

THE “JOURNEY TO ISTANBUL” BY JOSEPH BRODSKY (REALITY AND METAPHOR)

^aOLGA BOGDANOVA, ^bELIZAVETA VLASOVA, ^cMARIA BURAI, ^dEKATERINA ZHILENE

^aA.I. Herzen Russian State Pedagogical University,
St. Petersburg, Moika River Emb., 48, Russian Federation
email: olgabogdanova03@mail.ru

^bRussian National Library,
St. Petersburg, Sadovaya str., 18, Russian Federation
email: kealis@gmail.com

^cFar Eastern Federal University,
Vladivostok, Russky Island, Ayaks 10, Russian Federation
email: m_buraya@mail.ru

^dSt. Petersburg State Institute of Culture,
St. Petersburg, Dvortsovaya emb., 2, Russian Federation
email: ebibergan@yandex.ru

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to identify the formal and stylistic features of I. Brodsky's artistic narrative in the essay "Journey to Istanbul". The scientific novelty of the study consists in the fact that it offers a different judgment from the traditionally accepted in criticism both about the structural framework of the narrative and about the origins of the imaginary-negative pathos of the narrative facing the East. During the analysis, a number of dual motives were found in the text of the essay (namesake heroes, mirrors, reflections, dreams, etc.) and it was showed that the journey undertaken by Brodsky's auto-hero was not spatial, but temporal, anger directed at Istanbul was a sublimation of his own naivety and utopian dreams of returning to his "hometown".

Keywords: Brodsky; essay; prose and poetry; metaphor and metonymy; strategy of duality.

1 Introduction

The relevance of the research topic is due to the fact that the work of Joseph Brodsky, poet, Nobel laureate, is becoming increasingly popular not only in Russia and the USA, but also around the world.

2 Literature Review

The theoretical basis of the research was fundamental works on poetology (Novikov 2001, Trostnikov 1997), the peculiarities of inter-genre neoplasms, in particular, on the intersection of prose and poetry (Zhirmunsky 1997, 2001, Lotman 1972, 1973), on the history of the "Petersburg text" (Toporov 2003, Bogdanova 2021a). About antique verses in Brodsky's work there is a detailed research of N. Kazansky (Kazansky 1997, Bogdanova 2021b).

3 The practical significance

The practical significance of the study is that its intermediate and final conclusions, individual observations and judgments can be used in further study of the work of Joseph Brodsky.

4 Genre-style features and problem-thematic perspective of the narrative of Brodsky's essay

"Journey to Istanbul" by Joseph Brodsky is written in the genre of an essay – a prose genre, unloved by the poet. According to Brodsky, "prose is a means precisely because <...> and hateful because it is devoid of any form of discipline, except for the similarity of the one that arises along the way..." (Brodsky 1999, 299). However, it can be noted that against the background of Brodsky's other essays, "Journey to Istanbul" succinctly incorporates elements of metaphorical – that is, poetic – narration, which allows us (unlike other researchers) to look for the genre origins of the essay not in "Pilgrimage of Farther Superior Daniil" or "Pilgrimage of Afanasij Nikitin three sees abroad" (Venclova 1992), not in the "Journey From Petersburg to Moscow" by A. Radischev or "Journey to Arzerum" by A. Pushkin (Weil 1992, Glazunova 2005), and not even in "Journey to Armenia" by O. Mandel'shtam (Venclova 1992). There is to consider the Brodsky's essay not as a "journey genre", but to recognize the principle of the prosaization of poetry as

dominant in it, there is to find reflection of "rather the psychological state of the [author] than the state of the reality reflected by him" (Brodsky 1999, 281). "Travel to Istanbul" by Brodsky – not the "travel notes" (as, for an example, by Weil (in "The Genius of Place")), but only "a semblance of objectivity" (Brodsky 1999, 281), traditionally inherent in prose including essays. "The thing is strange and bizarre" (Venclova 1992, 171), Brodsky's narrative is penetrated with metaphorical subjectivity and has only a "certain degree of reality" (Brodsky 1999, 281; highlighted by us. – O. B. and others).

It is known that "Journey to Istanbul" exists in two versions – the essay was published in 1985 in Russian and in English. Moreover, the Russian and English versions have significant differences: in the Russian version there are 43 chapters and in the English version – 46. According to the commentators of the "Works of Joseph Brodsky", "individual sentences, phrases, in-text comments, etc. do not coincide" (Brodsky 1999, 372). "Jokes, puns, hints, and intra-textual comments differ: Russian readers, unlike Anglo-American readers, do not need to explain the name of the author's hometown or who Khodasevich and Tsiolkovsky are", "two variants are oriented to different literary subtexts" (Venclova 1992, 170). In this analysis, we will rely on the Russian version of the essay – the original and, as a result, more spontaneous and emotional.

