

**LATIP 2021****International Conference on Language and Technology in the Interdisciplinary Paradigm****SYMBOLIZING THE “WIND” CONCEPT IN “THE TWELVE”  
POEM BY A. BLOK**

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**Abstract**

The article is dedicated to the study of the national and cultural symbolizing of the “wind” concept in “The Twelve” poem by A. Blok. In the study under discussion the “wind” concept is viewed upon as a quantum of the structured knowledge, spreading beyond the linguistic semantics and being analyzed within the poetry, the history of the society and its culture. The ethnic – semantic analysis of the “wind” concept, which combines all the knowledge and achievements of the contemporary science – linguistics, cultural studies and literature, sociology, psychology and religion, has been applied in the research. This makes it possible to reveal the concept of “wind” as the most important element of the work. The new approach to the “wind” concept description implies the impossibility to analyze the concept from a pure linguistic viewpoint, without taking into account the prior or collateral ethnic-cultural understanding of the facts and the programme how to go beyond the linguistics into the cultural context of the epoch. Mainstreaming of functioning and correlation, synthesis of the context description components, diverse by their origin, their semantic and esthetic application, has made it possible to identify the nationally valuable characteristics of the “wind” concept in the “The Twelve” poem and to prove that the poet was a profoundly religious person.

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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary research in the sphere of fiction text creation and interpretation tends to analyze the text not only as a communication result between an author and a recipient, but also as the effect of its existence in a special cross-cultural environment, predetermined by the traditions and literary-esthetic stereotypes of different epochs (Alefirenko, 2005; Belousov, 2014; Gaparyan, 2014; Kubryakova, 2009; Lotman, 2010; Rudneva et al., 2019; Shchirova, 2014).

## 2. Problem Statement

Derivation of a fiction text meaning implies the interpretation of some non-linear structures, representing a system of esthetic categories and estimations, which includes the axiological value of the text. Thus, there are all the necessary reasons to view such an ideal formation as an artistic worldview.

It is an ideal formation, serving as an esthetic basis for the artistic communication and consisting of specific intentional structures, finding the ways to be expressed in a certain form of the individual conscience and collective unconscious, i.e. in artistic concepts.

## 3. Research Questions

In the present article we determine an artistic concept as a universal artistic experience, stated in the cultural memory and ready to be used as the material in order to form the new artistic senses.

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the work is to analyze the “wind” concept in “The Twelve” poem by A. Blok taking into consideration the national cultural values of the Russian worldview.

## 5. Research Methods

**The research material**, which serves as a basis for the analysis of the “wind” concept in “The Twelve” poem by A. Blok, is the text of “The Twelve” poem (Blok, 1971), information of the Bible Encyclopedia (2001), The Gospel Book (Mattew, 1992), diary notes by A. Blok (1965).

In the article under discussion the national cultural description of the “wind” concept in “The Twelve poem” by A. Blok on the basis of the ethnic-semantic analysis is provided.

## 6. Findings

We are going to analyze the “wind” concept in “The Twelve” poem by A. Blok to determine the national values.

In the research of “The Twelve” poem it is common to consider the image of the wind as the revolution (Blok, 2000). The reason for such interpretation was given by A. Blok himself. In the article “The Intellectuals and Revolution” (1918) he writes: “Russia is a **gale**. Russia is destined to endure the anguish, humiliation, separation, but it will survive all the humiliations and become renewed and great in

a new way. The revolution is like a **thunderstorm**, like a **blizzard**, it always brings something new and unexpected; it cruelly betrays many people; in its whirlpool it easily hurts the worthy, it often takes ashore the undignified safe and sound; but these are its peculiar features, which do not influence either its overall stream course or the overwhelming uproar of the torrent. If there is an uproar there is always something really great anyway” (Blok, 1980, p. 164). He compares Russia with the storm, the revolution with the blizzard, which brings something new and unexpected. A. Blok’s prose obviously helps to read his literary fiction, but cannot fully reveal its meaning, as “the image is always deeper than the idea”. Thus, we consider the **wind**, which “broke into city streets from the vastness of the symbolic Universe” (Blok, 1980, p. 168), to occupy a special place in the system of images. The poet empowers the wind with such characteristics, which explain many ideas if being interpreted from the ethical and cultural point of view. The **wind** not only builds the frame of the poem image system, “circling” and “crossing” it as a whole, the wind concept changes in the first three and last three chapters of “The Twelve”, going through the text it “touches” all the characters, helping them, punishing or praising to the sky.

