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**VALERY BRYUSOV'S *THE EARTH* AS AN EXPERIMENT
OF SCIENTIFIC POETRY**

*This paper describes that Bryusov's *The Earth* is a representative work of scientific poetry, and as such, any analysis or interpretation of this work must also adhere to the rules of scientific poetry. Bryusov believed that only the interaction of art and science is capable of manifesting modern culture, and the true function of art, the expansion of cognition, is achieved through scientific poetry; in other words, the convergence of these two fields forms an analogical relationship. The paper argues that *The Earth* develops a new cognitive methodology of scientific poetry that, while based on realistic concepts, also maintains an alternative perspective from reality.*

Keywords: *scientific poetry, science fiction, symbolism, tragedy, eschatology, trans-boundary aesthetics.*

Humans must leave Earth
in the next 200 years
if we want to survive
Stephen Hawking

1. Introduction

Valery Yakovlevich Bryusov (Валерий Яковлевич Брюсов) was one of the first theorists of symbolism and the first writers to craft works of symbolism in Russian literary history. Not only are his achievements far-reaching as a poet, playwright, novelist, literary theorist, publisher, translator, critic, and arguably other professions, but the general perceptions and evaluations of him are perhaps even more diverse. Despite laying the theoretical foundations for symbolism, Bryusov was careful not to fall into the trappings of dogma and mysticism, and while he did pave the way for the development of future symbolism, he chose not to walk the very path he established. The writer's conviction to avoid the trappings of symbolism alienated him, making him the subject of criticism from both schools of thought, that is, symbolists and critics of symbolism [1. P. 18]; however, Bryusov never balked or withdrew from his artistic ideology. For example, consider his declaration regarding his writing style: "I have never favored symbolism and I do not believe symbolism is the 'poetics of the future' as some fanatics say. My belief is that the poetics of symbolism bears a unique meaning regarding existence" [2. P. 29].

Bryusov opposed symbolistic excess as he believed it corrodes life and art, by opposing other symbolists who attempted to signify art as religious mysti-

cism or to erase any trace of reality by over-saturating life with art. By embracing the mantra “symbolism longed to be art and was always art” [2. P. 200] as his creed, he attempted to limit the scope of symbolism to only the domain of art. As his confession makes clear, “Although I am a symbolist, unfortunately, I am not a real symbolist” [1. P. 18]. Bryusov, stood on the border that divides symbolism, differing slightly with the tendencies of symbolism, yet, on the other hand, he crossed many other boundaries to integrate all characteristics of symbolism into his work.

Bryusov's career as a playwright makes his tendency to embrace symbolist views clear. *The Earth* (Земля, 1904) plainly shows the writer to be a man standing on the border of symbolism, which is obvious from the fact that the work is a science fiction play based on both scientific knowledge and the power of prediction. *The Earth* is rich with controversial and experimental ambivalence crossing the boundaries of symbolism, which emerge in opposition to scientific positivism combined with scientific imagination, confrontation between symbolists and humanists, and a subtle mix of hope and despair.

The purposefully ambivalent nature of the play has left the scholarship of the work divided in opinion. Of *The Earth's* finale Brodskaya said, “the death of the liberator is a reference to a praiseworthy and longed for moment for symbolists, namely a moment of sublime happiness on the eve of global integration and destruction” [3. P. 39], and the finale emphasizes the symbolic nature of the play. However, as the current work will show, it may be too much to say that *The Earth* represents symbolistic eschatology. In opposition to Brodskaya, Strashkova claims *The Earth* expresses “the hope that the Earth will achieve a new height of civilization” [4. P. 14]. Such an optimistic conclusion is also doubtful. Gerasimov, who best captures the true essence of the playwright's work, mentions the science fiction aspects of *The Earth* in his paper, “Bryusov's Science Fiction”, but even here does not fully identify the core principles of the play, such as the characters' personalities and the conflict structure. In addition to an analysis of *The Earth's* characters and genre, the current work argues that Bryusov's *boundary crossing aesthetics* defines his creative principles, which the writer realized as his own novel creation, namely, *scientific poetry* (Научная поэзия).

2. Triangle of Contradiction: Nevatl', Teopikski, and Teotl'

The play is set in an underground city many centuries in the future, where the human race has created a subterranean artificial environment due to an oxygen depletion of unknown origins. Additionally, a water shortage occurs as a vast reservoir supplying water begins to run dry, and the play opens with this background of humanity plunging towards their own destruction.

The human race, taking refuge underground, possesses advanced technical skills, and, although they capable of exception scientific feats, such as artificial oxygen production through chemical engineering, sophisticated architecture in the form of multi-storied underground living areas, and mechanical engineering that can encapsulate their entire society beneath a massive roof-feats well be-

yond the reach of the early 20th century, the level of civilization found in this underground world, hidden from the sun, has regressed much further into the past. Rather than overcoming crisis or making crisis a new opportunity to excel, this subterranean humanity has reverted back to a bygone era of undemocratic “enslavement” (“рабство”) [5. P. 70] under the dictatorship of the Consul. The space is described as a bleak living area, much like an ant hill. The roof of the city isolates its people and resembles a glass coffin housing corpses [6. P. 150]. Above all, historical degeneration is prominent as the achievements of human civilization, such as democracy, learning, and art, have all but vanished; in a place where the primary goal for each day is survival, there is no room for such pursuits. The reason being that “the fatal emotional feeling known as meaninglessness and the end of existence suffocates the human desire to feel, work, and reason” [7. P. 136]. To Bryusov, the destruction of culture and art was death itself. Political setbacks and the absence of artistic development, in juxtaposition to excellent scientific and technological progress, make it clear that such a complete imbalance in the world and life results in disharmony.

