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Ways of Time Mythologizing in K.D. Balmont's Lyrics

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Abstract. Time for K. Balmont is not only a moment of experiencing a lyrical emotion in all the entirety of its unique circumstances and the means to express such an emotion, but also the subject of poietic reflection, which attains the form of temporal designations, or temporal units, in his poems and which gives insight into general approaches the poet applied to time as a source of poietic creativity. We conducted a study of archetypicity of the novel literature and its ability to embody the mythologic "content" in itself, and is aimed at elucidating the tools for mythologization of time in Balmont's poems as a reflection of the folk conscience which has impacted on the uniqueness of the author's poietic manner. Scientific novelty of this study is defined by focusing attention on temporal designations, or temporal units, as resource for artistic world-modelling based on the principles of mythologic and folkloric conscience. The main body of the article represents an analysis of how these temporal designations function in Balmont's poetic works: as realization of the sacral meaning of events or phenomena; as indication of the supernatural essence of an object; as mutual reversibility of the temporary and the eternal; as a cycle of all that happens in the world (*a round-dancing of time*); as metaphor of transience of life or, conversely, as an opportunity to "stretch out" time in order to fit long years into a single moment. The results suggested that Balmont considered time and temporal designations, or temporal units, as a way to reproduce

the laws of being in the form of poetic images bearing the signs of folk conscience in themselves.

Способы мифологизации времени в лирике К.Д. Бальмонта

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Аннотация. Время для К.Д. Бальмонта — не только момент переживания лирической эмоции во всей совокупности неповторимых обстоятельств и приемов ее передачи, но и предмет поэтической рефлексии, принявший вид темпоральных единиц. Мы провели исследование архетипичности новой литературы, ее способности воплощать мифологическое «содержание». Главная цель — изучить приемы мифологизации времени в стихотворных произведениях Бальмонта, показать, как в них отражается народное сознание, как народное творчество влияет на уникальность авторской поэтической манеры. В статье изучается, как у Бальмонта функционируют временные обозначения: реализация сакрального смысла событий или явлений; указание на сверхъестественную природу объекта; взаимообратимость временного и вечного; круговорот всего происходящего в мире («хороводность времен»); метафора быстротечности жизни или, наоборот, возможность «растянуть» время, чтобы в одно мгновенье вместить долгие годы. Полученные результаты показали, что Бальмонт рассматривал время, временные обозначения, темпоральные единицы как способ воспроизведения законов бытия в поэтических образах, несущих приметы народного сознания.

Ключевые слова: темпоральные единицы, миф, фольклор, архетип, народное сознание, метафора, амплификация

Introduction

Time as a way of organizing a work of art is a fundamental and extensive field of literary research, the relevance of which is determined by the countless embodiments of this essence in verbal artistic creation. The peculiarity of the realization of artistic time is associated with a particular genus and species tradition (Bakhtin, 1979, pp. 204—236; Likhachev, 1979, pp. 209—334), with the author's ideological and thematic priorities, his predilection for certain visual resources (Silman, 1977, pp. 14—27, 122—136; Vinogradov, 1980, pp. 210—214), with the historical, literary and cultural context of the writer's work (Malinskaya, 2022, pp. 9—21).

As was correctly noted, by the twentieth century in art, time acquires special significance both as a theme, as a principle of the work's construction, and as a category outside of which it is impossible to embody an artistic idea (Ivanov, 1974, p. 39). The peculiarity of the realization of time in K.D. Balmont's poetic works is determined by the fact that, in these works, time itself, as a category of being, becomes the subject of poetic reflection, acquiring the status of either the law of life, the "face" of nature, or the spiritual "measure" in the poet's assessment of the surrounding reality.

Artistic understanding of the surrounding reality with the help of temporal units or time periods was not new for Russian poetry in the era when Balmont lived and worked. Measuring the course of history by a century is a long tradition of Russian poets (Pushkin, 1949, pp. 378—379; Radishchev, 1938, pp. 127—129; Trediakovsky, 1963, p. 180). Hugo's *Legend of the Ages* has also taken its place in world spiritual culture as an attempt to describe the history of mankind from creation (*From Eve to Jesus*) to Beyond Time, giving minor conclusions about

this history (Govenko, 2009, p. 529). In the depths of the national consciousness, the "age-old" measure was also in demand (Songs collected by P.N. Rybnikov, 1861, p. 344). This includes the myth of the "golden age" of mankind (Mythological Dictionary, 1985, p. 63). The "golden age" as an embodied eschatological ideal, as an "ideal sacred order" (Gasparov, 1999, pp. 163–164), as the kingdom of goodness.

