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***THE THIRD WAVE OF RUSSIAN IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES***

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## **2. INTRODUCTION**

This thesis explores how identities are constructed and transformed in immigration on the example of life and work of two significant representatives of the third wave of Russian immigration – poet Joseph Brodsky and writer Sergei Dovlatov. Since immigration results in cultural and psychological changes, and happens on multiple levels in both interacting cultures, I decided to use the interdisciplinary approach as the main method of analysis in this paper. My aim was to prove that an essential insight in other subjects, the linking of different contexts, and the awareness of overlaps between them are the key to understanding the immigrant experience, especially in the case of two very different social and cultural settings, in this case the Soviet Union and the United States. Since the effects of immigration can be seen in not only the socioeconomic context, but the artistic one as well, I have presented examples of this impact and analyzed the intercultural elements appearing in Brodsky's self-translated poetry and in one of Dovlatov's most famous works. My goal was to show that the immigration process and the new environment have the ability not only to influence the immigrant's identification, but also to encourage (or discourage) his or hers artistic creation, which then results in the invention of new forms and styles that further contribute to both cultures and develop and enrich their literary corpora.

The first chapter of this paper deals with the historical and political changes in Soviet Russia and clarifies the social role and position of their writers and poets, focusing on the period from around 1960s to 1980s. The second part deals with immigration and the new social and cultural context associated with the representatives of the third wave of Russian immigration in the United States. Furthermore, this part explores the importance of the acceptance by the host country, its immigration laws and policies, and the level of development of ethnic communities. In the third and fourth part of the thesis, I concentrate on identifying the main causes of Brodsky's and Dovlatov's immigration, its impact on their life and work abroad, and their relationship with the motherland. Using mostly interpretive biographical approach in methodology, and Brodsky's own interpretation of his involvement with English and Russian, the paper depicts his journey from literary monolingualism to literary bilingualism, and explores it through the analysis of selected poems translated by Brodsky himself. On the example of Dovlatov's novel *A Foreign Woman*, the thesis portrays the degree of Sergei's assimilation, ethnic sense of identity, and transformation as an individual and a writer living in the Russian community in New York.

### **3. SOCIO-POLITICAL AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SOVIET RUSSIA**

#### **3.1. Khrushchev Thaw and the Stagnation Era**

After Vladimir Lenin's period of cultural transformation, which is characterized as a period of tolerance to a certain degree, Joseph Stalin's rule was marked as a lot more repressive and nationalistic. Any kind of disapproval of the new system would often end in imprisonments and deportations, which would later be justified as a necessary act against those that betrayed the motherland.

After Stalin's death in 1953, the new leader Nikita Khrushchev established a process that tried to denounce Stalin's influence and change the system of the Soviet Union. At the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU on February 24-25 in 1956, Khrushchev criticized Stalin for abandoning "the Leninist method of convincing and educating for one of administrative violence, mass repression and terror" (Khrushchev 1956). He believed it was necessary to move away from the old cult of personality and return to the Leninist principles of collective leadership<sup>1</sup>, since it was "impermissible and foreign to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism to elevate one person, to transform him into a superman possessing supernatural characteristics akin to those of a god" (Sakwa 1999: 306). Khrushchev condemned Stalin for acting "not through persuasion, explanation, and patient cooperation with people, but by imposing his concepts and demanding absolute submission to his opinion" (Khrushchev 1956). Therefore, he decided to initiate a shift in political, cultural and economic life in the Soviet Union, which started with "the removal of Stalinist symbolism...the removal of Stalin's body from the mausoleum on Red Square, the renaming of everything that had been named after Stalin..." (Gill 1998: 70). Thus, the late 50s so-called Khrushchev Thaw, as well a social uplift after the victory in the Great Patriotic War, gave rise to a universal liberalization and a change of socio-political, cultural and other features. The dismissal of the cult of personality and criticism of the theory of non-conflict in literature gave rise to new expectations from the state.

Khrushchev's system allowed a certain amount of criticism and intellectual debate, and it gave rise to destalinization, which included modernization and urbanization. However, his ideas did not completely work as planned, because he did not recognize that "Stalinism was

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<sup>1</sup> Collective leadership was considered an ideal form of governance in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Its main task was to distribute powers and functions among the Politburo, the Central Committee, and the Council of Ministers to hinder any attempts to create a one-man dominance over the Soviet political system by a Soviet leader.

only Leninism written in large” and that Stalin had only “completed the transformations that had been implicit in Lenin’s revolution” (Wesson 1978: 119). This led to a new system under Leonid Brezhnev, the so-called Stagnation Era, which effectively reversed Khrushchev’s idea of a somewhat liberal system. The new system ensured job security and relative technological stagnation, but it only “superficially appeared an oasis of calm and gradual improvement”, while it was actually “the calm of decay” (Sakwa 1999: 339-340). Despite Brezhnev’s famous slogan of “strengthening the links between the party and masses” (Sakwa 1999: 342 Brezhnev), at the beginning of the 1970s, the Soviet government intensified repression and banned many prominent authors from publishing, which caused those charged with parasitism<sup>2</sup> and dissidence<sup>3</sup> to emigrate.

### 3.2. Censorship and Deportations

One of the most famous examples of censorship during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the USSR was the ban of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s work *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* / *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* (1962). First it was constantly ignored and not published, and afterwards it was either censored or officially critiqued. Additionally, pressure was put not only on authors, but on journals as well, starting with the literary magazine *Novy mir*, which published Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. The journal was accused of “distorting the truth by focusing on the dark side, on various forms of abnormality, with the painful side-effects of tempestuous growth” (Sakwa 1999: 353). After the forced resignation of its editor Alexander Tvardovsky, the journal, as the last platform for reformist ideas, was destroyed: “It was our most outspoken voice – within the limits allowed by an increasingly thickhead and mistrustful censorship – the voice of the people’s conscience” (Sakwa 1999: 354).

Because of these faults of the former system, one of the main goals of the Thaw was not only to release a large number of prisoners, but also to loosen censorship on arts, culture and science. Khrushchev criticized Stalin’s often used term ‘enemy of the people’, saying that it “made possible the usage of the most cruel repression, violating all norms of revolutionary legality”, and that it eliminated “the possibility of any kind of ideological fight or the making of one’s views known on this or that issue, even those of a practical character” (Sakwa 1999:

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<sup>2</sup> In the Soviet Union, those who refused to work, study or serve in another way risked being criminally charged with social parasitism (Russian: тунеядство, тунеядцы), in accordance with the socialist principle ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his contribution’.

<sup>3</sup> A dissident, broadly defined, is a person who actively challenges an established doctrine, policy, or institution.

307). Consequently, even though the Thaw did not end in complete success, Khrushchev did bring greater liberty to Soviet authors, which made those previously suppressed start publishing again. Probably the first and most famous example of these changes was the long awaited publication of Solzhenitsyn's previously mentioned novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. The act of its publication is today seen as the symbol of the end of socialist realism<sup>4</sup>, since until the 1960s publishing authors that opposed the Soviet ideology was not possible without immediate threat of labor camps.

However, many authors were still disappointed with the new system and its censorship. The social movement of those dissatisfied, at that time referred to as dissidents, in the 60s and 70s began to take shape even before the mass emigration of Russian citizens and mass arrests. This group of initiators of the new social movement consisted of intellectuals who were disappointed in the Thaw and were getting more and more convinced that there was a need for radical change as they felt that the state was advancing towards an even more ideologically closed period of the 70s. What is important to emphasize here is that the term 'dissident' had various meanings and was used to describe phenomena of various kinds. On the one hand, the word 'dissidence' was a self-designation of a group of writers or social activists and it afterwards moved on to writers that were actually not as extreme as those previously mentioned. On the other hand, the term is often generalized and used to refer to the period of the third wave of emigration and its representatives as a group of dissidents as a whole, because of ideological and political differences between them and the state, and between them and two previous emigration waves. In the case of the first dissident movement, the term marked a protest against government's policies that was expressed in scientists, writers and university students, who consciously gave up their jobs and started working as janitors or guards, forming a group that was later called the cultural 'underground'. This second culture, which existed alongside the official ideology, developed its own views on literature, politics, principles of good social order, etc. They spoke out against social realism as the leading method in art and criticized the political situation of the country. Many believe that this second culture gave rise to the formation of collective consciousness of future immigrants of the third wave, and that it took part in their identification in the 70s as 'those with a dissident worldview'.

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<sup>4</sup> Socialist realism is a style of realistic art that was the predominant form of approved art in the Soviet Union from its development in the early 1920s to its fall from popularity in the late 1960s. Its purpose was to limit popular culture a specific, highly regulated faction of creative expression that promoted Soviet ideals.

This was the first time that the Russian society became familiar with the phenomenon of parasitism, which representatives of different professions were accused of in case their activities did not correlate with the current government's ideology or they were not working for the good of the motherland. It was a period of a more active KGB (Committee for State Security), Glavlit (General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press) and the Department of culture and propaganda of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Consequently, their control over literature and art led to closure of periodicals and literary magazines for censorship reasons.

Soviet Union's foreign policy towards European countries caused a lot of outrage as well. Russian citizens, public figures and journalists actively opposed and protested the introduction of Soviet troops on Hungary's territory in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. For taking part in one of those rallies against the military occupation of Czechoslovakia, the poet Sergei Solovyov and the journalist Natalya Gorbanevskaya were proclaimed insane and put in a psychiatric hospital.

These psychiatric hospitals, deprivations of citizenship and accusations of parasitism led to a new socio-cultural phenomenon previously unknown to Russian society - forced deportation. This was the climax of a new wave of policy tightening and censorship in the USSR, which happened to those whom the state considered unwanted or inconvenient. The practice was first forced upon a representative of the literary sphere – Valery Tarsis. Aleksander Akhiezer explained the situation as follows:

At that time the government's emigration policy was based not on law, but was defined by the arbitrariness of the new government serving its opportunistic reasons. The government has been unable to continue the terror and therefore tried to use forced exile as if it were done voluntarily. (Akhiezer 1993: 74, my translation)

At the same time, official trips abroad were banned, but attempts to go under the guise of business trips were made repeatedly. Subsequently, on the pages of international publications dissidents themselves wrote the analysis of causes of the 70s and 80s emigration, as well as the formation of cultural and socio-political tasks of Russian emigration of the third wave.

It should be noted that, even before forced deportations, despite the opposition from Soviet institutions for state security, some dissident writers managed to transmit their works to the West, where they were published by various magazines and publishing houses, and then returned to the country. Afterwards, if successful, these authors would use typewriters and

copiers and start trading in secret. This practice continued during the 70s and 80s, when émigré writers carried out a kind of a ‘book exchange’ between the West and Brezhnev’s Russia, bringing books home after visiting scholars, researchers, diplomats, students, etc.

### **3.3. Foreign Policy and the Americanization of Soviet Popular Culture**

During the 20th century, Russians would often emphasize American personal traits and attitudes. They were particularly fond of their informality, directness and liveliness. They would express envy of their privilege of easily changing jobs, or of traveling to foreign countries. The general opinion in Russia was that “Americans are rather nice people, a little too rich, clever with machines – and lucky to have a large measure of a somewhat indefinable but precious good called ‘freedom’” (Barghoorn 1948: 298). However, despite the popularity of Americans and their way of life, Stalin would often criticize Western cultures for being imperialistic and corrupt. He believed that they wanted to implement “ideas about the world economy, a world state, and world government and present national sovereignty as antiquated” (Yurchak 2005: 162). Western cultural influences were “both criticized for bourgeois and celebrated for internationalism”, which “introduced a profound ambiguity into the Soviet authoritative discourse, making it impossible to know for sure whether any given formulation was right or wrong” (Yurchak 2005: 162-163). This simultaneous pro- and anti-Western atmosphere continued during Khrushchev’s period as well, when there was an explosion of interest in various cultural and intellectual pursuits based on the experience of the West.

Consequently, the ambiguous views of the West affected the evaluation of foreign influences on art and culture. On the one hand, the Minister of Culture Andrei Zhdanov celebrated internationalism, saying that “Soviet internationalism in music and respect for creative genius of other nations is (...) based on the enrichment and development of our national musical culture, which we can then share with other nations” and that these internationalist influences “inspire people of Soviet society to great achievements in labor, science and culture” (Yurchak 2005: 163). On the other hand, he attacked cosmopolitanism, which he described as “a product of Western imperialism, which in pursuit of its imperialist goals, strove to undermine the value of local patriotism among the peoples of the world, thereby weakening their national sovereignty” (Yurchak 2005: 163). Zhdanov believed that it was cosmopolitanism’s influence that led musicians to write ‘unharmonious’ and ‘unmelodious’ music, which “violated the fundamental physiology of normal human hearing” (Yurchak 2005: 163). This kind of subjective and unscientific argument was often used in the socialist period when certain cultural forms were evaluated as being ‘bourgeois’. However, whether foreign influence was a

manifestation of cosmopolitanism or internationalism was open to interpretation, which meant that “meanings of cultural forms depended on who practiced them, how and in what context” (Yurchak 2005: 166). It would often occur that in one context the same influence would be represented as cosmopolitanism, and in another context as internationalism. For example, foreign films were promoted in one context and criticized in another, and were therefore constantly shifting between being shown and being banned. This initial ambivalent attitude in which Soviet Russians would praise the American industry and technology, but at the same time stress their racism, exploitation of workers and materialism, later developed into a rivalry with an aim to make the Soviet Union “a new America, in the proletarian rather than the bourgeois sense of the word” (Ball 2003: 30).

However, Yurchak argues that in fact to Russians this West was not a real place, the geographical one, but only a notion of *zagranitsa*<sup>5</sup> or the Imaginary West. This Soviet imaginary elsewhere was produced at a time when the Soviets could not travel beyond the border, and it signified “an imaginary place that was simultaneously knowable and unattainable, tangible and abstract, mundane and exotic”, and that the West was only an “archetypal manifestation” (Yurchak 2005: 159). The occurrence of this imaginary world could often be seen in Soviet popular culture. It became a constitutive element of Soviet literature, movies and fashion. Even during Stalin, the Soviets were encouraged to enjoy consumption of Western commodities for their pleasure “as long as they were used not for egoistic goals of social prestige, careerism, and so forth, but as elements of ‘cultural life’ and due rewards for hard work” (Yurchak 2005: 168-169). During Khrushchev, movies and fashion became important in the production of new identities and contributed to the further development of the Imaginary West. For example, American clothes, especially jeans, were bought on the black market, the radio was used to listen to foreign broadcasts, American jazz and rock ‘n’ roll were illegally distributed on records and tapes, and young Soviets would even give each other English nicknames. The literal meaning of songs and the quality or brand of jeans were not important. What was important was their Western origin. These labels, symbols and names served as links to an imaginary world, and were sometimes interpreted as signs of “resistance to the Soviet state, a desire to flee from it to the West” (Yurchak 2005: 202). However, in the late 1980s, when it was easier to cross the Soviet border and many people decided to travel to the West for the first time, they

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<sup>5</sup> *Zagranitsa* (lit. “across the border” or “abroad”) refers to the real and imagined breadth of the world beyond the borders of the familiar, and especially to an idealized, Imaginary West that lay beyond the borders of the Soviet Union during the late Soviet period.

discovered the ‘real’ West was not an adventurous and fun space full of fanciful images and sounds, but somehow ordinary:

They revealed that the Imaginary West was no longer to be found anywhere and was lost forever – and that with it were lost all those intimate worlds of meaning and creativity that were so indivisible from the realities of socialism and so constitutive of its forms of ‘normal’ life. (Yurchak 2005: 206)

In addition to providing knowledge about the West, the newspapers would often try to remind the Soviet people that in order to be cultured one should be fluent in one or several foreign languages. The desire to learn more about the United States was encouraged by the government as long as one learned the right information and with a critical eye. Therefore, there has been a large influx of Russian students into the American industry, mostly to Henry Ford’s factory. Around a hundred Russian students would come to the factory’s school in Detroit every year for a period of training or cooperative work. The result of this temporary immigration could be seen in factories throughout the Soviet Union, where they implemented a lot of American design and equipment. However, things were not that simple when it came to the field of cultural relations. University professors and students were not exchanged on the same level as those from technical schools. Western ideas of democracy and widespread teaching of foreign languages early on began to enter Soviet universities and academies. As a result, when it became harder to control the type of information and its influence on the Soviet people, exchanges became practically non-existent and this tense situation in foreign policy was the reason for a new Iron Curtain<sup>6</sup> that would now and then open during the period of the Thaw, which worsened the social atmosphere even more.

