

THE NATIONAL IMAGE OF THE WORLD IN POETICS OF K.D. BALMONT AND S.A. YESENIN: THE URBAN SPACE AND INDIAN COSMOS

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The article considers the usage of the national elements in the poetry of K.D. Balmont, through the prism of the urban text. A lot of researches had been devoted to this issue, but scientists mainly appealed to the poems in which the image of the city had been evident, and came to the fore. However, in the work of the symbolist, the image of the city turned out to be closely connected with different countries and cultural traditions of India and Japan. Urban space is conditioned by national peculiarities; it is revealed through the national image of the world. In addition, the poet described the city not only from historical and ethnographic positions, but also from the standpoint of metaphysics. In this article, the considerable attention is paid to the mythology and archetypes in Balmont's poetry. The Indian text, manifested in the poetics of the symbolist, is compared with the provisions from the treatise "The Keys of Mary" by S.A. Yesenin. The new-peasant poet also consciously had turned to the ancient Indian mythology and philosophy, in which he saw the confirmation of his ideas about an eternal life of the soul and its unity with the global space. The typological method allows including the poetry of Balmont and Esenin's philosophical search in the world cultural context, that deepens the meanings of the images in their poetics.

Keywords: K.D. Balmont, S.A. Yesenin, Indian mythology and philosophy, urban space.

INTRODUCTION

The Russian literature is inherently sensitive to other cultural and literary codes. This was especially noticed by V.V. Kozhinov, when he wrote about Pushkin's "Monument." According to the scientist, the Russian philology, is a tense, heartfelt dialogue, "in which the extremely distant voices can equally participate" (Kozhinov, 1991).

Reflecting on the problems of Russian literature and national consciousness correlation, concluded, by the way, in the multinationalism and polyphony, the researcher also analyzed the Old Russian literature artifacts, noticing there had been a mixture of pagan, Christian, different cultures, that finally had formed a fertile ground for Russian language and literature.

One of such texts in our literature is the "Indian text", which has not been under certain attention in literary criticism, although a separate dissertation "The image of India in Russian literature" by E.V. Fiskovets (2011), had been devoted to this problem.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The work analyzes the corpus of the Russian literature texts (from “The Journey over Three Seas” by Afanasii Nikitin to the story of V. Astafiev “India”) in the context of the Indian theme. In this dissertation the author had turned to the poetry of the Silver Age and to the poetics of K.D. Balmont and N. Gumilev, but, in our opinion, the poetry of the first-mentioned should be considered in the light of his urban and national searches, the poet’s desire for travel and the recreation of different images and faces of eastern countries and cities.

In addition, the name of S.A. Esenin (1918), who wrote about Indian mythology and philosophy in the treatise “The Keys of Mary” is hardly mentioned in the research.

Thus, there is a need for additional comments towards the poetic texts of Balmont, which addresses the national issues of other countries. The purpose of this article is to clarify the realities associated with the codes of other cultures (particularly Japan and India), in the poems of the symbolist 1900-1910’s and to reveal the significance of Indian mythology of the new peasant poet. The methodology of our research assumes the use of historical-functional, historical-genetic and system-typological methods of analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Referring to Balmont’s poems about the city (1900s) it should be noted that the non-calendar beginning of the XX century had been a very tense time, when in Russia had grown an expectation of global changes, the foresight of revolutions and social and public dissatisfaction.

At the same time, the man had been on the verge of great cultural and scientific achievements (discoveries of Freud, Einstein and etc.) that had change the usual positivist view of the world.

For those reasons, there had appeared a truly new image of the city - not only the poetized ancient one, but also the city of the present, the city having being belonged to the coming capitalist civilization. But such an unfree civilization, which had been denied by the poet, had hadn’t been accepted by him internally. Therefore, the urbanism had been showed there with a minus sign, in all the colors of contradictions.

Thus, in the poem “In the Houses” (1902), included to “Let Us Be Like the Sun” (1903) album, we shall meet such a romantic depiction of gloomy houses: “In the painfully close crowd of houses,” “locked in their tombs, “In the cells.”

This is a new city, the city of civilization, which causes confusion and rejection, where people have forgotten about creativity, even have renounced it, which had made their lives boring with them poor in spirit:

In the excruciatingly cramped masses of houses
 Ugly pale people live,
 Bound with the memory of faded words,
 Having forgotten the creative miracle. (Bal'mont, 1908b).

