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**JOSEPH BRODSKY AS SELF-TRANSLATOR:
ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL CHANGES IN HIS SELF-TRANSLATIONS**

Volume I

By

Zarema Kumakhova

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ABSTRACT

JOSEPH BRODSKY AS SELF-TRANSLATOR: ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL CHANGES IN HIS SELF-TRANSLATIONS

By

Zarema Kumakhova

The dissertation, on the basis of an in-depth analysis of Brodsky's Russian original poems and English self-translations, develops a systematic approach for the examination of the lexical changes Brodsky introduces in his English translations. The analysis reveals tendencies Brodsky develops as self-translator and provides insight into his poetics and cultural consciousness.

The study of lexical modifications is divided into two parts. The first part examines structural changes, such as sequels, insertions, omissions, and substitutions, which are then analyzed within each group according to their semantic, or stylistic properties. The second part demonstrates how Brodsky deals with translation challenges that include translation of idioms, the rendering of cultural realia, colloquial language, imagery, and word-play.

The analysis of lexical changes in Brodsky's self-translations leads us the following conclusions. As far as lexical faithfulness is concerned two tendencies are observed. First, even under the demands of his self-imposed prosodic and rhyming faithfulness, Brodsky seeks greater lexical accuracy. Moreover, when he resorts to changes, they are still within the boundaries of his poetics. Secondly, there are obvious deviations from his originals and in the manner of writing. His texts carry more information, become more expressive, explanatory, and more lucid.

In this connection a question arises: should the changes introduced by the author be treated differently than by a translator who is not the author of the original text? Brodsky allows himself more liberties and a different kind of freedom than would a translator who is not the author. He cannot resist experimentation with the new language. He introduces information that only he can provide, as no outsider would be privy to it. On a few occasions he deconstructs poetic reality. Though Brodsky's English text is not an "ideal" translation, neither it is a new poem. They prove that self-translations have their own status. They provide clarification or an explanation of the original, thus they render the original text incomplete. That is why Brodsky scholars should not be restricted only by one language version if two versions exist. But self-translations should not be treated simply as clarifications or interpretations of the originals. They have their own value as they give the English reader a sense of Brodsky's Russian voice.

If Brodsky's English texts read differently (with changes in tone, more expressiveness, more specificity), this is how he wants them to sound. The English language serves as estrangement which has a dual function, allowing the author, as he relives the past, to be more emphatic and precise than in his own language, and at the same time it permits the author to maintain a protective distance from the subject. Herein lies its therapeutic emancipatory power that enables the poet to put closure on the past. The large number of self-translations that increased over the time shows that self-translation was not a stage in Brodsky's bilingualism, but an important part in his creative writing.

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Dedicated to my parents

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Introduction

In this dissertation, on the basis of an in depth comparative analysis of Brodsky's Russian originals and English self-translations, I will examine the lexical changes he introduces in his English texts and the effect they produce in the reading of these texts. This analysis will enable us to determine the tendencies Brodsky develops as self-translator and give us an additional insight into his poetics and cultural consciousness. It will also enable us to see whether the lexical changes in his self-translations reflect the desire of a bilingual writer to use a foreign language as a liberating vehicle to relive his/her experiences.

The analysis of lexical changes will also answer the important question of whether Brodsky is translating, re-writing himself, thus producing a new text. This will determine the status of his English self-translations, whether they are simply commentaries on his originals, amplifications, "continuations" of the originals or whether they have an independent status of their own.

Though self-translation has existed for more than 2000 years, only recently (in the last thirty years) has it become an area of scholarly interest. Self-translation is part of the phenomenon of bilingualism, namely creative bilingualism, though not all bilingual writers practice self-translation.¹ Modern times foster more bilinguals in general, and

¹Recently the term "self-translation" has also been used to denote "experiences of being forced to translate between two conceptual and emotional worlds associated with one's native and learnt languages" (Besemer and Perkins, *Translated Lives* 1). The term was coined in *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* by a Polish-born writer, Nancy Hoffman who emigrated to Canada, and it is in this meaning that it is used by Mary Besemer (*Translating One's Self*), Magda Stoinaka and Vittorina Cecchetto. I, however, follow not the metaphorical, but the traditional, literal meaning of the term "self-translation," which was introduced in the first studies of the phenomenon and is accepted and used in translation studies. It denotes the translation of one's work written in one language—not necessarily the mother tongue—into another language by the author of the original text. The term "author-translations" is also used, but not as widely. In Russian, self-translation is most commonly rendered as "авторский перевод."

hence stir linguistic interest in the question of bilingualism: "The condition of bilingualism is quickly becoming ubiquitous, not only as a result of massive migrations, but also as an aspect of globalization" (Maszewska 3).

The bilingualism of such talented authors as Vladimir Nabokov, Samuel Beckett, Joseph Conrad, and recently such writers as Eva Hoffman, Andrei Makine, Milan Kundera, and Nobel Prize winners Czeslaw Milosz and Joseph Brodsky gave visibility to bilingualism and fostered studies in creative writing in a second language.² In general, recent times are marked by interest in the cross-cultural, which includes postcolonial literature, dialectal writers, and literature of exile, all of which include a bilingual aspect (Beaujour; Stoinska and Cecchetto). Recent years have seen a flood of autobiographic writings due to the fact that more people, writing in a language that is not their mother tongue, try to understand and express their identity by writing autobiographies.³ This is becoming a new burgeoning area of literary studies (Besemeres; Ayers). Studies of the bilingualism of such a figures as Joseph Brodsky have reinforced and advanced the studies of bilingual creative writing, as well as the studies of autobiography as a genre of exile (Bethea, *Creation of Exile*; Diment).

Not all bilingual writers are self-translators; however, self-translation is a stage that most bilinguals go through (Beaujour 19, 53). Studies of colonial literature in India, which has a multilingual tradition, brought to light the fact that Rabindranath Tagore translated his own poems from Bengali into English and called them transcreations or

² See the roster of translingual writers in Steven Kellman's *The Translingual Imagination* (117-18).

³ The bestseller by Julia Alvarez recounting the experience of assimilation into the American mainstream of three sisters who had to flee from the Dominican Republic is tellingly entitled *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*.

reincarnations rather than translations in the general sense (Ray). Interest in the post-colonial literature of India has shown over the last fifty years that Indian literature has been marked by translation into English, with several instances of self-translation by bilinguals. Half a century after Tagore in another post-colonial space—Quebec—, the French Canadian writer Nicole Brossard uses Tagore's words 'transcreation' and 'transformance' when speaking about the constant tension of self-translations. Many dialectal writers feel that they need to translate their own work into the mainstream language (Villalta).

The first serious theoretical interest in self-translation was precipitated by works on Samuel Beckett, whose specificity as a writer has been bound with the bilingual character of his work. Beckett, who wrote in two languages, English and French, had an obsession to recreate his texts into another language, either English or French depending on what language he wrote in first, thus producing twin texts.⁴

Another writer whose career has been marked by bilingualism and self-translation is Vladimir Nabokov, who translated most of his works from English into Russian and from Russian into English. Although his controversial translation practice has been extensively studied, there is only comprehensive one work on Nabokov as self-translator (Grayson). This analysis of Nabokov's self-translations made it possible to determine his place in relation to mainstream Russian and English /American literature.

⁴ It is noteworthy that though Beckett has been an intriguing subject of literary criticism for more than seven decades, this cardinal aspect of Beckett has been ignored until the eighties. The only work on Beckett's self-translation was Ruby Cohn's. But as Michele Praeger noted it was Brian Fitch's studies that "gave self-translating a central space in Beckett's oeuvre" (91). It invoked a flow of works on Beckett's self-translations and introduced a new area of Beckett studies.

Interest in self-translations intersected with interest in text analysis, text linguistics, and pragmatics. Apparently for a literary, linguistic trend to emerge and flourish, it is important to have a deserving and intriguing object, as well as the material and the tools with which to analyze it. Helena Tanqueiro notes that self-translation can “constitute another tool which would make a worthwhile contribution to the theory of translation” (56).

Interest in self-translation can also be explained by its specific status, its unique linguistic nature. Common translation practice entails translation from a foreign language into one’s mother tongue. Self-translation reverses this practice. Often translators do not know the second language well, and yet they are excellent translators into their mother tongue. Self-translators, however, should know the second language exceptionally well, that is be truly bilingual. Another unusual thing can be observed: a writer, if he is really bilingual, can write in his second language and then translate himself into his mother tongue.⁵

Self-translation raises a whole array of theoretical and practical problems. But the basic question can be reduced to the following: does a self-translated text present just another type of translation? Is it no different from a translation done by a translator who is not the author? In other words, does it or does it not have autonomous value? If the answer to this question is that it does, then self-translation should be regarded as a truly unique example of translation, because the translator in this case has direct access to the

⁵This was practiced by Beckett who wrote in French and translated his works into his native English. Isak Dinesen first wrote in English and translated into her mother tongue—Danish. Nabokov translated *Lolita* from English into Russian. Brodsky, though he wrote some poems originally in English, did not practice this kind of self-translation.

thinking of the author. It is an ideal variant of what F.D.E. Schleiermacher had in mind when he said that the translator should translate the work “as it would have been if the author himself had originally written it in the reader’s language” (85). According to this point of view, self-translation is devoid of any misrepresentation due to misunderstanding, and any departure from the original text is “justified [...] since he [the author/translator] knows perfectly just how he originally concretized his thoughts through words, that is, he knows when these words are the only words which will serve and when they are the only set of words among many other equally valid sets” (Tanqueiro 59). This point of view does not treat self-translation any differently than translation and does not give it the status of an original work.

Analysis of self-translation and the original text shows, however, that self-translation is not just a reproduction of the original. Examination of works by Beckett and Nabokov demonstrates that there are many differences between the original and the self-translation. Lise Kure-Jensen notes that Dinesen’s self-translations in Danish have richer and more detailed vocabulary and in general sound more dramatic (317). Because the translator is the author, he/she has the unique license to do what he/she chooses with his/her own work and not be accountable for it. Self-translators themselves seem to believe that they are allowed more liberties than translators of other writers’ works.⁶ Had another translator who is not the author done it, it would not have passed as an adequate translation.⁷

⁶ Nicole Brossard says: “Of course when I translate myself, I can cheat because it is my text [...] Cheating then can give you a lot of pleasure” (2).

⁷ There is another point of view that holds self-translation does not really differ from any other translation practice as the translation should not be a mere reproduction of the original, but is a creative writing (St. Pierre).

Sometimes the version in another language differs so much that it makes some critics believe that they are dealing with different texts. For example, Baratynsky's self-translations of his Russian lyric into French were done in prose. This caused L.G. Frizman to note that "some poems could scarcely be considered translations, rather they are new works on the similar subject" (qtd. in Pilshikov 91). Beckett's self-translations permitted one critic to treat them as genuinely "original" versions in two languages (Friedman; Fletcher 235). But then as Lori Chamberlaine observes "The self-translator is not a translator at all; his texts are as 'original' and 'authentic' as those which preceded them" (18). She notes that because Beckett denied these categories in his work it would "just as plausible to argue that we have genuinely 'secondary' versions in two languages" (18).

Brian Fitch advocated a different point of view, noting that neither the original text nor the self-translation can be regarded as complete texts, the complete work being represented by the two pieces of writing together. He regards Beckett's twin texts as a metatext, a bilingual text. Igor Pilshikov, the author of an article on Baratynsky's self-translation, believes that despite all genre differences, self-translation can be treated as the realization of a single invariant structure. He proves that Baratynsky's self-translations are translations "within his own culture [which] do not overstep the limits" of his poetic world (21). Chamberlaine treats self-translation in view of the theory of repetition proposed by Deleuze (20). Irrespective of what they choose to call the two versions (binary texts, meta-text, repetition, twin texts), these scholars seem to agree that the process and the product of self-translation are not the same as the process and product of any other form of translation, that is, that self-translation is not simply a duplication of

the original. "Consequently, neither version can be appropriately substituted for the other by the critic: each has to be studied in its own right, together with the precise relationship existing between the two" (Federman 12). It has also been said "both versions should be treated as complementary, additional to each other. [...] Self-translation should be regarded as "a continuation, an amplification of the original" (Fitch, "The Relationship" 23). To concentrate on one version, if there is a second version by the same creator, will give a limited, unfair view of the author (Kure-Jensen 317).

In view of this discussion it is obvious that there is incompleteness in Brodsky studies. Brodsky translated fifty-five of his poems. Until recently, all the commentary and critique of his works were based on either Russian or English versions of his poems. Joanne Innis bases her analysis of "Roman Elegies" on the structural composition, observing the Russian version. The structural arrangement of the English version is completely different and will yield different interpretations. An interesting position is taken by David Rigsbee, who states that "the translated poem always produces the sign of its own absence as a poem and hence arrives in the foster language as an honorary elegy already. In this sense, it is likely that the translation will go the poem one better by [...] embodying this absence in the same form as the original, whereas the original poem's only absence belongs to the signifieds it purports to evoke" (4). That is why in his study of Brodsky's elegies he relies solely on the translations (not necessarily done by Brodsky). Only in recent years have scholars started drawing on the two versions in their analyses of his poetry (Sherr "To Urania"; Nesterov "Портрет трагедии").

Brodsky's self-translation practice caused a lot of controversy in the English-speaking establishment; it again raised the problem of the translatability of poetry, and

even put to question his reputation as a poet worthy of the Nobel Prize. This aspect and the polemic around it has been addressed by scholars, poets, journalists, and translators (Bethea *Creation of Exile*; Polukhina “Английский Бродский”; Karwowska; Rigsbee; Weissbort “From Russian”; Kyst).

In spite of the controversy around Brodsky’s self-translation, which started right away, there was for many years no comprehensive exploration of Brodsky’s self-translation practice. A few talented and insightful articles that analyze the difference in his Russian and English texts show that this kind of analysis could yield interesting results (Babanina and Milovidov; Givens; Molnar). Recently there appeared two dissertations devoted to Brodsky bilingualism. Jon Kyst concludes that “Brodsky’s bilingualism is closely related to the practice of writing elegies” (2). Natalia Rouleva calls Brodsky’s self-translations “author-translations” and believes that though they “should not be read as if they had been originally written in English. [...] they provoke a more sensitive response to Brodsky’s English” (1).⁸ The interest in different aspects of Brodsky’s self-translation and translation practice can be seen in a recent increase in articles appearing in the last few years (Volgina; Nickolaev; Rouleva “Exile, Language, Metamorphosis”).

Brodsky’s self-translation can be studied from various points of view-- psychological, chronological, comparative, and from the point of view of a translation technique. Is it close to the original or not? What does he sacrifice, and how does he compensate for the losses? Is he culturally sensitive? Do his poetics undergo changes in

⁸ The dissertation by Rouleva came to my attention at the final stage of completion of my thesis. Unfortunately, it was unavailable to me and continues to be unavailable to me. For that reason I could not include the discussion of this work.

another language? Can it be regarded as interpretations of his originals? Why does he turn to self-translations? Answering all these questions is probably not possible within the framework of one study. In fact, before answering them it is necessary to make a detailed comparative analysis of the faithfulness of the self-translations to the originals. This will help us determine what was essential to the author, where he compromised, what he sacrificed, and it will enable us to trace his translation tendencies and patterns and determine how the changes impact the original.

In turn, the problem of the faithfulness of the poetic translation can be analyzed via its verbal and formal aspects. This dissertation examines lexical changes in Brodsky's self-translations with the aim to develop a better understanding of Brodsky's poetics and aesthetics. The choice of the subject matter is dictated by several concerns.

On many occasions Brodsky underlines faithfulness to the formal elements of the original, disregarding the fact that this loyalty runs counter to established translation practice. This does not mean, however, that he considered content secondary. In fact, he says: "прежде всего содержание, а потом такие формальные аспекты, как ритм и метр" (БКИ 331). By content, Brodsky means lexical content. He does not downplay lexical content, but it appears that he believes that lexical faithfulness is to be taken for granted: "Содержание для меня не столь интересно, ведь я не могу расширить или расцветить его, это будет против правил" (186). It is clear that he puts great emphasis on the faithfulness of the verbal translation, and it turns out not to be such an easy task, considering the connotation of words in different languages, his penchant for word play, use of high and low vernacular, rendering cultural realia, and the restrictions imposed by the prosodic pattern.

The importance of words themselves for Brodsky is seen in his mystical treatment of language and poetry. He understands the Bible almost literally when it says that the Word is a creator of the world. For Brodsky there is “a complete fusing of self and language, an intuitive grasp of language as the universe” (Gordin, “A Tragic Perception” 39). Polukhina notes that he treats linguistic concepts like parts of his own body: “here I will end up my day, losing my hair, teeth, vowels, suffixes” (qtd. in Gordin 40). Yakov Gordin notes that “in his early poem ‘Verbs’ we observe animation of linguistic concepts, the word made flesh in the reality of everyday existence” (40).⁹ Brodsky confesses that

[i]n his heart of hearts, any more or less serious poet knows that he is not working for his audience, that he is writing because language is dictating to him. He is doing this—for the sake of these words and suffixes. (CWJB 218)

At the end of his life, Brodsky sums it up: “A Poet is doomed to resort to words” (“On Grief and Reason” 252).¹⁰ Anatoly Naiman, a poet and Brodsky’s friend, who with Brodsky was called “Akhmatova’s orphans,” speaking about the importance of the Acmeist schooling they went through, speaks about the Acmeist treatment of words:

Acmeism [...] teaches us that words are like Carrara marble, you must not spoil them [...] Every man who feels some pride in his work has learnt that lesson. We learned it. The difference between us and a lot of our contemporaries is that we don’t write in sentences, in idiomatic phrases, we write by *the word*. [...] To start with we learned how to respect our material —*words*. (“A Coagulation of Linguistic Energy” 10, italics mine)

⁹Brodsky’s views on language are the subject of articles and the dissertation by Denis Akhupkin and are also discussed by Shamil Khairov.

¹⁰It is interesting to look at the following two passages from two interviews given by Brodsky in 1991. “Поэзия ...безнадежна семантически. Можно сказать, что поэзия —это наивысший род семантики, наиболее сфокусированный, энергичный, законченный вид семантической деятельности” (БКИ 143). Of course, poetry is an organic fusion of verbal and prosodic features; however, in another interview it is clear that by semantics, Brodsky means words: “The subconscious is a source but composition is a highly rational enterprise in many ways. You may think of the dream as inspiration but then you type it down and then you begin to correct it. You replace the words. It is an invasion of the reasoning. Poetry is an incurably semantic art and you can’t help it. You have to make sense. That what distinguishes it from other arts... from all other arts” (JBC 151).

Later, when Brodsky began writing in two languages, his preoccupation with words was reinforced. He even says that he is ready to make sacrifices for the sake of word choice:

в английском есть нечто, что побуждает разъяснять, развивать мысль. И это есть теперь в моих стихах. Они, если мне можно оценивать свои вещи, более тщательны. [...] Я люблю доводить вещи до алогичного, абсурдного конца. От этого стихотворение может потерять в своей наивности, непринужденности. *Но зато чем тщательнее подбор слов, тем лучше.* (БКИ 251, italics mine)¹¹

Brodsky's obsession with words resulted in his propensity to experiment with them.

Seamus Heaney recollects that Brodsky "постоянно каламбурил. Слова были для него высоко октановым горючим; и он любил, чтобы они заносили его как можно дальше" ("Песнеслагатель" 260). Brodsky's interest in words was stimulated by his translation practices:

Когда я начал заниматься переводами, у меня на столе лежал большой словарь. Когда я искал в нем незнакомые слова и находил их вне контекста, со всеми значениями, которые может иметь одно слово, это волновало меня. Я понял, что хотя для перевода отыскиваемого надо употребить только одно слово, однако при этом надо иметь в виду все его другие значения, его этимологические корни, его мифологические и фонетические резонансы. Так я начал не только осваивать иностранный язык, но и узнавать нечто о собственном. Я научился удивляться словам. (qtd. in Loseff, "Вступление" 48)

Following Brodsky, this dissertation separates, content (understood as lexical content) and form for the purpose of analysis. Besides, the study of the formal aspect of Brodsky's self-translation should be carried out by a specialist of both English and Russian prosody.

¹¹ Alexandr Batchan, who attended Brodsky's lectures at Columbia University, recollects: "Отсюда его требование к студентам, как и к самому себе, чтобы между мыслью чувством и их языковой оболочкой было максимальное соответствие. Поэтому его английская речь была постоянным творческим актом. Читая лекции, Бродский не боялся повторять одни и те же мысли, выражая их по-разному, как бы примеряя, разглядывая, постоянно иронизируя над употребляемыми им оборотами" (65).

One of the definitions of translation is the relationship between the poetics of both languages. I believe that an analysis of the lexical aspect of the poetry will not only show Brodsky's techniques as self-translator, but in the end will enable us to better understand Brodsky's poetics. The analysis of the different readings of the two versions may also be of interest to future Brodsky translators.

This dissertation analyzes fifty-five poems having Brodsky's name as the sole translator as they appeared in *Collected Poems in English* published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 2000.

The choice of material presented some difficulties and needs explanation. It is known that Brodsky also co-authored the translation of many of his poems and exercised a very strict control over the translations. Even the translations carried out by others were not always entirely free of his influence.¹² On the other hand, the poems that have Brodsky's name as the only translator, as Weissbort suggests, probably were influenced by feedback from others (*From Russian*)¹³

Another difficulty was caused by the discrepancy in the authorship of some self-translations, as some earlier publications have Brodsky as the only translator, but appear in the *Collected Poems* as co-authored with others.¹⁴

Chapter One sets out to answer the question why Brodsky turned to self-translation. It will be shown that it stems from his Westernness and particularly his

¹²Brodsky's practice with his translators is discussed in Chapter One.

¹³Though Weissbort is not absolutely categorical about that, he writes: "it was preferable to collaborate with Russianists, who produce polufabrikaty or half-finished products, working drafts in English for Brodsky to revise and complete" (*From Russian* 38).

¹⁴"Homage to Chekhov" first appeared in *The New Yorker* in August 7, 1995 as a translation by the author. In *Collected Poems in English* it appears as a collaboration of the author and Jonathan Aaron. The controversy around "Part of Speech" will be discussed in Chapter One.

Englishness. It was also caused by the discontent with the translation of his poems by other hands. His love for the English language and his views on language were the contributing factors of him starting writing in English. The chapter also looks at the controversy around Brodsky's self-translations and discusses Brodsky's views on translation.

Chapter Two examines the nature of the modifications introduced in the English text. I am following Munir Sendich's model of translation analysis employed in his book, *English Counter Russian. Essays on Criticism of Literary Translation in America*, which organizes deviations from the original into specific groups. Part A looks at structural changes such as additions, insertions, substitutions, and omissions, which are further analyzed within each group according to their semantic or stylistic nature. Part B examines how Brodsky copes with translation difficulties such as rendering idioms, imagery, word play, alliteration, and cultural realia. It follows the tendencies Brodsky develops in his self-translating practice, explains the nature of the changes, and determines if his use of the English language is different from his use of Russian.

Chapter Three explains the differences in the two language versions resulting from the changes analyzed in Chapter Two. On the basis of a concrete analysis of two texts, I will argue that the tendencies towards exactness and expressiveness, though often caused by a faithfulness in rendering formal features, at the same time manifest the poet's desire to express himself differently in a foreign language. The foreign language serves as estrangement, which has a dual function: it allows the author, as he relives the past, to be more emphatic and exact and at the same time makes the experiences not quite so painful. In this lies the dichotomy of the foreign language, which enables the poet to put closure

on the past and which explains why writing in a foreign language is a kind of “sanctuary,” “therapy,” “escape,” or “nostalgic experience.” The analysis of the material also explains and clarifies some of Brodsky’s views on the English language as discussed in Chapter One.

The Bibliography consists of two parts: a list of the works cited in the dissertation and a bibliography of additional sources consulted.

Appendix I contains a list of Brodsky’s originals poems and their self-translations, with the dates of their publications.

Appendix II presents a chronology of main events in Brodsky’s life.

Brodsky’s Russian poems are cited from *Сочинения Иосифа Бродского*. Санкт-Петербург: Пушкинский фонд, 1998. Brodsky’s English self-translations are cited from. Joseph Brodsky. *Collected Poems in English*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.

The following list of abbreviations is used:

- CWJB: Volkov, Solomon. *Conversations with Joseph Brodsky*. New York: The Free Press, 1998.
- JBC: Haven, Cynthia, ed. *Joseph Brodsky: Conversations*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002
- БКИ: Polukhina, Valentina, comp. *Иосиф Бродский. Большая книга интервью*. Москва, 2000.
- WNWD: *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language*. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968
- WNDS: *Webster’s New Dictionary of Synonyms*. Springfield: G & G Merriam Company, 1973.

Chapter One: English Brodsky¹

Chapter One attempts to answer the question of why Brodsky turned to self-translation. I will show that though this turn was caused by his dissatisfaction with the translation of his poems by others, which stems from his views on translation, this dissatisfaction was not the only reason. The move toward self-translation also stems from Brodsky's Englishness, which is part of his Westernness. I will discuss how his love for the English language, which results from Brodsky's specific views on language, and the English language in particular, made him start writing in English. Self-translation is a part and not a stage of Brodsky's bilingualism. The chapter also surveys the controversy caused by Brodsky's self-translation practice and looks at his own views on the status of his English writing.

Nostalgia for World Culture

Lev Loseff recalls that in his early period Brodsky was called a "Westerniser" ("Home and Abroad" 29) because of his interest in and knowledge of Western cultural tradition. In a way, Brodsky continues the centuries-long division of Russian philosophical thought into Eurasian and Western orientations, which can be traced to the dawn of Russian Christianity.

¹ The phrase "English Brodsky" was introduced by Loseff. It was the title of an article that dealt with Brodsky's essay writing, which at the time was a new endeavor for the poet. He advocates the idea of writing only in one's own mother-tongue. Loseff believes that in translation it is "Русский язык (синтаксис мышления, парадигмы культуры) вот что переводится на другой язык" ("Английский Бродский" 54). Praising Brodsky's knowledge of English, Loseff notes that "ход авторской мысли, остается неповторимо русским" (55). The phrase was also used by Polukhina ("Английский Бродский") and by Kust ("Еще раз об английском Бродском"). Both focus on the discussion around Brodsky's controversial self-translation practice. The phrase has come to denote the complexity of Brodsky's bilingualism. I am using it to show that the question of Brodsky's turn to self-translation will be examined in the context of continued polemic about Brodsky's self-translation. It also indicates that Brodsky's self-translation should be regarded in the broader context of his creative bilingualism.

Brodsky's Westernness can be explained by two major factors, time and space, which are important categories for his poetics.

Joseph Brodsky was born in Leningrad in 1940. Being born and raised in the most European Russian city cannot but affect a person. Aleksandr Kushner, a poet and Brodsky's friend, says: "a boy growing up in that culture inherits the whole of European culture, his psyche is molded by its great architecture" (109). Through Petersburg, European culture and antiquity become part and parcel of one's cultural background and personality. Solomon Volkov in a conversation with the poet refers to Andrei Bitov who thinks that

in Petersburg everything educates the person--the boulevards, the buildings, even the stone. And the water too. That is, you get a literary education just walking around the city. When you are in contact with Petersburg stones you immediately find yourself in a certain literary context, and in this way you become a Petersburger, even if you came from somewhere else. (264 –65)

Petersburg came to represent the Western orientation of Russia as opposed to the Eurasian orientation, embodied in Moscow. Brodsky himself on many occasions speaks about the differences between the cultures of Moscow and Petersburg, as well as their literary traditions. Volkov and Brodsky, in an interesting discussion, "classified" Russian writers according to whether or not they belonged to the Petersburg tradition.² Brodsky believed that Russian literature began with Petersburg and has his own explanation for it:

Через пятьдесят лет после того, как перенесли столицу, в Петербурге возникла литература. При всей древности Москвы, при всей ее связанности с русской историей и т.д и т.д. чрезвычайно мало, в смысле литературы, из Москвы произошло. Почему? Потому что, на мой взгляд, люди, которые оказались в Петербурге,—это первое образованное в европейском смысле русское сословие, они ощутили себя как бы на краю империи, оказались в

² In this exchange between Brodsky and Volkov, Volkov mentions that Akhmatova used to say about Andrei Bely's *Petersburg* "which comes to be considered the model Petersburg composition" that "there was nothing Petersburgian about Bely's novel." Brodsky replies: "I'll say one terrible thing about Bely right off the bat: he is a bad writer." Volkov adds: "Most importantly he is a typical Muscovite!" (CWJB 266-67).

положении, позволившем взглянуть на эту империю, если угодно, со стороны. Что прежде всего необходимо писателю—это элемент отстранения. И этот элемент отстранения был обеспечен Петербургом чисто физически, то есть географически. Открытие Петербурга для литературы было как бы открытием Нового Света, подобно открытию Америки; то есть ты как бы оказываешься внутри своей культуры, но и вне ее. (БКИ 138-39)³

Brodsky attributes the success of Leningrad poetry, which in addition to him was represented by Yevgeny Rein, Aleksandr Kushner, Dmitry Bobyshev, Anatoly Naiman, Yury Kublanovsky, to the affiliation with the tradition embodied in the city:

всякий человек, который берется за перо в Ленинграде, так или иначе чувствует себя во власти традиции или принадлежащим традиции, и он не может отказаться от этого. (БКИ 133)

Brodsky says “‘Petersburg’ means a clarity of thought and a feeling of responsibility of content and a nobility of form” (CWJB 269). In this, he believes, lies Petersburg’s closeness to Hellenism: “It is what the Greeks used to call *kosmos*, that is order. [...] when the Greeks spoke of *kosmos*, they had in mind not so much the cosmos of heavenly bodies as the cosmos of military formations and the cosmos of thought” (270). In general, there is little doubt that Brodsky preferred a European model, though his views are often categorical, and may be polemic.⁴

³ In the same interview to Annie Epel’baum, to prove his point that “исторически Ленинград, или Петербург, всегда противопоставлялся Москве, ее чисто патриархальному духу,” Brodsky cites his favorite poet Baratynsky: “Еще Баратынский написал замечательные стихи: ‘На все свой ход, на все свои законы/ Меж лолкой и гробом спит Москва’” (БКИ 138). See also Brodsky’s essay “A Guide to a Renamed City.” Loseff does not share Brodsky’s identification of Russian literature with Petersburg (“Английский Бродский” 56).

⁴ Brodsky’s “Occidentophilism” is discussed in Loseff’s article “Home and Abroad in the Works of Brodskii,” which traces occidentalism to early Brodsky. Loseff notes that in Brodsky’s poetry we find the “consistent system of imagery for the expression of the theme ‘Russia—The West’ ...” (27). The critic goes on to say that “...Eurasian in its essence is the opposition of the images ‘Islam Christianity’. [...] In Brodsky we find [...] ‘календарь Москвы заражен кораном’” (27-28). Loseff links Brodsky’s “abroadsickness” to Pushkin. The critic warns against “a serious mistake to reduce the question of the ‘Occidentatism’ and ‘Slavophilism’ of Russian poets to their political orientation. The very definition of ‘Russian poet’ is in itself more profound than the Western—Slavophile dichotomy” (32). In an interview with Polukhina, Loseff denies that Brodsky’s poetics since his exile in the West demonstrate a “turning away from the Russian mind-set” (“New Conception” 128-29). Brodsky’s views on

In the Soviet period, the contradiction and rivalry between the two cities took on a new twist. Prior to the rise of the Soviet regime, Petersburg had represented Western tendencies. After the Soviet capital was moved to Moscow, Petersburg became allied with the notion of Russian, rather than Soviet, culture. Moscow thus became the symbol of a Soviet Union that had broken away from centuries of cultural tradition and historical heritage, while Leningrad was seen the bearer of those cultures and traditions.

The fact that Anna Akhmatova lived in Leningrad was also significant. Brodsky was introduced to her by Rein in 1961, and that turned out to be one of the major events in his life. The fall before his arrest, Brodsky rented a dacha in Komarovo where Akhmatova used to spend winters, and then they saw each other literally twice a day (БКИ 175). Brodsky, though he admired her poetry, denied poetic affinity with Akhmatova, but he always acknowledged that she had a tremendous spiritual influence on him.⁵ Akhmatova, who had fallen into disfavor with the regime, possessed a tragic and heroic personal story. For she was the “last great representative of a bygone epoch, the so-called Silver Age of the prerevolutionary culture, that still inherited this Judeo-Christian culture as its rightful patrimony” and was “the very embodiment of that historical continuity (*preemstvennost*). [...] that Brodsky and his orphaned ‘generation of 1956’ so lacked” (Bethea, *Creation of Exile* 85). Though Brodsky denied the poetic

the subject are most strongly expressed in the essay “Flight from Byzantium.” The essay aroused criticism even among Brodsky’s friends (Venclova, “Development” 281; Kublanovsky 202).

⁵ Brodsky recalls that Akhmatova once said, “Вам не могут нравятся моя стихи” (CWJB 209). Kublanovsky notes that Akhmatova until her meeting with Brodsky always adhered to the brevity of expression. However “when he brought to her those long poems of his, she stopped saying that” (205). The critic, however, sees at least one connection between the two poets—they come from the same city and it plays an important part in their poetics. Polukhina says that Akhmatova’s “influence was more spiritual, than cultural and stylistic” (*Joseph Brodsky* 9). In the conversation with Volkov, Brodsky says: “Anna Akhmatova transformed you into *Homo sapiens* with just the tone of her voice or the turn of her head” (207). Brodsky devoted an essay to Akhmatova “The Keening Muse” which first appeared as the

influence of Akhmatova, he acknowledged that at the time he “revered” another Acmeist, Osip Mandelstam.⁶ With Mandelstam, he shares an interest in antiquity, the theme which permeates his poetry and to which he was true all his life. Czeslaw Milosz attributes these “incursions into the world of Antiquity” to St. Petersburg: “If you were to ask him that he’d probably say ‘That’s classical Petersburg for you’ (326).⁷ Mandelstam was the one who defined Acmeism as the “nostalgia for world culture.” Brodsky was referred to as “the last Acmeist” (qtd. in Naiman “Coagulation” 9) because, through Akhmatova and Mandelstam, Brodsky inherited and “revived the link with Russian literature proper and reprised the theme of Acmeism – nostalgia for world culture” (Sedakova 247).⁸ As to an

introduction to *Anna Akhmatova: Poems* in 1983. About Brodsky and Akhmatova see also Lakerbaj. Brodsky admits a poetic affinity with Marina Tsvetaeva (JBC 85).

⁶ In an interview with the poet, Bethea finds parallels between Mandelstam’s “Сохрани мою речь” and Brodsky’s “Isaac and Abram.” Brodsky says in that 1962 when he wrote the poem, he had not been familiar with Mandelstam’s poem: “Ни о каком ‘Сохрани мою речь навсегда’ не могло быть и речи; хотя позже именно с этим стихотворением у меня сложились довольно близкие отношения” (БКИ 510-11). For more about Brodsky and Mandelstam, see also Leon Burnett’s “The Complicity of the Real” and Jane Knox’s *Isif Brodsky’s Affinity with Osip Mandelstam*. Brodsky most of the time was true to his literary taste, which was formed rather early. Much later, after immigrating, he says about Mandelstam: “Первое впечатление от его стихов во мне живет до сих пор, ничуть не потускнело от времени. Стихи Мандельштама, как и раньше, меня ошеломляют” (БКИ 91). Brodsky wrote two essays devoted to Mandelstam. “Child of Civilization” published in *Less Than One*. The essay is based on his introduction to *Osip Mandelstam: Fifty Poems*, which appeared in 1977. The essay also contained additional material based upon “Beyond Consolation”

⁷ Mikhail Meilakh notes that the theme of *Marble*, “after the end” is a Petersburg theme: “It’s a Petersburg theme—it is the city ‘after the end’” (167). The theme of antiquity goes through “Letters to a Roman Friend” and “The Roman Elegies.”

⁸ Acmeist motifs of traveling are perceived in “Mexican Divertimento” and in Italian poems. Brodsky’s poems brim with personal names, toponyms, and names of eating places, food. About Brodsky travelogues see also Vail. In Brodsky, the traveling theme echoes the idea of the irrelevance of space, and exile as a natural state for a poet. It is also connected with the idea of the poet as a wanderer, a Wandering Jew. Translation from all languages also is a manifestation of the desire to be part of the world culture (Kulle). Milosz calls Brodsky “a cultural explorer” and says it was “the result of Leningrad architectural influence” (326). Some, however, saw these cultural explorations as a demerit (Kublanovsky 202). As to placing Brodsky within any literary trend, Naiman strongly objects when Polukhina asks him to comment on Brodsky being called the “last Acmeist”: “That’s all nonsense in my opinion” (“Coagulation” 9). However, he attributes to the Acmeist stage Brodsky’s attitude to his craft, word. (See the introduction to this dissertation). Brodsky was also called a “son of Symbolists” (Nivat, “The Ironic Journey” 96). Brodsky’s poetic affiliations are the subject of the whole section entitled “Собеседники” of the 2000 collection of articles *Иосиф Бродский и мир*. See also Andrej Ranchin; Yakov Gordin “A Tragic Perception of Poetry.”

identification with literary trends, Brodsky himself says that he was “infected by usual classicism” (2:135), by which he asserts the continuity of tradition with Russian culture. Loseff sees in it Pushkinian tradition, which he calls “a dialogue between Russian and European man” (“New Conception” 128).⁹

Time was another factor that contributed to Brodsky’s interest in the West. He was born in 1940, his formative years fell in the sixties when the iron curtain began to be lifted. The first film festivals, publications in *Inostrannaya Literatura* of Western literature, and American jazz were catalysts for a curious mind.¹⁰ Brodsky says that “the emancipation of consciousness” for his generation began not with Solzhenitsyn’s *Ivan Denisovich* but with Tarzan: “This was the first movie in which we saw natural life. And long hair. And that marvelous cry of Tarzan, which [...] hung over every Russian city. We were so eager to imitate Tarzan. That’s what started it all. And the state fought this much harder than it did Solzhenitsin later” (CWJB 99). American culture was especially attractive. Brodsky explains this by the fact “после войны на Америку клеветали, а то, на что клеветают, всегда привлекательно, ведь ты знаешь, кто клеветает, и знаешь, какой они сами мусор” (БКИ 311). In a conversation with Sven Birkerts, when the interviewer wonders about rendering American cultural phenomenon, such as Ray Charles, in his Russian poems, Brodsky says that it did not present any difficulty, as American jazz was popular in Russia (JBC 107). Brodsky surprised his American interviewers with his knowledge of American culture. He claims that Sydney Pollock was

⁹ Naiman was one of the first critics to investigate the theme of Brodsky’s relation to Pushkin (“Заметки”). See also Saitanov; Zholkovsky; Semenova; and Ranchin

¹⁰ Ludmila Shtern in her memoirs about Brodsky recalls how in 1961 she and Brodsky went from Leningrad to Moscow to the first French Industrial Exhibition to see a glimpse of Western life (74).

the “hero of his youth,” and of Marc Rothko and Arshile Gorky he says: “it is even difficult to talk about it, even just to say that I like them—it is a part of me” (БКИ 311).

Brodsky gives an additional reason for this interest in America:

Наверное, это была реакция на коллективизм нашей российской экзистенции. И если так, то эта реакция оказалась неизмеримо сильнее импульса.[...] И для нас единственным местом, где она [идея индивидуализма] действительно воплотилась, были Соединенные Штаты. И мы хотели знать как можно больше, хотя бы об искусстве, мы хотели быть американцами в том смысле, что мы хотели быть индивидуалистами. (БКИ 650, 311)

Brodsky’s personality was another factor that fueled his interest in the West. It was obvious early on that he was not an ordinary child. At a very young age he displayed certain features that set him apart from others and made him immune to Soviet propaganda. When the whole country was mesmerized and paralyzed by the Stalin cult, a twelve-year old boy was able to see through it:

I was sick and tired of him, [...] his portraits everywhere! And that generalissimo uniform—the red stripes and so forth. [...] it always seemed to me that something behind it was rotten. That service cap with insignia and the brass, and all the other things—all that somehow did not jibe with Stalin, didn’t seem very convincing. (CWJB 30)¹¹

The fact that he dropped out of school is very suggestive. This was a very unorthodox thing for a boy from a Jewish family with its strong emphasis on education. Even at an early age he did not want to conform to what he did not believe in.

Probably the most important consequence of his dropping out of school was that now he was the one who determined his own education. His literary tastes were not

¹¹ Brodsky describes his reaction to Stalin’s death when the whole country was immersed in a state of mass paralysis and grief as follows: “The class was ordered ‘On your knees!’ All around me everyone was howling, and I was supposed to be howling, too, apparently, but—at the time to my shame, but now, I think to my credit - I wasn’t. It seemed all so barbaric to me” (CWJB 30). See also Brodsky’s recollections about his school years in “Less than One.”

subjected to the obligatory Socialist Realism reading. Brodsky believed in Harold Bloom's phrase "A person is what he reads." He expressed this idea in his conversation with Volkov:

The fact of the matter is that the view of the world you discover in these poets' work has become a part of our perception. If you like, our perception is a logical (or perhaps alogical) extension of what is set out in their verse. It is the development of principles, notions, and ideas whose expression was the work of these authors. Once we recognize them, nothing more important ever happened in our lives, right? I for example have never encountered anything more important. My own thinking included. These people simply created us. That's it. (41)

Brodsky's reading included Indian philosophers, Kierkegaard, the Bible, Russian philosophers, Russian banned literature, and later, English poetry.¹² Later, when he taught at the University of Michigan and other American universities, his students would be astounded by his knowledge of world literature. Loseff refers to a reading list that Brodsky gave his students which included the Old Testament, Mahabharata, Descartes, and Spinoza. Loseff writes that "Бродский не столько имел в виду реальный список чтения, сколько горизонты гуманитарного знания, некую карту той страны, которую он сам обжил и в которую он приглашал своих учеников" ("Вступление" 47).

A Yankee in Russian Poetry

Though everyone agrees that Brodsky was Russia's "most European poet," his interest in European literature was different from the traditional "gravitation" of Russian

¹² Brodsky explains his interest by his attraction to the unfamiliar: "[...] basically by the age of twenty, twenty three, I knew more or less all of the Russian poetry and had to look somewhere else. Not because Russian poetry ceased to satisfy me, but once you've read the text you know them...." (JBC 75-76). In the Russian version of the interview, Brodsky says "тянуло к новому" which was not rendered in the English version (БКН 79). The semantics of the word and subjectless structure in which it most commonly used implies attraction towards something that is not in one's power, beyond one's ability to control.

literature towards France and Germany (Kublanovsky 204-05). His main interest was English poetry, in which he was “как у себя дома” (*felt at home*) (Kushner 185). It is a commonly acknowledged fact that Brodsky was considerably influenced by English metaphysical poetry.¹³ Loseff notes that “even in the first period of his work he introduces into his Russian verse form a profoundly Western poetic, not to be found before him and with it a poetic outlook on life from the European Baroque and English Modernism” (“Home and Abroad” 28). Many believe that through Brodsky English poetic tradition had an impact on Russian poetry in general (Kublanovsky 205; Ufliand 151). It is noteworthy that his famous “Large Elegy to John Donne” was written in 1963, although at that time Brodsky was not very familiar with Donne. He says that he was intrigued by

this famous quotation from Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls*: “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of a Continent, a part of the main, if a clod be worked away by the Sea, Europe is the less, as well as a Promontory were, as well as if a Manor of the friends or of thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.” The epigraph made a major impression on me, and I attempted to find the quotation from Donne in the original (although I didn’t know English very well at the time). Some foreign student—one of the grad students studying in Leningrad—brought me a book by Donne. I went through it all, but I never did find the quotation I was looking for. Only later did I get that Hemingway wasn’t using a Donne poem but an excerpt from a sermon. (CWJB 150-51)

By that time it was “too late to study” Donne because Brodsky was arrested in January 1964. When he was in exile in Norenskaya, Lydia Chukovskaya sent him a book by Donne published by Sovremennaya Biblioteka. It was there in exile that his serious study of Donne and other metaphysicals began. “Armed with the dictionary,” he started

¹³ About the influence of English metaphysical poetry on Brodsky, see Bethea *Creation of Exile*; Ivanov; Крепа; MacFadyen; Nesterov ““За пределами Большой элегии””; and Polukhina *Joseph Brodsky*.

translating the English metaphysicals. The poet describes his experiences with a touch of humor:

Сидишь у стола, за окном Норенская на столе книга Донна, набранная мелким прифтом на папиросной бумаге. Такой замечательный контраст—если учесть, что вокруг на тысячу километров никого. (БКИ 513)

He says that the first thing that attracted him in Donne was his meter, alien to the Russian poetic tradition:

В Донне меня привлекала в первую очередь строфика. Вы знаете, что русская поэзия в основном писалась четырехсложником и была ориентирована на катрен. Когда ты читаешь Донна, ты видишь... этот типичный английский феномен—любопытная новаторская форма. (БКИ 514)

He admits that he learned a new metric arrangement by translating Donne:

переводя его, я очень многому научился. Дело в том, что вся русская поэзия по преимуществу строфична, то есть оперирует в чрезвычайно простых строфических единицах—это станс, четверостишие. В то время как у Донна я обнаружил куда более захватывающую структуру. Там необычайно сложные строфические построения. Мне это было интересно, и я этому научился. (БКИ 156)

Not only did Brodsky learn prosody from Donne, but he also admired “far-reaching baroque metaphors that did not exist in Russian poetry” (Loseff, “New Conception”

130)¹⁴ and most importantly the handling of existential issues:

Brodsky was trying to recapture or, in the case of Donne, take for the first time that intellectual ground which has been effectively lost to the intelligentsia reading public as a result of the policies of Stalinism [...] This ground included in its rich top soil the entire Biblical tradition, with its issues of divine judgment and theodicy, the economy of salvation, the meaning and shape of history, death and resurrection, the relation of soul to the body—indeed, an entire religious and philosophical lexicon that had to be exhumed and experimented with *as if for the first time*. (Bethea, *Creation of Exile* 84-85)¹⁵

¹⁴ In 1979, recommending a reading list of poets, Brodsky says: “I think reading foreign poetry loosens your imagination or your intuition” (JBC 67).

¹⁵ In the interview with Bethea, Brodsky says that Trediakovsky and Kantemir were “наследниками английской метафизики, не всерьез, а по стечению обстоятельств—у них было церковное образование и т.д. [...] В этом смысле у русской поэзии вполне здоровая наследственность. Они звали кому принадлежит их ум и сердце” (БКИ 514). Bethea, while acknowledging eighteenth-century

This is how the poet explained what happened to him:

Дело в том, что поэзия—это колоссальный ускоритель мышления. Она ускоряет работу мысли. И вот я подумал: хорошо, Иосиф, тебе надо изложить на бумаге мысль или образ, если угодно, и довести их до логического конца, где начинается метафизическое измерение. Когда Донн пишет: “Человек -- как Земля, где океану Бог отводит роль чресел” -- тут есть материал для размышления. (БКИ 515)

He began to write in this new vein. He also says that he was motivated by the spirit of competition: “Просто я хотел переплюнуть британцев, метафизиков...” (БКИ 515).¹⁶

When he returned to Leningrad, Academician Victor Zhirmunsky, who evidently had seen Brodsky's translations of metaphysicals through Akhmatova, had plans to publish a volume on the English Baroque for the Literary Monuments series with Brodsky's translations and with his (Zhirmunsky's) commentaries. The work was postponed, however, because Brodsky did not have enough translations, as his work on translations was “sporadic.” Brodsky recalls:

In 1971 Zhirmunsky died, but the idea of the edition did not die with him. I was summoned to Moscow, to the *Nauka Publishing House*, where they said that the agreement remained in force. At this point I still did not have enough translations. Consequently, publication of the volume was moved back a couple of years. But

Russian poetical thought, still holds that Brodsky was “the first metaphysical poet in true Donnean sense” (*Creation of Exile* 83).

¹⁶ Evidently competition was a big stimulating and motivating factor for Brodsky. He admits that he started writing, when shown a book by a poet whom he knew from his geological expeditions, when he thought he could write better on the topic (CWJB 32). Later he would compete with Mandelstam: “I always thought, ‘Can I do the Mandelstam thing?’ I thought on several occasions that I succeeded at a kind of pastiche.” Paradoxically, Tsvetaeva, to whom he feels close in technique and poetics, was the only poet with whom he decided not to compete (JBC 85). In the conversation with Bethea, he admits that he tried to compete with Tsvetaeva and saw that “это мне не по плечу” (БКИ 530). However, his words about competition should not be taken literally because by “competition,” he evidently means absorbing poetic heritage: “Это дух соревнования. Сначала написать лучше, чем, скажем, пишут те, кого ты знаешь, твои друзья; потом лучше (то есть, может быть, лучше не получалось, но казалось иногда, что получается), чем, скажем, у Пастернака, или Мандельштама... Ахматовой, Хлебникова, Заболоцкого. То есть ты сражаешься со всей русской поэзией; может быть, не столько сражаешься—просто там, где они кончили, ты начинаешь” (БКИ 141). On another occasion Brodsky says that a professional writer always compares himself with other poets (БКИ 91). He also talks about competing with contemporary English-speaking writers (БКИ 98).

May 1972 came and there could be no question of any book then. Too bad. There would have been more than Donne there. We had planned an anthology of metaphysical poetry, the whole band. (CWJB 151)¹⁷

Bethea is right when he says that Brodsky's "appropriation of English poetry began with Donne," and that through Donne Brodsky "found the theme... that will make his mature poetry so distinctive in his own native context--that of psychic exile" (*Creation of Exile* 102). It should be noted, however, that chronologically Brodsky's first interest in English-language poetry was stirred by an American poet, Robert Frost. Brodsky recalls that he began to read Frost in translation at the age of twenty two¹⁸ and that the poem "A Hundred Collars" produced a very strong impression on him: "I simply couldn't believe that there was such an American poet named Frost. I decided that there was some brilliant person in Moscow responsible for all these things, creating a kind of apocrypha. But it all became clear to me when I found 'A Hundred Collars' in English" (CWJB 86). Brodsky says he was drawn to Frost because "in poetry we look for a world view that is unfamiliar to us" (93) and because "Frost is the representative of art that simply does not exist in Russian. A Russian poet uses verse to express himself, to

¹⁷ Brodsky recalls: "In parallel with me, Boris Tomashevsky was translating Donne, who as a result did put out a volume of Donne. Yes, I've had a look at it. If you know Donne in the original, you can't read it. The translations are at the level of 'love perfidious and cruel,' I have no love for this translator." (CWJB 151) Later Brodsky's translations were published in *Остановка в пустыне*, which came out in 1970. Brodsky translated seven poems by Donne ("The Flea," "The Storm," "A Valediction: of Weeping," "The Apparition," "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning," "Elegy to the lady Markham," "The Will") and four by Andrew Marvell ("Eyes and Tears," "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn," "To His Coy Mistress," "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland").

¹⁸ There is a slight discrepancy in dates regarding his initial acquaintance with Frost. In the interview with Birkerts, Brodsky says he read Frost when he was twenty- two (JBC 75). In the interview with Volkov, Brodsky says that he read "A Hundred Collars" in 1962 (85). However, in the conversation with Epel'vian he gives a different date: "По-моему, в 1964 году я впервые прочел в переводе стихи Роберта Фроста. Это меня потрясло. Дело в том, что я не верил, что стихи могут быть такими. [...] Я был поражен и не верил переводам. И тогда я нашел стихи Фроста и попытался их разобрать по-английски. Оказалось, что все действительно на самом деле так у него и есть" (БКИ 142).

pour out his soul. Even the most abstract, the coldest, the most formal among Russian poets. Unlike Russian poets, Frost never splashes himself on the piano" (93). Brodsky calls him "a poet of terror, but not of tragedy or drama" (89). He felt kinship with the American poet, because "Frost senses the utter isolation of his own existence" (93).¹⁹ Soon after this he discovered Donne. But still Brodsky believed that "with Frost it all started" (JBC 75).

Another major influence was Wystan Auden. Brodsky says that his interest in Auden was stirred when Andrei Sergeev, his friend and a translator of English poetry whose opinions he greatly valued, mentioned to him that his poem "Two Hours in an Empty Tank"²⁰ was "very much like Auden":

I naturally took an interest in Auden and set about reading anything I could get my hands on. [...] I did not know English then. I was just beginning to figure things out. [...] Beginning in about 1964 I would read Auden when I come across him, deciphering him line by line.

Again, it was Auden's metrics that gripped Brodsky:

I could not help but understand him--not so much his poetics but his metrics. That is, this is what his poetics are. What in Russian is called *dolnik*, or accentual verse--disciplined and very well organized. With a marvelous internal caesura, in a hexametrical manner. (CWJB 129)

Brodsky was intrigued by "his symptomatic technique of description" and the fact that Auden "keeps his eye all the time on civilization, on the human condition" (JBC 77).

¹⁹ Brodsky also attributes his closeness to Frost by the fact that he read Frost in his exile in the North: "[...] in the North it was easier to identify with Frost. I spent basically three years in the Soviet Union strongly under the influence of Frost" (CWJB 89).

²⁰ Brodsky says about this poem: "At the time, I liked this poem a lot. Even now I can't judge it objectively" (CWJB 128).

Auden's words, "Time worships language," became Brodsky's motto.²¹ He acknowledges that "The End of the Beautiful Era," "Song of Innocence," and also "Letter to General Z" were written under Auden's influence. With a touch of pride he says that by the time of his departure from the Soviet Union he "knew Auden better than anyone" (CWJB 129). Brodsky idolized Auden all his life. He would say he would like to have a face like Auden (125). Brodsky—who claimed that he wrote "for his alter ego," or so "that He could understand" (JBC 63)—also says that Auden was his "invisible reader" (JBC 88). His first English poem was written "to please a shadow," that is to say, Auden's shadow.²²

Brodsky maintained his admiration for Frost and Auden all his life.²³ Later, in the United States, he devoted essays to both of them and they were among the five people about whom he talked about in his Nobel Lecture.²⁴ In addition, the collection of Donne's writings was the one book that he took when he was forced to leave the Soviet Union.

²¹ Brodsky says that he especially valued Auden's "Letter to Lord Byron," "which I labored over mightily, translating it. For me, 'Letter to Lord Byron' became an antidote to every kind of demagoguery. Whenever I was pushed over the edge, I would read this poem by Auden" (CWJB 129).

²² Brodsky compares Auden's influence on him to that of Akhmatova: "I fall into a certain dependence on him. An ethical rather than stylistic dependence. I could compare Auden's influence with Akhmatova's." Brodsky recalls that Auden "chucked over me like a mother hen over her chick. I had tremendous luck" (CWJB 133). They went together to the Poetry International Festival where Brodsky was introduced to the international literati and made personal acquaintances with some of them, including Spender. Auden had written the preface to *The Selected Poems*. He wanted to translate Brodsky's poems. Brodsky recalls: "I said no to Wystan Auden when he volunteered to translate some poems. I thought, 'Who the hell am I to be translated by Wystan?' Birkerts: 'That's an interesting reversal—the poet feeling inadequate to his translator' (JBC 74).

²³ See also: "the longer I live and the longer I practice my profession, the more real this poet keeps getting" (CWJB 133); "About Donne and Frost I feel the same way. [...] I lost a lot of idols [...] However some things got reinforced" (JBC 76).

²⁴ Brodsky wrote two essays about Auden, "To Please a Shadow" and "On 'September 1, 1939' by W.H. Auden," and one essay devoted to Frost entitled "On Grief and Reason."

By the time of his departure from the Soviet Union, Brodsky was probably the only Russian poet who knew English poetry very well. Nadezhda Mandelstam called him “the Yankee in Russian poetry” (Kublanovsky 205).²⁵ With a touch of pride, Brodsky says that when he came to the US, he “knew the scene rather well” (JFC 85).

Love Affair with the English Language

In the U.S. Brodsky became familiar with contemporary American and British poetry. He greatly admired Anthony Hecht, Stephen Spender, Richard Wilbur, Derek Walcott, and Robert Lowell, with many of whom he became friends.²⁶ Although each of these poets had a specific influence on Brodsky, there is a common denominator that made English-language poetry appealing and close to Brodsky. He says that he likes English poetry

потому что у них другое отношение к жизни. Дело в том, что европейцы, русские в том числе--хотя Россия не столько Восточная Европа, сколько Западная Азия,--рассматривают мир как бы изнутри, как его участники, как его жертвы. *В то время как в английской литературе... дело в языке, наверное, [...] все время такой несколько изумленный взгляд на вещи со стороны. Элемент отстранения, который европейцу, в общем, не очень присущ.* И это потрясающее качество, по крайней мере для русской литературы, настроенной на сантименты, на создание эмоционального или музыкального эффекта. Ты вдруг слышишь голос, звучащий *абсолютно нейтрально*. И благодаря этой нейтральности *возникает ощущение объективности* того, что говорится. Я думаю, что это не только завоевание поэтов, литераторов, которые эту психологию демонстрируют, *сколько самого английского языка.* (БКИ 142-43, italics mine)

²⁵ Kublanovsky recalls: “I still remember the occasion in the 1970s when I was sitting in Nadezhda Mandelstam’s kitchen. She was in a rather peevish mood. She asked me: ‘Who is your favorite contemporary Russian poet?’ And I said: ‘Brodsky, of course.’ Her answer was: ‘But, Yuri Mikhailovich, he is the Yankee in Russian poetry!’ And, at that time, America just hadn’t entered the picture at all” (205).

²⁶ Petr Vail makes an amusing comment: “Иосиф, вы завели неплохой обычай--вместо того чтобы дружить с ‘нобелями,’ заводите друзей, которые ‘нобелями’ становятся” (БКИ 593).

In this detachment, he saw an affinity between English poetry and Petersburg poetry, which he attributes to the geographical position (at the edge of the empire for Leningrad/Petersburg and British insular position). He believed that in general Russian poetry took after the French and German poetic tradition, which he calls “the tradition of twisting, of piling on, [...] of pathos, of urgent statements.” He says that the English poetic tradition is utilizing “an abstract poetic tone.” He compares English poetry to a cocked eyebrow, making a typically Brodskian metaphor involving both the spoken and visual planes (CWJB 87). On another occasion, he compares English and Russian poetry to both the inside and the outside of an apple:

Say you cut through an apple and peel the skin. Now you know what an apple has inside, but you lose sight of both its bulges, the two cheeks of the apple. Russian culture is interested in the apple itself. It admires its color, the smoothness of its skin, and so forth. It does not always know what’s inside the apple. These are, roughly speaking, different ways of relating to the world –the rational and the synthetic. (CWJB 185)

Brodsky says that English poetry gave him a feeling of a double culture: “Мне видны на сегодняшний день, я надеюсь, две грани ее (культуры): рациональная английская и рефлексивная русская” (БКИ 153).

What Brodsky says about English poetry, he also attributes to the English language. Very often, in his interviews, he uses the words *literature*, *poetry*, and *English language* in one breath:

Говоря об англичанах, о поэзии по-английски, я думаю, что это... более высокоразвитая форма языковой деятельности. Главное качество английской речи или английской литературы—не statement, то есть утверждение, а—understatement, отстранение, даже отчужденность в некотором роде. Это взгляд на явление со стороны. (БКИ 143-44, italics mine)

Auden's “aftertaste irony” he attributes to the English language: “I don’t even know where it comes from. This ironical element is more the achievement of the English

language than of Auden. The whole technique of English understatement” (CWJB 129).

He sees the same quality in Frost:

In Frost it comes out like this “Good fences make good neighbors.” That is, it is a statement replete with unresolved horror. Once again we are dealing with *the understatement of the English language*, but this understatement rather directly serves its own purpose. (CWJB 90, italics mine)

Brodsky also attributes the fact that he belongs to two cultures to his bilingualism.

“Культура начала становиться для меня 'двойной' только с помощью английского”

(БКИ 53). He compares his situation to “sitting on a top of a mountain and looking down both slopes.” He does not quite agree with the Volkov when the latter says it's like being an inhabitant of two worlds:

Well, not so much two worlds. It's always your own spot. But still you see both slopes, and this is an absolutely special sensation. *Were a miracle to occur and I were to return to Russia permanently, I would be extremely nervous at not having the option of using more than one language.* (CWJB 185-86, italics mine)

Brodsky's most intriguing statements about poetry and language are those in which he speaks about the two languages. For example, his ruminations about English and Russian poetry lead to the following reflection:

Поэзия, в сущности, высшая форма лингвистической, языковой деятельности. [...] поэзия не форма литературы, не форма искусства, не развлечение и не форма отдыха—это цель человека как биологического вида. Люди, занимающиеся поэзией,—наиболее совершенные в биологическом отношении образцы человеческого рода. (БКИ 143)

He treats language as a deity: “Language is the beginning of beginning. If there is any kind of deity to me, it's language” (JBC 96); “Язык—это важнее, чем бог, важнее, чем природа, важнее, чем что бы то ни было иное, для нас как биологического вида” (БКИ 143).

Brodsky's views on language, sometimes referred to as “language theology” or “language mythology,” have become a matter of special research. Denis Akhapkin tries to

reconstruct Brodsky's theory of language, which in a way resembles the Sapirian theory of language determinism, which was a topic of debate in the mid-sixties ("Поэзия грамматики").²⁷ According to this point of view, there is a correlation between national mentality and language. Brodsky tries to connect ethnic and religious notions with language. He contrasts analytical and flexive languages, the latter being more sensitive and capable of expressing nuances. In this he sees the merit of Russian syntax. However, he also believes that the inflective nature of the Russian language, its complex sentences, also makes it possible to harbor evil:

Во-первых, русский язык—язык бесконечного ряда сложноподчиненных предложений, язык отступлений, и поэтому этот язык настолько ограничен. Какой-бы феномен вы ни собирались описывать, включая феномен зла, на русском это сделать легче, хотя бы потому, что зло чрезвычайно разветвлено и органично, оно органично не менее добра. В то время, как с английским языком происходит совершенно обратное, это язык именительного падежа, он называет феномен, но не отражает его в полной мере, со всеми нюансами. (БКИ 541)

Evil as happens to be in the possession of Russians has been denied entry into consciousness on the grounds of having convoluted syntax. One wonders how many of us can recall a plain-speaking Evil across the threshold, saying: Hi, I am Evil. How are you? (*Less than One* 31)

According to Brodsky, tragedy is inherent to the Russian language; he believes that Andrei Platonov discovered that the Russian language was as a "transmitter of destruction" (Khairov 212).²⁸ Brodsky's friend Diana Abaeva-Mayers believes that he attributes unhappiness to the Russian language:

Он нашим языком объяснял наш характер, характер нашей жизни, мировосприятие, отход от нормы. Английский язык он связывал с

²⁷ Akhupkin believes that Brodsky may have been familiar with the debate around Sapir-Worf theory, as he was close to philological circles ("Поэзия грамматики" 273). See also an interesting article by Shamil Khairov.