Starting a conversation about Brodsky's "Journey to Istanbul", the researchers invariably and primarily focus on the negative reaction that Istanbul causes in Brodsky's mind. Almost every critic notes that "Eurasian Istanbul <...> appears in an apocalyptic light, symbolizing a civilization that has come to the brink of cataclysm, or rather, has already crossed the line" (Venclova 1992, 172). Almost every researcher states "angrily accusatory journalistic pathos" (Glazunova 2005, 330), "the irresistible disgust that the author feels towards the place in which he found himself" (Glazunova 2005, 331). According to P. Weil, Brodsky, a traveler, "resolutely does not perceive Istanbul ..." (Weil 1992, 321). Meanwhile, the question arises: why could a city with a great history and worldwide fame give rise to such an active rejection of the poet? what caused such a decisive rejection in Brodsky's soul and consciousness? why are there "irritation" and "almost grumbling about what they saw and experienced in Istanbul" (Weil 1992, 322)? In our opinion, the answer to this question deciphers the main pathos of "the most vulnerable" (as defined by P. Weil (Weil 1992, 322)) of Brodsky's work.

Explicating the main problems of the "Journey to Istanbul", critics and interpreters actualize, first of all, the historiographical perspective of the essay, emphasize the role of Brodsky as a "historian and thinker" (Venclova 1992, 171).

According to O. Glazunova, "the tasks that the author is trying to solve are to comprehend the laws of the development and spread of civilizations in space and time", to comprehend the "course of history" and "events of fundamental importance in the development of civilization" (Glazunova 2005, 331, 336, 339).

Indeed, T. Venclova is right in his own way, stating that "the main impression from the "Journey to Istanbul" is <...> freedom in handling material from various times, vigilance in catching analogies and structural similarities between phenomena distant from each other on the diachronic axis" (Venclova 1992, 172). Brodsky's essay seems to really have "signs of a scientific and philosophical treatise" (Venclova 1992, 172). However, the question remains: why should the poet desacralize traditional ideas about Istanbul, why "throughout a long (thirty-five pages) essay" (Weil 1992, 324) theoretically and historically justify the fierce rejection of the obviously great Byzantium-Constantinople-Istanbul? In our opinion, the fact is that Brodsky does not appear in this work as a theoretical historian or rationalist analyst following "chronology and historical logic" (Venclova 1992, 172). Rather, on the contrary, his entire text is purely emotional, irrational, subjective and therefore replete with reservations, alogisms,

tautologies, errors (some of which T. Venclova has already drawn attention to). From our point of view, the main strategies for constructing an essay in Brodsky are associativity and metaphorism, subtext and understatement. The non-textual space of Brodsky's thought – unspoken and unspoken – turns out to be at the center of the poet's psychological tosses, his mystical-metaphorical (almost dreamlike) wanderings in Tzargrad.

5 Compositional features of the essay

As already noted, the essay "Journey to Istanbul" consists of 43 chapters – not even chapters, but short chapters, each of which sometimes includes only 3-4 chapters, as already noted, the essay "Journey to Istanbul" consists of 43 chapters – not even chapters, but short chapters, each of which sometimes includes only 3-4 sentences, and once only two at all (chapter 43). Why did the author need to divide the narrative so fractionally, why create such a crushed mosaic – a kaleidoscope? (chapter 43). Why did the author need to divide the narrative so fractionally, why create such a crushed mosaic-a kaleidoscope?

Considering the fact that Brodsky is a poet, it can be assumed that the brief (almost poetic, almost elegiac) structuring of the text was closer to him (it is no coincidence that he complains about the lack of "discipline" in prose). Laconic forms inherited from the poetic text seem to "discipline", organize the prose text, "compressed" small chapters are perceived as stanzas, as independently integral judgments with a certain completed thought. Thus, highlighting the preliminary reflections in a separate first chapter (1), Brodsky consciously emphasizes and intentionally emphasizes the subjectivity of the journey he undertook-the narrative: "Taking into account that every observation suffers from the personal qualities of the observer, then <...> all of the following should, I believe, be treated with a degree of sarcasm – if not with complete distrust. A semblance of objectivity is probably achievable only in the case of a complete self-report given to himself by the observer at the moment of observation..." (Brodsky 1999, 281). And then he adds: "I don't think I'm capable of it; in any case, I didn't strive for it..." (Brodsky 1999, 281).

The author consciously orients the reader to the installation of "distrust" and only "a semblance of objectivity". The first introductory chapter is designed to emphasize and structurally highlight a special perspective of the perception of the text – its subjectivity and personality. And although Brodsky does not reveal the mechanism of actualization of the subtext plan, but he gives a hint about its presence, indicates its presence to the prepared (dedicated) recipient.

Following the first, the second chapter-the strophe concretizes and accumulates this personality – Brodsky confesses the real reason for traveling to Istanbul: he reports on "the promise given by me <him, Brodsky> to himself after leaving his hometown forever, to circumnavigate the inhabited world by latitude and longitude (i.e. by the Pulkovo meridian), on which it is located. <...> Istanbul is located only a couple of degrees to the West of the named meridian" (Brodsky 1999, 281).