The Bottom line of the poem is that such life is compared to the execution:

I cursed you, people. Live in the darkness.
 Yearn in a hasteless prudent fear.
 Get pale in your tormenting houses.
 You pass from one execution to another! (Bal'mont, 1908b).

In the poem "The Cities of Silence" (1903), which was included to the album "Let's be like the sun" (1903), the author had been already given some generalizing image of a silent city, where shadow people dwell.

At the same time the poet had drawn not one city, but silent cities. Especially important was the fact that the city specific had been dissolved in the pictures of obscure, faded landscapes, shrouded in ignorance and sleep:

There all live and feel in a dream,
 They stand, they sit with their eyes closed,
 Pass in the boundless silence. (Bal'mont, 1908b).

In addition, the semiotics of the "closed eyes", the "silent voices" referred to the topos of the next world, since the heroes and objects of a different world were a priori different: everything was either inverted or injurious (Nekljudov), and that was the "two-nature of the world".

In that poem the city had been clearly associated with a different realm:

Everything is constrained in a frozen mist realm,
 Buildings were built in a sad tale,
 As the trap - their dark corners. (Bal'mont, 1908b).

Motives of silence and lifelessness, calmness as a sign of lifelessness, unrealities had been played out in "the Cities of Silence" poem. Such was the end of the poem:

Extinguished. An awakening had been removed.
 Having closed its eyes forever,
 People-ghosts Pass silently
 In a country where dumb cities sleep. (Bal'mont, 1908b).

The silent lifeless cities expressed a sharp denial of the modern city and an urban negation by the poet.

In the poem "Beautiful streets with the crowd", included in the album "Only Love" (1903), there had been used a new motive - the motive of love. There were given the image of a woman who gave life to all, and awakened the lyrical soul:

Beautiful blue dusk,
 But how beautiful - in a bright hour
 To see closely before you
 Pupils of the enamored female eyes. (Bal'mont, 1913).

The poem, of course, is not strictly urban, but it is interesting with the fact that the streets of the city, even the festive ones ("magical festive attire") are contrasted with the intimate moods arising from the appearance of a woman.

She is the symbol of revival, spring:

Well, having finished a brave fight,
 To revel in Bliss silence.
 But how beautiful it is to be - entreaty,
 Be a cry of passion and spring. (Bal'mont, 1913).

These, in our view, manifest the latent opposition of the city, the public start to the personal and natural, passionate and life-giving.

In the poem "The City of the Golden Gates", included to the album "Liturgy of Beauty" (1905), appears the image of a fairy-tale city. The text is interesting because of its image of motion; it describes not just a magical ancient city, but the story of his miraculous birth:

Virgo-Water, that, conceived from the rays of Fire,
 Remains eternally light, keeping virginity.
 Children of Passion knew this, building the City of Water,
 Erecting slender Golden Gate City. (Bal'mont, 1911).

In this lies the hierophany of the city, its sacred protective function for the tenants:

That is why the Children of the Sun, in their triumph,
 Every temple and house had crowned with a tower of pride.
 Because their name is gold and steel,
 The proud name of Atlant - Toltec, Rmoagal.
 Without turning life into weekdays, loving the world, they
 filled the days with bright colors and hot feelings. (Bal'mont, 1911).

It is also important that the people of that city were not philistines, the people of civilization (in the usual sense of the word). They did not turn their lives into everyday life, they did not degrade gold to coins.

The special people and the special city that has already gone to the mythological area that seem to be the author's certain ideal, the absolute of spirituality, are described here.

In the poem "The City" (1912), included in "Birds in the Air" album (1912), there is already another intonation. At the first glance, the city is described as the miraculous, the mysterious and the inaccessible one to the common man:

How many doors are in town? Have you thought about this?
 How many windows in the height of the night snakes light!

How many buildings there are other, serious, somber, inflexible,
One-door hulks, blinded and unframed (Bal'mont, 1912).

At the same time, we might say it describes the environment in which the belongings, buildings, floors and doors hostile come together into the whole image of rebellion against bourgeois spirit of things, converting houses into coffins for human and sacrificing living hearts:

Because you're alone. Because the stones are breathing.
The behind-the-door-hearts are stony and do not hear.
Turn around a key in the hole - knock - you'll see clearly,
How a person could be hopelessly indifferent (Bal'mont, 1912).

The heart of a man in such a city is deaf and dumb; this is no longer the wonderful city of Atlantis, but the modern city, although the poem begins enough slyly, with the image of snaking light windows.