²⁸ See two essays by Brodsky where he discusses the language of Dostoevsky and Platonov: "The Power of Elements" and "Catastrophes in the Air."

нормальностью, с нормой существования. Он как будто боялся, что дочка, выучив русский язык, станет похожей на нас. Ну и что? А что в этом хорошего. Мы не были нормальные. На нас было клеймо несчастья, потому что мы существовали в русском языке. Это был язык несчастья. (102)

In contrast to Russian, Brodsky viewed the English language, with its simple grammar structure, as possessing objectivity and logic and as lacking the absence of demagoguery.

The English language to him represents the “nostalgia for world order” (БКИ 548).

“Demagoguery in English is very difficult. [...] It is a language in which it is very difficult to deceive” (JBC 86). I side with Bethea that the “point is not to agree or disagree with Brodsky but to note his belief in the ‘apriority of language,’ its very ethical nature” (*Creation of Exile* 121).²⁹ This issue will be revisited in Chapter III. Here it suffices to say that the qualities that he attributed to the English language made Brodsky enamored with it. On many occasions he speaks about his “love affair” with the English language, which started even in Russia.³⁰ He says that he nearly fainted when he first

²⁹ Loseff explains Brodsky’s obsession with language: “[...] language, which Joseph habitually talks about in what are usually considered religious terms is, for all that, one way or another just a semiotic form. For a man of Brodsky’s dimensions that is the form his commission takes, the form of his existential state, the form of his pact with providence. Brodsky exemplifies [...] the magnificent line from Tsvetaeva from her own poem ‘God’ where she writes of his lack of attachment to ‘your signs and burdens.’ [...] What Tsvetaeva is doing is formulating her God in profoundly semiotic terms. For me, there lies the key to understanding Brodsky’s personality” (“New Conception” 122). Loseff says that he himself “could never fully accept that idolization of language, so characteristic of Brodsky. I sympathize with his paganism in general, see it for what it is—a peculiar sort of Protestantism—with one very essential exception. I think Brodsky’s creative work disproves his own argument. Brodsky is rather overwhelmed with linguistics. Maybe it’s something to do with a gap in his education. Please understand me correctly. Brodsky is phenomenally well-educated, much better educated than I am. But we always gain something, lose something. And the absence of formal education in linguistics in particular has, maybe, led to his fetish of language” (123). Khairov believes that Brodsky’s views on language are the continuation of the tradition of search for the “genius of the language” (222). He holds that the poets’ views on language can be regarded as “author’s linguistics” and the analysis of their views will contribute to the epistemology of the languages (223).

³⁰ Brodsky on many occasions uses love imagery in reference to the English language: “With a foreign culture, a foreign realm, that you think you are never going to see, your love affair is a lot more intense” (JBC 76). It is noteworthy that Nabokov also uses a love metaphor in reference to his Russian writing. In immigration, Nabokov, who wrote prose in English, wrote poetry in Russian. He regarded his Russian muse as a mistress. Bethea writes that during his “first period as an English language writer (early 1940’s), he would arrange ‘trysts’ with his Russian muse and gladly ‘sleep with her’—that is write, write Russian verse ‘on the sly’—in order to keep the fires burning even as he was carrying out the ‘drudgery of

heard English from the mouth of Stephen Spender: “I nearly staggered. The phenomenal beauty of the sound! Few things have made such an impression on me. Well, maybe the view of the planet from the air” (CWJB 125)

Why Did Brodsky Start Translating His Own Poems?

Brodsky's poetry began appearing in the West right after his trial. “He was introduced for the first time to English-speaking readers in 1964 as a poet persecuted in the Soviet Union for his independence of thought” (Karwowska 101).³¹ His initial publication was in the émigré magazine *Posev*. The first collection of Brodsky's poetry was published in Russian by the *Inter-Language Literary Associates* in 1965. Though his name had become familiar, his poetry was still not known outside the circle of specialists. In English, two short poems with the transcript of Brodsky's trial were published in *The New Leader* in 1964. In 1965, George Kline, professor of philosophy at Bryn Mawr, published in *The Russian Review* his translation of “Elegy for John Donne.” The translation was highly praised and introduced Brodsky to an English-speaking audience. Brodsky was also translated into English by Carl Proffer, George Reavey and Nicholas

composing prose in another language” (*Creation of Exile* 226). The following quote from Nabokov illustrates this point: “I have lain with my Russian muse after a long period of adultery, and I am sending you a big poem she bore” (qtd. in Beaujour 97). Whereas Brodsky employs the metaphor of “marriage” about his relationship with English: “...у меня ведь давний роман с английским языком—он начался, когда мне было семнадцать, восемнадцать, от силы двадцать лет; с англосаксонской культурой вообще, с Англией и Америкой, как у всех 'европейцев' моего поколения. В моем случае наш роман зашел несколько дальше прогулок под луной, это уже нечто вроде супружества” (БКИ 302).

³¹Karwowska in her doctoral dissertation analyzes the reception of Brodsky and Milosz's poetry in the West. She traces the response of the English speaking literary establishment to the first publications in their native languages and to the first translations. She was one of the first to pay attention to the controversy around Brodsky's English.

Bethel, and translations appeared in several literary periodicals.³² The first collection in English, *Elegy to John Donne and Other Poems*, appeared in 1967. It was translated by Nicholas Bethel. But as Bozena Karwowska comments, this collection was hardly noted by the critics (108, 190). Kline writes that Brodsky was not satisfied with the translation, which he found hasty and inaccurate, and broke his contract with Bethel (“История двух книг” 223). In 1973, a comprehensive collection of the poems, *Joseph Brodsky: Selected Poems*, appeared. This collection, with a foreword by Auden, was translated solely by Kline, who also wrote an introduction and “A Note on the Translations.” The collection included previously translated poems—including major poems such as “Elegy to John Donne,” “Verses on the Death of T.S. Eliot—and also acquainted the reader with Brodsky’s later poems, including such important ones as “Odysseus to Telemachus,” “Nature Morte.” With this collection Kline became “Brodsky’s chief mediator” (Karwowska 191).³³

Kline tried to be close to the original. He recognized, however, that certain features (prosody, alliteration, word play) would be very difficult to render in English. He tried to compensate for the losses in short notes accompanying the poems, which clarified cultural realia and literary allusions; he also explained the difficulties he encountered regarding word-play and the choices he had to make. These notes are of great interest, as they give great insight into the laboratory of the translator and also illuminate a certain

³² “Fish in Winter;” “The Pilgrims;” “Stanzas to the City;” “With Sadness and Tenderness;” “From ‘Commentary’ in *Landfall*;” “The Pushkin Monument;” “Pilgrims;” “To Gleb Gorbovskiy” in *The Russian Review*; *A Stop in the Desert*, published by Ardis.

³³ About the work on the *Selected Poems* and *Остановка в пустыне*, see Kline’s “История двух книг.”

cross-cultural point of view.³⁴ As Karwowska notes, the collection was noted by mainstream critics and the translation was highly praised.³⁵ Although acknowledging the inevitable losses, Victor Erlich, a professor at Yale University, highly praised Kline's translation:

[T]here are losses: some euphonic effects have been muffled, some crisp lines flattened. But more often than not Professor Kline manages to convey the tenor, the content and the rhythm of the original with fidelity and effectiveness. These are fully authorized translations, a product of close collaboration and genuine affinity between the poet and the translator. George Kline was one of the first serious Western students of Russia to discover Brodsky and alert the rest of us to his promise. It is fitting that he should be the one to introduce this judicious selection from Brodsky's verse to a wider English-speaking audience. (621)

F. D. Reeve, however, in his article "Additions and Losses" was not so enthusiastic. He criticized the translations for lacking "poetic rigor." Reeve gives a list of paddings and changes of image, referring to the translation as "revamp[ed]," "alien," and "transmuted." He doesn't see any advantages in the fact that Kline

tends to explain too much, and [that] (*mole ruit sua*)³⁶ he adds words, images, intonations and lines which do not exist in the original and which, not surprisingly change Brodsky's work. *The Selected Poems* gives us a notion not of how Brodsky writes but of what themes he writes about. The flaccidity and the rhetorical sentimentality come not from Leningrad but from Bryn Mawr. (43)³⁷

³⁴ Kline, for example, explains that the rook is considered to be a symbol of spring. For the "Verses on the Death of T.S. Elliot" he writes: "Since the Russian word *smert'* (death) and *poeziya* (poetry) are both feminine in gender and are referred to by the same pronoun, *ona* (literally, 'she'), the connection between death and poetry in the second and third stanzas is clearer and more explicit in the original than it can be made in translation" (*Selected Poems* 102).

³⁵ Talking about difficulties of translating Brodsky, and also of Brodsky's increasing control over translations, Kline nevertheless emphasized collaboration with the poet, saying that they were always "in full agreement" ("Revising Brodsky" 159). In his later article, he admits that, because they lived on different continents, true collaboration was very difficult to achieve. After June 1972 (after Brodsky's forced immigration to the US, Kline says that the collaboration became more fruitful ("История двух книг" 225-26).

³⁶ *Mole ruit sua* translates to "It falls in ruins by its own weight" in English.

³⁷ Karwowska notes that at first there was very little interest in the faithfulness of the translation of Brodsky and Milosz (116). It "did not become topical until the time when the very high but formulaic recognition of both poets was confronted with the substantial body of their poems in English translation" (200).

Obviously, Brodsky could not and did not exercise much control over these translations.

But later, in the 1979 interview with Sven Birkerts, he expressed his concern that these translations did not sound good in English:

The thing that bothers me about many of those translations is that they are not very good English. It may have to do with the fact that my affair with the English language is fairly fresh, fairly new, and therefore perhaps I'm subjected to some extra sensitivity. So what bothers me is not so much that the line of mine is bad - what bothers me is the bad line in English. (JBC 74)

As his time in exile went on, Brodsky began to exercise more control over his translations. Evidently he was not completely satisfied with being represented by one translator. In the next collection, *A Part of Speech*, published in 1980, he employed a different "model"--a "variety of translator's interpretations" instead of being represented by one voice (Karwowska 200). This new collection has ten different translators. He continued to work with Kline, who still contributed ten translations, seven of which were new, but new translators were added: Richard Wilbur, Daniel Weissbort, Barry Rubin, Allan Mayers, Howard Moss, Anthony Hecht, Derek Walcott, and David Rigsbee. Though Brodsky explained that his main concern was to get the book ready for publications as quickly as possible (БКИ 319), he was also concerned about the quality of the English translation:

Прежде всего я хотел, чтобы сохранилось содержание, чтобы был хороший английский язык, это меня заботило в первую очередь. Мне всего лишь надо было, чтобы в каждом конкретном случае это было хорошее английское стихотворение. (331-32)

This likely also explains why four of the new translators (Walcott, Hecht, Moss, and Wilbur) were esteemed poets. Another change that was noted by the critics was the fact that one of the translators was the author himself. Brodsky collaborated with eleven translators, co-authored the translation of twenty-two poems, and translated two of his

poems, including a very significant one “A Part of Speech.”³⁸ The practice of employing different translators was continued in subsequent collections (*To Urania* and *So Forth*).³⁹ Most reviews of the translations were commendatory. The author’s collaboration with acclaimed poet-translators was noted as having been beneficial (Karwowska 201). Henry Gifford, who acknowledges the difficulty of preserving formal features of Russian verse in English, gives high praise: “Every poem in this book reads as if English has been its first home” (1159).

There also appeared, however, a number of critical reviews. The criticism follows two directions. First, paradoxically, the high quality of the English was questioned. Concern centered on the issue of whose voice was heard in the English translation—Brodsky’s or his translators. Reeve praises translations by Richard Wilbur, Alan Mayers, and Howard Moss, but still recognizes elements of their individual poetic style: “The translations by poets with established styles are in many ways closer to the translators’ work than to Brodsky’s original” (“On Joseph Brodsky” 36). Donald Davie gives credit for “Letters from the Ming Dynasty” both to the poet and the translator, although there is a tinge of ambivalence in the praise: “There is one poem in *A Part of Speech* ‘Letters from the Ming Dynasty’ that breathes beautifully and is, one wants to believe as true for

³⁸ Brodsky’s name appeared as the sole translator of two poems “December in Florence” and the program poem “A Part of Speech,” which is a compilation of fifteen poems. That constituted a major contribution and gave the critics the material to make observations about his self-translations. Whether to regard “A Part of Speech” as self-translation is a disputed topic. In the original 1980 collection it appeared as “translated by the author” and has always been treated as Brodsky’s self-translation. However, in *Collected Poems in English* published in 2000, it is noted that it was done in collaboration with Weissbort. The controversy around “A Part of Speech” is discussed on pages 43–44.

³⁹ Karwowska maintains that Brodsky did not establish a new model for translating his poetry and that his main influence consisted in the choice of translators (192). But as we will see, Brodsky in fact established a model—his own unique translations. Probably Karwowska refers to his “model” of working with translators.

Joseph Brodsky as for its translator. Certainly Walcott hasn't made it into 'a Walcott poem'" (1415). Brodsky admitted that he was "fortunate to be translated by such great talents" (JBC 74). He even goes as far as to say: "I think that if I were born here I would end up with qualities similar to Hecht's. One thing I would like to be as perfect as Hecht and Wilbur are. There would be something else, I presume, of my own, but insofar as the craftsmanship is concerned one couldn't wish for more" (JBC 91). Understandably, however, he resented the idea that his own voice was muffled. Asked in 1980, if there was any particular influence, for instance that of Derek Wolcott, Brodsky says "at that time I hadn't read Derek's work" (JBC 55).⁴⁰ In his interview with Brodsky, D. M. Thomas, praising the translation by Richard Wilbur "Six Years Later," comments that it reminds him of Wilbur's poems saying, "It is hard to imagine that it is written by a Russian writer." Brodsky's answer is very interesting. He repeats the highest praise, showing his admiration for the poets: "[I]f it sounds like Wilbur's it pleases me. Had I been born a poet in America I would have been someone like Wilbur or Hecht. I like their striving towards clarity and the power of the sentence." But he also sounds a bit defensive: "Yes, it is a very good poem, I hope it is good in Russian, too. But it seems to me, it lost a little bit in translation, especially the last two lines (БКН 185).

These associations with other poets made Brodsky feel that he was losing his own voice. That is probably why, in the next collection, *To Urania* (1988), Brodsky turned to yet another group of translators, not so distinguished. This time, he co-translated eight poems, translated twenty-three poems, and wrote twelve poems in English. Only two were translated without him. He continued to work with Kline and Myers. Two new translators were invited to participate: Harry Thomas, who translated "Gorbunov and Gorchakov," and Paul Graves who translated "At Karel Weilnik's Exhibition."

⁴⁰ See similar answers when asked about the influence of Mandelstam (БКН 510-11) and Auden (CWJB 129).

The change in the choice of translators was noted by critics. Davie explains the “striking change in the personnel,” that is, Brodsky’s turn to the translators “less distinguished as poets,” by the fact that “Brodsky no longer trusts translators until they proceed under his strict and perhaps persuasive supervisions,” and also by Brodsky’s apprehension of the strong influence of poet-translators in *A Part of Speech* (1415).

The second criticism of the translations concerned Brodsky’s insistence on rendering the formal features of the original Russian poems, such as rhyme and rhythm. From the very beginning Brodsky insisted on preserving in the translation prosodic features of the original. This prompted criticism on the part of English-speaking critics. Reeve categorically states that “you can’t rhyme in an uninflected language with rigid rules about sequence of tense and syntactic order the way you do in a richly inflected language with no sequence of tense, loose syntactical constructions, and different accentual patterns” (“On Joseph Brodsky” 36).

Anthony Astrachan writes about *A Part of Speech* that Brodsky has always insisted on impossibly high standards of translation demanding fidelity not only to the spirit of the original but also to the meter and the rhyme. Equivalent rhyme is particularly difficult in translating from Russian, an inflected language whose endings give a wealth of feminine rhymes and whose consonants are as thick and savory as name day borscht. I am both saddened and amused to see some that Brodsky has translated or helped to translate himself... There are several poems where Brodsky cheapens his work by inserting words alien to his original thought in order to reproduce rhyme. (325)

Most criticism focused on Brodsky’s persistence in preserving meter. Robert Hass criticized Brodsky for “cliches of iambic rhythm” that make him resort

to excessive use of the possessive case: [...] *closed to the clash of day’s accord, rubbed by the light on space’s surface, July’s conclusion mergers with the rains.* [...] It is like reading a book that keeps sneezing. And the absurd poetic diction: *the vast wet of ocean, a strengthening breeze.* There is a padding for the sake of rhyme [...] and the padding to which translators are tempted because there are so

often fewer words in a line of Russian verse than in an English equivalent. This leads fairly often to massive redundancy.

Hass goes on to explain why Russian meters should not be rendered in English:

English poetry is a much older art. Metrical poems in English have been written for over 400 years. In Russian for something like 200. That is, in terms of exhausting the resources of meter and rhyme, Russian verse could be said to be fresh as English poetry was at the end of the age of Pope. In America, a metrical poem is likely to conjure up the idea of the sort of poet who wears ties and lunches at the faculty club. In Russian it suggests the moral force of an art practiced against the greatest personal odds, as a discipline, solitary and intense. As a result, the kind of poem that Brodsky writes, difficult to render anyway has to be rendered with attention to the preservation of its form being transposed at the same time into another key altogether. (36)

Hass is harsh with Brodsky. He openly ridicules the poet, saying that "...Fatal miscalculations of tone can be candidates for any future Stuffed Owl, the famous anthology of awful verse" (36). Michael Schmidt calls Brodsky "his worst translator." Schmidt prefers Weissbort's translations to Brodsky's "elaborate joint versions" (25).

In contrast to this severe criticism, Walcott, who translated a number of Brodsky's poems, comes to Brodsky's defense. Acknowledging that Brodsky was "particularly concerned about approximating Russian meter," Walcott explains how the poet tried to achieve this. His recollection is valuable as it gives an insight into Brodsky's translation process:

But what happens in the Russian meter is that you lose the article. If you lose the English article, since there is no article in Russian, and it's done by inflection, or whatever, then you are seriously affecting the meter of the poem, because for example you can't say the ship, you need an extra syllable. But the problem was he is always careful that the thing did not sound too pentametrical. And therefore he would try to violate the pentameter as much as possible, or slur it, or break it down into thought, blocks of thought rather than the colloquiality of it. (316)

Brodsky's insistence on formal features made him difficult to work with. Sven Birkerts, interviewing Brodsky, confronted him: "I was reading recently where Wilbur was describing to the audience—quite tartly, I thought—how you and Derek Walcott were

flying in a plane over Iowa, re-correcting his translations of one of your poems-- which did not make him happy." Brodsky replied the "poem only profited out of that." He explained that having asked [Wilbur] to do certain passages three, four or more times I merely felt that I have no human right to bother him with that one more time. I just didn't have the guts. Even the uncorrected version was excellent (JBC 74). Walcott admits that Brodsky was very much in control of his translators and often demanded the impossible: "I think also what gets difficult in the translations of Brodsky is that sometimes he can be very stubborn about certain aspects of translation, but he has the right to be stubborn."

This is how he describes their collaborative work:

Joseph had done an interlinear. He himself does his interlinears. [...] I remember we spent, I think it must have been, six hours on three lines altogether, the three of us,⁴¹ in the apartment of a friend. And Joseph was groaning with anger and exasperation. He just said, 'Fuck this, fuck that, fuck you' in fun. But we all collaborated on trying to get those three lines right. (317)

Of his acclaimed translation of "Letters from the Ming Dynasty," Walcott modestly says:

The interlinears were already there. I was just given something that I had to wordfully adopt to a meter--with him there--that metrically very close. I'm not saying that out of the translation there were not felicities that I have arrived at in a sense. But that required getting into Joseph's mind. So people asked me, 'Do you know Russian?' So the word translation is very exaggerated. (316-17)

Walcott defends Brodsky from accusations of losing his own voice:

Dick Wilbur did "Six Years After." That's a beautiful poem, right? It's a lovely English poem, an American poem, if you wish, done by Richard Wilbur. The same feeling is there in "Lullaby of Cape Cod" translated by Anthony Hecht, and some of Howard Moss's translations. But ideally I don't know how close the Russian is, but I've listened to Joseph recite it. I've listened to the rhymes in it. I've listened to the meter in it. And I think Dick Wilbur has done a superb job. Now it may be more Wilburian than it is Brodskian but, at the same time, I don't think it matters very much. A prosaic translator goes for the sense, goes for the meaning, goes for the logic and the order of the words. A poet- translator knows that he has to adopt the poet's personality into his own and therefore when Wilbur

⁴¹ The third person was Barry Rubin (qtd. in Walcott 316).

becomes Brodsky (it's not a matter of Brodsky becoming Wilbur, it's Wilbur trying to become Brodsky) it's very, very sincere. (316)

Walcott also gives credit to Brodsky's involvement in the translation: "[H]e does an awful lot of work himself, even metrically, even with rhyme" (317).

As was mentioned, Brodsky was difficult to work with and it led to conflicts with his some of his translators. The controversy around the translation of "A Part of Speech" is the most notorious. In 1978, Weissbort published his translations of "A Part of Speech" in *Poetry* and was even awarded a prize for it (Weissbort, *From Russian* 24). But Brodsky was not satisfied with these translations, especially with the meter, as he thought that the line was too short. Brodsky retranslated the poem with the help of Walcott, explaining that "was putting a book together and that all he wanted to achieve was a certain consistence in meter."⁴² Weissbort says that he was humiliated as at the International Poetry Festival in Cambridge he was asked by the poet to read Brodsky's version: "It angered and humiliated me to hear echoes of my own work." He sent accusatory letters to Brodsky but the poet never admitted his fault. Weissbort believed that "even if he had decided, as was his right, not to use my translation, he ought to have consulted me before cannibalizing it" (25). He said he never received such an admission. Later Weissbort admits that he "was hasty":

In my confusion, I had not examined the translation closely, but had simply formed a general impression. It became clear to me later that he had, in fact, cannibalized it less than I had supposed, when I noted some resemblance between old and new. (25-26)⁴³

⁴² "A Part of Speech" was published in *The New York Review of Books* in December 1979 and had only Brodsky's name as the translator. In a collection of poems *A Part of Speech* published in 1980, it was presented as "translated by the author."

⁴³ Polukhina says that Brodsky made so many changes that Weissbort refused to be a co-author and even accused Brodsky of plagiarism ("Английский Бродский" 49).

Weissbort says that after a period of silence, Brodsky sent him a card: “a Joseph-card, possibly from Rome, of an ancient mosaic of two fighting cocks. Life was too short, he wrote—or words to that effect. But I think it was the rooster that did it. I had forgiven him anyway, I realized then, but the postcard made it possible for me to forgive myself too. Still, scars remained” (26). Despite this disagreement, Brodsky later asked Weissbort to translate other works (Polukhina “Английский Бродский” 49). In the 2002 *Joseph Brodsky: Collected Poems in English*, “A Part of Speech” appears with the following note: “This translation, by Daniel Weissbort, first appeared in *Poetry* (March 1978); subsequently revised with the author; revised I, II, VII, X, XIII, XIV, and XV first appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, December 20, 1979” (513).

Brodsky himself admits his difficulties working with translators:

С переводчиками всегда возникают довольно сложные отношения, особенно если они старше вас по возрасту. Они присылают вам варианты того, что они сделали, и вы начинаете их выправлять. Людей, которые старше тебя, можно поправлять, увы, только до известной степени, потому что потом начинаются обиды. Это, конечно, происходит с любым человеком, в любом возрасте. [...] И поэтому, чтобы не портить никому кровь, я стал заниматься этим сам. (БКИ 619-20)

He says that he feels responsible for what is published with his name, especially since he is in a privileged position to have to oversee it. Brodsky also claims to be ready to take the full responsibility for criticism of his English translations (БКИ 620).

Brodsky’s move toward self-translation may have been dictated by considerations of practicality (it was faster to do it himself and he avoided confrontations with translators), and status (he wanted readers to hear his own voice). His impossibly high standards probably made him feel that no one else could carry out the task and that he was the only one who had “congeniality” with the author. His faithfulness to the formal

features of his originals also suggests that Brodsky had ambitions to change the conventions of English poetry.

Is English Brodsky English? / Is Brodsky's English English?

After the appearance of *To Urania* where most of the translations were carried out by the author himself, Brodsky's critics, analyzing his work, no longer differentiated between the English works, which include Brodsky's English poems, his co-authored translations, and his self-translations.⁴⁴ There was an array of very positive reviews that proclaimed Brodsky "a true successor to Robert Lowell and a great American poet of our age."⁴⁵ Phoebe Pettingell in "Brodsky in Two Worlds" writes:

In English his poems display a mastery of form, dexterity with rhyme and meter, and an allusiveness one normally associates with neometaphysicals like Auden. The [...] section from "Venetian Stanzas" with its ironic twists of meaning, witty off-rhymes, alternating patterns of long and short lines add up to an impressionistic picture of exotic decadence in the city of canals [...] Such a passage might well pass for the effort of English or an American poet. One catches the influence of Robert Lowell or Anthony Hecht--and unquestionably that of Auden - as well as a whiff of their Victorian progenitors. The words resonate with primary vigor as if they were composed in English. (18)

The critic appreciated that "this international writer clings tenaciously to his origin," that his "similes evoke Russian objects, ideas, even their alphabet" (18). Andrew Motion goes as far as to make the bold assertion that "it has become a truth universally acknowledged that most of the best poets are the ones for whom English is not their native language, like Brodsky and Milosz" (qtd. in Davie 1415).

⁴⁴ Twenty-three poems were translated by the author, eight poems were translated in collaboration with others, and twelve poems were written in English.

⁴⁵ This praise is by Michael Hoffman taken from Christopher Reid's 1988 article on Brodsky (17).

This praise seems to have produced resentment on the part of some English and American critics, especially poets, who probably felt, as Weissbort puts it, that Brodsky “вторгся в их литературу,” and who were irritated by his success, “их возмущало, как это его сделали поэтом-лауреатом США” (qtd. in Polukhina, “Интервью с Дэниэлом Уэйсбортом” 130).

Christopher Reid, an esteemed English poet and poetry editor of *Faber & Faber*, believes that Brodsky “occupies a position of statelessness somewhere between Russian and English,” which he called “Translationese” (17). He acknowledges with regret that it “is the mark of time which ensures some privileges to the poet” and attributes Brodsky’s success to his “interesting personal history.” However, now that Brodsky “has dared to dispense with these privileges,” the critic says that his poems should be judged “purely on their own merit,” asking “how generous such allowances should be.” In his article, which is tellingly named “Great American Disaster,” Reid maintains that Brodsky has been a failure as an American poet. He says that Brodsky recklessly “shrugged off his co-translators and rushed into original English composition without any preparation.” He enumerates all the blunders in Brodsky’s poem “May 24, 1980.”⁴⁶ He says that “the poem as a whole transmits an air of flamboyance that is hard to resist, even when the claims the poet appears to be making himself verge on the thrasonical.” The critic ridicules Brodsky’s metaphors. Neither does he appreciate Brodsky’s propensity for word play: “He appears to have cultivated a taste for slang and colorful verbal arcana, his texts bristle with those thought-saving devices that are supposed to lend the language a

⁴⁶ Brodsky translation of this poem is the one that is most subjected to criticism. See Christopher Reid’s “Great American Disaster”; Craig Raine’s “Joseph Brodsky’s English”; Charles Simic’s “Whence This?”; Gerald Smith’s interview with Polukhina (122). The fact that this particular poem was chosen as an

colloquial swagger.” Reid accuses Brodsky of “tone deafness” that “afflicts both self-translations and original poems.” He sarcastically notes that poems “bear titles ‘A Martial Law Carol,’ ‘The Berlin Wall Tune’ that poignantly signal musical aspirations destined to be cruelly thwarted” (17).

Reid, however, does not deny a non-native speaker “access to understanding of English idiom,” which was “gloriously demonstrated” by Nabokov. A comparison with Nabokov is not in Brodsky’s favor: “Brodsky however has yet to achieve that mastery, and from the evidence here, would appear to have a long way to go before he does so” (17). Reid does, however, give credit to moments when Brodsky’s “original poems, even those on rather reach-me-down political themes, show less stress and strain, the melodramatic earnestness, that make so much of the translated work intolerable” and also, though with reservations (“certainly outstays its welcome”), finds that “The New Jules Verne” “offers flashes of genuine humor” (18). Reid’s verdict is very severe. He denies Brodsky any merit as a poet in English, qualifying Brodsky’s English as an “un-English quality of Brodsky’s performance” and condescendingly instructing that “the first thing” [Brodsky] needs to acquire, if he is to make progress, is an ear” (17). But he has serious doubts that Brodsky could ever develop one, as Reid suspects it might be “too late [...] to help the man, or alert him to the risks he is running. This weird jumble of mannerism has become a fixed style, his very stock-in trade, and he’s not likely to let go of it in a hurry.” At the end Reid warms a bit, saying that there may be “the glimpse of a hope that, if Brodsky can overcome his natural impatience and settle down to learning the

example of Brodsky’s flawed English was also noted by Polukhina (“‘I, Instead of Wild Beast, Entered the Cage...’” 69).

craft, he may become, not the great American poet of our time but at least someone we can read with admiration and pleasure" (18).

Another critic, Donald Davie, accuses Brodsky "of dense clutter," oversaturating the line with concrete physical detail." He sides with Reid regarding Brodsky's "unwillingness to pass up the remotest chance of pun or a quibble." Davie, as critics before him, attributes this to Brodsky's determination to keep Russian prosody: "The consequences are momentous, for it means that the pounding Russian line can master and carry along with itself a clutter of exuberant tropes and 'physical detail,' under the weight of which the lighter English verse stumbles and hesitates and is snarled" (1415). He also notes that

the enjambment [...] is a more delicate instrument in English than in Russian precisely because it is potentially more disruptive. If the integrity of the verse-line is less emphatic in English than in Russian, an enjambment sets that integrity at risk in English far more than Brodsky recognizes. For certainly his use of enjambment can be coarse and cavalier. (1415)

Neither does Davie appreciate "heaping of trope on trope, a hyperactivity of metaphors," and explains that this "seems to have come into being not by design, but somewhere in the gulf between Russian and English." Davie's verdict is kinder than Reid's under the guise of caring about what is better for the poet: "Commendations like 'that rare thing at present time--a major poet' or 'a poet of true nobility,' though doubtless warming to Brodsky, are of no use to him." This is still rather a far cry from giving him the status of the Great American poet:

The result is less happy. Brodsky is less inward with English especially with its rhymes and intonations than he supposes. If we compare *To Urania* with *A Part of Speech* we discover a poem that has become even more busy. *To Urania* makes it harder to encompass Brodsky under the aegis of the classical though this seems to be what he clearly craves. (1415)

John Simon, while giving credit to *A Part of Speech*, is very critical of *To Urania*: "*A Part of Speech* was unmistakingly poetry whether or not one liked a particular poem or even the book as a whole. *To Urania*, however, is with the exception of a couple of short pieces at the beginning—all opaque maunderings in tormented English or, worse yet, doggerel." He ridicules Brodsky for injecting conversation into his poetry and also using archaism- like "throth," "whence"; he finds such figures of speech as *dog-eared kingdom of cudgels forest* "illogical"; he observes that "well preserving" is un-English, notes grammar mistakes. Simon is especially harsh about Brodsky's rhyme, which he says "grate on the ear." His final assessment is acrimonious: "Disaster runs a riot in poem after poem, stanza after stanza, often line after line. [...] This is Gongorism or Mannerism at its rankest. Well second-rankest" (55).

There also appeared critical reviews, which questioned not only Brodsky's knowledge of English poetics, but also his intellect. Sam Hamill does not agree with Thomas Wharton, who compares Brodsky to Auden, Browning and Catullus. Criticizing Brodsky's syllabic count and rhyme scheme as "leaden rhymes," Hamill goes further than attributing failures only to untranslatability: "His prosody lacking the sophistication of an Ezra Pound there is an oddly Victorian quality about much of Brodsky's poetry. One feels behind the poems the movement of an intelligent but otherwise conventional mind." Hamill further denies Brodsky the status of contemporary poet:

Despite its post-modern stance, despite a very contemporary décor one sniffs the air for the faint musky odor of mothballs among velvet dresses and silk gowns. Brodsky is poorly suited to the task of speaking from an international stage. As a spokesman for literature with capital L, Joseph Brodsky is often at odds with common sense. (20)

Craig Raine, a prominent British poet, also questions Brodsky's reputation. In a 1996 article called "A Reputation Subject to Inflation," he attributes Brodsky's success to political circumstances and the lucky coincidence of being Akhmatova's protégé. He says, "As a thinker Brodsky is fatuous and banal" (19).

The controversy and criticism of Brodsky's English poems motivated Brodsky's advocates. Right after the publication of *To Urania* (1988), which caused contradictory criticism about Brodsky's English, Polukhina in her interviews with prominent Russian, British, and American literary figures, most of whom are Brodsky's colleagues, translators, and personal friends, asked them to assess Brodsky's English poems and his status as an English poet.⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that most Russian critics were ready to acknowledge the influence of English poetry on Brodsky and through him on Russian poetry in general. Loseff believes that "Brodsky transplanted the great leafy tree of English poetics to the Russian wilds" ("New Conception" 129).

Walcott, also a bilingual poet, though acknowledging the controversial nature of English poems,⁴⁸ still believes that Brodsky contributed to modern poetry and recognizes Brodsky's influence on himself:

I think that Joseph's poetry has enriched English twentieth-century poetry because most poets in the twentieth century that I can think of don't see intelligence as being a quality of poetry. The ability to think is not very common. The ability to be not only argumentative but to think thought is not necessarily the attribute of a lot of twentieth century poetry. I mean, there is a lot of striving and a lot of mumbling and a lot of stuff like that but thought as grace, as intelligence... I think

⁴⁷ The interviews were published in *Brodsky Through the Eyes of his Contemporaries* in 1992.

⁴⁸ This is what Walcott says, "Well, nobody is claiming that they are perfect. What you've come on to really is the question as to whether Russian is better than English. First of all he writes terrific English prose and he can write and he has written, good English poems. The only person I can think of who can write good English poetry is Nabokov, and Joseph is a much better poet than Nabokov" (318).

one thing I learned from Joseph is that it made me realize thinking is part of poetry. (318)

However, most English critics are not eager to grant him equal status with an English poet. Roy Fisher, also a poet, says:

In music there is a phrase “busy”, which means there are lots of little notes and pauses. The texture of Brodsky’s translations, as English poetry, reads to me as busy. [...] I can’t believe that the texture of the Russian, or the texture of Brodsky’s mind when he is writing in English, is as “busy” as the texture of his translations. (305)

Even Loseff is rather reserved: “He hasn’t yet succeeded in English anything as good as anything he’s written in Russian” (“New Conception” 132).

After Brodsky’s death, in the collection *Труды и дни* contributed by Brodsky’s fellow poets, critics, and friends, the same question comes up. Isaiah Berlin⁴⁹ believes that “Поэт может писать только на языке своего детства. Ни один поэт не создал ничего достойного на чужом языке.” On the other hand, Berlin’s own native language was Russian, and he openly admits: “По-настоящему я люблю только русскую поэзию. [...] Это каким-то образом поэт. [...] Английская поэзия со мной не говорит” (100). About Brodsky’s English poems, he says: “Я не говорю, что они не годятся. Но они не идут ни в какое сравнение с его русскими стихами. А по-русски... С самого начала, как только это начинается, вы в присутствии гения” (97-98).

Gerry Smith, one of the leading specialists on prosody and author of several articles on Brodsky’s prosody, shares the same opinion:

Но для меня, носителя английского языка с чужеродным знанием русского, как правило, то что звучит у Бродского гениально по-русски, по-английски

⁴⁹ Berlin is a philosopher, Professor at Oxford University, former President of the British Academy, and author of *Russian Thinkers*.

звучит только так себе, без божества. [...] Что касается его оригинальных английских стихов, я признаю, что это в каком-то роде *tour de force*, но об их качестве как поэзии я лучше умолчу. (qtd. in Polukhina, "Интервью с Джеральдом Смитом" 122)

He sees the problem not only in the untranslatibility of prosodic features:

Дело здесь не в привнесении в английские стихи строгих рифмованных форм; широко распространенное среди русских мнение о том, что у нас пишут и понимают только свободный стих, глубоко ошибочно. Для англосаксов труднее всего воспринять не форму, а образ поэта, обладающего высоким предназначением. Последним представителем этого типа, кажется, был как раз Иосиф Бродский. (122-23)

Answering Polukhina's question about whether Brodsky's twenty-year presence on the poetic horizon changed anything in English poetic landscape, Smith replies:

Скорее всего изменило очень мало, главным образом из-за масштабности и разнообразия поэзии на английском языке, частично из-за нашей пресловутой инсулярности.⁵⁰ (123)

Weissbort sums up the attitude of the English literary establishment:

Они считали его эксцентрической фигурой, а его успех, его известность полностью приписывали политическим обстоятельствам. Для них он был просто русским писателем, который в отличие от визитеров, Евтушенко и Вознесенского, постоянно живет на Западе. [...] Большинство англо-американских поэтов было довольно основательно настроены против Бродского. Не могу припомнить никого, на кого бы он повлиял.⁵¹ (qtd. in Polukhina "Интервью с Дэниэлом Уэйсбортом" 130)

Polukhina comes to Brodsky's defense in two articles. In the introduction to "Бродский в Англии" in the collection *Труды и дни*, and in the expanded version "Английский Бродский" (1998), she explains the hostile reaction of the English speaking literary establishment. One of the reasons for Brodsky's cool reception lies in his theory of translation, in the fact that he believed that Russian poetry could be

⁵⁰ Smith becomes rather defensive on this point: "А позвольте спросить кто в России знает крупного английского поэта уже свыше двадцати лет занимающего одно из первых мест, Крэга Рейна?" (123).

⁵¹ He does admit, however, that Brodsky influenced Heaney and Walcott (130).

translated into English while still transporting Russian prosodic features. She sides with the Russian poet Sedakova who says that Brodsky, being a reformer of Russian poetry, against the background of English-speaking poetry comes across as a conservative (56).

Another objective reason lies in the difficulty of rendering Sovietisms. But Polukhina also notes more subjective reasons for the cool reception. She quotes John Bailey, who believes that Brodsky's unpopularity "lies in his deep reverence of Auden." As Bailey points out, none of the English critics and poets had high esteem for Auden (56).

Polukhina focuses her defense on the two most vicious critics, Reid and Raine. She doesn't think that Brodsky's critics are familiar with Brodsky's poetic world, which is why they cannot appreciate the enjambments and inversion that capture the "portrait of the poet's fate"; neither could they understand that Brodsky's rhyme "bears semantic inevitability" (57). She accuses them of lack of conscientiousness, hasty reading, and inaccuracies.⁵²

Polukhina sides with Loseff when he says that "мнения западных поэтов, за исключением Милоша, основательно скомпрометированы незнанием русской поэзии и языка, на котором пишет Бродский." She believes that "наиболее авторитетную оценку английских стихов Бродского могли бы дать западные слависты, чей английский родной, чья профессия русская литература, а специальность—русская поэзия" (57). Polukhina turns to Russian, American, and British slavists for their input about Brodsky's English poems. In the recent collections

⁵² Polukhina notes that Raine tries to find support from Heaney, from whose article "Brodsky's Nobel" he selects two epithets, "awkward and skewed," for Brodsky's English poems, ignoring another article by Heaney, "The Singer of Tale," which praises Brodsky's intellectual genius and which contradicts Raine's opinion of Brodsky's intellect—"as thinker, Brodsky is fatuous and banal" ("Английский Бродский" 51). Polukhina gives an example of another critic, Ann Stevenson, who by her own admission bought only one book by the poet and in her critical review gave it the wrong title, *One Plus One* (57).

The Art of the Poem and *Как работает стихотворение Бродского*, which are devoted to the analysis of Brodsky's individual poems, prominent Slavists contribute illuminating readings of Brodsky's poems: Leon Burnett analyzes Brodsky's English poem "Galatea Encore"; Gerry Smith, "Singing without Music"; Robert Reid, "Belfast Tune"; Barry Sherr, "To Urania," and David Bethea, "To My Daughter." All have a very high opinion of Brodsky's English verse. It is noteworthy that all three specialists chose to analyze original English poems rather than self-translations. It is interesting to trace Bethea's opinion of Brodsky's English poems. He agrees with the poet's critics that Brodsky's "triple end-rhymes [...] that in Russian celebrate their own sound as poetry [...] in English exist only in limericks or doggerel." He believes that "the barrier [...] lies when he attempts to translate 'his rhythmic signature' into English" (*Creation of Exile* 231). He also argues:

The problem seems to be when he writes in a quasi-civic key, something very difficult in the present cultural climate in America, and when he overcompensates for the serious subject matter [...] by resorting to markedly casual, at times buffoonish puns and turns of phrase. (234)

Bethea, though critical of "W.H. Auden: A Tribute," notes that another elegy, to Robert Lowell, "genuinely seems to work, even reaching the level of Brodsky's great Russian 'Elegy on the death of T.S. Eliot'" (235). Bethea notes that "the clean, clipped images succeeded precisely because they are not pinioned too tightly by the rhyme scheme and rhythmic structure" (236). It must be emphasized that the poems under analysis were written in English and not translated. The status of translated poems is complicated as it is not clear what criteria to apply to them.

Bolder defense of Brodsky against Raine comes from Kyst. He focuses on Raine's criticism of Brodsky's use of vocabulary (mixing registers) for the sake of

preserving rhyme. Kyst believes that in this time of postcolonial literature, when English opens a lot of possibilities of non-normative use of language, Raine's objection is an anachronism ("Еще раз об английском Бродском" 304).

The publication in 2000 of *Collected Poems in English* reopened the issue of Brodsky's English. The translators are identified only at the end of the book. The editor of the *Collection*, Ann Kjellberg, explains the decision to acknowledge the translators separately from the poem, as following the example set by the 1996 collection, *So Forth*, which was "an invitation to the reader to consider the poems as if they were original texts in English" (xiii).

In his review of *Collected Poems in English*, Mackinnon notes that "Brodsky's poems in English have divided their readers as almost no other body of work in recent times" (9). He praises Brodsky because he "succeeded in finding a unique voice" and hopes that "he might yet have tremendously liberating effect on English verse" ("A Break From Dullness" 11). Mackinnon's article largely focuses on defending Brodsky from Raine, who had just republished his 1996 article under the new title "In Defence of T.S. Eliot."

Mackinnon's article elicited a response from Raine, in which Raine is not as harsh as he was in his original piece, but in which still does not treat Brodsky as an English poet. In the letter to the editor entitled "Joseph Brodsky's English," Raine now limits his criticism to Brodsky's English, calling it "wonky" and still asserting that Brodsky has "a deficient ear for English" (17). It is noteworthy that Raine again leans on Heaney to substantiate his point, citing the same words he quoted in his first article, "awkward and skewed," thus disregarding Polukhina's objection to his selective use of Heaney's

criticism. (See footnote on page 53). Charles Simic says that “[Brotsky’s] English is uneven—it is obvious to anyone reading him in two languages that he can be deaf to the nuances of usage of his adopted one” (10).

The changing views about the validity of Brodsky’s practice of translation can be followed through the vacillations of Brodsky’s translator Weissbort. Weissbort, was at first critical of Brodsky’s translations, calling them “беспомощны, даже возмутительны” (qtd. in Polukhina, “Интервью” 127).⁵³ In the recently published book, *From Russian with Love*, written in the form of journal and memoirs, Brodsky’s translator traces the evolution of his own attitude toward Brodsky’s translations and raises many issues of translation.

Weissbort admits that he “adamantly opposed Brodsky.” He believed that Brodsky “was asking the impossible, for the Russian text to be *imported* into English wholesale, English having to be Russianized to accommodate it. It followed that English then ceased to be English. That this was to be avoided at all costs” (31). However in the next line he exclaims, “Now I am not so sure!” Weissbort seems to side with Lachlan Mackinnon who believes that Brodsky was engaged in creating a new idiolect.⁵⁴

Though acknowledging and enumerating the pitfalls that this kind of translation is subject to, Weissbort believes it has legitimacy. One of the benefits he sees in it is that it

⁵³ The critic is very harsh: “На мой взгляд, они довольно беспомощны, даже возмутительны, в том смысле, что он вводит рифмы, которые в серьезном контексте не воспринимаются. Он пытался расширить границы применения женской рифмы в английской поэзии. Но в результате его произведения начинали звучать, как У.Ш. Гилбет или Огден Нэш” (qtd. in Polukhina, “Интервью” 127–28).

⁵⁴ Mackinnon refers to Brodsky’s English as “the half-English of a deracinated man” (“Joseph Brodsky” 12). Weissbort writes: “My only objection here is to Mackinnon’s characterization of this idiolect as ‘half-English’, since it is neither half, nor quarter, but simply itself” (32).

gives the advantage of hearing Brodsky's voice: "However, as I now mouth these *unsmooth* Brodsky-fabricated translations, I am grateful (as was Derek Walcott) to him. I hear – in or through the English--Joseph's own voice, that is his *Russian* voice" (88). Brodsky was willing to pay the price of being ridiculed, because he "was attempting to narrow the gap between the two languages" (53), to "create the English that embraced both traditions" (106) and to "marry" the two languages that he revered (88).

Weissbort notes that this experiment was "bound to be misunderstood and to offend, to be rejected as an aberration" (55). He leaves unanswered the question of whether "future translators should or will follow in the path of prosodic literalism that he trod. Perhaps only Joseph Brodsky was in a position to undertake such project, perhaps that that is, author and translator have to be the same person, and even then it is quite likely that Brodsky was uniquely endowed or qualified" (116).

Polukhina notes that Brodsky believed in the "mimesis" of the two languages and wanted to infuse Russian into English ("Английский Бродский" 56). Both Weissbort and Polukhina agree with Fisher when he calls Brodsky's insistence "a salutary and noble sight, if a quixotic one" (306). Polukhina also believes that Brodsky had a mission to bring Russian closer to the English reader, to the English language itself (56). Brodsky was very much aware of the criticism and took it to heart.⁵⁵ Nevertheless he would not concede.⁵⁶ This unrelentless persistence raises the question of Brodsky's

⁵⁵ Weissbort says that he was told Brodsky was upset by the reviews on *To Urania* (qtd. in Polukhina "Интервью" 130).

⁵⁶ Brodsky's unwavering views on translation stem from his uncompromising personality. He was a person of strong beliefs. My short survey demonstrates his strong personality even in childhood. Asked if he ever had been forced to change anything in his poems because of outside pressure, Brodsky gives a very categorical reply: "never" (CWJB 55). See Brodsky's later explanation of why he undertakes some projects, for example, writing essays or prefaces to collections of Russian writers: he says he owes it to the culture. When trusted with a particular project, he undertook it ardently. Not only did he have strong

ambition with regard to the English language. Did his experiments concern only his own translations, since he was the author and had the ultimate freedom with his translations, or did he have a far-reaching aim to impact English poetry”? This seems to be the implication of Weissbort’s remark when he says that Brodsky’s tried “[t]o broker the differences between Russian and English prosody by arranging a marriage between the two, in the expectation and hope that parties will grow to like one another” [...] (88). Weissbort aptly notes that Brodsky self-translation experiments revived the discussion about the possibilities of poetic translation (98).⁵⁷

As we can see, evaluation of Brodsky’s self-translation turns out to be a complicated matter. Should we apply different criteria to self-translations, different from poetry written by native speakers, and regard them as some kind of “Frankensteinian experiment”?⁵⁸ To Polukhina’s suggestion about who could assess Brodsky’s English writing, I would add that ideally, slavists and specialists in English poetry would be the most likely candidates. This, however, is practically an impossible combination. What is possible, nevertheless, is to require that both the English and Russian versions of the text are taken into consideration.

convictions, he believed in a sense of mission. When Brodsky was Poet Laureate, he wanted to put in every hotel nightstand drawer, along with the Bible, a collection of the best world poetry, as he believed in the power of poetry (Brodsky “An Immodest Proposal” 205). Paraphrasing Dostoevsky, Brodsky believed that poetry could save the world.

⁵⁷ Since, as I noted in the Introduction, I do not evaluate aesthetic value of the “Englishness” of his poetry, I do not engage in this discussion.

⁵⁸ This image was used by Bethea (*Creation of Exile* 263).

Joseph Brodsky About his English Writing.

On many occasions Brodsky repeated that he did not have any ambitious aspirations in the English language and that he was not “after a seat on the American Parnassus” (JBC 74). On the other hand, he persistently maintains that he cannot live without the English language, that English is his salvation, (БКИ 153) “the only interesting thing that’s left in my life” (JBC 98). If a writer is so passionate about a second language, how can he have no aspirations in that language? In order to answer the questions of whether Brodsky had ambitions “to change the vector of English poetry” or not, it is necessary to look at the views he expressed in various interviews in context and in chronological order and to segment his views on the status of his self-translations.

When the question of literary bilingualism arises, Brodsky is first compared to Vladimir Nabokov, and everyone notes the different nature of their bilingualism.⁵⁹ Nabokov's bilingualism “was a natural outgrowth of his upbringing” (Bethea, *Creation of Exile* 165). Brodsky learned English at school, failed the class, and had to take a make-up exam in the fall, for which he studied all summer, an experience for which he was ever grateful (БКИ 243). Later he learned English mainly through reading and translating English poetry with a dictionary, mostly in Northern exile in the small village of Norenskaya (БКИ 75). He could therefore read English before he could speak it (CWJB 88). Bethea also notes that the different nature of Nabokov's and Brodsky's bilingualism lies in the different nature of their talent. In immigration, Nabokov, who was not a great poet, would write Russian verse, “maintaining the fiction of writing Russian verse helped Nabokov over the barrier of leaving ‘Russia’ behind and taking on a new persona as a

⁵⁹ See bibliography for more on Nabokov's bilingualism.

great bilingual prose writer” (226). Bethea says that Brodsky's “trajectory” was different. There was nothing “old world about it” (226).

Brodsky admits that when he came to the USA in 1972, his English was “in an embryonic state” (CWJB135). He regrets that when he met Auden he could not have any kind of “substantive conversation,” because his English was “so inadequate” (135-37).⁶⁰ Nevertheless that same year, at the University of Michigan, where he was invited to be a poet-in-residence, he started giving brilliant lectures in English. A year and a half after his arrival he wrote his first English poem, and his first essay appeared in 1975.⁶¹

Brodsky himself said that his English was different from Nabokov's:

Что касается двуязычия: в моем случае это действительно двуязычие, в случае Набокова – нечто другое. Как всякий цивилизованный человек, он чувствовал себя как дома в нескольких языках, двух или трех, поскольку он знал французский и какой-то объем немецкого. Для него английский был просто одним из языков. (БКИ 548)⁶²

⁶⁰ Brodsky provides this critical assessment of his own English: “I was only capable of asking a few questions and listening to the answers, but to formulate my own thought in such a way that I wasn't ashamed” (CWJB 135). Brodsky also recollects that when, in 1972, Lowell invited him to spend time in Boston, one of the reasons why he did not accept the invitation was that his English “wasn't good enough” (JBC 93). In 1975, he says, “My English was somewhat better and I went. The time we spent was in many ways the best time I can recall having while here in the States. We talked about this and that and finally settled on Dante”(JBC 93).

⁶¹ This is what Le Carré says about Brodsky's English paradox: “Мне никогда не удавалось совместить Бродского, которого я знал, чей английский казался мне косноязычным, и Бродского, который вот написал же по-английски то, что написано на этой странице. Я всегда сильно подозревал, что имеет место сложный процесс перевода. Он пишет с утонченностью и с иностранным акцентом, что в грамматическом и синтаксическом отношении получается прекрасно и может быть сравнимо только с Конрадом” (qtd. in Polukhina, “Интервью с Джоном Ле Карре” 114). In 1987, his interviewer, Richard Merin, said of Brodsky's English: “Хаотично употребляемые разговорные выражения (многие, кажется, взяты из фильма ‘Девушка из долины’) оживляют его речь. ‘По большому счету, - говорит он, - я ими упиваюсь.’ Его речь часто прерывается—но не оттого, что он не знает какого-то английского слова. Он ищет точное, истинное слово” (БКИ 289).

⁶² In another interview, Brodsky says that the comparison with Nabokov is not a good one, as for Nabokov English was practically a native language, while for him it was a personal stand (БКИ 672).

He rejects John Updike's compliment that he dealt with exile by becoming an American poet: "That's flattering, but that's rubbish" (JBC 99).⁶³ However, Brodsky acknowledges that possessing two languages is the norm in the civilized world and that writing poetry in two languages is possible. In the conversation with Volkov, he says: "Why 'foreign,' ultimately? I feel that two languages is proper. In Russia, by the way, that was always the case, in the good old days" (158-59). He emphatically contradicts Loseff when the latter says that it is possible to be a writer only in one's mother tongue ("Английский Бродский" 53).

Дело в том, что в истории русской литературы не так уж легко найти пример, когда бы писатель был литератором в двух культурах, но двуязычие – это норма: Пушкин, в конце концов ... он не стал известен как французский поэт, но как автор писем он был ничем не хуже своих французских современников. Итак, Пушкин, Тургенев, два языка – это норма. Просто в силу самых разнообразных, не нами придуманных обстоятельств, мы оказались в ситуации, когда нам не остается ничего другого, как настаивать на нашей этнической уникальности. Но для человеческого вида, для рода, просто для человека как организма это означает нечто оскорбительное. Дело в том, что у человеческого организма существуют огромные потенциальные возможности развития, и с моей точки зрения, просто оперировать двумя языками – в этом нет ничего сверхъестественного. Возьмите европейцев, голландцев, немцев, англичан – для них существование, в общем, в двух или трех языках вполне естественно. Я знаю массу людей, для которых написать одно и то же на двух языках вполне возможно. Стихи труднее, но то же возможно. Возьмите Беккета, Джойса, кого угодно, почему русские хуже? (БКИ 117)

It seems that Brodsky advocates "compartmentalizing" writing in a foreign language—he says that Pushkin was a great epistolarian in French. When he talks about

⁶³ It is interesting, however, to see the end of this exchange when Brodsky admits that he is American in his understanding of the American landscape. Sven Birkerts: "[...] I imagine that he (Updike) was referring not only to the fact that you have written a few things in English, but also to the fact that you were beginning to deal with American landscape, Cape Cod." Brodsky: "[...] Certainly one becomes the land one lives in, especially in the end. In this sense I am quite American" (JBC 99). This statement echoes Brodsky's belief that changes in space are highly over-dramatized and his stoic rejection of succumbing to the drama of the émigré poet.

his own English writing, he also distinguishes three different areas (writing essays, writing poems in English, and translating his own poetry) that are often lumped together when Brodsky's English is discussed.

Brodsky's first poetic experiment in English was in 1973. Only a year and half after his arrival in the United States, Brodsky wrote "W.H. Auden: A Tribute" to commemorate the death of W. H Auden. He says that he wrote it in English "to find myself in a closer proximity to the man I consider the greatest mind of the twentieth century" ("To Please a Shadow" 357). As noted earlier, the poem was not a success. Bethea writes that "subsequently Brodsky came to understand that, however much he loved and admired Auden, this particular elegy did not do honor to its subject, and in this sense was probably much worse than writing nothing at all" (*Creation of Exile* 235).⁶⁴ Four years later, in 1977, the same critic considered Brodsky's elegy to Robert Lowell to be an effective poem (235). In 1981, in an interview with Thomas, Brodsky explained his desire to write the elegy in English:

Я написал это стихотворение к похоронам Лоуэлла в Бостоне, я был подавлен, даже не подавлен—угнетен. Сначала я хотел написать стихотворение по-русски, но потом решил поднести тени такой подарок—английское стихотворение. Это была просто дань уважения. (БКИ 185-86)⁶⁵

Asked in 1979 if he wanted to become a bilingual writer, Brodsky replied:

Вы знаете, нет. Эта амбиция у меня совершенно отсутствует, [...] Но статья Набоковым или Джозефом Конрадом—этих амбиций у меня напрочь нет. Хотя я это вполне представляю себе возможным, у меня просто нет на это ни времени, ни энергии, ни нарциссизма. (БКИ 119)

⁶⁴ Brodsky confided to Polukhina in 1980: "Why did I give permission for it to be included in the collection and so I've ruined the whole book." (*Joseph Brodsky* 89).

⁶⁵ Brodsky repeats the same in the interview with Birkerts (JBC 98). Later, in 1985-1986, in the interview with Vitale, he says that he wanted to please the poet: "я хотел написать его, конечно, по-русски, но потом подумал, что ему больше понравится, если я напишу его по-английски. Я сделал это просто потому, что хотел доставить ему удовольствие" (БКИ 250).

In 1981, after the appearance of *A Part of Speech*, Brodsky still categorically denied that he is going to write poetry in English: “Нет у меня нет желания продолжать писать английские стихи. Достаточно того, что я пишу английские эссе” (БКИ 185). He did not “want to create for myself an extra reality.” On a humorous note, Brodsky adds that he “does not want to be penalized twice” (JBC 98). It seems that he understood that he would be at a disadvantage: “I would have to compete with the people for whom English is the mother tongue.” Again he emphatically reiterates: “And lastly which is most important. I don’t have that aspiration” (JBC 98). In 1985 he repeated: “У меня нет стремления сделать существенный вклад в английскую поэзию” (БКИ 250). Even in 1988, when a considerable number of his English poems appeared in periodicals, he said that he occasionally writes poems in English, but not because he has an ambition to become an English language poet. He also notes that he has no intention of competing with poets for whom English is a native tongue (БКИ 367).

Along with denying any ambitious aspirations in English poetry, on all the above-mentioned occasions, Brodsky often said that he is content with writing essays. From 1975 on, his essays appeared steadily in prestigious American periodicals. In 1986, they were collected and published in his first essay collection *Less Than One*.⁶⁶ Throughout the next nine years Brodsky continued writing essays that were compiled in a second collection, 1995’s *On Grief and Reason*.

Brodsky gives a few reasons for writing essays in English. One stems from a practical necessity to meet the deadlines: when he gets commissions from publishers to

⁶⁶ In 1986, *Less than One* was awarded the National Books Critics’ Circle prize.

write an introduction or an essay on some writer, it is faster to do it immediately in English.

Я начал сочинять свои эссе по-английски исключительно по соображениям практическим, потому что эссе, рецензия или, скажем, статья заказывается тебе журналом. Конечно, ее можно написать и по-русски, потом перевести на английский, но это занимает гораздо больше времени. Журналы, как правило, ограничены какими-то определенными сроками, надо поспеть к выходу, поэтому гораздо большая вероятность напечатать, если ты уже пишешь по-английски. И это было единственным соображением, по которому я этим занялся. *Для меня абсолютно естественно быть русским поэтом и писать эссе по-английски.* (БКИ 117-18, italics mine)⁶⁷

However, to his friend Evgeny Rein, with whom he is very open--though he complains that writing essays is time consuming--Brodsky gives another reason for writing essays: he regards it as an obligation to write about people, writers he feels strongly about. This stems from his understanding of the power of poetry and his sense of duty to influence readers.

Кроме того, статьи--это всегда попытка повлиять на умы. Вот сколько есть у тебя читателей, может, у них что-то после и изменится. Раньше я этого совершенно не желал делать. [...] мне предложили написать рецензии,⁶⁸ и я говорил, что совершенно не хочу этим заниматься. А мне было сказано, если ты этого не сделаешь, то это отдадут какому-нибудь идиоту. И это, возможно, главный двигатель. Не то чтобы ты считаешь себя самым умным, но опасность того, что этим будет заниматься идиот, как-то заставляет тебя все это сделать. (БКИ 426)⁶⁹

In the same interview, he remarks that he finds essay writing "interesting"(425). It is noteworthy that Brodsky says that "внутреннего импульса писать прозу по-русски у

⁶⁷ About the same: "Прозу я обычно пишу по-английски, поскольку назначен гонорар и поставлены сроки" (БКИ 672). See also БКИ 301-02; БКИ 425.

⁶⁸ He wrote the introduction to the collection of Mandelstam's poetry and Akhmatova's poetry.

⁶⁹ This quote is a further demonstration of Brodsky's sense of mission.

меня никогда не было” (БКИ 367).⁷⁰ His interest was probably stirred by the fact that the essay is a genre “который не очень часто используется в русской литературе. Язык восстает, сопротивляется—он не подходит для этого. А английский подходит. Я рад, что могу пользоваться этим чудесным средством” (БКИ 197).⁷¹ For him it was natural to try his hand at something he regarded as typically English. He says he “adores this tradition” (БКИ 302). His answer in 1988 echoes the answer he gave in 1980:

Interviewer: Кем вы себя чувствуете--гражданином мира, русским или американцем?

Brodsky: Я чувствую себя русским поэтом, англоязычным эссеистом и гражданином Соединенных Штатов Америки. Я думаю, что лучшего определения я для себя придумать не в состоянии. (БКИ 367)⁷²

While Brodsky is enthusiastic about essay writing, he constantly downplays the significance of writing poetry in English. In 1979, in the interview with John Glad, he compares it to the game of chess: “ [...] когда я пишу стихи по- английски – это скорее игра в шахматы, если угодно, такое складывание кубиков” (БКИ 118). In 1988 he says that he writes poems for entertainment: “У меня нет стремления стать англоязычным поэтом, иногда для *развлечения* я сочиняю стихотворение на

⁷⁰ He said that in his youth he tried to write a novel and was glad that never saw it again. “If asked to write in prose in Russian, I wouldn’t be so keen about. But in English it’s a tremendous satisfaction” (JBC 88). See also: “На русском в прозе я пишу довольно мало. Я вообще всегда терпеть не мог писать прозу” (БКИ 301). Brodsky always believed that prose is inferior to poetry. His treatment of poetry as the highest manifestation of language can be seen in the following rather provocative remark: “Люди, которые занимаются поэзией,—наиболее совершенные в биологическом отношении образцы человеческого рода” (БКИ 143). See also Brodsky’s essay “A Poet and Prose”

⁷¹ Brodsky says that in Russian the genre of essay writing is not very developed, while in English it has longstanding traditions (БКИ 302).

