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## Art-Image Contents of Lexeme “Time” in the Poetic Language of J. Brodsky<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** *The article deals with the study of the peculiarities of the author’s individual semantic filling of the lexeme время / time in the poetic language of J. Brodsky.<sup>1</sup> Time is one of the system-forming abstract entities that play an important role in the person’s realization of the world’s organization of nature and society of people. The results of cognition of the properties of time find a vivid expression in the very language, so the study of linguistic temporal structures allows us to objectify the mental forms and comprehend the conceptualization of the world by human consciousness and mentality.*

*A special realization of time lexemes is in literary texts, because individualized meanings generated by the text itself along with the main nominative generalized meaning are realized in linguistic units. From this insight into the textual behaviour of linguistic units, it logically follows that each particular text has its own individual, functional-semantic field of artistic time inherent only in it, the units of which realize the temporal category in a special, original and unique way. In this connection, a special interest for our study is the corpus of poetry by J. Brodsky, which gives a metaphorical, axiologically coloured, emotionally marked image of time.*

*As a result of the research it has been found that the lexeme время / time in the texts of I. Brodsky has both usual meanings and occasional ones. In most contexts, the traditional interpretations of the temporal lexeme are enriched in the poet’s works with additional meanings connected with the author’s individual interpretation of temporal reality, as a result of which new original metaphorical images arise that reflect the specificity of the writer’s worldview. Thanks to the special image system, the anthropomorphic depiction of temporal aspects, the abundance of associative parallels of the lexeme время / time is perceived in the literary world of J. Brodsky as a multidimensional, original temporema, saturated with poetic meanings.*

*Research methods: descriptive-analytical method, method of contextual analysis of literary text, method of interpretation of literary text, method of continuous sampling.*

**Keywords:** time, poetic language, J. Brodsky, temporal category, metaphorical images.

### Introduction

Among large number of poetic systems, works by J. Brodsky representing a collection of bright, extraordinary, original literary texts are full of an abundance of philosophical and metaphysical reflections on life and place of a person in it.<sup>2</sup> The key role in Brodsky’s literary world is played by the category of time, based on the synthesis of philosophical, existential concepts. Time in the poetic language of

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<sup>2</sup> V. Polukhina, *Brodsky through the Eyes of his Contemporaries*, London, The Macmillan Press, 1992; D. M. Bethea, *Joseph Brodsky and the Creation of Exile*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994; G. L. Kline, "A History of Brodsky’s «Ostanovka v pustynе» and his «Selected Poems»", in *Modern Poetry in Translation*, X (1996), p. 8-19; L. Loseff, *Joseph Brodsky: a Literary Life*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2011; A. Berlina, *Brodsky Translating Brodsky: Poetry in Self-Translation*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2014.

Brodsky has not only a universal semantic structure, being characteristic of European and Russian linguistic view of the world, but also a number of specific, individual-authoring features that create on the pages of his works a unique multi-layered image of time.

It is known that the language of poetic works is characterized by various transformations of lexical units that differ in semantic complexity, the abundance of associative connections and the presence of extralinguistic subtext.<sup>3</sup> Brodsky's poetic text is not only conducive to the development of semantic augments in the semantics of temporal lexemes, the appearance of various kinds of transformations inherent in the words with temporal meanings, but also represents a concentrate of symbolic meanings associated with the category of time.

The topicality of the work is due to the fact that the study of the category of time represented in the poetic language of J. Brodsky creates a pronounced anthropocentric orientation of the work and makes it possible to determine the features of the author's individual worldview that influences the creation of literary reality.

The aim of the research is to reveal the peculiarities of the author's individual semantic filling of the lexeme *время* / *time* and to determine its figurative content in I. Brodsky's literary works.

### **Materials and methods**

The material of the study is the poetic texts by J. Brodsky, representing the main corpus of the poet's works, as well as the fragments of his essays, interviews and conversations.

In the process of studying, the following methods were used: descriptive-analytical method, method of contextual analysis of the text of literature, method for interpretation of the literary text, method of continuous sampling.

### **Results**

As is generally known, in the scientific picture of the world time is recognized as a materially non-embodied category, being devoid of any visual, audial or tactile characteristics: "Time cannot be measured in terms of the physical experience of the five senses, it does not leave perceptual images in the mind and is a mental representation in its pure form, reflecting a person's idea of the world around him"<sup>4</sup>. However, in the texts of literature it can possess the above features,

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<sup>3</sup> S. R. Levin, *Linguistic structures in poetry*, Hague, Mouton, 1962; R. Pinsky, *The situation of poetry. Contemporary poetry and its traditions*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976; R. W. Gibbs, *The poetics of mind: Figurative thought, language and understanding*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994; A. S. Afanasev, A. M. Sayapova, "Space as semantic beginning in E.A. Boratynsky's early poetics," in *Journal of Language and Literature*, VII (2016), no. 3, p. 163-166; D. Rakhimova, G. Hayrutdinova, "Semantics and functioning of the lexeme *igra* (GAME) (Based on the Material of Literary Works of Russian Poetry of XIX-XX Centuries)," in *Journal of Language and Literature*, VII (2016), no. 1, p. 186-189.

