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BRONIUS VAŠKELIS

BRONIUS VAŠKELIS holds a Ph.D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania. His doctoral dissertation — *The Language of Jurgis Baltrušaitis' Lithuanian Poetry* (1964). Presently Dr. Vaškelis is Assistant Professor in Russian Literature at Lafayette College, Eastnon, Pa.

JURGIS BALTRUŠAITIS
A Lithuanian and Russian Symbolist

Since Jurgis Baltrušaitis wrote both in Russian and in Lithuanian, as a poet he belongs to the literature of both of these nations. At the present time, however, his place in the literary history of either nation (especially the Russian) is not clearly defined. The uncertainty in his situation is due partly to the fact that the rich and complex Russian symbolist movement still awaits its historian and partly to the fact that Baltrušaitis' Russian literary activities were discontinued. Except for several eulogistic articles of a very general nature that were written mainly by his intimate friends and contemporaries,[1] almost no serious studies have so far been attempted. There are only a few general articles presenting studies of his Lithuanian poetry.[2] As it happens, however, these studies often echo one another and also the Russian critical essays on Baltrušaitis' Russian poetry.

A Biographical Sketch

Baltrušaitis was born on May 2, 1873, to a Catholic Lithuanian family in Paantvardžiai, a village near the town of Skirsnemunė, Raseiniai district, at that time in the province of Kaunas (Kovno). Until 12 years of age he lived in his native village, where he absorbed his country's folklore and received his elementary education in reading and writing. Thirty years later Baltrušaitis explained in detail what kind of education he received:

> "Into the magic art of reading and writing I initiated myself at a rather early age through personal efforts at home, but until I was ten my young mind had to be satisfied with only the meager content of a few old calendars and books, which happened to be in the old abandoned homestead. As if to make up for this, my imagination had a better playground for its development. There were the unforgetable wintery fairy-tales of my mother — often her own inventions — and the sinister Lithuanian legends about monsters, ancient giants, and whole tribes of people with dog's hearts and dog's heads. How ingenious were the tales of an old vagrant village tailor and the fables of the beggars who often passed the night in our poor village.[3] "

Tending the cattle during the summer, he slowly familiarized himself with all facets of nature — facets, which were probably a source of fear and wonder to the future poet, for his Russian and Lithuanian poetry is rich in images and symbols of the elements and forces of nature. Even as a student in a gymnasium in Kaunas from 1885 to 1893, he came home for the summer holidays every year — as he put it, to "return to a lost paradise." In 1893 he entered the Department of Mathematics and Physics of the University of Moscow, graduating in natural science. In addition to science lectures, he attended lectures in history and philology. Soon, however, he devoted himself to the study of literature and to literary activities. It seems that he did not again visit his native village until 1920.

Baltrušaitis' life in Moscow was marked by various cultural and literary activities. From 1896 on, he was a very active participant in many literary and social circles in Moscow. At first he translated into Russian works of August Strindberg, Maurice Maeterlinck, Henrik Ibsen, Gabriel d'A-nunzio,[4] but around the year 1899 his own essays and poems began to appear. He soon became acquainted with the leading Russian writers and artists; some of them became his intimate

friends: K. D. Bal'mont, V. Y. Brjusov, later V. I. Ivanov, and the composer A. N. Skrjabin. After the establishment of the publishing house of *Skorpion* (in 1900), in which Baltrušaitis was a partner, a meeting place was available for the budding Rusian symbolists of that time. Because of the absence of adequate and reliable information, it is difficult to assess the role of Baltruiaitis in the *Skorpion* publishing company and in the later magazine *Vesy* (The Scales), published by the same company. Brjusov wrote a great deal about Baltrušaitis in his diary, referring to him as one of "them" — *Skorpiony* — or simply as Jurgis.[5]

Baltrušaitis' contact with the magazine *Vesy*, however, was inconsistent and ambiguous. At the beginning of *Vesy'* publication he was one of its editors; later, it seems, his associations with the magazine were more in the form of an occational contribution of poems, an essay, and some stories. When the foundations of *Vesy* were shaken by a growing disagreement among the symbolists over the place and importance of aestheticism and mysticism in Symbolism, he was one of the so-called semerka, the seven editors between the spring of 1907 and the last issue of the magazine in 1909. It is difficult to determine what his contributions to *Vesy* actually were. In the memoirs of Percov, Baltrušaitis is mentioned as "an invisible propelling agent who is invaluable and even indispensable to the work." [6] Belyj tells in his diary that Baltrušaitis saved the situation for *Vesy* many times when the editors asked for his assistance in moments of crisis.[7] It is probable that he did very little of the actual manual work of editing, although in 1903 he was the editor of a symbolist review, *Severnyje cvety* (Northern Flowers).

