



# Nativity Poems

*Joseph Brodsky*

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**Nativity Poems** Joseph Brodsky  
Christmas poems by the Nobel Laureate

*To Him, all things seemed enormous: His mother's breast, the steam  
out of the ox's nostrils, Caspar, Balthazar, Melchior, the team  
of Magi, the presents heaped by the door, ajar.  
He was but a dot, and a dot was the star.*

Joseph Brodsky, who jokingly referred to himself "a Christian by correspondence," endeavored from the time he "first took to writing poems seriously," to write a poem for every Christmas. He said in an interview: "What is remarkable about Christmas? The fact that what we're dealing with here is the calculation of life--or, at the very least, existence--in the consciousness of an individual, a specific individual." He continued "I liked that concentration of everything in one place--which is what you have in that cave scene." There resulted a remarkable sequence of poems about time, eternity, and love, spanning a lifetime of metaphysical reflection and formal invention.

In *Nativity Poems* six superb poets in English have come together to translate the ten as yet untranslated poems from this sequence, and the poems are presented in English in their entirety for the first time, in a beautiful, pocket-sized edition drawing on the Renaissance imagery that Brodsky identified as the poems' inspiration.

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