



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32523/2616-678X-2025-153-4-179-190>

IRSTI 17.82.31

Research article

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## POLYPHONIC POETICS OF ANATOLY KIM'S WORKS: SEMANTICS AND FUNCTIONS

**Abstract.** The purpose of this article is to investigate the phenomenon of polyphony in A. Kim's prose, which manifests at various levels of its poetics, primarily in speech perversions. The plot core of the novel Joys of Paradise, the main object of analysis in this article, is rooted in Indian philosophical and religious traditions of the transmigration of the soul, «samsara». In the final transmigration, where the soul is meant to achieve perfection, the protagonist's «soul» receives a vessel in which it attains its goal and will no longer wander the world in search of the Joys of Paradise. The attainment of this harmony is marked in A. Kim's novel by the renunciation of the disharmony in the author-hero's speech sphere, and the removal of the leitmotivic speech schism. Schism, absurdist tendencies in the speech and imagery of A. Kim's works Squirrel and Settlement of Centaurs are conditioned by the polyphony of voices, character transformations, the «quartering» of the hero's personalities, animism, various types of neologisms, a wide associative array of metaphorical expressions, and synonymous lexical and syntactic constructions that unite incompatible elements.

**Keywords:** A. Kim, polyphony, speech perversions, poetics of absurdity, psychoanalytic literary criticism.

*Received: 19.06.2025; Revised: 10.12.2025; Accepted: 23.12.2025; Available online: 29.12.2025*

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## Introduction

Contemporary Kazakhstani Russian-language absurdist prose warrants in-depth investigation from a psychoanalytic perspective. By analyzing the speech organization of absurdist texts and drawing upon the works of authoritative scholars in the field of psychoanalytic literary criticism, it is possible to identify the underlying causes of the emergence of such texts (Safronova, 2023). Among the reasons for the appearance of absurdist texts are individual and collective traumas, as well as personality disorders, which are unconsciously reflected in the speech organization of the literary work (Foucault, 2009).

In studying Russian-language Kazakhstani literature of the absurd, various types of textual disruptions can be observed: orthographic and punctuation errors, excessive use of foreign words, repetitions, superfluous spacing, a high frequency of homogeneous enumerations, the blurring of boundaries between dream and reality, authorial slang, arcane language, among others. All identified absurdist disruptions can be interpreted as textual manifestations of the hidden fears and complexes of the work's characters, and potentially, of the author as well.

Anatoly Kim, a Russian and simultaneously Kazakhstani writer, is a representative of contemporary absurdist literature. He was born in 1939 in the South Kazakhstan village of Yntymak. Although his parents later moved to Sakhalin, this did not prevent Anatoly Kim from absorbing the Kazakh oriental flavor and actively incorporating it into his creative work.

Among the works of the writer the novel-tale *Squirrel* (Belka) occupies a special place, it was not immediately understood by the public, including because the main character has a quadripartite and is a werewolf (a man and a squirrel at the same time). Absurdity in the novel is expressed in the speech sphere of the characters, in the time paradigm, and in the system of images.

The absurdity reaches a new level in A. Kim's next novel *The Centaurs' Settlement*. In it, the writer uses a fictional language in dialogues of half-humans, which later becomes the language of "visionaries" in Kim's last autobiographical novel *Joys of Paradise*.

The protagonist of Anatoly Kim with the quadripartite from the novel *Squirrel*, turning into a recurring image, falls into an even deeper universal split, into a kind of wheel of Samsara in the novel *Joys of Paradise*, the image in which begins from the time of the Paleolithic and lasts until the era of modernity. If in the first novel of A. Kim's *Squirrel* dealt with the hero's transmigration into several other characters with similar fates, then in the novel *Joys of Paradise* (Kim, 2022), describes the reincarnation of the protagonist's soul in completely different people, regardless of gender and lifestyle, including animals, objects and natural phenomena not only on the planet "Earth", but in the Universe as a whole.