The essay was written in 1985. Brodsky left Russia already thirteen years ago. However, it is significant that the anniversary date – "Today I am forty-five years old" (Brodsky 1999, 295) – the hero flew to meet in Istanbul, and the city he left in 1972 "forever", many years later still warmly calls "native". Moreover, when mentioning the "coordinate grid" – in order to avoid misunderstanding – the narrator clarifies (accentuated, in parentheses) that we are talking about the Pulkovo meridian, the iconic toponym for every Leningrad-Petersburg (Pulkovo Heights, Pulkovo Observatory, Pulkovo Highway, Pulkovo Airport, V. Inber's poem "Pulkovo Meridian" and many others). Partly excessive clarification in attribution of the "named" meridian is essential and, as it is clear, fundamentally for Brodsky-the narrator, Brodsky-(auto)hero.

The personal component of the narrative undertaken by Brodsky, the essayist, is strengthened from chapter to chapter, from stanza to stanza. And this strategy persists throughout the narrative – each

chapter about Istanbul with visible commitment and (outwardly careless and accidental) intention will be associated with his hometown, with the history of the Fatherland in which he was born. In some chapter names will be listed, in others cities are named, in the third quotes are given, in the fourth the subtext will come into force, etc. For example, the third chapter, picking up information about the true reason that brought the hero to Istanbul, begins with the phrase: "By its contrivance, the above reason does not differ much from the somewhat more serious, main one..." (Brodsky 1999, 281). It seems that there is no visible connection with the "hometown" or the "Pulkovo meridian" in the message. However, for experts immersed in the "Petersburg text", it is known that it was Petersburg that was named F. Dostoevsky "the most intentional city". The contrivance of the reason for the trip to Istanbul rhymes with the "premeditation" of the narrator's hometown. And this allusion is not arbitrary – Rome will be called a "deliberate" city (exactly so, using Dostoevsky's epithet) in the text a little later (Brodsky 1999, 293). Rome the First will incorporate the figurative and literary characteristics of Rome the Third.

Just as it happens in Brodsky's poetry, in a prose essay the author subtly and exquisitely exploits allusions and reminiscences, actualizes symbolic intertexts, resorts to metaphorical parallelism (and so on), forcing the attentive reader to focus on the "inner", "hidden" layer, take into account and not miss the subtext of the essayistic narrative. The laws of the poetic organization of the text are appropriated by Brodsky's prosaic discourse.

Critics, as a rule, emphasize that the entire narrative in the essay "is divided into two parts that do not coincide in genre, style and semantics" (Venclova 1992, 172), pay attention to the fact that Brodsky's essay is built on "alternation of live sketches and 'theoretical' fragments" (Weil 1992, 322). This is partly how Brodsky's essay is perceived (at first glance), but it is important to emphasize the author's counter-directional strategy – on the contrary, to emphasize the fusion of outwardly differing chapters, their thematic and stylistic proximity and mutual intersection.

Another short chapter-strophe (4) strengthens the correlation between Istanbul and the "hometown" (not named anywhere else in the essay) – both of them are embedded by the narrator in a single "trinity" series: "In the end, I lived for 32 years in the Third Rome, about a year in the First. It was necessary – for the collection – to get the Second" (Brodsky 1999, 282). Istanbul, located (almost) on the Pulkovo meridian, is intended for Brodsky to play the role of a substitute, a kind of synonym for his hometown (the First/Second/Third Rome). In its meridian proximity, the Second Rome should reveal the kinship and the desired recognizability of the Third Rome (as, probably, earlier this kind of similarity was demonstrated by the First Rome, in which the narrator lived "for about a year"). Thanks to multiple metaphors-metonymies, it becomes clear that the only real reason for arriving in Istanbul was the hope of the narrator-hero to mentally return to his "hometown" on the day of his anniversary.

The artist, on the one hand, opens the veil of mystery with a share of revelation (the true purpose of coming to Istanbul), on the other hand, no less carefully veils it. If in one chapter-stanza the "main" reason is named – a vow, a promise made to oneself, then in another – the voiced reason is canceled, replaced by another. Moreover, the artist (as if not noticing the substitution) calls both one and the other reasons "main" and "genuine", tautologically applies the epithet "far-fetched" to both. It is hardly possible to assume that the author accidentally admits such an element of absurdity, rather he consciously resorts to chaoticization and absurdization in order to shift the boundaries of truth and fantasy, reality and dream, authenticity and imagination. Subjectivity and distrust, declared by the author at the beginning of the essay as a strategy, allow him to ignore the principles of logic and accuracy of narrative, shift the chronology and break the vector, thereby blurring the boundaries between an external narrative (a trip to Istanbul) and a plotless narrative (dreamlike, associative - a trip to his "hometown").

Within the framework of the “sick” motive, the narrator, as if to poetize the syllable, confesses: “... I feel like a carrier of a certain infection, despite the continuous inoculation of the ‘classical rose’, to which I consciously exposed myself for most of my life” (Brodsky 1999, 283). T. Venclova shrewdly saw the name of V. Khodasevich behind the inoculation of the “classical rose” (Venclova 1992, 172), but, in our opinion, the more significant in the intended association is that Brodsky refers to the poem by Khodasevich called “Petersburg”. Without naming his “hometown”, without pronouncing his name in the essay, the narrator again and again “quotes” attributes it with all certainty – the “nominal” intertext from Khodasevich, Khodasevich’s Petersburg becomes a sign-code that opens the entrance to the second (subtext) plan of the narrative.

