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Russia's Classical Alter Ego, 1963-2016
Classical reception in the poetry of Elena Shvarts,
Il'ia Kutik, and Polina Barskova

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Doctor of Philosophy
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DECLARATION

This is to certify that that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

ABSTRACT

Classical reception, suppressed under Stalin, returned to Soviet poetry during the Thaw (c. 1953-63), and through the many political upheavals of the late twentieth century it has remained a prominent trend in contemporary Russian poetry. This thesis explores classical reception in the oeuvres of Elena Shvarts, Il'ia Kutik, and Polina Barskova, whose poetry spans from 1963 to the present. They form part of – and serve as case studies for – the wider trend of late- and post-Soviet poetic engagement with classical antiquity. This phenomenon has been studied in the cases of Thaw poets Iosif Brodskii and, to a lesser extent, Aleksandr Kushner, but investigations have not extended beyond these figures to the succeeding Stagnation and post-Soviet poets.

Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova come from different generations and different poetic schools, and have very different poetic styles. They share a sustained and playful engagement with the literature and history of Ancient Greece and Rome, which is often in dialogue with earlier Russian receptions of classical antiquity. Their classical reception is frequently intended to 'estrangle' Soviet/Russian contexts, thus making antiquity an 'alter ego' of Russia. This objective is facilitated – and inspired – by the Russian literary tradition. Since its inception Russian literature has set classical antiquity before itself as a model, imitating its literary forms and emulating its characters. This long-standing analogy between Russia and the classical world underpins Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova's evocations of classical antiquity as Russia's alter ego. The utility of the classical alter ego lies precisely in its alterity: as well as a vehicle for veiled dissidence, as with Aesopian speech, it can be a more extreme, or fun, or ideal reality.

Inherent in Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova's recourse to classical reception as alter ego is a desire to connect with Europe, from which Russians were palpably divided for much of the twentieth century – the Mandel'shtamian 'yearning for world culture'. It stems also from their desire to connect with pre-Soviet (classically receptive) Russian literature. The thesis begins with a history of classical reception in Russian literature from Russia's first contact with the classical world up to the present. Such a history is crucial to understanding contemporary poets' classical reception, as so

many of their references to classical antiquity are refracted through Russian intertexts.

The chapters on Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova examine the entire oeuvre (to date) of each poet, selecting key poems and themes for close analysis. This is conducted alongside the intertexts (quotations from classical texts are given in English only, except where the original language has demonstrably informed reception). As well as literary contexts, historical and personal contexts are considered. Interviews conducted by the author with both living poets (Kutik and Barskova) inform the analysis.

This thesis contends that the pervasive classical reception evident in Russian poetry from 1953 to the present responds to the series of ontological crises Russia was precipitated into by the upheavals of the twentieth century. With the loosening of Socialist Realism's control over literature after Stalin, Russian poets resume Russia's poetic tradition of using classical antiquity as an alter ego, both to heighten portrayals of Russia, and to imagine another, alternate, Russia.

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NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

All translations from Russian are mine unless otherwise noted.

I use modified Library of Congress transliteration throughout. Certain names appear in two forms, where convention/authorial preference conflict with this system, particularly Il'ia/Ilya and Brodskii/Brodsky.

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INTRODUCTION

Russian poetry was in dialogue with classical antiquity throughout its history – until the Stalinist era, when repressions and the imposition of Socialist Realism interrupted this tradition. Classical reception returned to Soviet poetry during the Thaw (c. 1953-63), and through the many political and societal upheavals of the ensuing decades it has remained a prominent trend in contemporary Russian poetry. This thesis looks at classical reception in the oeuvres of Elena Shvarts, Il'ia Kutik, and Polina Barskova, whose poetry spans from 1963 to the present. It asks how they respond to Russia's turbulent recent history via classical reception; these interactions with classical antiquity encompass a spectrum, spanning from passing allusions to extended rewritings. It investigates what aspects of antiquity they respond to, through which sources and by which means, and how these reflect upon their personal circumstances and upon Russian contemporaneity and history. This thesis also discusses how Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova comment metatextually on processes of reception, and how they use the shared cultural inheritance of classical antiquity in quotation from other writers, Russian or otherwise, to establish themselves as part of a tradition.

From the many poets of the post-Stalin era who engage in classical reception, I have selected Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova primarily on account of their extensive allusions to and rewritings of classical literature, history, and mythology – for each, classical reception is a definitive feature of their poetry. Their prolific use of classical references gives a body of data sufficiently large to analyse and compare the development of specific themes. Their poetics also strike a balance between learnedness and unlearnedness: they are not so immersed in classical contexts as to reflect nothing of the author's context, nor do they only engage superficially with classical references gleaned from general cultural literacy; they show sustained reception of antiquity both for its own sake and in dialogue with their milieu. Almost as important to my choice was my high estimation of their poetry – I believe each poet is a significant figure, worthy of inclusion in the Russian literary canon, once it catches up with them (Shvarts is in the process of being canonicised¹).

¹ See Josephine von Zitzewitz, in *Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry: Reinventing the Canon*, ed. by Katharine Hodgson, Joanne Shelton, and Alexandra Smith (Open Book Publishers, 2017), pp. 225–63.

Despite this, they have been very little studied: there are few scholarly works on Shvarts, and next to none on Kutik or Barskova; to date, this thesis is the largest-scale work on each poet. Critical attention to classical reception in their poetry amounts to one excellent article in Russian on Shvarts' 'Kinfiia' cycle (Dmitrii Panchenko, "Kinfiia" Eleny Shvarts'). This is in stark contrast to the many studies of classical reception in the works of their Thaw-era predecessors, Iosif Brodskii and, to a lesser extent, Aleksandr Kushner. The analysis of the oeuvres of Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova given in this thesis hopes to illuminate the trend of late- and post-Soviet poetic engagement with classical antiquity.

They are a diverse grouping. Shvarts began life as a poet at the start of the Stagnation, Kutik towards the end of it, and Barskova at the very end of Communism. Shvarts rarely left Russia, while Kutik and Barskova emigrated in young adulthood. Kutik was part of the postmodernist metarealist movement, while Shvarts and Barskova were unaffiliated with any poetic school. Shvarts was religious yet taboo-breaking, while Kutik and Barskova seem mostly uninterested in religion and have few taboos available to break. Kutik and Barskova have gone on to academic careers outside Russia, while Shvarts' only occupation was poetry. Shvarts and Barskova write mainly lyric, while Kutik tends towards long, epic forms. Although they have encountered each other – Shvarts and Kutik in New York² and Shvarts and Barskova in Elsinore (see p. 275) – they do not share poetic milieux. These generational, poetic, and personal differences are an advantage to my attempt to posit these three individuals as indicative of a wider trend: despite all their diversity, this thesis discovers similarities between their receptions of antiquity.

Each chapter examines the entire oeuvre (to date) of the respective poet. I gather together all the poems with even the slightest occurrence of classical reception; this allows me to perceive recurring themes, and to address not only poems in which classical reception is the core component, but also those in which it is merely incidental, as I can group the latter with other poems displaying similar traits. This approach also helps me to trace the wider significance of classical antiquity to the poet. I analyse the poems alongside their intertexts, taking the original classical texts as my default sources, because they are the basis of classical knowledge that the poet may have accessed in some other form. Classical texts thus serve as *locum tenentes*

² Elena Shvarts, *Sochineniia Eleny Shvarts*, 5 vols (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 2008), IV, pp. 200–03.

for more generic classical sources, such as translations, extracts accessible in anthologies, and other more nebulous and unpindownable versions of antiquity at large in popular and literary culture. I give quotations from classical texts in English only, except where the original language has demonstrably informed reception. For certain poems (Shvarts' 'Kinfiia', Kutik's "Osvobozhdennyi Gerakl' (1960)', and Barskova's 'Kidneping') I traced the exact source. My approach does have limitations. Biographical, historical, or textual evidence for a poet's use of a particular source (e.g. a specific translation), such as I used for the aforementioned poems, would outweigh the textual echoes of an abstracted source that I tend to rely upon for analysis. The limitations stem in part from pragmatic issues of access to Russian libraries, and of time constraints.

However, my focus in this thesis is not textual reconstruction of poets' sources for classical allusion, but how and why they adapted antiquity for their own purposes. I am therefore especially interested in incongruities in poets' classical reception, classical references that are refracted through another Russian writer, or poems where antiquity intersects with references to contemporary Russia or the poet's personal circumstances. Such instances shed most light on the relevance of classical antiquity to contemporary Russian poetry. Autobiographical narratives are key to understanding the ways in which contemporary poets can allude simultaneously to classical antiquity and to personal histories, Russian tradition, and Russian contemporaneity. Accordingly, as well as textual information, my analyses are informed by historical and biographical information, including interviews I conducted with Kutik and Barskova.

The literary-historical-biographical approach of my thesis demands a great deal of context. While I give context immediately pertinent to each poet in their chapter, the poet chapters should be read in the light of my first chapter, a history of classical reception in Russia, which synthesises the scholarship on classical reception from Russia's first contact with the classical world up to the present, offering a comprehensive and concise history of the major figures and trends. As it shows, the appropriation of Europe's classical tradition was fundamental to Russia's establishment of a national literature and identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and classical reception continues to be central to Russian writers' conception of their place within the Russian tradition in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. I wrote it because notable existing histories of Russian classical reception, such as Zara Martirosova Torlone's *Russia and the Classics*, Judith Kalb's

Russia's Rome, and G.S. Knabe's *Russkaia Antichnost'* (*Russian Antiquity*), focus on canonical texts and particular historical periods to the exclusion of contemporary or more peripheral authors, or do not treat classical antiquity as a whole. My history of Russian classical reception provides indispensable context for contemporary poets' classical reception, which is typically mediated via Russian intertexts.

As the history makes evident, poetry is the main arena of classical reception in Russia. Moreover, ever since Pushkin, 'the poet' – a figure attracting both reverence and suspicion – has been called upon to represent Russian culture as a whole. Poetry was therefore subject to greater repression under Stalin and a greater revival in the Thaw and Stagnation eras, being seen as a site for expressing and contesting cultural shifts. It seems that these facts are interrelated: how Russian poets respond to classical antiquity says something about Russia's status and identity.

Poets use classical reception to 'estrangle' their contemporary Soviet/Russian contexts. 'Ostranenie' ('estrangement'), coined by Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovskii in 1917, is a technique designed to defer comprehension of meaning in art by defamiliarising its context, thus heightening perception of both art and reality.³ 'Ostranenie's etymology, from 'strannoe' ('strange') and playing upon 'otstranenie' ('distancing') and 'strana' ('country'), suggests foreignness as an element of estrangement.⁴ Shklovskii named Latin among the languages certain world literatures had used for estrangement.⁵ For Russians in the Thaw and Stagnation, estrangement became a form of resistance to Soviet reality, a means of overcoming *byt* – "the monster of everyday routine, opposed to the poetic and spiritual *bytie*".⁶ Shvarts, not usually given to theoretical explanations, characterises her adoption of the persona of Roman poet Kinfiia as "Известный принцип остранения" ("The well-known principle of estrangement"). She continues: "Забавно перенести свою жизнь из России семидесятых как бы в древний Рим, все становится смешнее и красивее"⁷ ("It's fun to transport your life from seventies Russia to Ancient Rome, as it were – everything becomes funnier and prettier"). As I will show, for Kutik and

³ Svetlana Boym, 'Poetics and Politics of Estrangement: Victor Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt', *Poetics Today*, 26.4 (2005), 581–611 (pp. 581, 586, 599).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 586.

⁵ Svetlana Boym, 'Estrangement as a Lifestyle: Shklovsky and Brodsky', *Poetics Today*, 17.4 (1996), 511–30 (p. 515).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 523; Boym, 'Poetics and Politics of Estrangement', p. 587 n. 8.

⁷ Elena Shvarts, "Mundus Imaginalis": Neobiazatel'nye poiasneniia', *Vavilon*, 2001 <<http://www.vavilon.ru/texts/shvarts1-6.html>> [accessed 12 September 2016].

Barskova, as well as Shvarts, classical reception and its estrangement of Russia is a means of poeticising and escaping the everyday.

I argue that Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova's estrangement of contemporary Russia through classical reception makes antiquity an 'alter ego' of Russia. The utility of the classical alter ego lies precisely in its alterity: it can present a more extreme, or fun, or ideal reality. They base this classical alter ego firmly in the Russian literary tradition, which has long used classical antiquity to allegorise Russia, whether in praise or dissent. Aesopian speech, allusive veiling of meaning, often using classical references, was particularly prevalent in the Soviet period as a means of eluding repression.⁸ The resurgence of classical reception in Russian poetry, from the end of Stalinist Socialist Realism in 1953 to the present, is not solely an attempt by contemporary poets to reconnect with the pre-Soviet tradition. It is a poetic response to the series of ontological crises Russia experienced through the twentieth century: the classical alter ego becomes both a model for the extreme shifts in Russian reality, and an escape route into an alternate Russia.

⁸ Boym, 'Poetics and Politics of Estrangement', p. 594.

CLASSICAL RECEPTION

Classical reception dates back to antiquity itself, both as a practice and as a field of study.¹ Latin literature in particular is founded upon reception, due to its Hellenisation from the earliest extant texts, and Roman writers vaunt their Greek influences.² The reception of Ovid begins with Ovid himself, as self-receptions later in his oeuvre rewrite episodes and versions of himself from earlier in his oeuvre.³ Commentaries glossing literary texts, which included tracing sources, appear from the Hellenistic period in Alexandria (most notably, Aristarchus of Samothrace) and the 1st century BC in Rome (Lucius Aelius Stilo Praeconinus).⁴ Ancient receptions often form the basis for subsequent receptions.⁵ So the ‘new approach to literature’ proposed by Jauss in 1967 as *Rezeptionsästhetik*, which would combine awareness of “the historicity of texts” with “the aesthetic response of readers”,⁶ in fact gave a new name to a very old subject indeed.

Defining ‘Classical’

I use ‘classical’ to refer to Greek and Roman antiquity, from Homer, their earliest extant literature, circa eighth century BC, to the end of the pagan period, circa 250

¹ *Brill’s New Pauly: The Reception of Classical Literature*, ed. by Christine Walde and others (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), p. xiii.

² Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 52. Hinds’ book gives excellent examples of Latin literature’s sustained allusivity and interest in reception.

³ See, e.g., K. Sara Myers, in *A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, ed. by John F. Miller and Carole Elizabeth Newlands, Wiley Blackwell Handbooks to Classical Reception (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 8–21.

⁴ Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, ‘Hypomnema’, *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 641–43; Cancik and Schneider, ‘Commentary’, *ibid.*, 630–31.

⁵ Walde and others, p. x.

⁶ Charles Martindale, in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, ed. by Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas, Classical Receptions (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 3.

AD.⁷ However, I do occasionally broaden this to look at pertinent references to non-Graeco-Roman, pre-Homeric, or post-Christian aspects of antiquity.

‘Classics’ has become a generally accepted shorthand for ‘Greek-and-Roman-antiquity’ (being used in this sense in English by 1711).⁸ It derives from the Roman class system, instituted by Roman king Servius in the first census, in which he grouped citizens into five property-owning *classes* (from *clamare*, ‘call out’⁹ – similar to ‘convocation’). Its first documented use in (apparently) the modern sense is in Aulus Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae*, in which he applies the adjective for the highest class, *classicus*, to a writer ‘*e cohorte [...] antiquiore*’, i.e. from the established canon of ancient authors, and opposes this with the adjective for the lowest class, *proletarius*.¹⁰ Gellius’ *classicus* thus combines two concepts that continue to be inherent in the term ‘classical’: age, which signifies a text’s preservation through history, meaning that time is “constitutive of the category of classicalness”;¹¹ and patrician ideology, idealising the elite class, meaning that the ‘classical’ “legitimate[s] a social order and a set of institutions, beliefs, and values that are commonly associated with western civilization and ‘our’ western cultural heritage”.¹² ‘Classics’ continued to refer to the Graeco-Roman literary canon until the sixteenth century, when it entered the vernacular signifying the ‘best’ of modern literature and subsequently (from the eighteenth century) of art more generally. It was the teaching of ancient Greek and Latin texts in school as the ‘best’, ‘classic’, literature in those languages that led (particularly in the nineteenth century) to the current prevailing meaning of ‘classical’ as ‘ancient Greek or Roman’, thus returning to Gellius’ coinage.¹³

The fact of classical literature continuing to be read and taught and hailed as the ‘best’ literature of all time is fundamental – a condition constantly in the background, mostly unobtrusive, yet *sine qua non* – to my poets’ reception of classical themes; and, moreover, to my study of them. My motivations for focusing

⁷ Following the broader definition of Jan M. Ziolkowski, in *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, ed. by Craig Kallendorf (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 18; and Christine Walde, in Walde and others, p. ix.

⁸ Edith Hall, in Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 387.

⁹ Seth L. Schein and Edith Hall, *ibid.*, pp. 76, 387.

¹⁰ Schein, *ibid.*, p. 76.

¹¹ Alexandra Lianeri, in Martindale and Thomas, p. 145.

¹² Schein, in Hardwick and Stray, p. 75.

¹³ Schein, *ibid.*, pp. 78–81.

upon references to this historical period and geographical area are just as contingent upon the processes of reception sketched out above. My classical expertise for this thesis stems ultimately from having access to Latin teaching at my private school, and afterwards at university (which led, ‘naturally’, to studying Greek)...Classics only remaining present on – and prestigious within – the curriculum due to its ‘classical’ status.

Defining ‘Reception’

Terms for ‘reception’ are contested, as they put different emphases on the relative agency and priority of the ‘received’ and ‘receiving’ texts or authors. There are no neutral terms.¹⁴

I use the term ‘reception’ to embrace references to classical literature, myth, and history within my poets’ work. I have chosen ‘reception’¹⁵ not only because it is the broadly agreed-upon term for this field, but also for its “dynamic and dialogic”¹⁶ connotations. Moreover, its greater – but not exclusive – focus upon the receiving as opposed to the ancient author reflects the emphasis of my thesis, which takes each modern Russian poet as its starting point, rather than the classical authors and themes being received. ‘Reception’ has, however, been criticised as too “passive” a term, implying “too simplistic a model of departure and arrival”.¹⁷ A term that better captures the continuous nature of rereadings of antiquity is ‘recipience’¹⁸ – which has yet to gain currency.

To give variety and different nuances, other terms for ‘reception’ (the overarching, everywhere-implied term) populate my thesis. These are defined below.¹⁹

¹⁴ Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, p. xii.

¹⁵ Yielding ‘receive’, ‘receptive’, etc.; with antonym ‘transmission’, etc.

¹⁶ Charles Martindale, in Kallendorf, p. 300.

¹⁷ Martindale, *ibid.*; Tim Whitmarsh, in Martindale and Thomas, p. 115.

¹⁸ Whitmarsh, in Martindale and Thomas, p. 115.

¹⁹ Also worth noting are some interesting metaphors about reception: received texts as a “springboard”, reception as “buggery, or [...] immaculate conception”, and “consumerism”, reception studies as ‘train-spotting’, and histories of receptions of a text as “biographies”: Hardwick and Stray, p. 5; Gilles Deleuze, quoted by Sarah Annes Brown, in Miller and Newlands, pp. 450–51; Martindale, in Kallendorf, p. 302; William Brockliss, *Reception and the Classics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 11; Christine Walde, in Walde and others, p. x.

‘Intertextuality’²⁰ (generally of specifically textual references) conveys both continuity and reciprocity. For Barchiesi, “Intertextuality is an *event*, not an *object*. It is not a thing, a fixed given to be analysed, but a relation in motion, even a dynamic destabilization. [...] The new text rereads its model, while the model in turn influences the reading of the new text.”²¹ Yet the impersonality of ‘intertextuality’ implied in this definition circumvents the problem of the “ultimate *unknowability* of the poet’s intention”,²² and so is less suited to my study, which makes poets’ biographical and historical circumstances the major prism through which I interpret their classical reception. Moreover, the intentions of two of my three poets *are* potentially knowable (up to a certain point²³), as interviews and email correspondence with both Kutik and Barskova form part of my source material. Despite this, it remains true that I myself “read out from the text” the poets,²⁴ and ‘Shvarts’, ‘Kutik’, and ‘Barskova’ are partly my constructs, as well as their own constructs (*personae*).

‘Allusion’ foregrounds authorial subjectivity more forcefully than ‘reception’; my usage may have undertones of playfulness or greater implicitness,²⁵ requiring the reader’s “complicity”.²⁶

I use ‘reference’ as a neutral term. (Although it can connote consultation with the original.²⁷)

Words I use more circumspectly are: ‘reworking’ or ‘rewriting’, because they suggest deviance from a specific ‘model’; and ‘influence’, ‘emulation’, ‘imitation’, as they imply various value judgments.²⁸ ‘Appropriation’, which may imply lack of dialogue or resistance from the text being received, and ‘tradition’, which may imply the reverse,²⁹ are used with awareness both of these implications and of the specific Russian context, detailed in the first chapter. When wishing to signify more common

²⁰ Julia Kristeva’s term: Craig Kallendorf, in Martindale and Thomas, p. 68.

²¹ Alessandro Barchiesi, *Speaking Volumes: Narrative and Intertext in Ovid and Other Latin Poets* (London: Duckworth, 2001), p. 142.

²² Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, pp. 47–48.

²³ Hinds’ description of inter-poet dialogue as “solipsistic” is apt. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–23.

²⁶ Simon Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: Art, Opera, Fiction, and the Proclamation of Modernity*, Martin Classical Lectures (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 244.

²⁷ Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, p. 21.

²⁸ See Barchiesi, p. 150.

²⁹ Martindale, in Kallendorf, p. 300.

or clichéd textual components, I use ‘motifs’ or ‘*topoi*’. I do not use ‘*nachleben*’ or ‘afterlife’, as it seems to contradict the fundamental tenet of reception: that texts acquire new life in new contexts.

The third set of important terms concerns my poets’ reception of classical antiquity *via* intermediary receivers. Intermediary reception is most often indicated by ‘mediation’, ‘focalisation’, ‘refraction’, and occasionally ‘triangulation’³⁰ or ‘indirect reception’ (interchangeably); I do not use ‘layering’ or ‘double-distancing’.³¹ Like direct reception, mediated reception dates back to antiquity.³² Where it occurs in my poets, it frequently involves their sense of themselves as Russian or European or World poets.

Receptive Writers as Readers

An area overlapping – but not identical – with reception studies is that of reader-response theory. This thesis, in studying poets as receptors of antiquity, necessarily engages with poets as readers.

Reader-response criticism emerged almost concurrently with reception theory, in the 1970s, with the avowed aim of challenging a focus on authorial intent to the exclusion of the reader.³³ Wolfgang Iser posited that “the literary work has two poles”, consisting of the author’s text and the reader’s “realization” of the text; he concludes “the work itself cannot be identical with the text or with its actualization but must be situated somewhere between the two” as a “virtual” construct.³⁴ Stanley Fish, extrapolating, connects this reader-centric view of reading with two fundamentals of my thesis: the impact of collective consensus upon individuals’ interpretations of a text, which under Iser’s model should be highly individual, but often aren’t – an effect Fish terms “interpretive communities”; and classical reception, as he uses a classical reference by Milton as an example for how (shared)

³⁰ David Bethea, *Joseph Brodsky and the Creation of Exile* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

³¹ Martindale, in Kallendorf, p. 303.

³² “in many cases it is no longer possible to tell where the reception of a text ends and the reception of its recipients begins”. Christine Walde, in Walde and others, p. xii.

³³ David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, *The Book History Reader*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 389.

³⁴ Wolfgang Iser, ‘Interaction Between Text and Reader’, *ibid.*, p. 391.

pre-existing knowledge influences readerly interpretation.³⁵ (Classics thus presumably represents for Fish the apogee of shared knowledge.) For the purposes of this thesis, the interpretive community is the Soviet/post-Soviet intelligentsia, to which my poets belong. However, ‘interpretive community’ seems to me synonymous with ‘culture’, the term I employ in my thesis.

Mikhail Bakhtin preceded the reader-response theorists to the idea that “the event of the life of the text, that is its true essence, always develops on the *boundary between two consciousnesses, two subjects*.”³⁶ It is this dialogic quality that constitutes the overlap between reader-response and reception theories. Indeed, Julia Kristeva acknowledges Bakhtin’s dialogism as an influence for her theory of intertextuality.³⁷ Soviet structuralists expanded Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia within the novel to apply to lyric poetry (under his schema, hopelessly ‘monologic’), facilitated by their perception that early-twentieth-century poets’ use of references (many of them classical) within their poetry was dialogic.³⁸

Reception studies took reader-response criticism and ran with it. Charles Martindale takes reader-response theory as an antidote to “radical historicism, which insists on one historically fixed reading”, whilst stressing that this criticism “should not be confused with its dottier modern parodies, whereby the reader becomes sole arbiter of a text’s meaning, and the very idea of ‘meaning’ is systematically dissolved”.³⁹ No reception scholar has adopted the stance (antithetical to the study of reception) that “the meaning of a text is simply identical to the author’s intended meaning”.⁴⁰ Among the many who argue for a middle ground between reader as sole arbiter and writer as sole source of meaning⁴¹ is Tim Whitmarsh:

³⁵ Stanley Fish, ‘Interpreting the Variorum’, *ibid.*, pp. 451, 457.

³⁶ Bakhtin, quoted by Whitmarsh, in Martindale and Thomas, p. 106.

³⁷ *Metamorphoses in Russian Modernism*, ed. by Peter I. Barta (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2000), pp. 4–5. Barta points out that Russians’ presence in the vanguard of intertextual theory is no coincidence, due to Russian culture’s recent development out of Western culture.

³⁸ Renate Lachmann, *Memory and Literature: Intertextuality in Russian Modernism*, trans. by Roy Sellars and Anthony Wall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 108–9, 121–22.

³⁹ *Virgil and His Influence: Bimillennial Studies*, ed. by Charles Martindale (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1984), p. 1.

⁴⁰ Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, ‘Against Theory’, *Critical Inquiry*, 8.4 (1982), 723–42.

⁴¹ See, e.g., William W. Batstone, Miriam Leonard, in Martindale and Thomas, pp. 17, 119; Joseph Farrell, Christopher S. Wood, in Brockliss, pp. 70, 165; Barchiesi, p. 142; Lawrence

Meaning is, surely, not determined *solely* at the point of reception; it is the product of a complex dialogue between producer and receiver, and certainly also refracted through intermediaries [...] reciprocal dialogue — bilateral, shading into multilateral [...]. Reception cannot do without a serious engagement with history: it must give full weight to the past.⁴²

Whitmarsh's seems to me the most coherent and practical definition of the reception of meaning through reading, and how that should affect the study of classical reception.

Lipking, in Philip R. Hardie and Helen Moore, *Classical Literary Careers and Their Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 292.

⁴² Whitmarsh, in Martindale and Thomas, p. 106. He continues, advocating “integrat[ing] the self-aware sophistication of reception with a commitment to the historical project of understanding the past”, “a ‘pragmatics’ of reception, whereby the Platonist language of knowledge and truth is replaced by an emphasis upon the provisional status of historical knowledge”.

HISTORY OF RUSSIAN CLASSICAL RECEPTION

Classics was famously late to arrive in Russia compared with the rest of Europe, engendering a persistent sense of belatedness and inferiority amongst its writers,¹ and a “strangely telescoped perspective” upon European literature, whereby classical, renaissance, and eighteenth-century writers arrived in Russia as “contemporaries”.² The history that follows charts Russia’s engagement with classical antiquity from its beginning to the present, collecting and précising scholarship on the influential figures within Russian classical reception. It looks primarily at classical reception in literature, predominantly poetry, since that has historically been the site of most of Russia’s classical reception. It also looks at classical reception in contexts affecting literature, such as the religious and political uses of antiquity, the teaching of Classics, and the translation of classical texts into Russian. This history tries to show these different kinds of classical reception as an interconnected whole, both indicative and formative of general trends in attitudes to antiquity. One caveat should be noted here: that this history concerns in general only a tiny proportion of Russia’s population, the educated elite from the nobility and intelligentsia who had access to Classics.³

Beginnings

First Contact

Russia’s engagement with the classical world, although not as extensive as that of Western European countries, is far from a recent phenomenon. Trans-Danubian peoples were known to the ancient Greeks and Romans, with Herodotus giving a detailed account of the various Scythian tribes in *Histories* Book IV and Pindar

¹ Zara Martirosova Torlone, *Russia and the Classics: Poetry’s Foreign Muse* (London: Duckworth, 2009), pp. 12, 4.

² Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *An Obsession with History: Russian Writers Confront the Past* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 220.

³ The Russian nobility “at no time in the eighteenth century numbered more than 1 per cent of the total population”. *The Eighteenth Century in Russia*, ed. by J. G. Garrard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 12.

referring to the Hyperboreans in his Tenth *Pythian Ode*.⁴ Many Russian writers, including Shvarts (see p. 137), have appropriated the status of ‘Scythian’ and/or ‘Hyperborean’, craving this evidence of antiquity’s awareness of them. Moreover, the territory of classical antiquity overlapped with the south-westernmost part of the Russian/Soviet empire: ancient Greeks established, and Romans maintained, trading colonies on the Black Sea.⁵ This area would become a specialism of Russian and Soviet Classics, and an evocative geographical link with antiquity for Russian poets from Pushkin to Kutik (see pp. 29, 44, 159).

Byzantine Inheritance

More widespread contact started with Prince Vladimir’s conversion of Rus’ to Orthodoxy in 988⁶ and the establishment of relations between Kievan Rus’ and the Byzantine Empire in the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁷ With Christianisation came literacy, but little emphasis on Christianity’s pagan heritage,⁸ and Slavic priests did not all even learn Greek.⁹ In the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries monastic libraries grew, some containing ancient Greek texts alongside the Orthodox Greek texts, and more and more translations were made from Greek, again, of pagan texts amongst the Christian. By the end of the fifteenth century in Rostov and Smolensk monastery schools were teaching ancient Greek; a Novgorod bishop asked the Rostov archbishop for ancient Greek texts, justifying the request by saying “все эти книги еретики имеют” (“heretics have all these books”).¹⁰

In artistic classical reception, Andrei Rublev’s icon ‘Troitsa’ has been perceived as influenced by classical Greek art, due to elements of its composition and Rublev’s

⁴ François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, New Historicism, 5 (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 13–14, 194–99; Maria Pavlou, ‘Pindar Olympian 3: Mapping Acragas on the Periphery of the Earth’, *The Classical Quarterly (New Series)*, 60.2 (2010), 313–26 (p. 322).

⁵ Judith E. Kalb, *Russia’s Rome: Imperial Visions, Messianic Dreams, 1890–1940* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), p. 9.

⁶ John Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church to 1448* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 35.

⁷ Kalb, p. 9.

⁸ *Russian Literature and the Classics*, ed. by Peter I. Barta, David H. J. Larmour, and Paul Allen Miller, Studies in Russian and European Literature, v. 1 (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1996), p. 6; O. E. Etingof, in *Antichnoe nasledie v kul’ture Rossii*, ed. by G. S. Knabe (Rossiiskii nauchno-issledovatel’skii institut kul’turnogo i prirodnogo nasledia, 1996), p. 54.

⁹ Garrard, p. 8.

¹⁰ G. S. Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost’: Soderzhanie, rol’ i sud’ba antichnogo nasledia v kul’ture Rossii* (Moscow: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet, 2000), pp. 50–53.

collaboration with Theophanes the Greek.¹¹ In the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries classical figures were depicted amongst Old-Testament prophets in Russian churches; the earliest appearance of Virgil is in a 1564 fresco in the Blagoveshchenskii cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin.¹²

Non-Renaissance

Europe's reassessment of its classical inheritance in the Renaissance (c. thirteenth to sixteenth centuries) bypassed Rus' due to internal turmoil: the Mongols invaded in the thirteenth century, and for over two hundred years the Russian states were under the Tatar Yoke. In 1453, decades before Muscovy cast off the Tatar yoke in 1480, Byzantium fell to the Ottoman Turks.¹³ Even before this a strengthening Muscovy had been pulling away from a weakening Byzantium, suspicious of the proposed union between the Roman and Greek Churches.¹⁴ The Church's changed standpoint was expressed more broadly in a distrust of learnedness, European culture, and classical heritage as antithetical to Russia's religion, nationhood, and Slavic roots.¹⁵ However, the State saw the usefulness of antiquity for consolidating its power. In 1472 Ivan III married Zoe Paleologue, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, and took on Roman imperial trappings, the two-headed eagle and title 'tsar'.¹⁶ This was the point at which a switch began in Russia's primary source for reception of antiquity: from Hellenic philosophy to the Roman empire.¹⁷

Third Rome

The sixteenth century saw the beginning of the enduring myth of Moscow as the Third Rome, to which many Russian poets have referred, including Shvarts and Kutik (see pp. 105, 183). In 1522 Pskovian monk Filofei declared Russia to have succeeded the Second Rome, Byzantium, as the custodian of Orthodoxy: "All Christian monarchies have come to an end and have been gathered into [...] the Russian monarchy; for two Romes have fallen, the third stands, and a fourth there

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 37–41.

¹² N. V. Kvlividze, 'Vergilii', *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia*, 2009, 707–9 <<http://www.pravenc.ru/text/150393.html>>.

¹³ *Re-Entering the Sign: Articulating New Russian Culture*, ed. by Ellen E. Berry and Anesa Miller-Pogacar (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 66.

¹⁴ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost'*, p. 60.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁶ Kalb, p. 16.

¹⁷ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost'*, p. 62.

will not be.”¹⁸ Given the absence of references to ‘Holy Russia’ in Christian sacred texts, Filofei’s inference of *translatio imperii* – the transfer of global dominance from one state to another¹⁹ – could be attributed to the previous century’s confluence of events, toppling Byzantium and establishing Russia.²⁰

Ivan the Terrible used the centralised power of the late Roman empire as an example for his rule of Russia.²¹ He invented a Roman lineage for himself, writing to the Polish king Sigismund II Augustus in 1567: “Наши великие государи почен от Августа кесаря, обладающего всею вселенною, и брата его Пруса и даже до великого государя Рюрика и от Рюрика до нынешнего государя”²² (“Our great sovereigns are descended from Augustus caesar, who possessed the whole universe, and his brother Prus and even to the great sovereign Riurik up to the present sovereign”). His claim for Roman descent mirrors more westerly Slavic and Eastern European states’ use at that time of classical history and geography to calculate their political place in Renaissance-era Europe.²³

While in the sixteenth century Rome was still widely viewed as alien, a threat to Russian values, as it – and, to a lesser extent, Greece – had been in the fifteenth century, in the seventeenth century Roman influence was brought more and more to bear upon Russian culture. This resulted in a conflict between Grecophiles and Latinists (precursing that of the Slavophiles and the Westernisers). This was fuelled by the government’s drive to modernise Russia, beginning in the 1630s with updating its army and setting up factories, for which Westerners were invited to Russia, including scholars to teach and translate Latin.²⁴ Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich was heavily influenced by Western Europe: he was accused by Patriarch Nikon of being a ‘латиномудренник’ (‘latin-smart-arse’); set a trend at court for dressing in Western fashion; imported (Greek-taught) Kievan and (Jesuit-taught) Polish scholars and clerics; invited as his children’s tutor Simeon Polotskii, who “учился

¹⁸ From the letter of Filofei to M. G. Munekhin, in Donald C. Treadgold, *The West in Russia and China*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1973), I, p. 19, in Stephen L. Baehr, ‘From History to National Myth: *Translatio Imperii* in Eighteenth-Century Russia’, *Russian Review*, 37 (1978), 1–13, p. 1.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Grigory Tulchinsky, in Berry and Miller-Pogacar, pp. 65–66.

²¹ In his correspondence with Andrei Kurbskii. Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost’*, p. 68.

²² Under the name of boyar M.I. Borotynskii. Ibid., p. 71.

²³ By the late sixteenth century Poland had placed Muscovy outside of its region, Sarmatia, as Scythia. Jerzy Axer with the assistance of Katarzyna Tomaszuk, in Kallendorf, p. 139.

²⁴ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost’*, pp. 86, 88–89.

только по латине и чел книги только латинския” (“studied only in Latin and read only Latin books”), was influenced by Aristotle, Seneca, and Cicero, and mentored Silvestr Medvedev, the future head of both the ‘Latin party’ and the Latin school, which opened in 1682.²⁵ The 1654-67 Russo-Polish war also aided the influx of Latin influence into Russia, through books looted by Russian soldiers and sold over the next decade.²⁶ This Romanisation was countered: the tsar tried to limit evident Western influences so as not to estrange the *narod* (common people); from the 1650s the Church became close again with the Greek Orthodox Church; and following the fall of Tsarevna Sofia the Latinists were repressed – Simeon Polotskii’s works were burned, and Silvestr Medvedev executed.²⁷ Knabe suggests that echoes of this conflict continued to resound in Russian literature up to the Silver Age:

Рим станет ассоциироваться с латино-романской цивилизацией Западной Европы и соответственно с католицизмом, России чуждым, тогда как в греческом наследии будет слышаться нечто более древнее и простое и потому «свое», исконное, близкое истокам России и православия.²⁸

Rome will become associated with the Latin/Roman civilisation of Western Europe and accordingly with Catholicism, foreign to Russia, just as the Greek inheritance will sound more ancient and simple and therefore ‘ours’, indigenous, close to the sources of Russia and Orthodoxy.

Petrine Reforms

Peter the Great’s westernisation of Russia in the first quarter of the eighteenth century kickstarted more widespread literary interest in classical antiquity, begun by Simeon Polotskii in the previous century (but temporarily halted). Classical trappings clad Peter from the beginning: before he became emperor he was heralded as a new Hercules, Jason, Perseus, Ulysses...²⁹ Rome in particular served to legitimise, ‘antiquate’, his rule, and to propel Russia into Europe.³⁰ In 1700 he introduced the Julian calendar; he introduced triumphal arches and triumphs for victorious Russian troops entering Moscow, and in 1703 appeared in one as Ulysses, Perseus, and Herakles; in 1721 he took the title ‘Imperator’; in 1724 he added ‘Father of the Fatherland’.³¹

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 89, 86, 90; Garrard, p. 9.

²⁶ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost’*, p. 89.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 87–90.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

²⁹ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost’*, p. 88.

³⁰ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 15; Kalb, p. 11.

³¹ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost’*, pp. 100–01.

Peter also made more substantial cultural reforms – ordering translations of Latin classics and dictionaries,³² opening a theatre in 1702 which staged plays with ancient subjects – but more especially to education. A Moscow gymnasium opened in 1703 taught Latin to a level allowing its students to read Virgil and Horace freely. In 1701 Peter reordered the Slaviano-greko-latinskaia Akademia, which had been founded in 1687, modelled on Jesuit classical academies. Peter’s advisor Feofan Prokopovich, who had a library containing over 75 Greek and Latin authors, including the first texts of Catullus, Propertius, and Tibullus in Russia,³³ taught classical Latin poetry there. The academy earned the appellation “новосияющие славяно-греко-латинские Афины”³⁴ (“new-shining slavonic-graeco-latin Athens”). In 1717, whilst visiting the Parisian Academy of Sciences, Peter decided to found his own, which he duly did at the end of his reign in 1724-25.³⁵ As there were no native scholars capable of filling it, he, like tsars before him, invited foreign scholars, tempting them with the unusual offer of pay. Knabe ascribes to Peter’s new classical education system the genesis of the intelligentsia, an educated class estranged from the *narod*, indispensable to Russia’s bureaucracy, yet also free thinkers dangerous to its autocracy.³⁶

Despite Peter’s crucial importance as the catalyst for classical antiquity’s permeation into Russian culture, neither culture nor literature were his prime focus, and institutions for higher education in the humanities, rather than science or technical skills, were not founded until after his death. Therefore his reign was “a transitional period”.³⁷ Nonetheless, as part of this transition “Russia entered into a circle of nations which had [...] acquired antiquity. Perhaps it was Russia that received the classical ideal through the greatest number of refractions.”³⁸

³² Kalb, p. 11.

³³ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 18.

³⁴ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost’*, pp. 101, 92; Garrard, p. 9.

³⁵ S. I. Romanovskii, *‘Pritashchennaia’ nauka*: (Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel’stvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 2004), p. 5; Kalb, p. 11.

³⁶ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost’*, pp. 97–98.

³⁷ Garrard, p. 10.

³⁸ Lev Pumpianskii, quoted in Andrew Kahn, ‘Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin’, *Slavic Review*, 52.4 (1993), 745–68 (p. 747).

(Short) Eighteenth Century

In the eighteenth century Classics became established in literature, education, and politics. The ‘Third Rome’ myth (see p. 15) continued to resound in comparisons between the Russian and Roman Empires, such as Lomonosov’s attempt to demonstrate an ‘equation’ between Russian and Roman history in his 1766 ‘Ancient Russian History’. (Russian writers were also seeking examples in Ancient Greece and in native Slavic mythology, but less frequently.) During Catherine the Great’s reign it became “a literary commonplace” for “the glory-that-was-Rome” to signify “the glory-that-was-to-be-Russia”.³⁹ Catherine encouraged allegories presenting her reign as a new Golden Age, and comparing her to ancient goddesses such as Minerva, and classical rulers such as Augustus.⁴⁰ Perhaps most appropriately, Catherine’s court librarian Vasilii Petrov (another graduate of the Slaviano-greko-latinskaia Akademia) in his 1772-86 translation of the *Aeneid* highlights Dido’s qualities as an enlightened monarch to extol Catherine.⁴¹ Aiming to present herself as natural successor to Peter the Great and his classicising reforms, the statue of him she commissioned, the Bronze Horseman, is based upon a Roman statue of Marcus Aurelius and bears a Latin dedication.⁴² Yet Catherine realised what Russian monarchs before her did not seem to: that classical allusion cuts both ways. Her reading of Tacitus, condemner of tyrants, brought on – as her diary attests – “a most uncommon disturbance in my head”, and she refused Denis Fonvizin permission to translate him.⁴³

The three formative figures of Russian Neoclassicism, Antiokh Kantemir, Vasilii Trediakovskii, and Mikhail Lomonosov, were all beneficiaries of Peter’s reforms, attending the Slaviano-greko-latinskaia Akademia in the 1720s and 30s.⁴⁴ The other major figure in creating Russian Neoclassicism, Lomonosov’s pupil⁴⁵ Aleksandr Sumarokov, was a product of the Cadet Corps,⁴⁶ Russia’s first higher education institution with a focus on the humanities, opened in 1731.⁴⁷ Finally, well behind the

³⁹ Baehr, pp. 3, 8.

⁴⁰ Kahn, ‘Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin’, p. 755.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 752–53, 756.

⁴² Kalb, p. 11.

⁴³ Kahn, ‘Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin’, pp. 758–59.

⁴⁴ Garrard, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ Alexander Lipski, ‘The Beginnings of General Secondary Education in Russia’, *History of Education Journal*, 6.3 (1955), 201–10 (p. 209).

⁴⁷ Garrard, p. 10.

rest of Europe, Russia founded its first university in Moscow in 1755, due mostly to the efforts of Lomonosov.⁴⁸ The mid-eighteenth century thus proved the point at which Russia engaged more seriously with Classics, and a “profusion” of classical texts were made available by an expanding publishing industry.⁴⁹ Neoclassicism is one of Kutik’s major influences, particularly Lomonosov and Derzhavin (see p. 151), while Barskova has cited Sumarokov’s adaptation of *Hamlet* (see p. 271).

Neoclassicism

The first Russian Neoclassicists “regarded the past as a cultural waste-land”, and saw their task as creating Russian literature – as Trediakovskii’s poem thanking Apollo “for deigning to visit Russia at long last” expresses.⁵⁰ They did so (between 1730 and 1770) by assimilating Western genres, mostly from late seventeenth-century French Classicism, yet mixing in other, more current European styles (*préciosité*, late German Baroque, rococo *poésie légère*, sentimentalism) due to the “telescoping” effect of receiving Western Classicism belatedly and wholesale.⁵¹ Antiquity was acquired as part of Western Classicism, rather than for itself (just as in previous centuries it had come with religion or politics), and Russian Neoclassicists generally turned to modern classicist works before original classical works.⁵² The most prestigious neoclassical genres were epic, panegyric ode, verse satire, and tragedy.⁵³

Neoclassicism’s exemplary classical authors were Roman, following fashions set by Western Classicism and Lomonosov. Lomonosov, “regarded as the founding father of Russian classicism”, surpassed Trediakovskii in reforming and Europeanising Russian literature, and elevating the panegyric state ode.⁵⁴ Classical languages, especially Latin, informed Lomonosov’s creation of a new literary language to replace Old Church Slavonic; in his ‘Rossiiskaia grammatika’ (‘Russian grammar’) he emulated the “богатство и сильную в изображениях краткость греческого и

⁴⁸ Romanovskii, p. 6; Garrard, p. 10.

⁴⁹ Kahn, ‘Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin’, p. 746.

⁵⁰ Garrard, pp. 10–11.

⁵¹ Harold Segel, *ibid.*, pp. 48–49, 52. Ippolit Bogdanovich’s *Dushenka* (1778–83) typifies the confluence of these tastes, as a rococo mock epic inspired by classical Greece and based on a French version of Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*. Segel, *ibid.*, p. 62.

⁵² Segel, *ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵³ Segel, *ibid.*, pp. 48–49.

⁵⁴ Kahn, ‘Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin’, pp. 747–48; Segel, in Garrard, pp. 50, 52.

латинского”⁵⁵ (“richness and powerful depictive concision of Greek and Latin”). Lomonosov acknowledged the historically primary role of Greek in Russia, but saw in this an “affinity between the Romans as the inheritors of Greek culture and, by analogy, Russia's equivalent position with relation to the west.”⁵⁶ Trediakovskii made a similar, though less influential, argument in 1745, presenting Romans who eschewed Greek in favour of Latin as an example to Russians to use their native language, in a speech given – ironically – in Latin.⁵⁷

Translation was a major service Neoclassicism did for Russian classical reception; Russian versions of classical works began to be available from mid-century onwards.⁵⁸ Many of the translations of classical poetry furthered prosodic innovation. Kantemir translated Horace (with commentaries), and 55 of Anacreon's poems from the original, in the original metre and without rhyme.⁵⁹ This flouted the eighteenth-century Russian preference for rhyme, due to the still-incomplete domestication of syllabo-tonic poetry; unrhymed verse was largely avoided except “in imitations – of Greek and Latin poets (high style) or folk poetry (low style) – or in translations”, where it signalled poetry that was “derivative rather than ‘original’” (a tendency that continues to this day).⁶⁰ Trediakovskii invented a system converting classical metres to Russian, changing length to stress, in his 1735 ‘New and Brief Method for Composing Russian Verse’. He translated Horace; Aesop and Seneca (1752) using iambic and trochaic hexameters; Terence; and Fénelon's *Télémaque* (1766) using unrhymed dactylic hexameter rather than the French-style alexandrine, “the first significant use of classical metrics in eighteenth-century Russian poetry”, and the first direct use of ancient mythology.⁶¹ The largest classical translation Trediakovskii undertook, if not the most influential, was of French scholars Rollin and Crevier's Roman histories.⁶² Out of fashion for many years, Trediakovskii was partially rehabilitated in the nineteenth century by Pushkin amongst others, and then embraced in the twentieth century by poets such as Mikhail Kuzmin,

⁵⁵ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost'*, p. 113.

⁵⁶ Segel, in Garrard, pp. 54–55; Kahn, ‘Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin’, p. 748.

⁵⁷ Kahn, ‘Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin’, p. 748.

⁵⁸ Segel, in Garrard, p. 56.

⁵⁹ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Michael Wachtel, *The Development of Russian Verse: Meter and Its Meanings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 60.

⁶¹ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost'*, p. 105; Segel, in Garrard, pp. 55–56, 63–64; Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 26.

⁶² Segel, in Garrard, p. 49.

particularly for his (metrical) unconventionality.⁶³ Lomonosov's 1739 'A Letter On the Rules of Russian Versification' sought to base Trediakovskii's stress-system in Russian folk poetry, whilst his 1748 *Ritorika (Rhetoric)* codified versification rules further, illustrated by translations of Demosthenes, Cicero, Virgil, and Ovid.⁶⁴ Lomonosov also translated Horace, Lucretius, Martial, Juvenal, and Anacreon.⁶⁵

Classical reception in original works became more prevalent towards the end of and after Neoclassicism. Kantemir wrote satires imitating Juvenal, Horace, and Persius.⁶⁶ Trediakovskii wrote a Pindaric ode (following Boileau rather than Pindar, however) on Russia's capture of Danzig from the Poles in 1734.⁶⁷ In 1750 Kantemir wrote a classical tragedy, *Deidamiia (Deidamia)*.⁶⁸ Under the influence of Greek antiquity Lomonosov wrote the tragedy *Demofont (Demophon, 1751)*, idyll 'Polidor' ('Polydorus', 1750), and series of odes 'Razgovor s Anakreonom' ('Conversation with Anacreon', 1756-61).⁶⁹ Sumarokov's few classically receptive works, imitations of Anacreon, Sappho, and Horace (1755-58), experiment with classical Greek metres, following Trediakovskii's examples, "the first Russian poet to do so in something other than a treatise on prosody".⁷⁰ He also introduced new classical genres: elegies, idylls, eclogues, epistles, satires, and epigrams.⁷¹ At the beginning of the next century Radishchev developed Trediakovskii and Sumarokov's classical metrical variety, using trochees, unrhymed sapphics, and elegiac couplets.⁷² Derzhavin began to move beyond Neoclassicism, intertwining antiquity with everyday Russian modernity, and using classical motifs as a mask concealing contemporary references, both facets that would become typical of later classical reception. Derzhavin compared himself with Pindar, Horace, and Anacreon, but specifically imitated only two Horatian odes.⁷³

⁶³ Irina Reyfman, *Vasilii Trediakovsky: The Fool of the 'new' Russian Literature*, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 224–25, 236–37.

⁶⁴ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 26–27.

⁶⁵ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost'*, p. 105; Segel, in Garrard, p. 55.

⁶⁶ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 25.

⁶⁷ Segel, in Garrard, p. 49.

⁶⁸ Segel, *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁶⁹ Segel, *ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

⁷⁰ Segel, *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁷¹ L. I. Savel'eva, *Antichnost' v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka (Kazan': Izdatel'stvo Kazanskogo universiteta, 1980)*, p. 6.

⁷² Segel, in Garrard, p. 65.

⁷³ Savel'eva, *Antichnost' v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka*, pp. 16–17, 21.

Late Eighteenth Century

Despite the move from Neoclassicism to Sentimentalism in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the translation and reception of classical authors continued. Sentimentalist poetry tended to treat classical antiquity more playfully, and in more amorous contexts; it was the first to feature Eros/Amor widely and wittily,⁷⁴ precursing how Shvarts and Barskova use the motif (see pp. 102, 237). European enthusiasm for Ancient Greece, which from mid-century was viewed as the original classical culture, as opposed to ‘derivative’ Roman culture, percolated into Russia over the second half of the eighteenth century. The emphasis placed on originality by pre-Romanticism fuelled Russian Hellenism.⁷⁵ This is evidenced by the attention increasingly accorded to Anacreon by Russian poets.

Mikhail Murav’ev translated Sappho, Anacreon, Horace, Virgil, Livy, and Petronius, and in 1778 first translated parts of the *Iliad* in classical hexameters (previous partial translations of Homer all used alexandrines).⁷⁶ Ivan Dmitriev translated (freely) Juvenal, Horace, Propertius, Tibullus, and epigrams from the Greek Anthology.⁷⁷ The continuing importance of translation was highlighted by Dmitriev, who made the first in a long tradition of triangulated references to Horace’s ‘Exegi monumentum’ (see pp. 30, 57, 59, 285, with Barskova among them), referring to it in his poem for the coronation of Alexander I in which he hopes for a new Lomonosov, the ode’s first Russian translator.

Nikolai Karamzin modelled his *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskogo* (*History of the Russian State*) on Livy and Tacitus, aware that he faced similar dangers in writing about a reigning ruler. His poem ‘Tatsit’ (‘Tacitus’) reflects upon this quandary, and moves from Neoclassicists’ ventriloquism of ancients to conversation with them.⁷⁸ Between 1787 and 1793 Karamzin experimented with classical metres – iambic hexameters, trochaic tetrameter, iambic trimeter, dactylic-trochaic trimeter, and dactylic-trochaic tetrameter – with a novel preference for unrhymed poetry.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 25, 39.

⁷⁵ Segel, in Garrard, pp. 57, 60–61. Konstantin Batiushkov called Pre-Romantic Iurii Neledinskii-Meletskii the ‘Anacreon of our time’.

⁷⁶ Segel, *ibid.*, p. 63.

⁷⁷ Savel’eva, *Antichnost’ v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka*, p. 34.

⁷⁸ Kahn, ‘Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin’, p. 759.

⁷⁹ Segel, in Garrard, p. 64.

Karamzin also stages the first *recusatio* from classical reception, refusing at the beginning of his Russian national tale 'Il'ia Muromets' to retell the *Iliad* or *Aeneid*.⁸⁰

Nineteenth Century

Early nineteenth-century attitudes towards Classics were polarised between two literary groupings. The Slavophiles, represented by the traditionalist, nationalist group 'Beseda', promoted the use of archaic Slavonic language and the resurrection of the ode and classical verse tragedy, reacting against Sentimentalism's importation of foreign literary styles and diction. Twentieth-century literary critic Iurii Tynianov divided the Slavophiles into older and younger 'archaisers', the former – reactionary Neoclassicists, and the latter – revolutionary Romantics.⁸¹ Their opponents, the Westernisers (designated 'Innovators' by Tynianov), formed the group Arzamas in 1816, advocating continuing the eighteenth century's derivation of Russian literature from French Neoclassicism, taking classical writers such as Pindar and Horace and French writers such as Racine and Voltaire as their examples.⁸²

By the mid-nineteenth century Russian literature had closed the 'cultural gap' between itself and the West. Yet having acquired European culture, Russians underwent an identity crisis, with "disaffection from the government, an uneasiness about the value of the Petrine reforms, and an ambivalence toward the West combined with a malaise about their own position".⁸³ In the 1820s philosopher Petr Chaadaev asserted the opinion, which by the 1840s would be reiterated as fact by literary critic Vissarion Belinskii, that Russia's history and trajectory was entirely divorced from Europe.⁸⁴ On the other hand, Arzamas-member and Westerniser Pushkin would come to define Russian literature.

Education

Public education was established in Russia in 1802, with Latin part of the curriculum from the beginning; in 1804 provincial secondary schools came under

⁸⁰ Savel'eva, *Antichnost' v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka*, pp. 26–27, 34, 32.

⁸¹ Andrew Kahn, *Pushkin's Lyric Intelligence* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 15–16; Lachmann, p. 189.

⁸² Kahn, *Pushkin's Lyric Intelligence*, pp. 16–17.

⁸³ Garrard, p. 14.

⁸⁴ Andrew Baruch Wachtel, pp. 1–2; Gary Saul Morson, *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 24.

the jurisdiction of the university, and were renamed ‘gymnasia’.⁸⁵ Classicist Sergei Uvarov as minister of national education from 1810 promoted the widespread teaching of Classics, including Greek.⁸⁶ However, the 1848 European revolutions prompted a reaction against classical schooling, which had been promoted under the ‘enlightened European’ model and was now seen as an inciter of rebellion; in 1849 Classics was reduced in the curriculum, and from 1852 Christian texts in Latin and Greek replaced ancient pagan authors.⁸⁷ Alexander II reintroduced the classical curriculum in 1864.⁸⁸ Dmitrii Tolstoi’s 1871 reforms increased Classics on the curriculum, despite an anti-revolutionary, nationalist mood in government; Classics under reactionary Alexander III was regarded as part of the establishment, supporting the conservative agenda, a dramatic change from its revolutionary reputation in the first half of the century.⁸⁹ ‘Tolstoyan classicism’ was criticised for teaching grammar above content and context;⁹⁰ yet it maintained the backbone for classical reception in literature. Classical gymnasia were essential to both the ‘Golden Age’ of Russian literature (Pushkin and his pleiad) in the nineteenth century, and the ‘Silver Age’ (Symbolists and Acmeists) in the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth centuries.⁹¹ However, reforms of 1890, 1900, and 1902 diminished Classics on the curriculum, so that at the beginning of the twentieth century Russia’s classical education system was already partially dismantled.⁹²

Gnedich

Perhaps the most significant classical work of the nineteenth century was Nikolai Gnedich’s translation of the *Iliad* (1812–28) from the original, in hexameters. Before this, the most extensive translation had been Kostrov’s 1787 version of the first six books, in alexandrines. Having begun a continuation in 1807, Gnedich in 1811 conceived a full, independent edition. Napoleon’s war with Russia ruled out the alexandrine, and, having consulted with Uvarov and poet-dramatist Vasili Kapnist,

⁸⁵ Knabe, *Antichnoe nasledie v kul’ture Rossii*, p. 204.

⁸⁶ Alexander K. Gavrilov, in *Classics and Communism: Greek and Latin behind the Iron Curtain*, ed. by György Karsai and others (Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, 2013), pp. 20–21; Knabe, *Antichnoe nasledie v kul’ture Rossii*, pp. 204–5.

⁸⁷ Knabe, *Antichnoe nasledie v kul’ture Rossii*, pp. 205–7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 208–9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 217–18; Gavrilov, in Karsai and others, p. 21; Alexander K. Gavrilov, in *The Classics in East Europe: Essays on the Survival of a Humanistic Tradition*, ed. by Victor Bers and Gregory Nagy (Worcester, Mass.: American Philological Association, 1995), p. 63.

⁹⁰ Knabe, *Antichnoe nasledie v kul’ture Rossii*, pp. 219–20.

⁹¹ Gavrilov, in Karsai and others, pp. 20–21; Knabe, *Antichnoe nasledie v kul’ture Rossii*, p. 228.

⁹² Knabe, *Antichnoe nasledie v kul’ture Rossii*, p. 227.

Gnedich chose the classical hexameter (Trediakovskii's variant) over the metre of the *bylina* (Russian folk epic). He accompanied his *Iliad* with a thoroughly researched commentary. Gnedich also translated the *Homeric Hymns* to Minerva, Diana, and Venus; excerpts from the *Odyssey* Book 11; a poem by Horace and Anacreon; and an idyll by Theocritus, 'Sirakuzianki, ili Prazdnik Adonisa' ('Syracusan women, or The festival of Adonis', 1820-21). Unsurprisingly, classical reception in Gnedich's original poetry frequently involves Homer – in the poem 'Inostrantsam gostiam moim' ('To my foreign guests', 1824) Homer is his *penates*⁹³ – and he considers the authorship of the Homeric epics in 'Setovanie Fetidy na grobe Akhillesa' ('Lament of Thetis on the grave of Achilles', 1815) and 'Rozhdenie Gomera' ('Birth of Homer', 1816). His translation of Theocritus also moved him to write a Russian national idyll, 'Rybaki' ('Fishermen', 1821).⁹⁴

Romanticism

Gnedich's translation of the *Iliad* was followed in 1849 by Zhukovskii's translation of the *Odyssey*, also in hexameters, but not from the original.⁹⁵ The majority of Zhukovskii's classical reception is found in his translations of Friedrich Schiller, aside from a free translation of Sappho, an imitation of Horace, the tale 'Sokol i Filomena', and the poem 'Schast'e'.⁹⁶ Zhukovskii's German Romantic influences show he was a poet-translator far more in the Romantic mould than Gnedich. With Konstantin Batiushkov, Zhukovskii was fellow founder of Russian Romanticism.

Batiushkov used classical reception to transform everyday reality (an approach which would resurface in the Brezhnev era; see pp. 4, 64, 74). Tibullus was Batiushkov's favourite ancient poet, and he translated (freely) three poems from the Tibullan corpus.⁹⁷ Batiushkov also translated from (and wrote an article about) Uvarov's French translation of the *Greek Anthology*, 'Iz grecheskoi antologii' ('From the Greek Anthology', 1820) which he followed the next year with a cycle of classical Greek imitations, 'Podrazhaniia drevnim' ('Imitations of the ancients', 1821).⁹⁸ Two original classical works written 1811-12 and 1814 stand out: 'Moi penaty' ('My penates'), which "pays tribute to his own personal pantheon of poets, including

⁹³ Savel'eva, *Antichnost' v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka*, pp. 85–86.

⁹⁴ Segel, in Garrard, pp. 65–68.

⁹⁵ Michael Wachtel, p. 175; Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 205 n. 80.

⁹⁶ Savel'eva, *Antichnost' v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka*, pp. 49–51.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 65, 70.

⁹⁸ Segel, in Garrard, p. 61.

Horace and Anacreon”, and ‘Sud’ba Odisseia’ (‘Odysseus’ fate’), a pessimistic retelling of Odysseus’ homecoming.⁹⁹

Gnedich’s idylls influenced Anton Del’vig, whose poetry Nabokov called “half amphora half samovar”, and who, with Vil’gel’m Kiukhel’beker, brought the neglected distich to prominence in Russia.¹⁰⁰ Del’vig was part of ‘Pushkin’s Pleiad’, which included Nikolai Iazykov, Petr Viazemskii, and Evgenii Baratynskii.

Romantics with a highly idealised view of classical antiquity, their anacreontics in particular display common ideals with the Decembrist poets (some of whom were also in Pushkin’s Pleiad) – their impetus to freedom.¹⁰¹

Classical reception is less frequent amongst Decembrist poets than other Romantics, due to their belief in Russian literature’s national originality; Aleksandr Bestuzhev stated “Мы не греки и не римляне и для нас другие сказки надобны”¹⁰² (“We are neither Greeks nor Romans and we need other fairytales”). Nevertheless, the Decembrists made conspicuous use of one element of classical reception: historical exempla. “The approach to the ancient world as a source of ethical instruction was constant in the first quarter of the nineteenth century”; the Decembrists merely expanded its application in using ancient tyrannicides to encourage contemporary fights for liberty.¹⁰³ Decembrists clothed “subversive remarks about contemporary politics in classical garb”, coding Caligula and Tiberius for Alexander I and Nikolai I, whilst “the Gracchi represented aspirations for the reform of Russia’s serf economy, and Cato stood for Stoic self-sacrifice”.¹⁰⁴ Kiukhel’beker in his poetry compared Viazemskii and Byron (after his death in the Greek war of independence) to the Greek lyric poet Tyrtaeus, his ideal poet-citizen, and Goethe and Pushkin to Prometheus.¹⁰⁵ Kondratii Ryleev, who was executed after the rebellion, also wrote a poem on Byron’s death, comparing him to Socrates, Cato, and Shakespeare. Ryleev imitated Juvenal’s satire of Rubellius (attributing it to Persius) in ‘K vremenshchiku’

⁹⁹ Kahn, *Pushkin’s Lyric Intelligence*, p. 25; Savel’eva, *Antichnost’ v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka*, p. 74.

¹⁰⁰ Segel, in Garrard, p. 67; Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 40; Michael Wachtel, p. 175.

¹⁰¹ L. I. Savel’eva, *Antichnost’ v russkoi romanticheskoi poezii: Poety Pushkinskogo kruga* (Kazan’: Izdatel’stvo Kazanskogo universiteta, 1986), pp. 76, 74.

¹⁰² Savel’eva, *Antichnost’ v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka*, p. 97; Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost’*, pp. 154–55.

¹⁰³ Kahn, *Pushkin’s Lyric Intelligence*, p. 220; Savel’eva, *Antichnost’ v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁴ Andrew Kahn, in Miller and Newlands, pp. 402–03.

¹⁰⁵ Savel’eva, *Antichnost’ v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka*, pp. 107, 101.

(‘To the pretender’, 1820), Anacreon, and Batiushkov’s ‘Moim penatam’ – ‘Pustynia’ (‘Desert’). His poems call for modern ‘republicans’ like Cicero, Brutus, Cato, Aristides, Themistocles, Pericles, and his poems mix classical references with Petersburg *byt* (everyday existence).¹⁰⁶ Kiukhel’beker rarely uses classical reception after his exile, but in one poem, ‘Dva soneta’ (‘Two sonnets’), compares himself poignantly to Tantalus – a reference to whom in an early sonnet he had once criticised as a meaningless cliché.¹⁰⁷ The Decembrists’ failed rebellion of December 1825 decimated Russia’s young, classically receptive poets (whether through death or exile), and greatly affected Pushkin, who lost friends – one way or the other – in the aftermath.¹⁰⁸

Pushkin

Pushkin merits his own section party due to being the focal point of the Golden Age, and his participation in various literary groupings (Andrew Kahn argues powerfully that Pushkin embraces Romanticism without ever abandoning Classicism¹⁰⁹). But most significant is the immense influence Pushkin has exerted on Russian literature after him, particularly the Symbolists, to whom the poets of the post-Stalin era looked back; Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova all make references to him (see pp. 99, 117, 129; 159, 177, 186, 195; 273, 285).

Pushkin studied at the Tsarskoe Selo Lyceum, a classical gymnasium, where he and his friends “cultivated pastiche and parody for the sake of displaying verbal wit”; Pushkin remained a talented, eclectic imitator.¹¹⁰ His first published poem, ‘K drugu stikhotvortsu’ (‘To a Versifier Friend’, 1814), when he was 15, is in neoclassical style, with references to classical myths and authors, whilst his poem ‘Litsiniiu’ (‘To Licinius’) of the following year imitates eighteenth-century Russian neoclassical Juvenalian satire.¹¹¹ Arzamas, too, encouraged Pushkin to “trouble [his] forebears”, as parody, particularly Lucianic dialogues with the dead, was fashionable in the group.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 109, 99, 112, 100–01, 112.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 111, 98.

¹⁰⁸ Kahn, in Miller and Newlands, p. 402.

¹⁰⁹ Kahn, *Pushkin’s Lyric Intelligence*, pp. 1–12.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 27, 221–22.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 21–22.

Pushkin's exile in Southern Russia (1820-23) led him to "meditate on poetic fates and posterity" by drawing parallels between himself and Ovid.¹¹³ His treatment of Ovid in 'K Ovidiiu' ('To Ovid', 1821) relies on their common exile to the Black Sea to establish a "transhistorical communion" between them "by transforming the temporal into the spatial" and making "a Romantic out of a classical writer, and a classical writer out of a Romantic" in its depiction of their emotions. Pushkin "structures poetic relationships as a ratio between successor poets and key predecessors", casting himself as Ovid's follower yet not claiming either Ovid's greatness or identity, and hinting at a possible future poet who could in turn follow him.¹¹⁴ Although Pushkin was not the first to make the connection between Crimea, Ovid, and exile – pre-Romantic Semen Bobrov combined these elements in 'Ballada: Mogila Ovidiia, slavnogo liubimtsa Muz' ('A Ballade: The Grave of Ovid, the famed favourite of the Muses') in 1792 – Pushkin's 'K Ovidiiu', unlike Bobrov's poem, has had a lasting impact.¹¹⁵ Perhaps Pushkin's Ovid has so resonated with later Russian poets because of his poem's inbuilt capacity for another successor, especially while censorship and exile have continued to affect Russian poets.

From 1824-26 Pushkin continued his exile on his mother's estate, Mikhailovskoe, during which time "his interest in antiquity shifted from Ovid to Tacitus and Greek poetry and myth", and amidst similarly historical-allegorical texts by Decembrist friends he produced 'Zamechaniia na Annaly Tatsita' ('Notes on the Annals of Tacitus', 1825-26).¹¹⁶

In 1826-28 (a period of post-exilic and post-Decembrist constraint) in response to the new marketability of Romantic 'genius' Pushkin writes a cluster of influential vatic poems: 'Prorok' ('Prophet'), 'Arion', and 'Poet i tolpa' ('The Poet and the Crowd').¹¹⁷ All three recycle "Greek Orphic and Horatian postures".¹¹⁸ "More than any other single work 'Prorok' has shaped the view that poetry occupies a uniquely important place in Russian literature",¹¹⁹ and despite its primarily Christian context and lack of overt classical references, its association with the aforementioned

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹⁴ Kahn, in Miller and Newlands, pp. 401–5.

¹¹⁵ Kahn, *ibid.*, pp. 401–2.

¹¹⁶ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 47; Kahn, 'Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin', p. 767.

¹¹⁷ Kahn, *Pushkin's Lyric Intelligence*, pp. 61, 59, 205.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 205.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 203.

classically receptive poems have led later poets to echo it in classical contexts. In 1826 Pushkin published his first lyric collection, made up of poems from across his whole career, divided into classical genres: elegies, epigrams, imitations of the ancients, and epistles.¹²⁰ In the 1830s Pushkin returned to these forms in a more developed style: Anacreontic and Horatian imitations and statuary poems in distichs, expressing Romantic Hellenism's view of concise Greek epigrams and classical fragments as the Platonic ideal.¹²¹ Other classical influences that mature across Pushkin's oeuvre are Epicureanism and Stoicism, received through Lucretius (and Diderot), Horace, and Cicero. The adolescent poetry of Pushkin and his Lyceum friends was infused with Horatian Epicureanism "as a matter of rhetorical polish", as "carpe diem" occurred in their juvenile verse when mortality threatened least". However, after the Decembrist revolt, with mortality a reality, Pushkin's 1831 and 1836 poems to his Lyceum friends "apply Stoic reasoning to the problem of personal and collective annihilation faced by the group".¹²²

One of Pushkin's last poems, 'Pamiatnik' ('Monument', 1836) translates and personalises Horace's ode 3.30, 'Exegi monumentum', famously already translated by Lomonosov and Derzhavin. He gives the original Latin title, which "labels Pushkin's *own* text as the *foreign* one".¹²³ Pushkin suggests the commonality between himself and Horace, Russia and Rome, both inheritors of another culture, by returning to Greek, which Horace's poem boasts about translating into Latin, with the idiomatically Russian calque of '*acheiropoetos*', 'nerukotvorniy' ('not made by human hand'), and by the adjective 'Aleksandriiskii' ('Alexandrian'), which points not only to the Alexander Column but also to Horace's Alexandrianism and to Pushkin's own name.¹²⁴ Thus "Pushkin made his most blatant assertion of originality by choosing one of the most intertextual tributes to imitation."¹²⁵ Like 'K Ovidiiu', 'Pamiatnik's demonstration of original succession has invited further imitations.

Late Nineteenth Century

After Pushkin and Lermontov's early deaths and the end of Romanticism, the latter nineteenth century was dominated by prose Realism. A notable example of classical

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 112–13.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 62. For Kahn's analysis of Pushkin's late classical imitations as distinct from his early ones, see pp. 74–80.

