TTR
Traduction, terminologie, re?daction

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Volume 2, numéro 1, 1er semestre 1989

Carrefours de la traduction

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/037036ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/037036ar

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Éditeur(s)

Association canadienne de traductologie

ISSN

0835-8443 (imprimé)
1708-2188 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article

Dietz, S. (1989). Reverence or Blasphemy: Translation Strategies in Aleksandr Blok's *Dvenadtsat'/The Twelve*. *TTR*, *2*(1), 103–115. https://doi.org/10.7202/037036ar

Reverence or Blasphemy: Translation Strategies in Aleksandr Blok's *Dvenadtsat'/The Twelve*

Shoshanah Dietz

Vladimir Maiakovskii was «the Poet» of the revolution, and Aleksandr Blok's *The Twelve* was «the Poem». This oft-cited claim reveals the acceptance of Blok's *The Twelve* into the canon of modern Russian literature and particularly of the literature on the Russian revolution. The history of *The Twelve*, its reception and publication record in Russia and abroad, however, is not so easily summed up. Blok himself is not easy to categorize and has often been manipulated for various political causes, due not least to his own ambivalent position in the political arena. These complex problems surrounding Blok's biography and poetry are clearly revealed in the different translations and interpretations of *The Twelve* in the English-speaking world. The three translations of *The Twelve* discussed here illustrate the polemics in the theory of both translation and interpretation. All three translations are collaborations between an English or American poet and a knowledgeable Russian speaker, yet they turn out to be very different. This is due not to the varying circumstances of time and place of the translations; rather the different translation strategies, interpretative biases, and different degrees of emphasis on the source text or the target audience have all contributed to produce remarkably different texts and create very different images of Blok's *The Twelve* in the English-speaking world.

Blok's very life span (1880-1921) reveals that he lived in a period of great political upheaval. The controversy surrounding Blok is not concerned with whether he was involved in the political aspect of life in Russia, but rather with where he stood. It is crucial to know how translators and critics viewed Blok's politics in order to fully comprehend the bias they are working from. Both Soviet and Western sources demonstrate the many contradictions surrounding efforts to interpret

Blok's political life. Soviet sources claim that Blok «saw the truth of Lenin's Bolshevist party» and that his sympathies were on the side of «all revolutionary people»; he was «a builder of the new socialist culture» (Kovalev, 1979, p. 91). Another Soviet source states decisively that «when the October Revolution was accomplished, Blok took its side» and cites Blok's article «The Intelligentsia and the Revolution» and his membership in official Soviet cultural organizations as further proof of his pro-Soviet stance (Fatiushchenko, 1982, p. 21).

Some Western sources concede that Blok was one of the few intellectuals who cooperated with the new government (Weber, 1979, p. 46), and others have tried to explain his cooperation in accordance with their own nationalist or religious views. Some Western critics were quick to expound Blok's later disappointment with the regime: «Later Blok was deeply distressed by the course that the Revolution was taking» (Yarmolinskii and Deutsch, 1949, p. 286). Soviet sources insist that despite the difficult years, «he remained true to the principles and the stand point which he had adopted at the beginning of 1918» (Fatiushchenko, 1982, p. 21). It is Blok's own ambivalence in taking a firm political stance that allows for so much freedom in interpreting his political views, and this becomes a significant factor in the translation and interpretation of *The Twelve*. In the realm of poetics, no one denies that Blok was an important poet of Russian symbolism, but attitudes towards this movement and the position of *The Twelve* within Blok's career produce a variety of interpretations. The controversies surrounding *The Twelve* concern both form and content, and the translator cannot avoid taking position on these important issues.

Interestingly enough, in both Western and Soviet sources, Blok's poetry is usually divided into two categories: his Symbolist poetry and *The Twelve*. In Western sources, Blok is most often listed primarily as a Russian Symbolist poet known for his earlier Symbolist poetry as well as *The Twelve* (see Weber, Terras, Mirskii, Oxford), and even Soviet sources are careful to separate his Symbolist poetry from *The Twelve* (see Fatiushchenko, Kovalev, *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*). Very few critics connect *The Twelve* with Blok's Symbolist poetry. This is due to different attitudes towards Symbolism in the Soviet Union and abroad. Soviet sources contain negative statements on the movement and attempt to downplay Blok's involvement in it: Symbolism was a «decadent literary-artistic movement... concerning the early Blok only» (Kovalev, 1979, p. 91); it emphasized only very negative aspects of life, but Blok, in his mature work, freed himself from the «abstract mysticism and romantic symbols» (*The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 1970, p. 369); Blok, while retaining an interest in Symbolism for some years, broke free from «Symbolist schemes and dogmas, which were actively imposed upon him by his friends, the Symbolists (Fatiushchenko, 1982, p. 18). Western sources, though usually acknow-

