

Twentieth-Century  
Literary Criticism

TCLC 219



Volume 219

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the  
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,  
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers  
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,  
from the First Published Critical  
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



 **GALE**  
CENGAGE Learning

Detroit • New York • San Francisco • New Haven, Conn • Waterville, Maine • London

**Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol.  
219**

Project Editors: Thomas J. Schoenberg and  
Lawrence J. Trudeau

Editorial: Dana Ramel Barnes, Lindsey  
Bryant, Kathy D. Darrow, Kristen A.  
Dorsch, Jeffrey W. Hunter, Jelena O.  
Krstović, Michelle Lee

Content Conversion: Katrina D. Coach,  
Gwen Tucker

Indexing Services: Laurie Andriot

Rights and Acquisitions: Margaret  
Abendroth, Sari Gordon, Aja Perales

Composition and Electronic Capture: Gary  
Leach

Manufacturing: Cynde Bishop

Associate Product Manager: Marc Cormier

© 2009 Gale, Cengage Learning

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced, transmitted, stored, or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including but not limited to photocopying, recording, scanning, digitizing, taping, Web distribution, information networks, or information storage and retrieval systems, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This publication is a creative work fully protected by all applicable copyright laws, as well as by misappropriation, trade secret, unfair competition, and other applicable laws. The authors and editors of this work have added value to the underlying factual material herein through one or more of the following: unique and original selection, coordination, expression, arrangement, and classification of the information.

For product information and technology assistance, contact us at  
**Gale Customer Support, 1-800-877-4253.**

For permission to use material from this text or product,  
submit all requests online at [www.cengage.com/permissions](http://www.cengage.com/permissions).

Further permissions questions can be emailed to  
[permissionrequest@cengage.com](mailto:permissionrequest@cengage.com)

While every effort has been made to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, does not guarantee the accuracy of the data contained herein. Gale accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

*Gale*  
27500 Drake Rd.  
Farmington Hills, MI, 48331-3535

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 76-46132

ISBN-13: 978-1-4144-3414-8

ISBN-10: 1-4144-3414-6

ISSN 0276-8178

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

# Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series

For criticism on	Consult these Gale series
Authors now living or who died after December 31, 1999	<i>CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM (CLC)</i>
Authors who died between 1900 and 1999	<i>TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM (TCLC)</i>
Authors who died between 1800 and 1899	<i>NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE CRITICISM (NCLC)</i>
Authors who died between 1400 and 1799	<i>LITERATURE CRITICISM FROM 1400 TO 1800 (LC)</i> <i>SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM (SC)</i>
Authors who died before 1400	<i>CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL LITERATURE CRITICISM (CMLC)</i>
Authors of books for children and young adults	<i>CHILDREN'S LITERATURE REVIEW (CLR)</i>
Dramatists	<i>DRAMA CRITICISM (DC)</i>
Poets	<i>POETRY CRITICISM (PC)</i>
Short story writers	<i>SHORT STORY CRITICISM (SSC)</i>
Literary topics and movements	<i>HARLEM RENAISSANCE: A GALE CRITICAL COMPANION (HR)</i> <i>THE BEAT GENERATION: A GALE CRITICAL COMPANION (BG)</i> <i>FEMINISM IN LITERATURE: A GALE CRITICAL COMPANION (FL)</i> <i>GOTHIC LITERATURE: A GALE CRITICAL COMPANION (GL)</i>
Asian American writers of the last two hundred years	<i>ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE (AAL)</i>
Black writers of the past two hundred years	<i>BLACK LITERATURE CRITICISM (BLC-1)</i> <i>BLACK LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (BLCS)</i> <i>BLACK LITERATURE CRITICISM: CLASSIC AND EMERGING AUTHORS SINCE 1950 (BLC-2)</i>
Hispanic writers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries	<i>HISPANIC LITERATURE CRITICISM (HLC)</i> <i>HISPANIC LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (HLCS)</i>
Native North American writers and orators of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries	<i>NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN LITERATURE (NNAL)</i>
Major authors from the Renaissance to the present	<i>WORLD LITERATURE CRITICISM, 1500 TO THE PRESENT (WLC)</i> <i>WORLD LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (WLCS)</i>

## Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

### Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of TCLC is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (CLC) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between CLC and TCLC.

### Organization of the Book

A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym is listed in the author heading and the author's actual name is given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the name of its author.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it originally appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

## Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *TCLC* as well as other Literature Criticism series.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *TCLC* by nationality, followed by the numbers of the *TCLC* volumes in which their entries appear.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

## Citing *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a bibliography set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, (2003); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

Cardone, Resha. "Reappearing Acts: Effigies and the Resurrection of Chilean Collective Memory in Marco Antonio de la Parra's *La tierra insomne o La puta madre*." *Hispania* 88, no. 2 (May 2005): 284-93. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 206, edited by Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, 356-65. Detroit: Gale, 2008.