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<sup>6</sup> The Iron Curtain was the name for the boundary dividing Europe into two separate areas from the end of World War II in 1945 until the end of the Cold War in 1991. The term symbolizes the efforts by the Soviet Union to block itself and its satellite states from open contact with the West and non-Soviet-controlled areas.

## **4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THIRD WAVE OF RUSSIAN EMIGRATION**

### **4.1. Overview of Three Russian Immigration Waves**

The first Russians, mostly traders and missionaries, came to the USA during the 18th century and settled in Alaska, where they founded the first permanent Russian settlement in 1784 on Kodiak Island. During the next decade, they traveled south and reached California, settling mostly in San Francisco. During that time, the Russian Empire was an economically underdeveloped country, which meant that most of the immigrants were poor peasants and unemployed or poorly paid industrial workers. However, mass immigration did not begin until the late nineteenth century.

The first large-scale emigration happened between 1881 and 1914, during which over 3.2 million immigrants arrived from the Russian Empire. Nearly half of them identified as Jews, and others as Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians. Many of them settled in New York and other large American cities on the coast. Improving the economic status was their primary motive for emigration, therefore a lot of them started their own businesses and sent their children to universities. Because of such a large number of people that had left the country, the tsarist Russian and Soviet governments placed restrictions on emigration. In 1885, they passed a decree that forbade all emigration except the one of Poles and Jews, which is the reason why there was such a small number of non-Jewish Russians in the United States. By the 1920s, control became even more rigorous and the ban was put on emigration in total. However, because so many of the immigrants of this first large-scale emigration were not truly ethnic Russians, most history books do not consider the first immigrant group from Russia as part of the three designated waves of Russian immigration.

Therefore, the first ‘real’ wave of immigration was the one caused by the Bolshevik Revolution and the Civil War, when two million people that were against the new regime escaped Russia between 1920 and 1922. During this period, around 30,000 people, mostly government officials, lawyers, teachers and military personnel, settled in the United States. Since most of them came from the upper class and were well educated, they would generally find similar jobs to their professions, and these kinds of jobs would at that time most easily be found in large cities such as Chicago, Boston, New York and San Francisco. Because they were seen as traitors, the Soviet refugees who fled the Union during this period were stripped of their citizenship, which made it impossible for them to return home legally.

The same happened with refugees of the second wave of Russian immigration, which happened as a direct outcome of World War II, during which millions of people had to flee their homes. Consequently, around 50,000 people from the Soviet Union settled in the United States. Most did not come directly, but had been first transported either to German labor camps during the war or had settled in East European countries (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, and the Baltic States) that were taken under the dominance of the Soviet Union. This wave included Russians from all classes, with most of them settling in large industrial areas such as New York or Chicago. However, after the end of the war, the United States, along with other Western countries, had to send back all people living on their territory that had been born in the Soviet Union. Between 1945 and 1948, these countries returned two million Russian refugees back to the Soviet Union, where many of them were imprisoned, exiled or even executed.

In contrast with previous immigration waves, the third one, which began in 1969, was legal. However, this was limited to Jews only. After Khrushchev became president, Russian Jews expected more lenient policies towards them and a shift in politics when it came to social tolerance. Therefore, when we speak of the emigration during the 70s it is important to note that, along with political emigrants and immigrants-intellectuals, there also began a formation of religious emigration, the essence of which was the rejection of anti-social activities of Soviet Russia's government. The origin of the formation in fact dates back to the late 40s and early 50s, when the representatives of religious backgrounds and classes already made plans to flee the USSR, because it was a country of atheism, which is sure to catch up with the wrath of the Lord (Iontsev, Lebedeva, Nazarov & Okorokov 2001). This religious opposition was against discrimination in public and private life, as well as against putting a ban on the freedom of speech. Their feeling of racial discrimination resulted from the term 'nationality', and because of the anti-Jews atmosphere and racial restrictions in access to education, they feared the possibility of persecutions. Therefore, in 1977, they expressed the desire to leave the country and in 1979, around 30,000 religious dissidents left Russia. Indeed, from the beginning of the 80s, their persecution by the state, arrests and deportations began and lasted until 1989. During that time, the Jews were allowed to leave the country for Israel as part of the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, to them Israel often served only as an official destination and many Jews abused it as one of few possible legal ways to immigrate. Consequently, almost 300,000 of Russian Jews immigrated to the USA by 1985, while only a small percentage of them were drawn to the home of their ancestors.

Others immigrated to countries that had been chosen by previous generations of Russian emigration. Western policy towards Soviet emigrants in those decades was undoubtedly generous. Numerous states, along with the United States, such as Canada, South American countries, Australia and also the traditional host countries of Russian immigration - France, Germany, Italy, England, Scandinavia and Switzerland - accepted those interested in staying. Out of nearly three million Americans, who identified themselves as Russians, resided in the Northeast. The third wave immigrants mostly settled in cities where previous Russian immigrants had emigrated, especially New York. Russian Jews mostly went to New York, Philadelphia, Boston and other large cities. The non-Jewish Russian settled in Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburg, and coal mining towns of Pennsylvania. Afterwards, during Mikhail Gorbachev's more liberal policies, anyone was allowed to leave the Soviet Union, which made thousands more Russians to immigrate to the United States. During the period from the 1917 to 2001, the number of immigrants from Russia to foreign countries amounted to about 45 million people. Of these, the share of immigrants of the third wave, according to various sources, was between 470 and 600 thousand to around 1.1 million from 1971 to 1987. However, in recent publications historians and researchers mostly agree that it is impossible to figure out the exact number of emigrants during the third wave.

What is perhaps more significant than the exact number of emigrants is the fact that a large part of the third wave of emigration was made out of creative intelligentsia<sup>7</sup>. Historians often see emigration of intellectuals as an indicator of the political and spiritual state of their society. However, the questions of the nature of the third wave Russian emigration and its ideological and political background still remains a topic of discussion. Some researchers believe that the 70s-80s dissident movement is a continuation of a trend towards national exodus from the country because of the disagreement with the current political regime, the dominant ideology, internal policies, etc. Others tend to give a unique character to the third wave émigré movement, since at the given time, the leading representatives among these emigrants were writers, publicist, journalists, scientists, artists and other intellectuals. The third opinion is that the main reason for creative intelligentsia's emigration was the difficulty or even impossibility of the publication of their work and constant criticism. A. Nezhnyj, a journalist, explained one of the possible reasons as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> broadly defined as those involved in artistic creativity, artistic expression, or teaching and research in the humanities

They left and are leaving not Russia – it is impossible to leave her. They are running away from the state, the huge carcass that is covering the sky; they are running away from the authorities, to whom nothing is sacred (...) they are fleeing to save their mortal bodies and immortal souls from the monster, they are running away, cursing and crying. (Iontsev et al., 2001, my translation)

However, the motives for departure were complex in composition, and were probably a combination of political, creative and financial reasons. Due to so many different potential causes for emigration, many researchers believe that it is impossible to clearly identify the main reason for emigration during the 70s and 80s.

In contrast with the two previous waves, the 70s and the 80s dissidents differ by their stronger sense of patriotism specifically among the writers. Writers were taking active steps to protect their colleagues from tyranny of the state, and they entered into debates on national, cultural, social and other issues. For example, in 1990, a Soviet journal published Solzhenitsyn's essay *Rebuilding Russia / Kak nam obustroit' Rossiyu?* (1990), which was dedicated especially to the preceding economic crisis, arbitrariness of the KGB, the nature of the Soviet political regime, and the like. In his article, Solzhenitsyn wrote that with all those prohibitions it would be difficult to make any harmonious development forward. It would probably contain more errors than merit, and would be difficult to try to keep up with the real course of thing. However, it would also be impossible not to try". (Solzhenitsyn 1990). Which means that the emigrants of the third wave sought freedom in a broader sense - not only creative, but also cultural, political, ideological. Consequently, Russian immigration in general and the third wave in particular, had a great value when it came to human rights:

With their help, we managed to widely propagandize the human rights movement in the USSR, to publish thousands of manuscripts, documents, literary works banned in the Soviet Union and make them accessible to a wide circle of the Western public. Hundreds of press conferences, demonstrations, exhibitions organized thanks to the authority and participations of the representatives of the third wave of emigration, made it possible to find or create a foreign organization to support the Russian opposition as well as to attract attention from the Western press to their problems. (Iontsev et al., 2001, my translation)

#### **4.2. Relationship between Representatives of Three Emigration Waves**

When talking about the critical situation of Russian immigrants of the third wave, a lot of importance is given to their rejection by the first and the second wave emigrants, which speaks of a certain inconsistency and fragmentation. In addition, not only did they differ from

the other two waves, but the strong ideological separation could also be found within the third wave, which shows a lack of unity within their group as well.

Representatives of the third wave were not accepted by previous generations of emigrants for various reasons. The first and second wave emigrants reacted negatively to the newly arrived immigrants from Russia, criticized their views on social order at home and tried not to maintain close creative and friendly contacts with them. These disagreements happened due to the fact that the third wave of Russian emigration differed not only in its socio-political conditions, but was also characterized by particular cultural, ideological and philosophical characteristics, completely unlike the similar features of the first and second waves. Specific to the third wave was that, since they were against the political and social regime in the country that they had left, these emigrants were in a kind of a paradoxical situation due to the fact that they were actually born in and raised by that same country and its regime. However, they did not face the difficulties of the previous regime as did the older generation, which is another possible reason for the lack of their mutual sympathy. However, despite the difficulties that the older generations faced, what the first and second waves held against the representatives of the third wave was their criticism of prerevolutionary Russia and perception of those days as ‘the golden age’. Some believe that another possible reason for disagreements might be that the older generations did not see themselves as part of the new Soviet regime in Russia and they spiritually stayed in the atmosphere of past eras that preceded it. Moreover, they saw the third wave as a sign of collapse of their hope of returning to the country (Iontsev et al., 2001).

Additionally, some second wave emigrants saw third wave emigrants as competition. The writers of the third wave had a greater chance of entering the sphere of the Western intelligentsia and more opportunities to engage in intellectual work, because they learned more quickly how the western market operated and adapted more easily to new creative forms and even language. This resulted in the second wave being accepted more by the Soviet audience, and the third wave by the Western public, because the writers of the new emigration had something to tell foreign readers in forms, and even language, that were closer to them. Alexander Genis described this clash between new immigrants and past generations as follows:

When I arrived in America in 1977 and immediately started working for the old (centenary!) newspapers “Novoe russkoe slovo”, I would still find the ‘whales’ of the previous era. Literary historian Boris Filippov, Gleb Struve, Bedrayev’s brother in arms philosopher Levitsky, a critic from the Acmeists’ group Vladimir Veidle, a poet Ivan Elagin. (...) (Andrej) Sedyh liked to remember his friends and acquaintances –

Mandelstam, Rachmaninoff, Chagall, Tsvetaeva. This is why he did not notice us, since he thought that the “third wave” was a carrier of the ugly Soviet adverb, the “new language’s offspring”. Sedyh did not understand a word of Brodsky, he called Dovlatov “the guard” (...) To overcome the wall between immigrant waves was not possible, therefore the “third wave” quickly acquired its own printed base. (Genis 2010, my translation)

These different experiences and outlooks made the third wave writers separate from the representatives of the first and second waves, which largely determined the ways of their further existence in the United States, the nature of their creative work, and the way and pace of their assimilation into new living conditions. Consequently, the third wave representatives tried to assimilate into the group of Western and not Russian émigré intellectuals, which was very unusual for writers and public figures of the first two waves, who strove rather to isolate from the new environment than to assimilate into it.

### **4.3. Assimilation of Third Wave Emigrants into the United States**

#### **4.3.1. Importance of Ethnic Identity and Ethnic Communities**

The assimilation into the Western society was one of the most important factors outside literature that influenced the formation of ideology and mentality of the writers of the third wave of Russian emigration. Their success in doing so depended mostly on the formation of their ethnic identity, which in general consists of various aspects, such as “self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment to a group, a sense of shared values, and attitudes toward one’s own ethnic group” (Phinney 2001: 496). Therefore, immigrants’ choice of either assimilation or separation would depend on the way in which they perceived and interpreted their situation in the host country.

Generally, in the case of the state’s support for ethnic preservation, immigrants most often choose either integration or assimilation, while in the case of not being allowed to retain their culture they are likely to choose between separation and marginalization. This means that the success of Russian emigrants’ assimilation depended a lot on the United States’ support and immigrant policies. Because of the USA’s encouragement and acceptance of pluralism during the second half of the 20th century, it became one of the most desirable countries for immigration. The US has often allowed immigrants the option of being bicultural, and has supported integration through education, housing and financial support. Results of ICSEY research on assimilation showed that the ethnic identity scores in the United States were significantly higher than in others countries included in the study. One possible cause of a more successful assimilation in the US than in other countries is the existence of a label that

incorporates both identities, for example 'Russian-American', which makes it easier for immigrants "to feel that they are part of both their culture and the larger society" (Phinney 2001: 498). Because of the importance of one's ethnic identity, a defining characteristic of immigrants, this bicultural or integrated identity "is generally associated with higher levels of overall well-being than are the other identity categories" (Phinney 2001: 505).

Many studies have shown that another decisive factor in immigrants' choice of assimilation or separation is the support of their ethnic community. In other words, those Russians that got support from the American-Russian community in the United States, and were surrounded by others they can identify with, were more willing to adapt to the new culture, because being bicultural also involves becoming part of the host, in this case American, society. Additionally, sometimes the host society views immigrants in negative or offensive ways, in which case, having a strong and secure ethnic community proves to be of great value as well. Otherwise, pressures to assimilate, without support from one's community, would often "result in anger, depression, and in some cases, violence" (Phinney 2001: 505), which could lead to a life in isolated ghettos, making emigrants unproductive members of the society. In the case of Russian emigrants, during the three waves of immigration, some Russians settled in big communities, others chose to pave their path by themselves. The reason that immigrants chose certain regions depended on the way they wanted to integrate. For those that chose to live in New York, it was most important to live among other Russians, in a big community where everything operated in Russian and they had their own stores, clinics, libraries, etc, since for those immigrants that did not speak English it was undeniably harder to assimilate. On the other hand, there were immigrants that knew the language well and were interested in American culture, so they were comfortable enough to try to integrate by themselves and could thus settle practically anywhere in the country. However, in the case of the representatives of the third wave of Russian emigration, it is important to emphasize a significant difference between the 'general' part of the third wave immigration and the intelligentsia part. The voluntary, mass emigration with the desire to assimilate did not apply to the entire third wave. One can speak of a conscious cultural assimilation almost solely in relation to the children and grandchildren of emigrant-writers of the 1970-1980s (Skarlygina 2008). One of the reasons for having difficulties assimilating were ideological differences between different generations of Russian emigrants. Many emigrants of the third wave were initially greeted cautiously and almost hostile: psychological and generational differences were too great, the yesterday's Soviets seemed a bit strange (Skarlygina 2008). Since a very important aspect in assimilation is the

response of the receiving society, which included previous generations of Russians, not all representatives of the third wave had the desire to assimilate, at least not in Russian-American ethnic communities.

