

A Sense of Place: Tsarskoe Selo and its Poets. Papers from 1989 Dartmouth Conference Dedicated to the Centennial of Anna Akhmatova.

"Classical" and "Tsarskoe Selo" in the Works of Annensky: Some Observations in Regard to Acmeism

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The Tsarskoe Selo stage of Annensky's biography, which ended with his death, was the period of his greatest creative blossoming. In the words of T.A. Bogdanovich, though he rarely stepped beyond the threshold of his study, he experienced "in this minute territory an entire life saturated with poetic and philosophical ideas" [23, p. 82].¹

* * *

Akhmatova more than once recalled the "more or less open persecution" of the young Gumilev, and linked it to the inability of "the brutal natives of Tsarskoe Selo" to reconcile themselves with "anything on a higher level" [12, p. 8; 36, pp. 273-274]. According to Akhmatova, their own "level" was such that all they knew about symbolism was: "O cover your pale legs" («О закрой свои бледные ноги») and *Let Us Be as the Sun* («Будем как солнце») [12, p.8]. The title of Balmont's work was transformed into an emblem of the current notion of poetry and poets, for it reflected the tendency of symbolist works to assume the aura of a world's fair [25, p. 96].

The title *Let Us Be as the Sun* is closely linked to the book's epigraph, presented as a quotation from Anaxagoras: «Я в этот мир пришел, чтоб видеть солнце» ("I came into this world to see the sun"). Balmont had in mind the statement attributed to Anaxagoras that life is justified by the opportunity "to observe the sky and its stars, Moon and Sun" («наблюдать небо и на нем звезды, Луну и Солнце») [28, pp. 221, 244]. This was undoubtedly familiar to Annensky, an expert on the classics as well as a poet to whom the "literary uproar" was alien, and who found a guidepost in the "falling" intonation of Dostoevsky's voice during his reading of Pushkin's «Пророк» ("The Prophet") [9, p. 237].² The notion ascribed to Anaxagoras found an echo in Annensky's tragedy *Melanippe the Wise* («Меланиппа-философ») but it sounded there "quietly" in accordance with the *Quiet Songs*, which in turn harmonized with "quiet and fragrant" Tsarskoe Selo, contrasted by Akhmatova to "thundering"

Petersburg [11, II, p. 248]. Let us recall Melanippe's declarations: "And the quiet stars speak with me, father, in the sleepless nights ..." («И тихие со мною говорят/ Бессонными, отец, ночами, звезды...») [8, p. 329]; "...Amidst the distant stars, I catch a fleeting glimpse of the beams of golden truth..." («Истины златой / среди дальних звезд и мне лучи мелькали...») [8, p. 344]; cf. «Среди миров» («Amidst worlds»).

Tsarskoe Selo's *Melanippe the Wise* corresponded to two of Euripides' un preserved tragedies [45, p. 162]. One of these had the same title as Annensky's and "was famous in antiquity for its account of Anaxagoras' rational system" [8, p. 308]. Euripides was considered his pupil; in any case, the influence exerted by "the father of rationalism" runs through the creations of the "philosopher of the stage" like a "vivid streak" [4, p. XX; 7, pp. 39; 28], including the fragments that have survived of *Melanippe the Wise* [28, p. 277]. Conversing "across centuries" with the tragedian of antiquity [20, p. 19], Annensky saw in the "mirror" of his poetry, the reflection of «чужие, ничьи лучи» ("another's, nobody's rays") [33, p. 72], the "rays" of Anaxagoras' doctrine.

Several important semantic components are in one way or another linked with Anaxagoras in the Euripidean layer of Annensky's work [2, V]. These include first and foremost «стремление за вещами познать их сущность» ("the striving to perceive the essence behind the material object" [4, p. XXI], to see "the form of thought" in poetry [29, p. 237], to divine beyond nature's reigning harmonic beauty of color, rays and of scent [9, p. 466] "another eternal beauty" [9, p. 217], «гармонию, которая не действует непосредственно на глаза и слуховые нервы» ("a harmony, which does not act directly on the eyes and the auditory nerves") [29, p. 542]. The «признание вечности материи» ("recognition of the eternity of matter") [4, p. XXI] belongs here, as does the notion of man's soul as "an atom of the world's spirit," "harmoniously flickering" with tendencies in the "world of ideas" ([9, pp. 217, 466], cf. also the Platonic implications), which gives rise in the "atom" to "power and greatness," independence, conscience, compassion and «нечто высшее чем жизнь отдельного человека» ("something higher than the life of an individual person")—cf. «второстепенность вопроса о смерти» ("the secondary nature of the question of death" [9, p. 28]). The analogues of these and other positions are summarized in Melanippe's extensive monologue [8, pp. 344-345], who, undoubtedly influenced by knowledge of her Euripidean prototype, with great pre-

cision and completeness sets forth Anaxagoras' system. Both the "Annensian" and Euripidian Melanippes are moved by the wish to save their children, by "the pathos of motherhood" ([29, p. 541]—on Creusa in "Ion"), in which the creative, spiritual but also "rationalist" aspect—"the art of thought" [9, p. 187], the "agony of thought" [9, p. 477; 39, p. 60]—receives exceptional development. This "agony of thought" comes from Pushkin's "Elegy"; cf. also: «А мне, скажите, в муках мысли / Найдется ль сердце сострадать?» ("But tell me, can a heart be found that would sympathize with me in my agony of thought?") [8, p. 202]). Annensky wrote of Euripides: "The poet forced not just Hecuba to propogate Anaxagoras' doctrine; he brought out onto the stage the actual philosopher in a peplos, and his Melanippe...delivered...an entire physics lecture" («Поэт заставил не одну Гекубу проповедовать учение Анаксагора, он вывел на сцену настоящего философа в пеплосе, и его Меланиппа. . прочитала. . целую лекцию по физике») [4, p. XII].

