

ABSTRACT

The present study discusses the theme of St. Petersburg-Leningrad in Joseph Brodsky's verse works. The chosen approach to the evolving image of the city in Brodsky's poetry is through four metaphors: St. Petersburg as "the common place" of the Petersburg Text, St. Petersburg as "Paradise and/or Hell", St. Petersburg as "a Utopian City" and St. Petersburg as "a Void".

This examination of the city-image focusses on the aspects of space and time as basic categories underlying the poet's poetic world view.

The method used is close reading, with an emphasis on semantical interpretation. The material consists of eighteen poems dating from 1958 to 1994. Apart from investigating the spatio-temporal features, the study focusses on exposing and analysing the allusions in the scrutinised works to other texts from Russian and Western *belles lettres*.

Terminology (introduced by Bakhtin and Yury Lotman, among others) concerning the poetics of space in literature is employed in the present study. Conceptions originating from the paradigm of possible worlds are also used in elucidating the position of fictional and actual chronotopes and heroes in Brodsky's poetry.

Brodsky's image of his native city is imbued with intertextual linkings. Through reminiscences of the "*Divine Comedy*" and Russian modernists, the city is paralleled with Dante's "lost and accursed" Florence, as well as with the lost St. Petersburg of Mandel'shtam and Akhmatova. His city-image is related to the Petersburg myth in Russian literature through their common themes of death and separation as well as through the merging of actual *realia* with the fictional worlds of the Petersburg Text.

In his later poems, when his view of the city is that of an exiled poet, the city begins to lose its actual world referents, turning into a mental realm which is no longer connected to any particular geographical location or historical time. It is placed outside time. The native city as the homeland in its entirety is replaced by another existence created in language.