## Results and Discussion

Within the framework of Indian religious and philosophical thought, the continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth – commonly known as reincarnation – is governed by the immutable law of karma. The notion of samsara occupies a central place in this system of ideas. Broadly understood, it designates the totality of phenomenal existence; in a narrower sense, it refers to the world immediately surrounding an individual, the realm of his or her subjective experience. The earliest mention of samsara appears in the *Katha Upanishad* (circa 5th century BCE), where the concept delineates the eternal movement of the soul through diverse forms of being.

According to classical Indian cosmology, the cycle of transmigration encompasses all entities – divine, human, and natural alike. Gods, demons, people, animals, and plants are all subject

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to the rhythm of rebirth. Moreover, certain philosophical interpretations extend this process even to inanimate matter: for example, stones or elements of the natural landscape may be understood as the outcome of negative karma accumulated by sentient beings in previous lives (Osipov, 2005).

The immaterial essence of the individual ātman or jīva after the dissolution of its bodily form, merges with a new corporeal shell, inheriting the mental, emotional, and existential parameters that correspond to its prior karmic record. Each incarnation thus represents a continuation of the soul's spiritual evolution. In this perspective, samsara signifies not merely an endless chain of rebirths, but a cosmic process of refinement, whereby the soul gradually attains wisdom and purity through successive experiences.

Ultimately, the culmination of this journey occurs when the soul achieves its highest degree of perfection, transcending the cycle of return and entering a state of liberation. The human soul, therefore, does not belong to the corporeal body but to the universe itself, it may pass into any form of existence, animate or inanimate. Material embodiment becomes secondary to the spiritual essence, which can reincarnate into radiant energy, celestial bodies, natural forces such as a tsunami or a storm, or even temporal-spatial phenomena existing simultaneously in multiple epochs of cosmic evolution.

In *Joys of Paradise*, the human soul embarks on an infinite journey in search of existential bliss, traversing various temporal and spatial dimensions. The only inaccessible domain is the future — a temporal form deliberately excluded by the narrator, who, being at once the author and the protagonist, avoids using verbs denoting futurity. Within this metaphysical framework, the wheel of samsara functions as the principal mechanism of spiritual movement, enabling the soul to inhabit any living being or material object. Consequently, every entity in the universe acquires an animistic essence: everything that possesses a soul must bear a name.

The rapid motion of this cosmic wheel renders the boundaries of the hero's corporeality nearly indiscernible. Throughout countless reincarnations, the protagonist's soul becomes a witness to pivotal moments in the history of humankind, including three apocalyptic events that signify the cyclic destruction and renewal of existence. The central precondition for reincarnation in Kim's narrative is the recurrence of the name Alexander, which manifests in multiple forms and variations across epochs. The transformations occasionally verge on the absurd, as one incarnation of Alexander (or Akim, Iskandir, Alexandra, etc.) encounters another and engages in dialogue with his or her own metaphysical doubles.

The polyphonic dimension of these encounters culminates in the protagonist's relationship with Sasha Belokon, who, according to the novel's logic of reincarnation, represents one of her earlier embodiments – Silver Toshiko, the “mental wife” from the Paleolithic age. This paradoxical union, where the beloved becomes both daughter and lover, reflects Kim's vision of cyclical existence, where human relationships transcend linear temporality and biological determinism (Kim, 2022, p. 265).

Animism, a defining feature of Kim's poetic worldview, assumes in this novel a distinctly ironic and at times absurdist tone. The narrator, in the Bakhtinian sense of dialogic consciousness, attributes personal names and spiritual essence even to the most insignificant elements of his environment – from a dandelion (Rodea) to a malignant tumor (Zagna). Every object, for the hero, carries intrinsic value and spiritual identity: the fire that warms his body (Alexander), the stone used for hunting (Ondar), the ram he kills for sustenance (Berendei), his right hand (Mahei), and even his sexual organ (Yeldorai), which becomes the instrument of procreation and the physical embodiment of the “joys of paradise.”

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In his primordial existence, the hero identifies himself as Akim (or Joachim) – the first incarnation of his wandering soul. Within this initial life cycle, he fulfills all the essential desires available to a Paleolithic human: successful hunting, nourishment, and sensual pleasure. His principal task is the continuation of the lineage, embodied in the conception of “Akimchik” within Silver Toshiko’s womb. The depiction of early humans in *Joys of Paradise* evokes parallels with Kim’s earlier novel *The Centaurs’ Settlement*, where half-human beings similarly embody the liminal boundary between instinct and consciousness.