With the setting firmly in place, the two leaders, Teopikski and Teotl’, engage in an ideological struggle throughout the narrative. Fierce debates rage based on the means by which destruction might be realized, and these are the key topics that populate the first half of *The Earth*. While the story of *The Earth* unfolds in an abstract space and time designed by symbolism, the characters and actions do not adhere to the conventional formula of symbolism, but rather function in a manner of opposition or betrayal. The fuse of these two characters’ conflict is lit by the appearance of Nevatl’, the messenger of hope.

2.1. Ideological confrontation between Teotl’ and Teopikski

With the backdrop of impending doom firmly established, Nevatl’, the first of his people to see the Sun with his own eyes, appears and proposes that the roof be opened and that the people should return to the surface to live as the ancients lived, those who had worshiped the Sun. Without hesitation, Teopikski agrees with and actively supports Nevatl’ because he believes he has found a way to realize the end of humankind in the form of Nevatl’'s grand proposal. At this juncture, the mindset of Teopikski, a man who seeks a dignified end for humankind, and the mindset of Teotl’, leader of the Order of Liberators (“Орден освободителей”) who defines life itself as indignity, mark a clear divergence in motivation. Despite ultimately working toward the same result, the end of times, the ideological and philosophical chasm that separates these two characters is vast. This difference lends the power of suspense to the play and provides the driving force behind the plot all the way to the end.

Teotl’ rejects all reasonable judgment or historical progress owing to a deep belief in decadent eschatology. This character believes death is the only way to escape all irrationality and fault, and it is his mission to help humankind free itself of the confines of life through death: “Death and darkness are two great principles. < . . . > The love of death calms all souls and all men become utterly obedient to that love!” [5. P. 85].

Teotl's exaltation of a decadent death is an ideological disposition commonly seen in the works of early symbolists. These artists, who yearned for a transcendental world to replace the injustices of the real world and who were deeply immersed in religious mysticism rather than intellectual rationalism, thought death was an inevitable phase and fate leading the human race toward symbolistic purification and rehabilitation, and, as mortal beings, these symbolists revered death as an absolute truth that cannot be denied. Similarly, Teotl rejects all aspects of life and claims that death, which ends all irrationalities, is the optimal state when compared to the difficulties and pointlessness that infest life. People are unable to embrace the freedom of death due to fear and ignorance, and ultimately, they are doomed to inherit and repeat a life of suffering and shame for all time. As such, Teotl invokes the rite of massacre by organizing his Order of Liberators as a means by which to "liberate" the people from their state of timidity and ignorance. Therefore, Nevatl provides a fitting end for all of humankind in which the prophecy of the liberator—death—might be realized, and this collective initiation rite forms a passage of eternal peace for all people.

On the other hand, although the character Teopikski shares a common goal with Teotl, as he too wishes to hasten the destruction of humankind by misleading Nevatl, his perception of reality and worldview is in stark contrast to that of Teotl. First, consider Teopikski's historical philosophy which comments on the historical ontology of humankind: "We are intellectual beings of Earth and are standing on the edge. Thousands of years of history have passed, but we are essentially frozen in prehistoric times. < . . . > The super humans, who our ancestors longed for, never came. Humankind has remained merely human" [5. P. 80].

According to Teopikski, humans play the role of mediator linking the heavens and the earth. Although the history of humankind is a journey of procession to ascend to divinity with the help of some super human race, humankind lost this opportunity to advance and ultimately never evolved beyond the level of prehistory. However, despite such a failure, Teopikski claims the dignity and value of humanity must never be compromised. This is where the character's humanistic perspective of humankind being the metric by which all creation is evaluated reveals itself: "If I mean anything to you, fulfill my only dying wish: 'Stay human.' < . . . > If only a single person proudly shouts 'It is I' knowing fully of their own greatness in the face of immortality, then, believe me, the Earth will survive!" [Ibid. P. 70].

While Teotl views life as something that has always been and always will be irrational, believing that happiness is nothing more than a "fairy tale" ("сказка") [Ibid. P. 79], Teopikski acknowledges the impressive achievements made by our ancestors and demands that such achievement be respected and recorded as significant, additionally claiming that the dignity and value of human life must never be forgotten. Based on such awareness of reality, Teopikski's alternative perspective on the final days of humankind is thus derived:

Just as the Earth's animals and birds perished, so too will humanity. It is a truly pitiful and detestable end! The only thing I want is to save people from indignity [Ibid. P. 82].

Humanity can be saved with one swift motion. Yes, humanity will not perish like abandoned corpses and decaying debris. Let us fire up the funeral firewood! The primary duty fate passed on to man is to become the executioner! [5. P. 83].