Another important factor in the success of assimilation is the initial stage in a new society, which usually includes the act of getting a new civic and social status. Immigrants' types of professions played a great role in finding their place in the working sphere. In the case of Russian emigrants, they were, for the most part, representatives of technical professions: engineers, technicians, physicists, mathematicians, biologists - people with a secondary education. Less commonly, these included students and humanitarians, many of whom were less known authors that were not able to quickly join the Western intelligentsia collective. On the other hand, known writers, such as A. I. Solzhenitsyn, I. A. Brodsky, A. I. Sinyavsky, A. V. Korzhavin, and others known in the foreign philology circle, were invited to collaborate with major universities as teachers of Slavonic languages. The former were forced to make a living by manual labor often outside their profession, and their 'finding my place' was somewhat different and probably harder.

#### **4.3.2. Relationship between Russian-American Writers and the USSR**

All the factors mentioned by now had great influence on writers of all three waves, and especially the third one. Many dissidents received the status of political refugees on the deprivation of Soviet citizenship, so the process of legalization of entry and residence on foreign country territory was the first difficulty on their way to resettling to a new location. Thus, it was typical for many authors to write about the cultural shock that one feels when entering another country for permanent residence. This, as well as initial everyday housing difficulties, problems in interpersonal relationships, the language barrier and so on, gave rise to some emigrants' rethinking of their personal position, the formation of a new world view and development of a new physical, mental and creative state.

This third wave's new worldview affected relationships not only among each other but with the USSR as well. Their complete disagreement with the political and social regime in the USSR even led to the fact that the US intelligence tried to use them as tools during the Cold War with Russia. This situation gave rise to ideological differences among third wave emigrants further more. On the one hand, part of them would realize the falsity of their new worldview and decide to rethink their interpretation of the situation in the United States. On the other hand, others became completely disappointed and spoke negatively not only about the regime, but

also about Russia all together (Iontsev et al., 2001). Analyzing the situation, N. M. Lebedeva wrote:

In emigration, strange things often happen to people – visionaries, truth worshipers, incorruptible critics of the regime, fighters for the freedom of speech and spirit, even at the cost of their own freedom (coming to the West and standing at the same place since the beginning of their emigration, not wanting to see that in Russia, which they left, major changes happened which their dreamt of) turned into stubborn and petty blind people. (Iontsev et al., 2001, my translation)

Many representatives of the third wave thought that time had stopped in Russia the moment they went abroad. Therefore, many researchers believe that their criticism of all the phenomena of Soviet social life and unwillingness to compromise was probably the cause of their ideological collapse in exile:

They were unable (or unwilling) to see real change in Russia in the late 80s and 90s: the abolition of censorship, restoration of closed pages of national history, the emergence of free access to all areas of literature, the fall of the ‘iron curtain’ and the possibility of wide international contact. (Iontsev et al., 2001, my translation)

This also prevented them from being accepted by the readership back home, since Russians saw their view of the USSR as too pretentious and false. However, such a phenomenon was not specific to only third wave of emigration. Some representatives of the first wave, as for example Ivan Bunin or Vladimir Nabokov, denied even the slightest possibility of the existence of any valuable works of literature in the Soviet Union (Iontsev et al., 2001).

Nevertheless, many of the third wave emigrant-writers continued to see themselves as part of the Russian intelligentsia. This gave rise to their eagerness to return home, which was intensified by the newfound freedom of speech in Russia and lack of supervision by the state. Returning home became for an émigré writer a matter of personal decision, since significant changes happened and a whole part of the national culture lost its historical meaning (Skobelev 1993).

#### **4.3.3. Reception of Soviet Immigrants in the USA**

The period following the World War II was a time of transition for the American society. On the one hand, the United States emerged from the war as the world’s superpower with a bright future for its citizens, and on the other hand, the atmosphere in the country was characterized as full of anxiety and frustration:

New domestic and foreign problems challenged a troubled generation. These anxieties and frustrations became manifest in a people who attempted to cope with an unfamiliar military 'police action' in Korea, with 'Cold War' tensions with the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc nations, with rapid urbanization, with intense struggles over issues of race, and with the advancement of a society consumed with increased commercialism and modernization. In addition, through its foreign policy of 'containment' of communism, the United States accepted the role of the world's policeman. (Foster 2000: 8)

The biggest American fear became the idea that some uncontrollable external force would threaten their way of life, which was often portrayed as being in contrast to the regime in Soviet Russia. This 'Americanism' can thus be seen as an explanation for the growth and attraction of anti-Russian sentiment during McCarthy. David Cate explains that "one of the appeals of McCarthyism was that it offered every American, however precarious his ancestry, the chance of being taken for a good American, simply by demonstrating a gut hatred for Commies" (Foster 2000: 9)

For that reason, during the 20th century it was not easy being a Russian immigrant. At home, they were often persecuted or even executed for opposing the system, and in the United States, because of the Red Scare<sup>8</sup>, they were surrounded by many Americans who thought that communists were trying to take over the US government. As this fear turned into mass panic, many Russian-Americans, especially those that came to the United States during the second wave of immigration, became victims of widespread suspicion that they were Soviet spies or secret agents, who tried to infiltrate the Russian émigré community in the United States. This anti-Soviet atmosphere reached its peak after Senator Joseph McCarthy's speech on February 9 1950 in West Virginia, in which he declared:

I have here in my hand a list of 205 people – a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being member of the Communist Party and who are nevertheless still working and shaping policy in the State Department. (Foster 2000: 6)

He repeated these numbers on several occasions, which started an investigation on Communist infiltrations. During the investigations, many Russian-Americans were accused of communist activity, which resulted in many of them being harassed or losing their jobs, and even jailed or

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<sup>8</sup> The Red Scare is the promotion by a state or society of widespread fear of a potential rise of communism or radical leftism. The term is most often used to refer to two periods in the history of the United States with this name. The First Red Scare, which occurred immediately after World War I, revolved around a perceived threat from the American labor movement, anarchist revolution and political radicalism. The Second Red Scare, which occurred immediately after World War II, was preoccupied with perceived national or foreign communists infiltrating or subverting U.S. society or the federal government.

deported. Therefore, they were forced to either maintain a low profile or abandon their heritage and adopt American customs.

This uncomfortable period for Russian-Americans consumed all aspects of everyday life, including public education. Attacks appeared on school personnel and educational policy and practice. In New York and Los Angeles, teachers were forced to aggressive loyalty checks, in Oklahoma books were burned for their supposed subversive representation of sex and socialism, and in Texas schools had to remove all books from their libraries that were published by the Soviet Union. In many schools, teachers worked in an atmosphere of fear, avoided controversial subjects and did not include any innovations into teaching practices for fear of losing their jobs or even being prosecuted. This anxiety and trauma, caused by the loss of freedom, resulted in self-censorship and affected their personal and family relations. The period of the Red Scare produced what the historian Ellen Schrecker described as “one of the most severe episodes of political repression the United States has ever experienced” (Schrecker 1986: 9). Since the opposition was almost nonexistent, this negative climate continued to have a significant and damaging impact on education for years to come:

[T]he full extent to which American scholars censored themselves is hard to gauge. There is no sure way to measure the books that were not written, the courses that were not taught, and the research that was never undertaken. (Schrecker 1986: 339)

Despite the fact that Russian immigrants were, sometimes, looked at with compassion and sympathy from the liberal side of American intelligentsia due to their situation in exile, many of them still thought that A. Solzhenitsyn's diatribes, human rights movements, V. Maksimov's and A. Zinovie's passionate journalism were excessive dramatizations of the political and ideological realities of the Soviet Union, which was an unnecessary complication of the international situation (Skarlygina 2008). For this reason, the contact between Western liberal intellectuals and the, generally anti-Soviet, immigrants of the third wave proved to be particularly difficult:

A lot of immigrants from the Soviet Union believed that the West was too lenient towards the Soviet Union, and that their warning about the dangers of the communist regime should be heard. What is indicative is the fact that the attempts to build bridges of understanding between Western intellectuals and Russian emigrants have had little success. (Skarlygina 2008, my translation)

#### 4.4. Russian Immigrant Literature in the United States during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

##### 4.4.1. The Question of Unity

One of the most frequent discussions when it comes to 20th century Russian literature is the question of its unity. Historians and literary critics often designate two, sometimes even three, 20th century Russian literatures – Russian literature at home, so-called *samizdat*<sup>9</sup>, and Russian literature abroad, so-called *tamizdat*<sup>10</sup>. Many essays were written on the topic of immigrant literature's language and style characteristics, in which there was often a representation of Soviet literature as actually two separate literatures happening at the same time. Literature at home was associated with control and censorship, while literature abroad with exile, alienation and estrangement. Especially during the 1980s, the popularity of immigrant literature was on the rise. Russian press would often publish interviews with immigrant authors or reviews of their work. Their books would be published in large numbers, and writers would often be asked to host reading sessions. At some point, it actually became difficult to get into newspapers if one was not a dissident. This resulted in a paradoxical situation, in which the departure abroad began to be depicted by the press as a special virtue, and emigrants were seen as figures more meaningful for Russian culture than those that remained at home (Skarlygina 2008). Even in universities, Russian literature abroad was made a separate course. However, it mostly dealt with literature of the first and second waves of immigration. On the whole, this division on 'our' and 'emigrant' literature is not so simple as it might seem at first glance. In order to say goodbye to those myths that were the basis of the opposition between Soviet and émigré literature, Russian had to slowly and responsibly analyze the debris and remove all sorts of obstacles that took decades to build (Skobelev 1996)

##### 4.4.2. General Characteristics of the Literature of the Third Wave

During the 1920s and 1930s, the goal of Russian literature abroad was to preserve the Russian culture, to continue and develop the tradition of classical Russian literature and the literature of the Silver Age – despite the formation of a new Soviet literature at home (Skarlygina 2008). Of course, that did not mean that artistic innovations were not allowed. For example, emigrant writers such as V. Nabokov or G. Gazdanov vigorously tried to overcome the dependence on the already established cultural canon, and were successful, but they were the exception to the rule (Skarlygina 2008). However, in most cases, first and second wave authors aimed at preserving the traditional culture. Afterwards, literature was marked by the

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<sup>9</sup> from *sam* ('self, by oneself') and *izdat* (an abbreviation of *izdatel'stvo*, 'publishing house')

<sup>10</sup> from *tam* ('there')

“search for the whole truth”, or “uncompromising realism”, and “remembering the forbidden tradition” (Lukšić 2004: 5). These phenomena were connected with Khrushchev’s and Brezhnev’s periods during the third wave of Russian immigration, when many writers and poets fled the country, among them J. Brodsky, S. Dovlatov, A. Galich, N. Korzhavin, V. Maksimov, V. Nekrasov, S. Sokolov, A. Sinyavsky, A. Solzhenitsyn, D. Rubina and others. Most of them wrote about their experience from the period of living in the Soviet Union, with the goal of portraying the dark side of socialism and trying to show the truth about the government’s intolerance towards anyone who disagreed with the regime. Some of them emigrated to France and Germany, but most of them went to the United States, where they founded their own Russian publishing houses and institutions for the periodical press. In aesthetics terms, writers of the third wave gave themselves creative tasks that were not welcome at home, and their literature was considered as not part of the socialist realism canon, but more “underground, and often beyond the law” (Lukšić 2004: 5). Therefore, many of them went to exile mainly so that they could be printed. Since going abroad was often forced or based on a personal choice after being rejected or criticized, they lacked the feeling of necessity to preserve Russian culture abroad. Instead, they felt the liberty to discover and use new forms or styles of writing. This was especially true in the case of the younger generation of the third wave immigrants, who had already been marked at home as creators of a second unofficial culture, which is why they avoided the political and ideological component in their work (Skarlygina 2008). For this reason, Solzhenitsyn denied being part of the third wave of Russian immigration emphasizing that because of his spirit, life experience and deep attachment to prerevolutionary Russian, he was much closer to the representatives of the postwar (‘second’) emigration (Skarlygina 2008). He called himself an outcast who was forced out of his homeland, which is why he did not consider himself part of a generation of immigrants that, as he believed, left the Soviet Union voluntarily in search for a better life. Indeed, they did not face the worst days of the regime, but this does not mean that the third wave immigrants had it a lot easier in the United States. As said in the previous chapter, they had to put extra effort in finding jobs and were not familiar with Western customs because of the Iron Curtain. Moreover, they were attacked by the previous generation for being in the center of interest of Russian immigrant newspapers, which resulted in attacks on publishers with an explanation that they wrote almost exclusively about the current emigration or that their editorial staff was made of only one kind of Soviets (Skarlygina 2008).

Major writers of the third wave of emigration were concerned about their uniqueness and formulation of their own goal or 'mission'. Aleksandr Genis believes that the thing that united them and made them unlike the two other waves was their unconditional opposition to the Soviet regime and their style and language (Genis 2010). Many of them recognized that their purpose should be to expose and question the Soviet regime in Russia. This was particularly true for writers such as A. I. Solzhenitsyn, A. Amalrik, V. Maksimov, V. Bukovskij and others. However, because of their new living circumstances that were very dissimilar to the situation in Russia - the Western functioning of literature and journalism, and the freedom of speech and press - it was difficult for them to adapt. At that time, the third wave writers were for the first time faced with concepts such as 'literature market' and 'consumer culture'. This meant that, in order to carry on their mission, they had to win over the new readership by creating works that not only expressed writers' ideas, but were also interesting to the reader. Otherwise, works by those writers that would not adapt to new circumstances and different foreign readership, would remain in small circulation mainly among other Russian emigrants.

