

Title: The *Veshchnost'* of a Poem: A Look at Heidegger's Notions of (Non)Being and Time in Brodsky's "The Butterfly" and "The Fly"

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According to Brodsky, the "one thing" he writes about is "time and what time does to a person" (Polukhina 249). Many scholars have investigated the issue of time in Brodsky's work, categorizing its forms as "historical" or "personal" (Polukhina 250), or its functions as "*Athanasia*" or "*Povtorenie*" (Beaver 8-11). However, by merely identifying contrary functions of the image, these studies fail to reflect fully Brodsky's complex treatment of time.

This paper examines two poems, "The Butterfly" (1972) and "The Fly" (1985) within the framework of Heideggerian ontology. Brodsky conceptualized time and man as "one thing." For Heidegger, too, they are inseparable: *to be* is *to be temporal*. However, what does this mean for a poet? Olga Sedakova claims, "The sincerity of the lyric poet lies in his most sincere desire to cease being himself" (352). For both Brodsky and Heidegger this would mean to cease being temporal, but how does one achieve this via language? Language, according to Brodsky, is the medium for sound and time.

The act of writing is commonly considered a means of transcending mortality (as in Pushkin's *Exegi Monumentum*), but Brodsky's speakers often seek otherwise. They seek not immortality but nothingness, with speech hovering not as a link to posterity but as a barrier to another dimension. By elucidating the parallels between Heidegger and Brodsky, this study shows how Brodsky questions what it means to *not* be and subsequently sheds new light on time, language, and what it means to be a poet.

Works Cited:

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