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Russian Silver-Age Galliambic Verse: Form and Meaning

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Abstract. The article surveys the four known Russian examples of Galliambic verse – a syllabo-tonic counterpart of the Latin metre associated with the cult of Cybele, as in Catullus' *Attis*: works by Vyacheslav Ivanov, Maximilian Voloshin, Nikolai Gumilev, and Georgij Adamovich – analyzing how metre, rhythm, and meaning interact in the rarest of Silver Age verse forms.

Keywords: Galliambic verse, metre and rhythm, Cybele, Attis, Catullus, Nietzsche, Russian Symbolism

Metr ne tol'ko zvuchit, no i znachit.
Grigorij Vinokur (1930)

Le mètre non seulement résonne, mais il raisonne aussi.

1. Galliambic Verse: A Brief Introduction

The Galliambic metre is exceptionally rare in classical poetry. The only complete Latin poem in this metre to survive from antiquity is Catullus' *Attis*.

The narrative of *Attis* unfolds as follows: the beautiful youth Attis sails to Phrygia, to the sanctuary of Cybele, the Mother Goddess. There, seized by ecstatic frenzy, he castrates himself. When he regains his senses, he bitterly regrets his action. However, Cybele sends a lion against him, driving him once more into madness. Attis is thus condemned to remain forever a priest-servant of Cybele, alongside a throng of her other attendants, known as Galli – named

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after the river Gallus, from which the term "Galliambic" is derived. The poem closes with a plea (perhaps tinged with irony) for Cybele to spare the poet himself from such a fate.

Traditionally, this metre was believed to have been used in the rituals of the cult of Cybele and Attis.

Apart from Catullus' work, only a handful of Galliambic verses survive, attributed to Varro, Maecenas, and various anonymous authors. A Galliambic passage of about a dozen lines also appears in Terentianus Maurus's treatise *De metris* (Keil 1874: 2888–2900). There are also a few Greek examples of the Galliambic metre, which likely served as the model for its Latin counterpart. Some philologists, such as Wilamowitz, argued that Catullus' *Attis* was based on an Alexandrian original, probably by Callimachus, which had not survived.

From the Renaissance, eight Galliambic poems are now known: seven are cited by David Campbell (1960), and the eighth, discovered by Dirk Sacré, is mentioned in Jean-Louis Charlet's recent work (Charlet 2020: 306 n69). There are also a small number of Galliambic pieces composed by twentieth-century Latinists (see Charlet 2020: 306). In any case, the Latin Galliambic metre remains an exotic curiosity.

Attis was first translated into Russian in 1886 by Afanasij Fet, who adapted the Latin metre to traditional Russian poetic tastes by rendering it as a regular trochaic octameter (Klenin 2015). However, my current interest lies not in translations, but in original poetry, where galliambics are as rare as they were in Latin: only four Russian Galliambic poems are known to exist. (Needless to say, by Russian Galliambic verse I mean the sillabo-tonic equivalent of the quantitative Latin metre.)

Regarding the Russian Galliambic metre, two articles on its semantics appeared over thirty years ago. First, my article "Voloshin's Galliamb (in Search of a Semantics of Metre)" was published in the journal *Russian Linguistics* (Dobritsyn 1993). Next, M. L. Gasparov's article on Georgij Adamovich's poem, "Phrygian Verse on Vologda Soil", appeared in the same journal (Gasparov 1994); it had been written much earlier but remained unpublished until then. At the beginning of my article, I mentioned the earliest known example of the Russian Galliambic metre: Vjacheslav Ivanov's huitain "The Vineyard of Dionysus". In his article, Gasparov referenced the Galliambic poems of Maximilian Voloshin and Nikolai Gumilev.[1] All these mentions, however, were brief and lacked detailed analysis.

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[1] Voloshin's and Adamovich's galliambics are also summarily discussed in Gasparov's book on Russian Silver Age verse forms (1993: 131–133).

Seventeen years later, V. A. Plungjan (2010) briefly addressed Ivanov's use of the Galliambic metre, describing it as trochaic verse with two additional inserted syllables. While this description is technically acceptable, it appears imprecise from a historical perspective. It is therefore worthwhile to examine the huitains of Ivanov and Gumilev in greater detail, particularly from the standpoint of what is commonly referred to as the semantics of metre.

2. Vjacheslav Ivanov's Experimental Galliambics

The Galliambic metre appeared in Russia for the first time in the work of the Symbolist poet Vjacheslav Ivanov, in the poem "The Vineyard of Dionysus", which is part of Ivanov's first published book of poetry, *Kormchie zvezdy* (*Guiding Stars*, 1903).

ВИНОГРАДНИКЪ ДІОНИСА
Ἄμπελος δ᾽ἦν κατηφής,
και σκυθρωπὸς οἶνος,
και βότρυς ὥσπερ δακρύων.
Himerius

Виноградникъ свой обходитъ, свой первоѝзбранный, Дионѝсъ;
Двѣ жены въ одеждахъ темныхъ – два виноградаря – вслѣдъ за нимъ.
Говоритъ двумъ скорбнымъ стражамъ – двумъ виноградарямъ – Дионѝсъ:
"Вы берите, Скорбь и Мѹка, вашъ, виноградари, острый ножъ;
Вы пожните, Скорбь и Мѹка, мой первоѝзбранный виноградъ!
Кровь сберите гроздій рдяныхъ, слезы кистей моихъ золотыхъ –
Жертву нѣгъ въ точило скорби, пурпуръ страданій въ точило нѣгъ;
Напоите влагой рьяной алыхъ восторговъ мой ярый Граль!"