¹²² Ibid., pp. 326–27. See also especially pp. 286–87, 298, 301, 330.

¹²³ Lachmann, p. 206.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 205–06, 208–10.

¹²⁵ Kahn, *Pushkin's Lyric Intelligence*, p. 83.

reception in prose is Gogol's novel *Taras Bulba* (1835), which adapts passages from the *Iliad*.¹²⁶ However, classical reception is infrequent in prose of this period. Even the writer Ivan Turgenev, who studied Classics his whole life, divorced this passion from his prose as irrelevant to contemporary Russia, ironising classical learning where it appears in his stories and novels.¹²⁷

Poetry, although no longer centre stage in literature, remained the site of classical reception. Afanasiï Fet's early poems often play with distichs (15 during 1842-47): 'Drug moi, bessil'ny slova' ('My friend, words are powerless', 1842) suggestively places the phrase 'caesura of lips' at the caesura.¹²⁸ Fet also created important translations of Virgil, Ovid, and Juvenal.¹²⁹ Fedor Tiutchev, influenced by neoclassical odes and German Romanticism, in 1830 wrote the poems 'Silentium!' and 'Tsitseron' ('Cicero'), the first with a Latin title, and the latter exploring a Roman subject through the lens of Pindar.¹³⁰ Imagist poet Apollon Maïkov wrote imitations of Greek lyric, and three cycles of poems and a drama exploring Rome and its clash with Christianity: 'Ocherki Rima' ('Sketches of Rome', 1843-45), 'Al'bom Antinoia' ('Antinous' Album', 1887), 'Iz Apollodora Gnostika' ('From Apollodorus, 1877-93), and *Two Worlds* (*Dva mira*, 1880).¹³¹ Arsenii Golenishchev-Kutuzov, who was mentored by Maïkov, Tiutchev, and Fet, wrote poems about Rome.¹³²

The late nineteenth-century lull in classical reception was soon to be broken by the Silver Age – the period of Russia's most intensive engagement with antiquity.

The Silver Age

The 'Silver Age' of Russian modernism – following the 'Golden Age' of Pushkin, so called by analogy with the classical Ages of Man – was a turn-of-the-century boom in Russian art of all kinds, so fervent and extensive that even at the time it was

¹²⁶ Carl R. Proffer, 'Gogol's Taras Bulba and the Iliad', *Comparative Literature*, 17.2 (1965), 142–50.

¹²⁷ Knabe, *Russkaia antichnost'*, p. 179.

¹²⁸ Michael Wachtel, pp. 192–93.

¹²⁹ Kalb, p. 12.

¹³⁰ Boris Maslov, 'Pindaric Temporality, Goethe's Augenblick, and the Invariant Plot of Tiutchev's Lyric', *Comparative Literature*, 64.4 (2012), 356–81 (pp. 369, 374).

¹³¹ Anna Frajlich, *The Legacy of Ancient Rome in the Russian Silver Age* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 27–29.

¹³² Frajlich, pp. 31–35.

compared to the Italian Renaissance.¹³³ It began in the early 1890s and was halted by the 1917 October Revolution; those artists who continued to create after the Revolution did so under altered cultural conditions.¹³⁴ The era is characterised by an urge towards synthesis of Russian and world culture.¹³⁵ With acquisition of European classical genres complete, Silver Age artists sought new forms, becoming increasingly avant-garde.¹³⁶ “Modernist culture did not view itself as the most recent historical ‘stage’, but rather as an eschatological and messianistic ‘phenomenon’, which was conferring new (and perhaps ultimate) meaning on the entire course of ‘history’”.¹³⁷ The Silver Age’s sense of itself as the apogee of world culture exhibited variously: mysticism, apocalypticism, and a heightened interest in classical antiquity. Many saw Russia’s mission as uniting “Eastern-based spirituality and Western secular imperialism”, as embodied – separately – by ancient Greece and Rome.¹³⁸ Nietzsche’s popularisation by Viacheslav Ivanov and later Symbolists, Aleksandr Blok in particular, led to Silver Age artists embracing Nietzsche’s Apollo-Dionysus polarity.¹³⁹ (Shvarts in particular has continued this; see section beginning p. 108.) This was Nietzsche’s transposition in *The Birth of Tragedy* of Apollo and Dionysus onto Schopenhauer’s conception of humanity’s ‘fundamental drives’, Representation and Will,¹⁴⁰ which Nietzsche claimed must be combined for the creation of art.¹⁴¹ For Modernists, Pushkin embodied this “combination of Dionysian and Apollonian principles, a harmonious blend of creative spontaneity with logical ordering, a mingling of the ‘Thracian’ and ‘Attic’ substrate of Greek culture”, as well as bridging East and West, and he became the Silver Age’s foundational myth.¹⁴²

¹³³ Pamela Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival: The Russian Renaissance of Classical Antiquity in the Twentieth Century*, Studies in Russia and Eastern Europe no. 6 (London: UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2009), p. 2.

¹³⁴ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 55–56.

¹³⁵ Knabe, *Antichnoe nasledie v kul'ture Rossii*, p. 17.

¹³⁶ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 56.

¹³⁷ B. Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno, *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age* (Berkeley; Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), p. 2.

¹³⁸ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 56–57.

¹³⁹ Davidson, in *Russian Literature and Its Demons*, ed. by Pamela Davidson, Studies in Slavic Literature, Culture, and Society, v. 6 (New York, N.Y.; Oxford: Berghahn, 2000), p. 188.

¹⁴⁰ Martha C. Nussbaum, in *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. by Christopher Janaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 358.

¹⁴¹ James M. Curtis, in *Nietzsche in Russia*, ed. by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Princeton, N.J.; Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 335.

¹⁴² Gasparov, Hughes, and Paperno, pp. 6–7.

The literary boom was built in part upon classical gymnasia, in which figures such as Ivanov, Valerii Briusov, Blok, Andrei Belyi, and Nikolai Gumilev were all educated.¹⁴³ Until the Revolution, Russian academia was on a par with Western academia: Classics was biased towards Hellenism, due to Byzantine influence, but strong in epigraphy, papyrology, socio-economic history; classicist Mikhail Rostovtsev pioneered pairing archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic sources with literary ones; Russia's democratisation led to increased study of Roman law and Athenian democracy.¹⁴⁴ Outside of academia, Classics entered popular culture via journal and newspaper articles, public lectures, whilst Ivan Tsvetaev made ancient art accessible, founding the Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow in 1912.¹⁴⁵

Originators, 'Slavonic Renaissance', & Symbolism

Silver Age syncretism is typified by Dmitrii Merezhkovskii's trilogy of novels '*Khristos i Antikhris*' ('*Christ and Antichrist*', 1896-1905), which explore the clash between paganism and Christianity through "late Roman antiquity, the Italian renaissance, and eighteenth-century Russian history".¹⁴⁶ Classically trained philosopher-poet Vladimir Solov'ev bridged the gap between the nineteenth- and twentieth-century periods of classical reception, as he worked with Fet translating the *Aeneid*,¹⁴⁷ and influenced the Symbolists, especially their infatuation with Sophia as the 'Eternal Feminine'.¹⁴⁸ Solov'ev's interest in antiquity was primarily religious: he translated Plato, and Virgil's 'messianic' Fourth Eclogue;¹⁴⁹ he believed Russia as the Third Rome must synthesise East and West, although his poem 'Panmongolizm' (1894) expressed disenchantment with this belief.¹⁵⁰

Other Silver Age Russian poets and thinkers also believed Classics could play an active role in shaping Russia. The 'Union of the Third Renaissance', conceived in 1899 by Faddei Zelinskii, a classicist at St Petersburg University, and convening until the October Revolution, aimed to infuse the (Nietzschean) Dionysiac spirit into

¹⁴³ Knabe, *Antichnoe nasledie v kul'ture Rossii*, p. 228.

¹⁴⁴ E. D. Frolov, *Russkaia nauka ob antichnosti: Istoriograficheskie ocherki* (St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 1999), pp. 398–401; V. I. Isaeva, *Istoriia evropeiskoi tsvilizatsii v russkoi nauke. Antichnoe nasledie* (Moscow: INION, 1991), pp. 6–7.

¹⁴⁵ Kalb, p. 22.

¹⁴⁶ Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival*, pp. 3–4.

¹⁴⁷ Frajlich, p. 39.

¹⁴⁸ Pamela Davidson, *The Poetic Imagination of Vyacheslav Ivanov* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 72.

¹⁴⁹ Frajlich, pp. 38–39.

¹⁵⁰ Kalb, pp. 17–18.

Slavonic culture, creating a 'Slavonic Renaissance' like those in Italy and in eighteenth-century Germany, and uniting Europe. Zelinskii believed this would be achieved through popularising Greek literature: such as his translation of Sophocles, and public lectures, articles, and books; poet and classicist Innokentii Annenskii's translation of Euripides; Viacheslav Ivanov's Dionysian poetry; and popular theatre – Vsevolod Meierkhol'd's planned staging of Ivanov's 'Tantalus', and Briusov and Fedor Sologub's mythological tragedies.¹⁵¹

Annenskii and Ivanov are called by Torlone the only true "poet-scholars" of the Silver Age.¹⁵² Annenskii translated Euripidean tragedy his whole life, infusing him with his own melancholy.¹⁵³ His original classically receptive works are also tragedies, written 1900-06, the first even using a title of a lost play by Euripides: *Melanippa-Filosof* (*Melanippe the Philosopher*), *Tsar' Iksion* (*King Ixion*), *Laodamiia* (*Laodamia*), *Famira-Kifared* (*Thamyris Cytharoede*). He saw himself as a 'mythurgos', recreating lesser-known myths in modernised form, using rhyme and colloquialisms.¹⁵⁴ Although Annenskii's lyric poems were first published alongside translations of Latin, French, and German poetry, and under the Odyssean alias 'Nik. T---o' ('N. O. One'), they show "almost no influence from his scholarly pursuits".¹⁵⁵ In the realm of lyric poetry, Annenskii's classical influence is felt more in the later Acmeist movement.¹⁵⁶

Classical antiquity pervaded every aspect of Ivanov's life and work. He had spent two decades studying Classics, in part under Otto Hirschfeld and Theodor Mommsen in Berlin,¹⁵⁷ before publishing his first poetry collection in 1903. 'Kormchie zvezdy' ('Pilot stars') had whole sections devoted to Ancient Greek themes, among those on

¹⁵¹ Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival*, pp. 5, 15–16; Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 75–76; Frajlich, p. 23; Tadeusz Zieliński, *Our Debt to Antiquity* (London: G. Routledge, 1909), pp. 120–21. Other members included Ivanov's stepdaughter/wife Vera Shvarsalon, Zelinskii's pupils Nikolai and Mikhail Bakhtin, and Zelinskii's son, future Soviet classicist Adrian Piotrovskii. Torlone, p. 214 n. 129. Zelinskii also translated Ovid's *Heroides* (1912-13), following a lesser-known translation by D. P. Shestakov (1902). M. L. Gasparov, in *Mandel'shtam i antichnost'*, ed. by Oleg Lekmanov, *Zapiski Mandel'shtamovskogo obshchestva* no. 7 (Moscow: Radiks, 1995), p. 110.

¹⁵² Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 57.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 29.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 82–84.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 118–19.

¹⁵⁷ Pamela Davidson, *Vyacheslav Ivanov and C.M. Bowra: A Correspondence from Two Corners on Humanism*, Birmingham Slavonic Monographs, No. 36 (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2006), p. 13.

Latin, European, and Russian subjects. Classical themes and forms continue all through to his last collection, ‘Rimskii dnevnik 1944 goda’ (‘Roman diary of 1944’). Ivanov did not only receive antiquity in Russian – he also composed in the classical languages. He wrote a cycle of poems in Greek and Latin, ‘Humaniorum studiorum cultoribus’ (‘To the cultivators of humanist studies’, 1912), addressed to Rostovtsev and Zelinskii.¹⁵⁸ Ivanov corresponded with British classicist C.M. Bowra in Latin and Greek verse,¹⁵⁹ and with Briusov in Latin; he twice experienced voices dictating Latin poetry to him, which he compared to a Hesiodic/Callimachean visitation by the Muses in his 1946 essay ‘Ein Echo’ (‘An Echo’).¹⁶⁰ Ivanov brought many classical authors into Russia through translations, which influenced many poets including Sofiia Parnok (see p. 38) and Mandel’shtam.¹⁶¹ He translated Aeschylus, Alcaeus, Sappho, Bacchylides, and Pindar, striving “to dissolve the boundaries between the worlds of ancient Greece and modern Russia by ‘russifying’ the Greek originals and by ‘Hellenizing’ the Russian language”.¹⁶²

Ivanov began the Silver Age fashion for ‘zhiznetvorchestvo’ (‘life-creation’, or ‘living-life-as-artwork’), which for Ivanov meant imbuing life with classical antiquity. He and his wife Lidiia Zinov’eva-Annibal held Platonic symposia at their ‘Tower’; he viewed their love as “Dionysian frenzy”, and after her death, that with her daughter as “sacred incest”.¹⁶³ Dionysianism was Ivanov’s obsession. Contradicting Nietzsche, he saw it as a precursor to Christianity, inherited by the Russian language via Byzantium.¹⁶⁴ He admired the Dionysiac chorism of Aeschylus, and so began a trilogy of Aeschylean tragedies, *Tantal* (*Tantalus*, 1904), *Niobeia* (*Niobe*, unfinished) and *Prometei* (*Prometheus*, 1914).¹⁶⁵ In his 1904 article ‘Nitsche i Dionis’ (‘Nietzsche and Dionysus’) and his ballad ‘Sud ognia’ (‘The judgement of fire’, from *Cor ardens*, 1911-12) he returned to a story in Pausanias featuring Dionysus; both times Ivanov exaggerates the role of Dionysus, in the article as a pretext to introduce

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 18-19, 30.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁶⁰ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 62.

¹⁶¹ See Kiril Taranovsky, *Essays on Mandel’shtam*, Harvard Slavic Studies, Vol. 6 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), passim, but particularly pp. 83-114.

¹⁶² Davidson, *Vyacheslav Ivanov and C.M. Bowra*, p. 18.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 64; Olga Matich, in *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*, ed. by Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 35.

¹⁶⁴ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 62–63; Pamela Davidson, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, p. 84.

¹⁶⁵ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 77.

Nietzschean Dionysianism, and in the ballad as part of his reflections upon the 1905 revolution, which throughout *Cor ardens* Ivanov hopefully construes as a Dionysian rebirth through fire.¹⁶⁶ However, after his exile to Rome in 1924, he came to view Russia's situation in Roman terms, with Communism as the barbarian Hannibal, and himself as Aeneas fleeing burning Troy.¹⁶⁷

After Ivanov, the most classical Symbolist is Briusov, as his collections' titles attest: *Me Eum Esse* (1896-97), *Tertia Vigilia* (1898-1901), *Urbi et Orbi...*(1901-03)¹⁶⁸ Briusov began his life-long translation of the *Aeneid* whilst still in the gymnasium, translated Horace (with commentary) and Ovid, and studied poets such as Ausonius and Claudianus from his favourite period, the fourth century A.D. After the Revolution he taught Classics. Many of his poems feature Roman historical figures whom he emulated, and he responded to Russia's unrest with Roman analogies, such as 'K sograzhdanam' ('To fellow citizens', 1904), which urges Russians to disregard the example of the early Roman Republic's plebeian secession – quite the opposite of similarly themed poems by Osip Mandel'shtam and Blok.¹⁶⁹

Of the younger generation of Symbolists, Blok, a student of Zelinskii's,¹⁷⁰ was particularly influenced by Ivanov's Dionysianism. However, Blok differed with Ivanov, rejecting his theory that in artistic creation Apollonian ascent follows Dionysian descent.¹⁷¹ He saw Dionysianism in Russia's Revolution. Reacting to the Revolution with a Roman parallel, Blok, convinced that poets always reflect their time, claimed to hear "Catiline's angry footsteps" in the galliambs of Catullus' *Attis*; this would inform his revolutionary poem *Dvenadtsat'* (*The Twelve*, 1918), which evokes the "Dionysian wind" transforming Russia, and links it to Christianity after Ivanov's example.¹⁷²

Blok's friend Belyi led a Symbolist movement called Argonautism. They looked upon the Argo myth as the basic myth underlying the 'text' of their lives; the Golden Fleece from Belyi's eponymous 1903 poem became their password, and another

¹⁶⁶ M. L. Gasparov, *Antichnost' v russkoi poezii nachala XX veka* (Genova: ECIG; Pisa, 1995); Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 69–70.

¹⁶⁷ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 66, 69, 71.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁶⁹ Frajlich, pp. 65–66, 78, 62, 71, 89–90.

¹⁷⁰ Kalb, p. 23.

¹⁷¹ Davidson, in Davidson, *Russian Literature and Its Demons*, p. 193.

¹⁷² Kalb, pp. 106–28.

Argonaut, Ellis (Lev Kobylinskii), took the Fleece as his personal symbol.¹⁷³ Belyi's novel *Peterburg* (*Petersburg*, 1912-13) is constructed with many under- and overlying classical references, such as Greek gods Apollo, Dionysus, Sophia, and Aphrodite, received through Nietzsche, Solov'ev, and Ivanov, and evident in some characters' names, so that the central family's "unhappiness embodies the city's past and portends its future as if in a myth of Greek tragedy".¹⁷⁴

Like Belyi, Kuzmin, originator of Clarism, another Symbolist movement, incorporated classical references into poetry, prose, and life. He translated Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, and dedicated two poems to this his favourite classical author. Classical antiquity provided a reference point for Kuzmin's homosexuality, and Rome is prominent in his (and Russia's) first gay novella, *Kryl'ia* (*Wings*, 1906). Kuzmin felt particular affinity for Antinous, Hadrian's lover, who appears often in his writing, and whose name he took as a nickname. Roman history, as for many Russian writers of this period, serves Kuzmin as analogy for Russian contemporaneity: Lenin's death inspired the play *Smert' Nerona* (*The Death of Nero*, 1927-29); and also for his personal life, as the thirty-year-old Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon features in a poem to his partner Iurii Iurkun on his thirtieth birthday.¹⁷⁵

Acmeism, Futurism, & Parnok

Acmeism broke away from Symbolism in 1910. Acmeism replaced Symbolism's mysticism with craft and "precision of language, to which the use of quotation from classical sources contributed".¹⁷⁶ Like Symbolism, however, intertextuality is central to Acmeist poetics, especially that of Akhmatova and Mandel'shtam. Their concept of poetry as a transhistorical and transcultural dialogue between poets, which is expressed through "answering, quotation, and allusion", is encapsulated in Mandel'shtam's phrase 'тоска по мировой культуре'¹⁷⁷ ('yearning for world culture'). Culture for Acmeists becomes a "supranational classical fund consisting of all cultures and all time periods: Homer, Dante, Pushkin".¹⁷⁸

Acmeism was led by Gumilev – until he was shot by the Bolsheviks in 1921 – but its central figure is Akhmatova. Her poetry selects female figures from literature as alter

¹⁷³ Alexander Lavrov, in Paperno and Grossman, pp. 87, 90.

¹⁷⁴ Mary Jo White, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, pp. 62, 60.

¹⁷⁵ Frajlich, pp. 165–67, 183, 170.

¹⁷⁶ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 118–19.

¹⁷⁷ Osip Mandel'shtam, *Slovo i kul'tura* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1987), p. 298.

¹⁷⁸ Lachmann, pp. 73, 184.

egos.¹⁷⁹ Her most prominent classical alter ego is Dido in ‘Shipovnik tsvetet’ (‘The wild rose is flowering’, 1946-64), whom she reads through Dante and Purcell, thus invoking Acmeist world culture.¹⁸⁰ This poem becomes an intertext for Barskova (see p. 269). Akhmatova’s tendency of focalising her classical reception through later interpretations expresses itself most in her evocation of Petersburg, which in her poetry is “a diachronic emblem with consecutive, overlapping *inscriptions*”: simultaneously classical St Petersburg, “Petrograd (the city of the Revolution and of the civil war) and Leningrad (the city of the blockade and of mass death by starvation and cold, the city of return)”.¹⁸¹

Acmeism’s aim to summarise and rewrite past culture partook in the apocalyptic mood of early twentieth-century Russia. The iconoclasm of its contemporary movement, Futurism, it has been posited, stems from the same urges, with “a minus sign” attached.¹⁸² While Acmeism resisted the cultural revolution occurring around 1910 (though not rejecting innovation), Futurism attempted to break away from the past altogether.¹⁸³ There is therefore little classical reception in Futurist writing, aside from Boris Pasternak, who was also associated with Symbolism and Acmeism, and who wrote several poems about Rome.¹⁸⁴ An interesting example of unambiguously Futurist classical reception is Velemir Khlebnikov, who in *Zangezi* (1922) gives *zaum* speech (his ideal, universal nonsense language) to “Roman, pagan Russian, and, perhaps, Finnic” gods.¹⁸⁵

Lesbian poet Sofiia Parnok, like Kuzmin, turns to antiquity to express her sexuality. After reading Ivanov’s translations of Sappho, Parnok began to write Sapphic stanzas, complete Sappho’s fragments, and published two imitations of Sappho titled ‘Saficheskie strofy’ (‘Sapphic strophes’, c. 1912-15) in her first book.¹⁸⁶ Understanding of Sappho as homosexual had only recently reached Russia from

¹⁷⁹ Tat’iana Tsiv’ian, *Iazyk: tema i variatsii: izbrannoe v dvukh knigakh* (Moscow: Nauka, 2008), II, pp. 307–8. Mandel’shtam also compares Akhmatova to Cassandra and Phaedra: pp. 309, 311.

¹⁸⁰ Zara Martirosova Torlone, *Vergil in Russia: National Identity and Classical Reception*, Classical Presences (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 206.

¹⁸¹ Lachmann, p. 250. Another poet associated with Acmeism who displays classical reception is Vasilii Komarovskii. See Frajlich, pp. 145–64.

¹⁸² Gasparov, Hughes, and Paperno, p. 8.

¹⁸³ Lachmann, pp. 231–32.

¹⁸⁴ A. I. Nemirovskii, in Lekmanov, *Mandel’shtam i antichnost’*, p. 139.

¹⁸⁵ Andrew Baruch Wachtel, p. 164.

¹⁸⁶ Diana Lewis Burgin, in *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture*, ed. by Jane T. Costlow, Stephanie Sandler, and Judith Vowles (Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 191; Sofiia Parnok, *Sobranie stikhotvorenii* (Sankt-Peterburg: INAPRESS, 1998), pp. 189, 191.

France, where it became current from the late nineteenth century.¹⁸⁷ Parnok quotes Sappho in “Devochkoi malen’koi ty mne predstala nelovkoiu” (“An awkward little girl you appeared to me”, 1915) as part of a veiled evocation of sex with Tsvetaeva. Parnok’s relationship with Marina Tsvetaeva (1914-16) provoked many poems from both poets (Tsvetaeva dedicated to Parnok the cycle ‘Podruga’ (‘Girlfriend’, 1914-15), but did not publish it).¹⁸⁸ Parnok’s next, entirely classical, collection, *Rozy Pierii* (*Roses of Pieria*, 1922), devotes the first 8 poems to Sappho, the next 3 to the Amazon Penthesilea, and the final 5 to Venus. This expansion in Parnok’s female pantheon continues in the ensuing collection, *Loza* (*Vine*, 1922), which responds to Russia’s misfortunes with a poem to a Russian/Kievan-Orthodox sibyl, the Muses crying over Achilles and fallen Troy, and a reminder of the significance (especially to the Symbolists) of her name, Sophia.¹⁸⁹ *Loza*’s Dionysian title may be connected with this symbol, but is most likely due to the collection’s complex of images surrounding blood and Communion, suggesting Russia’s Dionysus-like (Christ-like) resurrection following civil war. After *Loza*, classical references fade from Parnok’s poetry.

Tsvetaeva

Marina Tsvetaeva, although personally connected with many Silver Age poets, was unaffiliated with any poetic group. Tsvetaeva attended various schools in Russia and abroad that taught Classics, although her education was interrupted. Growing up in the household of Ivan Tsvetaev, a scholar of classical culture, and her mother Maria, who transmitted to Tsvetaeva her love for German Romanticism, facilitated an early introduction to Greek mythology.¹⁹⁰ Despite her close association with various classicists, Tsvetaeva consistently denied direct acquaintance with Classics, claiming as the source of her mythical allusions German nineteenth-century children’s collections of Greek myths, perhaps to escape too close association with her father and the Symbolist poet-scholars.¹⁹¹ Ancient Greece in particular appealed to Tsvetaeva, cast in her poetry as a pre-historic, heroic utopia;¹⁹² the “belligerently unscholarly approach” she took to it “demystifies the power ascribed to the Greek

¹⁸⁷ Diana Lewis Burgin, in Costlow, Sandler, and Vowles, p. 178.

¹⁸⁸ Diana Lewis Burgin, *ibid.*, pp. 191–93.

¹⁸⁹ Parnok, pp. 213–30, 231–32, 240–41.

¹⁹⁰ Olga Peters Hasty, *Tsvetaeva’s Orphic Journeys in the Worlds of the Word* (Northwestern University Press, 1996), p. 9.

¹⁹¹ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 94–95.

¹⁹² Roman Voitekhovich, *Antichnye motivy v tvorchestve Mariny Tsvetaevoi*, *Humaniora: Litterae Russicae*, Universitas Tartuensis (Tartu: Kafedra russkoi literatury Tartuskogo universiteta, 2007), p. 20.

myths and texts”.¹⁹³ Her classical reception was also thoroughly personalised, shaped by “the main generative oppositions in her poetics: male and female”;¹⁹⁴ Tsvetaeva knew she invested classical figures with her own character: “Выбери я [...] Троянскую войну – нет, и тогда Елена вышла бы Генриеттой, т.е. мной.”¹⁹⁵ (“Say I choose [...] the Trojan War – no, even then Helen would come out Henrietta, that is, me.”) She cast her friend Voloshin, with whom she stayed in Crimea in the 1910s, as Orpheus to her Eurydice; she saw him as central to the Silver Age Hellenistic revival.¹⁹⁶ Tsvetaeva and her personalising approach to myth is a big influence on both Shvarts and Barskova (see pp. 115, 121; 278 following).

Tsvetaeva’s early poetry shows ambivalence towards Classics. In her ‘first love’ poetry it is a source of jealousy for taking the attention of her beloved, Vladimir Nilender. Subsequently, classical references appear in imitation of Russian neoclassical poetry, and become more complex in plays of 1918-19. After her younger daughter Irina’s death from starvation in 1919, Tsvetaeva aimed to attain a state of ‘Spartanism’ with her remaining daughter Ariadna, which involved introspection, distancing oneself from mundanities, and avoiding profane speech; Tsvetaeva connected this with the figure of the Sibyl, recurrent in her poetry.¹⁹⁷ Her last pre-exilic collection *Remeslo* (*Craft*, 1921), with its classically suggestive title, contains the cycle ‘Khvala Afrodite’ (‘Praise to Aphrodite’), and the poem ‘Tak plyli: golova i lira’ (‘So they floated: head and lyre’). This is the second appearance – of many – of Orpheus; the first, ‘Kak sonnyi, kak p’iany’ (‘As if sleepy, as if drunk’, 1921) equated him with Tsvetaeva’s idol, Blok.¹⁹⁸ For Tsvetaeva Orpheus would come to symbolise overarching drives of her poetry: “the poet’s translation between a limited physical world and an abstracted ‘elsewhere’ for which the poet longs”, “the imperative of confronting death”, and “the human pain of the poet who pleads for respite from the intransigent demands of her art”.¹⁹⁹

The peak of Tsvetaeva’s classical reception, her “Бурный пражский роман с античностью” (“tempestuous Prague romance with antiquity”), occurs in 1922-

¹⁹³ Maria Stadter Fox, in Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 95.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹⁹⁵ Voitekhovich, p. 18.

¹⁹⁶ Alexandra Smith, ‘Marina Tsvetaeva’s Memoir on Maksimilian Voloshin in the Context of Artistic and Intellectual Trends of the 1910s-30s’, *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, 71 (2013), 189–210 (pp. 195, 205–6, 190).

¹⁹⁷ Voitekhovich, pp. 17–19, 46.

¹⁹⁸ Hasty, p. 9.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 235.

24,²⁰⁰ from her emigration to Prague in 1922 (via Berlin, where she was reunited with her husband) until their move to Paris in 1925.²⁰¹ At that time she was reading both popular and specialist literature about antiquity, translations of Euripides, and Nietzsche (whose influence is seen in the figure of Bacchus) in preparation for a trilogy of classical tragedies, conceived in 1923, titled first *Gnev Afrodity* (*The Wrath of Aphrodite*) and then *Tezei* (*Theseus*). The three plays were named after three doomed loves of Theseus: *Ariadna* (*Ariadne*), *Fedra* (*Phaedra*), and *Elena* (*Helen*), representing, respectively, soul, passion, and beauty. *Elena* was never written; she also planned a long poem about Achilles in 1924, for which she was still trying to gather material in the 30s, but had to abandon.²⁰² Her lyric collection of this first phase of emigration, *Posle Rossii* (*After Russia, 1922-25*), extends the classical trend of *Remeslo*. 1922 has the cycle ‘Sivilla’ (‘Sibyl’), for which Tsvetaeva drew upon Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*; the “Cumaeen Sibyl provides Tsvetaeva with a female alternative to the traditional male image of the prototypal poet”.²⁰³ In 1923 Tsvetaeva is evidently responding to her other projects, with cycles ‘Fedra’ (‘Phaedra’), ‘Ariadna’, and poems ‘Stoi! Ne Fedry li pod nebom’ (‘Stop! Is not Phaedra’s under the sky’), ‘Akhill na valu’ (‘Achilles on the rampart’); she also has a cycle of ‘Skifskie’ (‘Scythian’) poems, and ‘Evidika-Orfeiu’ (‘Eurydice to Orpheus’). These all, ‘Skifskie’ excepted, also focus upon “female self-expression” within “familiar tragic plots”,²⁰⁴ as does ‘Tak – tol’ko Elena gliadit nad krovliami’ (‘So – only Helen looks over the rooftops’) from 1924, when Tsvetaeva’s classical poems peter out. Due to external pressures in emigration in Paris and after her return to Russia in 1939 with her son, following her husband and daughter, Tsvetaeva wrote mostly prose; she committed suicide in 1941.²⁰⁵

Mandel’shtam

The most influential classically receptive poet who grew out of – and outgrew – Acmeism was Mandel’shtam, whose “poetry was typical of Acmeism only in ‘its assumption that the reader, knowledgeable in the classics of Western literature, will

²⁰⁰ Voitekhovich, pp. 19, 21.

²⁰¹ Lily Feiler, *Marina Tsvetaeva: The Double Beat of Heaven and Hell* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 124, 130, 132, 159.

²⁰² Voitekhovich, p. 19; Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 95–96, 117.

²⁰³ Hasty, p. 84.

²⁰⁴ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 5.

²⁰⁵ Feiler, pp. 201–3, 263–64.

recognize explicit and implicit quotations from extraneous texts”.²⁰⁶ Mandel’shtam was born in Warsaw to a Jewish family, who moved to St Petersburg in 1900 when he was nine. There he attended the progressive Tenishev School, the broad curriculum of which, along with travel to France, Italy, and his study of philosophy and philology at Heidelberg University, culminated in deep enthusiasm for European, especially classical, culture. Upon his return to Petersburg in 1912 Mandel’shtam enrolled in the Philological Faculty at St Petersburg University; his Greek tutor relates the haphazard, passionate, poetic approach he took to studying. He also visited Ivanov’s Tower.²⁰⁷ His relationship with Tsvetaeva, whom he met in 1915, had a profound effect on both poets, inspiring poems addressed to each other.²⁰⁸

Unlike Ivanov or earlier classically influenced poets, Mandel’shtam neither translated nor imitated classical texts. This and his ecumenical approach to cultural dialogue within his poetry led Victor Terras to equate his attitude towards ancient Greece and Rome with that towards their modern counterparts and the classics of European literature; while it is true that Mandel’shtam’s “visions of classical antiquity are not ‘Homeric’, ‘Sapphic’, or ‘Horatian’, but Mandel’shtamian”,²⁰⁹ his partiality for classical antiquity is clear. Antiquity emblematises Mandel’shtamian ‘culture’, Russia’s lack whereof he bewails in his essay ‘O prirode slova’ (‘On the nature of the word’, 1920-22), saying ‘У нас нет Акрополя.’²¹⁰ (‘We have no Acropolis’.) He followed Ivanov and Annenskii in insisting Russian poetry be grounded in classical antiquity.²¹¹ Mandel’shtam’s 1921 essay ‘Slovo i kul’tura’ (‘The word and culture’) declares his classical poetic programme: ‘вчерашний день [...] Его еще не было по-настоящему. Я хочу снова Овидия, Пушкина, Катулла, и меня не удовлетворяет исторический Овидий, Пушкин, Катулл.’²¹² (‘yesterday [...] has not yet really existed. I want Ovid, Pushkin, and Catullus to live once more, and I am not satisfied with the historical Ovid, Pushkin, and Catullus.’) And just as he wanted to re-embody past poets, he directed his poems to “an addressee of the

²⁰⁶ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 118–19, quoting Ziolkowsky (2005) p. 68.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 119; Konstantin Mochul’skii, in Lekmanov, *Mandel’shtam i antichnost’*, pp. 7–8.

²⁰⁸ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 132.

²⁰⁹ Victor Terras, ‘Classical Motives in the Poetry of Osip Mandel’shtam’, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 10.3 (1966), 251–67 (p. 254).

²¹⁰ Mandel’shtam, *Slovo i kul’tura*, p. 63.

²¹¹ Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival*, p. 16.

²¹² Mandel’shtam, *Slovo i kul’tura*, p. 41.

future”;²¹³ future poets have certainly responded. All three of Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova use Mandel’shtam as an important mediator with antiquity (see the section ‘Homo Musagetes’ starting p. 123, and pp. 179, 180, 199; 231).

Mandel’shtam’s early classical reception is characterised by an idealised Hellenism. His essay ‘O prirode slova’ later describes Hellenism as a source of humanised warmth, which chimes with his belief in the word as flesh, designated by the Greek *logos*. His 1910 poem ‘Silentium’ personifies *logos* as Aphrodite, in her pre-corporal, sea-foam state, just as his poetry remains in its pre-linguistic, musical, mute state; the poem polemicises with Tiutchev’s homonymous poem, contraposing to Tiutchev’s impossibility of poetic speech the unnecessary thereof.²¹⁴ Homer appears regularly in Mandel’shtam’s early poetry and onwards, representing for him the “perfect combination between music and *logos*, the primordial sound of poetic perfection”. ‘Ravnodenstvie’ (‘Equinox’, 1914) likens Homeric hexameter (using alexandrines) with the perfection of the autumnal equinox. ‘Bessonnitsa. Gomer. Tugie parusa’ (‘Insomnia. Homer. Taut sails’, 1915) describes Mandel’shtam’s counterintuitive response to Homer’s tedious Catalogue of Ships; his enthusiasm is possibly inspired by Annenskii’s.²¹⁵ As well as the *Iliad*, the poem echoes Dante, Goethe, and two ‘Bessonnitsa’ (‘Insomnia’) poems by Tiutchev and Akhmatova, displaying the literary associations Homer held for Mandel’shtam.²¹⁶ Russia’s pre-revolutionary unrest finds expression in Mandel’shtam’s hellenic references. His poem ‘1914’ reacts to Russia commissioning British warships by citing Solon’s fragmentary poem (reported in Diogenes Laertius’ *Life of Solon*) ‘Let us to Salamis, to fight for a lovely isle...’ as a reverse analogy, arguing that Europe, the new Hellas, should not accept aid from an island.²¹⁷ Persephone appears in two poems of 1916–17, ‘V Petropole prozrachnom my umrem’ (‘In transparent Petropolis we shall die’), and ‘Meganom’.²¹⁸

The same trajectory (of idealisation to politicisation) occurs in Mandel’shtam’s early Roman poems, a process connected to his changing depictions of Petersburg “from a

²¹³ Lachmann, p. 242.

²¹⁴ Taranovsky, pp. 121–24.

²¹⁵ Torlone, *Vergil in Russia*, p. 124.

²¹⁶ Lachmann, p. 257.

²¹⁷ Terras, in Lekmanov, *Mandel’shtam i antichnost’*, p. 20; Solon, ‘Elegy and Iambus, Volume I’

<<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0479%3Avolume%3D1%3Atext%3D5%3Asection%3D2>> [accessed 18 April 2016].

²¹⁸ Torlone, *Vergil in Russia*, p. 144; Terras, in Lekmanov, *Mandel’shtam i antichnost’*, p. 21.

city of classical grandeur and a Third Rome to a city of death”. Rome stands out among Mandel’shtam’s classical poems as the only ancient city he makes repeated reference to. Ancient Rome appears in a “haze of unreality” as “an idealized entity, an unbroken focal point of human existence, a timeless symbol rather than a network of streets and buildings”. In 1914 ‘Pust’ imena tsvetushchikh gorodov’ (‘May the names of flowering cities’) views Rome as the centre of the universe, and ‘Priroda – tot zhe Rim i otrazilas’ v nem’ (‘Nature is that same Rome and was mirrored in it’) depicts Roman imperial power as natural.²¹⁹ In 1915 ‘Obizhenno ukhodiat na kholmy’ (‘Offended, they withdraw to the hills’) sees civic unrest of Russian/Roman plebeians/sheep as the route to Rome.²²⁰ However, by 1915 Mandel’shtam was becoming disillusioned with Rome, calling it “Эллада, лишенная благодати” (“Hellas, bereft of grace”).²²¹

After the Revolution the Roman theme alters further, becoming connected with exile and reflecting Mandel’shtam’s wish “to hold onto the ‘old’ Petersburg”, his “longing and pain for the ‘dying’ city as it becomes Petrograd, the alien and foreign entity bred by the First World War and Revolution”. Poems of 1914-15, ‘O vremenakh prostykh i grubykh’ (‘Of times simple and rough’) and ‘S veselym rzhaniam pasutsia tabuny’ (‘With happy whinnying graze the herds’), evoke Ovid’s exile from Rome by Augustus (and Pushkin’s response thereto) in a light-hearted and positive manner.²²² Much more melancholic is his treatment of the same theme in 1918, ‘Tristia’, written from Crimea, on the same Black Sea. It alludes extensively to Ovid, Tibullus, Batiushkov, and Pushkin, the multiple sources as well as the topic serving to universalise Mandel’shtam’s experience at the mercy of – and in the context of – history. Poignantly, ‘Tristia’ “foregrounds individual loss rather than celebrating, as most revolutionary poetry of the period did, collective success”. The theme continued in Mandel’shtam’s work into the early 1920s. The quotations from Ovid’s *Tristia* and Pushkin’s *Tsygany* (*Gypsies*) about exiled Ovid beginning his essay ‘Slovo i kul’tura’ respond to the Revolution’s cultural vandalism but also comment on the inefficacy of pining for return. Elsewhere he turned to Greek mythical figures:

²¹⁹ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 5, 133–35.

²²⁰ Terras, in Lekmanov, *Mandel’shtam i antichnost’*, p. 18.

²²¹ Ryshard Pshybyl’skii, *ibid.*, p. 60.

²²² Pshybyl’skii, Terras, *ibid.*, pp. 44, 18.

Orpheus to represent the destruction of Petersburg's heritage; the Trojan cycle to represent civil war.²²³

Hellenic poems prevail in the years following the Revolution. Mandel'shtam spent much of 1917-20 in Crimea, an area associated with classical civilisations.²²⁴ His location in 'Tauris' (the ancient name for Crimea) provokes a meditation leading from Bacchus to Odysseus to the Argo in 'Zolotistogo meda struia' ('Stream of golden honey', 1917). Persephone and the underworld reappear in four poems of 1920, 'Kogda Psikheia-zhizn' ('When Psyche-life'), 'Voz'mi na radost' iz moikh ladonei' ('Take from my palms to your delight'), 'Ia v khorovod tenei, toptavshikh neznyi lug' ('Into the circle dance of shades, who trod the tender meadow, I), and 'Ia slovo pozabyl' ('I forgot the word'), the latter also featuring Antigone. An episode from the Trojan cycle, Helen's tempting of the soldiers within the wooden horse, and Mandel'shtam's Homeric oriole, mingle with love poetry in 'Za to, chto ia ruki tvoie ne sumel uderzhat' ('Because I could not hold onto your hands', 1920).²²⁵ 'S rozovoi penoi ustalosti u miagkikh губ' ('With pink foam of tiredness at soft lips', 1922) retells the myth of Europa.²²⁶ Sappho features in 'Na kamennykh otrogakh Pierii' ('On rocky spurs of Pieria', 1919), along with Sapphic and Pindaric allusions.²²⁷ Pindar appears again in 'Nashedshii podkovu' ('Finding a horseshoe', 1923). Mandel'shtam sets Pindar in stark contrast to himself, reflecting his struggle by the mid-twenties "to reconcile his love for past cultures with the needs of a state consecrated to the cult of the future": the patronage system under which Pindar thrived is "the ideal exchange that Mandelstam imagines between Culture and the State". Yet with this ideal proved impossible, Pindar also represents "the glorious beginnings of a history to which [Mandel'shtam] may be destined to make a less than glorious end".²²⁸

Between 1925 and 1930, under financial and political pressure, Mandel'shtam wrote little poetry, only breaking his silence in the mediterranean-like atmosphere of

²²³ Kahn, in Miller and Newlands, pp. 409, 406.

²²⁴ Iu. I. Levin, in Lekmanov, *Mandel'shtam i antichnost'*, p. 77.

²²⁵ Gasparov, *ibid.*, pp. 110–11.

²²⁶ Terras, *ibid.*, p. 25.

²²⁷ I. I. Kovaleva, A. V. Nesterov, *ibid.*, pp. 163–65.

²²⁸ Clare Cavanagh, *Osip Mandelstam and the Modernist Creation of Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 165.

Armenia, where he travelled in 1930.²²⁹ A poem of 1931, ‘Ia skazhu tebe s poslednei priamotoi’ (‘I shall tell you with final frankness’), bids a despondent farewell to Hellas, ‘shame’, ‘emptiness’, and ‘beggary’ having taken the place of its beauty; the Greeks (rather than Trojans) snatching Helen, which Torlone sees as a “blunder”, should instead be read in the context of Helen’s (forcible) return to Sparta ending the Trojan War, and thus also the Heroic Age; the end of which (sc. pre-Revolutionary Russia) Mandel’shtam laments.²³⁰ A poem from the same cycle, ‘Za gremuchiuu doblest’ griadushchikh vekov’ (‘For the thundering valour of ages to come’, 1931), contemplates the Terror and his impending arrest in similar terms of loss of culture and heroism; it resonates with his earlier poem ‘Vek’ (‘The Age’, 1922), which mourns a lost Hesiodic Golden Age. Classical motifs reappear with abundance in Mandel’shtam’s third *Voronezhskaia tetrad’* (*Voronezh Notebook*), written in exile in 1937, the year before his final arrest and death in a GULag near Vladivostok, perhaps because he knew death was inevitable (as earlier poems in the collection suggest).²³¹ ‘Rim’ (‘Rome’) shows the reader a very different view of Mandel’shtam’s universal city – oppressive and ruled by a dictator, construable as both Mussolini and Stalin, a situation to which ‘Nereidy moi, nereidy’ (‘Nereids, my nereids’) also alludes.²³² Three poems, ‘Kuvshin’ (‘Pitcher’), ‘Fleity grecheskoi teta i iota’ (‘The Greek flute’s theta and iota’), and ‘Goncharami velik ostrov sinii’ (‘Indigo isle, great with potters’), respond to Mandel’shtam’s surroundings: a Greek *krater* depicting a Dionysian scene, which Mandel’shtam saw in Voronezh’s museum; Marr’s classical linguistics, the approved school of thought in the early 1930s; and a German flutist friend of the Mandel’shtams, Shvab, who was arrested.²³³ Mandel’shtam takes the combined motifs of music and craftsmanship to express the work of the poet when sundered from his classical milieu and under threat of death.

²²⁹ Jennifer Baines, *Mandelstam: The Later Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. xiii, 1-2, 4.

²³⁰ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 128–29.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 121; M. S. Pavlov, in Lekmanov, *Mandel’shtam i antichnost’*, pp. 173–74.

²³² Kahn, in Miller and Newlands, p. 410; Pavlov, in Lekmanov, *Mandel’shtam i antichnost’*, pp. 182–83.

²³³ Terras, Pavlov, in Lekmanov, *Mandel’shtam i antichnost’*, pp. 25–26, 178.

Post-Revolution

As with Mandel'shtam and Tsvetaeva, many Silver Age poets continued writing well into the Soviet era; but more than this, many among the intelligentsia were in favour of revolution, which they idealised as a new French Revolution or Christian uprising against the Roman Empire (although there was far more support for the February than the October Revolution).²³⁴ Artists like Ivanov collaborated with the Bolsheviks' new cultural programme, and "much early Soviet art was a direct extension of pre-revolutionary ideas", as Bolshevik-sponsored collective art stemmed from the "Symbolist ideal of *usenarodnoe* [universal] art, based on a revival of Greek myth and tragedy".²³⁵ In the aftermath of the Revolution, Classics' popularity continued, as artists looked to it to imagine the USSR's future.²³⁶ But by the mid-1920s the state regained absolute control over the direction the country was taking, as well as over history, which became a tool for social engineering. In literature this stalled the frenzy of innovation, leading to the resurgence of more traditional, nineteenth-century genres, especially prose.²³⁷ The necessary simplification of art to cater to a proletarian audience ended the Silver Age experimentation with classical metres, such as the distich.²³⁸ As early as 1921 Zelinskii's student Lev Pumpianskii was declaring the 'Slavonic Renaissance' of antiquity dead, extant from Peter's reforms until the Revolution, rather than forthcoming. And over the period of 1917-53 a large portion of Russia's receivers of antiquity were lost: in the mass death and emigration attending war and Purges, disproportionately affecting the intelligentsia, bearers of Russia's classical heritage.

Emigration

As much of the Silver Age's momentum was dispersed by the Revolution, so were its artists. Antiquity diminished in significance amongst émigré poets, who tended to reference pre-revolutionary Russia as their 'classical' (i.e., 'best') ideal, rather than classical antiquity. However, émigrés were at least free to practise classical reception. Vladislav Khodasevich's poem 'Daktili' ('Dactyls', 1927-28), written in

²³⁴ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 56; Gavrilov, in Karsai and others, p. 24; Kalb, p. 26.

²³⁵ Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival*, p. 16. "In 1919 Ivanov was asked to collaborate with the theatrical section of Narkompros". Later, Ivanov's ideas "were assimilated into the aesthetics of Soviet cinema in the 1930s through the agency of Adrian Piotrovskii, the illegitimate son of Zelinskii."

²³⁶ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 75.

²³⁷ Rosalind J. Marsh, *Literature, History and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia, 1991-2006* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2007), p. 1; Andrew Baruch Wachtel, p. 176.

²³⁸ Michael Wachtel, p. 201.

distichs, uses antiquity to mark pre-revolutionary Russia as impossibly distant.²³⁹ Boris Poplavskii poeticises his experience of exile through the figure of Orpheus.²⁴⁰ Vladimir Nabokov also makes use of Orpheus, structuring ‘Vozvrashchenie Chorba’ (‘The return of Chorb’, 1925) around the Orphic *katabasis*.²⁴¹ Nabokov finds a model in another classical exile – Ovid – stating that “through his oeuvre [...] ‘sometimes a gentle wind ex / Ponto blows’”.²⁴²

Education

The study of Classics was diminished and distorted under Communism. Among the Bolsheviks’ first decrees were the abolition of gymnasia, turning all schools into ‘edinye trudovye shkoly’ (‘united working schools’) in 1918, and the abolition of illiteracy in 1919.²⁴³ Communist policy was to isolate and eradicate the intelligentsia, their class enemies, whilst cultivating academics fast from among the workers; quotas limited intellectuals’ entrance into universities.²⁴⁴

The Soviet regime repressed Classics in universities, along with other humanities, which, as well as having no evident practical application, were viewed as a potential source of dissidence; by 1930 Leningrad University had three faculties: Physics & Maths, Geography, and Biology. Soon after the Revolution Classics was moved from the Historical-Philological to the Social Sciences Faculty and renamed the ‘Ancient World’, yet the department functioned more or less normally until 1926, when it was merged into a Department of Ancient History, from the curriculum of which Greek and Latin were removed in 1929 (Latin teaching continued only in the Department of Romance Studies).²⁴⁵

Academic study of Classics was subordinated to Marxist ideology, losing all independence, pluralism, and objectivity. Soviet Classics focused upon socio-economic history, especially slavery and slave rebellions, seen as the precursor of Marxist class war.²⁴⁶ Soviet ideology accepted certain classical authors and rejected

²³⁹ Ibid., pp. 201–4.

²⁴⁰ Sonia Yetter, ‘The Orphic Theme in the Poetry of Boris Julianovic Poplavskij’ (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1992) <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/304001422/>> [accessed 23 September 2016].

²⁴¹ Polina Barskova, Interview by Georgina Barker, Amherst, Massachusetts, 2016.

²⁴² Barta, p. 68.

²⁴³ Gavrilov, in Karsai and others, p. 19 n. 2.

²⁴⁴ Romanovskii, pp. 94, 110.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 5, 10; Olga Budragina, in Karsai and others, pp. 5, 3.

²⁴⁶ Frolov, pp. 401–2, 405.

others. Epicurus and Democritus were the subject of Marx's doctoral dissertation, so they were embraced in the USSR. Lucretius was another author favoured by the founders of Marxism and therefore also the USSR. Epicureanism took precedence over Platonism and Aristotelianism.²⁴⁷ Studying "'decadent' and 'bourgeois' individualist poets such as the Roman elegists was often discouraged, while Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Oppian's *Halieutica*, and other texts focused on agriculture and food provision were examined in detail".²⁴⁸ Yet early Soviet Classics succeeded in certain areas. The Black Sea Coast became its leading specialty, with many multi-disciplinary studies undertaken.²⁴⁹

Translation & Literature

Many ancient texts were translated in this period, as translation was a stimulating yet relatively innocuous area for writers to work in, when writing from one's own persona was perilous; moreover, the reading public was growing fast. ABDEM, a group devoted to reading and collectively translating ancient novels, was formed in the late 1920s by Andrei Egunov, a translator of Plato, whilst Vikentii Veresaev translated Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymns*, and Adrian Piotrovskii and Sergei Shervinskii (separately) produced translations of Catullus, surpassing those of Fet.²⁵⁰

Past cultural figures fared differently depending on whether they could be fitted into the Communist mould. Pushkin was canonised – made into a cult figure; whilst Tsvetaev and his museum were excised from the *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia (Great Soviet Encyclopedia)*.²⁵¹

Bolshevism's destruction of culture figures repeatedly in the work of poet and prosaist Konstantin Vaginov as the decline of Rome and pagan culture in the mid-Imperial period. Vaginov attended Gumilev's Acmeist 'Tsekh poetov' ('Guild of poets'), Bakhtin's circle, the absurdist group OBERIU, and ABDEM. His work is filled with classical references, especially to Orpheus and Apollo, and his poetry

²⁴⁷ Gavrilov, in Bers and Nagy, p. 65; Gavrilov, in Karsai and others, pp. 26–27.

²⁴⁸ Edith Hall, in Hardwick and Stray, pp. 396–97.

²⁴⁹ Frolov, p. 423.

²⁵⁰ Gavrilov, in Bers and Nagy, pp. 71, 65–66. Until 1938, his death in the Stalinist Purges, Piotrovskii made it his goal to translate and adapt classical authors for a broad, modern audience. Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 214 n. 129.

²⁵¹ Lachmann, p. 185; Alexandra Smith, 'Marina Tsvetaeva's Memoir on Maksimilian Voloshin', p. c. 210.

frequently abandons rhyme.²⁵² In his poem ‘Tysiacha deviat’sot dvadtsat’ piatyi god’ (‘Nineteen twenty five’, 1925) Philostratus and Apollo fruitlessly oppose the philistinism of Soviet workers. Vaginov’s novel *Kozlinaia pesn’* (*Goat song*, 1928) encodes Vaginov as an Orphic poet, Ivanov as a classical scholar alienated from Soviet contemporaneity; the title, a literal translation of the Ancient Greek ‘*tragoedia*’, conveys the tragedy of these out-of-place intellectuals.²⁵³ Conversely, proletarian (but well-educated) lesbian poet Anna Barkova embraced the Revolution at first; perhaps with hopes of changed societal norms she wrote several poems treating Sappho as her “*alter ego*”, including ‘Safo’ (‘Sappho’, 1922). However, she later became disillusioned with the Soviet State, and was imprisoned in the GULags for decades; one GULag poem, ‘Predsmertnye slova’ (‘Dying words’, 1938) suggests Stalin’s tyranny via Nero and Augustus.²⁵⁴

Stalinism

Socialist Realism

After several years of increasing state control following the relative freedom of NEP, a decree of April 1932 abolished all independent literary organisations and formed the Union of Soviet Writers. A month later the term ‘Socialist Realism’ was first used in a speech by Ivan Gronskii, President of the Writers’ Union Organisational Committee, to designate the official style of Soviet literature, which was still in place – if not strictly enforced – when the USSR fell in 1991.²⁵⁵ Socialist Realism is “postapocalyptic”, for, due to the purported perfection of established Communism, it “regards historical time as ended and therefore occupies no particular place in it”.²⁵⁶ Of course this was not really the case: the conservative form and language of Socialist Realism were taken from the nineteenth-century realist novel.²⁵⁷ The

²⁵² Aleksei Purin, “‘Vospominaniia o Everterpe’”: Opyty Konstantina Vaginova’, *Vavilon*, 1991 <<http://www.vavilon.ru/texts/purin3-17.html>> [accessed 23 September 2016].

²⁵³ Graham Roberts, *The Last Soviet Avant-Garde: OBERIU - Fact, Fiction, Metafiction* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 61–66.

²⁵⁴ Stephanie Sandler, in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature*, ed. by Evgeny Dobrenko and Marina Balina (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 117, 125; Catriona Kelly, in *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature*, ed. by Neil Cornwell (Routledge, 2002), pp. 147–48; Katherine Hodgson, in *Enemies of the People: The Destruction of Soviet Literary, Theater, and Film Arts in the 1930s*, ed. by Katherine Bliss Eaton (Northwestern University Press, 2002), p. 26.

²⁵⁵ Katerina Clark, in Cornwell, p. 174.

²⁵⁶ Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 48–49.

²⁵⁷ Lachmann, p. 181.

intense focus of Socialist Realism on the present/future and its stylistic and ideological weighting in favour of prose made for a poor environment for classical reception in poetry.

Socialist Realism stipulated for poetry “Simplicity, normality, and freedom from complex historical-cultural associations”, whilst “straying from these qualities is condemned as formalism”.²⁵⁸ This greatly diminished both topical and metrical variety within Soviet poetry, which was now produced for the masses, not the elite. Modernist allusivity and metrical play were no more; syllabo-tonic metres – strict, end-stopped, and rhymed – dominated, and poets avoided imitating classical metres except in translations.²⁵⁹ An illustrative exception is Evgenia Ginzburg’s impromptu paean in distichs to some cucumbers that manifested themselves in her prison cell, in which she hesitates over which classical metre is best suited to praise this miracle and alludes to Vesuvius – Ginzburg being, by that stage, already beyond the pale of Socialist Realism’s dictates.²⁶⁰

Stalinist Classicism & Aesopian Speech

However, Stalinist Russia in the 1930s still wanted to capitalise upon Classics’ authority:

The *Soviet Encyclopedia of Literature* published in 1931 has an entry titled ‘Classical Literature’, which observes that, from the point of view of Marxist literary studies, the interpretation of the classical concept should be the task of the proletariat who must take possession of the achievements of the past. Learning something from the classical texts [...] is especially important for the ascending classes who must give new life to aristocratic and bourgeois literature.²⁶¹

In 1932-33 Leningrad University’s Classics Department was partially reconstructed – its philological half, with ancient history elsewhere.²⁶² In 1937 the journal *Vestnik drevnei istorii* (*Messenger of Ancient History*) was founded, after most other classical journals had been closed down.²⁶³ Translations of classical texts were commissioned, and neoclassical architecture came into vogue, due to the “regime’s

²⁵⁸ M. L. Gasparov, quoted in Emily Lygo, *Leningrad Poetry 1953-1975: The Thaw Generation* (Peter Lang, 2010), p. 135.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 135–36.

²⁶⁰ Evgeniia Ginzburg, *Krutoi marshrut* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1990), p. 137; Michael Wachtel, p. 294 n. 77.

²⁶¹ Lachmann, p. 181.

²⁶² Gavrilov, in Karsai and others, p. 25.

²⁶³ Gavrilov, in Bers and Nagy, p. 62.

wish to be identified with images of imperial greatness”.²⁶⁴ However, the “eclectic incorporation of more or less random classical ‘elements’” that characterises high Stalinist art is not seen as a true engagement with classical antiquity, as it “merely emphasize[s] that the present has surpassed the past, and therefore can mine it for forms regardless of those forms’ implied content”.²⁶⁵

The knife of identification with Roman imperial power cut both ways. Just as Catherine the Great was sensitive to the danger of Tacitus’ portrayal of Tiberius’ tyranny (see p. 19), so was the Soviet state: editions of the *Bol’shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia* from Stalin’s era show circumspect omission of statements of Tacitus’ hatred of tyranny (present in Tsarist encyclopedias). Classical reception in prose of the era makes cautious use of such identifications for Aesopian speech. In *Master i Margarita (Master and Margarita)* Mikhail Bulgakov draws a parallel between Tiberius and Stalin by juxtaposing Rome and Moscow. And Vasilii Grossman – far more implicitly, as he was writing for publication – draws the same parallel in his pre-war play *Esli verit’ pifagoreitsam (If you believe the Pythagoreans, 1941)* and wartime novella *Narod bessmerten (The people are immortal, 1942)*.²⁶⁶

Following World War II, three interlinked campaigns, Zhdanovshchina, ‘anti-formalism’, and ‘anti-cosmopolitanism’, targeted the West, Jews, and intellectuals, bringing another wave of death and imprisonment to people still using Classics in the Soviet Union. Leningrad University’s Department of Classical Philology came under threat of closure, since the study of dead languages was deemed unnecessary for Soviet society. Yet amidst this Stalin had the whim of reintroducing Latin to some secondary schools, a venture that failed due to the shortage of Latinists. Stalin’s death in 1953 ended these repressions.²⁶⁷

Tarkovskii

There was one major poet writing – if not publishing – classically receptive poetry through the Stalinist era: Arsenii Tarkovskii. (His first collection was only published in 1962, having been withdrawn from print in 1946.) Tarkovskii’s classical aesthetic changed from segregating classical allusions in poems on classical topics – especially

²⁶⁴ Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival*, p. 17.

²⁶⁵ Andrew Wachtel, in *Rereading Russian Poetry*, ed. by Stephanie Sandler (New Haven, Conn; London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 272.

²⁶⁶ Frank Ellis, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, pp. 131, 139 nn. 20, 128-31.

²⁶⁷ Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival*, p. 18; Gavrilov, in Karsai and others, pp. 27–29; Romanovskii, pp. 160–61.

around the Trojan War and Greek philosophers – to blending them with themes and diction of everyday life, an epiphany he attributes to his friend the poet Georgii Shengeli. This trait brings his classical allusions to bear upon Soviet reality, especially cuttingly in his triptych ‘Novosti antichnoi literatury’ (undated), which imitates and parodies classical epigrams and the philistine attitudes of Soviet publishers towards them. In this and other poetry he follows the Mandel’shtamian tradition.²⁶⁸ His most famous classically receptive poem is ‘Evrídika’ (‘Eurydice’, 1961), which he reads in his son Andrei’s film *Zerkalo* (*Mirror*, 1974).²⁶⁹ Tarkovskii was Kutik’s mentor, and influenced his development (see pp. 147, 159, 198).

Thaw

The Khrushchev Thaw, a period of cessation of repressions begun by Stalin’s death in 1953 and accelerated by Khrushchev’s Secret Speech denouncing Stalin in 1956, brought about “a cultural and spiritual revolution” in Russia.²⁷⁰ People began to return from the GULags, and figures such as Aristid Dovatur breathed fresh life into Classics.²⁷¹ The Iron Curtain became more porous, and academics less bound by Marxist ideology.²⁷² At a school level the Party undertook to correct the deficiencies in Latin teaching (lack of textbooks, ancient literature not taught).²⁷³ Most significantly, the Thaw started “a flowering of poetry in Russia that can be compared in its scale and significance to the Silver Age”, lasting into the 1970s.²⁷⁴ Lyric poetry had been suspect as “overly subjective and individualistic”, and, except for a brief reprieve during World War II, it was virtually unpublishable under Stalin.²⁷⁵ Following Stalin’s death, the Writers’ Union was instructed to revitalise Soviet poetry, which the Party saw was lagging behind other genres; in November 1953 the Leningrad Writers’ Union held a discussion about lyric poetry, at which Ol’ga

²⁶⁸ Polina Tsypleva, ‘Ironicheskii diskurs publikatsii Arseniia Tarkovskogo “Novosti antichnoi literatury”’, *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 2015, 37–42.

²⁶⁹ Alexandra Smith, ‘Andrei Tarkovsky as Reader of Arsenii Tarkovsky’s Poetry in the Film *Mirror*’, *Russian Studies in Literature*, 40.3 (2004), 46–63 (p. 59).

²⁷⁰ Lygo, p. 32; Marsh, *Literature, History and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia*, p. 1.

²⁷¹ Olga Budragina, in Karsai and others, p. 17.

²⁷² Frolov, pp. 405–6.

²⁷³ L. V. Golodnikov, ‘Sistema posobii po latinskomu iazyku dlia pedagogicheskikh institutov i fakul’tetov inostrannykh iazykov. Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata pedagogicheskikh nauk’ (Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii institut imeni A. I. Gertsena, 1957), pp. 3, 6.

²⁷⁴ Lygo, p. 1.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 2.

Berggol'ts argued against poetry written in standardised intonation on political themes, drawn solely from life experiences, and, crucially, without reference to earlier poets.²⁷⁶

Lyric became the major mode of the Thaw. The interruption in the poetic tradition impelled 1950s poets to look back to the Silver Age for predecessors: “Mayakovsky for Yevtushenko; Pasternak for Voznesensky; Akhmatova for Akhmadulina; and Mandelstam and Tsvetaeva for Brodsky”.²⁷⁷ Dmitrii Bobyshev (one of the four ‘Akhmatova’s orphans’, with Iosif Brodskii, Evgenii Rein, and Anatolii Naiman) looked back even further, to Derzhavin.²⁷⁸ Iunna Morits’ poem ‘Mezhdu Stsilloi i Kharibdoi’ (‘Between Scylla and Charibdis’, 1975) personifies in these classical monsters the particular difficulties facing female poets in this era of seeking predecessors – the looming presences of Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva.²⁷⁹ Viktor Sosnora, an official yet contentious poet, was influenced by the Futurists, and his poems from the 1970s fuse “Slavic and Classical folklore and mythology” in poems such as ‘Ispoved’ Dedala’ (Daedalus’ confession, 1970) and ‘Ritoricheskaia poema’ (‘Rhetorical poem’, 1972), which turns *babushki* into Hekatonchires.²⁸⁰

Brodskii

Iosif Brodskii is the Thaw poet who displays most classical reception in his poetry. His influence on both contemporaries and successors was inescapable. Viktor Krivulin said that “anyone starting out to write has had in a way to seek out some kind of counter-version” to Brodskii. Ol’ga Sedakova credits Brodskii with ending the epoch of Soviet poetry, reconnecting with Acmeism and the European tradition; grouping contemporary poets into those with “centripetal or centrifugal” approaches towards Brodskii, she states: “The reaction of the younger Leningrad poets is markedly centrifugal [...] he acts as a negative quantity upon such poets as Krivulin, Elena Shvarts and Stratanovsky. But in Moscow and the provinces I know of many poets who [...] are his imitators”.²⁸¹ Shvarts certainly reacts against him (see p. 83),

²⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 3, 16.

²⁷⁷ Andrew Wachtel, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, p. 270.

²⁷⁸ Lygo, pp. 55–56, 9.

²⁷⁹ *Contemporary Russian Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology*, ed. by Gerald Stanton Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 138–42.

²⁸⁰ Lygo, pp. 71, 231, 206–12.

²⁸¹ Valentina Polukhina, *Brodsky Through the Eyes of His Contemporaries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 179, 247, 250.

Kutik briefly memorialises him (see p. 182), but Barskova is especially influenced by Brodskii, alluding to him, but also polemicising with him (see pp. 222, 269, 273).

Brodskii identified himself as “заражен нормальным классицизмом” (“infected with normal classicism”); writing with a Mandel’shtamian ‘yearning for world culture’, he saw his task as “defending culture” against Soviet repression.²⁸² He came to poetry in his late teens, and participated actively in Leningrad’s Thaw-era poetry scene from 1959, but did not become affiliated with any official groups.²⁸³ Having introduced classical motifs into his early poems, Brodskii wrote his first poem on a classical theme in 1962: ‘Sonet’ (‘Sonnet’), a scene from the *Iliad* on a Greek vase reminiscent of Pushkin’s ‘Tsarskosel’skaia statuia’ (‘Tsarskoe Selo statue’).²⁸⁴ Whilst his early classical references are drawn mostly from the Russian tradition, especially Pushkin, Baratynskii, Mandel’shtam, and Tsvetaeva, from the mid-sixties they show knowledge of the texts of Horace, Ovid, and also authors not in Soviet school anthologies: Propertius, Simonides, Martial, Hesiod.²⁸⁵

By the early 1960s the political climate was starting to freeze again. An early sign of this change was Brodskii’s treatment: denounced in 1963, he was arrested and tried for parasitism in 1964, and sentenced to five years’ hard labour in Norinskaia near Arkhangel’sk, where he remained from March 1964 to November 1965.²⁸⁶ Having belittled Ovid’s exile in ‘Polevaia ekloga’ (‘Field eclogue’, 1963), after his own exile Brodskii follows Mandel’shtam and Pushkin in writing his exilic experience through Ovid, with four poems written 1964-65: ‘Szhimaiushchii paiku izgnaniia’ (‘Clutching the ration of exile’), ‘Zasnesh’ s prikushennoi guboi’ (‘You’ll fall asleep biting your lip’), ‘Ex Ponto’, and ‘Otryvok’ (‘Fragment’).²⁸⁷

Following Brodskii’s return from exile, a group of interrelated themes characterise his classical reception: empire (especially Roman); unsuccessful love affairs (echoing his separation from artist Marina Basmanova after the birth of their son Andrei); the price of heroism; and (continuing) exile. While he initially imitates Mandel’shtam’s Hellenism, especially in poems identifying the Crimea with its classical past, by the

²⁸² Dan Ungurianu, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, pp. 161–62.

²⁸³ Lygo, p. 55.

²⁸⁴ Ungurianu, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, p. 162; Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 153.

²⁸⁵ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 155–56.

²⁸⁶ Lygo, pp. 77–80; Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 176.

²⁸⁷ Kahn, in Miller and Newlands, pp. 410–13; Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 175–78.

early seventies Roman themes supplant Greek ones in Brodskii's poetry, as they did in Mandel'shtam's.²⁸⁸ Brodskii's Roman poems are the only ones to carry direct political meaning: his Roman Empire stands for the Soviet Union, as the reference to Voznesenskii as a citharoede in 'Post aetatem nostram' (1970) shows.²⁸⁹ Brodskii twists the Theseus myth to fit his view of his failed relationship in 'K Likomedu na Skiros' ('To Lycomedes on Scyros', 1967), making Ariadne the unfaithful party.²⁹⁰ His 1968 poem 'Anno Domini' refers to Propertius (and Akhmatova), casting Basmanova as Cynthia – unfaithful and unwilling to see him. Similarly, 'Didona i Enei' ('Dido and Aeneas', 1969) diminishes Virgil's heroine to convey Brodskii's masculine perspective upon lovers' necessary separation.²⁹¹ These poems all bear exilic themes, the latter pair specifically Roman, as do 'Neokonchenoe' ('Unfinished', 1970), 'Vtoroe Rozhdestvo na beregu nezamerzaiushchego Ponta' ('Second Christmas on the shore of never-freezing Pontus', 1971) and 'Pis'ma rimskomu drugu' ('Letters to a Roman friend', 1972); the latter, subtitled 'Iz Martsiala' ('From Martial') – for its tone rather than specific references, written on the eve of Brodskii's exile to the West, muses upon the consequences – mostly negative – of living at the heart of an empire.²⁹²

Exile would occupy Brodskii's poetry for only a short spell after his expulsion from the USSR; choosing to see his forcible relocation to the USA in 1972 "only as a change of empires", Brodskii "studiously avoided the rhetoric of victimization".²⁹³ Brodskii used Theseus again as a vehicle for his biography '1972 god' ('The year 1972'), his emergence from Minos' cave representing his exile to America.²⁹⁴ In his most famous exile poem, 'Odisei Telemaku' ('Odysseus to Telemachus'), also written in the year of his exile, Brodskii takes on the persona of Odysseus, lost at sea, writing to his son, the tone decidedly unheroic. He refers to this Odysseus again in 'Laguna' ('Lagoon', 1973). Two decades later, in 'Itaka' ('Ithaca', 1993), Odysseus finally reaches a home that is unrecognisable as such.²⁹⁵ A similar refusal of nostalgia is found in Brodskii's treatments of Ovid, who disappears as an exile poet,

²⁸⁸ Ungurianu, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, p. 163; Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 174.

²⁸⁹ Ungurianu, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, pp. 164–65.

²⁹⁰ Ungurianu, *ibid.*, p. 163.

²⁹¹ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 180–81, 168–69.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 178–79.

²⁹³ Ungurianu, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, p. 174; Kahn, in Miller and Newlands, p. 414.