The reasons for Baltrušaitis' disrupted and indefinite associations with *Vesy* were quite probably related to his frequent and prolonged sojourns between 1900 and 1914 in Italy, Switzerland, and other Western European countries. In 1901 he visited the Swedish playwright August Strindberg in Stockholm and the Norvegian playwright Henrik Ibsen in Oslo (then called Christiania). In 1903 he lived in Florence and later in Rome, where his frequent guests were G. Papini, D. Vanikola, A. Amendola, Eva Amendola-Kuh. In 1907 he lived in Alassio, on the Italian Riviera, spending most of his time with the critic and dramatist E. Gordon Craig. The onset of the First World War prevented him from leaving Moscow, and so he stayed, working in the *Svobodnyj teatr* as a manager of the repertoire, later as literary adviser in the *Kamernyj teatr*. During the period of 1917 - 1919 he worked in *Teatralnyj otdely narodnogo kommissariata prosvescenija* (Theatrical Department of the National Commissariat of Education) as a director preparing suitable repertoires for all Russian theatres and concerts. In 1918 he was elected the first chairman of *Vserossiskij Sojuz Pisatelej* (The All Russian Writers' Union).

The First World War completely changed Baltrušaitis' life in so far as his personal and literary activities were concerned. Intimidated by the German invasion of Lithuania in 1915, many Lithuanians fled into Russia, and a considerable number of them settled in Moscow. Baltrušaitis helped his compatriots in many ways; for example, he worked on the Committee for Lithuanian War Refugees, helped students to enter the university, etc. This renewal of a relationship with his compatriots which had been discontinued in his teens influenced Baltrušaitis' future activities. From 1917 to 1920 he participated in various charitable, social, cultural, even political activities with the Moscow Lithuanians. He had to allot his time and energy to both the Lithuanian and the Russian spheres. With the former his ties became stronger and more intimate while with the latter he continued social and cultural relationships. In 1920, after his appointment as Lithuanian Ambassador to the Soviet Union, however, he was no longer as active a participant in Russian social and cultural life; he kept only personal contact with his Russian friends. With regards to Lithuanian cultural and social life, he was more or less an observer until his retirement in 1939. He maintained, however, intimate friendships with Lithuanian writers such as B. Sruoga, V. Krėvė, and others. When the Soviets overran Lithuania, Baltrušaitis took refuge in France and devoted all of his time to composing Lithuanian poetry until his death on January 3, 1944.

Literary Contributions

Baltrušaitis' first published poem *Noc* (the Night) was written in Russian in 1899, but he had begun writing a few years before; several of his poems are dated as early as 1897. During the first decade of the twentieth century many of his poems appeared in various Russian literary magazines and reviews. In 1911 he collected and published them in a separate book *Zemnyje stupeni* (The Earthen Steps)[8] and in the following year a second collection of newly written poems, *Gornaja tropa* (The Mountain Path)[9] appeared. The last collection of poems, *Lilija i serp* (The Lily and Sickle)[10] was published posthumously in 1948 in Paris. It consisted of poems written mainly in the period from 1912 to 1920.