The narrative reaches a grotesque yet symbolic resolution when the Paleolithic hunter is devoured by his beloved and her tribe – an act that paradoxically grants the soul absolute freedom. Liberated from corporeal limitations, it begins an endless cycle of rebirths, incarnating in every Alexander, Akim, or Iskandar who succeeds him. In this way, Kim reconstructs the mythological model of eternal return, transforming the act of procreation and death into a universal mechanism of spiritual continuity and metaphysical renewal.

A.F. Losev in his work “Mythology of the Greeks and Romans”, speaking about the nature of werewolfism, notes: «The individual man did not separate himself either from his community or from nature. He thought of himself as a carrier of the forces of this community and this nature. And since he is the bearer not only of his own forces, but also of everything else in this or that measure, in this or that size, it means that he can think himself the bearer of its forces and be at the mercy of the illusions of such reincarnation, or werewolfism» (Losev, 1996).

The protagonist of A. Kim’s *Joys of Paradise* undergoes a series of reincarnations, inhabiting the bodies of both renowned and obscure figures named Alexander scattered across the vast expanse of the universe. Among these incarnations appear Alexander the Great, Alexander Pushkin, Alexander Blonsky, Alexander Dumas, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, the Moroccan prince Iskander Hasani, as well as the Turkish satellite Iskander and even the apostle Andrew the First-Called (Alexandrovich). Through this complex network of identities, Kim constructs a universal archetype of the “eternal Alexander,” whose soul experiences history in all its multiplicity.

The concept of polyphony, first introduced into literary theory by M. M. Bakhtin, provides an essential interpretative framework for understanding Kim’s narrative. As M. E. Koreshkova notes in her study *Polyphony: From Music to Literature* (2002), literary polyphony may be compared to a grand choral composition, where each voice maintains its individuality while contributing to a unified artistic harmony. Kim’s text exemplifies this principle, since his numerous characters, each bearing a distinct destiny, converge into the singular, immortal consciousness of the protagonist.

This polyphonic structure is further enriched by the motif of the “visionaries,” a spiritual community whose collective purpose is the search for paradisiacal joy and existential harmony. The protagonist, through the immortal continuity of his soul, travels across the globe “from Antarctica to Greenland, from Chukotka to Tierra del Fuego” (Kim, 2022) in pursuit of ultimate happiness.

From an autobiographical standpoint, *Joys of Paradise* demonstrates a deliberate overlap between the author and his hero. The repetition of initials, national background, and certain biographical details allows one to view the text as a metafictional reflection on Kim’s own spiritual and creative path. The name Alexander itself acquires numerous semantic and cultural transformations: in Eastern contexts it becomes Iskander, while the author’s alter ego appears as Akim (Joachim). This onomastic multiplicity is not arbitrary. The Hebrew origin of the name

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Joachim (Yehoyaqim) refers both to a biblical king of Judah and to the saintly ancestor of Christ, a dual connotation that reinforces the novel's synthesis of mythic, religious, and personal dimensions.

Thus, the fragmentation of the hero's identity mirrors the dispersion of the soul across time and matter. The narrative does not center on a single biographical subject but on a consciousness divided between numerous incarnations, each fulfilling its predestined function in the cosmic quest for the joys of paradise. Within this universe, Kim constructs a unique linguistic system common to all "visionaries," an authorial idiolect characterized by individual metaphors, uniform abbreviations, and a specific set of neologisms comprehensible only within the novel's semiotic field.

A defining feature of the narrator's style is the use of absurdist metaphor, which generates a surreal and expressive layer of meaning. Examples such as "furry butterflies of oncological hopes" (Kim, 2022, p. 266), "a sense of venereal incest" (p. 267), "in the wombs of the Louvre," or "a million quantum torpedoes" (p. 13) demonstrate Kim's deliberate distortion of semantic norms to achieve heightened emotional and symbolic resonance.

