

# FUNCTIONALITY OF THE SYMBOLS OF "BLACK" IN PUSHKIN'S POETICS OF THE 1830 s.

Osipova Yu.V. (Russian Federation)

Email: Osipova372@scientifictext.ru

Osipova Yulia Vyacheslavovna – PhD in Philology, Teacher of philological disciplines,  
STATE BUDGETARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION PEDAGOGICAL COLLEGE № 10, MOSCOW

**Abstract:** the article analyzes the functionality of the symbolism of the "black" in the context of the later Pushkin's poetics, based on the material poem "Demons". It was revealed that the symbolism of the "black" late Pushkin goes beyond the boundaries of exclusively color symbolism. Such symbolism begins to be perceived as "metaphysical symbolism of black." The metaphysical meaning of this symbolism is given by the poet's philosophical reflections on reality. Absorption of other images by "black" symbolizes a kind of spiritual destruction. Due to this, even other colors in "Demons" become symbols of destruction. The article notes that such a color perception of reality will be close to symbolist poets, in particular, A. Blok. The large-scale, dynamic symbolism of "black" rushes into the poetic system of A. Blok in a swift vector. The black-and-white graphics of Pushkin's images are inherited by the black-and-white storyboard of the flow of Blok's symbolic images in the poem "The Twelve". Thus, the resonant cinematography of this versatile poem is further enhanced. The materials of the article can be used at special seminars on Pushkin's work (philological, philosophical, cultural orientation).

**Keywords:** metaphysical symbolism, poetics, semantics, symbol, comparison, epithet.

## ФУНКЦИОНАЛЬНОСТЬ СИМВОЛИКИ «ЧЕРНОГО» В ПОЭТИКЕ ПУШКИНА 1830-Х ГГ.

Ю.В. Осипова (Российская Федерация)

Осипова Юлия Вячеславовна – кандидат филологических наук, преподаватель филологических дисциплин,  
Государственное профессиональное образовательное учреждение  
Педагогический колледж № 10, г. Москва

**Аннотация:** в статье на материале стихотворения Пушкина «Бесы» проанализирована функциональность символики «черного» в контексте поздней поэтики автора. Выявлено, что символика «черного» позднего Пушкина выходит за границы исключительно цветовой символики. Такая символика начинает восприниматься как «метафизическая символика черного». Метафизический смысл этой символике придают философские размышления поэта над действительностью. Поглощение «черным» других образов символизирует некое духовное уничтожение. За счет этого даже другие цвета в «Бесах» становятся символами разрушения. В статье отмечено, что подобное цветовое восприятие действительности окажется близким поэтам-символистам, в частности, А. Блоку. Масштабная, динамичная символика «черного» стремительным вектором врывается в поэтическую систему А. Блока. Черно-белая графика пушкинских образов наследуется черно-белой раскадровкой потока символических образов Блока в поэме «Двенадцать». Таким образом происходит усиление резонансной кинематографичности этой разноплановой поэмы. Материалы статьи могут использоваться на спецсеминарах по творчеству Пушкина (филологическая, философская, культурологическая направленность).

**Ключевые слова:** метафизическая символика, поэтика, семантика, символ, сравнение, эпитет.

Pushkin's poetics of the 1830s more and more gravitates towards the symbolic. Pushkin's immense charm lies in the fact that a huge, eternal, universal cosmos is concentrated in every manifestation of life in his poetry. In fact, in Pushkin we find not only a synthesis of form (thought) and sound, but also a synthesis of form (thought) and color [7], [8], [9], [10], [11].

In the early 1830s Pushkin strove to create a symbolic image of "black forces". The first manifestation of this was the poem "Demons" (1830), where the poetics of the symbol of "black forces" was formed on a mythological basis.

The study of this text has a long history. We will present several concepts for the interpretation of its unique mystery.