Beside these volumes of verse the literary heritage that Baltrušaitis has left to posterity includes several stories and articles on literature and art, which are still scattered in various Russian literary magazines.[11]

It is difficult to ascertain when Baltrušaitis began writing verse in Lithuanian. He himself used to say to his friends that after 1905 he was writing in Lithuanian, but the first published poem *Ramunėlė* (The Camomile) appeared in 1930. Several of his poems appeared later in Lithuanian magazines, and in 1942 the collection of poems, *Ašarų vainikas* (The Wreath of Tears),[12] was published. At the end of that collection it is stated that the poems were written in the period from 1905 to 1941, although the majority of them apparently were written, or at least finished, in 1940. As we see in the complete collection of Baltrušaitis' Lithuanian poems, *Poezija* (Poetry)[13], 29 out of 41 poems published in *Ašarų vainikas* belong to the period from February 3rd to May 25th in 1940. During his remaining four years he completed the second part of Asarif vainikas, the collection *Aukuro dūmai* (Smokes of a Sacrificial Altar) and *Žiurkių įkurtuvės* (The Rats' House-Warming).

As far as Baltrušaitis' creative activities are concerned, the period between 1920 and 1940 is relatively barren. These spiritual doldrums coincide with the years of his diplomatic career. There were several other periods of low creativity in

Baltrušaitis' earlier life.[14] In addition, we must keep in mind that he apparently tried to write in Lithuanian and at the same time continue writing in Russian, as is attested by one or two mediocre poems of a few stanzas written each year up until 1943 that appeared in the collection *Lilija i serp*.

Weltanschauung and Aesthetics

In order to understand and to fully enjoy Baltrušaitis' poetry — or that of any other mystical, symbolist writer — it is necessary to have a certain knowledge of his views on life and art. In most instances, this is due to his use of imagery and symbols devoid of traditionally accepted meaning and drawn from a special area of knowledge or from his own system of beliefs. Readers, of course, have interpreted or have tried to interpret some of Baltrušaitis' poems subjectively, but most of his poems remain to them nearly incomprehensible and enigmatic in nature. Even some literary specialists describe Baltrušaitis as an "obscure and ponderous poet", or say that "his verse is intelligible only to few."[15]

Since Baltrušaitis himself did not directly explain his belief and views, we have to reconstruct them from various other sources. The most reliable sources of information are his reviews and critical essays written on the works of Bal'mont, Runeberg, G. Craig, and his lecture *The Essence of Art and the Artist's Creative Duty*,[16] given in Moscow, in 1915. His poetry is more or less the true embodiment of his aesthetics, although, just as any true poetry, it scarcely represents a complete philosophical system, but rather an immediate experience with vague suggestions and allusions to his inclinations and leanings. In this case the poetry serves also as a secondary source and in many instances as material confirming the validity of his views expressed elsewhere.

According to Baltrušaitis' belief, there exist two spheres: the common world (the earth) and everything embracing the totality (the cosmos, or in his terms *čel'nost, edinstvo, polnota*). The former, consisting of particulars, is perceivable by human senses, whereas the latter consists of generics.[17] and is comprehensible only by extraordinary insight such as that of artists. The totality is an ideal and purposeful system in which eternal harmony, tranquillity, and stability reign. Objects of the common world enter into the totality not as the particulars or as a sum of particulars, but in generics. In this respect Baltrušaitis' views on the generics of objects resemble Plato's theory of *eidos*, the theory of Forms. Baltrušaitis' understanding of the cosmos, the totality, is almost identical to Plotinus' pantheistic universe and the One.

All generics, according to Baltrušaitis, are blended in one spiritual body by universal power, the so-called will of totality (but sometimes as world will, world soul, eternal divine will). The will of the totality is an omnipotent power and is very often identified with God's will or in poetry with the symbol of God. It seems that God and the will of the totality meant to him one and the same thing; in some cases, however, it is represented that God is above the totality, in the totality and in each generic, while the will of the totality resides only in the totality and in each generic. These seemingly contradictory statements are found in poetic contexts and seem to be due to his comprehension of the universe as a mystic and pantheistic unity.

Besides the will of the totality, Baltrušaitis acknowledges the exsistence of individual will or, as he sometimes called it (especially in poetry), soul, which is separated temporarily (for man's life-time) from the will of the totality. Therefore, man intuitively strives toward the totality in order to blend with it.

