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BAL'MONT--POET OF THE EXISTENTIAL VOID

The literary reputation of Konstantin Bal'mont rests on his ability to play with sound, his experimentation with poetic form, his adaptation of certain French Symbolist techniques to Russian poetry, his consciousness of alliteration and assonance. In short, he is known primarily for his stylistic concerns and for his lighthearted tone. It is that much more surprising, therefore, to read Bal'mont works that contradict the image of the singer of mellifluous melodies. In verse after verse, the poet attempted to resolve the fundamental questions posed by the mysteries of life. And in verse after verse, the answers thrown back at him were filled with hopelessness: forget about your dreams--there is no hope--you will never find the Promised Land:¹ there is one blessing--the quiet of death ("V ètoj Žizni," *Stix.*, p. 100). One of Bal'mont's poems is a sonnet about a scorpion for whom there is no out but death ("Skorpion," *Stix.*, pp. 153-154). In "Poèzija užasa," an essay about Goya, the poet expressed his admiration for artists with the ability to concentrate on the "...вопли отчаянья [которые] вырываются из души. Вместо нежнейшей сладости 'Gloria in excelsis' слышатся стоны Шуманского 'Manfreda' и, полная криков, музыка Вагнера."² An autobiographical sketch contains the information that Bal'mont valued *Brat'ja Karamazovy* more highly than any other book.³ One night, after reading Tolstoj's *Krejšcerova sonata*, Bal'mont attempted to commit suicide by throwing himself out of a third story window (*Stix.*, p. 19).

Does this description bear any resemblance to Bal'mont, bard of the delicate butterfly and of pastel sunsets? How, in fact, are we to reconcile the Bal'mont I have described here with the Bal'mont set forth in standard handbooks of Russian literature? My task here will be to rescue Bal'mont's image from cliché-ridden labels which have passed from generation to generation--by word of mouth in survey of literature courses and by the printed word in standard handbooks. Let me say at the outset that my analysis will not be chronological. Although I discuss separate phases of the poet's ideas, these are stages in thought and not in time. A pattern emerges after a consideration of his мировоззрение throughout his career. However, he seemed to be recycling the same thematic ingredients all through his life.

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Criticism has dealt unfairly with Bal'mont. Literary scholars have acknowledged important stylistic characteristics of Blok's poetry, but they have at the same time paid due respect, whether or not they agreed, to the content of his ideas. What student of Russian literature has not read about Blok's transition from the Divine Sophia of the "Prekrasnaja dama" period to that of the Carmen prostitutes in city taverns? By the same token, we should welcome insights into Bal'mont's technique as poetic craftsman, but we should not, in turning to the "how" of his poetry, blind ourselves to the equally illuminating "what."

Vladimir Markov has already challenged the opinions of critics who quickly dismiss anything Bal'mont wrote after 1905 as poems of inferior quality.⁴ Markov has done an admirable job in advancing the cause of the post-1905 works and in so doing, has taken an important first step in dispelling the Bal'mont myth. However, even Markov, by concentrating to a large extent on the poet's style, has failed to enlarge upon areas of Bal'montiana which must not under any circumstance be ignored.

Markov does not stand alone in the oversight. One has merely to thumb through Mirsky's *A History of Russian Literature*, Poggioli's *The Poets of Russia 1890-1930*, or Orlov's introductory essay to the *Biblioteka poeta* edition of Bal'mont's works to ascertain the degree to which Bal'mont has been shoved into the pigeonhole of "musicalness."⁵ A paragraph here and there seems to them sufficient to deal with other approaches to the poet; their main thrust remains on his "music," though.