D. Blagoy sociologized the idea of "Demons", defining it as a premonition of the end of the noble class [2].

B. Gorodetsky sees in this poem a kind of result of Pushkin's reflections on the life of Nikolayev's Russia [5].

M. Gershenzon, in his analysis of this work, did not emphasize the conventionality of landscape sketches. The researcher connected the text with the fate of Pushkin: Moscow gossip, a dowry, a painful thought about money, Boldin's section, cholera [4].

Traditionally, "Demons" are associated by subject matter and imagery with the poems of previous years: "Winter evening" (1825), "Winter road" (1826), "Winter morning" (1829). The reason for the rapprochement is a winter storm, a blizzard and other textual calls. You can draw a parallel between "Demons" and works saturated with tragic philosophical reflections of the poet about the meaning of life and the purpose of existence, about life and death. The poems "A vain gift, an accidental gift ..." (1828), "Caucasus" (1829), "Collapse" (1829) are dedicated to this.

It is also indisputable that the "Demons" correlate with the "Elegy" (1830). These poems are united by a pessimistic view of the future, which promises new and unhappy worries:

Безумных лет угасшее веселье  
Мне тяжело, как смутное похмелье...

...

Мой путь уныл... [III, 228]

The image of the "black forces" that appeared in "Demons" took on flesh even before the writing of this famous poem. This happened in the poems «The Poet and the Crowd» (1828) and «To the Poet» (1830). The first of them contains a direct appeal of the poet to the rabble (it is no coincidence that this poem had the original name "Mob"). The rabble is interpreted here as a stupid crowd, they are onlookers, fools, slanderers. All these listed images became symbols due to the symbolic semantics of "black". No wonder the poem contains comparisons of the rabble-crowd with images that directly refer to the connotations of "black": «ты червь земли, не сын небес» [III, 142], «душе противны вы как гробы» [III, 142].

The second poem ("To the Poet") contains echoes of the first: «суд глупца и смех толпы холодной» [III, 223]. There is also demonic "black" in it: «Так пускай толпа его бранит / И плюет на алтарь, где твой огонь горит» [III, 223].

Speaking about the emergence of the symbolic image of "black forces" in Pushkin's poetics, it must be added that this image is represented both in early and later works - "The Monk" (1813), "Ruslan and Lyudmila" (1820), "Gavriliada" (1821), "A Scene from Faust" (1825), "Eugene Onegin" (1823-1830), in the poem "At the beginning of my life I remember school ... (1830)," The Tale of the Priest and His Worker Balda "(1830) V. Koshelev drew attention to this [6].

V. Koshelev made an important conclusion that Pushkin strove for an ambiguous interpretation of this image. For example, in «Gavriliada», the demon is opposed to the angel in accordance with church tradition. In «Eugene Onegin», the demon and the angel are combined in one extraordinary personality:

Созданье ада и небес,  
Сей ангел, сей надменный бес... [VI, 149], [].

V. Koshelev's observations of Pushkin's epithets and comparisons in the representation of demons allowed the researcher to create a semblance of demonic typology: «мрачный бес» [IV, 51, 131], «лукавый бес» [IV, 127], «грешный бес», «умен как бес» [IV, 47], «бес ночной» [III, 835].

To these constructive remarks of the researcher, we add that in drafts Pushkin more and more often uses variations of "black": «Тройка едет в темном поле» [III, 832], «среди проклятой тьмы» [III, 834], «вон чернеет он избой» [III, 835], «черный пеня иль волк?...» [III, 835], «освещает мрак летучий» [III, 835].

Pushkin's ideas about the demon, undoubtedly, corresponded to the image of the demon in folk demonology. They included both the biblical idea of the Prince of Darkness (scene from "Faust"), and the "home" idea of the "naughty" demon (the ballad "Drowned", where the father calls his children "devil"), and the idea of the demon as a pagan god ("At the beginning of my life I remember school ..."). Thus, the symbolism of "black" is based on cultural traditions - night, death, decay, sin, evil and destructive forces, silence, emptiness. After all, black is a symbol of the otherworldly, infernality.