⁷² See also: “Для меня абсолютно естественно быть русским поэтом и писать эссе по-английски” (БКИ 117-18).

английском” (БКИ 330). He repeats the same idea in 1991: “Я довольно много пишу по-английски, но не стихи. Стихи чрезвычайно редко и скорее ради *развлечения*” (БКИ 152). Paradoxically, however, even as early as 1979, Brodsky says that he is quite capable of writing poetry in English. In the above mentioned interview with Glad, he says that it is quite possible to write poetry in a foreign language. What draws our attention in the following remark is that he emphasizes writing with prosodic elements:

Вплоне возможно, что через двадцать-тридцать лет просто появятся люди, для которых это будет вполне естественным. Я, например, знаю ряд литераторов в Европе – немецких и итальянских, которые, когда им больше нравится начинают писать стихи по-английски. Разумеется, это сопряжено с некоторой редукцией качества поэтической техники. (119)

Brodsky says with a touch of bravado that writing the poem in English “History of the Twentieth Century: A Roadshow” was not difficult (БКИ 302).⁷³

In 1991, after authoring a number of poems, Brodsky says he writes poetry in English because he wanted to “show his American colleagues”:

Я довольно много пишу по-английски, но не стихи. Стихи чрезвычайно редко и скорее ради развлечения. Или для того, чтобы доказать своим англоязычным коллегам, что я способен на это--чтобы не особенно гордились. (БКИ 191)

He explains that writing in English is a way to fight neurosis that comes from a desire to see his poems printed right away and not to wait till they are translated:

Я написал несколько стихотворений на английском языке, но это исключения. Это что-то вроде терапии. Я вижу, как мои американские коллеги пишут стихи, кладут их в конверт, отправляют в журнал и через неделю видят свои творения напечатанными. Начинаешь им завидовать, просыпается желание написать что-нибудь на языке, понятном всем, и не ждать пять-десять лет, пока тебя переведут. Это непреодолимое искушение,

⁷³ It is this poem that Bethea criticized for its “quasi-civic” style [...] something very difficult in the present cultural climate in America” (234).

которое может стать навязчивым. Чтобы избежать невроза, я уступаю искушению.⁷⁴ (БКИ 86)

Brodsky's friend Ababeva-Mayers believes that the English language presented new challenges for him:

У меня иногда было чувство, что он уже из русского не мог ничего извлечь такого, что его полностью захватило. Как будто материал не оказывал достаточного сопротивления, и ему стало не так интересно подчиняться русскому. А английский бросал вызов. Этот язык надо было сначала подчинить, и языку потом подчиниться. Но он явно чувствовал, что ему это дано. (100)

Brodsky humorously explains the novelty: "я попал в более интересную компанию" and on a more serious note, he adds, "английская литература старше русской. И это просто огромное удовольствие. Вдохновляешься тем, что пишешь на языке, на котором ничего раньше не делал" (БКИ 289).⁷⁵ It is noteworthy that Brodsky's words about his "love affair with the English language," about the necessity of having both languages, were said in the context of essay writing:

Достаточно того, что я пишу английские эссе. *Я люблю этот язык. Может быть, слишком.* Для удовлетворения самолюбия достаточно одних эссе. (БКИ 186, italics mine)

Как правило, пишу по-английски прозу, эссеистику. И мне это ужасно нравится. Я думаю, возникни сейчас ситуация, когда мне пришлось бы жить только с одним языком, с английским или с русским (даже с русским), то меня, мягко говоря, чрезвычайно расстроило бы, если б не свело с ума. На

⁷⁴ See also: "What's frustrating here is that your peers and friends judge you on the basis of something which has been done a long time ago. Translation is by definition...the consequence, the effect, not the cause, so therefore, you shake hands with people who have formed their opinion about you on the basis of something that has been written five or ten years ago. That prompts you in a sense to write occasionally a poem in English to show the boys who you are or who is charge" (JBC 163).

⁷⁵ This echoes Brodsky's explanation of why he started reading English poetry (see page 23). Ababeva-Mayers recalls: "Однажды в ответ на мою шутку, что он и за границей продолжает преклоняться перед заграницей, он мне сказал, что эти люди менее знакомы ему по складу- другие реакции, другое мышление, что у них больше можно научиться, чем у русских: он сам русский и все русское ему более знакомо и предсказуемо. Это было сразу после его приезда, давно и несерьезно, и касалось не друзей, а посторонних, но мне кажется, это в какой-то мере можно отнести к языку и к поэзии" (101).

сегодняшний день мне эти два языка необходимы. *Может быть, в этом до известной степени мое спасение.* (152-53, italics mine)

[A]s for English, I write my essays, which gives me enough sense of confidence. The thing is -- I don't know how to put-- technically speaking *English is the only interesting thing that's left in my life.* It's not an exaggeration and not a brooding statement. That's what it is. (JBC 98, italics mine)

Brodsky also uses the same vocabulary when he writes about self-translation.

а другие стихи вы пишете на английском? Написал несколько но у меня нет стремления сделать существенный вклад в английскую поэзию. Если и получилось хорошо, то отчасти потому, что я использовал некоторые тропы самого Льюелла. Но у меня нет стремления стать англоязычным поэтом. *Я перевел достаточно много своего на английский. Мне этого вполне достаточно.* (БКИ 230, italics mine)⁷⁶

When Brodsky speaks about self-translation, he becomes passionate: "It's a maddening experience" (JBC 73), "Я без ума от английского языка" (БКИ 250).

Translation, Brodsky says, requires congeniality, love for the language, "you have to be possessed by it" (БКИ 250). To describe living in two cultures and in two languages, Brodsky uses the word "schizophrenic" (БКИ 620). It is interesting that this remark "во всем этом есть нечто весьма шизофреническое (что, конечно, при существовании в двух культурах не более, чем норма" was used in the context of working on the translation of his poems. It seems that Brodsky, though he says that the two languages are important, understands that self-translations will not make him an American poet. Self-translation entails a psychological aspect, that is the need to re-express oneself in the new language. This aspect will be examined in Chapter III.

⁷⁶ Compare this with: "Я хочу писать стихи по-русски и прозу по-английски. Это дает мне чувство полноты или, скорее, *самодостаточности*" (БКИ 186) and "*Достаточно того, что я пишу английские эссе. Я люблю этот язык. Может быть, слишком. Для удовлетворения самолюбия достаточно одних эссе*" (185).

Brodsky's Views on Translation: Convictions and Contradictions⁷⁷

Though Brodsky was an avid translator—in his own words he “translated from every living or dead language” (CWJB151)—he says he did not have any strict theory of translation. He even doubted if a translation theory were possible and emphasized the practical aspects of translation:

Нет, теорий у меня нет. Я сомневаюсь, что в этом вопросе может существовать какая-либо теория. Тут все зависит от практики, все в процессе проб и ошибок. (БКИ 250)

Brodsky, nevertheless, expressed a rather categorical assessment of the translation of his own poetry and of the translation of Russian poetry in general. His views on translation can be deduced from his interviews, essays where he expressed his opinions on his own translations, (carried out by him and by others), on translation of Russian poetry in general, and, of course, from his own translation practice. Often Brodsky expressed contradictory views, but taken in context and chronologically they can give a picture of Brodsky's views on translation.

Translatability. Being a prolific translator, Brodsky was well aware of the difficulties and complexities of translation and of the impossibility of rendering everything in translation. In 1981, referring to the Russian poet David Samojlov, whom Brodsky considered his mentor, he says: “Мой учитель, поэт Давид Самойлов, говорил, что хороший перевод сохраняет 70 процентов подлинника. ... В любом,

⁷⁷ There is an insightful short article “Brodsky's Views on Translation” by Polukhina. The author explains the importance of form for Brodsky in general and, hence, the importance of rendering formal structure in the translation. She notes that the insistence on the prosodic features difficult for his translators to accept that also made him “embark on self-translation” (29). Polukhina observes that Brodsky believed in the possibility of translation, understanding that there are losses for which he was willing to make up. She also observes the importance of “congeniality” for Brodsky. I hope the analysis I present here will further develop and expand the subject.

даже самом совершенном, переводе вещь теряет” (БКИ 191). Seven years later when his English was considerably better, after having self-translated many of his own poems, Brodsky raised the translation possibility to 85 percent:

В лучшем случае в переводе передается 85 % оригинала. Порой можно достичь большей точности, но в действительности никогда не удастся целиком воспроизвести произведение на другом языке. *Ставишь себе невозможную цель и развлекаешься этим. Если можешь. Ведь такое занятие интересно само по себе, поскольку изначально перед тобой заведомо невыполнимая задача, а что может быть увлекательней, чем невозможное.* (БКИ 331, italics mine)

As often happens when a person attains more competence and facility, it only makes him realize that perfection is not possible. Besides, by that time Brodsky's self-translations and co-authored translations had been subjected to very harsh criticism, which made him understand the futility of trying to achieve absolute adequacy.

Conceding to the fact that “перевод—утрата по определению” (translation is a loss by definition) (БКИ 85), Brodsky still believes in the possibilities of translation, including the translation of poetry:

вся наша культура, она в той или иной степени переводная. [...] французская культура тоже переводная; с латыни, с греческого и т. д. Вся наша христианская и постхристианская культура, она зиждется на Библии, которая переведена, и переведена, и переведена. (БКИ 222-23)⁷⁸

He believes that “quite a lot of a poem survives translation. Besides, one is not able to say something so qualitatively different that in the translation it could be utterly lost. Man's capacity for utterances is somewhat limited: you cannot lose much, even though you only understand the man in half” (JBC 56-57). He admits that, “The succession of images and

⁷⁸ Brodsky compares poetry to translation thus: “Читая или переводя Донна, учишься взгляду на вещи. У Донна... мне ужасно понравился ... перевод бесконечного в конечное.” He paraphrases Tsvetaeva's metaphor “голос правды небесной против правды земной” for “голос правды небесной на язык правды земной” where he inserts his main concept “language” (БКИ 156). See also: “Poetry after all in itself is a translation; or, to put it another way, poetry is one of the aspects of the psyche rendered in language” (*Less Than One* 104).

sometimes the succession of thought, the development, the psychology of the next step are sometimes preserved.” However, the last remark conveys some reservations, and undermines and even contradicts Brodsky’s observation in the same interview, when he says that “poetry is all about nuance, linguistic nuance” (56). Understanding that it is difficult to preserve formal features, he still praises Charles Johnston’s translation of “Eugene Onegin,” calling it “excellent” and noting that it was rhymed (БКН 191).

Brodsky seems to distinguish between translation from Russian into English and from English into Russian. He believes that it is easier to translate from English into Russian:

It’s easier to translate from English into Russian than the reverse. It’s just simpler. If only because grammatically Russian is much more flexible. In Russian you can always make up for what’s been omitted, say just about anything you like... You can even shove this English straightforwardness into some more or less edible turn of phrase so that you don’t lose anything. (CWJB 86)

The main difficulty in the translation of English poetry into Russian he sees in the

reader’s lack of cultural preparation. For instance, what in English is called “reticence” can be restored in Russian, too, but the Russian reader is incapable of evaluating this reticence on its merits. He is not reared on the culture of restrained, of muffled irony. (CWJB 86-87)

Translating from Russian into English, according to Brodsky, is much more complex, which he attributes to the intricate Russian syntax that in translation has to be constrained within English fixed word order.

Its power of subordinate clauses, in all those participle phrases and other grammatical turns of speech that the devil himself could break his leg on. All this simply does not exist in English. In English translation, preserving this charm is, well, if not impossible, then at least incredibly difficult. So much is lost. Translation from Russian into English is one of the most horrendous mindbenders. There aren’t many minds equal to this. Even a good, talented poet who intuitively understands the task is incapable of restoring a Russian poem in English. The English language simply does not have those moves. The translator

is tied grammatically, structurally. That is why translation from Russian into English always involves straightening out the text. (CWJB 86)

It is Russian syntax, that, according to Brodsky, accounts for the difficulty of translating Platonov's prose, which is famous for grammatical constructions and which Brodsky calls "a dead end" and "cuneiform," and which he finds impossible to reconstruct (JBC 57). To the question of whether there is the same kind of loss in the translation of his poems Brodsky answers: "No, because... well it occurs, certainly, but in my case it occurs to a lesser degree" (JBC 57). This is another interesting and contradictory observation, as Brodsky's Russian syntax is notoriously complex.

Another inconsistency in Brodsky's ideas about translation concerns Brodsky's observation that only a native speaker can translate into his/her own language: "I think in translation what matters is your ability to handle your own language" (JBC 162). This remark is revealing from two points of view. It explains Brodsky's words on the difficulty of translating from English into Russian, and vice versa--being a native speaker of Russian, it might seem easier for him to translate into his own language. On the other hand, by 1991 when he gave this interview, Brodsky had translated many of his own poems, as well as those of other poets from Russian into English.⁷⁹ It shows that he considered himself capable of "handling" English.

Balance and Compensation. Understanding that it is impossible to render everything in translation, Brodsky admits that sacrifices are inevitable:

You may lose, in the case of this or that rhyme, but while you lose it there, you try to make it up in another line. Therefore, what you're trying to do is to sustain a

⁷⁹ Brodsky translated "Я тебя отвоюю у всех земель и всех небес" and "Собирая любимых в путь" by Tsvetaeva. They first appeared together under the title "Two Poems from 1916" in *The New Yorker* in October 17, 1983. Translation of "Tristia" by Mandelstam first appeared in *Confrontation* in 1984 and was reprinted in Brodsky's essay on Mandelstam, "The Child of Civilization" Brodsky also translated Nabokov's "Demon" published in *The Kenyon Review* (Winter 1979).

certain esthetic balance, which does exist in the original, and if it does exist, you simply try, by different means, to resurrect that balance. (БКИ 250)⁸⁰

In this connection a question arises: How is this balance achieved? What should be preserved and what can be sacrificed in the translation? Brodsky provided the answer to this question. In an interview given in 1988 to the Journal *Theater*, Brodsky expresses most fully his views on translation, prioritizing different aspects of translation. He noted that there were two or three dimensions, which had to be preserved in translation (БКИ 331). It seems that he gave priority to the content, and that formal aspects came second: “Прежде всего содержание, а потом такие формальные аспекты, как ритм и метр.” By “content” Brodsky understands lexical content.⁸¹ However, a few lines below he notes: “Самое основное при переводе сохранить строй оригинала. Если он обладает определенным размером и рифмовым звучанием, переводчик должен попытаться передать их, пусть это даже будет выглядеть банально” (БКИ 331). The last remark is relevant— Brodsky insisted on the faithfulness to the formal features of the original, though he understood that it may be to the detriment of the aesthetic value. Brodsky was also very much aware that in different cultural traditions prosodic patterns may mean different things:

The translator if he is a conscientious person, he will try to imitate the structure. However there is a large question that looms over those things, it certainly involves the biography of this or that structure with various cultures, various languages, various prosodic traditions. The same structure may mean, imply or allude to different thing. (JBC 57)⁸²

⁸⁰ See also: “You can sacrifice this or that aspect of a poem while translating” (JBC 175).

⁸¹ Though content is understood as lexical content, Brodsky also notes that “невозможно в конечном счете отделить содержание от формы, но так или иначе в процессе перевода можно их обособить” (БКИ 331).

⁸² See Hass’ criticism of Brodsky page 41.

This makes one agree with Bethea's opinion of Brodsky's translation practice: "Although in theory he is unwilling to sacrifice any part of the poem to the process of transposition, one senses that for Brodsky a work's prosodic character is certainly no less important than its individual lexical items (*Creation of Exile* 230). That is why Brodsky's evaluation of the translation of Khlebnikov by Paul Schmidt, which Bethea calls "monumental," was so harsh:

Predominately a tetramic poet, Khebnikov would have been better served by his translator if Schmidt had stuck to the literal renditions of the poet's lines, no matter the crypt of footnoting that would have been required. That at least would have given his readers an idea of Khlebnikov's verbal intensity. ("The Meaning of Meaning" 35)

"Eugene Onegin" translated by Nabokov in free verse did not gain Brodsky's approval either.⁸³

Brodsky believed that existing translations in free verse of Akhmatova, Pasternak, and Mandelstam were inadequate representations of these poets' works.⁸⁴ In the conversation with Volkov, Brodsky explains "why nineteenth-century Russian poetry has turned out to be so insurmountable" for the English speaking public:

I have a theory. The problem is that nineteenth century Russian poetry is metric, naturally, so translating it into English requires the meter. As soon as the modern English speaking reader encounters regular meters, though, he immediately thinks of his own native poetics, which set his teeth on edge a long time ago... Their knowledge of Pasternak and Akhmatova rests on translations that allow tremendous deviations from the original. The emphasis in these translations is usually on transmitting the "content" at the expense of the structural features, which they justify by saying that the principal idiom in twentieth century English poetry is free verse. What I would like to say is this: the use of free verse in translations does, of course, allow us to get more or less complete information

⁸³ Of Nabokov's translation, Brodsky states: "Он и перевел Онегина как аргумент в споре с пушкинистами, опустив рифмы и представив на суд совершенно другое, в сущности, произведение. Я бы не решился на такое, я бы попытался перевести близко к оригиналу, сохраняя рифмы, хотя бы из-за моего отношения к языку" (БКИ 548).

⁸⁴ See his harsh criticism of translation of Mandelstam's poetry in "Beyond Consolation."

about the original—but only at the level of “content,” no higher. Therefore, when people discuss Mandelstam here, in the West, they think he falls somewhere between Yeats and Eliot, because the music of the original flies out of the window. Local connoisseurs, however, feel this is permissible and even justifiable in the twentieth century. (53)

Brodsky's insistence on rendering formal features of his own poems, despite harsh criticism, makes one believe that he would not sacrifice formal features.⁸⁵ Talking about prosodic features such as rhyme and rhythm, he notes, “С размером разобраться легче, потому что пятистопный ямб остается пятистопным ямбом на любом языке.” He admits that “рифмы более интересны в плане перевода, поскольку тут очень велик выбор возможностей” (БКИ 331). However, Brodsky also admits that he is more willing to sacrifice rhyme than meter.⁸⁶

The question arises as to why Brodsky attaches so much importance to formal elements. On many occasions Brodsky speaks about prosody versus free form. In his essay on Mandelstam, he equates prosody to a moral act: “It should be remembered that verse meters in themselves are kinds of spiritual magnitudes for which nothing can be substituted. [...] Differences in meters are differences in breath and in heart-beat. Differences in rhyming pattern are those of brain functions” (“The Child of Civilization” 141). Brodsky believed it was the moral obligation of his generation to continue the tradition of formal verse:

когда мое поколение появилось на сцене, [...]мы оказались в каком-то смысле на опустошенной литературной почве. Мы знали, что-то было до нас, во втором десятилетии этого века [...] только все это было совершенно вымарано. Мы знали об этом, могли постепенно реконструировать разные

⁸⁵ A good example of Brodsky's persistence can be seen from the translation of “Song to No Music” and the criticism it evoked. Kline was convinced that the poem could not be translated. However, Brodsky with Rigsbee accomplished a translation, which resulted in sharp criticism (Schmidt).

⁸⁶ He admits, “В некоторых случаях я вынужден был пожертвовать рифмой. Просто потому, что у меня не было времени заниматься каждой строкой” (БКИ 185).

вещи. Книги были для нас недоступны: чтобы достать стихи Мандельштама, требовалось большое искусство. Цветаеву впервые я прочел в машинописи, такие вещи доставали тайно. Формы или, так сказать, традиционные подходы были для нас очень важны—я собираюсь говорить об этом в нобелевской лекции—в принципе тем, что мы пытались воссоздать, была культура, не меньше. Разумеется, мы могли бы писать все эти современные стихи. [...] все занимались деформацией поэзии. Мы, не столько рационально, сколько интуитивно, решили пытаться противодействовать этому искусственному разрыву традиции, пробовали ее воссоздать, сложить воедино это рассыпающееся здание, поддержать культуру. (БКИ 439)⁸⁷

Although he attaches such importance to preserving formal features, Brodsky still believes in the possibility of translation. He even sees advantages in the “explanatory nature” of translation. In his essay “In the Shadow of Dante,” talking about the new collection of Montale in English, Brodsky claims that though in translation “much of the subtle, discreet music is lost, the American reader has an advantage in understanding the meaning, and would be less likely to repeat in English an Italian’s charges of obscurity” (99). It is interesting that, though he accepts the free verse translation of Montale, Brodsky regrets that there are no indications of the rhyming scheme or metric patterns of the poems in the footnotes.

Accuracy. Accuracy is another principle of translation, according to Brodsky. He differentiates between inaccuracy and embellishment: “Переводчик стоит перед двумя опасностями. Первая--неточность. Нет ничего хуже неточности. Вторая опасность--это искушение придумать какие-то красоты, которых нет в оригинале” (БКИ 185).⁸⁸

Paul Schmidt’s translation of Khlebnikov is criticized by Brodsky because:

the translator tailors the material to his own liking, i.e. according to his own notions of what a successful modern poem should be... He reshuffles lines like a

⁸⁷ The fact that he talks about it in his Nobel Lecture is significant (“Uncommon Visage”). See also БКИ 32 and JBC 60.

⁸⁸ One might argue that embellishment is an inaccuracy.

deck of cards, writes his own lines, skips rhymes as he pleases. Alters the meters, “straightens” complex images, and juggles chronology - in general he behaves like a spoiled child at his aunt’s table. (“The Meaning of Meaning” 33)

All these remarks concerning accuracy deal mainly with prosody. About translations of his own poems he holds the same principles: “Я делал все, что было в моих скромных силах, чтобы приблизить стихи к оригиналам. Первое и самое главное--в большинстве случаев я настаивал на сохранении исходного ритма и схемы рифмы” (БКИ 185). Brodsky demands that everything, even what seemed to be poor and weak, should be rendered:

I try to restore in the translation even those things, which I regard as weaknesses.⁸⁹ [...] When you are translating you try to preserve the sheen, the paleness of those leaves. And you accept how some of them look ugly, but perhaps when you are doing the original that was because of some kind of strategy. Weakness has a certain function in a poem... some strategy in order to pave the reader’s way to the impact of this or that line. (JBC 73)

This insistence on faithfulness to the original is also aimed against embellishment. One of the criticisms aimed against translators of Mandelstam’s poetry was that translators because they “themselves poets and their own individuality is dearest of all to them. Their conception of individuality precludes the possibility of sacrifice, which from my point of view is the primary feature of mature individuality, and also the primary requirement of any (even technical) translation (“Beyond Consolation” 14).⁹⁰ Brodsky

⁸⁹ He uses the word “restore” because he speaks here about improving other people’s translations of his own verse.

⁹⁰ Here again we see one of Brodsky’s inconsistencies. In the conversation with Volkov, Brodsky says that he did not like the idea of translating Nabokov as he believed Nabokov was a “failed poet,” but a remarkable writer. “It was a sort of mischief on my part... And I think, by the way, that now—that is, in English — Nabokov’s poem sounds just a bit better than in Russian. Just a touch less banal. And, maybe, it is, in general, better to translate the second-class poets, the second-class poetry, like this poem by Nabokov, for instance. Because you feel-how should I put it?...less accountable” (159).

Brodsky’s interview with Volkov was published in a special issue of literary almanac *Chasti Rechi*. Brodsky’s friends secretly decided to publish a special issue dedicated to his fortieth birthday. Ludmila Shtern turned to Nabokova’s widow Vera Nabokova asking permission to republish Nabokov’s short story “A Matter of Chance.” The story and the interview appeared in the same issue. Shtern says that

was aware that faithfulness to the formal features resulted in making his English text sound awkward. However, he resisted being translated in free verse even if it sounded “better”:

Some translators espouse certain poetics of their own. In many cases their understanding of modernism is extremely simple. Their idea, if I reduce it to the basics, is “staying loose.” I, for one, would rather sound trite than slack or loose. I would prefer to sound like a cliché... an ordered cliché, rather than a clever slackness. (JBC 74)

Brotsky says that he would rather prefer “тяжеловесность и точность, чем прилаженность и непохожесть” (БКИ 332). He goes so far as to say: “Я верю в плохие переводы—они позволяют читателю отдаться собственному воображению” (БКИ 184-85).⁹¹ Now, one is confronted with another of Brotsky's contradictions, as on a number of occasions he expressed his concern about the quality of his English translations:

The thing that bothers me about many of those translations is that they are not very good English. It may have to do with the fact that my affair with the English language is fairly fresh, fairly new, and therefore perhaps it's subject to some extra sensitivity. So what bothers me is not so much that the line of mine is bad - what bothers me is the bad line in English. (JBC 74)

He says that he wanted it to be a good English poem: “я хотел, чтобы был хороший английский язык—чтобы это было хорошее английское стихотворение” (БКИ 332).⁹² On the other hand, the high praise of the translations of his poems, carried out by

she had not seen the text of the interview and because the almanac was prepared as surprise. Brotsky “had no idea” that she had asked for permission to reprint the Nabokov story (270).

⁹¹ He expresses the same idea when he talks about the translations of Mandelstam's poetry: “For bad translations, precisely because of their badness, stimulate the reader's imagination and provoke the desire to break through or abstract oneself from the text: they spur one's intuition” (“The Child of Civilisation” 142).

⁹² Walcott, describing Brotsky's tediousness and even stubbornness when it comes to translation, also notes Brotsky's readiness to compromise for the sake of good English. “He wanted it to sound natural in another language. [...] He is quite prepared to change a metaphor or a rhyme in English, which is a little astonishing, because he'd rather get the metaphor right in English with the rhyme than keep the Russian. I find that exciting because he's saying: I'm working in a language, the metaphors that have come out of that

acclaimed poets, make him aware that he is losing his own voice. Emphasizing his own faithfulness to the original, Brodsky says that he does not re-write his poems but translates them (JBC 73).

Congeniality. Faithfulness to the original and the suppression of one's own individuality is still not enough for Brodsky. He extends the exigencies of translation to the notion of congeniality. Evidently, Brodsky attaches great importance to congeniality, because he mentions it on different occasions. "Удачный перевод--это не просто мастерство переводчика, но и конгениальность" (БКИ 250). "Translation is a search for an equivalent, not a substitution. It requires, stylistic, if not psychological, congeniality" (The Child of Civilization" 140).⁹³ Brodsky sees this ability in Walcott: "I found working with Walcott that his intuition is stunning. He knows no language, but he knew what I was doing" (JBC 162).⁹⁴ Congeniality, however, is not enough for Brodsky. He goes one step further, bringing it to the extreme, as with everything that he does. Congeniality also presupposes not only attunement with the poet, but also an obsession with the language: "С другой стороны, это требует определенного напряженного внимания, которое можно назвать любовью к языку. Одержимостью им. Я без ума от английского языка" (БКИ 250). And of course, he says "я мог быть довольно

language are right and natural to that language, and so on, but I'm bringing a Russian intelligence to those things" (318).

⁹³ In the same essay, Brodsky goes further, likening congeniality to a mindset: "But apart from technical skills and even psychological congeniality, the most crucial thing that a translator of Mandelstam should possess or else develop is a like-minded sentiment for civilization" (140). See the analysis of Brodsky's translation of Mandelstam's "Tristia" in Nikolaev ("О конгениальности").

⁹⁴ This echoes Walcott's words about "getting into Joseph's mind" (316) discussed on page 43.

конгениальным по отношению к тому, что сам написал на русском. Я не могу найти для этого более конгениального человека” (БКИ 250).

Brodsky’s ideal translator would be Andrey Sergeev, a translator of English poetry who introduced Brodsky to Auden, and whose opinion he valued greatly. This is Brodsky’s description of Sergeev:

He was deep into Anglo-American poetry. For me Sergeev was not just a translator. He didn’t so much translate as recreate English-speaking literature for the reader using the means of Russian linguistic culture. Because the English-language and Russian-language cultures are absolute polar opposites. Which is what makes the translations interesting, by the way. (CWJB 128)

Again, one cannot but notice the contradiction: insisting on preserving Russian prosody, he goes against the tradition of English poetic culture. It seems that Brodsky insisted on bringing Russian linguistic culture into English. Polukhina believes that “through meter a poet is engaged in a complex exchange and dialogue with other cultures” (“Brodsky’s Views” 28).

Prosody is not the only translation challenge. There are many other translation difficulties, such as rendering cultural realia, imagery, lexical nuances, play on words. Of course, adherence to formal features limits the poet by putting some constraints on him or her, and makes the task extremely difficult. But as Brodsky says, it also makes the task “even more interesting” (БКИ 331).

Brodsky’s views on translation discussed here⁹⁵ were deduced from Brodsky’s observations about translation of his poems by others, about translation of other poets,

⁹⁵ It is noteworthy, that Polukhina’s article of 1996 is called “Brodsky’s Views on Translation.” However, in her article of 1998, she says “...следует коснуться еще одной серьезной причины холодного отношения к переводам самого Бродского—его теории перевода”(52), thus elevating his views to the status of theory. I tend to agree with Brodsky that he did not have a theory of translation, but rather strong views, which stem from his views on poetry and from his sense of mission. For beliefs and views to become theory, they have to be consistent and developed. Brodsky, however, apart from expressing strong

and about his own self-translations. That means that he does not treat self-translation differently from “regular” translations. It follows then that self-translations are translations and not variations on the same theme. It seems to substantiate Brodsky’s words that “I certainly don’t rewrite” (JBC 73).

As it is evident from the discussion, Brodsky has rather strong, sometimes controversial, views on translation practice. Certain aspects, however, remain unclear and controversial.

1. When Brodsky speaks about the inevitable losses in translated texts, he mentions that in the process of translation these losses are compensated in other places. He does not, however, indicate what he is ready to sacrifice, what his trade-off is.
2. It seems that he takes for granted the lexical accuracy that he calls “content.” When he speaks about accuracy, Brodsky mainly focuses on prosodic accuracy as that which presents the main difficulty. It appears that he is ready to sacrifice lexical accuracy for the sake of prosodic faithfulness. This, however, does not correlate with his emphasis on accuracy.
3. Another point also concerns accuracy. When Brodsky says that everything, all nuances, “all leaves” should be preserved, it seems that he aims at rendering all nuances of the poet’s style, such as play on words, idiomatic usage, imagery. He does not give any hint as to how they should be rendered.

views on prosody, leaves us only with fragmentary and contradictory ideas about other aspects of translation.

4. There is a contradiction between faithfulness to the original even at the expense of it “sound[ing] awkward and trite” and Brodsky’s concern that the translation should “sound good” in a foreign language.

Conclusion.

Self-translation is a part of Brodsky’s English creative writing, as well as his writing of essays, the composition of original poems in English, and his translation of Russian poetry into English. The impressive number of self-translations (fifty-five in all) and the fact that the number of self-translations was steadily increasing show that self-translation is an important part of Brodsky’s bilingual poetic work.⁹⁶

Brodsky’s Western orientation, determined by his Leningrad roots, the time of the “Thaw,” and also his association with Akhmatova, made him conscious of his link with world civilization. It opened him up to Western culture and, in a way, was the initial stepping stone that prepared him to start writing in English. His early interest in English and American poetry, in which he sees an affinity with his own poetics, and which he greatly admired, was important, because it prepared love for the Anglo-Saxon culture, which started in Russia and continued after his forced exile.

Brodsky’s constant inquisitiveness, his desire to experiment with new forms and ideas, also played an important part in his decision to begin writing in a foreign language and to translate his own poems. His main occupation and love in English was writing

⁹⁶ Beaujour believes that self-translation is a stage that most bilingual writers go through on their way to writing in their adopted language; it “forces writers who have been considering writing in another language, tentatively experimenting with it, finally to commit themselves to writing in their second language” (19). However, she observes that Nabokov returned to the self-translation of his earlier works later in life (175).

essays, a tradition that was not popular in Russian. Self-translation presented another challenge, and Brodsky was willing to master it.

Brodsky's resolve to engage in self-translation initially was caused by necessity. He was not satisfied with the quality of translation of his poetry by others. When the translation was entrusted to acclaimed poets, he was concerned about losing his voice. His standards of translation and his involvement in the translation process made him difficult to work with.

Though aware and hurt by criticism of his self-translation practice, Brodsky would not yield. His principled stand on translation can be explained by Brodsky's uncompromising nature and also by his sense of belief and mission in what he was doing.

Brodsky had strong, though contradictory, views on the translation of poetry that can be formulated as translatability, compensation for losses, accuracy to the original, and congeniality.

Many aspects of Brodsky's available comments on translation, expressed in different interviews, are still unclear. How far is Brodsky ready to go for the sake of prosodic faithfulness? How are cultural differences rendered? How is the balance between a good poem and faithfulness achieved, etc.? Chapter Two will look closely at Brodsky's translation practice and will attempt to provide answers to these questions.

Chapter Two: A Study of Brodsky's Self-Translation Practice. The Lexical Aspect

Chapter Two examines the nature of the modifications introduced in Brodsky's self-translations. The analysis is based on the premise demonstrated in Chapter One that Brodsky tries to preserve prosodic features of the original in his self-translations. This makes lexical rendition more difficult, as keeping the rhythmic pattern means selecting words with a certain number of syllables, which restricts word choice. Needless to say, attempting to sustain rhyme also limits the choice. This inevitably causes changes, which I call structural changes. This chapter is divided into two parts: Part A, "Structural Changes"; and Part B, "Translation Challenges." Part A looks at structural changes such as additions, insertions, substitutions, and omissions, which are further analyzed within each group according to their semantic or stylistic nature. Part B examines how Brodsky copes with translation difficulties such as rendering idioms, imagery, word play, alliteration, and cultural realia. A special section is devoted to discrepancies and inaccuracies. The analysis will enable us to trace tendencies Brodsky develops in his self-translation practice in terms of lexical choices and to explain the nature of the changes and the effect they have on the English text.

Part A: Structural Changes

Sequels

To preserve the rhythmic and rhyming pattern of the original, Brodsky resorts to what I call sequels, that is the addition of information in the English version at the end of

the syntactical unit. If the end of the syntactical unit coincides with the end of the poetic line, the sequel bears the double function of keeping rhythm and also rhyme:

что Финляндия спит, затаив в груди
нелюбовь к лыжным палкам – теперь, поди,
из алюминия: лучше, видать, для рук.
но по ним уже не узнать, как горит бамбук [...] (3: 246)

Or let's
say that Finland's asleep, nurturing deep disdains
for ski-poles, aluminum-made these days –
that is better for hands, as they say, for turns;
still they don't teach a youngster how bamboo burns [...] ("Kellomaki" 316)¹

Due to Brodsky's tendency to use enjambment, most sequels often run into the next line:

С высоты ледника я озираю полмира [...] (3: 191)

From a height of a glacier I beheld half a world, **the earthly width.** ("May 24, 1980" 211)

Sequels may also start a new line:

[...] Дальше, к югу,
то есть к юго-востоку, коричневеют горы,
бродят в осоке лошади-пржевали;
лица желтеют. (3: 248)

[...] farther eastward surge on
brown mountain ranges; wild mares carousing
in tall sedge; the cheekbones get yellower
as they turn numerous. ("To Urania" 281)

Sequels can be as short as one word or as long as a sentence. They include all parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, exclamations, et cetera.

In terms of the syntactic function they perform in a sentence, sequels can be objects or predicates, can indicate location, or function as secondary predicates or modifiers.

¹From here on the changes under analysis are in bold.

1. Most often sequels are used as objects in addition to the one in the original text, thus creating enumeration, which resonates with Brodsky's general tendency to use long enumerative chains in his Russian poems as well. In "Near Alexandria," to *pyramids* in the original text, Brodsky adds *porticoes, rooftops ripple*:

чувствуя близость пустыни в коих,
прячет с помощью пирамид
горизонтальность свою земля
цвета тертого кирпича, корицы.
И поезд подкрадывается, как змея,
к единственному соску столицы. (3: 242)

Having measured
to the capital's only nipple.
there the proximity of the desert,
the cinnamon-tinted earth waylays its
horizontality in the fake
pyramids, **porticoes, rooftops ripple**
as the train creeps knowingly, like a snake,
to the capital's only nipple. (269)

Sequel-objects are often accompanied by attributes:

Здесь можно вечером щелкнуть дверным замком,
остаться в одной сиреневой телогрейке. (4: 17)

Here in the evening you may snap the lock, undress
to the lilac sweatshirt, to the **matching long Johns**, whatever.
("The Residence" 288)

Sequels are often added with the help of conjunctions *and, or*:

а) Всюду,
даже в кухне, лоснится, дразня посуду,
образ, в масле, мыслителя, чья родня
доживает в Европе. (4: 17)

Everywhere, including the kitchen,
outnumbering dishes, hangs oils **and etching**,
depicting the Teacher, whose kinfolk might
still be living somewhere in Europe. ("The Residence" 288)

- b) А дальше плывут линкоры,
и простор голубеет, как белье с кружевами. (3: 248)

... And still farther east, steam dreadnoughts or
cruises
and the expanse grows blue like lace underwear. ("To Urania" 281)

In "North of Delphi," Brodsky simply adds *so on* to indicate enumeration, leaving it up to the reader's imagination and intellect to complete the picture:

Внемлите же этим речам, как пению червяка,
а не как музыке сфер, рассчитанной на века. (4: 72)

Harken then to these words as to the worm's true song
and not to the music of spheres for centuries and *so on*. (372)

He uses a similar technique in Russian, employing *и т.д.*, or *и проч.* Sometimes Brodsky adds yet another link to an enumerative chain that already exists in the original text:

... И отсюда тома Золя,
Бальзака, канделябры, балясины, капители
и вообще коллонада, в чьем стройном теле
размещены установки класса "земля-земля". (4: 17)

Hence, *sets of Goethe, plus
some Balzacs, chandeliers, capitals, gay putti,*
and the very columns whose supple body
houses a battery of the "ground-to-ground" class. ("The Residence" 288)

2. Sequels are also used to indicate location more specifically:

- a) что оставляют, слившись в одно,
белое после себя пятно. (3: 246)

so that the blending of two into one would yield
but a cloudy spot on the laundered field. ("Kellomaki" 317)

- b) In the English text of "May 24, 1980," Brodsky chooses to point to locations several times:

Я входил вместо дикого зверя в клетку,
выжигал свой срок и кликуху в бараке,

жил у моря, играл в рулетку,
обедал черт знает с кем во фраке.

I have braved, for want of wild beasts, steel cages,
carved my term and nickname on bunks and rafters
lived by the sea, flashed aces in an oasis,
dined with devil-knows –whom, in trails, on truffles.

Я слонялся в степях, помнящих вопли гунна,
надевал на себя, что сызнава входит в моду [...] (3: 191)

I have waded the steppes that saw yelling Huns in saddles
worn the clothes nowadays back in fashion in every quarter [...] (211)

3. Sequel-predicates are often employed to concretize or explain action expressed by the main predicate. They may be called “predicates of purpose.”

- a) превращавший “я”
в кристалл, отливавший твердою бирюзой,
но таявший после твоей слезой. (3: 244)

... turned some “I”
into a crystal, shot with hard turquoise,
that would melt like your tear to reduce the choice. (“Kellomaki” 314)

- b) у судьбы, увы,
вариантов меньше, чем жертв [...] (4: 71)

... fate, alas
has fewer options than victims to find itself at a loss [...] (“North of Delphi” 371)

Sequels-predicates are also used as another predicate:

- a) Шпион, ворошащий в помойке мусор,
извлекает смятый чертеж руин. (3: 241)

From a trash can, a spy plucks the crumpled morsel -
a blueprint of ruins--and glances east. (“Near Alexandria” 268)

The above addition suggests that a spy is from Europe.

- b) Впрочем, все это значит просто, что постарел,
что червяк устал извиваться в клове. (4: 72)

All that means, however, that you've grown old, that a tired worm
in a beak quits coiling, **becomes a morsel**. ("North of Delphi" 372)

4. Sequels are also used as second predicates:

- a) Повернуться спиной к окну и увидеть шинель с погонами
на коричневой вешалке, чернобурку на спинке кресла [...] (4: 42)

To turn away from the window! To behold a greatcoat with epaulets
on the brown varnished rack, a red fox on the chair, **neglected** [...]
("August Rain" 385)

- b) ты стремительно движешься. За тобою
не угнаться в пустыне, тем паче – в чаще
настоящего. Ибо тепло любое,
ладони – тем более, преходяще. (4: 132)

You are rushing away, **target free, defiant**.
There is no way to catch up with you in a desert; also
in the jungle-like present. For every warmth is finite.
that of the human hand is more so. ("Persian Arrow" 419)

- c) In the following example Brodsky graphically emphasizes the apposition by
embracing it in parentheses:

Падучая звезда, тем паче – астероид
на резкость без труда твой праздный взгляд настроит.
Взгляни, взгляни туда, куда смотреть не стоит. (3: 147)

A falling star, or worse a planet (**true or bogus**)
might thrill your idle eye with its quick hocus-pocus.
Look, look then at that locus that's better out of focus.
("The Fifth Anniversary" 241)

5. Sequels can specify how the action was carried out. The majority of sequels in this
group are verbal participles:

- a) Ясно, что долго накапливалось--в день или в год по
капле [...] (4: 142)

Clearly it rose drop by drop, for years, **attempting a neverscape**
("View with the Flood" 456)

- b) Се--лежащий плапмя колосс,
прикрытый бурою оболочкой
с отделанной кружевом оторочкой
замерших после шести колес. (3: 241)

This is a flattened colossus veiled
by the gauze **thickening on the horizon**
edged with the lacework of the wheels gone frozen
after six by the curb's gray welt. ("Near Alexandria" 268)

However, this type of sequel is expressed by other constructions as well:

- c) Там есть места, где припадал устами
тоже к устам и пером к листам. (3: 113)

There are places where lips touched lips **for the first time ever**
or pen pressed paper **with real fervor**. ("December in Florence" 132)

- d) города рвут сырую сетчатку из грубой ткани,
дребезжа, как сдаваемая посуда. (4: 26)

cities rip the retinal sacs **with lances**
clanging loud like returning empties. ("In Memoriam" 341)

6. Sequels can also be sentence-like structures:

- a) А то возникали чайки из снежной мглы,
как замусоленные ничьей рукой углы
белого, как пустая бумага дня;
и подолгу никто не зажигал огня. (3: 243)

Or else a few gulls would issue from the snowy haze
like the curls of the soiled-by nobody's fingers page
of a pallid, quietly rustling day,
and no lamp would light up **till they flapped away**. ("Kellomaki" 313)

- b) Зимой в пустых садах трубят гиперборей,
и ребер больше там у пыльной батареи
в подъездах, чем у дам. И вообще быстрее
нащупывает их рукой замерзшей странник. (3: 148)

In winter, Arctic wind shakes parks to herald foul days,
and radiators which absorb the dust in hallways
possess more ribs than girls. A freezing man, though, always
prefers the former, **which, in turn, appear more eager**.
("The Fifth Anniversary" 242)

- c) У рыбьей чешуи в воде там цвет консервный. (3: 148)

There fish scales shine with tin, in lakes where fish are soaking.
(“The Fifth Anniversary” 242)

- d) Золотистые лошади без уздечек
масть в дымоходе меняют на масть воронью. (III, 203)

Golden unharnessed stallions in the chimney
dye their manes to more corvine shades as they near the finish,
(“Tsushima Screen” 270)

- e) Дальше, к югу,
то есть к юго-востоку, коричневеют горы,
бродят в осоке лошади-пржевали;
лица желтеют. (3: 248)

Farther eastward surge on
brown mountain ranges; wild mares carousing
in tall sedge; the cheekbones get yellower
as they turn numerous. (“To Urania” 281)

Effects of Sequels

Informativeness

1. As the word suggests, sequels by their nature inject more information into the translated text, in comparison to the original. It should also be considered that in a poetic text, each word carries more gravity than in a prosaic text (Tynyanov). Therefore, the semantic space in Brodsky’s translation becomes denser as compared to the original. The reader of the English text absorbs more information than the reader of the Russian text (whether it is information about the qualities of an object or location information about how an action was carried out, or information that reveals the author’s attitude, such as irony or regret). Most of the information contained in sequels is not absolutely new, and thus not that essential, but it still makes the English text easier to understand. In

“Восходящее желтое солнце следит косыми лучами...” / “Tsushima Screen,” Brodsky compares fire in the chimney (or, more specifically, the sparks of the fire) to stallions who dye their mane from golden to corvine (at first fire sparks are the color of gold and at the end when the logs are burnt, become black). The addition in the English version of *as they near the finish*, which is a sustained metaphor, explicates the image and indicates that the fire is at an end. In the English text, Brodsky also uses a more specific verb that explains how the stallions change the color of their coat: they dye their manes:

Золотистые лошади без уздечек
масть в дымоходе меняют на масть воронью. (3: 203)

Golden unharnessed stallions in the chimney
dye their manes to more corvine shades **as they near the finish**. (270)

2. As was noted earlier, information contained in the sequel often is not very important, and sometimes it may be even redundant:

For it divides things in two, in **half**.
Like cash in your dreams. Like your idle fears
of dying. (“December in Florence” 132)

Dividing things in two implies that they will be divided in half.

In “To Urania,” describing the globe that Urania shows, the poet directs our eye to the forests full of berries, rivers full of fish: evidently he describes a location somewhere near St. Petersburg. He then takes us eastward where mares carouse in the sedge and says that *the faces turn yellower*, which suggests that now we are in Asia, where the people have a yellower skin tone. In the English version, Brodsky adds *as they turn numerous*, indicating the demographic situation (probably the large population of China), which is another hint that he is talking about the population of the Asian continent:

Дальше, к югу,
то есть к юго-востоку, коричневеют горы,
бродят в осоке лошади-пржевали;
лица желтеют. (3: 248)

[...] farther eastward surge on
brown mountain ranges; wild mares carousing
in tall sedge; the cheekbones get yellower
as they turn numerous. ("To Urania" 281)

3. However, some additions, in fact, contain important information, which might give a new perspective to the understanding of not only a particular poem, but shed new light on our understanding Brodsky's poetics. From the English version of "To Urania," we learn about Brodsky's attitude to Clio, who is the Muse of History; in Brodsky's semantics History means time. He says that, unlike Clio, Urania does not hide anything. The Russian text does not contain this contrast to Clio:

Днем, и при свете слепых коптилок,
видишь: она ничего не скрывает,
я, глядя на глобус, глядишь в затылок. (3: 248)

In daylight or with the soot-rich lantern,
you see the globe's pate free of any bio,
you see she hides nothing, unlike the latter. (281)

This, in a way, reveals Brodsky's belief that time is untrustworthy--unlike Urania, Clio/Time is hiding something. Probably this passage implies that Time is working against man, while man does not notice it. The opposition between Clio and Urania becomes sharper in the English version, which also makes clearer why Brodsky's sympathies lie with Urania.²

² The fact that Brodsky's attitude toward Urania is warmer was also noted by Sherr ("To Urania"). This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

Due to this addition, the English version of the following stanza from

“Kellomaki” offers a very interesting reading:

Эта внешняя щедрость, этот, на то пошло,
дар—холодея внутри, источать тепло,
вовне—постояльцев сближал с жильем,
и зима простыню считала своим бельем,
Это сковывало разговоры; смех
громко скрипел, оставляя след, как снег,
опушавший изморозью, точно хвоею, края
местоимений и превращавший “я”
в кристалл, отливавший твердою бирюзой,
но таявший после твоей слезой. (3: 244)

This outmost generosity, this—to denote true worth—
gift to exude, while freezing inside, the warmth
outside, was binding tenants and habitats,
and winter considered the drying sheets its own linen. That’s
what would stall conversations. A normal laugh
creaked snow underfoot, leaving prints above
where it powdered the edges of sighs or shy
pronouns with hoarfrost, or turned “I”
into a crystal, shot with hard turquoise,
that would melt like your tear to reduce the choice. (314)

At the end of the stanza, there is the sequel *to reduce the choice*, which is absent from the Russian text. To determine its meaning, one has to look at the whole poem. It is a retrospective poem devoted to the time spent together with Marina Basmanova³ in a small town on the Baltic Sea.⁴ The poem reconstructs the psychological and physical situation of their winter stay in this town (Smith “Kellomayki” 141). One of the motifs is the isolation of the town, especially in winter. This isolation makes the relationship special, because the lovers concentrate on each other. The motif of the unimportance of the town,

³ Marina Basmanova, Brodsky’s love and the mother of his son, Andrey, born in 1967.

⁴ Brodsky calls the place by its Finnish name. It is commonly known as Komarovo, where Akhmatova rented dacha. In the fall of 1963, Brodsky also rented a dacha there.

where they were once happy, is expressed throughout the poem, and is contrasted with the intensity of their relations. But the main theme is philosophy and the psychology of memory of the past (141), that is time. Brodsky addresses the question of what time does to love. As the town is disappearing from their memory, their love, which did not last, is disappearing from memory, as well. This idea is connected with the more profound thought that everything in life is passing. It brings us to another underlying theme, that everything is interconnected. The town is linked to love, the unimportance of the town makes their love stand out; the isolation of the town, on the other hand, makes their love the center of the universe, but in the end it also becomes unimportant, for it did not last. Love did not stand the test of time and exists only in memory, like the town. In Brodsky's poetic world, the borders between man, nature, and the world of things are blurred: the houses are reified—they are generous and try to warm the outside, in this they are like people: *this was binding tenants and habitats*. An intimate possession of a man (*bed sheet*) becomes an item that *winter claims its own*.

In the Russian text of the poem, cold *froze conversations*. The verb *сковывать* (freeze) is used with rivers (e.g. мороз сковал реку), which in general is an allegory of life, but in Brodsky's poetics, the river is also associated with speech. The fact that the river is frozen indicates silence. Laughter is compared to snow in a very intricate way: Brodsky compares creaking snow underfoot and leaving prints to the sound of laughter. Snow also is a symbol of memory.⁵ Brodsky attributes characteristics of snow to laughter: *смех громко скрипел, оставляя следы (снег, опушавший изморозью следы*

⁵ Snow is associated with marble, thus linking it with statutes and memory: "That's why the snow, this poor man's marble, devoid of muscle power, / melts...." ("In Memoriam" 341).

местоимений и превращавший «я» в кристалл/ snow powdering with hoarfrost the prints of pronouns and turning "I" into crystal). As a result, both snow and memory merge in some kind of linguistic unity, the fact that they rhyme and sound alike in Russian (*smekh--sneg*) enhances this symbiosis.

However, the metamorphosis does not stop here. "Я" is turned into crystal and then it melts into a tear of his beloved (*превращавший "я" в кристалл, отливавший твердую бирюзой, но таявший после твоей слезой*). "I" disappears, not only "I" the pronoun *per se*, but also the narrator for whom it stands.

If one traces the metamorphosis, the following chain emerges: 1. Laughter and snow are interrelated (they have characteristics that unite both); 2. Laughter powders the pronoun "I"; 3. "I" turns into crystal. Crystal looks like ice; 4. Crystal melts into the tear of a beloved woman.⁶ In Russian *кристалл* echoes with *хрусталь*. Crystal is a hard substance; the poet needs this characteristic because he compares it with hard turquoise, which, in its turn, suggests the color blue, which in Brodsky's semantic system of color, is positively charged.⁷ In the next line, the crystal is connected with the eye (through a tear and blue color). What makes the word *crystal* so potent is the fact that *кристалл* (crystal as a mineral) is close to *хрусталь* (crystal as glass) which is related to *хрусталик глаза* (iris). While "I" is in the form of crystal, it also reflects light and in a way symbolizes all the metamorphoses of which Brodsky has spoken above. But in the end nothing lasts: the crystal form is not the final form. "I," having turned into crystal, would

⁶ The tear is a recurrent image in metaphysical poetry. Brodsky translated Donne's Poem "A Valediction: Of Weeping," which he entitled "О слезах при разлуке," and Marvell's "Eyes and Tears."

⁷ See the opposition between a dark eye and blue eye in "Roman Elegies."

then melt and resemble the tear of a beloved woman, symbolizing sadness, implying that everything ends in sorrow. Taking into account the semantics of water, it might mean that everything is reduced to primordial water, the source of life. But the allusion to the tear of a beloved woman also warms this image. It makes one think about the poet's attachment to her, about their unfulfilled love, and about the bitterness of their relationship.

The fact that the metamorphosis ends with primordial water, which symbolizes life, is suggestive. It implies that everything returns to its final source, a cycle of return to origins, which is always sad. It also hints that one does not have many choices, that one is carried along by life, without thinking much about options. In English, this idea is expressed more explicitly than in Russian with the sequel *reduce the choice*. Placed in the final position, the sequel renders the poem's tone even bitterer.

In "May 24, 1980," summing up his forty-year life, Brodsky writes: "Что сказать мне о жизни? Что оказалась длинной" (3: 191). "What should I say about life? That's long and abhors transience" (211). The Russian text states that life has turned out to have dragged, which might imply boredom with life. In the English text, the addition *and abhors transience* suggests a different reading: one should not have expected life to be simple and understandable; it is complicated and unpredictable.⁸ Brodsky means, of course, his own life which had a long series of unexpected twists and turns (prison, northern exile, loss of love, expulsion from his country, immigration, heart surgery,

⁸ Weissbort thinks that it sounds "stilted," "highfalutin and therefore reductive" (*From Russian* 52).

recognition⁹). Whether this addition is for the better or for the worse is open to debate but it does allow a new interpretation of the poem.

Compensation

Aware of the losses inevitable in translation, Brodsky tries to compensate for them by providing additional information. In “То не Муза воды набирает в рот....” he uses the image of an aspen tree (*осина*), which in Russia is associated with death. In the English version of the same poem, “Folk Tune,” Brodsky does not render the image of the aspen tree (which does not bear the same associations for the English-speaking reader) but still he captures the idea of decay and death in the addition *grove’s sweet rot*:

И не встать ни раком, ни так словам,
как назад в осиновый строй дровам. (3: 196)

And the words won’t rise either like that rod
or like logs to rejoin their old grove’s *sweet rot* [...] (273)

In the English version of “Подруга, дурнея лицом, поселись в деревне...”/ “Elegy,” Brodsky does not translate *как знать*:

Это, как знать, даст побороть унылость. (4: 123)

That should cure ennui, though one should loath to patent
this. (“Elegy” 399)

The sequel *though one should loath to patent this* sounds like an afterthought and gives the utterance a flavor of the spoken speech, which in the Russian version was embedded in *как знать*.

⁹ Brodsky was first nominated the Nobel laureate in 1980. Polukhina in her analysis of the poem notes that “news of the possibility of his receiving the prize reaching him a few weeks before his fortieth birthday” (““I, Instead of a Wild Beast...” 73). The English version of the poem first appeared in the May 29, 1987 issue of *The New Yorker*. The same year he received the Nobel Prize for literature.

Emphasis

The position that sequels occupy, either at the end of the line, or at the end of the syntactical unit, enhances the information they contain. Very often they perform a summing up function, and oftentimes Brodsky tries to sustain this function of sequels with other means as well.

In "View with the Flood" a noun with an adjective (*a rainy gauze*) at the end of the enumeration chain after a strain of bare nouns (*cupolas, spires, treetops*) gives a note of finality to the line. It also sends us to the beginning of the poem, to the title, reminding that cupolas, spires, and treetops are seen through rainy gauze:

Вполне стандартный пейзаж, улучшенный наводнением.
Видны только кроны деревьев, штили и купола.
Хочется что-то сказать, захлебываясь, с волнением,
но из множества слов уцелело одно "была". (4: 142)

A somewhat familiar landscape, currently flooded. Currently
it's only *cupolas, spires, treetops, a rainy gauze*.
The throat wells up with gurgling, passionate commentary,
but out of the bunch of words all that remains is was. (456)

Rhythm can also produce the effect of finality. In the chain of predicates *blitzed, encircled, reduced to nil*, the verbs are given in a certain progression: the first verb has two syllables, the second one contains three, and the third one contains five syllables. Besides, the final predicate (sequel) consists of two words, while all others are of one word. The expressive short *nil* in the final position intensifies the idea of finality:

Когда вокруг больше нету того, что было,
не важно, берут вас в кольцо или это— блиц. (4: 173)

With nothing around to care for, for it's of no import
if you are *blitzed, encircled, reduced to nil*. ("Taps" 457)

Tone

Sequel-secondary predicates help create the effect of an afterthought, which gives the text a more colloquial tone and, at the same time, suggests a sense of thinking aloud, making it, in turn, more intimate. Sometimes afterthought can convey the author's irony.

In "Подруга, дурнея лицом поселись в деревне"/"Elegy" written in 1992 and evidently devoted to M.B. twenty years after they parted,¹⁰ Brodsky gives her the rather bitter advice to go live in a village where simple life with its natural change of seasons makes the process of aging seem natural:

You know, it's better to age where a milepost is nodding
where beauty means absolutely nothing,
or it means not youthfulness, bosom, semen
– since time, on the whole, is indeed all seasons.

That should cure ennui, **though one should loath to patent
this.** (399)

In this sequel (*though one should loath to patent this*), Brodsky acknowledges that it is bitter advice, but does so with sarcasm. The sequel also shows that he acknowledges that this poem is written in the form of a prescription, as if he were a doctor prescribing a cure.

Irony is also perceived in the next example. In "May 24, 1980" the addition *on truffles* indicates that the poet dined at exquisite restaurants. However the previous phrase *in tails* also clearly suggests an official ceremony.¹¹ This addition adds an ironic touch to

¹⁰ The English version of the poem first appeared in 1993 in *The Time Literary Supplement*.

¹¹ In her analysis of the Russian text of the poem, Polukhina suggests that *обедая черт знает с кем во фраке* (dine with the devil knows whom—in tails) may be interpreted as the reference to his "position to secure a Nobel Prize" ("("I, Instead of a Wild Beast..." 76). She notes the rhyming of *баракс – фраке*. Brodsky's life is embedded in these rhyming words. In the English text, he manages to render the same idea by rhyming *rafters* and *truffles*.

the phrase. Brodsky did not like pompous official ceremonies, and he tries to downplay them with irony; he also injects the ironic flavor in the enumeration of the dramatic twists of his life:

Я входил вместо дикого зверя в клетку,
выжигал свой срок и кликуху гвоздем в бараке,
жил у моря, играл в рулетку,
обедал черт знает с кем во фраке. (3: 191)

I have braved, for want of wild beasts, steel cages,
carved my term and nickname on bunks and rafters,
lived by the sea, flashed aces in an oasis,
dined with devil-knows--whom, in tails, **on truffles**. (211)

Sequels-parentheses also add coloring of oral speech to the poem. Not only do they give it a casual tone, but they also establish a contact with the reader and reveal the author's persona, thus injecting a personal touch to philosophic, esoteric thoughts.¹²

- a) But the past is neither that panther not some greyhound
that leaps onto one's stooped shoulders and, having thrown
the prey to the ground, strangles it in its brown
furry embrace – for its shanks ain't so sweet anymore, **alas**;
and the liquid Narcissus-resistant glass
of the river gets icy (the fish, having pondered its
tin-can, flickering silver bits
swims away beforehand). ("Kellomaki" 315)
- b) And our claim on that piece of land-
scape extended no further than, **should I say**,
the woodshed's sharp shadow, which on a sunny day,
wedged a snowpile. ("Kellomaki" 17)
- c) Here in the evening you may snap the lock, undress
to the lilac sweatshirt, to the matching long johns, **whatever**.
(**"The Residence"** 288)

¹² The fusion of colloquial and bookish, sophisticated vocabulary is characteristic of Brodsky's Russian style.

Sequels enhanced by other devices

Sequels, along with their main function to maintain the rhythm and very often rhyme, serve other functions, as if Brodsky wanted to kill two birds with one stone.

- a) Sequels that inner-rhyme. In the following example, *rest* rhymes with *dearest*:

Февраль короче
прочих месяцев и оттого лютее.
Кругосветное плавание, дорогая,
лучше кончить, руку согнув в локте
и вместе с дреднаутом догорая
в недрах камина. (3: 203)

February has fewer
days than the other months; therefore it's more cruel
than the rest. *Dearest*, it's more sound
to wrap up our sailing round
the globe with habitual naval grace [...] ("Tsushima Screen" 270)

- b) Sequels that contain alliteration and inner rhyme. Here, *aces* rhymes with *oasis*:

Я входил вместо дикого зверя в клетку,
выжигал свой срок и кликуху в бараке,
жил у моря, играл в рулетку [...], (3: 191)

I have braved, for want of wild beasts, steel cages,
carved my term and nickname on bunks and rafters,
lived by the sea, flashed *aces in an oasis* [...] ("May 24, 1980" 211)

- c) Sequels-metaphors:

Welcome, tragedy, with gods and heroes,
with curtains exposing your feet, *dirty with other eras*,
with proper names sunk in the maddening chorus. ("Portrait of Tragedy" 414)

- d) Elliptical sequels-metaphors:

In "MCMXCIV" the addition, *in this white captivity*, is metaphoric. Brodsky projects the notion of the animal world to the world of things. He alludes to the fact that animals do not multiply in captivity. The color *white* symbolizes death. The fact that the sequel is in

the form of a separate sentence gives it more weight. Moreover, its elliptical structure stresses finality of the utterance:

Возможно, просто
у вещей быстрее, чем у людей,
пропало желание размножаться. (4: 193)

Perhaps it's simply
that things, more quickly than men, have lost
their desire to multiply. **In this white captivity.** ("MCMXCIV" 454)

e) Sequels-neologisms. Neologisms are eye-catchers, and their final position makes them even more conspicuous:

Ясно, что долго накапливалось--в день или в год по
капле, чьи
пресные качества грезят о новых соленых га. (4: 142)

Clearly it rose drop by drop, for years, **attempting a neverscape**
whose potable swells now crave new distances: salty, vast.
("View with the Flood" 456)

The final position, enhanced by other stylistic devices, makes sequels a very powerful device that gives the English text additional meanings and nuances. Consequently, sequels can be regarded as a powerful intrusion in the original text.

Insertions

Insertions (an addition in the translated version of a word or a phrase in the middle of a syntactically connected unit) is the translation device most often employed by Brodsky. The difference between insertions and additions/sequels is that the latter occupy the final syntactical position. Positionally, insertions fall into two types: those that occur in the middle of the line and those that occupy the final position in the line (which is not necessarily final syntactical position).

Midline insertions:

**Древко твое истлело, истлело тело,
в которое ты не попала во време оно. (4: 132)**

**Your wooden shaft has vanished; so has the body
which you clearly missed way back in zero
B.C. ("Persian Arrow" 419)**

Insertions that occupy the final position of the line:

**Так отражаются к старости в зеркале бровь и лысина,
но никакого лица, не говоря—муде. (4: 142)**

**That's how, toward the end, a mirror reflects a veteran's
baldness, but not his face, let alone his butt. ("View with a Flood" 456)**

Brodsky uses insertions to keep the metric arrangement of the original. As Russian words are generally longer than English words, the translation text needs fillers to sustain the original rhythm. In the final position, insertions also have the role of sustaining the rhyme. Since the boundaries of the sentence and the boundaries of the poetic line do not coincide (that is, the syntactically bound phrase is carried into the next line), insertion is the device for enjambment in the English version, as in the example given above.