Century, centenary, millennium – this is the timekeeping that Balmont showed a steady interest in throughout his work. And it was obviously no coincidence that such large temporal units were applied to Balmont quite organically. M. Tsvetaeva, speaking about Balmont's creative indefatigability and calling him a lifelong worker, measured this quality of the poet with the same yardstick: "This is not fifty years... this is a hundred years of literary labor" (Tsvetaeva, 2000, pp. 327–328).

A. Blok also emphasizes: "Balmont began to sing under a meager 'northern sky' where there was 'vastness' – only waves, only air. And he plunged into such complete 'silence' in which the combined hum from centuries and peoples clearly reached his ears..." (Blok, 1980, p. 73). We dare to assume that the temporal unit "century" and other large time periods were not only a characteristic of the poet's broad nature, but also reflected his interest and sensitivity to the depths of the national idea of the world order, the laws of being, the transitory and eternal.

D.V. Abasheva, speaking about the folklore and mythological sources of M. Tsvetaeva's poetry, notes: "... close attention to the people and the manifestation of their creativity and spiritual culture permeated all areas of art and culture of this time" (Abasheva, 2016, p. 163). It seems that this can be fully attributed to Balmont, whose poetry represents the author's understanding of folk culture – at the level of images, motifs, genre associations, visual and expressive means of folklore and mythology.

The science of literature raises a question on to what extent the mythological and ritual meaning inherent in the folklore prototype remains relevant for the literary text using it and how can one prove or disprove the existence of such a semantic layer – indisputable for folklore – in a work of literature (Levinton, 1985, p. 38). It is noted that, in a literary work, mythologism can be created, in addition to a direct focus on myths, due to the polygenetic nature of the text, i.e. the combination of heterogeneous plots, motifs, tropes and other elements

drawn from various folklore sources is a kind of hypermythologism (Levinton, 1985, p. 39). And then literary processing gives rise to a new interpretation of these elements and becomes a focus that gives rise to a new meaning, which is mythological in nature.

The mythological character of Balmont's artistic thinking is largely determined by his concentration on various types of temporal designations, which outgrow their utilitarian significance and become a way to create a poetic image bearing the signs of popular consciousness. Just as the poet's fascination with numerical relations (Ivanov, 1974, p. 46) and numerical symbolism (Molchanova, 2001, p. 52, 53) creates the ground for numerical magic, the fascination with temporal units and time periods turns into a mythologization of time. The purpose of this article is to understand what are the techniques of mythologizing time in Balmont's poetic works and how this determines the uniqueness of the author's poetic manner in working with oral poetic sources.

Results and Discussion

The characteristic he gave to his lyrical hero in the poem *The Sorcerer* (*Birds in the Air*) is quite applicable to Balmont the poet: "... he left a lot of myths... / And he's far from us now, / but if there's a mystery, / We know he wasn't there by accident... He is here, we know, he hears us..." (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, p. 565). The 'myths' left by the Sorcerer are not a collection of stories, but a living source, they come to life when, as the poet says, 'the heart breathes', when the word about the world is realized in fate. Myth cannot be invented or invented: it is born through suffering (Virolainen, 1995, p. 332). Balmont led his lyrical hero through the 'suffering' of what is said about the world and what contains knowledge of the eternal laws of existence. And his fate shows an example of suffering as an attempt to understand the mystery of life — through love for all his relatives and a break with him after emigration. And an inescapable longing for what he had left behind forever.

A.N. Afanasyev, investigating the origin of the word "sorcerer", notes that it leads us to the concepts of higher, supernatural wisdom, foresight, poetic creativity, knowledge of sacred spells, sacrificial and cleansing rituals, the ability to perform divination, give omens and heal ailments (Afanasyev, 1983, pp. 377—378). The "sorcerer" and the "poet" thus converge on the basis of their supernatural nature, their ability to influence other people, and their ability to carry secret