Kuester, Martin. "Myth and Postmodernist Turn in Canadian Short Fiction: Sheila Watson, 'Antigone' (1959)." In *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations*, edited by Reginald M. Nischik, pp. 163-74. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2007. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 206, edited by Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, 227-32. Detroit: Gale, 2008.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 5th ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1999); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

Cardone, Resha. "Reappearing Acts: Effigies and the Resurrection of Chilean Collective Memory in Marco Antonio de la Parra's *La tierra insomne o La puta madre*." *Hispania* 88.2 (May 2005): 284-93. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau. Vol. 206. Detroit: Gale, 2008. 356-65.

Kuester, Martin. "Myth and Postmodernist Turn in Canadian Short Fiction: Sheila Watson, 'Antigone' (1959)." *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations*. Ed. Reginald M. Nischik. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2007. 163-74. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau. Vol. 206. Detroit: Gale, 2008. 227-32

## **Suggestions are Welcome**

Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Associate Product Manager:

Associate Product Manager, Literary Criticism Series

Gale

27500 Drake Road

Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535

1-800-347-4253 (GALE)

Fax: 248-699-8054



## Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the copyright holders of the criticism included in this volume and the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reproduction rights. Following is a list of the copyright holders who have granted us permission to reproduce material in this volume of *TCLC*. Every effort has been made to trace copyright, but if omissions have been made, please let us know.

### COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN *TCLC*, VOLUME 219, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING PERIODICALS:

*Australian Literary Studies*, v. 11, May, 1983. Copyright © 1983 University of Queensland. Reproduced by permission.—*Essays in Poetics*, v. 18, September, 1993. Copyright © 1993 by Christopher Jones. Reproduced by permission.—*Essays in Poetics*, v. 23, autumn, 1998. Copyright © 1998 by John Givens. Reproduced by permission.—*Kunapipi*, v. 16, 1994 for “Women Rising: Spirituality in the Writings of Barbara Hanrahan” by Elaine Lindsay. Copyright © 1994 by Kunapipi. Reproduced by permission of the author.—*Literary Imagination*, v. 7, fall, 2005. Copyright © 2005 by the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics. Reproduced by permission.—*Lituanus*, v. 39, summer, 1993. Copyright © 1993 Lituanus Foundation, Inc. Reproduced by permission.—*Mosaic*, v. 8, fall, 1974. Copyright © 1974 Mosaic. Acknowledgment of previous publication is herewith made.—*New York Review of Books*, November 24, 1988. Copyright © 1988 by NYREV, Inc. Reprinted with permission from *The New York Review of Books*.—*Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, v. 30, spring-summer, 2002; v. 34, spring-summer, 2006. Copyright © 2002, 2006 by the University of Nebraska Press. All rights reserved. Both reproduced by permission of the University of Nebraska Press.—*Partisan Review*, v. 63, spring, 1996 for “Notes on Joseph Brodsky” by Czeslaw Milosz. Copyright © 1996 by *Partisan Review*. Reproduced by permission of The Wylie Agency LLC.—*Romance Languages Annual*, 1998, v. 10, no. 1. Copyright © 1999 by Purdue Research Foundation. Reproduced by permission.—*The Russian Review*, v. 53, January, 1994. Copyright © 1994 Ohio State University Press. Reproduced by permission of John Wiley & Sons Ltd.—*The Russian Review*, v. 57, July, 1998. Copyright © 1998 *Russian Review*. Reproduced by permission of John Wiley & Sons.—*Slavic and East European Journal*, v. 51, fall, 2007. Copyright © 2007 by AATSEEL of the U.S., Inc. Reproduced by permission.—*Slavic and East European Performance*, v. 17, spring, 1997. Copyright © 1997 CASTA. Reproduced by permission.—*Slavic Review*, v. 64, no. 2, summer, 2005. Copyright © 2005 by the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Inc. Reproduced by permission.—*Westerly*, v. 27, September, 1982 for “Barbara Hanrahan’s Fantastic Fiction” by Diana Brydon. Copyright © 1982 by Diana Brydon. Reproduced by permission of the author.—*Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, v. 17, 1986. Copyright © Gesellschaft zur Förderung slawistischer Studien. All rights reserved. Translated from the Russian by Mark Jacob with the author. Reproduced by permission.

### COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN *TCLC*, VOLUME 219, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

Baguley, David. From “*Germinal: The Gathering Storm*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Zola*. Edited by Brian Nelson. Cambridge University Press, 2007. Copyright © 2007 Cambridge University Press. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.—Berg, William J. From “Visual Interaction: Vision and Thematics,” in *The Visual Novel: Emile Zola and the Art of His Times*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992. Copyright © 1992 by The Pennsylvania State University. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the author.—Berg, William J. and Martin, Laurey K. From *Emile Zola Revisited*. Twayne Publishers, 1992. Copyright © 1992 by Twayne Publishers. Reproduced by permission of Gale, a part of Cengage Learning.—Betha, David M. From *Joseph Brodsky and the Creation of Exile*. Princeton University Press, 1994. Copyright © 1994 by Princeton University Press. Reproduced by permission.—Buss, Robin and Émile Zola. From *Émile Zola: Thérèse Raquin*. Translated by Robin Buss. Penguin Books, 2004. Translation and editorial matter copyright © 2004 Robin Buss. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of Penguin Books, Ltd.—Carlisle, Olga. From *Poets on Street Corners: Portraits of Fifteen Russian Poets*. Random House, 1968. Copyright © 1968 by Random House, Inc. Reproduced by permission of Random House, Inc. and the author.—Duffy, Larry. From *Le Grand Transit Moderne: Mobility, Modernity and French Naturalist Fiction*. Rodopi, 2005. Copyright © 2005 Editions Rodopi B.V., Amsterdam. Reproduced by permission.—Emery, Elizabeth. From *Romancing the Cathedral: Gothic Architecture in Fin-de-Siècle French Culture*. State University of New York Press, 2001. Copyright © 2001 State University of New York. All

rights reserved. Reproduced with permission from the State University of New York Press.—Furst, Lilian R. From *L'Assommoir: A Working Woman's Life*. Twayne Publishers, 1990. Copyright © 1990 by G. K. Hall & Co. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of Gale, a part of Cengage Learning.—Glencross, Michael. From *Emile Zola: The Dream*. Translated by Michael Glencross. Peter Owen, 2005. Translation and introduction copyright © 2005 Michael Glencross. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Kuznetsov, Sergey. From “‘Darling, Tonight I Went Out Late ...’ (‘Dorogaia, ia vyshel segodnia iz domu pozdno vecherom’),” in *Joseph Brodsky: The Art of a Poem*. Edited by Lev Loseff and Valentina Polukhina. Macmillan Press, 1999. Selection and editorial matter copyright © 1999 Leo Loseff and Valentina Polukhina. Text copyright © 1999 Macmillan Press Ltd. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.—Lethbridge, Robert and Zola, Émile. From *Émile Zola: L'Assommoir*. Translated by Margaret Mauldon. Oxford University Press, 1998. Translation, Note on the Translation copyright © 1995 Margaret Mauldon. Introduction, Select Bibliography, Explanatory Notes Copyright © 1995 Robert Lethbridge. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press.—Lowe, Romana N. From *The Fictional Female: Sacrificial Rituals and Spectacles of Writing in Baudelaire, Zola, and Cocteau*. Peter Lang, 1997. Copyright © Romana N. Lowe. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Minogue, Valerie. From *Zola: L'Assommoir*. Grant & Cutler Ltd., 1991. Copyright © 1991 Grant & Cutler Ltd. Reproduced by permission.—Pagano, Tullio. From *Experimental Fictions: From Emile Zola's Naturalism to Giovanni Verga's Verism*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999. Copyright © 1999 by Associated University Presses, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Parmée, Douglas, and Emile Zola. From *Émile Zola: Nana*. Translated by Douglas Parmée. Oxford University Press. Translation, Introduction and Notes copyright © 1998 Douglas Parmée. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press.—Pearson, Roger and Émile Zola. From *Émile Zola: La Bête humaine*. Translated by Roger Pearson. Oxford University Press, 1999. Copyright © 1996 Roger Pearson. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press.—Thompson, Hannah. From “Questions of Sexuality and Gender,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Zola*. Edited by Brian Nelson. Cambridge University Press, 2007. Copyright © 2007 Cambridge University Press. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.—Vinken, Barbara. From “Temples of Delight: Consuming Consumption in Emile Zola's *Au Bonheur des dames*,” in *Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, Genre*. Edited by Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. Copyright © 1995 by the Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Weissbort, Daniel. From *From Russia with Love: Joseph Brodsky in English. Pages from a Journal 1996-97*. Anvil Press Poetry, 2004. Copyright © 2004 Daniel Weissbort. Reproduced with permission of Johnson & Alcock and Anvil Press Poetry.

