

## Autumn in Norenskaya · *Joseph Brodsky*

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*