ledging the importance of *The Twelve*, nevertheless claim that Blok's significance as a poet is based on his Symbolist poetry: Blok is listed primarily as a «Russian Symbolist poet» (Oxford, Weber, Terras). The reasons for these differences are due to political as well as cultural biases, and both sides have attempted to claim Blok as their own.

Given these various biases, how can one determine Blok's position in Russian and world literature? How central to Russian and world literature is *The Twelve*? In the Soviet Union, Blok has enjoyed immense success as the poet of *The Twelve*. In one standard textbook on literature for Soviet pupils, an entire chapter is devoted to Blok and half of that is on *The Twelve*. The chapter opens with quotes on Blok by Maksim Gorkii, one of the most revered Soviet writers, an important signal of Blok's acceptance in the official canonization (Kovalev, 1979, pp. 91-110). In 1932 Anatolii Lunacharskii, the Commissar of Culture in the 1920s, wrote that although Blok is «a spokesman for the nobility... the last great artist of the Russian nobility... he is charged with a hatred for his milieu and class,» thus giving Blok's ambiguous political position a more positive note (Lunacharskii, 1932, p. 12). The entry on Blok in *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* is short, indicative perhaps of the polemics concerning him, yet in the end, an entry demonstrates a positive sign by virtue of its very existence. An important signal of Blok's position in the Soviet canon is the publishing history of *The Twelve*. It was reprinted continually until 1940, when, due to the questionable political nature of both Blok and *The Twelve*, Stalin no longer approved of Blok's «limited understanding». After World War II, it was neither banned nor printed, and it was not republished and recanonized until after Stalin's death in 1954 (Forsyth, 1977, p. 122). Today, as shown by its inclusion in standard Soviet handbooks and textbooks, both Blok and *The Twelve*'s centrality in Russian literature is clearly demonstrated.

Western critics, especially émigré critics, have also recognized the centrality of Blok and *The Twelve* in Russian literature, although they do not have the same opinion on the quality of this central position. One émigré literary historian, Dmitrii Mirskii, acknowledges the importance of Blok's poetry, and instead attacks the man and concludes that Blok himself was «a man neither of great brains nor of great moral strength» (Mirskii, 1926, p. 217). Regardless of individual tastes, all agree that Blok was a very influential poet, a poet of the revolution (for good or bad), «unquestionably one of Russia's greatest poets» (Stallworthy and France, 1970, p. 9), ranked with the other great Russian poets as Aleksandr Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, and Nikolai Nekrasov (Kovalev, 1979, p. 92) and generally that his influence was felt by all poets who followed him. Indeed, Anna Akhmatova, the great Acmeist poet, called Blok «a monument to the beginning of a century» (Terras, 1985, p. 56).

Why has Blok's *The Twelve* provoked so much controversy? A short synopsis of the poem will suggest the polemics involved. Blok wrote *The Twelve* in January 1918 and published it in February 1918. The poem consists of twelve sections and contains a collage of lyrical, political, religious, and colloquial, even vulgar, language. The setting is Petrograd during a blizzard, and the poem portrays people on the street, an old woman, a writer, a priest, and the bourgeoisie in general. The main action surrounds twelve Red Guards marching through the streets, plundering and fighting their way through a snowstorm. Two of the twelve, Vanka and Petr, fight over Katya. As Vanka begins to leave a tavern with Katya, Petr shoots him, misses, and kills Katya instead. Vanka escapes and leaves the Red Guards, while Petr, though unhappy about Katya, continues to march on with them. The storm worsens and someone asks who is leading them; it turns out to be a mangy dog, who is likened to the old world. At the conclusion of the poem, someone asks a second time who is in front, leading them, bearing a bloody flag, invisible and untouched by storm or bullets, wearing a wreath of white roses —the leader now is Jesus Christ. Even this brief summary reveals the juxtaposition of religious and political symbols and its potential for controversy. Indeed, readers of *The Twelve* were either excited or disgusted; there were no neutral reactions.