English translation:

THE VINEYARD OF DIONYSUS
The vine (of Dionysus) was gloomy,
the grapes were gloomy,
and the bunch wept.
Himerius

Dionysus walks around his vineyard, his first-chosen one;
Two women in dark clothes – two vinedressers – follow him.
Dionysus speaks to the two sorrowful guards – two vinedressers:
"Take, Sorrow and Pain, your sharp knife, vinedressers;
Reap, Sorrow and Pain, my first-chosen grapes!
Gather the blood of the crimson clusters, the tears of my golden bunches –
The sacrifice of bliss into the winepress of sorrow,
the purple of suffering into the winepress of bliss;
Water my fervid Grail with the ardent moisture of scarlet raptures!"[2]

Galliambics were traditionally associated with the hymns that accompanied the rites in honor of Cybele and Attis. Yet Ivanov employs this metre to celebrate Dionysus – an entirely natural choice. The parallel between Attis and Dionysus was, by that time, so well established that even students in classical gymnasiums were expected to be familiar with it, as attested by Lübker's *Reallexikon des classischen Alterthums für Gymnasien* (1855: 250; translated into Russian in 1885):

Dieser lärmende Dienst stammte wahrscheinlich aus Thrakien und war die Veranlassung, dass Dionysos mit Kybele und Atys in Verbindung gesezt und mit *Sabazios* identificirt ward [...]

[This noisy service probably originated in Thrace and was the reason why Dionysus was associated with Cybele and Atys and identified with *Sabazius*.]

Franz Cumont's article "Attis" in *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie* (1896: 2250) expresses this connection even more explicitly:

Es lag also sehr nahe, den Gott [Attis] dem Dionysos gleichzusetzen.
[It was therefore very natural to equate this god (Attis) with Dionysus.]

Moreover, it is worth noting that in Catullus 63, Attis refers to himself as a *Maenad*, further underscoring the link between the two cults.

In a broader European context, Ivanov was not the first poet to compose a Galliambic hymn to Dionysus. As early as 1497, Michael Marullus (c. 1458–1500) published his *Hymn to Bacchus* in Galliambic verse (*Hymni naturales* I, 6). In the decades that followed, three other poets produced similar works: in 1515, the

[2] Here and elsewhere, translations from Russian and German are mine, unless otherwise noted.

young Marco Antonio Flaminio (1498–1550) published a song to Bacchus; in 1554, Marc Antoine Muret (1526–1585) put out a brief Galliambic poem celebrating Dionysus under various names; and in 1561, Julius Caesar Scaliger's (1484–1558) *Hymn to Bacchus* appeared (Campbell 1960). It is evident that the idea of composing hymns to Dionysus in galliambics naturally occurred to several poets.

Ivanov was deeply influenced by Nietzsche's ideas on the Apollonian and Dionysian principles. He took the syncretic religion of the dying and rising god seriously, making it the foundation of his own poetic vision. Ivanov's extreme syncretism led him to see all dying and rising gods as manifestations of a single, unified phenomenon, so that the cults of Osiris, Adonis, Dionysus, and Christ were, in his eyes, merely local variants of the same archetype. Attis, too, is included in this group. Although in Catullus' poem, Attis is a young Greek who becomes a priest of Cybele, Attis was also worshipped as a god, with his cult practiced not only in Asia Minor but also in Rome. For Ivanov, the dual nature of Attis – as both a priest and a god – suggested that a priest of a divinity could become identified with the divinity itself. This merging of a priest, sacrifice, and deity was a concept cherished by "Dionysian" Nietzscheans such as Ivanov and his disciple Maximilian Voloshin, as will be discussed later.

The penetration of Eastern cults into Rome was a fashionable topic in Ivanov's time.[3] As a historian, he was naturally interested in the cult of Cybele and Attis; as a philologist, he could hardly have overlooked the influential article on Galliambic verse by the preeminent German scholar Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff (1879).[4] The opening sentence of this article is a must-read for every student of metrical semantics:

> Die Galliamben sind das letzte griechische Versmaß, in dem Form und Inhalt völlig congruent sind, sich gegenseitig so nothwendig zu bedingen scheinen, dass ein Gedicht auf Attis in anderm Maß gerade so stilwidrig wäre, wie Galliamben für einen andern Stoff. (Wilamowitz-Möllendorff 1879: 194)
>
> [Galliambics are the last Greek verse measure in which form and content are completely congruent, seeming to condition each other so essentially that a poem on Attis in a different measure would be just as stylistically inappropriate as galliambics for another subject.]

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[3] As an example, Hugo Hepding's thesis on the cult of Attis (1903) is dated the same year as Ivanov's poetic book, although Ivanov's book was in fact published a year earlier.

[4] Ivanov later dedicated an article to Wilamowitz (Iwanow 1934).