For Teopikski, for humanity to accept their pitiful end complacently is an indignity; the character dreams of a realistic alternative where we voluntarily become our own executioners and honorably face our demise. Teotl's goal is to discard the deception of life and leap to his eternal death, while, on the other hand, the goal of Teopikski is to fight against the destructive power of death and secure eternal life; a collective mercy-killing is the only way to save humankind from indignity. The following table summarizes the contrasting ideas of these characters who form a clear dichotomy of "destruction for the sake of life" and "destruction for the sake of death":

	Teopikski	Teotl'
Goal	Eternal life	Eternal death
Diagnosis of Reality	Eventual indignity	Inevitable indignity
Duty of Humanity	To elevate humankind	To become the destroyer in the name of natural law
Realization Method	Transfer of knowledge	the Order of Liberators
Origin of the Universe	The Sun which is the power of creation and development	Death and darkness which are the two great principles
Classification of Death	Destruction of life	Liberation from life
View of History	Progressive	Retrogressive
View of Humanity	Emphasis on individuals and individuality	Emphasis on anonymous multitude with erased individuality
Alternative	Collective mercy-killing	Acceptance of death-savior

Although the two characters, who are clearly in mutual opposition in terms of their views on the cosmos and humanity, maintain a palpable conflict through the play as the physical manifestations of life and death, the composition of their conflict begins to dissolve in Act 3. Here, Teopikski and Teotl', obvious mortal enemies, come to the same conclusion regarding "the end of humankind". Teopikski favors the destruction of man when the same character had previously advocated humanity and human history, the foil to Teotl's terrible admiration of death. This shift in attitude plays a crucial role in the conflict structure of Bryusov's play, which comments on the fate of the Earth. As Teopikski professes to ignite the funeral pyre under the influence of Nevatl's claims, Nevatl' then quickly rises as a symbol of hope, and the people's attention turns to him.

Teopikski, depicted as being delusional, and Teotl' stand on opposite sides of the same spectrum, yet they ultimately arrive at the same conclusion, albeit for different reasons. Teopikski's commanding voice demands the people become the "executioners" of humankind and "raise the sword of ancestral rite that will slay your brothers", which is not terribly different from Teotl's own demands.

The collapse of the initial, tense conflict structure between the two characters, present through Act 2, is the destruction of the conventional (in particular, the destruction of “unity of action”) which is impossible to view as traditional dramaturgy. Along with the suppression of the struggle between good and evil and an awakening to the “plurality of truths”, this alignment of Teopiksi’s and Teotl’s goals is the product of a *boundary crossing* or *boundary suppressing* experiment which Bryusov sought at the time:

There are many truths. Those truths can also contradict each other. < . . . > My dream is to become the temple where all gods gather. Let us pray day and night to both Mitra and Adonis, and to both Christ and the Devil as well. “I” am the center point where all differences cease to exist and all boundaries dissolve away [8. P. 77].

Teopiksi and Teotl’, in spite of their opposing ideologies, reach the same conclusion, which then leads to an unconventional unfolding of the core conflict transferring to Nevatl’, and this in turn demonstrates Bryusov’s *boundary crossing* exploration that defies traditional symbolism. The playwright becomes a limitless house of coexistence for all gods by simultaneously summoning Christ and the Devil to his body.

2.2. Is Nevatl’ the messenger of hope?

Teopiksi, a symbol of intellect and learning, ultimately aligns himself with the pessimism of the strict eschatologist, Teotl’, and turns the foundation of the play’s conflict structure on its head. As the downfall of humanity waxes, the confrontational structure of good and evil wanes, and starting in Act 4, Nevatl’’s personal journey rises as the main thread in the story’s plot. After the emergence of Nevatl’, the play’s structure, previously based on a confrontation between good and evil substantiated by Teopiksi’s humanitarianism and Teotl’’s decadence, is then reborn as an ontological discussion on destruction and rehabilitation. Interestingly, Nevatl’, the only hope for human survival in the face of impending doom, stands in a position of power laughably weaker than the dramatic strength wielded by Teopiksi or Teotl’. Observe Nevatl’’s first realization of the reality of the situation:

We are one step away from extinction. The human race cease to be after our children’s generation. < . . . > We have covered the sky with a roof, installed artificial lights to compensate for the lack of a sun, and are breathing artificial air instead of free air. Our life has become a grotesque monster, and everything has been upturned and distorted [5. P. 82].

Nevatl’’s perception of reality is not so different from Teopiksi’s. According to Nevatl’, the human species has already reached a state of mental and physical collapse. What separates these two characters, however, is how they choose to respond to their inevitable future. To prevail over this so-called mon-

ster-like grotesque life, Nevatl' walks the path of the hero and sets out on an adventure, cradling the only remaining hope. This type of character, who embraces challenge, is rare among the works of symbolists, who instead view death as inescapable and hope as futile. Humanity's collective suicide seems all but certain, yet there remains a slight chance for hope [9. P. 435]. As Act 4 makes plain, however, this hero may not be up to the task, as Nevatl''s message of hope is denounced as merely reckless heroics and his dramatic role only fuels the determination of Teopikski to fulfill his plan. This act solely centers on Nevatl', and, through his meeting with Tlan and the Consul, Nevatl' reveals his inadequacy as the savior of humanity not only in character but also in philosophy.

The moment Nevatl' meets Tlan, the young lady rebukes our hero for his untimely delusions of grandeur. Nevatl' dismisses this remonstrance by saying that people's admiration and praise mean nothing to him because loneliness is an innate part of his being. Although the young man had assumed that his own pessimism was overcome by the passion of the lover's relationship, witnessing the vastness of the universe convinces him of the triviality of such love, and he claims that passion and love are no longer of any interest to him, being overshadowed by his new goal of saving humanity. In response to Nevatl''s logic, which discards love for the sake of salvation, Tlan responds by saying that it is a fallacy to attempt to save the human race when you are incapable of love:

Ahh! How lifeless are your words! This must be how you impressed the mob! You are going to preach of life? You should cure your own disease first! < . . . > When the people follow you, what will they do in your new Eden? If that place is only filled with unearthliness, devoid of love, anger, or despair, then we have no need for that kind of life. Rather than the Earth becoming an asexual ghost in the universe, it would be better to simply disappear! [5. P. 89].

