



The Language and Mythology of The City in The Lyrics by Alexander Blok: The Case Study of Russian Language

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Abstract

The urban text is of particular importance in the development of the meta-plot of the second volume of Blok's "humanization trilogy". The correlation of the language and mythology of the city with the symbol of the elements implies the deployment of the destructive component of the elements. The symbolic images of the Serpent, the bronze horseman as well as sunset symbolism become the meaning-and structure-forming centre. The analysis of the city's mythology and linguistic features in the context of the second volume of Blok's lyrics makes it possible to trace the development of the general meta-plot and, at the same time, to identify the specific features of the functioning of the mythology under study. The sense-forming dominants determine the specifics of the chronotopic and symbolic-associative deployment of mythologemes. The movement of light symbols in the structure of the second volume makes it possible to consider the transformation of the primary system of symbols that define the Blok's meta-plot.

Keywords: Linguistic Features; Alexander Blok; Mythology; Lyrics; Symbolic Images.

1. Introduction

On December 1st, 1873, Valery Yakovlevich Bryusov was born. Yakov Kuzmich, his father, wrote poems, some of which were published in different magazines. He was badly swept away by horse racing, becoming a gambler, playing a cruel joke on him since he squandered a lot on a sweepstake over time. Valery Bryusov's parents almost failed to raise their son, leaving him to his own devices as a result. Furthermore, they did not believe in Heaven, and strictly ensured that no religious literature was read by Valery. In the future, Bryusov admits that before studying how to multiply numbers, he heard about atheism. Undoubtedly, this was expressed not just in the poet's outlook, but in his whole biography as well. Bryusov became a pupil at the private F.I. Gymnasium in 1885. With Kreiman. However, as he was expelled for propagating atheistic views, he never managed to complete his studies in it. The next educational institution in Bryusov's biography was L.I.'s gymnasium. He showed a special interest in this period. The young man, having reached the age of 23, married John Runt, with whom he lived until his death (Binyon, 1969; Eliseenko, 2020; Moo, 2020; Paik, 2020; Pali, Hrinchenko, & Astakhova, 2016). No children were in the household. Bryusov was by nature, a very collected, purposeful and strong-willed man. Around the same time, though, he demonstrated a weakness for gambling, night restaurants, erotica, etc. The Russian Symbolists were named his first three sets. They included some French Symbolists' translations, as well as poems by young writers. "It's Me", "Romances Without Words" and "Masterpieces" were the following sets. Soon, collections of poems "The Third Guard", "Wreath", and "All the tunes." come from his pen. The poems of Bryusov are full of historical, mythological and abstract plots. There is passion in them, politics, religion, and man's private problems. An important fact is that poets such as (see), Sergey Solovyov and others were inspired by his work. The poet never dwelt on one thing, and played with style constantly. The concepts of urbanism, for instance, were



traced in his later work when it came to broad and highly developed ones. He was head of Scorpio, which published works of "new art" in 1899, in the book publishing company. The next place of work in Bryusov's biography was *Libra* magazine, where he was editor-in-chief. Bryusov became one of the most influential figures in Russian literature since achieving the pinnacle of fiction (Bryusov, 2007; Janecek, 2014). He was dubbed the "emperor of symbolism." The *Libra* magazine was closed in 1909, which resulted in Valery Bryusov starting to work in the Russian Thought publication's criticism department. He published his own and other works of people there, written in the style of symbolism, the intention of which was to destroy the separation of literature from the symbolic school.

Undoubtedly, Blok's urbanism's specifics acquire the Western European tradition, which previously concluded the originality of urbanism in Bryusov's work (Briusov, 2004; Graffy, 1979; Kepp, 2003; Yanishevsky, 1998). Having said that, it shapes the original concept of the Town. Simultaneously, following the tradition is embodied in the assimilation of the basic principles of town symbolization, which is equally a characteristic feature of Verkharn and Bryusov (martensitic symbols, the symbolization of the sound series, etc.), which are interfaced in Blok's lyrics with the signs of the St. Petersburg myth (Hwang, 2020). In 1900, in "Scorpio" the collection "Tertia Vigilia" ("The Third Guard") was written, opening a modern-"urban" phase of the work of Bryusov. Mythological themes gradually disappear in later collections, giving way to the ideas of urbanism-Bryusov glorifies the pace of life of a large city, its social inconsistencies, the cityscape, even the tram bells and filthy snow piling up in heaps.