²⁹⁴ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 174.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 163–65.

aside from his 1984 verse-translation of Mandel'shtam's 'Tristia' into English, an act of cultural dialogue rather than complaint.²⁹⁶ By 1976 he merely hints at poets' unwanted status in 'Razvivaia Platona' ('Developing Plato').²⁹⁷

Three interconnected works evoke Virgil: 'Ekloga 4-ia (zimniaia)' ('Fourth (winter) eclogue', 1977), 'Ekloga 5-ia (letniaia)' ('Fifth (summer) eclogue', 1981), and 'Rimskie elegii' ('Roman elegies', 1981).²⁹⁸ The eclogues' titles refer to Virgil's fourth and fifth eclogues, and the Fourth takes its epigraph from Virgil's fourth eclogue; however, neither shows much direct influence from Virgil, except the Fifth's pastoral setting, their common "interaction of human concerns with the natural landscape", and their interest in time and entropy.²⁹⁹ 'Rimskie elegii' are also concerned with time, which appears as a barbarian at one point; they are named for Goethe, evoke Mandel'shtam, outdo Horace's 'Exegi monumentum' by claiming a monument of ink, and feature multiple Roman writers, which all serves to prove his point that one can only escape time by "restructuring it with language".³⁰⁰ Roman themes dominate Brodskii's late work: poems such as 'Biust Tiberia' ('Bust of Tiberius', 1981), 'Vertumn' ('Vertumnus', 1990); his only play *Mramor* (*Marbles*, 1984), set in a future Roman Empire; and his essay 'Letter to Horace' (1995), which resonates with 'Rimskie elegii'.³⁰¹ Brodskii's 'Dedal v Sitsilii' ('Daedalus in Sicily', 1993) references Virgil's ephrasis of Daedalus' life story in the *Aeneid*; Daedalus, as an artist in exile who has lost his son, is another "mythological mask" whom Brodskii, aware of his failing health, uses "to express his final farewell" (he would die of heart failure in 1996).³⁰²

Kushner

Aleksandr Kushner is the other Thaw poet who made prominent use of classical reception. Despite its intellectual nature, Kushner's work "satisfied Soviet restrictions on published poetry by being strict in form and conservative in content",

²⁹⁶ Kahn, in Miller and Newlands, p. 414.

²⁹⁷ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 185.

²⁹⁸ Brodskii published the eclogues together as a pair; Leonid Batkin found interrelationships between the 'Roman Elegies' and the 'Fifth Eclogue'. Barry Scherr, 'Two Versions of Pastoral: Brodsky's Eclogues', *Russian Literature*, 37.2 (1995), 365–375 (p. 366); Jennifer J. Day, 'The Optics of Memory in Brodsky's "Fifth Eclogue"', *Russian Literature*, 62.1 (2007), 23–48 (p. 24).

²⁹⁹ Scherr, pp. 365–66, 371.

³⁰⁰ Frajlich, p. 23; Ungurianu, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, pp. 185, 175.

³⁰¹ Kahn, in Miller and Newlands, p. 414; Ungurianu, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, p. 172.

³⁰² Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 191–96.

so, unlike Brodskii, his work was published, although he was frequently attacked for his literariness.³⁰³ Kushner aimed to reconnect with the Silver Age in his poetry, particularly its classical heritage. Akhmatova encouraged Kushner in his poetry; after her death his poem ‘Pamiati Anny Akhmatovoi’ (‘In memory of Anna Akhmatova’, 1960s) portrayed her in the classical underworld. He connects Annenskii’s poems with Apollo in ‘Razmashisty sovkhov Temriukского raiona’ (‘The sprawling state farm of the Temriukskii district’, 1988), and Tsvetaeva with Orpheus in ‘O da, ona mogla b vnushit’ Orfeyu” (‘Oh yes, she could have inspired Orpheus’, 1990). But Mandel’shtam is the poet Kushner most associates with classical antiquity, imagining young Mandel’shtam’s haphazard yet inspired classical studies in ‘Ne slishkom slozhen byl professorskii vopros’ (‘The professor’s question was not too difficult’, 1988), whilst he polemicises with Mandel’shtam’s ‘Vek’ in ‘Vremena ne vybiraiut’ (‘People do not choose their times’, 1978), and again refers to ‘Vek’ and its pair ‘Za gremuchiuu doblest’ griadushchikh vekov’ in ‘Poslednyi, kto byl liut i dik — Domitsian’ (‘The last man who was wild and savage was Domitian’, 1987).³⁰⁴ ‘Vizhu, vizhu, spozaranku’ (‘I see, I see, bright and early’, 1967) merges the rivers of Petersburg with rivers of the underworld, evoking the city’s historical and literary associations with death (Mandel’shtam’s ‘Petropol’ among them).³⁰⁵

Kushner stated that he used classical references to talk about contemporary circumstances.³⁰⁶ His 1975 collection (which could not be published at the time) ‘Apollon v snegu’ (‘Apollo in the snow’) refers in its title to the adverse conditions – political and cultural as well as climatic – to writing classically inspired poetry in Russia.³⁰⁷ His poems of the mid-1980s and *glasnost*’ era draw increasingly overt parallels between the Roman Empire and the Soviet Union (Nero and Domitian and Stalin, Julius Caesar and Lenin). Poems from 1991 connect the fall of the USSR with that of Rome: ‘Mne i Rimskoi imperii zhal’ (‘I pity the Roman Empire too’).³⁰⁸ Classical poets most prominent in Kushner’s work are Catullus and Ausonius, the

³⁰³ Ibid., pp. 171, 69, 76.

³⁰⁴ David N. Wells, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, pp. 154–57.

³⁰⁵ Lygo, pp. 164–65.

³⁰⁶ Wells, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, p. 143.

³⁰⁷ Wells, *ibid.*, p. 146.

³⁰⁸ Wells, *ibid.*, pp. 150–52.

former especially valued for his nugatory verse, which Kushner frequently quotes, and the latter for his domestic stability in a time (late Roman Empire) of decay.³⁰⁹

Other poets also made the connection between Rome's decline and Russia's. These include: Andrei Voznesenskii, who quotes 'Exegi monumentum' and proclaims the end of civilisation in 'Avos' ('Mayhap', 1970);³¹⁰ bard Bulat Okudzhava in his song 'Rimskaia imperiia vremeni upadka' ('Roman Empire in decline', c. 1982); and Brodskii, who "reads' the apparently mighty USSR against the background of ancient empires at the moment of their decadence".³¹¹

Stagnation

In 1964 Khrushchev was replaced by Brezhnev as leader of the Soviet Union. As Khrushchev was associated with the Thaw, so Brezhnev was with the Stagnation. Whilst conservativisation began under Khrushchev, as Brodskii's arrest and Khrushchev's 1964 attack upon the Academy of Sciences³¹² attest, it intensified after his removal, with a renewed attack on 'formalism' in poetry in 1964-65, the Siniavskii and Daniel' trial for 'tamizdat' ('publishing abroad') in 1965, tightened control over the Writers' Union and official literary groups in 1966-68, the invasion of Prague in 1968, and the expulsions of Brodskii in 1972 and Solzhenitsyn in 1974.³¹³

By the mid-1960s the narrowing of criteria for official publication from a decade earlier created a growing gap between official and unofficial poetry, with a younger generation unable to gain admittance to the Writers' Union and publication without completely compromising their artistic integrity.³¹⁴ Instead, they self-published: 'samizdat'. People hand-wrote or typed (on rare typewriters) manuscripts of their or others' work, with varying degrees of polish, for circulation around a select group. Of samizdat in the Stagnation, Brodskii said: "We understood that we were living in a pre-Gutenberg age. What happened in Russia in the 1960s was very similar to what

³⁰⁹ Wells, *ibid.*, pp. 152–54.

³¹⁰ Andrew Baruch Wachtel and Ilya Vinitsky, *Russian Literature, Cultural History of Literature* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), p. 258.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

³¹² Romanovskii, p. 135.

³¹³ Lygo, pp. 83–91.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 86–87, 3–4. Translation and children's literature were exceptions, oases where marginal writers could find publication. pp. 122–3.

had occurred in Byzantium or in Alexandria, say, a thousand and a half years ago”.³¹⁵ When samizdat began in the Thaw era, it was more a by-product of the flowering of creativity encouraged by liberalisation, and perceived by poets as a step towards official publication; Stagnation-era samizdat was on a much larger scale, completely separate from official literature, and the only way unofficial writers could disseminate their work.³¹⁶ At the start of the Stagnation “the phrase ‘unpublishable work’ (*veshch’ nepechatnaya*) began to be used to denote something of worth”.³¹⁷

Samizdat circulated around the sub-culture made up of “unofficial writers, artists, human rights activists, feminists, and Christian groups”, which coalesced in the 1970s and became known as the ‘underground’. Also part of the underground was the dissident movement, which began in the 1960s, and was associated – often erroneously – with poets, from stadium-poets such as Voznesenskii (who were ‘permitted dissidents’), to Brodskii (who was not), and beyond. A ‘religious renaissance’ took place in the 1970s underground, with Russians exploring spiritualism of all kinds, from yoga to Orthodoxy, which had continued to be strictly suppressed under Khrushchev. The underground mentality was seen in society more widely: the intelligentsia, disillusioned with Communism after the end of the Thaw, typically lived double lives, paying lip service to Communist ideals at work and mocking them at home; many in the underground went further, taking menial jobs to avoid charges of parasitism and official scrutiny, and of necessity adopting bohemian lifestyles.³¹⁸ The desire to be ‘cultured’ became associated with dissidence, as the authorities approved only parts of cultural tradition, along ideological criteria.³¹⁹ There was even a samizdat classical journal, *Metrodorus* (begun in 1979 and closed down by the KGB in 1982), which combined serious classical scholarship with academic parodies.³²⁰

Classics acted as another underground, as it was less strictly controlled than subjects with closer links to modernity; free-thinking intellectuals such as Mikhail Gasparov were attracted to its study as “a crevice in which to hide away from contemporary

³¹⁵ Wachtel and Vinitsky, p. 250.

³¹⁶ Lygo, pp. 53–54, 60–65.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 115–18, 2–3, 86; Romanovskii, p. 162.

³¹⁹ Dmitri Panchenko, in Karsai and others, p. 38.

³²⁰ Dmitri Panchenko, *ibid.*, pp. 41–42. Panchenko was among the young classicists who established the journal.

life”.³²¹ Ancient philosophers previously disapproved of within Communist ideology (Heraclitus, the Stoics, and Plato) attracted study, as did late Greek and Byzantine studies, due to the Religious Renaissance.³²² Key classical scholars like Gasparov and Sergei Averintsev, who were friends as undergraduates and graduated into the Thaw, formed a “living link” between Silver Age Classics and the post-Stalin era (Aleksei Losev, who graduated before the Revolution and worked with Ivanov, was Averintsev’s tutor). In the 1970s Averintsev gave Saturday lectures at Moscow University which were attended by hundreds of people, speaking on ‘unSoviet’ themes (without being openly dissident), promoting a “new Enlightenment”; he was a great influence upon Stagnation-era poet Ol’ga Sedakova.³²³

Stagnation circumstances naturally had effects on the literature being produced, unofficially and officially. While Thaw poets expected publication and public readings, so made their poetry accessible, Stagnation poets wrote primarily for each other, leading to “either poetry that could be understood immediately and easily in informal oral performance (conceptualist verse) or poetry that was extremely hermetic, reveled in difficulty, and was not meant to be performed at all (metarealist poetry)”. Stagnation poets, like the preceding generation, sought inspiration in the past, but in an era Thaw poets had largely neglected, the eighteenth century.³²⁴ Aesopian speech resurfaced in the 1960s-70s, with poets disguising political opinions in ancient allegory.³²⁵ Poets connected with the religious renaissance attempted to overcome the spiritual and cultural poverty of the Stagnation, especially the USSR’s isolation, in their poetry.³²⁶

Postmodernism developed on this fertile ground at the end of the Thaw, formed not only by influence from Western postmodernism, but also by specifically Russian conditions. One was the legacy of Socialist Realism, which, due its representation of an unreal reality, itself bore postmodern features, lacking only postmodernism’s vital irony.³²⁷ The “devalorization of reality generated by the Soviet overproduction of simulacra – that is, ideological images that replace reality and eventually lose any

³²¹ Panchenko, *ibid.*, p. 39; Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival*, p. 20.

³²² Gasparov, pp. 72–73.

³²³ Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival*, pp. 18–20; Panchenko, in Karsai and others, pp. 39–40.

³²⁴ Andrew Wachtel, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, pp. 270–1, 286.

³²⁵ Kahn, in Miller and Newlands, p. 410.

³²⁶ Josephine von Zitzewitz, ‘The “Religious Renaissance” of the 1970s and Its Repercussions on the Soviet Literary Process’, 2009, p. 161.

³²⁷ Mikhail Epstein, in Berry and Miller-Pogacar, pp. 25, 41–42.

meaning”³²⁸ – became especially evident in the Stagnation disillusionment, as the deficits everywhere in society gave the lie to the similarly omnipresent declarations of abundance: “Cheese or sausage in Russia, far from being material facts, turned into Platonic ideas”. Russian postmodernism therefore aimed to “unmask ‘the absence of a profound reality’” by producing “images that have ‘no relation to any reality whatsoever’”. Playing with and mocking signs, which in Russia had acquired an independent reality, was a more shocking step for Russian than for Western postmodernism.³²⁹

Russian postmodernism has been classified into two strands: ‘conceptualism’ and ‘metarealism’ (Mikhail Epstein’s definition, with most currency; Mark Lipovetsky proposes ‘neo-baroque’, and Andrew Wachtel – ‘archaists’). Both strands are “more typical of modernist and avant-garde rebellion than of postmodernist indifference”,³³⁰ as they aimed to revive the modernist culture of the interrupted Silver Age: “conceptualism gravitates toward the tradition of Daniil Kharms and OBERIU while neo-baroque authors strive to absorb Nabokov’s artistry”. So conceptualism is closer to the avant-garde, metarealism to high modernism. There is naturally much overlap between the two strands; two writers who have been identified as early postmodernists, Venedikt Erofeev and Brodskii, “fuse neo-baroque aestheticism with conceptualist deconstruction”.³³¹ Both Shvarts and Kutik, who began their careers in the Stagnation (at either end), are, despite their very different styles, designated ‘metarealists’.³³² This is because classical reception is far more frequent in metarealist poetry, as metarealism “aspires to re-mythologize cultural ruins and fragments”, as opposed to conceptualism’s “deconstruction and de-mythologization of authoritative cultural signifiers”.³³³

³²⁸ Mark Lipovetsky, ‘Russian Literary Postmodernism in the 1990s’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 79.1 (2001), 31–50 (p. 33).

³²⁹ Epstein, in Berry and Miller-Pogacar, pp. 34, 31–32, 43.

³³⁰ In one reading, their shared predilection for intertextuality, and the inherent “search for meaning” debars them from true postmodernism; in another, their return to the “residues” of modernism makes them *de facto* postmodern. Lachmann, pp. 337–38; Brian McHale, *The Obligation toward the Difficult Whole: Postmodernist Long Poems* (Tuscaloosa, Ala; London: University of Alabama Press, 2004), p. xi.

³³¹ Lipovetsky, pp. 40–41, 32, 42.

³³² Mikhail Epstein, in Mikhail Epstein, Aleksandr Genis, and Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover, *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), p. 118.

³³³ Lipovetsky, p. 41.

Underground Poets

Elena Shvarts was part of this Stagnation-era underground, where poetic and classical influences mingled in samizdat. Shvarts remained unofficial despite promotion by Kushner, who recommended some of Shvarts' poems for publication in 1968, Irina Maliarova, who allowed her to give a public reading amongst official writers in 1974 (following which Maliarova's freedom to choose unofficial writers to read was curtailed), and Bobyshev, who dedicated to her the poem 'I zrenie i slukh' ('Both vision and hearing', 1973), which hints at his hope that Shvarts will be a new Russian Homer.³³⁴

Viktor Krivulin, like Shvarts and Sedakova, often drew upon myth and religion.³³⁵ Whilst aiming "to 'write himself' into the classical tradition of Russian poetry", he simultaneously ironised it. Much of his classical reception was connected with Mandel'shtam. In 'Gobeleny' ('Gobelin Tapestries', 1972) he introduces cypress trees, classical images of death employed by Mandel'shtam. His famous archaising statement 'P'iu vino arkhaizmov' ('I drink the wine of archaisms, 1973) "borrows Mandel'shtam's image of culture burned to ashes by the Soviet age" from 'V Peterburge my soidemsia snova' ('In Petersburg we'll meet again'), and designates this cremated culture the Mandel'shtamian 'Logos'. Krivulin's connection of classical reception with destruction stems from his sense of post-Stalin Leningrad as "post-catastrophic" and therefore "spiritually archaic", a sense that he claims first impelled him to write poetry; Krivulin's cultural inheritance has to be taken from ashes.³³⁶

Sedakova is the most learned of her era of poets, speaking several European languages, Old Church Slavonic, Latin, and Greek (and translating extensively from them, including Horace).³³⁷ The major influences on her work are Orthodoxy, classical antiquity, and European and Russian modernism and its influences, particularly Dante and Rilke. She has stated: "The great poetry of Europe, of Russia, is unthinkable without its two fountainheads, Athens and Jerusalem – Antiquity and the Bible", complaining that Soviet poetry lacks these sources, wishing for their return, and deploring the "destructive moment" she sees in a contemporary

³³⁴ Lygo, pp. 103, 114, 251–53.

³³⁵ Stephanie Sandler, in Dobrenko and Balina, p. 120.

³³⁶ von Zitzewitz, pp. 182, 209; Stephanie Sandler, in *Poetics. Self. Place: Essays to Honor Anna Lisa Crone*, ed. by Nicole Boudreau and Catherine O'Neil (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 2007), pp. 685, 678.

³³⁷ von Zitzewitz, p. 122. A partial list appears in Polukhina, p. 237.

movement, conceptualism.³³⁸ Classical reception features from her early poetry onwards: ‘Elegiia roze’ (‘Elegy to the rose’, 1975) features Dido, her 1975 cycle ‘Metamorfozy’ (‘Metamorphoses’) includes Ovidian and Anacreontic poems, and both refer to Aphrodite.³³⁹ Her cycle ‘Stely i nadpisi’ (‘Stelae and inscriptions’, 1982) uses distichs to connect metrically with its topic, ancient gravestone inscriptions.³⁴⁰ Her poem dedicated to Brodskii, ‘Pamiati poeta’ (‘In memory of a poet’, 2001) depicts him as Orpheus-like, archetypal (as the title suggests), following Tsvetaeva’s view of poetry.³⁴¹ Sedakova, whilst admiring of Brodskii, finds his language “alien”, and rates above him as “a poet of the first class” in her era Elena Shvarts.³⁴² Sedakova and Shvarts dedicated multiple poems to each other.

Stagnation poets, Shvarts prominent among them, mix classical references with *byt* (there was plenty of ‘everyday drudgery’ in Stagnation USSR). Aleksei Tsvetkov, a contemporary of Shvarts, sees a trio of *babushki* as the Moirai in ‘Na lavochke u parkovoi opushki’ (‘On a bench at the park edge’, 1978).³⁴³ Nina Iskrenko rewrites the Theban cycle of epics (concerning Oedipus and his descendants) in her ‘Fivanskii tsikl’ (‘Theban cycle’, 1988), mingling them with Soviet contemporaneity. She finds the title of one of the epics, *Epigonoï*, which means ‘those born afterwards’, apt to describe the Stagnation generation, born into a decaying empire. She creates a new Soviet Antigone, daughter of Tat’iana Larina, from Pushkin’s *Evgenii Onegin*, and Zoia Kosmodem’ianskaia, who became a heroine of Soviet propaganda after her death fighting as a partisan against the Germans in WWII. Antigone’s craziness and drunkenness in reaction to Theban/Soviet dysfunctionality is typical of Iskrenko’s highlighting of contemporary women’s experiences, and her documenting of “the crisis of [...] the Soviet totalitarian metanarrative”, the language of which she “fragments and subverts” in her poetry.³⁴⁴

³³⁸ Alexandra Smith, in Rosalind J. Marsh, *New Women’s Writing in Russia, Central and Eastern Europe: Gender, Generation and Identities* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2012), p. 306; Polukhina, p. 251.

³³⁹ Olga Sedakova, Valentina Polukhina, and Robert Reid, ‘Collective Analysis of Olga Sedakova’s “The Wild Rose”’, *Essays in Poetics*, 1997, 237–57 (p. 246).

³⁴⁰ Michael Wachtel, p. 294 n. 77.

³⁴¹ Smith, in Marsh, *New Women’s Writing in Russia, Central and Eastern Europe*, pp. 311–12.

³⁴² Polukhina, pp. 248, 251.

³⁴³ Gerald Stanton Smith, p. 234. He also references Minos: p. 242.

³⁴⁴ Vitaly Chernetsky, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, pp. 117–19, 107.

Il'ia Kutik moved to Moscow from Lvov towards the end of the Stagnation (c. 1978). His postmodern neoclassical long ode, begun in 1980, was part of a wider trend of formal imitations of long-past eras, as in the decade leading up to the collapse of the USSR many poems imitating classical metres appear. Kutik's friend and poetic associate Aleksei Parshchikov wrote a lyrico-epic poema under similar influences to Kutik's ode: 'Ia zhil na pole Poltavskoi bitvy' ('I lived on the Poltava battlefield', 1989) is in mock-hexameters, evoking Homeric epic, and makes reference to Odysseus.³⁴⁵ Igor' Irten'ev, a conceptualist contemporary of Shvarts, uses the classical epic metre to criticise and belittle Soviet politics in 'Podrazhanie drevnim (geksametry)' ('Imitation of the ancients (hexameters)', 1989).³⁴⁶

Perestroika & Post-Communism

Perestroika ('restructuring') began with Gorbachev's accession in 1985; *Glasnost* ('openness') was a tool used by Gorbachev to further his reforms by laying bare the abuses of the Stalinist and Brezhnevite eras. To this end he enlisted the intelligentsia, especially those, like Gorbachev himself, who had come of age during the Thaw. He allowed publication of Evtushenko's anti-Stalin poem 'Fuku!' in 1985, which, with the publication of poems by Gumilev in 1986, formed the first signs of *Glasnost*'s impact on literature. From 1987, millions of Soviet citizens participated in "a widespread re-examination of Soviet and pre-revolutionary history". In 1987 c. 6000 library books were moved from 'special access' to public shelves, and in 1988 school textbooks on Soviet history were pulped and examinations cancelled.

Perestroika officially ended in 1990 with the democratisation of parliament and abolition of censorship.³⁴⁷ The changes *Glasnost*' had wrought in public opinion mobilised the group of people (amongst whom were many classicists) who defended Gorbachev's democracy against the 1991 coup.³⁴⁸

Ironically, literature's new freedom precipitated it into crisis. The flood of previously unpublishable works daunted and drowned out current writers; the new political situation proved too confusing to respond to immediately; economic crisis diminished people's resources – financial and mental – for spending on reading, whilst journals' falling subscriptions and paper shortages increased their price and

³⁴⁵ Andrew Wachtel, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, pp. 272, 284.

³⁴⁶ Epstein, in Epstein, Genis, and Vladiv-Glover, p. 147; Michael Wachtel, p. 294 n. 77.

³⁴⁷ Marsh, *Literature, History and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia*, pp. 16, 10, 11, 13, 2, 200, 21.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2; Dmitri Panchenko, in Karsai and others, p. 37.

prevented their printing; free speech meant that literature was no longer required as a medium of Aesopian commentary upon politics. Besides irrelevance, writers experienced a loss of moral authority, due to their perceived collaboration with the increasingly discredited Soviet regime. Most harmful, however, was the revelation of literature's relative powerlessness: "the Soviet people expected a 'miracle' when Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* was published in 1989, as the author did himself"; when this did not materialise, Russians were saying in amazement, "the government has not fallen".³⁴⁹

In December 1991 the Soviet Union fell. When poetry ceased to be a matter of life and death, it lost its halo of "secular martyrdom".³⁵⁰ Under Capitalism "kitsch and sensationalism" flourished at the expense of literature; as of 2007 "fewer books than before are being published, and hardly any poetry".³⁵¹ Yet poetry has proliferated nonetheless, especially with the advent of the internet.³⁵² With the opening of the borders, classical reception became less popular in poetry, as it became "much easier to satisfy the 'yearning for world culture'".³⁵³ The brain drain also increased manifold, with poets and classical scholars among those leaving Russia.³⁵⁴ Standards of Classics teaching in schools declined in the post-Communist period, whilst the current revival has been called into question for the involvement of the Orthodox church and its nationalist agenda.³⁵⁵ However, the fall of the Soviet empire has led to much literature of nostalgia – especially for the pre-revolutionary, imperial period and the Silver Age – and to connections with fallen ancient empires, as Russians seek to redefine themselves with the help of classical antiquity.³⁵⁶

³⁴⁹ Marsh, *Literature, History and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia*, pp. 195, 22, 197, 191–92.

³⁵⁰ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 197.

³⁵¹ Marsh, *Literature, History and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia*, p. 24.

³⁵² Stephanie Sandler, in Dobrenko and Balina, pp. 117–18.

³⁵³ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 197.

³⁵⁴ For an illustrative list of poets who emigrated, see Stephanie Sandler, in Dobrenko and Balina, p. 128. The fall in academic salaries after the USSR's collapse led to Averintsev's permanent move to the University of Vienna. Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival*, p. 23.

³⁵⁵ Davidson, *Cultural Memory and Survival*, pp. 24–25. Aza Takho-Godi "Interviewed in 2007 for the journal *The Elite of Society* [*Elita obshchestva*] [...] lamented the current 'exceptional decline' of culture in Russia, noting that schools in the 1930s and 1940s, even in the 1950s, were far better".

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Poets of Late- & Post-Communism

Signs of the continuity of classical reception between the late- and post-Soviet poets (many of whom, of course, span this divide) are found in anthologies. An anthology of poets born between 1947 and 1981 (with Shvarts the earliest and Barskova almost the latest) contains many classical references. Out of 44 poets, 17 display classical reception: Iurii Kublanovskii, Ivan Zhdanov, Sedakova, Bakhyt Kenzheev, Irina Ermakova, Svetlana Kekova, Vladimir Salimon, Iurii Arabov, Timur Kibirov, Olesia Nikolaeva, Viktor Kulle, Iulii Gugolev, Gennadii Kanevskii, Maksim Amelin, Mariia Stepanova, Sandzhar Ianyshv, and Barskova.³⁵⁷ As Torlone points out, the title of an anthology of over 200 émigré poets, in 26 countries), *Osvobozhdennyi Uliss* (*Liberated Ulysses*, 2004), confirms the “sustained validity of the classical idiom for Russian poetry”.³⁵⁸ An example of post-USSR emigration stimulating classical reception is Aleksandra Petrova, whose life in Rome has brought its myths into her poetry.³⁵⁹ Torlone lists certain particularly classically receptive young poets of Barskova’s generation (Barskova among them): Andrei Poliakov, Ol’ga Grebennikova, Dem’ian Kudriavtsev, Konstantin Uvarov, and Grigorii Starikovskii.³⁶⁰ Starikovskii’s work as a classical scholar and translator together with his poetry³⁶¹ connects him with Barskova’s close friend Vsevolod Zel’chenko. Zel’chenko’s primary focus is classical scholarship, specialising in Hellenistic and Roman poetry, and Russian classical reception.³⁶² Along with ‘Menelai na Farose’ (‘Menelaus on Pharos’, 1997) one of his poems with most classical references is ‘Stikhi, napisannye na chetyrnadtsatiletie poeta Poliny Barskovoi’ (‘Verses written for the fourteenth birthday of poet Polina Barskova’, 1990), underscoring the classical connection between the two (see p. 228). Another classical scholar, Sergei

³⁵⁷ *Contemporary Russian Poetry: An Anthology*, ed. by Evgenii Bunimovich (Champaign, Ill.: Dalkey Archive Press, 2008), pp. 6–8, 54–56, 72–74, 94, 102, 110, 140, 148–50, 194–96, 208, 216–18, 246–48, 274–76, 336, 372, 390–92, 414–16.

³⁵⁸ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, p. 198; Stephanie Sandler, in *Russian Literature and the West: A Tribute for David M. Bethea*, ed. by Aleksandr Dolinin, Lazar’ Fleishman, and Leonid Livak (Stanford: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Stanford University; Oakland, Calif., 2008), p. 261.

³⁵⁹ Stephanie Sandler, in Dobrenko and Balina, p. 128.

³⁶⁰ Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, pp. 197–98.

³⁶¹ Aleksandr Genis, ‘Gost’ “Amerikanskogo chasa” - poet, perevodchik antichnoi poezii Grigorii Starikovskii’, *Radio Svoboda*, 2009 <<http://www.svoboda.org/a/1886528.html>> [accessed 24 September 2016].

³⁶² ‘Zel’chenko Vsevolod Vladimirovich’, *Bibliotheca Classica Petropolitana*, 2012 <<http://bibliotheca-classica.org/node/112>> [accessed 24 September 2016]; ‘Vsevolod Vladimirovich Zel’chenko’, *Librarius* <<http://librarius.narod.ru/personae/vvzel.htm>> [accessed 24 September 2016].

Zav'ialov, makes especially wide and varied use of classical metres – and corresponding references to ancient terms and authors, frequently in Latin or Greek – in his collections *Ody i epody (Odes and epodes, 1994)* and *Melika (Melic poems, 2003)*.³⁶³ Igor' Vishnevetskii also writes hexameters, emphasising the caesura with a gap, and scattering his verse with Ancient Greek deities and words, in 'Elene, na Rodos' ('To Helen, on Rhodes', c. 1996-2001).³⁶⁴ Whilst these many classically receptive poets suggest that classical reception will continue to be a major aspect of Russian poetry, Barskova believes that it is a legacy of the Soviet era, bound to go out of fashion as it has in other cultures.³⁶⁵

Conclusion

Russia's earliest reception of classical antiquity came along with Greek religious books after the conversion of Rus' to Orthodoxy, from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries (with an interruption for the Mongol conquest). Over the two centuries following the fall of Byzantium, Rome came to symbolise the political and religious authority that Russia desired. But the eventual dominance of Latin over Greek by the time of Peter the Great's reforms was not uncontested. The wrangling between Church and Tsars over which half of classical antiquity to adopt – Greek, seen as more 'Russian', aligned with Orthodoxy and the *narod*; or Latin, associated with Europe and modernisation – is indicative both of how the two traditions would continue to be perceived, and of how classical antiquity was already bound up with Russia's self-identification.

In the eighteenth century Russia's reception of classical antiquity accelerated, sparked by Peter's educational reforms and encouraged (for the most part) by Catherine the Great. The Neoclassicists assimilated Western genres (and their classical influences), translated classical texts, and adapted classical metres for Russian. Lomonosov's development of a new Russian literary language, based partly on Latin and Greek, removed written Russian from the preserve of the Church and

³⁶³ Iurii Orlickii, in *Stikh, iazyk, poeziia: pamiati Mikhaila Leonovicha Gasparova*, ed. by Henryk Baran and M. L. Gasparov (Moscow: Rossiiskii gosgumanitarnyi universitet, 2006), pp. 490, 495; Sergei Zav'ialov, 'Sergei Zav'ialov', *Vavilon*, 2006 <<http://www.vavilon.ru/texts/zavyalovo.html>> [accessed 25 September 2016].

³⁶⁴ Orlickii, in *Stikh, iazyk, poeziia*, p. 485. Orlickii also discusses the classical metrical imitations of Sergei Stratanovskii, Grigorii Dashevskii, and Maksim Amelin.

³⁶⁵ Barskova, 'Interview'.

laid the foundations for classical reception more integrated with Russian culture, by poets such as Derzhavin.

In the nineteenth century Russian literature caught up with Europe, but conflict over Russia's literary course relative to the West continued, between the Slavophiles and the Westernisers. Classical gymnasia produced most of the key poets of the Golden and Silver Ages. Translation of classical texts continued unabated, with Greek sources featuring more prominently than in the previous century; the crowning achievement was Gnedich's *Iliad*. Pushkin, a gymnasium-educated Westerniser, Neoclassicist turned Romantic, with close ties to the Decembrists, stands at the heart of the Golden Age and its classical reception. Pushkin participated both in Decembrism's allegorising, revolutionary approach to antiquity, and in Romanticism's use of antiquity for transcendence; with the advent of Romanticism, his exile, and the devastating suppression of the Decembrist revolt, his witty imitations of classical authors became more serious, often addressing the role of the poet. From the middle of the century, after Pushkin's early death, focus shifted away from poetry and classical reception was muted; Fet was the main producer of classical translations and poems of this era.

The Silver Age staged a boom in classical reception surpassing even the Golden Age. Modernists aimed for a synthesis of Russian and world culture, which Pushkin represented, both in the mystical, Apollonian-Dionysian view of Symbolism and in the logocentric view of Acmeism. There was much solid classical scholarship behind the Silver Age's creative engagement with antiquity. Many important classical translations were made by Zelinskii (for the 'Slavonic Renaissance') and by poet-scholars Annenskii and Ivanov. The scale of Ivanov's poetic and other classical reception was immense, and he also stood at the head of Symbolism's classical endeavours. Annenskii was both teacher and influence to members of Acmeism. It is indicative of how crucial classical antiquity was to literary creation in the Silver Age that classical reception was embraced by writers unaffiliated with these two main groups. Parnok used it to talk about her homosexuality, as did the Symbolist Kuzmin. Tsvetaeva invests mythical figures with her own personality to explore her poetic calling. Mandel'shtam, who grew out of Acmeism, engages idiosyncratically with antiquity throughout his oeuvre as one facet (albeit the primary one) of European culture. While his references are more Greek than Latin, the classical place he most often evokes is Rome; both themes come to express his disillusionment and pain with Russia's descent into cruel, uncultured despotism.

The Silver Age merged into the Communist era, as its artists (those who survived) continued to create – but the 1917 October Revolution drastically altered conditions.

The post-revolutionary period initially saw collaborations between proponents of antiquity and the revolutionaries, but Classics (both its artistic reception and its study) was gradually marginalised as unnecessary to the Communist future. One area in which classical reception did not halt, even during Stalinism, was translation, as this was a relatively anonymous, innocuous activity.

The imposition of Socialist Realism marked the beginning of Stalin's total control over published literature, and the end (more or less) of classical reception, as literature had to appeal to the masses. However, Stalin wished to appropriate antiquity's imperial connotations, so, repressing Classics with one hand, he encouraged it with the other – the reason classical texts continued to be translated. Tarkovskii – a historically disjointed poet: culturally part of the Silver Age, but only published in the Thaw – wrote classically receptive poems for the desk drawer during Stalinism.

The relative freedom of the Thaw allowed poets such as Brodskii and Kushner to engage extensively with classical antiquity; the Stagnation drove such poetry underground, into a second culture of samizdat, without halting its proliferation. Culturedness – of which knowledge about classical antiquity is a prime symptom – became associated with dissidence. In the post-Soviet era classical reception, and poetry generally, has lost its aura of danger, since poets may write and publish what they like; yet they are still writing on classical themes. The chapters that follow will investigate the interactions between poetic classical reception and Russia's recent history, from the Stagnation to post-Communism.

An 'archaising' tendency emerges in post-1953 Russian poetry. This Tynianovian term 'archaiser', redeployed by Wachtel to identify "a tendency that cuts across school lines to resurrect [neoclassical] traditions",³⁶⁶ could be productively applied to contemporary poets' classical reception, especially as it is so entwined with their recovery of pre-Soviet Russian literature. The widely accepted term of Epstein's, 'metarealist', partly conveys Russian poetry's archaist turn: "a poetry of the highest

³⁶⁶ Andrew Wachtel, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, p. 271.

layers of reality, of the universal images permeating all classical European art”.³⁶⁷ However, ‘metarealist’ is vague, un-descriptive, and excludes many poets playing with classical reception in similar ways (e.g., on the grounds of being ‘modernists’ rather than ‘postmodernists’).

Archaising stems from contemporary poets’ desire to connect with classically influenced Russian literature suppressed or subverted during the Stalinist period, and with Europe, from which Russians were palpably divided for much of the twentieth century – the Mandel’shtamian ‘yearning for world culture’. Archaising poetry flouts the norms of Socialist Realism, the only officially recognised style of the Soviet Union, thereby circumventing the Soviet period to engage directly with the earlier, interrupted tradition. So it may well be the case that, with the USSR fading from living memory, the urgent need to archaise fades too.

³⁶⁷ Epstein, in Epstein, Genis, and Vladiv-Glover, p. 209.

ELENA SHVARTS

Elena Shvarts (1948-2010) is a deeply individual poet, who expresses herself in her poetry without regard for publication, propriety, or, indeed, strict poetic form. Her classical reception occurs mostly in intensive, isolated patches through her oeuvre. It is one aspect of her poetry's mythologising tendency, frequently overlapping with another aspect, her religiousness. Shvarts' poems are "constructed from head-spinning mosaics of citations from literature, painting, architecture, from folklore and from popular belief (especially popular religious belief)."¹ Her metrics are similarly mosaic-like, skipping from metre to metre in a way that critics have termed 'polymetry';² her verse also admits many other unconventional features:

Ради звучности голоса поэт идет на риск: раскачивает регулярный ритм, усекает и теряет рифмы, наборматывает междометия, ахает, восклицает, хватает на лету просторечия — словом, позволяет стиху все, кроме нормативной мертвечины. (Всегда тем не менее имея норму, традицию в поле зрения.)³

For the sake of vocal sonorousness the poet runs risks: she shakes regular rhythm, cuts and loses rhymes, mutters interjections, 'oohs' and 'ahs', exclaims, snatches colloquialisms on the fly – in short, allows her verse everything but normative lifelessness. (Always, nevertheless, keeping the norm, tradition in view.)

Shvarts' attention to tradition is evident in her references both to classical antiquity and to Silver Age poets, with whom she connects to the exclusion of Soviet poetry, including dissident poets of the previous generation:

I tend to look to the poets active at the beginning of the century, simply because [...] our acquaintanceship with Brodsky, with Bobyshev wasn't very protracted. I was raised on the idea there was some sort of cultural chasm, abyss lying between us and the start of the century.⁴

¹ Catriona Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing, 1820-1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 413.

² Valerii Shubinskii, in B. I. Ivanov and B. A. Roginskii, *Istoriia leningradskoi nepodtzensurnoi literatury: 1950-1980-e gody: sbornik statei* (St Petersburg: Dean, 2000), p. 114.

³ Andrei Anpilov, 'Svetlo-iarostnaia tochka', *NLO*, 1999, p. 367.

⁴ Shvarts, in Polukhina, p. 217.

Growing up in the Thaw, Shvarts attended the officially sponsored schoolchildren's poetry club 'Derzanie'.⁵ Coming to maturity in the Stagnation, she became unpublishable, as her poetic style utterly failed to conform to the aesthetic of Socialist Realism; apart from two poems published in a Tartu University journal in 1973 nothing of Shvarts' was published in the USSR until 1983, even though from 1978 she was published quite widely abroad.⁶ Yet her apparent lack of concern for an official career left her free to write whatever interested her. The atmosphere in the seventies underground percolates into Shvarts' poetry. This generation actively strove for transcendence through spirituality and culture. Shvarts has said "I've been somehow drawn to God since I was a child".⁷ As well as through religion, she escaped the drag of *byt* (everyday existence) through her poetry's flights of fantasy, personae, and wide-ranging allusions:

Призрачное социальное существование, самиздат, ожидание то ли обыска, то ли ареста. [...] это не могло не наложить отпечаток на облик поэзии. Каждый старался найти свое небо, не оскверненное страхом и пошлостью. [...] Географической «горизонтали» советской поэзии — потаенная поэзия противопоставила историческую и эстетическую «вертикаль». Елена Шварц, обжигаясь о современность, о время и место [...] взмывает прочь: к библейским сюжетам, к средневековому Китаю, к античности, в XVIII, в XIX век, в цыганский табор, в монастырь — куда угодно.⁸

Illusory social existence, samizdat, the expectation of being either searched or arrested. [...] that could not but stamp its mark on the face of poetry. Each strove to find their own sky, unpolluted by fear and banality. [...] To the geographical 'horizontal' of Soviet poetry, Thaw poetry counterposed a historical and aesthetic 'vertical'. Elena Shvarts, burning herself on contemporaneity, on time and place [...] flies away: to biblical subjects, to medieval China, to antiquity, to the eighteenth, nineteenth century, to a gypsy camp, to a monastery – wherever.

Various definitions have been posited for Shvarts' style: 'metametaphorism',⁹ 'metarealism',¹⁰ 'neoclassicism',¹¹ 'baroque',¹² all of which take into account the

⁵ Lygo, pp. 49–51.

⁶ Barbara Heldt, 'The Poetry of Elena Shvarts', *World Literature Today*, 63.3 (1989), 381–83 (pp. 381–82).

⁷ Polukhina, p. 219.

⁸ Anpilov, p. 370.

⁹ Shubinskii, in Ivanov and Roginskii, p. 113.

¹⁰ Epstein, in Epstein, Genis, and Vladiv-Glover, p. 147.

¹¹ Ivan Zhdanov, in 'Andergraund vchera i segodnia', ed. by Mikhail Aizenberg, *Znamia*, 1998, 187–98 (p. 190).

highly allusive nature of her poetry. But Shvarts did not subscribe to any poetic label or school. Instead, one must look to Shvarts' self-portrayals in her poems for any poetic programme. 'Blagodarenie' ('Thanksgiving'), written on 6th October 2009, eight days after an operation and five months before her death, thanks God for her life.¹³ All the key themes of her poetry appear: the fact of being a poet, St Petersburg, her mother (and female experience more generally), the theatre, Rome and Jerusalem (linked with 'the world' symbolising the cultural inheritance of classical antiquity and Christianity), animals, her changefulness (reflected in her many poetic personae), and religion. Her self-characterisations in this late poem display the shifting syncretism that marks her interactions with classical antiquity throughout her oeuvre.

This chapter is structured primarily thematically, and secondarily chronologically. It begins by examining Shvarts' familiarity with Latin, and how this impacts her classical reception. Then it looks at some of the mythical figures Shvarts projects aspects of herself onto, as her doubles, to give a sense of her manner of eclectically appropriating classical antiquity, before the chapter turns to an analysis of Shvarts' most sustained classical alter ego. Kinfiia, a Roman poet Shvarts inhabited for a total of 27 poems, merits a section to herself, and is also involved in the discussion in the following two sections. The first charts chronologically the development of Shvarts' relationship with Rome from her earliest classically receptive poem to her final 'Kinfiia' poem, and how she maps Rome onto her native St Petersburg. The next investigates how Shvarts talks about the state of being a poet through classical figures construable as poets, in dialogue with the Silver Age. Finally, the chapter analyses Shvarts' other major classically receptive cycle, 'Homo Musagetes', and how she addresses aging – her own and that of classical antiquity itself. The chapter charts how Shvarts uses classical reception to address her poetic calling and to transcend *byt*, and how in reaction to her failing health and the obsolescence of poetry in the post-Communist era Shvarts stages *byt's* defeat of antiquity.

¹² I. V. Ostapenko, 'Priroda v russkoi lirike 1960-1980-x godov: Ot peizazha k kartine mira' (Kamenets-Podol'skii natsional'nyi universitet, 2012), pp. 32–33
<<http://daportal.org/upload/2014/06/05/0a77152abf6e950b4e809d991253fe1d.pdf>>.

¹³ Ol'ga Martynova, 'S nebes v nakazan'e na zemliu poverzhennyi', *Novaia kamera khraneniia*, 2010 <<http://www.newkamera.de/martynova/omartynova13.html>> [accessed 28 February 2014].

Latin

Shvarts' engagement with classical antiquity centres upon Rome, which may be due to her greater acquaintance with Latin than Greek. Although Shvarts had no formal training in Latin, in her diary at the age of 14 she mentions learning Latin;¹⁴ she has described herself as an autodidact,¹⁵ acquiring knowledge not through formal channels but from personal acquaintance and study; and her friend Ol'ga Martynova has stated that Shvarts spoke several European languages and that she believes Shvarts could read Latin.¹⁶ So it is possible that Shvarts read the Latin literature she receives in her poetry in the original. This is supported by her habit of giving Latin titles or subtitles to her poems (e.g. 'Horror eroticus', the subtitle of 'Grubymi sredstvami ne dostich' blazhenstva', 'By rough means you won't reach bliss', 1978). In 'Kinfiia' she uses Latin words wherever they are comprehensible in the Russian, and she gives a Latin 'speaking name' to Kinfiia's aged slave – Priscus, which appropriately means 'former', 'ancient', 'old-fashioned'.

An analysis of her short poem 'Nadgrobniaia nadpis' imperatora Adriana' ('Funerary inscription of Emperor Hadrian'), which adds to the long literary history of translations of Hadrian's last poem, suggests that she translated it from the original.

Душенька странная бродяжка
Гостя тела и собеседница
Где ты теперь блуждаешь
Смутным испуганным облачком,
И уж шуткам своим не смеешься ты.

Lil' soul strange wanderer
Guest of body and interlocutrix
Where do you now meander
Like a hazy frightened cloudlet,
And you don't even laugh at your own jokes.

Animula vagula blandula,
hospes comesque corporis,
quae nunc abibis in loca,
pallidula, rigida, nudula,
nec ut soles dabis iocos?¹⁷

¹⁴ Shvarts, v, p. 303 (4.10.1962).

¹⁵ Heldt, p. 381.

¹⁶ Martynova, 'S nebes v nakazan'e na zemliu poverzhennyi'.

¹⁷ *Minor Latin Poets, Volume II: Florus. Hadrian. Nemesianus. Reposianus. Tiberianus. Dicta Catonis. Phoenix. Avianus. Rutilius Namatianus. Others*, trans. by Arnold M. Duff and J. Wight Duff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 444.

The majority of the poem is faithful to the original: she chooses to retain Hadrian's diminutive in the first word; to convey the soul's feminine gender with 'собеседница' at the end of the second line, which the Latin does with 'Quae' at the beginning of the third; to address it in the second person; and to retain much of the original word order in the first four lines. She departs from the original significantly, however: changing 'blandula' ('charming') to 'странная' ('strange'); the fourth line is entirely different, 'Pallidula' ('pale') becoming 'Смутным' ('hazy'), 'rigida' ('rigid') becoming 'испуганным' ('frightened'), both understandable substitutions, but 'nudula' ('naked') becoming 'облачком' ('cloudlet'), probably due not to poetic licence but to misunderstanding 'nudus' as 'nubes'; the final line changes 'dabis iocos' ('make jokes') to 'шуткам своим [...] смеешься' ('laugh at your own jokes').

This proof of Shvarts' familiarity – albeit imperfect – with Latin should be understood as background to my readings of Shvarts' poetry over the course of this chapter, especially during the sections about 'Kinfiia', Rome, and 'Homo Musagetes'. Besides original classical texts, translations were also available, and for 'Kinfiia' I demonstrate that Shvarts made use of these. This finding should also be borne in mind over the course of the chapter, since for reasons of time and space I do not elsewhere conduct investigations into Shvarts' source material, but simply assume that she had access to Russian translations of classical texts. Many of Shvarts' classical allusions will undoubtedly have been drawn not from any specific text, but from culture more generally (and indefinably); I use classical texts as *locum tenentes* for such untraceable sources.

Classical Doubles

A hallmark of Shvarts' classical reception is her appropriation of classical figures to present facets of herself. One highly self-conscious comparison Shvarts draws between herself and a famously doubled classical figure suggests she was aware of this tendency. The poem, from 'Nochnaia tolcheia'¹⁸ ('Night-time throng', 1979), opens: 'Нарцисса я сужу за недостаток / К себе любви.' ('I judge Narcissus for his insufficiency / Of love for himself.') Through the poem Shvarts fits the Narcissus myth to herself, contrasting Narcissus' actions with hers. Whereas Narcissus initially

¹⁸ Elena Shvarts, *Sochineniia Eleny Shvarts*, 5 vols (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 2002), II, pp. 109–16.

believes his reflection is another beautiful youth, Shvarts is not fooled by reflections. She depicts her inner self as a plant, reminiscent both of the crocus Narcissus metamorphoses into, and of his 'deaf and dumb' reflection. She envisages a productive meeting/date with herself, and predicts that kissing herself would result in a strengthening of her inner 'I', and a rooting of her self in fertile earth. Shvarts contradicts Ovid's destructive scenario in *Metamorphes* 3 – Narcissus' kisses thwarted by the water and illusory nature of his reflection, and his consequent wasting away – by appropriating Ovid's pre- and post-metamorphosis Narcissus as her outer and inner self, and placing them in a sexualised union.

Imbuing classical characters with her own personality often makes them unconventionally riotous. 'Afrodita uletaet v noch' na subbotu'¹⁹ ('Aphrodite flies away in the early hours of Saturday morning', 1978) imagines the end of Aphrodite's Friday night on the town. It combines conventional, romantic elements with irreverent and graphic, dark and vampiric elements:

Запах розы и серы,
Изнемогая, навзничь, сияя двойною луною за да
В голубях и венках проплывала Венера.
Я таких голубей еще не видала –
Жертву тучную им приготовь.
Пели, как соловьи, из клюва свесилось жало,
Капала темная кровь.

Scent of rose and sulphur,
Worn out, on her back, shining with the twin moon of her buttocks,
Amidst doves and garlands Venus wafted past.
I had never seen such doves –
Prepare them a fatted victim.
They sang, like nightingales, from their beaks dangled stings,
Dark blood dripped.

The bird-drawn chariot is reminiscent of Sappho's *Hymn to Aphrodite*, but there the resemblance ends; the crude depiction suggests excessive sexual activity. Shvarts requests instead Aphrodite Ourania, the representation of pure, unearthly love: 'Где сестра твоя чистая – Афродита Урания? / [...] / Я видала ее, поклоняюсь я ей.' ('Where is your pure sister – Aphrodite Ourania? / [...] / I have seen her, I shall bow to her'.) But the following description of Aphrodite flying off with a goat confirms her identification as Aphrodite Pandemos, Ourania's counterpart, the representation

¹⁹ Elena Shvarts, *Sochineniia Eleny Shvarts*, 5 vols (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 2002), I, p. 56.

of earthly love, to whom, according to Lucian, prostitutes sacrificed goats.²⁰ Thus Shvarts expresses the dichotomy between her ideal and her actual approach to love and sex. Aphrodite's departure is as a victorious general departing the battlefield, which figures sex as death: 'торжествуя, она оглядела / Поле, полное жертв, – на постели, в траве, в саду, / Каменья лежали уже, холодея...' ('triumphant, she surveyed / The field, full of victims – on beds, in grass, in gardens, / Turning to stone they lay already, becoming cold...') While Shvarts moulds this Aphrodite in her own image, she remains separate from her mythical alter ego, as in the Narcissus poem above; the other aspect of Shvarts in the poem, the 'I', is a victim of Aphrodite (her own sexual excesses). She is addicted to Aphrodite's sex-bringing visits: 'Ах, до пятницы новой укола я в сердце не жду!' ('Ah, I do not expect an injection in my heart until next Friday!') Shvarts states again this dependence/disavowal polarity with a classical personification of love in 'А в окнах у tsygan'²¹ ('But in gypsies' windows', 1996): 'Венера мне не сестр, а спицею холодной / На древо знания припилена звезда / Полярная' ('Venus is not my sister, but a pole star / Pinned with a cold needle to the tree of knowledge'). Shvarts describes her very differently from the customary depiction of Venus as hot and passionate; the 'cold needle' becomes a compass needle as the sentence resolves into the statement that Venus is Shvarts' guiding Pole Star (playing upon Venus the planet). The star is conflated with Eve's apple, and Shvarts declares that she will eat this apple in order to bring about Venus' Satan-like fall from grace. Again, as with the drug-like prick in 'Afrodita uletает v noch' na subbotu', sex is portrayed as a fatal temptation proffered by Venus. Unlike her merging with her Narcissus-self, Shvarts is ambivalent about her Aphrodite/Venus double.

The Moon/Selene, another recurring figure in Shvarts' poetry, is connected with Venus in 'Gostinitsa Mondekhel'²² ('Hotel Mondehell', 1981). As in 'А в окнах у tsygan' Shvarts conflates the astronomical bodies with the mythical beings, and makes them both parts of herself and her relatives: 'вернусь я Луной на Луну, и Венерой к Венере, / Не узнают они, пусть разодранной, дочери? / Семена мы и осыпи звезд.' ('I shall return as Moon to Moon, and as Venus to Venus, / Won't they recognise their daughter, even dismembered? / We are seeds and scree of stars.') In

²⁰ Rachel Rosenzweig, *Worshipping Aphrodite: Art and Cult in Classical Athens* (University of Michigan Press, 2004), pp. 72–73.

²¹ Shvarts, I, p. 348.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 129–33.

‘Nochnoe kupan’e’²³ (‘Night bathing’, 1981) Shvarts depicts herself as part of the sea, orbiting Selene:

Вокруг Селены быстро-мутной
Ладью утлой кружилась я
На содрогающемся, смутном
И темном сердце бытия.

Around Selene as a quick-dull
Fragile boat I turned
Upon the shuddering, troubled
And dark heart of existence.

This literalises the attraction and influence of the Moon upon the poet. Shvarts devotes a cycle of poems to the Moon: ‘Luna bez golovy’²⁴ (‘The Moon headless’, 1987). The opening couplet encodes the name Selene in a way that closely ties Shvarts and Selene together, creating confusion over who is who:

Се ли ты?
Се ли она?
В стакане темноты
Горька Луна.
И ты – моя сестра. И твой
Я – сестр.

C’est toi?
C’est elle?
In a glass of darkness
The Moon is bitter.
And you are my sister. And your
sister am I.

Shvarts underscores her affinity with Selene through the closeness of their names (Elena and Selena): “игра слов, акцентирующая идею тождества «я» и Луны: слово «селена» [...] является омофоном словосочетания «се Лена» (в котором «се» – это устаревшая форма указательного местоимения «это»)²⁵ (“a pun, emphasising the idea of the equivalence of ‘I’ and the Moon: the word ‘selena’ [...] is a homophone of the phrase ‘[se] (it’s/c’est) Lena’ (in which ‘[se]’ is an obsolete form of the demonstrative pronoun ‘it’)”). It is telling that the one time Shvarts calls the Moon ‘Selene’ in ‘Luna bez golovy’ is when it is most personified and they are most connected:

²³ Ibid., p. 156.

²⁴ Shvarts, II, pp. 147–52.

²⁵ Ostapenko, p. 370.

Я протяну к Селене,
Такой же – и она мне.
Мы с нею заговорщики,
Мы шепчемся, шпионим.

I'll hold it out to Selene,
So will she to me.
We are conspirators,
We whisper and spy.

Shvarts is unconflicted in her embrace of Selene as her double.

Ariadne and her thread first appear as a symbol of the link between life and death after the death of Shvarts' mother in 1998, in the collection mourning her, *Solo na raskalennoi trube* (*Solo on a red-hot trumpet*). 'Volosovedenie (Vision)'²⁶ ('Hair-leading (Vision)', 1998) imagines the hair leading her through life as Ariadne's thread, ever under threat of being cut. Ariadne reappears at a time Shvarts was aware of her own impending death (by then two months away), in 'Korabl' zhizni unosilsia vdal'²⁷ ('The ship of life scudded into the distance', January 2010). The poem interacts with the story of Ariadne, told in Catullus 64, with Shvarts as Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus/Life. Ariadne's hopelessness must have resonated with Shvarts: 'Every way out is blocked by sea's encircling waves. / There's no means of escape, no hope.'²⁸ At the centre of the poem the line 'Сгнила в воде и Ариадны нить' ('Ariadne's thread, too, has rotted in the water') plays upon the irony of Ariadne's life-giving thread. The thread in Ariadne's story symbolises escape from a seemingly hopeless situation achieved by her wits, as she saved Theseus with the thread when he was lost in the labyrinth. But in Shvarts, as seen in 'Volosovedenie', the thread symbolises the potential of human life to be cut short. Its rotting in the water hints at the decay of both hope for a way out and of Shvarts' body. Her enactment of fruitless rage, 'Ах, зубы скалить белые у скал' ('Ah, to gnash white teeth by the cliffs'), evokes that of Ariadne on the island: 'She poured out shrill-edged cries from the depth of her heart, / And sometimes in her sorrow she

²⁶ Elena Shvarts, 'Na Povorote v Gefsimaniiu', *Sovremennaia Russkaia Poeziia* <<http://modernpoetry.ru>> [accessed 12 September 2016]; Oleg Rogov, 'Elena Shvarts. Solo na raskalennoi trube: novye stikhotvoreniia', *Volga*, 1999 <<http://magazines.russ.ru/volga/1999/2/shvarc.html>> [accessed 12 September 2016].

²⁷ Elena Shvarts, *Sochineniia Eleny Shvarts*, 5 vols (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 2013), V, p. 41.

²⁸ Gaius Valerius Catullus, *The Poems of Catullus*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford University Press) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 91 (ll. 185-6).

clambered up steep cliffs'.²⁹ Ariadne appealed to the gods for vengeance with her final words in the poem (ll. 188-201); Shvarts' final lines, too, make an appeal to God, but a very different one. She attempts to empathise with God's own pain, and in the final line asks for release, like her mother: 'Бывает болен Бог? Он ведь боль. / А ей не больно. И меня уволь.' ('Can God be in pain? For He is pain. / But she does not feel pain. Let me, too, go.') In this poem Ariadne for Shvarts becomes something between a double, referenced as a character in a parallel situation, and an alter ego, a persona to be fully inhabited.

'Kinfiia'

Shvarts' most sustained work of classical reception is 'Kinfiia' (1974, 1978, 1980s; for translation see p. 291), a cycle of poems about/'by' Propertius' girlfriend Cynthia.³⁰ Shvarts introduces her thus:

Кинфия – римская поэтесса I века до н. э., героиня элегий Проперция, прославившаяся не только талантом, но и дурным нравом. Стихи ее не дошли до наших дней, однако я все же попыталась перевести их на русский язык.

Kinfiia is a Roman poetess from the first century BC, the heroine of the elegies of Propertius, famed not only for her talent, but also for her temper. Her poems have not survived to the present day, nevertheless I have endeavoured to translate them into Russian.

Aside from the practical difficulty inherent in translating nonextant poetry, Cynthia was at least partly, if not entirely, fictional.³¹ The poems Shvarts translates almost certainly never existed. Propertius does present her as his 'docta puella', 'learned girl', in several poems,³² but only twice portrays her as a poet in her own right: 'Phoebus endows you with his songs, and Calliope, nothing loth, with Aonia's lyre' (1.2.27-30); 'when she attempts songs on the Aeolian lyre, gifted to compose

²⁹ Ibid., p. 87 (ll. 125-6).

³⁰ Shvarts, II, pp. 5-24.

³¹ Apuleius identifies her as Hostia in Apology 16, but this is unlikely: Goold, in Sextus Propertius, *Elegies*, trans. by G. P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 9. Cynthia's skills, apparent freedom, and listing alongside famous courtesans in 2.6 have led many to believe she was a meretrix; most likely is that she is a fictional construct, based on generic conventions of love elegy and predecessors Lesbia and Lycoris in Catullus and Gallus. Her name is derived from an allusion to another of Propertius' influences, Callimachus: Maria Wyke, 'Written Women: Propertius' Scripta Puella', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 77 (1987), 47-61 (p. 59).

³² 1.7.11, 2.11.6, 2.13.11.

something fit for Aganippe's harp, and when she pits her writings against those of ancient Corinna and deems Erinna's poems no match for her own' (2.3.19-22).³³ Shvarts has fully appropriated this meagre representation of a female poet. Her 'Kinfiia' is a form of "textual bonding", usually conducted between men, yet "Women did have a small and precious group of auctrices of their own which similarly stretched back to antiquity."³⁴ Rather than choosing a real classical female poet, such as Sappho or Sulpicia, Shvarts has (mostly) invented one.

A possible influence for Shvarts' appropriation of Cynthia is Dorothy Parker's 'From A Letter From Lesbia', which does the same thing, if less extensively, with Lesbia. Another likely influence – or rather, counter-influence – is Brodskii's 'Anno Domini', written six years before Shvarts began 'Kinfiia'. The poem is apparently written from the point of view of Propertius, but is focalised through an unnamed Governor for much of it. Although Cynthia and her son (invented, like much of Shvarts' version of Cynthia) feature in the poem, they are barely characterised, and are present only to signify Mary and Jesus/Brodskii's former lover Marina Basmanova and their son Andrei, who was born in 1967,³⁵ the year before 'Anno Domini' was written. Even Propertius and the Governor, the apparent foci of the poem, are really vehicles for the emotions and experiences of Brodskii himself. In 'Kinfiia', Kinfiia's independent, authentic persona (albeit imagined by Shvarts) is foremost. 'Kinfiia' gives a voice and agency to Propertius' creation, who in the original poems acts solely as a catalyst for Propertius' rather self-involved poetry. This voice is believably that of an Ancient Roman woman, although it speaks with markedly contemporary Russian diction. The poems are densely allusive, containing many authentic details of Roman life, and evidencing Shvarts' thorough acquaintance with her source material, chiefly Latin love elegy; yet this erudition is unobtrusive, fading into the backdrop of the life evoked by Kinfiia. Whilst 'Kinfiia' is a self-contained set of poems, it is engaged in a constant intertextual dialogue with its Roman predecessors, Propertius and Catullus in particular.

³³ Propertius, pp. 45, 113.

³⁴ Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 23.

³⁵ Keith Gessen, 'The Gift: Joseph Brodsky and the Fortunes of Misfortune', *The New Yorker*, 23 May 2011
<http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2011/05/23/110523crat_atlarge_gessen?currentPage=all> [accessed 16 July 2014].

Russian translations of all the lyric poets would have been available for Shvarts to consult.³⁶ Textual evidence points to Shvarts' major source for 'Kinfiia' being a 1963 edition of Catullus, Tibullus (and Sulpicia), and Propertius, edited by Petrovskii, with translations by Lev Ostroumov (except for Catullus³⁷). Kinfiia's claim in 1.1 for being 'переменчивей нравом' ('more volatile of temper') echoes 'Как переменчивы все разгневанной женщины клятвы' ('How volatile are all the oaths of an enraged woman', 2.9.35). The 'кельтибера, / Что мочою себе зубы чистит' ('Celtiberian, / who cleans his teeth with urine') of 1.3 is similarly translated by S. Apt 'Но ты – ты кельтибер. А в Кельтиберии / Уж так заведено – мочою собственной / Там чистят утром зубы и полощут рот' ('But you – you are a Celtiberian. And in Celtiberia / It's their custom – with their own urine / In the morning they clean their teeth and wash their mouths there', 39.17-19). The wording of 3.2, 'серой окуришь' ('fumigate yourself [...] with sulphur'), is found in Ostroumov 4.8.83-6, 'Все окурила [...] / Серным коснулась огнем' ('She fumigated everything [...] / She touched with sulphurous flame'). The 'meta' ('turning post') of 'Kinfiia' 3.3 may be drawn from Ostroumov, 'Пусть к этой дальней мете в пене стремится мой конь' ('May my horse race towards that far meta', 4.1.70). Shvarts' idea for her pun in 3.6 on 'тёлки [...] образ' ('heifer outfit') came from Ostroumov, 'Лживо надела себе телки еловой рога' ('Falsely put on horns of a spruce cow', 3.19.12).³⁸

Whether working from originals or translations, Shvarts has clearly modelled Kinfiia on Propertius' Cynthia, Catullus' Lesbia, and Ovid's Corinna; she may also have incorporated traces of Sulpicia and Tibullus' Delia. Formally, 'Kinfiia' also imitates its Roman models. Its 26 poems are arranged into three books, and the third book is named 'Разрозненное' ('Fragments'), suggesting the incompleteness of manuscript transmission present in all ancient works. None of the poems are rhymed, and although Shvarts rhymes far less frequently than other Russian poets, the unusual – for Russian poetry – lack of rhyme is reminiscent of the genre in which this occurs most often, translations of classical poetry. Its metre is not exclusively elegiac, which instantly marks the poetry apart from Propertius and the other elegists, recalling

³⁶ E. V. Sviiasov, *Antichnaia poeziia v russkikh perevodakh XVIII-XX vv.: bibliograficheskii ukazatel'*, ed. by G. V. Bakhareva (Sankt-Peterburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1998). Propertius: pp. 351-3, Catullus: pp. 304-15; Ovid: pp. 337-49; Tibullus/Sulpicia: pp. 356-58.

³⁷ Catullus translations by Adrian Piotrovskii, S. Shervinskii, I. Sel'vinskii, S. Osheryi, S. Apt, Z. Morozkina, Iu. Shul'ts, F. Petrovskii.

³⁸ *Valerii Katull, Al'bii Tibull, Sekst Propertsii. Pervod s latinskogo*, ed. by F. Petrovskii (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1963), pp. 305, 58-59, 445, 417, 403.

Catullus instead; the poems evoke classical metres but do not strictly follow their rules, being rather “реминисценциями античных размеров” (“reminiscences of classical metres”).³⁹

Allusion is fundamental to Latin love elegy, as each successive poet displays their debt to their predecessors through imitation and innovation. Catullus, the earliest of Shvarts’ intertexts, was not a love elegist per se, although he apparently originated the genre: elegy predominates, but his epigrams and lyrics are written in a wide variety of metres;⁴⁰ and whilst Lesbia is a frequent and the first addressee – besides the poetry book itself – she is hardly the collection’s focus. His influences are mostly Greek: Callimachus, from whom stems his polished, nugatory aesthetic; and Sappho, whom he famously adapts in 51 (and probably 11), and who influences the personal, candid, feminine aesthetic of the love poems. Sulpicia, the next, who is significant as the only female Latin love elegist, although very little of her work survives for Shvarts to draw on, apparently refers to both Catullus and Callimachus.⁴¹ Propertius, who writes only elegies, and those primarily about love, references, directly and indirectly, Catullus, Gallus (credited as the first love elegist, although only a few lines of his survive), Sulpicia,⁴² Callimachus, and even Horace.⁴³ Ovid, belated to love elegy, draws upon and subverts all his predecessors. So Shvarts’ appropriation of elements from both Propertius and other Roman poets heightens the authenticity of her portrayal of Kinfiia.

‘Kinfiia’ can be read as the other half of a dialogue with Propertius, the response that Cynthia never had the opportunity to make. Dialogue occurs within the Propertian references paralleling events in the Roman poet’s work; within the poems charting Kinfiia’s relationship with Propertius; and within the cycle’s overarching narrative. Certain poems pick up details or themes from Propertius. The first poem, ‘K sluzhanke’ (‘To a slave girl’), centres upon Kinfiia and her view of Rome, but ventures outside of that sphere briefly, recalling Rome’s far-off wars: ‘Только там – далеко, в Пиренеях – // На германца идут легионы’ (‘While there – far away, in

³⁹ Dmitrii Panchenko, “‘Kinfiia’ Eleny Shvarts’”, *NLO*, 2010 <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2010/103/pa22.html>> [accessed 4 March 2014].

⁴⁰ Gaius Valerius Catullus, pp. 190–93.

⁴¹ *Women Poets in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. by Ellen Greene (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), p. 161.

⁴² R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Collected Papers on Latin Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 350.

⁴³ Alison Keith, *Propertius: Poet of Love and Leisure*, *Classical Literature and Society* (London: Duckworth, 2008), p. 65.

the Pyrenees – // The legions march against the Germani’). War is ever-present in the background of Propertius’ poetry, as in his lifetime Rome underwent one of its bloodiest periods, with constant wars, civil and expansionist, at home and abroad. Characteristically, he touches upon the subject, then turns quickly to lighter, elegiac themes, and Shvarts does likewise: in the following stanza she returns to Kinfiia’s personal concerns. Her declaration ‘В Риме никто переменчивей нравом / Меня не рождался’ (‘In all Rome none more volatile of temper / Than me has ever been born’) corresponds with Propertius’ depiction of Cynthia, especially 2.9, which denounces her fickleness. Shvarts takes another Propertian theme in 1.8 ‘К провинциалке’ (‘To a provincial woman’): magic. The threats of sorcerous vengeance in the poem are based upon the numerous instances of magic in Propertius, uniquely amongst the love elegists.

As well as the thematic dialogue with Propertius, many poems go into overt dispute with him. 3.3 flaunts Kinfiia’s disregard of Propertius’ frequent imprecations against women enhancing their appearance through artificial means – in 2.18 he admonishes Cynthia ‘In hell below may many an ill befall that girl who stupidly dyes her hair with a false colour!’;⁴⁴ Shvarts highlights his hypocrisy as Kinfiia uses the same substance that Propertius depicts himself using in 4.6: ‘let Cilician saffron drench my locks’⁴⁵ / ‘Я хочу достать шафранной краски / Для волос’ (‘I want to get saffron dye / For my hair’). There is a further irony: whilst Kinfiia says ‘Рыжей стать хочу’ (‘I want to become ginger’), Propertius states that Cynthia ‘has auburn hair’⁴⁶ – perhaps Shvarts is suggesting that the ‘natural’ hair Propertius admired was, in fact, dyed. At the end of the poem Kinfiia characterises her fluctuating whims with a common Roman metaphor:

О желанья, вы – скороходы,
 Что, сменяясь, жизнь влекут
 К мете заветной.
 Вы – погонщики, вы и кони...

O wishes, you are seven-league boots,
 Which, taking turns, drag life along

⁴⁴ Propertius, p. 155.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 355.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 109. “Propertius stands alone among the poets of his day in his praise of the *fulva coma* and his opposition to the *flava coma* or artificially colored ‘golden’ hair, which was the fashion of the time [...] possessed by Catullus’s Berenice, Vergil’s Dido, Tibullus’s Delia; and in Horace, Pyrrha, Phyllis, Chloe, and Ganymedes”. Jesse Benedict Carter, *The Roman Elegiac Poets* (Boston, 1900), in Propertius, p. 109 n. 9.

Towards the ultimate *meta*.
You are both jockey and horses...

Metae appear thrice in Propertius, twice as a metaphor. Shvarts' use of *meta* contrasts with 4.1, putting whims in place of Propertius' lofty epic aspirations: 'I shall sing of rites and deities and ancient names of places: this is the goal [*metas*] to which my foaming steed must press.'⁴⁷ She reverses Propertius' use of *metae* in 2.25: 'You, too, credulous one, who put on airs because your love is at the full, no woman can be relied upon for long. [...] Does any man claim the prize with the race unfinished, before his chariot's axle has grazed the turning-post [*metam*] a seventh time?'⁴⁸ 'Kinfiia' draws upon the more common metaphor of *metae* as the end of the race of life to turn Propertius' metaphor of the race's finish as the ending of a woman's fickleness into a metaphor about whims driving the race of life.