Equally significant is the author's inventive play with abbreviations, which function not merely as linguistic compression but as a device of conceptual condensation and irony. Abbreviations such as "SCWF: Second Coming of the World Flood," "SCC: Second Coming of Christ" (Kim, 2022, p. 271), "UoS: Unit of Solitude" (p. 274), "AWM: Alone with Myself" (p. 108), and "PFSGB: Persimmon Frozen in the Sky with a Golden Ball" (p. 119) exemplify Kim's metaphorical experimentation. As Nurgaleeva (2009) observes, when an author "plays with the graphic form of linguistic units or applies them figuratively within a given context, the text acquires expressiveness and fulfills its pragmatic function of influencing the reader."

One of the most striking examples of this linguistic irony is Kim's reinterpretation of the abbreviation BAM. Traditionally associated with the Soviet Baikal-Amur Mainline, in the novel it is transformed into the Great American Dream. Through this resemanticization, Kim introduces a satirical allusion that juxtaposes Soviet utopian ideals with Western materialist aspirations, thereby expanding the semantic horizon of the abbreviation and embedding social critique within poetic language.

One can also note the hero's tendency to frequent use of individual-author neologisms, such as 'homo-perspicacious ones', 'mankind', 'yeldorai', 'rAu', 'pAu-rAy', "mrychi", 'antisuicidin', etc.

According to researchers, the tendency to invent neologisms is often regarded as a result of dissociative processes, that is, a disruption in associative thinking. Under normal conditions, associative links are formed through the coordination between the motor "output" in the frontal lobes and the sensory "input" in the posterior regions of the brain. When this coordination is impaired at the physiological level, the disturbance of normal neural connectivity may lead to the emergence of unusual linguistic constructions. As noted by Baimurzaeva and Akkueva (2007), in cases of mental pathology "speech ceases to function as a communicative tool, since the patient no longer speaks in order to be understood." In such situations, verbal production becomes fragmented and dissociated, manifesting itself in pathological forms such as schizophrasia or the creation of neologisms in spontaneous speech (pp. 45–56).

This associative, or so-called Eastern type of thinking, plays a significant role in the artistic structure of A. Kim's *Joys of Paradise*. Individuals with a dominant right hemisphere tend to perceive reality through images, analogies, and non-linear associations rather than through

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logical reasoning. N. N. Nikolaenko, in his work *Psychology of Creativity* (2005), characterizes this type of cognition as intuitive and figurative. In Kim's prose, it is reflected in the frequent use of extended enumerations, synonymic series, and cumulative images, all of which reproduce a right-hemisphere, associative mode of thought. Such stylistic devices serve not only as aesthetic markers of Kim's idiolect but also as a manifestation of the protagonist's unique mental and perceptual organization. A characteristic example can be seen in the following passage: «...to show how we are to proceed, all together, as an entire all-human quadrille, camarilla, squadron, armada, throng, team, corporation, corporate party, high-society gathering, masked ball, gay parade, parade of fire brigades, world history...» (Kim, 2022, p. 270).

In the works of Russian-speaking authors, one often finds onomastic and toponymic nominations, as well as intentional linguistic play involving nationally marked vocabulary. In A. Kim's prose, such linguistic creativity is exemplified by expressions like "a pack of cards – Koldybai," where the national element bai (common in names such as Maldybai, Kystybai, etc.) introduces a specifically ethnic and cultural nuance. Through such forms of wordplay, the author not only emphasizes the ethnic background of his characters but also enriches the narrative with subtle linguistic color and intertextual depth.

At the same time, certain behavioral and psychological traits of the protagonist in *Joys of Paradise* may be interpreted through the lens of psychopathological symbolism. Some of his actions resemble catatonic manifestations, particularly coprophagic behavior, which, according to V. M. Bleicher's *Explanatory Dictionary of Psychiatric Terms* (1995), refers to a pathological tendency to ingest excrement. In Kim's artistic context, such motifs are not literal but function as metaphorical representations of existential degradation and spiritual disintegration, reflecting the boundaries of human consciousness and the extremes of the soul's transmigration.: «(copro + Greek phagein - to eat, devour). Eating excrement, most often one's own, is usually observed in a state of mental marasmus, sometimes in states of disturbed consciousness and in patients with catatonic schizophrenia» (Bleicher, 1995).

