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***The Ballad of the Little Tugboat in the Context
of Brodsky's Poetry***

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Abstract. Examined Brodsky's first published poem, *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat*, in connection with other texts by the poet: *Stanzas*, *Stanzas to the City*, *Poems in April*, and some others. The introduction provides the history of the publication of *The Ballad...*; the main part offers a detailed analysis of the poetics of the work. It is noted that Brodsky puts the genre definition of 'ballad' in the title of several more texts: *The Ballad of Lermontov*, *Melancholic Ballad*, *Poems and Ballad from a Letter to E. Rein*, *Ballad with a Parcel*. The source of most of these texts is the *Maramzin's Collection*, the first self-publishing collection of Brodsky's works, which contains unpublished texts by the poet. In addition, Brodsky's 'ballad' texts are considered as part of the process of rethinking and overcoming the canons of the ballad genre in 20th-century poetry. Comparing the *Ballad of the Little Tugboat* with the poet's 'adult' poems allows it to be included in the circle of Brodsky's metaphysical and 'autobiographical' poetry. An analysis of the image of the tugboat in Brodsky's work allows us to conclude that the tugboat in the poet's artistic world is an individual, free, romantic and at the same time stoic consciousness resisting the automatism of perception of life, whose choice is to swim 'against the current'.

Keywords: Brodsky, ballad, children's poetry, lyrical hero, irony, Maramsin's Collection

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«Баллада о маленьком буксире» в контексте творчества И.А. Бродского

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Аннотация. Рассматривается первое опубликованное стихотворение Бродского – «Баллада о маленьком буксире» – в связи с другими текстами поэта: «Стансами», «Стансами городу», «Стихами в апреле» и некоторыми другими. Во введении приводится история публикации «Баллады...»; в основной части предлагается развернутый анализ поэтики произведения. Отмечается, что жанровое определение «баллада» Бродский выносит в заглавие еще нескольких текстов: «Баллада о Лермонтове», «Меланхолическая баллада», «Стихи и баллада из письма Е. Рейну», «Баллада с посылкой». Источником большинства этих текстов становится «Марамзинское собрание» – первое, самиздатовское собрание сочинений Бродского, которое содержит не опубликованные до сих пор тексты поэта. Кроме того, «баллады» Бродского рассматриваются как часть процесса переосмысления и преодоления канонов жанра в поэзии XX в. Сопоставление «Баллады о маленьком буксире» со «взрослыми» стихотворениями поэта позволяет включить ее в круг метафизической и «автобиографической» поэзии Бродского. Анализ образа буксира в творчестве Бродского позволяет прийти к выводу, что буксир в художественном мире поэта – это индивидуальное, свободное, противящееся автоматизму восприятия жизни, романтическое и одновременно стоическое сознание, выбор которого – плыть «против течения».

Ключевые слова: Бродский, баллада, стихотворения для детей, лирический герой, ирония, «Марамзинское собрание»

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Introduction

The aim of this study is to conduct a multifaceted analysis of one of Joseph Brodsky's most famous poems, *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat*, with particular focus on interpreting the symbolism of the tugboat as a recurring motif through comparison with the poet's other works, primarily *Stanzas to the City*, *April Poems*, and *Letters to the Wall*.

It is well known that Brodsky's first publication as an 'adult' poet was *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* – a poem that, “through the efforts of the poet's

friend L. Losev, was smuggled into publication” and appeared (in a heavily edited version, nearly halved in length) in 1962 in the children’s journal *Koster* (No. 11) (Klots, 2008). This is hardly surprising: as I. Bernstein observes, “children’s literature became a kind of internal emigration for adult writers whose texts couldn’t pass through censorship barriers” (Bernstein, 2016, p. 109).

Originally, the complete version of *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* was submitted by Brodsky for film adaptation to the *Lennauchefilm* studio. However, the screenplay was not approved (Leving, 2020). In spring 1962, after securing employment at *Koster* journal, L. Losev suggested that Brodsky “write children’s verse in the shape of a cross, a star, or some kind of riddle” (Polukhina, 2006, p. 131). Brodsky’s impromptu composition: “Under the bridge flows the Neva, so swift. / Above the bridge stands the Cheka, so grim” (Figure) – was ironic not only in content but also graphically, as it was written in the form of a grid. (The *Big House* – headquarters of the NKVD, People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, – was located near Brodsky’s home in Saint Petersburg.)

