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Quotes by Brodsky, Joseph

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Joseph Brodsky (May 24, 1940 – January 28, 1996), born Iosif Aleksandrovich Brodsky was a poet and essayist who won the Nobel Prize in Literature (1987) and was chosen Poet Laureate of the United States (1991-1992).

The surest defense against Evil is extreme individualism, originality of thinking, whimsicality, even -- if you will -- eccentricity. That is, something that can't be feigned, faked, imitated; something even a seasoned imposter couldn't be happy with.

- Brodsky, Joseph

It would be enough for me to have the system of a jury of twelve versus the system of one judge as a basis for preferring the U.S. to the Soviet Union. I would prefer the country you can leave to the country you cannot.

- Brodsky, Joseph

How delightful to find a friend in everyone.

- Brodsky, Joseph

The poetic notion of infinity is far greater than that which is sponsored by any creed.

- Brodsky, Joseph

What should I say about life? That it's long and abhors transparency.

- Brodsky, Joseph

In the works of the better poets you get the sensation that they're not talking to people any more, or to some seraphical creature. What they're doing is simply talking back to the language itself --as beauty, sensuality, wisdom, irony --those aspects of language of which the poet is a clear mirror. Poetry is not an art or a branch of art, it's something more. If what distinguishes us from other species is speech, then poetry, which is the supreme linguistic operation, is our anthropological, indeed genetic, goal. Anyone who regards poetry as an entertainment, as a read, commits an anthropological crime, in the first place, against himself.

- Brodsky, Joseph

If a poet has any obligation toward society, it is to write well. Being in the minority, he has no other choice. Failing this duty, he sinks into oblivion. Society, on the other hand, has no obligation toward the poet. A majority by definition, society thinks of itself as having other options than reading verses, no matter how well written. Its failure to do so results in its sinking to that level of locution at which society falls easy prey to a demagogue or a tyrant. This is society's own equivalent of oblivion.

- Brodsky, Joseph

Racism? But isn't it only a form of misanthropy?

- Brodsky, Joseph

There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them.

- Brodsky, Joseph

After all, it is hard to master both life and work equally well. So if you are bound to fake one of them, it had better be life.

- Brodsky, Joseph

Every writing career starts as a personal quest for sainthood, for self-betterment. Sooner or later, and as a rule quite soon, a man discovers that his pen accomplishes a lot more than his soul.

- Brodsky, Joseph

What I like about cities is that everything is king size, the beauty and the ugliness.

- Brodsky, Joseph

The real history of consciousness starts with one's first lie.

- Brodsky, Joseph



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