Brodsky’s auto-text also complements the subtext association – next to Khodasevich’s “classic rose”, the famous line of Brodsky himself is updated – “I am infected with normal classicism...” (“Toward one poetess”), for connoisseurs of the poet’s work, it is directly related to his hometown.

Thanks to the intertext, with the help of associations and parallels, Brodsky – almost imperceptibly – forms the motive of duality in the essay. Generating a bifocality of perception of the image and reality of Istanbul, the poet actualizes the motif of sleep (according to the text – the solution to the dreams of Constantine, the founder of Byzantium), and this dream perspective, on the one hand, allows you to mix the features of Istanbul and the “hometown” in a motivated way – “through a dream”, on the other hand, to introduce a duplicate of duality – the motif of the “namesake”.

In mentioning Emperor Constantine, the founder of Byzantium-Constantinople, Brodsky recalls a certain “famous namesake” (Brodsky 1999, 283) of the author, the biblical Joseph, who interpreted the prophetic dreams of Emperor Constantine. It seems that the roll call of namesake names is only limited to this. However, in terms of a mental return to his hometown, the image of another namesake of the author – Iosif Dzhughashvili (whose name will also flash in the text later (Brodsky 1999, 300)) also emerges: as Brodsky testifies in another essay, the portrait of the Soviet “namesake” hung protectively over his bed in the “one and a half rooms” of the Muruzi house. The biblical “namesake” is associated with the Soviet “namesake”, strengthening and increasing the dia- and poly-phonism of the perception of the narrative.

Reflections on the history of Byzantium-Constantinople are introduced into the text of the essay not because of “comprehension of the laws of the development and spread of civilizations in space and time” (Glazunova 2005, 331), not as “historical, ethical and aesthetic justifications” (Weil 1992, 322), which (allegedly) gave rise to a trip to Istanbul, but with the aim of awakening parallels, establishing comparisons, designating free calls that the meridian “namesake” Istanbul offered to the hero-traveler.

6 Poetization of prose, realization of the motive of duality

But on the other hand, it is a poetical course of duplication, pairing, assimilation, as a result – “separation”. Brodsky intentionally juxtaposes the city-reality and the ghost town, objective reality (including the history of the place) and the memory of the past, reality and dream, faces and faces. The author generates a mythical and mystical duality, in which one pretends to be another, the “native” takes on “alien” features. And such comparisons are of different sizes: if Istanbul does not directly stand in parallel with Leningrad (St. Petersburg), then nominatively it is associated with the Russian province: “this city – everything in it – gives very much to Astrakhan and Samarkand” (Brodsky 1999, 283), and somewhat later – “Astrakhan and Stalinabad” (Brodsky 1999, 311). Even if the narrator’s thought does not focus directly on the “hometown”, then the link to the fatherland, where the hero-narrator happened to be born, is preserved and constantly maintained (we emphasize – consistently and head-on). The sound level of the text also

corresponds to the duplication technique, including the author’s bilingualism: the Russian word “settlement” is doubled by English without “apparent need” «сетельментъ» (eng. settlement (Brodsky 1999, 284)), the “illustration” familiar to the Russian ear is tautologically duplicated. Namesake pairs, twin pairs, synonymous pairs permeate the entire text: “And the very cross of the crucifixion rather resembled a Russian (and the Latin capital) T...” (Brodsky 1999, 284).

The text remains, but the similarity of the triple names of Istanbul and the “hometown” is implied and guessed. Like “Istanbul, aka Constantinople, aka Byzantium” (Brodsky 1999, 290), Brodsky’s city was also “baptized three times, never defeated” (the famous chant about St. Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad was undoubtedly familiar to Brodsky from school years).

In some cases, Brodsky intentionally uses homonymy, polysemy, poetic onomasia. So, reflecting on the borderline essence between east and west, about the Bosphorus Strait, the narrator of the toponym Ural in a playful manner equates to the “impersonal” noun “mountains”: “Oh, these natural limits, straits and urals!” (Brodsky 1999, 290). Brodsky uses the antonomasia technique, turns a proper name into a common noun, invariably introducing two components into his thoughts, “alien” and “his own”, neutral (straits) and occasional (urals).

Essentially, the author is playing with the reader. Reflecting on the borders of the Empire (in particular, the Roman One), Brodsky designates its scope: “From Leptis Magna to Castricum <...> the citizen of the Empire always knew where he was in relation to the metropolis...” (Brodsky 1999, 284). Reflecting on the borders of the Empire (in particular, the Roman One), Brodsky designates its scope: Reflecting on the borders of the Empire (in particular, the Roman One), Brodsky designs its Speech in this case is definitely about the Roman Empire, but the full name is truncated to just “Empire” – and homonymy comes into play. The borders of the Empire are marked with Leptis and Castricum. However, Castricum is a city in the Netherlands province of North Holland, but Castricum is (also) a cape on the northernmost island of the Kuril Islands. Castricum is read by some readers of Brodsky as a point on the border of the Roman Empire, by others – on the border of the Russian Empire. “Borderline” Castricum also turn out to be “namesakes”, homonymous doubles.