This view fits in neatly with the commonly held but equally fallacious division of the Russian Symbolists into the art-for-art's-sake aesthetes (Bal'mont, Brjusov) and the metaphysically oriented theurgists (Blok, Ivanov, Belyj). We read, for example, that as distinct from the aesthetes, the theurgists "... wanted to make symbolism, above all, a metaphysical and mystical philosophy, and poetry subservient to the higher ends of 'theurgy.'⁶ In actual fact, it makes much more sense to think of all the Symbolists as members of the latter category. They were all searching desperately for some haven of permanence in the unstable world of the turn of the century. For Bal'mont and Brjusov, art was the God who filled the void. Brjusov's "Pompejanka," to cite one instance, describes two Pompeian lovers who were buried by the Vesuvian lava as they clasped each other. A moment of life is forever frozen into the permanent form of a sculpture because of the creative act (here, lava). Thus, for Brjusov (and for Bal'mont, as we shall see later) art is the religion that rescues the rapidly passing moment from instant death. Such an attitude is hardly *l'art pour l'art*. Unfortunately, the false aesthetics/theurgy distinction has certainly not contributed to a many-faceted approach to Bal'mont; to the con-

trary, it, too, has served to keep literary criticism of the poet within the narrow confines of formal analysis. No one will deny that sound play and melody are integral parts of Bal'mont's contribution to Russian poetry. But to stop at this point is to leave much unsaid.

For example, what we are often confronted with in Bal'mont is a poetic statement of the plight of twentieth-century man who, without a god, was thrown in upon himself. The feeling Bal'mont's poetry captures is that whatever man himself might be able to create would perhaps serve as a firm rock, but that on the whole, man was isolated and after all, only a transitory phenomenon. Thus, the reader of Bal'mont's poetry can settle down and watch the maestro magician set up one scene after another, only to make them vanish with a flick of the magic wand. "Nothing is permanent" is the hidden message embedded in poem after poem. Bal'mont speaks of the ephemeral quality both of dreams and images as they flash through his mind and of the transitoriness of his memory of the images. His use of the image of summer lightning to describe this phenomenon is indeed appropriate ("Zarnica," *Stix.*, p. 79).

Bal'mont is a master at capturing the evanescent instant while simultaneously denying it a permanent place in existence. The fact that he chooses August as the subject of a sonnet ("Avgust") implies a concern with change as well as with dying. After all, August hints at an end to the summer's blossoms; it portends the death of leaves. In the first two lines, Bal'mont underscores the temporary as he describes August's consciousness of the "...миголетность красоты" (*Stix.*, p. 86). Everything is changing; nothing stands still; everything is moving... Leaves have turned yellow, ripening stalks are standing in splendor for the last time before meeting the fate of the sickle... Flowers have given way to fruits, and a flock of cranes in flight overhead bids farewell to native places.

Over and over again Bal'mont plays his now-you-see-it-now-you-don't trick. He writes about a dying swan sobbing because it cannot bring back the past ("Lebed'," *Stix.*, pp. 98-99); about raindrops that will go along their present path only once, never to return ("Cet i necet," *Stix.*, p. 195); about flowers, dances, and people whose lives are but momentary ("Maskirovannyj bal," *Stix.*, p. 288).

Orlov makes a cogent case for referring to Bal'mont's "... творческая манера" as impressionism (*Stix.*, p. 44). He discusses the common bond of the philosophy of the moment so important to the French Impressionists and to the Russian poet. Although Orlov makes it clear that he is discussing only the stylistic features which the Impressionists and Bal'mont shared (*Stix.*, p. 45), he does not mention an important difference which must be examined. One has only to look at the smiling