Even though many agree that it is not entirely possible to define the third wave literature as unique, because it is still in its infancy stage (Genis 2010), these writers did differ from the first and second waves in their goal to move forward from tradition. Central themes in their works were Russian history and their life at home. However, they consisted of a lot of rethinking of that history and Soviet ideology, and contained symbols of both old and new life: homesickness, homeland, family, assimilation, cultural shock, etc., which would mostly be accompanied by feelings of emptiness and tragedy, since many of them did not leave Russia voluntarily. However, because of their constant questioning of the past and present, they would often open new philosophical and aesthetic questions focusing mostly on their existential problems and creating a new self and new literature in the West. Their biggest problem was how to get used to a strange country with a strange language, with different customs and a way of life – in short, how to survive and try to fit in a new culture (Skobelev 1996). In order to present their attitude towards the new surrounding they turned to postmodernism, used literary forms such as pun or paradox, and developed new genres. One of them was the 'novel of departure', in which the main theme is the feeling of being 'nowhere' or 'in between', which was caused by the third wave emigrants' wish not to go back to the old regime that they have outgrown, and also not to go forward into something alien to them. V. Perelman explained the situation as a creation of a special microcosm – neither Russian nor Soviet and in some way not even American (Tihomirova 1996). Other genres were the new 'epic drama', as for example

*Heron* by V. Aksenov that put the main focus on the struggle between good and evil (Gornichev 1996), and the 'emigrant anti-utopia', which parodied the utopian genre and consisted of motives such as fear and crime but was principally focused on entertaining, being interesting, and developing sharp, fascinating conflicts (Lanin 1996). However, despite all the innovations, it is important to note that:

Best books by best writers were written before the emigration of its authors. Almost all new literature masterpieces were created in the homeland, although they were printed abroad. (...) In exile, all these authors continued to write actively and fruitfully, but, as a rule, their work written in the West are inferior to the previous ones. (Genis 2010, my translation)

Another important phenomenon when it comes to literature of the third wave is its plurality. The question of political and cultural unity is not applicable to only 20th century Russian immigrant literature as a whole, but also to the third wave literature alone. During all three waves, some writers would openly criticize Western public institutions and their democratic values, while others dealt with the outside world that they sought to protect from the threat (of absolute evil) coming from Soviet Russia (Skarlygina 2008). This continued in the 1980s, at the beginning of perestroika and glasnost'<sup>11</sup>, when debates between patriots and liberals started once again. Russian patriots, representatives of the previous waves, would refer to the majority of the representatives of the third wave emigration simply as 'Jewish' and alien to the Russian spirit and Russian national culture (Skarlygina 2008), trying to emphasize ideological differences between them. Moreover, they accused the writers of the third wave of portraying Russia as a country that has an ability to be humiliated and to humiliate others (Skarlygina 2008). Indeed, while the first wave immigrants' mission was to try to preserve the Russian culture, the third wave writers' aim was to publish politically and/or aesthetically nonconformist works that were banned in the Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe, to expose the cannibalistic practice of communism, to open the world's eyes on the totalitarian system of Soviet society (Skarlygina 2008). Therefore, what was true about the third wave writers was their unique political nature evident in their mostly socially oriented texts, as described by N. Hrustaleva, who explained that among the main characteristics of the representatives of the third wave, the first one would be the ideologization of life goals and politicization of immigrants' value orientation (Hrustaleva 1996). However, these topics were

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<sup>11</sup> Perestroika was a political movement for reformation within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during the 1980s until 1991 widely associated with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and his glasnost' (meaning 'openness') policy reform.

more evident among the older generation of the third wave (e.g. V. Maksimov, N. Korzhavin, A. Zinovyev), since they gave priority to social significance of the text, while the representatives of the younger generation (e.g. S. Sokolov, A. Khvostenko, A. Cvetkov, E. Limonov, D. Savicky, Y. Miloslavsky) were mainly occupied with questions of form, style and language (Skarlygina 2008). For this reason, it is impossible to speak of the third wave immigrant literature in terms of cultural unity, or as Olga Demidova explains it, it would perhaps be more productive to talk about not unity or reunification of Russian literature, but rather a parallel movement of its several variants and existential coexistence of these variants (Demidova 2003: 244)

#### **4.4.3. Soviet Émigré Press**

Many Russians that emigrated after the Bolshevik Revolution felt they had a moral duty to preserve Russian language and literature outside the Soviet Union's borders, especially after the regime that banned all intellectual activity that did not follow the rules of communism. In addition, they wanted to keep contact between intellectuals that went abroad and the Soviet audience at home, since the interest in each other's fate in other countries was mutual. Therefore, in order to maintain that international contact and to preserve Russian language and literature abroad, Russian emigrants decided to establish institutions for the publication of Russian émigré press. They launched new newspapers, magazines and radio stations, which allowed them to openly express their thoughts and ideas without being concerned about censorship and harassment from the government.

However, during the 70s and the 80s, because of the ideological separation between emigrant writers, one part of the press was dedicated to the problems of the third wave and mainly focused on political issues, while the other part emerged in opposition. Therefore, despite the fact that in foreign countries Russians had already established journals, such as *Grani* in Germany or *Novyj zhurnal* in the United States, the third wave needed their own institutions, because cooperation with the first and second waves did not improve (Genis 2010). As a result, each emigrant group had its own publishing house. Largest literary magazines of the third wave were *Kontinent* and *Veche* in Europe, and the *Novy Amerikanets* in the United States. The *Kontinent* was a quarterly edited by V. Maksimov that published authors such as J. Brodsky and A. Sinyavsky and stood as an active resistance to communism and the totalitarian regime in Russia. Since Sinyavsky's idea was to overcome the Soviet literature, with its barren lifelikeness, and instead propose literature of phantasmagoria and grotesque, its version of, as we today call it, 'magical realism' (Genis 2010), he wanted to see a step forward from tradition

and was often regarded as the founding father of a new uncensored literature. However, the magazine developed in an opposite direction to that proposed by him, so Sinyavsky and his wife M. Rozanova founded a small magazine called *Sintaksis*, which became a pole of attraction for the liberal and pro-Western emigration (Genis 2010). The journal *Veche* was founded by V. N. Osipov that had an aversion towards the Soviet regime, but believed in Marxism-Leninism, so he characterized his journal as Russian, patriotic, and Slavophile in its orientation. The third largest émigré newspaper was Sergei Dovlatov's *Novy Amerikanets*, the only Jewish Russian language monthly journal in the United States. It was short-lived, but very influential and popular. It gathered a bright circle of authors and, more importantly, formed a reader's environment that would manage to evaluate the innovation of the newspaper. The success of the *Novy Amerikanets* remained a legend of the third wave that by now no one could repeat (Genis 2010). Indeed, the American press wrote about it, it was broadcasted on the fourth channel of American television, and a German/Swedish production group even made a film about it (Pryadko 2011: :302). Along with two ideologically opposed sides of the émigré press, there was a third one, which gathered representatives of the informal culture, who were not interested in the question of Russian politics. Therefore, they began to publish their own magazines – A. Glezer's *Tretya volna*, N. Bokov's *Kovcheg*, V. Maramzin's and A. Khvostenko's *Ekho* and others - which allowed them to separate even more from already established dissident journals and develop in their own way.

Along with the problem of disagreement between different generations and among the representatives of the third wave as well, there was also a problem with the reception of Russian literature by the Western liberal intellectuals. As it was already mentioned in the previous chapter, many intellectuals in the United States thought that the immigrants' portrayal of the Soviet regime was more of an unnecessary dramatization. Consequently, journals that dealt with the topic of Russian politics, such as the *Kontinent*, were unable to step outside the circle of Russian intellectuals. Along with the problem of separate ideologies and a readership that was scattered across various countries, this led to a situation in which it was difficult for Russian emigre journals to survive. However, what was important was their impact on the Russian culture at home and abroad:

This free forum, full with ideas and heated debates, served as an example of openness and as a prologue to a journalistic boom of the perestroika. The third wave tested the temptations and dangers of the freedom of speech, an experience that proved crucial for the whole Russian culture. (Genis 2010, my translation)

## 5. JOSEPH BRODSKY

### 5.1. Biography

Joseph Aleksandrovich Brodsky was born in 1940 in Leningrad as the only child of Aleksandr, a photographer in the Soviet Navy, and a professional interpreter Maria. They lived in poverty in communal apartments (Russian: kommunalka<sup>12</sup>). Therefore, Joseph quit school after the ninth grade in order to help support the family. He held various jobs, including helping in a morgue and participating in geological expeditions. During that time, because of his love of poetry and reading in original languages, he learned Polish, English, German, Spanish, Italian, French and Latin. In 1955, he started writing his own poems and producing literary translations, mostly from Spanish and Serbo-Croatian into Russian. The key figure in Brodsky's early years of development as a poet was one of the leading poets of the Silver Age - Anna Akhmatova. She became his mentor, encouraged him, and introduced him to other renowned artists. However, acquaintances, talent and hard work were not taken into consideration when, in 1963, the authorities confiscated Brodsky's writings. He was interrogated, put in a mental institution and in 1964, tried on charges of social parasitism and writing anti-Soviet poetry. The prosecution stated that his current and previous jobs were not a sufficient contribution to society, explaining that one should attend a university in order to be trained and become a valid poet. Brodsky argued that being a poet "is not a matter of education [...] it comes from God" (Vigdorova, Katz 2014: 185). Still, the judge disagreed explaining that his writings could not be considered work, since his poetry was not of use to the society and he was not earning money from it. Many Soviet poets, translators and scholars defended Brodsky, and all of them concluded he was talented, hardworking and humble: "I know that he lives very modestly, denying himself new clothes and entertainment, and spends the major part of his time sitting at his work desk. He contributes all the money he earns from his work to his family" (Vigdorova, Katz 2014: 191). Moreover, scholars and poets that had never met him in person defended Joseph solely on the basis of his writing talent:

These translations are talented, accomplished. [...] I can say that with complete confidence that they required tremendous effort on the part of their author. They testify to the translator's great mastery and culture. But miracles don't just happen. Mastery and culture don't simply come on their own. [...] Therefore, it is clear to me that he's working – working intensively and persistently. And when I learned today, only today, that he finished

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<sup>12</sup> Between two and seven families typically shared a communal apartment. Each family had its own room, which often served as a living room, dining room, and bedroom for the entire family. All the residents of the entire apartment shared the use of the hallways, kitchen, bathroom and telephone (if any).

only seven years of school, it became clear that he must have made a really gigantic effort to acquire such mastery and culture as he commands. The decree under which Brodsky has been called to account is directed against those who work too little, not those who earn too little. Parasites are those people who work too little. Therefore, the accusation that Brodsky is a parasite is absurd. (Vigdorova, Katz 2014: 199)

Despite their effort, Brodsky was sentenced to five years of hard labor. However, after the outcome of the trial triggered severe criticism and protests by prominent Soviet and foreign artists, some of which were Evgeny Evtushenko, Dmitri Shostakovich, Jean-Paul Sartre and Anna Akhmatova, the sentence was commuted to exile. Therefore, instead of hard labor, he was punished by serving on a farm in the town of Norenskaya, 350 miles from Leningrad, where he lived without plumbing or central heating, but was able to continue writing and reading English and American literature, mostly W. H. Auden and Robert Frost. In December 1965, he returned to Leningrad and continued to write over the next seven years. Many of these works were translated and published in the West, where his popularity grew rapidly. Nevertheless, because of the previous persecution Joseph was not permitted to leave the Soviet Union until 1971, when he was invited to immigrate to Israel on the basis of his Jewish heritage. He accepted the invitation and in 1972 took a plane to Austria, where he met Carl Ray Proffer, a professor at the University of Michigan, and an English poet and Brodsky's role model Wystan Hugh Auden. After listening to their advice, Brodsky decided to immigrate to the United States instead of Israel. Even before arriving to the USA, Brodsky's case had already been famous in the West after secret transcriptions of the trial were smuggled out of the country. This made him a symbol of resistance in a totalitarian society: "Joseph was a heroic figure, the paradigm of the dissident writer, a tremendously romantic figure who had stood up to the Soviet 'establishment' paid the consequences, and prevailed nonetheless" (Polukhina 2008b). Therefore, it is not surprising that Brodsky managed to find his first job soon after arriving to the United States. With some help from Auden and the Academy of American Poets, Joseph started working as a poet in residence at the University of Michigan, followed by the position of a Visiting Professor at Queens College, Smith College, Columbia University, Cambridge University, and Mount Holyoke College. He was mostly admired for his talent, charisma, a sense of humor, and the fact that he lived poetry and was very proud to be called a poet. Along with these positive features, he could sometimes be very rude and cruel, especially to young people but at the same time, this harshness and self-confidence was the reason why he would often leave a stunning impression, especially on his students:

Joseph projected a kind of mental energy and a kind of rigorousness that was not common. He challenged the students in ways that they were not used to being challenged, and he treated poetry as a more serious endeavor than most American students ever dreamed it could be. Some students reacted strongly against his attitude, while others, like myself, thought he was the most stimulating embodiment of poetry they had even encountered. (Polukhina 2008b)

All the hard work in writing poetry and working at various universities paid off - Brodsky was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters at Yale University, was given an honorary doctorate of literature from Oxford University, and was inducted as a member of the American Academy Institute of Arts and Letters. On top of everything, he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1987 and became Poet Laureate of the United States in 1991.

Brodsky believed that poetry had nothing to do with politics, which is why he never liked to be called a victim or play the Soviet or Jewish card on his American readership. However, William Wadsworth, Brodsky's former student and executive director of The Academy of American Poets (from 1989 to 2001), believes that it was precisely politics that gave him an opportunity to make his way in the literary world, especially the Western one. He believed that Joseph's heritage was the key to his success:

It is a terrible thing to say, but Joseph was blessed with a 'very poetic situation'. No American poet has had the opportunity to enjoy such terrible historical circumstances. Consequently, Joseph could speak with a moral authority, the authority of one who defied institutionalized evil and suffered the consequences, an air of authority that would hardly be possible for an American contemporary. (Polukhina 2008b)

Indeed, both Russian nationality and Jewish religion had a great impact on Joseph's writing and the success that followed. He lived in a repressive society, was interrogated on numerous occasions, spent some time in a mental institution, was sentenced to hard labor, lived in inhumane conditions, and was exiled to another country. In addition, he was influenced by those writers that had the same treatment as he did, due to their similar terrible fate. For example, Brodsky felt a strong connection with Osip Mandelstam, who he admired for his courage not to comply with the rules of the Soviet system and to, instead, strive for freedom and individuality. All these conditions influenced Brodsky as a poet not only in Russia, but in the United States as well, since the USA, compared to Russia, felt liberating due to its tradition of individualism and freedom:

It offered a kind of condition of existential freedom, at the very least a stoic's freedom, versus the imprisonment of the spirit in a repressive society [...] He had a chance to exert influence in a virgin territory among people, audiences and poets he both admired, enjoyed being with and felt superior to. He felt so superior that it was his privilege and pleasure to flatter Americans, and to flatter the United States [...] I am sure he saw exile as a tremendous opportunity to be a world poet, not just a Russian poet. (Polukhina 2008b)

Another great influence on Brodsky's writing and life in general was W. H. Auden, who was a kind of a prodigy among his generation of English poets. Auden, like Joseph, had a similar transition to the United States and was also an advocate of the traditional verse in modern poetry. William Wardsworth believes that it was this Auden's poetic stance, along with his philosophical and political implications, that Joseph was most drawn to:

The modern poets he most admired – Auden, Hardy, Frost – can be seen as coming out of a tradition of classic English liberalism, in which the intrinsic value is placed not on myth, system, theology, or ideology, but on the individual, on the intrinsic value and truth of human subjectivity. (Polukhina 2008b)

However, Brodsky was surprised to see that Auden was regularly considered old-fashioned and largely ignored in the United States, which was not in accordance with his belief that “the three greatest contributions that America has made to world culture are its jazz music, its cinema, and its modern poetry” (Polukhina 2008b). This Joseph's statement was considered a great validation of the importance of American poetry for the Academy of American Poets. Moreover, this was not the only way in which Brodsky tried to help Americans realize the quality of their poets and the importance of poetry in general. In order to promote poetry in American culture, he established a mass distribution of free poetry anthologies:

He made poetry ‘news’. In the U.S., where poetry is generally considered an arcane art form at best, this was an extraordinary turn of events. Suddenly there was a great deal of excitement in the press over this Russian poet laureate. Very ironically, it had taken a Russian to affirm to the American people that their literature mattered, that Americans in the twentieth century had produced some of the finest poetry ever written. (Polukhina 2008b)

## **5.2. Literature**

At the time of the Vietnam War and anti-government atmosphere in the United States, the most fashionable verse was the free verse, since many saw the traditional versification as “an expression of the academic establishment at a time when students mistrusted all

‘establishments’” (Polukhina 2008b). Brodsky, on the contrary, rejected free verse and this American modernist tradition. Instead, he brought attention to East European poets, openly presented his high regard for Auden and Frost, and brought moral seriousness to poetry. By doing so, he left a mark on many young poets, who saw him as a breath of fresh air, and made a great deal in making the “‘postmodernist’ verse look frivolous” (Polukhina 2008b).