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Under the bridge flows the Neva...

Source: Polukhina, V. (2006). Joseph Brodsky by his contemporaries’ view. Book one (1987–1992). Saint Petersburg: Publishing house of the magazine *Zvezda*, p. 132. (In Russ.)

However, L. Losev recalled that Brodsky later brought to *Koster* magazine “a very long, sentimental poem” that had “deeply moved” him. According to Losev, it was “a typical Leningrad watercolor painting” that was likely to appeal to the editorial board members deciding on publication “due to its overt romanticism” (Polukhina, 2006, p. 135). The version approved for printing, shortened by at least half, concluded with a pathetic statement perfectly in line with Soviet ideology: “I remain, without regret, / there, / where others need me” (Brodsky, 1962, p. 7). As Ya. Klots notes, “the hero masks his sadness at parting with free ships by emphasizing his civic duty and devotion to his humble work, which he

perceives as a calling” (Klots, 2008). Only later, when the full version of the poem was published, did it become clear that the original ending of *The Ballad...* had been different: the text did not culminate in glorifying civic duty but instead developed the narrative further, and – not directly, but still talked about freedom.

The complete text of the ballad first appeared in Volume IV of *The Maramzin Collection* (pp. 17–22) – a samizdat (i.e. self-publishing) collection of Brodsky’s works compiled by V. Maramzin in 1972–1974 (Losev, 2006, p. 432). The next publication of the full text occurred only in 2001, in *Staroe literaturnoe obozrenie* journal, No. 2 (Brodsky, 2001, pp. 12–13). Recent editions have published the complete version: in the collected works *Poems* (2011, 2019) (Brodsky, 2019), the children’s poetry collection *The Elephant and Maruska* (2011, 2022 and later reprints) (Brodsky, 2022), and separate illustrated editions (Brodsky, 2023, etc.).

The present study expands the understanding of the features of Brodsky’s poetry for children, which is traditionally not considered as a significant part of the poet’s creative heritage.

Results and Discussion

The Poetics of The Ballad of the Little Tugboat

When discussing the poetics aspects of the complete version of *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* and its integration into the context of the poet’s oeuvre, it is important to note that Brodsky included the genre label ‘ballad’ in the titles of several of his works: *A Little Ballad about a Piece of Bread* (1959), *Ballad About Lermontov* (1960), *Melancholic Ballad* (1960s), *Poems and Ballad from a Letter to E. Rein* (1964), and *Ballad with a Parcel* (1968). The sources for these texts (except *Melancholic Ballad*) are *The Maramzin Collection*; *Melancholic Ballad* is mentioned by L. Losev in *An Attempt at a Literary Biography* (Losev, 2006, p. 330). According to E. Pivkina, in the XX century, the literary ballad “lost its canonical strictness, thereby opening wide possibilities for individual authorial initiative” (Pivkina, 2019, p. 93). For instance, in *A Little Ballad About a Piece of Bread*, as in *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat*, the focus is on the image of an outwardly insignificant ‘hero’ who plays an important role in the lives of ‘greater’ beings and – more broadly – in the universe: “People believe in God / for a piece / of bread / or ruin their souls / for a piece / of bread” (*The Maramzin Collection*, Vol. I, p. 38).

Among the “main specific features of the phenomenon of ballad genre decanonization”, E. Pivkina notes “first-person narration, the overt manifestation of the lyrical hero, who illuminates and evaluates the plot” (Pivkina, 2019, p. 93). *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* exemplifies precisely this type of lyrical narration. Moreover, as A. Poltoratskaya emphasizes, “what primarily distinguishes Brodsky’s works from the old literary ballad is their greater or

more obvious philosophical depth and a paradoxical rationalism of form that is uncharacteristic of romantics” (Poltoratskaya, 2006, pp. 10–11). The rationalism of form in *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* is evident, for example, in the sequential development of lyrical thought, from ironic observations about life to its philosophical comprehension. Notably, in *Poems and Ballad from a Letter to E. Rein* (1964) (*The Maramzin Collection*, Vol. IV, p. 55), in its ‘ballad’ section, the rational and ironic (“...But here / only buttercups grow”, “the death chorus of mosquitoes”) coexists with the sublime and romantic (“I will praise your image!”).

