1978

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Joseph Brodsky

Daniel Weissbort

Recommended Citation

Brodsky, Joseph and Daniel Weissbort. "Autumn in Norenskaya." *The Iowa Review* 9.4 (1978): 2-3. Web.
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2373

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We return from the field. The wind
bells like buckets upturned,
brades the willow fringe,
earth onto boulder piles.
Horses, inflated casks
of ribs trapped among shafts,
turn to the rusted harrow aft
their grinning profiles.

The wind spins out the frozen sorrel,
swells kerchiefs and shawls, fumbles
in the skirts of old hags, turns them
into ragged cabbage heads.
Croaking, coughing, eyes down,
the women scissor their way home,
like cutting along a dress hem,
throw themselves onto their beds.

In the folds, rubber scissor legs glitter,
pupils water at the vision
of crabby little faces, wind–driven
into kolkhoz women's eyes, as a shower flings
what look like faces against the bare panes.
Under the harrow furrows fan
out before boulders. The wind sends a glade
of birds up over the fields in their crumbling.

These sights are a last sign
of the inner life, and hard by
stands any specter risen from outside,
if the wheel hub's churchbell clamor,
the upturned bodily world,
with its head stuck in a rut,
a live starling soaring in the clouds,
does not in the end make it stammer.

The sky grows dark. Not eyes but a rake
first sees the damp roofs, staked
out against the crest of a hill,
that's really a mound, far off.
Three *versts* still to go. The rain
Lords it over this wretched plain
and to their waterproof boot tops cling
brown lumps of native sod.

Translated by Daniel Weissbort
with the author