

следит за нами вечная пропасть' ('from underneath the glass the eternal abyss watches us') (Belyi 1904a: 46) and in a poem of 1904 we read:

Полудень: стой—не оборвись,
 Когда слетит туманов лопасть,
 Когда обрывистая высь
 Разверзнет под тобою пропасть. (Belyi 1966: 279).

Balancing on the brink of a dark gulf, humanity is incapable of apprehending it or coming to terms with it, and the result is that 'хаос души сливается с хаосом жизни' ('the chaos of the soul merges with the chaos of life') (Belyi 1904c: 71). This statement reveals an important aspect of Belyi's view of the 'abyss': it is to be found both inside and outside man, it is the origin of both the world and the psyche; hence the metaphysical opposition of the two worlds is reflected on a personal level in the dichotomy of the 'I' and the 'Other'.

The most dramatic relationship of the 'I' and the 'Other' can be found in Belyi's *Bacchanalia*.² In this poem a noble dreamer, symbolized by the purity of the camellia³ ('цветами перевил/Его мечтательных камелий'⁴), is opposed to his demonic alter-ego ('и в окна хохотал/Из душного, ночного мрака'); and their tragic reunion is envisaged through the merciless destruction of the latter:

В подставленный сосуд вином
 Струились огненные росы,
 Как прободал ему жезлом
 Грудь жезлоносец длинноносый.

The poem opens with the hero's careful preparation for the evening:

И огненный хитон принес,
 И маску черную в кардонке.

 Бокалы осушал, молчал,
 Камелию в петлицу фрака
 Воткнул, и в окна хохотал
 Из душного, ночного мрака-

and the reader is immediately faced with a question: is the poet talking about himself or merely describing an unrelated character? The conjugation of the verbs creates a vagueness as to whether the narration is conducted in the first, second or third person. The poet is perhaps hinting in this case at the unity of the 'I', the 'You', and the 'He', as if the exact person concerned does not matter, since they are all part of one entity.