The response of Russian readers to *The Twelve* depended largely on the political biases of the individual reader. Most émigrés of the time reacted very strongly against it and broke off their friendship with Blok, insisting he had sold out to the Soviets. Many were particularly appalled at the juxtaposition of Christian and Bolshevik symbols, calling it «a blasphemy, an offense against the humanist tradition, and a blind acceptance of the Communist regime» (Slonim, 1962, p. 205). Ivan Bunin, the Russian émigré Nobel prize-winner, said that *The Twelve* was ridiculous, naive, and unpoetic (Slonim, 1962, p. 205), calling it «a jumble of cheap verses... completely trashy, clumsy and vulgar beyond measure» (Forsyth, 1977, p. 123). Vladimir Nabokov considered the poem «a failure» (Forsyth, 1977, p. 123). Émigré critics who dit not wish to dismiss *The Twelve* completely attempted to downplay the importance of the poem, insisting one could interpret it only in the context of Blok's earlier poetry (Mirskii in Forsyth, 1977, p. 106). Other critics denied Blok's commitment to a specifically Bolshevik regime, claiming that Blok wrote about the revolution only as an «inevitable catastrophe out of which the good society would arise,» emphasizing the evil of the previous society and hoping for a better, though not necessarily Bolshevik, society to come (Yarmolinskii, 1949, p. 286).

Soviet reception to *The Twelve* was also varied. It, too, shows displeasure with the use of both communist and religious images in

the poem, though for different reasons. Soviet readers were uncertain how to interpret the poem. Gorkii thought it a satire; the poet Nikolai Gumilev considered Christ an «artificial addition» to an otherwise «dynamic piece of sharp realism» (Slonim, 1962, p. 204). Some Soviet critics objected to the portrayal of the Red Guards as rabble; others interpreted the poem more positively as a justification and acceptance of Bolshevism by Blok (Terras, 1985, p. 56). Leon Trotsky did not consider *The Twelve* a poem of the Revolution due to the negative portrayals of the Red Guards; nevertheless, he realized the impact of the poem: «To be sure, Blok is not one of ours, but he reached towards us... *The Twelve* is the most significant work of our epoch» (Trotsky, 1925, pp. 119-125). The publication history reveals the difficult status of *The Twelve* throughout the Stalin period, but now it is clearly fixed in the canon, though with some cautious remarks on the poem's religious symbols. A contemporary Soviet textbook emphasizes that Blok really denounces religion: his heroes were «without crosses» and the comrade priest is scorned. The use of Christ as the leader of the Red Guards is explained simply as a humanist ideal, a mere symbol of renewed life, recalling an analogy between the fall of the bourgeois world and the fall of Rome when the «development of the legend of Christ as a leader of a new universal religion» began (Kovalev, 1979, p. 107). The ambiguous attitude remains, however, and *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, the basic reference work for the average citizen in the Soviet Union, avoids any mention of the controversial interpretations of *The Twelve*, referring to it only as a poem «about the decline of the old world and its clash with the new one; the poem is built upon semantic antitheses and sharp contrasts.»

Western critics are also divided on where to place Blok's *The Twelve* and how to interpret it. Opinions vary from claiming that *The Twelve* is completely new in Blok's work to a compromise stating that it is «formally different from all his earlier work... though some themes from earlier works» are present (Stallworthy and France, 1970, p. 34). Once again, the use of religious symbols, particularly Christ, provokes the main controversies in interpretation. For an audience dependent upon a translation, this freedom of interpretation puts a great deal of responsibility on the part of the translator, who must first decide where and how to place Blok and *The Twelve* in the source culture before presenting him to the target culture.

