

# The Contribution Of Silver Age Poets To Composite Formation (Based On Texts By Symbolists And Acmeists)

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**Abstract:** This article is devoted to a systematic analysis of compound word formation in Silver Age poetry based on literary texts by representatives of Symbolism (Z. N. Gippius, D.S. Merezhkovskiy) and Acmeism (A.A. Akhmatova, N.S. Gumilyov). The study aims to identify the structural-semantic and functional-stylistic features of complex words as a significant means of poetic expression in this period. The focus is on substantive, adjectival and adverbial compounds, considered in terms of their capacity for semantic compression, expressive richness and modelling of individual authorial style. Analysis of the factual material allows us to establish that Silver Age poetry is dominated by complex adjectives, formed mainly on the basis of subordinate relationships between components and realising a complex suffixal method of word formation. A comparative analysis of the poetic texts of the Symbolists and Acmeists reveals differences in the functional load of compounds. In Symbolist poetry, complex words serve as a means of mystical and philosophical synthesis of the spiritual and material principles, contributing to the creation of multi-layered, metaphysically charged images. In acmeist poetics, on the contrary, composites are oriented towards conveying sensory accuracy, concrete specificity, and the visual and tactile certainty of the artistic world, which corresponds to the aesthetic programme of this movement.

**Keywords:** Compound formation, Silver Age, symbolism, acmeism, poetic language, complex words, linguistic expression, stylistics of poetry.

**Introduction:** The Silver Age of Russian poetry represents a special stage in the development of artistic thinking and linguistic experimentation. Poets of this period renewed aesthetic views on literature and had a significant influence on the development of the language system, in particular on word formation processes. One of the most productive and expressive methods of linguistic creativity in the Silver Age was compound word formation – the creation of complex words by combining two or more roots.

The poets of the Silver Age worked within various literary movements, among which symbolism (Z. Gippius – a poetess of mysticism and religious imagery; D. Merezhkovskiy – the founder of symbolism, a philosopher in poetry) and acmeism (A. Akhmatova – a master of psychological precision; N. Gumilyov – the founder of acmeism, a poet of exotic concreteness). In this study, we will focus on analysing the formation of composites in the poetry of these movements.

Symbolism sought a mystical synthesis of the spiritual and material through complex images, while acmeism focused on concrete specificity and sensory precision of expressive means. Compositional formation as a method of linguistic creativity embodied the aesthetic attitudes of both schools, expanding the expressive possibilities of the Russian language.

The relevance of this study is determined by the need for a comprehensive understanding of the role of Silver Age poetic language in the development of Russian word formation models. Despite the existence of individual works devoted to occasionalisms and individual authorial word formation, the contribution of Silver Age poets to the sphere of compound formation has not yet been systematically covered in scientific publications.

## METHOD

Problems of word formation in literary texts have traditionally been examined in the works of 20th- and

21st-century linguists. The theoretical foundations of compound formation are laid out in the works of V. V. Vinogradov [2], A. N. Tikhonov [10], E. A. Zemskaya [6], where complex words are analysed as the result of the interaction of morphological and semantic processes.

Individual authorial word formation, including in poetic discourse, has been studied in the works of N. D. Arutyunova [1], V. G. Gak [4], L. A. Novikova [12]. These works emphasise the role of occasional formations as a means of linguistic expression and cognitive compression.

The poetic language of the Silver Age has been analysed in studies devoted to symbolism [11; 9] and acmeism [5]. However, researchers have tended to focus on the imagery, rhythm and semantics of the text, while compound formation has been considered fragmentarily, without singling it out as an independent word-formation phenomenon.

Thus, existing scientific works create a solid theoretical basis, but at the same time reveal a gap related to the systematic description of composites in Silver Age poetry.

The methodological basis of the study consists of structural-word formation, semantic-cognitive, and functional-stylistic methods of analysis. The research material consists of poetic texts by Symbolists (Z.N. Gippius, D.S. Merezhkovskiy) and Acmeists (A.A. Akhmatova, N.S. Gumilyov).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the poetic texts of the Silver Age, authors actively use the following types of composites:

**substantive compounds:** белоперистость, вседержитель (Z.N. Gippius); буквоед, душегрейка (D.S. Merezhkovskiy); белорученька, клинопись (A.A. Akhmatova); единокор, своенравница (N.S. Gumilyov);

**adjectival compounds:** вечно-ясный, горестно-сердечный (Z.N. Gippius); вольнолюбивый, глубоко-ясный (D.S. Merezhkovskiy); иссиня-белый, ладанно-сладкий туманно-нежный (A.A. Akhmatova); дивно-высокий, гранитнокрылый (N.S. Gumilyov);

**adverbial compounds:** зыбко-дымчато, сладко-скучно (Z.N. Gippius); страшно-медленно, горько-горько (D.S. Merezhkovskiy); надменно-упрямо, любовно-кротко (A.A. Akhmatova); порывисто-безумно, заманчиво-легко (N.S. Gumilyov).