Approximately in the same strategy – paronymy, polysemy, homonymy – the slogan “The Fatherland is in danger” sounds in the text (Brodsky 1999, 292), which Western readers should recall the famous declaration of the French Revolution “La patrie en danger” (11.07.1792), Eastern – an appeal to the slogan of the period of Soviet historiography: “The Socialist Fatherland is in danger” (decree of the SNK of 18.02.1918).

In line with the same “duplicating” trends, random names of firms in Istanbul are also played out – for example, an expected Australian office with the ethnic name “Boomerang” (Brodsky 1999, 296) actually turns out to be the company’s office, in line with the same “duplicating” trends, random names of firms in Istanbul are also played out – for example, an expected Australian office with the ethnic name “Boomerang” (Brodsky 1999, 296) actually turns out to be the office of a company serving Soviet cruises on the Black and Mediterranean Seas. The author’s rhetoric is ironic: “I wonder where the senior lieutenant on the Lubyanka, who came up with this name, came from? From Tula? From Chelyabinsk?” (Brodsky 1999, 296). “Everything is mixed up...” in Brodsky’s Istanbul. The chaos and absurdity of Istanbul is created by doubling, multiplication, reflection.

From chapter to chapter it becomes clear that Brodsky’s essay is not written about history, but about himself. The essay takes into itself the deep introspection undertaken by the autohero, who, in the days of his forty-fifth birthday, set out to return to the past. Brodsky entrusts the comprehension of historical facts (or pseudo-facts) not to reason and erudition, but to the subconscious (a lexeme that is unusually often present in the

text): “In general, enough to clog the subconscious...” (Brodsky 1999, 283).

In an essay about a trip to Istanbul, Brodsky-the author, instead of the traditional perspective of the “genre of travel” – tells about the sights he has seen and the impressions generated by them (see P. Weil’s “The Genius of the Place”) – the essay about Istanbul unexpectedly connects with reflections on the nature of Greek and Roman poetry, about the difference in stylistic intentions and genre forms of Ovid and Virgil, in the most general terms – reflects on elegiac and epic poetry, in structural terms – in connection with the poetics of circular and linear. Leaving aside the essence and differences of the poetic directories of Ovid and Virgil, let us note that literary (literary) retrospections are necessary for the poet not as a philologist (or “sociologist” (Glazunova 2005, 336)), but as a reference material for modeling associations and analogies, for understanding not antiquity, but modernity and oneself.

7 The duality of the chronotope, the mental principles of linearity and circle

It is known that in Brodsky’s poetry the categories of time and space are constitutive and dominant, have an existential and substantial character. Time and space succinctly mediate all spheres of Brodsky’s poetic world. Researchers have repeatedly written about this (see: Akhaphkin 2002, 2021; Kelebay 2001; Snegirev 2012, etc.).

In the essay, Brodsky presents the category of time in the system of laws of Ovid’s elegiac poetry, space – through the epic narrative of Virgil. If, according to Brodsky, the graphics of the poetic creations of elegics (including Ovid) are mediated by the “tradition of symmetry”, “proportionality” and “harmony” and tend to “a closed circle” (Brodsky 1999, 287), then Brodsky’s Virgil “was the first <...> to propose the principle of linearity” (Brodsky 1999, 287). According to essayist, “most likely, this was dictated by the expansion of the empire, which reached a scale at which human displacement really became irrevocable...” (Brodsky 1999, 287).

In an isolated form, the principle of linearity (however, as well as closure), formulated by Virgil (or Ovid) – in any case, Brodsky, appears somewhat abstract and has little to do with the poet’s thoughts about “self-affirmation”.

But “example”, which Brodsky illustrates his observation, says the opposite. Brodsky quotes Virgil’s Aeneid and chooses the episode where Dido reproaches the hero: “I would still understand” – she says – “if you left me because you decided to return home to your own. But you’re going nowhere, to a new goal, to a new city that doesn’t exist yet...” (Brodsky 1999, 286–287). On the one hand, the above quotation is objective (artistic and historical) in nature and is associated with the actual events of the text of Virgil, on the other hand, it is marked by clearly subjective, personal, actually Brodsky connotations. The poet-essayist is trying to understand himself and find an answer to the question why he did not “decide to return home”, but went to a certain “new ... city”, as the association makes it clear – instead of his “hometown” he ended up in Istanbul.

In the appeal to ancient poetry, a new pair of “namesakes” and “doppelgangers” appears: Aeneas // Brodsky. And his (their) fate is interpreted in the axiology of the past: “in Virgil’s eyes, Aeneas is a hero led by the gods. In Ovid’s eyes, Aeneas is essentially an unprincipled scoundrel, explaining his behavior – movement along the plane – by divine providence” (Brodsky 1999, 287). Behind the temporal – ancient and modern – parallels, signs of the (psycho- and self-) analysis of the hero-author are guessed, comprehending the significant points of intersection of time and space, history and geography, latitude and meridian. In fact, the cross (urban and Christian) is being inspected, which is the basis for the architectural plans of large policies and the life of an individual subject-an individual. It seems that, turned to the contemplation of the “dusty catastrophe

of Asia”, to Istanbul, Brodsky actually plunges into himself, into introspection, marked by an abundance of rhetorical questions:

“Racism?.. Snobbery?.. Misanthropy? Despair?..” (Brodsky 1999, 288). And one more question-the resolution: “But can we expect anything else from a linear principle that has survived the apotheosis: from a person who has nowhere to go back?” (Brodsky 1999, 288). And one more question-the resolution: “But can we expect anything else from a linear principle that has survived the apotheosis: from a person who has nowhere to go back?” (Brodsky 1999, 288).