The Twelve was translated into English as early as 1920. It continued to be translated and included in numerous anthologies (the complete text as well as excerpts), ranging from anthologies of Blok's work to Russian poetry generally to collections on specific themes as well as a general survey of world poetry. (See, for example, *The Twelve*. Trans. B. Deutsch and A. Yarmolinskii, 1920; *The Twelve and Selected Poems*. Trans. Jon Stallworthy and Peter France, 1970;

Russian Poems. Ed. and trans. Charles Coxwell, 1929; *Soviet Literature*. Ed. and trans. George Reavey, 1933; *Poetry of Freedom*. Ed. William Rose Benet and Norman Cousins, 1945; *A Little Treasury of World Poetry*. Ed Hubert Creekmore, 1952). Even with this partial list, it is clear that, in the English-speaking world, *The Twelve* has become a central poem in our concept of Blok's work, modern Russian poetry, and modern world poetry.

The translator of *The Twelve* must deal with both linguistic and literary difficulties. Russian is highly inflected, allowing for a much freer syntax than English. Many translations appear more verbose than the original Russian, simply because prepositions or prepositional phrases must be added in the English. Where Blok uses one or two words, a translator may have to use four or five, thus reducing the concise direct impact of the original. Russian has no articles, so the translator must decide whether to give an indefinite or definite meaning to nouns. The translator must make this decision from the very beginning in translating the title. *Dvenadtsat'* means twelve, yet the connotation is changed when the definite article is added. It then refers to a specific group of twelve, which recalls the twelve apostles for many Western readers and influences their expectations of the poem from the very beginning. Russian also makes frequent use of prefixes and suffixes which can change the meaning of a verb or noun substantially, in a manner difficult for a translator to convey.

In *The Twelve* specifically, a translator must make important decisions regarding rhythm, rhyme, word register, and genre. The rhythm in *The Twelve* is very important; it is often irregular, abrupt, even broken, yet highly musical. Blok used imperfect rhymes frequently and is considered to have canonized the imperfect rhyme in twentieth century Russian poetry. He was credited with introducing innovative poetics into his poetry, and this must somehow be conveyed to the target audience. Even more striking is the manner in which Blok combined standard poetical language with traditional folklore language, political slogans with marching songs, religious with secular and obscene language. Indeed, this highly unusual juxtaposition also contributes to the controversy surrounding *The Twelve*. Even the average educated Russian is familiar with all of these language fields. In Russia, the genre of poetry plays a central role in the culture. To convey the unusual rhythm and different registers and to produce a translation as central in the target culture as it is in the source culture creates many difficulties for the translator. The translations discussed here have been chosen for various reasons. They are either currently in print or widely available in libraries, cited in critical works on Blok, and used in teaching Blok's poetry. All three translations are the results of collaboration between an authority on poetry and one on Russian literature. More important, these translations clearly illustrate the translator's

interpretative biases and different translation strategies, presenting very different images of *The Twelve* to the target audience.

Avrahm Yarmolinskii and Babette Deutsch were the first to translate *The Twelve* in 1920, and their translation has been reprinted and anthologized frequently up to the 1950s. Yarmolinskii was a Russian émigré, educated in St. Petersburg, Switzerland, and the United States. Due to his many translations, anthologies, and critical works, he was considered to be one of the main representatives of Russian literature for the American audience, a fact which gave his version of *The Twelve* not a little authority. His wife, Babette Deutsch, was a New York poet known for her «intellectual verse, highly charged with emotion and concerned with social questions and attitudes» (Hart, 1983, p. 197). Together they translated and introduced many Russian poets to American readers. The second translation was published by Jon Stallworthy and Peter France in 1970 in a book devoted to *The Twelve* and selected poems by Blok. Once again, it was the collective effort of a poet and an authority of Russian literature. Stallworthy has published several volumes of his own poetry, and France several critical works on literature. Theirs is one of the most recent translations, and it is often referred to in more recent criticism on Blok. The last translation is by Anselm Hollo, a poet and knowlegeable Russian speaker in one. Hollo has published numerous volumes of his own poetry as well as translated and edited anthologies of Finnish, Swedish, German, Slovenian, and Russian poetry. He has worked as a free-lance translator, writer, and book and art critic (Harding and Hollo, 1979, p. 262). His translation appeared in 1961 in an issue of the *Evergreen Review* (1957-1973), published by Grove Press, known for publishing foreign and contemporary, avant-garde, and even marginally erotic or pornographic literature. At the time, it was virtually ignored outside of the journal's readership. Ten years later, Hollo republished his translation along with other selected poems by Blok in a separate book, which is still in print.