Living in the "world of hyphotheses" [7, p. 39] Melanippe atones for the break in her "meditative life" with sufferings consecrated by reason ([8, p. 311], an attribute dating back, apparently, to Aristotle's opinion of Anaxagoras [28, p. 220] and applied by Annensky also to Euripides [4, p. XX]) and to reality, which overcomes the burden of "the inert matter" of existence [39, p. 62; 42, p. 142; 45, p. 168]. But the pathos (more precisely, *πάθος*, "enduring," an element in the structure of tragedy [14, p. 129]) of Melanippe can be seen as an analogue to the pathos of the divine spirit (corresponding to Anaxagoras' *νοῦς*, Spirit or Reason, but also to the Biblical spirit [John 3:8]; for more details see [2, part V]), about which she speaks in the monologue mentioned above. The spirit's cosmic act of overcoming Chaos consisted of beginning to rotate the mixed "essences of the world" ("seeds," "kernels" - to which Annensky sometimes equated "atoms"[4]), which led to a "harmonious" and "beautiful" [8, p. 345], "wonderful" [8, p. 562] world being eternally created by the spirit. The word *подъять* ("to lift")—"Having lifted the kernels from chaos...he began to whirl" («...зерна / Из Хаоса подъяв ... закружил ...») —applies to this act and recalls the formula found throughout Annensky's work that describes one of the basic predicates of the poet or the hero [2, III, p. 33; 3, p. 38].³

One can see the nature of the correspondences between Melanippe's "Anaxagorian" monologue and its classical sources (Anaxagoras' "On nature," for one) in these two examples:

...А семя

Там каждое начатки всех вещей
Незримые тайло: и железа
В нем был закал, и розы аромат,
И радуги цвета [8, p. 344]

...But there *each seed* hid the
invisible *elements of all things*:
and it had the tempering of iron,
and the *scent* of a rose, and
the *colors* of the rainbow

(Related to this notion is the "Annenskian" understanding of "beauty in nature" [9, p. 466], which has been referred to earlier. Since it is not possible here to discuss the very important theme of scent [2, V], let us note only the motif of a curative fragrance of a divine being, used by Annensky at the end of *Melanippe* (cf. the exodium of *Hippolytus* [7, p. 27; 9, pp. 384, 395; 29, p. 553]), and also in *King Ixion*, where the fragrance of the roses of Eros is linked with immortality and love. Note too the ending of Annensky's "Undying fragrance," a translation from Leconte de Lisle).

А смерть? . . . О, смерть - разлука,
но и только.
Коль на гробах мы видим огоньки,
Когда темно, а на могилах пышно
Трава растет; и если только пыль
В могилах от скелетов остается,
Так потому, что к расцепленью нет
Уж более преграды, чтобы пламя
Ушло в эфир и чтоб землей земля
И влажною травкою соки стали.
[8, p. 345]

And *death*?...O, *death* is a *parting*,
but not only that. If we see lights on
the coffins when it is dark, and on the
graves grows luxuriant grass; and
if only the dust of skeletons is left in
the graves, Then because there are
no more obstacles to the *uncoupling*,

«...семена всех вещей, облада-
ющие всевозможными форм-
ами, цветами, вкусами и за-
пахами» («О природе», фраг-
мент № 4) [28, pp. 147, 294]

...the *seeds of all things*,
possessing all possible *forms*,
colors, *tastes* and *smells*
[“On Nature,”
fragment No. 4]

«...никакая вещь не возникает
—и не уничтожается, но со-
единяется из существующих
вещей и разделяется...»
(«О природе», фрагмент № 17);
«Уходит назад / Родившееся
из земли—в землю. / Проис-
шедшее же из эфирного семе-
ни / Возвращается опять на
небо. / Не умирает ничто из
возникающего»

(Еврипид. Фрагмент трагедии
«Хрисипп» [28, с. 292, 298])

...*nothing* arises or is
destroyed, but forms and
dissolves from existing
things.. (“On nature,”
fragment No. 17):
It goes back / Born of the
earth—into the earth.

the flame could get out into the ether,
the earth become earth and the
juices become damp grass.

Issuing from the seed of
ether / It returns again
into the sky / Nothing that
arises dies.

(Euripides, Fragment of the tragedy
Chrysippus [28, pp. 292, 298]).

The above-quoted lines from Annensky reflected his thoughts about the dualism of Euripides: «...для него душа человека после смерти возвращается в эфир, как тело идет в землю» (...for him after death, a man's soul returns to ether, like the body returns to the earth" [4, p. XXV]); cf. also, for example: «Если умрет человек, / Душа на могиле / В темную ночь / Пламенем синим мерцает...» ("If a man dies, / The soul in the grave / In the dark night / Glimmers with a blue flame...") from *Laodamia* [8, p. 467]); and Для чего на забытых ветвях / Зеленой и пышнее трава? ("Why on the forgotten branches is the grass greener and more luxuriant?" [8, p. 176]).

These views are related to the motif, that figures in a number of Annensky's works, of life with which "an atom of the spirit" (man's soul) joins after becoming "uncoupled" from the body that has gone into the earth. The transition into this life is often linked with the soul striving to carry away with it something like a souvenir of the past. It could be, for example, the abstract image of a thing existing from color, scent and "contour" («Еще лилии» ("Still the lilies" cf. [24, p. 112]) or the image of some locality: «О Пелий! / Зеленый и с белой короной! И ели, / И токи смолы благовонной... / Для новых / Небес не забудем тебя мы...» ("O Pelion / Green, with a white crown! And the fir trees, / And the currents of fragrant resin... / We will not forget you for the new skies...") [8, p. 314]. Also «Все глаза мои брать хочу я / Из темноты сюда... / Чтобы сердце, / Сны былые / Узнавая, трепетало...» ("I want to take in everything with my eyes / Out of the darkening garden... / So that my heart, / Recognizing past dreams / Would tremble...") [8, p. 75]).