# Gale Literature Product Advisory Board

The members of the Gale Literature Product Advisory Board—reference librarians from public and academic library systems—represent a cross-section of our customer base and offer a variety of informed perspectives on both the presentation and content of our literature products. Advisory board members assess and define such quality issues as the relevance, currency, and usefulness of the author coverage, critical content, and literary topics included in our series; evaluate the layout, presentation, and general quality of our printed volumes; provide feedback on the criteria used for selecting authors and topics covered in our series; provide suggestions for potential enhancements to our series; identify any gaps in our coverage of authors or literary topics, recommending authors or topics for inclusion; analyze the appropriateness of our content and presentation for various user audiences, such as high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, librarians, and educators; and offer feedback on any proposed changes/enhancements to our series. We wish to thank the following advisors for their advice throughout the year.

**Barbara M. Bibel**

Librarian  
Oakland Public Library  
Oakland, California

**Dr. Toby Burrows**

Principal Librarian  
The Scholars' Centre  
University of Western Australia Library  
Nedlands, Western Australia

**Celia C. Daniel**

Associate Reference Librarian  
Howard University Libraries  
Washington, D.C.

**David M. Durant**

Reference Librarian  
Joyner Library  
East Carolina University  
Greenville, North Carolina

**Nancy T. Guidry**

Librarian  
Bakersfield Community College  
Bakersfield, California

**Heather Martin**

Arts & Humanities Librarian  
University of Alabama at Birmingham, Sterne Library  
Birmingham, Alabama

**Susan Mikula**

Librarian  
Indiana Free Library  
Indiana, Pennsylvania

**Thomas Nixon**

Humanities Reference Librarian  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Davis  
Library  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

**Mark Schumacher**

Jackson Library  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Greensboro, North Carolina

**Gwen Scott-Miller**

Assistant Director  
Sno-Isle Regional Library System  
Marysville, Washington

# Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xi

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board xiii

<b>Joseph Brodsky 1940-1996</b> .....	1
<i>Russian-born American poet and essayist</i>	
<b>Barbara Hanrahan 1939-1991</b> .....	146
<i>Australian novelist, short story writer, autobiographer, and visual artist</i>	
<b>Émile Zola 1840-1902</b> .....	167
<i>French novelist, short story writer, playwright, essayist, librettist, journalist, and poet</i>	

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Author Index 369

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Topic Index 481

*TCLC* Cumulative Nationality Index 497

*TCLC*-219 Title Index 503

# Joseph Brodsky

## 1940-1996

(Born Iosif Alexandrovich Brodsky; also transliterated as Brodskii) Russian-born American poet and essayist.

The following entry provides an overview of Brodsky's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *CLC*, Volumes 4, 6, 13, 36, and 100.

### INTRODUCTION

Joseph Brodsky is considered one of the most gifted Russian poets of the twentieth century. Exiled from what was then the Soviet Union in the early 1970s, Brodsky became a United States citizen in 1977 and produced volumes of poetry in both Russian and English. He also published several collections of essays written in English, most notably *Less Than One* (1986) and *On Grief and Reason* (1995). Brodsky is generally recognized as a direct successor of such modernist Russian poets as Marina Tsvetaeva, Osip Mandelstam, Anna Akhmatova, and Boris Pasternak. In much of his poetry he integrated references to Greek mythology and Judeo-Christian theology, adhering to a disciplined aesthetic form of complex metrical rhythms and rhyme, rather than adopting modern formal trends. Often elegiac in tone and structure, his poems address themes related to alienation, exile, death, and grief. Throughout his life Brodsky upheld the ideal of free poetic expression, regardless of the social and political pressures that he faced, and he challenged aesthetic, political, and philosophical conventions in both his prose and poetry. As a result he is credited with creating original work that advanced Russian- and English-language poetics. Mohit K. Ray has argued that Brodsky's experience of exile "increased his poetic potentialities" and "structured his vision," concluding that Brodsky "has absorbed various influences and has assimilated them into his poetic being. A master craftsman he has discovered his own idiom and identity." In a tribute to Brodsky after his death, Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz proclaimed, "[Brodsky] was a poet of culture, and thanks to that he could write in harmony with the deepest current of his century in which mankind, threatened with extinction, discovered its past as an unending labyrinth."

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Brodsky was born on May 24, 1940, in Leningrad, the only son of Jewish parents, Mariia Moiseevna Vol'pert and Aleksandr Ivanovich Brodsky. Throughout Brod-

sky's childhood his family lived under financial strain, particularly after his father was dismissed from the Soviet Navy in 1950, in accordance with a ruling that forbade Jews from holding high ranking positions in the military. Brodsky was a voracious reader and left school at the age of fifteen, in protest over the inferior Soviet education he was receiving, to study independently. He also worked several jobs between 1956 and 1962 to help alleviate his family's financial situation. During the late 1950s Brodsky began reading poetry and felt called to write his own poems. Although the first poems of his literary career were largely apolitical, they nevertheless attracted negative attention from Soviet authorities, who arrested the poet three times in the early 1960s. During this time he discovered the English poet John Donne and taught himself English, as well as Polish, so that he could begin translating Donne, and Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz, into Russian.