1.6 'Klavdii' ('To Claudia'), treats a common elegiac conceit, the *paraclausithyron* (exclusion at the mistress' door), something Propertius frequently alludes to as a cruel occupational hazard.⁴⁹ His one *paraclausithyron* treats the theme unconventionally – 1.16 is from the perspective of the door, which complains about Propertius' vigils on its step. Propertius' modification of the motif provides a precedent for Shvarts' own unconventional *paraclausithyron*: she writes it not from the perspective of the excluded lover, usually the elegiac poet, but the woman inside, who in this case is the elegiac poet. This sparks a series of role reversals, with Kinfiia's lover (presumably Propertius) not shut outside, but safely inside; his place is taken by her would-be lover, a gladiator, who is ridiculous in the role of elegiac lover, for which not physical but mental prowess is required.

2.7 'Na pliazhe v Baii' ('On the beach at Baiae'), is in dialogue with Propertius' two poems set in Baiae, 1.11 and 3.18. Whereas in the first poem Baiae's corrupting influence becomes the focus of Propertius' jealousy, as he imagines Cynthia in the arms of a rival, Kinfiia's experience of Baiae is utterly at odds with this. The dalliances on the beach in Propertius' version are replaced by scenes of decay, including a dissected starfish on the sand; instead of love, Kinfiia is entirely given over to the maddening forces of fate and inspired poetry. However, it is closer in tone to 3.18, an elegy to Marcellus, who died at Baiae; 'Kinfiia' 2.7 replicates its

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 315.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 177.

⁴⁹ e.g. 1.5.19-22, 1.18.23-4, 2.6.1-2, 37-40.

atmosphere of death and doom. The final section echoes and merges elements of Propertius' poem in a fantastic, hallucinogenic fashion:

Варится жизнь моя в котле медном,
Золотые солнца в крови кружатся.
Тянут Парки шелковые нити.
Тащат рыбаки блестящие сети.
Задыхаясь, я жабрами хлопаю быстро,
И вокруг меня золотые братья
Сохнут, извиваясь, – в тоске
Смертной.

My life is stewing in a brass cauldron,
Golden suns swirl through my bloodstream.
The Parcae tug at the silken threads.
Fishermen haul in the glistening nets.
Gulping for breath, I flap my gills fast,
And all around me my golden brothers
Dry out, squirming,
In mortal anguish.

This incorporates the infernal nature of Baiae's hot waters: 'Where the sea, locked out from shadowy Avernus, beats against Baiae's steaming pools of warm water';⁵⁰ conflation of Baiae's water with the underworld's, and a spirit's submersion in them: 'Baiae, [...] what malign deity has settled in your bay? – Marcellus has lowered his gaze to the waters of the Styx, and his noble spirit wanders about the infernal lake';⁵¹ fate and the inevitability of death: 'all must assuage the three heads of the barking guard-dog and embark on the grisly greybeard's boat that no one misses.'⁵² Kinfiia too falls under this malign influence: the Parcae are drawing in the threads of her life just as fishermen draw in their nets, and Kinfiia, imagining herself their piscine prey, is swept up, flapping her gills for breath.

2.8 'Razgovor' ('Conversation') is a *genethliacon* (elegiac birthday poem). It counters Propertius' birthday wishes for Cynthia in 3.10: instead of peace and joy and propitious rituals, followed by celebrations and love with Propertius, Kinfiia reacts to her birthday in a more realistic manner for a middle-aged woman, with anxiety about growing old and hope for philosophical comfort. These themes may respond to an underlying "anxiety" in Propertius' version: "the placing of [ll.] 17 and 18 must imply that the loss of *forma* will see the fall of Cynthia's *regna*. [...] The passing of

⁵⁰ Propertius, p. 283.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 285.

⁵² Ibid.

time is inexorable and nothing reminds one more of it than birthdays.”⁵³ It may also echo Sulpicia 2’s similar subversion of elegiac convention, as she “de’-celebrates her own birthday”.⁵⁴

3.2, again, shows the other side of Propertius’ various poems describing reunion with Cynthia after a night spent drinking and womanising, especially 1.3, 2.29, and 4.8. It is possible that the poem is the ending of 2.29, in which a drunk Propertius, out late at night, is accosted by a group of boys and forcibly dragged back to Cynthia. The poem’s opening, ‘Вновь Проперций мой ко мне вернулся, / Счастье для Кинфии какое!’ (‘My Propertius has returned to me again – / What luck, what joy for Kinfiia!’), could be sincere or sarcastic, although his bedraggled state detailed in the following lines suggests the latter. Kinfiia notes his shame before her, and apparently misreads it as shame for their tenacious love, rather than his poor behaviour (which is the cause in Propertius’ poems). Kinfiia is portrayed in a far more sympathetic light than Cynthia. She does not complain or harangue him, as her counterpart does in 1.3: ‘Has another’s scorn then at last brought you to my bed, expelling you from doors closed in your face? For where have you spent the long hours of the night which was due me, you who come, ah me, exhausted, when the stars are driven from the sky?’⁵⁵ Kinfiia’s behaviour is based upon Cynthia’s reaction to finding Propertius drinking with two girls in 4.8, at which Cynthia is shown at her most harpy-like: ‘she fumigated every spot touched by the girls brought in, and mopped the threshold with clean water; she bade me change anew all the oil in the lamps, and thrice with burning sulphur touched my head’.⁵⁶ But Kinfiia, instructing Propertius to carry out an almost identical purification, is merely mothering: ‘сепой окуришь от скверны’ (‘fumigate yourself from the filth with sulphur’).

In 3.6 Shvarts reverses a mythical exemplum that Propertius uses at various points to illustrate women’s wantonness, especially in 3.19 to demonstrate to Cynthia that women are ruled by lust even more than men: ‘You are constantly reproaching me with men’s lust: take it from me, lust commands women even more. [...] Witness is she who suffered the disdain of a Cretan bull and put on the false horns of a timber cow.’⁵⁷ Kinfiia’s poem is the retort, as she takes the figure of Pasiphae and uses her to

⁵³ Lyne, p. 29.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁵⁵ Propertius, p. 47.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

represent not a woman made irrational by passion, but a predatory and calculating lover: ‘Кинется ль она быку на шею? / Нет, пылая, ждет она, терпит.’ (‘Does she throw herself at the bull? / No: aflame, she waits, she endures.’) Her Pasiphae symbolises male guile, and is modelled on Propertius, whose complaint about the expense of bribing his mistress’ slaves in 2.23 Shvarts incorporates: ‘Кто в любви терпелив, кто служанок подкупит’ (‘He who bides his time in love, who bribes your slave girls’).

Propertius complains frequently of Cynthia’s infidelities. In 3.7 Shvarts gives the other side of this, showing Kinfiia’s lack of pleasure, even pain, in behaviour Propertius perceives as frivolous. It echoes Propertius 3.8’s depiction of love as war, a common topos in love elegy. Propertius’ account of his and Cynthia’s violent fights and lovemaking ends with a message to the man she has gone off with: ‘If you have now been offered the chance of stealing a night, it is not because she loves you, but because she is vexed with me.’⁵⁸ This perhaps answers Kinfiia’s question at the beginning of the poem – what threw her into another man’s arms.

‘Kinfiia’ ends, fittingly, with Propertius bidding Kinfiia farewell. 3.10 takes themes of parting from various Propertius poems. It is similar to 3.21 in circumstance – Propertius running away from Cynthia to seek distraction from the pain of love – and tone: ‘you, sweetheart, however you have treated me, farewell!’⁵⁹ In both 3.21 and 1.17 (another escape from Cynthia) Propertius imagines his own death, but Shvarts’ Propertius’ letter to Kinfiia imagines her death, something Propertius only depicts once, in poem 4.7, as reality. Shvarts has her Propertius write ‘Пусть твое некогда столь любимое тело, / [...] / Станет пеплом / В золоте костра погребального’ (‘May your body, formerly so beloved, / [...] / Turn to ashes / In the gold of a funeral pyre’), echoing Propertius’ depiction of Cynthia’s ghost: ‘a pale shade vanquishes and escapes the pyre. [...] her dress was charred at the side, and the fire had gnawed at the familiar beryl on her finger’.⁶⁰ Kinfiia detects the hollowness of Propertius’ threat to join the legions, which is belied by the writing tablets (which feature in Propertius 3.23): ‘Пахнут устрицами таблички, / Жареным вепрем, вином сицилийским, духами.’ (‘The tablets smell of oysters, / Roasted wild boar, Sicilian wine, perfume.’) It is also belied by Propertius’ own

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 249.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 293.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 357.

poems, which often flaunt their unwarlike nature, and the elegiac poet's replacement of war with love; indeed, in 3.12 he remonstrates with a friend for leaving his girlfriend to go off to fight, as Shvarts' Propertius has threatened to do here.

Alongside individual poems' dialogue with Propertius, the three parts of the Kinfiia cycle respond to the narrative within the four books of elegies. Whereas Propertius' first words, 'Cynthia prima', act as a mission statement for the central theme of the book (which was, in antiquity, often simply called 'Cynthia'⁶¹), Shvarts' first words are 'Дай мне' ('Give me'), introducing Kinfiia and her personal, practical concerns as the prime focus, speaking from a position of power, in the imperative, and with Propertius mentioned only in passing and not by name. Like Propertius, Shvarts moves away from the theme of the elegiac relationship: most of the second book, especially poems 2-6, is conducted without reference to Propertius, or indeed to other elegiac poets. The departure of Propertius ends the cycle; although the poems present him as almost entirely extraneous, this suggests he is essential to Kinfiia's poetry, perhaps due to her and Shvarts' dependence upon Propertius for Cynthia's existence. Propertius' move away from Cynthia does not entail the end of his poetry: he renounces her at the end of Book 3 to continue to greater, more epic themes in Book 4; kills her off and brings her back as a ghost in 4.7 and larger than life in 4.8; and closes the collection in 4.11 with an epigraph in the voice of an altogether different woman, an exemplary Roman wife. Propertius' collection ends on this apparent non sequitur; whereas Shvarts' is circular, returning to the themes of the first poem in the final poem: military issues far from Rome, and its weather, which has progressed from storms to pearly pink clouds, signifying Kinfiia's final state of peace. This echoes the apparent closure in Propertius and Cynthia's textual relationship at the end of Book 3, with Propertius claiming: 'after being shipwrecked in a very Aegean sea of passion [...] lo, my garlanded ship has reached harbour'.⁶²

Despite the cycle's deep indebtedness to Propertius, 'Kinfiia' has more of a Catullan than a Propertian tone, due to its realism, its physicality, which is more often violent or unpleasant than erotic, and its frequent use of invective. 1.5 'Molodomu poetu' ('To a young poet') seems inspired by Catullus 14, which vituperates the 'curse of our time, appalling poets'; 22, ridiculing an untalented poet; 36, which attacks 'Volusius'

⁶¹ Propertius calls it this in 2.23: 'now that your famous book has made you a legend, and your 'Cynthia' is read all over the forum?' p. 171.

⁶² Propertius, p. 303.

Annals, paper crap'; and 105, which shows the Muses' violence towards the presumptuous poet threatened in 'Kinfiia', as well as the literal superiority of Muses to poet: 'Tool tries to scale the Mount of Pipla: / Muses with pitchforks throw him down.'⁶³ / 'Раз сдернул я туфлю с Музы, / Раз оцарапал я ей лодыжку. / Чтоб гнев богини мимо пронесся' ('Once I pulled the Muse's shoe off, / Once I scratched her ankle. / So the goddess' anger might pass over'). 1.8 'К provintsialke' ('To a provincial woman') shares themes with Catullus 41-3, insulting ugly women, and especially 69, which informs Rufus that the reason he cannot entice women to sleep with him is that he is too smelly. Shvarts even flaunts 'Kinfiia's Catullan influence. In 1.3 Kinfiia upbraids her slave girl for hurting her by stepping on her shadow, and threatens: 'Выдать замуж за кельтибера, / Что мочою себе зубы чистит' ('Marry you off to a Celtiberian / Who cleans his teeth with urine'). This detail is taken from Catullus' invective poems 37 and 39 in which he attacks the Celtiberian Egnatius, who is trying to take his place in Lesbia's affections. Two lines later, Kinfiia says 'Катулла я твердила' ('I was reciting Catullus') – implying that Kinfiia got the idea for the punishment from what she was reading. There are more metaliterary twists. In 2.32 Propertius presents Catullus' representation of his beloved as the model for Cynthia's behaviour: 'Lesbia has already done all this before her with impunity: Lesbia's follower is surely less to blame.'⁶⁴ Shvarts follows this precedent by basing Kinfiia's outrageous behaviour on Catullus' Lesbia, just as Propertius did with the original Cynthia. Propertius positions himself as a successor to Catullus in 2.34 by placing himself in the ranks of love poets, Catullus among them: 'such themes the verse of wanton Catullus also sang, which made Lesbia better known than Helen herself'.⁶⁵ At the beginning of this poem he addresses a rival thus: 'When alone, I am even jealous of my shadow, a thing without substance'.⁶⁶ So Shvarts' reference to Catullus encompasses a reference to Catullus in a Propertius poem which, like 'Kinfiia' 1.3, also treats the shadow as a semi-physical entity. Furthermore, in *Ars Amatoria* Book 3 Ovid instructs girls to learn how to behave by reading love elegy: 'let Sappho too be known (for who more wanton than she?), [...] and you should be able to read a poem of tender Propertius [...] or from the three books marked by the

⁶³ Gaius Valerius Catullus, pp. 17, 37, 141.

⁶⁴ Propertius, p. 203.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 209–11.

title of ‘Loves’ choose out what you may softly read with docile voice’.⁶⁷ Here Shvarts shows Kinfiia learning elegiac modes of behaviour by reading Catullus as Ovid suggests – just as Shvarts learned to portray Kinfiia by reading the Latin love elegists.

A prominent reference to Kinfiia’s non-Propertian forebears comes in the first poem, ‘К sluzhanke’ (‘To a slave girl’).

Все верещит попугай –
Жалкого жалкий подарок,
Задуши его быстро, рабыня.
Тельце зеленое после в слезах поплывет,
Буду тебя проклинать, но сейчас задуши поскорее.

The parrot keeps jabbering –
Pitiful present of a pitiful man,
Strangle him quickly, slave girl.
The little green body will swim in tears after,
I shall curse you, but now strangle him quick as you can.

This reference is to two famous deaths of pet birds in Latin love elegy. Lesbia’s sparrow has a short but glorious career, going from life to death in Catullus’ second and third poems; and Ovid memorialises Corinna’s parrot in *Amores* 2.6. Ovid does not show Corinna’s reaction to the death of her parrot, instead staging an over-the-top eulogy, concluding with the epitaph: ‘YOU MAY JUDGE FROM MY VERY MONUMENT MY MISTRESS LOVED ME WELL. / I HAD A MOUTH WAS SKILLED IN SPEECH BEYOND A BIRD.’⁶⁸ This uses the poet’s gift to his mistress, the speaking bird, as a metaphor for the poet himself (just as Catullus’ sparrow can be read as a metaphor for his penis⁶⁹). Kinfiia’s ire is provoked when the parrot begins to speak – the reverse of Corinna’s reaction to her parrot/poet. Thus Kinfiia’s rejection of the pitiful poet’s pitiful gift can be read as an opening rejection of Propertius himself and his poetry. There is a further rejection inherent in Kinfiia’s behaviour: of elegiac behaviour. Catullus’ poem on the death of Lesbia’s sparrow ends ‘her eyes are swollen and red from crying’. Shvarts gives a nod to this with ‘The little green body will swim in tears after’, but it is she who orders its death.

⁶⁷ Ovid, *The Art of Love, and Other Poems*, ed. by G. P. Goold, trans. by J. H. Mozley (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 141–43.

⁶⁸ Ovid, *Heroides; Amores*, ed. by G. P. Goold, trans. by Grant Showerman (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 403.

⁶⁹ Arguments for and against given by Julia T. Dyson, in *A Companion to Catullus*, ed. by Marilyn B. Skinner, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World. Literature and Culture (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Pub, 2007), p. 257.

Shvarts' opening display of Kinfiia's authority, power, and propensity for violence echoes the abnormal and unstable power dynamics that are central to Latin love elegy. Elegy's fundamental conceit is a subversion of traditional Roman gender roles: the male poet is enslaved to his *domina* – a transgressive situation.⁷⁰ Cynthia's caprice and cruelty are exaggerated in 'Kinfiia', most prominently in 1.2, where Kinfiia fantasises about throwing her nagging father to moray eels or lions to be eaten alive, but is ultimately merciful. The sort of violent cruelty she imagines is unusually masculine, unlike Cynthia's typical cruelties, as the former punishment was used by Vedius Pollio, and cited as an example of unacceptable cruelty by Roman historians,⁷¹ and the latter was popularly the prerogative of emperors. 'Kinfiia' upsets the gender balance of Latin elegy: whereas traditionally the mistress is written by the apparently servile male poet, who therefore ultimately controls her actions and voice, Kinfiia, as the putative poet, takes back that control. Her freedom is even greater than that of Propertius, as she is both poet and *domina*. 1.4 'Kupidonu' ('To Cupid') displays this: Kinfiia informs Cupid that he is no longer her master, and contemptuously dismisses him at the end. This is in stark contrast with Propertius' assessment of his servitude to Cupid in the opening of Book 1:

Cynthia first with her eyes ensnared me, poor wretch, that had previously been untouched by desire. It was then that Love made me lower my looks of stubborn pride and trod my head beneath his feet, until the villain taught me to shun decent girls and to lead the life of a ne'er-do-well.⁷²

Shvarts' unconventional depiction of Cupid is motivated by Propertius' portrait of Cupid in 2.12:

[In] me still stay his darts, his boyish appearance stays: but he has certainly lost his wings, since nowhere from my breast does he fly away, but at the cost of my blood wages constant war. What pleasure is it for you to lodge in my bloodless veins? For very shame, boy, shoot your arrows elsewhere!⁷³

Propertius' image of Cupid's arrows stuck in his chest and his veins drained of blood have prompted Shvarts' vampiric image of him as 'сосунок крылатый' ('wingèd suckler') at Kinfiia's throat, pulling at arrows firmly lodged in her chest – but she is

⁷⁰ Maria Wyke, *The Roman Mistress: Ancient and Modern Representations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 32–45.

⁷¹ Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. by H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (London: W Heinemann, 1940), III, pp. 212–15 (9.39); Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Moral Essays*, trans. by John William Basore, Loeb Classical Library (London: W Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass, 1928), I, pp. 348–49, 408–9 (De ira, 3.40; De clementia, 1.18).

⁷² Propertius, p. 39.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

more successful at resisting his attack. By ridding herself of the tyranny of love, the chain that binds the male Roman poets to their mistresses, Kinfiia prevails in this power dynamic as well. Thus she is in a dominant position in all three major power battles in Latin love elegy: between man and woman; beloved (mistress) and lover (slave); and writer and subject.

Shvarts thus ensures that her Kinfiia outdoes Propertius' Cynthia, who is ultimately merely a 'scripta puella' ('written girl'),⁷⁴ not a writing woman. Cynthia's character is fairly sketchily portrayed, and "endlessly adaptable by the poet because she is a projection of his desires and anxieties". Cynthia is

both an internal object (an element in the poetry) and an external object (an objectification of the poetry book and separable from it), forming an important part of Propertius' 'plot' (though never getting to write her own), and eventually becoming identified with the book itself.⁷⁵

However, Propertius does convey at least the illusion of a female voice. Cynthia is given speech, at length, in three poems: 1.3, where her haranguing of Propertius shatters his prior representation of her as a mythical heroine; 4.7, as a ghost, lamenting; and 4.8, where her harridan-like speech and actions are complicated by the fact that she was dead in the previous poem. Although these instances are few, far between, and not straightforward, they nevertheless constitute

a 'space' [...], an uneasiness in the representation of gender for both the author and reader, where the language seems to have more potentiality to be interpreted from many different perspectives, where the marginalized characters seem to be trying to 'speak', and where there are border challengings (voices speaking against the text).⁷⁶

It is this 'space' which Shvarts exploits. Yet she makes little apparent use of the only real female voice from Latin love elegy, Sulpicia, who actually did what Shvarts' Kinfiia purports to do:

a *puella*, rather than being silenced, actively speaks her own desire and, rather than being written, writes herself into Augustan love poetry. The female narrator [...] appropriates many of the discursive strategies employed by the male *ego* in the poems of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Propertius, p. 132 (2.10.8).

⁷⁵ Barbara K. Gold, in *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, ed. by Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin, Thinking Gender (New York; London: Routledge, 1993), p. 88.

⁷⁶ Gold, *ibid.*, p. 84.

⁷⁷ Wyke, *The Roman Mistress*, pp. 163–64.

This may be because she had not read her, or because there is so little of her poetry extant (and what remains is subsumed into the *Corpus Tibullianum*). Or it may be due to the fact that Sulpicia presents herself as independent-minded whilst in a position of dependence, and not as an elegiac *domina*, whose extremes of behaviour are so evident in Kinfiia:

Sulpicia is not represented in any of these poems as an abjectly lovelorn damsel [...] for a man, taking up a position of abjection (however sincerely) is not to lose his social status and dignity. Sulpicia insists on her control over the relationship, where her male counterparts insist on their lack of it. She is thus not imitating Tibullus or Propertius, and she is most certainly not playing at being Cynthia or Delia, since she makes no claim to be either sexually libertarian or even socially independent.⁷⁸

In Sulpicia's second poem she complains that her uncle and guardian Messalla is taking her to the country against her wishes; in the following poem she expresses relief that he has relented and allowed her to stay in the city. She has little influence over either decision. Kinfiia's imagined attack upon her father in 1.2, a figure who in Roman society was the ultimate authority in the life of an unmarried woman, may be a reaction against the position of dependency shown by Sulpicia. If not an intertext, Sulpicia may be a model for Shvarts.

Despite its extensive use of Latin love elegy, 'Kinfiia' is not totally immersed in its Roman context. 3.1 appears to make an anachronistic (if still classical) reference to Pompeii and the simultaneous total destruction and perfect preservation this represents:

Оставляя позади все толпы
Тающих, одетых, неодетых,
Гневных, и веселых, и печальных –
Будто город после изверженья
Равнодушно-дикого вулкана.

Leaving behind all the crowds of
Phantoms – fading, clothed, unclothed,
Wrathful, and merry, and sorrowing –
As though fleeing a city after the eruption
Of an indifferent and savage volcano.

The most cleverly encoded anachronism appears in the final poem, 3.10, in which (presumably) Propertius threatens to join the Fifth Legion, signified by a literal

⁷⁸ Stevenson, p. 41.

translation of its Gaulish name, Alauda, ‘lark’.⁷⁹ It was made up of barbarian Gauls,⁸⁰ so is equivalent to the French Foreign Legion: ‘Записываюсь центурионом / В легион Жаворонка’ (‘I shall sign up as a centurion / In the Gaulish Foreign Legion’). Such unobtrusive anachronisms are jokes shared only between Shvarts and the modern reader; they consign Kinfiia to the past – perhaps this is why there are only two of them, and why the second, more incongruous one, appears in the final poem, when Shvarts is leaving Kinfiia behind.

Anachorisms (inconsistencies of place – my coinage, from the Greek ‘χώρα’, ‘space’, ‘place’, ‘country’) reveal the hand of Shvarts even more frequently. Every so often in the poems a word or phrase will occur that is so fundamentally Russian that it causes the illusion of Ancient Rome to fracture momentarily, and to blur with the author’s reality, modern Russia. Such instances occur throughout the collection, and although the use of modern Russian words is unavoidable in poetry that aims to give the impression of the voice of a real Roman woman translated into Russian, certain of them intentionally disrupt the authenticity of the picture. Anachorism is a subtle yet important method through which Shvarts makes antiquity comment upon (Soviet) Russian modernity.

1.2 introduces anachorism through Kinfiia’s diction. The first verse is full of slang and typically Russian modes of speech:

Снова сунулся отец с поученьем:
– Надо жить, мол, не так, а этак.
– Хорошо, говорю ему, папа,
Больше этого не будет, папаша.

Again father stuck his nose in pontificating:
“You ought not,” he’s like, “to live this way, but that.”
“Fine,” I say to him, “Dad,
I’ll stop it at once, Daddy.”

The final verse repeats the word ‘тыща’, ‘thou’, a slang contraction of ‘thousand’. By giving them modern Russian speech, Shvarts reflects the dysfunctional and violent relationship within a Roman family back onto the relationships within Russian families. 1.7 addresses bacchantes: ‘Кобылицами несетесь вы степными’ (‘You

⁷⁹ M. C. Bishop, ‘Legio V Alaudae and the Crested Lark’, *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies*, 1 (1990), 161–64 (p. 161).

⁸⁰ Hans Delbrück, *Warfare in Antiquity*, trans. by Walter J. Renfro, Jr., 4 vols (University of Nebraska Press, 1990), I, p. 526.

gallop like mares on the steppe’). ‘Steppe’ relocates the bacchantes to the wilds of Russia, perhaps more suitable to their state than civilised Rome. In 3.2 Propertius turns up at Kinfiia’s house in a state, drunk and battered after a fight. Kinfiia reacts with typical Russian diction and in a typical Russian manner, veering swiftly from anger to pity to mothering:

Ах, тебя прогнать отсюда взáшей
Так бы мне хотелось – только жалко
Бедную сестрицу ту – любвишку,
Жалкую, но все-таки живую.
Поменяй же тогу, эта в пятнах,
Залечи царапины, умойся,
После серой окуришь от скверны.

Akh, how I’d like to throw you out
On your ear – only I feel sorry
For that poor little sister, love,
in a pitiful state, but alive, all the same.
Go and change your toga, this one’s all stained,
see to your scratches, get washed,
then fumigate yourself from the filth with sulphur.

The final line, ‘Видно, уж судьба моя такая...’ (‘Apparently, such is my fate...’), is a phrase from the Russian folk songs ‘Letiat utki’ (‘Ducks are flying’) and ‘Ne brani menia rodnaia’ (‘Do not scold me, dear mother’), in which the singer is ill-treated by her beloved but accepts it as a good Russian woman should. There is irony in this, as Kinfiia is far from the devoted, chaste girl who would normally sing such a song, but it fits the context of a woman wronged by her man. 3.6 combines modern Russian slang with a literal mythical event to create a pun: ‘Сделай, мастер, мне, – Пасифая Дедалу / Быстро шепчет, – ну, постарайся, телки / Сделай образ’ (‘“Master, make me,” Pasiphae to Daedalus / whispers quickly, “please, do your best to make me / a heifer outfit”); the word ‘heifer’ in Russian is slang for an attractive woman, thus also translating as ‘make me the image of a babe’.

Other anachoristic instances blur Ancient Rome not just with modern Russia, but specifically with St Petersburg. In the first poem Rome is rain-lashed; throughout the cycle Shvarts evokes the typically damp St Petersburg by waterlogging Rome. Although 2.1, about the Bacchanalia, contains the eminently Roman detail of the gardens on the Esquiline Hill created by Propertius’ patron Maecenas, ‘Все закрыты на просушку Эсквилинские сады’ (‘The Esquiline gardens are all closed to let them dry out’), these are Petersburgified, as Panchenko notes: “обыкновение закрывать сады на весеннюю просушку после снежной зимы указывает совсем на другой

город”⁸¹ (“the practice of closing gardens to allow them to dry out in the spring following a snowy winter points to another city entirely”). In 3.5 evil witches cause Rome to be submerged under a flood of apocalyptic proportions: ‘Город бьет волна сырая, / Заливает Рим и мир.’ (‘The dank tide batters the city, / Floods Rome and the Globe.’) Shvarts accentuates the connection with oft-flooded St Petersburg by invoking a famous Russian intertext: Pushkin’s *Mednyi vsadnik* (*Bronze Horseman*), the narrative poem about the floods caused by Peter’s hubris in founding St Petersburg on the Neva. Elements especially in common are the malign motivation behind the flood, personification of the waves (‘встает волна’, ‘the wave is rising’ / ‘Вставали волны’,⁸² ‘the waves were rising’), and madness of the hero (though where Evgenii drowns, Kinfiia swims). The ‘ведьмы злые’ (‘evil witches’) and ‘волны в окна бьются’ (‘waves are beating at the windows’) echo Pushkin’s ‘злые волны, / Как воры, лезут в окна’⁸³ (‘evil waves, / Like thieves, creep through the windows’). The parallel is heightened by the classical grandeur of flooded Petersburg, as Shvarts’ ‘Затопило площадь, форум’ (‘Drowned is the Square, the Forum’) brings to mind the flooded square where Evgenii climbs a column to survive. Kinfiia’s whispered ‘Дионисе!’ (“Dionysus!”) parallels Evgenii’s whispered threat against his tormentor Peter.

Just as Shvarts puts a lot of St Petersburg in her Rome, she puts a lot of herself in her Roman poetess persona. In the introduction to *Mundus Imaginalis*, the book containing the Kinfiia cycle, Shvarts explains her motivation for writing from Kinfiia’s persona:

Сочинение таких вещей, конечно, носит игровой характер и помогает по-новому взглянуть на привычное. Известный принцип остранения. Забавно перенести свою жизнь из России семидесятых как бы в древний Рим, все становится смешнее и красивее. Древний Рим послужил мне чем-то вроде девичьей или кухни – для сплетен и сведения счетов, стихи "от себя" такой возможности не дают.⁸⁴

Of course, composing such things carries a playful character and helps to take a new look at the familiar. The well-known principle of estrangement. It’s fun to transport your life from seventies Russia to Ancient Rome, as it were – everything becomes funnier and prettier. I used Ancient Rome as something like a powder

⁸¹ Panchenko.

⁸² Aleksandr Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1949), III, p. 292.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

⁸⁴ Elena Shvarts, ‘Neobiazatel’nye poiasneniia’.

room or a kitchen – for gossip and settling scores; poems ‘from yourself’ don’t give you that possibility.

In this introduction Shvarts connects her use of estrangement with theatricality, “говoreние из-под маски” (“speaking from under a mask”), a connection present in Shklovskii’s original theory.⁸⁵ Shvarts even compares herself to a theatre (evoked partly through masks) in ‘Pokhorony rifmy’⁸⁶ (‘Burial of rhyme’, 2006):

К стене приклеены две горбоносых маски
[...]
Он мой двойник, подобна я театру
В котором призраки твердят все ту же мантру.

Two hook-nosed masks are stuck to the wall
[...]
It is my double, I am like a theatre
In which phantoms repeat the same old mantra.

Shvarts had a lifelong association with the theatre: she essentially grew up in it, as her mother worked in the theatre all her life,⁸⁷ and often wrote plays. It is thus unsurprising that treating her poetry as a theatre would make it more comfortable for her to speak. Shvarts indicates that Kinfiia is not only an estranged version of herself, but also a mouthpiece through which she can speak freely, truly be herself.

Aspects of Shvarts’ biography pervade ‘Kinfiia’, especially the second half of book 2. 2.8 ‘Razgovor’ (‘Conversation’) is a philosophical exchange between Kinfiia and her Greek slave, in which she orders him to explain the meaning of time, aging, and mortality to her, because it is the eve of her 40th birthday. The poem was written in the year Shvarts turned 30, a milestone possibly inducing similar musings, prompting the poem. 2.4 ‘Klavdii – posle poseshcheniia bol’noi babki’ (‘To Claudia, after visiting my sick granny’) relates Kinfiia’s distress on seeing her grandmother, once ‘Столбом, подпирающим мирозданье’ (‘The pillar propping up all Creation’), so helpless. It probably refers to Shvarts’ great aunt (in Russian ‘двоюродная бабушка’, ‘grandmother once removed’) Berta; Shvarts says “она была мне и

⁸⁵ Boym, ‘Poetics and Politics of Estrangement’, p. 587.

⁸⁶ Shvarts, III, pp. 135–36.

⁸⁷ Dina Shvarts, *Dnevnik i zametki* (Sankt-Peterburg: Inapress, 2001). Of Elena’s early years Dina writes: “Я делила себя между нею и театром. Может быть, театра было больше, я отдавала ему все. Может быть, в ущерб ребенку.” (“I divided myself between her and the theatre. Perhaps the theatre was more, I gave it my all. Perhaps, to the detriment of the child.”) p. 267.

бабушкой, и папой, и няней”⁸⁸ (“she was grandmother, father, and nanny to me”). Berta lived with Shvarts almost all her life, helped her mother bring her up, and died in 1980,⁸⁹ two years after this poem was written. 2.6 and 3.1 chime with incidents related in the reminiscences of Martynova, in which she recounts a bar brawl that Shvarts was the leading and most successful participant in, and justifies the numerous occasions when Shvarts threw things at people: “Если она в кого-нибудь кидала бутылку, плевала, выплескивала вино – значит, он этого заслуживал” (“If she threw a bottle at someone, spat at them, threw wine over them – that means they did something to deserve it”).⁹⁰ 2.6 is about Kinfiia’s legendary temper, and she justifies herself for scalding a boy with soup, throwing a bust of Brutus at a client, and attacking guests with a pike. In 3.1 ‘девчонки по-спартански, молча, / Кулаком наотмашь взрослых били’ (‘gals, in Spartan fashion and in silence, / Would beat up the adults with swinging punches’); although the main reference is to Propertius 3.14 about Spartan girls, Shvarts uses a colloquial Russian word for ‘girls’, which reinforces the connection with her own disorderly behaviour.

The most telling connections between Shvarts and Kinfiia appear in Shvarts’ other poetry: for Shvarts has made Propertius’ Cynthia a poet, like her. In 3.1 Kinfiia imagines her life so far, her past up to the present moment, as a ‘свалка’ (‘rubbish heap’). In the eponymous ‘Svalka’, written in 1983, around the same time as ‘Kinfiia’ 3, a rubbish heap stands up and sings like an inspired poet. Two other poems, 3.3 and 3.4, also make references to alter egos of Shvarts, via Propertius. In 3.3 Kinfiia states: ‘Рыжей стать хочу – лисицей в поле’ (‘I want to become ginger – like a fox in the field’); dying her hair in disregard of Propertius (as discussed above) highlights Kinfiia’s changefulness, perversity, and wilfulness, which she has in common with Shvarts. Their changefulness is pertinent to the intertext, as the fox alludes to a persona within a persona: the Chinese fox invented by the Estonian poet invented by Shvarts in ‘Sochineniia Arno Tsarta’ (‘Compositions of Arno Tsart’, 1981-84). 3.4 ‘К Морфею’ (‘To Morpheus’) contains a reference to Shvarts’ most famous and prolific persona, the nun Laviniia, from ‘Trudy i dni Lavinii, monakhini iz ordena obrezaniia serdtsa’⁹¹ (‘Works and days of Laviniia, a nun of the order of the

⁸⁸ Elena Shvarts, *Sochineniia Eleny Shvarts*, 5 vols (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 2008), III, p. 200.

⁸⁹ Kirill Kozyrev, ‘Ot publikatora’, *NLO*, 2012

<<http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2012/115/kk25.html>> [accessed 3 March 2014].

⁹⁰ Martynova, ‘S nebes v nakazan’e na zemliu poverzhennyi’.

⁹¹ Shvarts, II, pp. 165–221.

circumcision of the heart', 1984). In 'Soblaznitel' ('Seducer') Lavinia is visited by an incubus; in 'K Morfeiu' this takes on a Roman tinge: 'Весталке в сон развратника ты плешь' ('You send a Vestal virgin a debaucher in her sleep'). This is simultaneously a reference to Propertius 2.29, in which Cynthia is 'off to tell her dreams to chaste Vesta, in case they were dreams to bring her harm or me',⁹² in keeping with the poem's subject – Kinfiia warning Morpheus not to send her bad dreams...or else. There are other echoes between Kinfiia and Lavinia. In 29 an old demon tells Lavinia 'Вы ловитесь на то же, что и все: / Вино, амур, ням-ням, немного славы.' ('You are caught by the same things as everyone else: / Wine, cupid, yum-yum, a little glory.') Not only are these aspirations particularly Propertian/Kinfiian, 'amur' ('cupid') appears also in 'Kinfiia' 1.6 'Klavdii' ('To Claudia'). Key repetitions between 1.1 'K sluzhanke' ('To a slave girl'), 'Жалкого жалкий подарок' ('Pitiful present of a pitiful man'), and 3.2, 'только жалко / Бедную сестрицу ту – любвишку, / Жалкую, но все-таки живую' ('only I feel sorry / For that poor little sister, love, / In a pitiful state, but alive, all the same'), echo Lavinia's outburst in 43 'Ognennyi urok' ('Fiery lesson'): 'Все плакалась и хныкала и ныла / Про жалкую и к жалкому любовь' ('I kept crying and snivelling and mewling / About my pitiful love for a pitiful man'). It is when Lavinia is emphasising her human side, open to temptation and sin, that she is closest to Kinfiia; equally, it is when Kinfiia is at her most compassionate and self-sacrificing (caring for Propertius in 3.2) that she is closest to Lavinia.

Shvarts' identification with Kinfiia as an alter ego draws on both Shvarts' life and her poetry, both Russia and Ancient Rome, both *byt* and transcendence. And Kinfiia would not leave Shvarts after she wrote the final 'Kinfiia' book, but would continue decades later to colour her view of both Rome and Russia, as the following section will reveal.

Rome

Shvarts' relationship with Rome develops through her life, a development palpable through her oeuvre. Amongst her earliest poems is 'Monolog lodki'⁹³ ('Monologue of a boat', 1963), which takes an unusual perspective on Julius Caesar – that of the boat

⁹² Propertius, p. 193.

⁹³ Shvarts, v, p. 227.

carrying him. The poem charts the influence of Caesar's charisma, as the boat first criticises Caesar's thirst for power, then begins to identify with Caesar's progression through war hosts and centuries as 'тоже через бурю. / И тоже носом' ('also through storms. / Also nose first'), and finally wishes to serve Caesar as his horse. 'Rasprodazha biblioteki istorika'⁹⁴ ('Sale of a historian's library', 1970s) likewise reacts to famous Roman historical figures and instances: Nero during the Fire of Rome, mad Caligula, and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium. Shvarts places them at 'центр мира' ('the centre of the world') – both in the sense that they are turning points in world (European) history, and that they populate the historian's books around her. (Kutik imparts the same opinion in his own style in his Roman poems – see especially p. 184 onwards.)

Shvarts' conflation of Rome with St Petersburg begins in 'Kinfiia', and extends into other poems. 'Chernaia paskha'⁹⁵ ('Black Easter', 1974) depicts her disillusionment upon discovering that St Petersburg is no longer an island of Western civilisation:

Я думала — не я одна, —
 Что Петербург, нам родина — особая страна,
 Он — запад, вброшенный в восток,
 И окружен, и одинок,
 [...]
 Но рухнула духовная стена —
 Россия хлынула — дурна, темна, пьяна.
 Где ж родина? И поняла я вдруг:
 Давно Россиею затоплен Петербург.
 [...]
 О Парадиз!
 [...]
 В тебе тамбовский ветер матерится,
 И окает, и цокает Нева.

I thought – not only me –
 That Petersburg, our homeland, was a special country,
 It was west, flung into the east,
 And surrounded, and lonely,
 [...]
 But the spiritual wall collapsed –
 Russia gushed in – bad, dark, drunk.
 Where is our homeland? And I suddenly understood:
 Petersburg was swamped by Russia long ago.
 [...]
 O Paradise!
 [...]

⁹⁴ Shvarts, I, pp. 13–15.

⁹⁵ Shvarts, II, pp. 77–83.

Inside you the Tambov wind swears,
And the Neva says its 'a's as 'o's and its 'ch's as 'ts's.

The linguistic degradation of the Petersburgers evokes the descent of Latin into the European languages after Rome's fall. The word she addresses Petersburg with, 'Paradiz', is the word Peter the Great often used to describe his city.⁹⁶ St Petersburg is called 'Paradiz' in a similar context of fallen perfection in 'Kak eta ulitsa zovetsia'⁹⁷ ('What this street is called', 1982). This loaded, latinate word suggests St Petersburg's neoclassicism, and Peter's westernising imperialism, modelled upon Rome. It is within a context of decline again that Petersburg's neoclassical setting provokes a merging of Russian and Roman historical figures. As Dostoevskii walks amongst 'Римских цезарей печальных жирный мрамор' ('Greasy marble of sad Roman caesars') in Pavlovskii park in 'Kh'iumbi'⁹⁸ ('Humbe', 1982) he says: 'Вот Нерон. Я был Нероном. / И еще я буду, буду.' ('Here's Nero. I was Nero. / And shall be again, I shall.') Shvarts conflates Dostoevskii with his most famous character, Raskol'nikov, and his delusion of becoming a Napoleon; but Dostoevskii, as if incorporating his own profession, chooses instead an emperor who considered himself an artist.

As a result of *perestroika*, in 1989 Shvarts was permitted to travel abroad for the first time.⁹⁹ 'Dva nadgrobiia' ('Two gravestones') in 'Stikhi o Germanii'¹⁰⁰ ('Poems about Germany', 1990) depicts a legionary dying in Oppidum Ubiorum (modern-day Cologne) while the Roman Empire crumbles, then contrasts this scene with a modern gravestone. Beyond it the German Democratic Republic has just ceased to exist, signalling the crumbling of Soviet Russia's empire: 'За спиной оседает, как снежная баба / Империя наша. / Нету Рима, но нету Германии тоже.' ('Behind us our empire founders / Like a snowman. / Rome is no more, but neither is Germany.') Martynova calls the poem a 'сейсмограмма'¹⁰¹ ('seismogram') for its prescience, or its perception of the inevitability of the USSR's fall. Later, in 'Stambul ne pal, ne pal Konstantinopol'¹⁰² ('Istanbul has not fallen, nor has Constantinople',

⁹⁶ Baehr p. 9 n. 31.

⁹⁷ Shvarts, I, p. 135.

⁹⁸ Shvarts, II, pp. 125–33.

⁹⁹ Michael March, in Sarah Clovis Bishop, 'In Memoriam: Elena Andreevna Shvarts (17 May 1948–11 March 2010)', *Slavonica*, 16.2 (2010), 112–30 (p. 124).

¹⁰⁰ Shvarts, I, pp. 224–30.

¹⁰¹ Ol'ga Martynova, 'V lesu pod kel'nom', *Novaia kamera khraneniia*

<<http://www.newkamera.de/martynova/omartynova12.html>> [accessed 30 April 2015].

¹⁰² Shvarts, I, p. 324.

1996), Shvarts uses the imperial connotations of the Third Rome myth (see p. 15) to make it a metonym for the USSR and its collapse:

Стамбул не пал, не пал Константинополь,
А с грохотом расшибся третий Рим,
На дне морей, под изумрудной коркой
В его развалинах, в золе горим.

Istanbul has not fallen, nor has Constantinople,
But the Third Rome has come crashing down,
On the bottom of seas, under their emerald crust
In its ruins, in ash we burn.

The name of the collection this poem appears in, *Zapadno-vostochnyi veter* (*West-East Wind*), points to the theme of the power shifts and tug of war between East and West, applicable both to the fall of Rome and to the fall of the USSR. The title also suggests the liminality of Russia regarding Europe and its classical heritage. Another poem in the same collection, ‘Preryvistiia povest’ o kommunal’noi kvartire’¹⁰³ (‘Discontinuous story about a communal flat’, 1996) uses Rome in a very similar context, with similar wording, apparently to signify this same political collapse:

Вода превратилась в пламень,
Мы заперты и горим.
Храм наш давно сгорел,
Ныне сгорает Рим.

Water has turned to flame,
We are sealed in and we burn.
Our temple burned down long ago,
Now Rome is burning down.

Like ‘Chernaia paskha’, the poem implies the culpability of atheist, iconoclastic Communism in the collapse not only of Russia but of Russia’s culture; it implies a parallel between Christianity’s defeat of paganism and Communism’s abolition of Christianity, and a causal link to the subsequent falls of the respective empires.

More textured representations of Rome come in later poems that deal with Shvarts’ personal connection to the city. She spent the winter of 2001-02 in Rome,¹⁰⁴ and her ‘Rimskaia tetrad’¹⁰⁵ (‘Roman notebook’) chronicles her time there; half of its 14 poems involve classical reception, indicating the extent to which Rome was not just a modern city to her, nor even just the seat of the Catholic Church, but a place imbued

¹⁰³ Shvarts, II, pp. 153–64.

¹⁰⁴ Martynova, ‘S nebes v nakazan’e na zemliu poverzhennyi’.

¹⁰⁵ Shvarts, III, pp. 43–51.

with its classical past. ‘Sad villy Medichi’ (‘Medici villa garden’) conveys Shvarts’ wonder of living in such a historic spot:

В центре Рима, в центре мира
В тёмном я жила саду.
[...]
И стеной Аврелиана
Этот сад был огражден.
Здесь ее ломали готы,
Здесь они врывались в Рим,
То есть это место крови.

In the centre of Rome, in the centre of the world
I lived in a dark garden.
[...]
And by the Aurelian walls
That garden was enclosed.
Here the walls were ruptured by goths,
Here they burst into Rome,
So this is a place of blood.

Towards the end of the poem Soviet Russia amusingly and incongruously intrudes: ‘похожая на колхозницу статуя богини Рима.’ (‘statue of a goddess of Rome like a *kolkhoznitsa* [female collective farmer]’). She plays humorously upon Rome’s status as the Eternal City in ‘Zabastovka elektrikov v Rime’ (‘Electricians’ strike in Rome’): ‘Вдруг вечный мрак и вечный город / Облобызались, расходясь.’ (‘Suddenly the eternal gloom and the eternal city / Kissed as they parted.’) ‘Circo Massimo’ conveys most strongly Shvarts’ sense that Rome is haunted by its classical past. The poem begins firmly in the present, but gradually immerses itself in the past. Shvarts comes to the ruined Circus Maximus, and imagines it trying to continue its original function at night in its broken and darkened state, with ghostlike chariots bound never to reach the *metae*. She addresses a poisoned Caesar, probably Claudius, and urges him not to drink from the cup of the Circus, which was described at the beginning as filled with dark, as if stagnant water. It is this, the inevitable ruin the future brings, that is the real poison. ‘Rim kak budto varvar-gladiator’ (‘Rome like a barbarian-gladiator’) imagines the impact her time in Rome will have. Shvarts is a gladiator defeated (captured) by the gladiator Rome in the Circus: ‘Рим как будто варвар-гладиатор / Цепь накинул на меня стальную’ (‘Rome like a barbarian-gladiator / Threw a steel chain onto me’). She expresses her willingness to die (remain in Rome), but the crowd (both ‘plebs and senate’) wish her to live (continue her life in St Petersburg). Her love for Rome is presented as a dangerous, powerful force; the alternative, her native city, is far less compelling, and far more feared, as it

is described sibilantly as ‘северное страшное сиянье’ (‘frightful northern light’). Her return is made seemingly without her volition, as she is turned into ‘самолетную снежинку’ (‘an airborne snowflake’), thrown back to the frozen north.

Rome certainly proved to have a lasting impact on Shvarts. Three late poems (as well as ‘Blagodarenie’, ‘Thanksgiving’, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, p. 75) remember Rome, and confirm that it was Ancient Rome in particular that captivated Shvarts. The first line of ‘Vospominanie o Rime’¹⁰⁶ (‘Remembering Rome’, 2009) takes a natural image of lack of volition, paralleling that at the end of ‘Rim kak budto varvar-gladiator’, to express the fatedness of her visit to Rome: ‘Меня, как сухую ветвь, / К Риму долго несла река’ (‘Like a dry branch, / The river long carried me to Rome’). The second couplet casts Shvarts as Romulus/Remus. She drinks the milk from the wolf that hangs over Rome, its stomach blue and bottomless like the sky. Drinking it makes her a Roman, and ‘Обломок жизни моей / Прилепился к руинам Рима.’ (‘A fragment of my life / Adhered to the ruins of Rome.’) She again conflates St Petersburg and Rome in ‘Vospominanie o reanimatsii s vidom na Nevy techen’e’¹⁰⁷ (‘Remembrance of reanimation with a view onto the Neva’s flow’, 2009). She imagines herself drowning in the Neva, in which moment she sees herself as Romulus: ‘Я в ней как будто Ромул утопала, / А вместо Рема ерзала беда.’ (‘I was drowning in it like Romulus, / And instead of Remus misfortune squirmed.’) The poem’s thematic doubling (life and death, twins Romulus and Remus) facilitates the doubling of St Petersburg and Rome.

Shvarts returns to Kinfiia after a two-decade hiatus in ‘Zhaloba Kinfiia’¹⁰⁸ (‘Kinfiia’s complaint’, 2006; for translation see p. 304). Elsewhere the poem is called ‘Zhaloba rimlianina’¹⁰⁹ (‘A Roman’s complaint’), which emphasises its focus upon Rome and heightens the closeness of Kinfiia and Shvarts’ perspectives. Ostensibly about Rome, its lament for the sack of Rome could apply to the passing of the cultured Russia Shvarts knew, whilst its reference to fire brings to mind the fire that destroyed her flat in 2004: ‘Чем виноват соловей — что в эпоху лесного пожара / Довелось ему сгинуть в огне?’ (‘Is the nightingale to blame, if in the epoch of forest fire / It chances to perish in the flame?’) The poem has an atemporal quality: at times the

¹⁰⁶ Shvarts, V, p. 30.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁰⁸ Shvarts, III, pp. 140–41.

¹⁰⁹ Elena Shvarts, ‘Stikhi’, *Novaia kamera khraneniia*
<http://www.newkamera.de/shwarz/escwarz_o8.html> [accessed 8 September 2016].

poet is distanced from events, both temporally and stoically; at others, the poet is corporally very present, but not within her own persona; and despite references to trams and jeeps, which abruptly relocate the poem to modernity, the setting remains unclear. To an even greater extent than 'Kinfiia', the poem exists on two planes simultaneously: Ancient Rome and contemporary Russia. Alaric is both the king of the Goths who sacked Rome in 410 AD¹¹⁰ and a vulgar New Russian: 'Новый Аларих ведет войско джипов своих' ('New Alaric leads the war host of his jeeps'). The decline of art is both that which took place in Europe in the Dark Ages following the fall of Rome and that which is taking place in Russia following the reinstatement of capitalism:

Варваров новых язык
[...]
Седую бедною мышкой
Искусство в норку забилося,
Быстро поэзия сдохла
Будто и не жила.

The tongue of new barbarians
[...]
Poor grey mouse
Art hid cowering in a burrow,
Poetry quickly dropped dead
As if it had never lived.

The poet is both Roman Kinfiia and Russian Shvarts.

Archetypal Poets

Shvarts' explorations of poethood in 'Kinfiia' connect most evidently with her inquiry into the state of being a poet in other poems when she takes classical figures as models of poethood. These are Dionysus, Apollo, Pythia, Orpheus, and Eurydice. All are archetypes of an aspect of the poetic process. And all have been received as such within Russian literature, particularly that of the Silver Age, meaning that Shvarts' reception of these figures comes through the prism of poets whom Shvarts viewed as archetypes of Russian poetry in their own right.

¹¹⁰ Cancik and Schneider, 'Alaricus', *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 423–24.

Dionysus features most frequently – Shvarts’ Dionysus must have a Russian source: the Silver Age and its embrace of Nietzsche (see p. 32), in particular by Viacheslav Ivanov and Tsvetaeva. Ivanov saw Dionysus as “our barbarian, our Slavic god” (the cult of Dionysus originally moved to Rome from the East), and he “linked Russia’s Christian character with its Dionysian roots, finding in the dissolution of self he associated with Dionysus a central feature of the Russian character.”¹¹¹ So the Dionysus in ‘Kinfiia’, while possessed of certain Propertian echoes, is fundamentally Russian.

Dionysus always features in Shvarts’ poetry together with themes fundamental to her poetics: violence, madness, alcohol, self-harm, and self-sacrifice, especially with respect to women and for the sake of inspired poetry; theatricality, playing roles, wearing masks; death and rebirth, Christ, spring; death and decay; Apollo. Dionysian rites are the subject of two ‘Kinfiia’ poems, 1.7 and 2.1; Kinfiia also invokes Dionysus in 3.5, at a time when she is perceiving the world in all its immensity, in a state of inspiration between magic and madness. Shvarts’ Dionysus is a dark god, and consistently so – the Dionysus of ‘Kinfiia’ is no exception, even though in Propertius Bacchus is an overwhelmingly benign god (often his name is simply a metonym for wine), invoked as the inspirer of his poetry and linked with Cynthia.¹¹² In Propertius he goes exclusively by the Roman name Bacchus, and in Shvarts exclusively by the Greek name Dionysus (although she does write of ‘bacchantes’). Yet in Ivanov’s essay ‘Religiia Dionisa’ (‘Dionysus’ religion’) he constantly stresses the importance of sacrifice to Dionysus, and elsewhere he sees Dionysus’ sacrificial nature as inspiring poetry – this view is the source of Shvarts’ Dionysus’ darkness.¹¹³

Kinfiia’s self-harming reaction to bacchantes in 1.7 is not like Cynthia’s hymning and dancing or her maenadic fury. But it does correspond with a moment in Propertius 2.22: ‘все руки / Расцарапаны – в крови до локтя... / [...] / На себя ты страсть обрушить можешь’ (‘my arms / Are all scratched – bloodied up to the elbow... / [...]

¹¹¹ Kalb p. 147.

¹¹² 1.3 Bacchus/wine is in playful collusion with Love/Cupid; 2.30 Cynthia circle dances with the Muses around Bacchus as Propertius’ joint inspirations; 3.2 Propertius compares himself to Orpheus, and Bacchus and Apollo favour his poetry; 3.8 approvingly compares Cynthia with a Maenad, seeing in her madness proof of her love; 3.17 addresses Bacchus: Propertius promises to devote himself and his poetry to Bacchus if he will release him from his love and servitude to Cynthia; 4.1 Bacchus is Propertius’ chosen patron; 4.6 Apollo yields his place inspiring Propertius’ poetry to Bacchus, as Propertius moves from epic back to elegiac. The only exception is 3.22, Propertius’ ideal Rome is without raging bacchantes.

¹¹³ I am indebted to Pamela Davidson for this observation.

/ On yourself you can unleash your passion’) / ‘Why does a man gash his arms with ritual blades and maim himself at the mad rhythms of the Phrygian piper?’¹¹⁴ This refers to the cult of Cybele, whose followers castrated themselves in a parallel gender reversal to that of bacchantes.¹¹⁵ Cybele is linked with maenads in Catullus 63, the story of Attis’ madness and self-castration, implying that these are the contrasting fates of male and female followers; after Attis’ gender becomes uncertain he wonders if his only option is to become a maenad. (Catullus also depicts a more ominous Bacchus than Propertius: his impending arrival to rescue Ariadne in 64 is only heralded by the clamour of his followers’ instruments.) So by not succumbing to the socially sanctioned ecstatic escape from normal gender roles offered by Bacchus, Kinfiia here paradoxically takes on a male role again, inflicting suffering on herself like a man driven mad by Cybele rather than a woman driven mad by Bacchus.

Kinfiia describes the bacchantes’ frenzy in 1.7 with a significant simile: ‘И съезжали набок ваши лица, / Будто бы с плохих актеров маски.’ (‘And your faces slipped down on one side, / Like masks on mediocre actors.’) Masks suggest Dionysus himself:

The mask was Dionysus’ favourite attribute, not only an accessory that recalled his involvement with and patronage of the theatre but a metaphor for his own character, so much so that he was often worshipped in the form of a mask. The mask was a symbol of his slippery character – his ability to change his shape, to appear and disappear. It commemorated his many epiphanies and disguises, his ever presence, while simultaneously making clear his equally numerous departures and absences.¹¹⁶

The theatrical elements in 1.7 point to Shvarts’ use of a Greek play, Euripides’ *Bacchae*, from which she appropriates her scene of bacchantes tearing apart a bull.¹¹⁷ Shvarts’ emphasis upon the association of Dionysus and masks with the theatre also emphasises her bond with the god through her close personal connection with the theatre (discussed above, p. 100). Masks are symbolic of Shvarts’ poetic style, as she characterises her frequent use of personae in theatrical terms:

¹¹⁴ Propertius, p. 165.

¹¹⁵ Cancik and Schneider, ‘Galli’, *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 668–69.

¹¹⁶ *Role Models in the Roman World: Identity and Assimilation*, ed. by Sinclair Bell and Inge Lyse Hansen, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volume, 7* (Ann Arbor: Published for the American Academy in Rome by the University of Michigan Press, 2008), pp. 238–39.

¹¹⁷ Panchenko points out the similarities to lines 743–7 of Annenskii’s translation of *Bacchae*, *Vakchanki*, and the importance of Shvarts’ use of masks and peeking, both part of ancient tragedy. Panchenko.

“загримированность, говорение из-под маски, переодетый (или перерожденный) автор”¹¹⁸ (“stage make-up, speaking from under a mask, the author disguised (or reborn)”). These definitions recall Dionysus, who was twice-born, and in some traditions dies and is reborn.¹¹⁹ Shvarts’ conflation of faces and masks plays upon their inherent ambiguity: “in Greek *prosopon* might be used for both face and mask, and [...] in Latin *persona* can mean mask, assumed character, or a ‘real’ person”.¹²⁰ It is also a metatextual comment on Kinfiia’s somewhat precarious position within the text. If joining Dionysus leads to masks slipping, then Shvarts is at risk of being revealed: Kinfiia resisting the urge to join the bacchantes could reflect Shvarts’ need to maintain control over her persona.

‘Kinfiia’¹²¹’s other Dionysian poem, 2.1, foregrounds Dionysus Zagreus, the aspect of the Dionysian myth that focuses on his death and rebirth: ‘Я забвенью, полусмерти научусь у Диониса, / Очищает только смерть. Умирай же вместе с богом, / [...] / Ты воскреснешь чистым, юным – воскресит тебя Загрей’ (‘I shall learn oblivion, half-death from Dionysus. / Death alone can purify. Die together with the god, / [...] / You will rise from the grave pure, young – Zagreus will resurrect you’). Despite the Roman setting of the Bacchanalia, this version of Dionysus has a highly Christian colouring, influenced not just by Shvarts’ own religiousness, but also by the prevailing reception of Dionysus within the Russian tradition and without. The classical identification of Zagreus with Dionysus is uncertain; and the Christ-like Zagreus myth that Shvarts draws on is post-Christian, a nineteenth/twentieth-century scholarly invention.¹²² This Christ-like Dionysus was taken up by Russian Symbolists, especially Ivanov. In Merezhkovskii’s *Voskresshie bogi. Leonardo da Vinchi (Resurrected gods. Leonardo da Vinci)* it is revealed that Dionysus and Christ are one.¹²³ The Symbolists’ understanding of Dionysus is influential upon ‘Kinfiia’ 2.1: through death and rebirth Dionysus offers redemption, and dissolution of self – Ivanov’s Christian ideal of *sobornost’*.¹²³ Shvarts conflates the Christian and pagan Dionysus again by linking his rebirth and renewal with spring:

‘Равноденствие, и в чанах сада квасится весна’ (‘Equinox, and in the garden’s vats

¹¹⁸ Elena Shvarts, ‘Neobiazatel’nye poiasneniia’.

¹¹⁹ Cancik and Schneider, ‘Dionysus’, *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 496–509.

¹²⁰ Bell and Hansen, p. 242.

¹²¹ Radcliffe Edmonds, ‘Tearing Apart the Zagreus Myth: A Few Disparaging Remarks on Orphism and Original Sin’, *Classical Antiquity*, 18.1 (1999), 35–73 (p. 37 nn. 6, 66).

¹²² Rosenthal, in Rosenthal, p. 82.

¹²³ Rosenthal, p. 21.

spring is brewing'). Christ's death and rebirth became linked with the pagan festival of spring, Easter, which is easily connected with Dionysus' probable function as a fertility god, as he was represented and worshipped in cult by phalli.¹²⁴ Ivanov connected Dionysus with pagan spring in 'Trizna Dionisa' ('Funeral feast of Dionysus').

Other poems display a similarly Christian Dionysus. 'Kostroma-Dionis'¹²⁵ ('Kostroma-Dionysus', 1980) equates the slavic goddess of spring, Kostroma, with Dionysus, calling her 'Славянский тихий Дионис' ('Slavic quiet Dionysus'). In the course of the poem she dies and is resurrected like Christ; the poem's choruses end with an epithet usually associated with Christ, 'Царь царей' ('King of kings'); by the end the slavic gods are lessened as they have been replaced by Christianity. 'O tom, kto riadom'¹²⁶ ('About the one who's nearby', 1981) accuses God of fulfilling a bestial desire to kill a god, and juxtaposes the cries of grief over Christ's death with the phonally similar bacchanalian ecstatic cries: 'УВЫ! ЭВОЭ! УВЫ!' ('Woe! Euhoe! Woe!') This links both Christ's death and rebirth with Dionysus', and his killing with maenadic frenzy. The section 'Vesnoi mertvye riadom' ('In spring the dead are near') from 'Martovskie mertvetsy'¹²⁷ ('March corpses', 1980) deals with the Leningrad Blockade. The spring thaw, customarily bringing renewal, here brings revelation of death. Shvarts combines the idea of contrasting death and springtime rebirth with Dionysus in Christ's usual role: 'И все-таки могучий Дионис, / Обняв за икры Великий Пост' ('And yet mighty Dionysus, / Clasping the Lenten fast by its calves'). Lent, or the 'Great Fast' in Russian, becomes the Blockade's starvation: Shvarts interprets it as a darker, distorted version of normality, just as she substituted Dionysus for Christ.

'Svalka' ('Dump') in 'Letnee Morokko (natura culturata)'¹²⁸ ('Summer Morocco (natura culturata)', 1983) is an ode to a rubbish heap, which she sees as Dionysus dismembered: 'Ты – Дионис, разодранный на части' ('You are Dionysus, dismembered into pieces'). She uses the same adjective to speak about Dionysus in

¹²⁴ *Masks of Dionysus*, ed. by Thomas H. Carpenter and Christopher A. Faraone, Myth and Poetics (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 1.

¹²⁵ Shvarts, I, pp. 114–15.

¹²⁶ Shvarts, II, pp. 96–101.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 102–8.

¹²⁸ Shvarts, I, pp. 164–76.

‘Podrazhenie Bualo’¹²⁹ (‘Imitation of Boileau’, 1971): ‘В его разодранном размере, где Дионис живет’ (‘In his dismembered metre, where Dionysus lives’). In both, Dionysus represents her poetic voice, the brokenness and (metrical) disorder that inspires her poetry. In ‘Svalka’ this repellent aspect of Russian *byt* is empowered and given a voice through poetry – reminiscent of and in partial contradiction¹³⁰ to Akhmatova’s famous lines in ‘Tainy remesla’¹³¹ (‘Secrets of craft’):

Мне ни к чему одические рати
[...]
Когда б вы знали, из какого сора
Растут стихи.

I’ve no use for odic war hosts
[...]
If only you knew from what rubbish
Poems grow.

The rubbish heap’s at first shaky speech takes place in spite of the forces still trying to dismember it, in the figure of the crow, anthropomorphised into a Roman dictator, Sulla: ‘Ворона медленно на свалку опустилась / И вот она идет надменнее, чем Сулла, / И в цепкой лапе гибель или милость’ (‘A crow descended slowly on the dump, / See, it struts more haughtily than Sulla, / And in its vicelike claws – death or mercy’). This suggests the power of authoritarian rulers over poetry, a phenomenon Russia and Rome held in common. The final line invokes the heap as ‘O rosa mystica’, after a Catholic miracle, but follows this with ‘тебя слышат боги’ (‘the gods will hear you’), returning to paganism.

As with her other Christ-like Dionysuses, the death and decay the rubbish heap contains become a force for rebirth and renewal; the decay, literal and graphically described, becomes poetry:

Все в разложение соединяя, грея.
Большую мысль процвети, и гной
Как водку пей, и ешь курины ноги.
Зашевелись, прекрасная, и спой!

Unifying, warming all in decay,
May you bloom with great thoughts, and drink

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 40.

¹³⁰ Perhaps intentionally, since after their ill-fated meeting Shvarts was not a fan of Akhmatova. Shvarts, III, pp. 190-92.

¹³¹ Anna Akhmatova, *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova* (Somerville: Zephyr Press, 1990), II, pp. 154-56.

Pus like vodka, and eat hens' feet.
Rise up, my beauty, and sing!

The 'chicken drumsticks'/'hens' feet' seem to allude to Baba Yaga's magic hut on hens' feet, appropriately to the dump standing up and walking. Dionysus' association with alcohol is suggested by 'водку пей' ('drink vodka'). 'Gorbatyi mig'¹³² ('Hunchbacked moment', 1974) makes a similar connection in an ode to bottles she is taking to be refilled. Whilst waiting for alcohol she senses God's presence, who takes the alcohol and decay and transforms it into beauty. This transformation is repeated as the crowds' troubles become fertile ground for inspired poetry: 'вся тоска уйдет в навоз, / Чтоб дивный сад на нем возрос / Для Диониса и для Муз.' ('all our pain will go away into manure, / So a marvellous garden grows from it / For Dionysus and the Muses.') 'Dva aspekta'¹³³ ('Two aspects', 1979) also stages the transformation of death and decay into Dionysian poetry:

В зрелости и разложения пьянящем соку
Юным уснешь, а проснешься со смертью в боку,
[...]
Но хмельные прорастут из меня слова,
Как из щелей дионисовой лодки – лозы

In the intoxicating juice of ripeness and decomposition
You'll fall asleep young and wake up with death in your side,
[...]
But heady words will grow out of me,
Like vines out of the cracks of Dionysus' boat.

Decay and aging are seen as inherent to alcohol; alcoholic language in turn imbues the description of Shvarts' inspired, ecstatic words. The poem draws upon the story in the *Homeric Hymn* 7 to Dionysus of the god's attempted kidnapping by Tyrsenian pirates; Shvarts perhaps has in mind also the *Homeric Hymn*'s final line: 'Hail, child of fair-faced Semele! He who forgets you can in no wise order sweet song',¹³⁴ since under the influence of Dionysus Shvarts sings/creates poetry.

Dionysus and Apollo are combined by Shvarts in multiple poems. Shvarts' presentation of the two gods together has its origin in Nietzsche, whose Apollonian/Dionysian polarity was popularised in Russia by the Symbolists (see p. 32), especially Ivanov, who linked the two gods in poems such as 'Poetu' ('To the

¹³² Shvarts, II, pp. 71–76.

¹³³ Shvarts, I, p. 107.

¹³⁴ Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, trans. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White (London: Heinemann, 1914), p. 433.

poet'). Also significant for Shvarts' reception of the Nietzschean Dionysus and Apollo is Tsvetaeva's reaction to Nietzsche in terms of "the poet's sacrificial element".¹³⁵ Shvarts' perception of poetic inspiration as an act of violence against the poet, requiring self-sacrifice, is evident in all her poems invoking Dionysus or Apollo. 'Lestnitsa s dyriavymi ploshchadkami'¹³⁶ ('Stair with holey landings', 1978) places Apollo and Dionysus together as the earth's veins of inspiration. Shvarts portrays the gods equally, mirrored within the lines, working in tandem, towards a single aim – reforming a human being into a genius capable of receiving their inspiration, via a violent desecration of the individual:

Аполлона это жилы, это вены Диониса,
 Вживе вживленные в жизнь.
 Аполлон натерся маслом, Дионис натерся соком,
 И схватили человека – тот за шею, тот за мозг,
 Оборвали третье ухо, вырезали третье око,
 Плавят, рвут его как воск,
 Но сияющий, нетленный,
 Равноденственный, блаженный

They are Apollo's veins, they are Dionysus' venae,
 Alive enlivened into life.
 Apollo rubbed himself with oil, Dionysus rubbed himself with juice,
 And they seized a person – this one by the neck, that one by the brain,
 They ripped out a third ear, carved out a third eye,
 They melt and tear him like wax,
 But shining, incorruptible,
 Equinoctial, blessed.

Both 'Podrazhanie Bualo' and 'Elegiia na rentgenovskii snimok moego cherepa'¹³⁷ ('Elegy on an X-ray of my skull', 1973) show the poet physically destroyed by their contact with, in the former, Dionysus, in the latter, Apollo:

Поэт есть глаз [...]
 мгновенье связанный с ревуцим Божеством.

Глаз выдранный — на ниточке кровавой,
 на миг вместивший мира боль и славу.

The poet is an eye [...]
 for an instant linked with a roaring Deity.

The eye is torn out – on a bloody thread,

¹³⁵ Ute Stock, *The Ethics of the Poet: Marina Tsvetaeva's Art in the Light of Conscience* (MHRA, 2005), p. 25.

¹³⁶ Shvarts, I, pp. 69–94.

¹³⁷ Shvarts, I, pp. 28–30.

which for a moment contained the world's pain and glory.

Флейтист хвастлив, а Бог неистов —
Он с Марсия живого кожу снял.
И такова судьба земных флейтистов,
И каждому, ревнуя, скажет в срок:
«Ты меду музыки лизнул, но весь ты в тине,
Все тот же грязи ты комок,
И смерти косточка в тебе посередине».
Был богом света Аполлон,
Но помрачился —
Когда ты, Марсий, вкрут руки
Его от боли вился.
И вот теперь он бог мерцанья

The Flautist is boastful, and the God frenzied —
He flayed Marsyas alive.
And such is the fate of earthly flautists,
And to each he will jealously say in their turn
“You have had a lick of the mead of music, but you are wholly in mire,
You are still that selfsame lump of dirt,
And the kernel of death is in your middle”.
A god of light was Apollo,
But he grew gloomy —
When you, Marsyas, wound round
His hand from pain.
And so now he is a god of glimmering.

Shvarts' Apollo is transformed from a purer source of inspiration into one as dark and dangerous as Dionysus. This is against the traditional divide between the two modes of inspiration:

Whereas Apollo and the muses confer their gifts on man through a vertical hierarchy of patronage (the artist may invoke them in order to receive their gifts, but may not imitate them), the Dionysian paradigm of inspiration allows man to merge with the god, to enter the state of intoxication which brings about inspiration. The fairly passive and upward-looking hierarchy of receiving a divine gift is replaced by an active descent into chaos.¹³⁸

However, Ivanov merged Apollo and Dionysus in the figure of Orpheus, who “represents the God-Word”;¹³⁹ while Shvarts' merging of the two is therefore not unprecedented, her representation of the pairing is less idealised than Ivanov's. Through his *hubris* Marsyas aspired to parity with Apollo, yet through the god's violence a merging between god and man comes about, and Apollo becomes polluted, closer to man and hence closer to Dionysus.