Insertions can be examined from several angles. They can be grouped: (I) according to the number of words they contain; (II) according to the part of speech they represent; (III) according to their stylistic characteristics and (IV) semantic properties.

I. According to the number of words insertions contain, one-word insertion is the most common group. The first stanza of "Kellomaki" provides a few examples of one-word insertions that illustrate how widely used this device is:

**Dumped in the dunes snatched from the witless Finns
small veneered burg whose walls let one's sneezing fits
be echoed at once by "Bless you" cabled from Sweden, yet
sporting no ax to split enough wood to heat**

up a dwelling. What's more, certain houses aimed
at warming winter itself, using the **black** walls, and
bred **lush** flowers at eventide on blue
grass veranda rhomboids or squares; and you,
as though, plotting a trip to the polar zone,
were falling asleep there with your thick socks on. ("Kellomaki" 313)

Two-word insertions are not as numerous.

я отправляюсь пешком к монументу, который отлит
из тяжелого сна. (3: 306)

I often
set out on foot to monument cast in **molten**
lengthy bad dreams. ("Elegy" 319)

Ты заржавела, но все-таки долетела
до меня, воспитанница Зенона. (4: 132)

Nonetheless, oxidized and **badly**
chipped, you have reached me, dear devotee of Zeno. ("Persian Arrow" 419)

Insertions consisting of more than two word insertions are generally not found.

II. Insertions embrace all parts of speech. The largest group is insertions-attributes:

и профиль аэроплана,
растерявший все нимбы, выглядит в вышних странно. (4: 11)

[...] an airplane's **callous**
profile looks odd on high, having lost its halos. ("So Forth" 361)

The group of adverbial insertions is considerably smaller:

И поезд подкрадывается, как змея,
к единственному соску столицы. (3: 242)

as the train **creeps knowingly**, like a snake
to the capital's only nipple. ("Near Alexandria" 268)

Либо – в Азии, в тропиках, где заладили
дожди, разрыхляя почву [...] (4: 142)

Or else it's Southeast Asia, with the monsoon **soberly**
softening up the paddies. ("View with the Flood" 456)

Noun insertions are very few:

[...] смех
громко скрипел, оставляя следы, как снег,
опушавший изморозью, точно хвою, края
местоимений [...] (3: 244)

A normal laugh
creaked like snow underfoot leaving prints above
where it powdered the edges of **sighs** or shy
pronouns with hoarfrost [...] ("Kellomaki" 314)

The number of participle insertions is also negligible:

Всадники, стало быть, просто дали
дуба на собственной простыне. (3: 241)

The warriors apparently kicked the bucket,
crushing bedbugs on the linen sprawl. ("Near Alexandria" 268)

Parenthetical insertions give the poem the effect of spoken speech:

да предсмертные вопли сознавшегося во всем
сына, записанные на пленку. (4: 17)

or the last mortal screams of his confessed-it-all
son, apparently tape-recorded. ("The Residence" 288)

Другие, кому уже
выпало что-то любить больше, чем жизнь, в душе
зная, что старость—это и есть вторая
жизнь, белеют на солнце, как мрамор, не загорая [...] (4: 12)

The others had the luck
of loving something much more than life, knowing all along
that decrepitude is, **after all**, that after-
life, loom marble-white in the sun getting no tan and often [...] ("So Forth" 362)

No verb insertions were found in the examined texts.

Semantic and stylistic properties will be analyzed on the basis of attributive insertions, as this is the largest group and should be analyzed separately. The first thing that becomes apparent is that Brodsky goes against the principle of not using attributes, which he

follows very closely in his Russian verse.¹³ In the self-translated poems, however, he sacrifices this principle in an attempt to preserve the metric arrangement of the original.

III. Stylistic characteristics. Most insertions-attributes are not tropes but rather are stylistically neutral words. Insertions are also used as tropes.

It has been noted that Brodsky introduces linguistic terminology into poetry (Polukhina, *Joseph Brodsky* 177). What is interesting is that in English texts he enhances his language metaphors. Insertions are used as epithets when applied to language, especially to linguistic terminology:

[...] смех
громко скрипел, оставляя следы, как снег,
опушавший изморозью, точно хвою, края
местоимений [...] (3: 244)

A normal laugh
creaked like snow underfoot, leaving prints above
where it powdered the edges of sighs or shy
pronouns with hoarfrost [...] ("Kellomaki" 314)

спой мне песню о том, как шуршит портьера [...] (3: 170)

strum me a tune of how drapery makes its cloudy
rustle [...] ("Minefield Revisited" 267)

When Brodsky talks about thoughts, in the English versions they become *bleak thoughts about oneself* ("Kellomaki" 313), and *blurred thoughts about love* ("Kellomaki" 315):

Мелкие, плоские волны моря на буквы «б»,
сильно схожие издали с мыслями о себе,
набегали извилинами на пустынный пляж
и смерзались в морщины. (3: 243)

Flat, lapping swells of the sea starting with B, in curves,
resembling **bleak thoughts** about oneself, ran course

¹³ This was the advice given to him by Rein (БКИ, 106).

onto the empty beach and froze
into wrinkles there. ("Kellomaki" 313)

а что Келломяки ведали, кроме рельс
и расписанья железных вещей, свистя
возникавших из небытия, пять минут спустя
и растворявшихся в нем же, жадно глотавших жуть,
мысль о любви и успевших сесть? (3: 244-45)

And what honestly could Kellomaki prize
as such, save its rail and its schedule of tin-plate links,
whistling from nonexistence, by which these things
would be gobbled up five minutes later, along with blurred
thoughts of love [...] ("Kellomaki" 314-15)

Some insertions inject sensual or erotic implication into the poem. They will be analyzed
in "Colloquial and Crude Language."

IV. Semantic characteristics. Stylistically neutral attribute insertions can be organized
according to the information they contain. They range from insertions that are
informatively redundant to insertions that contain new and important information.

1. The first group includes attributes that point to the obvious characteristics of the
noun they agree with, or explicate the characteristics of the verb:

a) [...] и когда
от тебя оставались лишь губы, как от того кота. (3: 244)

[...] and where once you sat
just two lips were remaining, like that vanished cat. ("Kellomaki" 314)

b) Я входил вместо дикого зверя в клетку [...] (3: 191)

I have braved, for want of wild beasts, steel cages [...] ("May 24, 1980" 211)

c) Но скоро, как говорят, я сниму погоны
и стану просто одной звездой. (4: 173)

But soon, I am told, I'll lose my epaulettes altogether
and dwindle into a little star. ("Taps" 457)

Semantically these insertions seem to be redundant as they indicate the features inherent to the objects they denote (cages are made of steel, lips come in pairs, dwindle implies becoming smaller).

2. The second group consists of insertions whose the meaning implied by the context; however, verbalization of a particular aspect is not redundant, but rather emphasizes it.

- a) депо, кварталы больничных коек,
чувствуя близость пустыни в коих,
прячет с помощью пирамид
горизонтальность свою земля
цвета тертого кирпича, корицы. (3: 242)

Having measured
there the proximity of the desert,
the cinnamon-tinted earth waylays its
horizontality in the fake
pyramids, porticoes, rooftop ripple [...] ("Near Alexandria" 269)

In Alexandria, near Washington D.C., there are no real pyramids. *Fake* is used to stress the artificiality of the power of the capital. (See analysis on page 113.)

- b) [...] и когда
от тебя оставались лишь губы, как от того кота. (3: 244)

[...] and where once you sat
just two lips were remaining, like that **vanished** cat. ("Kellomaki" 314)

The allusion to the Cheshire cat from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* is implied in both texts. The insertion *vanished* enhances the parallel between the poet's beloved and the Cheshire cat in the sense that she too vanished from his life and now is vanishing from his memory.

3. The third group includes attribute insertions that pertain to the appearance of the object such as size, shape, material, and color. Insertions of this type are not redundant, but at the same time they are not vital for the context.

Insertion attributes indicating color constitute the largest group: небо - sky's **pink** hem ("Kellomaki" 314); объятия - **brown** furry embrace (315); небытия броня - non-being's **blue** armor plate ("Taps" 457); колодезь - **dark** well ("Elegy" 400); дома - **yellow** palazzo ("December in Florence" 113); лес—**dark** forest (130).

Insertions can denote texture:

и лошадки, скинув попоны, позируют для портрета
двигателя. (4: 194)

and little horses, casting off their **embroidered** blanket, pose
for a portrait of the new engine. ("MCMXCV" 455)

Some attributes serve to emphasize that the object is standard or normal.

a) В этом смысле, мы слились, хотя кровать
даже не скрипнула... (3: 247)

In that sense, I bet,
we really blended - though our **standard** bed
barely squeaked. ("Kellomaki" 317)

b) A **normal** laugh
creaked like snow underfoot, leaving prints above (314)

4. The fourth group consists of insertions that specify some characteristics that might be essential to the context, but unlike group two ("vanished cat"), are not necessarily implied in the text, though may be deduced from it.

Старик нагибается и, привязав к лодыжке
длинную нитку, чтобы не заблудиться,
направляется, крикнув, в сторону царства мертвых. (4: 137)

The old man bends down, ties to his brittle ankle
(so as not to get lost) a lengthy thread,
straightens up with a grunt, and heads out for Hades.
(“Daedalus in Sicily” 404)

Though old age is associated with brittle bones, it is not always so. *Brittle* stresses the fact that Daedalus was not only old, but also fragile.

5. Attributive insertions that explain cultural information constitute group five.

(They will be analyzed in “Cultural Changes.”)

It is noteworthy that in English Brodsky seems to have found a favorite attribute—the “filler.” Thus, he tends to use the word *idle* repeatedly as a “filler”:

- a) And the cricket’s chirr’s softer than all these idle
bird feeders with their sensitive relay wink. (“The Residence” 288)
- b) What is left is to shield the scull, with raised arms, against idle glances [...] (“In Memoriam” 341)
- c) [...] where, like a new kind
of quadruped, idle couples follow their river bend.
 (“December in Florence” 130)

Effect of Insertions

Words in the short space of a poem have more weight than in a prosaic text. Inserting words into the English text, in general, makes the latter denser and more informative. Insertions-epithets not only make the poem more expressive, but they also infuse the text with even more information, which the reader in a way has to decode. Stylistically neutral insertions make the semantic texture of the poem denser. The English version provides us with the information about the size, shape, colors, etc. of a particular object. That, however, takes something away from the reader; that is to say, less is demanded from him or her. Insertions, however, can also clarify the Russian text, which

can sometimes be difficult to understand. For instance, insertions can help illuminate metaphors:

И если за скорость света не ждешь спасибо,
то общего, может, **небытия броня**
ценит попытки ее превращения в сито
и за отверстие поблагодарит меня. (4: 173)

And although the speed of light can't in nature covet
thanks, non-being's **blue armor plate**,
prizing attempts at making a sifter of it,
might use my pinhole, at any rate. ("Taps" 457)

Небытия броня was rendered as *nonbeing's blue armor plate*. *Blue* helps decode the metaphor as celestial image. In the Russian text metaphor, *напор лба* is not transparent:

Известкой скрепленная скорлупа,
спасающая от **напора лба**,
соли, рыхлого молотка
в сумерках три желтка. (4: 134)

The English text with the insertion *wind's solid brow* makes the metaphor more understandable and obvious:

The rectangular, mortar-held eggshell,
enduring the **wind's solid brow**, as well
as breaker's wet hammer works,
reveals at dusk three yolks. ("Ischia in October" 431)

Certain insertions in the English text give us information that is for understanding Brodsky's poetics. Thus, in the English text of "To Urania" we find out that Clio, Muse of History, and Urania, Muse of Astronomy, are sisters:

Оттого-то Урания старше Клио. (3: 248)
That's why Urania's older than **sister** Clio! (281)

In Brodsky, History and Astronomy represent Space and Time respectively. Thus he links Time and Space by reference to a kinship bond.¹⁴

Insertions can also shift the meaning of the poem:

депо, кварталы больничных коек,
чувствуя близость пустыни в коих,
прячет с помощью пирамид
горизонтальность свою земля
цвета тертого кирпича, корицы. (3: 242)

Having measured
there the proximity of the desert,
the cinnamon-tinted earth waylays its
horizontality in the fake
pyramids, porticoes, rooftop ripple [...] ("Near Alexandria" 269)

It is clear that in the suburbs of Alexandria there are no real pyramids. The image of Egypt and pyramids was prompted by the name Alexandria, which was the capital of Old Egypt. When he says that the train approaches Washington D.C., Brodsky means that he sees a lot of cupolas and big buildings with columns, which remind him of ancient architecture. It could also mean buildings in the form of pyramids—buildings, banks. The comparison with Egypt is rendered also by the word *пустыня* (desert). The allusion to Egypt invokes the idea of pharaohs and of a concentration of power that is also enhanced by the last line, *to the capital's only nipple*, which is an allusion to the she-wolf that fed Remus and Romulus, founders of Rome, another symbol of the Empire. Pyramids imply death, the loss of power. The phrase *termites that survive everything* supports this idea (termites are the ones who destroy buildings). Thus the allusion to ancient Rome and

¹⁴ See page 93 in "Sequels" where the addition *unlike the latter* stresses the opposition between Urania and Clio. The fact that Urania and Clio in the English text turn out to be sisters was noted by Scherr ("To Urania"). A more detailed summary of the analysis of the effect of the changes in the English text will be given in Chapter III.

Egypt invokes the idea of an Empire once powerful, but one that did not last. Inserting *fake* shifts the emphasis onto the artificiality and pretense of the political power. The English text sounds more disrespectful of power. It is supported by another change, the addition of *crushing bedbugs on the linen sprawl* (which is absent in the Russian text). It shows skepticism of and disrespect for the symbols of power and authority:

Повсюду некто на скакуне;
Все копыта на пьедестале.
Всадники, стало быть, просто дали
дуба на собственной простыне. (3: 241)

Ubiquitous figures on horseback: all
four hooves glued to their marble bracket.
The warriors apparently kicked the bucket,
crushing bedbugs on the linen sprawl. (“Near Alexandria” 268)

The insertion *lovely* in “A Polar Explorer” shows that the poem is written from the perspective of the explorer. The Russian text is not necessarily perceived as reported speech, but rather as a third person narrative. If the poem is perceived as reported speech, if it reproduces the thoughts of the explorer, it makes the realization of death more personal, and hence more dramatic. The syntactical position of “gangrene” in the English text supports this idea. Not only is it in the final strong position, it is put in the position of ellipsis, and is graphically set apart by a colon. That gives it the flair of oral speech and also captures the reaction of horror—as if the explorer utters the word in horror. In contrast, the Russian text, especially the ending with the conjunction *и* that opens the sentence, makes it sound almost casual, but because of this, is probably more terrifying.

Все собаки съедены. В дневнике
не осталось чистой страницы. И бисер слов
покрывает фото супруги, к ее щеке
мушку даты сомнительной приколов.
Дальше—снимок сестры. Он не щадит сестру:

речь идет о достигнутой широте!
И гангрена, чернея, взбирается по бедру,
как чулок девицы из варьете. (3: 169)

All the huskies are eaten. There is no space
left in the diary. And the beads of quick
words scatter over his spouse's sepia shaded face
adding the date in question like a mole to her lovely cheek.
Next, the snapshot of his sister. He does not spare his kin:
what' has been reached is the highest possible latitude!
And, like the silk stocking of a burlesque half-nude
queen, it climbs up his thigh: gangrene. (214)

As if understanding that sometimes insertions are redundant, Brodsky loads them
with other functions--alliteration, or inner rhyme, so now they have the role of not only
sustaining the rhythm, but also that of the inner rhyme or sound alliteration:

- a) где рушатся и растут миры. (4: 135)

[...] where **great**
worlds rise and **disintegrate**. ("Ischia in October" 431)

- b) [...] в ощущении кисточки, оставшейся от картины, (4: 11)

[...] this feeling of a **puny** paintbrush left idle ("So Forth" 361)

- c) Но скоро, как говорят, я сниму погоны
и стану просто одной звездой. (4: 173)

But soon, I am told, I'll lose my epaulettes altogether
and **dwindle** into a *little* star. ("Taps" 457)

- d) And "there," through
empty rooms, **memory** roams like a thief at dusk [...]
(**"Kellomaki"** 315)

Substitutions

As the word suggests, substitutions involve changing a word or words, a phrase, or even a sentence in the original for a word or words, phrase, or even a sentence that is not the exact equivalent in the translated version. Brodsky's substitutions will be analyzed from two perspectives: semantic and stylistic. The semantic analysis will look at the semantic relations between the substitute and the original. Stylistic analysis will examine the stylistic features of substitutes.

Semantic changes

A. Semantically close substitutions

I. Brodsky changes a Russian word of a general, broad meaning to an English word with a more concrete meaning. The substitute represents only part of the meaning of the Russian word.

1. One of Brodsky's distinctive tendencies is that in the English version he names plants, animals, and natural phenomena specifically, while in Russian he gives a generic word. Thus, *собаки* (dogs) become *huskies* or *bloodhounds*; *ветер* (wind) is rendered as *northeaster*; *дождь* (rain) as *monsoon*.

- a) Утратив контакт с объектом
преследования, собаки принохиваются к объедкам,
и в этом их сходство с памятью, с жизнью вещей. (3: 280)

The bloodhounds, having lost their quarry,
with vengeance devour the leftovers – herein their very
strong resemblance to memory, to the fate of all things. ("In Italy" 340)

- b) Все собаки съедены. (3: 169)

All the huskies are eaten. ("Polar Explorer" 214)

Evidently, *huskies* is chosen because it is a longer word than *dog* and better fits the rhythm. Its Northern echoes signal from the beginning the setting of the poem.

- c) ах, кроме ветра
нет геометра
в мире для вас! (4: 67)

Ah, save the **northeaster**,
you wouldn't master
geometry! ("Clouds" 406)

- d) Либо – в Азии, в тропиках, где заладили
дожди, разрыхляя почву, но ты не рис. (4: 142)

Or else, it's South East Asia, with the **monsoon** soberly
softening up the paddies. But you are no rice. ("View with a Flood" 456)

- e) И, воробья кормя,
на него там смотрели всею семьей в окно,
где деревья тоже сливались в одно
черное дерево, стараясь перерастить
небо [...] (3: 244)

[...] when feeding a sparrow, huddled to watch the sight,
family strong, by the window whose trees as well
strove to merge into some **baobab** whose spill
of branches would overtake the sky's pink hem – ("Kellomaki," 314)

2. The second group of substitutions is an English specific term that is part of the meaning of the Russian word of a general semantics:

- a) mouth--larynx:

Но пока мне рот не забили глиной,
из него раздаваться будет лишь благодарность. (3: 191)

Yet until brown clay has been crammed down my **larynx**,
only gratitude will be gushing from it. ("May 24, 1980" 211)

- b) voice--baritone:

[...] и ты говоришь сонливым,
совершенно моим, но дальностью лет приглушенным
голосом: "Ну и ливень." (4: 42)

[...] and you say in your drowsy, quiet
almost my own but muted by years' vast distance –
baritone: What a climate. ("August Rain" 385)

3. Not only concrete words (animals, plants, bodily organs), but words of a more abstract meaning can express the same type of relationship. In the Russian text, Brodsky uses a neutral word, which expresses a general meaning, while in the English version he employs a word that represents only part of the meaning of general word, used in the original. The substitute points to additional characteristics of the word.

a) noise--clamor:

[...] И сумма
случившегося есть источник шума. (4: 123)

[...] And the total number
what happened already is the root of their constant **clamor**. ("Elegy" 399)

Clamor "implies loud noises in confusion [...]. As applied to human utterances, it commonly gains the suggestion of vehemence" (WNDS).

b) repetition--replication:

[...] Видимо, это—страх / повторимости. (4: 137)

[...] Presumably, that's the fear/of **replication**. ("Daedalus in Sicily" 404)

While in Russian *повторимость* *duplication*, *repetition* is a general word that could be used with sounds, graphics, gestures, etc. *Replication* is used in reference to statues, which is in tune with Brodsky's poetics of statues and monuments.

c) drink--guzzle:

и не пил только сухую воду. (3: 191)

guzzled everything save dry water. ("May 24, 1980" 211)

Guzzle indicates the manner of drinking "greedily or immoderately" (WHWD).

d) old age—decrepitude:

...Другие, кому уже
выпало что-то любить больше, чем жизнь в душе
зная, что старость-это и есть вторая
жизнь [...] (4: 12)

...The others who had the luck
of loving something much more than life, knowing all along
that **decrepitude** is, after all, that after-
life [...] ("So Forth" 362)

Old age does not necessarily mean decrepitude, which has the meaning of "feebleness,
worn out or broken down by use or age" (WNWD).

A good example to illustrate this part of the discussion is the substitutions of the
word *видет-увидеть* (see) for its synonyms.¹⁵

e) увидеть (see)—behold:

Повернуться спиной к окну и **увидеть** шинель с погонами
на коричневой вешалке [...] (4: 42)

To turn away from the window! To **behold** a greatcoat wit epaulettes
on the brown varnished rack [...] ("August Rain" 385)

f) глядеть (look)—scan:

Глядя в другой пейзаж,
будем считать, что клин этот острый – наш
общий локоть [...] (3: 246)

Scanning an alien scene,
let's agree that the edge can be simply **seen**
as our common elbow [...] ("Kellomyaki" 317)

II. Substitution of a word in the original for a word of the same semantic group, but
which has a different referent. This can be color substitutions, substitutions of one brand
of animal for another, family members, etc.

¹⁵Smith notes "the superiority of the eye as an instrument of perception over other senses" in "Полдень в комнате" ("Polden' v komnate" 132).

1. Change of colors:

a) red--rosy:

Ставя босую ногу на **красный** мрамор
тело делает шаг в будущее – одеться. (3: 227)

Setting a naked foot on a **rosy** marble
The body steps toward its future: to its attire. ("Roman Elegies" 64)

b) brown--gray:

Се – лежащий плашмя колосс,
прикрытый **бурою** оболочкой
с отделанной кружевом оторочкой
замерзших после шести колесс. (3: 241)

This is a flattened colossus veiled
by the gauze thickening on the horizon,
edged with the lacework of wheels gone frozen
after six by the curb's **gray** welt. ("Near Alexandria" 268)

c) gray--colorless:

Когда-нибудь, в **серую** краску уставясь взглядом,
ты узнаешь себя. И **серую** краску рядом. (4: 124)

Peering one day at some **colorless** brushstroke, dear,
you'll make out yourself, and a colorless brushstroke near. ("Elegy" 399)

2. Family members:

Granddaughter--grandniece:

Фортепьяно в гостиной, точно лакей – арап,
скалит зубы, в которых, короткопала
и близорука, ковыряет средь бела дня
внучка хозяина. (4: 17)

In the hall, like a grinning footman, the black Steinway lets
the owner's fat-fingered, myopic, porous
grandniece poke its molars in broad daylight. ("The Residence" 75)

3. Display of emotions:

a) smile-dying laughter:

Теперь здесь торгуют останками твоих щиколоток,
 бронзой
 загорелых доспехов, погасшей улыбкой, грозной
 мыслью о свежих резервах, памятью об изменах [...] (3: 306)

Now the place is abuzz with trading in your ankle's remnants, bronzes
of sunburn breastplates, dying laughter, bruises
rumors of fresh reserves, memories of high treason [...] ("Elegy" 319)

b) smile-scowling:

Смотрите, она улыбается! (4: 105)

Look at her; she is scowling! ("Portrait of Tragedy" 415)

4. Different breed of the same class of animals:

болонка--roodle:

Только выпколенная болонка
тявкает непрерывно, чувствуя, что приближается
к сахару [...] (4: 194)

Only a miniature shaggy poodle
still yelps incessantly, feeling she's getting closer
to the sugar lump [...] ("MCMXCV" 455)

In this example, we see the substitution of two words *вышколенная болонка* for *shaggy poodle*. Russian word *болонка* implies a small dog which is always fluffy. *Вышколенная* means *well trained, obedient*. The translation, though referencing a different breed of dog, preserves the meaning of trained. *Poodle* is a type of dog that is associated with circus, which implies that it is trained; *shaggy* compensates for the meaning of *fluffy* associated with *болонка*. So in a way, the relations are preserved. In the US, the poodle is associated with old people; it brings to mind dog shows that are mostly attended by older people.

5. Substitutions of Russian personal names, places, etc. for the names, places, etc. that would be recognizable to the English reading audience. They will be discussed in “Cultural Realia.”

III. Synonyms. This group consists of substitutions that are in synonymous relations with the word in the Russian original.

a) life of things--fate of things:

... Утратив контакт с объектом
преследования, собаки принимают к обеду,
и в этом их сходство с памятью, с жизнью вещей. (3: 280)

[...] The bloodhounds, having lost their quarry,
with vengeance devour the leftovers--herein their very
strong resemblance to memory, to the fate of things. (“In Italy” 340)

b) all the time--all seasons:

Знаешь, лучше стареть там, где верста маячит,
где красота ничего не значит
или значит не молодость, титьку, семя,
потому что природа вообще есть все время. (4: 123)

You know, it's better to age where a milepost is nodding
where beauty means absolutely nothing,
or it means not youthfulness, bosom, semen
--since time, on the whole, is indeed all seasons. (“Elegy” 399)

IV. The substitutions of this type are words that share one seme, while other semes are different.

a) short--myopic:

и бесконечная набережная делала жизнь короткой. (3: 280)

[...] and an infinite quay was rendering life myopic. (“In Italy” 340)

Short and *myopic* share one common seme “short,” but *myopic* has the meaning pertaining to the seeing semantic, which is important for Brodsky’s poetics.

b) lonely--monogamous

одинокому сердцу и телу бесчисленных постелей – (3: 58)

A **monogamous** heart and a torso of countless bedchambers –
(“To a Friend: In Memoriam” 212)

Monogamous and *lonely* share the seme “one,” but *monogamous* has the meaning “faithful to one” and implies a marital status, while *lonely* does has the meaning “to be alone.”

c) separate--recluse:

Лучше стареть в деревне. Даже живя отдельной
жизнью, там различишь нательный
крестик в драной березке [...] (4: 123)

There, even though a **recluse**,
you’d easily spot a tiny crucifix in a reckless
stark-naked birch [...] (“Elegy” 399)

Recluse and *separate* share the seme “apart from other people,” while the Russian text *живя отдельной жизнью* (*living your separate life*) does not imply that addressee should be shunning, avoiding people; it rather means a parallel life. In the English text *recluse* does have the meaning of avoiding others.

B. Semantically distant substitutions

I. This group consists of substitutions that are not regular synonyms; however they can be regarded in some contexts as contextual synonyms. Again we observe the already familiar relationship of the original to the translation: general to concrete.

a) In “Taps,” the word of general meaning *become* is changed into *dwindle*.

Но скоро, как говорят, я сниму погоны
и стану просто одной звездой. (4: 173)

But soon I will lose my epaulets altogether
and **dwindle** into a little star. (“Taps” 457)

b) A good example that illustrates this point is the substitution of the word *вещь* (*thing*) for a more concrete word. *Вещь* (*thing*) is a favored word in Brodsky's poetic vocabulary.¹⁶ In the English version of "Kellomaki" he concretizes the meaning of *thing* by *tin plate links*, which evidently means "train cars," but Brodsky does not want to sacrifice the word *thing*, and inserts it in the next line:

а что Келломяки ведали, кроме рельс
и расписанья железных вещей, свистя
возникавших из небытия, пять минут спустя
и растворявшихся в нем же [...] (3: 244)

And what honestly could Kellomaki prize
as such, save its rails and its schedule of **tin-plate links**
whistling from non-existence, by which these **things**
would be gobbled up five minutes later... ("Kellomaki" 314)

As was mentioned earlier, the translation in general is more concrete, it explains the statement in the Russian text.

c) strange—ugly

Странные морды высовываются из твоего окна [...] (4: 198)

Ugly gargoyles peek out of your well-lit windows [...] ("Via Furnari" 413)

The mugs are *strange* because they are *ugly*.

d) In "So Forth" he substitutes the Russian word *узнавать* for *enjoy*

ибо в открытом море больше не узнаешь
силуэт парохода, и профиль аэроплана,
растерявший все нимбы, выглядит в вышних странно. (4: 11)

For you can't **enjoy** any longer the silhouette
of a steamship at sea, and an airplane's
callous profile looks odd on high having lost its haloes. (361)

¹⁶ For more about *thing*, see pages 171-72.

Here the use of *enjoy* instead of *recognize* probably implies that you experience joy of recognition. The semantics of knowledge for Brodsky evidently implies a joy in knowledge.

e) A similar relationship is observed between *ведали* (*knew*) and *prize* (knowledge as something one prizes):

а что Келломаки ведали, кроме рельс (3: 244)

And what honestly could Kellomaki prize
as such, save its rail and its schedule of tin-plate links [...] (314)

II. Sometimes substitutes are not even semantically close; they create a rather different meaning, emotion, mood.

a) stupid--lousy

Глупое время: и нечего и не у кого украсть. (IV, 193)

Lousy times: nothing to steal and no one to steal from. ("MCMXCIV," 454)

b) rising sun--perilous sun:

Восходящее желтое солнце следит косыми
глазами за мачтами голой рощи [...] (3: 203)

The **perilous** yellow sun follows with its slant eyes
masts of the shuddered grove [...] ("Tsushima Screen" 270)

The usage of *perilous* sets a sinister tone to the poem.

III. Sometimes substitutions, though semantically distant, do not affect the meaning of the poem.

trousers--fist:

И как расческа
в кулаке дрессировщика--турка, как рыбку--леской,
возвышает болонку над Ковалевской (3: 170)

[...] how hidden in the **satin trousers**
the comb of a Turkish dog trainer, when played, elevates his poodle
beyond Kovalevskaya, beyond its idol ("Minefield Revisited" 267)

IV. Some substitutions are not only semantically unrelated, but have the opposite meaning; they will be analyzed in “Discrepancies.”

Stylistic Changes

The tendency towards greater detail in English leads to a diversification of vocabulary in the English version. This diversification occurs as more sophisticated, cruder, and more metaphoric language is used.

I. Sophisticated vocabulary

1. The substituted word is stylistically more bookish:

a) **Повсюду некто на скакуне [...]** (3: 241)

Ubiquitous figures on horseback [...] (“Near Alexandria” 268)

b) **И если за скорость света не ждешь спасибо [...]** (4: 173)

And although the speed of light can't in nature covet thanks [...] (“Taps” 457)

c) **тело делает шаг в будущее—одеться.** (3: 227)

the body steps toward its future: to its attire. (“Roman Elegies” 274)

2. The word in the English version is of a poetic nature:

a) **Повернуться спиной к окну и увидеть шинель с погонами [...]** (4: 42)

To turn away from the window! To behold a greatcoat with epaulets on the brown varnished rack, a red fox on the chair, neglected [...]
(“August Rain” 385)

b) **и кучевое пальто норовит обернуться шубой с неземного плеча.**
(4: 42)

and a cumulous cloak grows into an uneasy fur-coat off some astral back. (“August Rain” 385)

3. Brodsky also uses a specific word instead of a word of general semantics.

[...] и увидеть шинель с погонами на коричневой вешалке, чернобурку на спинке кресла,

бахрому желтой скатерти, что, совладав с законами
тяготения, воскресла
и накрыла обеденный стол, за которым втроем за ужином
мы сидим поздно вечером [...] (4: 42)

[...] To behold a greatcoat with epaulets
on the brown varnished rack, a red fox on the chair, neglected
fringe of the yellow cloth, which, having mastered the *shibboleths*
of gravity, has resurrected
itself and covered the table where late at night, a threesome,
we sit for supper [...] ("August Rain" 385)

4. The specific word may be an anatomical term, as with *mouth–larynx* in "May 24, 1980" (211).

5. Substitutions also occur along the axis: Russian neutral word – an English word that sounds foreign (barbarism):

a) ибо земле, как той простыне, понятен
язык не столько любви, сколько выбоин, впаден, вмятин. (4: 123)

not the *parlance* of love but that of ruts, gulches, hollows. ("Elegy" 399)

b) Это относится к осени, к времени вообще [...] (4: 11)

That goes for autumn: that goes for time *per se* [...] ("So Forth" 361)

c) Крылышки и бретельки
в состоянии обойтись без торса,
стройных конечностей, не говоря – любви [...] (4: 91)

Wings and shoulder straps can indeed
manage without a proper torso,
shapely limbs, or love *per se*, and cherish
anonymity [...] ("Angel" 355)

d) Море гораздо разнообразней суши. (3: 117)

The sea is more various than the *terra firma*. ("The New Jules Verne" 249)

e) [...] где по улицам с криком «растли! растли!»
бегал местный философ, треща бородкой [...] (3: 280)

and where a local *penseur*, with his shrill “Pervert! Pervert!” and the trembling goatee, was mopping avenues [...] (“In Italy” 340)

- f) И если бывает на свете пчела без улья
с лишней пыльцой на лапках, то это ты. (4: 166)

And if there was ever a bee sans beehive or solace
with extra spores on its paws, it’s you. (“Flourish” 453)

- g) “Ах, как ты постарел”
скажет тебе одна [...] (4:11)

“You’ve grown long in the tooth”
a belle may sigh [...] (“So Forth” 361)

In the same poem he uses *belle* again, now substituting it for the word *подруга*
(*girlfriend*):

Подруга была права

The belle was right.

II. A substituted word oftentimes is metaphoric, a trope. This kind of change will be examined in “Imagery.”

III. Substitutions can also proceed by using more colloquial, even cruder and sometimes sexually explicit vocabulary. They will be examined in the section entitled “Colloquial, Crude and Sexually Explicit Language.”

Effects of Substitutions

Informativeness

Of course, the changes in the level of detail and concretization of the vocabulary affect the semantic space of the poem. Even “harmless” changes of the type *dogs* – *huskies* are noticeable, because the word contains additional information: not only a general notion of the dog, but also a breed of a dog, which indicates location and images

associated with that breed. A reader registers this additional information. The same can be said about Brodsky's tendency to substitute words of very general abstract semantics with more concrete nouns, such as when Brodsky uses words with a very general meaning like *thing* and in the translated version deciphers it.

Even the substitution of a neutral word for a term, though it means the same, injects the text with additional stylistic information. The same is true of barbarisms that make the text stylistically dense, for they arrest the reader's attention, and force the reader to decode them.

Substitutions for poetic and bookish words also affect the semantic density of the poem. They "stick out" in the text and make the reader notice them. In other words the English reader, in this case absorbs more than the Russian reader. Moreover, barbarisms and bookish vocabulary very often entail an ironic effect:

"Ах, как ты постарел"
скажет тебе одна [...] (4: 11)

"You've grown long in the tooth"
a belle may sigh [...] ("So Forth" 361)

The reverse transformation (a foreign word in Russian to a neutral one in English) is rather rare. When this happens, the English version loses its ironic effect:

Теперь тебя видят в церквях в провинции и в метрополии
на панихидах по общим друзьям [...] (4: 64)

These days you've been seen in churches in the capital and in provinces [...]
("Brise Marine" 364)

By using *метрополия* in the Russian text, Brodsky mocks at the way M.B. is spending her time. It also reveals Brodsky's condescending attitude from afar towards the capital and the whole Russian setting.

Explication

Because the English text is more concrete, sometimes it can be regarded as explication and clarification of the Russian original. In “Kellomaki,” *другой пейзаж* (*other landscape*) is rendered as *alien scene*:

Глядя в другой пейзаж,
будем считать, что клин этот острый – наш
общий локоть, выдвинутый вовне [...] (3: 247)

Scanning an **alien** scene,
let's agree that that wedge can be simply seen
as our common elbow, thrust into the outside [...] (“Kellomaki” 317)

Другой does not imply *alien*, and *alien* has the meaning strange, unfamiliar, and hostile. Brodsky uses words of a very general semantics, whose meaning becomes clear only if we regard them in the broader context. Thus the word combination *вторая жизнь* (*second life*), meaning life after death, does not necessarily immediately invoke his idea. In English it is always rendered as *afterlife*:

- a) Так некоторые порой
ездят еще за границу, но, лишены **второй**
жизни, спешат воротиться, пряча глаза от страха,
и не успев улечься от прощального взмаха,
платочек трепещет в воздухе. Другие, кому уже
выпало что-то любить больше, чем жизнь, в душе
зная, что старость--это и есть **вторая**
жизнь, белеют на солнце, как мрамор, не загорая [...] (4: 11-2)

That's how some folk still do
travel abroad at times, but, not entitled
to **afterlife**, scurry back home hiding their eyes in terror.
The others who had the luck
of loving something much more than life, knowing all along
that decrepitude is, after all, that **after-**
life [...] (“So Forth” 362)

- b) In “Clouds,” *иная жизнь* (*other life*) is translated as *afterlife*:

То-то же я,
страхами крепок,

ВИЖУ В ВАС СЛЕПОК
С НЕБЫТИЯ
С ЖИЗНИ ИНОЙ. (4: 66)

Hence, I, an old
hand at premonitions
take your omniscience
for non-being's mould,
afterlife's mask. (405)

c) *Та жизнь* is rendered as *afterworld*, *тот свет* is also rendered as *afterworld*:

Может, и в той вы
жизни клубитесь
--конь или витязь,
реже-- святой. (4: 66)

Isn't your free state
afterworld's border--
stallions, a warrior,
sometimes a saint? (405)

[...] Открытию
Инфарктики--неизвестной части
того света. (4: 41)

[...] to the discovery of
Infarctica--an unknown quarter of afterworld [...]
("Postcard from Lisbon" 384)

Though in the Russian text it becomes clear that by *иная жизнь* (*other life*), *та жизнь* (*that life*), and *вторая жизнь* (*second life*) Brodsky means life after death, this intention is somehow coded; in English, the allusion to death is immediately obvious.

d) In "Kellomaki," Brodsky deciphers the meaning of *тот свет во сне* (*that light in the dream*) also as *afterlife*:

Было ли вправду все это? и если да, на кой
будоражить теперь этих бывших вещей покой,
вспоминая подробности, подгоняя сосну к сосне,
имитируя--часто удачно--тот свет во сне? (3: 244)

Did it rally happen, all that? And if yes, then why
now disturb the peace of these has-beens by
recalling details, testing shadowy pines by grip
– aping the **afterlife** (often accurately) when asleep? (“Kellomaki” 314)

Another frequently used word that allows an array of meanings is *дурной*, which can be interpreted as bad, silly, evil. In the English versions it is deciphered:

что знаменитая неодушевленность
космоса, устав от своей **дурной**
бесконечности, ищет себе земного
пристанища [...] (4: 198)

that the famous inanimateness
of the cosmos, tired of its pretty vicious
infinitude, seeks for itself an earthly
abode [...] (“Via Furnari” 413)

In “Elegy” it was deciphered as:

Подруга, **дурнея** лицом, поселись в деревне. (4: 123)

Sweetheart, **losing** your looks, go live in a village. (“Elegy” 399)

In the same poem the word *дурнеть* is used again, now it is translated as *ruined*:

Знаешь, **дурнея**, лица
лишь подтверждают, что можно слиться
разными способами [...] (124)

You know, a **ruined**
face only proves there exist more fluent
ways of tying the knot—ah many other methods! (400)

I will conclude my analysis of “Substitutions” with illustrating that even “harmless” substitutions affect the poem. In “The Residence,” Brodsky paints a collective picture of a tyrant. The mention in the last line of the screams of *confessed-it-all son* brings to mind Russian rulers who killed their sons for their cause, for the state interests: Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible. The position of this line after the mundane and bureaucratic-sounding line, “eight-digit budget figures routinely hoarded by the staff”

makes it frightening. The change in the English text of *granddaughter* to *grandniece* brings an additional meaning to the poem: the tyrant has no direct relatives, as *grandniece* is a rather distant relative. Since his son is executed, he does not have any direct heirs, and after the death of his son the tyrant is virtually alone – there is no one to carry on his cause, his great deed. In the Russian version, Brodsky uses the phrase *клонит в сон* (feels like falling asleep), which sounds horrifying as it implies that the tyrant is not disturbed by the death of his son. In the English version, the tyrant crawls to bed, as if he wanted to hide from the screams of his son. In the English version, the tyrant comes across lonelier and a bit more human.

Substitution that results in the concretization of meaning, besides bringing additional information, often entails other changes that contribute to the same effect. In

“Near Alexandria,” *прячет* (*hide*) is translated as *waylay*:

депо, кварталы больничных коек,
чувствуя близость пустыни в коих,
прячет с помощью пирамид

горизонтальность свою земля
цвета тертого кирпича, корицы,
И поезд подкрадывается, как змея,
к единственному соску столицы. (3: 241)

Warehouses, surgeries. Having measured
There the proximity of the desert,
the cinnamon-tinted earth waylays its

horizontality in the fake
pyramids, porticoes, rooftops' ripple,

as the train creeps knowingly, like a snake,
to the capital's only nipple. (269)

Waylay also “implies concealment [...] and often evil intent [...]” (WNDS). Brodsky in the next line intensifies the meaning of entrapment by inserting the word *knowingly*,

which is absent in the Russian version. In the preceding line, Brodsky changes *чувствуя близость пустыни в коих* to *having measured there the proximity of the desert*. The substitution of *measure* for *feeling* and the use of the perfective tense in the translation instead of the gerund also stress the idea of calculated decision versus something that happens instantly. The whole stanza takes on a different meaning: the earth hides, lays out a trap and does it knowingly, having calculated it all in advance. The segment in English is more menacing, sinister. A feeling of suspense is created also by the syntactic changes. In the Russian text there are two sentences, while in the English version, one sentence with conjunction *as the train creeps knowingly*, which creates the feeling of suspense. Alliteration is used both in Russian and in English texts: the voiceless sounds /w/ and /s/ are like the hissing of the snake.

Omissions

In his self-translations, Brodsky follows his Russian original very closely, trying to preserve all links in the chain of enumeration, finding equivalents for the names of plants, birds, rendering all nuances of meaning. If anything, Brodsky's resort to additions and insertions in his self-translation text is motivated by his desire to keep the metric arrangement of the Russian original. As Russian words are in general longer than English words, he has to add or insert more words in his translated version to fill in the metric positions. Cases of the opposite situation, that is long English words corresponding to

short Russian words, are extremely rare, which explains why omissions are not so numerous. Nevertheless, there are a few instances of omissions caused by a desire to preserve the meter. For example, the monosyllabic Russian word *еж* is the direct equivalent of the English word *hedgehog*, which is why, in the English version of “So Forth,” Brodsky, omits the attribute *стопроцентный* (*one hundred percent*):

И в горле уже не комок, но **стопроцентный еж** [...] (4: 11)

And it's not a lump but a **hedgehog** that fills your throat [...] (361)

It could be argued that substitutions can be regarded as omissions, because substituting means that a block of information in the original text is left out and another block of information replaces it in the translated version. However, precisely because of the latter, this kind of change is not treated as an omission. Omission is deleting a block of information from the original text and not replacing it in the translation. Attributes are most subject to omission. However, we should remember that in his Russian texts, Brodsky avoids using attributes, following the advice given to him by Rein. That is why attributes, when they appear in the Russian text, are very meaningful and bear an additional weight.

In the English text of “Ты, гитарообразная вещь со спутанной паутиной,” which in English has a title “Minefield revisited,” Brodsky omits attributes:

Ты, гитарообразная вещь со спутанной паутиной
струн, продолжающая коричневеть в гостиной,
белеть а-ля Казимир на выстиранном просторе,
темнеть—особенно вечером—в коридоре,
спой мне песню о том, как шуршит портьера,
как включается, чтоб оглушить полтела
тень, как лиловая муха сползает с карты
и закат в саду за окном точно дым эскадры,
от которой осталась одна матроска,
позабытая в детской. (3: 170)

You, guitar-shaped affair with tousled squalor
of chords, who keep looming brown in an empty parlor?
or snow-white against laundered expanses, or
dark--at dusk especially--in the corridor,
strum me tune of how drapery makes its cloudy
rustle, how a flipped-up switch ravages half a body
with shadow, how a fly prowls the atlas, how in the garden
outside, the sunset echoes a steaming squadron
of which there survived only a middy blouse
in the nursery... (267)

The English text does not have the attribute *лиловая* (*purple*). This poem reminds one of painting. Colors are rendered by verbs formed from adjectives denoting colors.¹⁷ Three verbs denoting colors appear in one sentence, over three lines that create a certain rhythm. Two of them appear in the opening line of the poem. However, the colors denoted by verbs are not definite colors: *белеть* expresses the idea of appearing / seeming white; *коричневеть*--appearing / seeming brown; *темнеть*--appearing / seeming dark. They create a typical Brodsky tone of neutrality, indefiniteness. Even the attribute *выстиранный* (*laundered*) renders the notion of colorlessness.¹⁸ These colors apply to the addressee of the poem *You, guitar-shaped affair with tousled squalor* whom Brodsky does not name directly, but defines with the help of verbs denoting color; as is often the case with Brodsky, he transgresses borders between the inside and outside world. *The guitar shaped thing* is in the parlor, against the laundered expanses, in the corridor. After

¹⁷ Loseff notes that in Russian it is possible to render the quality by an active form of the verb, which is a means of word formation possible in Russian, but not possible in English. He also mentions that this could cause difficulty for translators ("Чеховский лиризм" 188).

¹⁸ *Laundered expanses* bring out the idea of material, which is an important emblem in Brodsky, symbolizing time. Natalia Strizhevskaya notes the usage of *тряпочка* (cloth) in "*Дни расплетаются в тряпочку, выстиранной тобою*" (*a piece of cloth laundered/ washed by you*) (107). The image of laundered cloth brings up to mind associations of losing color, which is also associated with time. Water semantics that the word *laundered* evokes is also associated with time.

describing in so many words the addressee of the poem, Brodsky asks the addressee to sing him a tune about several things, four of which Brodsky puts in one sentence: 1) how the curtain rustles; 2) how the shadow deafens half the body; 3) how a fly crawls from the map; 4) and how the sunset is like the smoke screen. The fly appears in the third link in the enumeration chain: the juxtaposition of fly and map brings the idea of geographic expanses and domesticity at the same time. However the color *лиловая* creates a sinister mood; moreover, it stands in the middle of the line and draws the attention, especially as it is the first adjective that appears in the enumerative chain. It is like a spot in the middle of the canvas. The next noun, *sunset*, is not accompanied by any color, as the color red is implied. However, here Brodsky compares it with smoke, which in terms of color would translate into red and black and gray. Again, Brodsky uses the juxtaposition of sunset in the garden with steaming squadron. Though he does not name the colors, he still manages to evoke the color scale. And the word *мампочка* (*middy blouse*) is usually crispy white and blue which are the colors of purity and innocence. The fact that the middy blouse belonged to the child (*позабывтая в детской*) intensifies this mood. The color white, however, is also the color of death-nothingness, and implicitly it intensifies the feeling that something terrible has happened to the squadron. Therefore the adjective *лиловая* (*mauve*) is important, and its omission in the translation is to the detriment of the text. In the same poem in the English text, Brodsky omits the attribute *позабывтая left behind / forgotten* which has a colloquial coloring and that brings out the idea of peacefulness, domesticity, something that happens out of absent-mindedness. Together with the words *middy blouse* and *nursery* they create a peaceful picture that clashes with the picture of war.

In the same poem Brodsky omits *a la Kazimir*. In other poems, the color white is often accompanied by an allusion to Kazimir Malevich's white square.¹⁹ The allusion allows various interpretations. In general, Malevich's white square brings to mind the idea of nothingness and also the idea that this nothingness is meaningful and enigmatic.

Another regretful omission relating to color is in the poem "Persian Arrow":

Даже покоясь в теплой горсти в морозный
полдень, под незнакомым кровом,
схожая позеленевшей бронзой
с пережившим похлебку листом лавровым,
ты стремительно движешься. (4: 132)

Even now, resting in my warm fingers
on a cold afternoon, in an alien chamber,
resembling, thanks to your **greenish pigment**
a bay leaf that has outlived its chowder,
you are rushing away, target-free, defiant. (419)

In the Russian original, Brodsky compares the arrow with bronze that has oxidized and has become green (*схожая позеленевшей бронзой*). He also compares it with the bay leaf that has outlived the soup that it was in. The comparison with bronze is important, because first of all bronze is an alloy, associated with monuments and sculptures, and elevates the tone of the poem, and second, it also explains why and how the arrow has been preserved through centuries. In the English text, the word *bronze* is omitted, it is therefore not clear why it has a greenish pigment.

Another case of the omission of a meaningful attribute is the last line in the poem "In Memoriam":

Остается, затылок от взгляда прикрыв руками,
бормотать на ходу "умерла, умерла", покуда
города рвут сырую сетчатку из грубой ткани,

¹⁹ Allusions to Malevich's white square appear in "Kellomaki" and "Roman Elegies." Brodsky keeps the artist's name in his translations. See "Cultural Realia."

дребезжа, как сдаваемая посуда. (4: 26)

What is left is to shield the skull, with raised arms, against idle glances,
and the throat, with the lips' nonstop "She has died, she has died," while
endless

cities rip the retinal sacs with lances
clanging loud like returning empties. (341)

The phrase *города рвут сырую сетчатку из грубой ткани* (*the cities tear up raw /damp retina made of coarse fabric*) combines three important words for Brodsky poetics:

1) the eye semantics *сетчатка* (*retina*); 2) *ткань* (*cloth*), which Brodsky translated as sack, rendering *сетчатка из грубой ткани* (*retina made of coarse fabric*) as *retinal sack*; 3) the attribute *сырая* (*raw*) is connected with water semantics. The repetition of sound "s" (*сырую сетчатку*) which is contrasted with the sounds "rv," "gr" (*рвут, грубой*), which convey the sound of violent tearing. It should be noted that in the English text, Brodsky preserves alliteration in this position (though of a different sound) with *rip, retinal* and the sound "s" in *cities, sac, lances*.

As was noted, the semantics of vision plays a very important role in Brodsky's poetics (Smith, "Polden' v komnate'" 132). In the English version of "Kellomaki," Brodsky does not keep the phrase *то есть подать слепцу* (*in other words to give to a blind man*), which he puts in parenthesis to make it more graphically conspicuous. It sounds like an afterthought, but it explains the whole stanza:

Необязательно помнить, как звали тебя, меня;
тебе достаточно блузки и мне—ремня,
чтоб увидеть в трельяже (то есть, подать слепцу),
что безымянность нам в самый раз, к лицу [...] (3: 247)

It is irrelevant now to remember your name, or mine.
For your blouse or my waistband will do just fine
to confirm in a trifoliate mirror's splits
that anonymity truly becomes us, fits [...] (317)

The phrase compares a mirror to the blind man, the mirror being a symbol of time and what it does to a person, i.e. makes him anonymous and insignificant. A blind man does not identify the one who gives money; for him the giver is anonymous. On the other hand, giving money is a good deed. When you give money to a blind person, you do not expect to be identified, and that makes your gesture more valuable. That resonates with the idea of the anonymity of a person's existence. One understands that one's life will be forgotten, but while you are still here on earth, you try to make your presence meaningful. Still you must have the courage to admit that it will be forgotten.

Another case of omitting the semantics of vision is also from “Kellomäki”:

С точки зрения времени, нет «тогда»:
есть только “там”. И “там”, напрягая взор,
память бродит по комнатам в сумерках, точно вор,
шаря в шкафах, роняя на пол роман,
запуская руку к себе в карман. (3: 245)

From time's point of view,
here is no “then,” only “there.” And “there,” through
empty rooms, memory roams like a thief at dusk,
frisking the wardrobe, rummaging through the desk,
knocking over a novel by an unknown
– picking the pocket which is its own. (315)

A case of the omission of yet another major symbol is the omission of the phrase *как рыбку-леской* in “Minefield Revisited”:

И как расческа
в кулаке дрессировщика-турка, как рыбку—леской,
возвыпает болонку над Ковалевской
до счастливого случая твкнуть сорок
раз в день рожденья... (3: 170)

[...] how hidden in the satin trousers
the comb of a Turkish dog trainer, when played, elevates his poodle
beyond Kovalevskaya, beyond its idol

to happy occasion: that is, to yelping forty
times at some birthday... (267)

The allusion to fish is significant as this image is important in Brodsky's poetics. Fish here is elevated by a rod above the water, which indicates that the fish is caught and will die. Before dying, however, it would be higher than Kovalevska's monument. In Brodsky's poetics, the fish is associated with Christ,²⁰ and the image of elevation brings to mind the image of Christ crucified on Golgotha. He is dying but still he is above everything and everybody, looking from the heights of the mountain at people and accepting death for them.

In "Ischia in October," *развернув потускневший рцы* is not translated. This phrase contains particularly meaningful words for Brodsky's poetics. *Рцы* is an old Russian word for letter 'p'. Brodsky employs an archaic word to stress the idea that language is old. This resonates with *потускневший* that along with the implication of old also brings the idea of a precious material or paper that has lost its shine, of scribes writing the Bible. Shine/ light is also significant in Brodsky's poetics of writing.²¹ *Развернув* implies the idea of material or paper, which are both associated with writing. The loss of this image is understandable (it would be difficult to find an equivalent *for рцы*), but regrettable:

Теперь штукатурка дворцов не та,
цены не те и не те счета.

²⁰ Fish in Brodsky are connected with the early Christian symbol of fish denoting Christ. "...значима также связь концепта рыбы в культуре с оральным началом и с проблемой говорения-немоты" (Ranchin 43). The language—silence theme is present in Mandelstam and Brodsky. See Knox. Attraction to the image of fish, besides its water—time association, can be explained by the fact that Brodsky uses this image on the linguistic basis. In Ancient Greek, the word for fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ) resembles an early Christian mystical symbol for Christ (ΧΡΥΣ).

²¹ The opposition of light and shining will be discussed on. pages 186–87 in connection with "Roman Elegies."

Но я кое-как сожму концы
строк, развернув потускневший рцы. (4: 134)

These days, the palaces' stucco peels,
frightful prices make longer bills.
Yet somehow I still make, amid
all these changes, my line ends meet. (431)

The longest omitted piece is the omission of two lines in "Postcard from Lisbon."

This shortened the number of lines in the English version:

Кометам,
пролетевшим мимо земли (в погоне
за бесконечностью, чьим приметам
соответствуют эти ландшафты, но не
полностью). Временному сонтью
в бороде арестанта иден власти
и растительности. Открытью
Инфарктики—неизвестной части
того света. (4: 41)

[...] to the comets
that missed this place in their hot pursuit of
infinity- whose features are echoes very
frequently by local vistas (alas, more photo-
genic than habitable); to the discovery
of Infarctica—an unknown quarter
of the afterworld [...] (384)

Compensation for Omissions

Though omissions are inevitable in translation, Brodsky tries to compensate for them by other means, making them less painful. In the Russian text of "In Memoriam," Brodsky uses parenthesis *видимо* (*apparently*) twice, which adds to a rhythmic effect of the poem. In the English version, he uses the equivalent *probably* only once:

Видимо, никому из
нас не сделаться памятником. Видимо, в наших венах
недостаточно извести. (4: 26)

None of us was well suited
for the status of statues. **Probably** our blood vessels
lacked in hardening lime. (341)

However, Brodsky compensates for this omission by employing alliteration in *status of statues*. In the same poem he omits the word *волнуясь*:

В нашей семье,--волнуясь,
ты бы вставила,--не было ни военных,
ни великих мыслителей.

He compensates for it with *count our blessings*, which renders the idea of excited speech:

"Our family," you'd have put it,
"gave the world no generals, or--**count our blessings**--
great philosophers."

In "Tsushima Screen," Brodsky omits the sentence *Забудь цусиму!* In fact, he does not use the word *Tsushima* in the body of the English poem at all, while in Russian he uses it twice. However, he puts this word in the title of the poem, while the Russian poem is without a title. Brodsky also substitutes the opening line *rising sun* for *perilous sun*, emphasizing the idea of perishing, which is implied by the allusion to the Tsushima naval battle and which might be lost on the English-speaking reader.

In "A Footnote to Weather Forecasts," the omission *без прикрас* (*without embellishment*) is rather painless:

... Редкий,
возможно, единственный посетитель
этих мест, я думаю, я имею
право описать **без прикрас**
увиденное. (3: 303)

A rare,
perhaps the only visitor to these parts,
I have, I suppose, a right
to describe the observed. (350)

The semantics of the word *observed* implies (more than the semantics of the word *see*) the idea that what your eye registers is true. *Observer* suggests a person that registers only what he/she sees in contrast to a *commentator*.

Part B. Translation Challenges

Colloquial, Crude, and Sexually Explicit Language

Many researchers have noted the great diversity of Brodsky's language. Bethea writes: "Brodsky has grown up and lived in all the layers of the Russian Language, from the most idiomatic and earthy to the most exalted" (*Creation of Exile* 228). In the same poetic space, bookish words (mythological names, historical places, biblical terms, names of writers and painters, archaic, poetic vocabulary) go along with colloquial expressions, jargon and even obscene vocabulary. The same can be said about his syntax. He employs very complicated syntactical constructions and also in the same poem uses colloquial syntax such as abbreviated and elliptical sentences. All this makes his poetic speech stylistically multi-layered.

Brodsky's colloquialisms range from intellectual jargon to prison lingo and obscene vocabulary. A rendition of colloquial expressions is very difficult, as it is not always possible to find a corresponding English equivalent with the same stylistic coloring.

I. Translation of a colloquial expression with a non-colloquialism.

a) In "Подруга, дурнея лицом, поселись в деревне..." Brodsky uses a village colloquial word *тутька* that means "breast." The word implies the breast of a woman who is feeding a baby, rather than an erotic object. He puts the word in a context that

speaks about nature going its natural course. After youth, comes the period of childbearing, and the fact that after *тутька* comes the word *семя* (*semen*) supports this idea. In the English version, which is entitled “Elegy,” Brodsky chooses the word *bosom*, which does not have a village colloquial coloring, but rather a poetic coloring that obscures its sexual implications:

Знаешь, лучше стареть там, где верста маячит,
где красота ничего не значит
или значит не молодость, титьку, семя,
потому что природа вообще все время. (4: 123)

You know, it's better to age where a milepost is nodding,
where beauty means absolutely nothing
or it means not youthfulness, *bosom*, *semen*
--since time, on the whole, is indeed all seasons. (“Elegy” 399)

b) In “На смерть друга” he employs a combination of bookish and jargon vocabulary *эзопова феня*. In the English text “To a Friend: In Memoriam,” Brodsky substitutes urban argot *феня* with *chant*:

я... чересчур далеко, чтоб тебе различать голоса--
на эзоповой фене в отечестве белых головок [...] (3: 58)

I am... too distant for you to distinguish a voice,
an Aesopian chant, in that homeland of bottle-struck livers [...] (212)

c) In “Пчелы не улетели, всадник не ускакал, в кофейне...” Brodsky again uses the word *феня* and in the same line a word of the same register, *кодло*:

Пчелы не улетели, всадник не ускакал, в кофейне
“Яникулум” новое кодло болтает на прежней фене.
Тая в стакане, лед позволяет дважды
вступить в ту же самую воду, не утоляя жажды. (4: 55)

The tone of the opening lines clashes with the next two lines, which sound rather esoteric and contradict the impossibility of repeating certain things in life twice. This idea is expressed in a typical Brodskian way. He draws on the saying *to not to step in to the*

same water twice. He revives the image of the water by using the image of ice melting in water. In the English text, *кодро* and *фене* are not rendered with jargon.

The bees haven't buzzed away, nor has a horseman galloped off. In the bar Gianicolo, **old timers enjoy their salad days**, and the ice cube melts, cooling the ailing motor grateful for sipping twice the proverbial water. ("Porta San Pancrazio," 393)

II. Rendering a colloquialism with a colloquial equivalent.

In "То не Муза воды набирает в рот," Brodsky uses a folk word, *молодец*, which is in tune with the tone of the poem written in the genre of a folk song. He preserves the tone in the English version by using *lad* and *lass*, though the latter is not used in the Russian text:

То не Муза воды набирает в рот,
то, должно, крепкий сон **молодца** берет,
и махнувшая вслед голубым платком
наезжает на грудь паровым катком. (3: 196)

It's not the Muse feels like clamming up,
it's more like high time for the **lad's** last nap.
And the scarf--waving **lass** who wished him the best
drives a steam roller across his chest. (273)

In Russian, Brodsky uses words with sexual semantics that are often vulgar or slang.²² Following his principle to be close to the original, he tries to find English equivalents, and in most cases he succeeds.

a) In "The Residence" he uses *beaver* for *шахна*:

Вдалеке воронье гнездо как **шахна** еврейки,
с которой был в молодости знаком,
но, спасибо, расстались. (4: 17)

A far-off crow's nest in the branches suggests the beaver
of a Jewess he knew in his salad days,
but thank god they've split. (288)

²² For more about Brodsky's usage of crude sexual vocabulary, see Loseff's "Иосиф Бродский: Эротика."

b) The same English word appears in “To a Friend: In Memoriam” to render Russian *сиповки* in “На смерть друга”:

где на ощупь и слух наколол ты свои полюса
в мокром космосе злых корольков и визгливых сиповок [...] (3: 58)

where you fingered your course to the pole in the moist universe
of mean blabbering **squinchers** and whispering innocent **beavers** [...] (212)

III. Brodsky also uses a reverse practice—a colloquial English expression, or even a crude word is used instead of a neutral word in the Russian text.

a) In “Taps” he uses the abbreviated form of the word importance, *import*, which gives the stanza a colloquial coloring:

With nothing around to care for, **it’s of no import**
if you are blitzed, encircled, reduced to nil.
Thus wetting his dream with the tumbled ink-pot,
A schoolboy can multiply as no tables will. (457)

b) In “So Forth” he uses the shortened form of the word handkerchief, *hanky*, while in Russian the neutral diminutive form *платочек* is used:

и, не успев улечься от прощального взмаха,
платочек трепещет в воздухе. (4: 11-2)

And not yet settled after the farewell tremor
a **hanky** still flits in the air. (362)

Compared to Russian texts, Brodsky’s English version at times sounds cruder. His tendency to insert or add words often results in more colorful, even cruder, words than the Russian original contains.

a) Старуха (*old lady*) becomes *old hag* in “The Lithuanian Nocturne”:

Малец полуголый
и старуха в платке загоняют корову в сарай. (3: 48)

A youngster, half naked,
and a kerchiefed old hag chase a pig to the sty. (215)

b) In the English version of “Kellomaki,” Brodsky uses a slang word *hood* instead of a neutral *преступник (criminal)*:

В середине жизни, в густом лесу,
человеку свойственно оглядываться – как беглецу
или преступнику: то хрустнет ветка, то всплеск струи. (3: 245)

In mid life's thick forest, in that dark wood,
man, like a runaway or, better still, a hood,
tends to glance backward: now branches creaking, now water's sound. (315)

c) In “Near Alexandria” Brodsky inserts *crushing bedbugs*:

Всадники, стало быть, просто дали
дуба на собственной простыне. (3: 241)

The warriors apparently kicked the bucket,
crushing bedbugs on the linen sprawl. (268)

In both language texts, he shows his disrespect for monuments and generals,²³ but in English this disrespect comes across even stronger.