The mythology of the city, aligning in this cycle, is an adverse component of the element, which is highlighted through the prism of apocalyptic symbolism (Ivleva & Romanov, 2020). The symbolic images of the Serpent and the Bronze Horseman set in the poem "Peter" and the sunset symbolism become the semantic and structure-forming centre.

1.1. Research Objective

In the context of the second volume of Blok's songs, the study of the city's mythology and linguistic features are carried out.

2. Material and Methods

This article continues the research of the team of authors in the field of Blok's studies, in particular, the features of constructing an integral meta-plot of Blok's lyrics and determining the place of local "lyrical plots" in the structure of the "humanization trilogy" (A. Afanasev & Breeva, 2016; Anton Afanasev, Breeva, & Domansky, 2019; Anton Afanasev, Breeva, & Osmukhina, 2019).

The main research method is the structural-semantic method, which allows us to consider the process of modelling textual reality (Gaynutdinova, 2018; Matveeva, Domanski, & Skvortsov, 2017), and a set of studies devoted to the problem of super text, primarily the urban text (Khabibullina, 2019). In addition, the latest researches in the field of Blok's studies are taken into account (Annenkov & Todd, 1967; Blair, 2006; Blok's, 2009; Feinstein, 2007; Gerould, 1978; Ketchian, 1986; Vinnitsky, 2009).

3. Results and Discussion

The image of the Serpent is considered by Blok as a variant of the mythical Ouroboros and in this sense, is connected to the motive of whirling, symbolizing the hopeless isolation, "durnaya beskonechnost" (bad infinity) of earthly being. Therefore, there is a semantic identity of this image and *eternity* ("Eternity dropped into town..."). The motive of whirling reveals its negative semantics, paronymically connecting with the motive of immersion "Potonet vzglyad v manyashchem vzglyade" (The look will sink in one's, attracting.), filling the traditional marinistic symbolism of the St. Petersburg myth with new meaning and forcing the city to be perceived chthonic, the world of the abyss (Dondua & Aleksandrov, 2002; Dudarev et al., 2004; Kelly, 2014; Lachininskii, Lachininskii, & Semenova, 2016; Matthiessen et al., 2005; Moss, 2017; Popov, 2020).

A similar interpretation is supported by the vertical organization of the *city's* space, the upper point of which is the image of the Bronze Horseman hovering over the crowd, associated with the water element: "Rose street, gray full, /Yarn woven with cobwebs. /Rustling, was coming wave, /Making it difficult for crews' duct", "The building is smoke



sucked, Crowds of dark flowing..." – and with the underworld ("Rose from the darkness of cellars...") (I quote from (Titarenko, 2016; Tsvetaeva & Sokurova, 2017)). Moreover, in Bryusov's lyrics, the metaphorization of the city in the form of a sea wave became a way of expressing the opposition of staticity – dynamism / passion – passionlessness, then in the Blok's cycle, the marinistic symbolism receives mainly temporary filling, realizing a general-symbolic image of the river of time: "The shadows will cover all, / The look will sink

In addition to the emblematic meaning, the image of the Serpent determines the specifics of the chronotopa *town*, the spatial characterization of which is dominated by the topos of a winding alley associated with serpentine symbols – "Eternity dropped into town", "In taverns and winding side-streets...", "An Unknown Lady", etc. (Karadaş, 2020; Kellett, 2019; Lepper, Duncan, Diaz-Granados, & Frolking, 2018; Pedrini, Pedrini, & Pedrini, 1966; Squier, 1851) The image of the street is personified in the image of the crowd and, through metaphorization, is also connected to the image of the Serpent ("They rose from the darkness of cellars ..."). Such an organization contributes to the transformation of Petersburg toponymy by closing the *line* that structures the space of St. Petersburg into a circle that becomes synonymous with the image of a snake biting its tail (Basik & Rahautsou, 2019; Bratova, 2013; Kh, 2017; Shcherbinina, Kurbanova, & Prokhorenko, 2017; West, 2019; Young, Light, & Dumbraveanu, 2018) – Ouroboros, thereby acquiring the semantics of the disastrous circle and restoring the model of the world-prison (therefore, the image of eternity appears) (Amineva, 2014; Zagidullina & Amineva, 2016).