Of course, the symbolism in «Demons» goes far beyond black. Here, an important role is played by images-symbols of a horse, path-road, moon, fire, blizzard. But it is precisely the "black" who is assigned a special, almost leading role in the poem.

Pushkin's "black" coexists with other color designations. They bring a great sense of perspective to the text. The space of the "Demons" acquires an extraordinary volume due to Pushkin's use of three colors - white, red and black.

Мчатся тучи, вьются тучи;  
Невидимкою луна  
Освещает снег летучий;  
Мутно небо, ночь мутна [III, 226], -

this is how Pushkin begins "Demons", denoting the two leading colors in it - white and black. It is noteworthy that Pushkin loves the shades of these colors more. A shade of white, otherworldly lies about the image of the moons. Shades of black are veiled in images of a cloudy sky and a cloudy night. The epithet "мутный" deepens the space in this poem. It is no coincidence that Pushkin repeats it many times. This line sets the vertical axis, or the axis of the spirit, which was eclipsed by the demons. The spirit is black, cloudy, dark. An open field, unknown plains, which turn into whitening due to the light of the moon, are the horizontal axis, or the white axis of everyday life. Of course, Pushkin's use of the epithet "мутный" prevents the reader from perceiving the combination of "white" and "black" as contrasting. Therefore, we will talk here not so much about the contrast, but about the symbolic unity of these colors. They give rise to a sense of disharmony, chaos, fear:

Страшно, страшно поневоле  
Средь белеющих равнин! [III, 226]  
(...)

Вьюга злится, вьюга плачет;  
Кони чуткие храпят [III, 227].

It is this "muddy unity" that oppresses and interferes with the dynamics:  
«Нет мочи:

Коням, барин, тяжело»... [III, 226].

(...)

Сил нам нет кружиться доле;

Колокольчик вдруг умолк...

Кони стали... [III, 227]

«Вьюга мне слипает очи» [III, 226], - this line illustrates the transformation of light, when white turns into black, darkness. That is why the traveler goes astray. The leading white and black colors are joined by red, which is associated with the image of fire:

Там верстою небывалой

Он торчал передо мной;

Там сверкнул он искрой малой

И пропал во тьме пустой [III, 226-227].

In the rough sketch, the image of the spark is colored scarlet:

То верстою небывалой

Он торчит передо мной

То сверкает искрой алой [III, 834].

Here we are talking about a demon, the image of which reappears:

Вьюга злится, вьюга плачет;

Кони чуткие храпят;

Вон уж он далече скачет;

Лишь глаза во мгле горят [III, 227].

It is known that fire is not only divine, but also hellish. In these verses, fire is associated with red, the most aggressive color. The red color in this poem symbolizes the actions of demons, which Pushkin compares to swirling autumn leaves («закружились бесы разны, будто листья в ноябре» [III, 227]). This comparison deepens the symbolic semantics of "red" since the mythological tradition associates the image of the whirling leaves with the torment of a sinful soul in hell.

The demonic is connected with the symbolic image of hellfire in the poem "And then we went ..." (1832):

Бесенок, под себя поджав копыто,

Кружил ростовщика у адского огня [III, 281].

Pushkin has already used the symbolic combination of white, black and red colors in «Eugene Onegin». This happened in an episode of Tatyana Larina's dream. It is noteworthy that in the novel itself, in verse, the image of demons is used in a wide semantic range: «черти, змеи», «в меня вселился новый бес». The color palette is realized in Tatyana's dream in the following lines: «кипучий, темный поток» [VI, 102] (shade of black); «...и пред шумящею пучиной» [VI, 102] (shade of black); «осин, берез и лип нагих» (shade of black) [VI, 103]; «идет по снеговой поляне» (shade of white) [VI, 102]; «сияет луч светил ночных» (shade of white) [VI, 103]; «и ярко светится окошко» (shade of red because we are talking about a hut «шайки домовых») [VI, 104]; «Вдруг ветер дунул, загашая / Огонь светильников ночных» (shade of red) [VI, 105].