This scathing attack, admonishing worlds that revere only sublime ideas and diminish human emotion to meaninglessness, exposes Nevatl''s soteriology to be nothing more than foolish adventurism woefully lacking any humanistic foundation or thought. Nevatl''s claims are indeed absent of any denial or confirmation concerning the oxygen shortage as well as lacking any strategy or countermeasure should his plan fail. Nevatl' glamorizes his own paradoxes as the "will of destiny" ("воля судьбы") [Ibid. P. 90], using this to his advantage to justify the hero's dangerous challenge. However, Tlan has pinpointed the greatest weakness of Nevatl''s claims which is that they are in direct contradiction with each other. Through his inability to provide a valid and objective reason for opening the roof, and through his inability to understand the ultimate purpose of life, Nevatl', the hero, opposes himself and demonstrates ineligibility to become the protector of hope capable of challenging Teopikski and Teotl' who wish for destruction.

The flaws of Nevatl' are accentuated further in the scene with the couple Katontli and Yatla in Act 5. Unlike the cold-hearted Nevatl', Katontli appreciates and understands the value of love and the meaning of life. Considering the content and context, the short dialogue between Katontli and Yatla create a sharp contrast when compared to Nevatl' and Tlan:

That was the happiest moment of my life. You were mine and my love for you was also different then. My love for you at the time was based on bliss, and the happiness of the passion you gave me. < . . . > My love for you now is purer and more truthful. [5. P. 96].

Katontli's avowal, emphasizing his love as more sublime than death, counters the love of Nevatl', who puts duty before love, relinquishes the lovers' first meeting, and emphasizes biological life over spiritual life. Katontli waits for the end of days but maintains the ethical and mental character of a human, marking a world of difference with Nevatl''s naiveness, blinded by excitement and an immature obsession to save humankind, a folly doomed to conclude in failure. In this way, Teopikski's true disciple is Katontli rather than Nevatl'.

An additional personality flaw of Nevatl' is revealed through his conversation with the Consul. Nevatl' claims the Consul should resign as it is the will of the people, and the Consul dismisses this claim by stating that only truth is pure and objective, and that the fickle nature of people cannot be truth: "I have one sacred value that surpasses all truths, and it is called my 'self'. Whether I accept a truth or not depends on whether I am sure of the truth. < . . . > The only thing that remains constant is the moment" [Ibid. P. 92].

The logic of the Consul seems to dissuade Nevatl' from making a counter-argument, and the young man backs down from the debate. Despite being a scholar in pursuit of truth, in truth, Nevatl' sorely lacks sublime ideas or lofty intellect to show for the station he is afforded by the story. Interestingly, the philosophy of the Consul, who is nothing more than a dictator fallen into obstinacy and prejudice, repeats verbatim the philosophies of "the absoluteness of subjectivity" and the "moment", ideologies Bryusov adhered to in his younger days. However, Bryusov maintains a safe distance from antisocial decadent aestheticism by acknowledging the existence of other subjectivities and claiming the inevitability of communication with them. Although a mature mind and sentiment based on steadfast subjectivity have become a source of new language and reason through contact with others, the Consul does away with Bryusov's dialectical theory of the other, known as "self-sufficiency–loneliness–communication", and instead merely follows narrow-minded solipsism to justify his own political power and self-righteousness.

The Consul's absolute subjectivism, despite mimicking Bryusov's subjectivism, is only solipsistic and dogmatic sophistry, owing to the fact that this worldview completely lacks communication with others and empathy. Similarly, the essence of the "moment", for which the Consul advocates, is little more than a justification for maintaining power and his twisted ego, quite unlike Bryusov who emphasized truth and the potential of the "moment". After his confrontation with Tlan, Nevatl''s inability to appropriately respond to the Consul's sophistry is quite telling, indicating that the young man is also trapped in subjective isolation, unable to achieve solidarity with others. Moreover, this is why the Consul's mocking blow is especially painful for Nevatl': "You are as garrulous as a true orator. You look just like an ancient sculpture" [Ibidem]. Here, Nevatl''s exami-

nation is nothing more than a talk, and, just like a sculpture, his sophisticated attitude is stony, artificial, and unnatural.

3. Bryusov's Artistic Theory and *Scientific Poetry*

The dramatic focus in terms of *The Earth*'s structure undeniable shifts to Nevatl', yet is it difficult to claim that he has earned the status of the protagonist. The protagonist in a drama bears certain requisite qualities, such as lofty ideas, thorough self-analysis, a boundless sense of obligation to one's actions, and an awakening to his or her faults; however, none of these traits can be seen in Nevatl'. Moreover, the elements of the conflict, which traditionally end in tragedy, fall short of common dramatic structure, where instead of facing Teotl', the obvious ideological antagonist, our hero argues with the Consul and Tlan.

Most importantly, the three core protagonists of this work exist in complete isolation from each other; Teotl' never meets Nevatl' or Teopikski, and even though Teopikski treats Nevatl' favorably, this is a mere ruse. As such, the three never directly interact with one another, denying the audience of the expected relationship of conflict through traditional interaction. Furthermore, the conflict between these three characters resolves itself in the finale, and all three are delighted and resolved to their fates, free of pain or repentance. Just as Nevatl' and Teopikski die proud knowing they have succeeded in saving humanity from the underground tunnel, Teotl' too faces death, savoring his moment of liberation for which he so longed; all three joyfully face their end because they have all accomplished their goals.