<sup>4</sup> I. Zakhariyeva, "Emigrant Note in J. Brodsky's Lyrics of 70s-80s of the Twentieth Century," in *Russian Poets of 20th century: Phenomenal Aesthetic Structures*, Sophiya, 2007, p. 153-162.

reflecting the specifics of the author's personal, individual perception of the phenomenon of time by the poet.

It should be noted that J. Brodsky was always interested in the abstract idea of time, the embodiment of ideas about which in poetry was possible only by their description by the lexemes with concrete semantics: ... *I would say that I am more interested in a purely abstract idea of time. I think I can quite say that I use concrete ideas about time at the moment of immersion in abstract reflections. And I try to make these abstract reflections tangible via imagery, specific symbols and all that sort of things.*<sup>5</sup>

Being a category of abstract, not amenable to visual contemplation, time in the ordinary consciousness of a person does not correlate with any kind of colour spectrum, which cannot be said about literary world-image, in which time acquires concrete-material outlines and becomes the object of visualization. In the poetical texts of J. Brodsky, time is presented as an object of visual perception, which receives a colour description that carries a special symbolic subtext. Time in poetic language turns out to be directly related to one colour - gray, which is due to special extra-linguistic factors and personal associations of Brodsky: *I always say that if you imagine the colour of time, it will most likely be gray. This is the main visual impression and sensation from the North,*<sup>6</sup> *There is a gray colour in fashion - the colour of time and logs* ("The Fifth Anniversary"). Gray colour is associated in the worldview of the poet with the North, the Baltic Sea, and also becomes a symbol of the whole water element, with which the author repeatedly compared himself, but more often - time.

Time in the works of J. Brodsky appears as a reified entity, directly connected with a certain matter: *В этом силлом хрипении / за годами, / за веками / я вижу материю времени, / открытую петухами* («Петухи» / «Roosters»). / *In this wheezing hoarse / over the years, / over the centuries / I see the matter of time / discovered by roosters*). It is assimilated to a piece made of cloth and associated with the process of spinning: *И он перестоит века, / галактику, жилую часть / грядущего, от паука / привычку перенявши прясть / ткань времени, точнее – бязь / из тикающего сырца, / как маятником колотаясь / о стенку головой жильца* («Взгляни на деревянный дом...») / «Glance at the Wooden House ...»). / *And it will outlive times, / the galaxy, the living part / of the future, from the spider / adopting a habit of spinning / a gist of time, more precisely - coarse / from the ticking raw, / like banging with pendulum / the tenant's head against the brick wall*. In this context, according to O.I. Glazunovaya, the metaphor of spinning conveys the idea of prolonging time, stretching it.<sup>7</sup> Using such metaphorical combinations, J. Brodsky often brings together the category of time with the traditional-poetic image of Parki, the goddess of life and fate: *Жизнь есть товар на вынос: / торса, пениса, лба. / И географии примесь / к времени есть судьба. / Нехотя, из-под палки / признаешь эту власть, / подчиняешься Парке, / обожжающей прясть* («Строфы» / «Strophes»). / *Life is a commodity to take out: / torso, penis, forehead. / And admixture of the geography / to time is fate. / Reluctantly, under the lash / you will*

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<sup>5</sup> В.П. Полухина (ed.), *Joseph Brodsky. Large Book of Interviews*, Moscow, Zakharov, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> S. Volkov, *Dialogues with Joseph Brodsky*, Moscow, Independent Newspaper, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> O. I. Glazunova *Poetics by Joseph Brodsky: author's thesis for doctor of philology: 10.01.01; 10.02.01*; Sankt Petersburg, 2009.

