

The Moscow Text and the Imagery of Urban Perception

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Abstract Expounded in the article are prerequisites to a cognitive and semiotic description of the Moscow text as it is represented in the Russian literature of the twenty-first century. The concept of supertext or, the invariable recurrent text structure, is introduced and applied to textual representations of cities; the typical imagery forming the Moscow text is elucidated, along with its verbal representations. It is suggested that the practical description of the Moscow text should be made on the basis of the literary works constituting the Russian literary canon, which will ensure the conformity of linguistics and literary studies within the framework of general semiotics. The article mainly explores the specifics of the contemporary textual representations, drawing upon works shortlisted for literary awards. The literary material is supplemented with extensive social and cultural context, which is done in accordance with the modern literary studies, when the corresponding extra-textual reality is taken into account alongside the text itself. An orientation towards the literary text is postulated as absolutely essential, as a solid corpus of literary texts is indispensable for describing complicated linguistic phenomena and mental images standing behind them. The latest texts about Moscow feature a decrease in the status of the usual cult places of the metropolis, the authors' attention being redirected to urban images which have less historical or cultural significance.

Keywords Moscow text; supertext; urban studies; cognitive imagery; verbalization

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Introduction

The category of *space* is one of the fundamental categories (along with time and being) in the worldview of each person. It is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon which exists in several aspects: physical (real space accommodating the entire material world), perceptual (the space perceived), mental (images of space existing in people's minds), and conceptual (the space of abstract models and constructs).

Currently, the greatest interest of scholars is placed in the figurative characteristics of space, with an emphasis on how it is reflected in the minds of people who are aware of themselves and organize their existence in it. The spatial image, as semiotician Julia Gorelova suggests, always serves as an intermediary between a person's consciousness and the external reality, and in the course of its formation, individuals rely not only on direct sensations and emotions, but also on their previous experience¹. At the same time, the socio-cultural doxastic factors (stereotypes, values, and norms) also influence the conceptualization of reality. As a result, people perceive objective phenomena in their own, naïve, or non-scientific, way, and, in the case of environmental perception, they impart individual meanings to every fragment of it. This fact, however, does not rule out the presence of generally recognized meanings fixed in the given culture and a certain universally-accepted image of space which would be common for most people. It can be thus stated that the

1 Julia Gorelova, "Imagistic Features of Urban Environment," *Imagistic Features of Urban Environment as a Potential for the Territorial Development: Proceedings of the All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference*. Omsk: Siberian Branch of the Heritage Institute, 2020, p. 11.

mental image is a cluster of the most vivid cognitive representations containing the essential features of the object or phenomenon cognized¹.

Urban space is a special type of space centered around the modern person. Following urban scholar Julia Nikulina, it can be defined as a set of objects of the urban environment that are the locus of human life and existence in its material, social, cultural, communicative, mental, and metaphysical dimensions². The space of the city, and especially of the capital city, is the concentration of all the spheres of people's life and the place where the person's cultural, mental, and social progress occurs. Any city is a special universe of relations, artifacts, and spiritual values, a particular spatial organization which includes specific structural components³.

Acquaintance with any city begins, first of all, from its outward aspect, as manifested in its architecture and landscape. The characteristic features distinguishing urban space from other types of space would include the wide avenues and streets, boulevards and squares, high-rise buildings and numerous shopping centers, cafes and restaurants, parks, educational and cultural institutions, transport, etc. In addition, a person's perception of urban space largely depends on people inhabiting it, their social circle, their beliefs and values. Artistic images created by people of art (artists, poets, writers, cinematographers) also play a crucial role in shaping the perception of urban space. As anthropologist Francis Galton argues, imagery might be scarce in "scientific" minds and is abundant in people of artistic inclination⁴. A systematization of the sensations and experiences revealed would constitute a prerequisite for the formation of an integral multidimensional representation of urban space to be codified in linguistics means.

The concept of the *city image* originated in the 1920s in the works of area and culture studies scholar Nikolai Antsiferov dedicated to the imagery of St. Petersburg in literature⁵. In the 1960s American urban planner and philosopher Kevin Lynch noted that "like a work of architecture, the city is a structure in space, but on a gigantic scale, something that can be perceived only for the duration of time. [...] Everything is perceived not by itself, but in relation to the environment, to the chains of events

1 Paul Snowdon and Howard Robinson, "The Objects of Perceptual Experience," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 64, 1990, p. 157.

2 Julia Nikulina, "The Semiotic Aspect of How the Social Space of the Modern City is Arranged," *Philosophy and Social Sciences*, no. 2, 2008, p. 25.

