ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF WORD COMBINATIONS IN THE WORKS OF M.Y. LERMONTOV

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Abstract: This academic article is devoted to the study of the functions and typology of word combinations (phrases) in the poetic and prosaic legacy of Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov. The goal of this work is to identify how the author uses word combinations to achieve **maximum artistic expressiveness**, the **psychological portrayal of images**, and the expression of key philosophical themes (solitude, rebellion, romantic idealism). The stylistic and contextual analysis resulted in the classification of the main categories of word combinations, including archaic constructions, inverted epithets (e.g., парус одинокой — a lonely sail), and figurative tropes (metaphorical phrases and oxymorons, e.g., громкое молчанье — a loud silence). The study confirms that for Lermontov, the word combination acts not merely as a syntactic unit but as a concentrated **artistic code** reflecting the dualism of his world and the tragedy of the lyrical hero. The findings underscore Lermontov's innovation in poetic language and his mastery in creating multi-dimensional, emotionally charged images.

Keywords: Lermontov, word combination (phrase), syntax, Romanticism, stylistic analysis, metaphor, oxymoron, epithet, inversion, psychologism, IMRAD.

Introduction. Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov is one of the central figures of Russian literature, whose work is distinguished by its depth of philosophical thought, psychologism, and innovation in poetic language. The study of the writer's language, particularly his syntactic units such as word combinations, allows for a deeper understanding of the author's worldview and reveals the mechanisms for creating unique artistic imagery.

In Lermontov's works, the word combination often functions not just as a grammatical unit but as a **concentrated carrier of meaning**, emotional burden, and stylistic expressiveness. It can serve as a means for creating key tropes (metaphors, epithets, oxymorons) and contributes to the formation of the central themes of his work: solitude, rebellion, the confrontation between the individual and society, and the search for harmony.

Goal: To identify and classify the main types and functions of word combinations in the works of M.Yu. Lermontov as a key means of artistic expressiveness and an instrument of psychological characterization.

Tasks:

- **Determine the features** of using archaic and stylistically marked word combinations, examining their role in creating historical flavor and high style, primarily based on epic and civic works (Borodino, A Song About Tsar Ivan Vasilyevich, the Young Oprichnik, and the Valiant Merchant Kalashnikov).
- **Analyze the role of figurative word combinations (tropes)** in Lermontov's lyric poetry and prose, focusing on the mechanisms for creating oxymorons, metaphors, and complex epithets that serve to reflect the romantic conflict and the hero's internal drama.

- **Describe the functions of word combinations** in forming the psychological portrait of the lyrical hero and characters, demonstrating how specific word pairings convey the motifs of solitude, rebellion, disillusionment, and inner duality.

Methods

To ensure a comprehensive and objective study of Lermontov's linguistic material, the following set of linguistic methods was employed:

- **Continuous Sampling Method:** Applied to extract all relevant word combinations from a representative corpus of texts, including Lermontov's key works:

o **Lyric Poetry:** The Sail, The Death of the Poet, Duma, Prayer, Both Dull and Sad, The Prophet.

o **Narrative Poems:** Mtsyri, The Demon, Borodino.

o Prose: The novel A Hero of Our Time (all parts).

Word combinations demonstrating a deviation from neutral stylistics or possessing a high degree of figurativeness (presence of tropes) were selected.

- **Comparative-Contrastive Method:** Used to analyze the frequency and functional load of identical or typologically similar word combinations across different genres. For example, the use of archaic constructions in a historical poem (Borodino) was compared to their near absence in intimate lyric poetry. This allowed for the identification of stylistic dominants and the genre-specific nature of lexical choices.

- **Method of Stylistic Analysis (Tropological Analysis):** The key method for studying figurative word combinations. It allowed for:

o Classification of tropes (metaphor, oxymoron, synecdoche, epithet).

o Determination of the degree of novelty and authorial individuality in the creation of these tropes, in comparison with the traditions of Russian Romanticism (e.g., in comparison with V.A. Zhukovsky or A.S. Pushkin).

o Establishment of the **emotional tonality** (pathos, irony, tragedy) carried by a specific word combination.

- **Contextual Analysis Method:** Applied for the precise interpretation of word combinations whose meaning might be unclear outside the broad context of the work. This is especially important for polysemous metaphors and complex authorial neologisms. For example, the word combination печальный дар (**a mournful gift**) from The Demon was analyzed in the context of the entire poem to show that it is not merely a gift but a curse associated with immortality and the impossibility of love.