In *Laodamia* Hermes speaks of "atoms of a second existence" [8, p. 485]; it appears to him through the "multitude of centuries" at the spatial and temporal point where all the signs recall the poetic atmosphere of Greece: «Восток (the white night, the avenue, the statue under the cold rain etc. cf. [19]) and more concretely, the deserted little corner of the Ekaterininskii Park, where the statue "Pace,"⁴ described by Annensky, was located [15, p. 45; 23, p. 105]. Hermes

thinks about his future ability—already in the form of a “marble god”—to inspire the poet “with the beauty of contemplative forgetting,” which, one must assume, Annensky linked to a certain “new” perception that would refract the “eternal” [9, p. 205] through the psychological prism of the modern “I” “suffering with the consciousness of its irreparable solitude...” («замученного сознанием своего безысходного одиночества...») [9, p. 102]. The poem “Pace” affected the young Akhmatova and her friend V. S. Sreznevskaja just as much as did the “Statue of Peace” itself in “the overgrown part of the park,” where as teenagers they could observe Annensky’s strolls. [23, p. 144]. Impressions from the statue and from the lines dedicated to it (and from the entire «Трилистник в парке» [“Trefoil in the Park”]) found significant reflection in Akhmatova’s work; but another “sculpture” became her “marble twin” [22]. An echo of the ending of “Pace” can be found in the concluding couplet of the poem «Заплаканная осень, как вдова...» (“Tear-stained autumn, like a widow”; cf. about this further on). Let us also note a possible harkening back to Annensky (“Still the lillies,” etc.) in Akhmatova’s «Последняя Роза» (“The Last Rose”): «Господи! Ты видишь, я устала / Воскресать, и умирать, и жить. / Все возьми, но этой розы алой / Дай мне свежесть снова ощутить (“Lord! You see, I am tired / Of resurrecting, of dying, and living. / Take everything, but let me experience anew / The freshness of this scarlet rose”). Particularly worth noting are Akhmatova’s analogues to the “Annenskian” theme of fragrance and smell: “the smell of the immortal roses” [10, p. 411] et al., cf. [2, V].

The ending to Akhmatova’s poem, “The leaves of this willow tree withered in the 19th century...,” which contains numerous associations with Pushkin, Annensky and others [31], uses the “outlines” of Tsarskoe Selo’s gardens as an image, partly reminiscent of Annensky in that the focus is not directly on the object but on its form or “a combination of abstract forms” ([24, p. 113]⁵:

И туда не вернусь! Но возьму и за Лету с собою
Очертанья живые моих царкосельских садов.

I will not return there! But I will take with me beyond Lethe
The living outlines of my Tsarskoe Selo gardens.

Already in antiquity, in one of the places in Euripides’ *Alcestis*, people perceived a reference to Anaxagoras, who according to legend loses his son: «...умер/Юноша <...> Но стойко/Нес отец свое

... / A сединою волос / Был у него подернут: / Жизнь уже шла к
 концу» ("The youth / Died / . . . But stoically / The father bore his
 grief; / And his head was covered with grey hair: / His life was al-
 ready in decline" [28, pp. 223, 257]).⁶ The comparison of two lives,
 one of which, in its "decline," continues on, while the youthful life
 perishes, echoes the central theme of *Alcestis*. Admetus'
 inability to deny himself or to go into battle and suffer"
 corresponds to the old Pheres' "candid, almost cynical love of life,"
 but in Admetus is concealed "a sufferer, oppressed by the yoke of a
 weak, interminable manner . . . of life" [29, pp. 112, 126, 133].
 Alcestis obeying her tender heart's "quiet," but powerful voice,"
 rises up against Ananke, who personifies this kind of blind fate [29,
 p. 134]. The theme of the female heart moved by Eros to oppose
 Ananke at the price of its own existence is obviously close to
 Annensky's *Melanippe*. "The remainder of one's strength," an
 extremely important motif in his tragedy, apparently comes from
 the following characteristic contexts in his translation of *Alcestis*
 [27, I, pp. 76-77]:

Ферет:) Как же праха
 Той не почтить, которая твою
 Денюю дней своих нам жизнь купила,
 Дитя мое, которая дала
 Остаток дней и мне прожить
 спокойно <...> ?

Pheres:) How can I not honor
 the dust of she who bought us
 your life at the cost of her own
 days, my child, who allowed me
 to live in peace for the
remainder of my days...?

(Адмет:) Ты не пришел, старик,
 ты пожалел / *Остатком дней*
 пожертвовать. Зачем же, /
 Над юностью, загубленной
 тобою, / Теперь приходишь
 плакать?

(Admetus:) You did not come,
 old man, you weren't able to
 sacrifice the *remainder of*
your days. So why
 do you come now to cry over
 the youthful life you have
 squandered?

In *Melanippe* this motif is linked to Hellenus: "I preserved the
remainder of my strength, my Aeolus, / To see you and to feast
 upon the dawn / Of the fame of Aeolus' descendents / Which the son
 of Chronos once promised me" [8, p. 335]. The "remainder of one's
 days" is also a topic in Annensky's "Harmony." The relevant quota-
 tion is juxtaposed below with a passage from prayers addressed to
 Hera by Melanippe's girl friends:

Я жадно здесь, покуда небо знойно,
 Остаток дней туманных берегу.
 А где-то там мнутутся средь огня
 Такие ж я, без счета и названья,
 И чье-то молодое за меня
 Кончается в тоске существованье.

I greedily guard the *remainder of the hazy days*, while the sky is .
 sweltering. But somewhere amidst
 the *fire* similar I's, without name or
 number, are disturbed, and some-
one's existence, instead of
mine, ends in melancholy.

Сердцу сердца голос чуток:
 Пожалей в тоске рожденных,
 Из огня отдай малюток,
 Нежной матери спасенных

The heart's voice is sensitive
 to the heart: Pity those born in
melancholy. Return to their
 tender mother the babies
 rescued from fire
 ([8, p. 353], cf. here too on
 Heracles' children).

Let us append to what we said earlier [2, IV; 3] about "Turgenevian" and "Dostoevskian" (and possibly Akhmatovian) associations in "Harmony" that the Annenskian conception of *Alcestis* reveals similarities to the poet's interpretation of Turgenev's «Странная история» ("Strange Story"). According to Annensky, its theme is "youthful" life, "freely" accepting suffering that is "consciously aimless," "atoning for nothing," and containing within itself only "an aestheticism of the highest order of suffering" ([9, pp. 144-145]. This kind of an understanding in large part derives from the notion that a fixed sum of happiness and unhappiness exists in the world and if one of the "I's" living "in nature" [9, p. 102; 2, IV, p. 32] evades suffering it creates a "double burden" for another [9, p. 145]—cf. the ancient views used by Annensky in the analysis of *Alcestis*, in which «счастье и несчастье отпускались на людей в определенном количестве ...» ("happiness and unhappiness were given to people in a defined quantity...") [29, p. 128]).