Brodsky also uses sexual images when he talks about guns, in English more obviously than in Russian.

a) In the English “Near Alexandria,” the sexual implication is stronger:

Прележавший весь день на “пуске”
палец мусолит его сестру. (3: 241)

A finger, eight hours poised by the button
relaxes fondling its hooded twin. (268)

The meaning of Russian *мусолит* (fumbles) is not sexual, while the corresponding verb in the English translation, *fondles*, has a sexual implication.

²³ Brodsky's disrespect of statues is expressed more emphatically in the English text of “Мысль о тебе удалется, как разжалованная прислуга..”/ “In Memoriam.” See pages 171-72.

- b) In “Пятая годовщина” / “Fifth Anniversary” we find:

Там мучает охранник во сне штыка трехгранник. (3: 148)

A sleeping guard enjoys wet dreams and pulls the trigger. (242)

This is a euphemistic way to say that the guard was masturbating. In the English version, it is easier to interpret the guard's sexual practice, as Brodsky inserts the word *wet*, and the dreams become erotic. Sexual references are present in both texts; however, in Russian the erotic, sexual undercurrent is more veiled, while in English it is more transparent.

As oftentimes happens with Brodsky, in the English texts he uses recurrent images and word combinations, which are absent from the Russian originals. Thus, in the English texts *dreams* occur with the attribute *wet*.

- a) Я выпустил в свои сны вороненый зрачок конвоя [...] (3: 191)

I admitted the sentry's third eye into my wet and foul dreams. (“May 24, 1980” 211)

- b) Там мучает охранник во сне штыка трехгранник. (3: 148)

A sleeping guard enjoys wet dreams and pulls the trigger.
 (“The Fifth Anniversary” 242)

- c) Так школьник, увидев, однажды во сне чернила,
готов к умноженью лучше иных таблиц. (4: 173)

Thus wetting his dream with tumbled ink-pot,
a schoolboy can multiply as no tables will. (“Taps” 457)

Here the process of writing and creativity is interwoven with sexuality. It is certainly not the first time Brodsky interlaces sex and writing in English.²⁴

²⁴ See also page 294, which shows that in “December in Florence” an interrelation of writing and expression of love is expressed more strongly in English. In Russian, Brodsky uses a sexual image in connection with words: “И не встать ни раком, ни так словам” (3: 196).

Idioms

True to his tendency to experiment with language, Brodsky does not often use idioms in their original form, that is idioms per se, but rather he transforms them. Idioms are an excellent stylistic device. An idiom is a set phrase, the meaning of which is understood from the combination as a whole, though it cannot be derived from the meanings of the component parts. The components of the set phrase lose or partially lose their primary meaning and realize their transferred or figurative meaning. The components are so fused together that they cannot be distorted, that is, the word order is fixed. Distortion of an idiom leads to the revival of the meaning of its components; it makes each word of the combination acquire its literal meaning, and as a result the idiomatic meaning is revived. The change within an idiom—through grammar, word order, substitution of the component by synonyms or antonyms, omission, etc.—could lead to distortion to the extent that the idiom becomes a free word combination. It still retains its figurative meaning, so the two meanings are realized, that of the idiom as well as that of the free word combination. This ontological feature of the idiom makes it a wonderful source of puns, jokes, advertisements, and newspaper headlines. Another interesting feature of idioms is that the distortion of the idiom usually entails an ironic effect, and this gives Brodsky's verse a very interesting twist. On the one hand, the employment of idioms, which are universal truths, in metaphysical poetry makes the poem sound more quotidian. On the other hand, the distortion of the idiom leads to an ironic effect, and it gives the metaphysical poem a tongue-in-cheek tone.

A. Translation of an idiom with an idiom

I. Translation with an idiom that expresses the same image.

1. In the body of the Russian and English verses under analysis, very few examples of idioms in their intact form were found. This can be explained by the fact that since idioms are, in fact, trite metaphors whose figurative meaning has due to frequent usage become more accepted, but whose literal meaning has faded, Brodsky has no interest in them. If he resorts to the usage of idioms and sayings, he alters them, thus reviving the inner form of the components. In the rare cases when he uses idioms in their intact form, these idioms do not allow any decomposition. The primary meaning of the words is completely lost and the meaning of the idiom cannot be derived from the meaning of its components. That means that the words are strongly fused together. It is obvious that to find in another language an exact idiomatic equivalent with the same semantic components is practically impossible.

In the English version of “В окрестностях Александрии” / “Near Alexandria,” Brodsky uses an idiomatic equivalent with the same meaning and the same stylistic coloring, but with a different image. Russian and English idioms both are idioms with fully transferred meaning (their meaning cannot be deduced from the meaning of their components):

Всадники, стало быть, просто дали
дуба на собственной простыне. (3: 241)

the warriors apparently kicked the bucket
crushing bedbugs on the linen sprawl. (268)

Though not a crude expression, the idiom is highly colloquial and, appearing in the context of statues, injects a disrespectful tone. As was mentioned on page 148, the English version of this poem is even cruder, since in the next line Brodsky also inserts the phrase *crushing bedbugs*.

2. As was mentioned earlier, Brodsky tends to distort idioms, and in his translations he tries to replicate the same mechanism in English as he used in Russian. He tries to find an idiom with the same image in English, and subjects it to a number of transformations similar to the transformations that the Russian idiom has undergone.

a) In the Russian text of “Иския в Октябре”/“Ischia in October,” he alters the idiom *сводить концы с концами* (*to make one's ends meet*) by substituting part of the idiom with the word *строк* (*сводить концы строк*):

Но я кое-как **свожу концы**
строк, развернув потускневший рцы. (4: 134)

He uses the same mechanism in the English text:

Yet I somehow still **make, amid**
all these changes, my line ends meet. (430)

b) In “Вертумн”/“Vertumnus,” Brodsky distorts the idiom *нельзя вступить в ту же реку дважды*:

И **нельзя**
вступить в то же облако дважды. Даже
если ты бог. Тем более, если нет. (4: 88)

In the English version, the idiom *one cannot step twice into the same river* undergoes the same changes:

Besides, **one can't**
step twice into the same cloud. Even
if you are god. Especially if you are not. (379)

c) In the Russian text of “Квинтет,” Brodsky uses the idiom *цыплят по осени считают* (*count chickens in autumn*) which corresponds to the English idiom *do not count your chickens until they are hatched*:

Осенью ястреб дает круги / над селеньем, считая цыплят. (3: 153)

In autumn, a hawk keeps / counting villages' chicklets. ("Sextet" 265)

Parts of the idiom are disjointed and grammar is altered; the verb becomes an adverbial participle. The phrase is used literally. On the other hand, the idiomatic meaning is still transparent. Brodsky draws on the meaning of the original idiom, which implies: do not draw conclusions now, it is too early. It also cautions against being too optimistic before more evidence is available. In other words, it means: do not rush time; you should count your chickens in autumn after they have survived. In the poem, the phrase in question actually stresses the idea that the time has come to count chickens; it mentions that autumn has come, it's time to make plans, to take stock. In fact, autumn is the opening word of the poem. In true Brodskian manner, however, the author twists the meaning. Now that you should be ready to assess and to make plans, that is *count chickens*, it is not you, but the hawk that is counting them, and their end is near. This is an allegorical symbol of taking life. Life has played a bitter joke. All your expectations were futile. After all your expectations, hopes, your restraints from feeling joy of anticipation, someone else will take away from you what you desire. The phrase that *ястреб дает круги / над селеньем* the hawk is circling above the village stresses the idea of the anticipation of death.²⁵ In the English variant of this poem ("Sextet"), this phrase is rendered as *Autumn, a sky hawk keeps counting villages' chicklets*. Here Brodsky also distorts the English idiom, by using only a part of the idiom (leaving out *until they are hatched*), by inserting the word *villages'* (*villages' chicklets*), and by changing *chickens* into *chicklets*.

²⁵ In a way, this reveals Brodsky's sentiments about his own health, as he knew that his heart problem was very serious (Shtern).

The English saying suggests that *you can count the chickens once they are hatched*, but it does not indicate the time of waiting until they grow, that is, it does not emphasize the torment of waiting. In the English text the idea is the same, namely, the hawk will kill the chickens, but because the original saying did not have the word *autumn*, the idea of hope aborted is not so pronounced.

II. Translation of an idiom with an idiomatic equivalent, but with a different image.

In “На смерть друга” / “To a Friend: In Memoriam” Brodsky writes: “да
лежится тебе, как в большом оренбургском платке, / в нашей бурой земле,
местных труб проходимцу в дыма” [...] (3: 58). Here, he utilizes the idiom *пройти
через огонь, воду и медные трубы* (*to go through fire, water and brass pipes*) which
means “to experience a lot.” The closest equivalent in English is *to go through the mill*.
Compared to the English idiom *go through the mill*, the Russian idiom also has the
meaning “to be street smart and adventurous.” In the Russian text, Brodsky uses the word
проходимец (literally *passer through*) which denotes an adventurer, a person ready for
all kinds of schemes. The word is morphologically related to the verbal component of the
idiom *пройти* (*go through*), the perfective form of *проходить*. Thus, *проходимец*
(*adventurer / passer through*) captures the meaning of the idiom. These two meanings are
simultaneously realized. We have an idea of the poet’s friend, to whom the poem is
dedicated. He is an adventurous man, street smart, who has seen a lot in his life (the poem
enumerates all his ordeals). Brodsky distorts the idiom even more by substituting the
word *медные* (*brass*) in the original idiom for the word *местные* (*local*) (they differ in
two letters) *местных труб проходимцу*. This brings an ironic effect to this line. He also

changes the part of the idiom *пройти через огонь и воду* (*go through fire and water*) for *дым* (*smoke*).

In the English version, Brodsky renders the meaning of the idiom with an equivalent *go through hell and high water*: “may you lie, as though wrapped in an Orenburg shawl, in our dry, brownish mud, / you, a **tramper through hell and high water** and the meaningless sentence” (212). It has the same meaning as the Russian idiom, but invokes a different image, though the water image is preserved and fire is implicated by the word *hell*, where supposedly sinners burn in fire. *Проходимец* is rendered as *tramper*, which seems to be an excellent choice, as it, on the one hand, captures the meaning of moving, and, on the other, also brings to mind the word *tramp*. In the English text, Brodsky also distorts the meaning of the idiom *through hell and high water* even more by adding *and the meaningless sentence* (*A tramper through hell and high water and the meaningless sentence*). This alludes to the friend’s literary affiliations.²⁶

B. Translation of an idiom with a free word combination

I. Literal Translation.

Brodsky often does not render an idiom with an idiomatic equivalent, but translates it literally, thus preserving the image, but sacrificing figurative meaning. Since the English reader does not recognize the idiomatic meaning, a new metaphor is created in the target language.

a) In “Кончится лето...”/“So Forth,” he utilizes the idiom *на ловца и зверь бежит*, which can be rendered as *speak of the devil*; but translated literally, the line

²⁶ In the text there are other indications that the friend was a man of letters (e.g. *word-plyer*, *bard*, *abductor of books*).

reads *the animal / beast / is running to the hunter who catches it*. In the English text,

Brodsky translated it literally, preserving the image and foregoing the idiomatic meaning:

Дело, конечно, не в осени. И не в чертах лица,
меняющихся, как у зверя, бегущего на ловца [...] (4: 11)

The point of course is not autumn. And not one's own features, which
alter as those of an **animal approaching the one who'll catch**
it. (361)

b) In the last stanza of "Kellomaki" he writes:

Глядя в другой пейзаж,
будем считать, что клин этот острый--наш
общий локоть, выдвинутый вовне,
которого ни тебе, ни мне
не укусить, ни, подавно, поцеловать. (3: 247)

... Scanning an alien scene
let's agree that the wedge can simply be seen
as our common elbow, thrust into the outside;
the elbow that neither of us can bite
or, moreover, kiss. (317)

In the Russian version, Brodsky uses the expression *кусать локти* (*to bite one's own elbow*) which means *to regret something*. He distorts the idiom by, first of all, inserting *выдвинутый вовне* (*thrust outside*), by adding *поцеловать* (*to kiss*), and by comparing the wedge with the elbow, thus bringing to mind the literal meaning of the components of the idiomatic unit. Just the same, the idiomatic meaning is still detectable and it gives the last lines of the poem the meaning of something unattainable, something the lovers would regret.

In the English version, the meaning of unattainability is preserved by creating the image of the elbow that cannot be kissed or bitten. In English this image is fresh and novel; however, in Russian the idiom also has the meaning of regret, something which cannot be done or undone. In English this meaning is lost.

c) In “Fin de Siècle,” Brodsky uses an expression coined by Il’f and Petrov, *автомобиль не роскошь, но средство передвижения* (a car is not a luxury, but a means of transportation) which became the popular phrase:

Также автомобиль
больше не роскошь, но способ выбить пыль
из улицы... (4: 73)

Brodsky translates it literally:

Likewise, a car at last
isn’t a luxury but *the means* of extracting dust
out of a street... (388)

In the Russian verse, this literary allusion brings in an ironic effect. First of all the saying was perceived as ironic. In terms of Soviet reality, a car was a luxury item, and could not be considered simply a means of transportation. Brodsky uses this Sovietism, which is already infused with irony, but also distorts it. He substitutes *способ передвижения* (*means of transportation*) for *способ выбить пыль* (*means to extract dust out of a street*). This is again the Brodskian vision of reality, where the logical causes and effects are distorted, and phenomena appear in unexpected cause and effect relations.²⁷

d) In “*Портрет трагедии*,” Brodsky alludes to the line from a children’s urban rhyme used to tease their peers who they think are in love: *тили-тили тесто—жених и невеста* (*tili-tili dough—bride and groom*).

Врежь по-свойски, трагедия. Дави нас, меси, как тесто.
Мы с тобой повязаны, даром что не невеста. (4: 105)

In the English text, he does not keep the allusion to this children’s rhyme. Part of it is

²⁷ Ranchin observes: “... формальная логическая последовательность утверждения и следствия перевернута, инвертирована. Смысл суждения основан не превращении объективного в субъективное” (57). E.g. “Потому что каблук оставляет следы—зима” (3: 129); “Она надевает чулки, и наступает осень” (4: 133).

preserved by *knead us*, and a hint of sexual implications comes through in *knead us to pulp on your bunks and sofas*:

Tragedy, hit us like a relative. Make clowns of us.
Knead us in to pulp on your bunks and sofas. (416)

e) In “Примечания папоротника,” the idiom *кот наплакал* (*cat shed tears*), which means “very small amount,” in the English version is rendered literally with no idiomatic equivalent in the English language. True to his tendency to use bookish words, Brodsky uses the specific term *lacrimae*:

ваши дни сочтены—судьей или вообще
у вас их, что называется, кот наплакал. (4: 71)

your days are numbered—by a jury, or
they are pussycat *lacrimae*, scarce and bitter. (371)

To stress the idea of a small amount Brodsky adds the adjectives *scarce and bitter* in the final position. In English, the phrase *pussycat lacrimae* might evoke the saying ‘crocodile tears’ that brings to mind insincerity. Together with the bookish *lacrimae* it gives the English version a more caustic tone.

f) In “Дождь в августе” / “August Rain” Brodsky distorts the idiom *с чужого плеча* which literally means *from the stranger’s shoulder*, its figurative meaning is *something that does not fit*:

Среди бела дня начинает стремглав смеркаться,
и кучевое пальто норовит обернуться шубой
с неземного плеча. (4: 42)

In broad daylight it starts to get dark with
breathless speed, and a cumulous cloak grows into an uneasy
fur coat off some astral back. (385)

The idiomatic meaning can be interpreted as follows: Though the coat turns into a fur coat from an astral back, it is still uncomfortable, for it is not yours and does not fit you

properly and you always feel it. It is probably connected with the idea that, though life is easier and better in many ways, the poet still does not feel in his own element, as one who wears a coat that is not his own. In the English version *a cumulous cloak* becomes an uneasy fur-coat off some astral back. In English, Brodsky does not find an idiomatic equivalent; he translates it literally, but he does not want to sacrifice the meaning of *fitting badly*, which is why he inserts the attribute *uneasy*. Later, in the last stanza we find out that this fur-coat becomes more concrete *a black fox-coat*. In the English version, the coat is red, and the word *fox* appears. In the Russian text, *чернобурка* means a black fox coat, but the word *fox* is not verbalized. Bearing in mind the implication of the word *fox* in Brodsky's poetics as something sinister and menacing, which brings evil, one can't help but note that the English version sounds more menacing:

Повернуться спиной к окну и увидеть шинель с погонами
на коричневой вешалке, чернобурку на спинке кресла [...] (4: 42)

To turn away from the window! To behold a greatcoat with epaulets
on the brown varnished rack, a red-fox on the chair, neglected [...] (385)

II. Translation of the idiom with a free word combination but with a different image.

a) In "Полонез: Варнация" Brodsky distorts the idiom *горбатого могила исправит* (translated literally it reads as *only a coffin can improve the hunchback*) which corresponds to the English saying *a leopard does not change its spots*:

Плюс могилы нет, чтоб исправить нос
в пианино ушедшего Фредерика. (3: 249)

In the English version, he does not use the English idiomatic equivalent. The idiomatic and the literal meanings are lost. He renders it with a different image:

Of the rooms whose air savors every ounce
pecked by Frederick's key-board-bedeviled nozzle. (245)

Air pecked by birds' beaks is a recurrent image in Brodsky's poetics²⁸ and is connected with creativity and writing.

b) In "То не Муза воды набирает в рот..." he uses a rather crude expression *стать раком*, which, in the poem written in the genre of a folk song, allows this kind of language:

И не встать ни раком, ни так словам,
как назад в осиновый строй дровам. (3: 196)

And the words won't rise either like that rod
or like logs to rejoin their old grove's sweet rot [...] (273)

In the English version, he uses a different image, the image of words *rising like that rod* which also can be interpreted sexually. However, it brings to mind the idea of a fish caught by a rod as well.

Interestingly, the Russian poem "То не Муза воды набирает в рот..." was written in 1980 and the English version appeared in 1985. The image of the fish caught by the rod also appears in the Russian poem "Ты гитарообразная вещь со спутанной паутиной" written in 1978, earlier than "То не Муза ...":

И как расческа
в кулаке дрессировщика-турка, как рыбку—леской,
возвышает болонку над Ковалевской
до счастливого случая твякнуть сорок
раз в день рожденья [...] (3: 170)

As noted earlier, the fish is an important symbol in Brodsky's poetics (see page 141). In the English version of this poem, "Minefield Revisited," which appeared in *To Urania* in 1988, Brodsky foregoes this symbol. The interesting thing here is that the image in one Russian poem appears in another poem, though not in the Russian version, but in the

²⁸ For more about the image of birds pecking air, see page 207.

English translation. Noteworthy is the fact that in the English text, Brodsky uses the wording *rise like that rod*, which indicates that this image has already been mentioned in his poetry.

c) In “Пятая годовщина”/ “The Fifth Anniversary,” the urban slang *изображать барана* (*pretend you are a ram*) means “to act as if you do not understand anything what's going on, to be dumb.”²⁹ It also alludes to the sacrificial ram:

Но было бы чудней изображать барана,
дрожать, но раздражать на склоне дней тирана,
паясничать. (3: 149)

The meaning of this line is deduced from all these associations: it is silly to pretend that you do not understand what is going on and it is stupid to be a sacrificial lamb. This idiom is rendered in English as *lie low and ironed*, which captures the idea of humiliation, humbleness, and dumbness. The silliness of opposing a tyrant and that of sacrifice is conveyed by *play a warrior valiant*:

It would be odder still to **lie there low and ironed**
or play a warrior valiant and nudge an aging tyrant. (244)

d) In “Пятая годовщина”/ “The Fifth Anniversary” Brodsky uses the expression *язык без костей* (*boneless tongue*). The connotation of the idiom is negative, as it denotes a person who speaks everything that enters his mind without thinking. In the context of the poem, the negative meaning fades:

И без костей язык, до внятных звуков лаком,
судьбу благодарит кириллицыным знаком. (3: 150)

my free-flapping tongue, a glutton for clear lyric
sends its Cyrillic thanks into the blue acrylic (244)

²⁹ Probably it stems from the expression *уставиться как баран на новые ворота* (*to stare as a ram at new gates*). Ranchin notes: “... герой иронически именуется «бараном», что знаменует глупость жертвенного поступка” (31).

Brotsky translates it as *free flapping tongue*, which brings out the idea of material or cloth, which is associated with poetry.³⁰ The idea of poetry is more pronounced in the English version.

e) In the closing stanza of the Russian version of “Fin de Siècle,” Brodsky uses a pun based on the expression *открыть рот* (*open one's mouth*), which usually indicates an expression of surprise, but also bears the connotation of being fooled. *Открыть* also has the meaning *to discover*: *сделать открытие, открыть остров, новые организмы*.³¹

И, услышавши это, хочется бросить рыть
землю, сесть на пароход и плыть,
и плыть--не с целью открыть

остров или растение, прелесть иных широт,
новые организмы, но ровно наоборот;
главным образом--рот. (4: 77)

On the one hand, Brodsky intensifies the unexpectedness of the pun by creating suspense. He disconnects *рот* (*mouth*) from the verb *открыть* (*open*) by the whole stanza: *открыть* (*open*) occupies the last line of the penultimate stanza, and *рот* (*mouth*) is the last word of the poem. He makes the reader wait until the end of the stanza for what will be opened, utilizing the meaning of *discover*. But in the end he uses *рот*, i.e. the verb *открыть* (*to open*) is employed in its first meaning *to open*. This device is built on the polysemy of the word and is akin to zeugma. This intricate linguistic way of expressing the thought renders the idea that at the end of life's journey, life produces something unexpected and you open your mouth in surprise. It has been noted that the meaning of

³⁰ A cloth-poetry correlation was mentioned on page 136.

³¹ The two meanings of the word were also noted by Ranchin (263).

the last phrase *to open one's mouth* also means to breathe air, which could alternatively mean *to take a last gasp* (Batkin 21). For Brodsky, *to open one's mouth* is associated with language, and air as well is connected with language and poetry.³² Brodsky here merges two notions associated with the last gasp--death and writing.³³ The complex stylistic arrangement of this line also indicates that writing poetry is a linguistically virtuoso process.

The English version gives a different reading:

And upon hearing that, one wants to quit one's travail,
shoveling, digging, and board a steamship and sail
and sail, in order to hail

in the end not an island, not an organism Linnaeus never found,
not the charms of new latitudes, but the other way around:
something of no account. (392)

Открыть is rendered as *find*. The image of the *open mouth* is not rendered, which results in the loss of the zeugma effect. But the unexpectedness of the ending is still preserved. It gives the poem a different reading. Life's journey, in the end, will be for nothing, as you will not find anything of significance, and this is stated directly--
something of no account. If we read with the two versions in mind, another interpretation of the Russian ending *открыть рот* (*to open one's mouth*) becomes possible that does not necessarily involve the interpretation of writing. At the end of life's journey you open your mouth in surprise because you discover that life prepared nothing for you. There is no surprise. Here lays the clash between the ironic notion that there is no surprise and the fact that one is nonetheless surprised at being fooled.

³² See pages 209-10 in "Imagery."

³³ In "A Polar Explorer," the dying explorer writes on the photograph.

The next example does not belong to any of the above mentioned groups. It is interesting in the respect that, though Brodsky does not use the equivalent in English, he refers to it:

Тая в стакане, лед позволяет дважды
вступить в ту же самую воду, не утоляя жажды. (4: 55)

[...] and the ice cube melts, cooling the ailing motor
grateful for sipping twice the proverbial water.
("Porta San Pancrazio" 393)

In the Russian verse, he draws on the idiom *нельзя вступить в реку дважды*. He distorts the idiom by stating that it is possible to do so and also by substituting *river* for *water*. In the English version, Brodsky distorts the idiom even more. Instead of *stepping into the same river twice*, he uses *sipping twice the proverbial water*. The actual reference to *the proverbial water* helps one recognize the proverb.

C. Translation of a Russian free word-combination by an English idiom

This practice is not often employed by the poet.

а) In "Кончится лето, начнется сентябрь," "Ах, как ты постарел" скажет тебе одна (*Ah, you've aged so, one (female) (may) say to you*) is rendered as "You've grown old in the tooth"/, a belle may sigh..." (361). This gives the text a colloquial coloring.

б) In the English version of "Lithuanian Nocturne," Brodsky employs and distorts the idiom *out of sight, out of mind*:

Витовт, бросивший меч и похеривший щит,
погружается в Балтику в поисках броду
к шведам. (3: 53)

Prince Vytautas is ready to venture
our flatulent Baltic, with the Swedes out of sight
but in mind. (220)

In the Russian version, *в поисках броду* evokes the idioms *не зная броду, не суйся в воду*, which interlaces it with a slight disapproval towards Vytautus.³⁴ In English, Brodsky changes the whole line and *бросивший меч и похеривший щит* is not rendered. Thus the idea of the failure of Vytautus' enterprise is not obvious from this line.³⁵ However the word *flatulent* renders the irony. Though, in English there is no reference to the saying, *не зная броду, не суйся в воду*, Brodsky adds the idiom *out of sight, out of mind*, which he distorts. Probably it is done to enhance irony.

c) In the following passages from "Fin de Siècle," we see a figurative use of language (*wash, yellow, sweet tooth*), while in the Russian original neutral language is used:

Бег
времени требует жертвы, развалины. Баальбек
его не устраивает; человек
тоже. (4: 75)

The rush
of time, demanding a ruin, a victim, rejects as trash
Baalbek. A man won't wash
either. (389)

Таков аппетит и вкус
времени. Не тороплюсь,
но подаю. Я не трус [...] (4: 75)

Such is time's, alas,
sweet tooth. Well, I make no fuss
and give. I am not *yellow* [...] (389)

³⁴ Prince Vytautus was the most famous monarch of early Lithuania (*Collected poems* 518).

³⁵ In the English text, it (Vytautus' death) becomes evident in the next line "...However, the land / overtakes him, assuming the shape of a lengthy / pier ..." In fact, the English text, it is expressed more transparently than in Russian ("The land overtakes him"). The Russian text does not have any mention of the Prince. The next four lines have a more esoteric meaning. "...Впрочем, земля/ и сама завершается молом, погнавшимся за/как по плоским ступенькам, по волнам/ убежавшей свободой."

Neologisms and Puns

Neologisms

Consistent with Brodsky's propensity to enliven the meaning of words is his use of neologisms.³⁶ Neologisms are eye- and ear-catchers; because they are a violation of the form of a word, they immediately attract the attention of the reader or listener. In terms of linguistic mechanism, in neologisms the relationship between the building blocks of the word is de-automatized, and the meaning of morphemes emerges to the fore. This gives the impression that a word is born anew. Neologisms also contribute to the stylistic coloring of the text as, on the one hand, they add a colloquial touch, and, on the other, they are evidence of sophistication, for only those who are comfortable with words feel free to experiment with language. In a way, they are a form of language play. In Russian poetry, neologisms occur more often than in English due to the Russian language's extensively developed morphological system. Russian suffixes and prefixes make it possible to construct words with various connotations.

Obviously, it is not always possible or practically impossible to translate neologisms. The following analysis will illustrate Brodsky's practice of rendering neologisms into English.

I. Rendering neologisms with a standard word/ word combination.

a) In "December in Florence," Brodsky substitutes the neologism *биосмыем* (a verb created from noun *биосм* (*bust*) for the word of visual semantics *peer*. *Биосм* (*bust*) is a meaningful word in Brodsky's poetics, as monuments and statues are linked with the idea of antiquity and memory. Using the neologism *биосмыем*, he plays down, and even scoffs

³⁶ Polukhina notes that, in Russian, neologisms "are not one of his favourite devices" (*Joseph Brodsky* 247).

at the idea of statues and busts. It also serves to oppose the idea of the antiquity of Florence (Old Bridge, the statute to Cellini, eternal blue hill) with the modern, mundane life (the town peddlers selling the replicas of statues) where everything is bought and sold. The rhyming of *бюстует* and *торгуют* supports this idea:

На Старом Мосту--теперь его починили,--
где бюстует на фоне синих холмов Челлини,
бойко торгуют всяческой бранзулеткой [...] (3: 111)

[...] while the Old Bridge (new after repair),
where Cellini is peering at the hill's blue glare,
buzzes with heavy trading in bric-a-brac. (130)

b) The word *междудеревье* in the poem "Дождь в августе" is rendered literally as *tree intervals* in "August Rain":

Как семейно шуршанье дождя! как хорошо заштопаны
им прорехи в пейзаже изношенном, будь то выпас
или междудеревье, околица, лужа--чтоб они
зренью не дали выпасть
из пространства. (4: 42)

How familial is the rustling of rain! how well it darns and stitches
rents in a worn-out landscape, be that a pasture,
alleyways, puddles, *tree-intervals*—to foil one's eyesight, which is
capable of departure
from its range. (385)

c) *Жидопись* which is built on the association of *живопись* was rendered as *painful painting*, rendering the idea of painting and the notion of suffering associated with the word *жид* (derogative of Jew).

В одинокой комнате простыню
комкает белое (смуглое) просто ню--
жидопись неизвестной кисти. (3: 153)

Clutched sheets in a room elude
their milky/swarthy/abandoned nude--
an anonymous painful painting. (265)

II. Rendering neologisms with neologisms.

In “На смерть друга” Brodsky constructs *слововержец* according to an analogy between *громовержец*’s power to throw thunder and his friend’s power with words: “слововержцу, лжецу, пожирателю мелкой слезы” (3: 58). In the English version, “To a Friend: In Memoriam,” Brodsky calls his friend “a word-plier, a liar, a gulper of bright measly tears.” (212) Thus *слововержец* is rendered as “word- poyer,” which is not an exact equivalent but also is a neologism. The next word *gulper* (from *gulp* + agent suffix *-er*) is not a typical use of the word. *plier*, and *liar* create inner rhyme and alliteration; it is noteworthy that in the Russian text, there is also inner rhyme and alliteration (though of different sound combination) in *слововержцу, лжецу*.

Undoubtedly, it is easier to render a neologism if it is formed on the basis of international words, that is, those that exist in many languages, such as medical terms or computer terminology. This is the case with *Инфарктика*, which is built as *Арктика*, *Антарктика*. As the same words exist in the English language (medical terms and geographical names are the same in many languages), it is possible to render the neologism while preserving the same word formation and not making it sound foreign: *Infarctica* is also built on the analogy with Arctic /Antarctica.

Открытию
Инфарктики—неизвестной части
того света. (4: 41)

[...] to the discovery
of *Infarctica*--an unknown quarter
of the afterworld. (“Postcard from Lisbon” 384)

In Russian, the word *инфаркт* is regularly used by laymen; in English, though, *infarct* is primarily a medical term, and laymen use *heart attack*. This is why *Infarctica* in the English text gives it a bookish tinge.

III. Neologisms in the English text in lieu of a regular Russian word.

In a few cases, Brodsky devises neologisms in the English version, while in Russian he resorts to a more normative word.

a) In “View with the Flood” he uses a neologism *neverscape*:

Clearly it rose drop by drop, for years attempting a **neverscape**
whose portable swells now crave new distances: salty, vast. (456)

Ясно, что долго накапливалось—в день или в год по
капле, чьи
пресные качества грезят о новых соленых га. (4: 142)

Neverscape utilizes two words, one-indicating time (*never*), and the other pertaining to space (*scape*--from *landscape*). It suggests the idea of being in a space, which does not exist and has never existed in time or space. It also brings to mind the verb *escape*, which emphasizes fruitlessness of any attempts on the part of the drop to escape. This stresses the idea of being trapped in time and space. These meanings are not present in the Russian version of the poem.

b) In the English version of “Литовский ноктюрн” / “Lithuanian Nocturne,” Brodsky changes *zero* to *zerocide* which is formed on the analogy of the word-formation pattern *genocide*, reminiscent of the Russian newspaper cliché³⁷ - *жертвы геноцида* (*victims of genocide*):

Полночь. Сойка кричит
человеческим голосом и обвиняет
в преступлениях термометра против нуля. (3: 52)

³⁷ See Brodsky about the deformation of the language, inflicted by the party (JBC 185).

Midnight. Cries of a jay
sound human and charge Mother Nature
with the crime of thermometers: with *zerocide*. (215)

As with all distortion of clichés, it gives the stanza a tongue-and-cheek effect.³⁸ In the same poem, he alludes to *призрак коммунизма* (*specter of communism*), a phrase, which all Russians would recognize immediately as the opening line *Призрак бродит по Европе* / *A specter wanders in Europe* from Marx's "Communist Manifesto":

Призрак бродит по Каунусу. (3: 53)

A specter wanders in Kaunas. (221)

This ironic reference to political language brings out Brodsky's attitude to the political situation, and to the politicizing of the language. He makes the political cliché restore the primary meaning.³⁹ Interlacing a philosophical text, which deals with the problems of poetic creativity, poetic existence, with political innuendo is very characteristic of Brodsky.

However, an English reader would not necessarily sense the caustic elements in *genocide* that a Russian reader would recognize. Once again, we face an interesting phenomenon of self-translation. Only a bilingual reader (or the poet himself) would be able to appreciate the innuendoes of *zerocide*.

³⁸ This wording was criticized by Simon: "Mother Nature was charged by a jay 'with the crime of thermometers: with zerocide.' Of course, 'zerocide doesn't work linguistically: it is not the first half, the zero that is being exterminated-as is genocide, fratricide, etc. And why should the mere recording thermometer be charged with the crime?'" (56).

³⁹ For more about Brodsky's concern about the Russian language being crippled by the language of Soviet mass media see "Письмо о русской поэзии" written by an anonymous author. Diment also notes that one of the reasons for Brodsky's writing an essay about his parents in English can be explained by "the dehumanizing and hypocritical connotations," which "the rhetoric of the Soviet state" imposed on the most intimate words" (356).

с) In “Мысль о тебе удаляется, как разжалованная прислуга...” / “In Memoriam”

Brodsky writes:

Видимо никому из
нас не сделаться памятником, видимо, в наших венах
недостаточно извести. “В нашей семье,— волнуясь,
ты бы вставила,—не было ни военных,
ни великих мыслителей.” Правильно: невским струям
отражение еще одной вещи невыносимо. (4: 26)

None of us was well suited
for the statue of statues. Probably our blood vessels
lacked in hardening lime. “Our family,” you'd have put it,
“gave the world no generals, or—count our blessings—
great philosophers.” Just as well, though: the Neva surface
can't afford yet another reflection, brimming with *mediogres*. (341)

In the Russian text, Brodsky uses the word *вещь* (*thing*) which is a very potent word in Brodsky's poetics: *невским струям отражение еще одной вещи невыносимо* (*yet another reflection of a thing is unbearable for the streams of the Neva*). As has been noted (Stavitskij; Lotman M.Y., Lotman Y.M.; Polukhina, *Joseph Brodsky*), Brodsky's poems teem with “things.” “Elegy to John Donne” has more than 60 objects that have fallen asleep. In the often quoted “Я обнял эти плечи...” / “Dedicated to the chair” the *thing* becomes the main character in the poetic space. Things start ousting space. In the dichotomy of space vs. thing, thing is eternal and in the end it wins. (Lotman M.Y., Lotman Y.M., 67) In Brodsky, *thing* is not really a concrete object (it does not define or relate to any particular object), rather it is an abstract entity, that is, Brodsky uses *вещь* (*thing*) in its philosophical meaning.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ In “Lithuanian Nocturne” we see a very curious usage of *вещь* (*thing*):

И выносят на улицу главную вещь,
разделенную на три
без остатка [...] (3: 49)

Here *вещь* (*thing*) means “a bottle of vodka” and *разделенную на три без остатка* (*divided evenly by three*) reflects the Russian tradition that vodka should be drunk by three people. The fact that *thing*, a

In Brodsky, man is associated with things or should be striving to become a thing. When the poet's mother says that none of them can become statues, the son agrees with her saying that *невским струям отражение еще одной вещи невыносимо* (yet another reflection of a thing is unbearable for the streams of the Neva). He includes statues and people in the realm of things. On the other hand he excludes himself and his family from it. It is clear that in this context *вещь* (thing) means a statue, and here comes a whole array of meanings associated with statues. Statue has two sets of meanings in Brodsky's poetics. One is associated with eternity, memory. In "Roman Elegies" he identifies himself with the statue of ancient Rome, underlying the idea that he would become a statue and will live for centuries through his poetry.⁴¹ The second meaning is connected with Empire, and hence tyranny.

In the English text, Brodsky "decodes" the meaning of *thing* by calling it *mediogres*, which is built from *mediocre* and *ogre*. That is an intriguing explanation. In this context, philosophers and warriors, to whom the statues are erected, are treated as mediocrities, and also as ogres, monsters.

When his mother says that in their family they did not have any important people, the Russian *мыслители* (thinkers) is rendered as *philosophers*. However, in the Russian context *мыслители* was the word that was often used in reference to Lenin and Stalin, whose statues were erected everywhere. To Brodsky these figures were intellectual

metaphysical word, stands for "vodka" gives it a humorous effect, codes the meaning, and also emphasizes the irony of the fact that drinking is something innate for the Soviet people.

⁴¹ For more about statues in Brodsky's poetics see A. Razumovskaya's "Статуя в художественном мире И. Бродского."

mediocrities⁴² and moral ogres (see the Brodsky poems that give a collective portrait of a tyrant: “The Residence,” “To One Tyrant”). That is why, in the English version, the poet's mother is grateful that “our family gave the world no generals, or—count our blessings—great philosophers.” The author adds the words *count our blessings* (otherwise it would not be clear why the mother is grateful to the fact that their family is so unimportant). In the English text, the association between philosophers and Stalin and Lenin is not that obvious.

It is clear that Brodsky's attitude is more political and less philosophical. The author probably does not want the English-speaking reader to have any ambiguities. Since his English reader would not recognize the implications and associations of *мыслитель* (*thinker*), *mediogres* immediately leaves no doubt about who is meant and reveals the author's attitude. As a result the English text is more unveiled, probably because Brodsky believes that the Russian reader does not need unveiling.⁴³

Another characteristic of Brodsky's English vocabulary, akin to the use of neologisms, is his propensity to compound words consisting of parts that normally do not go together; this also produces an effect of novelty. In “Lithuanian Nocturne,” in section VII and VIII we see:

Вот откуда вся жизнь как нетвердая честная фраза
на пути к запятой. (3: 50)

That's whence, too, one's whole life's honest, hesitant sentence:
a comma-bound affair. (217)

⁴² In “Fin de Siècle,” he says *тиран уже не злодей, но посредственность* (III, 73). It is noteworthy, that in the English text, Brodsky translates *злодей* (evildoer) as bugaboo: “A tyrant's no longer a bugaboo / but a plain mediocrity...” (388). Polukhina notes the opening in the cycle “Post aetatem nostram” begins with a sarcastic sentence about the complete victory of mediocrity in the Empire: “The Empire is a country for fools” (Joseph Brodsky 198).

⁴³ A similar treatment of statutes is in “Near Alexandria.” See page 148. The disrespect to monuments and authorities is more flagrant in the English version.

Наша письменность, Томас! с моим, за поля
 выходящим сказуемым! с хмурым твоим
 домоседством
 подлежащего! Прочный, чернильный союз,
 кружева, вензеля,
 помесь литеры римской с кириллицей [...] (3: 50)

Our cuneiform, Thomas! With my **margin-prone**
 predicates! with your subjects, **hearthbound** and luckless!
 Our inkpot alliance! Its splurge!
 Doodling lace, herringbone,
 Roman writ cum Cyrillic [...] (217-18)

It is noteworthy that he uses these kind of constructions when he speaks about the language.

Puns

Puns, based on the interaction of two well-known meanings of a word or phrase, is another device employed by Brodsky to enliven the language. Puns can be based on the interaction of the two meanings of a word or two words.

a) In “О если бы птицы пели и облака скучали...” describing cold weather, Brodsky plays with the word Decembrist, the Russian revolutionary who took part in the uprising against the monarchy in December 1825, and the name of the Russian Decembrist Besstuzhev, which contains a word pertaining to cold *стужа* (*severe cold*):

И статуи стынут, хотя на дворе—бесстужев,
 казненный потом декабрист, и настал январь. (4: 166)

Yet oxygen seems to be just the raw material
 for lace strung out on spokes in the tsars' back yard,
 and the statues freeze as though they smell a serial
 Decembrist, beheaded later and breathing hard. (“Flourish” 453)

Reproducing the last name *Besstuzhev* will not make sense in the English text; still

Brodsky tries to reproduce the word play. He uses the word *Decembrist* to echo the idea

of cold. However, an average English speaking reader will not know the meaning of the word. *Beheaded later and breathing hard* hint at the fate of the Decembrists. However, the choice of *serial Decembrist* is rather strange. It does not have the heroic associations that would be evoked in any Russian reader. Moreover it evokes the expression *serial killer*.

b) In the Russian text of “Fin de Siècle,” Brodsky uses graphic homonyms, words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently due to differing stress:

По мне,
движущееся вовне
время не стоит внимания. Движущееся назад
стоит, или стоит, как иной фасад,
смахивая то на сад,
то на партию в шахматы. (4: 75)

In the English version, he manages to render the word play, not with the true homonyms, but drawing on the polysemy of the word. He goes even further and uses two sets of words: 1. a) *stand*, in the primary meaning to be in an upright position--*Time stands*; b) *stand*, meaning to “bear”--*I can stand*; 2. a) *still*, meaning “yet”; and b) meaning “not moving”--*stand still*:

It so happens
I can't **stand** time that moves on. Time that **stands still** I **still**
can **stand**. Like a solid façade whose style
echoes now a stockpile,
now a chessboard. (390)

c) In the following example the effect is achieved by the sequential use of **is** and **was**:

Вполне стандартный пейзаж, улучшенный наводнением.
Видны только кроны деревьев, шпиль и купола.
Хочется сказать, захлебываясь, с волнением,
но из множества слов уцелело одно “была.” (4: 142)

A somewhat familiar landscape, currently flooded. Currently
it's only cupolas, spires, treetops, a rainy gauze.
The throat wells up with a gurgling, passionate commentary,
But out of the bunch of words all that remains **is was**.
(“View with a Flood” 456)

As was mentioned above, Brodsky tends to experiment with the language by breaking up a set expression or using an anomalic grammar construction. He also uses sound similarities to create puns. He seemingly cannot help doing the same in his English texts. In the following example he uses rhyming words that are practically homonyms:

Спасибо, трагедия, за то, что непоправима,
что нет аборта без херувима [...] (4: 105)

Thanks, tragedy, for your attempts to **cheer up**
(since there is no abortion without a **cherub**) [...] (“Portrait of Tragedy” 415)

The fact that Brodsky uses puns and neologisms in his English texts testifies to the fact that he feels at ease with his new language and even dares to challenge it. Further, this usage reveals Brodsky's desire to experiment with his new language. Brodsky's opponents criticized him for “unwillingness to pass up the remotest chance of a pun or a quibble” (Davie 1415). However, this playing with the language is also consistent with what he does in Russian, with the nature of his talent.

Alliteration

Brodsky, discussing Russian poetry in his interview to Epel'buan, says that Pushkin and the harmonic school that emerged with him created a dynamic flexible Russian verse that is still in use today: “The harmonic school accelerated or harmonized verse to the extent that each word, and each thought have the same coloring, everything is given equal attention because the meter is very regular” (БКИ 145). Brodsky, however

believes that it is “not very good, because the *шероховатость* (uneven style) had some advantages, as the reader’s attention would slow down on what is being said.” He goes on to say that “within a century *зладкомусь* (smooth writing) was developed to the extent that the eye would not be hindered by anything” (БКИ 145). Brodsky, as the symbolists before him, tried to get away from heritage of the harmonic style. It has been noted that Brodsky’s texts are deliberately not melodic, as if he tries to make it impossible for his reader to slide through a smooth text and rhythm, in order to force him or her to deliberately stumble over unusually rough clusters of sounds. These clusters on the one hand, transmit emotional power and, on the other hand, force the reader to look at the words with a renewed interest, thus reviving their power.⁴⁴ While analyzing his poems, most scholars note Brodsky’s alliteration technique. Regrettably, the phonic structure of Brodsky’s poems has not been thoroughly explored.

Brodsky’s poetic space is very complex and informative. One device goes hand in hand with another. Often, Brodsky’s alliteration charges the text with even more information. To render alliteration in a translation is very difficult, if not impossible. Words in different languages obviously sound different, and sounds possess different associations. The following analysis will give us an idea how Brodsky tries to render alliteration in his self-translations.

I. The English version does not preserve alliteration.

In “Резиденция” describing the tyrant’s mansion, the poet uses alliteration to bring out

⁴⁴ The importance of euphony for Brodsky is seen from the following: “Basically, the imagery in a poem should be subordinate to its euphony; however, if you are a relatively old pro, you may forgo the euphonic beauty if you are enamored of the image, but you have to be very dexterous. In general, the reason I insist on euphony is perhaps the primacy of euphony. There, in the sound, we have in some animal way more than we have in our rational,... [sic] the sound can release a greater energy than the rational insight” (JBC 185).

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the similarity between the trees (орешник, ольшаник); he also chooses words with hushing sound /sh/, and carries this sound over to the next line:

В окнах спальни синеет ольшаник, не то орешник,
и сверчок верещит, не говоря уже о скворешнях
с их сверхчувствительными реле. (4: 17)

The /sh/ sound conveys the serene quiet atmosphere of the residence⁴⁵ where the tyrant dwells. The sound /sh/ is repeated in the middle of the poem in the word *шахна*, which, though a crude word, also conveys warmth and the idea of human affection. It, however, contrasts with the last line of the poem that describes the tyrant hiding in the bed from the screams of his son who was tortured to death. The sibilants /s/ and /z/ sustain this contrast:

И ничто так не клонит в сон;
как восьмизначные цифры, составленные в колонку
да предсмертные вопли сознавшего во всем
сына, записанные на пленку. (4: 17)

It should be noted that rhyming words *орешник*, *скворешнях* in this context bear additional meanings. Ranchin notes the dual meaning of *скворешня*: the house for starlings and the posts for guards (282). In this context, it means the posts equipped with sensitive instruments to guard the house of the tyrant. The image of *скворешня* is recurrent in Russian poetry: in Mandelstam, it is the image of time that is going away. With Brodsky, on the contrary, it is the sign of a new evil reality. *Орешник* (*alder*) also echoes with Mandelstam as the weapon that brings death. It is also reminiscent of Pasternak's poetry, where it bears the meaning of being outcast from life. In Pasternak's poetics, being shielded by an alder is not negative, but is even benevolent for the poet (Ranchin 283). This demonstrates the complexity and intricacy of Brodsky's poetic space.

⁴⁵ The Russian word for silence is *tishina* with voiceless consonants /t/ and /sh/.

The /sh / sound conveys the idea peacefulness and quietness, and at the same time it contradicts the evil meanings embodied in these words. It also contrasts with the sibilants in the final lines that reveal the real sinister and horrifying things that are going on in the house.

The English version of “The Residence” does not keep the alliteration of /sh/:

Bedroom windows hug poplars, or else its alders.

And the cricket’s chirr’s softer than all those idle
bird-feeders with their sensitive relay wink. (288)

Not only is the /sh /sound not preserved, *скворешни* is rendered as *bird- feeders*, which does not have the meaning of guard posts. But the sinister tone is maintained with *wink*.

II. Alliteration is rendered, the position of sounds is approximately preserved, though Russian and English sound clusters are different.

a) In “Кончится лето, начнется сентябрь...” we see the alternation of /sh- s- sh/ sounds along with the repetition of /k/:

но в ощущении кисточки, оставшейся от картины,
лишенной конца, начала, рамы и середины. (4: 11)

In the English version of “So Forth,” Brodsky inserts the word *puny*, which creates alliteration next to *paintbrush*, which is then carried into the next line in *painting*:

But this feeling of a puny paintbrush left idle
by the painting that lacks a frame, a beginning, an end, and a middle. (361)

b) In the same poem we see another sound repetition:

и профиль аэроплана,
растерявший все нимбы, выглядит в вышних странно. (4: 11)

The English text also contains alliteration, though of a different sound:

[...] and an airplane’s callous
profile looks odd on high, having lost its halos. (361)

c) In “В окрестностях Александрии,” we see the alliteration of /p/ in lines one and two. The English text carries on the alliteration of /p/. To achieve this (and also to keep the rhythm), Brodsky inserts the word *porticoes*, which is absent in the Russian text. The last line in the Russian text contains the repetition of /t/ цвета, тертого and /k/ sounds: / кирпича, корицы. The English version has alliteration of /r/ *rooftop’s ripple* (*rooftop’s ripple* is a metaphor which is not present in the Russian text):

чувствуя близость пустыни в коих,
прячет с помощью пирамид
горизонтальность свою земля
цвета тертого кирпича, корицы. (3: 242)

The cinnamon-tinted earth waylays its
horizontality in the fake
pyramids, porticoes, rooftop’s ripple. (268)

d) In “На смерть друга” he uses the repetition of sound clusters /lzh/ and /zh/ and inner rhyme: слововержцу, лжецу, пожирателю мелкой слезы, / обожателю Энгра... (3: 58). In the English text, Brodsky renders it with inner rhyme: *a word-plier, a liar, a gulper of bright measly tears* (“To a Friend: In Memoriam” 212).

III. English text contains alliteration while the Russian text does not.

a) In “Brise Marine” the poet uses inner rhyme *dallied alloyed* which goes in hand with the metaphoric usage of the verb *alloyed*. This in turn reveals Brodsky’s ironic bitterness towards his rival:

b) A quarter of century back you [...]
dallied with me—but later alloyed with a chemical
engineer and, judging by letters, grew fairly stupid. (364)

Четверть века назад ты [...]
развлекалась со мной; но потом сошлась
с инженером-химиком
и, судя по письмам, чудовищно поглупела. (4: 64)

b) In “Подруга, дурнея лицом, поселись в деревне...” we see repetition of /r/ *речка рябит*, which echoes alliteration of the opening line of the poem. In the English version of the same poem “Elegy,” the alliteration of the /r/ sound is rendered, and also a new alliteration of /f/ is added, which is then carried over to the next line:

Речка тоже рябит; а земля в морщинах--
и думать забыла, поди, о своих мужчинах. (4: 123)

A river, too, comes with ripples; and fields, in furrows,
clearly forgot for good about stocky fellows. (399)

To create rhythmic and melodic effect Brodsky resorts to the repetition of words. In “So Forth” *after* is repeated, and the enjambment of *afterlife* enhances the meaning of both words (*after* and *life*). The musicality is also intensified by the repetition of long /o/ and sonor /l/—*more all along, after all*. This gives the English lines a rather elevated tone. He speaks about death as something mysterious and somber. The Russian text does not have the same phonic properties:

Другие, кому уже
выпало что-то любить больше, чем жизнь, в душе
понимая, что старость—это и есть вторая
жизнь [...] (4: 12)

The others who had the luck
of loving something much more than life, knowing **all along**
that decrepitude is **after all**, that **after**
life [...] (361)

In “View with a Flood,” Brodsky repeats *currently* in the English version:

A somewhat familiar landscape, *currently* flooded. *Currently*
it's only cupolas, spires, treetops, a rainy gauze. (456)

It is noteworthy that *currently*, though occupying the rhyming position, is not the end of the syntactical unit. The /k/ sound in *currently* is carried over to the next line *cupolas*.

The Russian version does not have enjambment, though it contains alliteration: sound cluster /vod/ goes over to /vid/ in the next line:

Вполне стандартный пейзаж, улучшенный наводнением.
Видны только кроны деревьев, шпиль и купола. (4: 142)

The /vod/ and /vid/ sound proximity also emphasizes the connection between water and seeing. Also Brodsky uses word-play here: the word *currently* has the semantics of 'water.'

I will end this part by illustrating the alliteration technique in Russian and English texts. Sounds /z/ and /zh/ permeate "Персидская стрела." In Russian, these sounds imitate the sound of a sharp object cutting through air /zhikh, zhikh/. In the last stanza the voiced /zh/ becomes a voiceless /sh'/(*чаще, настоящего, преходяще*):

Даже покоясь в теплой горсти в морозный
полдень, под незнакомым кровом,
схожая позеленевшей бронзой
с пережившим похлебку листом лавровым

ты стремительно движешься. За тобою
не утнаться в пустыне, тем паче--в чаще
настоящего. Ибо тепло любое,
ладони--тем более, преходяще. (4: 132)

The sibilant /sh'/' is carried in the enjambment which puts additional importance on this sound. The shift to /sh'/' occurs also with the repetition of long /a:/; the whole cluster /ashe/ is being repeated three times (*чаще, настоящего, преходяще*) giving the poem a certain somber rhythmical arrangement. The fact that it also appears in the last word *преходяще* is significant. First, it imitates the sound of an object, in this case an arrow, cutting through the air. Second, the long /a:/ gives the poem, which is about a arrow passing through time, a sense of finality.

The semantics of the Russian word *преходяще* is intriguing. Though it has the meaning of coming to an end, it also conveys the idea that nothing is forever, everything comes and goes. The building blocks of the word *преходяще* (prefix *pre-*, and root *-hod-*) also convey the idea of movement. In a way, there is a certain contradiction: the finite position and the finality expressed in the repetition of the /ashe/ (*чаще, настоящего, преходяще*) oppose the meaning of the word. The idea expressed in the last line of the poem may be interpreted as follows; though the warmth of the palm is not forever, it is still not the end of movement. The arrow is still moving through time. At a deeper level, it may be interpreted as the opposition of the finiteness of life of a human being and the infinity of time. The phonic texture of the ending is in contrast with the beginning of the poem:

Древко твое истлело, истлело тело,
в которое ты не попала во времена оно.
Ты заржавела, но все-таки долетела
до меня, воспитанница Зенона. (4: 132)

The first line sets the tone of the poem with the repetition of *истлело, истлело* and phonetically close *тело*, repetition of sonor /l/ five times, voiceless /s/, /t/; and the opposition of /e/ (*истлело, истлело, тело, времена, долетела, меня*) to /o:/ in strong positions (*оно, Зенона*). Thus the sonor and /e/ and /o/ in the first stanza are contrasted to sibilants and /a:/ in the last stanza. The contrast is also present in the end position of the opening line *тело (telo)* and the last word of the poem *преходяще*. They embody the sound opposition. Contrast also lies in the semantics of the words: *telo (body)* implies that it is not forever, it is *преходяще* (temporary); that is why it *истлело*; however the last word of the poem has the meaning of “going forever.” The phonetic structure supports the semantic intricacy.

Imagery

Imagery in Brodsky's poetic language reflects his vision of the world as the interrelation of material and non-material.⁴⁶ He sees the universe as constantly changing entities flowing into one another and eventually blending with eternity. The poem "Clouds" shows the constant changing of clouds taking the shape of "profile of Tolstoy, muscular torso, bachelor digs" (405). He finds the correlation between seemingly distant semantic entities on the ground of their linguistic (often sound) associations and then establishes other connection.⁴⁷

Loss of Imagery

Naturally, losses in translation are expected as the semantic net in languages is different. In the opening stanza of "The Roman Elegies," in the second line, Brodsky mentions *хрустальный остров* (*crystal island*), which is a metaphor for a chandelier:

Пленное красное дерево частной квартиры в Риме.
Под потолком--пыльный хрустальный остров. (3: 227)

In the same stanza, in the third from the last line, we see *хрусталик* (*crystal*), which in this case means *iris of an eye*:

На ночь глядя, синий зрачок
полощет свой хрусталик слезой, доводя его до сверканья. (3: 227)

The interrelation between *хрустальный остров* (*crystal island*) and *хрусталик глаза*

⁴⁶ The best in-depth analysis of Brodsky's imagery is given by Polukhina in "Joseph Brodsky a Poet for Our Time." Irina Plekhanova notes that the verb *превращаться* became the conceptual word for Brodsky's poetry (36).

⁴⁷ Brodsky explained that the image of language as mice was prompted by the phonetics of the Russian language: the Russian word *грядущее* (*future*) is phonetically similar to the word *грызуны* (*rodents*). He says: "поэтому я раскручиваю его в идею, что грядущее, то есть само слово, грызет - или... погружает зубы--в сыр памяти" (БКИ 60). See also the analysis of the associations of *смех-снег* on pages 95-96. Four poems of the "Centaur" cycle proclaim multi-facetedness of the language when we see the metamorphosis of one entity into another before our eyes. In "Centaur" we see a mutation of the notions expressed by the mutations of the language: "на закате режут, возвращаясь с полей, муу-танки:/ крупный единорогий скот" (4: 47).

The English version does not contain the same sound clusters. The last stanza, however, contains repetition of sounds:

/w/--away, way, warmth, with

/s/-- also, so

/z/--present, desert

/h/--human hand.

Brotsky also preserves the inner rhyme: in Russian, *чаще--настоящего*, in English, *desert--present*. The somber tone is achieved by long /o:/ in *more so* in the final position. However, the complexity of *переходящее* is lost. It is translated as *finite*, which does not convey the idea of movement. Moreover, it does not occupy the final position in the poem and does not have the sound association of moving. Instead, Brotsky in the English text emphasizes the idea of warmth and the idea of finiteness:

you are rushing away, target-free, defiant.
There is no way to catch up with you in a desert; also
in the jungle-like present. For every warmth is finite.
That of the human hand is *more so*. (419)

In the first stanza, though the alliteration of /elo/ is not preserved, it is compensated by creating the repetition of /de/ (*dear devotee*), which is further enhanced by the sound /e/ that occurs throughout this line. To achieve this Brotsky inserts *dear* and changes *боснутахнуца* (*disciple*) to *devotee*:

Your wooden shaft has vanished; so has the body

which you clearly missed way back in zero
B.C. Nonetheless, oxidized and badly
chipped, you have reached me, dear devotee of Zeno. (419)

(*iris of an eye*) is very interesting. *Хрустальный остров* (*crystal island*) sets the mood of loneliness, which is the dominant mood in “Elegies.” The poet is alone in the apartment in Rome; Rome in August is deserted as everyone leaves the city because of the unbearable heat. The poet is alone in the eternal city amidst the eternal statues with which he feels affinity. The connection between the loneliness of a person's existence and the eye is brought up. The common feature that unites them is not only the linguistic root, but also the idea of shining. Brodsky attributes to the eye the features of a crystal chandelier *доводя его до сверканья* (*bringing it to glistening, making it glisten*). The eye semantic is very important in Brodsky's poetics (Smith “‘Polden’ v komnate”).⁴⁸ The visual semantics and the semantics of light and shining go through the whole body of “Elegies.” In stanza VIII, which is devoted to writing, Brodsky mentions candlelight; the word combination *свечной язычок* unites the idea of light and tongue. The same line contains *страница*. Thus, the idea of light, language, and writing is expressed in the following: *Бейся, свечной язычок, над пустой страницей* (3: 230). And writing is associated with light that illuminates. Thus the idea of mission is implied. “The Roman Elegies” end with the image of the eye:

Я был в Риме. Был залит светом. Так,
как только может мечтать обломок!
На сетчатке моей—золотой пятак.
Хватит на всю длину потемок. (3: 232)

Again, we encounter the allusion to light and shine. The poet calls himself *splinter*, which also binds him with statues. The light of the sun of Rome floods the poet and the statues, thus enhancing the affinity between him and the statues. It also stresses the idea of immortality. The light of the sun is connected to the shining of the coin that will

⁴⁸ See also Plekhanova's analysis of vision (43-46).

illuminate the darkness. This is a reference to the tradition of the ancient Greeks who put a coin on the eyes of the dead. The reference to the coin and darkness evidently suggests death. Again the lighting of Rome is linked to the shining of a coin. At the same time, the poet is challenging death. Writing is his coin, his light. Writing will make him immortal. The eye image (*хрусталик*) in the opening lines of “Elegies” and in the last (*сетчатка*) serves as a framing device. This brief analysis sheds some light on the interrelation of Brodsky’s images and ideas.

Due to the different semantic net in different languages, semantic interrelations are often lost in the translation. In the English version of “The Roman Elegies,” semantic relations between *хрустальный остров* (*crystal island*) and *хрусталик* (*iris*) are lost; hence, the connection between loneliness and shining that was traced from the first stanza to the last, is not as pronounced. “Пленное красное дерево частной квартиры в Риме. / Под потолком--пыльный хрустальный остров” (3: 227) is translated as “The captive mahogany of a private Roman / flat. In the ceiling, a dust-covered crystal island” (“Roman Elegies” 274). The line with *хрусталик* (*iris*) is rendered as follows:

На ночь глядя, синий зрачок
полощет свой хрусталик слезой, доводя его до сверканья. (3: 227)

By nightfall, a blue eye employs a tear,
cleansing, to a needless shine, the iris [...] (274)

In “Шведская музыка,” Brodsky tries to unite different notions, using words denoting temperature in reference to voice/ describing voice with words pertaining to temperature: “до какой тишины / может упасть безучастный голос?” (3: 188). The analogy here lies in the fact that in winter temperature falls down to very low digits and

the pitch of voice can fall, too (высокий - низкий голос).⁴⁹ In the English version of the same poem, which is called “North Baltic,” the image of cold is lost, as this line is rendered as: “What sign / language can sprout from a chary manner?” (235).

Preserving Imagery

On the other hand, often Brodsky painstakingly tries to preserve the image of the Russian original. In “Kellomaki,” he writes:

И население в субботу выстраивалось гуськом,
как караван в пустыне за сах. песком (3: 243)

And on Saturdays the populace strung out, bound
caravanlike for the **sandlike ground**
flour [...] (313)

Russian word *сахарный песок*, which literally means *sugar sand*, evidently prompted the image of a desert and caravan.⁵⁰ In the English language, the word *sugar* does not have the *sand* part. Brodsky still wants to connect it with *caravan* and *sand*; hence he changes *sugar* to *sandlike ground flour*, which invokes desert associations.