¹³⁸ Davidson, in Davidson, *Russian Literature and Its Demons*, pp. 134–35.

¹³⁹ Davidson, in Davidson, *Russian Literature and Its Demons*, p. 137.

Apollo's association with violent and sacrificial inspiration continues in Shvarts' representation of Pythia, the Delphic oracle inspired by Apollo. 'Zemlia, zemlia, ty esh' liudei'¹⁴⁰ ('Earth, earth, you eat people', 1981) portrays death as a source of inspiration: 'Земля, земля, ты ешь людей, / Рождая им взамен / Кастальский ключ' ('Earth, earth, you eat people, / Giving birth, instead of them, / to the Castalian spring'). The Castalian Spring was closely associated with both Apollo and Pythia, as it lay outside Apollo's sanctuary, where Pythia presided, and was used for purification.¹⁴¹ 'Kolodets-dub'¹⁴² ('Well-oak', 1994) treats a similar theme, a hollow oak with a spring through it. Shvarts represents the damaged, hypnotic, magical, disturbing oak through a filter of Pushkinian references:

И я кругами там ходила
 Как кот прозрачный и ученый
 И думала: сей дуб есть образ
 Безумца, пифии, пророка.

And I walked round in circles there
 Like the transparent and learned cat
 And thought: this oak is the image
 Of madman, pythia, prophet.

The 'oak' and 'learned cat' allude to Pushkin's 'Ruslan i Liudmila' ('Ruslan and Liudmila' – to which Kutik also alludes in a classical context; see p. 177), which is narrated by a cat chained to an oak; while the final word 'prophet' conjures up Pushkin's 'Prorok' ('The Prophet'), which depicts poetic inspiration as torture inflicted by an angel. Placing Pythia in this company suggests she is maddened and enslaved by inspiration; this final line retroactively casts the poem as Shvarts' view of poetic inspiration. 'Pifiia'¹⁴³ ('Pythia', 1992) begins with a colloquial address to the oracle from a suppliant asking for knowledge: 'Деушка, деушка' ('Girly, girly'). She is upside-down as a conduit from heaven to earth, spewing water like the spring. Her message is apparently Christian, about Judgement Day, reminiscent of the religious tinge of 'Prorok' and Shvarts' readings of Dionysus as Christ. The information she is inspired to give is ultimately fatal to her:

Утонула она – потому что тесна
 Водопаду, что в горле спит.

¹⁴⁰ Shvarts, I, p. 155.

¹⁴¹ J. N. Coldstream, in P. E. Easterling and J. V. Muir, *Greek Religion and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 96.

¹⁴² Shvarts, I, p. 304.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

[...]
«Мне тяжело – через воронку
Переливают океан».

She drowned – because she was too tight
For the waterfall asleep in her throat.

[...]
“It’s hard for me – they are decanting
An ocean through a funnel”.

These ominous depictions of Pythia as a model of poetic inspiration are repeated in ‘Kinfiia’ 2.7 ‘Na pliazhe v Baii’ (‘On the beach at Baiae’). It is filled with images of decay and death, rather than the holiday frolics associated with Baiae. This is because Kinfiia, as an inspired poet, is under the influence of Apollo, like Pythia:

Вечно бледной пифией в лихорадке
Вдыхать испарения злые
И вцепляться в невидимое, как собака
В кус вцепляется, головой мотая...
Но послушна я велению бога,
Шьющего стрелой золотые песни.

To be perpetually a pale pythia, fevered,
Breathing in baleful vapours
And grabbing on to the unseen, just as a dog
Grabs on to a scrap and shakes its head...
But I am obedient to the bidding of the god
Who sews golden songs with his arrow.

Apollo is recognisable from his famed shooting, described in Propertius 4.6: ‘For this feat did Actian Apollo win his temple, that each arrow he launched sank ten ships.’¹⁴⁴ Just as Propertius has Apollo change his bow for a lyre in the following line, here the arrows are transformed into the poetry he sends Pythia. He stands in stark contrast to the maddened yet faithful oracle/dog/poet. The Baiae landscape blurs with that of Delphi, its caves and vapours, which are unseen yet tangible:

Я иду – на плечах моих пещера
Тяжелым плащом повисла,
И невидимый город Дельфы
Дышит зловеще.

I walk; from my shoulders the cave
Hangs heavy like a cloak,
And the unseen city Delphi
Exhales ill omens.

¹⁴⁴ Propertius, p. 355.

The fatal ending makes it clear again that Shvarts' Pythian model of poetic inspiration is a tortured one.

'Lestnitsa s dyriavymi ploshchadkami' also contains a reference to Orpheus, whose poetic gifts, like Shvarts' other classical models of inspiration, are characterised by a joint communion with aethereal divinity and chthonic death. Orpheus is linked thematically to the poem's earlier merging of Dionysus and Apollo (see above, p. 115) by a configuration of the poem's 'stair' structure as a descent into the classical underworld near the beginning of the poem:

Я опущусь на дно морское
[...]
Я слышу [...]
визги пьяных Персефон,
И разъяренный бас Деметры.

I sink to the seabed
[...]
I hear [...]
shrieks of drunken Persephones,
And the enraged bass of Demeter.

(The combination of stairs to the underworld and Persephone and Demeter is reminiscent of the opening of Barskova's 'Kidneping'; see p. 259.) In the section 'Laif-vita' ('Life-vita') Shvarts sees Orpheus before her in her 'dark hole': 'плещет руками, / по ребрам скачет Орфей.' ('Orpheus claps his hands, / skitters over my ribs.') Orpheus here could symbolise inspiration; or Shvarts could be imagining herself as Eurydice. Both interpretations are corroborated by Shvarts' rewriting of the Orpheus myth in 'Solntse spuskaetsia v ad'¹⁴⁵ ('The sun descends into hell', 2002); she highlights the revisionary character of the poem by titling the section 'Orfei opiat' spuskaetsia v ad' ('Orpheus descends into hell again') and situating Orpheus amongst other classical examples of descent into the underworld, Persephone, Odysseus, and the Dioscuri (as in 'Lestnitsa s dyriavymi ploshchadkami'). When Orpheus reaches the underworld he finds Eurydice is a salamander, and swallows her to try to carry her out; once back in the land of the living she burns inside him:

Странный ожог терзал его сердце
С тех пор –
Там

¹⁴⁵ Shvarts, III, pp. 6–11.

Прозрачною ящеркой
Ты, Эвридика, плясала.

A strange burn has torn at his heart
Since then –
There
A transparent lizard
You, Eurydice, have danced.

This parallels Orpheus' skittering over Shvarts' ribs in 'Laif-vita', and similarly evokes poetic inspiration. 'Orfei'¹⁴⁶ ('Orpheus', 1982) stages a dialogue between Orpheus and Eurydice as he is leading her out of the underworld. He is alarmed by the inhuman sounds coming from behind him, and Eurydice warns him: 'Знай, что пока я из тьмы не вышла, – / Хуже дракона.' ('Know that until I have emerged from the dark, / I am worse than a dragon.') Nevertheless, he turns round, and is terrified by the sight. In Shvarts' version it is not the fact that Orpheus turns round that causes him to lose Eurydice, but that he does not recognise her:

– Нет, сердце твое не узнало,
Меня ты не любишь, –
С улыбкою горькой змея прошептала. –
Не надо! не надо! –
И дымом растаяла в сумерках ада.

"No, your heart did not recognise me,
You do not love me,"
Whispered the serpent with a bitter smile.
"Don't! Don't!"
And she melted like smoke in the twilight of hell.

Unlike the powerlessness of the mythical Eurydice, Shvarts' Eurydice makes the active choice not to follow Orpheus further.

Shvarts' representations of Eurydice as a salamander/serpent correspond with various self-representations. The epigraph to a section of 'Lestnitsa s dyriavymi ploshchadkami' contains the phrase '*стань саламандрой снова*' ('become a salamander again'), which Shvarts enacts: 'И вспыхнул мой язык, как от бензина, / Спасаясь от тебя – я убегу огнем.' ('And my tongue blazed up, like from petrol, / Saving myself from you, I shall flee aflame.') The salamander, or poetry, burns her up tongue first, just as Orpheus' heart is burnt by the salamander Eurydice in 'Solntse spuskaetsia v ad' (above); this makes Eurydice a representation of poetry. 'Salamandra' ('Salamander', 2001) addresses the salamander living within

¹⁴⁶ Shvarts, I, pp. 153–54.

her heart. And her life-summary poem ‘Stikhi o Gore-Zloschast’e i beskonechnom schast’e byt’ mechennoi Bozh’ei rukoi’¹⁴⁷ (‘Poems on Grief-Ill-fortune and the endless joy of being marked by God’s hand’, 2004) states:

А теперь я сделалась головней,
Говорящей
И танцующей на хвосте,
Как змея.

But now I am become a firebrand,
Speaking
And dancing on my tail,
Like a serpent.

The dancing snake-like firebrand Shvarts is very close to the dancing lizard-like salamander/serpent Eurydice. It responds to a real event – the fire in her apartment on 30th March 2004 – by attempting to recover past themes and personae (including Kinfiia), fragments of herself otherwise lost in the flames.¹⁴⁸

Shvarts displays a confused attitude towards Orpheus and Eurydice, as she conflates them and identifies with them both as emblems of inspiration. ‘Solntse spuskaetsia v ad’ is subtitled ‘Hommage à Hölderlin’. Hölderlin frequently treated classical mythological subject matter, as Shvarts does here, and was a great influence on Tsvetaeva,¹⁴⁹ for whom Orpheus was a major theme; Shvarts is almost certainly alluding to both poets here. A starting-point for Shvarts’ unusual depiction of Orpheus could be Tsvetaeva’s. Tsvetaeva also used a Sibyl (the Cumaean rather than the Pythian) as a paradigm for poetic inspiration, and although Orpheus was a key poetic role model for her, due to his defining qualities of self-sacrifice and confronting death,¹⁵⁰ her gendered approach to self-sacrificial poetic creation puts Orpheus second to the Sibyl:

On the strength of *eros* Orpheus penetrates forbidden space. On the strength of self-surrender the Sibyl finds new existence within herself. [...] these conventional views that oppress the woman in day-to-day life are transformed by Tsvetaeva into marks of the woman’s unarguable ascendancy in the transcendent realm of poetry. [...] Orpheus’s translation of his physical longing for Eurydice

¹⁴⁷ Shvarts, III, pp. 81–85.

¹⁴⁸ Shvarts, V, pp. 61–62. This diary entry of 23.4.2004 describes the burning of her early photographs as ‘Будто самая главная часть тела сгорела’ (‘As if the most important part of my body had burnt away’).

¹⁴⁹ Hasty, p. 135.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

into disembodied song is but an approximation of what the Sibyl [...] achieve[s].¹⁵¹

For Shvarts' rewriting of the Orpheus myth in 'Solntse spuskaetsia v ad', Eurydice is made an active force, symbolising poetry as much as Orpheus does. Shvarts both merges the couple and responds to them from Eurydice's perspective, furthering Tsvetaeva's gendered reading. Orpheus is feminised both by conflation with Eurydice, and by the parallels of his situation with Pythia, as the spirit of Eurydice enters him, causing both pain and inspiration. In 'Orfei' the mythical power of the male gaze is broken, as Eurydice both endures it and judges it flawed, remaining in the underworld by choice.

Both Orpheus and Pythia are connected with the dark, sacrificial, 'Dionysian' side of inspiration. Orpheus has been described as "the fusion of the radiant solar enlightenment of Apollo and the somber subterranean knowledge of Dionysus",¹⁵² and Shvarts said that her 'Lavinia' cycle was "written in the spirit of sacred Dionysian madness, just as Pythia at Delphi in Greece uttered 'dark' words".¹⁵³ Apollo for Shvarts is differentiated from Dionysus only by his attributes, and is just as violent a source of inspiration. In the poetry of her persona Lavinia, Shvarts "exceeded even Tsvetaeva in imagining a poetic world sustained by violence, self-sacrifice, and the capacity of female worshipers to open themselves up to divine possession and to aesthetic ecstasy."¹⁵⁴ The same is true of Kinfiia's reactions to Dionysus in 2.1 and 3.5, and Apollo in 2.7; she even shows awareness of the danger of surrendering to Dionysus in 1.7. The classical models of inspiration to whom Shvarts responds – Dionysus, Apollo, Orpheus, Eurydice, and Pythia – all inflict or suffer the cost of self-sacrifice for poetic inspiration.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁵² Walter A. Strauss, *Descent and Return: The Orphic Theme in Modern Literature* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 18.

¹⁵³ Clovis Bishop, p. 123.

¹⁵⁴ Stephanie Sandler, 'Introduction: Poetry at Heaven's Edge', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 51.4 (2007), 668–74 (p. 672).

‘Homo Musagetes’

‘Khomo musaget’¹⁵⁵ (‘Homo Musagetes’, 1994; for translation see p. 305) features most of these figures, but stars the classical Muses as its inspiration-bringers. It opens with an epigraph taken from Horace’s *Ode* 3.4: ‘Vester, Camenae, Vester...’ Thus begins a nine poem intertextual dialogue with Horace, conducted by Shvarts via diffuse and frequently tangential allusions to Horace’s *Odes* (often refracted through Mandel’shtam; see section on Mandel’shtam, particularly p. 45). Horace is a rare figure in Shvarts’ poetry, appearing elsewhere only in ‘Dve satiry v dukhe Goratsiia’¹⁵⁶ (‘Two satires in the spirit of Horace’, 1978), which, as advertised, are only ‘in the spirit’ of Horace, containing no direct Horatian references – and almost no classical references – beyond the title. Shvarts’ use of Horatian references in the cycle is distanced and far from positive, so that the ultimate effect of her Horatian reception in ‘Khomo musaget’ is, paradoxically, to question the relevance of the classical world and its literature to Shvarts and her poetry in 1990s St Petersburg. The epigraph framing the cycle thereby becomes more of a question than a statement: ‘Yours, Muses, am I yours?’

In ‘Khomo musaget’ the nine Muses dance their way into the deepening winter of 1994 towards Shvarts in St Petersburg. From the beginning they call to her to join their dance as their tenth, a call Shvarts steadfastly refuses. In the first poem the Muses begin their circle dance; the second recounts the death of Pan; in the third Shvarts sacrifices to them; in the fourth Shvarts dreams of sailing in Orpheus’ head as it floats down the Hebrus; the fifth begins with bees menacing her and ends with nine stars striking her on the temples; through the sixth Pythia hiccups madly; in the seventh the Muses resurrect a frozen sparrow; in the eighth – the first poem located in St Petersburg – they attempt to inspire a tramp; and in the ninth poem they enter a cathedral and bow before an icon. The cycle has a clear momentum: into Russia, into the cold of winter, towards old age and death, away from Greco-Roman paganism and towards Christianity, from classical antiquity and the classical world into Russian modernity.

¹⁵⁵ Shvarts, II, pp. 63–70.

¹⁵⁶ Shvarts, I, pp. 64–68.

The title ‘Khomomusaget’ takes the epithet usually given to Apollo, ‘musagetes’, or ‘leader of the Muses’,¹⁵⁷ and applies it instead to ‘man’, ‘homo’. This gives the first indication within the cycle of the demise of the pagan gods, as ‘man’ has taken Apollo’s place. Shvarts makes no attempt to render its Latin in Russian, lending it an exotic flavour: both words are obviously transliterations (‘musaget’ was pre-existent but rare¹⁵⁸). The ‘homo musagetes’ of the title is presumably Shvarts, as she draws the Muses to her, albeit unwillingly. Horace frequently depicts Apollo Musagetes, often in the context of his pride in his identity as a Latin, specifically Apulian, poet. *Carmen Saeculare* gives an Apollo Musagetes¹⁵⁹ who is ‘acceptus[] novem Camenis’¹⁶⁰ (‘dear to the nine Camenae’ – specifically Italian Muses¹⁶¹), and Horace at 4.6.25-30 connects Apollo’s leadership of the Muses with his inspiration by/as the Daunian (Apulian) Camena. Shvarts’ chosen epigraph (3.4.21) is preceded by a depiction of Horace as a child in Apulia (3.4.6-20) and followed by a manifestation of Apollo Musagetes¹⁶² (3.4.60-4). Horace’s appropriation of Apollo Musagetes for himself and his native region is repeated by Shvarts in her cycle, first in her transliterated title, then in her seemingly paradoxical subtitle, ‘Зимние Музы’ (‘Winter Muses’), and then in her translation¹⁶³ of the epigraph, ‘Я ваш, Музы, я ваш...’ (‘I am yours, Muses, yours’), substituting the more familiar ‘Muses’ for ‘Camenae’.

The epigraph signals the significance of *Ode* 3.4 in motivating ‘Khomomusaget’. Fourth of the six Roman Odes at the beginning of Book 3, addressing contemporary politics and morality from Horace’s guise of *sacerdos Musarum* (3.1), in more

¹⁵⁷ Alex Hardie, ‘Etymologising the Muse’, *Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici*, 2009, 9–57 (p. 48).

¹⁵⁸ In a footnote to the seventh poem she cites Goethe’s *Die Musageten*, which may be her original source for the word. Other possible sources include Stravinskii’s ballet ‘Apollon musagète’, or the Russian Symbolist publishing house *Musaget*.

¹⁵⁹ Michael C. J. Putnam, *Horace’s Carmen Saeculare: Ritual Magic and the Poet’s Art* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 87–88.

¹⁶⁰ Horace, *Odes and Epodes* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 266.

¹⁶¹ Cancik and Schneider, ‘Muses’, *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 322–25.

¹⁶² John F. Miller, ‘Horace’s Pindaric Apollo (Odes 3.4.60-4)’, *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 48.2 (1998), 545–52 (p. 551).

¹⁶³ Most published Russian translations retain ‘Camenae’, translating the phrase ‘Я ваш, Камены, ваш’, e.g. Goratsii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by S. V. Chistobaev (St Petersburg: Biograficheskii institut ‘Studiia biografika’, 1993), p. 110; Goratsii, *Ody. Epody. Satiry. Poslaniia.*, ed. by M. L. Gasparov (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo ‘Khudozhestvennaia literatura’, 1970), p. 134; Goratsii, *Ody*, trans. by N. I. Shaternikov (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo ‘Khudozhestvennaia literatura’, 1935), p. 94.

serious tone and elevated style, 3.4 gives the “fullest statement of his devotion to the muses”.¹⁶⁴ Shvarts takes her cue in bringing the Muses to St Petersburg from Horace’s imagined inspired travels in *Ode* 3.4.21-36, which culminate in Scythia:

Yours, Camenae, yours, I am raised
into the high Sabine Hills,
[...]
As long as you are with me, gladly
[...]
I shall see the quiver-bearing Geloni,
and, unharmed, the Scythian stream.¹⁶⁵

Shvarts’ quotation is doubly ironic, as Shvarts contradicts both Horace’s vatic pose, his wish for the Muses’ company, and his claim that Scythia is safe.

The nine poems in Shvarts’ cycle equal the number of classical Muses (first catalogued in the proem to Hesiod’s *Theogony*¹⁶⁶). Whilst the Muses’ spheres of artistic influence are indicated etymologically within their names,¹⁶⁷ the assignation of specific genres to each Muse, begun somewhat unsystematically by Greek lyric poets,¹⁶⁸ only rigidified in late antiquity.¹⁶⁹ So although by Horace’s time poets could “already play with the idea that different Muses had different provinces [...], the assignment of provinces was still vague”.¹⁷⁰ Horace rarely differentiates his Muses by genre,¹⁷¹ instead following his Greek predecessors in “indifference”, as he “sometimes speaks vaguely of ‘the Muse’ [...] and sometimes of a particular Muse”.¹⁷² However, Shvarts is informed by the later categorisation of the Muses, and many of the nine poems correspond thematically with individual Muses’ purviews.

The first poem is under the aegis of Terpsichore, the Muse of dancing, and it starts with the weather itself dancing, ‘Ветер подъямлет кругами’ (‘The wind, circling, rises’), which then merges with the circle dance of the unseen Muses. Their circle

¹⁶⁴ Steele Commager, *The Odes of Horace: A Critical Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 17.

¹⁶⁵ My translation.

¹⁶⁶ Alex Hardie, p. 9.

¹⁶⁷ Alex Hardie.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁹ Horace, *Odes Book IV; and Carmen Saeculare*, ed. by Richard F. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 123.

¹⁷⁰ R. G. M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 283.

¹⁷¹ R. G. M. Nisbet and Niall Rudd, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 377.

¹⁷² Nisbet and Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace I*, p. 282.

dance is the first in a string of allusions to Mandel'shtam, specifically to 'Na kamennykh otrogakh Pierii', which longs "for a golden age of humanity, now irretrievably lost"¹⁷³ – the central theme of Shvarts' cycle. Although they have drawn the elements into their dance, Shvarts herself refuses to join them:

Не тяните меня, Музы, в хоровод,
Я устала, я сотлела.
Не во что ногою топнуть –
Под ногами топлый плот.
Я уже вам не десятый,
И уже не мой черед.

Do not pull me, Muses, into the circle dance,
I'm tired, I'm burnt out.
There's nothing to tap my feet on –
Underfoot is a sodden, sinking raft.
I am no longer your tenth,
And it is no longer my turn.

Shvarts must have been aware of Sappho's reputation in antiquity as the tenth Muse,¹⁷⁴ so she is refusing the position of the most prominent ancient female poet. Sappho also forms part of the intertext of these lines with 'Na kamennykh otrogakh Pierii':

Водили музы первый хоровод
[...]
Бежит весна топтать луга Эллады,
Обула Сафо пестрый сапужок¹⁷⁵

The Muses led the first circle dance
[...]
Spring runs to trample the meadows of Hellas,
Sappho has donned her motley boot.

Yet while Mandel'shtam looks back to the spring of world culture, Shvarts sets her poem in its winter, turning his images to decay.

Whilst reluctance to dance is against the spirit of *Odes* Books 1-3 (1.37 uses similar phrasing in an exhortation to dance: 'Now let us thump the ground with unfettered feet!¹⁷⁶), and Shvarts' agedness contrasts sharply with the child Horace in 3.4, her refusal is entirely in keeping with *Odes* Book 4, which opens with a similar *recusatio*,

¹⁷³ Taranovsky, p. 84.

¹⁷⁴ *Greek lyric, Volume 1: Sappho, Alcaeus*, ed. by David A. Campbell (Cambridge, Mass.: London: Harvard University Press W. Heinemann, 1982), p. 48 (Plato, Anth. Pal. 9.506).

¹⁷⁵ Mandel'shtam, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, pp. 147–48.

¹⁷⁶ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, p. 93.

using a late return to love to symbolise Horace's return to lyric after a long interruption, after *Ode* 3.30 had crowned his lyric career apparently for good. Love, a key Horatian theme, is almost entirely absent from 'Khomomusaget', and where it does appear, it is conflated with death. Shvarts' *recusatio* is followed by a reference to Aphrodite: 'Вертишейкою распятой** / Закружили в колесе. // **
Вертишейку, распятую в колесе, приносили в жертву Афродите.' ('A crucified wryneck** / Has been spun in a wheel. // ** Wrynecks, crucified on a wheel, used to be brought as a sacrifice to Aphrodite.') The love charm is ominous: the nymph Iynx, who reputedly invented the charm, ended up being turned into a wryneck herself, and in another version she and her sisters enter a music contest with the Muses and are transformed for their hubris.¹⁷⁷ It also introduces the suggestion of a Pagan/Christian clash. The dead wryneck could be a distortion of Horace's doves in 3.4, which are similarly associated with Venus.¹⁷⁸ It could also be a riff upon Mandel'shtam's 'На свадьбу всех передушили кур' ('For the wedding all the chickens have been strangled').

The couplet is preceded by a sudden *locus amoenus*, a total dislocation from the windy back courtyard of the first verse: 'Пахнет льдом, вином и мятой, / Травы горные в росе.' ('Scent of ice, wine, and mint, / Mountain grasses in the dew.') It recalls the setting Horace describes whilst invoking Calliope in 3.4.7-8: 'a sacred grove, through which delightful streams and breezes wander.'¹⁷⁹ It adapts Mandel'shtam's 'мед, вино и молоко' ('honey, wine, and milk'), replacing warm-weather, Greek 'honey' with 'ice', and 'milk' with 'mint', which is connected with death in another Mandel'shtam poem Shvarts references elsewhere in 'Khomomusaget', 'Voz'mi na radost' iz moikh ladonei'. The contrast with the original underscores how out of place the Muses are in their sandals. Despite their unsuitable footwear for the cold, at the end of the first verse their singing and dancing seems to create heat. And the description of them in the final verse emphasises their colour and energy, but more so their dangerous, hypnotic power:

Музы кружатся, как бусы
Разноцветные, – пестрей!
И одна из них как прорубь,
А другая как Орфей.
И одна из них как морфий,

¹⁷⁷ W. Geoffrey Arnott, *Ancient Birds from A to Z* (Routledge, 2007), pp. 118–19.

¹⁷⁸ Nisbet and Rudd, p. 61.

¹⁷⁹ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, p. 153.

А другая как Морфей.
И одна как сон тягучий.
А другая – сноп огней.

The Muses spin, like beads
Multicoloured – yet more motley!
And one of them is like a hole in the ice,
Yet another is like Orpheus.
And one of them is like morphine,
Yet another is like Morpheus.
And one of them is like clinging sleep,
Yet another is a sheaf of fires.

The following poems pitch this power against Shvarts' will and the cold Russian winter; the fact that there are only nine poems hints that Shvarts' resolve not to become the tenth Muse holds firm.

The second poem is Calliope's. Its (condensed) epic subject matter supports this, and Calliope herself appears at the end of the poem: 'С первую порошей, по ледку босая / С черно-красным камнем первая бредет.' ('With the first dusting of snow, barefoot over frost / With her black-red stone the first goes wandering.') Again, the barefoot Muse is out of place in the winter's first snow, and the depiction is very different from that of Horace in 3.4: 'Descend from heaven, Queen Calliope, and come, sing a lengthy song with the pipe or, if you prefer, with your clear voice alone, or with the strings and lyre of Phoebus.'¹⁸⁰ Instead of playing or singing living music she carries a stone (perhaps a tablet inscribed with an ancient epic?). However, the poem does open with an acclamation to the Muses, albeit more informal than Horace's: 'Музы! Девушки! Зима уж навалилась. / Снег под кожей – где флейта, где тимпан?' ('Muses! Girls! Winter has truly closed in upon us. / Snow under skin – where's the flute, where's the timpani?') Shvarts imitates a Horatian metre (albeit irregularly): the Third Asclepiad. This was used by Horace in odes 3.10 and 4.5 (amongst others), both of which refer to the Scythian cold; this may have partly motivated her choice of metre for the first of several poems in 'Khomomusaget' which really emphasises the cold.

Winter is not a natural element for Horace. In seven odes which describe or mention winter, only one, 1.9, describes a winter which is entrenched; all of the others describe winters which are passing: four (1.4, 1.11, 4.7, 4.12) are about spring or fleeting seasons, one is historical (1.2), and one (2.10) is metaphorical. Horace

¹⁸⁰ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, p. 153.

deeply dislikes winter: in 2.10 he calls winter ‘ugly’,¹⁸¹ and in 1.9 it is to be combatted by staying indoors, lighting fires, drinking wine, and leaving everything to the gods. Most crucially, Horace links the end of winter with the coming of song and dance: ‘the meadows are no longer white with hoar frost. Now Cytherean Venus leads the dancers as the moon hangs overhead, and the lovely Graces, hand in hand with the Nymphs, beat the ground with one foot after the other’ (1.4.4-7). Shvarts’ winter is no place for the Muses and their Horatian poetry; already in the second poem their plans are going awry: ‘С верткой поземкой вы впервой явились / С углями в ладонях... или заблудились?’ (‘With the twisting blizzard you first appeared / With coals in your palms... or have you lost your way?’) The coals reference Pushkin’s ‘Prorok’, where a burning coal is placed in the chest of the poet by an angel; the Muses are similarly seeking to force inspiration upon someone.

The death of the pagan gods, implicit in the title, is confirmed at this point: ‘Сгнули, как Пан? // Моряки-эгейцы на недвижном море / Услыхали голос: – Умер Пан!’ (‘Vamoosed, like Pan? // The Aegean sailors on the becalmed sea / Heard a voice: “Pan is Dead!”’) Shvarts’ telling of Pan’s death comes from Plutarch’s *De defectu oraculorum*, related specifically as an instance of a god dying: ‘As for death among such beings’.¹⁸² Shvarts then follows Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poem *The Dead Pan*¹⁸³ in connecting this with the fall of all the classical gods, and subsequent lines compress a section of *The Dead Pan* each. ‘Вздох слетел с вершины, солнце побелело’ (‘A breath gusted down from the mountain peak, the sun turned pale’) reworks Barrett Browning’s relation of the original pronouncement in verse 24:

When a cry more loud than wind,
Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
From the piled Dark behind;
And the sun shrank and grew pale,
Breathed against by the great wail,—
“Pan, Pan is dead.”

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁸² Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. by Frank Cole Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library (London: New York: W. Heinemann Ltd.; G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1936), v, p. 401.

¹⁸³ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1890), III, pp. 280–93. I have been unable to ascertain if a translation of *The Dead Pan* was available in Russia when Shvarts wrote ‘Khome musaget’ in 1994, but as this was after Shvarts began to travel abroad, she could have gained access to Barrett Browning in English, if not in Russian.

‘В мареве Олимп пропал’ (‘In a haze Olympus fell’) paraphrases her description of the dead gods on Olympus in verse 4:

Or lie crushed your stagnant corpses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun? –
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

‘Только Музы живы’ (‘Only the Muses are alive’) responds to Barrett Browning’s description of the Muses’ reaction in verse 12:

Ha, Apollo! floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands,
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?

Shvarts leaves as subtext the connection that Barrett Browning makes overtly, between Pan and Christ, whose death(s) kill the ‘false’ pagan gods. The gods’ deaths may explain why in this poem Calliope seems lost, aimless, possibly deranged.

The third poem is Erato’s, the Muse of lyric and erotic poetry. A bee, a Horatian motif characteristic of Pindaric lyric, appears here for the first time, and love is mentioned for the first and only time. It begins with a libation to the Muses in the winter snow:

Вот выпал первый снег.
Багровое вино
В сугробы возливая,
Чтобы почтить озябших Муз
И дикие стихи
На свечке сожигая

So, the first snow has fallen.
Libating blood-red wine
Onto the snowdrifts
To honour the frozen Muses
And burning wild poems
Over a candle.

Odes 1.19, 1.31, 3.8, and 3.18 depict wine as part of a sacrifice to the gods; 1.31 is possibly a direct source for Shvarts, with Horace asking for poetry in his old age: ‘What boon does the bard ask of the newly consecrated Apollo? What does he pray

for as he pours a libation of new wine from the bowl? [...] may I have an old age that is not lacking in dignity or bereft of music.¹⁸⁴ In 1.16 Horace invites his addressee to burn his invective poetry (albeit not in sacrifice). Shvarts' first verse ends with an overtly Horatian image: 'Я Смерти говорю: / Пчелой в тебя вопьюсь.' ('I say to Death: / As a bee I will suck of thee.') This alludes to Horace's 'Pindaric' *Ode* 4.2: 'I, in manner and method like a Matine bee that with incessant toil sips the lovely thyme around the woods and riverbanks of well-watered Tibur, fashion in a small way my painstaking songs.'¹⁸⁵ Shvarts has distorted the citation, from one of pleasant, humble poetic industry, Horace's acknowledgement of indebtedness to his predecessors, the Greek lyricists, into a challenge to Death, which by analogy indicates that Shvarts' reception of Horace (like Horace's reception of Pindar's bee from *Pythian* 10.53-4) is a kind of feeding upon death. This bee and the later bees also interact with Mandel'shtam's use of the motif; in 'Na kamennykh otrogakh Pierii' he compares the Muses and their circle dance to bees: 'Чтобы, как пчелы, лирники слепые / Нам подарили ионийский мед.' ('So that, like bees, blind lyrists / Gifted us Ionian honey.')

In the poem's middle verse Shvarts anthropomorphises death:

О, как она бывает рада,
 Когда ее встречают
 [...]
 как любовника: и с трепетом в очах,
 И сладострастьем нетерпенья.

Oh, how happy she is
 When she is met
 [...]
 as a lover: with tremulousness in their eyes,
 And concupiscent impatience.

This echoes and alters *Ode* 1.4's anthropomorphisation of death: 'Pale Death knocks with impartial foot on the poor man's cottage and the rich man's castle.'¹⁸⁶ This ode, like Shvarts', links death with winter and includes wine and love – but concludes, differently from Shvarts, that death precludes these latter pleasures.

The final verse explores the consequences of the loss of the Muses' world revealed in the previous poem:

¹⁸⁴ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, p. 81.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Все боги умерли,
Оне одне остались.
Они и в смерть перелетают –
Как захотят летят они,
Горя вокруг древа мирового
Как новогодние огни.

All the gods were dead,
They alone were left.
The others – even unto death they flit;
As they choose, so they fly,
Burning round the world tree
Like so many New Year's lights.

Death or obsolescence are the only options, and the final couplet is replete with imagery from now defunct paganism.

The fourth poem (Euterpe's, Muse of lyric poetry) opens in the style of sympotic lyric with the command to mix wine for the poet:

Снега насыпьте в красный
Стакан с тяжелым вином,
Может быть, я забудусь
Горько-утешным сном.

Sprinkle some snow into a red
Cup with some heavy wine,
And perhaps I will find oblivion
In a bitterly-consoling dream.

This is reminiscent of 2.11: Horace's account of wine's care-alleviating properties (closer still is the adjective for wine in 2.7, 'oblivioso', to Shvarts' wish for oblivion here); the call for someone to mix the wine; and the mixing of that wine with water to hand in nature – in Horace, a stream, "a conventional feature of the symposium *al fresco*",¹⁸⁷ which in Shvarts becomes snow.

The poem focuses on the archetypal lyric poet, Orpheus. Orpheus appears twice in the *Odes*, in 1.12 and 1.24, both times as the poet who can move trees with his song; the first alludes to his mother Calliope,¹⁸⁸ perhaps providing another connection to Shvarts' Muses; the second reminds the reader of his failure to overcome death.¹⁸⁹ Ivanov identified Orpheus as 'Mycarer' ('Musagetes') in his essay 'Orfei' ('Orpheus')

¹⁸⁷ R. G. M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 176.

¹⁸⁸ Nisbet and Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace I*, p. 148.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

written for the *Musaget* publishing house, perhaps another reason for Orpheus' prominence in this cycle.¹⁹⁰ It is the dismembered Orpheus Shvarts picks for her poem, perhaps in implicit answer to her challenge to death in the previous poem. She hopes to dream of Orpheus' severed head: in the central verse she sails in it like a sailor in a boat, whilst the verses that surround it show the head's effect upon Shvarts through linguistic echoes (highlighted in corresponding styles below), as its active characteristics infect her:

Как ее колотило
Солью, и тьмой, и волной!
Как она небо корила
Черным своим языком
И **ослепляла** звезды
Бездонным **пустым зрачком**.

Кажется мне – это лодка,
Остроносая лодка была,
И я в ней плыла матросом,
Словесной икрой у весла.
Пред нею летели боги –
Дионис и Аполлон.
Они летели обнявшись:
Он в нас обоих влюблен.
С тех пор, как я прикоснулась
К разодранному рту,
Я падаю тяжким камнем
В **соленую** пустоту.
С тех пор, как я посмотрела
Глазами в глаза голове,
Я стала выродком, нищим,
Слепою, сестрой сове.

How it was pounded
By the **salt**, and the dark, and the waves!
How it reproached the heavens
With its black tongue
And **blinded** the stars
With bottomless **empty pupils**.

It was a boat, I think,
A sharp-nosed boat,
And I was a sailor paddling it,
The verbal calf muscle at the oars.
In front of it flew the gods –
Dionysus and Apollo.
As they flew they embraced:

¹⁹⁰ V. I. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Brussels: Foyer Oriental Chrétien, 1979), III, pp. 704-06. Thank you Pamela Davidson for this observation.

He is in love with us both.
 Ever since I touched
That dismembered mouth
 I have been a heavy stone falling
 Into **salty emptiness**.
 Ever since I looked
 The head in the **eyes**
 I am become degenerate, indigent,
Sightless, a sister to the owls.

This is a terrifying depiction of inspiration, supported by the appearance of Dionysus and Apollo, who are virtually one being. Horace rarely depicts them together (only five times, as compared to 17 individual appearances); one of these instances is in the same poem as Orpheus, 1.12. Apollo, here present (albeit in a dream of a mythical past), is a haunting absence throughout ‘Khomomusaget’; Dionysus here represents the danger of inspiration – for Horace, “Bacchus restores poetry to a primitive sense of spontaneity, licence, even aggression [...] the invocation of Bacchus as inspirer of poetry signals [...] a desire to escape the boundaries of the self and the spatial limitations of the here and now.”¹⁹¹ Despite its danger, Shvarts declares that she would choose this maddening, Orphic, self-sacrificial inspiration: ‘Счастье не в томной неге – / В истушленно-строгом бреду.’ (‘Happiness is not in languorous luxury, / But in ecstatically-strict delirium.’)

The ending returns to the wine mixing of the beginning, using many of the same words and the bloodlike potential of the wine to transform the earlier red cup into her own severed head, completing her merging with Orpheus: ‘Вмешайте в вино мне снегу, / Насыпьте в череп льду’ (‘Mix my wine with snow, / Sprinkle some ice into my skull’). The final lines show the Muses in a parody of a temple: ‘Кружатся девять незримых / В снегопадных столбах звеня.’ (‘The nine are wheeling unseen, / Amidst flurries of snowy columns they chime.’)

Urania, Muse of astronomy, is the Muse of the fifth poem. The (Horatian) bees from poem 3 reappear, now conflated with the frozen Muses, and therefore still more threatening. Their cold state signifies death; their progression towards death since the third poem stems from ‘Voz’mi na radost’ iz moikh ladonei’, in which

¹⁹¹ Schiesaro, in *Perceptions of Horace: A Roman Poet and His Readers*, ed. by L. B. T. Houghton and Maria Wyke (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 79.

Mandel'shtam imagines 'пчелы Персефоны'¹⁹² ('Persephone's bees') who become dying bee-kisses (reminiscent of Shvarts' bees sucking Death) and who are dead by the final stanza.¹⁹³ Shvarts asks the bees/Muses: 'Музы, ужели вы только / Пьющие душу зрачки?' ('Muses, surely you are not merely / Pupils for imbibing the soul?') Now, as well as sucking inspiration and death, the Horatian bee sucks souls. The soul-imbibing pupils echo the depiction of Orpheus from the previous poem. The poem also reassesses its attitude towards Dionysian inspiration, which becomes unambiguously threatening – the reader, like the Tyrsenian pirates, is entangled in Dionysus' vine, which has been imbued with the cold of Shvarts' cycle: 'Тебя оплетает хмельная, / Ледяная, в слезах, лоза.' ('You are entwined / By a heady, freezing, tear-dewed vine.') This amplifies the danger in Bacchic inspiration that Horace acknowledges in 2.19 and 3.25 (the latter especially relevant for 'Khomomusaget', as it shows a Maenad looking out at Hebrus, the river down which Orpheus' head floats, and snowy Thrace, associated with Dionysus¹⁹⁴ and next to Scythia).

But inspiration is unavoidable. The poem's final couplet reverses Horace's programmatic final couplet of his first ode, which calls upon the Muses for inspiration and his readers to rank him with his predecessors, the Greek lyric poets:

As for me, the ivy crown, the reward of poetic brows, puts me in the company of the gods above; the cool grove and the light-footed bands of Nymphs and Satyrs set me apart from the crowd, provided Euterpe does not cease to pipe and Polyhymnia does not refuse to tune the Lesbian lyre. But if you rank me among the lyric bards of Greece, I shall soar aloft and strike the stars with my head.¹⁹⁵

Shvarts conflates these stars (and the nine Greek lyric poets Horace here hopes to join) with the Muses, via a pun on the Russian word 'stony' ('kamenisty') with 'Camenae' ('kameny') (Kutik makes a similar pun; see p. 167).¹⁹⁶ Instead of raising herself to strike them, Shvarts – using the same, violent verb as Horace – is struck by them against her will: 'Девять звезд каменистых, / Кружась, ударяют в виски.' ('Nine stony stars, / Spinning, strike me in the temples.') These Muses are far more

¹⁹² Mandel'shtam, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, p. 157. "Greek sources (e.g., Hesychius, *Scholia* to Pindar, *Pythian*, IV, 60) report that bees were sacred to Persephone and that they were her initiates (*mystides*)." Terras, p. 267 n. 73.

¹⁹³ Taranovsky, pp. 109–10. See pp. 83–114 for Taranovsky's overarching analysis of the bee theme in Mandel'shtam.

¹⁹⁴ Nisbet and Rudd, p. 304.

¹⁹⁵ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, p. 25.

¹⁹⁶ So, 'petrean'/'pierian'.

down-to-earth (literally), dangerous, and unwished-for. Her reception of this moment in Horace, where he invokes Euterpe, the lyric Muse, and Polyhymnia, whose name means ‘many hymns/odes’, to suggest that he will combine the many songs of his Greek predecessors to create his own lyric poetry, implies that she is doing likewise with his *Odes*. Her inversion of Horace’s aim to join the lyric poets reflects her reluctance to become the tenth Muse.

The sixth poem, ‘Pifiia’ (‘Pythia’), presents the reader with a pathetic, hiccupping and deranged Pythia. As this is as comic as the cycle gets, this is the poem of Thalia, the comic Muse. Thalia appears once in the *Odes*, in 4.6: ‘Phoebus, minstrel-teacher of the clear-voiced Thalia’.¹⁹⁷ Pythia also appears once, in 1.16: ‘nor the resident in Pytho’s shrine [Apollo] [...] has such a shattering effect on the minds of his priests’.¹⁹⁸ This double connection to Apollo answers the question at the end of the poem as to why Pythia is hiccupping uncontrollably: ‘– Да что же с ей такое? / Иль умер кто у ней?’ (“What on earth’s the matter with her? / Has there been a death in the family?”) Her hiccupping derangement seems to be due to the absence (death) of Apollo, upon whom Pythia traditionally depends.

The seventh poem concerns life after death, informed by the *Odes*’ preoccupation with poetic immortality, and with Clio, Muse of History, as its Muse. Shvarts relocates Goethe’s musagetes flies from summer to winter: ‘* У Гете есть стихотворение «Мусагеты». Ими он считает мух – и те, и другие, мол, появляются летом. Здесь тоже мухи – мусагеты, но зимние – «белые мухи».’ (* Goethe has the poem ‘Die Musageten’. He believes that musagetes are flies, as both of them appear in summer. Here, flies are also musagetes, but winter ones – ‘white flies’.) The unnatural appearance of flies in winter is another instance where Shvarts emphasises how unseasonable winter is for the Muses. This is the first poem in ‘Khomu musaget’ that unambiguously locates the Muses in Russia:

– Мир отеснил нас, глухая вода,
В гиперборею.
Долго скользили во тьме седой
Над морем Белым

“The world, the deaf water, has pushed us out
Into Hyperborea.
Long had we slipt through the grey-haired gloom

¹⁹⁷ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, p. 237.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Over the White Sea.

Hyperborea is a central concept for ‘*Khomo musaget*’. Horace mentions trans-Danubian peoples – Hyperboreans, Scythians, Geloni, Getae, or Massagetae – in thirteen poems (often in combination),¹⁹⁹ quite loosely and inconsistently,²⁰⁰ generally intending to convey remoteness, exoticism, and hostility.

There is much disagreement as to the location and disposition of Hyperborea and Scythia. Before Herodotus Scythia was apparently proverbial in Ancient Greece for its distance from civilisation: “Scythia is a land of *eremia*, a zone of *eschatia*, a deserted place and a frontier: one of the ends of the earth”;²⁰¹ its extreme hostility: “The climate of Scythia is unique. [...] The Scythians undergo a winter that is excessive by reason of both its intensity and its duration: for eight months it is ‘unbearably’ cold”;²⁰² its people’s nomadism;²⁰³ and its liminality, with Hecataeus of Miletus placing Scythians in both Europe and Asia.²⁰⁴ Herodotus’ *Histories* Book IV complicated this picture, showing that Scythia was a varied territory inhabited by various peoples, not all of them exclusively nomadic.²⁰⁵ Later historians ennobled the Scythians (as early Greek writers, including Homer, had also done).²⁰⁶ Hyperborea was even further from the Greco-Roman ‘centre’ of civilisation, “at the northern extremity of the Earth”.²⁰⁷ Unlike the Scythians, the Hyperboreans were depicted in antiquity as fortunate, godlike, extremely longevous, and connected to Apollo (Pausanias conveys the legend that Hyperboreans, led by their prophet Olen, founded the Delphic oracle).²⁰⁸ Pindar in *Pythian* 10 describes the “blissful and toilfree existence of the Hyperboreans, as well as their constant dances and songs”;²⁰⁹ whilst Aeschylus refers to “Hyperborean good fortune”.²¹⁰ This good fortune is embodied in their weather:

¹⁹⁹ 1.19, 1.35, 2.9, 2.11, 2.20, 3.4, 3.8, 3.10, 3.24, 4.5, 4.14, 4.15, and the *Carmen Saeculare*.

²⁰⁰ See Nisbet and Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace I*, p. xxxiv.

²⁰¹ Hartog, p. 12.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14, 194–99.

²⁰⁶ James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 45–47.

²⁰⁷ Apollodorus 2.114, 119–20. Pavlou, p. 319 n. 37.

²⁰⁸ Romm, pp. 60–62.

²⁰⁹ Pavlou, p. 322.

²¹⁰ Libation Bearers 373: Romm, p. 60.

The very name of this northern people [...] locates them hyper boreas, 'beyond the North Wind' – which is to say, beyond the source of the cool, rainy weather which descends on Greece during winter months. [...] They thus inhabit a 'pocket' of climatic tranquillity.²¹¹

Scythia and Hyperborea are the names from the northerly extremes of the Greek and Romans' world map that Russians adopted most enthusiastically – and conflated – when searching for their place within classical literature.²¹²

Shvarts is no exception (either to Horace or the Russian tradition) – although she only uses 'Hyperborea' in 'Khomu musaget', within the one term she incorporates qualities of both. From Hyperborea: unearthliness, association with death, religiosity, connection with Apollo and Pythia. And from Scythia: liminality, hostility, inclemency, unending winter. From both: extreme and mysterious north-easterliness. Shvarts especially associates Hyperborea with St Petersburg, calling it 'Городок такой гиперборейский' ('Such a Hyperborean little city'), emphasising the word's mystical connotations, in 'Vtoroe puteshestvie lisy na severo-zapad' ('The fox's second journey to the north-west').²¹³

The crucial Horatian intertexts for Shvarts' Hyperborea in poem 7 are *Ode* 3.4 (the epigraph), which features the Geloni, a semi-mythical Scythian tribe redolent of extreme cold (*gelu*) and extreme north-easterliness,²¹⁴ and *Ode* 2.20, in which Horace declares that he/his fame/his eternal poetry will visit Hyperborea:

Soon, more famous than Daedalus' Icarus
I shall see [...]
[...], as a melodious
bird, the Hyperborean plains.²¹⁵

The swan and Hyperborea are both symbols of immortality:

The bird was thought to sing melodiously before its death [...]; its splendour and its music connected it with Apollo, and its distant northern flight with the felicity

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 65.

²¹² E.g. Karamzin, Tsvetaeva (see Alexandra Smith, *The Song of the Mocking Bird: Pushkin in the Work of Marina Tsvetaeva* (Berne, Switzerland; New York: Peter Lang, 1994), pp. 99–100.); Blok, 'Skify'; Brodskii, 'Letter to Horace': "We weren't even we; we were Geloni, Getae, Budini, etc." [...] "northern Scythia – Hyperborea to you", Joseph Brodsky, *On Grief and Reason: Essays* (Penguin, 1995), pp. 430, 432.

²¹³ Shvarts, II, p. 48.

²¹⁴ Nisbet and Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace I*, p. 400.

²¹⁵ My translation.

of the Hyperboreans [...] the swan's miraculous death [...] made it a symbol of immortality".²¹⁶

2.20 is a defiance of death, enacted through poetry: 'I [...] shall not die, shall not be confined by the waters of the Styx.'²¹⁷ Shvarts literalises this, replacing Horace's swan with Catullus' dead (now undead) sparrow:

Видим – на льдине живой воробей
Оледенелый.
Мы и согрели его собой,
Синими языками
Молний живых, и на свет голубой
Дале рванулись.
А он плывет там и поет
На девяти языках,
С синим огнем в ледяной голове,
Невидимым в очах.

We glimpse – a sparrow, alive, on an ice flow,
Frozen through.
So we warmed him with ourselves,
With blue tongues
Of living lightning, then we tore onwards
To daylight.
And he floats there and sings
In nine languages,
With blue fire in his icy head,
Imperceptible in his eyes.

The sight of the revived sparrow breaks Proserpina's heart: 'Лопнуло накрест в подвалах Эреба / Сердце седой Прозерпины.' ('In the basements of Erebus the heart / Of hoary-headed Proserpina broke in two.') The sparrow's reanimation refers to Horace's narrow escape from 'dusky Proserpine'²¹⁸ (2.13.21), as well as refuting the universal truth stated by Horace in 1.28: 'merciless Proserpine never shuns a head'.²¹⁹ The connection of Proserpina with a dead bird refers to Mandel'shtam's juxtaposition of Persephone with a blind swallow entering the underworld in 'Kogda Psikheia-zhizn' ('When Psyche-life'), and plays upon Mandel'shtam's embodiment of a word in this swallow in this poem's pair, 'Ia slovo pozabyt',²²⁰ as the Muses fill their sparrow with words. This also connects the sparrow with the earlier cold (Mandel'shtamian Persephone's) bees.

²¹⁶ Nisbet and Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace II*, pp. 333–34.

²¹⁷ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, p. 139.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²²⁰ Taranovsky, p. 77.

The eighth poem, ‘Voskhvalenie drug druga u Nikol’skogo sobora’ (‘Encomium of each other before Nikol’skii Cathedral’), is the first to invoke individual Muses by name; its tragic plot and emphasis on song indicate that Melpomene, Muse of both song and tragedy, and among those invoked, is its main Muse. Shvarts imitates the Sapphic stanza, the second most common of the thirteen metres employed by Horace in the *Odes*, after Alcaics. Sapphics appear first in *Ode* 1.2, as part of Horace’s display of metrical prowess in the nine Parade Odes, all in different metres, that open Book 1. Horace brings in yet another new metre in 1.11 after the “false closure” of his repeated Sapphics in 1.10, “enacting within his collection [...] his prospective addition to the canonical nine”,²²¹ so the final closure of Shvarts’ cycle after nine poems, which are also all in different metres, underscores her *recusatio* still further.

By this penultimate poem the Muses have reached Leningrad:

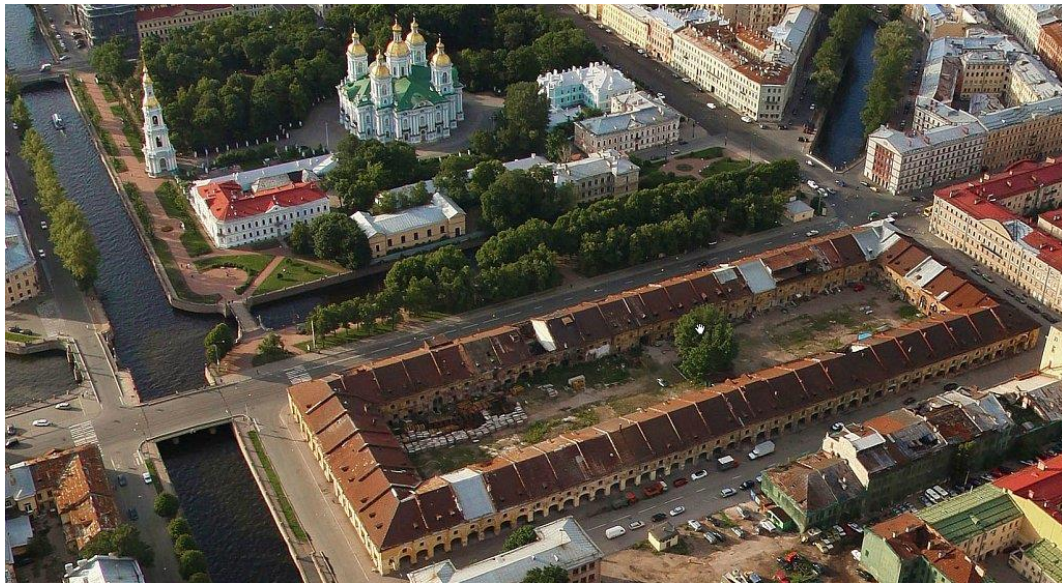
Аркады желтые, в проплешинах, Никольского рынка,
Где делают с цветочками посуду
Эмалированную, – там в длинную флейту ветер
Дует ночами.

The yellow arcades, paint peeling in patches, of the Nikol’skii Market,
Where they make enamelware with little flowers
On it – there, down the long flute the wind
Blows through the night hours.

The reference to the market’s produce situates the poem in contemporaneity,²²² whilst the image of the flute is motivated by the appearance of the Nikol’skii Market’s brownish yellow arcades, with hole-like gaps spaced evenly along its length:

²²¹ Eidinow, in Houghton and Wyke, p. 92.

²²² “После 1917 года в здании Никольского рынка разместилось производственно-промышленное объединение по изготовлению эмалированной посуды.” (“After 1917 a manufacturing-industrial association producing enamelled tableware was established in the Nikol’skii market building.”) Aleksandr Chernega, ‘Nicol’skii rynok (Sadovaia ul., 62)’, *Progulki po Peterburgu*, 2005 <<http://walkspb.ru/zd/sadovaya62.html>> [accessed 6 June 2016].



The image of the market as a flute helps to integrate the Muses into the modern setting, although they are still hopelessly out of place: ‘подпоясанные небрежно, босые, / Как перипатетики’ (‘carelessly girded, barefoot, / Like peripatetics’). Their clothing is entirely unsuitable, and they are compared not to modern beings but to ancient Greek philosophers of the Aristotelian school.

It is perhaps because the Muses have reached their destination (Shvarts) that she gives them names at this point: four, three of whom are among the six Muses mentioned in Horace’s *Odes*. Melpomene, the Muse most invoked by Horace (1.24, 3.30, 4.3), and Clio (1.12) are mentioned briefly. Erato, who is not present in Horace, appears first. Shvarts describes the inspiration she gives as a form of desire:

– Молний сноп на поясе у тебя, Эрато,
 Без тебя не сложится ни гимн, ни песня,
 Подойдешь ближе, глянешь – кровь быстрее
 В словах рванется.

“You have a sheaf of lightning at your belt, Erato,
 Without you neither hymn nor song will take shape,
 If you approach closer, bestow a glance – the blood rushes
 Faster through the words.”

Next Polyhymnia, unlike *Ode* 1.1, where her name indicates the multiplicity of Horace’s Greek lyric sources, is depicted exclusively as the Muse of sacred poetry:

²²³ vasia_morskoi, ‘Sankt-Peterburg s vozdukh: 20 foto’
 <<http://yandex.livejournal.com/194741.html>> [accessed 31 October 2014].

Ну а ты, Полигимния, не скромничай, дева,
Взор певца устремляешь в небо,
Без тебя он ползал бы по земле, извиваясь,
Тварью дрожащей.

“As for you, Polyhymnia, be not so modest, maiden,
You direct the singer’s gaze towards the sky,
Without you he would crawl o’er the earth, squirming
Like a quav’ring beast.”

The depiction of Polyhymnia as a religious Muse is important to the movement of the cycle towards Christianity. The Muses dance into a formation replete with Christian imagery: ‘сливались в темнисто-светлый / Венец терновый.’ (‘they merged into a darkly-bright / Crown of woven thorns.’) This also echoes the ‘final poem’ of Horace’s *Odes*, 3.30, in which Horace asks Melpomene to crown him with laurel, as a closural motif.²²⁴ The appearance of the crown in the penultimate poem demonstrates (doubly) that the Muses’ time is over. The crown also evokes Blok’s *Dvenadtsat’*, in which twelve red guardsmen march through the snowstorm of post-revolutionary Petrograd, only for it to be revealed in the final lines that they are led by Christ wearing a crown of roses. The wintry, stormy setting of ‘Khomo musaget’ evokes Blok throughout, but here, where Christ prevails, most of all; like in Blok’s poem the reader could see either cataclysm or rebirth in the revolution overturning the classical Muses.

The Muses then seek someone to inspire:

Ах, кому нам девяти, бедным,
Передать свою поющую силу,
Ах, кого напоить водой кастальской,
Оплести хмелем?

Ah, to whom are we nine, oh, poor maidens!,
To bequeath our power of song,
Ah, whom are we to intoxicate with Castalian water,
Entwine with hop vines?

Their chosen methods have already been encountered and discredited earlier in the cycle: the Castalian Spring is presumably the source of the water that worsens Pythia’s condition in poem 6, as it was used in Pythia’s cult at Delphi²²⁵:

Облей ее водою,

²²⁴ Eidinow, in Houghton and Wyke, p. 89.

²²⁵ ‘101 Castalian Spring’, *Livius*, 2015 <<http://www.livius.org/articles/place/delphi/101-castalian-spring/>> [accessed 2 June 2017].

И полегчает ей.
– Смотри, глаза полезли
И пена из ушей.

Throw some water over her,
That'll help calm her down."
"Look, her eyes are bulging
And froth's coming out her ears."

Moreover, the vine of poem 5 is cold and dangerous. So their chosen recipient (given the continued refusal of Shvarts), a homeless man, is driven mad and throws himself into the Kriukov canal (which runs along the left of the picture above, past the market and belltower).

The ninth poem, 'Muzy pered Ikonoj' ('Muses before the Icon'), is Polyhymnia's – the Christian Polyhymnia that Shvarts gives us in the previous poem. The Muses have ended up where Shvarts told them to go in the final line of the first poem: 'Ах, оставьте человека, / Позовите Бога вы.' ('Ah, leave mankind alone, / Call ye upon God instead.')

They enter a cathedral in the guise of, if not repentant, then cold and somewhat guilty sinners, bowing to the icon. Their transformation before it into a Catholic rosary parallels their transformation into a crown of thorns in the previous poem:

По очередности – пред Троеручицей
Творят – и в сторону – поклон короткий.
Меж рук Иконы неземной
Скользят отчетливо, как четки.

In order of precedence, before the Virgin of the Three Hands
They make her – and to the side – a brief bow.
Through the hands of the unearthly Icon
They slip one by one, like rosary beads.

This concession to the power of religion may be influenced by *Ode* 1.5, which ends with Horace hanging a votive offering to the gods in a gesture of defeat. In Shvarts' final verse the Muses recognise what the poem's clash of antiquity with modernity, death of pagan gods, their unnatural resurrection of the dead and unsuccessful inspiration of the lowly, and encroaching Christian symbolism all imply – that their time has passed: '– Все наши умерли давно.' ("All our kindred died long ago.") Their response can accordingly only be in Christian terms: 'Заупокойный заказали.' (They commissioned a requiem mass.)

The collision of the classical world with contemporary Russia results in failure for the Muses, lone representatives of antiquity. Through her negative receptions of

Horace and Mandel'shtam Shvarts demonstrates that the Muses' world is dead – even more so than in Mandel'shtam's time – and irrelevant to her world, and that, regardless of the respect she shows them, she is not the Muses' poet as Horace was. Yet even this conclusion of the irrelevance of Horace's Muses is Horatian: in the *Odes* Horace constantly reiterates that all things (with the possible exception of poetry) pass and are subject to time and fortune. In 'Khomu musaget' the Muses seize their last day in true Horatian fashion. Moreover, a crucial paradox remains: 'Khomu musaget's pervasive Horatian reception. In particular, Shvarts' engagement with Horace's constant themes of his own reception of lyric predecessors, and of fleeting time versus poetic immortality, draws attention to the fact that the very presence of classical reception in her poetry proves that it cannot be irrelevant. So, as he predicted in 2.20, Horace has indeed avoided death by visiting the Hyperborean plains.

Conclusion

Shvarts, with her propensity for mythologising the everyday and playing with personae, turns to classical antiquity – amongst other sources – for alter egos. These she inhabits often for extended periods of time, imbuing them with her personality. The most prominent of these is Kinfiia, but she also talks about herself through Narcissus, Venus, Selene, Ariadne, Pythia, Orpheus, and Eurydice. Her classical personae are all mythical or fictional, and almost all reflect specifically upon Shvarts as a poet. This is particularly true of Kinfiia; Pythia and Orpheus convey the pain of inspiration, which is embodied by Eurydice, and provoked by Dionysus or Apollo. With these latter mythical figures of inspiration Shvarts enters into dialogue with the Silver Age, especially Ivanov and Tsvetaeva. The way in which Shvarts returns again and again to certain figures to represent herself is a pattern inherited particularly from female and homosexual Silver Age poets such as Tsvetaeva, Akhmatova, Parnok, and Kuzmin; Barskova also inherits this mode of engagement with antiquity, although the figures she chooses are mostly different from Shvarts'. The balance Shvarts and Barskova strike with their alter egos between expressing their poetic life and their lived experience is also different, with Shvarts leaning towards the former, and Barskova towards the latter.

Shvarts' classical references feel organically part of her poetry, and do not seem learned. Her style of integrating references differs both from Kutik, who displays his

learning, and from Barskova, who is ambivalent about her learning. However, Shvarts' references are clearly drawn from reading of classical authors in translation, which gives to 'Kinfiia' and 'Khomu musaget' in particular great verisimilitude and depth.

Shvarts' classical antiquity is overwhelmingly Roman, as are her classical alter egos, due in part to her knowledge of some Latin, but also to the oppressive and turbulent political conditions of the era in which she was writing. Many of Shvarts' poems transpose Rome onto St Petersburg, or vice versa, conflating or comparing the two cities. Often Rome is the longed-for ideal, with Petersburg the inevitable reality; elsewhere the 'paradise' is invoked ironically, bringing connotations of decline, the fall of Russia-as-Rome. The other Petersburg-poet of this thesis, Barskova, has a quite different classical analogy for the city, perhaps because Barskova's evocations of Petersburg lack political/historical commentary. Shvarts' use of Rome for political and social commentary is a trait that is more pronounced in Kutik; but unlike Kutik, Shvarts uses Rome to transcend *byt*, as well as to comment upon it.

In Shvarts' later poetry, however, antiquity loses its power to transcend *byt*. Poems such as 'Korabl' zhizni unosilsia vdal', 'Zhaloba Kinfiia', and 'Khomu musaget' present the reader with an antiquity infected by change, decay, and death. Shvarts perceives the irony of the disconnect between antiquity's timelessness and the mortality of the poet, the changefulness of society. The rotting of Ariadne's thread represents Shvarts' coming death all the more powerfully because it is an enduring, 'classical' image (see p. 7). Kinfiia's complaint is the more jarring because it brings New Russians' disregard for culture into the Roman world Shvarts had made as an immersive escape. The Camenae's obsolescence does not just mirror Shvarts' age and disinclination for inspiration – it shows classical culture's decline in the face of a modern, Christian Russia, which feels even more remote from antiquity than it did to Mandel'shtam after the Revolution.

Shvarts' classical reception is in dialogue with the Russian tradition of classical reception (albeit not as overtly as Kutik's and Barskova's). Much of her antiquity is not only sourced from classical texts but mediated via Russian poets, especially of the Silver Age, but even of near-contemporaries (her correction of Brodskii, with 'Kinfiia'). Her use of Rome to comment upon Russian political and social conditions is also part of a long tradition of Aesopian speech. Where she departs from tradition is her personalising and contemporising of antiquity to the extremes of taboo-

breaking and repulsion (something Barskova also does), in poems such as 'Kinfiia', 'Afrodita uletaet v noch' na subbotu', and 'Svalka', which irreverently combine antiquity and *byt*. Not just "funnier and prettier", Shvarts' classical antiquity is also violent and grimy and increasingly subject to entropy.

IL'IA KUTIK

Il'ia Kutik (b. 1961) has consistently classified his poetry according to classical genres, and has aimed for (and played with) epic throughout, as if following (and straying from) the *rota Vergiliana*, a medieval model of the upwards progression of a poet's career from smaller to larger poetic forms.¹ Whilst the way his texts “talk to each other”, particularly about their generic metamorphoses, is distinctly Ovidian.² His trajectory towards epic began in 1980 with an attempt to create a work that was simultaneously an ode and an epic poem, in reaction against the prevailing lyric mode. Following his emigration in 1990 to Sweden and to America in 1994³ he wrote collections of lyric poetry. A quarter of a century later he achieved his aim of writing a postmodern Russian epic poem, *Epos*, a monster of a poem published in 24 installments between June 2009 and May 2010. Since then (and since the completion of research on this chapter), Kutik has been working on a collection named *Anakreontiki i amfibrakhii* (*Anacreontics and amphibrachics*).⁴

There are two distinct strands to Kutik's classical reception: the historical, and the Russian literary tradition. Kutik imbibed world history from an early age, as his father was a historian.⁵ Kutik has spoken of poetic tradition being handed down from one Russian poet to another like a “baton”; Kutik believes he was handed this baton by Tarkovskii, with whom – and amongst whose books – Kutik lived when he moved to Moscow from Lvov aged 16 (Tarkovskii having received the baton from Sologub).⁶

Kutik engages heavily with literary theory, identifying his work by Epstein's classification, as metarealist. Metarealist poetry is characterised by a strong interest in inherited culture, including classical antiquity: “Metarealism seeks out true value by turning to eternal themes or the arch-images of contemporary themes [...] Its

¹ Hardie and Moore, p. 4.

² Alessandro Barchiesi and Philip Hardie, *ibid.*, p. 59.

³ Ilya Kutik, Interview by Georgina Barker, Evanston, Illinois, 2014.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

material is nature, history, art, and ‘high’ culture.”⁷ Yet Kutik intermingles such ‘highbrow’ references with ones from contemporary popular culture, which has the effect of integrating classical antiquity with modernity and everyday life. Epstein sets him apart from other metarealists, along with Aleksei Parshchikov, between the extremes of metarealism and conceptualism due to this engagement with both past and present.⁸

Kutik’s classical reception is connected with his reception of eighteenth-century Russian poetry, which Wachtel sees as “an attempt to expand the literary horizons of the present through a return to unexploited traditions of the past.” His generation attempted to set themselves apart from the 60s poets, whose influences were from the more immediate past (the Silver Age), by engaging with the eighteenth century:

The previous poetic generation [...] was at its best in lyric forms, and the younger poets may well be expressing themselves in archaizing forms as a way of asserting their independence both from their immediate predecessors and from the Russian modernist poetic tradition. For although the post-Symbolist generation has undoubtedly looked to the eighteenth century for inspiration (and it was probably the modernists who opened the eyes of the young poets discussed here to the hidden potentials of Russian Baroque and classicism), its poets never chose to engage in an overt dialogue with its forms.⁹

Kutik characterises his poetic school’s wish for different forms from their predecessors as a search for an objective kind of poetry, which could stand alone, independent of the poet’s biography, the time, the cultural milieu:

we felt that lyric poetry in Russia had reached a dead end, that lyric poetry is a secondary phenomenon which lives off contexts it has not created. We felt that lyric verse had too short a half life and that its use in the work of our poetic predecessors (the so-called *shestidesiatniki* from whom we strove to differentiate ourselves) was neoromantic and elegiac.¹⁰

Kutik formulates the experience of coming to poetic maturity in 1980s Russia, when the recently opened chink in the Iron Curtain had been drawn shut, in suitably poetic terms: “in contrast to the ‘sixties people’, who succeeded in ‘oozing through’, we (under Brezhnev) came up against the caesura and tried to make the first

⁷ Epstein, in Epstein, Genis, and Vladiv-Glover, p. 107.

⁸ Ibid., p. 109.

⁹ Andrew Wachtel, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, p. 286.

¹⁰ Ilya Kutik, *The Ode and the Odic: Essays on Mandelstam, Pasternak, Tsvetaeva and Mayakovsky* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994), p. 16.

hemistich habitable.”¹¹ Despite his determination to make the best of the situation, Kutik knows that Russia and its poetry without Europe and its cultural heritage is only half a poem. Kutik’s classical reception is prompted by a Russia in which a singular viewpoint – of either State-sanctioned socialist realist poetry or dissident lyric poetry – was increasingly insufficient.

Wachtel’s characterisation of Kutik as one of the ‘youngest archaists’,¹² a term taken from Tynianov’s famous division of opposing sides in the early-nineteenth-century argument between writers into ‘older and younger archaists’ and ‘innovators’,¹³ is an apt one. Tynianov influenced Kutik’s thinking – Kutik cites Tynianov in his first scholarly article, ‘Slovo ob ode’ (‘A Word on the Ode’, 1983):

Ю. Тынянов полагал, что русская поэзия на разных ее этапах рождалась из борьбы Оды и Элегии. Вполне вероятно, что это одновременно и ветхозаветная борьба человека с богом, и борьба масок в античной трагедии. [...] катарсис этой драмы мы переживаем до сих пор.¹⁴

Iu. Tynianov theorised that Russian poetry in its various stages was born from the conflict of Ode with Elegy. It is entirely plausible that this is simultaneously the Old Testament conflict of man with God, and the conflict of masks in ancient tragedy. [...] to this day we are living through the catharsis of this drama.

Kutik took the side of the ode against elegy, just as the younger archaists (particularly Kiukhel’beker) promoted the then old-fashioned ode against the more minor (in both scale and key) poetic forms in the Karamzinian ‘middle style’, which were prevalent.¹⁵ Kutik’s insistence upon Russian poetry’s descent from classical forms, and the continuing relevance of those forms to contemporary Russian poetry (signified by ongoing ‘catharsis’, a term taken from Aristotle’s *Poetics*), is supported in his poetic oeuvre by his continued use of those forms. The generic ‘conflict’ he cites is, more broadly, key to understanding Kutik’s poetics, within which genre is a generative principle. In particular, his enduring focus upon epic, which he turns to along with the eighteenth-century ode to provide a form and language allowing for a new syncretic harmony, has defined his poetic trajectory.

