



THE THEME OF LONELINESS IN THE LYRICS OF I. BRODSKY

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Abstract

The article examines the theme of loneliness in the lyrics of Joseph Brodsky as one of the key ones in his work. Particular attention is paid to the philosophical and existential dimension of loneliness, which acts for the poet not only as a form of internal state, but also as a way of understanding the world and himself. Using the example of the poems "Pilgrims" and "Fifth Anniversary", it is analyzed how loneliness is associated with the motives of wandering, exile, the passage of time and mortality. The work uses interpretations of modern literary scholars, which allows us to more deeply reveal the specifics of Brodsky's artistic world and his attitude to the metaphysical questions of human existence.

Keywords: Loneliness, lyrics, philosophy, existential approach.

Introduction

The lyrics of Joseph Brodsky are a unique phenomenon in Russian poetry of the second half of the 20th century. Among the key themes of his work, the theme of loneliness stands out, permeating most of his poetic and essayistic works. This loneliness is not everyday or social, but existential, philosophical, metaphysical. It serves the poet as both a way of understanding the world and an instrument of artistic expression. Through the prism of loneliness, Brodsky understands not only his position in society and history, but also the eternal questions of human existence. One of the early manifestations of the motif of loneliness in the poet's lyrics is the poem "Pilgrims" (1962), where the hero is depicted in a state of eternal wandering. This journey is not only spatial, but also spiritual: "We wander,



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not knowing the land, / where we would live, as in a house, / not knowing what a house is" [6, 89]. Here loneliness appears as the original state of a person expelled from paradise, doomed to an eternal search and the impossibility of finding peace. According to literary scholar E. Fanaylova, "loneliness for Brodsky is not a tragedy, but a norm, it is the basis of his being" [4, 56]. The relationship between loneliness and time occupies a special place in the poet's lyrics. In the poem "The Fifth Anniversary" (1965), the lyrical subject reflects on the passage of time as a source of alienation. Time in Brodsky is inexorable and indifferent: it knows no empathy, does not spare and does not preserve. In this context, loneliness is intensified by the feeling of one's own mortality and the transience of life: "And time goes by like water — invisibly, inexorably, homeless." Researcher V. Losev emphasizes in his article that for Brodsky, "time is not just a category, but an instrument for the philosophical analysis of loneliness" [2, 68]. Spatial motifs in Brodsky's lyrics are also closely connected with the theme of loneliness. Leningrad, Venice, Rome, New York — these cities are not so much geographical objects as symbols of spiritual alienation. In poetry, they are devoid of warmth and comfort; they act as landscapes of an alien, alienated world. Brodsky's hero is always on the move, on the move; he has no permanent place; he is an exile in the broadest sense of the word. In the poem "Journey to Istanbul" (1965), the lyrical subject experiences loneliness even in a crowd, among people: "I am among people, but no one hears / my voice" [6, 47]. This testifies to the deep essence of loneliness, which does not depend on external conditions, but is determined by the internal state. The theme of exile occupies a central place in Brodsky's poetry after 1972, when he was forced to leave Russia. During this period, loneliness takes on new shades: it becomes not only a personal tragedy, but also an opportunity for creative freedom. In the United States, Brodsky continues to write in Russian, remaining in cultural isolation, but at the same time in spiritual autonomy. In the essay "Embankment of the Incurable" he notes: "Loneliness is a country where they speak your language, but no one hears you" [1, 89]. This statement aptly reflects the inner state of an emigrant, a poet outside his homeland, deprived of his usual connections, but who has acquired a new understanding of himself as an artist. The personal loneliness of Brodsky's lyrical hero, whether in Russia or abroad, is inextricably linked with his attitude to



language. Language becomes both a refuge and a wall for the poet. Writing in Russian in an English-speaking environment, Brodsky feels not only a cultural but also an ontological disconnect. He speaks of himself as a person of the “linguistic diaspora.” This loneliness among people who do not understand his language turns out to be a symbol of the poet in general – a figure doomed to speak into the void, to be understood... In the poem “Letter in a Bottle” (1974), we encounter the image of a lyrical message that may never be found by the addressee. This is a metaphor for literary creativity as such: the act of writing is always the hope of being heard in the future, in another time, in another world. Loneliness in this case is not only the absence of a response, but also the highest form of faith in the power of words. Brodsky writes: “When no one reads – and then / it is written, as on the shore – in a bottle” [6, 147].

In the poet's mature work (1980-1990s), loneliness is transformed into a metaphysical state. Brodsky's lyrical subject increasingly acts as an observer, contemplator, commentator on events occurring outside of him. At the same time, the distance between him and the world becomes increasingly significant. In his later poems, such as “I Entered the Cage Instead of a Wild Beast” or “Trophy”, one can observe not only alienation from the world, but also from oneself. A person becomes a stranger to himself, and this is the highest manifestation of loneliness...

In Brodsky, loneliness is closely connected with the concept of freedom. In one of his interviews, the poet says that “freedom is the opportunity to be alone.” This statement reveals the existential pathos of his poetry: loneliness is not a punishment, but a condition for inner independence. The hero of his poems chooses loneliness as a form of being, refusing to compromise with society and time. The poet realizes that being alone means being responsible for one's inner world. In the essay “They ask me: what is freedom?” he writes: “Freedom is when you expect nothing from others except silence.” This statement summarizes Brodsky's philosophical position, in which loneliness and freedom are inseparable. Lyrics become a space where the poet finds meaning in absence — in silence, in pauses, in the absence of an answer.

It is impossible not to mention the religious motives associated with loneliness. In the poem “Christmas Romance,” God is present not as a comforter, but as a



witness to man's loneliness. He is silent, and in this silence is the truth. Brodsky's poetry approaches mystical experience: loneliness in it is an opportunity to hear the inaudible, to see the invisible.

Thus, loneliness in Joseph Brodsky's lyrics is not only a central motive, but also an aesthetic and ontological principle. Through it, other important themes of his poetry are revealed: exile, time, freedom, God, language. Loneliness becomes the point from which the poet's voice emerges, addressed to the world, but not dissolved in it. It is in solitude that the true word is born, it is in it that a person achieves an understanding of his essence. Brodsky's lyrics are a path from isolation to clarity, from isolation to comprehension. His poetic world is a world without illusions, but also without despair, in which loneliness is not a tragedy, but a privilege to see, feel and understand more deeply.

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