3 Eduard Saiko, *The City as a Social and Cultural Phenomenon of the Historical Process*. Moscow: Nauka, 1995, p. 7.

4 Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*. New York: Macmillan, 1883, p. 183.

5 Nikolay Antsiferov, *The Soul of Saint-Petersburg*. Petersburg: Brockhaus and Efron, 1922, p. 32.

associated with it, to the memory of previous experiences” (Lynch 15).

The modern social and cultural reality has somewhat changed the figurative characteristics of urban space, and therefore, the perception and representation of the city by its citizens has also changed. Despite the fact that urban space is created by people, at some point it goes beyond the control of a person and starts an independent existence of its own. A modern large city is no longer accessible to instant perception—it is necessary to build its image piece by piece, which undoubtedly complicates the process of forming a solid and stable idea of it.

As the arrangement of urban space is the result of both physical and spiritual human activity, which is sign-based, it can be examined from a semiotic standpoint, considering the city as text. Within the framework of this approach elaborated by the Moscow-Tartu semiotic school, the city is understood as a “melting-pot of texts and codes” (Lotman 282). Texts here would not only include literary works containing speech figures and tropes helping convey the authors’ impression of the city, but also such semiotically represented city elements as architecture, landscape, toponyms, symbols, urban myths, etc.

Of particular interest are texts organized around the space of capital cities. For Russian linguistic culture, these are the Moscow and Petersburg texts. The object of the present research is the Moscow text or, *supertext*, a linguistic construct incorporating a totality of texts about Moscow. In Roland Harweg’s terms, it is an *emic* text serving as the semantic invariant for a group of texts, already existent or yet to be written on the topic¹. As the capital city of the Russian Federation, Moscow boasts an impressive history and has absorbed the spiritual, political and cultural experience of modern Russia. Moscow is certainly a center of gravity attracting people from different parts of the country and abroad.

The imagery of urban perception is largely shaped by the materials published in the media or posted on the Internet. Such images, however, feature a simple structure and contain the stereotypical ideas of the city. For purposes of linguistic and cultural study, it is worth turning attention to the images contained in artistic texts, in prose or poetry. Their structure is of a complex nature and they have a special vividness to them, which is accounted for by the artistic register of speech used. In addition to the features of the real ontological space, such images might incorporate elements from fictional spaces or, from the authors’ assumptive universes. Unlike everyday perception, there is no automatism in artistic vision. It is a special, more subtle perspective which highlights individual details, adds special iconicity, and resorts to other artistic techniques, thus making it possible to perceive otherwise

1 Roland Harweg, “Pronomina und Textkonstitution,” *Beiheft zu Poetica*, no. 2, 1968, p. 36.

long-familiar or even tedious fragments of the urban environment in a new light.

Materials

The present study examines the imagistic perception of the Russian capital, which is about constructing a holistic vision of the city and which aims at locating the logos of the city and conveying it in an artistic form. Quite legitimately, the study resorts to an analysis of linguistic means used to verbalize the perceptions of modern Moscow, as text is regarded as the first phenomenological givenness through which we ascend to the perceptual level. The material of the work was 45 Russian prosaic texts about Moscow collected in the book *Moscow: A Meeting Place*¹, along with 120 poems written in the 21st century by Russian authors Anatoly Arinin, Tatyana Berezhnaya, Marina Boroditskaya, Galina Brusnitsyna, Evgeny Bunimovich, Veronica Dolina, Michael Eisenberg, Vladimir Elistratov, Nataliya Filatova, Oleg Gruz, Michael Guskov, Yulian Levchuk, Alexander Voronin, etc. (41 authors overall). These texts were created by people who know Moscow well (they grew up in it, or moved to it a long time ago, or visited the capital often); therefore the information they contain is deemed to have a high degree of verity.

The images of Moscow in the works of the 21st-century authors are multifaceted, as it is one of the oldest Russian cities which has experienced numerous changes during its existence and ultimately turned into a modern metropolis. Quite naturally, writers and poets recall the historical past of the Russian capital, which marked the beginning and formation of other Russian cities, and describe Moscow as the principal city of Russia, an integral part of Russian history and culture: “Russia’s head,” “the World Capital,” “Tsar-City.” The country is governed from the capital, whose inhabitants are the first to learn what is going on in the state. Moscow is an all-embracing city where one can see things not to be found elsewhere. As American historian and urban sociologist Lewis Mumford observes, only the megalopolis, being the quintessence of the present day, can give the person the sense of the fullness of life². We can therefore state the universal allure of Moscow in a sense that any individual can choose the most congenial environment for them from the endlessly diverse manifestations of the city.