This thesis may have had a significant influence on the poetic ideology of the Russian poet. Ivanov, therefore, sought a metre that would correspond to the content of his poem, ensuring, as Wilamowitz suggested, a true interdependence between form and meaning. Since the meaning of Ivanov's Russian poem is not immediately transparent, it is worthwhile to clarify its content and justify the progression of the poetic narrative.

The first two lines establish the "Dionysian" theme and context. However, the poem then takes an unexpected turn: the winegrowers – servants of Dionysus – are revealed to be Sorrow and Pain (Suffering) themselves. Above all, the allusions to Chapter 14 of the Book of Revelation (Apocalypse) are unmistakably present here.

> 14 Then I looked and there was a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud one who looked like a son of man, with a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.
> 15 Another angel came out of the temple, crying out in a loud voice to the one sitting on the cloud, "Use your sickle and reap the harvest, for the time to reap has come, because the earth's harvest is fully ripe."
> 16 So the one who was sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.
> 17 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven who also had a sharp sickle.
> 18 Then another angel [came] from the altar, [who] was in charge of the fire, and cried out in a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Use your sharp sickle and cut the clusters from the earth's vines, for its grapes are ripe".
> 19 So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and cut the earth's vintage. He threw it into the great wine press of God's fury.
> 20 The wine press was trodden outside the city and blood poured out of the wine press to the height of a horse's bridle for two hundred miles.

Ivanov's Dionysus is suddenly revealed as a figure drawn from the Apocalypse. But where do the personified figures of Sorrow and Pain come from, and what role do they play in the poem? These figures are inspired by Nietzsche's works.

The apocalyptic imagery – "the world is ripe and will be harvested" – which I have just mentioned, is found in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (*Also sprach Zarathustra*, 1883–1885), specifically in Part IV, in the section "The Song of Drunkenness" ("Das trunkne Lied"). Nietzsche's text, in my view, illuminates the development of the Dionysian theme in Ivanov's poem, particularly the emergence of Sorrow and Pain as personified characters. After referencing the harvest of the world and the winegrower's knife (which will

later be mentioned in Ivanov's poem), Nietzsche introduces Sorrow and Pain as personifications. In the poem's conclusion, he speaks of the intertwining and binding together of pain and pleasure (or even voluptuousness), which may help explain Ivanov's final semantic chiasmus:

6 [...] die Welt selber ward reif, die Traube bräunt,
– nun will sie sterben, vor Glück sterben. [...]

9 Du Weinstock! Was preisest du mich! Ich schnitt dich doch! Ich bin grausam, du blutest –: was will dein Lob meiner trunkenen Grausamkeit?
„Was vollkommen ward, alles Reife – will sterben!" so redest du. Gesegnet, gesegnet sei das Winzermesser! [...]
Weh spricht: „Vergeh! Weg, du Wehe!" Aber alles, was leidet, will leben, daß es reif werde und lustig und sehnsüchtig [...]
Weh spricht: „Brich, blute, Herz!" [...] *Weh spricht: „vergeh!"*

10 [...] Schmerz ist auch eine Lust, Fluch ist auch ein Segen, Nacht ist auch eine Sonne – geht davon oder ihr lernt: ein Weiser ist auch ein Narr.
Sagtet ihr jemals ja zu einer Lust? Oh, meine Freunde, so sagtet ihr ja auch zu *allem* Wehe. Alle Dinge sind verkettet, verfädelt, verliebt [...]

English translation by Thomas Common:

6 [...] The world itself hath become ripe, the grape turneth brown,
– Now doth it wish to die, to die of happiness. [...]

9 Thou grapevine! Why dost thou praise me? Have I not cut thee! I am cruel, thou bleedest–: what meaneth thy praise of my drunken cruelty?
"Whatever hath become perfect, everything mature – wanteth to die!" so sayest thou. Blessed, blessed be the vintner's knife! [...]
Woe saith: "Hence! Go! Away, thou woe!" But everything that suffereth wanteth to live, that it may become mature and lively and longing [...]
Woe saith: "Break, bleed, thou heart!" [...] *Woe saith: "Hence! Go!"*

10 [...] Pain is also a joy, curse is also a blessing, night is also a sun – go away! or ye will learn that a sage is also a fool.

> Said ye ever Yea to one joy? O my friends, then said ye Yea also unto *all* woe. All things are enlinked, enlaced and enamoured [...][5]

This idea of mixing pain with joy and pleasure is also present at the end of *The Birth of the Tragedy of the Spirit of Music* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, 1872), in the penultimate section 24:

> Das Dionysische, mit seiner selbst am **Schmerz** perzipierten **Urlust**, ist der gemeinsame Geburtsschoß der Musik und des tragischen Mythus.
>
> [The Dionysian, with its primal **pleasure** perceived even in **pain**, is the common birthplace of music and tragic myth.]

In Ivanov, we witness an attempt to forge his own tragic myth: the Dionysian fusion understood in the Nietzschean sense – of bliss and sorrow, suffering and joy – is intertwined with apocalyptic visions of the world's end, while the world, harvested like grapes, is identified with the sacrificed deity. The triumph of Dionysus coincides with the Apocalypse. In the final lines of the huitain, Dionysus, evoking the image of the Grail, is already cast in the role of Christ ("*my* fervid Grail", says Dionysus), alluding to the anticipated resurrection of the world in the Christian tradition.