¹¹ Ilya Kutik, *Hieroglyphs of Another World: On Poetry, Swedenborg, and Other Matters* (Northwestern University Press, 2000), p. 25.

¹² Andrew Wachtel, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, p. 270.

¹³ Lachmann, pp. 187–89.

¹⁴ Ilya Kutik, ‘Slovo ob ode’, *Literaturnaia ucheba*, 6 (1983), 142–50 (p. 150).

¹⁵ Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire*, Publications of the Wisconsin Center for Pushkin Studies (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 146; Yuri Tynianov, ‘The Ode as an Oratorical Genre’, trans. by Ann Shukman, *New Literary History*, 34.3 (2003), 565–96 (p. 591).

Kutik does not read either Greek or Latin, but is nevertheless very well-read in classical authors, accessing classical texts in translation.¹⁶ Kutik's fluency in English and proficiency in other European languages mean that these translations need not always be in Russian. I therefore approach his classical references knowing there was probably a textual basis for them, and use English translations of classical texts to identify his original classical sources. Naturally, some of his references will have been drawn from anthologies or histories looking back to classical sources, or from culture more generally; I again use classical texts as *locum tenentes* for such sources.

This chapter is structured primarily chronologically, and secondarily thematically, as I see Kutik's shaping of a career trajectory through (classical) genres as a driving force behind his poetry. The chapter begins with an analysis of his long poem *Oda*, which seeks to establish what balance Kutik strikes between classical and eighteenth-century Russian models. Next it moves to Kutik's lyric collections. It treats *Luk Odisseia* separately, as a book of transition – not only between genres, but also between states of being. The rest of the lyric collections are dealt with collectively and thematically (while remaining in broadly chronological order), as key themes recur across books, and one – Rome – occurs in all three. Finally, the chapter discusses Kutik's epic poem *Epos*. This discussion of necessity excludes much material, due to the epic's extreme length and pervasive classical reception; it focuses on the classical authors who shape *Epos*' statements of genre, in particular Homer. The chapter shows how Kutik's manifest and eclectic dialogue with the tradition of classical reception frames his place within that tradition.

Oda

Kutik's first poetic work, *Oda na poseshchenie Belosaraiskoi kosy, chto na Azovskom more* (*Ode Upon Visiting the Belosaraisk Spit, Which is on the Sea of Azov*, 1980-82; henceforth *Oda*), was written in response to a need he felt in contemporary literature for a new Russian epic:

Why I called this work an ode and why I was writing an ode at all were questions that I did not ask at the time. I simply wrote a long poem which had no plot and was filled with metaphorical language. The need for such a poem in Russian culture at the time was felt not only by me but by other members of my

¹⁶ Kutik, 'Interview'.

generation [...] the conclusion we reached: we need to create our own form of epic [...] mine was [...] my 'Ode'.¹⁷

Wachtel designates *Oda* a “neoclassical dialogue”, in which the ‘new’ and the ‘classical’ “sound simultaneously, in a kind of witty contrapuntal dialogue”.¹⁸ *Oda* is written in “the ten-line stanza, the rhyme scheme (aBaBccDeeD), and the meter (iambic tetrameter) that Lomonosov used in all his solemn odes”,¹⁹ and contains within this strict odic framework a cacophonous mix of references from history, literature, and myth (Russian and European, classical and biblical), in various registers and without a visible guiding consciousness. It displays both “a typical characterization of a contemporary situation through a metaphorical filter of classical images” and “elements inappropriate to the solemn ode”.²⁰ Kutik’s rejection of lyric forms and personae together with elegy is indicative of his embracing of the Lomonosovian strand of odic tradition, in which the lyric persona is subordinated to the overarching power, over the Derzhavinian strand, in which individual personality was increasingly foregrounded.²¹ Wachtel, too, reads *Oda* as principally Lomonosovian, yet it could be argued that Kutik’s inclusion of ‘inappropriate’ elements is in fact an extension of Derzhavin’s practice of “introducing into the lexis of the elevated style elements of middle style (and even low style)” to modernise the genre.²²

Both typical elements (such as classical allusions) and inappropriate elements (such as modern allusions and diction) are part of Kutik’s translation of the ode into a contemporary idiom, as he knew the form was still relevant, but essentially anachronistic:

О. Мандельштам [...] часто и с сожалением повторял, что невозможно снова написать державинскую оду [...] невозможность эта вовсе не от того, что ода как таковая исчерпала свои жанровые потенции. Просто возродить ее в былом виде – значило бы идти против течения времени.²³

O. Mandel’shtam [...] used to say frequently and regretfully that it was impossible to write a new Derzhavinian ode [...] it is impossible not because the ode has exhausted its potential as a genre, but because reviving it in a past form would mean going against the flow of time.

¹⁷ Kutik, *The Ode and the Odic*, p. 16.

¹⁸ Andrew Wachtel, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, p. 286.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Ram, pp. 81, 107.

²² Tynianov, p. 585.

²³ Kutik, ‘Slovo ob ode’, p. 142.

The mixing of fragments from past and present culture, echoed in the mingling of the elements in the poem's 'plot', within the regular, historic poetic form and enclosed reality of *Oda* makes a picture of a present both created and informed by the past. Viktor Sosnora describes *Oda* as "the only contemporary ode written according to all the rules of classical versification, but in a living language".²⁴

An Epic Ode?

Yet Kutik had ambitions beyond the neoclassical ode: he wanted *Oda* to be an epic as well. To establish *Oda*'s epic credentials Kutik references and imitates Homer, most prominently at the ode's climax. However, Homer is bound up in complex ways with the Russian eighteenth-century odic tradition. Kutik associates its leading poets with Homer, calling Derzhavin "the same universal past ('first source') for Russian poetry as Homer [...] for world poetry",²⁵ and saying of Lomonosov:

А под напудренным париком старился череп осьмнадцатого столетия [...] грозил расколоться как череп Зевса, из которого в полном вооружении вышла на свет Афина. Не то же ли произошло и с эпическим космосом Гомера, распавшимся на миры великих античных трагиков, лириков (в частности, родоначальников оды Пиндара) и даже – Вергилия?²⁶

But under [Lomonosov's] powdered wig the aging cranium of the eighteenth century [...] threatened to split open like Zeus' skull, out of which emerged Athena in full armour. Did not Homer's epic cosmos fare likewise, breaking up into the worlds of the great ancient tragedians, lyric poets (ancestors, amongst others, of Pindar's ode), and even Virgil?

With the eighteenth-century ode Kutik connects Gnedich, whose translation of Homer's *Iliad* in the early nineteenth century influenced the formative stages of Russian literature:

великий гнедичевский перевод «Илиады», тесно связанный с открытиями русского одического классицизма, ведь именно на его языке заговорил по-русски Гомер, оказав столь потрясающее воздействие на судьбу всей последующей нашей литературы!²⁷

Gnedich's great translation of the *Iliad* was closely linked with the breakthroughs in Russian odic classicism, for it was with his voice that Homer first spoke in Russian – with such a staggering impact on the course of all our subsequent literature!

²⁴ Andrew Wachtel, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, p. 274.

²⁵ Kutik, *The Ode and the Odic*, p. 112.

²⁶ Kutik, 'Slovo ob ode', p. 149.

²⁷ Ibid.

Despite – or perhaps because of – the foundational place he assigns Homer, Kutik’s reception of Homer is not without anxiety. When planning *Oda*, Homer was both model and overshadowing predecessor: Kutik wanted to “выйти из ситуации «как» Гомер и – одновременно – послегомеровская поэзия. То есть создать этот самый большой план (эпос)”²⁸ (“escape the situation of writing poetry that is simultaneously ‘like’ Homer yet also post-Homeric. That is, to create that same big plan (epic)”).

In *The Ode and The Odic* (1994) Kutik set out to prove the theory that had exercised him over the decade since he wrote *Oda*: that “the odic genre is both the Russian epic past and epic genre”;²⁹ he acknowledges but resists “the generally accepted critical opinion which sees the ode as a lyric genre”.³⁰ Kutik sees the ode primarily as a Russian genre (although it retains associations for Kutik with the classical tradition that created it), embodied by poets of Russia’s eighteenth-century odic tradition, rather than by Horace and classical antiquity: “in the 18th century, the ode realized its epic potential by summing up the entire world as seen by poets such as Lomonosov and Derzhavin”.³¹ Kutik’s conception of epic, on the other hand, is definitely classical: to illustrate the ‘epicness’ of the odic poetry of Derzhavin and Maiakovskii he refers to and quotes liberally from Gnedich’s *Iliad*, and from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* for Tsvetaeva’s.³² His claim is thus to an extent contradictory, at least from the perspective of classical reception, as it seems that Kutik’s prominent allusions to classical epic in *Oda* are intended to bolster the sense of it as epic, when it stems formally wholly from the Russian eighteenth century.

Undermining Kutik’s attempt to write an epic ode is the fact that classical allusions were a stock feature of the original odic style, with Lomonosov’s prototypical ode *Oda na vziatie Khotina* (*Ode on the taking of Khotin*, 1739) containing many Homeric and Virgilian features, and Sumarokov’s prescription of odic subject-matter in *Nastavlenie khotiashchim byti pisateliami* (*Instruction for those wanting to be writers*, 1747/74) including “Homeric battles”.³³ Metre and length, too, are against

²⁸ Baviĭskii, ‘Sny-podstrochniki’.

²⁹ Kutik, *The Ode and the Odic*, pp. 16–17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. iv.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 174-5-80, 183–84, 197, 201-1.

³³ C. L. Drage, *Russian Literature in the Eighteenth Century: The Solemn Ode, the Epic, Other Poetic Genres, the Story, the Novel, Drama: An Introduction for University Courses* (London: C. L. Drage, 1978), pp. 11–12, 18.

Kutik's claim. The major criterion for neoclassical epic, as for classical epic, was hexameter, a prescription Russia received from Horace's *Ars Poetica* and Aristotle's *Poetics* via Boileau's *Art poétique*.³⁴ And while at 60 stanzas *Oda* is far longer than Lomonosov's odes, which averaged 23-4 stanzas, and never exceeded 32 stanzas (the 50-stanza odes of Vasilii Petrov "took the Lomonosov style to extreme 'decadence'"),³⁵ it is of comparable length only to the classical epyllion, a genre invented in modernity to classify problematically small epics (variously, up to 400, 600, or 1000 lines).³⁶ *Oda* is slightly longer (600 lines, 2742 words) than the prototypical epyllion Catullus 64 (408 lines, 2427 words).

The historical underpinnings of Kutik's claim for the ode as Russia's epic genre centre upon the ode's high prestige in eighteenth-century Russia. Neoclassical theory placed the ode second only to epic in the poetic hierarchy, leading early didactic theorists in Russia to compare and conflate the two genres.³⁷ The ode's importance and variety in Russia outstripped that in Europe, as "the near absence of a secular court literature in Russia and the newness of the post-Petrine literary system worked against genre pluralism, allowing the ode to quickly establish its monopoly on civic themes". The only genre more prestigious and potentially able to rival the ode, epic, was apparently beyond the reach of Russia's poets, and the eighteenth century was "littered with incomplete or unsuccessful epics".³⁸ Moreover – or, perhaps, therefore – the ode in all its variety was "not a finalized, closed genre", so that it

had the capacity to attract and draw into itself all sorts of new material, to be vitalized at the expense of other genres, and finally be changed almost out of all recognition as a genre, and yet, as long as the formal elements were fixed to the basic speech function, the orientation, never ceased to be recognized as an ode.³⁹

This statement by Tynianov may be at the root of Kutik's plan with *Oda* to create an ode with many of the generic features of epic.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 34–35.

³⁵ Tynianov, p. 568.

³⁶ *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Epyllion and Its Reception*, ed. by Silvio Bär and Manuel Baumbach (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. ix, xi.

³⁷ Drage, p. 5. Trediakovskii's commentary 'Rassuzhdenie o ode voobshche' ('General discourse upon the ode') states that the ode is briefer than epic, but resembles it in "nobility of matter and sublimity of speech". Ram, p. 43. The section on the ode in Sumarokov's *Nastavlenie khotiashchim byti pisateliami* (*Instruction for those wanting to be writers*) merges with the following section on epic. Drage, p. 17.

³⁸ Ram, p. 40.

³⁹ Tynianov, pp. 584–85.

What the ode and epic have in common, in Kutik's view, is what he calls 'epic vision'. He credits both ode and epic with this vision, generated by an omniscient and impartial narrator who gathers events, characters, and objects into a narrative untainted by subjectivity: "At the base of the odic mentality is a turn from the lyric 'I' to a de-personified 'we'", a state he characterises as "the epic peak";⁴⁰ "Meta in Homer and Vergil has to do with the simultaneity of the epic and the subjective, [...] which thus produces an *intimate* perspective on *what is, without bringing into view a perceiving lyric subject*".⁴¹ Not only does Kutik cite classical epic as a major influence upon metarealism, he also suggests that the ancient epics were themselves by nature postmodern: "Postmodernism is already *epic*, by virtue of its gathering nature, by virtue of being *post* [...] postmodernism doesn't 'meddle'. One of the unwritten laws of the epic states: If Achilles threw a spear, even Homer couldn't stop it."⁴²

In *Oda* Kutik amplifies epic's relative (to lyric) narratorlessness. The 'I' of a lyric subject appears only twice, in the second and final stanzas. Its protagonists are not people, but the environment; its narrative is not a conventional account of events, but a series of associations radiating from these 'protagonists'. The glue for Kutik's odic aesthetics (and for the entirety of his poetics, as he expounds elsewhere) is metaphor, which he defines, quoting Lomonosov, as "сопряжение далековатых идей" ("the conjunction of remote ideas"). He compares this faculty of metaphor with (in essence) the mechanics of reception: "Отдаленные во времени события и все периферии пространства внезапно сходятся под мощным прессом авторского зрения" ("Distant events in time and all the peripheries of space suddenly come together under the powerful press of the authorial eye"); and he calls this tendency "в корне своем *эпическую*" (at its heart *epic*).⁴³ Although Kutik's metaphors in particular betray the presence of the 'perceiving lyric subject' that he wished to eliminate, this parallels how the Homeric narrator's presence is felt most strongly when he constructs similes. The simile "unites narrator and audience in *their* world, not that of the heroes", reminding the audience of the scene of discourse, which is usually occluded due to its being "a different level of existence

⁴⁰ Kutik, *The Ode and the Odic*, p. iv, 131.

⁴¹ Reginald Gibbons, 'On Russian Meta-Realist Poetry: A Conversation with Ilya Kutik', *The American Poetry Review*, 36.2 (2007), 19–25 (p. 23).

⁴² Kutik, *Hieroglyphs of Another World*, p. 17.

⁴³ Kutik, 'Slovo ob ode', p. 148.

from the world of the story”.⁴⁴ The Homeric narrator’s classification as a “metacharacter” – who is not given a distinct personality within the story, but whose character is discerned in the structuring of the narrative⁴⁵ – well suits the narrator of *Oda*.

So although *Oda* does not fulfil the generic requirements of epic, the prominent influence of Homer upon its style gives it an epic tint.

Oda’s Classical Allusions

Oda’s setting is the Belosaraisk Spit, a peninsula at the bottom of the Crimea jutting out into the Black Sea. As the area of the Soviet Union with the closest ties to the classical world (see p. 13), it is the perfect site for the new context Kutik desired for his modern Russian epic in the Homeric style. The peninsula’s situation at the whim of the waves, which gives the poem its theme, is appropriate to both the epic and odic traditions. Virtually all the ancient epics featured sea voyages, and many were predominantly sea-based (like the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, the *Argonautica*). The “rush of water” was Derzhavin’s favourite metaphor (most famously in ‘Vodopad’, ‘Waterfall’, 1791-94); it represented “the all-consuming vortex of time” and was “likened metapoetically to the ode itself, which, like a fast river, ‘carries everything away in its wake’”.⁴⁶ *Oda*’s geographic focus is not unusual, as in eighteenth-century Russia “the odic vision of the unfolding of Russian history was inescapably linked to territory”; however, its specific location is unusual – eighteenth-century odes tended to evoke Russia’s “boundlessness”, and distinguished “between Russia’s *western* boundary with Europe, where peace is desirable, and its *southern* and *eastern* limits, which continue to provide an outlet for military adventurism”.⁴⁷ Whereas *Oda* is specifically at the edge of the USSR, looking out to the south and the west from the country of Kutik’s birth. This is reminiscent of Kutik’s account of coming up against the ‘caesura’ of the divide from Europe: by the Black Sea, once part of the classical world, Kutik reconnects with Europe’s classical heritage.

Oda’s setting/protagonists, sea and shore, are in flux through the poem: “The actual subject of the poem is the cosmic battle between order (dry land) and chaos (the

⁴⁴ Mark W. Edwards and G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary: Volume 5* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 39; Scott Douglas Richardson, *The Homeric Narrator* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1990), p. 66.

⁴⁵ Richardson, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Ram, p. 93.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 77.

water), which allows the poet's imagination to range freely over the whole universe."⁴⁸ The opposition of order and chaos is a struggle Kutik entrusts to the ode: "высшая, по Блоку, задача художника заключается в том, чтобы из хаоса вознести космос, а здесь мы можем опереться как раз на жанровую традицию русского одического классицизма."⁴⁹ ("according the Blok, the artist's highest task lies in raising up cosmos out of chaos, and in this we can rely upon the tradition of the genre of Russian odic classicism.") The terminology – 'cosmos' rather than 'order' – that Kutik cites from Blok is typical of metaphysical philosophy, in which cosmos does not mean the universe, but rather "structured space embracing internally harmonious systems that function as a dynamic unit".⁵⁰ (A definition pertinent to *Oda*.) It originates in Empedoclean philosophy, which posits that the universe is in an endless cycle, moving between the two poles of Love and Strife (equivalent to order/cosmos and chaos), in the direction of either greater creation and unification, or greater destruction and division.⁵¹ In Empedoclean cosmology the ideal point comes when Love and Strife are in perfect balance. (Absolute harmony is not a state to be wished for by humans, as the height of Love is sterile in the extreme, described by Empedocles as "a rounded sphere, rejoicing in encircling stillness".⁵²) Kutik balances order and chaos in his poem in a similar way. The calm found at the beginning of *Oda* is comparable to the state of sterile harmony, and Kutik must introduce the chaos of the wave in order to spark creation. This first scatters, then gathers the elements to end the poem in balance, on a trajectory back towards order. Another Empedoclean touch is the fact that the poem's protagonists are the four elements (water and earth in particular, but fire and air also feature) that Empedocles postulated made up the world, the mixing of which allowed for movement and change in nature, just as his theory of Love and Strife did on a cosmic scale.⁵³

In the first stanza of *Oda* Kutik puns on the title of a non-Homeric work recounting the story of the Trojan War: '«Офигения в Авлиде»'⁵⁴ (*Ifriggenia in Aulis*). Taking

⁴⁸ Andrew Wachtel, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, pp. 274–75.

⁴⁹ Kutik, 'Slovo ob ode', p. 142.

⁵⁰ Berry and Miller-Pogacar, p. 13.

⁵¹ M. R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 166.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 176.

⁵⁴ Ilya Kutik, 'Oda na poseshchenie Belosaraiskoi kosy, chto na Azovskom more', *Sovremennaiia russkaia poeziia* <<http://modernpoetry.ru/main/ilya-kutik-oda-na->

Euripides' play *Iphigenia in Aulis* as *Oda*'s opening classical reference could indicate an intention to emulate Euripides, who famously "strain[ed] the limits of the plots handed him by tradition" when reworking them.⁵⁵ Kutik's pun warns the reader that his use of classical reference will be similarly unorthodox. Iphigenia's sacrifice by her father Agamemnon to placate Artemis who had becalmed the Greek ships, allowing the fleet to sail to Troy, is in a sense the opening act of the Trojan War. It could be said that it was not Helen's face, but Iphigenia's death, that launched a thousand ships. She likewise launches Kutik's epic: whilst his sea is also calm to begin with, it is soon anything but, and its movement is necessary to drive the poem's 'narrative'. This single classical reference in the first stanza literally sets the stage for the poem:

Безоблачно и море лосо.
 Облапистый изморный зной
 песок поставил на колеса,
 как бы театр передвижной.
 Дается в искаженном виде
 фарс – «Офигения в Авлиде» –
 в виду того, что ветра нет.
 Тот в марафон угнал Цунами,
 а море жирными мазками
 во сне наводит марафет.

The sky is clear and the sea is smooth.
 The groping, sapping heat
 has set the sand on wheels,
 like a travelling theatre.
 They are staging, in distorted form,
 a farce: *Iphigenia in Aulis* –
 in view of the fact that there's no breeze.
 That one joyrode a Tsunami to marathon;
 meanwhile the sea in greasy daubs
 puts its face on in its sleep.

The calm, windless sea suggests *Iphigenia in Aulis* to the poet; the shifting sand of the spit itself becomes the theatre for both the Greek play and the modern Russian ode; at the end of the stanza the sea 'brings order', but also 'applies makeup' to the scene. Thus the sea and the land, and the shifting dynamic between them, are introduced to the reader as both the poem's setting and its main actors; the other players are also in place: the references (frequently literary, often classical) induced

poseshchenie-belosarayskoy-kosy-cto-na-azovskom-more> [accessed 2 November 2013].
 All further references to *Oda* from this page.

⁵⁵ Richardson, p. 188.

by and inducing associative leaps; the linguistic games; and the combination of the ancient and the modern. All these elements are exemplified by the pun ‘Офигения’ (‘Ifrigenia’) which amalgamates an ancient name and modern slang within a classical reference that has implications for the surrounding text and the poem as a whole.

In the second stanza Kutik looks at the sea through the prism of Ivan Aivazovskii’s Crimean seascapes. Aivazovskii painted the Sea of Azov (e.g. ‘Storm on the Azov Sea’) as well as the Black Sea; he also did paintings of Pushkin in the same setting (e.g. ‘Pushkin on the Black Sea Coast’), and it is this which provides the implicit link for Kutik to go on to depict Ovid in the following stanza. As many Russian poets, Pushkin among them, had done before him, Kutik imagines Ovid at Tomis, in the Black Sea, only 400 miles or so from his current location, and in the same body of water:

Холодный до воды Овидий,
сойдя в ее сырой подвал,
тотчас же стал одной из мидий,
как их Тарковский срифмовал.

Already cold to water, Ovid,
descending into its damp vault,
instantly metamorphosed into a squid;⁵⁶
it’s Tarkovskii’s rhyming that’s at fault.

The phrase ‘Холодный до воды’ evokes Ovid’s constant complaints in *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto* about the cold; according to Kutik, his specific reference is to *Amores* 3.2.47-8, “Cheer Neptune, all who over-trust the ocean; / The sea’s not my concern: dry land for me”, proving Ovid’s dislike for the sea predated his exile.⁵⁷ Kutik’s verse takes its intermediary reference to Ovid not from Pushkin, but from Tarkovskii’s ‘Stepnaia dudka’ (‘Steppe pipe’, 1960-64). Kutik focuses not on the content of Tarkovskii’s poem (which makes the common point that while for Italians the Black Sea region was a northern land of torment, for Russians it is a southern land of comfort), but on Tarkovskii’s unusual rhyming ‘Ovidii’ and ‘midii’ (‘Ovid’ and ‘mussel’, which I translate as ‘squid’ to retain the crucial rhyme):

⁵⁶ Actually ‘mussel’.

⁵⁷ Ilya Kutik, *Ode on Visiting the Belosaraisk Spit on the Sea of Azov / Oda Na Poseshchenie Belosaraiskoi Kosy, Chto Na Azovskom More*, trans. by Kit Robinson (New York: Alef Books, 1995), p. 5, n.

Где вьюгу на латынь
Переводил Овидий,
Я пил степную синь
И суп варил из мидий⁵⁸

Where the blizzard into Latin
Translated was by Ovid,
I drank the steppe's dark blue in
And boiled up soup from squid.

Ovid's metamorphosis into a mussel in *Oda* is due directly to the linguistic potential that Kutik saw in Tarkovskii's poem.

Ovid recurs two stanzas later, in a reference to Python, the legendary monster killed by Apollo in Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*: 'Так семя с самого зачину / в утробе кружит, дно клубя, [...] / как в кольцах собственных Пифон' ('So a seed from germination / turns in its womb, stirring up the bottom, [...] / like Python wrapped in his own coils'). The placing of the Python episode within the *Metamorphoses* – after the tales about the formation of the world, before the poem's first foray out of the epic into the elegiac mode – mirrors its placing in Kutik's poem, which is also in its formative stages, describing the birth of the wave.

Stanzas 14 to 18 build up to an equation of the seafloor with Hades. This begins with a fisherman who is subtly compared to Orpheus, with his line like a string and his backward glance tangled in his net. The following stanza's depiction of the seadepths as the dark, lower world 'откуда и приходят сны' ('whence come dreams') references the assertion in *Aeneid* Book 6 that dreams issue from the underworld through gates of ivory and horn. Kutik draws a comparison between this Orphean figure and the biblical version of prohibition of the backward glance – Lot's wife:

И вздумай он теперь воочью,
всю жизнь вложив в единый взгляд,
на то, что завершилось ночью,
при свете посмотреть назад,
как некогда супруга Лота, –
взгляд этой силой эхолота
всю память смерит в глубину,
но глубина не даст ответа:
там – вместо дна – струится Лета
и эхо гасит о волну.

⁵⁸ Arsenii Tarkovskii, *Izbrannoe: stikhotvoreniia, poemy, perevody (1929-1979)* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1982), p. 161.

And but dare he, with his own eyes,
placing his whole life in a single glance,
look back, now in the daylight,
at what was done in the night,
as one time did Lot's wife,
then the glance with the power of an echolocator
will look the whole memory up and down into the depths
but the depths will give no answer:
there, instead of the bottom, Lethe's
flow douses the echo with a wave.

Only the mention of Lethe confirms that the primary reference is to Orpheus.

In stanzas 24-5 Kutik maps out the building of the great wave, the structural premise of his poem, in terms of the interaction of space and time, at the confluence of which he locates humanity and history. The stanzas have a biological and an Egyptian setting: the human cardiovascular system and the Pyramids.

Так в кровеносной прасистеме
того же склада пирамид
Пространство – малый круг, а Время
есть круг большой, поскольку мчит,
как в капилляры из аорты,
по всем камням, что притерты
друг к дружке, вроде шестерен,
им занятых в перепасовке
между собой, зане в фасовке
такой всяк прах – Тутанхамон.

Вот почему спустилось время
в тот самый миг, когда волна
с себя стряхнула вес, как бремя,
и снова стала гладью на
тот самый миг, войдя без дрожи
в пространство моря
[...]
ведь море – легкие природы
и крови мира малый круг.

Thus in the circulatory ante-system,
along the same model as the pyramids,
Space is the lesser circuit, and Time
is the greater circuit, as it rushes,
as if from the aorta into capillaries,
around all the stones that are fitted
tightly together like cogs,
engaged in a back-and-forth with it
amongst themselves, for in such packaging
any old dust is Tutankhamun.

This is why time dropped down

at the moment when the wave
shook the weight off itself like a burden
and became smooth once again
for that moment, entering the space
of the sea without trembling
[...]
for the seas are nature's lungs
and the lesser circuit of the world's blood.

He finds that space is the lesser (pulmonary) circulatory system, to which the sea is likened, as 'легкие природы' ('nature's lungs'), whereas time is the greater (systemic) circulatory system, which flows throughout the body, or world. Space (or the sea) is viewed as a simple, almost two-dimensional area, whereas time must suffuse everything contained in the space, thereby travelling further. Thus, time follows the progress of the wave, subsiding as it subsides, and, one assumes, also growing along with the wave. This explanation of the flexibility of time prefigures Kutik's stretching of the narrative towards the end, when the great wave is at its highest. This conflation of space and time with the effect of pausing time is typical of metarealism:

The cessation of time is a common feature of both Soviet and postmodern reality, insofar as they become self-sufficient systems incorporating the exemplary, classical fragments of previous cultures and eras. [...] The flow of time stops and categories of space become primary.⁵⁹

The wave that structures *Oda's* narrative is thus shown to be a construct symbolising Kutik's jumbling together of references from across human history. Moreover, this section also suggests that Kutik places a higher value on older references: the phrase 'в фасовке / такой всяк прах – Тутанхамон' ('in such packaging / any old dust is Tutankhamun') encrypts Kutik's view that any worthless object when sufficiently aged acquires value, as the 'фасовка' ('packaging') is both the pyramid, which has risen, wave-like, accumulating time along with height, and time itself.

Shortly after the poem's midpoint, a messiah figure (probably Mohammed, whom Bulukiya, a hero from the *1001 Nights*, has been seeking across the seas) is washed up from the sea. He is half man, half fish, and Kutik quotes the Greek philosopher Anaximander's theory of man's 'evolution' from fish (appropriate to *Oda's* focus on the interaction between land and sea):

Он – спал, но рыбья кольчуга

⁵⁹ Mikhail Epstein, in Berry and Miller-Pogacar, p. 39.

не испеклась – наоборот:
она, со слов Анаксимандра,
была теперь взамен скафандра
тому, кто миллион парсек
летел к Нему сквозь атмосферы

He slept, but the fish scale chain mail
did not bake. On the contrary,
in the words of Anaximander,
it now functioned as a scaphander
for he who across a million parsecs
flew to Him through the atmosphere.

Anaximander's suggestion that early humans, for protection from the elements, developed into adulthood inside fish (according to Censorius, Hippolytus, and Plutarch) or within thorny bark in water until it evaporated to expose dry land, at which point the bark broke off (according to Aetius)⁶⁰ is Kutik's basis for charting the progression of humanity from sea to space within a single stanza, as the protective fish scales become a 'скафандр', the word for both 'diving suit' and 'spacesuit'.

In the build-up to the climax of the poem Kutik unleashes the most characteristic weapon in the epic arsenal: the Homeric simile.

The extended simile is a distinctive feature of Homeric style [...]. It consists of a comparison which is developed in detail, usually for two or three lines, and which regularly introduces elements which at first sight bear no relation to the narrative events which prompted the simile.⁶¹

Two accompany the wave at its greatest height in stanzas 42-3, and one during the wave's final union with the land in 51-2. Each instance is expressed in the conventional Homeric wording of 'как...так', 'just as...so' (although there are many similes elsewhere in the poem, no others are Homeric). Kutik employs the Homeric simile knowingly, clearly following – and subverting – its rules. Homer's similes are expansive, prolonging a moment: Kutik's similes extend the breaking of the wave over 11 stanzas. Homer's similes take the reader away from the events of the narrative; in the *Iliad* "the similes introduce variety and remind us of the world beyond the Trojan plain": Kutik's take the reader away from the Belosaraisk Spit into the Homeric world. Homer's similes "add weight and significance to an

⁶⁰ *Anaximander in Context: New Studies in the Origins of Greek Philosophy* (SUNY Press, 2003), pp. 14–17.

⁶¹ R. B. Rutherford, *Homer: Odyssey. Books XIX and XX* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 73.

occasion: this is especially the case when similes are accumulated”: Kutik’s similes come in a group at the poem’s climax.⁶²

Kutik’s final Homeric simile is the most typically Homeric. The epic meeting of land and wave conjures up a distinctly unepic comparison: ‘как, когда от старой пыли / ковер вытряхивают’ (‘just as when old dust / is shaken out of a rug’). This follows Homeric practice of “juxtaposing ‘low’ or unheroic similes with heroic or dignified action in the narrative”.⁶³ *Iliad* 12.433-5 provides a typical example, and possibly the prototype for Kutik’s simile:

they held their ground, as a careful woman that laboureth with her hands at spinning, holdeth the balance and raiseth the weight and the wool in either scale, making them equal, that she may win a meagre wage for her children; so evenly was strained their war and battle.⁶⁴

Yet Kutik is aware that his poem is *not* the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, and plays with this. In Homer, similes are usually taken from everyday life,⁶⁵ creating contrasts between men battling and the natural world, whereas Kutik’s work is already about the natural world; he therefore inverts the traditional Homeric simile, and compares the epic clash of natural elements with specifically Homeric warfare. The first group of similes in stanza 42 concludes with a comparison of the giant fish with a bow: ‘а тело, выгнутое в муке, / с хвостом сомкнулось, – так на луке / натягивают тетиву.’ (‘but its body, curved in torment, / joined up with its tail – just as a bow / is strung and drawn.’) This references Homer’s famous simile when Odysseus strings his bow in *Odyssey* 21.406-11:

even as when a man well-skilled in the lyre and in song easily stretches the string about a new peg, making fast at either end the twisted sheep-gut – so without effort did Odysseus string the great bow. And he held it in his right hand, and tried the string, which sang sweetly beneath his touch, like to a swallow in tone.⁶⁶

Kutik associates the awesome destructive power of Odysseus’ bow with the fish. This is also a metapoetic reference for Kutik, as he characterises the allusive synthesis he hoped to achieve in *Oda* with just this episode:

⁶² Ibid., pp. 74–75.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 76–5.

⁶⁴ Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. by A. T. Murray, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1924), I, p. 575.

⁶⁵ Rutherford, p. 75.

⁶⁶ Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by A. T. Murray, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1974), II, p. 341.

a poem [...] is that arrow from Odysseus's bow which passes untouched through all the parts (each strophe is a ring) and hits the target. [...] The rings comprise *all* cultures – Hellas, Rome, Judea, Byzantium... [...] An attempt (a personal one) is my 'Ode on Visiting the Belosaraisk Spit on the Sea of Azov.' This (in the ode and in general) is, for me, a solution to the problem of the Whole, of nostalgia in an epic key.⁶⁷

The central of the three similes, in the next stanza, alludes to the *Iliad*, by which Kutik acknowledges his Homeric source:

И как когда-то, в оны лета,
Арес – сраженный наповал
копьем аргосца Диомеда –
кровавым криком закричал,
так содрогнулось тело рыбе

And just as one time, long ago,
Ares, felled by one blow
of the spear of the Argive Diomedes,
bellowed a bloody cry,
just so shuddered the fish's body.

As with the bow simile, the Ares simile is drawn from an event in the *Iliad* which is itself subject to a Homeric simile, 5.859-68:

Then brazen Ares bellowed as loud as nine thousand warriors or ten thousand cry in battle, when they join in the strife of the war-god [...] Even as a black darkness appeareth from the clouds when after heat a blustering wind ariseth, even in such wise unto Diomedes, son of Tydeus, did brazen Ares appear, as he fared amid the clouds unto broad heaven.⁶⁸

The comparison from the first simile continues beyond this new simile, as the fish/bow lets loose a cry/arrow: 'стрела шального крика / помчалась с Юга на Восток' ('the stray cry's arrow / sped from South to East'), thus mirroring the structure of Homer's version, where Ares first shouts, then shoots through the sky. Kutik reverses the original simile: in *Oda* the material of Homer's simile, the chaos of the elements, is reality, as opposed to the warriors whom Kutik has appropriated from the *Iliad* for his own simile.

Suitably to the Homeric air of this section of the poem, the surrounding stanzas are especially thick with classical references. Stanza 49 shows seagulls 'ища Орфея на экране / голубизны' ('searching for Orpheus on the screen / of blue'). This could be a reference to Orpheus' sailing as one of the Argonauts, or to the version of his myth

⁶⁷ Kutik, *Hieroglyphs of Another World*, pp. 5–6.

⁶⁸ Homer, *The Iliad*, I, pp. 257–59.

where his severed head was thrown into the river Hebrus by the Bacchantes, or even to the many representations of Orpheus in film. Stanza 50 has another classical severed head, that of Medusa, to convey the (metaphorical) petrification of the fishermen at the sight of the giant wave:

как если бы в лицо Горгону-
Медузу увидели вдруг;
их лица [...]
в скульптуры превратил испуг.

like they'd suddenly looked Gorgon
Medusa in the face;
their faces [...]
turned to sculptures from fright.

In stanza 55 the wave breaches 'могилам / весталок этих вод' ('the graves / of the vestal virgins of these waters'). The destruction left behind on the spit in the wake of the wave becomes the ruins of Delphi in stanza 56: 'В разрушенных дельфиньих Дельфах / алтарь залитый дотлевал' ('In destroyed dolphin-y Delphi / the flooded altar was guttering'). This could hark back to the reference to Python near the beginning of the poem, as Apollo killed him at Delphi; the adjective 'дельфиньих', chosen for its acoustic similarity with 'Delphi', means both 'dolphins' and 'Delphinian/Pythian', one of Apollo's epithets, since he led Cretans to the settlement (then called Pytho) in the form of a dolphin. The *Homeric Hymn to Pythian Apollo* recounts this, along with the founding of the eternal flame in the Temple of Apollo: 'make an altar upon the beach of the sea: light fire upon it and make an offering of white meal [...] in as much as at the first on the hazy sea I sprang upon the swift ship in the form of a dolphin, pray to me as Apollo Delphinus.'⁶⁹ That Kutik shows this flame going out hints at the earth-shattering nature of the cataclysm he has just described. Similarly, the transformation of the living spit – just before thronged with an epic catalogue of birds, fishermen, seacreatures... – into an ancient city, long 'dead' ('на мертвых шельфах', 'on dead ledges') and buried, is a shocking departure. The wave vacating the land to return to the sea merges with the excavation of Delphi: 'арена / над ней сомкнулась [...] обнажился небосвод' ('the arena / closed over [the wave] [...] the vault of heaven was bared').

The final stanza (along with stanza 43) contains the highest density of classical references in the entire poem. The phrase 'небес куратор', 'curator of the heavens',

⁶⁹ Hesiod, p. 359.

with its transliterated Latin word, whilst not a set phrase in either language, gives the Russian a latinate feel. The charming image of the tide as a Greek orator takes its prompt from Demosthenes practising oratory with pebbles in his mouth,⁷⁰ an action, moreover, more natural for the sea: ‘прибой, как греческий оратор, / катает камушки во рту’ (‘the tide, like a Greek orator, / rolls pebbles round its mouth’).⁷¹ The arrival of Calliope allows Kutik to make a play upon the similarity of the name for the Roman Muses, ‘Camenae’ (although Calliope, as a Greek Muse, was not technically among them),⁷² and the Russian for ‘stones’, ‘камни’: ‘выходит муза Каллиопа / на берег первую в ряду / камен, ведя их через камни’ (‘out comes the muse Calliope / onto the shore, first in the ranks of Camenae, / leading them through the stones’). (This similarity is one that Shvarts also plays upon in ‘Khomomusaget’ – see p. 135.) Calliope is the epic muse – Homer’s muse. Kutik’s closing declaration of his intention to pursue the goal of writing epic, specifically Homeric, poetry, ‘За ними же я и пойду’ (‘I, too, shall follow behind them’), forms an unconventionally placed acclamation of the Muse, a hallmark of Greek epic.⁷³ In Homer it is the only point at which the narrator refers to himself in the first person; it stands outside the narrative, and pulls the reader out of their immersion in the plot:

The invocations to the Muses are directed neither to the level of the story nor to that of the discourse, but to the sphere that oversees the construction of the narrative discourse out of the fabric of the story. In calling on the goddesses to show him the story, he subtly directs our attention to his own act of creation.⁷⁴

Similarly, in *Oda* it is the only point at which the narrator appears in the poem, and it shatters the illusion of narratorlessness; by revealing himself Kutik signals the end of the show that he set up in the first stanza. Invoking the Muse at the end of the poem, rather than the beginning, as is usual for epic poetry, undercuts the arrogance implicit in claiming divine authority and rivalling Homer. Moreover, the offhand tone in which Kutik declares his intention to follow the muses indicates either humility or ambivalence – he is just tagging along. The statement of intent indicates

⁷⁰ James J. Murphy, ‘Demosthenes’, *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 2016 <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Demosthenes-Greek-statesman-and-orator>> [accessed 18 July 2016].

⁷¹ It may also refer to the “oratorical” nature of the ode (especially Lomonosov’s) propounded by Tynianov. Tynianov, p. 581.

⁷² Cancik and Schneider, ‘Muse, Acclamation of the’, *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 321–22 (p. 321).

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Richardson, pp. 181–82.

Kutik's awareness that *Oda* falls short of epic, and might become a prelude to a greater epic.

Lyric Collections

Kutik's four collections published over the two decades following *Oda* are of short, lyric poetry, a form he originally eschewed. They no longer lay claim to the grand sweep or national significance of ode or epic, yet still aspire to a larger form, as each collection is intended as a thematically coherent whole: Kutik has said "I never write poems. [...] I don't think in poetic cycles, I think in books."⁷⁵

All four collections are titled with a classical reference: *Luk Odisseia (Odysseus' Bow, 1989-91, publ. 1993)* unambiguously so, whereas the other three collections' titles originate in classical antiquity but could just as easily refer to the present day (a characteristic of much of his classical reception in them). The collections' major themes all reflect their titles' classical origin. *Luk Odisseia* deals with changes of state, as encapsulated in its movement away from ode towards lyric. The overarching theme of *Piatibor'e chuvstv (Pentathlon of feelings, publ. 1990)* is time and the legacy of classical antiquity. *Persidskie pis'ma, ili vtoraiia chast' knigi Smert' tragedii, vykhodiashchaia pervoi (Persian epistles, or the second part of the book 'The death of tragedy', issued first; henceforth Persidskie pis'ma, 1993-99)* focuses on cats and their place in time and Kutik's poetics. *Grazhdanskie voiny, ili pervaiia chast' knigi Smert' tragedii, raspolozhennaia vtoroi (The Civil Wars, or the first part of the book 'The death of tragedy', placed second; henceforth Grazhdanskie voiny, 1999-2002)* explores civil war and the nearness of death.⁷⁶ At least a third of all the poems in each collection feature classical references: *Luk Odisseia* 10/25; *Piatibor'e chuvstv* 12/23; *Persidskie pis'ma* 13/34; *Grazhdanskie voiny* 37/106.

Odysseus' Bow: Bowing Out of the Ode, Epic, and USSR

The episode of the stringing and shooting of Odysseus' bow at the end of the *Odyssey* is hugely significant for Kutik, recurring throughout his poetry and criticism, and,

⁷⁵ Kutik, 'Interview'.

⁷⁶ I will discuss the two books of *Smert' tragedii* in the reading order Kutik recommends in the 'Паpуслобие' ('Fewword') to *Persidskie pis'ma*: first *Persidskie pis'ma* then *Grazhdanskie voiny*. Ilya Kutik, *Persidskie pis'ma, ili vtoraiia chast' knigi Smert' Tragedii, vykhodiashchaia pervoi* (Moscow: Kommentarii, 2003), p. 4.

unsurprisingly, throughout the eponymous book *Luk Odisseia*. In the essay which opens the book, also named ‘Luk Odisseia’, he likens Odysseus’ preparation to shoot the bow with “the creative process”, and the result with “a poem”.⁷⁷ In the first poem, ‘Slukh i golos’ (‘Hearing and voice), Kutik reduces poetry to its raw components, hearing and voice, and equates his voice with Odysseus’ arrow:

Голос – ты почерк от точки слуха,
только по воздуху. Т.Е. сей
путь – как маршрут отлетевшей с лука
Вашего – Одиссей –

да, той стрелы⁷⁸

Voice – you are the writing from the point of hearing,
only through the air. I.E. that
path is like the trajectory – flown forth from a bow,
yours, Odysseus –

yes, of that arrow.

He then imagines his voice (the arrow) drawing together ‘everything’ (the air inside the axe heads). This classical reference explains the gathering principle of his poetry, which transforms heard things (references) and surroundings (the present moment) into the singular, directed thread of a poem. Next he compares the ‘emptiness’ drawn into his poetry with a classical image contradictory to arrow flight – a meandering labyrinth: ‘Разве та / Крит-пустота, что застроил Минос, / не многократная пустота?..’ (‘Is the / Crete-emptiness, that Minos built up, / not a manifold emptiness?..’) (11) In ‘Predmet’ (‘Subject’) Kutik compares the flow of poetry through rhyme with an arrow, which is stuck in his throat:

Это А в горле
Как наконечник – торчит – стрелы
и не дает – «Ы» – выдохнуть
[...] Но течение
языка и круги, как в тире,
и стрела... (74)

That A in the throat
Like the tip – sticks out – of an arrow
and does not let – “U” – exhale
[...] But the flow
of language, and circles, as in a shooting range,

⁷⁷ Kutik, *Hieroglyphs of Another World*, pp. 5–6.

⁷⁸ Пыла Kutik, *Luk Odisseia: Tret'ia kniga stikhotvorenii* (St Petersburg: Sovetskii pisatel', 1993), p. 11. Further page references given in brackets.

and an arrow...

The arrow in his throat is clearly Odysseus': that Kutik sees as creating poetry. The fact that the arrow is stuck and stopping him speaking, along with the incoherence of the poem, its references to love, and its frequent Swedish interjections, suggest that Kutik is struggling to write poetry in his new context – lyric and emigration.

Kutik's perceived betrayal of the ode/epic, a central issue for the collection, is bound up with other changes of state, which were plentiful in the years of its composition, 1989 to 1991: his first travels beyond the bounds of the USSR, starting in 1988;⁷⁹ and the interrelated fact of the Soviet Union's sudden precarious standing after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Of *Luk Odisseia* Kutik says “мне нужно было дать-показать свои субъективные – по мере возможного – объективные образы своей ‘vita nuova’”⁸⁰ (“I needed to impart subjective – insofar as possible – objective images of my ‘vita nuova’”). Naming the book after Odysseus, the archetypal exile, is also pertinent to Kutik's departure from the USSR, although he does not develop the theme.

‘Vospominanie ob ode’ (‘Remembrance of the ode’) tackles departure from ode writing directly. Its first line quotes the first line of *Oda* word for word, after which the poem diverges into a reflection upon another coastline: not Ukraine, as in *Oda*, but Denmark. Like *Oda*, the coast is seen through a prism of classical references. Unlike *Oda*, the focus of the poem is no longer the landscape or the associations evoked by it. True to its lyric form, the focus is Kutik himself – although he writes of himself at a distance, in the third person, and the past tense – as a former ‘writer of odes’, literally immersed in Horace, the embodiment of the odic poet, who was surprisingly absent from *Oda* itself:

Писатель од, он жил здесь сам,
вдали от их цивилизаций,
и тек по (так сказать) усам –
не попадая в рот – Гораций... (58)

The writer of odes, he lived here himself,
far from their civilisations,
and there flowed through his (as it were) moustache –
missing his mouth – Horace...

⁷⁹ Babil'skii, ‘Sny-podstrochniki’.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

This choice of tense and person and adaptation of a formula that traditionally closes fairytales, ‘по усам текло, а в рот не попало’ (‘it flowed through my moustache, but missed my mouth’), suggests a farewell to the ode; even an unwilling, forced parting. (See p. 228 for Barskova’s use of this formula.) Kutik depicts the ode’s very substance (sand, one half of the main components of *Oda*) slipping between his fingers as he tries to cling on to it:

Язык его песочных од
(он размышлял свежо и горько)
как бы меж пальцами течет,
и – глядь! – внизу другая горка...

Как между пальцами песок,
уходит – несмотря на сжатье... (58)

The language of his sandy odes
(he brooded freshly and bitterly)
seems to flow through the fingers,
and – look! – below there’s another mound...

Like sand through your fingers,
it *runs away* – no matter how tight you grasp it...

This same imagery and wording appears later in ‘Tri pustyni’ (‘Three deserts’): ‘оды Горация, чей песочный / стих между пальцев уходит’ (69) (‘Horace’s odes, whose sandy / verse runs through the fingers’), reinforcing Kutik’s loss of the genre. Sand becomes a symbol for time’s flow in the penultimate stanza of ‘Vospominanie ob ode’, which sums up *Oda* in dismissively concise fashion:

Писатель од, он жил здесь с
Горацием, и шторм-истерик
словно песочные часы
перевернул однажды берег. (59)

The writer of odes, he lived here with Horace,
and one day a hysteric-storm
like an hourglass
overturned the seashore.

Turning (and overturning) the seashore from *Oda* into an hourglass could stand as a metaphor for ‘Vospominanie ob ode’ itself: it encapsulates *Oda*, miniaturises it, and subjects it to the inexorable march of time, which *Oda* resisted, but ‘Vospominanie ob ode’, as a memory of a past event, embraces. Words like ‘истерик’ (‘hysteric’) and ‘однажды’ (‘one day’) trivialise *Oda* further. Epic is diminished along with the ode, as Homer and the great fish, whose appearance in ‘Oda’ was heralded by Homeric similes, become a ‘подземный крот’ (‘subterranean mole’) and ‘сардина’ (‘sardine’)

respectively (58). The final verse shows Kutik's life after Oda: 'чемодан раскрытый / огромной раковиной всплыл / с успевшей выйти Афродитой' (59) ('the open suitcase / surfaced like a giant shell, with Aphrodite already emerged'). The suitcase reminds the reader that the author has moved in space as well as time. The erotic connotations of Botticelli's Aphrodite rising from it might signal Kutik's turn to lyric poetry, which tends to deal with personal themes, especially love.

The diminishment of epic recurs elsewhere. 'Elegiia na tserkovnom kladbishche' ('Elegy in a church graveyard') imagines Homer as a mole, digging foundations for future literature, of which the only visible sign is his epics, portrayed as a burial mound/molehill:⁸¹ 'от кротов-Гомеров / нам остается лишь курган Ахилла, / но не поймешь: где – эпос, где – могила...' (22) ('from the mole-Homers / all we have left is the burial mound of Achilles, / but you can't tell where the epic ends and the grave begins...') The ambiguous metaphor miniaturises and buries Homer whilst affirming his legacy. Just as Homer's poetry became a grave, the poem itself turns into a gravestone, an epitaph:⁸² 'ЗДЕСЬ ВСЮДУ – КИРКЕГ[АРД]. А ПОЕМУ / ЭЛЕГИЕЙ НЕ ОДУРАЧИТЬ ОДУ...' (23) ('HERE, ALL IS KIERKEGAARD.⁸³ AND THIS IS WHY / THE ODE CANNOT BE FOOLED BY ELEGY...') Kutik suggests that his turn to elegy cannot lessen his earliest work, as it all becomes a legacy eventually. Literalising generic conflict reminds the reader of the genres' usual purposes, elegy "mourning the past", and ode "praising the new".⁸⁴ A snail, a representation of Kutik, crawls through the poem from beginning to end. It carries the spiral of history on its back (the Marxist interpretation of Hegel),⁸⁵ but declares itself free of this (Communist) ideology, choosing to carry instead literary influences, specifically – the elegiac influences of the present poem (Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' and Vasilii Zhukovskii's translation 'Sel'skoe kladbishche', 'Village graveyard', a foundational text in the development of modern Russian literature⁸⁶).

Я не улитка, чтоб тащить спираль

⁸¹ Kutik, 'Interview'.

⁸² Kutik takes this structure from Gray's Elegy. Ibid.

⁸³ The Danish 'kirkegard', meaning 'cemetery', sounds identical to 'Kierkegaard', as Kutik discovered when he went to visit the grave of Kierkegaard in Copenhagen and asked the person working at the cemetery where it was. Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ram, p. 233.

⁸⁵ Kutik, 'Interview'.

⁸⁶ Catherine Ciepiela, in Sandler, *Rereading Russian Poetry*, pp. 31, 36.

дьялектики за Гегелем марксизма.
Мой домик-томик, где Жуковский-Грей
[...] открыт... (22)

I am not a snail to drag the spiral
of dialectic after the Hegel of Marxism.
My home-tome is where Zhukovskii-Gray
[...] is open...

At the end the snail/Kutik overtakes Achilles, representing Homer and epic:
'УЛИТКА ОБГОНЯЕТ ЧЕРЕПАХУ, / А ТА – АХИЛЛА...' (24) ('THE SNAIL
OVERTAKES THE TORTOISE, / AND IT – ACHILLES...') As Kutik comes after
Homer, he is able to make use of the foundations the mole-Homer had dug and so
surpass him. This alludes to and partially contradicts Zeno's paradox, which states
that Achilles can never overtake a tortoise if it began moving before him.⁸⁷

Elegy and its interconnected (for Kutik) genre, lyric, overtakes epic in other poems
of *Luk Odisseia*. In 'Pustynia troikh' ('Desert of three') Kutik links the fall of Troy
with the battle between lyric and epic in Soviet literature, which epic won:

Если между нами трещина пробежит
по сухой земле, как змея,
мы ее уьем (переступим), и этот вид
пре-ступления я
готов приравнять ко взятию Трои,
к победе Эпоса над собой,
т. е. – Лирикой... (82)

If a crack runs between us
across the dry earth, like a snake,
we will kill (transgress) it, and
I am prepared to liken that kind of
trans-gression⁸⁸ to the capture of Troy,
to the victory of Epic over itself,
i.e., over Lyric...)

This generic conflict came to be embodied by Pasternak (lyric) and Maiakovskii
(epic), as in the mid-1930s Bukharin championed the former and Stalin imposed the
latter (posthumously); but it was waged also within Maiakovskii himself as he tried

⁸⁷ Kutik, 'Interview'; Cancik and Schneider, 'Zeno of Elea', *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 882–84 (p. 883).

⁸⁸ Kutik is punning on 'perestupim' ('we will overstep/transgress') and 'pre-stuplenie' ('crime/transgression').

to overcome his “irrepressible lyricism” with epic.⁸⁹ Kutik discusses Maiakovskii’s conflicted poetics: “In Mayakovsky, the odic genre found its highest epic conclusion, to the prejudice of its own lyric potential”.⁹⁰ Kutik’s interpretation of epic’s victory here as Pyrrhic, deriving from his implied reference to Maiakovskii, suggests his own generic indecision. The ‘crack’ could be construed also as a split between Russia and Europe, an interpretation facilitated by Kutik’s reference to himself as Janus earlier in the poem.

The theme of the fall of Troy is combined with that of the USSR in multiple poems. ‘Vospominanie ob ode’ contains a punning parody of the phrase ‘timeo Danaos et dona ferentis’:⁹¹ ‘Данайцев Дании, дары / не приносящих, – что бояться?’ (‘Why fear Danish Danaans, / not bearing gifts?’) (58) This remarks upon Kutik’s emergence from behind the Iron Curtain into Scandinavia of his own free will, unlike the Trojans’ loss of their city walls through deception. In ‘1991-...’ Kutik links the digits of the date with Hecuba’s 19 children, most of whom died in the Trojan War:⁹²

Эпос-Гомер.
Гекуба,
бедная-бедная, все 19
детей разлетелись

в смерть. (72)

Epos-Homer.
Poor, poor
Hecuba, all 19
children have flown away

to death.

‘1991-...’ is paired with ‘1978-1991’, implying a clear divide between the first part of Kutik’s adult life and the rest, from 1991; the significance of this date is doubtless the break-up of the Soviet Union, which was already well underway by October 1991, when the poem was written. In *Luk Odisseia* Kutik encapsulates the breakdown of the epic communist project and his own change of genre in the dual image of the fall

⁸⁹ Clare Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West* (New Haven, Conn; London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 151, 156.

⁹⁰ Kutik, *The Ode and the Odic*, p. 206.

⁹¹ Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid I-VI*, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 318 (2.49).

⁹² Cancik and Schneider, ‘Priam’, *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 817–18 (p. 817).

of Troy – the end of the Trojan epic cycle – and Odysseus’ shooting of the suitors – the end of the *Odyssey*.

The final word goes to ‘Prozaicheskii postskriptum’ (‘Prosaic postscriptum’), a short prose piece at the end of the collection. In it, Kutik answers the accusation made implicitly in the preceding poetry that he has betrayed the ode by turning to lyric: “Даже с тобой я не изменял *Оде*. От *Оды* как *жанра* – к *Оде* как *стилю*.” (86) (“Even with you I have not been unfaithful to *Oda*. From the *Ode* as a *genre* – to the *Ode* as a *style*.”) He returns to the image of Horace and the sand-filled hourglass and transforms it from a representation of loss caused by the passing of time, to a representation of the potential for renewal inherent in the passing of time: “Оды Горация – как пустыня: в песочных часах. Переверни страницу... Переверни часы...” (86) (“Horace’s odes are like a desert: in an hourglass. Turn over the page... Turn over the hourglass...”) Yet the elegiac poetics of *Luk Odisseia* negate this hope that it is possible to write in the epic/odic mode even within lyric poetry.

Old Kotik’s Book of Classical Cats

The first poem of *Piatibor’e chuvstv*, ‘Iiul’ kotov’ (‘Cats’ July’; for translation see p. 311), contains in miniature the major themes of the three collections, all connected with classical reception: time and the legacy of classical antiquity (the overarching theme of *Piatibor’e chuvstv*); cats and their place in time (*Persidskie pis’ma*); and civil war (*Grazhdanskie voiny*). Kutik looks into the dreams of cats and sees their great and terrible history before their decline into creatures of luxury:

Коты, но скажите, кто помнит из вас
военные песни роскошного Рима?
[...]
вам их заменили буддийская дрема
и жмурки Китая.⁹³

Tomcats, pray tell, who of you recalls
the martial songs of luxurious Rome?
[...]
they have been supplanted by the drowse of Buddha
and blind Chinaman’s buff.

Cats’ descent from wild cats into tame housecats is expressed in terms of classical history, one which predicts Western civilisation’s parallel movement into decadence.

⁹³ Илья Кутик, ‘Piatibor’e chuvstv’, *Sovremennaia russkaia poeziia*, 1990
<<http://modernpoetry.ru/main/ilya-kutik-izbrannoe>> [accessed 25 January 2014].

The earliest domestication of the cat, popularly held to be in Ancient Egypt,⁹⁴ is equated with first the seduction of Cleopatra and then the (related) assassination of Julius Caesar:

Июль – это месяц паломника ласк
египетской киски, чей визг и обиды,
[...]
и марта кошачьего шумные иды...

July – the month of the pilgrim’s caresses
of the Egyptian pussycat, her caterwauling and huffs,
[...]
and the noisy ides of cattish March...

Kutik turns a caress into a stab. He shows that cats retain a spark of the warrior spirit, which, within his analogy, turns them momentarily back into Roman soldiers:

мечтами,
когда вспоминает разнеженный кот
про рыбе густое и сладкое мясо,
ваш мех золотой засверкает мечами
железного Марса.

dreams,
in which the mollycoddled cat reminisces
about rich and sweet fish’s flesh,
your golden fur shall shine out as the swords
of iron Mars.

The final stanza is a feline Actium, with cats cast both as the ships that fought the battle and as Mark Antony, who lost it:⁹⁵

И в сон ваш пробьется сражение галер,
в борта запустивших блестящие когти,
[...] Антонии ревности, спите,
дремлите...дремлите...

And into your dream will break the struggle of galleys,
letting fly shining grappling claws into each other’s sides
[...] Antonys of jealousy, sleep,
doze...doze...

⁹⁴ Modern cats are certainly descended from Egyptian cats, but evidence is too scarce to be certain that Egypt was the site of cats’ first domestication. Jaromir Malek, *The Cat in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1993), pp. 14, 45–57.

⁹⁵ For an account of Actium, see Josiah Osgood, *Caesar’s Legacy: Civil War and the Emergence of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 372–75.

The naval battle between Octavian/Agrippa and Antony at Actium on 2nd September 31 BC was the deciding, if not quite final, act in the civil wars that followed Julius Caesar's death in 44 BC. As such, "Actium constitutes a potent and enduring turning point in the course of Roman history and indeed of Western civilization",⁹⁶ whether viewed as the moment marking the ultimate demise of the Roman Republic and democracy or the establishment of the Pax Augusta. Both opinions were current in antiquity, and Augustan poets began the process of writing and rewriting Actium, from Horace to Propertius to Virgil to Propertius again.⁹⁷ Kutik continues this tradition; his rewriting comes down between the two views: he laments cats'/Rome's decadence, but wishes to preserve the peace stemming from Antony's defeat. His depiction of the battling ships, whilst vague, is accurate: both Antony and Agrippa's ships were oared and armed with 'corvi', grappling irons upon which Roman naval warfare was dependent.⁹⁸

Kutik's Persian blue cat Anton (whose name connects cats with Antony) is the central figure of *Persidskie pis'ma*, as its Persian title and themes reflect.



Kutik and Anton, 1992 ⁹⁹

The cat also alludes to Pushkin's mock-epic poem 'Ruslan i Liudmila' ('Ruslan and Liudmila'), the prologue of which features a learned, tale-telling cat: Kutik's hint

⁹⁶ Robert Alan Gurval, *Actium and Augustus: The Politics and Emotions of Civil War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–4, 10–13, 289–90.

⁹⁸ William Ledyard Rodgers, *Greek and Roman Naval Warfare: A Study of Strategy, Tactics, and Ship Design from Salamis (480 B.C.) to Actium (31 B.C.)* (Annapolis, Md: United States Naval Institute, 1964), pp. 514–16, 529, 431.

⁹⁹ Ilya Kutik, 'Cat Photograph', email to the author, 2 February 2015.

that he has not abandoned his epic aspirations (see p. 117) for Shvarts' use of this cat in a classical context). In 'Vstuplenie'¹⁰⁰ ('Initiation'), the first poem of the collection, Kutik stages the creation of his cat from his own thoughts: 'Что делать с мыслями? [...] / А, может быть, – подумал я, – из них / слепить себе котяру, новый голем?..' ('What to do with my thoughts? [...] Or perhaps – thought I – mould / myself a moggy from them, a new golem..?') This refers to an ancient Egyptian statue of a Persian cat, sketches of which feature on the cover of *Persidskie pis'ma* (6-7); it also signals the cat's semi-fictional form. Moulding the cat, he must, like a god, breathe life into it, yet temporarily resists doing so. He likens this resistance to the Battle of Thermopylae, at which King Leonidas, his 300 Spartans, and around 2300 Greek allies defended to the death the pass against King Xerxes' far larger army, delaying the Persian invasion of Greece by three days.¹⁰¹

И ком
как шелковый лоскут прижал я к сердцу,
но чувствовал, что сердце не хочет
и запирает вздох как Леонид
персидскому препятствующий Ксерксу.

And I pressed
the clod like a silken scrap to my heart,
but felt my heart balk
and hold back breath like Leonidas
impeding Persian Xerxes.

Persidskie pis'ma's final poem returns to the ancient Persian theme. Having established his cat Anton's death in the penultimate poem, he conflates this with the decline of Persia, which, once "the first world empire",¹⁰² now, as Iran, has lost even its name. Correspondingly, its founder, Cyrus the Great, becomes a homonymous cocktail: 'Да и где они, персы? где их великий Кир? – / превратившийся нонича в некий домашний кир' (81) ('And where are they today, the Persians? Where is their Great Cyrus? / Turned into some kind of home-brewed kir').

Kutik's cat is often associated with the Epic Cycle, but in irreverent, diminishing ways. Anton enters the *Iliad* in 'Kot: pokidaiu bitvu' ('Cat: I leave the battle', 42-4). Kutik stacks the Iliadic heroes up like cards, parodying and belittling the hero-on-hero combat that is the basis of much of the *Iliad*:

¹⁰⁰ Kutik, *Persidskie pis'ma*, p. 10. Further page references given in brackets.

¹⁰¹ Ernle Bradford, *The Year of Thermopylae* (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 18, 125–44.

¹⁰² Tom Holland, *Persian Fire: The First World Empire and the Battle for the West* (Abacus, 2005).

Битва – на Гектора падающий Ахилл,
на Ахилла – Парис, на Париса – Аякс, т.д.
Это карточный домик, который хил
изначально, что б умные не гадали.
Дайте бойцам kota – прижимать как щит,
что не от боли, а от любви трещит...

Battle: Achilles falling upon Hector,
Paris on Achilles, Ajax on Paris, etc.
It's a house of cards, which was shaky
to begin with, so as not to make smart readers guess.
Give the warriors a cat, to press close like a shield,
which cracks not from pain, but from love...

The overpowering of strife by love shows the lyric, rather than epic, focus of the poem. The suggestion of taking a cat into battle as a shield proves, surprisingly, effective: 'стрела [...] / летит к земле, на ней поражая тех, / кто никогда не гладил кошачий мех...' ('the arrow [...] / flies to earth, striking down those / who had never stroked a cat's fur...') The cat is shown to be by nature averse to outright warfare, preferring the Odyssean cunning that won the war for the Greeks: 'он может понять прятание в коне, / но не стрелы, растущие из корней...' ('he can understand hiding in a horse, / but not arrows, growing from roots...') The growing arrows allude to Mandel'shtam's 'Za to, chto ia ruki tvoï ne sumel uderzhat' a poem from Menelaus' perspective within the Trojan horse,¹⁰³ and, like Kutik's, also presaging the collapse of Troy; this yields a parallel reading of the cat as a reader of Mandel'shtam. Finally, Kutik casts his cat as Menelaus, with himself in the role of the slain Patroclus:

Битва протяжна, как песий лай...
Заливаются в небе стрелы...
И кот выносит, как Менелай,
из битвы мое же тело...

The battle is drawn out, like dogs' baying...
Arrows pour forth in the sky...
And the cat carries my body
out of the battle, like Menelaus...

These lines compress the entirety of *Iliad* Book 17, during which Menelaus fights the Trojans for Patroclus' body; the 'dogs' baying' reflects the threefold similes comparing Menelaus to a lion attacking a herd defended by dogs (ll. 61-6, 109-10, 657-8). The cat – a smaller lion – effortlessly accomplishing this epic feat again

¹⁰³ Terras, p. 262.

shows the lyric setting. Anton partakes in the Catalogue of Ships from *Iliad* Book 2 in ‘Preemnik’ (‘Receiver’, 51), the title of which plays upon the similarity between ‘приемник’ (‘radio set’, ‘receiver’) and ‘преемник’ (‘follower’ – or ‘receiver’ in the sense of my thesis’ use of the word).¹⁰⁴ The poem indeed engages with ideas of poetic reception: its dedication to Voznesenskii indicates the source of the comparison of a cat to a radio, Voznesenskii’s poem ‘Antimiry’ (‘Antiworlds’). In ‘Priemnik’ Kutik not only receives his earlier contemporary Voznesenskii, but also Mandel’shtam and Homer. Anton is described as ‘толстым гомером, раскрытым на кораблях, – / забывая и мух и блях’ (‘a fat homer, splayed over the ships, / forgetting both f-lies and shi-iields’). As well as playing on the minced oath ‘бляха-муха’ (lit. ‘shield-fly’; an English equivalent would be ‘fiddlesticks’), the ‘flies’ refer to the simile which comes a few lines before the start of the catalogue at 2.469-72: ‘Even as the many tribes of swarming flies that buzz to and fro throughout the herdsman’s farmstead in the season of spring, when the milk drenches the pails, even in such numbers stood the long-haired Achaeans’.¹⁰⁵ This reference is refracted through Mandel’shtam’s ‘Bessonitsa. Gomer. Tugie parusa’ (‘Insomnia. Homer. Taut sails’; see p. 43), the first two words of which Kutik enjambes: ‘У тебя появился преемник, кот, от моей бессонницы. / Гомер никогда мне не способствовал, как О.М.’ (‘Cat, you have developed a receiver, tuned to my insomnia. / Homer never worked for me like for О.М.’). Anton references the *Odyssey* in ‘Kot obrashchaetsia k bogu’ (‘Cat addresses god’, 49). The cat refers to the unspoken comparison in *Luk Odisseia*, between Odysseus’ exile and Kutik’s emigration: ‘сделай так, чтоб вернуться в свою итаку / мог всегда я!’ (‘make it so that I can always / return to my ithaca!’). In ‘Epilog’ (‘Epilogue’, 81) Kutik’s deceased cat is cast in the role of Paris at the Judgement, an episode from the wider Epic Cycle: ‘мой перс, как парис, восседает меж трех богинь / и не знает, какую выбрать’ (‘my persian, like paris, is seated between three goddesses / and knows not which to choose’). Anton’s wisdom in making the choice pragmatically affiliates him with Athena:

АНТОН
 выдаст той антоновку, коей он
 будет больше обласкан, вычесан, утеплен.
 И это будешь, конечно же, ты, Паллада –
 голубые персы схожи с твоей совой.

¹⁰⁴ Илья Kutik, ‘Re: March 2014’, email to the author, 18 February 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Homer, *The Iliad*, I, p. 85.

Anton
will give the antonovka apple to she, who shall
most cosset, comb, cosy him.
And that, of course, will be you, Pallas –
blue persians are kindred with your owl.

The other major classical connection Anton has is with Catullus. ‘Iz Katulla’ (‘From Catullus’, 45) and ‘Pis’mo poslednee’ (‘Last letter’, 48; for translation see p. 314) are modelled (loosely) on Catullus’ famous pair of sparrow poems. The first two words of ‘Iz Katulla’, ‘Умер воробушек’ (‘The sparrowlet died’), echo the first three words of the third line of Catullus 3, ‘passer mortuus est’¹⁰⁶ (‘the sparrow died), mostly accurately. The rest of the poem departs almost entirely from the original, retaining only the classical setting for its delightful flight of imagination. From the sparrow’s body Kutik reads ‘ауспиций’ (‘auspices’) deliberately literally, seeing its twisted shape as ‘7’ and the fact of its annihilation as ‘0’, and thence inferring ‘мы до 70 доживем’ (‘we should live to 70’). In ‘Pis’mo poslednee’, addressed to Anton, Kutik compares Catullus’ sparrow to his dead dog: ‘без мохнатого Миши, которого – ветром сдуло, / плач о котором – как о воробье, Катулла’ (‘without shaggy Misha, who was blown away by the wind, / for whom the lamentation was as that for the sparrow – Catullus’). The break between ‘sparrow’ and ‘Catullus’ makes Kutik’s explanation of his reference seem an afterthought; it is only at the end of the poem that he questions Anton’s possible literary knowledge (not to mention literacy): ‘Впрочем, коту ли / было знать о Катулле...’ (‘Then again, what can a cat / know about Catullus...’). His pun of ‘kotu li’ and ‘Katulle’ ironically equates the cat and Catullus as homophones even while questioning the one’s ability to understand the other. In very meta fashion, ‘Iz Katulla’ takes as its epigraph not a quotation from Catullus’ original poem, but these last lines of ‘Pis’mo poslednee’, slightly modified: ‘но коту ли / знать о Катулле?..’ (‘but can a cat / know about Catullus..?’). Kutik thereby begins a poem referencing Catullus with a quote of himself referencing Catullus from a poem the reader has yet to read. ‘Iz Katulla’ both in its erroneous epigraph and its ‘misreading’ of Catullus plays upon the distortion of reception, in a circular fashion similar to Kutik’s playing with reception in ‘Priemnik’. Taking the cat as his focus seems to allow Kutik to be even more playful in his treatment of classical material than usual.