Unlike many other great Russian poets, Brodsky was surprisingly not a lyrical poet. Quite the reverse, he sought to avoid all romantic elements. His worldview in life and in poetry was gloomy, melancholic and pessimistic. He saw the evolution of poetry in an effort to neutralize every lyrical element, bringing it closer to the sound produced by the pendulum (Mordorvceva 2007: 152). To this end, Brodsky mercilessly combined styles, putting in a single row slang words and scientific terms. His poems consist of the most complex speech constructs, unexpectedly used phrases, branched syntax, and in this sense really resemble rhetorical gymnastics (Mordorvceva 2007: 154). This complex style of writing was a reflexion of his complex perception of the world. His lyrical hero shared the same world outlook; he does not accept the world and is not interested in either the past or the present, for he realizes the mortality of all that exists, and does not see ways to avoid it (Mordorvceva 2007: 153). For that reason, the poet would frequently portray his heroes as nameless, fragmentary or anonymous. Moreover, this anonymity would further develop into a completely concealed and insignificant individual, as in the *Elegy* (1982): ‘We are but parts of a large whole’. This attitude towards the hero led to an almost complete ousting of it from the poem – increasingly the place of the hero is occupied by pronouns or adverbs (Mordorvceva 2007: 153). This oversimplification and relationship towards the hero can be seen in first several lines of Brodsky’s poem *From nowhere with love* / *Niotkuda s lyubov’yu* (1976):

*From nowhere with love the enth of Marchember sir  
sweetie respected darling but in the end  
it's irrelevant who for memory won't restore  
features not yours and no one's devoted friend  
greet you from this fifth last part of earth*

*Niotkuda s lyubov'yu, nadcatogo martobrya,  
dorogoj, uvazhaemyj, milaya, **no ne vazhno**  
**dazhe kto**, ibo chert lica, govorya  
otkrovenno, **ne vspomnit' uzhe, ne vash, no**  
**i nichej vernyj drug** vas privetstvuet s odnogo*

As previously mentioned, Brodsky would often combine different styles, which included language varieties as well. He combined formal and informal vocabulary; labor camp slang (barrack, convoy / barak, konvoj ), prison jargon (nickname / klikuha), 'high' poetic vocabulary (looked about, nurtured, solidarity / oziral, vskormila, solidarnost'), and vulgar expressions (loitering, again, gluttonized / slonyalsya, syznova, zhral). This was another Brodsky's method for creating a sense of irony that can be viewed, on one hand, as a facet of poet's worldview, and on the other, as a stylistic device in his works (Mordorvceva 2007: 154). Moreover, he used culturally specific mechanisms, devices of different nations and from various historical periods. By doing so, he was able to achieve the almost impossible for poetry. He glorified and developed Russian speech, even remaining outside the territorial borders of Russia (Mordorvceva 2007: 155-156). Aleksandr Kushner, Russian poet and essayist, believes that Brodsky made an additional effort in using these mechanisms, along with the latest slang, in order "to show that he was keeping up with linguistic changes that he encountered while in exile" (Polukhina 2008a: 129).

Brodsky drew on a wide range of themes, from nature and time to death and the metaphysical. His poem *In Memoriam / Mysl' o tebe* (1985), written as a response to the death of his parents, is a great example of one of the reoccurring themes in Joseph's poetry – grief. However, what might be unexpected in the case of the chosen topic is that the poem seems impersonal, cold and without any feeling of nostalgia. Brodsky achieved this kind of tone using irony, oversimplification and puns, as for example, an oversimplified and unemotional image at the beginning ("The thought of you is receding like a chambermaid given notice / Mysl' o tebe udalyaetsya, kak razhalovannaya prisluga"). Moreover, this poem uses another 'device' in order to achieve the impersonal and cold atmosphere - the English language. Alexandra Berlina argues that the fact that *In Memoriam* was originally written in a foreign language shows that Brodsky tried to "estrangle and mask painful remembering" (Berlina 2014: 79).

The memory of his mother was not the only theme of the past in Joseph's poems. In several of his works, he wrote about his Russian background. One of them was *A Prophecy / Prorochestvo* (1965), a poem that addresses an unnamed beloved, to whom the poet says:

*And if*

*we make a child, we'll call the boy **Andrei**,  
Anna the girl, so that **our Russian speech**,  
imprinted on its wrinkled little face,  
shall never be forgot.*

*I esli my proizvedem ditya,  
to nazovem **Andreem** ili **Annoj**.  
Chtob, k smorshhennomu lihiku privit,  
pozabyt byl **russskij** **alfavit**.*

This was one of the rare occasions on which Brodsky wrote about Russia in a positive and nostalgic tone. At other times, he would frequently write about his homeland in a more critical and negative tone. For instance, he wrote about "the quantity and energy of the evil directed against Osip Mandelstam, and the dreadful fate of the poet who was, like Brodsky, too autonomous to merge into that brutal society" (Meyers 2014: 126). Still, many considered him apolitical. Indeed, even though he closely followed everything that was happening in Russia, Joseph wrote only several poems criticizing Russian politics, some of which were *On the Death of Zhukov / Na smert' Zhukova* (1974) and *Centaurs IV / Kentavry IV* (1988). The first one is a poem about a Russian hero of the World War II, and the second one about the life of veterans and the Soviet relationship with Afghanistan.

Brodsky's desire to combine and unite things that usually do not work well together and his habit of going to extremes in his doubts and questions were key principles of his poetry. One of his central existential beliefs was that faith was the main virtue of a person. However, he was not categorical in the matter of the superiority of faith over reason and did not diminish the importance of either one. Therefore, although his thoughts were close to the philosophy of Existentialism, the fact that he believed the rational was only one of the ways to cognize the world, Joseph's beliefs did not entirely correspond to those of the Existentialists. Brodsky thought that for a believer nothing was impossible and he saw suffering as a blessing that gave a person additional experience. These beliefs were expressed in his poem *Conversation with a Celestial Being / Razgovor s nebozhitelem* (1970), in which the poet addresses the Celestial:

*I will not wait*

*for your replies, **Angel** [...]*

*I shall not cry out: Why hast **Thou** forsaken me?! [...]*

***you** encounter things in the Second Circle,  
having **descended from the cross**. [...]*

***God** knows!*

*Ne stanu zhdat'*

*tvoih otvetov, **Angel** [...]*

*ne vozoplyu: "Pochto menya ostavil?!" [...]*

*idesh' na veshhi po vtoromu krugu,  
**sojdy**a s kresta. [...]*

***Bog** vest'!*

The fact that he never gets an answer makes him shout louder, which emphasizes the silence (*Silence of the night.../ Nochnaya tish'....*), and the lyric hero starts to doubt that human speech can reach the ears of the celestial. Therefore, the 'conversation' quickly turns into a monologue, and the poem reveals another instance of Brodsky's play with irony when dealing with one of the questions that he took great interest in - the question of choosing between theism and atheism. However, it should be noted that in most of Brodsky's nativity poems, as in the *Conversation with a Celestial Being*, he does not portray religion in the sense of its everyday practice, but instead these motives of faith represent the metaphysical in general:

Brodsky is, first and foremost, a metaphysician. The religious aspect of his work can in no way be considered to be akin to the poetry of religious ecstasy, nor does it deal with the minutiae of the religious life. And it has nothing to do with that organic fellowship in redemption (*sobornost*) that is considered to be particular to our Russian Orthodox faith. (Polukhina 2008a: 76)

Besides, Brodsky never liked to talk about religion and spirituality, so during a question-and-answer session, after a reading of his poetry at a university, he refused to answer a question about his attitude towards religion, arguing that one was not supposed to ask or answer those kind of questions. An American essayist Susan Sontag explained Brodsky's complex connection to religion:

He was interested in Christianity because of its domination of European culture. [...] I don't feel him as a religious poet and I don't feel him as someone who particularly identified with Judaism or being Jewish, just as I don't. He was a poet of world culture, in the European sense. [...] This was his material: there was Horace, there was Ovid and there was Auden, there was Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva. Why does Judaism have to come into it? Why does Christianity come into it? (Polukhina 2008b)

This privateness in religious affiliation is connected with another theme that often appeared in Brodsky's poetry - individuality. Joseph believed in the importance of individuality, which is complemented by a person's uniqueness and separateness. He explained this in his Nobel lecture on December 8, 1987:

If art teaches anything (to the artist, in the first place). It is the privateness of the human condition. Being the most ancient as well as the most literal form of private enterprise, it fosters a man, knowingly or unwitting, a sense of his uniqueness, of individuality, of separateness – thus turning him from a social animal into an autonomous 'I'. Lots of things can be shared: a bed, a piece of bread, convictions, a mistress, but not a poem by, say, Rainer Maria Rilke. A work of art, of literature especially, and a poem in particular, addresses a man tête-à-tête, entering with him into direct – free of any go-betweens – relations. (Lavers 2013: 42)

In Brodsky's later works, he was mostly interested in themes of time and place. Through these categories, he analyzed the relationship between the Self and the outside world. However, he did not treat space and time in the same way. In his opinion, time increasingly strives for Eternity, holds an incomparably higher place than all worldly existence, and is elevated by the poet to the rank of the infinite and the boundless (Mordovceva 2007: 151). This interesting representation of the poet's comprehension of time can be seen in the poem *Lullaby / Kolybel'naya* (1992), which portrays Christ's separation from his mother:

*Birth I gave you in a desert  
not by chance,  
for no king would ever hazard.*

*Seeking you in it, I figure,  
won't be wise  
since it's winter cold is bigger  
than its size.*

*Rodila tebya v pustyne  
ya ne zrya.  
Potomu chto net v pomine  
v nej carya.  
B nej **iskat'** tebya naprasno.  
B nej zimoj  
Stuzhi bol'she, chem prostranstva  
v nej samoj.*

However, this is not only a geographical separation of a son and his mothers, but also a temporal separation of mankind from God, a central concept in Christian theology. Lavers explains this connection of movement and time as follows: "The image of Christ in the desert (and the nativity scene) is compelling because of how it inserts a finite body (Jesus), and the sense of

time that that body represents, into a landscape that is seemingly infinite both geographically and temporally” (Lavers 2013: 35). Therefore, in this case, Christ is not the one who eternizes, but one who makes finite, which makes his impact not spiritual, but temporal:

*Paths one sees here are **not really**  
human paths  
but the **centuries'** which freely  
through it **pass**.*

***Ne lyudskie**, znat', v nej tropy!  
Velika  
i bezlyudna ona, chtoby  
**shli veka**.*

Unlike on the notion of time, Brodsky had a completely different opinion on the notion of space. Even though he believed that time cannot exist without matter, that it does not exist in its pure form, he still saw space as a negative phenomenon without a function. In his opinion, a poet does not like space, because it spreads out, that is, leads to nowhere (Mordovceva 2007: 152). However, one spatial theme, or rather the result of spatial separation, often occupied Joseph's thoughts and led to one of the most reoccurring themes in Brodsky's poetry – mortality. Poetry in general has always been interested in life and death, the two themes that have been poets' endless sources of inspiration for centuries, and Brodsky's answer to its often asked question - how to conquer death - lays in the artistic play with language:

The attempt to come to grips with time, to find a reconciliatory relationship with that very real abstraction with which we all live is one of the central themes of Brodsky's poetry. Time and death are interwoven; in fact, according to Brodsky, Time was created by death. [...] To conquer both, we are given language. It is because we are mortal that we feel the need to artistically play with language, to create, as Frost said, that momentary stay against confusion. (Lavers 2013: 42)

### 5.3. Translation

At the time of his death, Brodsky was considered one of the greatest poets writing in his mother tongue and, after decades spent in the United States, he became a great poet writing in the adopted language as well. However, his relationship with the English language age started off on the wrong foot: “At the age of ten I regarded this language as an unnecessary evil. So much that I was almost left for a second year in the fourth grade: on account of my poor showing in English and botany” (Ishov 2008: 61). Later, at the beginning of the 1960s, while serving a five-year sentence of hard labor on charges of social parasitism, Brodsky discovered poetry of John Donne and Wystan Hugh Auden equipped with only a bilingual dictionary. This was the start of his interest in English poetry and language: “Beginning in about 1964 I would read

Auden when I came across him, deciphering him line by line. At some point in the late 1960's I was already beginning to understand things. I couldn't help but understand him – not so much his poetics as his metrics. That is, this is what poetics are" (Volkov 1998: 129). While he was living in Leningrad he did not get a chance to practice his English, but he early on realized that translation was an activity from which he could not only derive a great degree of pleasure, but could also get a chance to polish his knowledge of foreign languages. His love for the English language grew rapidly and he decided to pay homage to his adoptive tongue and to poets that influenced him the most. In addition, he wanted to revive the formal verse. Therefore, he did not hesitate to test his English language capabilities translating great 'formal' poets, such as John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Robert Frost, T.S. Eliot, and many others. By doing so, Brodsky wanted to sustain a certain standard of the English language:

I have the poem in the original, that's enough. I've done it and for better or worse it stays there. My Russian laurels – or lack of them – satisfy me enough. I'm not after a good seat on the American Parnassus. 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 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. (Haven 2002: 73-74)

Furthermore, he believed that in order to write well in a foreign language, one has to hear it. He was especially fascinated by 'Oxford English', which he first heard after arriving to the United States and meeting an English poet, essayist and novelist Stephen Spender: "It was for me [a] gripping, stunning [pleasure] [...] to hear Oxford English. The phenomenal nobility of sound! [...] I nearly fainted. I was simply staggered! Few things have ever made that kind of impression on me." (Volkov 1998: 126). Unfortunately, he did not get many opportunities to practice spoken English and was insecure about his strong Russian accent, which he thought made it difficult to understand what he was saying. However, on the contrary, his friends from the West would often comment that his English was surprisingly good for someone who taught himself, "good not in its grammatical exactness but in his ability to express so many of his ideas. He joked about how bad his English was, but I think he was proud of it and his own accomplishment nevertheless" (Haven 2002: 4-6). His knowledge of the second language improved after arriving to the United States into a circle of mostly English speaking friends. Poet and essayist Bella Akhmadulina believes that this new environment gave a boost to Joseph's anglophile side

and the idea of a world culture that he was so fond of, and which he believed was possible through translations:

And while we suffer in Russia, Brodsky is elsewhere. I think that this has been useful to him. In other words, he has none of the negative qualities of narrow-mindedness, pettiness, parochialism. He is a worldwide phenomenon. Indeed, his sense of world culture, of language in general, it seems to me, reveals itself in his poetics. (Polukhina 2008a: 106)

When it comes to Brodsky's translation technique, he was a supporter of an adaptive method<sup>13</sup>, which proved to be quite a difficult task due to different trends in English and Russian poetic traditions as well as differences in their grammatical structures:

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. Its power is in its subordinate clauses, in all those participial phrases and other grammatical turns of speech that the devil himself could break his leg on. All of this simply does not exist in English. (Volkov 1998: 86)

These dissimilarities made it almost impossible to avoid losses in translations. Much would be left out, especially in the case of other translators translating Brodsky's poetry. Therefore, he decided to undertake this task by himself feeling that his profound knowledge of both Russian and English languages made him more aware of their possibilities. However, there was a certain amount of criticism directed against Joseph's teaching and translating English language and poetry. Some would comment that English was Brodsky's second language, which meant he was ill equipped to comprehend it. Others believed that the Russian language determined his tastes in English, making them irrelevant to his new readership. However, many thought quite the opposite, saying that Brodsky being both the author and the translator had an enormous advantage over other translators. Since he experienced firsthand both American and Russian realities, and knew what his initial intention was in the original poem, as well as the effect he wanted to produce on the reader, he was given a unique freedom to make changes to his original images or metaphors.