As it is clear from (under) the text, this is Brodsky (the hero and author) – the person who “has nowhere to go back”, whose life is subordinated to “the linear principle of existence” (Brodsky 1999, 288). His mother and father died in his hometown (“my mother <...> died the year before last. Last year – my father died” (Brodsky 1999, 294)) – the threads that connected him with his homeland have broken, and, according to Brodsky, it is impossible to return. The only real and effective way to overcome the “linear principle” – “to return to the circles of its own” – is mystical, “dual”.

Following the metaphorical logic of the narrative, which Brodsky demonstrates, it can be noticed that the hero-narrator creates more and more pairs-doublets. Conditionally Brodsky is a poet = Ovid, conditionally Brodsky-essayist = Virgil. Brodsky’s poetry = ring, multiple returns and spirals, his essay = epic realization of the principle of linearity. “Dual” in the status of an artist, poet and prose writer (essayist), Brodsky-personality seeks to “bypass” the principle of linearity: he hopes in a city located just a few degrees from the Pulkovo meridian to find the possibility of a mental ring, spiral, return-visit. Following the Emperor Constantine, Brodsky’s hero believes that Istanbul-Byzantium will turn out to be “for him, the cross is not only symbolic, but also literal – a crossroads <...> from east to west no less than from north to south” (Brodsky 1999, 288).

The technique of “duality”, the motif of “namesakes” and “reflections”, the symbolism of sleep and delirium (“illness”) allow Brodsky to talk about Constantine or Aeneas, and to imagine himself behind them, to talk about one city, but steadily (albeit allusively, subtext) to talk about another. It is difficult to determine the toponymic binding without “affiliation”: “... the placement of the capital on the very edge of the empire, as it were, turns the edge into the center and assumes an equal space on the ‘other’ side, from the center” (Brodsky 1999, 289) – without context, it is hardly possible to understand whether we are talking about Istanbul or about the “hometown”. Brodsky plays, juggles words, uses associative writing, actively turns to metaphor, metonymy, semantic polysemy and speech homonymy.

Between the lines, returning to the purpose of his journey, Brodsky’s auto-hero “visit” to Istanbul metaphorically connects with spiritual “purification”. “The process of purification (catharsis) is very diverse and has both an individual (sacrifice, pilgrimage to a sacred place, one or another vow) and a mass (theater, sports competition) character. A hearth is no different from an amphitheater, a stadium from an altar, a pot from a statue” (Brodsky 1999, 292). The “doppelgangers” reappear (hearth // amphitheater, stadium // altar, pot // statue), moreover, they are recognizably of Mandel’stam (i.e. intertextual and topographically iconic), and behind the abundance of words and images, a “proverb” is lost – a vow (= a promise made to oneself in 1972), a pilgrimage to a sacred place (= “hometown”).

8 The West and the East as the embodiment of time and space

Being in Istanbul pushes Brodsky to think about the West and the East, about Islam and Christianity, about paganism and monotheism, about poly- and mono-theism, about despotism and democracy, about the individual and the mass (in artistic reality, starting, as if, from Istanbul, in the subtext drawing parallels to Russia and the USA, homeland and emigration). At

the same time, the pairing of concepts, concepts, ideologies that the writer concerns does not imply unambiguity of conclusions within the framework of a programmatically subjectivized narrative. The narrator's reflections lean to one pole, then to the other. The hero's thought leads him to recognize that being in Istanbul pushes Brodsky to think about the West and the East, about Islam and Christianity, about paganism and monotheism, about poly- and mono-theism, about despotism and democracy, about the individual and the mass (in artistic reality, starting, as it were, from Istanbul, in the subtext drawing parallels to Russia and the USA, homeland and emigration). At the same time, there are the pairing of concepts, ideologies: "The East is indeed the metaphysical center of humanity. <...> By the time of Constantine's accession, the Roman Empire, not a little due to its size, was a real fair, a bazaar of faiths. <...> the source of all the proposed belief systems and cults was precisely the East. The West offered nothing. The West was essentially a buyer" (Brodsky 1999, 291). Then (following the reflections on the cult in Islam and Christianity) Westernism triumphs: "... the longer I live <...> the more dangerous monotheism in its purest form seems to me. It's probably not worth calling a spade a spade, but a democratic state is actually a historical triumph of idolatry over Christianity" (Brodsky 1999, 293), over "just a monologue of the Koran" (Brodsky 1999, 295).