Baltrušaitis' pantheistic and mystical conception of the universe and of life obviously has influenced many of his views on aesthetics. He pointed out in his earlier-mentioned lecture that in moments of creative activities the poet's soul coalesces with the will of the totality and the activities themselves become the sacerdotal offering, because poetry descends from heaven. In other words, a poet, being under a spell in a blissful, mystical trance, loses awareness of the surrounding reality and creates unconsciously, acting more or less as an instrument.[18] A poet who fails to achieve this acstatic state ceases to be a poet, for he lacks the vision that enables him to perceive the essence of things and being (the generics) and he loses himself among the external phenomena (the particulars), which are alien to the content of art. It follows that the artistic value of poetry depends on how the poet perceives and how he transfers it into poetry, because even the smallest flower and dew-drop belong to artistic expression as long as they are treated not in their isolation, but as threads of a majestic and universally interrelated fabric, as links of an infinite universe, only if the breathing of the will of the totality in them is manifested in the expression.[19]

Characteristics of Baltrušaitis' Poetry

In discussing Baltrušaitis' Russian and Lithuanian poetry, it is customary among Lithuanian literary specialists to mention Sruoga's views [20] that Baltrušaitis' Lithuanian poetry is more personal, lyrical, and of higher aesthetic value than his abstract and impersonal Russian poetry. If such general statements are true to a certain extent, we have then to deal with two different types of Baltrušaitis' poetry; different both in nature and in artistic expression. However, we find no radical differences in his bilingual poetry, except, of course, in the realm of linguistics and stylistics. Differences of the former are due to the dissimilar Russian and Lithuanian languages and in the latter also to dissimiliarities of languages and to the changes in Baltrušaitis' outlook toward eternity which took place around 1912. It is necessary to note that this change in belief is also reflected in his latest Russian poetry; because of this, in discussing the general characteristics of Baltrušaitis' poetry, we do not here separate it into two groups based on bilingual differences.

From the very beginning of his creative activities, Baltrušaitis distinguished himself as a poet of mystical susceptibilities and almost exclusively preoccupied with nature; the majority of his images and symbols were drawn from inanimate nature. In the period of eight to ten years his poetry acquired gradually more austere, monotonous and insensuate characteristics, especially in vocabulary which consisted of a great number of general and overused words such as tree, grass, day, night, light, darkness, dust, road, man, soul, earth, heaven, etc. These generic terms are used often without epithets or in sparce epithets lacking a great deal of diversity in color.

These characteristics of Baltrušaitis' poetry, of course, are due to his aesthetics and especially to his insistence on the necessity of having exclusively generic content to the poetry. Approaching an object, he sees its particulars, but strives to reveal the general which is neither sensual, personal, nor particular. (For example, if it is an oak, he does not pay attention to its leaves, height, corns, but strives to the essence and purpose of the tree.) Through generalizing, discarding the charm of the external and its diverse realities, he probes further toward the meaning and the essence of that which takes place — from the processes of change to the immutable, from events to being.

As his poetry indicates, Baltrušaitis acquired mystical knowledge and reconciled himself with his mystically comprehended universe through a long, gradual development. In the collection *Zemnyje stupeni*, we see how the poet changes slowly from a passive but receptive observer into an active investigator, who probes into the secrets of nature and consequently lives through periods of metaphysical loneliness, despondency, and joy after he experiences profound mystical sensations, indicating that beyond the mundane existence there is his "eternal native country." Gradually, having submitted to his comprehended mystic One, he becomes the praying and ambulant pilgrim "walking" toward the "snowy mountains" — the source of knowledge and fulfillment. From then on, his poetry became even more austere than it had been before. Instead of symbols such as "mute pain," "roaring sea," "dewy morning," we often encounter images and symbols drawn from the topography of a desert or bleak mountains: "dusty road," "naked gloomy rocks," "autumnal sky," etc. His moods and attitudes are in constant fluctuation — some poems mirror his inner tranquillity, others long for his metaphysical "native country," and in others the poet worries about his own "smallness" in comparison with eternity.