Out of Brodsky's sixty prose texts, only sixteen were originally written in Russian, and out of more than five hundred poems only about forty-five were originally English. One of

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<sup>13</sup> Adaptive (or mimetic) translation presupposes attempts by the translator to find precise metrical and stylistic equivalents of the foreign original in the target language, both on the level of form and content.

those originally Russian poems that he himself translated, *The North Buckles Metal / Sever kroshit metall* (1976), can serve as a great example of Brodsky's translation methods:

*The North* buckles **metal**, **glass** it won't harm;

teaches the throat to say, "Let me in."

I was raised by the **cold** that, to warm my palm,

gathered my fingers around a pen.

*Sever* kroshit **metall**, no shhadit **steklo**.

Uchit' gortan' progovorit' «vpusti».

**Holod** menya vospital i vlozhl pero

v pal'cy, chtoby ih sogret' s gorsti.

**Freezing**, I see the red sun that sets

behind oceans, and there is no soul

in sight. Either my heel slips on **ice**, or the globe itself

arches sharply under my sole.

**Zamerzaya**, ya vizhu, kak za morya

Solnce sadit'sya, i nikogo krugom.

To li po **l'du** kabluk skol'zit, to li sama zemlya

zakruglyaetsya pod kablukom.

And in my throat, where a boring tale

or tea, or laughter should be the norm,

**snow** grows all the louder and "**Farwell!**"

darkens like Scott wrapped in a polar storm.

I v gortani moej, gde polozen smeh,

ili rech', ili goryachij chaj,

vse otchetlivej razdaetsya **sneg**

i cherneem, chto tvoj Sedov, «**proshhaj**».

Brodsky believed that the only thing that could create barriers in poetry translations was the difference in historical realities:

I don't believe the language creates [...] a barrier. What creates this barrier is some historical reality, which for most of the century was politically different from the reality of the realms of 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. (Volkov 1998: 183)

However, he still decided to translate the above poem about the Russian North, a Russian reality that has no equivalent in the English historical background and is, therefore, rather exotic to non-Soviet readers, especially the Western ones. In order to bring this subject closer to the

reader, Brodsky had to make changes on the poem's semantic level. Since he believed that form played a vital role in poetry, he did not mind making changes in his own original metaphors or images in order to keep the structure as truthful to the original as possible. However, he did not decide to lose some of the original images in his translations just to keep the original form, but also in order to produce meaning that would be closer to the Western reader. For example, he decided to replace the image of the 'Sedov'<sup>14</sup> sailing ship with 'Scott wrapped in a polar storm'. By using the story of Captain Robert Falcon Scott's ill-fated mission to the Antarctic in 1911, Brodsky placed the importance on "the image of a Polar explorer trapped in a snowy and icy wasteland and not whether he was a Russian hero or an English one; or whether it was the North or the South Pole that he explored" (Ishov 2008: 217). Other examples include the replacement of the image of the 'sea' and 'speech'. By using 'behind oceans' instead of 'beyond the sea', he additionally stressed the enormous distance and the feeling of loneliness. To serve the same purpose, he replaced 'speech' from the original with 'a boring tale', since 'tale' has a more private and secluded connotation in the English language.

In order to preserve the same atmosphere as in the original, he kept most of the symbols for the grayness ('metal', 'glass', 'ice') and coldness ('North', 'cold', 'freezing', 'ice', 'snow', 'polar storm') of the landscape. The symbols of 'metal' and 'glass' were preserved because of their contrasting meanings and a popular belief about the North, according to which "people, who can conform with the rules of society and with the help of their assertive qualities gain success in it, often break down in the North; vice versa, people seemingly too fragile to succeed in everyday life – especially due to their honesty and transparency ('glass') – are believed to prove fitter to withstand its challenges" (Ishov 2008: 210). The symbol of a pen in 'I was raised by the cold that, to warm my palm, / gathered my fingers around a pen' was preserved because of the autobiographical connotation - Brodsky's exile to the North, where he spent his time writing and reading.

When it comes to rhymes, Brodsky was always more precise in their transfer to English versions than his co-translators. The same can be seen in *The North Buckles Metal*. He would replace original images, or their position in the poem, in order to maintain the same form, but at the same time trying to make certain meanings rhyme as well. For example, in the English version of the first stanza, the poet managed to rhyme three out of four semantically identical words that rhyme in the original ('harm – palm', 'soul – sole', 'norm – storm'), even though

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<sup>14</sup> a four-masted steel barque that for almost 80 years was the largest traditional sailing ship in operation in Russia

some of them did not stay in the same rhyming couple ('let me in – pen', 'harm – palm). Another method he used for keeping the structure of the original poem was to introduce new words that were not present in the original, as can be seen in the second stanza where he added words 'red' and 'sharply'. In the same stanza, in order not to lose the 'soul' – 'sole' rhyme, he used two words with similar meaning ('heel' and 'sole') instead of only one word used twice in the original ('kabluk).

All in all, although there is no critical consensus about the quality of Brodsky's self-translations due to their often broken harmony and un-Englishness, when taking into account the preservation of original metaphors, images, and the bond between form and content, one might conclude that Brodsky had successfully achieved his goal of showing English and Russian language similarities rather than focusing on their differences. His authentic and independent English verses have indeed rendered homage to the English language:

He managed to get into this big league of English language poets. How did he manage it? (...) What drove him, what made for Joseph's genius, was not just the lyric quality. It was the intelligence. Because he was a poet of phenomenal intelligence. That is the principle at work. And it's not an English or an American quality. (Polukhina 2008b)

## 6. SERGEI DOVLATOV

### 6.1. Biography

Sergei Donatovich Dovlatov was born in 1941 in Ufa, Republic of Bashkiria within the USSR, from where he and his family immigrated to Leningrad during the World War II. His mother was an Armenian actress and his father a Jewish theater director. After two and a half years of studying, Dovlatov left the Finnish Department at the Leningrad State University, after which he earned his living as a journalist and tour guide. In his second attempt, he enrolled in the Department of Journalism at the same university. During college, he wrote for a students' newspaper, and after graduation for the *Banner of Progress*. From 1972 to 1975, Dovlatov lived in Tallinn, where he was a correspondent for two newspapers - *Soviet Estonia* and *Estonian Seaman*. In 1975, he returned to Leningrad, where he worked in the *Bonfire* magazine. Along with his journalistic work, Dovlatov wrote prose fiction, but was unable to get published in the Soviet Union and most of his stories were banned. Fortunately, Dovlatov's writings managed to find their way into Western Europe in the early 1970s, mostly through the *Kontinent*, *Vremya i my* and *Ekho*. However, these publications in foreign journals caused his expulsion from the state by Soviet authorities in 1978. He was charged with social parasitism because of his "ultra-liberal literary affiliations, his bohemian lifestyle and his lack of steady employment" (Ryan-Hayes 1992: 155-156). Therefore, unlike most émigré authors, Dovlatov had hardly published in the Soviet Union before emigrating, which means that he was exiled to the United States among writers such as Sinyavsky, Aksyonov, Voinovich and Vladimov that had enjoyed a literary and dissident glory before emigration, while Dovlatov started almost from scratch (Genis 2010). Certainly, censorship and exile had an effect on his writing, but unlike many who believe that the oppression that writers experienced in the Soviet Union had only a positive effect on their literary work, Dovlatov argued that these kind of conditions would often lead to different consequences. He believed that „such pressures can be likened to heavy physical labor, which up to a certain point toughens a man and builds up his muscles but which can, once that point is passed, disable or destroy him“ (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985).

Along with censorship and oppression by the Soviet government, Dovlatov's days as a camp guard in the army had a great impact on his literary work and worldview as well. Many of his friends were convicts, informants or even inspectors, so the army was quite a common theme during their discussions. Dovlatov appreciated his camp experience, but believed that nothing was black and white in the world, even in the case of prison camps, and that prison was like an abbreviation of life: by removing all cultural layers, it skins life to flesh, to pure existence

(Genis 1998). Thus, Dovlatov believed that it was precisely this period of his life that “made him a writer”:

I was stunned by the depth and diversity of life. [...] For the first time I realized what freedom, cruelty, and violence are. [...] I saw freedom behind bars. Brutality, senseless like poetry. [...] I saw a man completely brought down to the status of an animal. I saw what he was able to enjoy. And I think I saw the light. (Genis 1998, my translation)

After Dovlatov left the Soviet Union for Austria in 1978, and the United States in 1979, many considered him the voice of the third wave of Russian emigrant writers. However, he did not see himself as a typical representative of the third wave, since he was not a political immigrant, and his literature was not a result of frustration with Soviet literary institutions: “I was not a dissident, I did not take part in any political struggle, all I did was write stories no one wanted to print. I left so that I could write without fearing for myself and my family” (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985). Thus, he saw himself as part of the smaller stream of Russian emigration – the artistic one.

In an interview with J. Bobko, Dovlatov explained that he chose the United States not only because it was one of the countries tolerant towards immigrants, but also because he was in love with American movies, jazz and prose. While he was still in the Union, he liked meeting American tourists due to their easy manners, uninhibited behavior and contempt for accepted norms. He explained what the United States looked like in the eyes of Russians:

I'd like to explain what America was for us. America was our idea of heaven, because heaven, in essence, is whatever one doesn't have. For us America embodied freedom, independence, open friendliness, and miraculous technology; it was a nation of cowboys, jeans, records, and cocktails. For many of us our love of America and somewhat naive notions about it were in our younger years something of an ideological, moral, and artistic creed. (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985)

While still living in Russia, Dovlatov was, like many Russians, fascinated by the myth of American democracy and its promise of various rights and freedoms. He imagined the United States as a country of equality with a social system that does not persecute those that do not think or act the way the government wants them to. Brodsky explained this sudden shift from oppression to freedom:

Freedom of movement was out of the question. When all of a sudden this became a possibility, it was too late for many of us to realize it: we did not need a physical realization

of this freedom anymore. The idea of individualism had become for us but an abstract, metaphysical idea. [...] In this sense, we had achieved in our consciousness and on paper a much more tangible freedom that it would have ever been possible to achieve physically anywhere. (Meerzon 2015: 71)

However, after his arrival, Dovlatov realized that the United States was not exactly what he imagined it to be. It was “no better and no worse, but a thousand times more varied. It turned out there's everything here: good and bad, greatness and mediocrity, combativeness and goodwill, nonchalance and practicality. For the first time in my life I feel at home” (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985). In the USA, the place Dovlatov called home was the city of New York. He saw the city as a place of contrasts:

New York is relaxingly blithe and lethally dangerous. Excessively generous and pathologically stingy. [...] Its architecture reminds of a pile of children's toys. It is nightmarish to the point of attaining a certain harmony. [...] This city is so diverse that you feel there is a nook for you too. I think that New York is my last, definitive, final city. (Meerzon 2015: 62-63)

Yana Meerzon argues that achieving a sense of closure with his home country was the only way for Dovlatov to make it in the dream city. He managed to accomplish this by “re-creating the mentality, the geography and the social-cultural practices of the 1980s Russian New York in his short stories”, and by this creating an “imagined community” (Meerzon 2015:60). The neighborhood of New York, as a place of contained life, became Dovlatov's main inspiration and served him as “a strategic point, the stage on which the theatre of Russian émigré life takes place” (Meerzon 2015: 69-70).

Dovlatov not only adapted to his new surroundings in New York, but the American readership embraced him as well. In a little over a decade in emigration, he published twelve books, and his translated stories were featured in the *New Yorker* magazine, which made him the second Russian writer, after V. Nabokov, to appear in this highly respected journal. Sergei believed that he owed this success not only to his prose that met the American standards, or his fine literary agent, but mostly to Joseph Brodsky: “I've had fewer problems than many other Russian writers in America. Right from the beginning I've been very lucky. It was my luck that Joseph Brodsky put his stamp of approval on my stories and recommended them to The New Yorker” (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985). After he established himself in the writers' circle, he was praised by many American writers, and even received the Pen Club prize for the best story of the year.

The one part of assimilation in which Dovlatov did not succeed was his very poor command of the English language. This affected his knowledge of contemporary American literature and criticism, since he could only read works that were translated into Russian. However, Sergei's poor command of the language did not have an impact only on his knowledge of American literature, but his everyday life as well:

I can't write even a primitive business letter in English, I have almost no possibility of establishing personal contacts in America, I react to jokes with a stone face, in the company of Americans I feel like a six-year-old child, and a trip to a restaurant with my editor Lee Goerner—a charming man of obvious intelligence -is a painful ordeal for me. (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985)

Despite the translations, some may argue that because of this language barrier Dovlatov did not fully integrate into the American literary circle. In one of his interviews, Dovlatov explained his difficulty as a writer in the United States that does not speak English:

Once in the West, you stop having a feel for your audience. What do you write and for whom? For Americans about Russia? For Russians about America? Turns out you write for yourself. For that familiar and close person. (Meerzon 2015: 65)

Dovlatov's problems with language brought forward another interesting fact that mesmerized him. He was never interested in questions of nationality, but still thought that being Armenian was more interesting than being a Russian Jew, since the second one was not exotic enough (Genis 1998). However, after spending some time in the United States, he realized that Americans view this notion quite differently than the Soviets. Dovlatov thought about his nationality only when he would come to Russia, while across the ocean, everyone would quickly forget the question of nationality. They would most probably forget whether someone was Russian or Armenian, but being a Jew was something that never escaped the conversation. To Russian-Americans Jews were always a topic. For many people, if the topic was not the Jews, than it was not a topic at all (Genis 1998). Nevertheless, he was admired by both Russian and English speaking readers, whether Jewish or not. One of the reasons of his popularity might be that, although Dovlatov dealt with same themes as other representatives of the third wave (labor camps, censorship, oppression, etc), readers felt the originality of Dovlatov's style and the charm of his worldview. His style of writing was simple, avoided tricks, psychological prose and the trend of avant-garde techniques, and he would rather put himself below than above the reader (Genis 2010). In addition, unlike many authors of the third wave, Sergei wanted to

assimilate, to discover and understand his new surroundings. He was willing to adapt to new circumstances, and this positive attitude proved successful in gaining a Western readership.