The hero's hesitations are always motivated and reasoned, but not absolute — a new turn of the character's thought leads him to different (often contrapuntal) preferences and conclusions. Moving linearly from east to west, the auto hero mentally makes circles, returning to what he seemed to have already abandoned. Starting a conversation about "the diverse dominions of the British Empire" (Brodsky 1999, 298), the author necessarily returns to the life of the multinational USSR he left ("... why go far for examples' — and in the text appear "Evenks who are Soviet citizens" (Brodsky 1999, 298)). As soon as the idea of a political system arises, its definition immediately sounds, which is undoubtedly based on one's own experience, on the past years lived in the homeland: "The disadvantage of any system, even a perfect one, is precisely that it is a system. That is, in the fact that, by definition, for the sake of its existence, it has to exclude something, consider something as alien and, insofar as possible, equate this alien with non-existent" (Brodsky 1999, 299). Echoes of Brodsky's own biography appear through the matrix of the above maxim.

Meanwhile, judging by the numerous invectives that Brodsky draws to Istanbul, a trip to the Second Rome was not able to provide the hero with a round of returning to the past. "An investigation is rarely able to look at its cause with approval" (Brodsky 1999, 291). Everything in Istanbul irritates the narrator, everything causes rejection. "The delirium and horror of the East. The dusty catastrophe of Asia. The greens are only on the Prophet's banner. Nothing grows here, except a mustache. A black-eyed part of the world, overgrown by the evening with three-day stubble. The embers of the fire filled with urine. That smell! Mixed with bad tobacco and sweaty soap. And the underclothes wound around their loins that your turban..." (Brodsky 1999, 288).

"Ubiquitous concrete, the consistency of dung and the color of an open grave. <...> And this everywhere, even in the city, sand flying into the muzzle, gouging the world out of your eyes <...> You can jump out into the street — but dust is flying there" (Brodsky 1999, 288, 303).

Examples of "irritation" and "anger" can be multiplied. However, Brodsky's dislike of Istanbul is not actually dislike of the city (as the researchers suggested (Weil 1992; Venclova 1992; Glazunova 2005)), rather irritation against himself, who dreamed of returning to the past along the spiral of time, but deceived in utopian expectations.

In the second half of the essay, after a series of Istanbul visual impressions, the narrator's negative emotions intensify, accumulate, and condense. The 26th chapter is entirely devoted to the statement of verbal inconsistencies and "discrepancies":

"Istanbul <...> sounds quite Turkish; for the Russian ear, anyway. In fact, Istanbul is a Greek name, it comes, as it will be said in any guidebook, from the Greek "stan polin" — which means (lo) simply "city". "The camp"? "Pauline"? Russian ear? Who can hear who here? Here, where "mess" means "glass". Where "fool" means "stop". "Bir mess tea" — one glass of tea. "Bus fool" — bus stop. At least the bus is only half Greek" (Brodsky 1999, 301).

Irritation reaches its apogee. Brodsky's hero does not restrain anger even in relation to Istanbul architecture, first of all goes to mosques and their "nameless orthodox creators", marked, according to the angry narrator, "aesthetic stupidity" (Brodsky 1999, 306). If in Central Asian mosques of the (former) USSR the hero sees "ideosyncrism, self-involvement, the desire to complete ourselves" (Brodsky 1999, 305), then the mosques of Istanbul are for the opinion of the disappointed essayist, — "the tent complex! pinned to the ground! Namaz" (Brodsky 1999, 306). "There really is something menacingly otherworldly in them, <...> absolutely hermetic, shell-like" (Brodsky 1999, 306).

Concluding his notes-impressions on Cape Sounion, not far from ancient classical Athens (Brodsky 1999, 285), Brodsky-narrator compares the "ornament units" of Eastern and Western European. According to Brodsky, these are spatial and temporal ornaments. The latter — Western — are inherent "its rhythmicity, its tendency to symmetry, its fundamentally abstract character, subordinating graphic expression to rhythmic sensation" (Brodsky 1999, 307). The Temple of Poseidon on Cape Sounion and the (implied, imaginary) twin image parallel to it — the Exchange building on Vasilievsky Island in the "hometown" ("It is ten times smaller than the Parthenon. It is difficult to say how many times it is more beautiful, because it is not clear what should be considered a unit of perfection" (Brodsky 1999, 312)), they become for Brodsky a triumph of harmony, a sign and a sign of the cosmos that has overcome chaos.

It has already been noted that in a number of interviews Brodsky has repeatedly admitted that for him, in the categories of space and time, the idea of time is more important and closer. Moving in space (the main one among them is from Russia to America), according to the poet, has determined little in his (self)consciousness. However, in the essay "Journey to Istanbul" Brodsky clarifies this conclusion: spatial linearity, as it turned out, was of great importance in his life. "The idea that everything is intertwined, that everything is just a pattern of a carpet trampled by a foot, no matter how exciting <...> it may be, is still much inferior to the idea that everything is left behind, the carpet and the foot trampling it — even its own — including" (Brodsky 1999, 308).

A visit to Istanbul, located near the "same" meridian, did not bring relief to the hero (and the author). The attempt to return to the "hometown" — at least mentally, mentally — failed. That is why the narrator is so angry at Istanbul, angry that the Second Rome could not help him overcome time and return to the Third Rome in imaginary space.