In February of 1964 Brodsky was arrested for the third time, and in a closed trial was charged with "social parasitism," a law that was intended to punish citizens who refused to find gainful employment. He was sent to a psychiatric hospital for three weeks before his second trial, which was held in March. During this trial Brodsky was defended by respected members of the Leningrad Writers' Union, as well as several Lenin Prize laureates, speaking at the behest of Russian poet Anna Akhmatova. Nevertheless Brodsky was sentenced to serve five years of hard labor on a state farm in the far north of Russia. Transcripts of the trial circulated and were eventually published throughout Europe, bringing Brodsky instant international fame. Subsequently, a collection of his works, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, was published in New York in 1965. Brodsky continued to study English and write during his exile. He was released after serving less than two years of his sentence, partially as a result of international pressure from prominent persons in the Soviet Union, Europe, and North America. Brodsky returned to Leningrad after his release and continued to write, although mounting political tensions prevented him from publishing several book-length collections.

In 1972 Soviet officials forced him to leave the country. He traveled to Austria, where he met his friend Carl Proffer, who introduced him to the Anglo-American poet W. H. Auden. Proffer also invited Brodsky to serve as poet-in-residence at the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Brodsky settled in Ann Arbor for



nine years, and later also taught literature and creative writing at Mount Holyoke College, in Massachusetts. His *Selected Poems* was published in 1973, which included a preface written by Auden. In 1977 Brodsky published *Chast' rechi: Stikhotvoreniia, 1972-1976*, which reflected his feelings of alienation and loneliness following his exile from the Soviet Union. The poem "Elegy: For Robert Lowell," included in the collection, was one of Brodsky's first poems written in English. Increasingly Brodsky assumed authorial control over the English versions of his work, including *Uraniia: Novaia kniga stikhov* (1987; *To Urania: Selected Poems, 1965-1985*), and even produced some of the translations himself. He also published several works of prose in English, including *Less Than One, Watermark* (1992), and *On Grief and Reason. So Forth*, a collection of poems written in English, was published in 1996. Brodsky's health declined while he was living in the United States, and after a heart attack in 1976 he underwent several heart-bypass operations. On January 28, 1996, Brodsky died of massive heart failure in his apartment in New York City; he was later buried in Venice, Italy.

## MAJOR WORKS

In the 1960s Brodsky began experimenting with modes of language and poetic form, which proved foundational in his development as a poet. During this time he composed his first *poemy*, or long narrative poem, inspired by the verse of Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva. In this longer poetic form, Brodsky was able to experiment with rhythm, meter, and various linguistic registers. Early works of this type include "Bol'shaia elegiia Dzhonu Donnu" (1965; "Elegy to John Donne") and "Isaak i Avraam" (1965; "Isaac and Abraham"). While serving his prison term in the mid-1960s Brodsky composed several important poems, many of which are collected in *Ostanovka v pustyne* (1970), which translates as "A Halt in the Desert." This volume consists of a number of *poemy*, as well as over seventy lyric poems, including "Pis'mo v butylke" ("A Letter in a Bottle"), "Einem Alten Architekten in Rom," and "Novye stansy k Avguste" ("New Stanzas to Augusta"). The poems of this period reflect Brodsky's broadening worldview and intellectualism, as well as his growing interest in the work of Western poets, such as T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden. Increasingly in these verses he incorporated spiritual and metaphysical elements and further developed a wry, ironic voice, which he employed throughout his literary career. In 1965 Brodsky composed another elegy, "Stikhi na smert' T. S. Eliota," translated as "Verses on the Death of T. S. Eliot," which depicts Eliot leaving the world and "latching his door with a chain of years." Brodsky portrays poetry as an orphan in the poem, left bereft after Eliot's death.

In the years following his exile from the former Soviet Union, Brodsky produced several new volumes of poetry, which were translated from Russian into English. One of the best known of these collections, *A Part of Speech* (1980), consists of thirty-six poems that address the poet's life before exile, as well as his feelings of loneliness and isolation after leaving Russia. Other poems in the collection reflect Brodsky's experience of American culture. Formally, the volume is characterized by a fragmented and chaotic syntactical style, in which meaning is pared down, in some cases, to its most elemental linguistic level. For some critics, this technique, in which language is reduced to an essential state, heightens intensity of meaning in the poems.