It would be correct to seek a Euripidian-Anaxagorian element in such essential concepts of the early Annensky as "the poetry of conscience," a notion developed by him in his analysis of Dostoevsky's works. It is sufficient to take an example from *Hippolytus*. In concluding the discussion about wives deceiving their husbands in *Laodamia* [8, p. 455]) Phaedra says: «И если что-нибудь поспорить может/ С желаньем жить, так совесть...» ("And if anything can compete/ With the wish to live, it is the conscience...") [I, p. 241]).⁸ The degree to which conscience as a moral factor, formulated and organized by the "wish to live"⁹ is important to Annensky's personality can be traced back to an episode of his biography

which has recently become known. The spiritual kinship of the poet and of O. P. Khmara-Barshchevskaia "could have developed into an intimately close relationship, but Annensky could not go that far" [23, p. 65]. As O.P. Khmara-Barshchevskaia acknowledged, "...he was tormented by the thought: 'What sort of a person am I? First I took the mother (from my stepson), and then I'll take the wife? Where will I hide from my conscience?'" And there arose "not a liaison, but a radiant merging" [23, p. 118]; Annensky's characteristic motif of "the eyes' rays," to which the "radiant merging" also applies, comes from Euripides, as in *Elektra*: "We will not merge with our eyes' rays!" [17, II, p. 70].

The "I" of "Harmony" is essentially in the same situation as Pheres (and to a degree as Admetus) in *Alcestis*: "a youthful existence" ending "in melancholy" saves "the remainder of his days" for him. But if Pheres clutches at life above all else, for the "I" of "Harmony" the opportunity to live the "remainder of his days," is linked to the need to "purify himself in the crucible of suffering" [29, p. 138], with tormenting thoughts about the cost at which he has bought his own life (cf. [41, p. 21]). In a similar fashion, Admetus savors the "fruits of self-denial" on the part of "the great and brave hearts" of Heracles and Alcestis [29, pp. 133, 138].

The image of a widow appears in the opening lines of Akhmatova's "Tear-stained autumn, like a widow....," written after receiving the news of Gumilev's death¹⁰:

Заплаканная осень, как вдова,
В одеждах черных, всё сердца туманит.
Перебирая мужины слова,
Она рыдать не перестанет.

Tear-stained autumn, like a widow, / In black clothing, continuously clouds hearts. / Turning over in her mind her husband's words, / She will not cease to sob.

Through its direct source in Annensky's "Трое (Threesome)" Akhmatova's poem contains "contextual overtones" [35, p. 36] that reflect the "Annenskian" translation of *Alcestis*:

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

Плач погребальный лики
Брака сменяет ... Черной
Ризой блеск покрывлся.
И на пустое ложе
В дом одиноко влачусь я

In the *bed* of a deep ditch / *Covered* The funereal lament replaces the songs of marriage
to her heels in *garments of foam* / ...splendor is *covered* with a
The *lonely widow dreams* / a black *garment*. Alone, I drag
And the cold waters boil... myself into the house and onto
the *empty bed* [17, I, p. 91]

Note too, in *Melanippe*, the children dressed in "funereal clothes" and their prototype in "Heracles": "funereal cloaks" [17, I, p. 421].

The tragic note of Akhmatova's poem is intensified by the sub-text of *Alcestis*, which is connected with Admetus' pathos, the feeling of "a life that is worse than death" [29, pp. 138-139], i.e. of a life, preserved at the cost of the death of someone near, of a dear "youthful life," destroyed by Ananke's senseless decision. Note as well in *Helen*: "If my husband had been killed in a foreign land - in a flow of tears / I would have found comfort in widowhood" [17, II, p. 126].¹¹

There are hidden echoes of the theme of Hellenus, *Melanippe* and the descendants of Aeolus in Annensky's "encouraging madrigal" dedicated to Gumilev [36, p. 273; cf. also 2, IV, p. 29; 3; 15, p.57]: "remainder of one's strength," the sunset of life, motherhood, the possibility of seeing the continuers of their kind and the "dawn" of their glory. In a unique way it "illuminates" the continuity from Annensky to the Guild of Poets. Even Annensky's death seemed to be an unintentional development of this theme: he did not live "the remainder of his days" and did not see "the dawn" of the fame of his literary "descendants" (nor did he survive to see his own fame; see Akhmatova's "Teacher"). Just as Annensky had predicted [34, p. 198], not long after his death a quiet but compelling feminine poetic voice was heard; the verse was "provocatively spare in the age of symbolist gigantomania" and found "brilliant and unexpected success" [ibid.].

For the second anniversary of his Teacher's death, Gumilev wrote a poem in which the image of the "muse who has departed from the poet" appears right in the park at Tsarskoe Selo, in the very place where Annensky located Hermes in *Laodamia*. But "the wounds in place of eyes" on the face of the muse first and foremost recall *Melanippe*, blinded and separated from her children:

...Мои глаза...

О, солнце...О, цветы...О, сны...О, дети...

...My eyes...

O, sun...O, flowers...O, dreams...O, children... [8, p.359]

The association of the sun, flowers, and children comes from Dostoevsky¹² and Verlaine. Melannippe's "dreams" have something in common with her other "dreams"; the words «...не надо больше / Мучительных и невозможных снов» ("... I don't need any more of these agonizing and impossible dreams") [8, p. 365] clearly correspond to "Pas de mauvais rêves!" in "Impression fausse," which Annensky translated from Verlaine ("Dreams - impossible dreams" [8, p. 277]). But a particularly important source is Euripides ("Hecuba," 1255):

οἱμοι τέκνων τῶνδ' ὀμμάτων τ' ἔμων, τάλας

Alas! O, children!..O, eyes!..O bitterness!.. [17, I, p. 399]

Polymestor's exclamation refers to his children, killed by the Trojan women, and to the eyes of the "wretched husband" that they had plucked out. An indication of the Euripidian aspects of the blinded Muse in Gumilev's poem can be seen in the second verse. Referring to the realia of Annensky's study [23, pp. 70, 127] the lines «А там, над шкафом, профиль Еврипида / ~~уже~~ ^{слепил горящие глаза}» ("But there, above the shelf, the profile of Euripides already *blinded the burning eyes*") seemingly foreshadowing «раны вместо глаз» ("wounds in place of eyes") in the poem's finale; similarly, «горящие две ямы» ("the two burning hollows") of the Nymph's eyes in the Bacchic drama [8, p. 561] foreshadow the blinding of Thamyris.