The “wind” concept in the indirect sense is widely used in the Bible (The Bible Encyclopedia, 2001). The wind in the Holy Scriptures is the influence tool of the Holy Spirit:

*Suddenly there was a noise*

*From the sky, as if from the blowing*

*Strong wind, which filled*

*The whole house, where they were (The Bible Encyclopedia, 2001).*

That is exactly the way the wind is introduced in the poem:

*Darkness – and white*

*Snow hurled*

*By the wind. The wind!*

*You cannot stand upright*

*For the wind: the wind*

*Scouring God’s world (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).*

In the Bible we read:

*The wind blows where it wishes,*

*and you hear its sound,*

*but you do not know where it comes from*

*or where it goes.*

*So it is with everyone*

*who is born of the Spirit (Gospel of John; The Bible Encyclopedia, 2001).*

In the poem the wind ‘leaves’, taking the Savior and the Twelve with him. As a result, we observe the author’s bewilderment caused by the final part of his poem. A. Blok admitted he did not like the end of “The Twelve”: “When I finished, I was surprised myself: why Christ? But the more I looked into it, the more vividly I saw Christ” (Blok, 1965). Akhmatova heard “the voice...”, whereas A.A. Blok – had a vision. A. Blok, who knew the Bible very well, could have hardly forgotten that the wind in the Holy Scripture is consistently depicted as a testimony to God’s creative might:

*You do not know the ways of the wind,*

*so you cannot know the work of God,  
who does everything* (Matthew, 1992).

Trying to resist the phenomenon of Christ for quite a long while, the poet introduces the image of Christ in the end, striding on “the wings of the wind” (*The Bible Encyclopedia*, 2001). Besides the wind in the Bible expresses the idea of a devastating war impact:

*Like the east wind I will scatter them  
before the enemy.  
I will show them my back, not my face,  
in the day of their calamity* (Matthew, 1992; Jeremiah 18 chapter).

The wind in the poem is also diverse (headwind and tail wind), especially in the first chapter:

*Will the frost never lose its grip  
Or the wind lay its whips aside?  
The bourgeois where the roads divide  
Stands chin on chest, his collar up.  
The wind rejoices,  
Mischievous and sly,  
Ballooning dresses  
And skittling passersby.  
It buffets with a shower  
Of snow the banner cloth:  
ALL POWER TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY,  
And carries voices. Evening ebbs out.  
The crowds decamp.  
Only a tramp Potters about.  
And the wind screams...* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

As the symbol of the fast-paced life, the wind (chapter 6) “touches” Kate’s ridiculous and accidental death:

*Crack–crack–reload–crack–crack!*

*The snow whirls skyward off the road! ...* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

- In the Bible we read: “Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good” (Job 7 chapter; Matthew, 1992). Regarding Kate the wind depicts God’s wrath, as in the Isaiah chapter: “You called it a measure when you rejected it; you threw it away; you threw it away with your strong breath, as in the day of the east wind” (*The Bible Encyclopedia*, 2001).

It should be mentioned that the wind concept could not be found only in four chapters out of twelve (5, 7, 8, 9), thus it makes the “Judgment Day” inevitable. The symbols of the sin are disseminated throughout these chapters:

*Once upon a time you wore gray spats,  
Scoffed chocolates in gold foil,  
Went out with officer-cadets –  
Now it’s the rank and file!*

*Honey, honey, don't be cruel!*

*Roll with me to ease your soul!* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

*Onward the twelve advance,*

*Their butts swinging together,*

*But the poor killer looks*

*At the end of his tether...* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

*I'll get my knife*

*And slit your throat!* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

There is no wind, no movement, no Holy Spirit.