A. Poltoratskaya observes that Brodsky’s ballads almost always feature a special atmosphere of enigmatic space and contain “a certain set of themes and motifs – death, the poet’s vocation, the abyss, darkness, the intersection of the mundane with the transcendent” (Poltoratskaya, 2006, pp. 11–12). The ‘enigmatic space’ in *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* is the ‘distant lands’ from which ships arrive, and the tugboat’s ultimate destination – the ‘golden country’, a realm of otherbeing. The genre designation of the poem as a ballad allows the depicted events to transcend the boundaries of the everyday and familiar, creating a lyrical narrative in which the story of the ‘little tugboat’ reveals universal themes: loneliness, overcoming circumstances, and the yearning for an ‘ideal’ world.

At the same time, the title *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* can be viewed as a somewhat ironic move by the author. This genre form, usually used in the Romantic tradition for elevated – epic or romantic – plots, here serves to tell the story of a modest, unremarkable, inconspicuous, but persistent hero. In our view, through the title of the text, Brodsky plays with the reader’s expectations twice over: he creates the impression of a lofty Romantic genre (*The Ballad of...* or *The Ballad about...*), then undercuts the implied ‘loftiness’ with the prosaic and somewhat ironic image of the hero (“little tugboat”), and finally subverts the reader’s expectations once more through the actual content of the text.

At the same time, *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* stands out among Brodsky’s ‘children’s’ poems as one of the few where the lyrical element prevails over the ironic, and where absurdist statements are virtually absent. The name of the protagonist represents another of the ballad’s rare ironic touches. In mythology, Antaeus is a tireless giant, the son of Poseidon, god of the sea, and Gaia, goddess of the earth. The opening lines immediately contrast with the title *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat*: “This is me. My name is Antaeus...”. The hero, as if sensing the incongruity, immediately emphasizes the mismatch between his name and his ‘insignificance’: “Though I’m no ancient hero...” (note the phonetic similarity but contextual opposition: ‘Antaeus’ – ‘ancient’). Later, describing his work, the tugboat almost sheepishly admits: “sometimes I get tired”. Readers familiar with Greek mythology will recognize the ironic choice of name – though not destructively.

We encounter an adult hero (“I was young”) who has retained childlike directness, “actively exploring, receptive, open” (Doronina, Romanov, 2019). The naive, heartfelt, lyrical and even somewhat humorous tones established at the beginning are maintained through colloquial Russian words (*never sick, a little, little circle, buddy, guys, more fun*). The poetics of repetition also contribute to creating lyrical tones. The word ‘beautiful’ appears five times in the poem: from the childishly direct “a cook with a beautiful ladle” at the beginning, to the hero’s lyrical perception of reality (“beautiful landscape”, “through beautiful places”), dreams (“about beautiful seas”), and otherbeing (“to beautiful sleep”). The hero possesses imagination and a poetic worldview. He speaks warmly and affectionately about his guests: “I’ll place you here / among other ships, / so you’ll have more cheerful company”. The distant lands from which ships arrive are perceived by him as a marvelous yet inaccessible country, “where shores sleep peacefully”, where parrots cry in palm trees, but where the little tugboat will “never drop anchors”. Yet the hero poeticizes the ordinary, showing the familiar in an unfamiliar light: “the lace of distant lifting cranes” (an image repeated twice), “the hurried sunset chases the stern”, “the Neva shimmers in silver fire”. Few could describe port work as poetically as this “little tugboat”. While not oppressed by routine, through his poetic vision the hero nevertheless resists ‘automatic’ perception of reality.

Continuing the conversation about the poetics of repetition, we should note that the hero identifies himself three times: “I am a tugboat”, yet never calls himself a “little tugboat”. T. Doronina and S. Romanov observe: “Significant is not only the frequent use of first-person pronouns, but also how ‘I’ becomes both the reference point and focal point of everything happening” (Doronina, Romanov, 2019). For Brodsky, ‘I’ represents not so much a marker of the hero’s ‘childlike’ quality as his attempt to establish individual identity (against just 2 instances of ‘we’, the text contains nearly 40 uses of ‘I’ in various grammatical forms). In *The Maramzin Collection* we find a 1964 poem that begins similarly to *The Ballad...* and shares its intonation: “This is ME, I.A. Brodsky, / in the yard of a country estate / (to live there / and write, and write)” (Vol. IV, p. 59). The lyrical heroes of both works feel compelled to name themselves and locate themselves in space.