Somewhat calmed down, already transported to Sounion, the hero-narrator softens a little and comes to a philosophical judgment: "What should I say to that? and should I say anything? I am not sure; but, nevertheless, I will note that if I had not foreseen <...> objections, I would not have taken up the pen. That space for me is really both smaller and less expensive than time. Not, however, because it is less, but because it is a thing, whereas time is a thought about a thing. Between a thing and a thought, I will say, the latter is always preferable" (Brodsky 1999, 308). Somewhat calmed down, already transported to Sounion, the hero-narrator softens a little and comes to a philosophical judgment, Under the soothing emotions of Athens, the hero-narrator confesses to the realization of the futility of the undertaken journey to Istanbul, a journey geographical, spatial, but not mental, not temporal. Physical movement in the West-East direction is now felt by the hero and the author to be forbidden.

If the Islamic Istanbul caused the “traveler” exclusively anger and irritation, then the Christianized Fatherland (note, written with a capital letter), “we” and “ours” (note, marked possessive pronouns) gave rise to sadness and regret in the hero. Istanbul (unlike the “classical” Rome and Athens) forced the hero to actualize in memory the “zoomorphic” features of his native “corner of the earth”, to recall the dictates of his “system”, the principles of Soviet “monotheism”, military-police decrees and regulations. “It is enough <...>, having looked in the dictionary, to establish that ‘penal servitude’ is also a Turkish word. As it is enough to find on the Turkish map – whether in Anatolia, or in Ionia – a city called Nowhere” (Brodsky 1999, 313).

The name of the “negative” city, introduced in the text of the final chapters, becomes a verbal abstraction for Brodsky, a speech substitute (double) of another vow (not) given by the hero to himself: never to return to the past linearly, spatially, geographically. Between a thing and a thought, prefer the latter. Therefore, the definition that the hero gives to himself at the end of the journey, – “victim of geography” (Brodsky 1999, 313), thus parallel, but not “victim of history” (Brodsky 1999, 313), thus, meridian. In an interview, Brodsky always (following A. Akhmatova) persistently and resolutely refused to define “victim”, therefore he makes a reservation and clarifies: “no one can be blamed for anything” (Brodsky 1999, 314). The hero-Brodsky comes to the idea of humility, “with some effort of imagination – Christian humility” (Brodsky 1999, 314), of melancholy, even more precisely and of “justly – fatalism” (Brodsky 1999, 314). The author is a character trying to figure out who he is: “a hero led by the gods” or “an unprincipled scoundrel who explains his behavior <...> by divine providence” (Brodsky 1999, 287) – he inclines to the intertextual Lermontov fatality, to the fate and fate of the Pechorin type. Brodsky seems to join the classic: his hero, “my dear sirs, exactly, a portrait, but not of one person: this is a portrait made up of the vices of our entire generation, in their full development” (Lermontov 1962, 5). His philanthropy and misanthropy are universal qualities and properties, another thing is that the hero of Brodsky (as well as the hero of Lermontov) they are imbued with end-to-end self-reflection, immersion in introspection, “self-report” (Brodsky 1999, 281) and “self-affirmation” (Brodsky 1999, 285), related to the need to find your own coordinate in an extensive network of latitudes and meridians, between East and West.

9 Conclusion

Thus, answering the question posed at the beginning of the analysis: why could a city with a great history and worldwide fame give rise to such an irritated rejection of the poet (“almost grumbling” (Weil 1992, 322)), what caused the decisive rejection in Brodsky’s soul and consciousness? – it can be argued that the negative poured out by the hero-narrator on Byzantium-Constantinople-Istanbul was sublimated, redirected from himself (the idealist) to the great Ottoman city, which failed to give the hero and the author the expected return and peace. The hero-narrator is angry at himself, who imagined and allowed the possibility of a circular movement of memory and emotions in spite of the linear principle of life, hoped that the twin city located near the very “named” meridian would be able to replace him for a while (for the jubilee time) “hometown” and “Fatherland”.

As the analysis showed, the whole structure of the essay, its compositional features, strophic division, figurative series, motivics and symbolism (duality, pairing, reflections, “namesakes”, dream perspective, etc.), a system of artistic means (mainly figurative allusions and reminiscences, assonance-alliterated polysemy, paronymy and homonymy, with the dominance of metaphor approaches) they testify to the primacy of lyric-poetic strategies that Brodsky exploits and which powerfully represent his idiostyle in the generic constants of both lyrics and epic. The proximity of the artist’s prose to poetry (lines to a circle) actualizes the high degree of emotionality that the essayist demonstrates.

10 Prospects for further research

Concluding the analysis of Brodsky’s prose essayistic narrative, we can conclude that (unlike poetry) his prose is extremely poorly studied and, with a different angle of appeal to it, demonstrates new facets, offers new interpretations and discovers unexpected narrative and semantic moves. Attention to Brodsky’s prose creativity in the future will be able to actualize semantic and poetological strategies not previously considered, to identify special facets of inter-genre formations modeled by the poet in prose.

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