«- Your own shit? Eat it?

- Well, yes. Like astronauts ...

... even as digested food (spiritual food) ...» (Kim, 2022, pp. 139–140).

The protagonist repeatedly acknowledges his own mental instability, referring to it as a form of "spiritual illness." He is aware that this affliction destroys him more rapidly than any physical disease that could be cured by medication (Kim, 2022, p. 140). Throughout the novel, the character demonstrates moments of self-awareness in which he confesses his inability to control his consciousness: "Since madness and amnesia have always been like brother and sister – so alike – I never imagined that I was ill, nor did I ever realize that, day after day, I was gradually going insane" (Kim, 2022, p. 90). These reflections not only reveal the hero's internal fragmentation but also serve as a narrative mechanism through which A. Kim explores the boundaries between sanity and creative revelation, depicting madness as both a destructive and generative force in the search for transcendence.

«...human words and their morphemic articulations were scattered across the cosmos, spinning and bouncing, overtaking each other and silently making horrible grimaces. Dusty clouds of separate speech sounds, vowels and consonants, as well as diphthongs, assonances and alliterations, which in the gravitational world in the air made up intelligible human speech, in the absolute freedom of the human spirit inevitably went into the darkness of annihilation. Words, torn to shreds by the photon bomb blast of the absolute freedom of the self, were dying

from dissections incompatible with life. Russian and non-Russian futurists, pouncing on these vital verbal fragments, tried to catch them in a cage and bring them to life again, putting them back together in some way.

The author-narrator wonders why he is writing in this way and on this topic. Answering himself: «Mushrooms were collected for someone, just as books were written, but for what and for whom did I write this last book, if no one read it anywhere? And for that, probably, to experience before death itself, to what temperature of inner freedom can rise the spirit of a human being...» (Kim, 2022, pp. 74). Michel Foucault compared madness with freedom, calling artists happy madmen, free from the fetters of social hierarchy (Foucault, 2009).

[illegible]

The results of the conducted research were the identification in the novel text of A. Kim's Joys of Paradise: animism (giving a proper name to all objects and phenomena surrounding the protagonist-narrator); autobiographical (in the form of the proper-direct speech of the protagonist-narrator and the similarity of the name and surname of the protagonist-narrator and the author); individual-author neologisms characterized as signs of associative (oriental) thinking expressed by means of homogeneous enumerations; author's metaphors with incomprehensible, sometimes absurd meaning; author's abbreviations used and adequately deciphered within the framework of this novel only; mathematical problems, repeated expressions, lexemes and syllables, unnecessary spaces and inappropriate use of capital letters in words or whole sentences (Baizhigit, 2024).

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of the most effective methods of expressing the author's worldview, enhancing the expressiveness and communicative impact of the text as a whole" (Batalov, 2004). The use of vocabulary bearing national and cultural connotations by translingual authors within the framework of the "Russophone artistic text" contributes to the organization of the aesthetic space of the literary work and assists in constructing images of intercultural reality (Bakhtikireeva & Valikova, 2023). Complex authorial metaphors – often multi-component and semantically layered – reflect the distinctive mental and linguistic characteristics of translingual writers (Shmakova, Baizhigit, & Begaliyeva, 2024).

As noted earlier, the narrative core of A. Kim's *Joys of Paradise* is rooted in the Indian philosophical and religious concept of the soul's transmigration, or *samsara*. In the ultimate reincarnation, where the soul attains spiritual perfection, the protagonist's essence finally finds a vessel that allows it to achieve unity and cease its wandering in search of the "joys of paradise." This moment of harmony in Kim's novel is symbolically expressed through the renunciation of inner dissonance and the dissolution of the speech schism that previously defined the author-hero's consciousness (Safronova & Sermukhametova, 2022, pp. 135–148).

The practical significance of the research lies in the fact that the results of the analysis can be used in the study of courses on Modern Literary Process, Modern Kazakhstani Literature, Theory of Literature, Psychological Direction in Literary Studies, etc., taught in higher educational institutions.