As it often happens in Brodsky, a particular image reoccurs in other poems. He tries to preserve the *sugar sand-desert* connections in the rendition of “Пятая годовщина” / “Fifth Anniversary”:

Там лежучи плашмя на рядовой холстине,
отбрасываешь тень, как пальма в Палестине,
особенно--во сне. И на манер пустыни,

там **сахарный песок** пересекаем мухой. (3: 148)

There even when you lie flat on a sheet of cotton,
your shadow dwarfs a palm in Palestine, begotten
most likely in a dream. There **deserts** lie well-trodden
by **sugar bowls’** houseflies, which trek on foot, old-style. (242)

⁴⁹ In Russian, *низкий* (*low*) in reference to a voice means hoarse; the word that denotes *low* voice is *тихий*. However, the usage of *тишина* makes it clear that the voice pitch is meant here.

⁵⁰ The abbreviated form *сах. песок* reproduces the way it was written on the tags in the store.

Nonetheless, in English, the association of desert-sugar is not clear, because the linguistic connection between *sugar* and *sand* is lost.

Due to different connotations of words in the two language systems, sometimes the image that the poet tries to sustain in the English rendition may not evoke the same associations for the English reader. In “Дождь в августе”/ “August Rain,” Brodsky compares geranium stems in the rain to a seamstress’ neck: “...и герань обнажает шейные / позвонки белошвейки” (4: 42). The word *белошвейка* (*seamstress*) in Russian has a very positive connotation, first of all, due to its word-formation *white* and *seamstress*.⁵¹ Usually these are young girls who can sew delicate things because they have good eyesight and deft fingers. That is why geranium under rain, its stems bared by the rain is compared to a girl’s neck, with her hair up baring her delicate neck. In English this aspect is lost, as *seamstress* does not invoke the same associations: “[...] and a geranium bares the sinewed / vertebrae of a *seamstress*” (385). These are inevitable losses that are inherent to any translation, due to the differences in the language systems.

Even when he cannot find a direct equivalent, Brodsky tries to preserve the essence of the image by other means and compensate for the loss by expanding the image:

Пропадая без вести из виду, мир вовне
сводит счета с лицом, как с заложником Мамелюка. (3: 188)

Falling out of sight, the outside world
makes the face its **hostage: pale, plain, snowbound**. (“North Baltic” 235)

The ground of analogy between cold and Mameluck⁵² is that cold makes the face

⁵¹ There is also sound alliteration in *шейные—белошвейки*.

⁵² Mamluk or Mameluk, which in Arabic means slave, was a warrior caste dominant in Egypt and influential in the Middle East for over 700 years. Islamic rulers created this warrior cast by collecting non-

immobile and swollen; Mameluks, famous for their cruelty, beat their hostages, so that their faces became swollen and immobile. In Russian, *мороз/холод* (*frost/cold*) oftentimes is used with adjectives *злой, жестокий* (*cruel*), thus linking cold and the Mameluk through cruelty. In the English version, though losing the allusion to the Mameluk, the poet preserves the image of the face as a hostage (*the outside world makes the face its hostage*). He also expands it, as if compensating for the loss: *pale, plain, snowbound*. Inner rhyming *pale, plain* enhances the image.

In the following example, the loss of the image *каждый резец оскален* (*each morsel bared*) is compensated for by inserting *hungrily*, which is how the mouse gnaws:

Закат, выпуская из щели мышь,
Вгрызается--каждый резец оскален--
в электрический сыр окраин, (3: 241-2)

Like the mouse creeping out of the scarlet crack,
the sunset gnaws **hungrily** the electric
cheese of the outskirts... ("Near Alexandria" 269)

In the next example, syntactic relations are distorted, but the image is preserved:

Больше длинных жил, чем для них кровей,
да и мысли *мертвых* кустов кривей. (3: 196)

There are more blue veins than the blood to swell
their *dried* web, let alone some remote brain cell. ("Folk Tune" 273)

The imagery and meaning are slightly changed due to the change of syntax:

1. In the Russian text, thoughts are compared to dead bushes whose branches are crooked. In the translation, veins are dried and compared to a web, which renders the idea of shape of the bushes; *dried* also renders the idea of *dead* as dead bushes are also dried.

Muslim slave boys and training them as cavalier soldiers for their owner and each other (*Online Columbia University Press Encyclopedia*).

2. *Мысли (thoughts)* are rendered by *brain cell*, the fact that they are dead is rendered by *there is not enough blood to reach remote some brain cell*.

More Imagery in the English Text

Expansion of the original image

In "Kellomaki," Brodsky writes:

А то возникали чайки из снежной мглы,
как замусоленные ничьей рукой углы
белого, как пустая бумага дня [...] (3: 243)

Or else a few gulls would issue from the snowy haze
like the curls of the soiled-by- nobody's fingers page
of a pallid, quietly rustling day [...] (313)

In the English version, the association of *бумага* with *день (paper and day)* is preserved.

In the English text, though the word *paper* is not actually verbalized, it is clear that it is implied. Brodsky also develops the image by adding *quietly rustling*; i.e. to the day that goes away *quietly*, he attributes the characteristics of the paper (*rustling*). Also, the color is changed. In the English text, it is not white, but more indefinite--*pallid*.

Enhancing the image

In the English version, Brodsky often changes the image by enhancing the original image. This is achieved in different ways: by using words with stronger connotation or by adding details that would make the image more vivid.

Using words with stronger connotation:

a) *readiness of a womanizer* is rendered as *lecher's ardor*:

Рухнем в объятия трагедии с готовностью ловеласа!
Погрузимся в ее немолодое мясо.
Прободаем ее насквозь, до пружин матраса. (4: 104)

Let's tumble in her arms with a lecher's ardor!
Let's drown in her flabby rubble; yes, let's go under. ("Portrait of Tragedy" 415)

- b) *longer* is rendered as *everlasting*

Привыкай жить с этой тайной:
чувства те
пригодятся, знать, в бескрайней
пустоте.
Не хуже́й она, чем эта
лишь длинней [...] (4: 117)

Keep this secret, child, for later.
That, I guess,
may just help you in a greater
emptiness.
Which is like this one, just ever-
lasting [...] ("Lullaby" 427)

The enjambment of *everlasting* that leaves *ever-* in the strong final position accentuates the idea of the length of time.

Adding details that make the image more vivid:

- a) [...] Почувствовать приступ рвоты. (4: 105)

[...] And throw up in her laces. (415)

Not only is the image stronger (*feel nauseous* versus *throw up*), it is more detailed.

- b) Но там стоишь ты, с дрыном, глаза навывкат. (4: 105)

But there, an ogre
you are looming large with your oblong cudgels and bulging goggle!
("Portrait of Tragedy" 416)

- c) Создателю двигателя с горючим
из отходов воспоминаний. (4: 41)

to the inventor of engines that foiled invaders
using discarded memories for fuel [...] (384)

Often the English text contains more imagery than the original. Forced to introduce changes for the sake of meter and rhyme, Brodsky often makes the change more metaphoric, which is in tune with his general tendency of making the translation

more emphatic. When Brodsky inserts, substitutes, or adds adjectives, they are often epithets.

- a) смех
 [...] **пушавший изморозью, точно хвою, края**
местоимений [...] (3: 244)

A normal laugh
 [...] powdered the edges of sighs or **shy**
 pronouns with hoarfrost [...] ("Kellomaki" 314)

- b) **я отправляюсь пешком к монументу, который отлит**
из тяжелого сна. (3: 306)

I often
 set out on foot to a monument cast in **molten**
 lengthy bad dreams. ("Elegy" 319)

- c) Если бы звезды Юга
двигались ею, то— в стороны друг от друга. (3: 113)

If love were to shift the gears
 of the southern stars, they'd run to their **virgin** spheres.
 ("December in Florence" 132)

- d) [...] **слившиеся в одно, /белое после себя пятно.** (3: 246)

[...] the blending of two into one would yield
 but a **cloudy spot on the laundered** field. ("Kellomaki" 317)

- e) **Добрый вечер, трагедия с героями и богами,**
с плохо прикрытыми занавесом ногами [...] (4: 104)

Welcome, tragedy, with gods and heroes,
 with the curtain exposing your feet, **dirty with other eras** [...]
 ("Portrait of Tragedy" 414)

Substitutions are oftentimes of metaphoric nature. They can be verbal metaphors:

- a) **Не пойми меня дурно: с твоим голосом, телом, именем**
ничего уже больше не связано. Никто их не уничтожил [...] (4: 64)

Understand me correctly, though: your body, your middle
name
 now stir practically nothing. Not that they've ceased to **burgeon**;
 ("Brise Marine" 364)

Most often they are noun-metaphors that code the meaning of the Russian neutral wording into metaphor.

- b) так стенные часы, **сердцебенью вторя,**
остановившись по эту, продолжают идти по ту
сторону моря. (3: 188)

thus a grandfather clock, a **heartbeat's brother,**
having stopped this side of the sea, still tick-tocks to show
time at the other. ("North Baltic" 235)

- c) [...] где--Господь прости--
точно рыба – **воздух, сырой губой**
я хватал что было тогда тобой? (3: 196)

where like fish that gasp at the **foreign blue**
my raw lip was catching what then meant you? ("Folk Tune" 273)

- d) эти обрывки голоса, монолога
и попытки **прикинуться нелюдимом**
в первый раз с той поры, как ты обернулся дымом. (4: 69)

better these snatches of voice, this patchwork
monologue of a recluse trying to **play a genie**
for the first time since you formed a cloud above a chimney.
("In Memory of My Farther: Australia" 360)

- e) In the following example, metaphor *horizon's ant* is the apposition, it substitutes *качающимся на волне*, but it is a metaphor for *steamer*. The phrase, *качающимся на волне*, however, implies the idea of horizon (as it paints the picture of a ship against the horizon):

Лучше плыть пароходом, **качающимся на волне** [...] (3: 151)

Better sail by steamer, **horizon's ant** [...] ("Sextet" 263)

Metaphors take a form of metaphoric paraphrasing:

- a) и око могло различать, становясь **синей,**
звонкую трель преследуя; дверь с ключами
и тех, кого больше нету нигде, за ней. (4: 166)

[...] the eye gaining blue as it traced their trill
could make out the keys in the door and, beyond, a ceiling,
and those whose address at present begins with nil. ("Flourish" 453)

- b) You were opening our small beaks in favor
of names like Marina or Olga- morsels
of tenderness at that age that fancies
cousins. ("Eclogue IV: Winter" 293)

- с) В ней судьба открыта взору.
За версту
в ней легко признаешь гору
по кресту. (4: 117)

In it, fate rejects a phantom
faint or gross:
one can tell for miles a mountain
by a cross. ("Lullaby" 427)

Oftentimes it is personification:

- a) Мне нечего сказать ни греку; ни варягу.
Зане не знаю я, в какую землю лягу. (3: 150)

This won't be heard up North, nor where hot sands hug cactus.
I don't know anymore what earth will nurse my carcass.
("The Fifth Anniversary" 244)

- b) Здравствуй, трагедия! Давно тебя не видали.
Привет, обратная сторона медали.
Рассмотрим подробно твои детали. (4: 104)

How are you, tragedy? We haven't seen you lately.
Hello, the medal's flip side gone lazy.
Let's examine your aspects, lady. ("Portrait of Tragedy" 414)

- с) Век скоро кончится, но раньше кончусь я.
Это, боюсь, не вопрос чутья.
Скорее--влиянье небытия
на бытие. (3: 73)

The century will soon be over, but sooner it will be me.
That's not the message, though, of a trembling knee.
Rather, the influence of not-to-be
on to-be. ("Fin de Siècle" 387)

The example from “Elegy,” illustrating this type of translation practice (Russian neutral wording--English metaphoric wording), will finish discussion of this part.

Там у тебя одной на сто верст помада,
но **вынимать ее все равно не надо.** (4: 123)

There for a hundred miles yours is the only lipstick,
though its slug will do better with no ballistics. (399)

Change of image

Oftentimes, the English translation contains imagery that is different from the Russian original. The following examples illustrate this point.

- a) В стужу панель подобна сахарной карамели.
Пар из гортани **чаще к вздоху, чем к поцелую.** (3: 198)

In great cold, pavements glaze like a sugar candy,
steam from the mouth **suggests a dragon [...]** (“Eclogue IV: Winter” 290)

- b) Прижаться к щеке трагедии! К черным кудрям Горгоны,
к грубой доске с той стороны иконы,
с катящейся по скуле, **как на Восток вагоны,**
звездю, облюбовавшей околыши и погоны. (4: 104)

Ah, but to press ourselves against her cheek, her Gorgon
coiling hairdo! Against the golden
icon’s coarse wooden backside **that hoard the burden**
of proof the better the more her horizon broaden. (“Portrait of Tragedy” 414)

Most often, the English text expresses the same idea, but with a different image

Знаешь, дурнея, лица
лишь подтверждают, что можно **слиться**
разными способами; их бездны,
и нам, дорогая, не все известны. (4: 124)

You know, a ruined
face only proves there exist more fluent
ways of **tying the knot—ah, many other methods!**
Yet we seldom see what is staring at us. (“Elegy” 399)

The idea of death is expressed in Russian by *слиться разными способами* (*there are many different ways to blend*). In the English version, it is rendered as *there exist more... ways of tying the knot*. Though the images in Russian and English texts differ, it is interesting to trace the semantic connection between them, to see what Brodsky is willing to forgo and what he wants to preserve.

In the example given above the idea of death is expressed by *слиться* (*blend*) in Russian and *tie the knot* in English. *Слиться* (*blend*) is the Brodskian way of saying that everything is inter-united, especially in death—one entity goes into another. *Слиться* (*blend*) has the root that implies water semantics, which in Brodsky is associated with life, eternity, and the beginning and the end of everything. The blending of one into another results in an indefinite color; at the end of the poem we see the result of this blending, a gray spot, actually two gray spots: one is the devotee of the poem and the other is the poet himself. Both of them are of the same gray color, i.e. they blended with time. Gray is Brodsky's favorite color; it is the color of water, of indefiniteness, of time.⁵³ In English, though, he uses a different image, *tie the knot*, which does not have water semantics. But he inserts the word *fluent* (*there are more fluent ways of tying the knot*), placing it in a strong final position. Thus the idea of water is implicit. He finishes the poem with the change of *gray* to *colorless* that renders the idea of indefiniteness:

- a) Когда-нибудь, в серую краску уставясь взглядом,
Ты узнаешь себя. И серую краску рядом. (4: 124)

Squinting one day at some **colorless** brushstrokes, dear,
you'll make out yourself, and the **colorless** brushstroke near. ("Elegy" 400)

⁵³ A water image implies cradle of life, life, and time. For more about our water semantics see also Келлемаки *Поэт в доме ребенка* (58-65). Time, in Brodsky, is gray, the color of water. The idea of life losing color and become colorless is implied in the image of *laundered cloth*. In English, Brodsky tends not to use the name of the color but stresses the colorlessness, thus enhancing the idea of blending into nothingness. See the same in motif in "Kellomaki."

- б) В феврале чем позднее, тем меньше ртути.
Т.е. чем больше времени, тем холоднее. Звезды
как разбитый термометр: каждый квадратный метр
ночи ими усеян, как при салюте. (3: 200)

In February, the later it is, the lower
the mercury. More times mean more cold. Stars, scattered
like a smashed thermometer, turn remotest
regions of night into a **strep marvel**. ("Eclogue IV: Winter" 292)

In the Russian text, the night sky with stars is compared to a broken thermometer.

Probably, *mercury*, with its celestial associations prompted this comparison. Though in Russian, Brodsky uses the word *ртуть*, which does not immediately evoke celestial associations. But the scientific term is for *ртуть* is *меркурий*. When mercury spreads, it looks like small silver balls, which in its turn is compared to the fireworks. In English, the allusion to fireworks is lost: stars are compared to balls of mercury that leak out of smashed thermometer. A thermometer is used when a person is sick. Brodsky develops the "sickness" image. He compares the stars to mercury balls and to the strep bacteria, which looks like stars under a microscope. Calling them a *marvel*, he links strep bacteria and stars. In English, the connection between stars and thermometer is more obvious, as he uses the word *mercury*.

The relationship between the Russian and English images is often of the type that was observed before: the image in the Russian version denotes the action, while the image in the English translation indicates the result of the action and is more concrete:

- а) Здравствуй, трагедия, одетая не по моде,
с временем, получающим от судьи по морде. (4: 104)

Greetings, tragedy, dressed slightly out of fashion,
with lengthy sentences making time too ashen. ("Portrait of Tragedy" 414)

In the Russian text, time is hit in the face by a judge, implying that the judge gave a harsh verdict. In the English text, time looks ashen because of lengthy sentences (Russian-hit in the face; English version--that is why it looks ashen).

- b) Однако время, шурша,
сделало именно это. (4: 73)

Yet time's **shuffling sole**
has accomplished just that. ("Fin de Siècle" 387)

The Russian text indicates noise; the English explains how the noise is made. *Шурша* may suggest the rustling of dress, or paper. The English version states that the noise is made by shuffling the sole. It brings the idea of an old person walking slowly which gives an additional understanding of the image of time.

- c) Тебе хорошо на природе, но лучше в морге. (4: 104)

Though you feel fine alfresco it's the morgue **you've got the crush on.**
(“Portrait of Tragedy” 414)

The Russian says that Tragedy feels better in the morgue. The English explains why – she has a crush on the morgue.

- d) The English text explains the meaning of *за счет населения* (*at the expense of the population*) by using *by dint of the population*

Снам, навязавшим яви
за счет населения свою бессвязность. (4: 41)

To dreams which imposed their chaos
on matter, **by dint of the population.** (“Postcard from Lisbon” 384)

Often the English image is more explicit, and unpleasant.

И--говоря о товаре в твоей утробе--
чем лучше роль крупной твари роли невзрачной дробин? (4: 104)

And re stuffing wombs, what takes more courage
to star in: a scene of carnage or a pile of garbage? (“Portrait of Tragedy” 415)

The opposition significance-insignificance is rendered differently. In English, the image is more unpleasant, which is in tune with Brodsky's general tendency to use harsher vocabulary in the translation.

As was observed earlier, changes introduced in English translation make the English text more readily understandable. The same can be said about imagery. The imagery in the English versions is more explicit, not so ambiguous as in Russian.

a) Не брезгуй ею, трагедия, жанр итога. (4: 104)

Don't spurn that, tragedy, genre of martyrs! ("Portrait of Tragedy" 415)

Tragedy is more often associated with *martyrs*. Taking into consideration the English version, *умоз (result)* may be interpreted as something that involves martyrs.

b) In the following example the juxtaposition of two words, the semantically distant *happiness* and *terracotta*, obscures the understanding of the poem.

в погоне за чистым временем, без счастья и терракоты. (4:, 55)

The English text has abstract words which are semantically related *love* and *future*.

In its pursuit of pure time devoid of love and future.

("Porta San Pancrazio" 393)

c) In the following example, the English text loses the sexual undertone the word *приплод* implies.

Что тоже можно рассматривать как приплод; но
что еще интереснее, ежели вещь бесплотна. (4: 105)

Which, too, could be seen as a boon! The catch is
a thing must become unpalpable to look matchless. ("Portrait of Tragedy" 415).

However, the English text explains the meaning of the Russian *интереснее (more interesting)*—it is more interesting because it is more unique (*matchless*).

d) In the next example, the English version is more explicit and concrete, which makes it more understandable. The image of leaves/greenery recurs in Brodsky's poetics and denotes man (Ranchin 44). Brodsky preserves it in the translation, but also adds another image of music performances:

Сумме зеленых листьев, вправе
заранее презирать их разность. (4: 41)

to the green leaf choir's bias against their callous
soloist getting the last ovation; ("Postcard from Lisbon" 384)

The notion of contrasting masses with an individual is expressed in Russian with the mathematical image: sum total of green leaves holding in contempt their differences. In English, Brodsky employs music imagery--mass of green leaves becomes choir, and the individual is a soloist. The mass, the choir, is envious of the soloist having reaped the benefits (*getting the last ovation*) of the joint performance. The two texts produce a slightly different reading: The Russian text, stresses the opposition between masses and individuality, the English text implies jealousy.

е) Так обретает адрес стадо и почву--древо.
Всюду маячит твой абрис--направо и налево.
Валяй, отворяй ворота хлева. (4: 106)

A worried
herd, though, finds its address, and a lamb an oven
by spotting your footprints that's fresh and cloven.
Come on! Fly the gates of your pigsty open. ("Portrait of Tragedy" 416)

Стадо (*herd*) implies mankind. In the Russian text, the fact that the herd finds its address is compared to a tree that finds its soil *так обретает адрес стадо и почву--древо* (*in this way, the herd finds its address, and a tree--its soil*). At this point of the poem, it is not clear what kind of address is meant. In the English version, *почву--древо* (*the tree finds soil*) is changed to *the lamb finds the oven*. Immediately, two associations are

brought to mind: the indication of death and a sarcastic allusion to a sacrificial lamb. The English text immediately leaves no doubt about the nature of the address: herd-like mankind will find its address to its dead end. The Russian text compares the herd finding the address to a tree finding the soil. The tree in Brodsky denotes horror at the absurdity of existence, especially the roots of the tree (Ranchin 44). This gives the Russian text another nuance. *The tree finds soil* implies the idea of longing. Projected on the man, it reads as mankind longingly finding its address. Later we learn that the address is hell. Herein lies the absurdity of human existence. In the English text, the idea of longing (the tree finds its soil) is substituted for idea of a *stupid* sacrifice (*the lamb finds the oven*).⁵⁴ In English, is the poem also specifies how the herd will find the address--by spotting footprints; in Russian, it is expressed in a very abstract way--*всюду маячит твой абрис--направо и налево*. In English, however, the word *cloven* suggests *devilish*. The mankind finds the address by the footprint, which the devil leaves. The phrase *ворота хлева* evidently brings to mind *ворота рая*. It is clear that the footprints lead to hell not to heaven. The change in the idiom, *ворота рая* for *ворота хлева* brings out the idea of surprise and mockery.

Sometimes the English image decodes the Russian image.

а) “Пятая годовщина” contains the phrase “Там при словах “я за” течет со щек известка” (3: 148). The Russian image is obscure, complicated. The phrase *течет со щек известка* (which literally means *lime-paint pours from cheeks*) is used in reference to women with a lot of make up. Also a clown in the circus is brought to mind. His gaudy

⁵⁴ The idea of the stupidity of sacrifice is also expressed in “The Fifth Anniversary,” which also employs the image of the lamb. I referred to this example on page 161.

happy smile and make up conceal his true emotions. This implies the situation in Russia, when people had to wear a public face over their true private face. Probably Brodsky refers to the public trials of the thirties when people were accused of conspiring against the state and sentenced to death or to Gulag, or to more recent campaign against Akhmatova and Zoshenko, or even to Brodsky's own trial, when people voted along the Party line, knowing that it was wrong but not daring to oppose. *Lime-paint* stands for the fact that they had to mask their emotions, distorted make-up shows that they cried. The English substitute deciphers the Russian metaphor (*they sob*) and also implies that they tried to conceal the fact of crying: *There having voted yes, they sob in toilet corners* (242).

- b) **Лишь хрусталик тускнеет, да млечный цвет
тела с россыпью родинок застит платье. (3: 249)**

Still, the *iris* gleams, and the milky tint,
with those scattered birthmarks, your dress effaces. ("Polonaise: Variation" 245)

In the Russian text, because of the polysemantic nature of the word *хрусталик*, the allusion to the eye is not immediately so clear. In English, it is evident right away that the word *iris* refers to the eye.

Sources of Imagery

One explanation as to why English texts contain more imagery than the Russian originals lies in the fact that the literal rendition of a Russian word combination, which is sometimes a trite metaphor, is perceived in English as a fresh image.

**Больше уже ту дверь не отпереть ключом
с замысловатой бородкой [...] (3: 245)**

Never again is that door to endure that key
with its curly goatee [...] ("Kellomaki" 315)

The Russian *бородка ключа* (*key beard*) is a set expression indicating the shape of a key. The fact that it is used with an adjective *замысловатой* (*complicated*) proves that it lost its primary meaning, as *замысловатой* is not used in reference to a beard, but often in reference to complicated intricate ornaments or designs. Brodsky translated the phrase directly as *goatee*; however the word *goatee* in the English language does not have the meaning related to keys. To underline the metaphoric meaning of the new phrase, Brodsky uses *curly*, which is used in connection with hair.

The same thing occurs when he renders Russian idioms literally.⁵⁵ In “Кончится лето...” / “So Forth,” the idiom *на ловца и зверь бежит* is used, which can be rendered as *speak of the devil*; but translated literally it reads *the animal/ beast/ is running to the hunter who catches it*. In the English text, Brodsky translates it literally, preserving the image and foregoing the idiomatic meaning:

Дело, конечно, не в осени. И не в чертах лица,
меняющихся, как у зверя, бегущего на ловца [...] (4: 11)

The point of course is not autumn. And not one's own features, which
alter as those of an **animal approaching the one who'll catch**
it. (361)

In Russian, Brodsky is known for his revival of language; he breathes new life into trite expressions, bringing to the fore “primeval” meanings of the word. He employs the same device with the English language; it seems he could not resist experimenting with the language possibilities of the other language. Thus he uses puns in English while in Russian he does not:

а) Роза и незабудка
в разговорах всплывают все реже. (3: 197)

⁵⁵ See more examples in “Translations of Idioms,” where I speak about the literal rendition of Russian idioms into English.

Forget-me-nots and roses
crop up less frequently in dialogues. ("Eclogue IV: Winter" 289)

Crop up is used with flowers and plants. In connection with language, it is used in the figurative meaning.

b) In "Persian Arrow," *выражаясь книжно* is rendered to *put it archly*:

Ходики тикают. Но **выражаясь книжно**,
как жидкость в закупоренном сосуде,
они неподвижны, а ты подвижна [...] (4: 132)

Clockworks tick on. Yet, to **put it archly**,
they are, like a corked liquid, settled
and immobile. (419)

Archly is connected with the image of the arrow and bow. Though the word is not used in reference to words, Brodsky uses it figuratively, thus rendering the idea expressed in Russian *выражаясь книжно*, that is expressing oneself in a complicated way.

The change in imagery can be also explained by pragmatic cultural reasons. Certain images that are related to cultural realia will not be understood by his new audience. (This topic will be dealt with in "Cultural Realia.")

Consistent Changes

In the course of my analysis, some recurrent tendencies in Brodsky's changes have been observed.

First of all, in English, imagery is more detailed and elaborate, and at the same time clearer, when he writes about writing⁵⁶:

Жертва легких, но друг ресниц,
воздух прозрачен, зане искомлот
клювами плохо сносящих холод,
видимых только в профиль птиц. (3:, 241)

⁵⁶ On page 107, in analyzing metaphoric insertions, I noted that Brodsky tends to insert epithets when he talks about language.

**Victim of lungs though friend to words
the air is transparent, severely punctured
by beaks that treat it as pens treat parchment,
by visible only-only-in-profile birds. ("Near Alexandria" 268)**

In the Russian text of "Near Alexandria," air is called a *friend to lashes*, while in English it is a *friend to words*. Air in Brodsky's poetics is associated with poetry and often appears linked with eyes, the most superior of senses (in Brodsky). In "Lithuanian Nocturne" he links all three notions:

**Воздух и есть эпилог
для сетчатки—поскольку он необитаем.
Он суть наше "домой",
восвоясь вернувшийся слог. (3: 55)⁵⁷**

In the next line of "Lithuanian Nocturne" there is an allusion to sewing, patching. Thus, air is compared to material, which is a symbol of time and also poetry:

**Сколько жаброй его ни хватаем,
он успешно латаем
светом взапуски с тьмой.⁵⁸ (3: 55)**

In the Russian version of "Near Alexandria," air is associated with lashes, which is part of the eye semantics, and through this establishes the connection with poetry. In the English version, he chooses another part of the air association—words, which is more transparent; he omits the air-eye connections. In the same stanza, Brodsky develops this

⁵⁷ See in the same poem "Причисли привиденье к родне, /к свойствам воздуха—так же как мелкий петит, /рассыпавший в сумраке речью картавой..." (54); воздух-вещь языка (54). Brodsky's image of poetry differs from Pasternak who believes that "поэзия в той траве, что у вас под ногами, достаточно нагнуться, увидеть и сорвать ее" (БКИ 285). Brodsky says that "наблюдательность не источник поэзии, а лишь часть ее. В действительности поэзия разлита в воздухе." This image reflects Brodsky's pious attitude about language and poetry.

⁵⁸ Here we see all associations: (1) air—material (through *patch*); (2) the word *жабра* evokes fish association; which in turn brings (3) water associations, which implies idea of eternity. The fish gasping for air is the image of language (open mouth) and silence and also the image death. The death—writing connection can be observed in "A Polar Explorer."

image by saying that air is punctured by the beaks of birds, which in Brodsky's poetics are higher, purer creatures. They are also connected with writing and creativity.⁵⁹

In the English text, he uses a comparison, which is absent from the Russian version, comparing air punctured by birds to parchment punctured by pens (*punctured by beaks that treat it as pens treat parchment*). This addition makes the association with writing even stronger in English. The image of pecked air is also present only in the English version of "Polonaise: Variation":

Плюс могилы нет, чтоб исправить нос
в пианино упедшего Фредерика. (3: 249)

Of the rooms whose air savors every ounce
pecked by Frederick's key-board-bedeveled nozzle. (245)

Here he does not translate the distorted idiomatic expression (built on the idiom *горбатого могла исправить*), but chooses to substitute it with the image, recurrent in his poetics. Being true to his penchant for word play, he distorts his own image of birds' beaks pecking air, for Frederick's nose. It, however, only intensifies the idea of creativity and inter-links Frederick--music--birds--air.

The image of puncturing air and the association of it with puncturing the parchment are also present in "August Rain":

Дождь! двигатель близорукости,
летописец вне кельи, жадный до пищи постной,
испешряющий суглинок, точно перо без рукописи,
клинописью и оспой. (4: 42)

⁵⁹ Brodsky gives an interesting comparison between the bird and himself, and the recurrent image of profile of birds, in the following: "... еще христианская тенденция прощать, понимать- когда она накладывается на механизм отстранения, тогда довольно быстро наступает такая минута, когда вам с людьми не то чтобы нечего делать, но вы на них смотрите не так, как они на вас смотрят. Птичка всегда смотрит одним глазом в одну сторону, другим в другую сторону, вы всегда видите птичку только в профиль, она на вас смотрит только одним глазом. ...положение птички --это хорошее сравнение, когда смотришь на свою жизнь, на свой собственный опыт--и чирикаешь"(БКИ 477). One encounters a lot of varieties of birds in Brodsky's poetry--hawk, goldfinch, goose, crow, rook. Birds may also be opposed to man as in the poem "Садовник в ватнике, как дрозд..." (Ranchin 42).

In the English version of "August Rain," Brodsky introduces a change in this line, linking cuneiform to silence, which is absent from the Russian original:

Rain! vehicle of nearsightedness,
a scribe without his cell, greedy for Lenten fare,
mottling the loamy parchment **with his cuneiform brand of silence**
with his small pox care. (385)

The idea of silence and words is also present in "Lithuanian Nocturne."

In the English version of "Near Alexandria," Brodsky employs the image of weaving associated with writing, which is absent from the Russian original (*мелькают гузки* is changed for *weave their sweet pattern*). Though writing is probably implied in the image of dancing sylphides, still in English it is more pronounced:

В сумерках люстра сродни костру,
пляшут сальфиды, мелькают гузки. (3: 241)

In the twilight, chandeliers gleam, akin
to bonfires; sylphides **weave their sweet pattern**. (268)

Free-flapping tongue ("The Fifth Anniversary") is another example, when only in English Brodsky uses language—cloth associations.⁶⁰

There are a few cases where the imagery of words, i.e. writing, is more pronounced and clear and is expressed more elaborately in English

- а) Крутя бугенвилей вензеля,
ограниченная земля,
их письменностью прикрывая стыд,
растительностью пространству мстит. (4: 134-35)

The bougainvillea's tightly wound
scrawl helps the isolated ground, to shade

⁶⁰ This image was criticized by Reid: "What Brodsky himself refers to his 'free-flapping tongue' [...] which we can picture as a not-so-distant cousin of Gogol's Nose, proceeds ahead of its owner and his brain with alarming impetuosity. Brodsky also calls that organ 'a glutton for clear lyric,' but this, I fear, merely prompts me to wonder if he ever gets a square meal" (18). The critic evidently is not familiar with Brodsky's imagery and poetics.

its limited shame a bit,
avenging thus space with writ. ("Ischia in October" 431)

Here, *растительность* is decoded as *writ*.

b) Кто думал, что их сотрет,
как резинкой с бумаги усилья карандаша,
время? (4: 73)

Who could foresee time's grim
eraser wiping them off like some chicken scrawl
from a notepad? ("Fin de Siècle" 387)

c) In the English text of "Kellomaki" the word *pronouns* is accompanied by the epithet *shy*. Writing is also connected with immortality, or working against time. In the English version of "The Fifth Anniversary," a new metaphor is created based on the association with white paper and the white associated with death:

Скрипи, скрипи, перо! переводи бумагу. (3: 150)

Scratch on, my pen: let's mark the white like it marks us. (244)⁶¹

In Brodsky's poetics, the mouth, and especially throat, are associated with language, as it is there that speech is formed.⁶² Mouth and throat often appear with the mention of water. In the next example, Brodsky uses imagery in English that is absent in the Russian version, though the wording in the Russian version triggered the image in the English text. *Говорить захлебываясь* is a set expression meaning to speak passionately,

⁶¹ The idea of whiteness associated with death is also expressed in the English version of "MCMXCIV" where Brodsky adds a final phrase, absent from the Russian verse:

Возможно, просто
у вещей быстрее, чем у людей.
пропало желание размножаться (4: 193)

Perhaps it's simply
that things, more quickly than men, have lost
their desire to multiply. In this white captivity. (454)

⁶² See Ranchin 40. This was noted by Polukhina ("I Instead of a Wild Beast" 82). See also the discussion connected with open mouth on page 161.

swallowing words. The connection between speech and water (*захлебываясь*) is implied. This connection also stresses their ever-present, essential nature. In English, he uses the image of the throat, and the water semantics is rendered by the metaphoric use of *well up*.

Хочется что-то сказать, *захлебываясь* с волнением [...] (4: 142)

The throat wells up with a gurgling, passionate commentary,
(“View with a Flood” 456)

In Brodsky's poetics, mouth and throat are linked with creatures of the sea; this also points to the primeval and nature of language. Again, sometimes Brodsky uses these images in his English texts and not in Russian:

Тщетно драхму во рту твоём ищет угрюмый Харон [...] (3: 58)

Gloomy Charon in vain seeks the coin in your tightly shut shell,
(“To a Friend: In Memoriam” 212)

The next example presents an interesting case of Brodsky trying to render the word play in English. The expression *набрать в рот воды* in Russian means to be silent. Silence is connected with language. The words *mouth*, *water*, *Muse*, and the implied idea of silence create the image of language.

The English language does not have the same idiom (*набрать в рот воды*). Brodsky uses *clam up* which has the meaning of to be full and not to be able to talk. On the other hand, *clam* is connected with the ocean and with the primitive creatures of the ocean, emphasizing the origin of life and language.

То не Муза воды набирает в рот. (3: 196)

It's not the Muse feels like *clammed up* [...] (“Folk Tune” 273)

Seeing. Other interesting changes are observed in connection with seeing semantics, which plays a very important role in Brodsky. As was shown in “Substitutions,” in

English he uses more varied vocabulary of seeing semantics than in Russian.⁶³ He also introduces changes that involve imagery connected with seeing. In "In Italy" he changes *short life* for *myopic life*:

и бесконечная набережная делала жизнь короткой. (3: 280)

[...] and an infinite quay was rendering life *myopic*. (340)

The image of *myopic life* first appeared in "Allenby Road," a poem written in English in 1981:

life is gradually getting *myopic*, spliced,
aquiline, geometrical, free of gloss
or detail— (240)

In both poems the image of life is connected to streets and perspectives. Brodsky found a metaphor in one language, which then found its place in the English version of another poem, but not in the Russian original. He also inserts *myopic* in the English text of "Centaurus I," while it is absent from the Russian original: *myopic naked statue* (365)—*голая статуя* (IV, 45).⁶⁴

Eye semantics is more pronounced in the English version of "Памяти Клиффорда Брауна":

Это—не синий цвет, это—холодный цвет.
Это—цвет Атлантики в середине
февраля. (4: 131)

It's not the color of blue, it's the color cold.
It's the Atlantic's color you've got **no eyes for**
in the middle of February. ("In Memory of Clifford Brown" 450)

In the same poem a change in the imagery connected with eye semantics is observed:

⁶³ See page 119

⁶⁴ There is a discrepancy in the arrangement and numbering of the "Centaur's" circle. Cf. "Кентавры I"—"Centaur II," "Кентавры II"—"Centaur I," "Кентавры III"—"Centaur III," "Кентавры IV"—"Centaur IV." Brodsky concludes the cycle with poem, which he wrote in English "The Epitaph for a Centaur."

и капля, сверкая плывет в зенит,
чтобы взглянуть на мир с той стороны сетчатки. (4: 131)

And a glistening drop soars to the zenith, so
as to glance at the space with no retina's interference. (450)

Это не просто сетчатка, это—с искрой парча,
новая нотная грамота звезд и полос. (4: 131)

It's not a simple space, it's a nothing, with
alts attaining in height what they lose in color [...] (450)

In Russian, *сетчатка* (*retina*) is compared to *парча с искрой* (*brocade with lustrous thread in it*, literally *brocade with a sparkle*), which is also another allusion to material and to life. In English, *retina* is changed to *space* at which the drop is looking, and then it is called *nothing* which implies cosmos. The image is more pessimistic. However, the reference to shininess, luminescence associated with *парча с искрой* is rendered by *alts attaining in height what they lose in color* preserving the idea of intensity. Though the image of *новая нотная грамота звезд и полос* is lost, the idea of music is retained.

Visual semantics is connected with the semantics of camera. It is noteworthy that the poet's father was a photographer. Brodsky has a few poems written as if they were postcards, which is also a form of photography ("A Postcard from Lisbon," "A Postcard"). Brodsky's poem "Мы жили в городе цвета окаменевшей водки..." in English bears a title "A Photograph." In his English translations, the image of the camera and lens appears often instead of the eye. In the English version of "Postcard from Lisbon," Brodsky is more obvious in indicating that it is a postcard:

[...] Кометам,
пролетевшим мимо земли (в погоне
за бесконечностью, чьим приметам
соответствуют эти ландшафты, но не
полностью). (4: 41)

[...] to the comets
that missed this place in their hot pursuit of
infinity- whose features are echoed very
frequently by local *vistas* (**alas, more photo-
genic than habitable**) [...] (384)

In the English version of “December in Florence,” *рябит*, which is used in the
expression *рябит в глазах*, for *blur your lens*:

[...] И
там **рябит** от аркад, коллонад; от чугунных пугал [...] (3: 113)

There are arcades, colonnades, iron idols that **blur your lens**. (132)

In the English version of “The Fifth Anniversary,” the following transformations
are observed. In the Russian version, the eye is connected to the semantics of telescope
на резкость без труда твой праздный взгляд настроит, which was not rendered in
English. However, the allusion to telescope appears in the next line— *locus that’s better
out of focus* substitutes *куда смотреть не стоит*:

Падучая звезда, тем паче астероид
на **резкость** без труда твой праздный взгляд **настроит**.
Взгляни, взгляни туда, куда **смотреть не стоит**. (3: 147)

A falling star, or worse a planet (true, or bogus)
might thrill your idle eye worth its quick focus-pocus.
Look, look then at that locus **that’s better out of focus**. (241)

Another example is from “View with the Flood.” In the English version at the
end of the second stanza, the addition *cut* gives a clue to the reading of the poem. The
poem is written in the way a film camera works, as if it were a script for the shooting of
the film: the camera goes from one object to another, from giving the general plane from
afar—a *somewhat familiar landscape*—to the objects of the city landscape shot from
above:

A somewhat familiar landscape, currently flooded. Currently
It's only cupolas, spires, treetops, a rainy gauze.
The throat wells up with a gurgling, passionate commentary,
but out of the bunch of words all that remains is was.

That's how, towards the end, the mirror reflects a veteran's
boldness, but not his face, let alone his butt.
Below, sheer washed out scribblings and swallowed utterance.
Above, the snatch of a cloud. And you stand in water. Cut. (456)

However, it is not really a dispassionate registration. The last two lines of the first stanza are about poetry. In the second stanza, the camera comes from the street into the house. It shows us the reflection of an aging person in the mirror, which is another instrument of reflection. Then again, the camera shifts outside. We see snatches of cloud, and again it is connected with writing.⁶⁵ In the Russian, at the end the poet brings in the image of a periscope: *И впору поднять перископом ребенка на плечи,/ чтоб разглядеть, как дымят вдали корабли врага* (142). This also gives the text the idea of looking through the lens into distance, in this case, into time.

In "The Fifth Anniversary" there is another reference to a camera, this time to photos, which is absent from the Russian original:

Начала и концы там жизнь от взора прячет.
Покойник там незрим, как тот, кто только зачат.
Иначе--среди птиц. Но птицы мало значат. (3: 147)

There cause and effects are drowned in murky waters.
One's corpse there lies unseen; so does, of course, one's foetus.
It's different with birds; but eggs don't beg for photos. (241)

The first line clearly alludes to the idiomatic expression *прятать концы в воду*, which means to hide something, especially the evidence of a criminal act. In this context, it might be understood as the reference to the terrible things the state was hiding from the

⁶⁵ Sergey Kuznetsov notes that photography is connected with Brodsky's perception of water (215).

public. The second line makes it clear what kind of things it was hiding--killing hundreds of people, whose dead bodies are unseen (hidden). However, the word of the seeing semantics unites the foetus with the dead bodies and interlinks the idea of the beginning and end of life. The third line mentions birds, which in Brodsky's poetics are always pure. It is clear that he opposes birds to people. In English, the opposition is developed by the substitution of phrase *Но птицы мало значат* for *But eggs don't beg for photos*. Probably this is a hint that the leaders who did terrible things were constantly photographed. *Eggs*, of course, symbolize life and probably compensate for the loss of *начало и концы*. It also echoes *the foetus*.

Cultural Realia

Translation of cultural realia is one of the most difficult aspects of translation. The way a self-translator handles this aspect may provide an understanding of his cultural consciousness. It shows what he expects his new readers to know, even how he treats his new readership. When asked whether he is addressing some assumed audience, Brodsky used to repeat Igor Stravinsky's words that he is writing for himself and for his hypothetical alter ego (CWJB 159). In this context, his answer could be interpreted as meaning that he did not care whether his English-speaking audience understood Russian realia or not. As we will see, Brodsky goes to great pains to make his text accessible to the new reader.

There are various ways to treat cultural realia in the translation: (1) Not to translate at all, but give transliteration. This would be perfect for bilingual readers. Nabokov employs this practice in *Ada*, which is written for a polyglot reader who can

fully appreciate its linguistic complexity. Without knowing Russian, the reader cannot even understand the first paragraph of "Ada." (2) To use a descriptive rendition. (3) To find an equivalent in the target culture. (4) To use footnote. (5) To omit the reference to cultural realia, to not translate it at all.

It should be mentioned that Brodsky's Russian poetic texts brim with foreign realia. Even his early poems are heavily interlaced with the names of Greek gods, Biblical names, and names of foreign authors and artists, which reflect his "nostalgia for world civilization." After his forced immigration to the United States, Brodsky had the chance to travel around the world. Following his first semester of teaching in Ann Arbor, he took his "first free money, hopped on the plane and flew to Italy" (CWJB 191). In his travelogues, Brodsky mentions the names of places, coffee shops, streets, and people's names that sound foreign to the Russian ear. However, he does not resort to footnotes. Living in the United States, he wrote a number of poems with distinct American backgrounds.⁶⁶ When asked how he feels about writing something full of American associations in the Russian language, he says: "In many cases you don't have a Russian word for that, or you have a Russian word which is kind of cumbersome; then you look for ways around the problem" (JBC 99). However, he presumed his Russian audience would not have any difficulty recognizing the name of Ray Charles, because his Russian

⁶⁶ In the interview with Brodsky, Birkerts mentioned Updike's praise of Brodsky that he is becoming an American poet. Brodsky at first objects ("That's flattering, but rubbish"); however, he agrees when Birkerts explains: "I imagine that he (Updike) was referring not only to the fact that you have written a few things in English, but also to the fact that you were beginning to deal with the American landscape, Cape Cod." Brodsky: "Certainly one becomes the land one lives in, especially in the end. In that sense I'm quite American" (JBC 99).

audience was familiar with American jazz,⁶⁷ or understanding what a squad car is, as the analogue exists in the Russian culture (JBC 99).

When Brodsky translates his poems into English he retains practically all references to world culture. In a way, that shows he expects his English reader to have the same cultural background as his Russian reader. In the interview with David Montenegro, answering the question of whether he thinks religious imagery is a common language, Brodsky answers that it is understood by his Russian audience. And he adds that he believes that his “Russian audience is not that qualitatively different in the final analysis from his English audience” (JBC110). Though the question is referred to religious imagery, the answer about the audience can be understood in a broader sense. Brodsky does not use footnotes in his English self-translations.

In one case, his English text contains the name of the scientist, Linnaeus, Father of Taxonomy, while the Russian text does not have any name references. As is often the case with Brodsky, he charges the lexical change with the alliterative function, in this case, island--*Linnaeus*.

И, услышавши это, хочется бросить рыть
землю, сесть на пароход и плыть,
и плыть--не с целью открыть

остров или растение, прелесть иных широт,
новые организмы, но ровно наоборот;
главным образом--рот. (4: 77)

And upon hearing that, one wants to quit one's travail,
shoveling, digging, and board a steamship and sail
and sail, in order to hail

⁶⁷ See our discussion on page 20 where Brodsky says that his generation was very familiar with American culture.

in the end not an island nor an organism **Linnaeus** never found,
nor the charms of new latitudes, but the other way around:
something of no account. ("Fin de Siècle" 392)

In English text of "The New Jules Verne," Brodsky includes the authors of the works, while in Russian we see the titles of the works without the reference to the authors, whom he presumes the readers know. The coexistence of idealistic philosopher Emmanuel Kant and communist Karl Marx intermixed with erotic Maupassant, give a humorous idea of the lieutenant's eclectic reading. In the Russian text, the titles make the contrast more transparent. In the English version, one has to presume that the readers know that Kant was an idealistic philosopher.

Лейтенант отличается от капитана
нашивками, выраженьем глаз,
фотокарточкой Бланш или Франсуаз,
чтением «Критики чистого разума», Мопассана и
«Капитала». (3: 115)

You can tell a lieutenant from a captain
by the stripes, his hazel eyes razzmatazz,
by the snapshots of Blanche or Françoise,
by his reading of Kant, Maupassant, Karl Marx, and his buying smokes by
the carton. (247)

Brodsky's practice of rendering cultural realia changes when he renders Russian cultural phenomena. It is interesting to see what he expected his English-speaking audience to know about Russian culture, on what knowledge he relied.

Names of Russian men and women of culture and science. He expects his audience to be familiar with the names of certain artists, scientists, historical leaders, Nikolaj Lobachevsky, Sofia Kovalevskaja, Kazimir Malevich.

- a) One may nod and admit that the Lobachevsky sleds' lesson was lost on this terrain. ("Kellomäki" 316)

- b) [...] how hidden in the satin trousers
the comb of a Turkish dog trainer, when played, elevates his poodle
beyond Kovalevska, beyond its idol
to a happy occasion: ("Minefield Revisited" 267)

- c) He trusts that the reader would recognize Malevich's first name, Kazimir:

White upon white, as Kazimir's dream image,
one summer evening, I, the most mortal item
in the mist of the wreckage resembling the whole world's rib cage,
sip with feverish lips wine from a tender collar-
bone [...] ("Roman Elegies" 278)⁶⁸

In the English version of "Eclogue: Winter," however, he calls the painter by his last name, though in the Russian text he gives his first name.

Днем, когда небо под стать извеске,
сам Казимир бы из не заметил,
белых на белом. (3: 200)

In daytime, when sky is akin to stucco,
Malevich himself wouldn't have noticed
them, white on white. (292)

In the English version of "Ты, гитарообразная вещь со спутанной паутиной..." /

"Minefield revisited," Brodsky does not render the name of the artist at all, but emphasizes the idea of whiteness by using *snow white*:

Ты, гитарообразная вещь со спутанной паутиной
струн, продолжающая коричневеть в гостиной
белеть а-ля Казимир на выстиранном просторе [...] (3: 170)

You, guitar-shaped affair with tousled squalor
of chords, who keep looming brown in an empty parlor,
or snow white against laundered expanses [...] (267)

Brodsky keeps names that one would not necessarily expect a foreign reader to know, like Goncharova, Pushkin's wife:

⁶⁸ The Russian texts are not given since the English text does not differ from Russian in the aspect under analysis.

...the sharp pen to the most smashing ode
on the fall of the bard at the feet of the laced **Goncharova**,
(“To a Friend: In Memoriam,” 212)

or a famous pianist **Ashkenazy**:

North! A white iceberg’s frozen-in piano;
smallpoxed with quartz, vases’ granite figures;
a plain unable to stop field- glass scanning;
sweet **Ashkenazy**’s ten running fingers. (“Roman Elegies” 277)

However, Brodsky omits the name of Ivan Michurin, Soviet horticulturalist, who specialized in hybrid plants and created new flower and fruit varieties, or the famous 19th century Russian explorer Miklukha-Maklai, who explored New Guinea and identified strongly with the indigenous people, because he does not expect his English-speaking to know them.

a) Но по ним уже не узнать [...]

[...] тот
вид параллелей, где голым—поскольку край
света – гулял, как дикарь, **Маклай**. (3: 246)

still, they won't teach [...]

[...] the sort
of parallels where, since the world there end,
a **naked scientist makes naked friends**. (“Kellomaki” 316)

b) Гибрид архангелов с золотою ротой!

Давай, как сказал **Мичурину** фрукт, уродуй. (4: 106)

Let's graft a seraph to the night-work buggy.

As the fruit told the **botanist**, Fine, make me ugly.

(“Portrait of Tragedy” 416).

c) Neither does he render the name of the marine artist Ivan Ajvazovsky:

[...] Был **содержимым тюрем**
Привык к свинцу небес и к **айвазовским** бурям. (3: 149)

[...] Was kept, a guilty secret,
in cells. Admired lead skies, as well as **windswept liquid**. (243)

Brodsky deciphers the initials A.S., which stand for Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, as *bard* (To a Friend: In Memoriam," 212).

He substituted the name of the pioneer of astronautics Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, who theorized many aspects of space travel and rocket propulsion, by *Martian army*. For the Russian-speaking reader, though the phrase *торжество Циолковского* (*triumph of Tsiolkovsky*) has a touch of irony, as it is based on the cliché, nevertheless, the name of Tsiolkovsky still symbolizes the idea of the power of human mind, of dreams and vision. The English substitution *Martian army* evokes the image of aliens from a science fiction film, and brings the idea of something unrealistic and even hostile, as Martians are traditionally portrayed as hostile aliens that want to conquer the Earth. In the light of the English text the cliché *торжество Циолковского* (*triumph of Tsiolkovsky*) makes the slogans about the brighter future and dreams becoming reality, which were meant to help endure the existence of the drab life in the communal apartment, sound like brainwashing. The Russian text does not have the hostile element, which is discernable in *Martian army*.

Эмалированные кастрюли кухни
внушали уверенность в завтрашнем дне, упрямо
превращаясь в головные уборы либо
в торжество Циолковского. (4: 174)

In a kitchen, enameled pots
were installing confidence in tomorrow
by turning stubbornly, in a dream, into headgear or
Martian army. ("Photograph" 444)

Historical Allusions. In a few cases, Brodsky tries to find in English culture an analogue that would bear the same associations. Brodsky does not expect his reader to know the legendary Russian cruiser "*Varyag*." When notified that the Russian- Japanese war of

1905 had begun, the captain of the ship made an unsuccessful attempt to break through to Port Arthur. The Russian ship fought courageously against the heavily outweighed Japanese fleet. The ship was damaged and lost more than a hundred sailors. The ship was sunk to avoid being captured by the enemy. In the English version, Brodsky alludes to a more recent history; he changes "Varyag" for "Tirpitz," the largest German warship that played an important role in the WWII. It was sunk in 1944, hit by the aerial bombings. However, for the English-speaking reader, this name does not bear heroic implications.

но и в черном пруду из дурных коряг
я бы всплыл пред тобой, как не смог «Варяг». (3: 196)

and from black gnarled snags in the oil-smooth pond
I'd bob up to your face as some *Tirpitz* won't. ("Folk Tune" 273)

Another allusion to the Russian-Japanese war is in the poem "Восходящее желтое солнце следит косыми" In the body of the poem, Brodsky alludes twice to the Tsushima battle, comparing his relationship with M.B. to a battle that was lost. The English text does not contain references to Tsushima. But Brodsky incorporates an allusion into the title of the poem, "Tsushima Screen." He does not rely on the knowledge of his English-speaking audience. That is why he changes the first line from *rising sun* to *perilous sun* that bears the implication of tragedy. *Крещенские морозы* is rendered as *Epiphany*. Though both denote the same Christian celebration that commemorates the revealing of Jesus as Christ to the Gentiles in the persons of the Magi at Bethlehem, they have different connotations. The Russian phrase *крещенские морозы* is used mainly in reference to very windy cold weather, while the English word *Epiphany* actualizes the meaning of revelation. The English text has an additional meaning: it has become clear (like an Epiphany) to both lovers that there is no sense in continuing their relationship.

Восходящее желтое солнце следит косыми
глазами за мачтами голой рощи,
идушей на всех парах к пусиме
Крещенских морозов. Февраль короче
прочих месяцев и оттого лютее.
Кругосветное плаванье, дорогая,
лучше кончить, руку согнув в локте и
вместе с дредноутом догорая
в недрах камина. Забудь пусиму! (3: 203)

Finding analogues in the target culture makes the text more accessible to the foreign reader; however, the text loses its cultural flavor. That is why in "The New Jules Verne," Brodsky changes the name of the ship "Витязь," which has a folkloric touch, to "Tsarina," which not only has a Russian flavor, but also captures the humorous, aristocratic setting of the poem.

As a rule, Brodsky does not render the names from Russian epics.

Даже выпав
из космического аппарата,
ничего не поймаете: ни фокстрота,
ни Ярославны, хоть на Путивль настроясь. (3: 201)

Even being hurtled
out of the spacecraft, no one wouldn't capture
any sounds on the radio--neither fox-trots nor maidens
wailing from the hometown station. ("Eclogue: Winter" 293)

A Russian reader would immediately recognize allusion to the famous epic image from the "Igor' Tale" known as known as "плач Ярославны." The Russian text does not verbalize the word *cry*; nevertheless it is implied as a part of the poetic allusion. The allusion to Russian history brings to mind sadness and grief and is contrasted to happy foreign foxtrots. It serves the purpose of enhancing and deepening the time span--from foxtrot to old Russian. In the English text, the word *wailing* is verbalized, thus the opposition between a foreign foxtrot and sad, national music is preserved. *Maidens* bears

the reference to folklore, though the allusion to the historical event is not present, and since this dimension is lost, the time span is not so deep.

As it often happens with Brodsky, he compensates for losses by word play and alliteration. Thus *храбрый кощей* (3: 52) becomes the *Vizier of Woes* ("Lithuanian Nocturne" 220).

Some images from Russian fairy tales are translated literally with the clarification that they come from the fairy tale: for example, *избушка на курьих ножках* is rendered as *fairy tale's hut on chicken feet* ("Centaur III" 367).

Toponyms. Most Russian toponyms are rendered, which gives the text the local flavor. However, Brodsky explains for his English reader that Terek is a *boisterous mountain stream*.

И вам снятся настурции; бурный Терек
В тесном ущелье, мушиный куколь
между стеной и торцом буфета [...] (3: 199)

and you dream of nasturtiums' stubborn odor,
a tuft of cobwebs shading a corner nightly,
in a narrow ravine torrid Terek's splashes [...] ("Eclogue: Winter" 291)

Неугомонный Терек там ищет третий берег. (3: 147)

A boisterous mountain stream strives for the third shore there.
("The Fifth Anniversary" 241).

He does not render the name of the city *Odinburg*, but again he compensates for the loss with inner rhyming.

По названию станции--Одинбург--
что пора выходить, что яйцу не сносить скорлупки. (4: 71)

A junction's veneer -- that you're getting nearer,
that the boiled egg won't sport its battered shell forever. ("North of Delphi" 371)

In “To a Friend: In Memoriam,” Brodsky preserves the name *оренбургский платок* – *orenburg shawl*. However, it is doubtful that English-speaking readers would recognize all the connotations. Genuine Orenburg shawls are made of down and are usually gray or brown. The phrase also evokes the saying, used when speaking of the dead, *да будет земля ему пухом*, which means *may he rest in peace*; translated literally it reads: let the earth be the down for him.

да лежится тебе, как в большом оренбургском платке,
в нашей бурой земле [...] (3: 58)

may you lie, as though wrapped in an Orenburg shawl in our dry, brownish mud,
 (“To a Friend: In Memoriam” 212)

An English-speaking reader might think it is a cotton or silk shawl. The connection with the idiom is lost.⁶⁹

As seen from the above-given example, a proper name may be charged with connotations that most certainly are lost on a foreign reader. Most often Brodsky tries to find equivalents that bear the same implications in the English speaking culture.

“The New Jules Verne” gives a view from inside the octopus. It allows the author to look at things from a different perspective and find unexpected relations between things or notions. As it often happens with Brodsky, he finds linguistic connections between notions that are usually not correlated.

На земле существуют четыре стены и крыша.
Мы боимся волка или медведя.
Медведя, однако, меньше и зовем его “Миша”.
а если хватает воображенья—“Федя.” (3: 117)

The land means four solid walls, a ceiling.
We are scared of wolves or of bears. Although some are ready
to detect in the latter a human feeling
and address one as Teddy. (249)

⁶⁹ In the English text of “In Memoriam,” Brodsky changes the names of the cities from *Вырина* and *Тарту* to *Dvinak* and *Tatras*. This was done for rhyming purposes, and the names still bear the Russian flavor.

In Russian tales, bears are called Misha; also oftentimes kids name their toy bears “mishka.” This would say nothing to the English reader. In America, toy bears are called “Teddy,” which is an allusion to the American president, Theodore Roosevelt. When Theodore Roosevelt, after a day of hunting finally saw a helpless bear, he refused to kill it. The story about the president’s kind act spread throughout the country and was used in a cartoon. The owner of a shop in Brooklyn decided to make toy bears and asked the permission of the president to call a new toy “Teddy’s bear.” Now these toys are known as Teddy bears. Brodsky is evidently aware of this, as he even slightly changes the preceding line (*we are not so much afraid of the bear to some are ready to detect in the bear a human feeling*) obviously referring to this story. In this case, he connects animals (bears) and humans through the name.

In the next stanza, he does not change the name *Borya*, as he says the name does not suit the whale in either language. He calls the whale Dick, which is an allusion to Herman Melville’s “Moby Dick.” The White Whale Moby Dick symbolizes evil. In Russian, the grammatical instrumental form of the name (*Дик—Диком*) is the homonym to the attribute in the prepositional case (*дикий—диком /savage*). The final rhyming position of both words reinforces the word play. On the one hand, it stresses the idea of horror embedded in name *Moby Dick*. On the other hand, taking away the first part of the name also takes away the menacing aspect and brings the idea of homeliness and tenderness. In English, though, the allusion to *Moby Dick* is transparent; the name Dick without the first part does not sound threatening. In the English version, Brodsky even says *Dick sounds tender*, which contradicts the literary allusion.

Ничего подобного не происходит в море.
Кита в его первозданном, диком
виде не трогает имя **Бори**.
Лучше звать его **Диком**. (3: 117)

The sea has no room for these sorts of worries.
A whale, in its primordial splendor,
Won't respond to the name like **Boris**;
Dick is bit tender. (249)

Some names undergo the process of antonomasia (nominal meaning becomes the logical meaning, as in *hooligan*). The dog's name *Жучка*, which in Russian is a generic word of a female dog, is rendered as *bitches*:

И к звездам до сих пор там запускают **жучек** (3: 147)

There rockets carry up crafts filled with barking **bitches**
("The Fifth Anniversary" 241)

In "The Fifth Anniversary," *пеструха*, which is a nickname of a cow with a lot of spots, is changed to *Holstein* which is a breed of a cow, also with spots:

и карта мира там замещена **пеструхой**,
мычащей на бугре. (3: 148)

The world map is replaced there by a large **Holstein**
a-mooing on a hill [...] (242)

Food is another cultural phenomenon that is difficult to render. The following examples show how Brodsky deals with it. *Ты питала пристрастие к люля /и к финикам* (4: 64) was translated as *You craved curry and dates from Senegal* ("Brise Marine" 364). *Там, наливая чай, ломают зуб о пряник* (3: 148) was translated as *At tea, a candy hurts a tooth, that scarcely bigger* ("The Fifth Anniversary" 242).

Music tunes. Popular music tunes are replaced by popular tunes in the target culture:

чижик (3: 201) by *chopsticks* ("Eclogue: Winter" 293); "во саду-ли" (194) by "Down in the Valley." ("Eclogue: Winter" 289).

Clothing. A Typically Russian piece of clothing *телогрейка* (4: 17) is rendered as *sweat shirt* ("The Residence" 288). In the English text, Brodsky adds *matching long johns* to underline the idea of bed attire.

Cultural customs and traditions.

a) The Russian text of "То не муза воды набирает в рот" contains *осина* (*aspen*). Aspen is the tree that is associated with death, and is used in a number of sayings *вбить в могилу осиновый кол*.⁷⁰ In the English version of the same poem, "Folk Tune," Brodsky omits the reference to aspen, but still captures the idea of decay and death in the addition *grove's sweet rot*.

И не встать ни раком, ни так словам,
как назад в осиновый строй дровам. (3: 196)

And the word won't rise either like that rod
or like logs to rejoin their old grove's sweet rot [...] (273)

He uses the image of aspen in "Portrait of Tragedy," and in the English text he translates the name of the tree. Brodsky tries to render the idea of graveyard in the addition *leaves needles buried*.