Here, the dramatic tension built by the characters throughout the story suddenly deflates, and fearing for the future of humankind is a burden passed onto the reader/audience. As Bryusov turns his back on customary, literary expectation and destroys the formulaic ending, the reader/audience, now faced with an unfamiliar finale, is then swallowed whole by this vacuum. In the vacuum, the reader knows only confusion and shock, while researchers respectively jump to both optimistic and pessimistic conclusions. Dramas might predictably end by alleviating tension and inducing a feeling of catharsis, yet Bryusov obviously intended for this absurd and unexpected crisis to raise only more questions and perhaps be a little painful for his audience.

3.1. Bryusov's epistemic theory of art: *trans-boundary aesthetics*

To completely understand the playwright's design and setting, it is necessary to consider the epistemic theory of art and *scientific poetry*, topics that captivated Bryusov during the 1900s. True art, as Bryusov claims, is the only methodology capable of capturing that which our sensory organs cannot perceive, cannot be identified objectively, and cannot be expressed in language. Therefore, "Art begins from the moment when the artist attempts to clarify his/her secret emotions. Without such clarification, there is also no artistry. If there are no secrets within emotion, there is also no art" [5. P. 86].

In short, art is a comprehensive process of perceiving meaning, discovering and observing secret phenomena within oneself, and finally revealing them to the world. While mystical symbolists severed communication with the world and cloistered themselves away with their inner secrets, Bryusov was not only interested in the transcendental world beyond intellect and reason, but also believed that bringing such secrecy back to the stage of objectivity was an artistic goal to strive for. A notable point is the concept of a “boundary”, which continuously emerges in Bryusov’s artistic theory. To expand one’s cognition, contemplation is necessary, and contemplation is only amplified when one acknowledges a “plurality of truths”. Therefore, the “plurality of truths” is essential to expand one’s thinking [5. P. 50], and the countless boundaries that exist among multiple truths are targets of subjugation. In other words, Bryusov believes that only those who are courageous enough to explore beyond their own cognitive limitation and expand their boundaries are capable of being artists:

A person who perceives all things in the world as simple and comprehensible cannot be an artist. Art is where courage crosses boundaries, within the thirst to drink even a single drop of “alien, transliminal elements,”¹ and art is beyond the boundaries of the cognitive realm [Ibid. P. 86].

Bryusov’s “escape beyond the boundaries” is an epistemic exploration of delving into the essence of things, into an unfamiliar and foreign domain outside the limits of the current confined and superficial conditions. As the writer puts it, to do such a thing is no easy task and is perhaps as dangerous as breaking out of prison; it requires boldness, courage, and decisiveness.

We are not hopelessly locked up in the “blue prison,”² the imagery used by Fet. We do have an exit and a ray of hope to escape from prison toward freedom. The ray of hope is the moments of ecstasy and moments of supersensible intuition, beyond the shell of the phenomenal world, piercing into the essence and enabling us to understand the phenomenal world differently [Ibidem].

If art is a ray of hope and an exit, art is then also the activity of penetrating the secret soul of the artist by breaking our shackles in the prison of convention, and after colliding with “secret, vague emotions” (“тайные, смутные чувствования”) [Ibid. P. 56], and, realizing their meaning and value, a true artist must then “give shape” to them in some artistic form³. Bryusov’s desire to oppose all obstacles which interfere with free and higher-dimensional cognition, such as tradition, custom, rationality, and normalcy, in other words, “the desire

¹ This is an excerpt from Afanasy Fet’s poem “Swallows” (“Ласточки”).

² This “blue prison” from Afanasy Fet’s poem “In Memory of N. Ya. Danilevskii” is an illusory nature of phenomena, which refers to the natural destiny of a person who is in dependent on the senses and consciousness [10. P. 56–79]. According to Bryusov, due to science, humanity is trapped in a “blue prison” of visible things and physical senses, and the act of obtaining epistemic freedom and ensuring limitless cognition should be the clear orientation of humanity, whereas the purpose of art is to implement the existential task of expanding our cognition.

³ “Art is the embodiment of things that can’t be defined or put into words. Art defines and speaks through images” [5. P. 205].

to reach an infinite expansion of one's creative scope" [11. P. 10] is an attempt to once again combine science and art which, due to symbolism, were in direct opposition with each other:

Only the interaction between art and science can create the true culture of our times. Poetry must complement science, and science must complement poetry. < . . . > Art must start from scientific knowledge, and science must discover the breath of life in art [5. P. 157].

Bryusov attempted to combine science and art for two reasons. First, the playwright wished to realize "the possibility of objectively rationalizing the demand and necessity for illogical and irrational things" [12. P. 95]. Second, rather than art being stuck in an eternal conflict with science, just as "poetry should become the metaphysics of man and the universe, related to one another through science" [5. P. 156], integrating science would provide the only opportunity to ascend to a metaphysical state of a higher-dimension. In Bryusov's mind, as is dictated by scientific logic, the act of systematically revealing the illogical, the irrational, and intuition was the definition of poetry. To Bryusov, art was already "science" with a different name, where the only discrepancy between the two was that science utilizes "analysis" and art uses "synthesis." Consider: "If poetry is a form of cognition just as science is, how can we distinguish between scientific cognition and cognition of poetic composition? This typically is based on methodology. The way of science is analysis and the way of poetry is synthesis" [Ibid. P. 502].

