**“Odysseus to Telemachus”**

Joseph Brodsky, 1940 - 1996

My dear Telemachus,

The Trojan War

is over now; I don’t recall who won it.

The Greeks, no doubt, for only they would leave

so many dead so far from their own homeland.

But still, my homeward way has proved too long.

While we were wasting time there, old Poseidon,

it almost seems, stretched and extended space.

I don’t know where I am or what this place

can be. It would appear some filthy island,

with bushes, buildings, and great grunting pigs.

A garden choked with weeds; some queen or other.

Grass and huge stones . . . Telemachus, my son!

To a wanderer the faces of all islands

resemble one another. And the mind

trips, numbering waves; eyes, sore from sea horizons,

run; and the flesh of water stuffs the ears.

I can’t remember how the war came out;

even how old you are--I can’t remember.

Grow up, then, my Telemachus, grow strong.

Only the gods know if we’ll see each other

again. You’ve long since ceased to be that babe

before whom I reined in the plowing bullocks.

Had it not been for Palamedes’ trick

we two would still be living in one household.

But maybe he was right; away from me

you are quite safe from all Oedipal passions,

and your dreams, my Telemachus, are blameless.