

random perceptions or passions that have got out of hand. If in his "Elegy for John Donne" a catalogue of disparate objects—from plates and socks to a cathedral dome, from mice and wild beasts to forests, seas, and rivers, to heaven itself, God, angels, and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse—serves him to build an infinite and eternal universe, it is that his vision, in a magnificent sweep, stretches beyond the limits of matter and even spirit to a realm of values that encompasses them all. Objects of ordinary life are neither debased nor made to stand for something other than themselves. Sometimes, as in "The Tenant Finds His New House Wholly Strange," a melancholy irony attaches to them. Sometimes, as in "When I Embraced These Shoulders," there is a terror of soullessness. But each thing, complete and real, exists in its own sphere, and without being symbolic is neither meaningless nor isolated, for its specific reality is part of a vaster, unifying one of concepts and poetic intuition.

Brodsky is a metaphysical poet, whose affinity with the English metaphysical school derives from kinship of intellectual attitudes and emotional susceptibilities as much as of taste. This allies him in the twentieth century with T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden, who were also practiced in the sharp observation and disciplined thinking of the seventeenth century. Brodsky's imagination, like theirs, is capable of extraordinary leaps, as, for example, that of the remarkable conceit of "Refusing to Catalogue All of One's Woes," where the spell he casts on a woman he has loved—a spell made of the alleys, backyards, and fences that are the backdrop of their rift—is compared to a dying, drunken tailor's patching the garment of a nobleman. He is always restrained (compare his "New Stanzas to Augusta" with the Byronic poem to which his alludes), sometimes humorous (as in "Two Hours in an Empty Tank"), sometimes brilliantly epigrammatic, and often witty—with the serious, unfrivolous wit of his metaphysical forebears. And his experience of tragedy has lent his voice a poignant gravity that is extremely moving.

George Kline, collaborating with the poet, has translated most of his published work. He has done this with exemplary modesty and sensitiveness, and as successfully as anyone I know. The introduction he has supplied is an admirable piece of criticism, and his "Note on the Translation" is a model of good sense.

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RUSSIAN-ENGLISH IDIOM DICTIONARY. By *Alexander J. Vitek*. Edited by *Harry H. Josselson*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973. x, 328 pp. \$19.95.

Students, teachers, translators, researchers, and many others who have worked with Russian have lamented the lack of an extensive, reliable Russian-English idiom dictionary. Even the best lexicons available are marred by serious shortcomings. Most have been oriented toward British English, often providing obscure, antiquated, and even bizarre equivalents. Americans have often turned to *A Phrase and Sentence Dictionary of Spoken Russian* (a reissue of the old War Department Technical Manual), based on the Ushakov dictionary, which, as the title indicates, is intended primarily for a different purpose. Most recent efforts to meet the need have failed on a number of counts. The most serious of these are (1) the failure to differentiate true idioms from other word sequences, proverbs, and complex lexical items, (2) inadequate, incorrect, misleading, and sometimes nonsensical

English equivalents, and (3) incorrect designation of stylistic level, often including Russian examples with exotically mixed styles.

The authors of the *Russian-English Idiom Dictionary* have avoided these pitfalls to produce a reference tool that should prove invaluable to the field. They have limited their corpus to authoritative Russian lexicons (the Ushakov and the 1957 four-volume Academy dictionaries), extracted items identified as to participation in idioms from a store of computer-coded materials, and supplied Russian examples only when they were not provided by the source. Wherever possible, English idioms corresponding in meaning to the Russian ones are given, otherwise an explanation of the Russian idiom is supplied. Educated native speakers of Russian and English have worked together in an admirable combination of man and machine processing.

Although no mention is made of the total number of entries, random sampling indicates that well over five thousand head-word items are included. Often the head word covers a number of idioms, not infrequently as many as twenty, so that the volume provides an extensive reference tool from the standpoint of quantity alone. Lexical and grammatical variations are clearly indicated. Words are marked not only for stress but also for dieresis, a welcome addition. The stylistic code, derived from the source materials, encompasses eighty-five identifying levels of usage; albeit the majority of entries carry no special stylistic evaluation (in cross listing, only the full items carry the full style code). Head words and English references are given in capital letters for easy identification.

There are some transgressions. These are mainly in blind cross listings, English misspellings, and minor typographical matters. (The unfortunate *derzhat' kamen' shire*, where obviously what is intended is *derzhat' karman shire*, in the introduction should not be taken as an indication of the contents of the volume.) Most of the English equivalents succeed well in conveying the stylistic tone of the original. Some could benefit by fuller explanation: for example, under *kombinatsiia iz trekh pal'tsev* "a fig," *derzhat' bank* "to keep the bank," a brief additional comment would make the meaning clearer; *pokryt' aplodishmentamy* connotes not merely "to applaud" but "to applaud to a considerable degree"; *ustavit'sia/smotret' kak baran na novye vorota* is used not only to indicate that someone is "out of one's element" but that the speaker has every expectation that this person should well know or be capable of dealing with the situation; *priiti k shapochnomu razboru* is not "to come to the end of (something)" but "to come at the end of (something)," that is, when everyone is preparing to depart. Such shortcomings, however, can easily be accommodated in future editions of the dictionary, a work which should readily find its way into every Slavist's library.

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MULTILINGUALISM IN THE SOVIET UNION: ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE POLICY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION. By *E. Glyn Lewis*. Contributions to the Sociology of Language, no. 3. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1972. xx, 332 pp. 62 Dglds., paper.

There are only 210,000 speakers of the Icelandic language, but Mordvinian, a Finnic language, has six times as many: 1,263,000. Yet Icelandic is flourishing, and Mordvinian will probably disappear as a spoken language in the next century.