In the collection *Gornaja tropa* the poet expresses his awareness of contradictory situations: from one point of view, the earth is like "paradise" and he himself is like "God's shepherd," from the other, he feels like a "slave of destiny" living in "hell." As the imagery and the changes in his pensive, lofty, and serene tranquillity indicate, he soon reaches his symbolic summit. These all contrasts and extremities are fused into an unworldly simplicity where even the poet can "pray without words" and acquire "knowledge without conscious striving." There is "neither hunger nor craving, but only the Word" — the mystical vision. This indicates Baltrušaitis' feeling of being in complete accord with the mystical universe where everything is fused into one all-embracing unity, the totality. He no longer probes into the secrets of being and eternity, but as a poet of a mystical wisdom speaks in a meditative tone about man and his purpose during his temporary sojourn on earth. By this time symbols of "eternal offering" begin to appear in his poetry. Nature becomes a huge temple, where he, the "faithful priest", brings his deeds and dreams, prayers and disappointments and places them on a "stern sacrificial altar." His entire day seems to him like an uninterrupted bounteous offering of his earthly actions. The symbolic offering is not a simple act of ablation through which man expresses his thankfulness or adoration to the divinity; rather, it symbolizes the poet's desire to fuse with eternity — "offering fire is the only link which joins us unto Eternity." Death, as such, ceases to exist, because it is not d e a t h, but a process from one state to another. He has risen above the fear of death into the spiritual state where "life is without death" and the "image of death is a lie."

In spite of his serene mood and God-praising tone, Baltrušaitis' thoughts soon turned more often toward the earth, the people, and their toil. Especially in the collection *Lilija i serp*, it seems that the poet reached the highest peak of his poetic-mystical mountain path and began a hasty descent. Instead of images and symbols of austere, rocky, treeless topography appeared symbols related to moral landscapes, lowland scenes, and labor — symbols as "ryefields," "arable land," "plough," "sickle," "hammer," "sweat," "toil," and others. From this time on, not nature, but man was the center of attention to which he tried to convey his mystical wisdom. Nevertheless images and symbols drawn from inanimate nature are still copiously used, merely as means of illustration in order to show the secrets of being and eternity to man. Bal-trusaitis, however, could not avoid repetitions of previously expressed ideas which in many instances became nothing more than simple manipulation of previously used epithets, symbols, and images, which he frequently presented in a rather rhetorical and prosaic manner.

The events of 1917 in Russia shook Baltrušaitis out of his spiritual doldrums, and he wrote several poems full of fresh, vivid, and vigorous poetic expression. Poems written after the communist seizure of power reflected his despondent mood, mild but insistent lament, and longing for escape from the "world of lies and shadows." The poems which appeared in 1920 and afterwards are inferior in poetic value. When he talked about mundane and heavenly matters, it appeared that he repeated phrases and concepts more from habit than from any inner urge to express them. He still gazed at the toiling man and meditated on the darkness of the night, but this aroused neither feelings nor emotions which could result in new poetic expressions.

Baltrušaitis, however, was to appear again as a poet with new vigor and poetic expression in his Lithuanian poetry. The sources for his new upsurge were mainly reminiscences from his childhood and early adolescent years spent in Lithuania. By reliving them afresh and letting them through the prism of a poet's mystical wisdom, he charged them with new energy and tinged them considerably with mysticism and metaphysics. We see no apparent change in Baltrušaitis' outlook toward life, eternity, art, and the poet's duties to man in general, although there are many instances of elaboration in more detail of

the relationships of man to eternity, nature, and life on earth. For example, from Baltrušaitis' critical essays we know only that man and any plant are equal parts in the totality, until we find several assertions in his Lithuanian verses that the same fate is alloted equally to man as to a hop and a grass-bent — to live and later to blend into the totality. Much new imagery and many symbols are obviously drawn from the landscape of Lithuania — wayside crosses, wind mills, well sweep — and from life and work on a farm, but by the same token we encounter copious abstract symbols — symbols which in many instances are identical to those which abound in his Russian poetry: "fire of ages,", "distances of ages," "miracle of existence," "circle of earth," "cross of earth," etc. In general, Baltrušaitis was fortunate to find a new theme — his reminiscences — and new means to express them — the Lithuanian language; in his Lithuanian poetry he avoided repeating himself as he did in the latest of his Russian poetry.