One should also take into account, of course, that the theme of blinding, important for *Melanippe* and also for *Thamyris*, appeared in Annensky's last poem, which says of the poet's Melancholy and her children, the verses: «Собралась петь она... Не смолк и первый стих, / Как маленьких детей у ней перевязали, / Сломали руки им и ослепили их» ("She was about to sing... and the first verse had not quieted, / When they bound her *little children*, / broke their arms and *blinded them*." [8, p. 171]). From the mythological aspect, blinding is treated as a harmful function of the Muses, and it is closely related to the motif of depriving a singer of his poetic gift or, on the contrary, granting him such a gift [37, p. 42]. The first of the two possibilities is reflected in the myth about the Thracian singer Thamyris, which served as the basis for Sophocles' unperformed tragedy [8, p. 511], and also for Annensky's Bacchic drama. "Freely

bearing" the torment and deprived of the ability to see "the amazing world" [8, p. 562],¹³ to remember or to hear music, *Thamyris* in the "prison of this deafness and of this forgetting" [20, p. 24] saves "the last ray" from *Euterpe's* music ([8, p. 568]. Similarly, in *Melanippe* we note: «...мира / Последний луч для Арны» ("...of the world/ The last ray for Arne") and the «раскаленный» ("scorching-hot") nail [8, p. 361]. The blind wanderer driven by his mother who has been transformed into a bird, preserves the echo of the Muse's "ineffable" melody [20, p. 24] and remains the possessor of a certain true knowledge—similar to *Tiresias* and to other blind men, "contemplators of the essence," to whom *Oedipus*, after all, also belonged [1, p. 101]. In *Akhmatova's* cycle «Памяти поэта» ("To the Memory of the Poet"), which is dedicated to *Pasternak*, the image of the prophet is linked to the blind *Oedipus* and *Tiresias*, and, indirectly perhaps, also to *Thamyris*: «Словно дочка слепого Эдипа, Муза к смерти провидца вела» ("Like the daughter of blind *Oedipus*, / The Muse led the prophet to death").¹⁴

In connection with the mythological motif of the harmful influence of the Muses who impart the gift of poetry, one should mention *Akhmatova's* description of her impression upon first reading the *Cypress Chest*. She basically describes a state of blindness and deafness: «Я сразу перестала видеть и слышать, я не могла оторваться, я повторяла эти стихи днем и ночью» ("I immediately ceased to see and to hear, I could not tear myself away, I repeated those lines day and night" [18, p. 71]). The reading of her *Teacher's* book prepared the way for the soon to follow first "ascent" of *Akhmatova's* Muse in the spirit of her later verses: «А Муза и глохла и слепла, / В земле истлевала зерном, / Чтоб после, как Феникс из пепла, / В эфире восстать голубом» ("But the Muse went blind and deaf, / She rotted in the earth like grain, / So that later like the phoenix from the ashes, / She would rise up into the pale blue ether" [10, p. 298]).¹⁵

At the end of *Akhmatova's* "Teacher" («...во всех вдохнул томлень...["...he breathed languor into everyone..."]»), as indicated by the well-known declarations of the Author, the word "everyone" refers to the pleiad of young poets "contained" in the creator of *Cypress Chest*. "Languor" refers to the *Annensian* way of signalling the creative condition [2, I, 22; II, pp. 3, 21; 3; 44, pp. 148, 215], which is linked to the notion of "bearing" torments, a heavy burden and so forth (томить: «мучить. . . налагать непосильное бремя» {to weary: "to torment. . . to place an excessive burden"} [16, IV, p.

414]), and also to the notion of the mother's "torment" over her children (*мать томит по дитяти «мучит, она грустит»*) (the mother torments herself over her children; "she is tormented, she is grieving" [ibid.]). Note too the poems "My Melancholy" and "Third Tormenting Sonnet." The "mind tormenting" hypostasis of "the pathos of motherhood" and of the "vivid streak," which is reflected in *Melanippe* ([6, p. 86], on Euripides), permeates all of Annensky's works, beginning with his article on the tragedies of the "first tragedian of the individual" [20, p. 19].

Here are several illustrations (see above as well): "...Andromache with the pathos of a grieving mother, with her children, which they tear away from her embrace... [4, p. IV]; ("Alongside the tragedy of Rhesus stands the tragedy of his mother the muse, of the immortal mother of the mortal son" ([5, p. 120]);¹⁶ "Euripides loved to portray the union of this maidenly purity with the deep tenderness of motherhood..." ([6, pp. 85-86)—on *Iphiginea* and *Antigone*);¹⁷ "One must be familiar with all of Euripides' poetic output to understand the meaning behind the motif of murdering infants..." ([29, pp. 426, 428] analyzing *Heracles*; on the murder of children by Heracles see also *Melanippe* [8, p. 352] and *King Ixion* [8, p. 379]); and "Creusa suffers from the deeply hidden and all-consuming pathos of motherhood. Euripides touched upon this theme in *Melanippe*...." ([29, p. 541], see above).

In one of his articles on Dostoevsky Annensky wrote that the former "could not help endowing *the sick children of his fantasy* with his own consuming *disease of creativity*" ([9, p. 128]—Annensky's emphasis; cf. [2, III, p. 29]). Others have noted his interest in the story "Mr. Prokharchin," "which was not only not liked but also had bad luck" and that the story is where the "first outline of the prophet in the poetry of Dostoevsky" arose [9, pp. 27, 238]. From here it is not far to Annensky's notion of the «идеальный поэт» ("ideal poet") as the «пасынок человечества» ("stepchild of humanity") [9, p. 201].

The theme of Thamyris' «холодное детство» ("cold childhood") in the "Bacchic drama" is tinged with Annensky's reflections on Euripides' *Ion*. In the Nymph's monologue, in which she appeals to her son, certain that he will not remember her, the obvious echo of Ion's bitter complaint is heard: «...он вспомнил о матери; о, кто бы она ни была, в эту минуту ему все равно,—это *холодное детство*...» ("...he remembered his mother; o, whoever she may be,

at this moment it did not matter to him—that *cold childhood*...” [9, p. 536]:

... простить / Не можешь ты безум-
ной нимфе детства / Холодного, без
ласки и без тех / Нам памятных на-
век причуд ребячьих, / Когда бра-
нит нас мать, потом смеется, /
Потом, лаская, плачет...

Судьбой же не обласкан «...»
Пока другой бы нежился в
объятиях / У матери, я моло-
ка лишен был женского «...»
А мать была ль счастливее?
Она ведь тоже не ласкала
сына...

