

Title: Anna Glazova, Poems and Photographs
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Glazova examines the possibility of recovering for objects their lost aura through photography. There is an astonishing absence of persons from the photographs, amid their urgent interrogation of the categories of mental vivacity. The photographs feature flowers, which Elaine Scarry has taught us to view as premier objects for mental representation. Rather than limiting herself to words, Glazova uses photographs, which offer a visual representation of stem, petal, thorn, and leaf, which in turn become emblems for the mental work of imagination. Just as the photographs press the fading, decaying objects of the natural world into expressions of flickering aliveness, so her poetry explores mental states at the boundary zones of alertness, clarity, self-certainty, and self-knowledge.

The category of the “still life,” which is so pervasively the genre of Glazova’s photography, helps us understand her poetry, where elements of the natural world are scrutinized with the same fine gaze that watches the mind performing these acts of scrutiny. Barthes compared things in photographs to anesthetized, fastened-down butterflies, and Glazova’s work pursues that desire for absolute stillness to its logical conclusion: a gesture of self-reflection that faces the deadness such stillness always threatens.

Alongside photographs of flowers and also of a few other objects in the natural world (chiefly snow), the paper treats a very few poems (chosen from among “Fotosintez,” “Shpanskiye pomidory,” “iz naklonnykh bokalov,” “my tak izognuli stenu,” “iabloki, dvoe, povisli,” and “sinii”). The goal is to develop a theory of reading this challenging poet based on her only apparently more accessible work with images. I draw as well on theory of photography, some listed below, and on Glazova’s own reading of the photography and poetry of Arkady Dragomoshchenko. His exemplary work remains extremely important for her, and I will end the paper with a brief comparison of the ways in which their visual aesthetics opened out to philosophical reflections.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, tr. Richard Howard. NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981.

Benjamin, Walter. “Little History of Photography,” *Selected Writings: Vol. 2, 1927–1934*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, 507–530.

Dragomoshchenko, Arkadii. *Tavtologiia*. Moscow: NLO, 2011.

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