The poems of *To Urania* rely less on syntactical fragmentation but examine similar themes to those expressed in *A Part of Speech*. The first poem in the volume, "May 24, 1980," which marks the poet's birthday, evokes Brodsky's banishment from his native country and offers insight into his intense feeling of loneliness, as evidenced in the line, "Those who forgot me would make a city." The seasons and the Russian landscape are recalled in "To Urania," "Eclogue IV: Winter," and "Eclogue V: Summer." As some commentators have noted, themes of death and isolation are treated throughout the collection. Poet Derek Walcott has asserted that "Brodsky's poems are seamed with a sense of mortality. Time frays the flesh, unstitches veins, but no soul steps out of the body's crumpled, abandoned garment, trembling with lightness and transparency like a butterfly." Brodsky produced a number of the English translations in *To Urania*, which, for some critics, detracted from the strength of the collection. Others, however, found increased unity and cohesion in the work as a result of Brodsky's involvement in the translation. Walcott has argued that "*To Urania* is more of a whole, and it is this that enriches not only its native literature but that of the country in which a demonstrably great poet, an almost sublime intelligence, moves us and moves among us in the guise of another citizen."

Although he is best known for his poetry, Brodsky produced several works of prose that have earned the respect of popular and critical audiences. In the essays of *Less Than One*, Brodsky explores his childhood and the influence of his parents, and contemplates the Russian poetic tradition, as well as the cultural influence of his native city, Leningrad. The essays "Less Than One" and "In a Room and a Half," which frame the collection, contrast Brodsky's reminiscences of his parents and early childhood growing up in a small apartment in Soviet Leningrad with brief reflections on his life in exile. In these essays the poet depicts his younger self as isolated, diminished, and insecure. In other essays in the collection Brodsky discusses memory and his aesthetic ideals, and he provides commentary on Russian culture and literature.

In the essays that comprise *On Grief and Reason* Brodsky focuses his attention on the concerns of Western art and culture. Several of the essays consider the work of American and European literary figures, including Robert Frost, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Thomas Hardy. In other essays Brodsky comments on his experience of American society while living in exile. *Watermark* offers a book-length portrait of the Italian city of Venice, to which Brodsky made regular pilgrimages throughout his life. He describes Venice as "a Penelope of a city, weaving her patterns by day and undoing them by night, with no Ulysses in sight. Only the sea." According to some critics, this work represents more than a meditation on Venice, offering insight into questions of identity and heritage as well. Sanna Turoma has observed that "by the time he was writing *Watermark* in 1989, Brodsky had been granted the leading Western institutionalized literary acknowledgement and no longer associated himself with marginal identities but, rather, with the bulk of canonical Western writers, artists and cultural figures as well as Russians of Western orientation, whose names he drops in anecdotal fashion throughout the text. Finally, by writing *Watermark* in English, Brodsky signaled his surmounting of the West/Russia/East triptych, fully identifying with the 'West' and shedding the 'East.'"

### CRITICAL RECEPTION

Brodsky's poetry came to the attention of audiences in Europe and North America during the 1960s, following the release of transcripts from the author's arrest and trial in the Soviet Union, and his subsequent conviction. During this time many critics and several respected writers declared that he was an unusually gifted writer, as well as an important and original emergent voice in Russian poetics. In his foreword to Brodsky's *Selected Poems* Auden described Brodsky as "a poet of the first order, a man of whom his country should be proud." In early reviews of his work commentators often emphasized his craftsmanship, especially his proficiency with rhyme and meter, and his command of various poetic modes. Not every critic, however, regarded Brodsky as the most influential poet of his generation, and some suggested that early praise for his talent was shaped more by the West's sympathy for his political persecution than by an honest appraisal of his work. Regardless, Brodsky earned many honors during the last decades of the twentieth century. In addition to winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1987, he was awarded France's Order of the Legion of Honor in 1991, and that same year became the poet laureate of the United States.

Brodsky's work, particularly his English-language poetry, has continued to elicit a divided response from critics in recent years. While some have argued that

Brodsky's English poems equal the Russian poems in their brilliance and formal technique, others have claimed that they lack the linguistic precision and ironic articulation of their Russian counterparts. Some scholars have also perceived sexist elements and patriarchal attitudes in Brodsky's work, while others have reacted negatively to the poet's stance on modernist poetics, including his aversion to free verse. In general, however, critics have acknowledged Brodsky's mastery of numerous verse forms and lauded his commitment to poetic expression, as well as his wide-ranging knowledge of Western traditions of poetry. G. S. Smith has stated that Brodsky earned acclaim "with a flow of poems which, from the beginning, marked him out as an exceptional talent," adding, "Here was a poet who, even as a young man, negotiated on familiar terms with the great shades of the past, and particularly with shades who had previously been unknown or ignored in Russia: John Donne, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden. Here was a poised, sophisticated but also, on occasion, vulgar authorial persona who was nevertheless obviously capable of profound emotion, even passion, haunted by an awareness of the damaged dignity of human life."

### PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (poetry) 1965
- Ausgewahlte Gedichte* (poetry) 1966
- Collines et autres poemes* (poetry) 1966
- Elegy to John Donne and Other Poems* (poetry) 1967
- Velka elegie* (poetry) 1968
- Ostanovka v pustyne* (poetry) 1970
- Poems by Joseph Brodsky* (poetry) 1972
- Selected Poems* (poetry) 1973
- Chast' rechi: Stikhotvoreniia, 1972-1976* (poetry) 1977
- Konets prekrasnoi epokhi: Stikhotvoreniia, 1964-1971* (poetry) 1977
- V Anglii* (poetry) 1977
- A Part of Speech* (poetry) 1980
- Verses on the Winter Campaign 1980* (poetry) 1981
- Rimskie elegii* (poetry) 1982
- Novye stansy k Avguste: Stikhi k M. B., 1962-1982* (poetry) 1983
- Less Than One* (essays) 1986
- Mramor [Marbles]* (play) 1986
- Urania: Novaia kniga stikhov [To Urania: Selected Poems, 1965-1985]* (poetry) 1987
- Demokratiia! [Democracy!]* (play) 1990
- Discovery* (poetry) 1991
- Rozhdestvenskie stikhi [Nativity Poems]* (poetry) 1992; revised edition, 1996
- Watermark* (essay) 1992
- Sochineniia. 4 vols.* (poetry) 1992-1995
- On Grief and Reason* (essays) 1995

*So Forth* (poetry) 1996  
*Gorbunov i Gorchakov* (poem) 1999  
*Collected Poems in English, 1972-1999* (poetry) 2000

## CRITICISM

### Olga Carlisle (essay date 1968)

SOURCE: Carlisle, Olga. "Joseph Brodsky (1940-)." In *Poets on Street Corners: Portraits of Fifteen Russian Poets*, pp. 397-401. New York: Random House, 1968.

[In the following essay, Carlisle describes Brodsky as a "young poet of brilliance and originality," whose "intensely personal" poems, which reflect his preoccupation with death and a somber worldview, are "as good as anything written in the sixties in Russia."]

To walk out of love on a bright sunny day with no return,  
 To hear the rustling of grass in the alleys which lead away,  
 In the warm cloud of the day, in the darkening evening, sleepily  
 To listen to the barking of dogs from under the square nests of sod.

Joseph Brodsky<sup>1</sup>

The west is acquainted with the name of Joseph Brodsky because of his well-known trial. In March, 1964, the Soviet police authorities made this young poet's plight into a cause célèbre by convicting him in a civil court in Leningrad on charges of vagrancy. He was a "social parasite" with no other occupation than the writing and freelance translating of poetry! Brodsky was sent to a *kolkhoz* (a collective farm) near Archangel, where, among other tasks, he shoveled manure.

The whole affair was an attempt on the part of a group of reactionary Leningrad writers to intimidate their independent-minded colleagues—those who have given up any thought of being published now in order to be able to write exactly as they choose. The case was publicized abroad thanks to a Communist, a courageous member of the Leningrad Writers' Union, Frieda Vigdorova. She attended the trial and, outraged at the insulting, arbitrary manner in which it was conducted, took down in shorthand a record of the proceedings. This verbatim record was subsequently published in the Western press, shocking public opinion deeply.

An outburst of indignation followed this attempt to discredit one part of the Soviet literary intelligentsia. At about the same time Brodsky's works were smuggled

out of Russia. By then Brodsky was well known in the West; his poems were brought out at once by an émigré publishing house. It turned out that the "social parasite" was a young poet of brilliance and originality. And he was not actively anti-Soviet; like many of his Russian contemporaries—he is twenty-seven years old—Brodsky is essentially apolitical.

Brodsky is a Jew, and was born and brought up in Leningrad in the Soviet equivalent of a middle-class family. He is said to have left school at the age of fifteen, dedicating himself to the writing of poetry and to translating from the English and Polish languages. He was Akhmatova's favorite young poet. His trial was a blow to her, as it was to others. For the first time since the early thirties, protests were heard from Soviet intellectuals. This, combined with a flood of petitions from abroad, led to Brodsky's release in the winter of 1966, and he was allowed to return to Leningrad shortly before Akhmatova's death.

One cannot tell yet if Brodsky will become a major poet, as Akhmatova predicted. In his work, as in Voznesensky's, there is sometimes a tendency towards wordiness; a hollowness may be felt occasionally underneath the rhetoric. Perhaps what is absent is the nineteenth-century humanism, which had its last representatives in Pasternak and Akhmatova. Compared with them, many young Soviet writers have a certain simple-mindedness common to youths of many countries today. Like the hippies of America, they attempt to answer the world's problems through a return to immediate perceptions. But in the case of Brodsky, one feels that his interest in traditional literary and religious concepts has enriched his work and will continue to help him grow. (This can also be said of Akhmadulina, and for the same reasons, but Brodsky is less self-conscious and more profound a poet than she.)