While Dovlatov was focused on the acceptance of the American readership, the literary situation in the Soviet Union was, in his words, “wretched, barren, and – what’s most important – incredibly uninteresting. If under Stalin talented writers were at first published, subsequently vilified in the press, and finally executed or destroyed in camps, it’s now the case that no one is executed, almost no one is put in prison – and no one is published” (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985). Not everyone agreed with this rather pessimistic view, but for Dovlatov the fact that books were published, to some extent, did not mean that the situation was promising, since not many of them dealt with important issues. However, despite all its problems, he believed that Russian literature had a future, because “As long as at least one Russian writer of genius is alive and writing, Russian literature is still alive” (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985), and here he mentions Joseph Brodsky, Fazil Iskander, Venedikt Erofeev, Vasily Aksyonov and Andrei Sinyavsky. As long as their books are published, or returned to Russia from the West, and are being passed from one person to another, then Russian literature lives on. However, this was not an easy task, since all correspondence between the Union and the West was carefully monitored. Nevertheless, Dovlatov’s books managed to pass by the Soviet wall in a limited number of copies, and after the fall of the Soviet Union almost all of his works got published.

## **6.2. Literature**

Even though Dovlatov was a member of the dissident wave of immigration, he did not consider himself a dissident, and was not particularly interested in politics or the question of nationality: “He rejected (implicitly if not explicitly) the tenets of Socialist Realism and sought inspiration in the gritty, sometimes seamy aspects of Soviet urban contemporaneity” (Ryan-Hayes 1992 155). However, Dovlatov’s works still seemed to deal with the same themes as those of other third wave authors. He explained this by saying that, in a sense, “every work of fiction is autobiographical, if for no other reason than that a writer’s own emotional life serves as his raw material, and his wildest fantasies rest upon personal experience” (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985). Therefore, Dovlatov’s own writing was based on different areas of his own experience: family, lower-class urban life, strict-security prison camps, etc. However, the difference was that these stories were presented from a privileged point of view - “simultaneously from within (an immigrant and permanent resident) and from without (as a recent arrival who does not speak English and only marginally grasps cultural nuances)” (Ryan-Hayes 1992 157).

Another innovation in Dovlatov's writing was the fact that he was not afraid to portray himself in a painful or humiliating situation, or present himself as ridiculous or weak. However, the real-life Dovlatov contradicted the literary one when it came to physical appearance, which was more on the tough side than the helpless one. Therefore, in order to achieve compassion, he would openly share the embarrassment, and surround himself with sympathetic readers, believing they would return the favor with affection and love. This was quite unusual, since people usually find it more important to hide physical defects than the spiritual ones, but Dovlatov's motive on the surface only masked the plot that he secretly plaited his whole life: Sergei was careful not to rise above the reader. Like no other, he understood the gains of that position (Genis 1998). In other words, Dovlatov's goal of this kind of self-portrayal was to humble himself and become equal to the reader, since he believed that in literature the strong one is liked less than the weak one, the intelligent one is feared more than the stupid one, the luckier ones are more often punished than the unlucky ones, and that people prefer a helpless baby to a titan of the universe (Genis 1998).

Dovlatov would apply this method on his characters as well. He believed that there is a sinner and a righteous man in all of us, but that no one should be judged for it. A. Genis recalls an incident in which Sergei confronted the entire radio station *Svoboda*, because they excitedly talked about the dead and wounded during the American attack on Gaddafi's palace. Since he hated the idea of paying according to merit, he explained, pale with rage, how vile it is to enjoy something like that. Genis believes that Dovlatov acted this way because he tried to understand every crime, and could not stand the idea of punishment. He was not guided by love or kindness, but felt a deep sense of an unbreakable blood tie with the entire world (Genis 1998). The reason why in his stories the author is not different from the characters is precisely because Dovlatov believed that, even though people are complex, we are still all the same. These complex features were the reason that Sergei was interested in people. He was so fascinated by human emotions and interrelationships that people became the alphabet of his poetics. That is, person as a unit of text (Genis 1998). However, Sergei believed it was important to not only present all these different characteristics, but also to present them as accurately as possible. He thought that many authors wrote long and beautiful, but about nothing, and that most often the accuracy would be replaced by good intentions (Genis 1998).

Despite the complex human nature, Dovlatov looked for the minimum combination of elements, which would sometimes make his texts give the impression of being hastily written or inattentively edited. They tend to the journalistic and feuilletonistic rather than to the

belletristic side of the literary spectrum (Genis 1998). Indeed, he would remove everything he considered less important, present only the inevitable, and express it accurately and in a rather simple way. He himself explained the basis of this kind of appearance: “I understand that all my reasoning is quite trivial. No wonder Vail and Genis nicknamed me ‘the troubadour of polished banality.’ I take no offence. [...] I'm proud that not once in my life have I written such an odious sentence as ‘The heavy oak door scraped open’ (Ryan-Hayes 1992: 158). Still, because of this simplicity his stories would often seem rough and incomplete. However, as Brodsky wrote, they should not be dismissed as trivial just because he did not like excess drama or tragedy:

Dovlatov does not make drama out of what's happening to him because he is not contented with drama, whether physical or psychological. [...] He is remarkable in his rejection of the tendency for tragedy endemic to Russian literature, as well as its consolatory drift. The tone of his prose is tongue-in-cheek in a reserved way, if one considers the desperation of the condition he describes. (Meerzon 2015: 81)

As explained above by Brodsky, Dovlatov's style corresponded to his ethics. He was very self-disciplined and economical when it came to expression. However, this desire for simplicity would close for Dovlatov various possibilities when it came to style. For example, he could not use extended metaphors, so instead, in order to escape these self-imposed restraints, he would use “short metaphors in a multilevel or nuclear chain-like manner – when every subsequent sentence deepens and specifies the previous one building up the mockery within it” (Tabachnikova 2015: 254). Dovlatov believed that this kind of writing would hardly cause a sensation, but he hoped that, nonetheless, he would have a potential circle of readers in the Soviet Union: “My presumed readers are, of course, less cultivated and discriminating than, for example, Brodsky's, but then I console myself with the hope there are more of them” (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985).

The previously mentioned Dovlatov's self-discipline and economy in expression are connected to one other literary feature - his use of a documentary- or montage-like, structure. Dovlatov described his literary style as “an attempt to synthesize artistic and documentary devices [...] trying to create an artistically coherent chain of events whose result is a document” (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985). He would mix the truth with invention, or in other words, use documents that are created by artistic means. In Sergei's words, he used this kind of style in order to avoid active measures of any kind, since he believed in passively following the circumstances (Genis 1998). Moreover, Yana Meerzon argues that his documentary feature is

similar to caricatures: “Using techniques of concretization similar to newspaper sketches, Dovlatov’s writing creates an impression of a documentary that at the same time borders on caricature” (Meerzon 2015: 74). Indeed, many of the images in his stories have a photographic quality, which gives an impression of authenticity. Dovlatov’s goal was to blur boundaries between real life and literature, and in order to do so, he would often appear as a figure in the text – a Russian writer in the United States, who had his books published in both Russian and English. By equating himself with the characters, he would let the surroundings speak and use the narrator-character to present his point of view and have the ability to find humor in those unexpected situations. By examining this narrative strategy, one can unveil “considerable sophistication and technical mastery in regard to the implied author, degree of narrative perceptibility and narrative reliability” (Ryan-Hayes 1992: 158), and even consider his writing as autobiographical. Another feature of Dovlatov’s writing connected to the documentary-like style, is his great attention to detail, which Tabachnikova believes has its roots in Dovlatov’s taste in music: “an admirer of jazz improvisations from his youth, Dovlatov wrote his prose following internally not so much the main theme, but its variations” (Tabachnikova 2015: 254).

Some of these features of Dovlatov’s writing style resemble those common to American writers. Dovlatov argued that one must take into consideration the fact that, even though he and other writers of the third wave were born and raised in the Soviet Union, they also witnessed the fall of the Iron Curtain, when they “were given access to the previously forbidden fruit of the ‘bourgeois’ culture” (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985). Therefore, as they were exposed to American writers such as Faulkner, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Vonnegut, etc. much later than the readership in the West, they discovered a new literary style that was considerably different from the one they were used to:

Their prose differed in important respects not only from lifeless, bombastic, and pious Soviet writing but also from Russian classical literature. What struck us was the aesthetic brilliance of Western, and particularly American literature, its genuine tragic note, attention to real human problems, and competent observation of life. (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985)

The fall of the Iron Curtain brought forward another phenomenon in Soviet literary circles. American novels were published in Russia in translation made by the Soviet school of translation, which gave a chance to many prominent authors, who were not able to publish their own books in the Soviet Union, to work as translators for financial reasons. Along with the positive outcome of American literature becoming more available to Russian readership, there

was also a drastic increase in the quality of translations. In addition, it is important to note that Soviet censorship was not as hard on American writers as it was on the Soviet ones:

If a Soviet heroine betrays her husband without any special regrets, that's slandering socialism, but when Mike Campbell's fiancée Brett Ashley does exactly that in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, it's taken as progressive criticism of bourgeois life. (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985)

However, this translation phenomenon had a negative effect as well, since many writers had to spend their time translating other authors, which harmed their original creations. Another problem was that, because of the greater availability of American literature, Dovlatov, and many other authors, “grew up under the influence of American literature, consciously and unconsciously imitated American writers”, which the Soviet editors held against him referring to the “pernicious influence of the West” (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985). On the contrary, influence and imitation of American literature proved positive once Dovlatov immigrated to the United States, where his knowledge of the Western literary style made his books more accessible to American readership.

Dovlatov's success among the American readership gave rise to his influence on the Soviet literature abroad and at home. Dovlatov stepped away from traditional Soviet poetics and decided to discover new opportunities of Russian prose. However, these new features and styles of writing were unusual for previous generations of Soviet authors. Therefore, many dissidents, and especially representatives of the third wave, who had parted with the traditional Soviet literature and politics, found their place in this new Dovlatov's poetics, which had a strong influence on the style of Russian literature in general and the press in particular (Genis 2010). Brodsky was one of those writers that found in Dovlatov “a literary and existential ally, one who had been trying to impart to Russian prose the same qualities he [Brodsky] has been trying to instill in Russian poetry” (Meerzon 2015: 73). He recognized the similarity between his and Dovlatov's love for language and the process of writing: “Brodsky saw in Dovlatov a fellow servant of the Russian language, a prose-writer whose writing style is comparable to that of poetry. He emphasized the accessibility of Dovlatov's prose, the elegance of style, and his skill in grabbing the reader's attention” (Meerzon 2015: 73).

Dovlatov believed that the source of his humor, a distinguishing feature of his work, lied in the fact that he was a Caucasian on his mother's side, and among Caucasians “a sense of humor is a no less valued commodity than physical courage or an expansive nature. In the

Caucasus it's a much lesser crime to murder an innocent man than it is to take him out to a miserable dinner or to give a tedious, uninspired speech at his wedding" (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985). His talent for a fun way of communicating with the readers was practiced in childhood, during which he was a fan of storytelling. Dovlatov would absorb everything curious and funny from his surroundings, and later use the moments he found funny in his oral presentations in front of family and friends. Afterwards, when he became more familiar with American literature, he noticed that "While in Russia one can still name great writers in whom there's hardly a trace of irony or humor, I simply can't think of one significant American writer who hasn't a sense of humor" (Bobko, Dovlatov 1985). Indeed, during Stalin, humor in the Soviet Union was mostly seen in cheerful comedy films, and was confined "either to a forced laughter or a toothless satire – on carefully chosen petty topics" (Young 2009: 250), often portraying life as excessively sweet and wonderful. On the other hand, in his stories, Dovlatov would mostly portray life as boring and unfunny but moved forward by characters that say or do something odd or unexpected, since for him humor was as a halogen flash, which pulled us out of the normal flow of life in those moments when we were most like ourselves (Genis 1998). These moments that make people most like themselves are those in which they act irrationally. Dovlatov believed that people are irrational beings with strivings of the souls that "are not grounded in any tangible underlying causes, and arise organically, almost as a fatal feature of organic matter" (Tabachnikova 2015: 253-254). Therefore, his reaction, and of many other Russian writers as well, to the Soviet political demagoguery and false pathos became an increased use of irony. In Dovlatov's case, this was mostly self-irony, which he used not only to make oneself a target of laughter, but also to show that it is important to understand rather than judge. Olga Tabachnikova believes that it is precisely this self-irony in his writing that "is responsible for the distinctly therapeutic effect of Dovlatov's prose", and sees its origins in "his infinite compassion for individual existence which he sees in all its vulnerable absurdity" (Tabachnikova 2015: 253). Because of this compassion, he did not seek attention for himself or force himself upon the reader. This lack of attempts to make the author above the reader was a rare quality in literature in general. However, Dovlatov would often stress the importance of spending humor sparingly, since he put the focus on its function, and not amount. He would place jokes only in strategically important place, and not the most spectacular ones. For example, he never started nor finished his story with a funny phrase. Dovlatov would save humor for those situations where it was inappropriate, and his funny was usually associated with the terrible (Genis 1998). Indeed, he would use humor not only in less important places, but in unexpected situations as well. For example, Dovlatov's humor would often come out of

fear, which would in certain situations seem absurd. Brodsky explained that the reason behind this combination stood in Dovlatov's experience as an immigrant:

This binding of the funny and the inevitable becomes the norm not the exception; it marks his writing as self-reflective and absurd. [...] A sense of absurdity of what goes on both within and outside of his consciousness is characteristic of Dovlatov's vision of émigré realities. (Meerzon 2015: 74).

### **6.3. A Foreign Woman**

Dovlatov's *A Foreign Woman / Inostranka* was published in 1986 in the West and in 1990 in the Soviet Union. The novel focuses on Russian émigrés in Forest Hill, New York, and the process of their assimilation into the Western culture. Based on his past relationships, Sergei dedicated *A Foreign Woman* to "lonely Russian women in America – with love, sorrow and hope". The woman in the center of the novel is Marusya Tatarovich, daughter of Party functionaries, who emigrates from the Soviet Union not for political reasons, but because she sees emigration as something fashionable and exotic. She has been married several times: to a son of a general, a famous singer Razudalov (father of her son Lyova), and to Tsekhnovitser, a Jew whom she married only to be able to emigrate. Once they both immigrate to Austria, Tsekhnovitser flies to Israel, while Marusya departs for the United States. During her life in the Soviet Union, Marusya never did any real work, so she decides to attend a jewelry workshop in order to gain some qualifications in the United States. Because of her ignorance of the American way of life, she fails to find work in New York and decides to return to Russia. However, the officials at the Soviet Embassy tell her she needs to write a letter denouncing life in the United States in order to be pardoned and earn the right to return to Russia, which Marusya declines and decides to give the United States another chance. Fortunately, despite the lack of accomplishments and the number of failed marriages, other male characters in the novel still find Marusya attractive. Therefore, continuing with her financial dependency on others, she starts a relationship with a middle-aged Hispanic man named Rafael. As towards other immigrants in the novel, Russians have prejudices towards Latin Americans as well: "For us they are mysterious people with boom boxes. We do not know them. But just in case we despise and fear them" (Dovlatov 1986: 4). They first think Rafael is a gangster or even a terrorist, and definitely a drunkard: "The men thought Rafa was gangster or even a terrorist. The women thought he was an ordinary drunkard" (Dovlatov 1986: 71). Later they conclude he is a man who acts recklessly as if sitting on millions of dollars, which is the kind of behavior that Russian do not easily forgive: "Emigre society could have forgiven them almost anything: welfare

cheating, mooching, drugs. Everything except fecklessness” (Dovlatov 1986: 72). However, at the end, it is precisely their irresponsibility and rebellion that “attracts the neighborhood and makes it possible for Marusya to make peace with herself, with America, and with the neighborhood” (Meerzon 2015: 78-79).