At the same time, the Russian capital is conceptualized as built upon the organic principles, created in harmony with Nature and therefore very dear to every citizen. It is no coincidence that such a role of Moscow is reflected in numerous

1 Lyudmila Ulitskaya, et al. *Moscow: A Meeting Place*. Moscow: AST Publishers, 2016.

2 Lewis Mumford, “Rise and Fall of Megalopolis.” *The Culture of Cities*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers (1970): 247.

Russian proverbs and popular sayings embodying people's wisdom: "Moscow is the heart and soul of Russia," "From Moscow, as from a high mountain, everything is visible," "He who has not been to Moscow has not seen Beauty."

Discussion

In modern literature, the myth of Moscow as "the Third Rome" is still of high relevance. On the one hand, it assigns the important mission of the guardian of the Christian faith on earth to the Russian capital, while on the other, it emphasizes Moscow's (and, more generally, Russia's) distinct path of development from both the West and the East: "There is Moscow—Great Rome, / There were two, it is the third" (Guskov (a)). Men of letters also evoke the external similarity of Moscow and Rome. Comparing these cities and their individual districts, Sergey Shargunov writes: "There are seven hills in Moscow, just like in Rome. Rome has Trastevere across the Tiber, with its temples and low houses on narrow streets; Moscow has Zamoskvorechye" (Ulitskaya et al. 70).

The Russian capital, like the "eternal" Rome, attracts people to itself, casts a spell upon them, and does not let them go, being a cathedral city and the spiritual center of Russia. It is thus no coincidence that a large number of golden domes, monasteries, cathedrals are mentioned in poetic texts. The architectural appearance of Moscow would be incomplete without its numerous churches. In addition to these images, the poem *Moscow* by Maria Medvedeva-Yakubitskaya contains another one—that of Moscow as a phoenix bird or, as a city reborn from the ashes to a new life:

Moscow! The great golden-domed city,
Riches of food you have seen and fierce hunger...
You were abandoned, burned by your own lot and others,
But You did not close your big eyes;
You do keep the Orthodox shrines in yourself,
And you are reborn as a Phoenix Bird to this day! (Medvedeva-Yakubitskaya)

Moscow also preserves the image of the mother of Russian cities, widely regarded as their progenitrix, and it chiefly appears in a female guise in the Russian textual tradition. Unlike the stern "male" Petersburg, Moscow does not lose its maternal origin¹. This role of the city has developed historically and is unconditionally rec-

1 Yuri Mann, "Moscow in Gogol's Creative Conscience." *Moscow and the Moscow Text of Russian Culture: A Collection of Articles*. Moscow: RSUH, 1998, p. 64.

ognized by all, which has found its way into aphoristic verbal use: “Moscow is the mother of all cities,” “It’s not scary to give your life for Mother-Moscow.” As a mother, Moscow is commonly perceived as beautiful by default and certainly not subject to any criticism. At the same time, people naturally expect to find a secure shelter in this city, good care, and readiness to accept them with all their problems and shortcomings: “From all over the country they fly to the capital—/ Moscow, like a mother, attracts them to itself” (Levchuk (b)). Here we deal with a typical urban metaphor—the capital city as a center of gravity.

In addition, Moscow appears to be a mysterious city filled with secret and magic, enchanting its citizens and guests. When referring to specific objects of Moscow’s space (Sretenka Street, the Vorobyovy or, Sparrow, Hills, St. Basil’s Cathedral, the Gogol Monument) men of letters stress the presence of a certain spell-binding secret in them: “St. Basil stands on a dais, and when it is dusk, you do not see the temple. But with each step, it, like an image in a photograph, manifests itself to a greater extent and finally appears in all its insane glory. This is the miraculous secret of this amazingly Russian monument which unites distinct beginnings like the eclectic Moscow itself” (Ulitskaya et al. 130). Rolan Bykov elaborates on the mystery of yet another locus of the Russian capital: “And if you stand facing the monument to Nikolai Gogol (who is sitting) and start walking around it to the left and then turn around sharply, it turns out that Gogol is spying on you. In my opinion, he saw not only the truth of life, but the very secret underlying the truth of life” (131).