*recognize this power, / submit to Parki, / who adores to spin.* However, in the poet's works there are other author's individual images of time created due to nominations related to needlework and weaving: *Но много сломанных иголок / на платье времени сгубя, / хотя бы собственных знакомых / любить, как самого себя* («Петербургский роман» / «Petersburg novel»). *But many broken needles / having been spoilt for the dress of time, / at least own friends / to love like yourself.*

Time in the poetic language of J. Brodsky also appears in the role of creation, which is characterized by certain physiological processes. For example, it is actualized in the poet's texts as the addressee of speech capable of carrying out communicative activity, as evidenced by linguistic constructions in which the temporal lexeme is used in the function of circulation: *О, время, послужи, как пустота, / часам, идущим в доме Аполлона* («Приходит март. Я сызнова служу...» / «March comes, I am anew ...»). / *O, time, serve as emptiness / hours in the house of Apollo.* J. Brodsky accentuates the readers' attention to the possibility of time to carry out a speech action, which is expected from him by a lyrical hero, trying to build up an original dialogue in the course of time: *Да. Времени – о собственной судьбе / кричу все громче голосом печальным. / Да. Говорю о времени себе, / но время мне отвечает молчаньем <...> Пусть время обо мне молчит* («Бессмертия у смерти не прошу...» / «I do not ask death for immortality ...»). / *Yes. Time - about my own destiny / I'm crying louder with a sad voice. / Yes. I'm talking about time to myself, / but time responds with silence ... <...> Let the time be silent about me.* In this poetic fragment, the temporal lexeme is used with the predicate *молчать / be silent*, which implies the possibility of performing a speech action, and therefore, "belongs to the virtual area of the language"<sup>8</sup>. The use of acoustic metaphors allows J. Brodsky to depict time as a category capable of carrying out the process of speaking, but for some reason does not use this possibility and remains silent: *Над нами время промолчит, / пройдет, не говоря* («Шествие» / «Procession»). *The time will remain silent over us, saying nothing.* This feature of the representation of time draws attention of V. A. Kulle, who marks the motive of silence in his works, the accompanying image of time in the poet's work.<sup>9</sup> Confirmation of this interpretation are the examples illustrating time in the image of entity that verbalizes without the participation of speech or lacking the ability to speak: *И возникает на пороге / пришелец, памятник, венец / в конце любви, в конце дороги, / немного времени гонец* («Петербургский роман» / «Petersburg novel»). / *And the messenger of a dumb time appears on the threshold / an alien, a monument, a crown / at the end of love, at the end of the road.*

It is important to note that in J. Brodsky's poetic works, time is endowed with sounding, that is, the ability to reproduction of certain sounds, which is indicated by the semantics of verb forms that are combined with a temporal lexeme. But in most cases, sounding is not the main feature of time but indirect, serving as an additional accompany of action performed by time: *Однако время, шурша, / сделало именно это / Однако, время rustling, / did precisely that* («Fin de

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<sup>8</sup> M. N. Epstein, "Word and Silence in Russian Culture," in *Zvezda*, X (2005), p. 202-222.

<sup>9</sup> V. A. Kulle, *Poetic Evolution of Joseph Brodsky in Russia (1957- 1972): dissertation for candidate of philological sciences: 10.01.01., Moscow, 1996.*

Siecle»). The adverbial participle used in the given poetic fragment with the temporal lexeme is in the meaning of “making a muffled crackling sound” and indicates the possibility of time to make sounds. The presence of acoustic features of time is indicated by the contexts in which the temporal word is in combination with the predicates with the meaning of deprivation of sound which, according to the poet, it never had: *Он шел по пространству, лишенному тверди, / он слышал, что время утратило звук* («Сретенье» / “Candlemas Day”) / *He was going around the space, deprived of solid surface, / he heard that time lost its sound.*

In addition to the acoustic features, time is endowed in J. Brodsky’s works with other characteristic features as well, for example, an ability to see: *...а Время / взирает с неким холодом в кости / на циферблат колониальной лавки* («Осенний вечер в скромном городке...») / “An Autumn Evening in an Unpretentious Town”) / *... and Time / gazes with a cold in the bone / upon clock face of colonial bench; ...покамест Время / варварским взглядом обводит форум* («Римские элегии» / “Roman Elegies”) / *... meanwhile Time / is shooting a barbarous look around forum.* In “a look” of time the poet captures a certain axiological colouring which gives a distinctive imagery to the temporal unit.