In translating literature, a translator must decide which strategy to emphasize. The three translations discussed here represent three strategies: Yarmolinskii and Deutsch privilege the source text, Hollo the target audience, and Stallworthy and France represent a compromise. These different translation strategies are evident from the first glance at the printed page. The very layout of the poem plays an important role in Russian avant-garde poetry, and *The Twelve* is no exception. The Yarmolinskii/Deutsch translation follows Blok's line indentions and stanza divisions exactly. The Stallworthy/France keeps the same stanza divisions but does not indent any lines, lining them up in the left margin. Their translation, therefore, does not reflect any kind of experimentation with the printed form. Hollo, too, lines everything up in the left margin, but most of his lines consist of only

a few words, creating columns of words, not stanzas. He does not keep Blok's stanza divisions but instead creates longer or shorter stanzas than the original based on omissions or repetitions in his translation. He also restructures the last three sections of the poem, so that only the last stanza remains in section twelve, creating a more dramatic and climatic effect in these last lines. Though he does not follow the exact layout of Blok's poem, Hollo's arrangement of his translation does give *The Twelve* an innovative, avant-garde appearance for his target audience, thus creating a similar effect for the target audience that the source text would have had on the source audience.

The translators' approach to conveying the meter and rhyme of *The Twelve* is illustrated in the first two stanzas of section one. The Yarmolinskii/Deutsch translation keeps as close as possible to the rhythm and rhyme of the original. In Russian, Blok alternates between trochees and anapests. While Yarmolinskii/Deutsch did not reproduce this exact meter, they did incorporate iambs into their translation, giving it a kind of regular meter similar to that of the original. They also produced a nearly exact replica of the rhyme scheme. The original rhyme pattern, ABABAC, is only slightly altered in their version to ABCBCB. They kept the inner rhyme in line 10 («*Skol'zko, tiazhko*» becomes «Stumbling and tumbling») as well as reproducing the repetitive sound within the first two stanzas (the repetition of «v» in *vecher, veter, svete, zavivaet* becomes a repetitive «w» in white, wind, world, weaving). Based on the Yarmolinskii/Deutsch translation of these two stanzas alone, one clearly sees the privileging of the formal features of the source text as their translation strategy.

The Stallworthy/France translation, while retaining some of the rhyme scheme and internal sound structure, begins to move away from a rigid representation of formal features in the source text. They do reproduce the repetition of sounds («v» becomes «w» in white, wind, world, wool, wicked, walking) and the final rhymes (ABCACB) as did Yarmolinskii/Deutsch. There is no attempt, however, at incorporating a regular meter in the Stallworthy/France translation. Indeed, their use of standard word order and enjambments gives their translation the sound of prose. Hollo is not concerned with recreating the formal features of the text at all. There is no use of traditional poetic meters or rhyme patterns. Neither does he transform the poem into prose; rather, his concise, abrupt lines reflect the innovative style of current beat poetry.

The different translation strategies are demonstrated even more clearly in sections two and three, which consist of rhymed couplets and *chastushki* (witty, colloquial texts sung to a simple melody) respectively. The Yarmolinskii/Deutsch translation imitates the meter and rhyme scheme of the source text even to the point of preserving the Russian *kerenki* (bills issued during the short provisional government

headed by Kerenskii in 1917) for the sake of meter and rhyme. In order to maintain a consistent translation of meter and rhyme, they are also forced to add footnotes or information not present in the source text: 11. 94-5 read «Now Vanka's *off* with Karya, *on a spree .../The tart*, her stocking's *stuffed* with *kerenki!*» or in section six, 1. 183 reads «*The pretty slut* shot through the head!» Both examples include information (italicized) not found in the original text and are highly influential in the audience's judgement of Vanka and Katka's characters, changing the meaning of the source text for the sake of adhering to the formal features. In translating chastushki, Yarmolinskii/Deutsch reproduce the exact rhyme scheme of the original, but fail to convey the folk elements («*Kak poshi ... /gore-gor'koe*») present in the source text and easily recognizeable to the source audience.