Finally, Moscow gives the impression of a highly organized urban space with its landscape objects, buildings, and memorable places—the so-called points of dominance which make it possible to distinguish its characteristic urban space from other cities. The recognizable or, precedent, space of the Russian capital is created *inter alia* by Arbat, Sadovaya, Sretenka, and Tverskaya Streets, by Tsvetnoy or, Colored, Boulevard, by Sadovoye Koltso or, the Garden Orbital, by the Vorobyovy Hills, the Khodynka Field, the Moskva, the Neglinka, and the Yauza Rivers, by the Patriarch’s Ponds, etc. Such sacred symbols of the capital as the Kremlin and the Red Square are also frequently mentioned in the micro-corpus under study. These symbols are imbued with history, and it is through them that the Russians feel a connection with their ancestors and take pride in their country. In terms of the number of occurrences, however, other streets and houses greatly surpass these well-known objects. For the Muscovites, their city is primarily associated with the old crooked streets which constitute the core of the cultural-imagistic code. They are convinced that the *real* Moscow is located within the Sadovoe Orbital, on the Vorobyovy Hills,

around the Khodynka Field, and along the banks of the Moskva River.

Artistic images are primarily images of memories. Writers and poets recall their native Moscow, which they knew as children: “A very large part of Moscow, the best for me, has passed into the past” (Ulitskaya et al. 10); “The intimate old Moscow flows as caramel into darkness” (Filatova (b)). The capital is undergoing change before their eyes, which is not always for the better. The old city so familiar to them and suggestive of history has sunk into oblivion and now only stays in people’s memory. Ivan Tsybin writes the following lines: “Moscow, which is so dear to me, with its small houses and cosy courtyards, with its grandmothers sitting on benches there, with its unique charm and a barely perceptible, but recognizable flavour, with its horned trolleybuses floating swiftly along the Boulevard Ring, has disappeared altogether. I am really sorry that the city of my childhood no longer exists” (Ulitskaya et al. 75).

Yuri Arabov notes that “another time and another era have come” (Ulitskaya et al. 169). Following Maria Golovanivskaya, in modern Moscow, “[...] there is another life already—petty, commonplace, and scurrying” (Ulitskaya et al. 125). There are new shops, and malls, and banks, and advertising in the streets, and modern cars in the courtyards, and new residential complexes in the districts. The authors perceive these changes ambiguously. For example, Alexey Varlamov sees them as “alien, outlandish, or, ridiculous” (208); he resists them and ultimately feels deceived. Andrei Makarevich writes regretfully that “very soon there will be no old Moscow. Actually, it is no longer there—as the refurbished architectural monuments do not give any feeling of a living old city” (41). Michael Eisenberg laments the fact that “Moscow has now an amateurish artisanal look” (Eisenberg (b)). Due to the uncoordinated repairs, the capital has lost its formerly recognizable face and now wears many disparate “masks.”

The receding Moscow of the past is also remembered by writers and poets for its crooked streets, turns, and nooks, as noted by Andrei Makarevich: “Old Moscow, in the complete absence of a general architectural plan and the subsequent variety of structures, was exceptionally charming. It was all a little crooked, consisting of twists, nooks and crannies” (Ulitskaya et al. 41). Other authors also emphasize the crookedness of the old Moscow streets, and the radical change in the architectural appearance of the modern capital due to mass construction: “Moscow was disappearing before my eyes. I don’t really like the city that has been formed as a result of construction and demolition. I hardly like it at all. It has lost its sprawling, chaotic, and tender appearance, its charm that sprang from a conglomeration of settlements, former villages and estates; it has lost its curvature and privacy” (Ulitskaya et al. 7).

The second group of artistic images of the city comprises metaphorical images that reflect both the perception of the city as a whole and of its individual elements. As is well known, the basis for creating a metaphorical image is the transfer of the name from one object or action to another based on the similarity of any of their features. The metaphors that shape the general image of Moscow were examined from a linguocultural perspective, using the classification of cultural codes by Victoria Krasnykh¹. According to the scholar, the cultural code is like a grid thrown on the surrounding world, and with its help, the world is divided, categorized, structured, and evaluated². V.V. Krasnykh identifies six basic codes of Russian culture that can be implemented in metaphors: spatial, somatic, temporal, subject, biomorphic, and spiritual. As our analysis demonstrated, four cultural codes can be encountered the literary texts under consideration.

1. The *somatic code* is constituted by metaphors based on the symbolic functions of various parts of the human body. The metaphor *Moscow as the heart of Russia* has become traditional, emphasizing the key role of the capital in the life of the state. It invigorates the country and gives it an impetus to develop: “Moscow! You are the heart of my Motherland!” (Arinin (b)). Poets would also call Moscow *the head of Russia*, despite the fact that this metaphor is historically connected with St. Petersburg, as the popular saying goes: “St. Petersburg is the head of Russia, Moscow is the heart, Nizhny Novgorod is its pocket.” The metaphor is present in Alexander Rudt’s and Vitaly Sevryugin’s poems: “Moscow, the head for holidays and troubles” (Rudt); “Russia’s head” (Sevryugin). Michael Guskov compares the Russian capital with a thinking organ: “Moscow and the brain are but the same” (Guskov (c)).

