiparisovy larets*, and of Annensky's prose poems. In my analysis of the books (I have not included the collection *Posmertnye stikhi* for consideration as I do not regard it as a finished whole) I have attempted to show how they are structured as books, as cycles of poems. Thus the chapter on *Kiparisovy larets* centres to a certain extent on the formal implications of the cyclic groupings (*trilistniki*, *skladi*). I believe this to be a new approach to Annensky's poetry: the poems are generally treated as a homogeneous entity. This is certainly the case with the two main studies of Annensky, those of Setchkarev 1) and Bazzarelli 2). In contrast to these authors I had during my study of the prose poems all the material at my disposal, and not merely those sections which are available in *Posmertnye stikhi* and the introduction to Fedorov's anniversary edition of Annensky's poems and tragedies 3).

In the second part of the work I have tried to illuminate some areas of Annensky's aesthetic preoccupations which I think lie at the root of much of the difficulty of the poet's work. The chapter about the Real and the Ideal discusses the question of Annensky's poetic I both with reference to the poems themselves and in a wider, more general literary-historical context. In the chapter entitled "The Social Content of Annensky's Poetic I" some attempt has been made to discuss the nature of Annensky's rather tenuous poetic relationship with the lives of other people and with the outside world, and the way in which this relationship determines the character of the poet's aesthetic subjectivity. Annensky's essay Bely ekstaz 1), the subject of the final chapter, has always seemed to me the most important and concise statement of Annensky's situation as a poet, and in my discussion of it I have tried to unite all the threads of my inquiry. Annensky's essential isolation and uniqueness is seen to arise from the poet's determined resistance to all anti-artistic or non-aesthetic influences, a resistance which is unusual in the history of Russian literature.

1) Kniga otrazhenii II, pp. 33-41.
As an extension of the introduction to the thesis there is a discussion of the critical literature about Annensky. This has already been done very well by Eridano Bazzarelli 1), but I wanted above all to give some impression of Bazzarelli's own work which has not been translated into English and which remains one of the most important studies of Annensky's poetry. I also felt the need to indicate a passage of Mandel'shtam's literary criticism 2) which seems to me of particular significance concerning Annensky.