

Title: Carnal and Sexual Themes in Brodsky's Poetry: Their Sources and Significance as Anti-Utopian Discourse.  
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Joseph Brodsky was one of the best internationally known Russian authors to be charged with including "obscenity," explicit erotica, "amorality," and even "pornography" into his works. He seldom wrote explicitly politicized poetry or social criticism, but a lot of his works deal with intimacy and eroticism. Several of his poems (including «Римские элегии», «Представление», «На смерть друга» and «Посвящается Чехову») will be discussed.

The argument is built around an assumption that Brodsky's poetry (in regard to the sexual and the corporeal) is an amalgam of two major influences: Golden Age of Latin poetry and Russian low class and criminal jargons, including *мат* and *феня*. Brodsky was able to combine, for example, the libertinism of Catullus's poems with his deep intellectual curiosity toward the sex-related vocabulary of certain groups of Russian speakers, including (ex)convicts.

Just like Catullus's, much of Brodsky's work can be characterized as having a "light touch" in representing the sexual and the carnal. Whenever he uses obscene terms or explicit sexual references, he makes them look and sound natural; his strategy is to invariably balance obscenities and swear words with a jocular, light-hearted tone. Unlike many Russian writers of the past and present, Brodsky never shies away from referring to bodily needs and is always open to pleasurable sexuality.

Brodsky arguably set himself the task of estranging himself from the Russian intellectual tradition of the anti-corporeal and anti-sexual, of breaking free from the strategies of silencing or burlesquing human sexualities. Amongst Brodsky's most significant contributions to Russian letters, there is his role in developing Russian literary *libertinage*. There undoubtedly exists a strong link between literary libertinage (as a tradition of both socio-political and sexual freethinking) in any culture and anti-utopian discourse (in Russia in the cases of Rozanov, Zamyatin and Bulgakov, among others). On the other hand, utopian thought in Russia has always sided with anti-corporeal, anti-sexual ideologies. In the case of Russia's intellectual history, these connections and tendencies have been explored by such scholars as Aleksandr Etkind and Georges Nivat. I am going to extend this argument to Brodsky's work.

I will claim that Brodsky's bold use of *fеня* and *мат*, along with his welcoming of procreative and especially pleasurable sexuality, could be interpreted in the framework of resistance to utopian and totalitarian ideologies and creative strategies embedded in his work. Among other things, this trait of his poetry could have been a reason why he was so viciously attacked and even prosecuted by the Soviet regime (despite the fact that much of his early work was not explicitly "dissident" or anticommunist).

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