The mystery of Tatyana's dream is in its ambiguity. On the one hand, the combination of white and black colors is a symbol of Tatyana's future marriage with the general (the bride's white dress and the groom's black tailcoat). There is something similar in "Demons":

Домового ли хоронят,

Ведьму ль замуж выдают [III, 105]?

On the other hand, the presence of red in Tatyana's dream symbolizes danger, blood, Lensky's imminent death.

Pushkin surprisingly accurately shows the dynamics of color, as well as how the light changes in the poem "Demons". Along with these, there is a change in the accents in the poem.

At first, the moon illuminates the snow («освещает снег летучий» [III, 226]), then it turns into a month («в мутной месяца игре» [III, 227]), then the month again transforms into a moon («Мчатся тучи, выются тучи; / Невидимкою луна» [III, 227]).

Such a transformation of the moon into a month became possible due to the thickening of the dark, black forces that block its light. The month now began to symbolize the changes taking place in the poem. The month now began to symbolize these phenomena and the power that transforms them (the world of Darkness, Hell is depicted as a waning month):

Сколько их! Куда их гонят?

Что так жалобно поют?

Домового ли хоронят,

Ведьму ль замуж выдают [III, 227]?

After that, Pushkin again returns to the image of the full moon, which, although invisible, illuminates the snow:

Мчатся бесы рой за роем

В беспредельной вышине,

Визгом жалобным и воем

Надрывая сердце мне... [III, 227]

The poem ends with a thickening of the "black forces" that will again close the moon. Starting with this poem, the image of demons in Pushkin's poetics more and more often combines with the symbolism of the "black":

Тогда я демонов увидел черный рой  
Подобный издали ватаге муравьиной.  
(«И дале мы пошли...» (1832) – [Ш, 281])

In the drafts of "Demons" one can also find an intensification of "black expression" in the image of a demon. He has a different look, because capable of reincarnation:

Вон он брежит искрой алой  
Вон чернеет он избой [Ш, 227].

When the moon decreases, the light dims, and the landscape becomes impenetrable. That is why, at the end of the poem, for Pushkin, it becomes important to combine this ominous, desolate "black" with sound - the screeching and howling of demons. It is this screech that tears the space apart. After all, it is so strong that you cannot hear the sound of a bell.

Black in "Demons" absorbs white and red. A kind of conceptual chain is built in our minds: black - darkness - unknown - fear. The absorption of other images by the "black" in the poem, apparently, symbolizes a kind of spiritual abolition. As a result, even white and red colors become symbols of destruction.

It is important to note that all these symbols will turn out to be close to the symbolist poets. B. Gasparov stressed that the national myth of devilry, created by Pushkin, was developed in the works of Dostoevsky, and then in the works of Blok [3].

A. Blok reflected a similar thought in his diary, in which a line from "Demons" appears: «Домового ли хоронят, ведьму ль замуж выдают» [VIII, 227] [3].

It is surprising that Blok uses in the poem "The Twelve" the same colors as Pushkin, black, white, and red. Blok in the poem uses pure colors (Pushkin prefers shades of these colors). Black is represented by the following images: «черный вечер» [Ш, 349], «черное, черное небо» [Ш, 349], «черная злоба» [Ш, 350], «винтовое черные ремни» [Ш, 350], «черный ус» [Ш, 351], «ночки черные, хмельные» [Ш, 354], «чернобровушку» [Ш, 354]. Images of snow («белый снег» [Ш, 347]), light («на всем божьем свете» [Ш, 347]), the crown of Christ («в белом венчике из роз» [Ш, 359]) have white color. The red color in the poem symbolizes fire, blood, robbery: «кругом огни, огни, огни» [Ш, 350], «бубновый туз» [Ш, 351], «в красной гвардии» [Ш, 351], «мировой пожар в крови» [Ш, 351], «шрам не зажил от ножа» [Ш, 352], «...под грудью, Катя, та царапина свежа» [Ш, 352].