knowledge. In the poem *The Sorceress* (*Only love*), the lyrical hero acquires the 'mystery of Good and Evil' through a love affair with a Sorceress, he becomes 'immortal', like the Sorceress, whose mythical nature is transmitted through a temporary designation − she lived "not for years, but always", she is "forever young", she has "a century in her pupils" (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, pp. 570−571). According to pagan beliefs, of the human body, as well as the soul, "contained supernatural power, especially the face, in which the elemental force penetrated through the eyes <...> As a ray of sunlight not only illuminates and has a beneficial effect on nature, but also produces infection, so the human gaze, like a ray of light ... could exert both a beneficent and a malevolent force" (Buslaev, 2003, pp. 28−29). The 'century' seen in Sorceress's pupils is the author's method of denoting the supernatural nature of the forces under which the hero fell, who acquired the 'mystery of Good and Evil'. The temporal unit 'century' in this case functions according to the laws of traditional consciousness, which shunned detailed analysis or description of the moral content of an object.

Supernatural origin in Balmont's works is also associated with a fairy tale, a fairy-tale world and is transmitted through time units: "We are thrown into a fairy-tale world, / By some mighty hand. / For three weeks? To the battle? To the feast? / I don't know. I'm always different. / I am burned every minute" (*We are thrown into a fairy-tale world... We will be like the sun*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 407). And the love fairy tale atualizes the magical and fabulous time, which, in essence, is 'eternal', 'combining all times': "I enchant time with a fairy tale, / I create stars in passion, / I am all spring when I sing, / I am a bright god when I kiss!" (*My dear... We will be like the sun*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 443). It is precisely due to uncertainty, due to the fact that the fairy tale is not attached to any of the historical epochs, that it turns out to be modern in all ... epochs[1]. For Balmont, 'to enchant time with a fairy tale' means to make 'a minute' an 'eternity', and vice versa.

The 'fairy-tale world' as a model of being is marked by a temporal unit in the poem *In different languages* (*Let's be like the sun*): "But I live. As in the fabulous ages, the Airy garden is full of fragrance. / The bee sings. My soul is rich. / We speak different languages" (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 415). Here, the 'fabulous ages' are both an allegory of long past

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[1] Neelov, E.M. (1989). *Natural philosophy of Russian fairy tales: A tutorial*. Petrozavodsk. (In Russ.)

times and a sense of the lyrical hero's life — life as a victory of the fragrant 'air garden' over the 'dead coast'. The 'ages' here carry not so much a temporary meaning as the meaning of the law of life as the victory of light over darkness, life over death. It would not be a big distortion to consider that the 'fabulous ages' in this poem by Balmont represent the author's version of the fabulous law of life — the victory of Good over Evil. And the wealth of the lyrical hero's soul ('my soul is rich') is a formula for the life and trials of a fairy tale hero, rolled up to lyrical emotion.

In many cases, Balmont's image of time is based on the cycle of everything that happens in the world, which can be seen as signs of an archaic concept of the world order, according to which any object and any action become real only when they imitate or repeat a certain archetype, which is considered by mythologists as the phenomenon of time cancellation through imitation of patterns and repetition of paradigmatic actions (Eliade, 1998, pp. 56, 58). Within this concept, 'mundane' time is abolished, and a person becomes, as it were, 'himself'. The poem *The Cycle* (*Evil Spells*) through time intervals represents the law of the world order as a repetition of once given — for nature and for man. Balmont's nature, as a rule, represents the world order, it is a particle of the sacred world order: it opposes time, becomes doubly real because of its infinitely long existence. A natural product, an object made by man, acquires its reality, its identity only to the extent that they are involved in transcendent reality (Eliade, 1998, pp. 13—16). In the poem *From the Forest to the Garden* (*Green Helicopter City*), Forest and Garden recreate circular motion as a law of the world order, which is marked by the temporal unit 'century'.

In the same row, the image of time in the poem *The Thirteenth* (*The Dance of Times*), where 'The Year' becomes the personification of the father, the parent of all months, who gave them 'knowledge of being in the whirl' with all its sacred signs: 'flowers', 'snows', 'stars', 'a rainbow-like arc'. The 'circularity' of the Year is the wisdom of the world order, and the 'circular recurrence' of the 'months is the real reality, since it stands at the foundation of the world (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, pp. 609—610). The rainbow here highlights the sacred range of objects, because its semicircular shape ... makes one see it as a ring embracing the earth, and the magnificent, brilliant colors with which the rainbow shines made one liken it to a precious headdress in which the deity of heaven dresses up (Afanasyev, 1983, p. 101). The same thing is in the poem *The*