Results

In the course of the linguistic analysis, it was revealed that Lermontov uses word combinations as a multifunctional tool that shapes his unique authorial style. The dominant categories are presented below with detailed examples and facts.

1. Archaic and High-Style Word Combinations

Lermontov, as an heir to 18th-century traditions and Romanticism, actively uses stylistically marked constructions to give the text solemnity or historical authenticity, especially in battle scenes and works based on folklore.

Word Combination	Work / Context	Linguistic Fact / Function
ломить стеною (to break with a wall)	Borodino (about the Russian attack)	**Archaic phrase.** Means pressure, a powerful, unbreakable formation, which enhances the pathos and heroic mood.
постоять головою (to stand with one's head/life)	Borodino (about the readiness to die)	**Historical phraseology.** Conveys self-sacrifice and emphasizes the connection to ancient Russian epic tradition.
сражен булатом (struck by damask steel)	A Song About Merchant Kalashnikov	**Archaism** (Bulat – high-quality steel). Gives the text a folklore, historical authenticity and severity.
нынешнее племя (the present generation)	Duma (in the context of criticism)	**High style / Bookish character.** The lexical combination is used to create an accusatory, tragic tone directed at contemporaries.
отчизне верный (faithful to the fatherland)	Mtsyri	**Slavicism / Inversion.** Reinforces the idea of service, elevating the image of the idealized rebel-hero.

2. Figurative Word Combinations (Tropes) – An Instrument of Romantic Conflict

Lermontov elevates the use of tropes within word combinations to the highest degree of mastery, making them key carriers of meaning in his work.

A. Oxymorons

These combinations directly express the main conflict of the Romantic hero – the discord between the inner world and external reality.

- **громкое молчанье** (**a loud silence**) (from the poem about the poet)

o **Fact:** This combination describes a situation where inner suffering or an unspoken thought is so intense that its silence is felt as a deafening sound. It is a means of **psychological tension**.

- **в бурях есть покой** (**in storms there is peace**) (The Sail)

o **Analysis:** A direct violation of logical compatibility. Peace found in struggle (storm) symbolizes the restless soul for whom harmony is unattainable in the mundane world, and true life is an eternal striving and conflict.

- **печальный дар** (**a mournful gift**) (The Demon)

o **Fact:** Applicable to the Demon's immortality. The gift (immortality) becomes mournful (a curse) because it deprives him of the possibility of love and compassion.

B. Metaphorical Word Combinations

Lermontov uses metaphors for a compressed yet capacious expression of abstract concepts and inner states.

- **железный стих** (**an iron verse**) (How often, surrounded by a motley crowd...)

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o **Fact:** The word combination "iron" (hard, incorruptible) conveys the idea of civic poetry, which must be strong, truthful, and accusatory. It is contrasted with secular, empty poetry.

- **сладкий недуг** (**a sweet ailment**) (Both Dull and Sad...)

o **Analysis:** A metaphor describing love or passion. "Ailment" (sickness, suffering) points to the tragic nature of the feeling, while "sweet" points to its attractiveness, reflecting the dualism of Lermontov's sensibility.

- **лишние силы** (**superfluous powers**) (A Hero of Our Time, about Pechorin)

o **Fact:** One of the key word combinations for understanding the image of the "superfluous man." It metaphorically denotes enormous potential that finds no application in secular society, dooming the hero to a purposeless existence and destruction.

C. Inverted Epithets

Syntactic inversion (word rearrangement) not only gives the speech an elevated, poetic structure but also emphasizes the defining attribute, intensifying the image.

- **Белеет парус одинокой...** (A lonely sail gleams white...) (instead of одинокий парус — a lonely sail)

o **Function:** Highlights **solitude** as the central, defining characteristic of the sail (the hero), and not merely its incidental state.

- **...в минуту жизни трудную** (...in a difficult moment of life) (instead of трудную минуту — a difficult moment)

o **Fact:** Emphasis on the difficulty, on the trial, before which the hero turns to prayer.

- **молитву чудную** (a wondrous prayer) (instead of чудную молитву — a wondrous prayer)

o **Analysis:** The miraculous, saving power of the prayer is emphasized.