The metaphors included in this group also reflect the specifics of a particular place. For instance, Rolan Bykov recalls the history of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior destroyed in 1931, which began to be restored at the end of the 20th century. It seems to the writer that “it was like a broken tooth that was put back in its place. And Moscow’s smile is now one hundred percent” (Ulitskaya et al. 130). Lyudmila Ulitskaya has a similar anthropomorphic figurative vision: “Neither the old center nor the north are any more—only individual teeth in the new jaw can occasionally be found” (7). These metaphors indicate that the 21st century has preserved the idea of Moscow as a human city in people’s minds, as an anthropomorphic organism cre-

1 Victoria Krasnykh, *At Home among Foreigners: Myth or Reality*. Moscow: ITDGC “Gnosis,” 2003, p. 297.

2 Victoria Krasnykh. *Ethnic Psycholinguistics and Linguistic Cultural Studies*. Moscow: ITDGC “Gnosis,” 2002, p. 232.

ated by Nature itself. Alyona Dergilyova, in turn, draws the reader's attention to the "smiling, yawning or screaming" facades of buildings with eyes, noses, and mouths; to the walls, wrinkled into a grimace as if they were "undergoing cosmetic surgery" (144). She painfully perceives this result, as the buildings have lost their former historical faces and received a smooth death mask instead.

2. The *subject code* of culture is associated with artifacts which fill Moscow's urban space and constitute the immediately recognizable structure of the surrounding world. Based on the personal impressions of her hometown, Marina Boroditskaya calls the Russian capital *my home* (Ulitskaya et al. 60), while Rolan Bykov refers to it as his apartment: "The whole city was my apartment—my beloved Zatsepa Street, Paveletsky Railway Station, Schipok Street, Balchug Street, the Sparrow Hills, Sokolniki District, Neskuchny Garden" (129). The metaphors coined by Irina Zaslavskaya and Alexander Popov-Ginzberg are also worth mentioning. They actualize the propositional meaning *the Russian capital as the center of attraction*: "Moscow is the All-Russian railway station" (Zaslavskaya); "the eternal railway station" (Popov-Ginzberg). The metaphors indicate that the capital is the largest transportation hub in the country, receiving about three million people daily. Michael Guskov's phrase "a golden, God-driven nail" (Guskov (b)) is reminiscent of the capital as a religious center, and Alexander Perov-Vtoroy's eulogistic metaphors "Moscow is the pearl of Russia" and "Moscow is the crown" (Perov-Vtoroy) express the socially-codified admiration for the city. In addition, the authors conceptualize as a pearl not only Moscow itself, but also VDNH or, the All-Union Exhibition of the Achievements of National Economy, located in Ostankino district: "the real pearl of Ostankino is, of course, VDNH" (Ulitskaya et al. 170).

Writers often present the metaphorical portrayal of distinct streets, districts, or houses of the capital. Maya Kucherskaya compares the famous Arbat to a fortified building, thus emphasizing the iconic role of this street in Moscow's life: "The Arbat stood strong. The Arbat was the house, the fortress" (Ulitskaya et al. 97). Andrey Makarevich focuses on the houses located in it, which have not yet been "crippled by restoration," and calls them "chiselled sculptures." He maintains that the authentic breath has gone out of the refurbished houses and that they have become mere "decorations," against which human life seems unnatural (41).

Images of the houses making up Moscow's urban space are found in stories by Vladimir Berezin, Marina Moskvina, Olga Velchinskaya, and Alyona Dergilyova: "The house stood like a gray battleship and there were lower-ranking ships around, tin boats of garages [...]" (Ulitskaya et al. 42); "My cloud-cutting house No. 10 in Bolshoy Gnezdikovskiy Lane" (49); "[...] the architectural concept of Loskov's new

stone house in Mansurovsky Lane is based on a medieval castle with a round corner tower, a sharp Gothic roof and a spiral staircase. A Moorish balcony was awkwardly attached to the façade of this Gothic castle, and the walls were lavishly ornamented” (109); “the house like a smoothing iron in Petropavlovsk Lane, 1/2, next to the famous Khitrovka Square” (144). Andrei Makarevich writes about his alma mater, Moscow Architectural University, describing its façade with glazed tiles as “somewhat resembling the traditional Russian gingerbread” (40).