The semantics of the doom circle is also supported by the emergence of a network motive ("A Cold Day", "I Walk, wander wilted ...") and the image of the ring ("Ring-Suffering") (Missuno, 2015; Wierzbicka, 1992). The emergence of the motive of the network is associated with light symbolism; the image of lanterns becomes especially important here, the light of which is objectified and likened to the threads forming a network thrown over the city ("Peter", "Rose from the darkness of cellars ...", "Tale", "Ring of suffering", "I walk, wander wilted ...") (K Al-Naimat & M Saidat, 2019; Valeryevna Erofeeva, Ilgizovitch Gilyazov, & Alexandrovna Pilgun, 2019). Such an interpretation of the light of lanterns is one of the options for solving the opposition of natural – artificial light, which plays an important role in the poetics of young symbolism, and at the same time, demonstrates the development of this image in relation to the previous cycle ("Various Poems").

4. Summary

The tactile perception of the sun's rays receives a positive sound in young symbolism, likening it to the image of *solar tissue*, taken from the romantic system, and demonstrating protective semantics. The objectification of artificial light, which has a clearly expressed negative sound, is the projection of infernal symbolism onto the entire surrounding space, in this case, the space of the *Town*.

In the poem "Her Arrival", which is part of "Various Poems", the semantics of the lantern lost its negative meaning, participating in the gradation of light: the artificial light of the lantern anticipated the light of the sun, embodying the *dawn* symbolism characteristic of young symbolism in general and assimilated in the first volume of the Block. The artificial light of lanterns was rehabilitated through its inclusion in a natural context, indicated through a system of metaphorical assimilation to the image of a flower: "About, Seas luminous stalks, beacons! Your Spotlight – flower! Your soil – Create excitement, sandy spit!" and stars: "Let the stores from underwater monsters Electricity – our star!" These assimilations develop the symbolism of a lantern/lighthouse, supplementing it with the semantics of a guiding star, leading the heroes to their true purpose embodied in the symbolism of *dawns*. All this formed the protective semantics of the lantern/lighthouse, dispersing the "*yoke of the night mist*".

In the "City", the traditional semantics of artificial light are being restored, destroying the possibility of vertical deployment of the world and supporting the gnostic model of the world-prison. In contrast, the figurative embodiment of natural light is reduced, the presence of sunlight in the world of the *Town* is minimal, almost every work emphasizes the evening, less often night-time nature of what is happening, actualizing sunset symbolism. In those cases when the daylight is mentioned nevertheless, it loses its luminiferous function and is likened to an artificial decoration ("And astral discus, dull and obdurate, / Squirms in the sky above it all"), moving from a vertical projection to a horizontal plane: "There ladies flaunt modes, / Lyceum student there any sharp – / The boredom of summer cottages, over gardens, / Above the solar dust Lakes. / There beckoning fingers scarlet / And truckers cares nothing / Above the dusty station's unattainable dawn".



The profane semantics of light-bearers is combined with a declarative statement of the spiritual hypostasis of light cast out from the world of the *city*, the realization of which is a parody of the biblical story – expulsion from the temple. The manifestation of the grassroots nature of the city – "In this city of trade/ Heaven will not Leave". ("Eternity threw into the city ...") develops in the plot of the expulsion of heavenly messengers from the urban world ("You pass without a smile ..."). This poem is built on the contrast of the darkness of the "black city" and sacred symbols – the Cathedral, the Virgin, the Innocent. By playing one of the pieces of the icon-painting image of Madonna with Child, Blok considers the concentration of their views on each other ("You pass without a smile, /lowered lashes... <...>, /How your face looks like/ On the evening of the Virgin,/ lowering the eyelashes... <...> But with you is kinky/ Meek boy in the white hat, /You're the handle,/ Do not give it to fall") as the impossibility of pouring heavenly light into the world, moreover, with regard to the city and even the lyrical hero, the motive of blindness, the impossibility of perceiving this light, is activated: "I stand in the shadow of the portal,/ There, where the wind blows sharp, was covered with tears eyestrain".