If art is a cognitive means by which to probe the self, reveal one's internal secrets, and then express these ideas externally, then science is a means by which to explain those things external to the self and to determine the relationship between all things: "Science does not claim to penetrate the essence of things. Science knows only the correlation of present conditions and compares and contrasts them. Science cannot contemplate anything without the relevant relationship to other things" [Ibid. P. 80]. Given that science is a cognitive methodology of forging relationships based on cause and effect, art delves into these relationships, removes their shell, exposes bare and vulnerable skin, and finally translates these internal secrets into human language. In other words, art is both experiment and adventure, revealing the aesthetics of *crossing boundaries* by breaking through, knocking down, and climbing over the walls of the so-called "blue prison". Bryusov's artistic theory frequently incorporates aggressive images, which shatter barriers and expand space, such as the imagery of breaking through or crossing boundaries from outside to inside and *vice versa*. Such imagery makes clear the dynamic nature of *boundary crossing aesthetics*, which attempts to destroy and dismantle the stagnate system of existing concepts and social norms.

Bryusov's artistic conception of epistemology leads to the acceptance of *scientific poetry*¹. Bryusov, who from the very beginning opposed all things mysti-

¹ Accepting French poet R. Ghil's theory of *scientific poetry*, Bryusov earnestly incorporates this concept in his paper "The Literary Life of France: Scientific Poetry" (1909). Here, scientific poetry is used as a concept for describing general poetics such as the rules, principles, and methods needed to create poetry. Therefore, it is safe to understand *scientific poetry* as "scientific poetics".

cal related to cognitive objects, believed the scientific task of differentiation, work that divides and classifies all worldly phenomena into categories, was an epistemic activity sorely needed in the creative work of artists.

Of course, poetry must not play the role of a simple mirror, which indifferently reflects all the phenomena of the current reality, because to reflect, to repeat does not mean to perceive. Poetry must interpret reality, establish its relationship to the permanent laws of history and sociology [5. P. 157].

By combining the analytic activity of science with the intuitive synthesis of poetry, the so-called *scientific poetry* acquires “integrity which is unobtainable from the fragmented fields of science” [Ibidem], and then only poetry can predict the future, and the poet will have earned his ancient name—*vates*, “the prophet”. To Bryusov, *scientific poetry* was a cognitive activity of reasoning, an ideal artform intimately related to the demands of the time. As Bryusov himself stated “a paradoxical combination of words”, the concept of *scientific poetry* is a good explanation of the paradox inherent to Bryusov’s aesthetics, which attempts to utilize reason and logic to objectify the subjective in the domain of inspiration and intuition. Being in direct opposition to mysticism and finding himself an outsider to such art, Bryusov discovered science and incorporated it into his work, expanding his own artistic repertoire and thereby expanding the field itself and creating a new artform through this interdisciplinary convergence. When art embraces science, this too can be interpreted as a *boundary crossing* activity that merges the two fields. For the playwright, such unity and synthesis, pursued by art, was the essence of communication: “Art expresses the soul of artists and satisfies the desire of twofold communication: solidarity with others and revealing of one’s true self” [Ibid. P. 47].

When examining the evolutionary path of Bryusov’s epistemic theory of art, which embraces the unfamiliar domain of science and led to *scientific poetry*, it is essential to consider the writer’s experimental spirit, which not only juxtaposes customs and cultural norms, but also includes its own paradoxes and contradictions. Bryusov’s extraordinary view of artistic expression (see “Truths” [Ibid. P. 49–55]) acknowledges “a plurality of truths” and is comparable to an infinite circuitry working to repudiate absolute truths and endlessly pursue change and improvement: “The potential to become aware of oneself is infinite, and the road to perfection is endless” [Ibid. P. 39]. *The Earth* is a work filled with the experimental spirit of *scientific poetry*, and the play recalls the necessity of cognitive expansion and discussion in literature. *The Earth* strives to walk “the endless road to perfection” as it induces cognitive expansion through the dynamics of *boundary crossing aesthetics* realized by the shock and intellectual awakening unique to Bryusov’s carefully crafted paradoxes.

3.2. *The Earth* as scientific poetry

The Earth is not a two-dimensional mixture of various themes and motifs such as symbolic eschatology, cyclical ideas of cultural development, and allegories related to the political chaos on the eve of revolution; instead the work

has a three-dimensional structure that specifically warns against a future society by penetrating the essence of the reality of the times based on a novel cognitive methodology known as scientific imagination. The creation of Bryusov's futurological works is based on the principles of *scientific poetry* [7. P. 136]. Because the "future" is impossible to demonstrate through experience and bears the uncertainty of having to make predictions based solely on the power of imagination and intuition, only a hybrid artform, which combines science and poetics, is capable of permeating such uncertainty. Portrayals of the future, an unknown and murky domain, are a zeitgeist of the times fused with anxiety and hope; this is the domain Bryusov ventures into through the epistemic adventure of crossing temporal borders via his own *boundary crossing aesthetics*. Therefore, *The Earth* embodies a complex and intellectual entanglement which cannot be seen from a conventional point of view, traditional poetics, or from generic cultural customs. The play must rather be approached from a *scientific poetry* perspective, characterized by innovative interdisciplinary combinations and an awareness of where each discipline's boundary lies.