Time in J. Brodsky’s language of art is endowed not only with the ability to bring about all kinds of physiological processes, but to be carried away into the sphere of sensing and tactile perception owing to the use of meteorological metaphors that represent time as an entity being sensed via tactility. The most frequent lexeme that characterizes time in the same way is the word *холод* / *cold*. It is the cold that the time is likened to and associated with: *Время есть холод. Всякое тело, рано / или поздно, становится пищею телескопа: / остывает с годами, удаляется от светила. <...> Там, где роятся сны, за пределом зренья, / время, упавшее сильно ниже / нуля, обжигает ваш мозг, как пальчик / шалуна из русского стихотворенья* («Эклога 4-я (зимняя)» / “Eclogue 4” (winter)) / *Time is cold. Any body, sooner/ or later, becomes food for telescope: / gets cold, moves off the luminary. <...> Where the dreams swarm, beyond the sense of sight, / time, having dropped below zero/ burns your brain like a finger / naughty child from Russian verse.* The poet points to the inextricable link between time and cold, manifested in their peculiar correlation: *В феврале чем позднее, тем меньше ртути. / Т.е. чем больше времени, тем холоднее...* («Эклога 4-я (зимняя)» / “Eclogue 4 (winter)”) / *In February, the later, the less mercury. / That is, much time, colder... .* According to I. Zakharieva, cold in the poetic world of J. Brodsky is connected with the image of glaciation, the process of which is synonymous with the idea of aging:<sup>10</sup> *Жизнь моя затянулась. В речитативе вьюги / обострившийся слух различает невольную тему / оледенения* («Эклога 4-я (зимняя)» / “Eclogue 4 (winter)”) / *My life dragged on. In blizzard’s intoning / a keen ear discerns an involuntary theme / of glaciation.* However, in the scientific literature on J. Brodsky’s works, there are the other variants of interpretation of the symbolic content of the lexeme *холод* / *cold*. For example, if I. Y. Samoylova regards cold as a variant of

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<sup>10</sup> B. N. Zhanturina, "Spacial Component in Metaphors of Time," in *The Proceedings of Volgograd State Pedagogical University*, V (2009), p. 24-27.

emptiness along with such concepts as vacuum and absolute zero,<sup>11</sup> L. Batkin sees in cold an indispensable sign of death<sup>12</sup>, then E.V. Melnikova notes a positive perception of cold that is understood as "accumulating extensible beginning", associated with "eternity", being capable of "slowing down life and preserving space".<sup>13</sup> According to Melnikova, the acuity of perception of the lyric character is connected "with cold": the attitude to creativity as more visible, clear, to what remains after you; the attitude to death as a way of approaching eternity."<sup>14</sup>

### Summary

The image of water is directly associated with the notion of time in the poet's works: *Я просто считаю, что вода есть образ времени, и под всякий Новый год, в несколько языческом духе, стараюсь оказаться у воды, предпочтительно у моря или у океана, чтобы застать всплытие новой порции, нового стакана времени («Набережная нецелых» / "The Waterfront of the Incurable") / I simply believe that water is an image of time, and on every New Year's Eve, in a somewhat pagan spirit, I try to find myself by the water, preferably at the seaside or at the ocean, to catch the emersion of a new portion, a new glass of time). This traditional convergence of time and water element finds a vivid expression in the poetic language of J. Brodsky, being abundant in detailed metaphorical images: *Время выходит из волн, меняя / стрелку на башне — ее одну («Лагуна» / "Lagoon") / Time comes out of the waves, changing / the arrow on the tower — it only. Water in the poet's works is interpreted as "mirror" of time, its original twin, which makes it possible to speak on the existential perception of J. Brodsky's foundations of the world: *Ведь вода, если угодно, это сгущенная форма времени <...> Если можно себе представить время, то скорее всего оно выглядит как вода / After all, water, if you like, is a condensed form of time ... If one can imagine time, it looks like water. Water becomes the main "cultural mythologeme" in Brodsky's poetry, which embodies the substance, the "thing" that "is also a mediator between time, space and language, and the property of all things in general, their beginning and end".<sup>15</sup>***

### Conclusion

Thus, in the poetic language of J. Brodsky, in the semantic structure, the lexeme *время / time* encompasses both the main nominative generalized meanings and individualized ones, formed by the author's concept and generated by the text. The poetic language of J. Brodsky is characterized by an abundance of semantic nuances of the lexeme *время / time* and its conceptual, psychological and evaluative interpretation, which reveals the originality of the author's thinking and attitude.

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<sup>11</sup> I. Y. Samoilova, *Dynamic Picture of the World of J. Brodsky: Linguistic Aspect: Monography*, Grodno, GrSU, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> L. M. Bakhtin, "Thing and Emptiness. Notes of the Reader in the Margins of Brodsky's Verses," in *October*, I (1996), p. 161–182.

<sup>13</sup> E.V. Melnikova, "Some Aspects of Frame "Tactility" in J.A. Brodsky's Sensory Picture of the World," in *The Herald of Cherepovets State University*, III (2010), p. 36-40.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> E. A. Chernichenko, "Culture as a Myth in Poetry of Late J.A. Prodsky," in *Philology and Man*, III (2008), p. 169-177.

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The semantic fullness of the temporal lexeme reflects the features of the author's individual perception of time, the formation of which was significantly influenced by extra-linguistic factors.

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