The motive of the network, along with the sunset symbolism identical to the symbolism of blood ("The city limits in red...") implements the destructive cosmogonic functions of the image of the Serpent. At the same time, the semantics of sunset combines the social component with the metabolization of the internal state of the lyrical hero ("Bench boat red with blood/ My torn dreams..." – "I will tell you heavenly ...") and with the metaphysical meaning of apocalyptic images, for example, the image of the "okrovavlenny yazyk" (bloodied tongue) of the sky – "The city limits in red...", "In the taverns winding side streets...".

Universalization of the image of the Serpent is achieved by identifying it with the motive of the network – the "rasklubivshiysya Zmei" (deepened Serpent) ("Peter"), which activates the magic functions of the Bronze Horseman – "Begite vse na zov! na lov! (Run to the call!...) " projecting sunset symbolism into the city world: "Soydut glukhiye vechera,/ Zmey rasklubitsya nad domami,/ V ruke protyanutoy Petra, / Zaplyashet fakel'noye plamy. / Zazhgutsya niti fonarey, / Blesnut vitriny i trottuary". (Dead evenings will come, / The Serpent will delve over the houses, / In Peter's outstretched hand/ The torch flame will dance. / The threads of lanterns will light up, / The windows and sidewalks will flash).

The negative symbolism of the Bronze Horseman is supported by the paraphrase of Pushkin's poem – "Skok po kamnyu tyazhko zvonok..." (Dobrokhotov, 2019; Helle, 1995; Malia, 2009); (Gallop on the stone road makes a hard call); it is a demonic hypostasis of the image of the "Dazzling Horseman", arising in the previous cycle and symbolizing the transformation, which will restore the integrity of the world ("My mother"). At the same time, the semantics of retribution inherent in the Bronze Horseman and combined with the social component characteristic of this period paradoxically begins to embody the essence of metaphysical evil. Therefore, the relationship between him and the city develops in two ways: on the one hand, the Bronze Horseman occupies a dominant position, activating Petersburg's traditional perception of St. Petersburg as embodied Peter's dream, a reduced characteristic of which is affirmed here by the appearance of hallucinating semantics: "I predok tsarstvenno-chugunnyy/ Vse tak zhe bredit na zmeye..." (And the royal-cast-iron ancestor / Still raves on the snake ...). Perception of the Snake as a source of dreams allows us to consider the image of the Bronze Horseman as a way to realize the destructive cosmogonic principle, as a result of which the essence of this image is distorted, the semantics of retaliation is replaced by the embodiment of metaphysical chaos: "I yesli lik svobody yavlen, / To prezhdye yavlen lik zmei, / I ni odin sustav ne sdavlen/ Sverknuvshikh kolets cheshui" (And if the face of freedom is revealed, / but beforehand the face of snake is revealed, / And not a single joint is compressed / Of glittering rings of scales) ("Hanging over the city of the world ...").

At the same time, the demonization of the image of the Horseman is achieved by connecting it to the symbolism of the *Town*, a reflection of which is the interaction of the motives of fire and smoke, realizing the general-symbolic mythology of combustion/combustion, in the framework of which the image is transformed, defining it as the infernal double of "The Dazzling Horseman". The fiery symbolism characterizing the image of the Bronze Horseman and associated with the semantics of passion is polemically opposed to the "Dazzling Horseman", which in the previous cycle became a symbolic reflection of the lost "bright goals". In the space of the *Town*, fiery symbolism is replaced by the sunset / bloody symbolism, which allows, on the one hand, to make an accent on the social and revolutionary conflict, and on the other hand, to emphasize the infernal nature of the *Town*, the personified embodiment of which becomes the hypostasis of the living dead ("The city limits in red...").