Speaking about Baltrušaitis' poetry in general terms, the meditative and glorifying attitudes of Baltrušaitis are the major characteristics; because of this, many poems sound like lyric prayers, reverent hymns, or yearning elegies, radiating the austerity and simplicity of his generically comprehended universe. In his verses he usually contrasts realistic aspects with the metaphysical sides of things and arrives at a somewhat suggestive, evocative conclusion about eternal life and joy beyond mundane existence. With deep sincerity and truthfullness he sings hymns to the eternal, the reflection of which he perceives in any object, while at the same time he is surrounded by a reality which fills his heart with melancholy and even a tragic sense of futility. These two moods are fused into one atmosphere in which at one and the same time one can experience lofty and gloomy emotions. Characteristically enough, hopelesssness is alien to Baltrušaitis' elgiac verses, in spite of his yearning to leave this earth and to blend with eternity.

The prayer-like mood and liturgical characteristics of his verses designate Baltrušaitis as a religious poet. However, his religious sentiments rest on a very undifferentiated awareness of God. Sometimes he perceives God as the other and higher authority, but in other instances there is neither a distinct difference nor distance between God and himself; both the poet and God are of the same substance, but in different forms. This characteristic of Baltrušaitis' poetry suggests that he leans toward pantheism rather than towards Christianity — even though he was born and raised a Roman Catholic. There are other indications which support this supposition. First, the relationship between the poet and God is always a purely vertical, upward movement. God is envisaged as silent, serene, and unconcerned with man, while the poet strives toward Him. Secondly, the poet completely neglects the problem of evil; there is no distinction between good and bad. Third, the poetry conveys no definite proof of his attachment to any organized cult; it displays rather a spiritual discipline arising out of Baltrušaitis' mystically-comprehended universe.

Baltrušaitis' Place in the History of Literature

Throughout the period from 1894 to 1910, when symbolism dominated the Russian literary scene, Baltrušaitis was an active participant. The Russian symbolists may be divided into two groups: the generation of the "nineties" — Merezkovskij, Bal'mont, Brjusov, Sologub and Hippius — and the generation of the first decade of the twentieth century — Ivanov, Belyj, Blok, Vološin and others. Baltrušaitis, because of his preoccupation with religious and metaphysical problems and his late appearance in the literary life (his first poem was published in 1899), hardly belongs to the first generation of symbolists. Nonetheless, he had a very intimate personal and literary relationship with Bal'mont and Brjusov, in spite of their adherence to aestheticism and to a certain extent to im-moralism. The second generation was nearer to Baltrušaitis' literary creed, because it (at least Ivanov, Belyj and Blok) fostered at a certain period of time the idea of unity between poetry and religion, a mystical attitude toward art in general, and symbolism in particular. They all considered a poet as a seer whose mystical intuition helps to reveal the deep correspondence of this world with the other one. Art was viewed by all of them as irrational from the standpoint of the creative process, revealing the eternal in the transient. In general, the similarity of Baltrušaitis' views with the views of the second generation of symbolist, was probably influenced by the so-called "spirit of the time" and more so by the ideologies of the second-generation writers and the ideologies of such writers as Tjutčev, V. Solovjev, the French symbolists, and the German romantics.

While Blok, Belyj, and Ivanov were affected, each in a somewhat different way, by S. Solovjev's mystical and divine feminine being — Sophia — Baltrušaitis was possessed by a mystical vision of the will of the totality. Essentially they do not greatly differ, since Neoplatonism was apparently one of the main sources of influence for all of them. There is some difference, however, in the sense that the neoplatonic World-Soul, comprehended somewhat in the will of the totality by Baltrušaitis, was the main principle of the aesthetic creed he followed all the time in his creative activities; on the other hand, for Blok, Belyj, and probably even less for Ivanov, the cult of the worship of Sophia, was for short periods of their literary careers at the core of their unstable aesthetics.

Regarding Baltrušaitis' mystical attitude toward nature, the ideas of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Maurice Maeterlinck are detectable in his poetry. Emerson proposed a complete submission of the individual to the universal soul and a subordination to "Ideal Nature," because "nature is the representative of universal mind." [21] Baltrušaitis submits slavishly to the will of the totality and perceives generics in nature only as part of the mystical totality. In the book, *Le Tresor des humbles*, which Baltrušaitis translated into Russian in 1896, Maeterlinck praises humbleness and forbearance in man, suggests the existing mystery of life, the greatness of little things, and points out inner beauty and invisible goodness in the external world. It seems that Baltrušaitis took those precepts seriously, accepting them *in toto*.