The quiet hero of *The Ballad...*, while repeatedly emphasizing his external insignificance in his monologue: “excuse me, friends”, “though...you look down” (the port receives not just ships but SHIPS that dwarf the hero), “they’ll feed me some coal” (i.e., just a bit) – nevertheless asserts the importance of his work and existence: “you simply can’t do without me”. The poetics of repetition underscore the apparent monotony of the tugboat’s life, his daily yet vitally important actions: “I am always running, / always rushing, / bringing in, taking away, / bringing in, taking away”. However, the hero’s self-affirmation in the world, his self-definition, comes not through ironic – Gogolian or Chekhovian –

tones, but through the lyrical hero's sense of authenticity, necessity, and existential wholeness. 'Little' – this alien word in the title is one the lyrical subject cannot accept. The title places the hero within certain confines, yet the entire text of *The Ballad...* becomes an argument with the title, an overcoming of this imposed definition voiced by an 'alien' voice. The hero doesn't see himself as 'little', yet this 'littleness' becomes a source of heroization. Thus Brodsky offers his own concept of heroism: instead of great feats – inconspicuous but vital labor; instead of epic scale – modesty, resilience, self-reflection, lyricism and free consciousness.

Paradoxically, the tugboat asserts and defends its 'human' dignity, despite what T. Doronina and S. Romanov see as *The Ballad...* being "an extended metaphor of longing and confinement" (Doronina, Romanov, 2019). The tugboat endures its 'confinement' stoically. The hero's 'prohibition' on dreaming might be understood as a tragic sign of the times in which Brodsky wrote the poem (in Russian the words 'locked' *zapret* and 'prohibition' *zapert* forming anagrams of each other).

As M. Grygel writes in her article about the metaphysics of the 'ordinary' in Brodsky's 1960s poetry, "the small creature not only emphasizes human greatness in the empirical world but also reminds us of all creatures' mortality" (Grygel, 2012, p. 115). The final 'breakthrough' into the existential introduces *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* into the circle of Joseph Brodsky's 'metaphysical' poetry (*Great Elegy for John Donne*, *Butterfly*, *Dogrose in April*, etc.), as well as his works where the poet – implicitly or explicitly – contemplates facts of his biography (*From the Outskirts to the Center*, *Letters to the Wall*, etc.).

The entire *Ballad...* is permeated with the drama of farewell. First, there is the pain of the tugboat's separation from ships ("it's bitter to part with a beloved ship"), then – farewell to its crew and the city, and ultimately to life itself. Yet in this final parting, no bitterness remains. The tugboat reflects on how it will finally sail "to beautiful sleep <...> to the golden land" – let us recall that the great ships arrive from those beautiful lands, from where "shores sleep peacefully in silence," and depart there never to return. Death is perceived by the lyrical hero as a long-awaited journey, liberation from eternal yearning for distant shores, a path to freedom.

Ballad... and the image of a tugboat in the context of Brodsky's work

Undoubtedly, *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* shares parallels with another of Brodsky's poems – *Stanzas* ("Neither country nor churchyard..."), also written in 1962 (Brodsky, 2019, Vol. 2, p. 289). Both poems outline the geography of St. Petersburg: The Neva in *The Ballad...* corresponds to Vasilievsky Island and "Petrograd smoke" in *Stanzas*. Yet here (as in Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman*) the city is never directly named by its 'official' title. For the lyrical

heroes, this is not Soviet Leningrad but a timeless space (certainly “smoky”) that holds personal significance – the backdrop of their lives and the setting for their final farewell before death. Key markers of this space are water, bridges, islands: “water beneath me”, “empty islets” in *The Ballad...* – “Vasilevsky Island”, “the soul <...> will flash above bridges” in *Stanzas*. The space is associated with blue hues – “blueness” and “blue trees” in *The Ballad...* – “dark blue façade” in *Stanzas*. The lyrical heroes demonstrate profound, uncompromising attachment to ‘their’ space: “someone must remain” – “I don’t want to choose any country or churchyard”. The characters have a special connection with this space; they don’t just exist in it, but they emotionally inhabit it, though their tones hint at the “compulsory” nature of this habitation, the longing and pain associated with it. The heroes lament the unfulfilled: “I regret that I’m not a sailor”, “I long for beautiful seas” – “from unlived years”. “I must remain”, the tugboat insists to itself and others, where we might detect external obligation (not “I would like to remain”). The lyrical hero of *Stanzas* himself “doesn’t want to choose” another country – yet the homeland remains indifferent, offering no reciprocity.

