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Review Of "What We Saw From This Mountain: Selected Poems 1976-2014" By V. Aristov, Translated By J. Trubikhina-Kunina And B. Hulick

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circulate abroad, and although the Post-Stalinist “thaw” indicated a better social climate, Pasternak was clearly not blind to the underlying reality. Nor does Mancosu forget to tell us that Pasternak gave the manuscript to Sergio d’Angelo with the following words: “You are as of now invited to my execution” (29). And he emphasizes Pasternak’s steadfast resolve by carefully selecting the most memorable excerpts of the author’s correspondence, including Pasternak’s admission in August 15, 1956, when the clouds were getting very dark: “But I can’t imagine how or when the work could be published over here; and I did not write it in order to hide it. And I accepted the risk, and however many times I were to be put to the test, I should take the same risk again” (31).

Elena Glazov-Corrigan, Emory University

Vladimir Aristov. *What We Saw from This Mountain*. Translated from the Russian by Julia Trubikhina-Kunina and Betsy Hulick, with contributions from Gerald Janacek [*sic*], Rebekah Smith, and Matvei Yankelevich. New York: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2017. xi + 107 pp. \$18.00 (paper).

Vladimir Aristov, who began publishing in the glasnost’ era, is less well-known in the Anglophone world than many of his peers. *What We Saw from This Mountain* is a bilingual collection of his poetry that offers the first substantial presentation of his work in English. The volume opens with a thoughtful introduction by lead translator Julia Trubikhina-Kunina, which places Aristov in the context of his own career and of the poetic movements around him. The book closes with a thirteen-page interview between author and Trubikhina-Kunina, and this conveys a great deal of information about the author and his poetics. In brief, Aristov is a working physicist who has published more scientific articles than poetry; he comments, “As a high school student [...] I was enchanted with the new, unsolved problems, which suddenly opened up the world as if it were completely new, and here undoubtedly lies a kinship with poetry” (95). He is also a sharp and attentive reader of poetry, and the interview has interesting things to say about friends and role models like Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, Ivan Zhdanov, and Alexei Parshchikov.

After learning or being reminded of the poet’s dual identity as a scientist, the reader might expect verse that draws on specialized topics and terms, but Aristov’s poems live their own lives. Often unrhymed, they reveal a subtle music and persistent rhythm and often recognizable metrics (he seems particularly comfortable in iambic pentameter). The topics range from love to archeology to scenes on a city street, with a few poems dedicated to other poets. “Faces in the Metro” (“Litsa v metro”) plays interestingly, and at more length, with the idea of Ezra Pound’s “In a Station of the Metro” (76–77). Aristov is well-read and well-informed about world poetry as well as intimately familiar with the Moscow scene of his own youth and ongoing creative period. The bilingual format means that fewer poems altogether are included, but the book serves to introduce Aristov’s work for readers in both languages.

The translations display a fine sense of Aristov’s rhythms and take steps to preserve it: In the poem “Music,” for example, the word “desiccated” is used to render “sukhaia” (3), both preserving the specific gravity of the line and offering more of a phonetic punch than the word “dry” would have. The translations feature a rich vocabulary, not only elucidating the originals but creating enjoyable new verbal artistry. This reader especially enjoyed the longish “Dolphinarium” (“A Poem in Fourteen Statements”)—the poet is so clever, and the translation catches that along with the emotional color of the work. Sometimes it is the restraint of the translators that makes things just right, as in “Who spoke to them in the Esperanto of interjections?” (29) for “Kto s nimi govovil na Esperanto mezhdumetii?” Some of the ambiguities in the original (such as the gender of a speaker on p. 7) are resolved in what seems the most likely direction,

though that can simplify the reading somewhat; in other places, a potentially dual meaning receives both of its possibilities: “Swim in the peals of kitchen seashell sinks” to catch the two senses of “rakovina” in “Plyvi v raskatakh rakovin kvartirnykh” (49). Trubikhina-Kunina is herself a published poet, and several of her collaborators are prominent and experienced translators. In a few places rhythm is sacrificed somewhat to maintain meaning: “Into the darkness of earth and the silence of embraces” (3) becomes a bit wordy, and the line “and having from your face brushed dark of hair” (for “i temnotu volos ubrav s litsa,” 52–53), rhythmically and sonically lovely, is nevertheless more obscure than the original, missing an article and perhaps a possessive pronoun that is implied in Russian (who else’s hair would be falling across one’s face?). For the most part, though, the translations are admirably unwordy, economical without losing any necessary flesh, and attentive to expressive arrangement on the page.

Each translation ends with the initials of the translators involved, conveying the necessary information without distraction. The sophisticated discussion of Aristov’s own poetics and the poetry (and lives) of his friends and peers in the interview at the end of the book, as well as its introduction, will be appreciated by scholars and fans of Russian poetry.

Like all books from Ugly Duckling Presse, this one is physically appealing, with a handsome and durable cover combined with excellent production values. *What We Saw from This Mountain* is an admirable introduction to the work of this poet. It should serve Aristov well for a variety of readers: those who do not yet know his work in Russian or in English, and for those who wish to read a well-done translation of very interesting Russian poetry.

Sibelan Forrester, Swarthmore College

T. I. Afanas'eva, V. V. Kozak, A. N. Sobolev. *Glagolicheskaja pis'mennost' Zapadnykh Balkan X–XVI vekov: uchebno-metodicheskoe posobie*. Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 2016. 72 pp. Paper.

The emergence of Slavic literacy is associated with two alphabets, Cyrillic and Glagolitic, and with the activity of the two Greek missionaries, Sts. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius, who came to spread the true Christian faith in the local language among the Slavic-speaking communities of Great Moravia and Pannonia in the second half of the ninth century. Insufficient sources and difficulty interpreting them have led to disagreements among historians about the details of this legation and, not least, about which of the two alphabets St. Cyril invented and used for writing down the first Church Slavonic liturgical texts. The prevalent opinion is that it was the uniquely shaped Glagolitic, and that Cyrillic, even though it bears Cyril’s name, was developed only later in Bulgaria on the basis of Greek letters. While Cyrillic soon supplanted Glagolitic in the Slavic Orthodox Churches, the Slavic-speaking Christians in the Western Church adopted the Roman rite and Latin script. But in the western Balkans, on the Adriatic coast and islands, the idiosyncratic tradition of Glagolitic writing and literature survived until as late as the eighteenth century.

Although the Glagolitic literary tradition has major cultural importance for Croatia (it is an object of national pride), and is crucial for understanding the early history of religious life among the Slavs in general, it is not widely taught, and learning to read Glagolitic script (whether early “round,” or Croatian “angular”) has long been taken off the typical Slavic department curriculum in American institutions of higher education. It is with a bittersweet feeling, therefore, that I turn to review a textbook that, as its authors explain, is intended for students who are interested in gaining practical knowledge of reading Glagolitic texts, along with learning about the history of the medieval western Balkans, the history of the Slavic writing, South Slavic historical dialectology, manuscript studies, and paleography. Sweet—because I am delighted to see an academic publication outside of Croatia that promotes the knowledge of