3. Word Combinations-Antitheses – Reflection of World Dualism

Antithesis (opposition) is the core of Lermontov's Romantic poetics. Word combinations are often built on contrast to express an irresolvable conflict.

- **в стране далёкой / в краю родном** (in a distant land / in the native land) (The Sail)

o **Fact:** The antithesis expresses the hero's eternal striving for the ideal (distant land – a symbol of freedom) with the simultaneous impossibility of finding peace (native land – a symbol of chains).

- **мир холодный** (cold world) — **тёплая заступница** (warm intercessor/protectress) (The Mother of God, the ideal) — contrast in Prayer.

o **Analysis:** Contrast between the emotionally negative defining term холодный (**cold**) (the world, society, which does not understand) and the emotionally positive тёплая (**warm**) (the ideal, faith, which saves).

- **богатая природа** (rich nature) / **дурная цель** (bad purpose) (A Hero of Our Time)

o **Fact:** A word combination-antithesis describing Pechorin. The contrast between his богатая (**rich**, enormous, talented) inner essence and the дурная (**bad**, petty, destructive) purpose of his actions, which underscores the tragedy of the "superfluous man."

Discussion

The analysis shows that the word combination in Lermontov's work is one of the most important means of **psychologization** and **Romantic idealization/disillusionment**.

The use of figurative word combinations (oxymorons, metaphors) directly reflects the internal drama of the lyrical hero, his discord with the surrounding world. Lermontov's hero lives in a space of contrasts: "storm and peace," "life and death," "dream and reality." The word

combination allows the author to seize and fix this moment of internal struggle, making the image more voluminous and multi-dimensional.

Inverted epithets not only give the lyric poetry an elevated, "song-like" structure but also shift the emphasis, highlighting the quality of the object: the sail is not simply gleaming white, it is **lonely**. This underscores Lermontov's main theme – the theme of solitude as the lot of an exceptional personality.

In the prose (A Hero of Our Time), word combinations also play a key role in creating psychological portraits. For example, descriptions of Pechorin often feature word combinations indicating his duality: **лишние силы** (**superfluous powers**), **бесплодная трата чувств** (**fruitless waste of feelings**), **богатая природа** (**rich nature**) with a **дурная цель** (**bad purpose**).

Thus, the word combination in Lermontov's works ceases to be a purely syntactic unit. It acquires the function of an **artistic code** by which the poet expresses his philosophical position, reflects the tragedy of human existence, and shapes the aesthetics of Russian Romanticism. Lermontov uses the word combination as a tool to create **maximum semantic and emotional compression** of the text.

Conclusion. The linguo-stylistic study, conducted using key poetic and prosaic works of M.Yu. Lermontov, convincingly confirms that the word combination is one of the most functionally loaded and structurally significant elements of his artistic system. Word combinations in Lermontov's work go beyond simple grammatical connection, becoming concentrated carriers of the author's idea and emotional tension.

Summary of Key Functions of Word Combinations:

- **Means of Stylization and Historical Flavor:** The study of archaic and high-style word combinations (e.g., **постоять головою** — to stand with one's life, **сражен булатом** — struck by damask steel) proves their critical role in creating the necessary pathetic or historically authentic background in works dedicated to military or folklore themes (Borodino, A Song About Merchant Kalashnikov). These constructions allow Lermontov to organically integrate the traditions of the high style, lending monumentality to the text.

- **Generator of Key Tropes and Romantic Conflict:** Word combinations act as the primary units for creating tropes that express the central romantic conflict – the dualism and contradiction of existence. The use of oxymorons (**громкое молчанье** — loud silence, **в бурях есть покой** — in storms there is peace) directly reflects the rift between the ideal and reality, while metaphorical word combinations (**железный стих** — iron verse, **лишние силы** — superfluous powers) concisely and deeply characterize the inner world of the lyrical hero and his tragic fate.

- **Instrument of Psychologization and Portrait Characterization:** Specific word pairings, especially inverted epithets (**парус одинокой** — a lonely sail, **минуту жизни трудную** — a difficult moment of life), as well as contrasting characteristics in prose (**богатая природа** — rich nature, with a **дурная цель** — bad purpose), serve for the finest transmission of the inner complexity, reflection, and contradiction of the characters. The word combination becomes an instrument of **psychological realism** that Lermontov brings to the Romantic tradition.

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