The most difficult color image is the image of Katka. It merges shades of red, white and black: «зубки блещут жемчугом» [Ш, 351] (shade of white), «из-за родинки пунцовой» [Ш, 354] (shade of red), «гетры серые носила» [Ш, 352] (combination of colors of white and black). The image of Katka is the most ambiguous, behind it is the image of Russia. This image is unambiguously inexpressible:

С юнкером гулять ходила –  
С солдатом теперь пошла [Ш, 352]?

Blok's poem "The Twelve" is built not only on the contrast of colors, but also on the contrast of their semantics: light - darkness, harmony - chaos, divinity - sin, spirit - flesh, world - blood.

In chapter 12, the transcendental image of Jesus Christ appears. This image stands not only over the world, but over all the horror of the cosmic blizzard:

Нежной поступью надвьюжной,  
Снежной россыпью жемчужной,  
В белом венчике из роз –  
Впереди Иисус Христос.

In contrast to the dominant black color in Pushkin's "Demons", in the poem "The Twelve" all color symbolism tends to white and its shades. Shades of white express purity, holiness, divinity, forgiveness, repentance, predominance. Therefore, it is no coincidence that chapter 10 of the poem speaks of the golden iconostasis that saved Petka. In the context of this, Blok's poem "The Twelve" should be viewed not only as a poem about timelessness, but also as a poem about a return to spiritual sources.

In the poem "The Twelve" Blok follows in the footsteps of Pushkin. It strengthens the semantics of conventional color, its metaphysical meaning, maximum color expression. It is this color expression that serves the artist not only as a means of self-expression, but also leads to the symbolic construction of the world and its forms.

### *References / Список литературы*

1. Пушкин А.С. Полн. собр. соч.: В 16-ти тт. 8 т. М.; Л.: АН СССР, 1937-1949.
2. Благый Д.Д. Социология творчества Пушкина. М.: Кооп. изд. «Мир», 1931.
3. Гаспаров Б.М. Поэма А. Блока «Двенадцать» и некоторые проблемы карнавализации в искусстве начала XX // Slavica Neirusolimitana, V. I, Ierusalem, 1977.
4. Гершензон М.О. Ключ веры. Гольфстрем. Мудрость Пушкина, М.: Аграф, 2001.
5. Горюцкий Б.М. Лирика Пушкина, М., Л.: Изд. АН СССР, 1962.
6. Кошелев В.А. Пушкин: история и предание. СПб: Акад. Проект, 2000.
7. Osipova Yu.V. Simvolicheskaya kharakteristika gorodskogo prostranstva v poetike Pushkina 1830-kh gg.// LXIV International correspondence scientific and practical conference «European research: innovation in science, education and technology». June 5-9, 2020. London, United Kingdom.

8. *Osipova Yu.V.* Simvolika tsveta v povesti Pushkina «Pikovaya dama» // Problemy sovremennoy nauki i obrazovaniya. № 6, 2020.
9. *Osipova Yu.V.* Pushkinskiye simvoly 1830-kh gg. v p'yese M.A. Bulgakova «Pushkin» // Nauka, obrazovaniye i kul'tura. № 1, 2019.
10. *Osipova Yu.V.* Muzykal'nost' poetiki A.S. Pushkina: interpretatsiya muzykal'noy prirody stikhotvoreniya A.S. Pushkina «Osen'» // International scientific review of problems and prospects of modern science and education, Boston USA, January. 21-22, 2019.
11. Pushkinskiye chteniya. Sbornik po itogam Mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii «XXVIII Pushkinskiye chteniya». M.: Gosudarstvennyy institut russkogo yazyka im. A.S. Pushkina, 2018.