In line with Wilamowitz's thesis on the essential congruity of form and content – and given the identification of Attis with Dionysus – Ivanov had every reason to employ the Galliambic metre, the traditional metre of the mysteries of Cybele and Attis, to express his own Dionysian and Christian myth.

At this point, a few words are in order regarding the relationship between metre and rhythm. I will follow the technical definition used by the Russian Formalists, considering rhythm as a realization of metre, that is, the material embodiment (in language) of an ideal metrical scheme. Let us now examine how the Russian Galliambic metre is manifested in Ivanov's huitain. It is generally agreed that the basic pattern of the Galliambic line is a minor Ionic catalectic tetrameter:

⏑⏑ – – | ⏑⏑ – – | ⏑⏑ – – | ⏑⏑ –

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[5] Compare an interweaving in Ivanov's poem: *The sacrifice of bliss into the winepress of sorrow, the purple of suffering into the winepress of bliss.*

In practice, two-thirds of the lines in Catullus' poem have the following form:

⏑⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – – ‖ ⏑⏑ – ⏑⏑⏑⏑⏒

In Ivanov's case, the pattern is as follows:

⏑⏑ – ⏑ | – ⏑ – ⏑ ‖ ⏒⏑⏑ – | ⏑⏑ ⏑⏑ –
⏒⏑ – ⏑ | – ⏑ – ⏑ ‖ – ⏑⏑ – | ⏑⏑ ⏒⏑ –
⏑⏑ – ⏑ | – ⏑ – ⏑ ‖ – ⏑⏑ – | ⏑⏑ ⏑⏑ –
⏒⏑ – ⏑ | – ⏑ – ⏑ ‖ – ⏑⏑ – | ⏑⏑ – ⏑ –
⏒⏑ – ⏑ | – ⏑ – ⏑ ‖ ⏒⏑⏑ – | ⏑⏑ ⏑⏑ –
– ⏑ – ⏑ | – ⏑ – ⏑ ‖ – ⏑⏑ – | ⏑ – ⏑⏑ –
– ⏑ – ⏑ | – ⏑ – ⏑ ‖ – ⏑⏑ – | ⏑⏑ – ⏑ –
⏑⏑ – ⏑ | – ⏑ – ⏑ ‖ – ⏑⏑ – | ⏑⏑ – ⏑ –

For Ivanov's Galliambic verse, the new basic form of meter should not be considered the Ionic tetrameter, but rather the form most frequently found in Catullus. Ivanov modified this by requiring the pre-caesura syllable to be obligatorily unstressed (whereas in Catullus this syllable was obligatorily long, which in Russian metrics should correspond to a stressed syllable). In other words, Ivanov made the first hemistich trochaic and extended this trochaic inertia into the second hemistich by adding a stressed ("long") syllable immediately after the caesura. The characteristic cluster of four unstressed syllables (equivalent to Catullus's short syllables) in the second hemistich is preserved, and this should be regarded as a *metrical*, rather than a *rhythmic*, feature.

We observe that the first lines of both quatrains are rhythmically almost equivalent, as if at the beginning of each quatrain Ivanov establishes a paeonic matrix for the second hemistich: paeon fourth plus hyperpaeon fifth, which subsequently varies in the following lines of the quatrain. It is perhaps this form that should be considered basic, rather than the form of lines 2–4 in each quatrain – that is, not the form with a stressed syllable after the caesura.

Ivanov's huitain was the first – and, at the time, the only – example of Galliambic verse in Russian poetry. Strictly speaking, it is impossible to draw a clear distinction between metre and rhythm in this context, since there is no universally accepted ideal pattern that could serve as the definitive metre. However, it can be argued that the Russian Galliambic metre, as it developed, was derived from the Catullan rhythm – a process known as metrization of rhythm (Shapir 1990; Pilshchikov 2024: 100–106).

M. L. Gasparov, one of the foremost authorities on Russian versification, regarded the Russian Galliambic metre as essentially trochaic, but with an

extension (i.e., with one extra syllable inserted in the second hemistich). In his *Russian Verse at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century in Comments*, Gasparov devotes one chapter to "Galliambics and loosened Galliambics", where he writes:

> The basis of the [Russian] Galliambic metre is a trochaic foot; to the Russian ear, strict Galliambic verse without any dissolution is perceived as a trochaic line of eight feet (with a caesura after the fourth foot), extended at the end by an extra syllable.[6]

Gasparov analyzed Voloshin's verse, not Ivanov's; this is why he speaks only about one "extra syllable". Building on this view, Plungjan conjectures:

> Canonical Galliambic verse on Russian soil consists of two hemistichs, each with four ictuses: one is a regular trochee, and the other is the same trochee, but with an additional syllable between the 2nd and 3rd ictus. In Vjacheslav Ivanov, this scheme is realized unconventionally: an extra syllable in the second hemistich appears twice, between the 1st and 2nd ictus and then between the 2nd and 3rd ictus. For this reason, we speak of a "derivative of the Galliambic metre", rather than Galliambic verse in the strict sense.[7]