It is necessary to note that the mystical-religious poetry of Baltrušaitis did not develop into a religion in itself as did the poetry of Belyj and Ivanov at one point. Neither did it become the handmaiden of theology nor of any theological system,

as was the case with Belyj during his preoccupation with theosophy. Baltrušaitis strove towards the secrets of universe in order to understand, to probe, and to illuminate the relation of finite and infinite and to let the eternal invade his every experience. After he attained the mystical knowledge himself, the imminence of God in nature, he strove to convey this awareness to his fellow man, encouraging him to go patiently and joyously along a "thorny path" — the earth. In Baltrušaitis' encouragement there is almost no hint about reward in eternity for the suffering and hardship experienced on earth, but rather constant reminding about man's temporal sojourn and that the reward will be eternity itself. Therefore, many of his prayer-poems exhibit his unceasing yearning for a "closer walk with God" rather requesting material or spiritual gain. In this respect there is no other symbolist poet in Russian literature.

While his persistent preoccupation with nature and his attitude toward man and eternity distinguished Baltrušaitis from other Russian symbolists, his slavish adherence to the poetry of the generics singles him out as the most severe and grave poet of them all. When Baltrušaitis' poems, devoid of intricate euphonism and variety, are compared with the fabulous virtuosity and unchecked sonority of Bal'mont and the multifarious sounds in Blok's poetic orchestration, they resemble in sonance the ancient psalms.

Baltrušaitis' contribution to Lithuanian literature is of a dual nature. First, his Russian poetry greatly influenced the aesthetics and styles of the Lithuanian symbolists B. Sruoga, F. Kirša, and V. Mykolaitis-Putinas. In one of Sruoga's letters, written during the First World War, Baltrušaitis is even considered as "our spiritual father." **22** To some literary historians it might seem an overstatement, although Baltrušaitis deserves more credit than he has received until now. Second, since Lithuanian symbolism as leading movement extended only through the second and partly the third decade of the twentieth century, Baltrušaitis' Lithuanian poetry could be considered somewhat anachronistic. In comparing his Lithuanian poetry with the poetry of his symbolist compatriots, his is perhaps too colorless and monotonous with a solemn, meditative tone, more enigmatic in imagery and mystic in content. This is due to his aesthetics and his *Weltanschauung*, and as he used symbols and syntactic and genitival constructions of abstruse and ambiguous meaning and obsolete and rarely-used words from dialects, it seems that Baltrušaitis strove purposely to create an indefinite and mysterious atmosphere.**23**

In attempting to create lyrics with bare, austere generics in a rigid system of prosody, Baltrušaitis forced himself into a narrow realm of possibilities. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for his lagging behind such literary Russian giants as Blok, Ivanov, and Belyj, although in the Lithuanian Parnassus he stands alone, huge, and unique. In addition, his bilingual poetry offers very rare possibilities for comparative linguistic and stylistic studies which would throw more light on bilingual interrelationships, their differences, as well as upon secrets of the creative process.

NOTES

1 J. Aichenval'd, "Baltrušaitis", *Siluety russkichpisatelej*, vol. 3. Berlin, Slovo, 1922; I. Erenburg, "Jurgis Kazimirovic Baltrušaitis", *Portrety russkich poetov*, Berlin, Argonavty, 1922; V. Ivanov, "Jurgis Baltrušaitis, kad liričeskij poet", *Russkaja literatura XX veka*, kniga 6, edited by S. Vengerov, Moscow, Mir, 1915; S. Kara-Murza, "Jurgis Baltrušaitis", Kultura, September, 1934, No. 9, 10; R. Poggioli, *The Poets of Russia*, Harvard U. Press, 1960, pp. 174-177.