Both poems describe the transition to otherbeing, the journey toward death as transcendence of physical boundaries and earthly constraints. In *The Ballad...* this appears in the finale, where death isn’t named directly but the tugboat, yearning for distant shores and its “native ocean”, departs for the “golden land”. In *Stanzas* death appears in the very first line (“nor churchyard”); while the hero remains physically in his native space, his soul transcends bodily limits to fly freely “above bridges” – like the tugboat, on its final journey. The “farewell” for both heroes – the “captain”, “boatswain in sou’wester”, “sister-girls” – become symbols of the past, that space-time the heroes are leaving behind.

Both texts employ colloquialisms conveying the heroes’ “living” intonations and absolute sincerity: “to my liking”, “all hands”, “never sick”, “cook with ladle”, “good evening, friend” – “in the dark”, “drizzle”, “goodbye, friend”; childhood themes emerge (“little tugboat” – “boys wave after”), emphasizing connections between past and present, present and future. The rhythmic correspondence is also evident in Russian: both predominantly use two-foot anapest.

We should note that *The Maramzin Collection* contains several lesser-known Brodsky texts resonating with *The Ballad...* and *Stanzas*. *Farewell to Collectors* (1961, *The Maramzin Collection*, Vol. 2, pp. 152–153), reflecting Brodsky’s geological expedition experiences, also treats separation and death, with direct textual echoes of *The Ballad...* and *Stanzas*: “goodbye, kids”, “watch your brother depart” (“sister-girls” who “wave after the boy”). The message *To Nina from Joseph, November 21, 1970* (*The Maramzin Collection*, Vol. 4, p. 72) ironically reworks the “homeland attraction” theme: “Shall I tell you a tall tale? / I don’t want to go abroad / to some European capital...”. The irony intensifies

through quoting Pushkin's *October 19*: "The whole world is foreign to me", and the comical spelling of the country's name: "I'll die in the eS-eS-eS-eR".

Another poetic 'bridge' between *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* and *Stanzas* ("Neither country nor churchyard...") is *Stanzas to the City* (Brodsky, 2019, Vol. 2, p. 288), dated June 2, 1962. The rhythmic (anapestic) and imagistic connections between these three 'same-year' poems are evident, as are their genre-referencing titles. The opening lines of *Stanzas* and *Stanzas to the City* are synonymous: the lyrical heroes define their death terms through rejecting the undesirable – dying outside Petersburg ("Neither country nor churchyard / do I want to choose" – "Let it not be given / to die far from you..."). Both texts feature the tragic image of the childhood 'boy' against the backdrop of passing into eternity. Like *The Ballad...*, *Stanzas to the City* connects artistic space with the "chorus of heavens and water" (also the escorts into oblivion), recognizable Petersburg landscape ("granite", "white night"), and the image of the tugboat is also associated with reflecting on the coming of death ("All will grow silent around. / Only a black tugboat will cry out...").

The tugboat image, embedded in urban landscape coordinates, recurs several times in Brodsky's oeuvre. Its earliest appearance was likely in chapter XXI of the 1961 poem *Petersburg Novel* (Brodsky, 2001, Vol. 1, p. 61): "A tugboat hoots beyond the Summer Garden". In the cycle *From February to April* (1969–1970, Brodsky, 2019, Vol. 1, pp. 334–357) the tugboat assumes compositional significance. As L. Losev notes, the tugboat "in the first poem <...> is motionless, while in the fourth it picks its way to the estuary" (Brodsky, 2019, Vol. 1, p. 617). *April Poems* – with their "April" chronotope echoing *Stanzas*, Petersburg locus, and familiar "finality" motif – though here it's not life's end but winter's conclusion as an oppressive, anxious time, "recovery" from it: "This winter I didn't / go mad again. And winter / look, has ended...", "...the time of alarms doesn't end, / but winters do".