I find this position difficult to accept. First, there cannot be a "Russian Galliambic metre in the strict sense" in principle, given the non-quantitative nature of Russian metrics. Second, since Ivanov's poem was the first and only example of galliambics in Russian at that time, it could not be considered a "derivative"; rather, it was *the* Russian Galliambic metre. Finally, in my view, the definitions offered by Gasparov and Plungian are inadequate, as they fail to account for the genesis of the meter: Russian Galliambic verse originated from the Catullan rhythm, not from the trochee. Therefore, we should not speak of "omitted" metrical stresses in the second hemistich (a "pyrrhic" in place of a

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6 "В основе галлиямба лежит хореическая стопа; на русский слух строгий, без распущений галлиямб воспринимается как 8-ст. хорей (с цезурой после 4-й стопы), затянутый на конце лишним слогом" (Gasparov 1993: 132–133).

7 "Канонический галлиямб на русской почве состоит из двух 4-иктных полустиший, одно из которых представляет собой правильный хорей, а другое тот же хорей, но с дополнительным слогом между 2 и 3 иктом. У Вяч. Иванова эта схема реализована нестандартно – дополнительный слог во втором полустишии встречается дважды, между 1 и 2 и между 2 и 3 иктом, поэтому мы и говорим о «деривате галлиямба», а не о галлиямбе в точном смысле" (Plungjan 2010: 298–299).

"trochee"), but rather of extraschematic (ostensibly, "trochaic") stresses – when they do appear, as in lines 6–8 of Ivanov's huitain.

3. Maximilian Voloshin's Strict Galliambics

A few years after the publication of Ivanov's poem, a second example of Russian galliambics appeared: in 1907, Maximilian Voloshin took up Ivanov's challenge and found a similar, yet distinct, use for this metre, advancing it even further than his predecessor. The poem was published in the Moscow-based Symbolist magazine *Zolotoe Runo* (*Golden Fleece*) as part of a cycle titled "Terre antique". In 1910, it was republished in Voloshin's collection of poetry, *Stikhotvoreniia. 1900–1910* (*Poems, 1900–1910*), where it is divided into two quatrains:

Я иду дорогой скорбной въ мой безрадостный Коктебель...
По нагорьямъ тернъ узорный и кустарники въ серебрѣ.
По долинамъ тонкимъ дымомъ розовѣетъ внизу миндаль
И лежитъ земля страстная въ черныхъ ризахъ и ораряхъ.

Припаду я къ острымъ щебнямъ, къ сѣрымъ срывамъ размытыхъ горъ,
Причащусь я горькой соли задыхающейся волны,
Обовью я чобромъ, мятой и полынью сѣдой чело.
Здравствуй, ты, въ веснѣ распятый, мой торжественный Коктебель!

[I walk the path of suffering towards my gloomy Koktebél
On the high plateaus, embroideries of thorns and silver bushes.
Down in the valleys the almond trees turn pink like fine smoke,
And the passionate earth lies in black chasubles and orarions.

I will press myself against the sharp pebbles,
against the grey cliffs of the eroded mountains,
I will commune with the bitter salt of the gasping wave,
I'll gird my brow with thyme, mint and silver wormwood.
Hail, thou crucified in spring, my triumphant Koktebél!]

Koktebel, the Crimean village on the Black Sea where Voloshin lived, plays a central role in his poetic vision. Near the village stand the dramatic rock formations created by the ancient volcanic eruptions of Karadag. Voloshin's relationship with this landscape was profoundly mystical; he even believed that the outline of a cliff mirrored his own profile.

Examining Voloshin's poems from this period, we see that he developed his own unique, local chthonic cult: the cult of Mother Earth, embodied in the land of Koktebel. Moreover, it is likely that, for Voloshin, *Koktebel* was an anagram of *Kybele*. In his huitain, the earth is portrayed as a suffering deity – both "passionate" and "crucified", with these two adjectives occupying the same metrical position. At the same time, the earth wears the priestly vestments ("chasubles and orarions"), so that the deity (Mother Earth) is both the sacrificial offering and the priest.

As for the poet himself:

a) He walks the path of suffering, explicitly comparing himself to Christ, thus casting himself as a sacrificial victim, like Christ;

b) He presses himself against the ground and communes with a wave that washes over the earth, thereby identifying himself with the earth, which is both a divinity and an object of worship. In this way, he becomes himself a divinity – by participation, as Lévy-Bruhl might have put it;

c) He wears a crown on his head – a traditional symbol of sacrifice, marking the victim led to the altar. It is no coincidence that this crown is woven from aromatic herbs; in other poems, Voloshin describes the rituals of his invented cult, including the burning of fragrant herbs to summon the soul of a loved one from the underworld.

All of this is skillfully constructed, with clear allusions to Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, subtler references to the Greek etymology of the names of aromatic herbs, and more (refer to my article Dobritsyn 1993 for further details).

Let us return to the question of metre. Why does Voloshin employ the Galliambic metre here? Like Ivanov, Voloshin seeks a form that matches the unique religious cult he has created; his hymn demands a particular and distinctive structure, which Galliambic verse provides. The huitain is narrated in the first person and culminates in an invocation of the divinity – in other words, it is presented as a genuine hymn to Koktebel equated with Mother Earth and Cybele. Thus, galliambics are arguably even more appropriate for Voloshin's cult of the Koktebel land than for Ivanov's apocalyptic myth of Dionysus's vineyard.

