



## EVA PETROCZI

### BRODSKY TRIPTYCH

#### I. NOBEL-LAUREATE WITH A CAT *on the portrait of Joseph Brodsky*

The prize is now yours,  
but it is not fame  
that brings the velvet touch  
back to your calloused hand  
marked by so many wounds, no:  
it is that little kitten  
that you are fondling, sad faced,  
on your Stockholm portrait,  
she who nestled like Muryonka  
in the cradle of your fingers,  
(exactly like a Russian kitten,  
definitely so!)  
I tell you, she, she alone,  
could share with you there  
those fleeting days  
of cold evening-dressed triumph.

#### II. DIDO'S LAST WORDS

*Our bed. Lavinia slumbers. Not a stir.  
She's younger, firmer-fleshed than you could claim,  
yes, but flames that turn the human frame  
into an altar, have never burnt in her.*

#### István Baka: Aeneas and Dido

Lavinia bores you, this is obvious.  
With every desirous cell  
you want your Dido,  
me, who is no longer

a young-eyed filly, but you want  
me, who is arrival,  
me, who is farewell,  
me, who had loved you so deeply,

son of distant Troy,  
that your brine-bitten beauteous eyes  
will be in tears, when they realize  
that they will never see me again.

The funeral pyre weeps beneath me,  
and you burn with me, my love.  
You burn with me although your body will  
survive you as your own cold empty shell.

#### III. ELEGY FOR JOSEPH BRODSKY

*„John Donne has sunk in sleep. His verses sleep  
His images, his rhymes, and his strong lines  
fade out of view...”  
Joseph Brodsky, Elegy for John Donne  
(transl. by George L. Kline)*

Joseph Brodsky retired to rest.  
His cradle was a windy, many-named city,  
debased daughter of the river Neva.  
His resting place is the doges' sea-girt residence.

Worn threadbare by wanderings, his lace-like heart  
(beautiful heart, like Venetian railings)  
took leave – in great haste – from this world,  
but soon two poetess-angels, Anna and Marina  
began to mother him there, on the other side,  
(Yes, their lips curled in Russian, the language of angels),  
followed by his poet-uncle, Auden  
with a gentian-blue bunch of solace in his hand.

Finally Rilke came to greet  
the son of Petersburg becomingly in Hades,  
the son worn out by life so soon.  
(When Rilke speaks, German transmutes  
into a soft angelic tongue.)

Joseph Brodsky retired to rest  
but those four kept rousing him.  
They tutored him to think no more of death  
and learn from them the art of resurrection.

Joseph Brodsky retired to rest.  
But he was not silenced by the grave,  
for he had his friends, the four.  
He was their ward and, believing or disbelieving,  
with beauteous and indomitable lines, he gave  
each a new lease of life on this earth.

Translated by Peter Zollman