The metaphors used in describing houses and buildings are generally based on the likening of these to inanimate objects. For instance, Olga Trifonova recalls that one of the houses in Pervaya (or, the First) Tverskaya Street was called a “matchbox” (Ulitskaya et al. 12). Nikolay Beschastnov mentions the richly decorated house of the Apraksin-Trubetskoy dukes which is known as “a chest-of-drawers house” (149).

3. The *biomorphic code* of culture manifests itself in names related to people themselves, animals, and plants. No representations of the animal or, zoomorphic, code were found in the description of Moscow in the texts examined. The flora-related or, phytomorphic, code is present in the metaphors by Vladimir Berezin and Veronica Dolina indicating the organic origin and existence of the Russian capital. Vladimir Berezin observes that “from above, Moscow looks like the cut of a sawn tree, with its concentric streets resembling growth rings” (Ulitskaya et al. 42). Veronica Dolina regards Sretenka Street with its alleys as “the bulb of a tulip tree” (159). Alexander Minkin uses an anthropomorphic figurative metaphor, calling the respectable Taganka (a separate district of Moscow) a “teetotaler with whom you can’t even have a beer” (131).

In a number of modern poems, we also encounter the metaphor *Moscow as a beautiful woman*. Despite the solid age of the capital, the authors often see it in the guise of a young, beautiful girl, whom “you wouldn’t approach idly or nonchalantly” and whom “East and West covet”:

Moscow, I tell you, is a remarkable girl!
 You wouldn’t approach her just for nothing.
 Suitors from everywhere, with ostentation
 Have sent matchmakers to her! (Berezhnaya (b))

Galina Brusnitsyna calls Moscow a giantess because the finger rings she has dropped are the three famous orbital highways¹. Marina Boroditskaya creates the

1 Galina Brusnitsyna, “The Bridal Moscow,” 2018. Available at: <<https://stihi.ru/2018/08/20/485>> (accessed September 17, 2023).

image of the capital as of a would-be fiancée who “wily flees from the wedlock” (Ulitskaya et al. 67). Like the true woman, Moscow can charm anyone and grab them tightly afterwards. As Lyudmila Ulitskaya points out, “Moscow does not let people go away from itself” (10). According to Olga Flyarkovskaya, Moscow has always had a right to steal people’s hearts¹. “I am avidly catching Moscow’s breath,” writes Elena Yakhnitskaya, and this metaphor once again proves that modern poets commonly perceive their hometown as a living organism (Yakhnitskaya).

4. The *spiritual code* includes metaphors embodying people’s mythological or religious ideas about the world. Such metaphors do not arise immediately, but only as a result of gradual comprehension of what people have seen, and therefore they are mainly inherent to the capital’s citizens rather than its guests. Some authors would compare the Russian capital with Paradise, as, for instance, Nataliya Filatova and Oleg Gruz: “Moscow is my only paradise” (Filatova (a)); “Moscow, with the infinity of its outskirts, seems like Paradise to many” (Gruz). At the same time, not only Moscow can be called a paradise, but also its districts: “Frunze District was designed by Stalin’s stroke of the pen as a housing paradise for the staunchest communists, who were modest and non-public people in everyday life” (Ulitskaya et al. 124). Dmitry Bykov indirectly hints that Moscow was created by God, and calls the Sparrow Hills his favorite place, because he believes that they “are under the direct patronage of the most important Owner, being reliably protected from any interference; life is presented in its true fullness there” (215).

5. The *sentimental code* comprises the verbalized feelings which the capital evokes in its citizens and guests. Rolan Bykov resorts to the festive metaphor and calls Moscow “my eternal holiday” (Ulitskaya et al. 129). Quite in the same line, Michael Eisenberg defines the city as “a permanent display of fireworks” (Eisenberg (a)). Olga Flyarkovskaya, admiring the Russian capital, exclaims, “What a miracle of miracles / Our city is today!” (Flyarkovskaya). Writers also delight in certain places of the capital—the Sparrow Hills, for instance. Dmitry Bykov admires them as this is the point from where the hills of Moscow with its skyscrapers are visible. It is no coincidence that tsar Alexander I called the Sparrow Hills the crown of Moscow (Ulitskaya et al. 214). Vladimir Elistratov confesses his love for the light of lanterns and the millions of bricks from which Moscow University is built². Dmitry Glukhovskiy, when taking a walk at VDNH, discovered the similarity of its build-

1 Olga Flyarkovskaya, “The Typical of Moscow,” 2014. Available at: <<https://stihi.ru/2014/11/21/9578>> (accessed September 21, 2023).