faces of Renoir *jeunes filles* or at the sparkling green grass of a Monet garden to conclude that the French Impressionists were conveying a *joie de vivre* in the moment.⁷ The world around them was changing with ever increasing rapidity, and the Impressionists were responding in a *positive* way to the changes. Bal'mont also focused on the evanescence of the moment, but with an undercurrent of the negative connotations that rapid change entailed. Once a moment is gone he says, it has vanished forever and ever, and nothing anyone can do will bring it back. Man cannot count on comfort from anyone in his distressing situation. Lost and alone, Bal'mont cries out in heart-rending tones, "Чего хочу я?" to which he offers the bleak response, "Смерти одной/Я дух бесстрастный, дух бесприютный." ⁸ The word for "homeless, shelterless" ("бесприютный") will not be unfamiliar to the avid reader of Bal'mont's verses. The fact of its frequent occurrence--one of his sonnets is even called "Бесприютность" (*Stix.*, p. 99)--serves as a convenient beacon lighting up the way toward an important concern in his poetic world, for he frequently focuses on his isolation from other human beings. Assuming the role of "бродяга," he writes, "Есть люди, присужденные к скитаньям,/Где б ни был я, - Я всем чужой, всегда" ("Razluka," *Stix.*, p. 180). If not mourning directly about his woeful condition, Bal'mont drives home the same point in an oblique manner--by reference to other people, animals, or even inanimate objects. In the first stanza of the 1916 cycle of poems entitled "Lermontov," he paints a vivid portrait of Lermontov as an angel banished from heaven, as a demon who has stopped loving hell, as a brother of homeless ("бездомных") winds and storms (*Stix.*, p. 422). The wind itself tells its own grim story in the poem "Veter" (*Stix.*, p. 101). Dissatisfied with life in the present, it lives "в бегстве неустанном" as it attempts to chase the elusive shadows of nature's movements. Bal'mont's vision of a seagull is that of "бесприютная чайка из дальней страны," who flies over the cold depths of the sea with wistful cries. "Чайка, серая чайка с печальными криками носится/Над холодной пучиной морской" ("Сайка," *Stix.*, p. 443). The image itself of the lone bird, hovering as it does between earth and sky, emphasizes still more poignantly a state of isolation. An unattached spark becomes the center of interest of another lyric devoted to the same topic. The epigraph to the poem characterizes sparks as having fallen away from the Great Source and while falling, as having lighted up with a false light. Bal'mont skillfully sets his words to a playful, if not singsong iambic trimeter, generously sprinkled with pyrrhics. In the course of the swaying

motion, the reader learns that the narrator is eager for estrangement from his sacred native land and that he is a spark who, for no reason he can fathom, has recoiled from his sun and has forgotten God ("Iskry," *Stix.*, pp. 117-119).

Bal'mont's imaginative world is not limited to homeless wanderers; it is also filled with objects which are in places where they do not ordinarily belong. Underwater plants grow and multiply, yet they are far from the sun's lifegiving rays (*Stix.*, p. 96). Most animals flourish above the earth's surface. The mole, a creature that Bal'mont describes, feels comfortable only in the underground labyrinths of night and darkness.⁹ Amidst the rot and mold a silvery stream glows at the bottom of a well ("Kolodec," ["Ja pripomnil slova, čto prisnilis' mečte"], *Polnoe*, IV, 119-120).

The human being does not fare well when he is separated from his natural surroundings. Bal'mont feels a strong sense of isolation in his role as émigré in Paris. His poem "Ona" is a song of praise to Russia. The last stanza is especially noteworthy in this respect: "И все пройдя пути морские,/И все земные царства дней,/Я слово не найду нежней,/ Чем имя звучное: Россия" (*Stix.*, p. 443). He ends one poem with the words, "Одно лишь слово нужно мне: Москва" ("Тол'ко," *Stix.*, pp. 441-442). Incidentally, this poem serves as the epigraph to *Gde moj dom*, a 1924 collection of essays. Even the title of the collection attests to the physical isolation which penetrates his entire being as he must resign himself to his lot as a stranger in a foreign land. What a pathetic voice is heard in the three *Gde moj dom* sketches devoted to the poet's separation from Russia: "Zavtra,"¹⁰ where he notes the first anniversary of his emigration; "Bez rusla,"¹¹ where he describes the torment of being an outsider to the throbbings of Parisian life; the essay "Gde moj dom,"¹² a nostalgic vignette where he implies that despite people's sufferings during the Moscow famine, real human warmth and contact were possible.