The distribution of stresses in Voloshin's Galliambic poem reveals an almost perfect symmetry:

– ∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ ‖ – ∪ | – ∪ | ∪ ∪∪ –
∪∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ ‖ ∪∪ | – ∪ | ∪ ∪∪ –
∪∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ ‖ ∪∪ | – ∪ | ∪ – ∪ –
∪∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ ‖ – ∪ | – ∪ | ∪ ∪∪ –

∪∪|–∪|–∪|–∪‖–∪|–∪|∪–∪–
∪∪|–∪|–∪|–∪‖∪∪|–∪|∪∪∪–
∪∪|–∪|–∪|–∪‖∪∪|–∪|∪–∪–
–∪|–∪|–∪|–∪‖–∪|–∪|∪∪∪–

Voloshin shortened Ivanov's verse, having effectively constructed a new metrical form (cf. Shapir 1996: 283). The symmetry in the variations of accentual rhythm points to a predetermined regularity – a strict, almost algorithmic pattern, in other words, true metricity. The first and last lines are rhythmically identical, they both end with the phrase "*my (+ a tetrasyllabic adjective) Koktebél*", and their syntactic structure reinforces parallelism, which is further reinforced by inexact rhymes in the first hemistichs of lines 1–2 and 7–8: "*skórbnoj – uzórnyj*" and "*mjátoj – raspjátyj*". The pyrrhics at the beginning of each hemistich in both quatrains are also arranged with regularity, following a symmetrical pattern. As in Ivanov's poem, the accumulation of unstressed syllables at the end of the line can be considered a metrical feature canonized by Catullus. Consequently, we may speak of extraschematic stresses at the end of lines 3, 5 and 7.

If we consider metre as an algorithm that renders the ictic structure predictable, and rhythm as the principle that allows for unpredictable accentual variations within that structure, then we cannot distinguish between metre and rhythm in Voloshin's huitain, because we cannot say, for example, which line embodies the ideal metrical scheme – the first or the second. We are thus compelled to speak of an indissoluble metro-rhythmical unit.

4. Nikolai Gumilev's Galliambics

Four years after Voloshin, in 1911, the Petersburg-based Symbolist magazine *Apollon* (*Apollo*) published Nikolai Gumilev's Galliambic poem, a revised version of which was published next year in his poetic book *Chuzhoe nebo* (*Alien Sky*, 1912) under the title "Zhizn'" ("Life"). Unlike the previous Galliambic poems, Gumilev's huitain is fully rhymed and divided graphically into two quatrains from the very beginning:

Съ тусклымъ взоромъ, съ мертвымъ сердцемъ въ морѣ броситься со скалы,
Въ часъ, когда, какъ знамя, въ небѣ дымно-розовая заря,
Иль въ темницѣ стать свободнымъ, какъ свободны одни орлы,
Иль найти покой нежданный въ дымной хижинѣ дикаря!

Да, я понялъ. Символъ жизни – не поэтъ, что творитъ слова,
И не воинъ съ твердымъ сердцемъ, не работникъ, ведущій плугъ,
– Съ иронической усмешкой царь-ребенокъ на шкурѣ льва,
Забывающій игрушки между бѣлыхъ усталыхъ рукъ.

[Eyes extinguished, heart dead, thrown off a rock into the sea,
At the hour when, like a banner, in the sky is a smoky pink dawn,
Or become free in prison, as only eagles are free,
Or find unexpected peace in the smoke-filled hut of the savage!

Yes, I understand. The symbol of life is not the poet who creates words,
Nor the hard-hearted warrior, nor the labourer who leads the plough,
– With an ironic smile, the child-king in a lion's skin,
Forgetting his toys in his tired white hands.]

When reading this poem in Russian, it is not immediately apparent that it is composed in Galliambic metre, as the rhyme scheme artfully conceals the underlying structure.

I want to offer a few remarks on the meaning of this poem, beginning with its conclusion. Here, a child with white hands, weary from play, is contrasted with the poet as creator, the laborer as worker, and the warrior as a figure of hard resolve. This is no ordinary child, but a child-king. This child-king, who holds toys and symbolizes life, comes from Heraclitus' famous fragment B 52, though perhaps not without the influence of Nietzsche's Basel lecture on Heraclitus:

αἰὼν παῖς ἐστι παίζων, πεσσεύων· παιδὸς ἡ βασιληίη

[Time (αἰών, 'time of life, era, eternity') is a child playing draughts; kingship is a child's.]

This fragment of Heraclitus[8] is also quoted in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, almost immediately after the already cited phrase about the kinship of pain and pleasure. "The Dionysian, with its primal pleasure, itself perceived in pain, is the common womb of music and tragic myth", writes Nietzsche, and the next paragraph reads:

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[8] The enigmatic fragment has been interpreted in numerous ways; for those interested in exploring its many meanings, I recommend the collection of articles by David Bouvier and Véronique Dasen (2020).