2 Vladimir Elistratov, “I love the Sparrow Hills in the Night...” 2010. Available at: <<https://stihi.ru/2010/06/30/6057>> (accessed September 18, 2023).

ings to ancient edifices (Ulitskaya et al. 171).

The analysis of the imagery which modern writers and poets employ to characterize Moscow suggests that distinct cultural codes interact in their minds. The metaphors considered indicate that in the 21st century, the idea of Moscow as a human city (biomorphic code) prevails in people's worldview. It is a living organism with its own character and destiny, which is constantly working, progressing, and renewing itself. Also, the objects of the city space—streets, alleys, houses, squares—are extensively compared with objects created by human hand (the subject code). Still, most of the metaphors depicting Moscow were born from comparing the city's appearance with natural objects.

In addition, the image of Moscow is created with the help of epithets. They reflect diverse attitudes to the capital city which the authors assume and can refer to both the city as a whole and its individual places. The epithets describing Moscow can be combined into three semantic-pragmatic groups. In the first of them there is admiration for the city and declaration of love for it. So, Evgeny Bunimovich describes the Russian capital as a "great city," stressing its leading role in the country's life, while immediately taking notice of the shortcomings typical of the Muscovites: "Due to the notorious Moscow laziness, which is so characteristic of the inhabitants of my great city, no architectural ensemble has ever been completed here, no project has been finalized" (Ulitskaya et al. 21). Yulian Levchuk's epithets are fairly simple, but they convey the poet's very intimate affection to the city: "Moscow is beloved and familiar"; "the much cherished city"; "Moscow is my dearest city" (Levchuk (d)). During a walk around his native Moscow the author exclaims that the capital is "both majestic and dear to heart, its avenues and streets endlessly attract us" (Levchuk (a)).

Poets and writers experience "a surge of love for their beloved Moscow" (Levchuk (c)) in different parts of the capital. Yulian Levchuk and Olga Flyarkovskaya recognize the Red Square and the Kremlin as such places: "their contours are beautiful—simple greatness!" (Flyarkovskaya). At the same time, Dmitry Bykov considers the Kremlin to be "quite alien" to the city. He characterizes modern Moscow as "a sick city," but despite this there are several places in it that attract him with their mystery (Ulitskaya et al. 215). They are the Sparrow Hills, the Moskva River and the Neskuchny Garden.

Olga Trifonova recalls the "shady and green" Alexander Nevsky Street in Miussy district where she was born. The writer is pleased to say that when she was a child "the 2nd Miusskaya Street was green and quiet and it has still retained this appearance" (15). Evgeny Bunimovich writes about the street of his childhood—

Novosushchevskaya Street, which is still “all covered in century-old poplars” (21). For Dmitry Glukhovsky, one of the favorite places of the capital is the “beautiful and amazing” Ostankino district (170). Lyudmila Ulitskaya recalls her favorite area on the left bank of the Yauza river, which is close to nature. She employs a variety of epithets expressing her warm attitude to the place described: “Zayauzye was a wonderful but neglected area; there are still some very soulful corners to be found there” (10). Sergey Shargunov considers the historic Zamoskvorechye area as “the most cosy, sweet, and magnetizing” place (89). Yuri Arabov, recalling the Moscow of the past, turns to one of its most criminal districts—the “legendary” Maryina Roscha or, Grove (166). Olga Trifonova calls her native Miussa district “mysterious” (14), where one could find such heterogeneous objects as research institutes, slums, the House of Officers, building belonging to the GULAG or, the Main Administration of Corrective Labour Camps, and an alley where the timber trade was carried on.

The second group includes epithets-personifications representing Moscow in a human, generally the female, guise. Galina Brusnitsyna’s poem “Moscow is sad [...]” is built on such epithets. At first, the capital appears in a negative light and is characterized as “poor, sleepless, pale, slandered, sworn at, rushed, exhausted.” Then the tone of the narrative changes and Moscow already appears in the image of a “sad, young, neat, nice and sweet” girl and, like the phoenix bird reborn, it recovers its splendid appearance (Brusnitsyna (a)).

The third group contains epithets with the meaning of Moscow’s allure, its mystery and magic incomprehensible to the human mind. Anatoly Arinin admires the “attractively colorful” city, which Moscow becomes in autumn being naturally decorated with golden leaves (Arinin (a)). Tatyana Berezhnaya declares her love of the Capital: “And I love my Moscow, so motley, crazy [...] (Berezhnaya (a)). Dinara Zhabbarova exclaims: “Oh, Moscow, how beautiful you are!” (Zhabbarova).