¹⁰⁶ Catullus, *The Poems of Catullus*, trans. by Guy Lee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 2.

T. S. Eliot's influence is evident in Kutik's placing of cats at the centre of a book of poetry; he freely admits his aim was "переплюнуть Элиота, у которого – всё просто смешно и мило"¹⁰⁷ ("to outdo Eliot, in whom everything is simply funny and nice"). The cat in Kutik's lyric poetry is not simply a depiction of a beloved pet, but also a representation of Kutik himself: "кот сначала просто кот, а потом – я сам. Тоже какое-то «объединение»"¹⁰⁸ ("at first the cat is just a cat, and then it is me. Also a sort of 'amalgamation'"). The merge is aided by the coincidental similarity, noted by Babil'skii, between 'Kutik' and 'kotik' ('little cat'): "усатая мордашка Котика [...] постепенно превращается в Кутика"¹⁰⁹ ("the whiskery face of Kotik [...] gradually transforms into Kutik"). (Another pun links the cat/Kutik to Catullus.) This metamorphosis starts when the cat is created from Kutik's thoughts. The title 'Kot-polyglot dumaet o 'metarealizme'' ('Cat-polyglot thinks about 'metarealism', 29) (amidst a long series of such titles) gives the cat such unlikely and such Kutikesque attributes that he seems to stand for Kutik. The four poems that bring the cat into the Homeric world also bring him into Kutik's personal canon. The penultimate poem, 'Pamiati Antona i Allena' ('In memory of Anton and Allen', 77-80; for translation see p. 315), brings the cat still further into Kutik's poetic world, grouping Anton with Allen Ginsberg, Kutik's fellow poet and friend, to create an elegy for them both:

Голубой был перс и голубой еврей.
 [...]
 еврей станет персом, а кот – евреем.
 [...]
 лишь флот Харона? –

куда ж причален
 Ваш ботик, Аллен?
 Каких колосьев
 там сбор, Иосиф?

The persian was grey and the jew was gay.¹¹⁰
 [...]
 the jew will become a persian and the cat a jew.
 [...]
 only Charon's fleet?

¹⁰⁷ Babil'skii, 'Sny-podstrochniki'.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Dmitrii Babil'skii, 'Nevozmozhnost' puteshestvii', *Russkii zhurnal*, 2002 <http://old.russ.ru/krug/20020715_bav.html> [accessed 31 October 2013].

¹¹⁰ Kutik's pun is closer: 'голубой' means both 'blue' and 'gay'.

Then where's your skiff
moored, Allen?
What's the wheat
crop like there, Iosif?

Kutik implies that Allen is crossing into the classical underworld and Brodskii, who had died the year before, is already in Elysium. The final poem's depiction of Anton amongst classical goddesses is also a form of afterlife. These last poems, along with the prefiguring of the beloved pet's death in the Catullus pair, make the collection "растянуты[й] на девять десятков страниц реквием[]. Который постепенно, к концу жизни этой книги, оборачивается едва ли не самоэпитафией"¹¹¹ ("a requiem, extended over ninety-odd pages. Which gradually, towards the end of this book's life, turns into something like an auto-epitaph"). The cat as a repository of ancient tradition is nonetheless fragile, liable to death and distortion, as conveyed by the alteration of Cyrus between the first and last poems. Similarly mortal and distortable are the cat's counterparts, Kutik and his fellow poets (contemporary and ancient), as 'Iz Katulla' and 'Pamiati Antona i Allena' show.

(Third) Rome

Kutik refers to the myth of Russia as the 'Third Rome' (see p. 15) twice in quick succession, in the penultimate poem of *Persidskie pis'ma* and the first poem of *Grazhdanskie voiny*. Both instances set up this long-standing equivalence of Rome and Russia as a subtext for the whole of *Grazhdanskie voiny*. Its first incidence is in 'Pamiati Antona i Allena' (77-80), a poem which combines modernity and antiquity (ice on Kutik's car windows suggests the statue of Nike on the roof, leading to James Bond driving a tank with a statue on top in *Goldeneye*); Kutik's use of 'Third Rome' is correspondingly within a contemporary political point: 'Что в Третьем Риме / быть голубыми / вина велика?..' ('That in the Third Rome / being blue – being homo – / is a great sin?'). The opening poems of *Persidskie pis'ma* and *Grazhdanskie voiny* both begin identically, with Kutik asking what to do with his thoughts; whereas in *Persidskie pis'ma* he makes a cat from them, in *Grazhdanskie voiny* Kutik contemplates making a Fourth Rome from them: 'Навариста ль твоя уха, товарищ?.. – / Два уха из ухи... Был третий Рим. / Четвертый же с такими не наваришь.'¹¹² ('Has your fish broth boiled down thick, comrade..? / Two ears

¹¹¹ Baviĭskii, 'Nevozmozhnost' puteshestvii'.

¹¹² Илья Кутик, *Grazhdanskie voiny, ili pervaiia chast' knigi Smert' Tragedii, raspolozhennaiia utoroĭ* (Moscow: Kommentarii, 2003), p. 15. Further page references given in brackets.

from broth...¹¹³ The third Rome has gone. / You won't boil up a fourth from these.')

His use of Soviet language and typical Russian food suggests the Third Rome as Soviet Russia, now dissolved. Kutik sees parallels between the Roman and Soviet mentalities, due in part to the USSR's "militarised society": "Romans I understand very well, especially if you lived in the Soviet Union"; he credits Briusov with bringing the Roman mentality into Russian, and thence Soviet, poetry.¹¹⁴ (A fair assessment; see p. 36.)

Kutik shows an interest in retelling Roman history in his earliest lyric collection, *Piatibor'e chuvstv*. As well as the restaging of Actium in 'Iiul' kotov', 'Osa Chasa' ('The wasp in the Hour'; for translation see p. 312) refers to the incident Horace recounts in *Ode* 2.7, when he cowardly discarded his shield during the rout of Brutus' forces by Octavian and Mark Antony at the second battle of Philippi: 'I experienced Philippi and its headlong rout, leaving my little shield behind with little credit, when valour was broken and threatening warriors ignominiously bit the dust.'¹¹⁵

Но вдруг озаботившись ходом
дальнейшим, скажи-ка, не ты ль
приводишь жужжащим заводом
в движение всю их латынь?

Не ту, на какой в перепалке
гудели щиты, когда Флакк
свой на земля [sic] кинул, и жалкий
латунный его переляк, –

а неприземленную эту,
похожую – если на щит,
то весь как бы в оспинах света
и строчкою стрелок прошит.¹¹⁶

But suddenly concerning yourself with future
motion, tell me, won't you with your
buzzing rewinding bring
into movement all their latin?

Not the latin, in which the shields tolled
at the skirmish when Flaccus
threw his to the ground, and its pitiful,

¹¹³ Kutik puns on 'ukho' ('ear') and 'ukha' ('fish broth').

¹¹⁴ Kutik, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁵ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, pp. 108–11.

¹¹⁶ Kutik, 'Piatibor'e chuvstv'.

brassy feartiness –

but that unearthly latin,
resembling, if a shield,
then one all pocked with light
and stitched with a seam of seconds.

Kutik asks the wasp in the clock to rewind it and keep the hands moving forward; Latin – the Roman numerals on the clock face – stands for time, two strands of which Kutik identifies: pre- and post-Philippi.

On the plain of Philippi in October of 42 the triumvirs temporarily halted the Republican opposition; Sextus Pompey would continue the struggle in the West for several years thereafter, but the Republicans never regained either the unity or the strength they enjoyed under the leadership of Brutus and Cassius. Thus in one sense Philippi marked the end of Roman democracy.¹¹⁷

So for Kutik in this poem Philippi (and the Roman civil wars more generally) marks the break between past and future. (Shvarts also gives this impression; see p. 103.) But it is in Kutik's most Roman collection, *Grazhdanskie voiny*, where his preoccupation with this decisive period comes to the fore. It contains 5 poems devoted to – and many others which refer to – Roman history, most, true to the book's title, depicting a Rome embroiled in civil strife. Of all Kutik's poems, the historical poems display most distinctly the mock-encyclopaedic précis style characteristic of metarealist poetry: "The premise and source of metarealism is the entire history of world art, in its condensed cultural codes, encyclopedic summaries and extracts."¹¹⁸

'Padenie Rimskoi imperii' ('Fall of the Roman empire', 31-4) cites its source prominently in its subtitle as Karl Christ, a German historian of ancient history.¹¹⁹ It is in two parts, 'O Nerone' ('About Nero') and 'O Tite' ('About Titus'), the second actually running through a list of Roman emperors from Vespasian to Marcus Aurelius. 'Padenie Rimskoi imperii' begins in the same spirit as its subtitle, naming Roman historians for the whole first line, then making a survey of other viewpoints in a 'for and against' (a format he repeats for the emperors in 'O Tite'), highlighting the subjectivity of history:

¹¹⁷ Alain M. Gowing, *The Triumviral Narratives of Appian and Cassius Dio*, Michigan Monographs in Classical Antiquity (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 173.

¹¹⁸ Epstein, in Epstein, Genis, and Vladiv-Glover, p. 122.

¹¹⁹ William M. Calder III, review of *Geschichte und Existenz*, by Karl Christ, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2006 <<http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/1992/03.02.06.html>> [accessed 22 July 2016].

Сенека, Тацит, Светоний и Кассий Дион:
Нерон был вырожденец. Присоединяются и евреи:
подавитель восстания, Лжеаполлон, плюс он
укокошил мать. Туда же и христиане:

распяты в садах, бойни в цирках. Против этих двух –
ТОЛЬКО греки: Нерон был ПОЭТ.

Seneca, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio:
Nero was a degenerate. Jews agree:
revolt suppressor, false Apollo, plus he
bumped off his mother. Christians too:

crucifixions in parks, slaughters in circuses. Against these two
ONLY greeks: Nero was a POET.

Kutik's descriptions of Nero are pointedly anachronistic – modern, slang-filled, or russified, with words like 'укокошил' ('bumped off'), 'гастролей' ('road tours'), 'ТЫЩИ' ('THOUS'), 'панк' ('punk'), 'писак' ('scribblers'), 'ПРОФЕССИОНАЛ' ('PROFESSIONAL'), 'буржуа' ('bourgeois'), and 'ЗНАМЕНИТОСТЬ' ('CELEBRITY'). Other anachronistic references connect Nero with Russian writers. 'Какой светильник разума угас, / какое сердце биться перестало! – / НЕ про Нерона!..' ('What a light of reason has been extinguished, / what a heart has ceased to beat! – / NOT about Nero..!') plays upon the extrinsic similarity between Nekrasov's poetic obituary of Dobroliubov¹²⁰ and Nero's famous last words. Nero is next reimagined as one of Kutik's contemporary Soviet poets; this then merges with Ovid in exile, the chronologically appropriate reference coloured by Pushkin's depiction of Ovid in 'К Ovidiiu': 'Пел бы – нетрезвый в дым – / стихи в коммуналках... Как скифам своим – Овидий.' ('He would have sung – drunk as a skunk – / poems in communal flats... Like Ovid, to his Scythians.') Both parts of 'Padenie Rimskoi imperii' focus upon the emperors' relations with poetry to such an extent as to distort the historical account. Kutik refers to Nero as a poet four times, twice in capitals, and to the others as poets five times, also twice in capitals. Nero's main claim to fame – his poetry – is undermined by the fact it did not survive:

Но – ни ЕДИНЫЙ стих

до нас не дошел. Публиковать запрещал. С листа –
не хотел. Лишь – по памяти, как Гомера. Легко уважа
его амбиции, скажем: не та, не та
память у современников, греков даже.

¹²⁰ 'Pamiati Dobroliubova' ('In memory of Dobroliubov', 1864).

But – not ONE line

has come down to us. He forbade publication. Didn't want them read aloud. Only from memory, like Homer. Easily respecting his ambitions, let us say: his contemporaries' memory isn't what it was, even the Greeks'.

Kutik leaves unsaid the possibility that Nero's poetry was not worth memorising, unlike Homer's, whilst his final lines imply the Greeks' pro-Nero bias may be based on his patronage of their horse races rather than his poetry. Domitian is summarised according to the literature of his era: 'Домициан / поэтом не был, но был как отец поэтам. / Пахли при нем и цвели Ювенал, Марциал.' ('Domitian / was not a poet, but was like a father to poets. / Under him stank and flourished Juvenal and Martial.') This is deeply ironic: whilst Martial praised Domitian for his patronage ('smelled' refers back to Kutik's earlier quotation of Vespasian's adage 'money does not stink',¹²¹ and may allude to Martial's pronounced interest in money), Juvenal castigated Domitian for his tyranny (and the portrait received of him in modernity was as a victim of Domitian); (post-)contemporary accounts unanimously depict Domitian as a despot, whilst late-twentieth-century Russian poems have equated him with Stalin.¹²² In keeping with his breakneck-speed summarising of a century's worth of Roman emperors, Kutik uses blatant slippery-slope reasoning to attribute the fall of Rome to its emperors' turn from poetry to prose:

Дальше – Пий. Как Папа. Молился и НЕ писал.
За ним – прозаик-профессионал
Марк Аврелий. Отравлен. А дальше – сплошь некролог.
Рим, скатившийся к ПРОЗЕ, не пасть не мог.

Next – Pius. Like the Pope. Prayed and did NOT write.
After him – prosaist-professional
Marcus Aurelius. Poisoned. And beyond – total obituary.
Rome, having slid into PROSE, could not help but fall.

¹²¹ Barbara Goldfield, 'Vespasian's Legacy', *Italian Notebook*, 2014
<<http://www.italiannotebook.com/art-archaeology/vespasian-urinals/>> [accessed 28 September 2016].

¹²² Barbara K. Gold, in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. by A. J. Boyle and William J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 601–3; Martin M. Winkler, in *Writing Politics in Imperial Rome*, ed. by William J. Dominik, J. Garthwaite, and P. A. Roche, Brill's Companions in Classical Studies (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), pp. 463–65; Marcus Wilson, in Boyle and Dominik, p. 523; David N. Wells, in Barta, Larmour, and Miller, p. 151.

In the middle of *Grazhdanskie voiny* four poems, ‘Kniga smertei i odnogo spaseniia: Appian’ (‘A book of deaths and one deliverance: Appian’, 95-101), ‘Garpaks’ (‘Harpax’, 103), ‘Proklat’e Stsipiona’ (‘Scipio’s curse’, 104), and ‘Smert’ oratora’ (‘Death of an orator’, 107), form a group linked by the same précis/encyclopaedic style of narration as ‘Padenie Rimskoi imperii’, and their central theme of death. They open the second half of the book, ‘Narrativy’ (‘Narratives’), the subtitle to which, ‘Нарратив – это нереализованный сюжет’ (‘Narrative is unrealised plot’), suggests Kutik’s method in these poems: mining histories for plots to craft into his own narratives.

‘Garpaks’ gives a detailed technical explanation of the workings of the shipboard catapult harpoon created by Agrippa, evidently informed by a historical source.¹²³ The final line emphasises the irony of changing tides of allegiance turning Agrippa’s weapon against a former ally: ‘А придумал его Агриппа, / полководец Октавиана, разбивший вскоре Антония. Друг.’ (‘And Agrippa, / Octavian’s lieutenant, invented it, and soon defeated Antony. His friend.’) ‘Proklat’e Stsipiona’ suggests that Scipio Africanus’ curse on Carthage led directly to Gaius Gracchus’ political misfortunes and ensuing suicide after he had been sent to Africa to begin construction there (leaving out vast swathes of the complex historical circumstances):¹²⁴ ‘ТАК пострадать за проклятье, наложенное собственным – дедом.’ (‘To suffer SO for a curse, imposed by your own...grandfather.’) ‘Smert’ oratora’ shows the impotence of art in the face of violence: the power of the orator’s language stops the soldiers and seemingly stops time, but ultimately cannot prevent his death. The poem is in dialogue with the earlier ‘Kniga smertei i odnogo spaseniia: Appian’, in particular the parts ‘Smert’ Tsitserona’ (‘The death of Cicero’) and ‘Novyi Arion’ (‘A new Arion’), due to their thematic and historical parallels. ‘Smert’ oratora’ is set during an earlier Roman dictatorship from these poems, and portrays the death of an earlier Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony’s grandfather). Ironically, Marcus Antonius, who appears as an exemplary orator in Cicero’s *De Oratore*,¹²⁵ has far more in common with Cicero than his homonymous grandson, who in ‘Kniga smertei i odnogo spaseniia: Appian’ plays the role of the persecuting dictator who

¹²³ Either this book or one of his sources: Rodgers, p. 511.

¹²⁴ Cancik and Schneider, ‘Cornelius’, *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 808–36 (p. 820); Cancik and Schneider, ‘Sempronius’, *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 243–54 (pp. 246–49).

¹²⁵ *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric*, ed. by James J. Murphy, Richard A. Katula, and Michael Hoppmann (Routledge, 2013), p. 124.

has ordered the orator's death. The poems' progression embodies individuals' changing fortunes along with the fundamentally unchanging cycle of history.

The exemplary text of *Grazhdanskiye voiny*, 'Kniga smertei i odnogo spaseniia: Appian', is a cycle of six poems: 'Smert' Pompeia' ('The death of Pompey'), 'Smert' kogorty' ('The death of a cohort'), 'Dve smerti ubiits Tsezaria' ('The two deaths of Caesar's assassins'), 'Smert' tribuna' ('The death of a tribune'), 'Smert' Tsitserona' ('The death of Cicero'), and 'Novyi Arion' ('A new Arion'). It is adapted from Appian's homonymous *Civil Wars*, covering Rome's internal strife from 133-35 BC and focusing on the period from the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC to Octavian's defeat of Sextus Pompey in 35 BC.¹²⁶ Appian's is one of only two extant continuous narratives about Rome's internecine period, the other being that of Cassius Dio.¹²⁷ Why Kutik chose as his source Appian over Dio is likely to do with Appian's narrative style, which is "not from the winner's point of view (as so much Roman historiography was), but from a variety of perspectives", giving voice to the triumvirs' victims but also treating Antony more fairly than other commentators,¹²⁸ and frequently putting the view of the common people.¹²⁹ Appian's is also a perspective partially mirrored by Kutik's: as an Alexandrian working within the legal apparatus of Rome, he possessed the viewpoint of both an outsider and an insider; writing in the stability of the rule of Antoninus Pius, he wished to contrast "the virtues of his own period with the horrors of the past".¹³⁰ Kutik was first a Ukrainian in Russia, then a Russian abroad; and when writing of Roman history, mindful of the horrors of Russia's recent past. Finally, Marx's express approval of Appian may have made the text available in Kutik's youth in the USSR.¹³¹

In 'Smert' Pompeia' Kutik repeats elements from Appian 2.84-5: his emphasis on Sempronius (as a former Roman soldier) standing; Pompey's suspicion and hesitation before deciding to get on the boat; Pompey's family watching helplessly from the shore. He quotes almost word for word Pompey and Sempronius' exchange in Appian: 'he turned to him and said, "Do I not know you, comrade?" The other

¹²⁶ Gowing, p. 37.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

¹²⁸ Osgood, p. 9.

¹²⁹ Gowing, pp. 10, 37.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 287, 282. The *Roman History*, of which the *Civil Wars* are part, is dated to around 148-161 AD. p. 16.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 9.

nodded'.¹³² 'Помпей спокойно спросил: «Тебя ли / я вижу, соратник?» Семпроний кивнул' ('Pompey calmly asked: "Is it you / I see, comrade-in-arms?" Sempronius nodded'): On the other hand, near the beginning of the poem Kutik inserts a parenthetical, personal remark: '(здесь надобна эпопея!)' ('(here an epic is needed!)'). He ignores the greater political context found in Appian, the machinations at work beyond the boat, and the reactions of the spectators to focus in on and expand the relationship between Pompey and Sempronius. He makes Sempronius the main object of Pompey's suspicion, and whereas Appian's account dryly makes Sempronius' blow the first of several, 'as Pompey turned away, he immediately gave him the first stab and the others followed his example',¹³³ Kutik builds up to a sole, killing blow with an exchange of glances that prefigure it and encapsulate the betrayal on a personal level: 'Глядя в упор / на Семпрония' ('Staring fixedly / at Sempronius'), 'взгляд / углубился в Помпея. Он меч схватил, как топор, / и смахнул ему голову' ('his stare / bored into Pompey. He seized the sword like an axe, / and knocked off his head'). The comparison of the sword to an axe has a Russian resonance, unlike Appian's Roman stabbing.

In 'Smert' kogorty' Kutik relates Pompey's crossing of the Alps in Appian 1.109. He sets up a parallel in capital letters between the two instances of 'eyes': 'И на ГЛАЗАХ у Помпея / берет город Лаврон. Грабит.' ('And before Pompey's very EYES / takes the city Lauro. Plunders it.');

'Та / выкальивает ГЛАЗА себе пальцами.' ('She / gouges out her EYES with her fingers.')

The first is almost a direct translation of Appian: 'He also plundered and destroyed the Roman town of Lauro before the very eyes of Pompey.'¹³⁴ The second alters the original considerably: from an insult and attempted rape followed by the woman tearing the soldier's eyes out, to rape and her tearing her own eyes out. The way Kutik intensifies the drama here by his selective abridgement is typical of his précis style.

In 'Dve smerti ubiits Tsezaria' Kutik strays further in content from Appian 3.97-8 (which, just as Kutik's title says, relates the deaths of two of Caesar's assassins), whilst adhering more closely to the general form. At the beginning Kutik adds an explanation for contemporary readers that was obviously unnecessary for Appian's audience: 'Децим Брут (не путать с главным, с Марком, / но – тоже убийца

¹³² Appian, *Roman History*, trans. by Horace White, 4 vols (London; Cambridge, Mass.: Heinemann, 1912), III, p. 385.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 205.

Цезаря' ('Decimus Brutus (not to be confused with the main one, Marcus, / but also an assassin of Caesar'). He makes two direct quotes from Appian: 'He put on Gallic clothing' – 'Переоделся галлом' ('He dressed as a Gaul'); and 'captured by robbers'¹³⁵ – 'схвачен разбойниками' ('seized by bandits'). He alters the scenario in which the Gaulish chief connives with Antony to kill Brutus to one in which the killing is unplanned, 'на всякий случай' ('just in case'). Appian's Antony is apparently indifferent, and the narrator points out the irony of Brutus' death at the hands of his former subjects himself:

When he saw the head he ordered his attendants to bury it. Such was the end of Decimus, who had been Caesar's praefect of horse and had governed Narbonensian Gaul under him and had been designated by him for the consulship the coming year and for the governorship of the other Gaul.¹³⁶

Whereas Kutik presents the reader with a smug Antony fully cognisant of this irony: 'Тот смотрит с усмешкой кuceй / на голову: Децим ведь правил Галлией сам, и / еще при Цезаре. Да, вот такой провал.' ('He looks with a clipped sneer / at the head: for Decimus had once ruled Gaul himself, and / even in Caesar's time. Yes, quite a downfall.') Kutik parallels almost exactly Appian's segue from this into a second death: 'About the same time Minucius Basilius, another of Caesar's murderers, was killed by his slaves, some of whom he was mutilating by way of punishment.'¹³⁷ Like with 'Smert' kogorty' Kutik gets rid of ambiguity, as well as injecting an emotive adverb: 'Еще один из убийц – Мануций [sic] / Базилл – вскоре зверски убит рабами / за то, что кастрировать приказал.' ('Another of the assassins – Manucius [sic] / Basillus – was soon brutally killed by his slaves, / because he ordered them castrated.')

The last three poems render episodes from the proscriptions of 43-42 BC, carried out by the Triumvirate of Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus. Appian conveys the injustice and horror of this period of terror more strongly than other historians, giving more detail and examples, and focusing most upon the victims.¹³⁸

Significantly, all the poems set during the proscriptions, taken from the first half of *Civil Wars 4*, follow the order and internal logic of Appian's narrative: Salvius' is the first individual proscription Appian depicts; Appius' is the last; Cicero's is depicted

¹³⁵ Appian, *Roman History*, trans. by Horace White, 4 vols (London; Cambridge, Mass.: Heinemann, 1912), IV, p. 135.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 137.

¹³⁸ Gowing, pp. 52, 249–56.

two sections after Salvius', and then revisited (via Cicero's son) immediately before Appius'.

'Smert' tribuna' in its final two thirds follows the final two thirds of *Civil Wars* 4.17 with few cuts, no deviation, and only minor illustrative additions at the end. The first third of the poem, however, compresses and russifies Appian's explanation of the political motivations behind the story:

Salvius, too, was the tribune who had at first prevented the Senate from declaring Antony a public enemy, but later he had co-operated with Cicero in everything. When he heard of the agreement of the triumvirs, and of their hastening to the city, he gave a banquet to his friends, believing that he should not have many more opportunities for doing so.¹³⁹

Триумвират: Антоний, Октавиан, Лепид.

[...]

Сальвий в пору – на Антония – римской злости назвал его «враг отечества», что как «жид» кому-то сказать, даже – хуже. Антоний тогда запил.

Triumvirate: Antonius, Octavian, Lepidus.

[...]

Salvius, in a moment of Roman spite – against Antony – called him an 'enemy of the fatherland', which is like calling someone 'yid' – perhaps worse. So Antony started drinking.

Every element of the second stanza is russified. Kutik presents Salvius' decision to denounce Antony as purely emotional. The phrase 'enemy of the fatherland' is highly charged, especially within the context of the proscriptions, as it is clearly intended to bring to mind Stalin's Purges, and to prompt the reader to draw similarities between them. He adds the (typically Russian) anti-Semitism and drinking binge. The reader gets the impression especially strongly here that Kutik sees in the piles of Roman corpses the victims of Russia's own civil strife and repressions.

The next death, Cicero's, is the one Kutik embellishes most. 'Smert' Tsitserona' reorders Appian 4.19-20, informing the reader of the centurion's pursuit and his prior obligation to Cicero before introducing Cicero himself, whereas Appian introduces this detail just before the murder. This builds up suspense, and increases the sense of injustice. Kutik includes small details from Appian: 'he landed and went

¹³⁹ Appian, IV, pp. 167–9.

to a country place of his own',¹⁴⁰ 'Остановился он / на собственной вилле' ('He stopped / at his own villa'); 'his servants [...] put him in a litter and again conveyed him toward the sea',¹⁴¹ 'паланкин, / который бегом несут рабы к лодке' ('a sedan, / which his slaves carry to the boat at a run'). He translates the murder almost word for word, adding one detail in capitals: that Cicero's head was 'КРАСНУЮ' ('RED'). Kutik transfers the direct speech, which in Appian belongs to Laena, to Cicero. The ploys are identical, but Appian focuses on Cicero's numerical advantage and Laena's cunning, whilst Kutik focuses on Cicero's military disadvantage and foolishness:

seeing slaves mustering for the defence in much larger number than the force under his own command, [Laena] called out by way of stratagem, "Centurions in the rear, to the front!" Thereupon the slaves, thinking that more soldiers were coming, were terror-stricken¹⁴²

Цицерон [...] кричит: – Эй, заходите слева,

а вы, вы – справа! – Это – блеф, ибо он – один
здесь, без солдат. Рабы бросают свой груз, и бот
отчаливает.

Cicero [...] cries: 'Hey, come from the left,

and you, you from the right! A bluff, for he's alone
here, without soldiers. The slaves drop their cargo, and the boat
casts off.

Appian aims to increase the poignancy of Cicero's death;¹⁴³ Kutik wishes to increase the bathos. Therefore Kutik makes Laena seem unwilling yet dutiful by the word 'должен' and the fact that Cicero is caught due to his own foolishness, rather than Laena's trap; and Cicero is not portrayed as the great orator, as in Appian, but a fallible and faintly ludicrous man. Kutik continues his characterisation of Antony from 'Dve smerti ubiits Tsezaria' as childishly vicious: 'подносит Антонию их за обедом. Тот страшно рад. / Ишь ты, – говорит Антоний голове Цицерона, – ишь ты! / И отрезанною рукою бьет голову по щекам.' ('he brings them before Antony at lunch. Who is extremely happy. / "Well I never," says Antony to Cicero's head, "well I never!" / And hits the head on the cheeks with the severed hand.') Although Appian speaks of Antony gloating over Cicero's head, there is no mention of his actions towards it: 'It is said that even at his meals Antony placed the head of

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Gowing, p. 156.

Cicero before his table, until he became satiated with the horrid sight.¹⁴⁴ Antony's handling of the hand is instead reminiscent of Laena's in Appian's account: 'Laena, a long distance off, shewed him the head and hand by lifting them up and shaking them.'¹⁴⁵

The final poem in 'Книга смерти и одного спасения: Appian', 'Novyi Arion', differs from the others not just because it is the solitary 'deliverance', or for its non-literal title, but mostly due to its middle section, which has an entirely different focus, tone, and style. The first two stanzas follow Appian 4.51 closely; the final two embellish without straying from the plot, adding descriptive flourishes: an unapt simile, 'Так выглядят одногодки, / но очень разного роста' ('Just so look yearlings, / but ones of very different sizes'); unusual metaphors, 'Вода – желе, / когда жарко. Но в шторм, как пожар, ревет' ('Water is jelly, / when it's hot. But in a storm it roars like a fire'); and adjectives contrasting the boat and the ship, 'захудалой' ('run-down') and 'испытанном' ('experienced'), to render Appian's drier 'unexpectedly'.¹⁴⁶ The third section is taken from *Civil Wars* 5.71, 97, and 88, using elements from another, later storm off the coast of Sicily during Octavian's Sicilian war with Pompey's son, Sextus Pompeius Magnus. 'Суда / трехвесельные [...] Красавцы' ('Triremes [...] Beauties') echoes 'a magnificent one with six banks of oars';¹⁴⁷ 'где-то их караулит Помпей – сын, но такой хапуга' ('somewhere guarding them is Pompey – the son, but such a grasper') renders Appian's tactical analysis, 'He guarded the whole coast of Sicily';¹⁴⁸ Kutik's unfavourable comparison of Sextus Pompey to his father is unmotivated by Appian, who is among the few historians to assess him favourably.¹⁴⁹ The final line, 'все разбились о скалы или же друг о друга' ('they were all smashed against the cliffs or against each other'), echoes Appian's 'The ships of Octavian were again shattered on the rough and inhospitable coast, dashing against the rocks and against each other'.¹⁵⁰ The opening of both stanzas has 'Caesar Octavian' looking at the fleet, and although it is unclear whose fleet is under scrutiny, the figure exudes authority, and its placing within the same poem as Appian's miraculous escape from a storm on the same coast implicates Octavian as the tyrant behind all the strife.

¹⁴⁴ Appian, IV, p. 175.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 497.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 541.

¹⁴⁹ Gowing, pp. 182, 200–202.

¹⁵⁰ Appian, IV, p. 527.

The short central section turns contemplative, with more figurative language, no plot, and no direct relation to Appian. It has a different metrical scheme and stanza form – four shorter, more regular lines, as opposed to the groupings of three lines found throughout the rest of the ‘book’, with a simpler alternating rhyme scheme:

В мире, где нет никакого мира,
судьба лишь знает, достигнуть где.
Как будто бы затонула лира,
доски, плывущие по воде.

In a world where there’s no peace to be found,
fate only knows where to capture it.
As if a lyre had drowned,
boards, floating in the water.

The overall effect is more ‘poetic’. By marking it as different, significant, Kutik suggests it as a conclusion to ‘*Kniga smertei i odnogo spaseniia: Appian*’, yet does not place it at the very end. Its positioning supports the stanza’s sentiment, as peace is still elusive at the end. The image of post-shipwreck flotsam as a drowned lyre relates to the poem’s title: Arion, a shipwrecked poet, refers to both Pushkin’s poem ‘Arion’ and to Ovid’s account of Arion in *Fasti* Book 2. Elements of both Arions fit Kutik’s Appius: the greedy scheming of men supposed to be aiding him (Ovid), and the fate that saved him from the waves (Pushkin). Whereas in Ovid Arion’s lyre playing saves his life, and in Pushkin the implication is that fate favours the inspired singer for his talent, in Kutik the lyre is an impotent object, and fate decides who survives unbiased by merit. The stanza’s Pushkinian air applies its sentiments to the Russian Poet (see p. 29) – Kutik here is thus talking about himself.

Rome is a theme that spans all of Kutik’s lyric collections: *Grazhdanskie voiny* especially, but also its pair *Persidskie pis'ma*, and the earlier collections *Piatibor'e chuvstv*, as well as *Luk Odisseia* – although not discussed above, ‘Plus-minus’ (‘Plus-minus, 1990) refers at length to the legend of geese saving Rome. *Oda* does not make reference to Roman history; it seems to appear in emigration, and very probably as a result of the fall of the USSR and Russia’s subsequent turmoil. Throughout, Kutik portrays a Rome that is strikingly similar to the Third Rome. It speaks a contemporary language. It is strife-stricken, inhabited by poets and graphomaniacs, and politicians and artists alike are swept up in the killings that accompany each new coup. He balances his use of modern language and Rome’s internecine years, which invite comparison with Russia, with an encyclopaedic style, acknowledgement of sources, and a mix of well-known and obscure episodes, which

emphasise the poems' historical provenance. The Civil Wars referenced in the title of *Grazhdanskie voiny* and so many of his poems represent a turning-point in world history for Kutik, as 'Osa Chasa' encodes. The parallels Kutik draws between his rewritings of Appian and Russia (Stalinist and contemporary) suggest that Russia in the twentieth century has undergone just such a turning-point in its history.

From Page to Screen and Back Again

Continuing *Grazhdanskie voiny*'s adapting of adaptations of classical history and colliding of ancient material with modern expression, two poems, "Gladiator' (1999)' (45-8) and "Osvobozhdennyi Gerakl' (1960)' ("Hercules Unchained' (1960)', 66-71), retell the classically receptive films *Gladiator* and *Hercules Unchained*. Kutik's re-reception of antiquity via film self-consciously engages with 'classical' films' central paradox:

As a definitively modern medium, every time it engages with the ancient world, it forces us to confront the chasm between then and now, whilst frequently aiming to close that gap. Virtually every other kind of reception of antiquity (with the exception perhaps of computer games) occurs in a medium which existed in at least a broadly similar way in antiquity too, whereas cinema is a product only of the last century or so.¹⁵¹

Kutik brings his awareness of this paradox most conspicuously to the fore in "Gladiator' (1999)', perhaps due to the fact that, as opposed to the campy, low-production-valued *Hercules Unchained*, the Hollywood epic *Gladiator* "trumpeted its 'accuracy' through its meticulous recreation of the Colosseum", taking great pains to get its audience to "respond to the film as an unmediated encounter with antiquity". Such uncritical acceptance relies in part upon "the audience's willingness to trust filmed images as authoritative and *real*".¹⁵² Kutik punctures the illusion immediately: the first word is 'Фильмы' ('Films'); the second-third lines give these vital statistics: 'Ридли Скотт – / режиссер. Рассел Кроу – в роли Максима' ('Ridley Scott – / director. Russell Crowe – in the role of Maximus'). He criticises the narrative: '(здесь наврали, / но это неважно)' ('(here they've fibbed, / but that's not important)'), and analyses it: 'Здесь-то и поворот / сюжета, и здесь – роковая часть. / Мы ее обсудим' ('Here is the turn / in the plot, and here is the fatal part. / Let us examine it').

¹⁵¹ Joanna Paul, in Hardwick and Stray, p. 312.

¹⁵² Paul, *ibid.*

Kutik conveys the first 45 minutes of the film in reasonable detail, particularly the visual richness of the opening battle. He covers the final hour in ten lines, with a casual ‘Обойдем.’ (‘We’ll skip it.’) The moments Kutik highlights most and expands upon are those which hold personal emotional resonance for him. Kutik vividly imagines himself in Maximus’ place in the aftermath of the battle, amongst the scorched pine trees, at 14:10 when he retrieves his sword: ‘Чудится дух сосновый, / наверно – смолы, если сосну поджечь. / Сторела. В стволе он находит свой белый меч.’ (‘I seem to catch a breath of pine, / probably the resin, as when a pine tree burns. / It has burned. In its trunk he finds his white sword.’) This moment’s significance is as the point in the film when Maximus should be able to put away his sword for the last time, having just wiped out the last pocket of resistance to Roman rule in the Empire, as the subsequent dialogue makes plain:

Marcus Aurelius: You have proved your valour, yet again Maximus. Let us hope for the last time.

Maximus: There is no one left to fight, sire.

Marcus Aurelius: There is always someone left to fight. How can I reward Rome’s greatest general?

Maximus: Let me go home.¹⁵³

Kutik dwells upon it because he sees himself and his friends in Maximus:

Но фильм – абсолютно великий: для тех, кому в жизни сей – на взлете известности – пришлось начинать по-новой и в других обстоятельствах... Как я или Алексей, или – другие немногие...

But the film is absolutely great: for those who in this life were forced – at the moment their fame was taking off – to start again in new circumstances... Like myself or Aleksei, or certain others...

His trivialised reading of Maximus’ bereavement and enslavement in terms of his and fellow metarealist Aleksei Parshchikov’s disrupted poetic careers, something he elsewhere characterises as a positive choice,¹⁵⁴ relies upon the parallel of regime change in second-century Rome and 1980s-90s Russia (and upon irony). Kutik’s reading of *Gladiator* as pertinent both to him personally and to Russian history (a theme the poem expands upon) is a common response to the film; *Gladiator*’s immense popularity can be attributed to this consonance with the *zeitgeist*:

¹⁵³ Ridley Scott, *Gladiator* (DreamWorks, 2000), 14:34-57.

¹⁵⁴ Gibbons, p. 21.

It is, in the end, not so much a matter of delivering historical accuracy as of creating resonances, which need not be anachronistic, with both timeless and contemporary themes, sensibilities, and concerns. This was a major reason [...] for the enormous success of [...] *Gladiator* (2000) [...]: themes of empire, individual integrity versus public corruption, vengeance, struggle against injustice, violence in sports and in battle, dedication to family, thoughts about the next life.¹⁵⁵

Kutik uses Maximus' life to schematise life as a pattern of rises and falls, like a poetic foot:

Умер он полководцем. Но – проснулся: в тряпье раба
и гладиатором. Такая у нас дорога –
как схема ямба: вершина-удар-и спад –
и снова ползешь, и не вниз, а – кверху...

He died as a general. But he woke up: in slave's rags
and a gladiator. Such is our path –
like the form of an iamb: peak-beat-and fall –
and once again you're crawling, and not down but up...

Kutik contends that *Gladiator* shows that all life, all history is a repeating cycle. He illustrates this by linking *Gladiator* with similarly bloody moments in Russian history. The fire arrows the Roman soldiers shoot at the German tribe become Katyusha rocket launchers at the battle of Stalingrad, one of the bloodiest engagements on Russian soil in World War II: 'стрелы – эффект катюш / под Сталинградом' ('arrows – effect of katyushas / at Stalingrad'). Kutik imagines himself in a similar position to Maximus, caught up in civil war, and concludes that he would not have survived in Russia in 1919; he also declares that it is better to die at the hands of a dictator, as Maximus did, than betray your principles, as Arsenii Tarkovskii did by writing poems for Stalin:

В 19-ом я навряд
выжил бы, т.е. – ТОЧНО не выжил...
Еще вам пример – Арсений:
должен был умереть тридцати пяти,
т.е. – ПОСЛЕ сына, но ДО – тех стихотворений,
которые он написал, чтоб славу СЕБЕ спасти.

In '19 I would hardly
have survived – that is, DEFINITELY not...
Another example for you – Arsenii:
should have died at thirty five,
i.e. AFTER his son was born, but BEFORE those poems
which he wrote to save his OWN reputation.

¹⁵⁵ Karl Galinsky, in Kallendorf, p. 395.

Later he goes further back into Russian history, calling *Gladiator*'s invented¹⁵⁶ history in which Commodus kills his father an 'анти-Репин' ('anti-Repin'), alluding to Repin's painting of Ivan the Terrible killing his son.

The poem's closing section echoes the epic quality of the opening scene, zooming out to view death not on the individual level, but on the broadest scale – that of history:

реки крови [...]
хлещут из горла, из дня, из года,
из столетья, застывая на палаше.
Эпос ВСЕ метет в кучу [...]
Подруга ж в рецензии пишет, что фильм, мол, одни клише.
Клише? – все клише!

rivers of blood [...]
gush from the throat, the day, the year,
the century, congealing on the broadsword.
Epic sweeps EVERYTHING into a heap [...]
A friend writes in her review that the film is, like, cliché after cliché.
Cliché? Everything's cliché!

This echoes Mandel'shtam's epic and bloody view of history in 'Vek' ('The age'), particularly the lines 'Кровь-строительница хлещет / Горлом из земных вещей'¹⁵⁷ ('Blood the constructor gushes / by the throat from wordly things'), and its depiction of a time period as a bleeding, living creature. This reference intensifies Kutik's poem's parallel with twentieth-century Russia: the rivers of blood flow from both Rome and Russia. *Gladiator*'s clichédness, a criticism in the eyes of most, is for Kutik the essence of its epic quality, what allows him to see its hero as a model for his life and the lives of others, its plot as a model for Russian history and world history. *Gladiator*'s epic themes have been recognised and connected with Homer.¹⁵⁸ "Gladiator' (1999)' resonates with *Oda*, *Luk Odisseia*, and *Epos* in its interest in epic, while its précis style, connection of Roman and Russian history, and focus on Rome's period of decline keeps it firmly in line with the rest of *Grazhdanskie voiny*.

Hercules Unchained is a more unusual choice of film to retell in verse. It is a sequel in a series of hugely popular Italian films (dubbed into English) starring American bodybuilder Steve Reeves as Hercules. The first film spawned a "minigenre of

¹⁵⁶ Cancik and Schneider, 'Commodus', *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 652–54 (p. 653).

¹⁵⁷ Osip Mandel'shtam, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (St Petersburg: Gumanitarnyi agentstvo 'Akademicheskii proekt', 1997), pp. 169–70. Thank you to Pamela Davidson for pointing out this intertext.

¹⁵⁸ Joanna Paul, in Hardwick and Stray, p. 308.

muscle films set in antiquity”, named ‘peplum’ films “after the short tunics worn by the male leads”.¹⁵⁹ Whilst Hercules in these films and “the male imagination” usually serves as a “cypher[] for ‘macho’ values”, the episode here depicted, of Hercules’ enslavement by Omphale, nuances the hero’s hypermasculinity, and it has been used to express emasculation anxiety.¹⁶⁰ Kutik, whilst probably aware of these connotations, uses *Hercules Unchained* to investigate the process of reception.

For the most part Kutik conveys the film faithfully. The only substantial changes, aside from a few omitted scenes, are the extraction of the short scene between the opening credits and the Antaeus scene for a later section of the poem, and his separation for the sake of narrative clarity of the scenes with Omphale and the scenes in Thebes, which are shown concurrently in the film. His attention to the detail of the film’s plot is ironic, as the film itself muddles elements from various Greek myths. Moreover, unlike with his retelling of *Gladiator*, there is nothing in the poem besides the title to indicate that it is a retelling of a film, rather than a more direct reception of Greek myth.

As with his retellings of Roman history, Kutik’s retelling of film displays a tendency towards concision, giving the poem a dry, rather sarcastic tone. At times, however, Kutik embellishes, adding his own, personal touches. So, in the second line he reveals some information about Omphale which in the film is not discovered until 54 minutes in: ‘Любит героев. Бальзамирует, употребив.’ (‘She loves heroes. Embalms them, after use.’) In an apt yet jarringly anachronistic description he calls Omphale’s collection ‘Мадам Тюссо героев’ (‘a Madame Tussaud’s of heroes’). The opposite occurs when he compares Omphale’s suicide to Dido’s: ‘В египетский – свой же! – вар / Омфала бросается, как Дидона.’ (‘Into the egyptian – her own! – wax / Omphale throws herself, like Dido.’) Again, the situations are eminently comparable, but Kutik’s use of a classical reference from classical epic highlights how ridiculous Omphale’s melodramatic plunge into the mysterious embalming pool is in the film.¹⁶¹ Kutik also makes his presence felt through certain subjective remarks, as if commentating on the film as he watches: ‘видимо, каннибал, / поскольку – людские кости’ (‘evidently a cannibal, / as there are human bones’) renders the footage at 11:29-31; ‘Красивейшие из красивых / воинов’

¹⁵⁹ Alastair J. L. Blanshard, in Kallendorf, p. 337.

¹⁶⁰ Blanshard, *ibid.*, p. 331.

¹⁶¹ Pietro Francisci, *Hercules Unchained* (Warner Bros., 1959), 1:15:00-18.

(‘Handsomest of handsome / warriors’) is almost certainly sarcastic, as the soldiers at 34:52 are far from attractive; and the assessment ‘В Фивах – полный бардак’ (‘In Thebes it’s total bedlam’) is the narrator’s viewpoint.

Kutik addresses issues of reception directly in his summing up of the plot at the end of part 1:

Геракл, освобожденный от чар Омфалы, Иола –
из плена: лица – как в позднем барокко в Прадо.

Что ж до легкого произвола
касательно мифологии, какая разница, правда?

Hercules, freed from Omphale’s charms, Iole –
from captivity: faces like those in the Prado’s rococo.

What of the light liberties
concerning mythology, what difference does it make, right?

He demonstrates his awareness of the film’s distance from the original myths, and claims it does not bother him. His reference to another art form that took a playful approach to classical characters – late baroque, or rococo¹⁶² – supports his claim. This also shows knowledge of the “unprecedented explosion of images of Hercules and Omphale” in rococo painting, as “Hercules’ humiliating servitude to Queen Omphale [...] struck a chord with the emasculated nobles of the French Regency”.¹⁶³ His allusion to the characters in another artform chimes with their earlier depiction as waxworks, an aspect of the film – Omphale’s preserving of ex-lovers as wax statues – that makes it ripe for Kutik’s exploration of classical reception between media; along with its linguistic ambivalence – as an Italian retelling of Greek myth dubbed into English; and of course the fact of its filmic form. The ensuing three sections of the poem pursue this theme of the inevitable distortion of classical antiquity inherent in its reception, its translation from language to language and medium to medium. He begins with the basics: ‘Итак, друзья, на каком / языке говорили боги? / Да, древнегреческом.’ (‘So, friends, what / language did the gods speak? / Yes, ancient Greek.’) He uses Orpheus as an example, building up to the revelation that the only thing that elevates him above modern-day poets was his language:

¹⁶² Jillian Powell, *Painting and Sculpture* (Steck-Vaughn, 1990), p. 29.

¹⁶³ Blanshard, in Kallendorf, p. 331.

Но голосов таких,
как у него, – навалом.
Так что же делает стих
Орфея столь небывалым? –

Язык, на котором он
– слагая стихи – поет...

But voices like his
are two a penny.
So what makes the poetry
of Orpheus so unprecedented? –

The language in which he,
composing poems, sings...

The revelation at the end of the section that Orpheus' divine singing is as effective in Italian as in Greek is bathetic in the extreme:

На Олимпе и в страшной мгле
Аида, среди теней
– один такой на земле –
поет и поет Орфей

по-итальянски...

On Olympus and in the fearful gloom
of Hades, amongst the shades
– the only one of his kind on earth –
Orpheus sings and sings

in Italian...

Kutik refers to another adaptation of classical myth, either Monteverde's opera *L'Orfeo* or Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*, as well as to the film's Italian origins. It serves as a link back to the film, to Argo giving Iole a lyre from Orpheus, which she takes with a little hesitation, 'Oh...I must practise!',¹⁶⁴ which Kutik notes: 'Робея / поначалу' ('Timidly / at first'). Her song, 'Evening Star', is in yet another non-classical language: 'она начинает петь. Естественно, по-английски.' ('she begins to sing. Naturally, in English.') The final section addresses the issue of reception and translation from a personal, if prosaic, viewpoint. It charts Kutik's search for a suitable translation of the title. He dismisses the literal 'Геркул раскованный' ('Hercules unchained') due to the adjective's metaphorical meaning 'mellow' in modern Russian: 'РАСКОВАН – да еще как! – / любой плейбой' ('UNFETTERED

¹⁶⁴ Francisci, 6:48.

– and how! – / any playboy’); ‘Геракл отвязанный’ (‘Hercules untied’) due to the adjective’s colloquialness (it also means ‘get lost’); and ‘Геракл разрывает цепи’ (‘Hercules breaks his chains’) because of its floweriness, ‘звучит, как Шелли’ (‘it sounds like Shelley’). In an apparent segue from Shelley, Kutik gives another reason for dismissing this last title: ‘Во-вторых, это – эпос, и – пережив / его – сам становишься его пылью.’ (‘Secondly, it’s epic, and when you’ve outlived / it, you yourself become its dust’.) This bears a resemblance to Shelley’s powerful evocation of the ultimate result of epic projects in his poem ‘Ozymandias’:

its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
[...]
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.¹⁶⁵

Kutik suggests that all the titles he has discussed, all the adaptations – including his own, are ultimately unimportant, for if the adaptor has outlived the epic they are adapting, then both they and their works are necessarily dead and insignificant.

Like “Gladiator’ (1999)’, “Osvobozhdennyi Gerakl’ (1960)’ ends with historical perspective on the writer and his life and work, and a nod to epic. Besides the inherent epic potential of the original films’ subject matter, Kutik’s emphasis on the processes of multiple reception, exposing their telescoping effect, facilitates both poems’ concluding epic turn.

Classical Antiquity vs. The Bible

As demonstrated by his poems receiving filmic receptions of classical antiquity (themselves roving considerably, referentially) – Kutik likes to mix his references. When he makes religious references, Kutik often seeks intersections with classical references, to indicate similarities between classical and biblical mythologies whilst maximising the incongruity of the mix of referential systems. At the end of ‘Kot: pokidaiu bitvu’ Kutik describes his death (as Patroclus) as ‘я врываю в Троицу’ (‘I float into Troynity’), inserting the word ‘Trinity’ where the reader expects ‘Troy’, as if by mistake.

¹⁶⁵ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*, Norton Critical Edition, Second edition (New York: Norton, 2002), pp. 109–10.

Grazhdanskie voiny has several more extensive biblical/classical contrasts. ‘Avram i Isaak’ (‘Abraham and Isaac’, 43-4) compares the cold cruelty of Abraham’s sacrifice of his son with Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter. Kutik claims that they are not truly equivalent: ‘Здесь вспомнят нам/ Агамемнона и Ифигению. Мы ж обойдемся без / аналогий, ведь Агамемнон не должен был резать – САМ!’ (‘Here we’ll be reminded of / Agamemnon and Iphigenia. We’ll make do without / analogies, as Agamemnon did not have to slaughter – HIMSELF!’) In the following poem, ‘Gladiator’ (1999) (45-8), having established ‘father kills son’ as normal behaviour on the implicit basis of Abraham and Isaac, ‘Отец убивает сына. Сюжет вполне / библейско-евангельский’ (‘Father kills son. A totally / biblical-evangelical subject’), Kutik marvels at Commodus’ atypical killing of his father.

‘Etimologiiia-2’ (‘Etymology-2’, 50-1) derives Evanston, Kutik’s city in America, from ‘Евин стон’, ‘Eve’s groan’. He depicts himself ‘dissolving in the city like a sugar cube in a round glass’, and says that his naming (of the city) is like Adam’s, and not like Archimedes’, a reference to Archimedes’ ‘Eureka moment’ which equates his bath with Kutik’s glass. The second stanza shows Hercules and Odysseus digging a tunnel to escape from Evanston, where Eve has been holding them captive as her lovers (in Adam’s stead). This situation is based on *Hercules Unchained*, Kutik’s version of which is placed seven poems after ‘Etimologiiia-2’. He replaces Hercules’ drinking from the Waters of Forgetfulness with eating an apple – Adam’s downfall at the hands of Eve in Genesis. Instead of forgetfulness, the apple brings knowledge and mortality to Hercules as it did to Adam; the connected death of the Olympian gods may refer to the ascendancy of Christianity: ‘узнав, что он смертен тоже, / что боги Олимпа вымерли’ (‘discovering that he is mortal too, / that the Olympian gods had died out’). Shvarts had written about the death of the pagan gods only a few years before, in ‘Khomu musaget’ (see section beginning p. 123); the similar timing of this theme (1994 and 1999-2002) suggests it may be connected with Orthodoxy’s return to power in post-Soviet Russia. However, unlike Shvarts, Kutik conclusively prioritises classical characters and literature over biblical in the final part of ‘Etimologiiia-2’, through an examination of Eve’s groan upon finding Hercules and Odysseus gone:

Судя по нотам в нынешнем стоне, вое
 потеряла Ева не просто мужчин, а двух
 АНТИЧНЫХ мужчин, знавших, что женский СЛУХ –
 это уже ПОЛ-ЭТОГО, что у кого ИСТОРИЙ

будет столько; что хоть и озеро, но не море,
что хоть в главной книге вдоволь о ней, про них
все ж написано больше, и даже стихом, а стих –

со СЛУХА и высшая форма власти
в литературе, раскрывшей, как гидра, пасти.

Judging by the notes in the present groan, howl
Eve lost not simply men, but two
CLASSICAL men, who knew that female HEARSAY

is already HALF OF IT, that whoever has so many HISTORIES;
that if you've got a lake of 'em, it's not a sea,
that though in the main book there's plenty about her, there's still
more written about them, and even in verse, and verse
is from HEAR(t)SAY and is the highest form of power
in literature, once it's opened its jaws like a hydra.

Although Eve appears in 'the main book' – the Bible – this is still inferior to appearing in the adventures of mythical heroes, because there are more stories written about them, and those stories, unlike the Bible, are written in verse, the most powerful and memorable form of all. To illustrate his point, he compares verse and its rumour-like form of transmission to the almost undefeatable hydra, which is famous from ancient myth as the monster defeated by Hercules as one of his Labours; the rumour refers to Eve's reputation as the source of 'original sin', which in Kutik's account is acquired due to the escape of her classical heroes.

Kutik's most sustained contrast of classical and biblical figures comes in 'David i Orfei' ('David and Orpheus', 72; for translation see p. 318). As the archetypal musician in their respective traditions, David and Orpheus form a natural pair. Kutik uses their respective instruments, the biblical harp and the classical lyre, to facilitate the comparison. He also sets up a structural contrast between them, containing them within separate stanzas. In the first part David occupies the two outer stanzas and Orpheus the two inner; in the second part David has the first stanza and Orpheus the second. Kutik transgresses the segregation in the first part by rhyming between, not within, stanzas. Phonic links between stanzas also occur in the body of the lines, often between related or contrasting concepts. These consonances are highlighted below:

На простой своей арфе поет он хвалу **Тому**,
Кто нас создал. Голос дрожит от **сомненья**
в самом себе, но не в Нем, **Единственном, Страшном даже**.

По аполлоновой лире, сзади оставив **тьму**

аида, проводит он пальцами, не зная на этой сцене,
какому богу петь песню **в данном лесном пейзаже**:

этого дуба? той вон **сосны**? этой речки? какому?
Опять – проблемы Париса? Легко он вам
сыграет и на дожде. Но кому из них непреренно?

Давид же сидит под деревом. От душевного перелома
после помазанья – жизнь подобна ветвям,
на которые вешали арфы еще его предки во время плена.

On his simple harp he sings praise to Him,
Who created us. His voice trembles from uncertainty
in himself, but not in Him, the Only, the Formidable – no escape.

Over his Apollonian lyre, having left behind the gloom
of Hades, he runs his fingers, not knowing amongst this scenery
which god to sing his song for **in the present forest landscape**:

of that oak? of that there **pine**? of that river? which to?
Again – the problems of Paris? He'll play for any o' youse
easily, even in the rain. But for which one ought he?

David, now, sits under a **tree**. From soul rupture
after the Anointing – life is like the branches
his ancestors have hung their harps on ever since captivity.

Kutik emphasises both the parity and difference between pagan and Abrahamic religions via their paralleled attributes: the 'simple' harp and 'apollonian' lyre; God's creation and Hades' destruction; David's certainty that he must sing to his One God, yet uncertainty in his own powers, and Orpheus' uncertainty which of the many gods to sing to, yet certainty in his own powers; the monotheist's God's terrifying power and the polytheist's gods' smaller, natural, local essence, and the related specificity/lack thereof about natural objects. The associations called up by their situations pertain to their respective mythologies: Orpheus recalls Paris' Judgement, and David recalls ritual anointing. David and Orpheus seem to overlap in place, as Orpheus considers singing to the god of 'that pine' and at the same place in the following stanza David is sitting under 'a tree'. Their metaphorical situations also mirror each other: both have recently undergone a 'spiritual crisis/turning point', David having been anointed King of Israel, and Orpheus having just returned from Hades. Their life views, however, are diametrically opposed: David sees himself as part of a long, continuing, and growing line of mortals, who despite their short lives pass on their skills to their descendants; whereas Orpheus has his unsuccessful attempt to rescue Eurydice behind him, and a fatalistic disregard for his life ahead of him.

The second part is trivial in comparison, and shifts the focus from David and Orpheus to their instruments. The first stanza moves the imagery almost to the present, to early-twentieth-century cubism, and to Christian motifs:

Арфа, ты – как скула
кубизма, ты – как икон
падающая скала,
а рядом – святой и конь.

Harp, you are like the cheekbone
of cubism, you are like an icon-
precipice falling down,
and alongside – a saint and his mount.

The second stanza returns to the classical world, referring to Pan and Apollo's rivalry,¹⁶⁶ yet ends on a flippant note:

Лира, твои края
загнуты так, что Пан
говорит Аполлону: – Я
и не знал про такой тюльпан.

Lyre, your sides
are incurved so like lips,
that Pan says to Apollo: "I
knew not of such a tulip."

Whilst Kutik treats the classical and biblical elements of the poem absolutely equally, the final part reinforces the impression from the first of biblical mythology as both more serious and more enduring into modernity than classical mythology. David's serious attitude to God is paired with the high or pious art to which the harp is compared, while Orpheus' lack of aim is paired with the flippancy of the comparison of the lyre to a tulip. The conclusion of monotheism's supremacy is exactly opposite to the conclusion of 'Etimologija-2'. His lack of a clear opinion may be explained by the fact that his evocations of religion are just as ancient as classical antiquity, unlike Shvarts' opposition of antiquity and contemporary Russian Orthodoxy in 'Khome musaget'. Kutik's main interest is the endurance of ancient culture, whatever its ideology.

¹⁶⁶ Maria Moog-Grünwald and Duncan Smart, 'Pan', *Brill's New Pauly: The Reception of Myth and Mythology*, Neue Pauly. Supplemente. English; 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 495–500 (p. 495).

Epos

The mere fact of *Epos*' existence (although there is nothing 'mere' about *Epos*, with its 300 plus pages of verse) is the fulfilment of the statement of intent made in the final stanza of *Oda*, and apparently renounced in *Luk Odisseia*, to create a true postmodern Russian epic. Kutik defines *Epos* as "personal epic",¹⁶⁷ which is true in many senses. Il'ia Kutik, the poet's own persona, is the epic's hero. Kutik planned *Epos* as the "hypertext" embracing all his previous works.¹⁶⁸ This embrace includes a mix of prior influences, and genres. Seven books of lyric and odic poems follow 'Rama' ('Frame'), the first half of *Epos*, corresponding to the events in 'Rama's' epic narrative. Despite Kutik's asseveration of the syncretism inherent in both postmodernism and epic – "Postmodernism is already *epic*, by virtue of its gathering nature, by virtue of being *post*"¹⁶⁹ – the presence of whole books of lyric poetry within an epic poem, especially one drawing so heavily upon classical epic, is incongruous. These books were originally written to appear between the chapters of 'Rama', but Kutik sacrificed this structure for the sake of readability;¹⁷⁰ perhaps the incongruity would be less with the lyric interludes integrated. Nevertheless, *Epos* defines itself with certainty as epic. For reasons of space and time, the following analysis will focus on 'Rama'.

Many classical and non-classical authors appear in *Epos* as both influences and characters, but Homer is his paramount intertext in terms of characters and citation; the plot and structure of the poem are determined by joint reference to Dante and Homer. Kutik appropriates Dante's plot and position as author-narrator-protagonist, and Homer's main characters as his fellow characters. This presumptuous familiarity is echoed in the narrative: Homer and Dante's names occur so often as to seem like invocations rather than citations; at one point Kutik declares 'у меня с Гомером сложные отношения!'¹⁷¹ ('*I have a complicated relationship with Homer!*'); Dante's appearance is mocked: 'алигатора – (портрет его видели?) – Алигьери' (44) ('alligator (*have you seen his portrait?*) Alighieri'), as is his masterpiece: 'сплошной БиБиСи на небеси' (67) ('one long BBC on high'). They are so fundamental to Kutik's conception of epic that they become more than

¹⁶⁷ Kutik, 'Interview'.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Kutik, *Hieroglyphs of Another World*, p. 17.

¹⁷⁰ Kutik, 'Interview'.

¹⁷¹ Ilya Kutik, *Epos* (Moscow: Nauka, 2010), p. 125. Further page references given in brackets.

just influences: ‘Создать нечто новое на территории Гомера и Данте – это сделать их не эпической моделью, а соучастниками эпического действия.’ (8) (‘To create something new on the territory of Homer and Dante is to make them not an epic model, but accomplices in the epic action.’) Basing his epic on *La Divina Commedia*, the most famous post-classical national epic, implies a claim for similar status for *Epos*; significantly, Kutik attributes the same influences to the closest work Russia has to a national epic, Gogol’s unfinished trilogy: “writing *Dead Souls*, he was rewriting both Homer and Dante.”¹⁷² Although as ‘personal epic’ it comes out of a Russian context, Kutik does not see *Epos* as a national epic¹⁷³ – the action occurs mostly in America and Greece, and addresses international, rather than specifically Russian, themes.

Kutik introduces *Epos*’ Dantean principle on the very first page of the poem, in the introduction: ‘А я вас попробую провести / через жизни героев – в виде ада, чистилища и рая – у Эпоса моего’ (9) (‘I shall try to lead you / through the lives of the heroes – in the guise of *hell, purgatory, and paradise* – of my *Epos*’). This structure gives the text a very definite teleology, in keeping with Kutik’s wish “to create something that has a beginning and an end”.¹⁷⁴ Homer is the other half of this: Kutik merges the Dantean structure with that of the *Odyssey*: Kutik’s heroic path mimics that of Odysseus; the absent heroine, Kutik’s wife, is simultaneously Beatrice and Penelope; the meeting with her, which is the epic’s *telos*, is the attainment of both Paradise and Ithaca. Kutik says that he started *Epos* in the same place as Pound’s *Cantos*: with the *Odyssey*.¹⁷⁵ Kutik selects Swedenborg as his guide through the underworld, over Dante’s guide Virgil. This has the effect of promoting Homer, as he remains the sole representative of classical epic. Virgil is seldom mentioned in *Epos* (and then generally in the context of Dante), and Aeneas is included only reluctantly in Kutik’s list of epic heroes who had preceded him on his journey into the underworld: ‘нисхождение в те глубины, куда Орфей, Одиссей и, ладно, Эней / сошли (хоть последний – из пальца высосан! Он – вообще леденец для Августа...’ (75) (‘descent into those depths which Orpheus, Odysseus, and, fine, Aeneas / penetrated (although the latter was plucked from thin air! He

¹⁷² Илья Кутик, *Writing as Exorcism: The Personal Codes of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2005), p. 82.

¹⁷³ Kutik, ‘Interview’.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

was basically a lollipop for Augustus...’) Kutik is joined in this opinion by Barskova (see p. 266).

Homer first appears in *Epos* in the second chapter of ‘Rama’, under the unpromising title ‘Воспоминание об эпосе-Гомере, и почему его нет теперь’ (‘Reminiscence about Epos-Homer, and why it is no more’); he and his kind of epic have disappeared along with Ancient Greece. There is a constant tension in *Epos* between past and present; indeed, one character, Daffy, dies because he mistakes modern Greece for Ancient Greece (93). The paucity of epic in modernity is illustrated by a Hollywood reimagining of Ancient Greece. This sets up a fundamental binary for the book – between anger and restraint, Homer and Plato:

Но что был бы эпос у греков, т.е. их *Илиада*, без гнева? –
что если бы, как на Гулливера, *тысячи тысяч пут*
наложили на Ахиллову *страсть* по Патроклу иль Брисеиде –
платоноведы? –
где был бы эпос, а? – *а в нигде!* (19)

But *what would have become* of the Greeks’ epic, i.e. their *Iliad*, without anger?
What if, like on Gulliver, *thousands of thousands of fetters*
were put on Achilles’ *passion* for Patroclus or Briseis by *platonists?*
Where would *epic* be then, eh? Why, *nowhere!*

The Homer-Plato binary is embodied in Kutik and the object of his quest, his missing wife, who is modelled upon a real-life Platonist:¹⁷⁶ ‘Она – улетела – к Платону’ (50) (‘She... flew away... to Plato’); ‘может, страстей / ты не принимаешь – по *научным* ещё причинам, / а? ну, как платоноведка?’ (329) (‘Perhaps you reject / passions for *intellectual* reasons, / eh? You know, as a platoniste?’) Both figures are key to defining and resolving the generic conflicts within *Epos*, as they play out in the plot and in Kutik’s persona.

Having established that anger is vital for epic, Kutik makes his own Iliadic invocation of the muse – undercut somewhat by its belated placement halfway through chapter 5, and comically generic, informal phrasing: ‘Гнев теперь воспой, Кто Ты Там Есть Для Этого Наверху! – О, помоги воспеть!’ (44) (‘Now sing anger, Whoever You Are Who Does That On High! – O, help me to sing it!’) Yet Kutik claims the same muse as Homer nonetheless: ‘к Каллиопе я / бы взвыл, музе Эпоса моего!’ (76) (‘I would have howled / to Calliope, the muse of my Epos!’) The importance of anger becomes clearer in chapter 7, at the gates of Hell, which are

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

compared with those in Dante (79). Mimicking Odysseus' sacrifice of sheep to gain entrance to the underworld in *Odyssey* Book 11, Kutik sacrifices the 'бумара-баран' ('paper-sheep') which he has been holding as a torch, and to which he has been telling his story: 'Так барашек белый — становится чёрной овцой в Гомере, / и Одиссей — спускаясь в Аид — перерезает ему глотку' (79) ('Thus the white lamb becomes the black sheep in Homer, / and Odysseus, descending into Hades, cuts its throat'). This sacrifice sparks the epiphany of the Homeric heroes' identity, settling the question of the authorship of the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey':

А Одиссей — кто он? — а Лев он, как
и Ахилл! — Так и написано в Песни 22-ой — «Подобился льву он (это после
убийства женихов!) [...]»
— А знаете, что Одиссей
значит, как имя? — В Песни 19-ой прямо сказано:
Одиссей означает: «сердитый», «гневный» — От
глагола «одиссомай», т.е. «сержусь», «гневаюсь» — он происходит! — Т.е.
гнев, гнев Одиссей! —
как — точь-в-точь Ахилл, *так ведь получается?* — Вот вам и доказательство!
— *авторства!* (79-80)

And Odysseus — who is he? He's Lion, like
Achilles! Thus it is written in Book 22: '*He was like a lion*' (this is after the killing
of the suitors!)
But do you know what the name Odysseus
means? In Book 19 it says directly:
Odysseus means 'angry', 'wrathful' — it comes from the verb 'odussomai', i.e. 'I
am angry', 'I hate'! I.e. *anger, anger is Odysseus!*
Just like Achilles, *isn't it?* There's your proof of *authorship!*

Kutik takes his proof from *Odyssey* 19.407-9, in which the story of how Odysseus got his name is recounted. However, the etymology Kutik cites is ambiguous, as it is unclear whether the participle is active or passive, 'one who is angry' or 'one who incurs anger'.¹⁷⁷ Kutik chooses the former interpretation in order to unify Odysseus with the more traditionally Homeric Achilles under the single idea of epic anger, allowing him to take on the heroic mantle, descend into the underworld, and begin the epic proper.

Soon afterwards, Olen, supposedly the earliest poet,¹⁷⁸ exhorts Kutik to behave like a true epic hero and slaughter his enemies: 'Ты / должен был убить его и напиться его крови' (85) (You / should have killed him and drunk of his blood'). Olen

¹⁷⁷ W. B. Stanford, 'The Homeric Etymology of the Name Odysseus', *Classical Philology*, 47.4 (1952), 209–13.

¹⁷⁸ Daniil Cherkasskii, in Kutik, *Epos*, p. 389.

intimates that Kutik cannot be a true epic poet without embracing epic's primal savagery:

Муз
[...] Уста ты и есть! – ты только должен [...] вспомнить [...] Гомера! – Т.е. – взять том «Одиссеи» и перечесть то место перед казнью женихов, где даётся описание Денницы и её – колесницы!.. Вот и всё... Там ты найдёшь свои лампочки (85)

You *are* the Muses' Mouthpiece! You must just [...] remember Homer! I.e. take a volume of the *Odyssey* and reread the place before the execution of the suitors, where there's a description of Dawn and her chariot!.. That's it... There you will find your lamps.

The promised reward, 'lamps', are revealed in the final chapter of 'Katai' ('Cathay'), 'Лампочка: Встреча' ('Lamp: Meeting'), to be his wife/Beatrice in Paradise. (374)

The anti-Homer of *Epos* is Plato. Kutik often cites, in the context of an argument with his wife, Plato's heinous act of excluding Homer from his Republic:

ТОЛЬКО ВОТ ЭТО
качество — Гнев — а, то есть, по-твоему, *несдержанность!*.. — ...Платон уж так
ненавидел, что даже любимого им Гомера
из-за Ахилла — изгнал из Государства! (100)

only that
quality, Anger – that is, in your opinion, *unrestraint!* – Plato so hated, that he even banished his beloved Homer, because of Achilles, from his Republic!

He insists that Plato was conflicted between his poetic passions and his philosophy, and exiled Homer because of this:

Платон-то — *сам поэт!* — а поэт и ученик Сократа вместе — это трудно, даже с *пока-тым лбом и выпученными глазами!* — ибо как совмещать страсти (что и есть, как-никак, поэт) и их полное забвение [...]?
— ведь оксюморон, *да ведь*, получается?
[...]
— ... Поэтому – всегда легче выгнать Гомера, чем – себя самого из Государства, так ведь? (100-1)

But Plato was *himself a poet!* A poet and student of Socrates simultaneously – that's difficult, even with a *sloping forehead and bulging eyes!* For how can you combine passions

(which is, after all, the poet) with total obliviousness to them [...]?