> [...] wir [...] ein dionysisches Phänomen zu erkennen haben, das uns immer von neuem wieder das spielende Aufbauen und Zertrümmern der Individualwelt als den Ausfluß einer Urlust offenbart, in einer ähnlichen Weise, wie wenn von Heraklit dem Dunklen die weltbildende Kraft einem Kinde verglichen wird, das spielend Steine hin und her setzt und Sandhaufen aufbaut und wieder einwirft.
>
> [We ... have to recognise a Dionysian phenomenon, which reveals to us again and again the playful building and shattering of the individual world as the outflow of a primal lust, in a similar way as when Heraclitus the Dark compares the world-forming force to a child who playfully places stones back and forth and builds up heaps of sand and throws them in again.]

Let us now turn to the first quatrain of Gumilev's poem. All the verbs used here are in the infinitive form.[9] Infinitive constructions, lacking personal verb forms, are not anchored to any specific moment in time and thus convey a sense of timeless generalization. Alexander Zholkovsky, who has studied almost four hundred "infinitive poems" (Zholkovsky 2020), including Gumilev's, observes that "the semantic halo of infinitive writing" is "meditation on an alternative path in life" (Zholkovsky 2000: 188).

This observation also holds for Gumilev's "Life". In this case, the "alternative path in life" is one of withdrawal – stepping away from a busy lifestyle, leaving behind all activities, even departing from life itself (as in the image of throwing oneself off a rock).[10] This is why the playing child is contrasted with the active figures of the poet, the worker, and the warrior. The Heraclitan Aion is the domain of the playful child, not of the creator or the warrior. For early-twentieth-century poets, the word "Aion" (or "Eon") could refer to an era, a century, a human lifespan, or even eternity. When Gumilev describes the child-king as a symbol of life, for him, "the symbol of life" probably means 'the symbol of the century'. The meaning, then, is as follows: our century belongs neither to poets, nor warriors, nor workers; it is a century that is weary, spoiled, and decadent.

We can understand now why Gumilev chose Galliambic verse for such content. In antiquity, the Galliambic metre – used in the songs and dances of the eunuch priests of Cybele – had a somewhat dubious reputation. It was

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[9] The only finite verb in the second quatrain, *tvorit* ('creates'), was only added in the 1912 redaction of Gumilev's poem. Instead of "не поэтъ, что творитъ слова" ['not the poet who creates words'], the original version reads: "не жена, что всегда жива" ['not the ever-living woman'], i.e. Goethe's and Vladimir Soloviev's *das Ewig-Weibliche*.

[10] On the choice between life and death and even "between different death scenarios" in twentieth-century infinitive poetry, see Zholkovsky 2005: 466–469.

considered weak, languid, effeminate, and even frivolous. In fact, all Ionic metres were viewed in this light (Morgan 2010). Varro offers a telling testimony (Varro, *Men. Sat.* 360): Ἀχιλλέως ἡρωϊκὸς, ἰωνικὸς κιναίδου ['the rhythm of Achilles is heroic, the Ionic that of the catamite (pervert)']. Martial (II, 86) expresses a similar sentiment specifically about galliambics:

> nec dictat mihi luculentus Attis
> mollem debilitate galliambon...
>
> [(...Because) the elegant Attis does not dictate to me
> the languorous galliambic...]

Later, Quintilian deemed galliambics obscene and lascivious, referring to them as *parvi pedes* – 'petty feet' (*Inst. Orat.* IX, 4 [De compositione], 6):

> Fortius vero quod incompositum potest esse, quam vinctum, et bene collocatum? neque, si parvi pedes vim detrahunt rebus, ut Sotadeorum et Galliamborum, et quorumdam in oratione simili pæne licentia lascivientium, compositionis est judicandum.

H. E. Butler's translation in Loeb Classical Library:

> How can a style which lacks orderly structure be stronger than one that is welded together and artistically arranged? It must not be regarded as the fault of the study of structure that the employment of feet consisting of short syllables such as characterise the Sotadean and Galliambic metres and certain prose rhythms closely resembling them in wildness, weakens the force of our matter.

Gumilev's use of Galliambic verse suggests that the symbol of our century can only be evoked through a metre that is itself tired, languid, and effeminate – qualities that resonate with the spirit of the age.

In Gumilev's Galliambic poem, there is none of the symmetry found in Voloshin or even Ivanov. Instead, we observe a kind of anti-symmetry: in the first hemistich, there are few pyrrhics, while in the second hemistich, they are numerous. In the second quatrain, the pattern is reversed: the first hemistich contains more pyrrhics, while the second hemistich has fewer:

– ∪ – ∪ – ∪ – ∪ ‖ – ∪ – ∪∪ ∪∪ –
– ∪ – ∪ – ∪ – ∪ ‖ – ∪ – ∪∪ ∪∪ –
⏑∪ – ∪ – ∪ – ∪ ‖ ⏑∪ – ∪∪ – ∪ –
⏑∪ – ∪ – ∪ – ∪ ‖ – ∪ – ∪∪ ∪∪ –

– ∪ – ∪ – ∪ – ∪ ‖ ∪∪ – ∪∪ – ∪ –
∪∪ – ∪ – ∪ – ∪ ‖ ∪∪ – ∪∪ – ∪ –
∪∪ – ∪∪ ∪ – ∪ ‖ – ∪ – ∪∪ – ∪ –
∪∪ – ∪∪ ∪ – ∪ ‖ – ∪ – ∪∪ – ∪ –

It seems possible to offer an interpretation of this anti-symmetry.

