claims on Byzantine heritage are invented traditions. As numerous studies have demonstrated, Muscovite cultural practices, like court ceremonies or icon painting, claimed continuity from Byzantium but in fact were adaptations of diverse foreign and local traditions. The Muscovite reception of Byzantine models depended on court politics, the availability of cultural resources, language expertise, and the dynamic relationship between the crown and the church. Affected by these factors, foreign models underwent deep transformations during the process of borrowing in Russia. Ostrowski acknowledges Russia's agency in adapting state-of-the-art warfare to local conditions. But in general, Ostrowski sees Russia as a passive recipient of ready foreign models, which he seeks to find across Eurasia. His tenacious search for prepacked models sometimes results in stretched assertions, like his claim that Peter I borrowed the Table of Ranks, which regulated service in Imperial Russia through 1917, from the Moghuls. As many historians have argued, the Table of Ranks most likely utilized different European sources and practices, making the process of borrowing complex and creative. If so, the Table of Ranks may perfectly illustrate Ostrowski's general observation that Russia was becoming increasingly involved in cooperation with Europe throughout the period under consideration.

Ostrowski's discussion of Europe is perplexed. He is of course correct in rejecting the idea of an idealized progressive "Europe." By putting the word Europe in inverted commas, he treats "Europe" as a cognitive construct which is based on cherry picking the best elements in politics, society, technology, and culture. But he also uses Europe without quotation marks, leaving this usage unexplained. This is where the exposition becomes confused and confusing. Ostrowski insists that Russia is not part of "Europe" (Ostrowski's inverted commas). He rejects Catherine II's claim that Russia was a European country, noting that her statement is anything but an impartial assessment. Catherine was of course biased. But partiality lies in the core of the concept of "Europe" as described by Ostrowski. Catherine's preoccupation with Europe helps us understand the role of "Europe" as a cognitive idea in making the identity (or identities) of the Russian imperial elite in the eighteenth century. But Ostrowski seems to have no interest in early modern identities. Such indifference occasionally leads to factual errors, like the misidentification of the Scottish engineer Christopher Galloway as English (he added a clock to the Savior tower of the Moscow Kremlin). But there are broader methodological implications. Ostrowski's study of Russia's relationship with Eurasia fails to address the key issue of how early modern Russians saw Russia's place in the world. Did their perception evolve throughout the period, and, if yes, what does it tell us about continuity and change? A closer engagement with invented traditions, the reception of influences and the issues of identity would have made Ostrowski's argument more nuanced and more persuasive.

Sergei Bogatyrev
University College London

Stone Dreams: A Novel-Requiem. By Akram Aylisi. Trans. Katherine E. Young. Brookline, Mass.: Academic Studies Press, 2022. viii, 144 pp. Notes. Glossary. $16.95, paper.

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Thanks to Academic Studies Press Central Asian Literatures in Translation Series, Akram Aylisi's remarkable novella *Stone Dreams* has been published with a new foreword by Thomas De Waal. *Stone Dreams* was published previously in the same series

as a section of *Farewell Aylis: A Non-Traditional Novel in Three Parts*, but stands up well on its own as a more fluid introduction to Aylisi's work.

The story behind this novella is as compelling as the work itself. Aylisi originally wrote *Stone Dreams* in Azerbaijani and translated it into Russian himself for publication in the journal *Druzhba narodov* in 2012, after which it was swiftly banned in Azerbaijan. Once the national writer of Azerbaijan, Aylisi was stripped of his awards and placed under house arrest in Baku, where he remains today. In his condemnation of both Azerbaijani and Armenian nationalism and violence, he is a rare advocate for dialog and reconciliation and a strong moral voice.

Aylisi is more than a courageous figure, however; he is a masterful writer whose works transcend their Azerbaijani context. *Stone Dreams* takes on the corrosive forces of power, corruption, and propaganda while meditating on the destructive power of hate. Set in 1989, the novella centers on Sadai Sadygly, a man who refuses to give in to blind nationalism as street violence against Armenians engulfs Baku. Lying in a coma after being attacked for defending an elderly man from a violent mob, Sadygly journeys in memory and vision through his childhood village Aylis, reliving both its beautiful and horrifying histories. Meanwhile other characters hover around him in the hospital, adding their perspectives to the disturbing conversations inspired by the unconscious body lying before them.

Katherine E. Young's translation adroitly follows the stylistic twists and turns of the novel, which can move from satire to lyricism to horror within a few lines. The thick irony can strike a cartoonish note, as with the character Nuvarish Karabakhly, a "small, fidgety man of fifty-five to sixty whose small face was not at all in harmony with his enormous, round belly" (2), and his thuggish nemesis who has turned the corner apartment into a brothel after throwing their Armenian neighbor out of the window. The black humor turns sinister when Karabakhly dreams of his neighbor's bloody undead corpse, and is all the more jarring when the comic actor cannot be taken seriously and meets a similar end.