Seven-color Bridge (*Birds in the Air*). Here, the rainbow is marked with the temporal designation "week" and it appears in the image of the bride of the month, and the months, 'marrying the weeks', make the 'round dance' of the Year: "Midnight of the Year! with new happiness! The New Year is coming!" The image of the rainbow, the bride of the month, can be considered as Balmont's interpretation of the traditional ideas of the seasons as 'the living embodiment of the elemental gods and goddesses who alternately descend from the heavenly heights to the earth and establish their dominion on it', resembling a wife, husband, which, in turn, goes back to the idea of the spring awakening of nature, as the marriage of the goddess of the Earth with the brightened Sky (Afanasyev, 1983, p. 430). The wedding, associated with the seasons, is reflected in ancient rituals that are attached to the death and rebirth of the year. They kill (drown, hang, throw from a cliff) the winter, the old year, and crown (marry, make kings) the new one – spring, summer (Freudenberg, 1998, p. 127).

O.M. Freudenberg ascribes primitive man's perception of the world as a 'circle' to a type of thinking that did not know formal logic – with the deduction of the effect from the cause: "The reason for one phenomenon lay for him in a related phenomenon. This created a chain of causes and effects in the form of a circle, a closed line, where each member of the series was both cause and effect. Such causality caused the perception of the environment as a changing immutability" (Freudenberg, 1998, p. 24). This also applies to time, which, according to the mythologist, was presented to primitive consciousness in the form of a space with its own segments; space was perceived by it in the form of a thing, we can talk about the primitive perception of time in the form of a thing (Freudenberg, 1998, pp. 25, 34).

This type of thinking is realized in the poem *Atoms of Time* (*Round Dance of Times*), where the cycle of return is brought to a new level – not of the Year, but of Time as an eternal return from 'facelessness' to 'face', from 'silence' to 'sounds', from 'cry' to 'Song'. The structure of the world order also takes the form of a circle – an 'all-round mouth' into which a person falls, like all 'snowflakes, cobwebs', in whose destinies the 'round dance of time' is embodied (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, pp. 636–637). The perception of time 'in the form of a thing' – a 'green Tree' that blooms 'all year round' – is presented in the poem *The Slavic Tree* (*Firebird*): "From willow to birch, from cherry to spruce, / The Green Tree blooms" (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, p. 240).

Circular recurrence as a principle of the world order is fixed by the regular use of the concept of 'time' in the plural — 'times', which emphasizes such a property of time in Balmont as homogeneity, indistinguishability in the main, in its original essence, set by the 'beginning of time': "At the beginning of time / Everywhere there was only the Sky and the Sea. / ... yes, the sky is bright / bottomless around them" (*At the beginning of time, The Firebird*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, p. 153). The event that defined the essence of all times, distinguished in detail, but united in the main thing, is the meeting in this poem of God, who sailed among the 'homeless', 'boundless' expanse, with the Devil, whom God took into his rook. This is the only essential 'Change' of the world since its creation, everything else is 'times' and there is a single law in them as long as the world stands: the endless struggle of these two. God fell asleep, and the Devil planned to push God off the boat: "So that he would fall into the Sea, so that the Lord would sink into the Abyss. / <...> And the Devil has been his enemy ever since" (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, p. 155).

In this series — 'on the other side of time' (*The verse about Onika the warrior, Firebird*), 'distant times' (*Volkh, Firebird*), 'at all times' (*The quiet Light, Green Helicopter*), 'the Dream of the times' (*Don't Forget, Green Helicopter City*), 'The Dream of the times' (*The Fly, Birds in the Air*), 'The Trend of the Times' (*The Snake Candle, Birds in the Air*). Balmont's 'temporality', even in its fleeting manifestations, beckons to 'Eternity': "Dresses in gold, glows scarlet" (*The Wedding of Water and Fire, Birds in the Air*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, p. 527).