The Stallworthy/France translation also attemps to follow the rhythm and rhyme pattern of the couplets and *chastushki*, but they incorporate a formal feature not found in the corresponding lines in the source text, though common in Blok's poetry as a whole. They reproduce the irregular rhymes for which Blok was so famous, though not in exact correspondence with the rhymes in the original. Stallworthy/France use irregular rhymes (up/top, step/stop, arse/cross, wars/cause), even when they do not exactly represent the rhyme scheme in the Russian in order to convey a common formal feature of Blok's poetry. Once again, Hollo represents a totally different strategy. He translates neither the meter nor the rhymes of the source text but creates his own version based on a different system of sound in poetry. Hollo's translation is not meant to be read silently but recited aloud; only then is the rhythm evident. He does not strictly adhere to Blok's poetics, but he does represent Blok's emphasis on the spoken, not written, quality of *The Twelve*. Indeed, when *The Twelve* was going to be given a public reading, Blok took the reader to a cabaret to listen to a couplet-singer in order to hear the correct style of reciting his poem (Forsyth, 1977, p. 103). Hollo's translation, therefore, focuses not on the poetics of the source text but rather on the tone it will convey to an audience.

The different emphases of the three translations are also reflected in their different interpretations of the varied word register in *The Twelve*. Yarmolinskii/Deutsch tend to tame down the obscene language and generally use quaint or poetical language that is not representative of the source text. Stallworthy/France do not usually prettify the language and do include some obscenities in their translation, but they do not go to the extreme that Hollo does. Hollo often uses slang and the worst obscenities to give the same shock value to the target audience as the original had on the source audience. In section one, «*akh, bedniazhka!*» is translated with religious connotations «God pity all!» (Yarmolinskii/Deutsch), very neutrally «poor thing» (Stallwor-

thy/France), and obscenely «Poor bastards» (Hollo). «*Pisatel... Vitiia*» is tranlated plainly as «writer chap... who has a glib tongue» (Yarmolinskii/Deutsch), more colloquially as «pen-pusher... a word-spinner» (Stallworthy/France), and in a rather slangy manner as «Some bookish cat» (Hollo). In section six, «*Utek, podlets!*» ranges from a very mild «The rat is gone» (Yarmolinskii/Deutsch) to a stronger «Running away, you bastard?» (Stallworthy/France) to a very strong and vulgar «That fuckhound/He got away» (Hollo). In the last stanza of the poem «*V belom venchike iz roz—!*» both Yarmolinskii/Deutsch and Stallworthy/France use elevated poetic language translating the line as «With mist-white roses garlanded» and «a flowery diadem of frost,» while Hollo keeps to the most literal neutral translation «a wreath... white as roses.» These few examples here represent the general tendency in the translations as a whole: Yarmolinskii/Deutsch beautify the language, Hollo vulgarizes it, and Stallworthy/France look for a compromise.

Yarmolinskii/Deutsch and, to a lesser extent, Stallworthy/France share the same idea on the place of literature in their translations. Their translation strategies reflect a «certain historically circumscribed concept of literature» and a tendency to «identify «literature» with a certain «ornamental» use of language... in other words, defend a resolutely amodern concept.» (Lefevere, 1982, p. 5) Although Stallworthy/France claim that «in the old conflict between what used to be called fidelity and beauty, we have taken the side of beauty... to produce poems that can stand by themselves in 1970,» they also state that «to forgo [Blok's] supple use of traditional verse forms in favor of the freer forms more commonly used in verse translation today would have given a distorted picture... of Blok's poetry» (Stallworthy and France, 1970, pp. 10-11). In the end, they represent not one strategy but a compromise; they ally their translation strategy neither to the «fidelity» of Yarmolinskii/Deutsch, nor to the «freer forms» of Hollo. They justify their freedom in translating *The Twelve* as they see fit with the argument that Blok experimented and, therefore, so can they (Stallworthy and France, 1970, p. 12). Yet their translation does not truly reflect experimental writing. Hollo is the sole translator to apply this strategy and produce a translation as experimental and shocking to the target audience as *The Twelve* must have been to the source audience.