It is worth noting that for all of the poets presented, complex adjectives are in first place in terms of frequency of use, followed by nouns and then compound adverbs. The authors practically do not use complex verbs and numerals.

Word formation analysis showed that, at the level of complex adjectives, poets most often formed compounds by adding subordinate elements to the base:

дымнобагровый, ровноголубой, богоподобный, нежно-зеленый, сладостно-покатый, равнодушно-жёлтый, смешно-нелепый, странно-красивый, а также сложно-суффиксальным способом: лучиночный, разноцветный, победоносный, темнолистный, прошлогодний, тлетворный, путеводный, красноречивый and addition with zero suffixation: большеголовый, тупозлой, голубоглазый, белокрылый, светлоголовый, двурогий, золотоголавы, пестрокрылый.

At the level of complex nouns, the complex suffixal method prevails: звездоубийца, полусверкание, празднотворец, полководец, самоубийство, песнопение, четверостишие, чернокнижница, мореплаватель, иноверец, and complex adverbs are formed by addition and reduplication: темно-холодно, протяжно-робко, нетленно-вечно, горько-горько, мимоходом, недавно-странно, просто-напросто, всецело.

In addition, composites in Silver Age poetry perform the function of semantic compression, allowing several semantic planes to be combined in a single word. At the same time, we identified common semantic characteristics in all the poets considered at the level of independent parts of speech. Thus, at the level of nouns, a large group of words consists of characters; at the level of adjectives, words containing colour and emotional-evaluative semantics; at the level of adverbs, each author creates and uses composites necessary for the expression of individual thought through poetic forms.

In poetic texts, complex words perform a special stylistic function, forming the author's individual style. Thus, in the works of Z. Gippius and D. Merezhkovskiy, they emphasise mystical tension. Acmeists such as A. Akhmatova and N. Gumilyov use compounds to accurately convey sensory impressions.

Symbolists prefer composites with metaphysical semantics: белоперистость (angelic nature), вольнолюбивый (the ideal of freedom), зыбко-дымчато (the unreality of existence), enhancing mysticism and emotional tension.

Acmeists use composites for subject specificity: белорученька (affectionate epithet), иссиня-белый (colour accuracy), порывисто-безумно (dynamics of movement), reflecting the principles of «visibility» and «creativity».

Thus, compound formation in Silver Age poetry is not merely a specific word-formation technique, but a universal mechanism for artistically modelling the

poetic picture of the world. Through complex words, poets achieve a high degree of semantic concentration, combining diverse semantic planes – material and spiritual, concrete and abstract – within a single lexical unit. Functioning as a condensed metaphor, the composite allows complex philosophical and aesthetic concepts to be captured, which in their expanded form would require entire syntactic constructions. As a result, the complex word becomes a carrier of multi-layered meaning, reflecting both the individual author's worldview and the general cultural dominants of the era. In Symbolist poetry, complex words contribute to the creation of a tense artistic space in which different levels of being and meaning interact. In Acmeist poetics, on the contrary, composites serve as a means of accurately denoting objective sensory experience, ensuring the concreteness and clarity of the poetic image while preserving its expressiveness. In this context, compound formation goes beyond its exclusively expressive or nominative function and becomes a significant element in the organisation of Silver Age poetic thought, reflecting the transition from a generalised symbolic mode of artistic expression to an aesthetic of object clarity and semantic certainty.

## CONCLUSION

The study allows us to conclude that the poets of the Silver Age – Symbolists and Acmeists – made a significant contribution to the development of compound formation as a productive method of word formation in the Russian language. Composites in their poetry perform semantic, cognitive and stylistic functions, reflecting the worldview and aesthetic attitudes of the era.

The poetic compound formation of the Silver Age expanded the boundaries of the literary norm, influenced the subsequent development of poetic language, and contributed to the formation of the modern conception of the word as a multidimensional unit of meaning.

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