The motif of strangulation, even death, which points the city as a different realm, pernicious to man, manifests itself here again:

The walls make chronicles, and narrate about hinges.
Windows are Devils eyes.
Thy are waiting to the night.
They are conjuring (Bal'mont, 1912).

So, the city in this poem is painted in an apocalyptic perspective: houses, doors, walls - everything presses and devours a person. We have already met such intonation in the poem "In the Deaf Days". Hence, the poet himself has a different attitude to the city topos - he may be ancient, miraculous, saving, and can turn into a prison, a terrible tower, and finally, into a coffin for a person.

Apocalyptic, gloomy moods towards the urban space have become changed, when the poet begins to write poems about Japan. Balmont knew enough about this country even before the trip there, which, in fact, is symptomatic for him. The poet was always fascinated by the East and presented "the Japanese", "the Indian" and "Egyptian" texts to the Russian poetry of the 20th century beginning. Thus, in the poem of 1916, "To Japan" Balmont revealed a subtle cultural and poetic flair:

I love your blue sky,
And the cherry tree at the time of bloom,
Your spring is as bright as summer,
The carving of everything is a patterned dream (Azadovskiy & D'yakonova, 1991).

The cultural flair of the poet considers not only that Japan is a country of Light (this is a well-known fact), but that the blossoming cherry had become the symbol of the ancient culture and its spiritual forces.

The "blooming cherry tree" is one of the cultural dominants in Japanese poetry:

“What a ridiculous
Life », - thought I, stopping near
the blossoming cherry (Base, 1999).

In addition, the symbol of blossoming cherry is also relevant for Russian literature, not only the poetry, but the prose too, for example white cherry blossoms disturbed the soul of boy Egorushka “Steppe” (Galieva, 2010) by A.P. Chekhov (K. Reho (1987) wrote in detail about the connections of the Russian classic with Japanese culture).

India and its rich culture took a prominent place in the artistic heritage of Balmont. Those had been reflected in his poetry, translations of Hindu philosophy monuments, correspondence with V. Bryusov, and in the study of special literature.

While staying in England, Balmont was fond of Theosophy. He attentively have read a book of E. Blavatskaya “The Voice of the Silence”, in which the Indian material (Bhagavad Gita, Buddhist texts, etc.) was widely presented. In the album “Let’s Be Like the Sun” (1903), which was highly appreciated by A. Blok and V. Bryusov, Balmont justified his enthusiasm about India:

I fell in love with Indians because,
The countless buildings are is in their words,
They grow out of a bright affliction,
Piercing the depths of the centuries, changing the darkness.(Bal’mont, 1908b).

Here again the poet addresses the theme of the eternal word, the Logos: he paid attention to the principles of the tank in the “Japanese verses”, he had been attracted by the eternal word of Indian culture, giving the way out of the rebirth darkness.

It should be noted that the poem “Lonely” had been included to the cycle dedicated to D.S. Merezhkovsky, who had already wrote his famous poems “Nirvana” and “Buddha.”

Probably, Balmont’s text can be considered a certain answer to the famous poet (Bongard-Levin, 1990; 2010). However, the poet did not limit himself to several poems, India inspired him to create a whole cycle called “Indian herbs.” The complexity of Indian philosophy was expressed in the poem “As a Spider”:

So from the Eternal comes the world -
The multiplicity and unity of being.
The world is one, but in this world there are always two: -
He is - the Immobile, He is - the Unwilling, is I am too. (Bal’mont, 1908a).

The ambivalent nature of the Indian cosmos, the national image, lies in the polysyllabic oneness of existence, in which man must find his own self and at the same instant to renounce his “I” in order to feel his connection with the world atman (soul).

An artist, likened to a spider, the custodian of a web, that is, of a complex whole universe in himself, is called to help realize this being:

As a spider in itself gives birth to a web,
 And, heavy, creates the airiness of threads, -
 As an artist creates his own picture,
 Fixing fleeting events. (Bal'mont, 1908a).

However, India's cosmos is mostly expressed in the poem "From the Upanishads"; the poet is not just representing a double-natural position of man, but gives the reader to feel the essence of the man of the East worldview:

Striving to achieve all incomprehensible;
 It looks at the rapid current of visions,
 Like the air - hugging everything around,
 And spilling out the life force.
 Motionlessly moves everything; far and close;
 It is inside the universe forever. (Bal'mont, 1908a).