Though *The Earth* is centered around an end-of-the-world theme, whose allegorical nature is related to cultural destruction on the eve of revolution, it is clear that this theme is borne of a longing for future society flourishing with culture, a longing that forbids the decline of culture as this leads to the downfall of humanity. Herbert George Wells was another science fiction writer who, in his novels, predicted world war, economic depression, global warming, and abominable weapons such as nuclear bombs, chemical weapons, and lasers, yet he was also an idealist longing to describe a better future that integrated all of humanity into one nation. Bryusov, clearly influenced by the imagination of earlier science fiction writers, such as Wells, subtly contrasted themes of hope, salvation and cultural development against the grim background of the Earth's destruction. In *The Earth*, Bryusov made logical and empirical inferences regarding future society by utilizing imagination grounded by specific, realistic examples such as water and oxygen shortages. The writer was the first to caution the Russian literary world of the dangers of natural resource depletion, and this was seen as "foresight regarding environmental disasters which truly began in the 1960-70s" [13. P. 24]. In particular, the idea of oxygen depletion seemed to have stemmed from the new scientific finding of oxygen thinning outside the troposphere after the discovery of the stratosphere¹, and, at the time, not only was this prediction realized in the form of the Great Smog of London in 1952, revealing the dangers of air pollution, but we can notice additional predictions made in *The Earth* that appear even in the modern era, issues such as low birth rates and the destruction of nature. Considering the fact that "many of his ideas were later actually realized" [14. P. 41], ideas that appear in additional *scientific poetry* works, it is not too much to say that Bryusov's *scientific poetry* presented many accurate and reasonable theories that hold true in reality.

¹ French physicist Teisserenc de Bort discovered the stratosphere in 1900, and it is regarded as one of the most striking discoveries in the evolution of meteorology.

The Earth is a work of fiction but also an experiment analyzing what impact a collision between literature and the ethics of life and existence has on human thought. Based on the characters of Teopikski, Nevatl', and Teotl', strategically placed in roles meaningful to the story, we see what is possible and impossible, what is right and wrong, what is necessary, and what is important. The narrative functions as a probe and challenge of humanity's past, present, future, hope, and despair through these three characters' actions which occur purely of their own volition without compromise with or interference from others. Accordingly, *The Earth* cannot be properly understood through a conventional reading dependent on a generic expectation or a unilateral interpretation based on simple, cultural norms because *The Earth* is a novel experiment designed to deconstruct such customs. Accordingly, the mystery behind the genesis of *The Earth*, a wholly unique drama characterized by the destruction of traditional dramaturgy and an absence of tragic characters, is partially revealed. Bryusov's experiment intended to expand the audience's attention to the larger fate of the Earth and humanity, rather than focus on the fate of individual characters; it forced the narrative to consider the bigger picture that ignores "conflict" between characters who face their end after either failing or achieving each of their ideological goals. The story does this by utilizing characters who are never in direct conflict with each other. Instead of putting the weight of the world on one character, incident, or conflict, the play centers around the dilemma at hand, that is, the fate of the Earth and humanity, in order to expedite the reason for dramatic catastrophe. It is the Earth's explicit intention to dismantle the traditional tension structure between characters¹ and story-idiosyncratic conflict in order to emphasize more important and general ideas regarding the future and cognitive reasoning.

Bryusov believed that the truth is relative, and he asserted this belief in order to stimulate cognitive expansion, allowing for ambiguous interpretations of the story's conclusion. To analyze this play where "pessimism caused by mental fatigue, soaring fantasy, passionate dreams about the future appear simultaneously" [15. P. 25], one must take a "boundary crossing" approach capable of overcoming even symbolic pessimism and hopeful optimism. To Bryusov, any and all boundaries which limit perception are the target of subjugation, and such boundaries existed between symbolism and realism, art and science, present and future, and between tradition and experimentation. *The Earth* incorporates and breaks down many aspects of these boundaries. In the preface of the Czech translation (published in 1911) of *The Earth*, Bryusov noted that "Instead of portraying contemporary life, I tried to explain the timeless question, namely the relationship between existence and dream, fantasy and reality, through poetry" [14. P. 39]. *The Earth*'s shocking finale is derived from "the relationship between existence and dream, fantasy and reality," an oppositional and contradictory but yet converging and mutually inclusive relationship. Andreasyan reached

¹ At this point we notice Voloshin's analysis of people not seeing or hearing their own voices. "In *The Earth*, people are not visible, only principles shouted by various humans can be heard" [16. P. 425].

the following conclusion: “The Sun is the source of life, but also the source of death. Here, the heavens and the earth joins, the light and the darkness joins, and life and death are mutually connected and conditioned. Death is the justification of life, and life is the justification of death” [6. P. 154]. The finale of *The Earth* provides new and expansive thought by transcending the boundaries of art and science and by combining them into one discipline. *Scientific poetry* can be viewed as cognitive expansion resulting from Bryusov’s melding of these fields, two areas in seeming opposition with each other, and while this amalgam is not viewed as “synthesis between realism and idealism,”¹ it shows the potential of *scientific poetry* as an experiment striving for higher-dimensional poetics of the future. Through his scientific poetry-like writing, Bryusov earned a name for himself as one of the greatest writers in the popular genres of the temporal fantasy and space science literature [18. P. 165], being hailed as a “pioneer of early Russian science fiction and the first theorist” [15. P. 34].