### **Conflict of interests, acknowledgements and funding information**

The research paper contains no conflicts of interest.

### **Contribution of the authors**

**Baizhigit B.S.** - collection of materials and literature review related to the article's topic, analysis and generalization of research results. **Safronova L.V.** - generalization of research results, collection and interpretation of the work's results. **Kanafina M.A.** - work with the manuscript text, literature review.

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### **Анатолий Ким шығармаларындағы полифониялық поэтика: семантикасы мен функциялары**

**Аңдатпа.** Бұл мақаланың мақсаты – А. Ким прозасындағы полифония құбылысын зерттеу. Ол, ең алдымен, сөйлеу перверсияларында (ауытқуларында) көрініс табатын, шығарма поэтикасының түрлі деңгейлерінде байқалады. Осы мақалада талдаудың негізгі нысаны болып табылатын «Жұмақ қуанышы» романындағы оқиға желісінің негізгі үнділік философиялық-діни дәстүрлер – жанның қоныс аударуы, яғни «сансара» ұғымына негізделген. Бұл көшіп-қону үдерісінің соңында жан кемелдікке жетуге тиіс. Басты кейіпкердің жаны өз мақсатына жететін бейнеге енеді және енді жер бетінде «жұмақ қуанышын» іздеп сенделмейді. А. Кимнің романында бұл үйлесімге қол жеткізу жазушы-қаһарманның тілдік дисгармониясынан бастарту, сөйлеу лейтмотивіндегі «схизистік» (екіге жарылу) қайшылықты жою арқылы көрініс табады. «Тиін» және «Кентаврлар қонысы» атты шығармаларындағы схизис, сондай-ақ сөйлеу мен бейне жүйесіндегі абсурдистік үрдістер – Ким прозасындағы полифониялық дауыстардың, кейіпкерлердің түрленуінің, қаһарманның «төртке бөлінуінің», анимизмнің, түрлі деңгейдегі неологизмдердің, кең метафоралық ассоциациялар қатарларының, синонимдік лексикалық және синтаксистік құрылымдардың, бір-біріне қарама-қарсы элементтерді біріктіруінің нәтижесі болып табылады. А. Кимнің «Тиін», «Жұмақ қуанышы» романдары мен «Кентаврлар қонысы» повесінің полифониялық құрылымын талдау үшін компаративистика, герменевтика, психоанализ және когнитивтік әдебиеттану сияқты пәнаралық әдістер қолданылды.

**Түйін сөздер:** А. Ким, полифония, сөйлеудің өзгеруі, абсурд поэтикасы, психоаналитикалық әдебиеттану.

### Полифоническая поэтика произведений Анатолия Кима: семантика и функции

**Аннотация.** Целью статьи является исследование феномена полифонии в прозе А. Кима, проявляющегося на разных уровнях ее поэтики, прежде всего – в речевых перверсиях. Сюжетным стрержнем романа «Радости рая», основного объекта анализа в данной статье, являются индийские философско-религиозные традиции переселения души, «сансара». В конечном переселении, в котором душа должна достичь совершенства, «душа» главного героя получает оболочку, в которой она достигает своей цели и более не будет бродить по свету в поисках «радостей рая». Достижение этой гармонии обозначено в романе А. Кима отказом и от дисгармоничности речевой сферы автора-героя, снятием лейтмотивного речевого схизиса. Схизис, абсурдистские тенденции речевой и образной сферы в произведениях А. Кима «Белка» и «Поселок кентавров» обусловлены полифонией голосов, персонажных перевоплощений, «расчетверения» личностей героя, анимизмом, разного плана неологизмами, широким ассоциативным рядом метафорических выражений, синонимичными лексическими и синтаксическими конструкциями, объединяющими несопоставимые элементы. Для анализа полифонической структуры романов А. Кима «Белка» и «Радости рая», повести «Поселок кентавров» использовался междисциплинарный подход: компаративистика, герменевтика, психоаналитическое и когнитивное литературоведение.

**Ключевые слова:** А. Ким, полифония, речевые перверсии, поэтика абсурда, психоаналитическое литературоведение.

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