2 J. Aistis, "Jurgis Baltrušaitis", *Poezija*, Darbininko Spauda, Boston, 1948; J. Keliuotis, "Jurgis Baltrušaitis, minties ir pastangos poetas", *Kūryba*, No. 2, Feb. 1944; A. Raginis, "Jurgis Baltrušaitis", *Studentų žodis*, Marianapolis College, Thompson, Conn., April 1942; B. Sruoga, "Baltrušaičio vainikas", *Ašarų vainikas*, Kaunas, Valstybine leidykla, 1942; J. Žekaitė, "Jurgis Baltrušaitis", *Lietuvių literatūros istorija*, vol. 3, Vilnius, 1958, pp. 440-449.

3 J. Baltrušaitis, "Biografija J. K. Baltrušaitisa", *Lilija i serp*, Paris, YMCA Press, 1940, p. 5.

4 He later translated works of G. Byron, G. Hauptmann, Knut Hamsum, Edgar A. Poe, R. Tahor, 0. Wilde and others — in total over 50 books.

5 V. Brjusov, *Dnevniki* (1891-1910), Moscow, M.S. Sabasnikovych, 1927.

6 P. Percov, quoted by S. Kara-Murza, *Kultūra*, 1934, No. 10, p. 545.

7 A. Belyj, quoted *ibid*.

8 J. Baltrušaitis, *Zemnyje stupeni*, Moscow, Skorpion, 1911.

9 J. Baltrušaitis, *Gornaja tropa*, Moscow, Skorpion, 1912.

10 J. Baltrušaitis, *Lilija i serp*, Paris, YMCA - Press, 1948.

11 Short stories: "Legend o fakelach", *Severnyje cvety*, Moscow, Skorpion, 1902, pp. 84-88; "Kapli", *Severnyje cvety*, Moscow, Skorpion, 1903, pp. 55-65; "Sputniki", *Vesy*, Moscow, Skorpion, 1906, No. 12, pp. 20-33. Articles: "O suscnosti iskusstva i tvorceskom dolge chudoznika", published under the title "Apie meno esme. ir menininko kurybine pareiga/', *Aidai*, Franciscan Fathers, Kennbunkport, Maine, February, 1954; "O vnutrennem puti K. Bal'monta", *Zavety*, 1914, No. 6, pp. 62-68; "The Path of Gordon Craig", *The Mask*, Florence, January, 1913, pp. 209-216; "Jugan Liudvig Runeberg", *Vesy*, 1904, No. 2, pp. 55-56; "U groba Ibsena", Vesy, 1908, No. 8, pp. 54-58.

12 J. Baltrušaitis, *Ašarų vainikas*, Kaunas, Valstybine leidykla, 1942.

13 J. Baltrušaitis, *Poezija*, Boston, Darbininko Spauda, 1948.

14 B. Vaskelis, *Jurgis Baltrushaitis, a Russian Symbolist* (unpublished Master's thesis, the University of Toronto, 1961) pp. 145-176.

15 M. Slonim, *From Chekhov to the Revolution,* New York, Oxford U. Press, 1962, p. 86; I. Erenburg, op. tit., p. 11.

16 J. Baltrušaitis' article in *Aidai*, op. eit.

17 The generics represent the common idea of the object or action which never changes in its essence and is self-explainable, easily understandible. Such generics as flower, tree, man give a general meaning, typical only of that group,

but there is no description of their particularities, such as shape, color, appearances and so on.
18 A. Belyj describes how Baltrušaitis had written poems during literary evenings: "Baltrušaitis would sit in such a pose that it seemed as if he would warm himself in the sunshine, while underneath his feet, instead of floors, was a waving golden field of rye. Once he pulled out of his pocket a slip of paper and unexpectedly read to me his poem, written just then, about a sky hanging low over the ploughed ground." S. Kara-Murza, *Kultūra*, No. 10, p. 544.
19 J. Baltrušaitis' article in *Aidai*, op. dt. p. 70.
20 B. Sruoga, "Baltrusaicio vainikas" in *Ašarų vainikas,* Kaunas, 1942.
21 R. W. Emerson, *Society and Solitude*, Cambridge, Mass., The Riverside Press, 1870, p. 40.
22 V. Galinis, "Balys Sruoga", *Lietuvių literatūros istorija*, vol. 3, Vilnius, 1958, p. 464.
23 B. Vaškelis, *The Language of Jurgis Baltrušaitis' Lithuanian Poetry*; (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, the University of Pennsylvania, 1964) pp. 342-347.