Let us begin with the observation that Gumilev's poem shares a feature also found in Catullus. To fill the sequence of four or five short syllables required by the rhythm of Catullus's galliambics, the Latin poet repeatedly employs long adjectives, many of which are neologisms: *ederigerae* (22), *properipedem* (34), *sonipedibus* (41), *erifugae* (51), *nemorivagus* (72).

To fill the sequence of four unstressed syllables demanded by the metrical scheme of the Russian Galliambic metre, Russian poets resorted to the same device, which is natural for the Russian language (Gasparov, Skulacheva 2004: 74–75; Zhirmunsky 1966 [1925]: 117–119). Ivanov twice repeats the adjective *pervoizbrannyj* ('first-chosen'), a rare word but one found in church texts (e.g., "Petr, pervoizbrannyj apostolov" – 'Peter, first-chosen of the apostles') and recorded in Dahl's dictionary. In Voloshin's poem, we see in the same position two adjectives and one participle: *bezradostnyj* ('joyless'), *zadykhajushchejsja* ('suffocating'), *torzhestvennyj* ('solemn'); all three words are fairly common. Gumilev, like Catullus, creates his own adjective *dymno-rozovaja* ('smoky-pink') specifically to create a sequence of unaccented positions in the second half of the Galliambic line.

In the first quatrain, Gumilev marks the end of each line with a long adjective, presenting a "normal" Galliambic line. In the second quatrain, however, a five-syllable adjective and an equally long participle are shifted to the first hemistich. This repositioning, from the very outset, symbolizes the languor of the "child-century" and it explains the asymmetry in the distribution of pyrrhics in "Life".

In this way, Gumilev aspires to establish the same correspondence between poetic form and content that Wilamowitz identified in Catullus' poem. However, unlike Ivanov or Voloshin, Gumilev approaches the metre without hieratic piety, for he does not intend to construct a new cult (as Ivanov or Voloshin did), nor does he allude to any existing one. In his case, the distinction between rhythm and metre becomes apparent – not because he is following in the footsteps of two predecessors, but because, for him, the Galliambic metre is a ready-made form, rather than a new structure invented in the act of creation. At the same time, he relies on an underlying philosophical subtext no less substantial than that of his predecessors.

To conclude my discussion of Gumilev's huitain, I wish to offer a brief comment on its phonetic qualities. One of Cybele's epithets is Dindymene, the mistress of Mount Dindymon – *domina Dindymi*. When this phrase appears in verse, it becomes a kind of phonetic play, imitating the timpani of Cybele's servants:

Dea magna, dea Cybēbē, dea, **domina Dindymī**... (Cat. 63.91)

Gumilev seems to have noticed this phonetic effect, and in the following lines, an anagram of *domina Dindymi* may be detected, which also involves Gumilev's neologism:

...V chás, ko**gd**á, kak z**nám**ja, v nébe **dỳmn**o-rózovaja zarjá,
Il' v te**mn**ítse stàt' svobó**dnym,** kak svobó**dny** o**dní** orlý,
Il' najtí pokój nezh**dán**nyj v **dýmn**oj khízhine dikarjá!

5. Georgij Adamovich's Loosened Galliambics

The last example of Russian Galliambic verse is Georgij Adamovich's long narrative poem "Vologodskij angel" ("The Angel of Vologda", 1916). I will not dwell on it here, as it is the most direct imitation of Catullus' *Attis* – essentially an adaptation of the original plot. In this version, the role of Attis is played by Alyosha, a pure and pious young provincial, while Cybele is represented by the widow of a Moscow merchant, who, according to rumor, has killed her husband. To escape temptation, Alyosha flees into the forest, where he ultimately dies. The poem and its rhythmic features have already been thoroughly analyzed in Gasparov's 1993 book and his 1994 article. Gasparov describes Adamovich's meter as follows (optional elements are parenthesised), warning that some lines do not conform to it:

⏑⏑ – ⏑⏑ (⏑)⏑ – ⏑ || ⏑⏑ – ⏑⏑ (⏑)⏑ –

6. Conclusion

Galliambic verse entered Russian poetry through the oeuvre of Vyacheslav Ivanov, who infused the Dionysian themes with Nietzschean overtones. Maximilian Voloshin, one of Ivanov's disciples, deepened the ritualistic

dimension of this metre by employing it in a kind of hymn to Mother Earth represented by the ancient land of Koktebel in Crimea, where he settled.

Nikolai Gumilev, another of Ivanov's followers, reinterpreted the Galliambic's semantics, emphasizing themes of weariness, languor, and morbidity. Gumilev both concealed the Galliambic metre beneath his rhyme scheme and introduced an additional archaic element – an allusion to Heraclitus. Under Gumilev's pen, the Galliambic metre became not a ritualistic, but a philosophical form.

Georgij Adamovich's poem, produced by a younger poet far removed from the Symbolist circle's refinement, represents the last significant attempt to use Galliambic verse in Russian poetry: it is an adaptation of Catullus' *Attis* set in Russia. Later uses of this rare metre are found only in translations of Catullus, some of which are quite successful.[11]

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