

Title: Vyacheslav Ivanov's Idea of Confession: The Relationship between Text and Memory in Infancy

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The goal of this paper is to examine the connection between two major themes in Vyacheslav Ivanov's autobiographical poem "Infancy: text and memory." As the prologue of the poem indicates, the right kind of memory is shaped by a correct attitude towards a text. In fact, to remember correctly is not only to read a text correctly but to produce a narrative of one's life, a confession. Naturally, not every text involves a confession; but a religious text encourages a person to recount the events of his life as if before God.

The father most vividly embodies the religious struggle between text and memory. At the outset of the poem he is an unbeliever whose lack of faith is symbolically described as a heap of freethinking books: "И грудю вольнодумных книг / Меж Богом и собой воздвиг" (XXIV). Although an atheist for most of his adult life, the father eventually returns to faith on his deathbed, when his mind no longer can resist the pressure of a Gospel text. However, the father's repentance is not limited to hearing a religious text but also finds expression in a personal narrative, or a confession: "Долгий час / За дверью слышались рыдания, / Перерывавшие рассказ" (XLIV).

While the spiritual journey of the father is significant in its own right, it also illuminates our understanding of Vyacheslav Ivanov's own religious experience, more specifically the way he understood the relationship between his faith and his literary art. In the poem, the father's return to faith is paralleled by the son's doubt and eventual disbelief foreshadowing a repetition of the father's spiritual journey in the son's life. Therefore, we can view the very act of writing "Infancy" as the poet's own act of remembrance, his confession.

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