Chapter nine plays a particular role among the above mentioned chapters concerning the structure and the system of characters. The real names of the places (the crossroads at the corner of the Nevsky Avenue and Dumskaya Street, where the “bourgeois” and the “dog” are standing), the clear historic reference (“We’ve seen the last of the police”), and at the same time the absence of the wind (“The prison tower reigns in peace” (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France)) make the transformation of the real characters into the symbol of “the old world”:

*The bourgeois where the roads divide,*

*Stands chin on chest, his collar up:*

*Mangy and flea-bitten at his side*

*Shivers a coarse-haired mongrel pup* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

*The bourgeois with a hangdog air*

*Stands speechless, like a question mark,*

*And the old world behind him there*

*Stands with its tail down in the dark* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

This scene frozen in the historic and fiction context is fixed by the recipient’s conscience as the symbol of the time, reflecting the devil’s origin.

The wind’s “attitude” to the Past (the old world) and to the Future, symbolized by Christ, followed by the Twelve, is obvious. The final image would not have caused so much discussion, if this antithesis had been scrutinized. The attempt to substitute Christ for Antichrist, made by Bulgakov (“At the Gods Feast”) and later on by the church advocates (Alexei Sidorenko), is utterly impossible within the poem context:

*...So on they go with sovereign tread –*

*Behind them limps the hungry mongrel,*

*And wrapped in wild snow at their head*

*Carrying the flag blood-red –*

*Soft-footed in the blizzard’s swirl,*

*Invulnerable where bullets sliced –*

*Crowned with a crown of snowflake pearl,*

*In a wreath of white rose,*

*Ahead of them Christ Jesus goes* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

It is harder to analyze the “occasional” characters and the Twelve, also accompanied by **the wind**. The latter are not represented in the first chapter where the **wind** is very “active” and in a diverse way “meets and sees off” the passers-by. It blows “a man” off his feet, but spares a “walker”:

*Everyone out walking*

*Slips. Look – poor thing!* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

The ambiguity of the meaning is vividly seen here. The chapter is full of non-personified remarks. Crowds of people and polyvocality of “The black evening” symbolizes tormenting uncertainty in the estimation of the ongoing events, on the other hand, the attempt to embrace everything and everyone, different people at a certain moment, is made by the poet.

**The wind** “meets” the “*old weeping woman, who is worried to death*” (Stallworthy and France). Reading attentively, one can notice a particular symbolic meaning of the character:

*From building to building over*

*The street a rope skips nimble,*

*A banner on the rope:*

*ALL POWER TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.*

*This old weeping woman is worried to death,*

*She doesn't know what it's all about:*

*That banner – for God's sake –*

*So many yards of cloth!*

*How many children's leggings it would make*

*And they without shirts – without boots* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

*The old girl like a puffed hen picks*

*Her way between drifts of snow.*

*“Mother of God, these Bolsheviks*

*Will be the death of us, I know!”* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France)

Why is she compared with “a puffed hen”? “The peculiar features of a mother-hen, caring mother loving its chicks, are emphasized by the “Savior” himself, as it is described in the Biblical Encyclopedia” (The Bible Encyclopedia, 2001).

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!*

*How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under*

*her wings, and you were not willing!* (The Bible Encyclopedia, 2001; Gospel of Matthew)

Right in the first chapter the Holy Mother is mentioned; Christ’s “voice” can be heard indirectly. The character of the old woman symbolizes the faith in the Savior. She is crying about children, believes and seems to be preparing us for the appearance of the Savior in the final part of the poem. So the wind helps her to go over the snowdrift.

The “biting wind” is severe to a bourgeois, it gives a rough time to a writer, to a priest, to a grand lady, and the author also seems to be making fun of these characters too. Jointly with the wind they both overhear, sympathize, prophesize, warn and anguish.

The Twelve appear in the second chapter. In his scientific research, “The Thunderstorm in the Garden of Nightingales” Gorelov (1984) writes: “**The wind** is blowing, it is snowing and the violent

force of nature loses its aggressiveness ahead of the Twelve” (p. 301). Etkind (1998) develops the idea, having found out that in the third chapter the wind not just supports the revolutionary force but becomes its main weapon, “the tool to blow out the revolution in the whole world”.

*To smoke the nobles out of their holes  
We'll light a fire through all the world,  
A bloody fire through all the world –  
Lord, bless our souls!* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France)

Blood as well as the cross has a biblical meaning, a “Blood-coloured flag” in the hands of Jesus Christ irritates many researchers:

*The soul of the body is in blood* (Mattew, 1992).  
*Blood is the soul* (Mattew, 1992).