G.D. Gachev (1993) rightly notes that "The whole cosmos of India is fluid, haze, wave nature"; Balmont had emphasized the vital force had been poured around in the poem too.

So, the poet has subtly noted the main not ethnographic, as in the case of Japan, but philosophical and Cosmovision components of Indian culture, which had been manifested in the cycle "Indian herbs", being opened by epigraphs that orient the reader to the Indian philosophical tradition.

The first is "That is you" (Founding of Indian wisdom), the second - "The learned entity has become above sadness" (from the utterances of Sri Sankara-Agariya - the Indian philosopher and reformer). This is the ideological theme of the cycle, which can be designated as "know yourself in the Absolute and join the Great."

The Russian poet discovered to himself the world of the East through Japan and India, and also he introduced to the reader the world of antiquity and metaphysics, but not the urbanism and positivism.

In ancient Indian mythology, the salvation from every day and mediocre was not only wised up by the symbolist Balmont, but also by S. Esenin.

In his philosophical treatise "The Keys of Mary" (1918), the poet meditated about folk art, Russian embroidery, carvings of houses, skates and roosters on the roofs, denoting those as sacred ornaments: "The fact that music and the epic were born together through the sign of the tree, makes us to conclude those was not an accidental fact of a mythical statement, but the rigorous measurement of our distant ancestors. The evidence of this is our unexplained and unraveled household decoration" (Esenin, 1997). Through such everyday signs and household items people answered philosophical questions about their origin and the purpose on the Earth: "And, being unwinding the ball of movements on earth, having find a name for any subject and position, having learned to defend himself against any offensive phenomenon, he had resolved by the same means to reconcile himself with the

disobedience of the elements and the irresponsibility of space. The reconciliation was that everywhere he did so-called arrangement that was clear to his understanding. The sun, for example, resembled a wheel, a calf and many other positions, clouds exploded like wolves, etc.» (Esenin, 1997). For the persuasiveness of his propositions Yesenin addresses various cultural world mythological traditions. The poet is especially attracted by the mythological structure of the Indian cosmos: “India in the Vedas through Brahman affirms the same as Daniel Zatocnik: “The body is made of veins, like a tree of roots. The juice and blood leakage through them, like the memory of water”. As a younger tribe in the development of spiritual values, we could be seemed to the inexperienced eye the talented mappers of those roads that have been explored before us. But it will be just the blindness of the inexperienced eye (Esenin, 1997). The poet asserts, through an appeal to the myth of the universe device, that everything in the world is not accidental, that man exists in several dimensions. By the subtle observation of E.A. Samodelova (2006), “Esenin believes the genesis of the body of the first person from natural realities to be quite possible, and in every national culture there are specific features of the origin of corporeality, originally took from different initial materials”. The world culture and mythology has retained those ideas about the life of men, that is important for the poet: “First of all, any mythology, whether it is the mythology of the Egyptians, the Babylonians, Jews or Indians, carries in its womb the creation of a certain idea” (Samodelova, 2006).

Embroidery, ornamentation, and the construction of a log hut have made rooted man in the world’s existential space. In addition, Esenin approaches those subjects from the pagan side and refers to the theory of reincarnation, the transmigration of souls: “The confluence knot between the afterworld and the visible world is a hidden belief in the transmigration of the soul. Nothing is given without sacrifice. You will not know a secret without a message to death”. (Samodelova, 2006).

Such ambivalence of the surrounding space, the combination of everyday and cosmic, the ability to see the world soul through the details of everyday life (the ornament of Esenin), is consonant with Balmont’s search for his India in the poem “Like a Spider,” where a person comprehends “the multisyllabity and unity of being”.

CONCLUSION

The first, Balmont’s appealing to the urban theme in his poetry allows us to see a complex relationship of the poet to the city and its manifestations, yet modern city it is alien to a person being, it fetters his soul and does not give to be free; the second, an interest in other cultures, oriental themes, Japanese and Indian, shows the significance of all the ancient, eternal in world cultures for the poet. The deep philosophy of India attracts a symbolist, because it helps a person overcomes his physical origin and dual nature. Yesenin described in his treatise “The Keys of

Mary” the similar ideas about the world, from the standpoint of peasant life and Russian reality. The poet also had addressed the mythology of India, the Vedas. The typology of cultures is extremely important for him, since it confirms his theses about the unity of everyday and metaphysical, about the need to study the things around us, which conceal in themselves an incomprehensible, from the point of view of profane reality, world meaning.

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