Brodsky's poems are intensely personal. Most of them are about death—a private death. When they deal with life, his vision is somber. They echo Mandelstam's late poems, but on the whole Brodsky's literary ancestors are not easy to trace. Edward Arlington Robinson and Robert Frost are favorites of his, and at present he is engaged in translating John Donne into Russian. More than any other young Soviet poet today, he is under the influence of English classics and of contemporary American writers. But his perceptions are purely Russian:

We are no harder of hearing,  
 we have not aged, we say  
 the same words, our coats are no brighter,  
 the same women do not care for us,

We still toy with the seasons  
 in the amphitheaters of solitude,  
 the same lanterns flare on our heads  
 like exclamation marks of night.

We live on the past as though it were the present,  
present unlike the future, again we stay awake  
all night, we forget those who sleep,  
we repeat the same labors.

Humor, watch over the joyful young  
in the nocturnal rounds of light  
and shadow, make them great for the glory and shame,  
and good for the vanity of age.

—Adapted by W. S. Merwin

Not long ago while in Moscow I heard Brodsky's voice on tape, reading his "**The Great Elegy for John Donne**." The voice was extremely youthful and frenzied with anguish. The poet was reciting the elegy's detailed catalogue of household objects in a breathless, rhetorical manner, in the tradition of the poets of the Revolutionary generation. His passion gave life to each thing enumerated, and this somehow made the very long poem seem short. There was a touch of Surrealism to this work—a new, Soviet kind of Surrealism—in the intrusion of everyday detail into the poem. However, Brodsky's Surrealism takes on a more metaphysical dimension in some of his short poems. These are as good as anything written in the sixties in Russia. (Incidentally, we are unable to date them exactly. They were made available to Western readers in 1965 without indication as to when they were written or how they were obtained. We may assume that they are the works of a poet in his early twenties.)

#### Note

1. Brodsky's patronymic is not known to me.

#### Joseph Brodsky and Anne-Marie Brumm (interview date 1973-74)

SOURCE: Brodsky, Joseph, and Anne-Marie Brumm. "The Muse in Exile: Conversations with the Russian Poet, Joseph Brodsky." *Mosaic* 8, no. 1 (fall 1974): 229-46.

[In the following interview with Brumm, begun in 1973 and completed in 1974, Brodsky shares his thoughts on such topics as the function of art, his approach to writing poetry, influences on his work, and his response to classical and modern poetry.]

[Brumm]: What do you see as being the function of the artist?

[Brodsky]: The role of the artist—and his duty—Well, if this can be said for poetry, for literature—is to write well, that's all.

What then would you say are the main concerns of your poetry?

Once I made this statement and maybe it's correct. I think that the role of writer and of artist is to show to the people the real vision of the scale of things. For instance, I think that a good writer shows you life as some long chain and a good writer can indicate very correctly the number of your link in this chain. Or at least he has to move you to create such a possibility for yourself, for recognizing your own link in this chain. That is what I mean.

*How old were you when you first started writing poetry?*

I don't remember. I was 17-18, I guess. But it wasn't serious. I started to write seriously, well, at least I think seriously, when I was 23, 22-23.

*Could you tell me how your poetry has developed or changed from the time when you first started writing until now?*

The only thing which I can tell about it is that (pause) in the beginning I was well, as all the people in the beginning, I was very emotional and so on. But right now, (pause) I have more taboos, more vetoes than permissions. I make more vetoes for myself writing something than I permit myself. I think if I can talk about any development, my writing becomes a bit more hard, a bit more sober, maybe not a bit more—more sober, more dry—less emotional, just more deaf in some sense.

*Could you explain that more fully?*

I can, I guess. When I was young, younger I mean. When I started, my poetry was—well, my poetry—my verses were very "sounding." I used a great amount of instrumentation. There were a number of sounds. It was just phonetically very beautiful, well, I think it was. (laugh). But right now, the sound is a bit more impersonal. It sounds like (pause) less exciting, I guess.

*Would you say that your poems tend to be rather sad and ultimately pessimistic, as for example, "Christmas Romance"?*

No, that's wrong. It's not pessimistic and I don't think this is a good definition for poetry, pessimistic or optimistic.

*OK. It must be painful for you to write about your past experiences.*

No, no, and as a matter of fact, I think my verses are rather retrospective than introspective. I mean I'd rather remember when I write. The hero of the poems I write rather remembers things than predicts them.