In *A Foreign Woman*, Dovlatov depicts a semi-fictional Russian émigré community situated in New York. He constructs his own imaginary New York based on the real ‘Russian part’ of the city – the corner of 108th Street and 64th Avenue in Forest Hills, where around seven thousand Russians lived at the time, including Dovlatov. He uses this exilic neighborhood to depict the third wave of Russian immigration, and portray them as actors on a theatre stage, where each one of them is assigned a role and has to act according to practices accepted by the community: “to go out into the street is to constantly run the risk of being recognized, thus pointed out. The practice of the neighborhood implies adhesion to a system of values and behaviors forcing each dweller to remain behind a mask playing his or her role” (Meerzon 2015: 61). It is up to the characters to decide whether they want to submit to these codes of behavior, and these decisions are at the center of *A Foreign Woman*. For example, as already mentioned, Marusya mostly made bad choices while in immigration. On the other hand, characters Lora and Fima, a married couple, handled their new living situation in a rather different way: “They decided to settle in New York. In a year’s time, they spoke tolerable English. Fima signed up for accounting courses. Lora took lessons from a manicurist. In a few months they found jobs [...] Soon they bought their own house, a small brick affair in Forest Hills. [...] Happiness was as natural and organic for them as good health” (Dovlatov 1986: 34).

Other than Russians, immigrants from Germany, Mexico, Armenia, etc. live in Forest Hills as well, which is the reason why here Russians have the chance to feel at home just as other foreigners, since everybody speaks English with an accent. Dovlatov explained this feeling in one of his interviews: “There is no sense of place here. It feels like a ship crammed with millions of passengers. This city is so multifarious that you realize there’s a corner here for you, too” (Young 2009 :180). Despite the fact that New York has been considered one of the most multicultural cities in the world, Dovlatov depicts the exilic neighborhood as an independent state. For example, in Forest Hills, Russian is the ‘official’ language: “If we hear English being spoken, we grow wavy. Sometimes we insist, ‘Speak Russian!’” (Dovlatov 1986: 4). Moreover, characters in the novel would act with caution and suspicion not only towards outsiders, like Koreans, Hindus, Arabs or the Chinese, but towards some of the Americans as

well: “people from Texas appear as foreigners and inhabitants of Iowa look as if they had arrived from another planet” (Young 2009: 180).

Dovlatov’s *A Foreign Woman* is an important example of not only the portrayal of Russian diasporic life but also of life in exilic communities in general. The novel describes the phenomenon of a neighborhood as a small closed community, which is common to many diasporic practices. Dovlatov’s neighborhood unites residents with a shared language, experiences, memories, routines and struggles, which creates “a sense of intimacy and safety among the neighborhood’s dwellers, who otherwise would have nothing to do with one another back home (Meerzon 2015: 76). In the center of the story is Marusya and Rafael’s love story, “a Romeo and Juliet/West Side Story fabula”, which Dovlatov uses to expose “the spiritual and emotional state of exiles the West, specifically in New York” (Ryan-Hayes 1992: 169). Alongside Marusya and Rafael, most other social classes are depicted in this Russian ethnic community as well: unsuccessful poets and writers, rich merchants, lawyers, musicians, etc. By creating such characters, Dovlatov portrays diverse emotional and social characteristics of the representatives of the third wave and relationships between them. In order to describe their lives he uses irony and humor, but not only to show happiness and satisfaction, but also fear and insecurity, which play a big part in every exilic community. In the novel, Dovlatov shows his belief that in order to get past these negative aspects of immigration and assimilate successfully is to embrace life in the new neighborhood and create a space of diasporic intimacy. Only then the community becomes a place in which immigrants feel secure and comfortable. Moreover, he wanted to communicate this message to the readers as well, because he believed that emigration and assimilation could teach immigrants personal dignity. Therefore, he wanted Russian immigrants “to accept the conditions of their new life; he encouraged them to humor, accept, and possibly understand those neighbors and acquaintances who in emigration – often by sheer force of circumstances – become their close friends” (Meerzon 2015: 81).

However, along with being a space of personal safety, an ethnic community can also become “a type of social restraint: a container, an enclosed society to live in which would mean to subject oneself to this society’s rules and expectations” (Meerzon 2015: 68). This can be seen in the example of Marusya, who accepted the routines of Russian community life in New York, and other immigrants helped her deal with everyday émigré struggles. However, because she used the neighborhood more as a container she failed to assimilate into the American society. Instead, she retreated to life in the Russian ethnic community. Despite his previously mentioned reinforcement of diasporic intimacy in immigrant neighborhoods, Dovlatov ridiculed those

immigrants that resisted assimilation outside the community, believing that they should not so blindly stick to the Russian mindset when in a foreign country. If they decide not to change their worldview and contain themselves inside the ethnic community, it would eventually evoke a tension between the familiar space and the rest of the city. It is precisely this complex relationship between the inside and the outside of the neighborhood that Dovlatov uses to describe the process of assimilation. For example, in Marusya case, New York was at the same time interesting and scary. On the one hand, “New York was an event for Marusya, a concert, a spectacle. It became a city only after a month or two. Gradually the chaos revealed figures, colors, sounds. The noisy marketing intersection suddenly fell apart into its constituent units: a grocery store, a cafeteria, an insurance agency, and a delicatessen” (Dovlatov 1986: 40). On the other hand, it still does not feel friendly and gives her the shivers: “Early in the morning Marusya would run to the subway stop, then spend an hour in the rumbling, scary underground of New York. A daily portion of fear” (Dovlatov 1986: 40). The city reminds her of being an immigrant and of not being able to share her past with its residents:

New York gave rise to feelings of irritation and intimidation in Marusya. [...] Marusya envied the children, the beggars, the policemen – everyone who felt part of the city. [...] From the subway to the jewelry sweatshop was three hundred eighty-five steps. Sometimes, if Marusya almost run, it took only three hundred eighty. Three hundred eighty steps through the motley, festive, chattering crowd. [...] The daily dose of fear and uncertainty. (Dovlatov 1986: 40-41).

As a result, Marusya returns to the safety of her neighborhood. Meerzon believes that the reason for this kind of attitude towards the new surrounding stands in her, and other immigrants’, “fear of becoming too settled in Russian America and the need to eventually leave one’s space” (Meerzon 2015: 70-71).

The narrator in *A Foreign Woman* plays a great part in creating this atmosphere of intimacy in the neighborhood. On the one hand, he interprets daily events and dialogues and informs the readers about what the characters think and how they feel. By using this kind of observer narration, it may seem that the narrator does not participate in the story. However, since the author “refused to place himself above the characters, portraying the residents of New York’s 108th Street as his equals, becoming a part of them” (Meerzon 2015: 74), he would blend the narrator with other characters and speak as ‘we’: “We are six brick buildings clustered around a supermarket, inhabited primarily by Russians – that is, recent Soviet citizens. Or, as the newspapers put it, emigres of the third wave” (Dovlatov 1986: 3). Moreover, Dovlatov

appears as a figure in the text, presenting himself as an established writer from Russia, who wrote many books in Russian, English and other languages: “By that time I had been a naturalized American for about a year and a half. I lived essentially on my literary earnings. My books were published in good translations. That’s why one of my colleagues liked to repeat, ‘Dovlatov loses something in the original’” (Dovlatov 1986: 54). Like the rest of the characters in the novel, he “is shown in his relation to Marusya, to emigration, and to the fortunes and misfortunes of life in the United States” (Young 2009: 184). Dovlatov himself lived in New York with his family and was part of the émigré community described in *A Foreign Woman*. However, despite the temptation of equating the narrator and the author, Dovlatov’s outer and inner stances constantly shift, and their relationship in the text is rather complex:

The two are interconnected in Dovlatov’s writing. His prose, always semi-autobiographical, featuring the I of the author in the slightly crooked mirror of the I of the narrator-protagonist, close in its cadence to poetry, cinematic in its structure, and somewhat nostalgic and self-ironic in its tone, constitutes the focus of Dovlatov’s artistic project. (Meerzon 2015: 80)

For example, at times the narrator would inform us about Marusya’s emotions and thoughts linking them to her experiences from the past. At other times, he would describe events as they occur, with no knowledge of previous actions or possible causes. However, these shifts between the narrator and the implied author are not without purpose. Dovlatov would use them in order to play with readers’ expectations and create a comic situation. For example, after Marusya and Rafael’s fight, the narrator assumes that Rafael gave her the black eye and split lip, but later it turns out that it was actually Marusya that beat him up. In addition, he toys with the identity of the implied author in order to underscore “the ambiguity of the narrative persona” and to emphasize the “conventionality of the narrative devices he employs” (Ryan-Hayes 1992: 171). In the final part of the novel, he directly comments on this relationship between the narrator and the characters:

You are a character and I am an author. You are my invention. Everything you hear, I say. Everything that happened, I experienced. I am an author – vengeful, humiliated, mediocre, nasty, whatever you want – but the author. People I have known live on in me. They are my neurosis, anger, aplomb, and fecklessness. And so on. (Dovlatov 1986: 112)

Ryan-Hayes believes that this creativity in transforming experience into fiction and making the implied author’s position “at once broadly philosophical, sophisticated and psychologically insightful” represents “a significant advance in Dovlatov’s narrative praxis”

(Ryan-Hayes 1992: 170). However, despite all the positive feedback, Dovlatov would often undermine his work. The same happened with *A Foreign Woman*. By the time the novel was published, he had revised it several times and wrote to Sagalovsky:

I'm sending you *A Foreign Woman* with a restrained dedication. So far – sorry – everyone has been praising it, including at least two intelligent people – the film producer Slava Tsukerman, the author of the monstrous film *Liquid Sky*, and a certain writer called Sumerkin, who is astute and clever [...] Boria Shragin [...] said 'After this book I want to live.' So there you are. In a word, *The Captain's Daughter* it isn't, but all the same, if you can muster the strength, have a read of it. (Young 2009: 180)

## **7. CONCLUSION**

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Soviet government intensified repression and banned many prominent authors from publishing, which caused those charged with parasitism and dissidence to emigrate. During the 1970s, many of these writers, known as the representatives of the third wave of Russian immigration, chose the United States as their destination due to its policies towards immigrants. However, the interdisciplinary approach in this thesis showed that these two very different social and cultural contexts influenced both their everyday life and the creation of literary works. The anti-Soviet atmosphere due to the Red Scare, lack of acceptance by the representatives of the two previous waves, and the rejection by the readership at home due to their open opposition to the Soviet regime and the untraditional character of their literature, all had an effect on their assimilation into the American society and acceptance by the American readership. Two representatives of the third wave that succeeded in this process were Joseph Brodsky and Sergei Dovlatov. Despite the Iron Curtain, both of them encountered English language, jazz and Hollywood movies at an early age, which gave them a glimpse of the Western lifestyle that was drastically different from the one in Soviet Russia. After immigrating to the United States, they decided to use these two rather different realities as a source of literary inspiration. In addition, Brodsky used these two different cultural and linguistic angles after realizing that this more informed and objective view might give him an advantage in his attempt of being a great literary bilingual poet. On the other hand, Dovlatov used the Russian community in New York as his source of inner strength and motivation for achieving a sense of closure with his home country. By using the interdisciplinary approach and analyzing these works in both the American and Russian context, I concluded that it was precisely this richness, exoticism and complexity of their immigrant life that was most interesting to their American readership. I believe that a large part of their success lays in the fact that they both focused on the cultural exchange and adapted their texts and poems to suit the Anglophone audience, which made their works rich and complex in the cultural context. Indeed, despite Brodsky's long and demanding process of self-translation, accompanied by a certain amount of criticism, and Dovlatov's fear of not being able to gain American readership as an author writing only in Russian, their efforts proved worthwhile. This resulted in both of them gaining praise from their readership, being acknowledged by other authors, and being published in quantities that would most likely not be possible if they had decided to stay in the Soviet Union.

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## 9. ABSTRACT

Nedostatak političke i stvaralačke slobode te svekolike represije, odnosno uspostavljanje tzv. totalne cenzure u Sovjetskom Savezu doveo je do tri velika vala emigracije nepodobnih književnika. Ovaj se rad bavi interkulturalnim stvaralaštvom dvojice najznačajnijih predstavnika trećeg vala ruske imigracije – Iosifom Brodskim i Sergejem Dovlatovom, koji su 1970-ih iz ondašnjega Leningrada bili primorani emigrirati u Sjedinjene Američke Države (obojici je skori dom postao New York). Ruskim emigrantima u Americi nije bilo lako zbog nemogućnosti snalaženja u novonastalim uvjetima (bili su odbačeni od ruskoga društva i čitateljstva, a nisu bili potpuno asimilirani u američko društvo). Njihova je potpuna asimilacija bila otežana zbog američkoga straha od uspona komunizma u SAD-u, a izgubili su dobar dio ruskoga čitateljstva zbog otvorene kritike sovjetskog režima i netradicionalnog karaktera književnosti. Unatoč nastojanjima Sovjetskog Saveza da onemogući svaki kulturni kontakt sa Zapadom, i Brodskij i Dovlatov bili su skloni američkoj glazbi (jazzu) i holivudskim filmovima, što im je dalo uvid u zapadnjački način života (dakako, američki se kultura drastično razlikovala od krutoga sovjetskoga kulturnog kanona koji je onemogućivao postojanje «druge» kulture). Ipak, Brodskij i Dovlatov autori su posve različitih poetika i senzibiliteta, pa je i njihovo «američko stvaralaštvo» posve oprečno (različita je i njihova recepcija kako u Americi, tako i u Rusiji). Dobitnik Nobelove nagrade za književnost, Iosif Brodskij, odlučio je iskoristiti oba jezika u svojoj poeziji i prozi, dok je Dovlatov ostao ukorijenjen u ruski jezik, nikada se ne odvojivši u potpunosti od domovine. Dok je Brodskij često samoga sebe prevodio s jednoga na drugi jezik (što je bio i dugotrajan i zahtjevan proces), Dovlatov je sve do smrti ovisio upravo o ruskome čitateljstvu jer je pisao isključivo na ruskome jeziku.

## 10. KEY WORDS

imigracija, asimilacija, književnost, Brodskij, Dovlatov

immigration, assimilation, literature, Brodsky, Dovlatov

## **11. BIOGRAPHY**

Maja Trkulja rođena je 14. travnja 1990. godine u Zagrebu. Prvu gimnaziju u Zagrebu završava 2009. godine nakon čega upisuje Filozofski fakultet u Zagrebu te 2015. godine završava preddiplomski Studij engleskog jezika i književnosti te Studij ruskog jezika i književnosti. Trenutno je upisana na diplomski studij Engleskog jezika i književnosti (smjer: književno-kulturološki, američka književnost i kultura) i Ruskog jezika i književnosti (smjer: prevoditeljski).