вкати ей кубик аминазину, воткни там и сям осину [...] (4: 106)

[...] Plant there aspens, shoot up acid, and leave needles buried.
("Portrait of Tragedy" 416)

b) Certain Russian folkloric beliefs are changed for an equivalent from world folklore. The title of the poem "Примечания папоротника" (*Footnotes of Fern*), which reflects the belief in the prognostic power of ferns is changed to "North of Delphi," which is the location of the Mythological Oracle who foretells the future.

⁷⁰Brodsky employs this image in his early poem "Лагуна": *по гробу его плачет в лесах осина*. (II, 318)

c) The following example is interesting as it contains some losses, but still renders the superstitious belief in numbers. In the same poem, “Примечания папоротника,” when talking about fortune telling, Brodsky refers to the Russian habit of reading numbers on a bus or trolley-bus ticket. If the sum of the first three numbers equals the sum of the last three numbers that means that it is a lucky ticket and one is supposed to make a wish. The tickets are usually pink.

[...] Линия на руке,
пляска розовых цифр в троллейбусном номерке [...]
подтверждают лишь то, что у судьбы, увы,
вариантов меньше, чем жертв [...] (4: 71)

This is rendered in English with reference to the unlucky thirteen and configuration of number sixty-nine. In Russian there is no direct indication of an unhappy number. The reference to the ticket is lost, too.

[...] The palm's tangled lines,
thirteens and, moreover, sixty-nines,
prove only that fate, alas,
has fewer options than victims to find oneself at a loss [...] (371)

Patterns of Behavior. Everyday practices, such as interaction in the family in different cultures, may vary. Two examples from “The Fifth Anniversary” follow: “Там одиночка-мать вывозит дочку в скверик” (3: 147) is rendered as “There single mothers put their daughters in day care” (241). Taking kids to the park by single mothers will not be understood by an English speaking- audience, as most single mothers in the West have to work, unlike Russian single mothers who had an option of maternity leave. That is why in the English version mothers take their children to daycare.

The line *Там дедушку в упор рассматривает внучек* also refers to the tradition of grandparents babysitting or living with grandchildren, which is not common in the US.

That is why it is rendered as *A kid stares down his dad there all the way to breeches*. The Russian text stresses the opposition of old and young; in the English text, the emphasis is on the generation gap, and it also has a touch of animosity.

Sometimes Brodsky in his translations deciphers words that are associated with certain cultural practices. Thus the expression *белые головки*, which denotes vodka bottles, he renders as *bottle struck livers* that conveys the idea of alcoholism and its harmful consequences.

[...] различать голоса--
на эзоповой фене в отечестве белых головок [...] (3: 58)

[...] for you to distinguish a voice,
an Aesopian chant, in that homeland of bottle struck livers [...]
(“To a Friend: In Memoriam” 212)

In the same line, Brodsky uses the phrase *эзоповой фене*, which means the language used to hide the meaning, and at the same time he employs the code, in reference to drinking. However, the following lines from “Lithuanian Nocturne,” which refer to the practice among alcoholics of buying a vodka bottle and drinking vodka by three people, will be not understood by the English reader. In Russian, Brodsky uses the alcoholics’ argot *разделить на троих*.

[...] И выносят на улицу главную вещь,
разделенную на три
без остатка [...] (III, 49)

[...] while in an archway the object of passion
gets divided by three, with, I bet,
no leftovers. [...] (216)

Occasionally Brodsky, in his English self-translations, introduces cultural changes that will be meaningful only to the audience familiar with Russian culture. In the English translation of “Подруга, дурнея лицом, поселись в деревне...” / “Elegy,” Brodsky

inserts *litter* comparing young men to kittens or puppies. This comparison stresses the animal aspect of life in the village; it also stresses the inexperience of young men, practically kids, who do stupid things that lead them to jail:

Nothing but kids around. And as to whose this litter is, that's known to those who jail the suckers later [...] (399)

It also alludes to the practice in Russian villages of drowning newly born kittens, which are still blind. This practice is familiar to all Russians due to Ivan Turgenev's short story "Mumu," which was on the reading lists in all Soviet schools. The associations the word *litter* evokes bring into the text a touch of compassion. This will be only understood by English speaking audience familiar with Russian culture.

In "December in Florence" it is practically impossible to render the following word pun expressed graphically:

Мостовую пересекаешь с риском
Быть за ^клеванным насмерть (3: 113)

[...] Intersections scare your skull
like crossed bones. (132)

In the English text, Brodsky refers to the danger sign of skull and crossbones, which is very often seen in Russia, especially on the doors of oscillators. The graphics that convey the wordplay in the Russian text probably prompted the image skull and crossbones in the English text. The sign of skull and crossbones is familiar to English-speaking audience most likely from pirate movies and as a common sign for poison. It is less familiar as the danger sign in the streets of the city.

Sovietisms. Speaking about the problems of translation, Brodsky says that it is not the language that presents difficulties:

What creates the barrier is some historic reality, which for the most of the century was politically different from the reality of the realism of the Romance and Germanic languages. [...] In the twentieth century, a completely new society emerged. So translating a sentence from Russian prose depicting life in the communal apartment into English is practically impossible. In the first place, what is the communal apartment? So practically every sentence would require a substantial footnote. The disparity of the reality of life is what is conspiring against being translated successfully into English, not the language itself. (JBC 183).

These are a few examples how Brodsky renders Sovietisms:

a) In "The Fifth Anniversary," the colloquial expression *запороть план* is substituted for *into the Great Machine someone has lobbed a spanner*. The colloquial expression *запороть план, работу* in the Russian version is used ironically *великий план запорот*.

Там украшают флаг, обнявшись, серп и молот.
Но в стенку гвоздь не вбит и огород не полот.
Там, грубо говоря, великий план запорот. (3: 149)

The hammer hugging sickle there adorns the banner
But nails are not struck home and weeds submerge the planner:
into the Great Machine someone has lobbed a spanner. (243)

In the English text, *Great Machine* denotes a planned economy. It is also understood literally, as *lob a spanner* actualizes the literal meaning of the word machine, and this stresses the de-humanized nature of the planned economy society. There is another shift in the meaning. The Russian sentence *Великий план запорот* does not have the agent; this reflects the idea that nobody bears the individual responsibility in the society of planned economy and communal property. It also captures the Russian belief that things just happen by themselves and nobody knows why. Thus, nobody is responsible for it. The English text may be interpreted as if the sabotage was done by purpose.⁷¹

⁷¹ See also the example from "Imagery," where the English text decodes *течет с лица известка* as *sob in toilet corners*.

b) Venclova, the devotee of “Lithuanian Nocturne,” explains the usage of *Makrous*: “It is an untranslatable joke in which great play is made with the notion of ‘a large, (damp?) moustache,’ and the sound of the name of ‘Marx,’ the moustached Marx and the moustached Stalin—two prophets of the maxim ‘the end justifies the means’ – are, evidently, conflated” (“Lithuanian Nocturne” 147). *Makrous* was rendered as *Magnavox*.

c) Brodsky translates another Sovietism *ликбез*⁷² as *blackboard in white* (224). This is a good translation find, in tune with Brodsky’s poetics (open mouth—language, air—language, silence—death), that preserves the educational aspect of the poem as well as the association of language with silence and death. In the same stanza, there is reference to whiteness.

Оттого-то он чист.
Нет на свете вещей , безупречней
(кроме смерти самой)
отбеляющих лист.

Чем белее, тем бесчеловечней.
Муза, можно домой?
Восвояси! В тот край,
где бездумный Борей попирает беспечно трофеи
уст. В грамматику без
препинания. В рай
алфавита, трахен.
В твой великий ликбез. (3: 56-57)

That is why it is pure!
In this world, there is nothing that bleaches
pages better (except
for one’s dying) than air.
And the whiter, the emptier, which is
homelike. Muse, may I set
out homeward? To that out-loud
realm where witless Boreas
tramples over the trophies of lips in his flight,

⁷² The abbreviation for *ликвидация безграмотности* (elimination of illiteracy).

to your grammar without
punctuation, to your Paradise of our alphabets
and tracheas,
to your **blackboard in white**. (224)

Americanisms. Brodsky, in his English texts, introduces changes that inject American coloring.

a) In the "North of Delphi," we see the change of *judge* for *jury*, which reflects the American judicial custom where the jury, not the judge, often gives the verdict.

Оракул
не лучше, когда в жилище входит закон в плаще:
ваши дни сочтены--судьей или вообще
у вас их, что называется, кот наплакал. (4: 71)

The oracle is no better
when the law in a raincoat crosses your threshold:
your days are numbered--by a jury, or
they are pussycat lacrimae, scare and bitter. (371)

b) He inserts an Americanism, *playmate*:

[...] Модно все черное: сорочка, чулки, белье.
Когда в результате вы это все с нее
стаскиваете, жилье
озаряется светом примерно в тридцать ватт [...] (4: 74)

[...] Black things are in vogue: camisole, bloomers, hose,
When in the end you relieve your **playmate** of those
items, your humble house
suddenly gets lit up by something like a twenty watt. (388)

c) In "Folk Tune" addressing M.B., an artist, Brodsky says:

Навсегда расстанемся с тобой, дружок.
Нарисуй на бумаге простой кружок.
Это буду я: ничего внутри.
Посмотри на него--и потом сотри. (3: 196)

In the English version, he uses the object of everyday American life, the popular yellow pad, which is most often used for writing and making notes.

We are parting for good, little friend, that's that.
Draw an empty circle on your yellow pad.
That will be me: no inside in thrall.
Stare at it a while, then erase the scrawl. (273)

The word *бумага* (*paper*) in the Russian text renders the idea of writing or drawing on something that is close at hand. The paper is then tossed away. Notepads, on the other hand, imply that one writes something that can be used or referred to later, that one may want to keep. On the other hand, the word *yellow* in Russian culture bears the implication of parting.⁷³ But, that will be understood only by a bilingual reader.

d) In the English version of “Fin de Siècle” the addition of typically American *whiskey sour on ice* stresses the American or rather cosmopolitan setting; rhyming of *soar* and *sour* produces the ironic effect, which is in tune with the bitter tone of the poem.

Ни
в кафе не встретить сподвижника, раздавленного судьбой,
ни в баре уставшего пробовать возвыситься над собой
ангела в голубой
юбке и кофточке. (4: 73)

No chance of you spotting at
a little café your confreres ruined by kismet, or
at the bar the silk-clad angel who failed to soar
above herself and her *whiskey sour*
on ice. (387)

Literary Allusions. Brodsky's texts are interlaced with literary allusions. Ranchin says that Brodsky's poetry is “secondary,” by which he means that Brodsky is an heir to the tradition of Russian literature (177). He traces inter-textual echoes of Brodsky's texts to the texts of Kantemir, Derzhavin, Pushkin, Baratynsky, Lermontov, and Khodasevich.

⁷³ Natasha Rostova's yellow dress when she first sees Prince Andrey is the early warning sign that their relationship would not last. It is not customary to give yellow flowers especially in a romantic situation.

Understandably most literary allusions, as they presuppose the knowledge of the exact wording of other texts, are lost on the foreign ear. These few examples will show how Brodsky deals with this aspect of translation.

In "The Fifth Anniversary," Brodsky describes Russia seen from afar. At the end of the third opening stanza, a Russian understands that the place *куда смотреть не стоит*/ *where it is not worth looking at*/ is the Soviet Union, as he or she would recognize the allusion to Pushkin in the following line: "оцепеневший дуб кивает лукоморью" (3:147). This is rendered in English *as on rocks enchanted oaks nod to a passing liner* (241).

In "Lithuanian Nocturne," Brodsky tries to indicate to his English-speaking reader that *литовская корчма* bears additional implications by inserting the adjective *famed*:

Либо—просто синяк
на скуле мирозданья от взгляда подростка,
от попытки на глаз
расстоянье прикинуть от той ли литовской корчмы
до лица, многооко смотрящего мимо [...] (3: 51)

[...] or
as a bruise that still sits
on the firmament, brought on-
to its cheek by a youngster whose sore
eye was trying to fathom the distance from that
famed Lithuanian inn [...] (218)⁷⁴

In the English version of "Квинтет," which in English is titled "Sextet," Brodsky omits the allusion to Maxim Gorky's *Жизнь Клима Самгина* "А был ли мальчик?"⁷⁵

⁷⁴ In "Eclogue: Winter" *как пальчик шалуна из русского стихотворенья* (3: 199), which is an allusion to Pushkin, was translated as *the index finger of a scamp from a popular Russian verse* (291).

⁷⁵ Givens in his analysis of the "Kvintet" and "Sextet" notices this omission from the English version (214). The source was prompted to me by Gordin in a private conversation in November 2003.

In “Примечания папоротника,” Brodsky refers to the allusion *по ком звонит колокол, он звонит по тебе* (*ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for you*) from John Donne, which most Russians recognize, as it was used as the title of Hemmingway’s novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

[...] И если он [человек] слышит звон,
то звонят по нему: пьют, бьют и сдают посуду. (4: 71)

Brodsky combines the literary allusion with the Russian tradition of drinking at the funeral and beating empty bottles. The toll of the bell turns out to be the noise of the clinking and beaten glasses. The fact that he also says *сдаюм посуду* (*return the empties*) implies that life goes on: they drank at your funeral, but also did not want to waste the empty bottles (*life is more important*). The clash between the elevated literary text and mundane daily activities stresses the enigma of death and unimportance of life.⁷⁶ In the English version, though the translation is correct, the allusion is not so obvious, because the exact wording of the allusion is not preserved (instead of *for whom the bell tolls*, we see *ring a bell*). Thus, the juxtaposition of the elevated tone and mundane reality is not present:

Whenever something rings a bell,
It sure rings for him, as they clink, drink and round up the empties. (371)

⁷⁶ This was also observed by Ranchin (62), who also notes the recurrent image of rattling empties in “Мысль о тебе удаляется, как разжалованная прислуга...” (108). Brodsky retains the image in the English text: города рвут сетчатку из грубой ткани/ дребезжа, как сдаваемая посуда. (IV, 26)-... while endless/ cities rip the retinal sacks with lances/ clanging loud like returning empties. (341)

Deviations and Inaccuracies

Strictly speaking, all deviations from the original could be labeled as errors. The famous, often-cited line from "To Urania," *Loneliness cubes a man at random*, differs from the Russian phrase *Одиночество есть человек в квадрате* (*Loneliness is a man squared*) in three ways: (1) The syntactic subject-object relations are different: the Russian phrase is a *назывное* sentence, while in English *loneliness* is an active agent, a doer of the action (*loneliness cubes a man*.) (2) *A man* in the Russian text is *squared*, in the English version *is cubed*. (3) The English phrase contains an addition *at random*, which is absent from the Russian text. However, irrespective of these differences, I do not classify this example as an error, as both phrases express the notion that loneliness is bigger than the life size of man, and both the Russian and English phrases express this idea, though in a slightly different manner, in terms of mathematics. The English version utilizes *cubes* while the Russian original references *squares*; hence the idea of loneliness is more emphatic in English than in Russian. Another issue that arises in connection with self-translation is that certain deviations and inconsistencies—which in a regular translation would be blamed on the translator's inaccuracy or incompetence—in self-translation are regarded as legitimate changes; they might even be considered improvements of the original. However, even a self-translator is not immune from making mistakes.

Under the category of "Deviations and Inaccuracies," I would include those deviations that contradict or distort the original. They fall into four groups: (I) Deviations that express the idea differently from the original, but do not hurt the text. (II)

Those that contradict the logic of the text. (III) Inaccuracies that do not distort the idea of the original, but still are to the detriment of the text. (IV) Minor inaccuracies.

I. Statements in the English version that express an idea that is contrary to the original, but do not harm the English text.

a) The last line of the fourth stanza in "Пятая годовщина" / "The Fifth Anniversary," *В лесах полно куниц и прочих ценных тварей* (3: 148), which means *The woods are full of martens and other precious creatures*, is rendered in English as: *There the martens quit the woods, whose branches fail to hide them* (242). The idea expressed in the translation is opposite to the one expressed in the original. The Russian text states that there are a lot of animals in the woods, while the English text says that martens quit the woods. Do they quit the woods because *the branches fail to hide them*, and does the latter point to the ecological situation, implying that the woods are being chopped down, and that this in turn is an indication of the bad ecological situation? The ecological situation in the English text is worse; however, it parallels the general picture of economic decay:

Там украшают флаг, обнявшись, серп и молот.
Но в стенку гвоздь не вбит и огород не полот.
Там, грубо говоря, великий план запорот. (3: 149)

The hammer-hugging sickle there adorns the banner.
But nails are not struck home and weeds submerge the planner:
Into the Great Machine someone has lobbed a spanner. (243)

This change does not affect the general tone of the poem.⁷⁷ It seems that the English text is more consistent in depicting the overall negative situation in Russia.

⁷⁷ Yakov Gordin says that the line *в лесах полно куниц и прочих ценных тварей* in the Russian text always seemed to him incongruent with the poem. He suggests that Brodsky corrected it in the English version (from the conversation with Gordin).

b) In “Римские элегии” and “Roman Elegies,” the month of August in Rome is described differently:

Месяц спущенных штор и зачехленных стульев,
потного двойника в зеркале над комодом,
пчел, позабывших расположение ульев
и улетевших к морю покрыться медом. (3: 227)

The month of drawn blinds, of furniture wrapped in cotton
shrouds, of the seating double in the mirror above the cupboard,
of bees that forget the topography of their hives and, coated
with suntan honey, keep staggering seaward. (274)

In the Russian original, bees flew to the sea to be covered with honey; while in the English version, they are already coated with honey. That is probably why Brodsky says that they are *staggering seaward*.

c) In “На Виа Фурнари” and “Via Funari” subject-object relations are reversed:

В общем, мы не увиделись. Боюсь, что теперь не скоро
представится новый случай. Может быть, никогда.
Не горюй: не думаю, что я мог бы
признаться тебе в чем-то большем, чем Сириусу –

Канопус [...] (4: 198)

Well, we've failed to connect. I think the next opportunity
won't arise very soon. Probably not at all.
Do not regret this, however. I don't believe I could
reveal to you more than Sirius to Canopus [...] (413)

Sirius is the brightest star in the Canis major constellation, and Canopus is the second brightest star after Sirius, and is not visible to anyone above latitude 37 North. That means that Sirius and Canopus cannot see each other. In the poem, Brodsky speaks about missed opportunity to see his friend while he was in Via Funari. Metaphorically, it means that the poet and the addressee are not able to communicate because they are in different spheres and by objective reasons cannot be together. The fact that in the Russian text the poet associates himself with Canopus and in the English version with

Sirius is evidently of no importance, as the poet does not bring up the mythology associated with the two names; but focuses on their astrological properties, that is, their complete separation, their inability to see each other. This explanation seems logical as the astrological image of separation is also prompted by the fact that the poet stresses the inability to see each other by the words *Probably not at all*.

II. The second group includes changes that are inconsistent with the logic of the text.

a) In "To Urania," describing the difference between the two Muses, Urania and Clio, Brodsky writes:

Оттого-то Урания старше Клио.
Днем, и при свете слепых коптилок,
видишь: она ничего не скрыла,
и, глядя на глобус, глядишь в затылок.
вот они, те леса, где полно черники [...] (3: 248)

...That's why Urania is older than sister Clio!
In daylight or with the soot-rich lantern,
You see the globe's pate *free of any bio*,
You see she hides nothing, unlike the latter.
There they are, blueberry-laden forests,
rivers where the folk with bare hands catch sturgeon
or the towns in whose soggy telephone books
you are starring no longer; farther eastward surge on
brown mountain ranges; wild mares carousing
in tall sedge; the cheekbones get yellower,
as they turn numerous. (281)

The Russian original reads: *and looking at the globe, you look at the pate*; the image of the pate indicates that there is nothing to hide. In the English version, Brodsky employs an addition to characterize the globe's pate *free of any bio*, obviously, to stress that if there is no bio, the globe cannot hide anything. In the English text, it is also emphasized by contrast with Clio (*You see she hides nothing, unlike the latter*). However, the next lines indicate that there is plenty of bio, (*blueberry-laden forests, / rivers where the folk*

with bare hands catch sturgeon /... and farther eastward surge on brown mountains; wild mares carousing in tall sedge,...); and the picture is not static: everything is in motion (hand catch sturgeon, wild mares carouse), everything grows and changes color (... the cheekbones get yellower as they turn numerous).

b) In "View with the Flood" there is another logical mistake:

Так отражаются к старости в зеркале бровь и лысина,
но никакого лица, не говоря – муде. (4: 142)

That's how, toward the end, a mirror reflects a veteran's
baldness, but not his face, let alone his butt. (456)

The idea of the reflection of a body in the mirror resonates throughout Brodsky's poetry. In the mirror one does not see oneself, but articles of clothing.⁷⁸ Equating man to pieces of clothing, Brodsky stresses the insignificance of a person (Polukhina, *A Poet*). Another recurrent motif in Brodsky is the aging and ailing of the body.⁷⁹ In this poem, in the mirror, one sees the signs of old age (baldness); one does not see the face or eyes, but an eyebrow, and then Brodsky uses a very crude Russian word *муде*, which means male genitalia, implying that the sexual potency is gone too. In the English version, he substitutes *butt for муде*, thus losing the idea of sexual power. In the Russian version, it is apparent that a person is looking at himself full-face in the mirror. In the English version, he runs into a discrepancy: face and brows imply that the person is looking at himself full-face, in which case he cannot see his back (butt).

c) The following versions of Russian and English "Келомяки" / "Kellomaki" offer different interpretations:

⁷⁸ In "The Roman Elegies" the person sees his ragged clothes in the mirror. This will also be discussed in connection with "Roman Elegies."

Несмотря на все это, были они крепки,
эти брошенные спичечные коробки
с громыхавшими в них посудой двумя-тремя
сырыми головками. И воробья кормя,
на него там смотрели всею семьей в окно [...] (3: 244)

Notwithstanding all that, they were sturdy, those
abandoned matchboxes, stacked in white bundled rows
with two or three rattling, **damp heads inside**,
which, when feeding a sparrow, huddled to watch the sight,
family strong, by the window [...] (314)

Translated literally this passage reads: *In spite of it, they were sturdy, those abandoned matchboxes, / with two- three damp heads rattling in them. And feeding a sparrow, the whole family was looking at it through the window.* In this context *головок* (little heads) stands for liquor, most likely, vodka bottles. The same meaning of *головок* (heads) we see in “To a Friend: In Memoriam”: *Я... чересчур далеко, чтоб тебе различать голоса – на эзоповой фене в отечестве белых головок* (3: 58). (*I am too far away for you to be able to distinguish voices in Aesopian jargon in the homeland of white heads*). In the Russian text, *белые головки* (white heads) means vodka bottles. This was rendered into English, as *I am too distant for you to distinguish a voice, an Aesopian chant, in that homeland of bottle-struck livers* (212). Though not translated literally, the idea of drunkenness is rendered by *the bottle struck livers*, alluding to the fact that alcohol harms the liver.

In the English version of “Kellomaki,” we see a different interpretation of *головок* (heads). It is translated literally as *heads*. The syntactical structure makes this rendition rather ambiguous. This phrase is then understood as *rattling damp heads huddled to watch the sight, when feeding the sparrow*. The phrase *family strong* suggests

⁷⁹ In his interview with Kline, Brodsky says that in aging, the body is filled with silence, its organs and their functions become useless for the life of the body (JBC 38).

that the whole family was watching and feeding a sparrow. If it means that these are *heads* of kids (whose heads are damp), then it is not clear why are they *rattling*. If *heads* is understood as heads of bottles, which is probably what was meant, especially taking into account the previous line, *stacked in white bundled rows*, then the next line is illogical. How could bottle heads *feed and watch a sparrow*, and how could they be *family strong*? Another discrepancy that hinders the understanding of the English text even more lies in the fact that, strictly speaking, *stacked in white bundled rows* is grammatically attached to *the abandoned matchboxes* (*Notwithstanding all that, they were sturdy, those/ abandoned matchboxes, stacked in white bundled rows*) and could be interpreted as: houses standing in a row; they are white, because of the snow.

III. Deviations that do not distort the idea, but are still to the detriment of the poem.

a) In the poem “*Пчелы не улетели, всадник не ускакал. В кофейне...*” the poet revisits the city in eight years. A lot happened in the world:

Восемь лет пронеслось. Вспыхивали, затухали
войны, рушились семьи, в газетах мелькали хари [...] (4: 55)

Eight years have scurried by. Wars have flared up and smoldered,
families crumbled, scum bared its teeth grown older [...]
(“Porta San Pancrazio” 393)

However, nothing affected the city, everything in the city is the same: things are the same, smells are the same:

[...] The cinder
reeks of burnt leaves, and the fountain is glittering like a wobbly
medal pinned to a cannon at noon for its aimless volley.

Stone is employed worldwide to keep memory captive.

This means that “Life without us is, darling, thinkable. It exists as / honeybees, horsemen, bars, habitués, columns, vistas...” Of course, this is the eternal city, Rome, the city that

has captured time. In a way, this is a poem about the contrast between time and space. The idea of contrast is embodied in the second line: “В кофейне ‘Яникулум’ **новое** кодро болтает на **прежней** фене” (4: 55). *Новое* (*new*) is opposed to *прежнее* (*old*), the idea being that though times change and new people frequent the coffee-shop, their conversation has not changed. They talk about the same things as people did in the same coffee shop eight years ago.

In the English version we read: ...*In the bar Gianicolo, old-timers enjoy their salad / days* (393). Thus, the notion of a new crowd is lost, and the English rendition implies that they are talking about their youth. One has the impression that it was the same crowd that was here eight years ago, and that they are remembering their salad days. However, the motif that they sit and speak the same language they spoke earlier, is preserved.

b) In one case the Russian idiom is rendered incorrectly. In “Ischia in October”

Неподалеку Вергилий жил,
и У.Х. Оден вино глушил. (4: 134)

Virgil dwelt not too far away,
and Wystan Auden held drinks at bay. (430)

Вино глушил is a slang expression for *drink a lot*. Brodsky evidently wanted to preserve the colloquial strong flavor and translated it with an idiom *keep drinks at bay*, which has the opposite meaning of *try not to drink* while still implying that to not drink is a struggle.

IV. Minor inaccuracies.

a) In “Памяти отца: Австралия,” / “In Memory to My Father: Australia,” the difference in the two version lies in the rendition of a conjunction “a” as “though”

Голос с трехкратным эхом
окликал и жаловался на климат

и обои: квартиру никак не снимут,
жалко, не в центре, а около океана [...] (4: 69)

The last line in the Russian original reads: *it is a pity that the apartment is not downtown, but at the ocean*, implying that father, as all Russians, would prefer to live downtown. It also implies that an ocean location is not as desirable (conjunction “a” opposes *downtown* to *near the ocean*). In the English text, this line reads: *pity it's not downtown, though near the ocean*. Near the ocean is regarded as a positive factor that counterbalances the downside that it is not downtown.

The voice, with a triple echo,
ebbed and flowed, complaining about climate,
grime, that the deal with the flat is stymied,
pity it's not downtown, though near the ocean [...] (360)

b) The misrendition of another little word changes the logical stress in “A Footnote to Weather Forecasts”:

Это освобождает –
не столько воображение, сколько память
– и надолго, если не навсегда. (3: 303)

This unshackles
memory more than imagination –
not forever, of course, but for a while. (350)

The Russian text states that memory will be freed practically forever; whereas the English version says that that it will be not forever; moreover, the phrase *of course* emphasizes the fact that it will not be forever.

c) Another example of the same type of inaccuracy is observed in “Полярный исследователь” / “A Polar Explorer”:

И бисер слов
покрывает фото супруги, к ее щеке
мушку даты сомнительной приколов. (3: 169)

And the beads of quick
words scatter over his spouse's sepia-shaded face
adding the **date in question** like a mole to her lovely cheek. (214)

Сомнительная дата means *questionable date*, which implies that the explorer lost track of the days. It also renders the idea that he loses confidence that he will be saved.

Another possible interpretation may stem from the fact that the poem was written on M.B.'s birthday. In the text, *сомнительная дата* (*questionable date*) is written on the photo of the explorer's wife. This might reveal Brodsky's misgivings about his relations with M.B. The English translation *date in question* would be rendered in Russian as *дата, о которой идет речь*.

d) In "Портрет трагедии" / "Portrait of Tragedy," misrendition occurs due to the polysemy of the word:

Рухнем в объятия трагедии с готовностью ловеласа!
Погрузимся в ее немолодое мясо.
Прободаем ее насквозь, до пружин матраса.
Авось она вынесет. Так выживает раса. (3: 104)

Let's tumble into her arms with a lecher's ardor!
Let's drown in her flabby rubble, let's go under.
Let's burrow through her and make mattress fodder.
Who knows, she may carry. A race always needs a founder. (414)

In the Russian text; *Авось она вынесет* means *who knows, she might endure it*. The mistake stems from the fact that the Russian word *вынести* has two meanings: to carry and to endure or bear. The English rendition employs the first meaning. In this context, it is obvious that the verb was used in the second meaning. The next phrase *Так выживает раса* (*This way the race survives*) proves it. In the English version, however, this phrase was also changed to *A race always needs a founder*. Probably, the first inaccuracy *carry* is what prompted this rendition, for *carry* might imply *carry a child*. It

is apparent that the text describes the allegoric brutal rape of Tragedy. In this context, the English text develops the metaphor. After the rape there is a child who is the founder of a new race. The idea of Russians under the centuries of the Mongol yoke comes to mind, for the two hundred years of Mongolian yoke greatly affected the Russian nation.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Brodsky's Russian poems and their self-translations shows that Brodsky in his self-translations aspires towards lexical accuracy, in spite of restrictions in the choice of vocabulary imposed by adherence to the prosodic and rhythmic patterns of the original. In most cases, he goes to great lengths to translate the names of plants and birds, and to reproduce puns, idiomatic expressions, colloquial expressions, and crude language which in general present challenges for a translator. Nevertheless, he is forced to introduce changes in order to comply with the demands of meter and rhyme. That is why he resorts to substitutions, sequels, and insertions. Though most changes do not interfere with or contradict the content of the poem, they make his English texts more expressive, more explicit, and more informative. These changes also cause certain shifts of meaning that give a slightly different reading of his poems. Some changes introduce new information and give significant new insight into the understanding of Brodsky's poetics. Even when forced to introduce major changes, Brodsky is in most cases consistent with his poetics. Cases when the changes are inconsistent with or contradict the content of the poem or Brodsky's poetics are rare.

His changes display certain consistent tendencies. Brodsky uses more diverse vocabulary and develops a knack for using filler words, such as "idle." He often pairs

the word “dream” with the word “wet,” injecting it with sexual implications. When he speaks about writing, he infuses it with additional imagery that is absent in his Russian version, exploits the semantics of seeing, and uses the lens image. Here again, he is within the framework of his poetics.

His English style resembles his Russian style; even his changes reflect his technique in Russian (e.g. his additions often present enumeration or continue an already existing enumerative chain). Brodsky, however, cannot resist what the new language offers him and exploits the possibilities of the English language, creating puns, neologisms, and distorting idiomatic expression. This again is in tune with his penchant for “word-plying” in Russian. On the whole his English versions give a fair idea of Brodsky’s Russian style. However, he goes against his principle of not using adjectives, since he resorts to employing insertions.

Omissions are rare in Brodsky’s translations. He tries to compensate for the loss of information. However, his compensations often result in substituting the loss with word play. Oftentimes if the changes that he introduces do not carry important information, he “overcompensates” by charging them with alliteration, thus making them work for the musicality of the poem.

His self-translations are not immune from inevitable translation inaccuracies. There are also inevitable losses in rendering imagery, as the lexical system in different languages varies.

In spite of his proclamations that he writes for his “alter ego,” which could be interpreted as not caring about his audience, Brodsky makes his poems more accessible to his English readers. This has a double effect. On the one hand, he sacrifices local Russian

coloring. On the other hand, his poetic experience in the translation becomes more universal. It is noteworthy that in his English versions we observe Americanisms.

The way Brodsky renders cultural allusions is not always accurate. While alluding to some astrological notions, he does not always render correctly their syntactical relations or substitutes one mythological figure for another. This shows that he is more concerned with saturating his poetry with a certain atmosphere, than with literal pedantic accuracy. There is another observation that shows Brodsky's value of words. Often Brodsky gives a literal rendition of idioms, which in his Russian text are used in their deconstructed form. This suggests that one should read his Russian texts with more attention to the deconstructed meaning. In English, the literal rendition results in creating a new image, devoid of idiomatic meaning, and that image becomes relevant for the reading of the poem.

These observations show that though aspiring towards accuracy, Brodsky allows more liberties with his translations than a translator who is not the author would dare to.

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**JOSEPH BRODSKY AS SELF-TRANSLATOR:
ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL CHANGES IN HIS SELF-TRANSLATIONS**

Volume II

By

Zarema Kumakhova

A DISSERTATION

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Chapter Three: Effects of Lexical Changes in Brodsky's English Texts. Estrangement of the English Language as a Possible Explanation

Chapter Three explains the differences in the two versions of English and Russian text brought about by the changes analyzed in Chapter Two. The chapter systematizes the changes introduced in the English text with an eye to the differences these changes produce in reading the English and Russian texts. On the basis of the analysis of two texts, I will show that the tendencies towards exactness and expressiveness, though often caused by a faithfulness in rendering formal features, at the same time manifest the poet's need to express himself differently in a foreign language. The foreign language serves as estrangement, which has a dual function: it allows the author, as he relives the past, to be more emphatic and exact, and at the same time, it makes the past experiences less painful. Herein lies the dichotomy of the foreign language that enables the poet to put closure on the past. This notion of estrangement corresponds to the idea that writing in a foreign language is a kind of "sanctuary," "therapy," "escape," or "nostalgic experience." The analysis of the material also explains and clarifies some of Brodsky's views on the English language as discussed in Chapter One.

The differences in the two language versions of Brodsky's poetic texts result in making the English text more specific and detailed, and thereby more lucid, and more expressive.

Specificity

1. Adhering to the metric and rhyming pattern of the original makes the poet use "fillers," such as insertions and sequels. As was shown in Chapter Two, these additions can be very significant in understanding Brodsky's poetics. From the English version of

"To Urania," which appeared in 1987, we learn that Clio, the Muse of History, and hence Time, and Urania, the Muse of Astronomy, are sisters. In the 1991 essay "Profile of Clio," Brodsky calls Urania the Muse of Geography, which means he identifies her with space.¹ In the same essay he also alludes to the fact that Clio and Urania are sisters. However, in the 1982 Russian verse, there is no mention that they are sisters. The only comparison between them is that Urania is older than Clio. In the English version, Urania and Clio are contrasted with one another: unlike Clio, Urania does not conceal anything.² The fact that the two are sisters ties them closer together; it also brings another dimension to their opposition, that is sibling rivalry. The English text leaves no doubt that the author's sympathies are with Urania. As Brodsky always proclaims his fascination with time and indifference to space,³ this clarification becomes very significant in understanding this poem and Brodsky's poetics in general.

¹ Barry Scherr in his insightful analysis of *To Urania* dwells upon the differences between Clio and Urania, referring to Brodsky's essay "Profile of Clio" where Urania is called the Muse of Geography. He argues that Urania for Brodsky is identified with space: "Exactly how Brodsky arrives at the notion of Urania as representing geography is not clear. [...] she is often seen holding a globe and some scientific instruments such as compass. [...] he might have viewed these accoutrements as representing the tools of a geographer" ("To Urania" 102). Scherr says that "the poem is not just a meditation of sorrow, on a sense of loss, but a discourse on history and geography, time and space" (103).

² Scherr also points to this addition in the English text ("To Urania" 102), which helps prove his point that "Urania, or space, is thus both superior to Clio (time) and kinder to humans. [...] The poem is an exuberant homage to geography" (103-04). The critic notes how "inorganic cold objects of the poem's opening lines" that are associated with time "are replaced by references to life and vitality: berries, rivers teeming with fish" (104) that are associated with concrete space.

³ In the same essay Brodsky announces that he is "Clio's admirer" (117). In his 1979 interview with Glad Brodsky says: "меня более всего интересует и всегда интересовало на свете [...] это время и тот эффект, который оно оказывает на человека, как оно его меняет [...] Это, если угодно, то, что происходит с человеком во время жизни, то, что время делает с человеком, как оно его трансформирует. С другой стороны, это всего лишь метафора того, что вообще время делает с пространством и миром" (БКИ 110-11). It is apparent from this quote that space is a category subordinate to time. When asked about exile, Brodsky says that it only meant the change of space, thus refusing to succumb to self-pity; this demonstrates his general tendency to downplay the importance of space. See also his essay "The Condition We Call Exile." That is why this poem becomes important, as it shows the "progression from the absence and lifelessness caused by the workings of time, to a sense of vitality and of belonging to one's home and to the earth" (Scherr, "To Urania" 104).

Oftentimes, however, insertions and additions do not bear any crucial information (some can even be redundant), but rather function as semantic fillers. This entails a double-sided consequence. Though they do not convey any important information, these fillers still make the text more specific, pointing to the color, shape, etc. By the same token, this greater specificity makes the English text busier and denser.

2. Another conceivable explanation of why the English text is more specific and detailed than the Russian original lies in Brodsky's tendency to replace words of a broader, more general meaning in the Russian text with more specific words in the English text. In English, the poet differentiates between the breeds of dogs, specifies weather phenomena, etc. This tendency can be explained by the fact that the English language has more words than the Russian language. Like a child who wants to play with new toys, the poet, a foreigner, delights in using the new words that he suddenly finds at his disposal. A closer examination of Brodsky's substitutions, however, shows that the Russian language has direct equivalents of most of Brodsky's English substitutes (*лайка* for *huskies*, *улицёвku* for *bloodhounds*). Nevertheless, in the Russian text, the poet opted to use generic words. More likely, this penchant for specificity can be explained by the fact that a foreigner often has the feeling that a new language is more precise. He/she may feel that it enables him/her to express notions and relations "better" than in his mother tongue. This, in turn, can be explained by the fact, that because of different collocability, semantic correlation, and spatial and time relations, words in a foreign language represent reality differently than in the mother tongue. That explains Brodsky's remarks about the ability of the English language to "express truth" (БКН 466) and "to make sense" (CWJB 126).

In his native tongue, Brodsky not only masterfully utilizes the Russian language's semantic structure and its richly developed morphological system to reflect the world as an interconnected universe,⁴ but he also finds associations between semantically distant words, sometimes on the basis of their sound proximity. By means of language he finds connections between distant notions, between the metaphysical and the everyday, thus bridging these two planes and proclaiming their coherence.

The English language offers its own system of associations and connections, new for the poet, and hence, a new representation of life. For a poet, especially a poet with Brodsky's keen feeling for, even obsession with, language, a new language opens another vision of life. That explains Brodsky's fascination with the English language that opens for him new possibilities of interpretations.⁵

The analysis of the two texts of "В Италии" / "In Italy" illustrates this point:

И я когда-то жил в городе, где на домах росли
статуи, где по улицам с криком "растли! растли!"
бегал местный философ, трясая бородкой,
и бесконечная набережная делала жизнь короткой.

Теперь там садится солнце, кариатид слепя.
Но тех, кто любили меня больше самих себя,
больше нету в живых. Утратив контакт с объектом
преследования, собаки принимают к обьедкам,

и в этом их сходство с памятью, с жизнью вещей. (3: 280)

I, too, once lived in a city whose cornices used to court
clouds with statues, and where a local *penseur*, with his shrill "Pervert!
Pervert!" and the trembling goatee, was mopping

⁴ See pages 185-87 on хрусталик-хрустальный.

⁵ See Chapter One, which deals with Brodsky's fascination with English. In the conversation with Volkov, Brodsky says that he "was amazed by a line from a poem by the rather mediocre American poet Anne Sexton. She's standing on a little bridge over a brook and sees small fish swimming there, "like silver spoons," she adds. This is an image that would never occur to a Russian poet because in the Russian consciousness fish and spoons are strongly dissociated" (87).

avenues; and an infinite quay was rendering life myopic.

These days evening sun still blinds the tenements' domino.
But those who have loved me more than themselves are no
longer alive. The **bloodhounds** having lost their quarry,
with **vengeance devour** the leftovers - herein their very

strong resemblance to memory, to the fate of **all** things. (340)

Italy reminds the poet of his native St. Petersburg (he admits it in the opening line:

"I, too, once lived in a city, whose cornices used to court/clouds with statues..."). He

regrets that people who used to love him are no longer alive. He then compares memory to dogs. Memory is trying to reconstruct the past, to follow it back and catch it. But the past is gone, and memory has to be satisfied with the leftovers from the past.

In the English text, the word *bloodhounds* indicates a specific breed of dog, "a hunting dog or a police dog, trained to trace an animal, victim or escaped prisoners" (WNWD). A native speaker does not necessarily discern the literal meaning of the word compounds (blood+hound); for him or her, it has faded. For a foreigner, however, the literal meaning comes to the fore. It evokes a sense of tragedy, as the bloodhound traces the victim by smelling blood.

The poet can be compared to a child because through a new language he, like a child, re-discovers the world.⁶

3. In addition to utilizing a more diverse vocabulary, Brodsky has a propensity for substituting neutral words in the original for a more bookish, sophisticated vocabulary in the English version. Using *larynx* instead of *горло* (*throat*) gives the impression that in

⁶ Brodsky uses the image of a child in connection with language: "язык, который нам дан, он таков, что мы оказываемся в положении детей, получивших дар. Дар, как правило, всегда меньше дарителя, и что указывает нам на природу языка" (БКИ 237). One of the books on Brodsky is called *Поэт в доме ребенка* (Keleba).

the English text the poet wants to be “clinically” exact, which is another manifestation of Brodsky’s general tendency toward more exactness in the English text.

Moreover, compared to the generic word, words of sophisticated vocabulary contain additional meaning, which inevitably brings another dimension to the reading of the English text. In “So Forth” Brodsky substitutes neutral *старость* (*old age*) with *decrepitude*, which has a meaning of feebleness and weakness, making the idea of aging and death more pronounced. On the other hand, unlike *feebleness* and *weakness*, the bookish nature of *decrepitude* does not imply self-pity, but presents the state of decrepitude as a natural aspect of old age. The poem is about the natural cycle of things in life, which is expressed in the opening line: *Кончится лето, начнется сентябрь...* (4: 11) (*Summer will end, September will start/begin...*) (361). Antonyms (*end—begin*) occurring in parallel constructions stress the idea that there is regularity in the cycle of nature, which is to say that beginning and end are practically the same. The title “So Forth” implies the continuity of life and, at the same time, a matter-of-fact attitude towards it. The poem accepts the notion that growing old and dying are natural and inevitable. The wording *so forth* usually stands after enumeration. Here it suggests that life events can be summed as a mere enumeration. Condensing these events in the generic *so forth*, without attempting to spell them out, implies that they are not even worth mentioning. That is why *decrepitude*—though, on the one hand, making the idea of old age more emphatic— on the other, through its bookish nature, renders old age devoid of pity and even brings some dignity into this state, which is in tune with the general neutral tone of the poem.⁷

⁷ The fact that Brodsky chose the title of the poem “So Forth” as the name of his collection of poems published in 1996 elevates the significance of the title and also stresses the importance of the poem.

The new language enables the poet to grasp and express new nuances, to see deeper, far-reaching interconnections between notions and ideas. The following analysis will illustrate how the substitution of one word may infuse the text with additional meaning and intensify certain aspects of the poem.

Brodsky translated the following lines from Elegy I of “Roman Elegies”:

Ставя босую ногу на красный мрамор,
тело делает шаг в будущее—одеться. (3: 227)⁸

as:

Setting a naked foot on the rosy marble
the body steps forward toward its future: to its attire. (274)

We see a juxtaposition where after a metaphysical phrase *the body makes a step towards its future* comes a trivial one *to get dressed*. In the Russian text, the contrast between the two planes is shown even graphically with a hyphen, emphasizing a typically Brodskian co-existence of the metaphysical and the mundane. It also gives prominence to the simple everyday ritual of getting dressed, thus elevating everyday activities to the metaphysical level. This line is both sad and caustic, and at the same time courageous. Expressed by simple wording, it means that though every step brings one closer to the end, one still goes on living.

The themes of “Roman Elegies” are memory and immortality. The city that bears its history in stone fascinates the poet. Brodsky’s ambivalent attitude to statues comes across here too. Although he downplays the revered status of a statue, calling it an

⁸ See also “На выставке Карла Вейлинка”: “Что, в сущности и есть автопортрет. / Шаг в сторону от собственного тела, повернутый к вам профиль табурет, / вид издали на жизнь, что пролетела” (3: 292).

*object*⁹ (*I've never built that cloud-thrusting stony/object that could explain cloud's pallor* (276), the idea of memory and immortality, embedded in statues, as something that resists time and becomes the manifestation of time, still fascinates Brodsky. He says that his fate is different. His writing will be his memory and will grant him immortality:¹⁰

I've learned about my own, and any other
fate, from a letter, from its black color. (276)

At the end, the poet triumphantly proclaims his acceptance of death and also his immortality:

Я БЫЛ В РИМЕ. БЫЛ ЗАЛИТ СВЕТОМ. ТАК,
КАК ТОЛЬКО МОЖЕТ МЕЧТАТЬ ОБЛОМОК!
НА СЕТЧАТКЕ МОЕЙ – ЗОЛОТОЙ ПЯТАК.
ХВАТИТ НА ВСЮ ДЛИНУ ПОТЕМОК! (3: 232)

I was in Rome. I was flooded by light. The way
a splinter can only dream about.
Golden coins on the retina are to stay –
enough to last one through the whole blackout. (280)

The closing lines are triumphant and caustic at the same time. Calling himself *a splinter*, the poet identifies with statues, thus announcing that his memory will live on and proclaiming his immortality. Conversely, calling himself *a splinter* gives Brodsky a tongue-in-cheek tone, as he diminishes both himself and statues. Saying that the coins will illuminate the blackout shows that he is aware of death and challenges it. The fact that earlier, Brodsky uses the word *torso* in reference to himself and also in reference to the statues connects the poet and statues:

Для бездомного торса и праздных граблей
ничего нет ближе, чем вид развалин. (3: 227)

⁹ In the Russian version of "In 'Memoriam,'" the statue is referred to as *вещь* (*thing*).

¹⁰ Smith, in his analysis of "Полдень в комнате," also notes that "... Brodsky asserts a familiar claim to immortality made by poets: that they will be immortal in their writing" (132). The image of a statue erected by the writing goes back to Derzhavin and Pushkin. Poetry as a guarantor of immortality is present in Pasternak and Mandelstam.

To a homeless **torso** and its idle, grabby
mitts, there's nothing as dear as the sight of ruins. (274)

Обожженная небом, мягкая в пальцах глина--
плоть, принявшая вечность как анонимность **торса**. (3: 232)

Haven- baked clay, fingertips' brave arena.
Flesh that renders eternity an enormous **torso**. (278)

The substitution of *getting dressed* with *attire* in the English text provides yet another textual interconnection. First, in the Russian original, the reflexive verb *одеться* (*to get dressed*). The body makes a step toward its future, but this future is directed towards the body. Thus, two directions blend together. Changing the reflexive verb *одеться* (*to get dressed*) to the noun *attire*, gives more prominence to the noun, as *attire* becomes the point of destination. In the English text, the significance of movement is more pronounced.¹¹ Second, *attire* is a bookish version of *clothes*. It “usually stresses the appearance or the total impression produced by one’s clothes; it is therefore rarely used with reference to one’s own clothes except in affectation or humorously” (WNDS 155).¹² It is also used to denote adorned rich apparel for special occasions or ceremonies (RT 96). Unlike the neutral *get dressed*, it elevates the process of the daily ritual (though it also loses to some degree the juxtaposition expressed by the neutrality of *getting dressed* and the metaphysical nature of the first part of the sentence). Using *attire* in reference to himself, the poet establishes a link between himself and statues from the very outset of

¹¹ Spatial relations in “Roman Elegies” are of interest. The action is set in Rome inside his apartment where the poet is isolated from the world (words *island* and *captive* enhance the idea of isolation). The outside is shown by presenting pictures of Rome, its fountains, statues, and the noise of the cars. However the two spaces become interconnected, as the poet establishes a link between himself and statues.

¹² There is no direct equivalent in Russian. The word *одежды* is the closest.

the poem. In the same poem, Elegy I, the poet talks about the nakedness and folds of the robe of statues, attaching more significance to the robe:

The world's made of nakedness and foldings.
Still, the latter's richer with love than a face, that's certain. (274)¹³

The idea of clothing and nakedness goes through the whole text of "Roman Elegies."

In Elegy II, the poet looks at himself in the mirror. He alludes to his naked body under the water, speaking of signs of decay, which is another link with the ruins of Rome. In Elegy VI, he mentions the nymph under water whose face is being ruined. The fact that in the English text, in Elegy I *босая нога* (*bare foot*) is replaced by *naked foot* makes the idea of nakedness and vulnerability more pronounced. Together with the change of *get dressed* for *attire* in the same verse it enhances the opposition between nakedness and clothing. In Elegy XI, speaking about the statues of beautiful women whom the warriors knew naked, he employs erotic vocabulary as if they were live bodies, thus breathing life into statues and crossing connections between statues and people, memory and life. Writing the names of prominent emperors in lower case, as well as inserting *statues* among the proper names, Brodsky downgrades historical figures to the level of inanimate objects. In Elegy XI, the poet again looks in the mirror—now his reflection, his double is covered:

С помощью мятой куртки и голубой рубахи
что-то еще отражается в зеркале гардероба. (3: 231)

By means of a blue shirt and a rumpled jacket
something still gets reflected in the wardrobe mirror. (279)

¹³ Nivat notes that these words are quintessential for the poem. They symbolize personal and historic, space and time ("Путь к Риму" 91).

The poet calls himself *something*, transforming himself literally to the status of a thing, which injects an element of estrangement. In Brodsky's poetics, человек в пальто (*a man in a coat*)¹⁴ is a recurrent image like the Eternal Jew.¹⁵ Coat / raincoat becomes a shield that covers a man, whom he calls *something, person, etc.* Куртка, пальто, плащ (jacket, coat, raincoat) become more important than the man, which is in tune with Brodsky's poetics of things (ousting people). In "Roman Elegies" we see the same predominance of clothing, or things, over the person.

The fact that the word *attire* is "rarely used with reference to one's clothes except in affectation or humorously" (WDS 155) has a double effect. On the one hand, it brings in an element of estrangement, as if the poet dissociates from himself, as if he is speaking about himself in the third person. It also brings in an ironic, tongue-in-cheek tone due to the clash between the meaning of attire as *adorned apparel for special occasions* and the real clothing of a poet—a blue shirt and a rumpled jacket. Using the bookish *attire* gives prominence to the idea of clothing. It includes everything from coat, blue shirt, and rumpled jacket to the tunic of Roman statues. It elevates the poet's rumpled dress to the status of robes, and thus links the author with statues. But the irony embedded in *attire* also spreads to statues. On the one hand the poet links himself with statues, while at the same time, he is ironic about it.

¹⁴ In the interview with Polukhina, Rein notes that "an absolute nobody, a man in a raincoat' [...] is a real treasure of a find." The interviewer observes that this "lyrical hero" manifests the complete elimination of the lyrical "I" from his poetry and she connects it with humbleness (67). Kublanovsky links it with idea that Brodsky's poetry is becoming "more and more detached from the world—he consciously makes it colder" (208). He notes that "his lyrical hero is lacking in that spiritual warmth which is the glory of our poetry." Polukhina notes that a body "without the features of a face is directly associated with nowhere" (*Joseph Brodsky* 158).

¹⁵ See an interesting observation by Svetlana Boym who connects Brodsky's Jewishness with nomadism: "Brodsky's Jew is a nomad; in the best possible circumstances, he manages to remain faithful to the diasporic predicament" (259-60).

Thus, in the opening verse of the English text the idea of dissociating oneself, looking at oneself from a distance, as well as the idea of clothing, the thing, being more prominent than man, is more pronounced. The English text from the outset establishes closer links with statues, while at the same time being more ironic about it. Also the contrast between clothes and nakedness, represented by *attire--naked foot* compared to Russian *одеться--босая нога*, is enhanced.

As was mentioned, in “Roman Elegies” the notion of moving forward towards the future is more pronounced in English; hence the idea of moving out of space towards another destination is also more evident in English. I have observed that, in general, the notion of *moving out* and/or *into*, in English, is expressed more specifically and is fraught with the meaning of “making an effort.” In “May 24, 1980,” *Я входил вместо дикого зверя в клетку...* (3: 191) (*I entered instead of a wild beast into a cage...*) was rendered as *I have braved, for want of wild beasts, steel cages* (211). The opening line from “Brise Marine” “Дорогая, я вышел сегодня из дому поздно вечером” (4: 64) (*Dear, I left/went out of the house late this evening*) was translated as *Dear, I have ventured out of the house late this evening...* (364). What is striking is that in both cases these are the opening lines of the poems, as if the author wanted to make them more emphatic in English from the outset.

Substitutions along with insertions and additions reveal the same tendency toward more specification. This cannot help but affect the text, which becomes more informative, because the reader takes in additional information. The English text develops additional interconnections.

Explicitness, Clarity, and Transparency

In speaking of the English translations of Montale, Brodsky observes that “translation—because of its explanatory nature—somehow catches up with the original by *clarifying* those things which can be regarded by the author as self-evident and thus elude the native reader” (“In the Shadow of Dante” 99, italics mine). He even implies that a reader of the translated text “has an advantage in understanding the meaning,” as it will not be obscure. Brodsky’s own self-translation practice bears out this observation.

1. Specification results in making the English text more concrete, detailed, explicit and often less ambiguous.

The tendency to use more specific vocabulary helps eliminate ambiguity. In the Russian text “Дождь в августе,” it is not clear who is addressed at the end of the poem, the poet’s mother or father:

[...] и ты говоришь сонливым,
совершенно моим, но дальностью лет приглушенным
голосом: “Ну и ливень.” (4: 42)

In the English version the word *baritone* makes it clear that the poet’s father is speaking.

[...] and you say in your drowsy, quiet
— almost my own baritone but muted by years’ vast distance —
baritone: What a climate.¹⁶ (“August Rain” 385)

The tendency to specify also accounts for the fact that in the English texts imagery is also clearer and oftentimes easier to understand than the Russian original.

Let us compare the two versions from “Centaur III”:

¹⁶ One indication, in the Russian text, of the fact that it is father speaking is the wording *совершенно моим* [...] *голосом*; it is more likely that his voice would be similar to his father’s.

Дать это жизнью сейчас и вечной
жизнью, в которой как яйца в сетке,
мы все одинаковы и страшны наседке,
повторяющей средствами наш эры
шестикрылую помесь веры и стратосферы. (4: 46)

Cast it as life right now mixed with afterlife where, like eggs in
a string bag, we all are alike and equally petrifying
to the mother hen who, sparing its yolk the frying
pan, flutters up by means of our era
the six-winged mixture of faith and the stratosphere. (367)

The Russian text states that the mother hen is afraid of the eggs in a string bag, whereas the English text explains why she is petrified--she knows what awaits them and wants to spare them a frying pan.¹⁷ The word *страшны* (*petrifying*), which implies that eggs evoke a feeling of fear, makes the Russian text more ambiguous. From the English text it is clear that the hen is petrified not only of eggs, but also for them. The Russian text is more ambivalent, stating only that something might happen to the eggs. The English text specifies what the hen fears, that is, the frying pan.

Another illustrative example is from Brodsky's early self-translation, "December in Florence." In the Russian text, the connection between words and moisture is not instantly obvious. The reference to *moisture* appears in a separate sentence--as an aside, graphically shown with a hyphen.

и лицо в потемках, словами наружу--благо
так куда быстрее просыхает влага--
смеется, как скомканная бумага. (3: 112)

Not only does the English text have the insertion *moist*, it also explains, by using the paraphrase *what has been said*, that it is words that will dry:

¹⁷ It echoes with the image of "omelet that makes me vomit" in the English text of "May 24, 1980." There is another mention of eggs in the English version of "The Fifth Anniversary," absent from the Russian original. See page 214 in Chapter Two.

And a face with **moist** words inside
out to dry **what has been said**,
smirks like the crumpled paper absorbed by shade. (131)

Oftentimes the English substitution is the explanation of the Russian original:

Кругосветное плавание, дорогая,
лучше кончить, руку согнув в локте и
вместе с дредноутом догорая
в недрах камина. (3: 203)

Dearest, it's **more sound**
to wrap up our sailing round
the globe with habitual naval grace,
moving our cot the fireplace
where our dreadnought is going under
in great smoke. ("Tsushima Screen" 270)

The English text explains why it is better to end the love affair--because *it is more sound*, implying that there is no logic in continuing a relationship that has no future.

A similar kind of relationship between the substitute and the substituted was observed in the discussion of changes in imagery. The English substitution can be regarded as the result or explanation of the Russian. (See more examples in "Imagery.")

The fact that Brodsky gives titles to all his English poems, while in Russian he oftentimes leaves his verse untitled also accounts for the increased precision of Brodsky's English verse. It is as if the poet does not want to leave room for any guessing or ambiguity, but rather announces the topic from the very beginning, channeling the reader towards a certain interpretation

2. Clarity and explicitness of the English text is also the result of Brodsky's simpler syntax. It is noteworthy that Brodsky relates the ability of the English language to "make sense" (CWJB 126) to its clarity. When asked what he liked about the English language, he says:

Clarity. In Russian or in German or in French what matters is the combination of words, whereas in English what matters is the meaning. It's the difference between playing chess and playing tennis. In chess, what matters is the complexity of the moves. In tennis ... well... it's how you win the game, or lose often (laughs). Whereas in English, the ball immediately flies back into your face. It's immediately back in your court. The main question the writer of a Russian sentence asks himself is whether it's a good sentence, whatever it means. Whereas in English, the first question he asks himself is whether it makes sense. (JBC 159, *italics mine*)

Brodsky attributes the ability to “express truth” to English syntax. This is what the poet says in the interview with Amurskij:

У английского языка на протяжении истории было больше возможностей выражать правду... Это очень простой язык. В нем очень простая конструкция: объект—глагол—субъект. То есть, как бы сказать... дело в порядке слов. (БКИ 466)¹⁸

As we have seen in Chapter One, Brodsky says that clarity of English syntax does not allow the English language demagoguery and deceit. One of the reasons that may account for the clarity of the English versions is that Brodsky's English syntax is not as complicated as his Russian syntax. When talking about his Russian texts, many scholars note Brodsky's complex syntax that stretches grammatical norms. Polukhina writes:

Бродский передает все разнообразие разговорной речи и на уровне синтаксиса все возможные расстройства синтагматических связей, инверсий, анжамбеманом, вводными конструкциям, выделением придаточных предложений в самостоятельные, а также своеобразными мелодическими сдвигами. (“Грамматика метафоры” 64)

Brodsky's sentences spreads over the whole stanza often running into the next one. Scherr notes Brodsky's “unwillingness to use short strophes”(*Russian Poetry* 101), which results in “preferring dol'nik to classical meters, breaking up the poetic line, the stanza, bringing his poetry closer to the realm of prose” (162). This tendency gives his poetry a

¹⁸ See Brodsky's discussion of the intricacies of Russian syntax in Chapter One.

“prosaic effect” (Rein 65). Brodsky also freely uses colloquial syntactical constructions along with bookish syntax.¹⁹

Russian word order permits the poet to reverse subjects and predicates, separate objects from predicates, and use elliptical sentences, which results in a rather complicated syntactical structure that oftentimes inhibits instantaneous understanding of the text. It does not make for smooth reading but rather requires work on the part of the reader. Brodsky once said that “Чтение поэзии—это борьба, как и все в жизни” (БКИ 23).²⁰ Syntax also serves as a poetic device, it creates “[t]he feeling that the text goes on and on without a break. And in as much as being is discrete, has breaks, lacks meaning, a text for Brodsky is order, an order which vanquishes life’s chaos, its Brownian motion, and so, in Brodsky’s case, that device has a metaphysical basis (Krivulin 186).²¹

Though in English Brodsky tries to render the original sentence structure, it is only natural that Russian syntactical patterns cannot be completely preserved in translation. The fixed word order of the English language does not allow syntactic disruptions. This, therefore, inevitably makes the English text more lucid and transparent in the sense that it is easier to understand.

The following analysis of the syntactical structure in the two language versions will illustrate the point.

a) Let us compare the two language versions from “Kellomaki.”

Существуют обон; и населенный пункт
освобождаем ими обычно от внешних пут
столь успешно, что дым норовит назад

¹⁹ See also Lotman “Гиперстрофика Бродского.”

²⁰ See also “Anyone who regards poetry as entertainment, as a ‘read,’ commits an anthropological crime, in the first place, against himself” (JBC 100). See Brodsky’s essay “How to Read a Book.”

²¹ See Brodsky about Platonov’s syntax (JBC 49) discussed in Chapter One

воротиться в трубу, не подводить фасад;
что оставляют, слившееся в одно,
белое после себя пятно. (3: 246)

Here, the long complex sentence, consisting of four simple sentences, goes for six lines. It opens with a short sentence consisting of only predicate and subject, with the predicate expressed by the word *существуют*, placed in a prominent position. The subject *обои* is also the implicit subject of the last sentence *что оставляют, слившееся в одно, белое после себя пятно*, as it governs the predicate *оставляют*, from which it is separated by five lines and two sentences. The syntactical connection is also breached, as the conjunction *что*, which opens the last sentence, does not connect the first sentence with the last, but is linked to *успешно* as part of the comparative expression *столь, что*. There is another conjunction *что* that appears earlier and connects to *успешно* the sentence *что дым норовит назад воротиться в трубу, не подводить фасад*. This produces the effect of “blending,” making the syntactical connections difficult to grasp.

Another irregularity is the position of the adjective *белое*, which is disunited from the noun *пятно* by the words *после себя*. A grammatically correct sentence would be: *что оставляют после себя белое, слившееся в одно, пятно*. The violation was caused by the rhyming demands (*одно—пятно*); it also stresses the important word *белое* and puts the voiced *beloe* at the beginning of the line, followed by the voiceless *posl'e* and *pyatno*.

In the English version, the syntactical connections are simpler and more transparent:

The wall paper suffices; a populated site
is relieved by its pattern from outer ties
so completely the smoke would in kind decide
to coil back into chimney, whitewashing its pale façade,

so that the blending of two into one would yield
but a cloudy spot on the laundered field. (316)

b) Another example is from the two versions of “Элегия” / “Elegy.” The syntax in the Russian version is very complex.

