

Mother Maria Skobtsova (1891–1945)

David O'Neal

The Parisians who observed her
Bargaining with the greengrocer
For a better deal on potatoes
Had no category for her,
So confusing to them was
The garb of a Russian nun.
(But, inured to their stares,
She continued, weighing
The sorry state of the leeks
Against their reduced price,
Adding them, skeptically,
To her bag.)
Later (it's always later),
Her confusing persona
Was revealed to be
Nothing other than a sign
Of the anomaly she'd become
Among humankind
The moment she understood
Cross and resurrection
To be the same thing,
Rather than cause and effect.
(As the apples seemed salvageable,
She took some of those too.)
That cigarette hanging from her mouth:
Her antidote to the odor of sanctity.
(A couple cabbages more,
And she continued on her way home.)



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David O'Neal is a book editor who lives in Boston, Massachusetts. He is a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary. His essays and poetry are archived on his blog, *Nonidiomatic* (<http://davensati54.blogspot.com>).