...You cannot forgive / the insane
nymph for a *cold* / *Childhood with
out kindness* and without / Those
ever-lasting memories of childhood
caprices, / When *mother* scolds us,
then laughs, / Then, *carressing* us,
cries... [8, pp. 531-532]

I was *not carressed* by
fate... While the other would
bask in mother's embrace /
I was deprived of a woman's
milk. . . But was *mother*
more happy? She, after all,
did not *caress* her son
either... [17, II, p. 327].

Note the description of motherhood in *Melanippe*: «Я ласкаю, слезой
и грудью нежной / Малюткам долг платила материнский...» («With a
caress, with *tears* and a *tender breast* / I fulfilled my motherly du-
ties to the babies...» [8, p. 313]).

The image of *Thamyris* also affects the appearance of the
theme of a “cold childhood” in Annensky's above-quoted speech,
which reveals the role of *Tsarskoe Selo* in forming Pushkin's per-
sonality, his «поэтическое самозабвение и самоотречения» (“poetic
self-forgetting and self-denial” ([9, p. 319])—a theme illustrated by
Pushkin's «Заклинание» (“Incantation.”) The introduction of this
poem's diction in the translation of *Heracles*—in the monologue of
Megara summoning the hero—is significant [2, III, p. 12]). Also
relevant is the indication of Pushkin's developing «бессаветность»
 (“selflessness”) in friendship while at *Tsarskoe Selo* [9, p. 319].¹⁸
«Пушкин любил Царское Село, потому что там прошло его отро-
чество и юность, и нам возразят, пожалуй, что ранние годы жизни
всегда кажутся нам розовыми в воспоминаниях. . . Да, но отчего же
Захарово и Москва гораздо реже вспоминались Пушкину, и отчего в
стихах его нет совсем трогательного образа материнской ласки, как
у Гоголя, у графа Льва Толстого, у Гончарова (вспомните слезу
Обломова)? (“Pushkin loved *Tsarskoe Selo*, because he spent his ado-
lescence and youth there, and people may object that we always re-

member our early years through rose-colored glasses . . . Yes, but why are Zakharovo¹⁹ and Moscow recalled much less by Pushkin, and why are there absolutely no touching images of motherly tenderness in his poems, as there are in the works of Gogol, Count Lev Tolstoy, or Goncharov (remember Oblomov's tear?) [9, p. 311].

Thamyris rejects the Nymph's "scorching" caresses: «Иль матери так любят? Я слышал, / Что песни их, как полог, тихи...» ("Do mothers love this way? I heard, / That their songs, like a cover, are quiet..." [8, p. 527]). These words support the possibility of a link to the theme of childhood and motherhood in the title of Annensky's first book, *Quiet Songs* [2, I, p. 24; 43, p. 94]. A similar interpretation applies to one of the cycles of *Cypress Chest*, «Складни» ("Double Icons"; see also [32]). The precise term is "Diptychs"; cf. Greek διπτυχος "double, folding" and the motif of twin children in *Medea* (as in Annensky's *Melanippe*; the common motif of the knife as a murder weapon is essential for both tragedies [2, III, p. 28]). Note κλων...διπτυχος γωνη (Medea, 1136), which in Annensky's translation comes out «... твоих детей, Медея, складень двустворчатый...» ("...the hinged diptych of your children, Medea...") [17, I, p. 156].

A key instance of "Annenskian" "portent" and an "omen" of what "later happened" to Akhmatova (cf. [10, p. 346]) can be ascribed to "Requiem," where she introduces "the pathos of the grieving mother" («пафос скорбной матери»), separated from her son, who is threatened by death (see also [21]). "The well-known cycle of poems from 1950, which must be evaluated as a heroic sacrifice" («известный цикл стихов 1950 года, который трудно оценить иначе как подвиг») can be mentioned in this connection [26, p. 268]. Just as Akhmatova once spoke "in the name of the anonymous throng... of 'domestic poetesses'" («от имени безымянного сонма... домашних поэтесс») [34, p. 190], in "Requiem," she united "her own mother's tragedy with that of countless other mothers and with the great all-Russian tragedy" ([46, p. 10], see also Akhmatova's poems about war). This poetry, "the child of death and despair" («дитя смерти и отчаяния») [9, p. 207], contained mortal danger [2, IV, p. 38]. Annensky's "pining" («томление») for his poetic offspring («Они—минуты праздога томленья, / Перегоревшие на медленном огне»—"They are minutes of idle pinning, / Burned up in a slow fire" [9, p. 91]) was perforce contrasted by Akhmatova «тлевшая на медленном огне» ("smouldering in a slow fire" [10, p. 289]) to a mother's ruthlessness, in keeping with the notion (of N. V. Dobrovo) that cruelty and hardness, as well as stability and

strength, are immanent qualities of her poetry: «Я стихам не матерью—/ Мачехой была. / Эх, бумага белая, / Строчек ровный ряд! / Сколько раз глядела я, / Как они горят» (“I was not a mother to poems—/ I was a stepmother. / Oh, white paper, / Lines in an even row! / How many times did I see, / Them burn”) (from «Под узорной скатертью» [“Beneath the embroidered table-cloth,”] pointed out to the author by T. V. Tsivian; see also [2, I, pp. 36-37]).

Akhmatova inherited the theme of motherhood and childhood from her Teacher as an inalienable component of the “poetry of conscience,” («поэзия совести»), which consistently corresponded to the category of memory and conscience that was fundamental for Annensky’s “pupil” («ученица»), and which was imbued with the “sense of guilt” («чувство вины») characteristic of her works [40, p. 110]. One of the wide range of examples (which cannot be examined here, see [2; 3]) is the ruthless reflection of Akhmatova the mother, seen in the poem addressed to her son “I will be quiet in the country churchyard...” («Буду тихо на погосте...»), the end of which refers to the passage cited above from the Nymph’s monologue in the Bacchic drama (and more broadly to Annensky’s concept of the duty of the mother and of people toward children, as, for instance, in “Children”):

Знаю, милый, можешь мало
 Обо мне припоминать:
 Не бранила, не ласкала,
 Не водила причащать.

I know, dear, you have little
 To remember me with:
 I didn’t scold, didn’t comfort,
 Didn’t take you to communion.