Standalone Moscow buildings might also seem unusual and mysterious to the authors. For instance, Olga Velchinskaya describes Loskov’s stone house as “fantastic,” because it represents a mixture of several styles (Ulitskaya et al. 109). Alexey Kozlov calls an Italian-styled house shaped like the letter “O” “bizarre” (77), and Marina Moskvina believes the house by architect Ernst Nirnsee, one of the first skyscrapers in Moscow, to be “a fantastic structure” (49). For Dmitry Glukhovsky, the VDNH exhibition complex is the most spellbinding locus: “I can’t think of any other such place in Moscow—weird, mysterious, artificially unnatural, and therefore completely magical” (170).

The epithets considered amply demonstrate that the Russian capital is loved by its citizens. People also cherish its secluded corners (courtyards, backstreets, etc.),

and this admiration cannot be explained in a rational way. This feeling stems in an incomprehensible way from heterogeneous impressions—mostly childhood memories and romantic sensations received already at a conscious age when people feel a certain mystery attracting them.

Conclusion

The analysis of the latest literary works about Moscow suggests that the 21st century may be considered a new stage in the development of the Moscow text. The life in the capital has changed considerably, and Moscow has become a megalopolis, one of the largest cities in the world, which is inevitably reflected in literary works. The authors take a new look at the current situation in the capital, sometimes supporting the changes in its appearance, sometimes, on the contrary, directing their thoughts towards to the bygone Moscow of their childhood and nostalgically remembering the objects of its urban space lost for good.

The general image of the urban space is always individual and at the same time fixed typologically. It arises from recurring themes, subjects, plots, and motifs that constitute a kind of supertext. Within the Moscow supertext, the typical myths about the Russian capital are still relevant: Moscow as the major and most spectacular city of Russia (a state in itself!), which commonly appears in a female guise (Moscow as the mother-city) and whose mission is to be the guardian of the Christian faith (Moscow as the third Rome). It is thus commonly perceived as the spiritual center of Russia. In addition, Moscow is a mysterious city which casts a spell on its citizens and guests; it is fraught with secret and magic and is constantly reborn to a new life (Moscow as the phoenix bird).

The Moscow text is constructed by its constituent authors through the prism of their own vision of the city. Writers and poets concentrate on radically different features in the realities of the capital, indicating their caring attitude to the city, and therefore Moscow appears multifaceted in their texts. Nevertheless, their descriptions follow more or less standard semantic patterns.

The image of Moscow in the works of the 21st century authors is formed in two main directions: the historical (or, public) and the psychological (or, private). Various urban objects become the focus of the narrative in literary texts. These elements of the city space can either be widely known, having become iconic for the Muscovites and visitors of the capital, or ordinary, unremarkable. It is generally the latter that acquire a personally relevant meaning. The authors pay the greatest attention to particular streets, alleys, old houses, and courtyards preserved in their original form considering them, in Olga Velchinskaya's words, "a sweet historical

homeland that belongs to every person” (Ulitskaya et al. 116). The authors write about it with great love, which is expressed in the fact that every one of them knows such minute details from the city life that make Moscow their home.

Any person creates a picture of the world, including the space where he or she lives, in accordance with their personal ideas about it. Fairly indicative in this regard is the creation of Moscow’s spatial map based on the results of our analysis of the latest prose and poetry. Such individual psychological cartography permits representing the city’s image as it exists in the minds of its inhabitants. Their sphere of interests is not focused on “the splendour of the church-onions of the golden-domed city,” as a poet has so aptly put it (Filatova (c)), not on skyscrapers, cathedrals, palaces, theaters, or museums. Paramount value is attributed to the specific places of residence (the secluded side-yard and the quiet street with adjacent alleys) and to the loci related to the person’s social activity (place of study or work).

As the study results suggest, the latest texts about Moscow feature a decrease in the status of the usual cult places of the metropolis, the authors’ attention being redirected to urban objects which often do not have historical or cultural significance. These are, first of all, the buildings that have been pulled down or await demolition, the trees felled and the courtyards redeveloped.

In the current conditions, the main value for a Muscovite is tranquility, which implies a less hectic pace of life and its voluntary restriction to a small well-known space. However, the modern metropolis provides few opportunities for this. Muscovites are very closely following the changes which take place in their city. Everyone seems to agree that Moscow is a living organism with its own temperament, ever evolving. The capital keeps up with the times and reveals itself to each person in its own way. Still, the charming beauty of the city, which combines pleasant and disagreeable, spiritual and mundane, continues to attract people.

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