In *Letters to the Wall* (Brodsky, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 21) the tugboat image again connects with death and 'confinement' themes, emphasizing the 'freedom-unfreedom' opposition: "A tugboat passes. Emptiness in its wake / The golden moon high above the brick prison". The emptiness behind the tugboat mirrors the void, loneliness, darkness surrounding the lyrical hero. This poem about fear of death ("I don't want to die. My mind can't endure death...") documents Brodsky's tragic circumstances: "Brodsky hid from arrest in Moscow's Kashchenko mental hospital, was first arrested, held in pretrial detention, then sent for psychiatric evaluation" (Artemova, 2023, p. 28). *Letters to the Wall* undoubtedly rhymes with *Stanzas*: "Anyway I'll never come here to die". The hero's desperate monologue reveals childlike, vulnerable consciousness: "Truly some unknown child stares at you". Thus, in the 1960s, the themes of childhood and death became a regular feature in Brodsky's texts.

In *The Thames in Chelsea* (1974, Brodsky, 2019, Vol. 1, pp. 398–400), the lyrical hero, finding himself far from his homeland, observes tugboats on another river: “The Thames rolls seaward, swollen like a vein, / and tugboats in Chelsea brawl in bass”. Here the tugboat weaves into memory motifs: “What do you love most in the world? – Rivers and streets – the long things of life. / Do you remember the past? – I remember there was winter...”, “phone numbers of previous / and current lives”. According to Brodsky, this poem marked an important shift in his poetics: “this is where I begin moving away from standard, so-called iron metrics. Here I start to destroy the verse meter a little” (Brodsky, 2019, Vol. 1, p. 669). The tugboat mention in this “quite important” poem of Brodsky’s mature period signals the image’s enduring significance in his artistic world.

Apparently, the last time Brodsky used the image of a tugboat was in his 1976 essay *Less Than One*: “And the river’s gray mirror, sometimes with a tugboat puffing upstream, told me more about infinity and stoicism than mathematics and Zeno” (Brodsky, 2001, Vol. 5, p. 8). This brief mention (again singular) ultimately clarifies the image’s meaning in Brodsky’s work. The tugboat represents individual, free consciousness resisting life’s automatism – romantic yet stoic, choosing to sail “against the current”, “pick its way through ice floes”, showing others how to navigate difficult passages.

“And Brodsky – he’s a tugboat...”, the poet Oleg Okhapkin wrote in his poem *To Joseph Brodsky* (Polukhina, 2015, p. 35).

Conclusion

The study has led to the following conclusions. The image of the tugboat in I.A. Brodsky’s poetry is connected with themes of childhood and memory, “quiet heroism”, the transition from being to non-being, the opposition of “freedom versus unfreedom”, as well as with the image of St. Petersburg. Within the poet’s artistic world, the tugboat serves as a symbol of free consciousness, resilience, a lyrical perception of the world, and the overcoming of mundane existence.

The Ballad of the Little Tugboat, like Brodsky’s other works whose titles reference the ballad genre, participates in the broader twentieth-century process of this genre’s decanonization. The very title *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* proves significant for interpreting the text. The descriptor ‘little’ in the title sounds like an external characterization. While the title places the hero within certain confines, the entire text of *The Ballad...* emerges as a polemic with this title, overcoming its predetermined framing that was voiced by an ‘alien’ voice. ‘Little’ becomes a source of heroism. The story of the “little tugboat” reveals universal themes of loneliness, overcoming circumstances, and striving for an ‘ideal’ world. In the lyrical hero’s “prohibition” on dreaming of distant lands in

The Ballad..., and in his “confinement”, the tragic features of the era in which Brodsky wrote the poem become apparent.

Brodsky’s works created as ‘poems for children’ constitute a significant part of his creative legacy. Through comparing *The Ballad of the Little Tugboat* with the poet’s other texts (*Stanzas*, *Stanzas to the City*, *April Poems*, *Letters to the Wall*, etc.), it can be included in the sphere of Brodsky’s ‘autobiographical’ and metaphysical poetry.

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