Contrasted to the chaotic atmosphere of Baku, Sadygly's inner narrative is lyrical and serious as he finds himself in the village of Aylis. Returning to the ruins of stone churches, to the "yellow-rose light" (63) that falls on a cupola, and to the slaughter of a tiny, beautiful fox cub, Sadygly relives his childhood in a community with a troubled past of anti-Armenian violence. His Aylis is peopled with villagers, some compassionate and wise, some brutal and insane, all affected by their shared traumatic history. Longing to return to a time when Azerbaijanis and Armenians lived in harmony, Sadygly follows his visions, searching for redemption.

In counterpoint to Sadygly's journey, other voices express alternate perspectives. Dr. Farzani, who has recently moved to Baku from Moscow, is a concerned outsider whose own broken family mirrors the social conflict. Sadygly's pragmatic wife Azada *khanum*, worried that her husband is on the "verge of madness," reminds him "you've also been in those places from which *Armenians* drove out thousands of unfortunate *Azerbaijanis*. . . . . . Why don't you think about that, my dear?" (72) [Italics in the original]. But it is Azada's father Dr. Abasaliev who delivers the most thought-provoking line of the book: "what today's Armenians are like is besides the point—the point is what we're like now" (38). As a meditation on the psychological toll of war, even on the victors, *Stone Dreams* speaks as a novel of our time.

Framed by De Waal's insightful forward, which introduces the author's life and the novella's historical contexts, *Stone Dreams* is an important work of contemporary fiction. I recommend this book to everyone—Azerbaijani literature is so little known, and Aylisi's work is a compelling introduction. Ideal for the university, *Stone Dreams* would be excellent in post-Soviet studies or a Russian literature course decolonizing its curriculum. And although the ending is not cheerful, the hope for a better future is

palpable—it is the hope embedded in Sadygly's quest, and in Akram Aylisi's courage in writing and publishing this work.

Anna Oldfield
Coastal Carolina University

Everburning Pilot. By Leonid Schwab. Alexander Spektor, Anton Tenser, and Sibelan Forrester, eds. New York: Cicada Press, 2022. 176 pp. $20.00, paper.
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Leonid Schwab is a lyric poet who hauntingly suggests whole civilizations. He holds a unique place in contemporary Russophone poetry, drawing together—and shaping—vastly different poetic modes. His new translated collection, *Everburning Pilot* from Cicada Press, now makes this legacy available to English readers in a substantial way for the first time.

Schwab was born in Bobruisk, Belarus in 1961, and he has lived in Israel since 1990. Winner of Russia's prestigious Andrey Bely Prize in poetry, he is described in Maria Stepanova's introductory essay as an epic poet, even while his poems are particularly compressed, often less than half a page in length. The poems selected for this volume and presented chronologically span his career, from 1987 to 2015.

Numerous poems in this volume, especially the earliest, invoke narratives, sometimes ominous, through lightly sketched characters. The opening poem, "The guests were gathering at a dacha . . ." (*Gosti s''ezzhalis' na dachu*) suspends a group of people midwinter in a house its host has left "as if he had stepped out for a minute" (22–23). Other poems plant individuals or clusters of them in landscapes that often threaten to engulf them, as in the unnamed (nearly unpronounced) figure in "Chipping at bushings with gunpowder . . ." (*Vtulki otbival porokhom*), who walks through city blocks and out into a valley in search of his brother (63). As the poems progress in time, they tend to pan out so that the landscape seems to predominate. But even at these larger scales, he never abandons the intimate and human. This is a postindustrial, often militarized landscape that features an automobile cast against a "worldwide ocean"; a national border someone would like to breach much as they would like some potato soup; a seashore gone missing from memory right along with a radio receiver (110–11). The poetic universes Schwab evokes extend through imperial periphery right out into space, and back again. In the 2000s his verse becomes at once more abstract, abandoning punctuation to strings of images and expressions, while also more frequently engaging the aphoristic and archetypal bent of oral culture.

Schwab's poetry will resonate with readers of diverse exposure and predilection, but especially with those familiar with Russian poetry. His verse at times betrays an almost classical or Pushkinian wit; an Acmeist attention to telling details and to the archeology of culture. Perhaps less obviously—given Schwab's practice of gesturing at worlds that never coalesce or have long ago dissolved—his poems, with their cosmic scale and juxtaposition of humans against a larger universe, also echo the metaphysical lyrics of Evgeny Baratynsky and Fedor Tiutchev. The motif of the pilot recalls the Futurists' technological poetics, exemplified by Vasilii Kamenskii's 1914 *Tango s korovami* (Tango with Cows), structured partly by the perspective of a pilot plying the air. At the same time, Schwab's poetry is wholly contemporary in its exploration of empire and the postcolonial periphery, its deconstruction of nation, its proximity to an apocalypse seen through the lens of people moving forward through daily life. Notable is Schwab's attention to *groups* of people, villages, communities, and how together they navigate these fragmented, layered environments.