The three translations also reveal the translators' interpretative biases in their choice of using religious or sacrilegious terms. From the very beginning, Yarmolinskii/Deutsch's bias in creating a religious overtone, Hollo's sacrilegious one, and Stallworthy/France's usual compromise between the two extremes is evident. Yarmolinskii/Deutsch introduce God as a character of the poem in the very first stanzas. The term «*bozh'em svete*» becomes «God's world» (capital «G»), and «*akh, bedniazhka*» is translated as «God pity all,» making God an active

and sympathetic character. Hollo simply omits the reference to «*bozh'em svete*» and introduces his first obscenity «Poor bastards,» creating a very different tone in his version. Stallworthy/France are not consistent, using first a more religious term «God's world,» but then using a neutral, literal translation «poor thing» in the end. Later in section one of the Yarmolinskii/Deutsch translation, «*vpolgolosa*» becomes «wrathful,» suggesting the wrath of God, «*Predateli*» becomes «Renegades,» traitors in a religious as well as a political sense, and «*dolgopolyi*» becomes a «cassock,» a typical clergyman's garment. In all cases, Hollo translates literally with «mumbles,» «Treason,» and «skirts.» Stallworthy/France often translate neutrally but introduce a religious reference where the others do not in translating «the faithful» for «*narod.*» This pattern is generally consistent throughout the translations.

The contrast between a religious or sacrilegious connotation is revealed particularly in the syntax and tone in the three versions. In section three, «*Gospodi, blagoslovi!*» carries religious meanings as «Bless us, Lord God» (Yarmolinskii/Deutsch) or «Lord, bless our souls!» (Stallworthy/France) but a somewhat sacrilegious connotation in «All that blood God all that blood» (Hollo). One is not quite sure whether Hollo is taking God's name in vain or not. The contrast becomes clearer as the translation proceeds. In section ten, «*Okh, purga kakaia, spase... Ot chego tebia upas / Zolotoi ikonostas*?» is translated as a plea to God to explain his ways «Savior, here's a blizzard!... Did your Savior and His kin / Save you from committing sin?» (Yarmolinskii/Deutsch). Capital letters are always used when referring to God, conveying a reverential tone. Keeping the original's word order in their first line, «Oh, what a blizzard!... Jesus Christ!», Stallworthy/France convey a totally different connotation. Hollo's translation, too, implies a curse on God: «God he says what a night.»

The translators' interpretative biases are perhaps most strongly revealed in the dramatic last stanza of *The Twelve*. In Hollo's translation, section twelve has been reduced to this stanza alone; the conciseness intensifies the impact of the conclusion of the poem. While Hollo does introduce a character with the pronoun «he,» there is no forewarning of the surprising end to the poem. Although none of the translators manage to find an equivalent of the Russian «*Isus Kristos*» (the form of Jesus Christ used by the religious sect of the Old Believers), both Hollo and Stallworthy/France keep the original final position of the name Jesus Christ, saving it for the very end to produce the strongest impact. In the Yarmolinskii/Deutsch translation, the reader has been long prepared for some kind of religious resolution. This is particulary true of the last stanza, where references, both overtly and covertly, to religion, indeed, to the apocalypse, abound. The twelve walk as a «haughty host,» recalling the heavenly hosts or the host used in the

church service; someone is «bearing high the banner,» a reference to religious processions where icons are carried by the faithful; the unknown person is referred to as «He» and «He Himself,» consistent with the capitalization of previous references to God; and «He» is «walking on the wind» recalls the biblical story of Christ's walking on the water as well as the prophecy of Christ's walking on the wind in the second coming. The appearance of Christ as the leader of the twelve is neither surprising nor, due to its initial position in the last line, dramatic. In contrast to the Stallworthy/France and Hollo translations, the many religious references in the Yarmolinskii/Deutsch translation have recreated a very different version of *The Twelve* in terms of both interpretation of the source text and its impact on the target audience.

These three translations illustrate the very controversies that the source text created in the source culture, though all three present very different images of Blok's *The Twelve*. The many religious and apocalyptic references in Yarmolinskii/Deutsch's tranlation brings *The Twelve* into the realm of Blok's earlier Symbolist poetry. Although they attempt to maintain a close correspondence to Blok's poetical forms of language, the result is often quaint and stilted, creating a text that reflects very little of the musicality of Symbolist poetry or the polemics that the source text created in the source audience. Hollo's version, with its musicality, contemporary form, and obscene language, reflects the tone of the source text and produces the same kind of controversial reception in the target audience that the original text created when it was published. The Stallworthy/France translation, with its compromises and ambiguous stance, reflects at most the very ambiguity of Blok, *The Twelve* and its reception. All three translations illustrate the difficulties in selecting a translation strategy that reflects the translators' interpretation of the image they wish to present of a poet and a text.

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