One could, of course, contend that Bal'mont's physical separation from his homeland precipitated his preoccupation with the homeless and unattached. I would maintain that this interpretation would not be correct. It is rather a case of the reverse. The emigration theme fits very neatly into the pattern of thought which Bal'mont had been weaving all along. The unattached, the isolated, the homeless, were all themes which came up over and over again throughout Bal'mont's career. He was just keenly attuned to the philosophical sound waves of his age.

Bal'mont did a magnificent job of recording the agonizing thoughts of the modern soul as it experienced the hapless consequences of physical and metaphysical isolation. Loneliness was near the top of the list in this respect. And he composed work after work in which loneliness occupies a key position. His review of Maeterlinck's *oeuvre* amounts to a guided tour through

the nooks and crannies of the contemporary *condition humaine*. Like spiders, Bal'mont says, we engage in endless searches, we spread our delicate webs in all directions, up and down, in order to gain a foothold. But there is no foothold anywhere, he continues.

"Всюду пропасть, всюду срыв, всюду скользкая стена, из которой нельзя укрепиться, пустота, темная, черная, мутно-холодная."¹³ No comfort can be found from turning to other human beings, for in Bal'mont's view, there is no joining of souls. "Одиноким человеком рождается, одиноко он умирает."¹⁴ As a way out of his miserable solitude, the narrator of "Pogibšij" cries out to nature for help. The moon and stars do not pay attention and the Wind's only reply is a thrice-repeated message: "Ты один - один - один" (*Polnoe*, I, 121). Bal'mont constructs a truly tragic scene in his poem "L'diny;" here, the narrator, totally alone on a block of ice, hears no kindred voices (*Polnoe*, III, 24-25).

Under the circumstances, one might easily feel as alone as if one were locked up in a prison from which escape was impossible. It is hardly surprising, then, that Bal'mont makes use of the image in his poetic explorations. He speaks of a dying person, terrified and alone in the bottomless Universe as a captive prisoner (*Polnoe*, IV, 103). For a description of life's similarity to a prison, the reader is referred, in particular, to "Iz-pod severnogo neba" (*Stix.*, pp. 107-108), and to "V tjur'me" (*Stix.*, p. 171). The latter especially deserves attention. The poet says that we have been sentenced to an eternal prison. No one can help as the prison walls close in on us.

There is no way out, Bal'mont keeps on insisting. If people have not caught on, he makes sure they will by repeatedly resorting to the same theme. On one occasion, a cave serves as a launching pad for his ideas. It is dark in the cave, he says, and he can find no way out (*Polnoe*, I, 64). On other occasions, he falls back on animal imagery to convey his message. A particularly beautiful case in point involves the description of a butterfly that has flown into a room. Its delicate wings beat against the window glass in an effort to escape, but all to no avail. Eventual death is the only escape. "Что же пленнице делать еще остается?/Только биться и блекнуть! О, жалкая, бедная!" ("Бабочка," *Polnoe*, II, 73). An equally moving scene centers around a little gray bird with sad black eyes. The poet entreats it not to try to get out of its cage. Instead of fighting with all its might, it should resign itself to its existence in the cage; it should learn to live even within those restrictive bounds ("Seraja ptička," *Polnoe*, V, 28).

A comparison of these two poems is a good lesson in Bal'montian psychology. A logical conclusion to Bal'mont's dilemma, and the one he draws in the butterfly poem, would be that death is the only means of escape from the imprisonment of life that he has depicted. He does not seem to be ready to accept such a

solution, however. We are trapped, he writes in the second poem, but why not accept the limitations and go on from there.

