

2007

Out of Sixteen Portraits, One Turns to Look

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Recommended Citation

Davis, Carol Ann. "Out of Sixteen Portraits, One Turns to Look." *The Iowa Review* 37.1 (2007): 143-144. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.6584>

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Out of Sixteen Portraits, One Turns to Look

for Anna Akhmatova

Prison gates at this hour
smell of sulfur and burn the tongue.

•

On the third day she gets up and makes tea.

•

As if there is something besides river to be found,
the ice breaks up.

•

A bird caught in thistle,
thistle caught in water.

•

Asia, Abyssinia, the Crimea, we are tired.

•

Sensei, all long train rides lead into a square.

•

The boulevards just swept and finished,
the paint tasting of wax and powders.

•

The Futurists and Acmeists can leave me for dead for all I care.

•

And with “just the right figure for ballet.”

•

At this hour the window she’s chosen
for her son’s is a blank eye among blank eyes,

•

her face to him a white impression on snow.

•

And gun-shots and the shops always dark;
a forest of suicides from factories that smell of candy.

•

I take it all back, how it seemed, how it was.

•

The river over reason is at war with sky.

•

Clock on the dresser, half-drunk glass.