Balmont's temporal segments often become a metaphor for inexhaustibility, eternal return, and the inability to break out of a vicious circle, which can also be considered a sign of an archaic consciousness that excluded the development of the world in time and correlated human life with the immutability of the laws of nature. Thus, in the poem *Ocean* (*In the vastness*), the lyrical hero comes to realize the futility of hoping to find the Promised Land through repeated and increasing time periods: "Wander for days, years, tens, hundreds of years, / You will not find the Promised Land anywhere" (Balmont, 1994, vol.1, p. 60). The desire to escape from this circle of wandering is equivalent to the desire to overcome time, but the inescapability of his condition is ensured by the very law of life, for which a natural object, the Ocean, is represented here, which, no matter how much it murmurs,

'rumbles', or 'worries', will remain unchanged − the murmur will be 'silenced'. The concept of the future is inseparable from the idea of irreversibility. The absolute repeatability and absolute reversibility of events deprive the past, present and future of real differences. What will be has already been, and what is, has already been and will still be; all potencies are realized, things and events do not arise in the proper sense of the word, but are only reproduced. The concept of development cannot be applied to such a world (Askin, 1974, p. 68). The nerve of Balmont's poem is in the thirst for the future, the passionate desire to overcome the present existence, to find something that has never been. But the time series 'days, years, tens, hundreds of years' is built as a movement without movement, as a return to the past, where there is no change, there is no Promised Land. In this case, temporal designations can be considered as a variant of the 'infinite' and 'immeasurable' as a general principle of Balmont's poetics: the promotion of the infinite and immeasurable as the initial principle, which is carried out through paradigmatic analogies-parallels, when the very integrity of the artistic image is determined by the attitude to infinity, because the paradigmatic series it can go on forever (Broitman, 1997, pp. 29, 215, 241, 243).

It is not uncommon for Balmont to use large temporal units as a way to depict the transience of life: "... like a single moment, thousands of years have passed" (*Fire, The Liturgy of Beauty*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 759); "Centuries will pass and they will seem like a moment" (*Irreparable, In the vastness*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 104). Or, on the contrary, as a way to 'stretch' time in order to reproduce the path of searching for the meaning of life: "...I probably lived not for years, but for centuries" (*War, not enmity, The Liturgy of Beauty*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 738); "Days, moments, like years − the years are slowly passing" (*Sadness, Under the Northern Sky*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 43) − as a creative act capable of accommodating many years of spiritual experience in one moment.

Balmont's mythologization of time is played by various cases of the use of redundant constructions (amplification) using temporal units in the form of 'piling up' equivalent expressions, 'strengthening' them with hyperbole, gradation, analogies and contrasts (Literary Encyclopedic Dictionary, 1987, p. 22). "This captivity will last for centuries" (*The Condemned, Let us be like the sun*) (Balmont, 1994, vol.1, p. 534); "From age to age − beauty" (*Obsession, Let us be like the*

sun) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 519); "Day after day, for year after year. / And year after year, always. / A star is shining in the evening. / And for us, for ages of ages, / There is no solution to the petals" (*Flower, Fairy tales*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, p. 34); "From age to age, / And before all ages" (*To the Sweet River, Green Vertograd*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, p. 363); "Through the centuries of centuries" (*Birds in the air*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, p. 532); "How many years, centuries, thousands of years, / I could not say – and why count?"(*The Emerald Bird, Birds in the air*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 2, p. 560); "Lord ... / Why did You give me an unearthly soul – / And chained me to the ground? / I am talking to You through the darkness of millennia / <...> And thousands of centuries are in vain, unanswered / My mournful cry: Why? Why?" (*Why, Under the northern sky*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 17). The use of such constructions invariably accompanies the poet's metaphysical searches in his quest to find an answer to key questions of the world order. And the depth of the search corresponds to the temporal measure of 'millions, myriads of endless centuries', to which the poet finds an incalculable temporal equivalent of Forever and Never: "We do not know where the new star of truth will be born. We are ruled by two curses: Forever and Never" (*Yes, I see... In the vastness*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 129). And the cosmic, universal scale of existence corresponds to the image of 'frightened centuries' rushing to their 'bitter end' (*Centuries of centuries will pass, Silence*) (Balmont, 1994, vol. 1, p. 185).

Conclusion

Balmont's mythologization of time is largely determined by how time intervals and temporal units, function in his poems: as the realization of the sacred meaning of events and phenomena; as an indication of the supernatural nature of an object; as the interchangeability of time and eternal; as the cycle of everything happening in the world; as a metaphor for the transience of life or, on the contrary, as an opportunity to 'stretch' time in order to accommodate many years in an instant. Balmont's mythologization of time is also connected with the high demand for the amplification technique, which allows the poet, as a mythical giant, to 'walk' widely – through years, centuries, millennia, forcing him to see the signs of an archaic consciousness appealing to the forces tested by these years, centuries and millennia, that is, the forces of nature and the forces of tradition.

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