It is interesting that the comparison points out, in encapsulated form, the steps Bal'mont creates in his dance with life and death. There is no God; human life can be filled with inexplicable terrors. That he has more than adequately ascertained. Since he is not happy with a final step that contains a dead end, he keeps searching for an alternative. Any reader who accompanies him in his travels becomes aware of the unsatisfactory shape which the search at times assumed. For what seems to happen is that Bal'mont, while unsuccessfully attempting to lift himself from a bog of filth and slime, continues to twirl in the very same vortex. He makes statements or, more often, asks questions that deny the terrible conclusions he had foreseen. Yet the same conclusions float to the surface again. The result is a repetition, a reinforcement of his uncertainties. "Зачем Господь в борьбе нам не поможет,..." he asks. "Зачем Он создал смерть, болезнь, страданье..." ("Tri soneta"; 1. "Vopros," *Polnoe*, I, 121-122). "Что же мы ищем в безднах неверных,..." ("K vetru," *Polnoe*, III, 37). "Есть ли Бог, и как Его найти?...Как узнать! Как знать, какой Он - Бог!" ("Kak znat'," *Polnoe*, V, 53-54). "Где же я?" ("Gde že ja," *Polnoe*, X, 114-115). The questions do not lead beyond the twisted form of the question mark. One poem ends on exactly that note: "Зачем, зачем, зачем, зачем?" ("Začem, zveno so zvenom sviva-ja," *Polnoe*, X, 113-114).

It was as if Bal'mont needed some sort of justification in order to be able to live, or so he informs us in the epigraph to the cycle of poems "Gorjaščie zdanija. Lirika sovremennoj duši": "Мир должен быть оправдан весь, чтоб можно было жить" (*Stix.*, p. 146). As we have seen, his plight and search play a dominant role in his works. Yet if we think about them as a whole, we can see that he did find a port of calm in the turbulence of the twentieth century. If there was seemingly senseless suffering and ugliness in life, he would solve the problem by incorporating them into a rational system. If there was no permanence, he, the artist, would create it. And this is exactly what he did. Each of the flaws he found in the less than perfect world, he transformed into a virtue. In Nekrasov's images of the miserable countryside--swamps, dark forests, the woman for whom death is a blessing, the song whose melody sounds like moans--Bal'mont finds a "красота трагического."¹⁵ Not only do the ugly phenomena contain beauty--such as the silvery stream in the depths of a well's slime; familiarity with the dark recesses of ocean bottoms and prisons serves as a *prerequisite* for the attainment of beauty. He maintains, for instance, that in order to reach the heights, he sinks to the bottom ("Probuždenie," No. 8, *Polnoe*, II, 133). Radiant stars shine for those who know how to sink into the gloom at the bottom of the arid well ("V bezvodnom

kolodce," *Stix.*, pp. 109-110), Bal'mont suggests. He aptly dubs Baudelaire, "павший в пропасти, но жаждавший вершин" ("К Bодлеру," *Stix.*, p. 188), his spiritual father in his ability to compose a symphony of fragrances, sounds, and colors out of the raw material of evil and decay.

Bal'mont, it will be recalled, plaintively sobbed as he faced the twin spectres of solitude and transitoriness. The poet works wonders of magical metamorphosis on this situation, too. And how does he do it? Very easily indeed, for it turns out that there are advantages to remaining alone. The concept is clearly brought out in a poem called "Художник" (*Polnoe*, III, 185-187). Here, the artist describes at great length his estrangement all through his life. He was never like everybody else; even in childhood, he was already a wanderer. Then--and once again we see Bal'mont's ingenious mind at work justifying and unjustifiable--comes the narrator's statement that he is glad there are sufferings in the world, for he can plait them into a fairytale pattern. The implication is that had he not been set apart, he would not have learned his art.

A consideration of the well-known poem "Ja mečtoju lovil uxodjaščie teni" (*Stix.*, p. 93) will illustrate the same psychology at work:

Я мечтою ловил уходящие тени,
Уходящие тени погасавшего дня,
Я на башню всходил, и дрожали ступени,
И дрожали ступени под ногой у меня.