The image of orphaned children appears in a draft of “The Russian Trianon” («Русский Трианон»); the fate of Akhmatova the mother and Akhmatova the poet, “the heiress” («наследница»), corresponds to the tragic fate of Tsarskoe Selo’s park in the 20th century: «О знал ли он, любимец двух столетий, / Как грозно третьим принят будет он. / Мне суждено запомнить этот сон, / Как помнят мать, осиротевши, дети / [«И парк безлюден, как Сибирский лес...»] (“O, did it know, the favorite of two centuries, / How terribly it would be treated by the third. / I was obliged to remember this dream, /

Like orphaned children remember their mother." ["And the park is deserted, like a Siberian forest"] [10, p. 424].²⁰

The dream, especially in combination with the "orphaned children," is an Annensian trait (see above in *Melanippe*: O, dreams, O, children..."), which can be traced back, incidentally, to Gumilev's inscription on the copy he gave to Annensky of *Пути конквистадоров* (*The Paths of the Conquistadors*): «...» Кто создал „Тихих Песен” нежный сон - / Творцу Лаодамии / от автора» («...» Who created the tender dream of the "Quiet Songs" - / To the creator of Laodamia/ from the author") [36, p. 272].²¹ Laodamia, the "Thessalian Lenora" («фессалийская Ленора») [10, p. 443], in our view, is referred to in Akhmatova's draft of "Wind of War" («Ветер войны»): "And there were no Lenoras, and no ballads, / The Tsarskoe Selo garden had been destroyed" («И нет Ленор, и нет баллад, / Погублен царскоесельский сад») [10, p. 407].

In descriptions of Akhmatova's childhood in Tsarskoe Selo the motifs of severity, of abandonment, and neglect are constant [11, II, p. 255]: "And there was no rosy childhood whatsoever..." («И никакого розового детства...»);²² they appear along with impressions of Tsarskoe Selo's palace park, from which, as if from "rubbish" («сор»), the poems of Tsarskoe Selo's Muse "grew" («вырастали») like "burdock and goosefoot" («лопухи и лебеда»). "The Ode to Tsarskoe Selo" reconstructed with exceptional force the atmosphere of the "vulgar, democratic" («мещанский, демократический») Tsarskoe Selo [18, p. 135], "the bedroom of Petersburg" [36, p. 273]. In the "Ode" the word "torpor" («одурь») is used ("the clouding of the mind, madness" («омрачение ума, помешательство») [16, II, p. 574]); it refers back to Annensky's work, where "torpor," "narcotic" («дурман») and a large lexicon of similar words correlate to the depiction of the "edge of existence" («грань бытия»), which compels the poet to suffer. Boredom, the melancholy of a colorless existence, and so forth oppress and torment him: "The Melancholy of the Train Station" («Тоска вокзала»), "The Melancholy of a White Stone" («Тоска белого камня»), "Dying" («Умирание»), "A Picture" («Картинка»), "Winter train" («Зимний поезд»), "Iambs" («Ямбы»). "Narcotic" can also refer in Annensky's works to the "poison of poetry" («отрава стихов»; from "Flies like thoughts" [Мухи как мысли] [2, II, p. 9; 44, pp. 58-59, 131, 147, 215]. Akhmatova encodes her version of Annensky's death in "Teacher" with the aid of the word "torpor" («одурь»): «Весь яд впитал, всю эту одурь выпил...» ("He absorbed all of the poison, drank in all of this torpor..."). ; Here, and in the "Ode," it com-

prises the moment of "a subsequent evaluation", («поздняя оценка») of those surroundings, from which Akhmatova's poetry "grew."²³

Akhmatova also inherited from the Teacher and profoundly developed acuity as an immanent quality of her poetics and as a theme of her works (cf. acmeism: *ακμή* meaning "the tip, the point" [«кончик, острие»]), which is (not lastly) linked to the motif of stinging, biting insects—in keeping with the spirit of Mandelstam's characterization of Akhmatova's poetry: «жало узкой осы приспособлено для переноса психологической пыльцы...» ("the stinger of a narrow wasp is adapted for the transfer of psychological pollen...") [30]. In the Bacchic drama one sees (for example, in Aeschylus) the myth of Io, whom «неотвязная оса наполняла бредом, отчаянием и неистовым желанием двигаться» ("a persistent wasp filled with delirium, despair, and the frenzied desire to move") [7, p. 8]. Io and Nymph's ancient "wasp-like" («осиный») madness in *Thamyris*,²⁴ at the level of Annensky's contemporary realia, corresponded to the aforementioned "torpor" (recalling, incidentally, such expressions as "deadly, crazed boredom," "you become stupid from boredom," "the boredom is such that it brings torpor" («скука смертная, бешеная; от скуки одуреешь; скука, инно одурь берет»)[16, IV, pp. 212-213]). One of its hypostases was "the sting of boredom" («жало скуки»), pain caused by a prick, directly or indirectly related to flies—see "Melancholy of the Train Station," "Melancholy," and "A Picture." Very significant is the poem "Flies like thoughts," which refers to Apukhtin's²⁵ "stinging" "Flies," and also possibly to the tormenting image of the "poisonous autumn fly" («ядовитая осенняя муха») in Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent* («Подросток») [2, IV, p. 20]. The "sharp" («острый») perception of life passed on to Akhmatova by the Teacher [30, p. 41] came from Dostoevsky: "Dostoevsky's prophet . . . is rather a dreamer and a martyr. . . to whom reality brings only painfully sharp pricks" («Пророк Достоевского. . . скорее сновидец и мученик. . . до которого действительность доходит лишь болезненно-острыми уколами») [9, p. 238; 2, II, p. 12].²⁶

NOTES

1. Throughout citations are indicated as in the original Russian version of the article. Numbers in italics refer to the list of REFERENCES following the notes. [Editors' note.]

2. See the programmatic "Poetry" («Поэзия») in *Quiet Songs* («Тихие песни») [7, p. 14].

3. Cf. also in regard to Christ: "He, having borne the sins of the world ..." («Тот, грехи подъявший мира ...») [8, p. 127].

4. That is, "Peace," the Italian inscription appearing at the statue's base. [Editors' note.]

5. Cf. the assertion by Annensky in his speech "Pushkin and Tsarskoe Selo" that the poet's eye "was trained in the calm and elegantly majestic contours of the Tsarskoe gardens" [9, p. 308].