Прошло что-то около года. Я вернулся на место битвы,
к научившимся крылья расправлять у опасной бритвы
или же—в лучшем случае—у удивленной брови
птицам цвета то сумерек, то испорченной крови. (3: 306)

In the Russian version, the verb *вернулся* (*returned*) is used with two prepositions: *на*, indicating location, and *к* indicating *to whom*. The construction *Я вернулся к* (*I returned to (whom)*), requires an immediate indirect object. However, here the object *птицам* (*birds*) appears only in the last line, separated from the attribute *научившимся* by two lines and by a conversational aside *в лучшем случае*, which is graphically shown by a hyphen. Any grammatical violation inevitably puts an emphasis on the word, in this case *birds*; placing *birds*, an important word in Brodsky's poetics, in the initial position without the preposition also enhances its role.²² The disjunction of the object from the predicate also creates an element of suspense. In the English version, the syntax is more lucid:

About a year has passed. I have returned to the place of battle,
to its birds that have learned their unfolding of wings
from a subtle life of surprised eyebrow, or perhaps from a razor blade
—wings, now the shadow of early twilight, now of stale blood. (319)

Also, the Russian text indicates the color of birds *птицам цвета то сумерек, то испорченной крови* (*the birds now the color of twilight, now the (color) of spoiled blood*). The English text is more specific; it says that not birds, but in particular *the wings* [are], *now the shadow of early twilight, now of stale blood*.

²² See Chapter Two about the bird image on pages 205-207.

c) In the following example from “Иския в октябре,” the sentence with bookish *суть* is disrupted by a colloquial imperative sentence *быстро голову поверни!*, written with a lower case but with the exclamation mark:

И сквозняк,
бумаги раскидывая, суть знак
--**быстро голову поверни!** --
что мы здесь не одни. (4: 134)

In the English version, the imperative sentence is omitted, thus avoiding syntactical disruption:

A sudden draft
scattering papers right and left
is proof that in this limestone
place we are not alone. (430)

3. Like its fixed word order, the conventions of the English language for the use of possessive pronouns also eliminate ambiguity. The following example is very illustrative. In the Russian text “Иския в октябре,” it is not clear whose wife and daughter are meant in stanza IV:

Когда-то здесь клекотал вулкан.
Потом--грудь клевал пеликан.
Неподалеку Вергилий жил,
и У.Х. Оден вино глушил.

Теперь штукатурка дворцов не та,
цены не те и не счета.
Но я кое-как свожу концы
строк, развернув потускневший рцы.

Рыбак уплывает в ультрамарин
от вывешенных на балкон перин,
и осень захлестывает горный кряж
морем другим, чем безлюдный пляж.

Дочка с женой с балюстрады вдаль
глядят, высматривая рояль
паруса или воздушный шар--
затихший колокола удар. (4: 134)

Are the wife and daughter related to the fisherman mentioned in stanza III, are they the fisherman's wife and daughter whom he is leaving behind? In stanza III, the mattresses sprawled on the balcony symbolize the leisure of domestic life, and they also suggest erotic undertones (again, in the English text the author adds the word *lure*, giving it a sexual undertone). However, they cannot lure the fisherman. *Жена и дочка* (*wife and daughter*) can be understood as another tie that should bind the fisherman. In stanza IV, the fact that the wife and daughter see the sail could indicate that they are following the fisherman's boat with their eyes. *Ор жена и дочка* (*wife and daughter*) might have a relationship to the author, who with his family is re-visiting the places where he had once lived. From the reference in the first stanza to Auden, who used to live in the area, we understand that it is a personal poem. The author notices the changes that have occurred since his last visit and he is trying to reconnect the past (represented not only by Auden, but also by the mythological Aeneas) with the present through poetry, through this poem.

In the Russian text, only in the closing stanza XI does it become definitely clear that the poet means his own wife and daughter--the pronoun *мы* (*we*) embraces the three of them. Stanzas IV and XI are linked through the verbs of seeing semantics *глядят, видим* (*look and see*). Also, *вдаль* (*distance*) in IV becomes in XI *безадресней и синей* (*more addressless and bluer*).

Мы здесь втроем, и держу пари,
то, что вместе мы видим, в три
раза безадресней и синей,
чем то, на что смотрел Эней. (4: 135)

As the English language requires the insertion of the pronoun or an article, any ambiguity in the English text is eliminated²³:

On the balustrade my wife and child
peer at a distant piano lid
or sail, or at the small balloon
of Angelus fleeing the afternoon. (430)

The tendency towards specificity and the exactness and explicitness of the vocabulary, as well as the fixed word order, make the English text more lucid and transparent. Probably, this is what Brodsky means when he says that the English language is the best language to convey meaning.

I would like to note here that although the words “exactness,” “clarity,” and “lucidity” bear a positive connotation, I do not mean to suggest that the English texts, because they are more lucid and transparent, are “better.” The clarity and explicitness of the English text is double-edged: on the one hand, it eliminates ambiguity; on the other hand, the “straightening” of the English text²⁴ makes the interconnections more obvious and thus simplifies the reading of the text, that is, takes away its intricacy. Additionally, this clarity is often achieved as a result of padding and conforming to rhyming requirements, which does not necessarily result in poetry that sounds truly “English” (see the criticism of Brodsky’s English, discussed in Chapter Two). I, however, refrain from assessing the Englishness of Brodsky’s self-translation.

Furthermore, here we also encounter a very interesting phenomenon. Brodsky on many occasions spoke about the understatement of the English language and the

²³ For example, the Russian *Я положил руки в карман* is rendered in English as *I put my hands into my pockets*.

²⁴ This word was used by Brodsky when he spoke about the difficulties of translating English into Russian due to the intricate Russian syntax (CWJB 89).

understatement present in English poetry, which he admired (БКИ 141-42). However, Brodsky's English texts are more explicit and less ambiguous compared to the Russian original.

In general, the tendency towards clarification gives the impression that the author wants to spell out everything, not to leave anything unsaid for the English reader. Does this mean that Brodsky trusts the Russian reader to discern the context without articulating everything, but wants to make sure that the English reader understands the text perhaps due to the lack of confidence in the latter? Or does he doubt his own ability to convey his meaning in English and want to be more specific?

Expressiveness

Structural changes, introduced for versification purposes, not only make the text more precise and more informative, but, as most of them have additional connotations, often also make the text more expressive.

Even neutral insertions like *bad* or *good* are evaluative; color words like *gray*, *brown*, *black*, and *white* in Brodsky's texts are charged with poetic meaning, which cannot but affect the expressiveness of the text.

Most substitutions are emotionally colored. For example, *decrepitude* suggests weakness, invoking empathy and making the description more emphatic than *old age*. *Brave* bears a positive evaluative component. *Bloodhound* is a stronger word than *dog*. Oftentimes one strong substitution causes a chain reaction resulting in another stronger substitution. The substitution of *bloodhounds* for *dogs* leads to other more expressive changes: *принюхиваются к объедкам* (*sniff the leftovers*) is changed to *with vengeance*

devour the leftovers. *Жизнь* (*life*) is replaced by *fate*, and intensifiers *very* and *all*, inserted in the last line, make the substitution even more expressive. The whole nostalgic experience in the English version of “In Italy” is much more painful.

Most substitutions are words with a negative connotation. For example, *lover* becomes *lecher* (“Portrait of Tragedy” 415) and *old woman* becomes *old hag* (“Lithuanian Nocturne” 215). The tendency towards negative vocabulary can be observed not only in substitutions but in other types of changes as well.

The tendency to use cruder and often more sexually explicit vocabulary contributes to the expressiveness of the text. Interesting factors come into play that might explain this tendency. A foreigner, though aware of the meaning, does not have the same set of cultural values associated with a crude expression that the native speaker has. He/she cannot have the same reaction and therefore he/she generally is not as offended. However, this separation from cultural values can lend the non-native speaker the freedom or bravery to express emotions using words that he/she would not employ in his/her mother tongue, where they would be loaded with social taboos. In Russian, Brodsky also uses crude and even obscene vocabulary, giving it status in the poetry. In a way, it was also a form of protest against the contorted language being created by the Soviet Government.²⁵ The fact that he uses this kind of vocabulary in English in a way reflects his Russian style.

It should be mentioned, though, that there are not many blatantly obscene substitutions in Brodsky’s English text. But as was shown in Chapter Two, sexual

²⁵ “Двадцать сонетов к Марии Стюарт” is the best example of the co-existence of Pushkin allusions and vulgar vernacular.

undercurrents in Russian are more veiled, whereas in English they are quite explicit. In English, Brodsky develops a recurrent insertion *we* with dreams, and the connection between writing and sexuality is also more pronounced in English texts.

The fact that English texts are more expressive is also due to the fact that they contain more imagery. A few interesting tendencies are apparent:

- a) Changes that Brodsky introduces into his English texts oftentimes are stylistic in nature: insertions and additions can be epithets, and substitutions are also often of a metaphoric nature.
- b) Oftentimes, if Brodsky renders a Russian image in the English text, this image undergoes further development in English and goes along the line of being more intense or unpleasant. (See examples in “Imagery.”)
- c) Brodsky develops recurrent epithets that accompany some of his poetic notions. They mark his English canvas as a special English trademark.
- d) The image of birds reoccurs more frequently in his English verse.
- e) The English text contains more language metaphors, as if the poet wanted to pay tribute to language with language.
- f) An interesting refraction may be observed: a Russian idiom or cultural phenomenon when rendered literally in English produces a fresh image. (See examples in “Idioms” on pages 155-159)

The English texts also contain neologisms and puns in place of Russian neutral vocabulary that also contribute to making the text more expressive. This can be explained. As was mentioned earlier, a foreigner can become enchanted with a new

language.²⁶ To a poet-foreigner, the new language presents an inducement to experiment and even to challenge it. The poet discovers the possibilities of the new language, which for him are fresh and new. If the English language offers the opportunity to play with words, Brodsky does not hesitate to take advantage. He distorts idioms, creates neologisms, and uses alliteration. Here it is timely to remember again Brodsky's admission that "technically speaking, English is the only interesting thing that's left in my life" (JBC 98). In Brodsky's words, he is "led by the language." Brodsky often spoke about the relationship between the poet and the language - "the poet is the puppet of the language" (БКИ 224), "продукт языка" (БКИ 285). This means that the poet has the gift to see what the language offers and follow it. If we project these words on a foreign language and continue Brodsky's metaphor, then the path along which he is led is more vivid and the colors more intense because everything is new.

As we saw in Chapter One, Brodsky was also criticized for his penchant for word play in his English texts. However, that is the nature of his gift; in English he does what he does in Russian. Brodsky's Russian verse abounds with the co-existence, even clash, of different layers of vocabulary; in Russian he does not miss a chance to revive and expand the usage of idioms and trite metaphors or coin neologisms. His English poetic style reflects his Russian; these changes are in line with Brodsky's style in Russian. When Weissbort says that Brodsky "tries to resurrect his Russian poems bodily" ("Something Like His Own Language" 3), he means a faithfulness to formal elements. These words can be expanded to other aspects of translation, where he transplants Russian images, and also to his poetic manner of writing.

²⁶ See Brodsky's "Love Affair with the English Language."

However, Brodsky is aware of inevitable losses in translation. He tries to compensate for the losses, and sometimes stylistic compensations outweigh them. The result is that the English texts are more adorned and more dramatic than the Russian.²⁷ Here, we encounter a truly remarkable phenomenon. Brodsky in his translation practice goes against his own principles when he speaks about the neutrality of English poetry, which he attributes to the English language (БКИ 142-43; CWJB 87).

To end this section, I will refer to the fact that Brodsky frequently uses camera images in his English versions. Taking his camera imagery as a metaphor for his English translations, Brodsky's English photos are not only more precise and more crowded with detail, but also brighter, as opposed to the Russian ones, which are black and white or sepia.

Estrangement

Brodsky, with his keen sense of language, of course, could not help noticing these differences in his two language texts. Therefore, the fact that he willingly let them stand is rather significant. In this part, I will try to find an explanation for it.

It was noted that writing in a foreign language has a therapeutic power.

Interestingly, Brodsky uses the word "therapy" in connection with writing poems in a foreign language:

Когда живешь в определенном языковом контексте, то возникает связанное с этим контекстом давление на тебя. То есть ты хочешь написать что-то и на этом языке, хотя бы для того, чтобы принять всерьез, подтвердить для себя свою способность это сделать. Тебе со всех сторон--и, кроме того, изнутри--

²⁷ See Kreps' observation that "Бродский избегает употребления прилагательных и почти никогда их не рифмует- вещь на редчайшая в русской литературе" (53). See also "В связи с установкой Бродского на рациональное познание мира (как материального, так и духовного) орнаментальный эпитет как способ выражения чувственного восприятия не играет у него существенной роли" (51).

голоса твердят, что этого делать не надо, не следует оставлять свою культуру, поддаваться этому соблазну. Но когда возникает искушение, есть два способа с ним бороться. Первый – все время противиться и в конце концов, вполне возможно, превратиться в святого. Но более вероятный исход, чем превращение в святого,--это невроз. И поэтому моя политика всегда была--время от времени поддаваться искушению. (БКИ 355-56) ²⁸

Therapeutic power might equate to what is now called “detachment” or “estrangement.”

Estrangement and *отчуждение* are active words in Brodsky’s vocabulary though it seems that he does not differentiate between detachment and estrangement. On numerous occasions when asked about his situation as a writer in exile, and how he copes with being isolated from Russian culture and language, he refuses to succumb to self-pity and asserts that exile is the natural condition of a writer. He even talks about the advantages of his own situation. In a 1989 interview, for example, he says:

писатель, особенно, если он поэт,--фигура в любом обществе маргинальная... Ведь после круглосуточной работы человек и среди соотечественников чувствует себя чужим ничуть не меньше. Но, может быть, для творческого настроения такую *отчужденность* здоровее чувствовать, находясь в действительности среди чужих, чем у себя дома? (БКИ 440)

Brodsky also says that “назвать поэта “поэтом отчуждения”--величайший комплимент, который можно ему сделать” (БКИ 43). Additionally, in the Russian translation of his essays, “estrangement” is translated as “отчуждение”:

...мне прошло в голову, что изречение Маркса “Бытие определяет сознание” верно лишь до тех пор, пока соанание не овладело искусством *отчуждения*. (“Меньше единицы” 7, *italics mine*)

²⁸ In another interview, he explains that writing in English is a way to fight the neurosis that comes from the desire to see his poems printed right away and not to wait till they are translated: “Я написал несколько стихотворений на английском языке, но это исключения. Это что-то вроде терапии. Я вижу, как мои американские коллеги пишут стихи, кладут их в конверт, отправляют в журнал и через неделю видят свои творения напечатанными. Начинаешь им завидовать, просыпается желание написать что-нибудь на языке понятном всем, и не ждать пять-десять лет, пока тебя переведут. Это непреодолимое искушение, которое может стать навязчивым. Чтобы избежать невроза, я уступаю искушению” (БКИ 286).

Если верно, что писателю нужно отстраниться от собственного опыта, чтобы иметь возможность прокомментировать его, тогда город, с его услугами *отчуждения*, позволял писателю сэкономить на путешествии. (“Путеводитель по переименованному городу” 80)

It seems that Brodsky uses the word “estrangement” interchangeably with detachment for the Russian word *отчуждение*. However, he claims that his understanding of estrangement does not contradict that of Shklovsky. When asked: “You comment on the value of ‘estrangement’ to developing first an individual perspective and second a writer’s perspective. Is the one a necessary prerequisite of the other and how much are you using Shklovsky’s concept of ‘estrangement,’ if at all?” Brodsky replies: “The former is surely necessary for the latter, and the other way around I am afraid is also. Hence the answer to your Shklovsky question.” (JBC174)

Brodsky also believes that estrangement/detachment is innate to the English language: “Главное качество английской речи или английской литературы—не statement. То есть не утверждение, а understatement—отстранение, даже отчуждение в некотором роде. Это взгляд на явление со стороны” (БКИ 143-44). It appears that by “understatement,” Brodsky means “detachment” (*otstranenie*) synonymous with “estrangement.” However, “understatement” would normally be translated as “недоговоренность.” Evidently, Brodsky connects the notion of understatement with that of detachment, which grants neutrality of tone.

In 1985, Brodsky wrote the essay “In a Room and a Half” about his parents, who had died by that time and who had been repeatedly denied a visa to visit their son. The fact that he chose to write in English about his most intimate memories, home, and family has been noted by Beaujour (159) and by Diment. Brodsky again uses the word *therapeutic* when he says that writing in English about his parents was therapeutic. In his essay, he

explains that his choice was determined by several factors. They were analyzed by Diment who contends that “the decision to use a non-native language to describe native experiences is not illogical at all. Distance brings a therapeutic comfort—often the primary reason for writing autobiographies in the first place” (357).²⁹ As we have seen, Brodsky attributes to the English language responsibility and truth (see pages 32-33). His use of English, thus, would “grant [his parents] a margin of freedom.” Diment also notes the socio-political aspect. The freedom of the English language is opposed to the “hypocrytic connotations added to [the words and their usage] by the rhetoric of the Soviet State” (356).³⁰ That is why “Brodsky wanted to use his English in order to build a sanctuary for his parents, protecting them from the inhumanity of trivialization and allowing himself to take at least some edge off his pain. Through English Brodsky also hoped to attain that very degree of greater estrangement which he craved no less than did Beckett or Nabokov” (354).

In the literature about bilingual / translingual writers, the connection between the second language and distancing and liberating effect was noted. The word “estrangement” is often used to refer to the distancing, detached quality of a foreign language.³¹ Discussions of estrangement generally focus on its psychological aspects. In

²⁹ See also the discussion in the Introduction about the prevalence of autobiographies written in a second language.

³⁰ See also Bethea: “Brodsky’s anglophone (and americanophile) leanings have their source and inspiration in Soviet history, a history of distortion and repression. This disenchanted *homo sovieticus* so despised the cant and cliché that had taken root in his native speech that he looked to English and the great modern poets of that tradition as kind of ‘truth serum,’ a way to cleanse, reinvigorate, and discipline his own and his generation” shabby idiom” (*Creation of Exile* 226-27).

³¹ There are a number of different usages of the word estrangement. Polukhina uses the word estrange /estrangement to mean detachment (34, 62, 226), but she notes that “Russian poets developed the idea of alienation by fusing it with the device of estrangement,” which she understands as Shklovsky’s *ostranenie*. She then gives an insightful analysis of Brodsky’s ability to use stylistic devices to create the effect of estrangement. (238)

fact, the linguistic mechanism of the phenomenon has not been thoroughly analyzed.³²

Because, in a foreign language, words and connections between them are de-automatized, their meanings and associations, which a native speaker takes for granted, are freshly re-encountered by a bilingual writer. They evoke different associations in a foreign language and give another representation of life, which is a prerequisite for the use of estrangement as a literary device, according to Shklovsky. According to Shklovsky, the role of art is to restore the experience of life, which is numbed by the automatized routine of daily life.

Due to estrangement, art presents the familiar as strange, perceived anew. “Estrangement is surprise at the world, intensified perception of it” (Shklovsky, *Temusa* 230). Kellman notes that “translinguals represent an exaggerated instance of what the Russian formalists maintained is the distinctive quality of all imaginative literature: *ostranenie*, ‘making it strange’” (29). Of course, a bilingual writer uses images and words that sound strange or disturbing to the native ear.

I am using the word estrangement to refer not to a literary device, but as an innate feature of the foreign language. Estrangement in this sense does not act specifically to create a sense of defamiliarization in the reader of a literary text, but operates on the side

Svetlana Boym in her insightful article, “Estrangement as a Lifestyle: Shklovsky and Brodsky,” notes that Brodsky’s interest in “civilization” in the Russian poetic language was a form of estrangement. “‘Art of estrangement’ became a dissident art; in the Soviet artistic context of the 1960s, estrangement represented a resistance to sovietisation” (254). Diment uses the word in relation to foreign language. She observes that for Nabokov English became “the perfect mechanism for [...] defamiliarization. Not only an ‘alien tongue’ but also a tongue of ‘alienation,’ it provided a natural medium for ‘ostranenie,’ which made his elevation of the loved ones, or ‘otstranenie,’ all the more possible” (352).

³² The only attempt at linguistic explanation I could find was Kellman, who noted “working in foreign language is an obvious way to de-familiarize verbal expression—it creates the impediment to fluency that is the hallmark of the aesthetic according to Shklovsky... using the language that does not allow anything for granted, the translingual author if fulfilling those conditions that the formalists established for aesthetic experience” (*Trilingual Imagination* 28-29).

of the writer, for whom the foreign words may seem new, strange, expressive, and open to new possibilities and connections.

It is estrangement of the foreign language that gives the bilingual writer the feeling that in a foreign language one can express things better, that the foreign language is more precise.³³ This explains Brodsky's remarks about the English language being clearer, better able to express truth, being devoid of demagoguery, which in turn explains his love for English. However, the foreigner still does not feel close to the foreign language. This feeling of distance enables bilingual writers to use stronger expressions, which in turn gives them a liberated feeling, the belief they are more precise and expressive than in their native tongue. Paradoxically, estrangement also allows the writer to hide.³⁴ Kellman compares foreign languages to a masks "that enable us to mingle comfortably at the ball" (*Trilingual Imagination* 26). Hidden by a mask, one dares do and say certain things one would not do if exposed. In a way, one assumes a different persona.³⁵

Use of a foreign language thus constitutes a dichotomy that allows the bilingual author to write of a painful subject in a way that is more precise and expressive than in the native tongue, but that allows the writer to maintain a certain protective distance from his or her subject, thereby muting its painful associations. Herein probably lies its

³³ Kellman writes that "emancipatory detachment of writing in another language is probably an important factor in the decision of Samuel Beckett [...] to become a French novelist" (28). Beckett turned to French to "bridle his unruly English" and in French he evidently saw clarity and discipline. (28).

³⁴ Shtern: "Бродский часто переходил на английский, будто чужой язык помогал скрыть или нейтрально выразить спектр чувств." Notably, she refers to this habit Brodsky gives a non-complimentary remark in English about their close friend (253).

³⁵ Diment writes that the artificial flavor of the new language facilitated Nabokov's experience with writing his memoirs. It is interesting that Nabokov created a person who composed the autobiographic writing ()

therapeutic emancipatory power of writing in a foreign language. This explains why so many autobiographies are written in an adopted language.

Though the subject matter of this dissertation is not Brodsky's English texts written originally in English, everything stated above has a bearing on the self-translations. Brodsky admits that his poetry is retrospective, or autobiographical (БКИ 19). One thing that leaps to the eye is that fifty-five poems translated by Brodsky include some of his most intimate. Among them were: "In Memoriam," written about the death of his mother, "In Memory of My Father: Australia" about his father's death, "August Rain," devoted to both his parents, and written after their deaths; "May 24, 1980," a very important poem written on Brodsky's fortieth birthday summing up his life;³⁶ fifteen poems devoted to Marina Basmanova; the long poems "Fin de Siècle" and "Portrait of Tragedy"; the very personal poem "Vertumnus"; and the programmatic poem "So Forth" that gave title to a collection of poems.

It seems as though the poet could not and would not trust others to translate these personal poems. Also, it appears that Brodsky wanted to re-live his experiences and could put them to rest only after he expressed and experienced them in English. As noted above, English gives him a feeling of estrangement, which in turn grants him objectivity and freedom.³⁷

³⁶Polukhina says that "this, one of the poet's own favorite poems - he read it at festivals and poetry reading more often than any - can be regarded as an epitome of Brodsky's creative work" ("The Art of a Poem" 69).

³⁷ Brodsky says about his attitude to his poems and to his self-translations: "It's a maddening thing in itself to look at one old poem of yours. To translate it is even more maddening. So, before doing that you have to cool off a great deal, and when you start you are looking upon your work as the soul looks from its abode upon the abandoned body. The only thing the soul perceives is the slow smoking of decay" (JBC 73).

As noted earlier, Brodsky sees parallels between poetry and photography. Writing in a foreign language can be compared to looking through lenses, looking through time and space. The English language is like a lens that gives stereoscopic vision,³⁸ and allows Brodsky to “focus” on things (probably poignant) that he will not in Russian. Furthermore, the English language provides a lens that brings into focus certain things that the Russian lens would not. This phenomenon likely explains the imagery connected with the camera lens in his English texts. In a foreign language, through the lens, you can see things clearly, face them, name them, and part with them.

The analysis provided below will show how the changes introduced in the English texts inject new meanings into the poems and allow for different readings. I will demonstrate that the poet strives to enable these new meanings and that it is the distancing and liberating power of estrangement that permits him to do it.

The tendency towards exactness in his English versions is seen in the fact that Brodsky provides titles to his English version. This suggests not only that he does not want to leave anything misinterpreted, i.e. wants “to cross all the ts,” but the translation also provides a feeling of finality and helps him cope with, if not part from, the pain of past experiences. The title of any text functions as a clue that prepares the reader to interpret the text within a certain framework of connotations and associations.

The English version of the 1992 poem “Меня упрекали во всем, кроме погоды...” has the title “Taps,” which signifies the music at the military funeral or at the end of the

³⁸ The word stereoscopic was used in the interview by the interviewer David Montenegro when he asked Brodsky if “being in another country gives you a sort of double vision” (JBC 112).

day when the flag is lowered. The poet talks about the expectation of death—and not abstract death, but his own.

но скоро, как говорят, я сниму погоны
и стану просто одной звездой. (4: 173)

But soon, I'm told, I'll lose my epaulets altogether
and dwindle into a little star. (457)

The English version of the poem appeared in 1996, the year Brodsky died. By that time he had had several heart surgeries, which were not successful. He must have thought often about death,³⁹ and had the courage to admit it in the title. Like Mozart⁴⁰ writing a requiem before his death, Brodsky too writes music to his death. The title is also prompted by the military imagery in the poem.⁴¹ It shows the poet not only anticipates death, but it is as if he looks down from the sky, and observes how the music is performed at his funeral. However, there is nothing somber and grave about the tone:

Я буду мерцать в проводах лейтенантом неба (4: 173)

I'll dwindle among the wires, a sky's lieutenant,
and hide in clouds when thunder roars,
blind to the troops as they fold their pennant
and run, pursued by the pen, in droves. (457)

In giving the title to this poem, Brodsky establishes a connection with another of his poems, "Reveille," written in English in 1996. Alexandr Sumerkin notes that in

³⁹ Brodsky's friend Shtern recalls that Brodsky, who had a serious heart disease, was afraid of the heart surgery that was scheduled for 1996. In her memoirs about Brodsky, she cites another of Brodsky's friends, Sumerkin, who witnessed Brodsky's last days. Signing the book for a mutual friend, Brodsky said: "And the next one you will get from Sumerkin." Dumbstruck, she did not ask him why" (264).

⁴⁰ Brodsky says that his favorite composers are Bach and Mozart, and that he was striving in his poems to achieve the ease of Mozart (БКИ 20).

⁴¹ Brodsky always had respect for military, especially for the navy. His father was a photographer in the navy. Brodsky even tried to enter the Second Baltic Academy, but was not accepted because of his nationality (CWB 23).

“Reveille” “стойческая готовность к концу дана в осознании себя частицей извечно повторяющегося пробуждения мира” (46).

In the Russian version “Мысль о тебе удаляется, как разжалованная прислуга...,” at first it is not obvious that the poem is written about the death of the poet’s mother.⁴² In fact, only in the middle of the poem (line 7) does it become clear that the poem is about her (*В нашей семье— волнуясь, /ты бы встала, не было ни военных, / ни великих мыслителей*) and that his mother died becomes apparent only in the third from the last line. In Russian, there is an element of suspense, which suggests that the author does not want to acknowledge her death. The words *умерла, умерла* (*died, died*) come as a shock at the end.

The English version was published the same year (1987) as the Russian original. The title “In Memoriam” immediately makes it apparent that the poem is written on the death of a person. It also indicates from the beginning that the author acknowledges the fact and accepts the death. The rather formal title, and the fact that it does not indicate the name of the dead person, gives it a less personal tone and suggests that it is a general poem about death, but this impersonality is at odds with the rather emotional ending. On the other hand, the fact that the title does not reveal the name of the person is rather suggestive. Other poems “in memoriam” bear the name of the dead: “In Memoriam: To My Friend,” “Elegy: For Robert Lowell,” “In Memory of My Father: Australia,” “In Memory of Clifford Brown.” It is as though Brodsky cannot pronounce in the same

⁴² The self-translation of this poem was also analyzed by Babanina and Milovodov, however they did not focus on this aspect.

breath “mother” and “in memoriam.” The English title acknowledges death, but it also masks his pain.

The estrangement provided by the English language allows Brodsky to express certain things more boldly and to admit what he could not admit in Russian. Through the prism of the English language, certain things appear in a different light.

The opening line of his poem “Я входил вместо дикого зверя в клетку...” written on his fortieth birthday in which Brodsky sums up his life⁴³ was translated as “I have braved, for want of wild beasts, steel cages.” In Russian, the neutral verb *входил* (*entered*) does not have an evaluative component. In English, Brodsky feels it is all right to recognize his own courage.⁴⁴ However, it is not self-aggrandizing, because *brave* also suggests acknowledgment of gathering strength and banishing fears before “facing and enduring forces which ordinarily would strike a spirit with terror” (WNDS). In the English version, the date, which in the Russian text is located under the poem, becomes the title. This might suggest that the poet attaches significance to this date and also wants to give closure to the experience.

English versions of the poems to Marina Basmanova also manifest the explicitness, expressiveness, and distance from emotion that comes with estrangement. The tone of some of his English translations is more bitter and acerbic, and the wording is stronger. Let us look at the two versions “Подруга, дурнея лицом, поселись в деревне....” Besides the fact that Brodsky gives a title to the poem, which suggests closure, the English title “Elegy” also suggests a certain type of poetry often written on

⁴³ See analysis of the Russian version by Polukhina published in *The Art of a Poem*.

⁴⁴ As Polukhina rightly notes, the English version of this poem came under much attack for its flawed English.

the death of a person or in general presupposes a sad tone.⁴⁵ In naming the poem “Elegy,” Brodsky states that their love affair is no longer alive. Or it could be interpreted as “Elegy” for an old sweetheart, implying that for him she is now dead. It is a rather tongue-in-cheek title as it is at odds with the general tone of the poem, which is written in the form of advice to his former lover. The opening line is rather caustic, employing the condescending *нодыга*, then stating that with age the lover is losing her looks and saying that she should go live in the village. In the English text the description of village life is cruder. In the first stanza, Brodsky inserts *stocky*:

Sweetheart, losing your looks, go to live in a village.
Mirrors there crave mildew, no maiden’s visage.
A river, too, comes with ripples; and fields in furrows,
clearly forgot for good about *stocky* fellows. (399)

In the second stanza, he uses *litter*, which he substitutes for the Russian phrase *a om kozo pojaxom* (*who they are born from*) which means *who their fathers are*. In the same stanza he uses *suckers*, while in the Russian text he uses the neutral *me* (*those*):

Там—одни пацаны. А от кого рожают
знают лишь те, которые их сажают. (4:123)

Nothing but *kids* around. And as to whose this *litter*
is, that’s known but to those who jail the *suckers* later. (399)

Litter, *stocky fellows*, and *suckers* emphasize physicality in the poem. The word *litter* suggests animals (puppies, kittens), which is in tune with the image of village life, primitive instincts, and the rough nature of young men, which would later lead them to jail. It also suggests the Russian village practice of drowning newly born blind kittens. The word also stresses the idea that the kids are not wanted, and will be done away with;

⁴⁵ For more about the elegiac nature of Brodsky’s poetic gift see Rigsbee’s *Style of Ruin*.

in the poem they are put in jail. Another association that the word *litter* brings to mind is the idea of innocence and blindness. The young men do stupid violent things because they are ignorant.

Against this crude background, bookish foreign words stick out. The English text substitutes *ennui* (*boredom*) for *унылость* and adds the sarcastic addition *though one would loath to patent this*: “That should cure ennui, though one would be loath to patent / this” (399). *Patent* and *ennui* are incongruent with the rest of the vocabulary of the poem. *Patent* also shows that the poet acknowledges that this poem is written in the form of a prescription –as if he were a doctor, prescribing a cure. In stanza VII, he replaces *язык любви* (*language of love*) with the foreignism *parlance of love*. In the Russian text, *язык любви* (*language of love*) is opposed to *язык выбоин, впадин, вмятин* (*that of ruts, gulches, hollows*). In English, the foreignism *parlance of love* enhances this opposition and makes it even more incongruent. It presents their love as something artificial that did not, could not survive.

And I'll come join you there. Still, in this ardent cry of
joining you read not your but those beings' triumph,
since, like a bed sheet, earth better follows
not the *parlance of love* but that of ruts, gulches, hollows. (399-400)

The English version of “Дорогая, я вышел сегодня из дому поздно вечером...” also sounds more bitter than the Russian version.⁴⁶ In Russian, the enumeration of the

⁴⁶ Kuznetsov argues that this poem, written in 1989, shows that “the author’s complete estrangement from his recollections had occurred ... they had lost their emotional significance.” He says that it “is a farewell uttered by a person who has nearly forgotten the woman to whom the words of parting are addressed” (218). The critic interprets this poems not so much as parting ... with M. B. but as parting “with that posture of the romantic poet which Brodsky had perfected for a quarter of a century” (221). I believe that though Brodsky expresses a farewell, the poem shows that the poet still harbors pain. Notably Brodsky’s friend Shtern, having read the Russian version of the poem, was surprised at the tone of the poem, as she believed it sounded cruel and not worthy of his love (114).

activities of the ex-lover builds up her portrait as a rather superficial person, not serious about anything. In one breath, Brodsky talks about her professional “aspirations” and the fact that she had a love affair with him. It shows that she took nothing seriously. In Russian, the colloquial word *сошлась с* (*shack up with*) has a negative connotation and is used in derisive contexts. In English, Brodsky uses the ironic metaphor *alloy*, prompted by the profession of the ex-lover's new love interest, who is a *chemical engineer*. The assonance of *dallied—alloyed* and alliteration in the previous line *scratch—sketch* give a lighter tone to the poem, which in turn makes M.B. seem even shallower and diminishes their love.

Четверть века назад ты питала пристрастие к люля
и к финикам,
рисовала тушью в блокноте, немножко пела,
развлекалась со мной; но потом сошлась
с инженером-химиком
и, судя по письмам, чудовищно поглупела. (4: 64)

A quarter a century back you craved curry and dates from Senegal,
tried your voice for the stage, scratched profiles in a sketch pad,
dallied with me—but later *alloyed* with a chemical
engineer and, judging by letters, grew fairly stupid. (“Brise Marine” 364)

On the other hand, this lightness of tone is deceptive. There is a notable change in the syntactical construction of subject-object relations: in English, M.B.'s physical qualities are placed in the subject position, whereas in Russian *nothing* is in the strong position. It is noteworthy that, in the English text, Brodsky places *now* in the strong position and *nothing* also in the strong final position. Together with the sound alliteration *now nothing*, the idea of closure is enhanced in the English text:

Не пойми меня дурно: с твоим голосом, телом, именем
ничего уже больше не связано. (4: 64)

... your body, your warble, your middle name
now stir practically nothing. (364)

This categorical insistence that the relationship is over is at odds with the lightness of the irony embedded in *alloy-chemical engineer*, belying the depth of Brodsky's emotions. Also the word *warble*, which means "to sing with trills, quavers, runs as a bird" (WNWD), is at odds with finality of the tone and the irony of her portrayal, betraying the remnants of his feelings for M.B. However, in English Brodsky acknowledges that she vanished like a Cheshire cat ("Kellomaki"). In "Tsushima Screen," the word "epiphany" implies that to both lovers it was revealed that there is no future in the relationship. In the same poem, in the English text, by replacing "better" with "more sound," Brodsky pairs this revelation with the suggestion that ending the relationship is the wise thing to do.

In the English text, Brodsky takes away the dedication to M.B., though I believe that the title of the poem, "Brise Marine," codes her first initials. On the one hand, by taking away the initials, Brodsky wants to make the poem less personal, erase her name, to prove that with *[her] name nothing is connected*. On the other hand, everything, even the wind, Brise Marine, reminds him of her. In Russian, навеять мысли, воспоминания is connected with the wind semantics. Thus, the Russian language prompts the English title. Though he tries to depict this episode with irony and derision, the poet still feels pain. In the opening line, he substitutes *venture* for *вышел* (*Dear, I ventured out of the house late this evening*), which implies that for him it is an effort to face the past.

In all his English versions, Brodsky eliminates the dedications to M.B., but in other self-translations and translations by others, he leaves dedications to other people.⁴⁷ This shows that he wanted to make these experiences more impersonal, to objectify them and present them as a poetic experience and not tie them to any one person; it also

⁴⁷ In his conversation with Volkov about dedications of his poems to different people, the subject of M.B. does not come up (198-89).

demonstrates that she is no longer with him in English, that nothing is connected with her name. However, Brodsky is not more dispassionate. On the contrary, the English language estrangement gives him the power to use more emotional wording, which reveals a whole array of emotions: sarcasm hiding animosity and pain. The ability to express his feelings helps him achieve closure.

Brodsky removes the dedications but provides the titles, which in itself is an attempt to give closure. The titles are often revealing. In English, the Russian poem “Ты, гитарообразная вещь со спутанной паутиной...” has a title “Minefield Revisited,” which implies that for him going back in time is like going through a minefield where every detail can blow up in the present. In English, he acknowledges the pain of revisiting the past.

Through the lens of the English language, certain details from Brodsky’s past appear more unpleasant.⁴⁸ In “To a Friend: In Memoriam,” Brodsky inserts an attribute with negative, repulsive semantics: *cold-piss-reeking*.

понимавшему жизнь, как пчела на горячем цветке,
и замерзшему насмерть в параднике Третьего Рима.
Может, лучше и нету на свете калитки в Ничто. (3: 58)

who took life like a bumblebee touching a sun-heated bud
but instead froze to death in the third-Rome’s *cold-piss-reeking* entrance.
May be Nothing has no better gateway indeed than this shortcut. (212)

In Russian, the friend is characterized by antithetical notions: cold--hot (bee on the hot flower - frozen to death in the entrance). In English, the characterization is enhanced by

⁴⁸ Burnett writes: “Brodsky’s attitude both to the value of ‘recollection’ and to people is often negative, and, for this reason, the sense of the poet’s loneliness is a major theme in his work” (Complicates of the Real 15).

the words of the “smelling” semantics. In the expression *sun heated bud*, though fragrance is not verbalized, the idea of smell is strongly suggested in the image of a flower that attracts bees, and it is opposed to the odor of *cold pee-reeking entrance*. In the next line, he repeats the idea of unpleasant odor, inserting the word *smelly*.

The English version of “The Fifth Anniversary” presents the ecological situation as worse than it is expressed in Russian (see page 239).

It is interesting that the tendency towards presenting something as permanently unpleasant comes through in the English version. The closing line in the Russian version of “August Rain” *Ну и ливень* (*Look, how it's pouring*) serves as a framing device as it is connected with the idea of rainwater. It implies, however, the idea of something temporary. It is pouring now, but the rain will stop. In the English version, the ending “What a climate” expresses dissatisfaction with the climate, which is a permanent feature of St. Petersburg and cannot be fixed. In a way, it expresses the dissatisfaction with the state of affairs, as climate is an innate feature of the country.

Sometimes, the change indicates that the poet has reassessed the situation. In the 1980 Russian text of “Эклога 4-я (зимняя)” Brodsky writes: “Реже снятся дома, где уже не примут” (3: 198). The 1982 English version presents the situation differently: “If you dream of a door, you tend to slam it” (“Eclogue I: Winter” 290). The Russian text, though stating that the dreams come not so often, still bears certain feelings of humiliation. It indicates that the poet is no longer welcome. Whereas, in English, the poet is more assertive, and he allows himself to show emotions of anger. It also indicates that he no longer cares, since he is the one who slams the door, that is, has the last word. He closes this door to the past.

In “December in Florence,” Brodsky introduces some changes that alter the meaning of the English version so that it is inconsistent with facts. The fact that Brodsky compares writing with love and uses erotic images has been noted. In “Декабрь во Флоренции” he says:

Там есть места, где припадал устами
тоже к устам и пером к листам. (3: 113)

The common predicate *припадал* (*fell*) governs both *уста́ми* and *пером* and makes the comparison between writing and love more obvious. In English, Brodsky does not use one verb in reference to love and writing; hence the connection is not as strong. In the English version, to the phrase describing physical love, he adds *for the first time ever*, which suggests novelty, inexperience and, of course, ardor:

There are places where lips touched lips for the first time ever
or pen pressed paper with real fervor. (“December in Florence” 132)

The next line, which speaks about writing, expresses the idea of ardor through another addition, *with real fervor*. Thus, these additions complement each other (implications of love, which are perceived in both additions and rhyme (*ever—fervor*) makes the parallel between writing and love more pronounced, making up for the loss of the connection between love and writing expressed through the common verb in the Russian text. That is why the addition *for the first time ever* extends to writing. On the one hand, it is a more emotional, emphatic text, while on the other hand, the image of writing becomes different. It is more passionate, and it bears the idea of novelty and inexperience, which is not present in the Russian text. Brodsky when he visited Florence was not a novice poet. It was noted that “December in Florence” is not only about Florence but also about

Leningrad (Polukhina, *Joseph Brodsky* 213). This English ending, which is more true to Brodsky's experiences in Leningrad, makes it even more obvious.

The changes introduced into the English texts are prompted by the language; as Brodsky would say, he was "led by the language." The English language allows him to find and express additional nuances or even new feelings. These changes are not implanted into the text, but stem naturally from the context. They are what the poet is striving for in the English version. Thus the linguistic aspect interlinks with the psychological aspect.

It seems appropriate to conclude this section with an illustration of how the change in the English text leads to a change in the presentation of his family and how these changes are natural, coming from the poem itself. The poem "August Rain" transcends time and space. Rain in Brodsky is associated with thread and patches space and time. The location is at first cosmic--*кучевое пальто cumulous cloak, неземное нечто astral back*. But, as is often the case with Brodsky, he links the two planes, cosmic and human, combining *astral* and *cumulous* with coat. The image of a coat is important in Brodsky poetics. It is the coat of a wanderer. Here the rain is a wanderer that travels through time. The image of the eternal Jew comes to mind. In other poems, the poet often identifies himself with the man in a coat. Next, he shifts the focus to a closer location, as if it were outside the window. He combines two perceptions, visual and audio--the noise of an acacia in the rain and the sight of the bare stems of a geranium. Here the noise of the rain is associated with the noise of a sewing machine⁴⁹ and the bare stem of a geranium is compared with the neck of a seamstress. Visual and audio is again combined through the image of sewing. It is noteworthy that the shift to a closer sphere, outside the

window, occurs in the middle of the third line, right after the words *astral back*. So again, even structurally, Brodsky links these two planes and transcends them. Invoking the comparison of rain with sewing, he links another two planes, outside (rain) and inside (sewing); but since the outside was connected with the cosmic plane, now all three planes are inter-linked. Rain in general brings back the recollections of home,⁵⁰ and the image of home is rendered also by the image of a seamstress sewing, a very peaceful, familial scene.

In the second stanza, Brodsky actually verbalizes the idea of a familial scene. He opens the second stanza with *Как семейно шуршание дождя!* (*How familial the rustling of rain*), but instead of painting an actual family scene, he goes a few centuries back, to an image of scribes copying the Bible. Here he compares rain to the scribe (*летомисец вне кельи, ...испещряющий суглинок, точно перо без рукописи, клинописью и оспой*). Thus he introduces the idea of creation, through sacred writing. Calling this scene *familial*, he implies that writing is familial, dear and sacred at the same time. The rain is writing a sacred scene. Again, the rain, writing, and the poet are interlinked.

In the third stanza, the familial scene in his apartment in Leningrad is recreated. He mentions a greatcoat, epaulets (his father was a military photographer). But a fur coat brings to mind the coat from the first stanza, thus combining the idea of the cosmic and home. The fact that it is *чернобырка* (*a fox fur coat*) is also important, as fox often appears in Brodsky's poetics. There are many religious allusions and symbols in the last

⁴⁹ In "A Room and a Half" Brodsky says that his mother had a zinger sewing machine.

⁵⁰ Hemingway's story "Cat in the Rain" comes to mind when the rain outside makes the woman in the hotel think of comfort of home.

stanza. Painting the picture of his family, he invokes the idea of a sacred family. This is attained by a few means:

- Mention of the family comes after the stanza about scribes writing a sacred Bible.
- Rain is writing a sacred scene.
- The words *семейно* *familial* links these two planes (family and writing scripture).
- The mentioning of *ужин* (*supper*) brings to mind the Last Supper.
- The fact that there are three of them invokes the holy family.
- The word *воскресла* (*resurrected*) has biblical implications.

As shown, both versions are very close. In the last stanza of the English version, Brodsky changes *законы тяготенья* (*laws of gravity*) to *shibboleth*. This change is very suggestive. First, it hints at his Jewish origin. This, in its turn, makes the allusion to rain as an eternal Jew more obvious, thus linking the author and the rain. Second, since the word *shibboleth* means “password,” it implies that only the privileged ones are allowed to witness this scene. The family life is sacred. Though *shibboleth* means any password, the word also brings to mind its origins as “a test word used by the men of Gilead to distinguish the escaping Ephraimites who pronounced the initial /sh/ as /s/.” The fact that it was difficult to pronounce the word is important. Brodsky uses language as sacred knowledge, open only to a few. It also hints at the idea of persecution.

In addition, instead of *скатерть* (*tablecloth*), in the English text, Brodsky uses the word *cloth*, evoking the idea of a shroud, especially since *cloth* is combined with the word *resurrect*, which has a double function. On the one hand, it resurrects the family scene, since we know that Brodsky never saw his parents after exile. On the other hand, it

is an allusion to Jesus Christ and thus makes the allusion to the Biblical holy family stronger.

In Russian, color symbolism (yellow is the color of parting) is a hint at parting with the family and also suggests the family's sacrifice of its son. In English, since the idea of shroud is more pronounced, yellow evokes the image of old material, thus enhancing the shroud implications. The word *behold*, used instead of *yevdemy* (*see*) in the opening line of the third stanza, gives the scene an elevated tone, setting the tone of the last stanza. Thus, in English, the idea of family is presented as more sacred.

Conclusion

Analysis of the original poems and self-translations shows that the changes imposed by prosodic faithfulness result in making the English text more specific, clearer, and more expressive.

The English texts contain more information that results in specification due to sequels and insertions and also due to the usage of more diverse and specific vocabulary. The additional information can range from the non-relevant to the really significant, which brings additional insight into Brodsky's poetics.

The English texts are more lucid than Russian originals, due to the English word order and the use of pronouns to eliminate ambiguity. Also imagery in the English texts is more transparent. We saw that in general Brodsky's English texts tend to be explanatory, i.e., they explain and decode what is expressed in Russian in general terms.

The expressiveness of the English texts is achieved by using more diverse vocabulary, which is often bookish, colloquial, or more metaphoric. Compared to the

Russian original version, Brodsky enhances imagery in his English translation. He also uses metaphoric language in lieu of neutral Russian language. A literal rendition of Russian idioms results in creating imagery in English. Brodsky's propensity for word play makes the English text more expressive.

These properties of Brodsky's English text explain why he attributes such qualities as clarity, absence of demagoguery, and the ability to express "sense" to the English language. However, his English texts are also busier. The tendency to explain goes against the attachment to understatement that Brodsky believed was innate to English poetry, as well as the English language.

These new qualities of Brodsky's English texts illustrate that a foreigner, especially a writer creating in a foreign language, has a feeling of the liberating, therapeutic power of a foreign language, which resides in the estrangement the foreign language provides. The de-familiarization that accompanies the use of a foreign language gives a foreigner a feeling that the second language is clearer, more precise, "better." To a creative writer, this gives a feeling of "molding" words. That explains Brodsky's fascination with the English language. It also explains why Brodsky, like any foreigner, tends to use more expressive language. On the other hand, the distancing effect of the foreign language mutes the strength and immediacy of the emotions it expresses. That is why one can express emotions that one does not express in his/her own language. One can also call it a masking effect.

The English language enables Brodsky to relive certain experiences. He translated all his most important program poems, including personal poems on the death of his parents. He translated most of his poems dedicated to M.B. The analysis of the poems

shows that he used stronger vocabulary and irony. The English language allows him to be more expressive, and often ironic, which at the same time masks pain and even bitterness. But masking pain is also a way of admitting it. The ability to express himself has the effect of bringing his experiences to closure. The fact that he eliminated all dedications to M.B. suggests that he wanted to say she is no longer with him, wanted to objectify his experiences and give his poems a universal interpretation. The fact that Brodsky gave titles to all his English poems, some of the titles being poignantly painful ("Minefield Revisited," "In Memoriam," "Taps"), shows that, besides being helpful to the reader by providing a certain interpretation, the poet had the courage to openly admit the finality of some experiences and to accept it.

I also compare the English language to a lens through which the poet looks at the events that appear closer but at the same time are far away. The lens image occurs most often in Brodsky's English self-translation. The lens allows him to focus on certain aspects of life and to blur others. That explains the more negative vocabulary when he talks about some events. Through this lens some events acquire a different interpretation in his English version.

The expressiveness, clarity, and specificity of Brodsky's English version, imposed by prosody, is in a way what Brodsky is aspiring for in English. These new qualities of his English texts manifest the truth of Brodsky's own words that he is led by language.

Conclusions

Any discussion of self-translation leads to the perplexing question of how to regard self-translation: is it an “ideal” translation? is it a new poem? is it still a translation? These questions were raised in connection with Joseph Brodsky’s self-translations, which range from being called “mimetic” translations to being treated as new poems.

The analysis of lexical changes in Brodsky’s self-translations leads us to the following conclusions.

The word ‘mimetic,’ which is often applied to Brodsky’s self-translations, cannot be applied to the lexical aspect of his poems. As far as lexical faithfulness is concerned, two tendencies are observed. First, even under the demands of self-imposed prosodic faithfulness, Brodsky seeks greater lexical accuracy. Moreover, when he resorts to changes, they are still in tune with his poetics. The penchant for word play and for mixing different registers of the language reflects Brodsky’s Russian manner of writing. The changes he introduces in imagery are still within the boundaries of his poetic system. In this way, his texts “resurrect his Russian text.”

Secondly, there are obvious deviations in his manner of writing. Brodsky as self-translator goes against his own principle of not using attributes. His English texts carry more information, become busier, are not so economical, and are more dramatic. They lack understatement, which he admired in English poetry, as he tends to be over explanatory,

The analysis of structural changes has demonstrated that he also allows himself considerable deviations from the original. In this connection, a question arises: Should

the changes introduced by the author be treated any differently than changes introduced by a translator who is not the author, as translations can be creative? Because the translator is the author he has an insight as to how his texts should be translated. We saw that Brodsky allows himself more liberties and a different kind of freedom than would a translator who is not the author. He cannot resist experimentation with the new language. He introduces information that only he can provide, as no outsider would be privy to it. The changes lead to a shift in emphasis, giving additional insight into the poet's experiences. On a few occasions, he even deconstructs his poetic reality.

Though Brodsky's English text is not an "ideal" translation, neither is it a new poem, despite these changes. His English texts are not complete metamorphoses or transcreations, like R. Tagore's English poems, which were reduced from 68 lines to 18. Brodsky in his self-translations acts as a translator; he does not create a new text.

Brodsky's self-translations prove that self-translations have their own status, different from any other translation. Brodsky's English texts often provide clarification or an explanation of the original; they thus render the original text incomplete. This proves Fitch's point that "what was originally complete and autonomous in itself, is now rendered retroactively incomplete and now the first version is dependent on the second version" ("Relationship" 31).

That is why Brodsky scholars should not be restricted only by one language version, if two versions exist. Originals and self-translations should be regarded together, complementary to each other, and neither of the versions should be ignored. Each has to be studied in its own right and with the other version, establishing the relationship between the two. Both of them provide a new aesthetic experience.

Brodsky's self-translations, though they can provide insight into his poetics and to the reading of his texts, should not be regarded simply as clarifications or interpretations of the originals. Brodsky's English texts have their own value. Not only do they give an English reader a sense of Brodsky's Russian voice, but more importantly, one hears Brodsky in English, a bilingual author with all the limitations and advantages of his situation.

If Brodsky's English texts read differently (with changes in tone, with more expressiveness, more lucidity, or more specificity), this is how he wants them to sound. These are the words he needs to say, and the foreign language allows him to do it. The changes in his English texts are the result of the dichotomy of the foreign language. A translator who translates into the target language, which is his native tongue, does not have the same relationship with the target language as the author-translator, for whom the target language is foreign. The estrangement of the English language gave Brodsky a liberating power to relive his experiences and express himself differently in the language he adored.

That is why Brodsky feels the need to translate his own poems. The impressive number of fifty-five self-translations, which was progressively growing, shows that self-translation was not a stage in his bilingualism but a part of Brodsky's creative writing.

Future translators should not be precluded from translating poems already translated by the author. They can provide them with some explanations and clues to the text and also encourage others to follow his translation practices. They can be also be of great help to Brodsky translators working with a third language.

There are areas that demand future research, such as an analysis of Brodsky's translations of English poetry and his translations from languages other than English. This would permit the comparison of the translation from languages he knows well with those he does know not well. Another fruitful area is the study of his translation of Russian poetry (not his own) into English and the comparison of these translations with his practice as self-translator.

Brodsky's self-translations

Russian poems and English translations by the author	Year/date of writing of the Russian text	Year /date of first publication of the English translation by the author
1. Октябрьская песня October Tune	1971	1987 <i>The New Yorker</i> (October 5)
2. На смерть друга To a Friend: In Memoriam	1973	1985 <i>The New Yorker</i> (May 6)
3. Литовский ноктюрн: Томасу Венцлова Lithuanian Nocturne	1973	1987 <i>Ploughshares</i> (Spring)
4. Декабрь во Флоренции December in Florence	1976	1980 <i>New York Review of Books</i> (May 1)
5. Новый Жюль Верн The New Jules Verne	1976	1987 <i>Partisan Review</i> (September)
6. Пятая годовщина (4 июня 1977) The Fifth Anniversary	1977	1989 <i>To Urania</i>
7. Квинтет Sextet	1977	1984 <i>The New Yorker</i> (December 31)
8. Полярный исследователь A Polar Explorer	July 22, 1978	1980 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (October 17)
9. "Ты, гитарообразная вещь со спутанной паутиной..." Minefield Revisited	July 22 1978	1989 <i>To Urania</i>
10. Шведская музыка North Baltic	1978	1988 <i>The New York Review of Books</i> (February 18)
11. "Я входил вместо дикого зверя в клетку..." May 24, 1980	1980	<i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (May 29)
12. "То не Муза воды набирает в рот..." Folk Tune	1980	1985 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (October 11)
13. Эклога 4-я: (зимняя) Eclogue IV: Winter	1980	1982 <i>The New Yorker</i> (March 29)
14. "Восходящее жёлтое солнце следит косыми..." Tsushima Screen	1980	1989 <i>To Urania</i>
15. Римские элегии Roman Elegies	1981	1981 "Roman Elegy III" first appeared in <i>The New Yorker</i> (July 13). All twelve appeared in <i>Vanity Fair</i> in 1983 (December)
16. В окрестностях Александрии Near Alexandria	1982	1982 <i>The New York Review of Books</i> (December 22)
17. Келомяки Kellomaki	1982	1987 <i>The New Yorker</i> (January 26)
18. Полонез: вариация Polonaise: A Variation	1982	1987 <i>The New Yorker</i> (September)
19. К Урании To Urania	1982	1987 <i>The Paris Review</i> 103 (Summer)
20. В Италии In Italy	1985	1989 <i>To Urania</i>

21. Примечание к прогнозам погоды A Footnote to Weather Forecasts	1986	<i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (June 30-July 6)
22. Элегия: ("Прошло что-то около года. Я вернулся на место битвы...") Elegy: "About a year passed"	1986	1987 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (June 26)
23. Рождественская звезда Star of Nativity	December 25, 1987	1988 <i>The New York Times</i> (December 24)
24. "Кончится лето, начнётся сентябрь. Разрешат отстрел..." So Forth	1987	1992 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (October 9)
25. Резиденция The Residence	1987	1984 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (July 13)
26. "Мысль о тебе удаляется, как разжалованная прислуга..." In Memoriam	1987	1987 <i>The New Yorker</i> (November 9)
27. Открытка из Лиссабона Postcard from Lisbon	1988	1991 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (October 18)
28. Дождь в августе August Rain	1988	1991 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (August 2)
29. Кентавры (I-IV) Centaur (I-V)	1988	1988 <i>Western Humanities Review</i> (Winter)
30. Элегия ("Постоянство суть эволюция принципа помешенья") Constancy	1988	1994 <i>The Princeton University Library Chronicle</i> (Spring)
31. "Пчёлы не улетели, всадник не ускакал. В кофейне..." Porta San Pancrazio	1989	1994 <i>The New Yorker</i> (March 14)
32. "Дорогая, я вышел сегодня из дому поздно вечером..." Brise Marine	1989	1991 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (February 1)
33. Облака Clouds	1989	1995 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (May 19)
34. Памяти отца: Австралия In Memory of my Farther: Australia	1989	1990 <i>The New Yorker</i> (March 5)
35. Примечания папоротника North of Delphi	1989	1991 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (April 12)
36. Fin de Siècle Fin de Siècle	1989	1992 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (August 7)
37. "Не важно, что было вокруг, и не важно..." Nativity	December 25, 1990	1991 <i>A Garland of Stephen</i>
38. Вертумн Vertumnus	December 1990	1991 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (October 4)
39. Ангел Angel	1990	1994 <i>The New Yorker</i> (January 10)
40. Портрет трагедии Portrait of Tragedy	July 1991	1996 <i>The New Yorker</i> (February 12)
41. "Однажды я тоже зимою приплыл сюда..." Homage to Girolamo Marcello	1991	1991 <i>The New Yorker</i> (January 21)
42. "Подруга, дурная лицом, поселись в деревне..."	1992	1993 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (October 8)

Elegy: "Sweetheart, losing your looks, go live in a village..."		
43. Колыбельная Lullaby	December 1992	1993 <i>The New Yorker</i> (December 20)
44. Памяти Клиффорда Брауна In Memory of Clifford Brown	February 1993	1995 <i>The New Republic</i> (December 11)
45. Персидская стрела Persian Arrow	February 1993	1994 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (December 23)
46. Иския в октябре Ischia in October	October 1993	1995 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (May 19)
47. Дедал в Сицилии Daedalus in Sicily	Fall-winter 1993	1993 <i>The New York Review of Books</i> (October 7)
48. Пейзаж с наводнением View with a Flood	1993	1995 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (February 10)
49. "О если бы птицы пели и облака сучали..." Flourish	Spring 1994	1996 <i>The New Republic</i> (March 4)
50. "Меня упрекали во всем окромя погоды..." Taps	1994	1996 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (January 12)
51. "Мы жили в городе окаменевшей водки..." A Photograph	1994	1994 <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i> (October 28)
52. MCMXCIV MCMXCIV	1994	1995 <i>The New York Review of Books</i> (June 8)
53. "Клоуны разрушают цирк. Слоны убежали в Индию..." MCMXCV	1995	1995 <i>The New York Review of Books</i> (June 8)
54. На Виа Фунари Via Funari	Fall 1995	1996 <i>The New York review of Books</i> (February 1)
55. С натуры In Front of Casa Marcello	Fall 1995	1996 <i>The New Republic</i> (May 27)

Selected Chronology of Brodsky's Life*

1940 May 24	Brodsky is born to Maria Volpert Brodsky and Alexandr Brodsky. His mother is a German-Russian interpreter during the war. His father is naval officer. His father is dismissed from the army and works a photographer.
1940 September	The Germans begin a 900-day siege of Leningrad.
1953	Stalin dies. His death saves the family from deportation from Leningrad.
1956	Brodsky drops out of school at the age of fifteen. Over the years he works at a factory, a morgue, as metal worker, assistant at a crystallography lab at the Department of Geology at the Leningrad University. Studies Polish and reads Polish poets in original.
1957-1958	Brodsky works in geological expeditions in Far North, and Far East. Starts writing poetry.
1959	First Poetry reading.
1959	Brodsky is introduced to Anna Akhmatova by Yevgenij Rein.
1960	Joins geological expedition at the Caspian Sea region.
1964	February Brodsky is arrested, He is charged with corruption if youth, distributing works of forbidden authors, parasitism. He is sentenced to five years of internal exile in a Northern village Norenskaya close to the Arctic Circle. Reads and translates English metaphysicals.
1964	His sentence is commuted after international protests.
1964	Akhmatova dies.
1965-1967	Brodsky works begin appearing in foreign publications.
1967 October	Birth of his son Andrei.
1971	Brodsky receives fake invitation to emigrate to Israel. Brodsky does not want to leave.

* Adapted from *Joseph Brodsky: Conversations*. Ed. Cynthia Haven. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2002.

1972 June	Leaves for Vienna, where he is met by Carl Proffer, who arranges for him a position at the University of Michigan as poet in residence. While in Austria, Brodsky and Proffer visit Auden.
1974-1975	Becomes Five College Distinguished Visiting professor, based at Smith.
1976 December	His first heart attack. Brodsky is hospitalized in New York.
1979	Receives tenure appointment as Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of Michigan.
1981	Named Five College Professor of Literature, based at Mount Holyoke.
1983 March	His mother dies.
1984 April	His father dies.
1986	<i>Less Than One</i> is awarded the National Book Critics' Circle prize.
1987	Receives Nobel Prize for Literature.
1990 September 1	Marries Maria Sozzani in Stockholm.
1991	Named US Poet Laureate, serving 1991-1992.
1993 June	Daughter Anna Maria Alexandra is born.
1996 January 28	Has a fatal heart attack, dies in his Brooklyn apartment. Is buried in Venice.

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* Note on the transliteration of sources:

In all instances, authors' names have been transliterated into the English alphabet, even where the original source was published in Russian. Russian titles and publication information have been left in Cyrillic, except in cases where the entry has been alphabetized according to the title. In these instances, the article or book title is alphabetized according to its transliterated title, which is followed in the entry by the original Cyrillic title in brackets. For the sake of consistency, the name of the writer Lev Loseff, who publishes in English under "Loseff" but whose name is generally transliterated from Russian texts as "Losev," has been cited in all cases as "Loseff." Bibliographic entries citing texts by the same author in both Russian and English have been grouped by language and then alphabetized accordingly.

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