И чем выше я шел, тем ясней рисовались,
Тем ясней рисовались очертанья вдали,
И какие-то звуки вокруг раздавались,
Вкруг меня раздавались от Небес и Земли.

Чем я выше всходил, тем светлее сверкали
Тем светлее сверкали выси дремлющих гор,
И сияньем прощальным как будто ласкали,
Словно нежно ласкали туманенный взор.

А внизу подо мною уж ночь наступила,
Уже ночь наступила для уснувшей Земли,
Для меня же блистало дневное светило,
Огневое светило догорало вдали.

Я узнал, как ловить уходящие тени,
Уходящие тени потускневшего дня,
И все выше я шел, и дрожали ступени,
И дрожали ступени под ногой у меня.

Several features immediately glare out at the reader. Bal'mont has obviously reserved a special place for the "I" ("Я," "меня"), which appears as the first and final words of the poem and is carefully repeated, twice more in stanza one; twice, in stanzas

two and five; and once each, in the third and fourth stanzas. Words such as "башню," "ступени," "вдали," "выси," and "всходил" demonstrate that he is playing with the idea of distance. At the same time, a major element of the poem is a concentration on the transitory. The departing shadows of the exciting day are replaced by night itself. Things are in constant motion, we note, in the number of verbs and in particular, in the number of motion verbs. Like a movie projectionist intent on capturing every nuance of movement, Bal'mont keeps switching his perspective. He shows his audience his climbing, then switches to the stairs under him, then goes a bit higher and pauses to describe the scene from his new vantage point. Once again he cuts back to events below, then above again, and so forth. The stanzas which frame the poem, beginning and end, contain Bal'mont's all-important preoccupation with the transitory. He is clutching at that which cannot be grasped. But, as he puts more and more distance between him and the earth, something happens. The farther he gets from reality--and let us emphasize that he is traveling alone--the more involved he becomes in his dream, the more permanence he finds. There in the heavenly heights, "Для меня не блистало дневное светило," although night had already descended upon the earth.

By creating a dream--and both words, the creating and the dream, should be heavily underscored--Bal'mont had found the answer to his problems. One can justifiably censure him for repetition of theme, for once Bal'mont had latched onto "something good," the reader is in for a long session of variations on one theme. In the lyric "Majatnik" (*Polnoe*, III, 158-159), a pendulum swings evenly from one side to the other. Today it is of the gods; tomorrow it will be miserable. The poet implies that the pendulum can choose between the extremes of pain and happiness. The weaving of a dream is the key which will open the door to the positive. Or, what can be more blunt than the poem "Skazat' mgnoven'ju: Stoj?" For it is here that Bal'mont writes that there is only one way to achieve permanence--and that way is the dream (*Stix.*, p. 232).

The dream is salvation, whether in the lighthearted, care-free world of make-believe which Bal'mont constructs in "Fejnye skazki" or in his escape from the executioner in a torture chamber. Interestingly enough, in the torture chamber poem, the line "No mečta mne moja doroga" ("V zastenke," *Stix.*, p. 237) stands exactly at the center--eight lines from the top and eight from the bottom--as if stylistically to demonstrate the high regard with which the poet viewed the idea.

Given Bal'mont's concerns with the evanescent, we must realize that escape into a dream was not enough. If one could create a world of make-believe, who was to say that it would not blow away like a house of cards against which the wind had gently brushed? Hence, the final step in Bal'mont's poetic search. It

is essential to remember that the word *creating* the dream was as crucial to a full understanding as was the word *dream*. With this idea the twistings and turnings of discomfort finally cease. Permanence can be reached in art. The seventeenth-century painter Velasquez is eternally ours, for in his works, he lives on, writes Bal'mont ("Velaskes," *Stix.*, pp. 263-264). In ordinary life, flowers blossom for a brief summer's moment and then are gone forever. But through the medium of art, a miracle is performed. The spirit of a mimosa lives on because Shelley could "соркать" verses ("Šelli," *Stix.*, p. 421). The creations of artists result in expansion of the moment into a permanent phenomenon ("Šekspir," *Stix.*, p. 420). As the embodiment of poetry, the narrator of "Ja--izyskannost' russkoj medlennoj reči" can remain eternally young (*Stix.*, p. 232).