Blok wrote in his article “Intellectuals and Revolution” (1918) almost like in the Bible: “A soul attracts blood. Only spirit can confront the horrors. Why should one oppose warm-heartedness to spirituality? The beautiful is always hard to achieve” (Blok, 1980), let us compare:

*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood;  
And without shedding of blood is no remission* (Mattew, 1992).

Thus, the sacrificial blood is mentioned in the Holy Scripture. We can also read in the Biblical Encyclopedia: «Obviously, the blood itself could not redeem the sins and destroy them, and it gets its particular meaning only if it transforms into the other High blood spilt on the cross for the human race by the God Jesus Christ, and which can purify (The Bible Encyclopedia, 2001):

*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,  
We have fellowship with one another,  
And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son  
Purifies us from all sin* (Mattew, 1992).

Therefore, «the blood-colored flag» in the poem by A. Blok is the highest symbol of purification, the sign of Hope for the atonement for “any” sins, for the Future, and it could be held only by That, Who sacrificed the blood for people.

A. Blok was very harsh in his judgment of people and events where the concept of faith is concerned. “Why, – he wrote, – a cathedral was destroyed? – Because an obese priest, hiccupping, took bribes and sold vodka (Blok, 1980). He considered the desire to save the wealth and to take care of themselves to be “the issue of bourgeoisie’s self-interest”. And the fact that “it is impossible to prove the existence of God” was impertinently told at school and in the family (Blok, 1980). Therefore, the bourgeoisie and the priesthood is shown with the lack of high human qualities in “prose”, the author could not help expressing it in a figurative sense in his fiction literature (Blok, 1980).

In the poem this idea is exaggerated: bourgeois – mongrel dog – devil. “Turning its back to the past, the wind is “blowing around” in the Present, looking for the way to the Future. Like the author, the wind has nothing to do but believe in the stamina and creative force of the Twelve apostles of the new time. Two names are well-known: and both are biblical (Pete, Andrey). Pete’s character is shown in detail, like apostle Peter, he makes sins and repents, sins and prays for forgiveness, makes sins and appeals to Lord:

*I shot her in my fury –  
Like the fool I am...*” (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).  
“*Oh, what a blizzard! ... Jesus Christ!!*” (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

His teammates consider that he lacks class consciousness:

*You fool, what did Christ and his cross  
Ever do for the likes of us?* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

Pete follows the overall irreligious mood. The faith is lost.

*...Abusing God's name as they go,  
All twelve march onward into snow* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

*Into their faces day and night  
Bellows the wind  
Without a break...* (Blok, 1971; Stallworthy and France).

The way to faith is long, but one cannot live without it: “It is worth living only in such a way, – A. Blok wrote, – so that to make immense demands to life: all or nothing, to expect the unexpected; to believe in ‘things that do not exist’, as it must be arranged in the world that way though the situation is not as it is supposed to be and will not change for the better for quite a long while. Life gives it away to us, because it is wonderful” (Blok, 1980). One cannot help mentioning Yeshua from the novel by Bulgakov, who was asked by Pilate Pontius:

– ... *So, then, Mark Rat-slayer, a cold and convinced torturer, the people who, as I see, 'the procurator pointed to Yeshua's disfigured face, 'beat you for your preaching, the robbers Dysmas and Gestas, who with their confreres killed four soldiers, and, finally, the dirty traitor Judas – are all good people?'*  
*'Yes,' said the prisoner.*  
*'And the kingdom of truth will come?'*  
*'It will, Hegemon,' Yeshua answered with conviction* (Bulgakov, 1989).

To sum up, the “wind” concept is the basis of “The Twelve” poem composition and its image structure. In A. Blok’s literary works, it symbolizes spiritual connection between the Present and the Past. The “wind” raises Christ and his followers, supports them in the fight against natural hazards and earth forces, taking them “above the blizzard” to “the fields of the Lord”.

## 7. Conclusion

To draw the conclusion, the ethno-semantic analysis of “the wind concept” in “The Twelve” poem by A. Blok has enabled to prove the fact that the system of the verbal meanings correlates with the national values of the native speakers, the concepts reflecting the national values determine the Russian mentality. Thus, A. Blok showed the worldview and the world perception, interwoven in the context of the national traditions, in the language and in the system of particular stereotypes, standard images, which are typical of the language.

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