6. The Russian here is given in Annensky's translation from the Greek. [Editors' note.]

7. Cf. the idea of «белый экстаз» ("white ecstasy") and its reflection in Annensky's lyric poetry: "Pace" et al. [13 ; 43, pp. 78-80].

8. Recall Admetus' words addressed to his father: «В тебе желанье жизни—это все» ("All that you desire is to live" [17, I, p. 80]).

9. Cf. "The desire to live," "On the threshold,"—in which Raskolnikov's words could reverberate: «Только бы жить, жить, и жить! Как бы ни жить, только бы жить!» ("Only to live, live and live! However to live, only to live!..." [2, IV, p. 32]).

10. Cf. [2, II, pp. 8-9] for this poem's Annensky reference: "friend autumn" etc.

11. Cf. [2, IV] on the motif of tears in Annensky, Euripides, and Akhmatova.

12. See Annensky's poem («Дети») ("Children"), which is filled with quotations from Dostoevsky, and also («Одуванчики») ("Dandelions"); for more details, see [2, I; IV]. On the motif of "dreams" in connection with Dostoevsky see below in the text.

13. See above; cf. the typical Tsarskoe Selo motif of the fountain in the description of this world—and Akhmatova's «Город чистых водометов» ("City of pure fountain:" [10, p. 102]).

14. ([10, p. 26]). Along with the images of Sophocles, note in the "Annensky" translation of "Phoenissae": «Ты веди меня, дитяtko, / Горького горемычная» ("You lead me, child, / The ill-fated leading the ill-

fated" [17, II, p. 248]) and also «О дочь моя, для старца слепца ты — опора...» ("O my daughter, you are the eyes and support for an old blind man ...") [17, II, p. 207]). We may also cite Akhmatova's lines «И печальная Муза моя, / Как слепую, водила меня» ("And my mournful Muse, / Led me as if I were blind") [10, p. 93], which recall Annensky's "portrait" of the Russian Muse: «...истинно наша муза это — ищущая дороги, слепая муза Тютчева, если не кликуша Достоевского» ("...this truly is our muse—*searching for a path, Tjutchev's blind muse, if not Dostoevsky's hysterical one*" [9, p. 398]). For more on this topic see [2, II, pp. 22-23].

15. Cf. in one of Annensky's critical studies the motifs of the phoenix, blindness and deafness in poetry [9, p. 244]; see [2, II, pp. 28-29].

16. Cf. the image of Nymph in the "Bacchic drama": "How many of us, cherished by the son of Chronos, have given birth to heroic sons. . . Achilles, Memnon, and Rhesus..." [8, p. 540].

17. Cf. Annensky's *Melanippe*, and also *Laodamia* in connection with the motif of "sweet redemption" ([8, p. 453], see also [2, III, p. 31]); of interest is "the maidenly heart" in "Clouds," see [2, IV, p. 18]).

18. Cf. the motif of friendship in *Alkestis* and also *Thamyris'* appeal to the "Cythara player," i.e. to Appollo, the friend of Admetus ([8, p. 547]. Note too «голос друга» ("the voice of a friend") in the finale of Akhmatova's «Все мне видится Павловск холмистый...» ("I can still see hilly Pavlovsk..." [2, I, pp. 25, 48]).

19. Zakharovo is the name of the estate, some thirty miles from Moscow, that belonged to Pushkin's grandmother; he spent his boyhood summers there. [Editors' note.]

20. Cf. her "Siberian earth" in "Поem" [10, p. 377]; see also [2, I, p. 46]).

21. Cf., in connection with "quietness" and tenderness, one other possible reference by Akhmatova to *Thamyris-Kitharodos*: «Спи, мой тихий, спи, мой мальчик, / я дурная мать» "Sleep, my quiet one, sleep, my little one, / I'm a bad mother" [10, p. 179]; cf. [2, I, p. 24].

22. Cf. Annensky's "rosy children" («розовые дети») [8, p. 71], and also his discussion of the "rosy early years of life" («розовые ранние годы жизни») — see above in the article on Pushkin.

23. See also [2, IV, pp. 42-43] on the semantic sphere of "torpor" in the later works of Akhmatova—the motifs of asphyxiation, stench, poison, and so forth; cf. the poems from "the burned notebook": «Обкорнили меня клеветой, / Опоили отравой меня»; «В душной изнывала я истоме, / Задыхалась в смраде и крови» ("They stuffed me with slander, / Poisoned me with their drink"; "In the stifling lassitude I languished, / I suffocated in the stench and blood,") et al.

24. Cf. the wasps in the "Second Sonnet for Piano" —along with the dance of the "maidens," which is associated with the dance of Plato's *Corymbantes* see *Ion*, p. 536 [2, III, p. 39].

25. A. N. Apukhtin, 1840-93, a lyric poet noted for the melancholy mood of his verse. His poem "Flies" begins with the line "Flies, like black thoughts, do not leave me in peace all day" («Мухи, как черные мысли, весь день не дают мне покою»). [Editors' note.]

26. Cf. "Needling Thoughts" («Мысли-Иглы») in Annensky and especially, "A lordly power is with us..." («Сила господняя с нами»): "I am tormented by dreams, dreams. . . they pricked my skin all over. . . They burned my eyes without a flame..." («Снами измучен я, снами...< . . . > Кожу они искололи. . . Выжгли без пламени очи...»)[8, pp. 183-184].

A most interesting textual echoing in Akhmatova has been recently described [27, p. 139]. Her lines

"I roam by the waves and conceal myself in the forest, I am sketched on the sky's pure enamel" («По волнам блуждаю и прячусь в лесу, / Мерещусь на чистой эмали»)

recall the scene of "The blue enamel" («Голубая эмаль») in the Bacchic drama, where it is precisely a question of the Nymph's twentieth century "waspy" («осиный») madness [«Приюта не имея, я металась...»] ("Having no shelter, I rushed about...") [8, p. 529]. One should also keep in mind Akhmatova's line "buzzes around me like a gadfly. . . This most boring argument / Of your black jealousy" («Надо мной жужжит, как овод. . . / Этот самый скучный довод / Черной ревности твоей» [10, p. 157]). Curious as well are the highly probable etymological links of the word "torpor" («одурь») with the Lithuanian *dūrti* "to prick," "to sting," and so forth [38, p. 392].

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