The concepts of artist and sun seem to be inextricably bound in Bal'mont's мировоззрение. The artist, the creator, becomes a god, a sun, a life-giving force. Bal'mont explains that Goethe was a writer of perfection, a writer who attained "the whole." He compares Goethe to the sun, who could look at and love the entire world.¹⁶ He writes hymns of ecstasy to the sun as the bearer of life, as God and creator ("Gimn solncu," *Stix.*, pp. 267-272; "Gimn ognju," *Stix.*, pp. 207-210). "Будем, как солнце всегда молодое," he shouts in a poem within the cycle *Budem kak solnce* ("Budem kak solnce," *Stix.*, p. 204).

Bal'mont's imaginative journey led from darkness, wandering, ephemerality, and isolation to light, creation, permanence, and dream. He was certainly not unique in this respect. Like the Symbolist "theurgists," he was seeking an answer to the uncertainties of life. It is high time that the search be acknowledged in critical literature. Whatever one may think about Bal'mont as a composer of sweet poetic songs, it is valuable to pursue, within his work, the quest of his heart and mind as well as the patterns of his pen.

NOTES

1. "Okean," in K. D. Bal'mont, *Stixotvorenija* (Leningrad, 1969), p. 98. Subsequent references to this edition will appear in the text as *Stix.*
2. K. D. Bal'mont, *Gornye veršiny. Sbornik statej* (Moscow, 1904), p. 2.
3. K. D. Bal'mont, "Avtobiografičeskie materialy dlja biografii Bal'monta," in *Russkaja literatura XX veka (1890-1910)*, ed. S. E. Vengerov (Moscow, 1914), p. 59.
4. Vladimir Markov, "Balmont: A Reappraisal," *Slavic Review*,

XXVIII, No. 2 (1969), 221-64.

5. Renato Poggioli, *Poets of Russia 1890-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960); D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), pp. 433-4; Bal'mont, *Stix.*, pp. 5-74, particularly p. 48. One major exception is Rodney Patterson, who, in a detailed introduction to an anthology of Bal'mont's poetry, considers both style and theme. K. D. Bal'mont, *Izbrannye stixotvore-nija i poëmy*, selection, foreword, and commentary, Vladimir Markov (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1975), pp. 15-80. Also see Patterson's "Balmont: In Search of Sun and Shadow," *Russian Literary Triquarterly*, No. 4 (1972), 241-64.
6. Mirsky, p. 431.
7. I would, however, exclude Degas from this category; he was more concerned with experimenting with different angles of perspective than with capturing the joy of a particular moment.
8. "Komu ja moljus'?" K. D. Bal'mont, *Polnoe sobranie stixov* (Moscow, 1909), I, 236-7. I shall hereafter refer to this edition as *Polnoe* in the text.
9. "Krot," in Vladimir Markov, Merrill Sparks, *Modern Russian Poetry* (Indianapolis, Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), p. 18.
10. K. D. Bal'mont, *Gde moj dom. Očerki (1920-1923)* (Prague, 1924), pp. 24-8.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-7.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 169-82.
13. "Tajna odinočestva i smerti," in K. D. Bal'mont, *Belye zarnicy. Mysli i vpečatlenija* (St. Petersburg, 1908), p. 146.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
15. "Skvoz' stroj. (Pamjati Nekrasova)," Bal'mont, *Gornye veršiny*, pp. 98-9.
16. However, he also compares him to the earth for his fondness for the darkness. "Izbrannik zemli (Pamjati Gete)," *Belye zarnicy*, pp. 7-9.