Such a figurative solution allows us to develop a model of the "world-prison", revealing it through the Dante reminiscences "Predvechernyuyu poroyu..." (before evening time), while the passionate beginning characterizes the very essence of earthly existence, defining it as a dead being. This activates the polarization of the "fire of the soul" and the "fire of the heart", traditional for symbolism, while the luminosity connecting the first mythology to solar symbolism gives way to fixing the temperature regime "Bleshchut iskristyye grivy/ Zolotykh, kak zhar, koney..." (Sparkling manes of the horses hot are shining brightly) ("The City in red limits..."), "Poneslis', blesnuli v ochi/ Ognevyye yazyki,/ Zolotyye bryzgi nochi,/ Gorodskiy motyl'ki" (Rushed, flashed into the eyes / Fire tongues, / Golden spray of night, / City moths) ("Fire"), the forcing of which leads to complete destruction, combustion, embodied in a smoke motif ("Peter", "Hanging over a world-wide city...", "Fire"). As a result, the image of the Bronze Horseman transforms into an infernal anti-image, a reflection of which can be traced iconography: "Tam na skale, veselyy tsar'/ Vzmakhnul zlovonnnoye kadilo,/ I rizoy gorodskaya gar'/ Fonar' manyashchiy oblachila!" (There, on the rock, a cheerful king / He waved a fetid censer, / And with a robe of a city cinder / A lantern beckoning vested!) ("Peter").

The ambivalent element of the *Town* is embodied in the universality of the state of intoxication (this is supported by dominance in the spatial characteristics of the restaurant/tavern topos), combining the two-component symbolism of insanity ("The Stranger," "There ladies flaunt modes..." etc.). The street/crowd, perceiving the hallucinating symbolism of the Bronze Horseman, realizes a low version of madness, thereby connecting to the destructive cosmogonic nature of the Serpent, reflecting the deconstructing side of the elements; in relation to the lyrical hero, both options are activated. A reflection of such ambivalence is the development of the semantic transformation of the poetics of flicker, which characterized the character of the heroine in the cycle "Crossroads"; the desire to give a figurative concretization of the "inexpressible" ("Poems about the beautiful Lady") was replaced by an interpretation of flicker as evidence of the relativity of truth.

5. Conclusion

The preservation of such poetics in the "City" is ensured by the special character of the state of the lyrical hero, at the same time correlated with dionysianism and its profane analog, the realization of which is the expansion of romantic irony as a whole characteristic of young symbolism of the mid-1900s. The symbolism of reflection/mirroring, transforming the narcissistic component, widely declared in the work of the older symbolists, is a way to unlock the Dionysian potential of high madness. The Blok outperforms the problematic interaction "I - You", which in their work acquired a negative (by the definition of A. Hanzen-Leve, "devilish") character. The specifics of the functioning of romantic irony defines two types of relationships "I – You," the first of which is revealed in the poems "The Stranger," "There ladies flaunt mods ...", "You look into the eyes of clear dawns ...", etc., the second – "In the attic", "Cleopatra".

The compositions of the first group are characterized by compositional articulation, noted by Z.G. Mints, which allows in relation to the "Stranger" to build the opposition of the internal – the external, suggesting, in contrast to the romantic tradition, the possibility of interchangeability of the true and imaginary meanings, and thereby outlines the ambiguity of the decision of the hypostasis of the *poet* and the creative act as a whole, typical later on for the "Snow Mask". The first part of each work is separated from the rest of the text by the "absence of words with the meaning" poet "(=" I ", " mine ") and" The Stranger "(=" she ", " her ", " girl's camp ", etc.)" (Hanzen-Leve, 2003), which are restored in the second part. For the "The Stranger," a three-part composition, organized by an anaphoric repetition – "every day" is distinctive. At the same time, the structural unity of all parts is noted, due to the clash of the imagery generated by the ironic discourse with the "vocabulary and phraseology typical of "Poems about the Beautiful Lady" (Hanzen-Leve, 2003), restoring the lyrical discourse. Such a mixture of discourses predetermines the absolute dominance of the concept of vulgarity "Sred' etoy poshlosti tainstvennoy...", (Amid this vulgarity of mystery ...), which extends to the result of a creative act and activates the problem of its interpretation, which is solved by the symbolism of reflection/mirroring, which includes the narcissistic component.

5.1. Contribution

The movement of light symbols in the second volume structure enables the transformation of the primary symbol system that determines the meta-plot of the Blok to be considered.



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