Symbolic eschatology inherently risks pointless anxiety rather than inducing a clear understanding and analysis of a situation. This ideology depends on mental and sentimental aspects of anxiety and fear instead of taking a rational approach, which results in an abdication of and disregard for reality, not leading readers toward symbolic truths. However, as *scientific poetry*, *The Earth* presents various logical inferences and reasonable possibilities concerning the destiny of humanity and society by actively imagining a future based on reason and well-founded concepts, in turn broadening the cognitive horizons of its audience. Above all, unlike the passivism of other eschatological narratives, *The Earth* uniquely demonstrates active eschatology, that is, human beings choose the end of their own accord. Passive eschatology emphasizes there is nothing that can be done except be silent, but humankind, choosing its own destruction, forces us contemplate and reconsider the legitimacy and necessity of our actions. The audience’s shock and the narrative’s mystery, brought about by active eschatology, induce a cognitive vacuum, foreshadowing an expansion of awareness.

Conclusion

In order to dismantle boundaries artificially segregating the world, cognitive stimulation is required. Mentally crossing these boundaries and thinking unconventionally are made possible through the use of intellectual and psychological energy, namely shock and contemplation. The setting of another Bryusov’s play, *The World of Seven Generations*, written in 1923, takes place as a comet narrowly misses a collision with the Earth, yet in a letter to Morozov, the playwright wrote that if Halley’s Comet in 1910 had collided with Earth, it would have greatly helped humankind [15. P. 54]. Here, the author means that such a catastrophe was capable of destroying all obstacles that prevent humans from

¹ In the 1910 journal *Russian Thought* (No. 7), Bryusov wrote, “The future clearly belongs to some synthesis of realism and idealism not yet found” [17. P. 359].

reaching their full cognitive potential. In the paper “Secret Key” (“Ключи тайн”), Bryusov says the following on artistic potential subjugating the cognitive limits of science: “The iron bars of science and axes of sociology do not have the power destroy the door or the walls that have confined us, but art is ferocious dynamite capable of breaking down these walls” [5. P. 87]. The key to our cell doors in the “blue prison” of custom and tradition is art, which leads us toward eternal freedom. Art is the first and only hint that provides any clue to salvation, impossible to find in our distressed lives and civilization. *The Earth* is a distress signal from an intellectual unable to find a solution or logical exit on the eve of revolution, a literary and scientific warning regarding the confusion and despair caused by a complete lack of alternatives. The play exemplifies this in the political backwardness of the Consul, the citizens unwilling to resist their fate, intellectuals who are unable to present a novel solution to the current disaster, and religions thick with dogmatism and hatred.

Although *The Earth* imagines a hypothetical world of an unknown future and its social structure and psychological atmosphere, Bryusov's scientific poetry-like cognitive expansion delivers knowledge and new life to the society and humanity of the time. New scientific discoveries, discourse, and foresight of the future rearrange daily experience and understanding of reality-based ever-changing methodologies. Predictions regarding the end of days activate alternative possibilities to inspire a novel means to survive in spite of Armageddon. *The Earth* allegorizes the brutal political situation in the 1905 Russia, actively intervening in and commenting on the tragic reality. In addition, the work develops a new cognitive methodology called *scientific poetry*, which, while based on realistic concepts, also maintains an alternative perspective from reality. *The Earth* analyzes the ontological stature of human beings by restructuring the theme of cultural crisis into a drama, achieving a new level of science, knowledge, and cognition.

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«Земля» В.Я. Брюсова как эксперимент научной поэзии

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Ключевые слова: научная поэзия, научная фантастика, символизм, трагедия, эсхатология, трансграничная эстетика.

В статье описывается «Земля» В.Я. Брюсова в качестве выдающегося произведения научной поэзии, а также проводится анализ данной пьесы. Финал пьесы, предвещающий смерть человеческого рода, и мрачная атмосфера, которой пронизана вся драма, напоминают типичную символистскую трагедию. Однако при более пристальном рассмотрении структуры пьесы можно заметить, что она выходит за рамки символистской драматургии. В основном мотив научной фантастики, дополненный технологическими деталями и предсказаниями будущего, резко контрастирует с символизмом с его мистическими и религиозными мотивами. Кроме того, эсхатологический персонаж Теотль и гуманист Теописки, несмотря на противоположность идеологий, приходят к одному и тому же выводу, приводящему к нетрадиционному развертыванию основного конфликта, центром которого становится Неватль. Это, в свою очередь, демонстрирует эксперимент трансграничной эстетики Брюсова, бросающий вызов традиционному символизму.

Более того, Неватль, который появляется в качестве посланника надежды на воскресение, имеет слишком много недостатков, чтобы стать ключевым героем трагедии. Неватль, единственная надежда на выживание человека перед лицом надвигающейся гибели, находится на позиции силы, которая, к сожалению, слабее, чем драматическая сила, которой обладают Теописки или Теотль. Во время встречи с Гланом и Консулом Неватль обнаруживает, что он несостоятелен как спаситель человечества не только по характеру, но и по философии.

Брюсов полагал, что только взаимодействие искусства и науки способно создать истинную культуру данной эпохи, а «расширения познания» в качестве подлинной функции искусства можно достичь посредством научной поэзии, т.е. сближения поэзии

и науки, которые равноценны. «Земля» анализирует онтологический статус человека, превращая тему культурного кризиса в драму и достигая нового уровня науки, знаний и познания. Хотя «Земля» представляет собой гипотетический мир с неизвестным будущим, его социальной структурой и психологической атмосферой, когнитивная экспансия Брюсова, основанная на научной поэзии, дает знания и новую жизнь обществу и человечеству того времени.

В статье обосновывается утверждение, что «Земля» создает новую когнитивную методологию научной поэзии, которая, основываясь на реалистичных концепциях, также поддерживает альтернативную реальности перспективу.