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BRODSKY AMONG US, A MEMOIR , By Ayse Dietrich*, Published by: Academic Studies Press, USA. Written by Ellendea Proffer Teasley, Year of Publishing: 2017. Subject Area: Jews of Russia and Eastern Europe and their Legacy. Book Type: Memoir, Literary Criticism . Total Number of Pages: 166. ISBN: 9781618115799, \$24.00, Paperback.

The poet in exile becomes the poet of exile... the poet of exile is continually struggling in a time that is too late and a place that is elsewhere.
Peterson (1993)^[1]

This memoir *Brodsky Among Us (Brodskiy sredi nas)* written by Ellendea Proffer Teasley is about the friendship and experiences between the author and her husband and the Russian-born poet Joseph Brodsky. In 1964 he was charged with social parasitism and sentenced to five years of hard labor. Brodsky was exiled from his country to Israel in 1972, but he was persuaded to live in the United States and offered a job at the University of Michigan by the Proffers; Brodsky and the Proffers remained friends until Brodsky's death in 1996. The author of the book, Ellendea Proffer Teasley, who co-founded with her husband the avant-garde Russian publishing house Ardis in the U.S., published her book first in Russian in Russia in 2015; the English translation was published in the U.S. by the Academic Studies Press in 2017.

In the section of the book "A Word about the Context" the author explains how she and her husband met Brodsky in Leningrad in 1969 on the advice of Nadezhda Mandelstam, the widow of the poet Osip Mandelstam and the one who introduced the Proffers into the Russian literary world. The author was a graduate student at Indiana University when she went to the Soviet Union with her husband, Carl Proffer.

She continues her book with an explanation of her first Russian contact with Russian literature, particularly with Dostoevsky and Mayakovsky in her teenage years, and her graduate school education at Indiana University. Later she describes her first impressions about the Russian intellectual world and her first impressions about Brodsky and 'his code of behaviour under totalitarian rule'. The author states that 'a man who does not think for himself, a man who goes

along with the group, is part of the evil structure itself'. She states that the most remarkable thing about the poet was 'his determination to live as if he were free in the eleven time zone prison that is the Soviet Union' and 'his preference to act as if the Soviet regime does not exist'. During their visit the author witnessed the rivalry between Leningrad/Petersburg and Moscow. She describes Leningrad as an artificial and the most European city, which considers itself superior to the rest of the country. As a resident of Leningrad Brodsky considered himself part of an elite and had the same attitude. Later in the memoir, the author talks about anti-Soviet Brodsky's desperate desire to get out of the Soviet Union. His first offer from the OVIR was to emigrate to Israel, and the second offer by the Proffers was to become poet-in-residence at the University of Michigan. The author states that Brodsky had no intention to go to Israel; he wanted to go to the anti-Soviet great power. Then the memoir continues with Brodsky meeting with Carl in Vienna, then his meeting with poets from London, their travel to his first settlement place, Ann Arbor in the U.S. where he was forced to learn many new things, his first impressions about the new country, his comparison of old and new cultures, and shows how Brodsky found a way to adapt himself to the new world and how this new world perceived him. He loved England, he loved Italy and Poland, but stayed in this new world, in New York because only the U.S. was as anti-Soviet Union he required, where he was free to express his overwhelming disgust at how the Soviet system required not just obedience, but complicity and how his country had been enslaved.

In the Soviet Union he had been known only to a small circle of literary people; in New York, however, he was not only accepted, but as a dissident he had influence, power and became part of the establishment. The author claims that he had trouble getting the balance right. While he was proud and possessive of his relations with the famous outside of Russia, he was infuriated by the fame of literary people in his homeland, Russia, and his hostility was based on his conviction that these people were political puppets. He was envied them because he also wanted to be famous in his country, but he was unable to do so.

The author also talks about Brodsky's problems of after becoming famous, his thirst for recognition and fame in the U.S. She explains why Brodsky never returned to his beloved Petersburg. The author believes that this was "because he didn't believe anything had really changed and return would be a form of forgiveness; and as if exile was not so difficult and it had not cost you anything. sometimes you love your country but it doesn't love you back. This loss becomes a part of your new identity."

Proffer Teasley's memoir is an excellent primary source for information about Brodsky's character and personality, his exile and journey to the United States, his adaptation to this new culture and his attitudes toward it, his relationship with writers and intellectuals in America, and his undiminished opposition to and hostility towards the Soviet Union.

^[1]Peterson, D., 'From Exile to Affirmation: The Poetry of Joseph Brodsky', *Studies in 20th Century Literature*, Vol.17, Issue 2, Article 12, 1993.

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