– you get an oxymoron, don't you?

[...]

Therefore – it is always easier to banish Homer from the Republic than yourself, is it not?

Kutik's quest in 'Rama' is staged as a detective thriller, and his opponent, the murderer hunted over the course of the book, is eventually revealed to be Plato. Kutik sees the character of Plato in *Epos* as "providence", a "demigod" ruling people's fates, resolving conflicts either by killing or rewarding, and describes providence as "the frame in which we live";¹⁷⁹ this links Plato with the title of the main, epic narrative, 'Rama', or 'frame'. As the murderer, Plato is identifiable with the eponymous frame as the character creating and controlling the context for Kutik's quest in 'Rama'.

Suitably for a semi-divine character representing providence, Plato becomes a key figure once again in the final book of Purgatory and the book of Paradise, 'Loto Platona' ('Plato's Lotto') and 'Katai'. There is a rapprochement of sorts between Homer and Plato. An exculpatory anecdote shows Plato acting contrary to his anti-epic stance: at the performance of Antimachus' epic *Thebaid*, Plato was the only person who stayed through the night to the end of the poem. The description of the lengthy epic, its 'строки плюс сюжеты смешаны – как в лото!' (321) ('lines plus storylines jumbled, like a lotto!'), is reminiscent of Kutik's own *Epos*, and he seems to feel an empathetic gratitude for Plato's patience, perhaps hoping that his own readers are doing the same. Moreover, Homeric anger is no longer held up as the ideal, and in a condemnation of the immorality of Homer's heroes Kutik concludes that he is stuck between Homeric passion and Platonic restraint: 'поэт есть герой с совестью, потому и зажатый – ух! и / как ещё! – между двух логик' (334) ('a poet is a hero with a conscience, and therefore squeezed – oof! / and how! – between two logics'). This balance between Homer and Plato only becomes possible in the Paradise sections of *Epos*, 'Katai' and the end of 'Rama'; indeed, it is necessary to facilitate the movement of the poem away from epic anger towards harmony. This move can be seen in how Kutik's goal (an unspecified reward, that turns out to be reunion with his wife) changes place within the *Odyssey*. In Olen's speech to Kutik towards the beginning of 'Rama' the reward precedes the epic violence; it is later revealed that he actually referred to Odysseus and Penelope's prolonged night

¹⁷⁹ Kutik, 'Interview'.

together after Odysseus has killed the suitors: ‘В одном лишь ошибся Олен: место взято / из Песни 23-ей – после убийства уже женихов, а не до! – / во время любовной ночи Одиссея и Пенелопы’ (113) (‘Olen was mistaken about just one thing: the place was taken / from Book 23 – after the killing of the suitors, and not before! – / during *Odysseus and Penelope’s night of love*’).

The same movement is seen in the prominence of the major classical influences for the lyric sections of *Epos*, which deserve fuller analysis than I can give them here. These influences are all reappearing in Kutik’s epic from his earlier works: Ovid (*Oda*), Horace (*Luk Odisseia*), and Catullus (*Persidskie pis’ma*). The trio star in the antepenultimate and ultimate books of lyric, ‘Urbi et skorbi’ (‘Urbi et sorrows’ – the title is a reference to Briusov’s *Urbi et orbi*) and ‘Katai’. As Ovid was an epic as well as a lyric poet, he is more ubiquitous – characters from Ovid’s epic, the ‘Metamorphoses’, join the Homeric heroes as Kutik’s co-stars in ‘Rama’, but Kutik emphasises his departure from Ovid’s canonical retellings of myth, instead moulding the characters to his own epic, as Ovid had done. The more distinctly Ovidian reception of Ovid is the reworking of Ovid’s most overtly personal poetry, the *Tristia*, which occupies over half of ‘Urbi et skorbi’. Kutik adapts Horace’s ‘Ship of State’ *Ode* 1.14 in ‘Iz Goratsiia’ (‘From Horace’), the opening poem of ‘Urbi et skorbi’. Horace is associated, even merged, to an extent, with Ovid: where he appears in ‘Rama’ his name is linked with Ovid’s, and ‘Skorbnye ody’ (‘Sorrowful odes’) (in ‘Urbi et skorbi’) is an amalgam of Ovid’s *Tristia* and Horace’s *Odes*. Catullus barely features in *Epos* outside of ‘Katai’: once with Homer as Ovid’s main influences (291), and once his dead sparrow is compared with Kutik’s dead father (70). But a whole section of ‘Katai’, ‘Veslo, pritulivshis’ k Katullu, inspiriruet’ (‘An oar, snagged on Catullus, inspires’), is dedicated to Catullus. It includes a Louis Zukofsky-style semi-translation, semi-transliteration of one of Catullus’ most explicit and aggressive invectives. With his mix of invective and love poems, Catullus represents the halfway house between epic anger and calmer lyric, and is used to demonstrate that Kutik has moved on from the epic aggression that was necessary to the Hell section of *Epos*. Kutik characterises himself as a rower whose oar got stuck momentarily passing Catullus before sailing on, and now he is looking back from Paradise on his time in Purgatory with Catullus:

Катулл и Цюй Юань — конечно, два темперамента... [...]
— Я прислонил, притулил, вбил весло!..
Хватит — с меня! *Было* [...] (целый эпос [...])
Но — я выжил, мне повезло.

Это же — я пишу из Рая, ибо позади уж всё — Ад,
судороги Чистилища (а вы постойте-ка с Ка-
туллом, плюс ещё и с Горацием и Овидием, для *наглядности!* (348)

Catullus and Qu Yuan – certainly, are two temperaments... [...]
I leant, stuck, drove the oar in!..
I've had enough! It's *past* [...] (the whole epic [...])
But I survived, I was lucky.
This – I am writing it from Paradise, for everything is already behind me – Hell,
the throes of Purgatory (but you stay awhile with Catullus,
plus with Horace and Ovid, for *illustration!*

Crucially, he groups Catullus with Ovid and Horace, whom he credits with helping him through Purgatory: 'без них бы – в чистилище своём! – просто не продержался бы!.. (20) ('without them – in my *purgatory!* – I simply would not have stuck it out..!')

As with the harmonising of Homer and Plato in 'Rama', here the Latin love elegists are invoked towards the end of *Epos* to facilitate Kutik's move away from epic, towards the greater tranquillity and introspection required to enter Paradise and be reunited with his beloved. This is reminiscent of the evocations of lyric in *Luk Odisseia*, such as when he bids farewell to the odic style in 'Vospominanie ob ode'. It also reverses the invocation of Homer towards the end of *Oda* to signify a move towards epic; instead, the lyric impulse closes this epic. Such a backwards glance to his earliest attempt at epic would be typical of Kutik's poetics. With his epic ambitions finally accomplished, Kutik is perhaps indicating that he is content to return to smaller forms.

Conclusion

Kutik has shaped his poetic career according to classical genres, taking ancient authors as models. This makes classical authors Kutik's alter egos, which the poetic narrator assumes when he rewrites their works or adopts elements of their style. Homer is foremost, with Catullus, Appian, Euripides, Ovid, and Horace amongst the others. This is something that Barskova also does, but less extensively, with Longus and Catullus (see pp. 222, 224). Like both Barskova and Shvarts, intermediaries are prominent in Kutik's classical reception: he reaches Homer through Lomonosov and Derzhavin in *Oda*; through Mandel'shtam in 'Kot: pokidaiu bitvu' and 'Priemnik'; and through Dante and Swedenborg (who takes Virgil's place as guide through the underworld) in *Epos* (67).

Kutik's greatest point of connection with Shvarts and Barskova is his use of mythical or fictional classical alter egos to talk about the state of being a poet. Like them, he writes about Orpheus as the archetypal poet. He also transforms non-poets into poets, as Shvarts did with Eurydice and Barskova did with the Danaids (see pp. 120, 281). Odysseus, representative of Kutik's post-USSR wanderings, becomes a poet in Kutik's reading of his bow and arrow. Nero is presented as primarily a poet, even though none of his poetry survives. The classical cat is no exception: Anton becomes a poet (Homer) in the process of merging with Kutik as his alter ego.

It is notable that Kutik's classical models are overwhelmingly male (Homer, Catullus, Appian, Orpheus...). They are also typically masculine (Odysseus, Maximus, Hercules... – although the latter's hypermasculinity is certainly ironised). While epic, the genre towards which Kutik most aspires, has been "traditionally conceived as the most masculine of genres".¹⁸⁰ This contrasts with Shvarts and Barskova's more gender-balanced reception of antiquity. Although there are admittedly few female voices to be gleaned from antiquity, they have sought some of them out (even creating them, in the case of Kinfiia and the Danaids) without shunning male poetic figures, such as Orpheus. Kutik's Odysseus, in the act of slaughtering the suitors, could be compared with Barskova's Odysseus, a figure marginal to the various women he encountered. Kutik's Orpheus, juxtaposed with David, could be compared with Shvarts and Barskova's Orpheuses, usually accompanied by Eurydice.

In terms of his classical focus, Kutik stands between Shvarts and Barskova and their preference for, respectively, Rome and Greece. He has stated that Greece has more "aesthetic" and Rome more "political" connotations for him.¹⁸¹ In his role as poet, Kutik tends to aim for Homer and epic, prioritising Greek mythological and literary sources. In his role as historian, summarising and modernising history, Kutik chooses overwhelmingly Roman topics. His very history-orientated Roman poems do more overtly what Shvarts does in 'Kinfiia' or 'Stambul ne pal, ne pal Konstantinopol': they invite comparisons with twentieth-century Russian history through their subject matter, and with Russian contemporaneity through their diction. The fall of the USSR provokes reception of both halves of classical antiquity, as Kutik uses both Rome and Troy to represent the ending of the epic Soviet project.

¹⁸⁰ Blanshard, in Kallendorf, p. 333.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Dialogue with the Russian (and European) tradition of classical reception is absolutely central to Kutik's poetics. He likes to foreground his sources, which are not only classical texts but also mediated via Russian poets, especially of the eighteenth century, but also Silver Age poets and his contemporaries. As with Shvarts, his use of Rome to comment upon Russian political and social conditions is part of a long tradition of Aesopian speech. Where he departs from tradition is in his irreverent style: his fast-moving précis poems, which condense and contemporise antiquity to the point of ridicule, and his apparently indiscriminate blending of references from utterly diverse cultural sources via lateral associations. Kutik's classical antiquity is very aware of the many hands it has been passed through as a "baton"; with his self-conscious classical reception Kutik frames his place in a long tradition.

POLINA BARSKOVA

Polina Barskova (b. 1976) makes references to antiquity eclectically, throughout her extensive oeuvre. She has formal training in Latin and Greek, as she did her undergraduate degree in Classics:

I've graduated from Classical dept of Saint Petersburg U-- and games with the ancient authors were acutely on my mind-- since we've read them in the original 10 hours a day:))
Hence my love to and revolt against them, I guess.¹

Yet classical motifs appear in her poetry even before this, inspired by her childhood environment – books of myths read with her father, and neoclassical St Petersburg.² Whilst her first publications (from the age of nine) were during the Soviet period,³ the majority of her poetry has been written and published in post-Soviet Russia and in emigration. She is part of “the last generation of Russian poets formed by the Soviet experience [...] old enough to have visceral memories of Soviet life but young enough to move adeptly with the new influences, new media, and new choices introduced in the post-Soviet era.”⁴ It is a generation shaped and scattered by the fall of the USSR; a generation whose “ментальность сформировалась во второй половине 80-х, когда основной характеристикой советского общества стала нестабильность”⁵ (“mentality was formed in the second half of the 80s, when the basic characteristic of Soviet society was instability”). Reactions to this disruption of civilisation have been perceived in Barskova’s poetry.⁶ The major change that Barskova herself has spoken about was in the status of poetry: “на наших глазах литература, как церковь при большевиках, отделяется от государства и становится, наконец, личным делом каждого” (“before our very eyes literature,

¹ Polina Barskova, email to the author, 19 April 2015.

² Barskova, ‘Interview’.

³ Linor Goralik, ‘Polina Barskova: “Мне нужно переключение времени”’, *Colta.ru*, 2013 <<http://archives.colta.ru/docs/23363>> [accessed 17 July 2015].

⁴ Catherine Ciepela, ‘After the USSR (Three Russian Poets)’, *The Common*, 2013 <<http://www.thecommononline.org/after-ussr-three-russian-poets>> [accessed 20 July 2015].

⁵ Dmitrii Kuz’min, ‘Pokolenie Vavilona’, 1999 <<http://www.guelman.ru/slava/writers/kuzmin1.html>> [accessed 20 July 2015].

⁶ Jason Rotstein, ‘Review: The Zoo in Winter’, *Jewish Quarterly*, 58.1 (2011), 76.

like the church under the Bolsheviks, separates from the state and becomes, finally, a person's own business"), leading to "дерзкого тезиса о том, что отныне поэт в России не больше (но зато – и не меньше), чем поэт" ("the daring thesis that now a poet in Russia is no more (and yet no less, either) than a poet").⁷

Barskova emigrated to the USA immediately after completing her degree, in 1998, and, having been offered postgraduate study and subsequently academic work, has remained.⁸ She identifies the education she obtained there as giving her critical distance on her own culture, and on her conceptions – political, historical, academic, literary – more generally.⁹ Due to these factors, Barskova does not appear to feel the same distance from or reverence for Western culture as earlier Russian poets. When reviewing the poetry of one of her contemporaries she actively praises the lack of yearning for world culture she perceives therein:

Наверное, следует изыскивать влияния и вытаскивать за хвостики подтексты. Наверное, следует – но не хочется. Потому что перед нами не сложные метатекстуальные песочные замки, оплывающие под натиском океана, а то, что только неторопливый муми-троль может рассмотреть на берегу. Стихи Глазовой не есть очередной приступ тоски по мировой культуре. Здесь не дар учёной памяти, но дар зрения.¹⁰

I probably should seek out influences and drag subtexts out by their tails. I probably should – but I don't want to. Because before us are not complicated metatextual sandcastles, collapsing under the onslaught of the ocean, but things only an unhurried moomin can detect on the shore. Glazova's poems are not yet another bout of yearning for world culture. Her gift is not erudite recollection, but vision.

'Erudition' is a quality Barskova sees as potentially interfering in the poet's relationship with words, when not entirely integrated with their poetry. This attitude is characteristic of Barskova's generation, "the last one raised on Russian modernism, which these poets are renovating from within. [...] While they possess the modernists' erudition, they decline to worship high culture."¹¹

⁷ Polina Barskova, 'Sentimental'nye puteshestviia za mertvoi vodoi', *Vavilon* <<http://www.vavilon.ru/textonly/issue12/barskova.html>> [accessed 20 July 2015].

⁸ Goralik.

⁹ Anastasia Tikhonova, "Vpustiv v sebja etot iad, ia uzhe ne mogu ostanovit'sia", *Siburbia*, 2014 <<http://siburbia.ru/culture/polina-barskova/>> [accessed 20 July 2015].

¹⁰ Polina Barskova, "Zrenie - zrelishe - zerkalo: O knige stikhov Anny Glazovoi "Pust' i Voda", *Vavilon*, 2003 <<http://www.vavilon.ru/diary/030206.html>> [accessed 20 July 2015].

¹¹ Ciepla.

Classical reception is only a part of Barskova's fusion of references from Russia and the West within her poetry, a fusion which she identifies in the poem 'L'iuisu Kerollu'¹² ('To Lewis Carroll', 1993) as central to her poetic identity:

я –
Результат умножения
Кольриджа на Ленинград,
Апельсина на снег,
Врага на друга.

I
Am the result of multiplying
Coleridge by Leningrad,
Orange by snow,
Enemy by friend.

She connects Western influence (Romanticism) with enmity and Mediterranean warmth, her native Russian milieu (Leningrad) with friendship and cold; these opposing forces are integrated paradoxically within her. She describes herself as a 'sponge', absorbing everything around and transforming it into poetry:

Мне кажется, поэту важно ощущать себя губкой. Я пытаюсь впитывать всю эту эклектику вокруг меня – славистику, Америку, джаз, кино, океан. Главное – чтобы все шло в дело: губка не выбирает. [...] Все это должно перемешаться в единственной подвластной мне стихии, стихии русского языка, и если преломление окажется густым, едким, живым, физиологическим раствором – можно работать дальше.¹³

I feel it is important for a poet to feel like a sponge. I try to soak up the eclectic experiences around me – Slavonic studies, America, jazz, cinema, ocean. The main thing is for it all to be used: a sponge isn't choosy. [...] Everything should intermingle in the one element under my control, the element of the Russian language, and if the refraction comes out a thick, caustic, live, physiological solution – that's something I can work with.

Fusion is the most oft-recognised facet of her poetry: "Barskova [...] is widely admired for her graceful riffs on received poetic forms and for her deft

¹² Polina Barskova, *Rasa brezgliviykh*, Biblioteka molodoi literatury, 2 (Moscow: ARGORISK, 1993) <<http://www.vavilon.ru/texts/prim/barskova1.html>> [accessed 17 November 2015].

¹³ Larisa Volodimerova, 'Interv'iu', 2000 <<http://www.ezhe.ru/data/eks/26.html>> [accessed 20 July 2015].

recombination of high-, middle-, and lowbrow discourses.”¹⁴ A term Barskova has endorsed for this referential mingling is ‘physiological acmeism’.¹⁵

Barskova is fascinated by the process of reception itself; this interest emerges particularly in her poems that receive antiquity via Russian writers. She has said that she feels close to classical authors only through their receptions in Russian authors, and that she is interested in “how we steal, how we appropriate”.¹⁶ Her poem ‘Dafnis i Khloia’ (‘Daphnis and Chloe’, 2007; for translation see p. 322) receives Longus’ homonymous novel through the prism of Brodskii’s pastorals (amongst other Russian intertexts), and ephrasises Daphnis and Chloe themselves as the products of thousands of years of writing and reception.¹⁷ Upon starting graduate study at Berkeley, Barskova first focused on Konstantin Vaginov, whose work shows considerable classical influence, and considered specialising in classical reception.¹⁸ Vaginov features in two poems which also feature classical motifs, ‘Konets moemu terpeniiu’¹⁹ (‘End of my patience’, 1999) and ‘Istoriia ideologii i poezii’²⁰ (‘History of ideology and poetry’, 2001). But first and foremost she cites Iosif Brodskii, whose work is full of classical reception (see section beginning p. 54), and whom she read intensively between the ages of 11 and 15, as the major formative influence upon her poetry, her “linguistic medium”, comparing his influence upon her with that of Homer upon antiquity.²¹ ‘Una furtiva lacrima’²² (2000; titled in Latin rather than the Italian of the Donizetti aria) is subtitled ‘26 января 1996 года’ (‘26th January 1996’), a date (possibly mistakenly) two days before Brodskii died. A declaration of both love and grief, it begs Brodskii not to abandon Barskova, having ‘debauched’ her when she was 11 – the moment of “сугубо персональное потрясение” (“profoundly personal shock”) when she first read him: “Кинотеатр ‘Дружба’, мама протягивает

¹⁴ Boris Dralyuk, ‘A “Leperous Distilment”: Retranslating Polina Barskova’s Shakespearean Allusions’, *Translation Review*, 88.1 (2014), 46–55.

¹⁵ Volodimerova.

¹⁶ Barskova, ‘Interview’.

¹⁷ See also my article ‘Polina Barskova’s ‘Daphnis and Chloe’: A Russian Pastoral’ in *Classical Receptions Journal*, 2016

<http://crj.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/10/13/crj.clwo20>.

¹⁸ Tikhonova.

¹⁹ Polina Barskova, ‘vse: 1999-i’, 2015.

²⁰ Polina Barskova, *Arii*, Avtograf, 53 (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 2001) <<http://www.vavilon.ru/texts/prim/barskova4.html>> [accessed 17 November 2015].

²¹ Igor’ Petrov, ‘Polina Barskova: Ot Brodskizma k rabotorgovle’, *Vechernii Gondol’er*, 2001 <<http://gondolier.ru/023/23lab.html>> [accessed 21 July 2015].

²² Polina Barskova, *Evridei i Orfika*, Avtograf, 38 (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 2000) <<http://www.vavilon.ru/texts/prim/barskova3.html>> [accessed 17 November 2015].

‘Новый Мир’, 1987 год” (“‘Friendship’ cinema, mum holds out ‘Novyi mir’, 1987”).²³ In the poem she never calls him by name, but in the second half compares him to Christ, and in the first calls him ‘император, алхимик, знаток / Милых чудес’ (‘emperor, alchemist, expert / in lovely marvels’). This classical/fairytale context continues with her cry “Колобок! / И от меня и от Луция Афра убёг, / И от Корнелии, и от Коринны, стервец!” (“Kolobok! / You’ve run away from both me and Lucius Afr, / And from Cornelia, and from Corinna, you little shit!”) She replaces the stock figures of the fairytale *Kolobok*²⁴ with characters from antiquity. It is unclear exactly who they are. ‘Lucius Afr’ could be comic poet Lucius Afranius, Terence (Publius Terentius Afer, with Lucius as an incorrect substitution), or perhaps Lucius from Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*, misattributed to Terence.²⁵ Cornelia is probably the Cornelia who speaks from an epitaph in Propertius 4.11; Corinna could be either Ovid’s *puella* or the sixth-century Greek poet. These figures may refer to Brodskii’s infamous reading list that he gave to his students at Mount Holyoke, as Corinna, Propertius, Apuleius and Terence are among the few prominent classical authors missing;²⁶ in that case, running away from Barskova may be her complaint about also being ‘missed’, as he (probably) never read her poetry.

Barskova’s academic interests have moved steadily further away from Classics. She has talked of her undergraduate experience as socially formative, but academically as “classical agoraphobia”, due to the lack of inquisitiveness she found there: “вопрос ‘почему’ там почти никого не занимает” (“the question ‘why’ interests almost nobody there”). She speaks of the start of her studies in California as an emergence from this state into true academic inquiry:

К моему великому удивлению, они взяли меня к себе в аспирантуру. Я стала читать то, что весь мир давно знает и умеет... Мне же после классической агорафобии все было в новинку. Каждый день – открытие: начиная с Фуко, Барта, до Исера и Рифатера. Весь легион.²⁷

To my great amazement, they took me on as a PhD student. I began to read the things the whole world has long known and understood... For me after my

²³ Volodimerova.

²⁴ Like the Gingerbread boy.

²⁵ Cancik and Schneider, ‘Afer’, *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 287; Cancik and Schneider, ‘Afranius, L.’, *ibid.*, 290.

²⁶ Cynthia Haven, ‘Joseph Brodsky’s Reading List “to Have a Basic Conversation” – plus the Shorter One He Gave to Me’, *The Book Haven*, 2013

<<http://bookhaven.stanford.edu/2013/11/joseph-brodskys-reading-list-to-have-a-basic-conversation-plus-the-shorter-one-he-gave-to-me/>> [accessed 20 October 2015].

²⁷ Volodimerova.

classical agoraphobia everything was a novelty. Every day a discovery: beginning with Foucault, Barthes, to Iser and Riffaterre. The whole legion.

For the past decade she has been working on material from Blockade archives,²⁸ not directly connected with Classics – but as the writers are from the intelligentsia, classical references occur. Blockade themes merge with classical in poems such as ‘Persei’ (‘Perseus’, 2011), where the fascination of this awful topic for Barskova is personified as Medusa.²⁹ Some of her teaching has also utilised her undergraduate classical training.³⁰ However, just as parts of Barskova’s knowledge of classical literature from her degree recur in her poetry, the only part of her degree that she claims to have enjoyed – a dissertation on diminutives in Catullus (a particularly Russian theme) – has recurred in her work on the Blockade:

20 лет спустя, я вернулась к своему диплому, потому что сейчас я написала небольшую такую работу. Я писала тогда об очень странном тексте Катулла, где он размышляет о том, что такое дом. Это текст знаменитый о смерти брата. И вот сейчас я немножко занимаюсь проблемой того, как блокадники размышляли, что такое семья и дом в катастрофе. И я вдруг поняла, что тогда я пыталась думать о тех же примерно вещах.³¹

20 years on, I have returned to my undergraduate dissertation, because now I have written this modest work. I wrote then about a very strange Catullus text, where he contemplates what home is. It is the famous poem about his brother’s death. And now I am working a little on the question of how the besieged contemplated what family and home meant amidst a catastrophe. And I suddenly realised that I had been trying to think about the same sort of things then.

One of her most recent poems, ‘Katull 68 (a) Lissabon’ (‘Catullus 68 (a) Lisbon’, 2015) returns again to the poem she translated for her undergraduate dissertation.³² This illustrates the extent to which the different spheres of Barskova’s education, research, and writing interact with and inform each other, even at great distance. She says “я гибридный персонаж — думаю о словах и делаю слова” (“I am a

²⁸ Tikhonova.

²⁹ Barskova, ‘Interview’.

³⁰ “Another course, The State of Poetry, draws on the professor’s background as an undergraduate classics major as well as her own unique geographic and literary origins. Three historical contexts – imperial Rome, the romantic Europe of the Napoleonic era, and the totalitarian states of the 20th century – provide context for discussion of the poet’s duty and resistance in relationship to the state.” ‘Poet and Professor Polina Barskova’, *Hampshire College*, 2009 <<https://www.hampshire.edu/news/2009/02/23/poet-and-professor-polina-barskova>> [accessed 21 July 2015].

³¹ Goralik.

³² Barskova, ‘Interview’.

hybrid character – I think about words and I make words”).³³ The poetic results of the interactions of her interests are just as hybrid.

The fact that from university age onwards Barskova has knowledge (albeit imperfect) of Latin and Greek, and has read classical texts in the original, should be understood as background to my readings of her later poetry. I therefore refer more to classical texts in the original than in previous chapters, but I still use translations predominantly. A different approach is required for her juvenilia; in pre-university poems she was unlikely to have referred to classical texts themselves, but instead to have drawn her references from anthologies at home, such as Nikolai Kun’s *Legendy i mify drevnei Gretsii* (*Legends and myths of Ancient Greece*), which she remembers her father reading to her.³⁴ Many of her classical allusions elsewhere will have been drawn from sources such as these and from culture more generally; to analyse these I use classical texts as *locum tenentes*. It should be noted that Barskova seldom dates her poems, so most of the dates given are publication dates.

This chapter is structured thematically; since Barskova has been writing poetry prolifically since childhood, she has an immense oeuvre, and many of her key themes recur in poems that were written decades apart. The chapter begins (perhaps counter-intuitively) with Barskova’s rebellion against Classics, mostly from the years of her undergraduate Classics studies. It then moves to another negative (yet productive) association Barskova makes with classical antiquity: her use of it to write about the untimely deaths of her father and her lover. This theme connects with her long-standing interest in *katabasis* (descent into the underworld). Finally, the chapter moves away from death (somewhat) to discuss Barskova’s interconnected receptions of *Hamlet* and classical antiquity. This chapter reveals the paradox at the heart of Barskova’s relationship with antiquity, its association with both death and creation, and how these opposing forces interact with her writing about personal experiences, Russian history, and the Russian literary tradition.

³³ Tikhonova.

³⁴ Barskova, ‘Interview’.

Classical Ambivalence

Barskova was ambivalent towards her degree – for it not being of her choosing or suited to her temperament, its irrelevance, lack of inquiry into human concerns, its deadness:

Не было выбора никакого, меня поступили. Родители были связаны с университетом, на классике учился Сева Зельченко, надо было меня куда-то пристраивать, и это было все очень странно, потому что никакого классика из меня не получилось даже приблизительно, я не могла этим заниматься, потому что оно было совершенно для меня мертвое [...] мне в конце пятого курса впервые стало интересно, потому что мне разрешили заниматься не плюсквамперфектом, не частицами в греческом, а человеческими вопросами.³⁵

I had no choice at all, I was enrolled [into the Classics department]. My parents were connected with the university, Seva Zel'chenko was studying Classics, I had to be put somewhere, and that was all very strange, because I was not even remotely cut out to be a classicist, I could not study it, because it was something totally dead for me [...] I first began to find it interesting at the end of fifth year, because I was allowed to study something other than the pluperfect or Greek particles – human questions.

This negative classical reception appears frequently in her poetry, particularly during and immediately following the period (1993-98) she spent at university, as she vents her teenaged anger and frustration against Classics, viewed as her tormentor.

She sums up the Philological Faculty in 'Zoopark zimoi'³⁶ ('Zoo in winter', 2008) with the words 'Плиний, сплин' ('Pliny, spleen'), linking Pliny – or her studies – and her boredom/depression there by their similar sound. 'Bibliophilia'³⁷ ('Bibliophilia', 1999) contrasts the arid world of the library and the tome she must consult there with home and the sex she indulges in whilst waiting for the book to arrive:

Диким казалось мне то, что скоро пора возвращаться
В мир, где меня терпеливо трактат 'О возвышенном' ждёт,
Невыносимо смешной под взглядами наших объятий,
Наших измученных тел, что изгнаны были из рая
Кем-то, подобным тебе, истинно Ложный Лонгин.

³⁵ Goralik.

³⁶ Polina Barskova, 'stikh proshloi zimy, ktr zhil kak-to v teni', *pbarskova*, 2008 <<http://pbarskova.livejournal.com/1707.html>> [accessed 18 November 2015].

³⁷ Barskova, 'vse'.

It seemed crazy to me that it would soon be time to return
To the world where the treatise 'On the Sublime' patiently waits for me,
Unbearably funny beneath the gazes of our embraces,
Our exhausted bodies, that were expelled from paradise
By someone like you, truly Pseudo-Longinus.

Barskova plays with ironies in this poem. She construes breaking off lovemaking in order to return to the book as an expulsion from Heaven, yet the book is *On the Sublime*; Barskova hints that the sublimity of sex is far preferable. Therefore she insults the work's author, Pseudo-Longinus, by emphasising the appositeness of 'Pseudo', which in Russian more commonly means 'false', 'deceitful'. The poem's title is sarcastic, as she is far from book-loving here; but it also reflects neatly the poem's structure, alternating between the themes of the book and love. In 'Angel goroda' ('City angel'), part of 'Soshestvie angelov'³⁸ ('Angels' descent', 2006), Barskova is revising Plato for an exam. She rehashes the *Symposium*'s argument about Love: Agathon's contention that Love is "the most blissful" of the gods "as being the most beautiful and the best"; Socrates' counter-argument (quoting Diotima) that Love is "not good nor beautiful" or "ugly and bad, but something betwixt the two", and "between a mortal and an immortal".³⁹ This is distilled by Barskova down to the unphilosophical essentials: the need to quote something in the exam, the pain and fear of failing, the treachery of memory:

И Платон в рюкзаке перед сессией:
Вот откуда печаль, Диотима!

Вот откуда болтливый (verbosus) гугнивый Эрот.

Всё же — Бог или смертный? Щербетный красавец? Урод,
К Агафону прилёгший?

Да нет: он заплата, цитата.
Он — лицо моей падшей подруги
В слезах, и соплях, и грязи
Сожалений. Он — ночь равнодушного града,
По которому память в сверкающих санках скользит
Королевою Снежной.

And Plato in my rucksack before exam time:
Here is the source of sadness, Diotima!

³⁸ Polina Barskova, 'Soshestvie Angelov', ed. by Dmitrii Kuz'min, *Vozdukh*, 3 (2006) <<http://www.litkarta.ru/projects/vozdukh/issues/2006-3/barskova/>> [accessed 17 November 2015].

³⁹ Plato, *Lysis; Symposium; Gorgias*, trans. by W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press; London, 1925), pp. 153, 177–79.

Here is the source of blabbermouth (verbosus) nasal Eros.

Still – is he God or mortal? A sherbet hottie? A minger,
Cuddled up to Agathon?

Nah – he’s a patch, a quote.
He’s the face of my fallen friend
In tears, and snot, and dirt
Of regrets. He’s a night of uncaring hail,
Over which memory, in a shining sledge, skims,
As a Snow Queen.

An air of unpleasantness is again attached to the Philfac in ‘Vizit v stolovuiu universiteta’⁴⁰ (‘Visit to the university canteen’, 2000) as someone (presumably Barskova) is unwillingly drawn into a conversation about Homer. She mocks the incongruity and pretension of debating classical topics in the canteen: ‘Чтобы ты мог сказать: “И я там был, / Салат морковный ел и кофе пил, / Распространялся о пожаре Рима”.’ (‘So you can say: “I too was there, / Ate carrot salad and drank coffee, / Pontificated about the fire of Rome”.’) This is an allusion to the other half of the same fairytale closural formula that Kutik uses in ‘Vospominanie ob ode’ (see p. 170): ‘и я там был, мед-пиво пил, по усам текло, а в рот не попало’ (‘I too was there, drank honey-beer, it flowed through my moustache, but missed my mouth’).⁴¹ For both poets this saying is connected with classical antiquity as evoking an event from the distant past, and in both cases it introduces an element of absurdity. Barskova again mocks the pretension of using classical references when, in ‘Piatnadsatoe noiabria 1998 goda’⁴² (‘Fifteenth November 1998’), Barskova has a student at the Philfac describe a boy she fancies as like ‘варвару Эллада’ (‘Hellas to a barbarian’), after a long list of other learned comparisons, which she is told to hurry up and finish.

An antithesis to the alienating effect of her classical degree can be found in poems related to Viacheslav Leikin’s studio (for talented young writers), which Barskova attended from the age of nine for the rest of her childhood, and which fellow classicist and poet Vsevolod Zel’chenko also attended (see p. 67).⁴³ Two poems, ‘Na deviatnadsatiletie Vsevoloda Zel’chenko’⁴⁴ (‘Upon the nineteenth birthday of

⁴⁰ Barskova, *Evrimei i Orfika*.

⁴¹ Thank you to Anna Vaninskaya for this observation.

⁴² Barskova, ‘vse’.

⁴³ Volodimerova.

⁴⁴ Barskova, *Rasa brezgliviykh*.

положит мне рублик золотой' ('When the bitch Anthropos cuts that thread / And places a little golden rouble under my tongue').

At other times she calls attention to the clichédness of the classical motifs she uses. In 'Nakanune dnia rozhdeniia'⁵³ ('Birthday eve', 2000) Barskova begins by combining the famous first line of Lermontov's 'Parus' ('Sail') with Theseus' famous forgetfulness in changing his sails, but as the familiar story veers from its usual course she breaks off, saying the motif has become twisted with overuse: 'А я здесь мучаю сюжетец, извитый славой' ('But here I am torturing the little fame-twisted plot'). 'Belyi avtomobil'⁵⁴ ('White car', 2001) updates the cliché 'торная дорога' ('beaten track/trodden path') with the synonym 'троп[a]' ('trope/path', identical in the plural), illustrating, subverting, and embracing the inevitability of clichédness:

Уже эпитафьи готовы –
Розовокрылые оковы
Для группы осуждённых муз.
Мы ходим все по торным тропам.
Одни ползком, а те – галопом.
Я из вторых.

Already the epigraphs are ready –
Rosy-winged fetters
For a group of condemned muses.
We all walk along trodden tropes.
Some at a crawl, others at a gallop.
I'm among the latter.

The poem is introduced with a trio of epigraphs, called Muses' fetters in the opening lines. The epigraphs already indicate reception, emulation, repetition; both Muses and the imitation Homeric epithet are well-worn classical motifs; the fetters reinforce the poem's circular theme, and suggest the lack of freedom in poetry enslaved to classicism. Barskova shows herself galloping along this repetitious path, and later equates her repetitious classical education with poison:

тот сверчок,
Знаток Платонова и Plato,
Кто мне на днях подсыпал яда
В недорасширенный зрачок.

that cricket,
Connoisseur of Platonov and Plato,

⁵³ Barskova, *Evrideri i Orfika*.

⁵⁴ Barskova, *Arii*.

Who just days ago sprinkled poison
Into my undilated pupil.

Having played with repetition and cliché throughout, at this point Barskova breaks the cycle, inverting two famous classical clichés and halting a third:

С огнетушителем Нерона
Или со зрением Гомера,
Кричим надменно и сердито:
“Тележка, тпру! остановись!
Останься пеной, Афродита,
И слово, в музыку вернись

With Nero's fire extinguisher
Or Homer's eyesight,
We cry haughtily and angrily:
Wagon, whoa! Stop!
Stay foam, Aphrodite,
And word, return to music.

The paradoxical, broken clichés at the end of the poem connect with the cunningly altered cliché at the beginning. These last two lines are an exact quotation, in the exact same position, of the antepenultimate lines of Mandel'shtam's 'Silentium' (a poem already in dialogue with the Russian and classical traditions; see p. 43). The fact of this intertext, along with the uselessness of the non-existent classical weapons, lays bare the futility of avoiding words/clichés.

Barskova's view of Classics as a dead subject surfaces in many of her poems. 'Konets moemu terpeniiu'⁵⁵ ('End of my tether', 1999) shows undergraduate Barskova struggling to learn Latin verbs:

Мне тяжело от вас, латинские глаголы,
Танцующие на моей груди —
Осиные плевки, блошинные уколы,
Топорный ход Хароновой ладьи

You oppress me, Latin verbs,
Dancing on my chest —
Wasp spits, flea pricks,
Clumsy motion of Charon's boat.

At first they are merely oppressive, painful, bloodsucking; but with the introduction of Charon's boat they turn fatal. She expresses the verbs' violence towards her through two classical examples — they are Zeus, and she Danae, made bodiless by his

⁵⁵ Barskova, 'vse'.

rape; they are dagger-wielding assassins, and she Caesar on the Ides of March. Being examined on her Classical knowledge in 'Angel goroda' is figured as communion with death:

Всё кончилось в полдень, когда
Я погибшее имя, как ком пламенеющей рвоты,
Изблевала из детского жалкого жуткого рта.
[...]
Вот мы скоро с тобой, недобитки,
Отплывём, моя радость, навстречу обещанной пытке
На раскрашенной лодке Харона — на остров Цитеру, на Крит.

Everything finished at midday, when
From my childish pitiful fearsome mouth I spewed
Out the deceased name like a chunk of flaming vomit.
[...]
So us survivors will soon
Sail to meet the promised torture, my sweet,
Aboard Charon's painted boat – to the island Cythera, to Crete.

Plato's name is dead and vomitlike; again, she is on Charon's boat, sailing to the underworld of Greek islands. A similar uncouth irreverence for Classical figures is evident in 'Moi peristy i angel s glazami bezvkusnogo demona'⁵⁶ ('My plummy angel with eyes of a tasteless demon', 1999): 'Когда Аполлон со своею похмельной гитарою / Молчит, на диване своём захлебнувшись блевотиной' ('When Apollo with his hungover guitar / Is silent on his couch, choked by puke'). This is coupled with an address to her angel, who combines modernity with the underworld (and has haemorrhoids): 'Обходчик железных путей...залетейского тракта...' ('Ranger of railway tracks...the translethean tract...') Her attitude to classical literature is less severe in this poem, as she attributes to it only the appearance of morbidity: 'Зато у латинских поэтов такие созвучия – / Живое всегда притворяется мёртвым' ('Yet the Latin poets have such harmonies – / The living always plays dead'). This more positive approach may be due to receiving the Latin poetry through the nineteenth-century Russian poet and translator Afanasii Fet (see p. 31), to whom Barskova dedicates the poem. 'Mertvechina klassitsizma i bordel' barokko'⁵⁷ ('Carrion classicism and brothel baroque', 1999) opens with the assertion that although Classics is dead, it is impervious, like a child's love, to any diminishment in status. Her comparison with childlike, unconditional love implies that she feels this is the basis for people's reverence for Classics; and her statement is belied by

⁵⁶ Barskova, 'vse'.

⁵⁷ Barskova, 'vse'.

Barskova's scornful, distasteful epithets. Through the rest of the poem a string of classical references illustrates this double-sided opening couplet. She shows the beautiful hair of Medusa from Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4.791-801 turning to snakes – but people are only partially turned to stone by the sight of it. The world is only *like* the mountain Sisyphus pushed a boulder up eternally. Prometheus bringing fire to mankind is dangerous, yes, but also stupid. All the classical references are diminished, made ineffectual or pointless. Yet if Classics is obsolete, why has she written a poem filled with classical references? The final couplet explains: 'Смерть не избавляет от соблазна. / Но самоуверенность Горгоны / Зачастую здесь благообразна.' ('Death does not free us from temptation. / But the Gorgon's arrogance / Is oft-times attractive here.') The compelling, partially deadening Gorgon symbolises the appeal and effect of Classics; as do the eternally toiling Sisyphus and eternally punished Prometheus – death is no escape.

Despite her close contact with the dead classical world, Barskova emphasises her own vitality. In 'Vesennii Peterburg'⁵⁸ ('Spring Petersburg', 1999) Barskova describes her visits to have sex with the dead (and decaying) Alexandrian librarian, who holds in his mouth words which he calls his 'little coffins'. Characteristically, the librarian asks Barskova to be quiet; but this is so as not to disturb his soul, which Barskova takes the place of: "Тихе! Тихе! Тихе! / Не разбуди душу моего тела. Ты такая смешная. Почти как моя душа." ("Hush! Hush! Hush! / Do not disturb the soul of my body. You are so funny. Almost like my soul.") Only when she leaves does he begin to feel ill, and it is revealed that he is dead. This metaphor for Barskova's communion with ancient texts, to which she, as the reader, brings life, is bookended by statements of her everyday activities, her freedom, her joy in life. Contact with dead literature leaves her fundamentally unmoved:

Изящную щель
 Бывшего рта,
 К которому прикоснулась
 Я, ничего не чувствуя, радуясь, что жива.

The dainty chink
 Of the former mouth,
 Which I touched,
 Feeling nothing, joying that I am alive.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

This perhaps explains the paradox of Barskova's generally negative attitude towards classics alongside the pervasiveness of classical allusions in her poetry. She feels that classical knowledge, which in most contexts she sees as dead, has the capacity to be reanimated in her poetry.

The Underworld and Fatal Love

The underworld occurs with striking frequency in Barskova's poems. The theme is related at first to two deaths of loved ones, and later to her scholarly work on the Blockade. Barskova's father, on whom she "totally depended" died when she was 17.⁵⁹ Her 1993 collection *Rasa brezglivikh (Squeamish Race)*, published the year after, is dedicated to him. When she was 19 (shortly before – and partially precipitating – her emigration to the US in 1998), Barskova's lover, literary critic and poet Manuk Zhazhoian, was run over and killed on Nevskii Prospekt. Zhazhoian was an expert on the Silver Age and its mythologies, especially Tsvetaeva; Barskova still has his book *Sluchai Orfeia (The case of Orpheus)* on her bookshelf in Amherst.⁶⁰ It is thus natural for Barskova to embody him in various underworld myths, including that of Orpheus and Eurydice. She turned her father and Zhazhoian into an "all-surviving army of lovers" in her poetry, using classical mythology to support herself like a "crutch", to immortalise them.⁶¹

Rivers of Hades

Reference to the underworld often takes the form of one of its rivers or its ferryman Charon, which are mentioned in 18 separate poems (Lethe – 8 times;⁶² Charon – 6 times;⁶³ the unusual adjective 'залетейский', 'translethean' – 3 times;⁶⁴ and Styx – 2 times),⁶⁵ as opposed to Hades, which is named only 3 times.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Barskova, 'Interview'.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² 'Arii', 'Evridei i Orfika, konechno, odno', 'Iz dnevnika S.O. (1941, Leningrad)', 'Mimesis', 'Nakanune dnia rozhdeniia', 'Proshchanie s Ofeliei', 'Rovesniki', 'Smert' Devy'.

⁶³ 'Angel goroda', 'Bogateishaia ideia', 'Kidneping', 'Konets moemu terpeniiu', 'P'eta: III', 'V svoi den' rozhden'ia ia idu na balet'.

⁶⁴ 'Moi peristy angel s glazami bezvkusnogo demon'a', 'Beznadezhnost' v samoi beznadezhnosti, a ne v tebe', 'Elenograd'.

⁶⁵ 'Prichudlivyi, kapriznyi, prikhotlivyi', 'V svoi den' rozhden'ia ia idu na balet'.

⁶⁶ 'Evridei i Orfika, konechno, odno', 'Kidneping', 'Marsh protesta'.

One poem in *Rasa Brezglivkykh*, 'Beznadezhnost' v samoi beznadezhnosti, a ne v tebe'⁶⁷ ('Hopelessness is in hopelessness itself, and not in you', 1993) speaks of the triviality of death, and asks 'А где твой отец? / Говорят, что ушел в залетейскую глушь. За грибами.' ('But where's your father? / They say he's gone into the translethean wilderness. Mushroom picking.') The final words illustrate the everyday nature of death, deflating and domesticating the grandiose preceding phrase.

Zhazhoian, with his complex of classical associations, appears in many underworld poems. 'Ty vernesh'sia ottuda, otkuda tebia ne zhdu'⁶⁸ ('You shall return thence, whence I do not expect you', 1999) depicts her beloved in the underworld, whence he will return once he has completed the Danaids' endless task. Her comparison of her love to 'Medea's gift' of poisoned clothing, which marks and burns him, suggests he may be in the underworld due to her. 'P'eta'⁶⁹ ('Pietà', 1999-2000) takes its name from Catholic artwork depicting Mary holding the dead Christ, and approaches death from many viewpoints – many involving classical reception. Its third poem shows Charon coming to take away the dead beloved; its emphasis on the deceased's short stay yet great impact is reminiscent of Barskova's description of her love affair above. Barskova's description of Zhazhoian as angel-like also recurs in her poems: "тот человек, который погиб на Невском [...] в каком-то смысле был ангел, был ниоткуда и в никуда. Появился, все изменил, изменил представления о вещах, изменил жизнь и исчез."⁷⁰ ("the person who died on Nevskii [Prospekt] [...] was in some sense an angel, he came out of nowhere, and went the same way. He appeared, changed everything, changed my perceptions of things, changed my life, and disappeared.") 'Angel goroda' addresses an angel, a traveller – earthly and unearthly; it highlights the distance between him and his beloved, but does not make clear which of the two are dead, or whether the woman is Barskova; and it plays subtextually with the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. In 'Bogateishaia ideia'⁷¹ ('Richest idea', 2001) Barskova asks Raphael, presumably the archangel, to pay Charon to bring her back someone from the dead, past Cerberus, in contradiction of mythology (implying Orpheus' failure):

⁶⁷ Barskova, *Rasa brezglivkykh*.

⁶⁸ Barskova, 'vse'.

⁶⁹ Barskova, *Evrideri i Orfika*; Barskova, 'vse'.

⁷⁰ Goralik.

⁷¹ Barskova, *Arii*.

Спит игла в яйце.
Дай Харону два обола,
Объясни ему *ab ovo*,
Кого тебе вспять
Мифологии оттуда
Привезти, где пёс, паскуда,
Разевает пасть.

Sleeps a needle in an egg.
Give Charon two obols,
Explain to him *ab ovo*
Whom he should, reversing
Mythology, bring to you
Thence, where the hound, wretch,
Opens wide his jaws.

She mixes this classical reference with one from Russian folklore: Koschei the Deathless, whose soul (and death) is hidden in a needle in an egg; ‘*ab ovo*’, ‘from the egg’, is thus both ‘from the beginning’, ‘from the soul’, and ‘from the death’. This, she says, is for her poetry: making the strange (death) familiar. She hopes her life-filled poetry will penetrate death (like Orpheus’), but she is silenced by death raising a finger to her lips, in silence. The final part of the poem alludes to her emigration, influenced by her lover’s death (still personified and silent):

Куда
Заведёт её молчанье
Нас? В West-Oakland, [...]
Где твой призрак – вечно вешний
Придорожный знак.

Whither
will her silence lead
Us? To West-Oakland, [...]
Where your ghost is an eternally vernal
Roadside sign.

Finally, she merges the dark of the underworld with the darkness – to her – of the city she left:

И когда во тьму
Я писульки отправляю,
То, от всех в отличие, знаю –
Куда и кому.

And when I send
Scrawls into the dark,
Then, unlike everybody else, I know
Where and to whom.

Petersburg merges with the underworld in many of Barskova's poems. In 'Nakanune dnia rozhdeniia', having conveyed in classical terms the fact that her beloved died before she emigrated, she explicitly connects the rivers Lethe and Neva, a logical step from her lover's death on Nevskii Prospekt:

Не долетит стрела Амура до середины
Калифорнийской зимней ночи – падёт во тьму.
[...]
Всё сплыло. К немоте – по Лете. К заливу – по Неве!

Cupid's arrow will not reach the middle
of the Californian winter night – it will fall into darkness.
[...]
All's flown. To muteness – along the Lethe. To the gulf – along the Neva!

She has still more reason to connect Lethe with the Neva in later poetry, once she has begun studying the Leningrad Blockade. Her 2010 poem 'Iz dnevnika S.O. (1941, Leningrad)'⁷² ('From S.O.'s diary (1941, Leningrad)') presents a scene from a Blockade victim's diary, which begins 'Голова Антиноя на тулове стегозавра' ('Head of Antinous on torso of stegosaurus'). This conveys the writer's dystrophic delusions, whilst also reminding the reader of Antinous' death on the Nile, an association that chimes with the line 'Воду приходится брать из Леты' ('I am forced to take water from the Lethe'): the writer has confused the Neva and the Lethe, with good reason, considering the many dangers attendant upon taking water from it.

Amor & Eros

'Амур', the Latin 'Amor', and its Greek counterpart 'Эрот', 'Eros', both potentially referring to either Cupid or love, appear with a frequency almost as notable as that of the rivers: Amor in 5 poems, and Eros in 3.⁷³ Significantly, they tend to appear in similar contexts – even in identical contexts: 'Nakanune dnia rozhdeniia' and 'Proshchanie s Ofeliei' ('Farewell to Ophelia', 1993) mention Amor and Lethe, and 'Angel goroda' – Eros and Charon. This correlation suggests an association between love and loss for Barskova, one corroborated by two poems in particular (although

⁷² Barskova, *Priamoe upravlenie*, p. 56.

⁷³ 'Dan' frantsuzskoi poezii', 'Nakanune dnia rozhdeniia', 'Odetta-Odillia', 'Proshchanie s Ofeliei', 'Rozovaia pizhama'; 'Angel goroda', 'Kloun Kol'ka udarit klouna Pet'ku...', 'Kto tam stoit u zakrytykh vorot?'.

most of the other instances of Amor/Eros occur with negative, deathly associations).
'Dan' frantsuzskoi poezii'⁷⁴ ('Tribute to French poetry', 1993) states:

Ради гордых сестер девяти
Мы гнием и стареем.
Золоченый Амур коварным становится змеем.
То, что было любовью, становится смертью

For the proud sisters nine
We rot and age.
Gilded Amor turns guileful snake.
What was love becomes death.

Barskova contends that humans are incapable of the natural love animals achieve; the unnaturalness of art intervenes, just as life (equated with love) is interrupted by death; yet the poem concludes 'А пока я пишу, мой возлюбленный не умирает' ('But while I write, my beloved does not die'): art has the power to preserve life/love. 'Kto tam stoit u zakrytykh vorot?'⁷⁵ ('Who's there, standing at the closed gates?'), 2000) presents the reader with 'Черный Эрот' ('Black Eros'), who is 'предвестник утрат' ('harbinger of losses'), delighting in human attachments, precursors of pain, and forcing his 'flock', pacified by love, into oblivion: 'Выжмет ее, как из тюбика пасту, / В черные дыры, в Ничто, в Никуда.' ('He squeezes it out like paste from a tube / Into black holes, into Nothing, into Nowhere.')

All these poems attacking the unreliability of Amor/Eros come in collections published following the death of her father or Zhazhoian.

Echo & Narcissus

Echo and Narcissus, perhaps the ultimate tragically mismatched classical couple, appear in six poems, separately and together, once in conjunction with Amor. Echo and Narcissus are known to modernity almost exclusively through Ovid, who combined their pre-existent but separate myths in *Metamorphoses* Book 3.⁷⁶ They are ripe for symbolic use in various respects, not least amatory: "first of their kind in the *Metamorphoses* – Narcissus the first human lover, Echo the first desiring female [...], their erotic vicissitudes enjoy paradigmatic status for earthly desire".⁷⁷ Indeed,

⁷⁴ Barskova, *Rasa brezglivyykh*.

⁷⁵ Barskova, *Evridei i Orfika*.

⁷⁶ Louise Vinge, *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century* (Lund: Gleerups, 1967), pp. 12, 19, 40.

⁷⁷ Micaela Janan, *Reflections in a Serpent's Eye: Thebes in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 115–16.

in ‘Delo dazhe ne v zhelchi i ne v pustoi obide’⁷⁸ (‘It’s really not about gall or empty umbrage’) Barskova credits Ovid in his *Ars Amatoria* persona as her teacher of love. Ovidian references – aside from Echo and Narcissus – are relatively rare in Barskova, consisting of two references to Europa, and one each to Pygmalion and Galatea, Arachne, and Perseus.⁷⁹ So it is not their Ovidian source but their thematic significances that provoke Barskova’s interest in Echo and Narcissus.

The most salient point of the Echo and Narcissus story, the one most frequently occasioning Barskova’s references to them, is that of doubling, which caused Ovid to link their separate traditions: “The motif of reflection connects the two themes in a way which [...] is characteristic of the way in which the *Metamorphoses* are welded into a unit.”⁸⁰ ‘Odetta-Odillia’⁸¹ (‘Odette-Odile’, 1999) segues into a reference to Narcissus via motifs found in both Ovid and *Swan Lake*: doubling, lake, hunting with bow and arrow: ‘Больной струной сознания вспомнишь квадратный пруд. / Амур, лениво напрягаясь, натягивает лук. / Не замер Нарцисс над безмолвной рекой’ (‘By the sick string of consciousness you’ll remember the square pond. / Amor, lazily straining, draws his bow. / Narcissus did not freeze over the speechless river’). Barskova takes elements of Ovid’s narrative after Narcissus falls in love with his reflection, but before he realises his mistake, and negates them: Narcissus not freezing/melting negates ‘He looks in speechless wonder at himself and hangs there motionless in the same expression’; the speechless river alters Narcissus’ complaint to the lake ‘you answer my words as well, but words which do not reach my ears’; ‘Не звал двойника оголённой рукой, / Не гладил журчания обманчивых вод’ (‘He did not call his double with bared arm, / Did not stroke the gurglings of the deceitful waters’) negates ‘How often did he offer vain kisses on the elusive pool? How often did he plunge his arms into the water seeking to clasp the neck he sees there’.⁸² These negations lead logically to Narcissus’ survival: ‘В мое оправдание он не умрёт!’ (‘In my defence, he will not die!’) In place of the fame Ovid assigns to the seer Tiresias immediately after the fulfilment of his prophecy of Narcissus’ doom (ll. 511-12), Barskova has the vaguer, less worldly ‘По жилам оракула вечность бежит.’

⁷⁸ Polina Barskova, ‘Stikhi’, in *GF - Novaia literaturnaia gazeta*, 1 (Moscow, 1994), p. 7 <<http://www.vavilon.ru/metatext/nlg1/barskova.html>> [accessed 17 November 2015].

⁷⁹ ‘Evropa’, ‘Molodoi chelovek kachaet nogoi’, ‘Ona nikogda ne pridet s moroza’, ‘P’eta: VII. Probuzhdenie’, ‘Persei’.

⁸⁰ Vinge, p. 12.

⁸¹ Barskova, ‘vse’.

⁸² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), I, pp. 153–57 (3.418-19, 462, 427-29).

(‘Eternity runs through the veins of the oracle.’) This reminds the reader that the prophecy, now thwarted, had been given in response to Narcissus’ mother’s question if her child would live to old age (ll. 346-8). This personal element, Barskova’s first-person involvement when she declares he will not die, and the un-Ovidian ‘river’ instead of a pool (especially as that would have merged better with *Swan Lake*), which suggests the Neva, all lead to a reading of Narcissus’ survival as Barskova’s attempt to write the survival of her dead lover. The poem’s final lines hint at the futility of this attempt, figuring his death as a sparrow (bearing a human appellation): ‘маленький жид*, / Раздавленный на мостовой. *В XIX-м веке так называли воробьёв (прим. автора).’ (‘little jew*, / squashed on the road. *In the 19th century this was a name for sparrows (author’s note).’)

‘Музыка прежде всего’⁸³ (‘Music above all’, 2001-05) uses Echo and Narcissus to discuss the effect of death upon her writing:

Капает кровавым с рук,
 Что держали, как букет,
 Тельце белое твоё.
 Мой нарцисс, мой белый свет,
 Эхо, эхо я твоё!

Drips bloody from my hands
 That held, like a bouquet,
 Your small white body.
 My narcissus, my white light,
 I am your echo, Echo!

The blood of the absent person Barskova addresses seems to turn into ink: ‘Мы писали’ (‘We were writing’). She plays with the dual identities of Echo and Narcissus as an echo and a narcissus like Ovid does, with the latter foremost. She conflates dead body and flower, as Ovid does literally after Narcissus’ death, ‘In place of his body they find a flower, its yellow centre girt with white petals’,⁸⁴ as well as before, as Narcissus is shown losing ruddiness, turning pale (l. 491), and “his gaze is preserved in the very shape of the flower that keeps on ‘looking down’ in a fantasy of erotic contemplation”.⁸⁵ Barskova echoes the ‘echo’, as Ovid plays upon Echo’s

⁸³ Polina Barskova, ‘Brazil’skie stseny: Stikhi 2001-2005 gg.’, in *Proekt ‘Vozdukh’*, ed. by Dmitrii Kuz’min, 7 (Moscow; Tver’: ARGO-RISK; Kolonna, 2005)
 <<http://www.vavilon.ru/texts/prim/barskova5.html>> [accessed 17 November 2015].

⁸⁴ Ovid, I, p. 161 (3.509-10).

⁸⁵ Patricia B. Salzman-Mitchell, *A Web of Fantasies: Gaze, Image, and Gender in Ovid’s Metamorphoses* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), p. 59.

repetitions throughout and names 'Echo' at the end of the line every time but one. Barskova indicates with this her awareness of the passivity forced upon Echo by her lack of autonomous speech, which, despite her ingenious manipulation of repetition, makes for a "shadowy semi-existence, mirrored and reflected in the male text rather than seen face-to-face".⁸⁶ Perhaps due to this, 'Музыка прежде всего' is the only poem in which Barskova identifies with Echo, rather than Narcissus.

In the seventh poem of 'P'eta' (devoted to the subject of death, and probably primarily that of her lover) the Narcissan themes of starving for (unrequited) speech, the naked body, and hunting Echo place Barskova in the role of Narcissus:

голод речи
Без тебя утоляем теперь.
Без тебя мы тела заголяем,
Без тебя заливаем глаза,
Эхо дразним и криком и лаем,
А потом выпускаем в леса.
А потом — начинаем охоту

we quench
Without you the hunger for speech, now.
Without you we bare our bodies,
Without you we flood our eyes, tease
Echo with both crying and baying,
And then release into the woods.
And then we begin the hunt.

Here, Echo is not only spurned by Barskova but actively driven away and hunted. The poem's addressee (the dead lover) seems to be the reflected Narcissus, who is linked with the written word, as all that remains of him is ink on (probably Barskova's) lips: 'Ты вернулся к пенатам застенка / Бурым следом чернил на усах...' ('You returned to the torture-chamber penates / As a russet trace of ink on lips...') This is similar to his representation in 'Музыка прежде всего' (above). It is also typical of the reception of Narcissus, which from the eighteenth century has made him "a symbol of the artist", and in the nineteenth century "a symbol for the relation of the poet to his creation".⁸⁷ There are ample grounds for this reading in Ovid: "[Narcissus'] reaction to his reflection prompts some of Ovid's most pointed

⁸⁶ Alison Sharrock, in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. by Philip Hardie, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 101.

⁸⁷ Vinge, pp. 314, 330.

repetitions, a reflexive parody almost of the self-love of his own talent of which Quintilian was to accuse the poet”.⁸⁸

‘Arii’⁸⁹ (‘Arias’, 2001), couched, like ‘Muzyka prezhde vsego’, in a musical context, is a pair of poems about alternate personalities within Barskova/her art: perverse/jester. The latter personality seems to be a combination of Narcissus and his reflection, Barskova, and her lover:

Он в такт беззвучию дрожит
Латинской головой.
[...]
Уж он [...]
отражение моё,
Прилипшее к воде,
И, как отравленный наряд,
Мой взгляд к тебе приник.
Я пью? Я испражняю яд?
В уста? Из уст твоих?
Вода ж уносится, звеня,
И Эхо видит, как
Ты манишь мной к себе меня –
В придонный скользкий мрак.

In time to soundlessness his
Latin head quakes.
[...]
He is [...]
my reflection,
Stuck to the water,
And, like poisoned attire,
My gaze clings to you.
I drink? I emit poison?
Into your lips? From your lips?
The water rushes away, ringing,
And Echo sees how
You lure me to you with myself –
Into the slippery riverbed gloom.

Barskova’s reference to poisoned clothing seems to allude to a classical character outside of the Echo and Narcissus story: Deianeira, whose innocent gift to Heracles of a poisoned shirt killed him. With this Barskova expresses her unfounded guilt over her lover’s (Narcissus’) death. The doubling play between self and reflection is reminiscent of Shvarts’ treatment of the Narcissus theme in ‘Nochnaia tolcheia’ (see p. 77).

⁸⁸ Philip Hardie, p. 6.

⁸⁹ Barskova, *Arii*.

'Besy'⁹⁰ ('Demons', 2009) also emphasises the danger of artistic narcissism. Demon Ambition tries to tempt Cherviakov to become like Narcissus, gazing at himself in a hundred mirrors, 'стократно заглушая нимфу Э' ('Drowning out a hundredfold nymph E'). Cherviakov resists, threatens to blind and castrate himself, to choose an Erinys over Echo (linked by the first letter of their names): 'Я в белый брак с Э.ринией вступлю, а Э.хо выгоню.' ('I shall contract a marriage of convenience with E.rinys, and drive out E.cho.') A Narcissus-like Barskova is pursued by Echo even to America, in 'Peredyshka'⁹¹ ('Breather') published in 2000, two years after her emigration:

Кто я здесь? Но скажи: кто я там?
Пусть никто, но за мной по пятам
Неотступно спешит нимфа Эхо
С чем-то вроде нервного смеха...

Вспоминая Нарцисса зыбучий, растерянный лик,
Вспоминая свои трам-там-там и его тру-ля-ля

Who am I here? But tell me: who am I there?
Perhaps nobody, but hot on my heels
Hurries, relentless, nymph Echo
With something like nervous laughter...

Remembering Narcissus' adrift, wavering visage,
Remembering her tum-te-tums and his tra-la-las.

Barskova uses Narcissus' doubling to represent her split between two worlds (with Petersburg implicitly inhabited by the reflected Narcissus – illusory and death-filled). Echo represents the persistence of grief. Both suggest the difficulty of overcoming language barriers in emigration.

Katabases

Katabasis, descent into the underworld, is a theme Barskova returns to again and again. The classical *katabasists* she invokes most are Orpheus, then Persephone, then Odysseus; Aeneas' *katabasis* appears solely in connection with Dido and Marcellus, whom he met in the underworld. Certain *katabasis* poems predate her

⁹⁰ Polina Barskova, 'v nochnom', *pbarskova*, 2009
<<http://pbarskova.livejournal.com/9644.html>> [accessed 25 November 2015].

⁹¹ Barskova, *Evridei i Orfika*.

loss of Barskov and Zhazhoian (discussed above, p. 234), but most respond to their deaths.

Orpheus

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice, perhaps the most famous classical *katabasis*, is prominent in Barskova's poetry. Virtually every commentator on the extensive reception of Orpheus in Western literature begins by stating Orpheus' archetypality⁹² and continues by explaining that this reception is mostly based upon Virgil's *Eclogues* Book 4 and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book 10,⁹³ although both versions were drawn from an older tradition.⁹⁴ Barskova displays her awareness of the fact that it is a story that has been cited and reworked to the point of cliché by playing with the story's framework (as above), evoking the plot without mentioning any of the key characters' names, assuming her audience will keep up. She also references Orpheus in passing, carelessly, as a generic type. In 'Profprigodnost'⁹⁵ ('Competency', 1999) she lumps Orpheus in with various other men, deprived even of the distinction of a capital letter, to convey the varied perfection attained by the dead beloved in her poetry: 'Он стал адонисом, орфеем, / Вийоном, байроном, рембо...' (He became adonis, orpheus, / Villon, byron, rimbaud...') Again, Orpheus is a type linked with another figure and used to describe another man in 'Poet Peshkin'⁹⁶ (2000) 'Он был бы в Риме – Галл, во Фракии – Орфей' ('In Rome he would have been Gallus, in Thrace – Orpheus'). Gallus, an elegiac poet, contemporary of Virgil, and precursor to Ovid, is Orpheus' companion here as a poet who died young.⁹⁷

Orpheus' story is more central elsewhere. 'Temnokrylye bliadi na bostonskom avtovokzale'⁹⁸ ('Dark-winged whores in the Boston bus station', 2011) takes the parts of the myth most popularly reworked⁹⁹ – the tragedy of his backward glance and

⁹² e.g. Geoffrey Miles, *Classical Mythology in English Literature: A Critical Anthology* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 61.

⁹³ e.g. Philip Thibodeau, *Playing the Farmer: Representations of Rural Life in Vergil's Georgics* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2011), p. 242.

⁹⁴ Elisabeth Henry, *Orpheus with His Lute: Poetry and the Renewal of Life* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1992), pp. 15–16.

⁹⁵ Barskova, 'vse'.

⁹⁶ Barskova, *Evridei i Orfika*.

⁹⁷ Suicide: Cassius Dio, *Roman History, Volume VI Books 51-55.*, trans. by Earnest Cary (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917).

⁹⁸ Polina Barskova, *Soobshchenie Arielia* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2011), pp. 49–50.

⁹⁹ Henry, pp. 14–15.

subsequent miserable wanderings until his dismemberment – and merges them with Barskova’s viewpoint. This is typical of the twentieth-century reception of Orpheus, in which

Orpheus the lover is subject to unprecedentedly harsh criticism; Orpheus the poet is seen most vividly in terms of his failure and death, and his power, if he has any, is gained painfully through suffering and loss. [...] Many male poets, and some female ones, have movingly identified with him as they use the legend to express personal experiences of loss and grief.¹⁰⁰

The opening line holds a menacing premonition of Barskova/Orpheus’ fate at the hands of the bacchantes. The dark-winged whores are reminiscent of the modern-day bacchantes in ‘Kak zhenshchiny tebia liubili!’¹⁰¹ (‘How women loved you!’, 1999) in which Barskova follows Ovid in making the bacchantes turn upon Orpheus because he scorned them (*Metamorphoses* 10.79-85, 11.3-43):

Орфей, заснувший на вокзале...
Они тебя и растерзали,
Вакханки с красными зубами.
За то, что был к ним непричастен

Orpheus, asleep in the station...
They tore you apart,
Bacchantes with red teeth.
Because you were indifferent to them.

Barskova is similarly unable and unwilling to touch the whores in ‘Temnokrylye bliadi na bostonskom avtovokzale’: ‘Я блуждаю меж вас словно в райском саду обезьянка / Как по плоти гниющей’ (‘I wander amongst you like a monkey in the Garden of Eden, / As if over putrefying flesh’). Ovid gives two alternatives for Orpheus’ turn to homosexuality: ‘Orpheus had shunned all love of womankind, whether because it had gone so ill with him, or because he had so given his troth.’ (10.79-81)¹⁰² Barskova therefore favours the former, with her Orpheus-persona viewing all women as polluted by death. The poem revolves around Orpheus’ breaking of the prohibition on looking round, a moment which in Barskova’s version lingers with her. She tries to deny the extent of the pain of separation from her Eurydice, and how the oblivion of death is now – paradoxically – constantly with her:

¹⁰⁰ Miles, pp. 70–71.

¹⁰¹ Barskova, ‘vse’.

¹⁰² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), II, p. 71.

Мой глагол для тебя — уходить
Чем милее нужнее
Тем пространство для нас растопырено круче нежнее
Мой глагол отнимать отрицать и лишь долею звука
Утверждать как черна как влажна как огромна разлука
Как забвеньё развёрнуто выгнуто дивной спиною

My verb for you – to leave
The dearer more needed
The steeper more tender is space splayed for us
My verb to take away to deny and with only a fraction of a sound
To confirm how black how moist how huge is parting
How oblivion is unfolded curved like a wondrous back.

Barskova juxtaposes sexual and negative words incoherently to convey the pain of loss. The ‘wondrous back’ recalls Orpheus’ loss of Eurydice by unturning his back on her. While Orpheus lost Eurydice, Barskova’s beloved remains forever behind her, like in their procession out of the underworld: ‘Я иду улыбаясь и ты невидимка со мною / То есть в позе собачьей Орфей-Эвридика’ (‘I walk smiling and you invisible one with me, / That is doggy style Orpheus-Eurydice’). The *double entendre* ‘doggy style’ (like walking a dog / like sex from behind) is ironic, in the context of both the untouchable whores and Orpheus and Eurydice’s unconsummated (in Ovid’s version) marriage. It also materialises and empowers (in perhaps the starkest form possible, a penetrating penis) Eurydice’s “mute gaze with no power to control or influence her husband”, which is nevertheless “felt as a weakening of masculinity” for Orpheus,¹⁰³ and here expressed as a loss of control for Barskova. She protests the unfairness of the prohibition: ‘Наказание неадекватно проступку’ (‘Punishment unfit for the offence’). She excuses her urge to turn round in terms simultaneously poeticised and sexualised:

Я только хотела
Видеть слышать [...]
Как твой голос лежал словно дивная шлюха меж нами
Улыбаясь сверкая бодлеровской чёрной спиною

I only wanted
To see hear [...]
Your voice lying like a wondrous slut between us
Smiling flashing a Baudelairean black back.

It is her beloved’s voice (the organ of poetry) she desires to see in a sexual position, and she compares it to another poet, Baudelaire’s, eroticised depictions of his

¹⁰³ Salzman-Mitchell, p. 77.

mixed-race mistress Jeanne Duval.¹⁰⁴ The poetic bent of her description of her flouting of the taboo is a response to Orpheus' status as a poetic archetype, how "In his unsuccessful attempt to reclaim his wife Eurydice from death, and his own death at the hands of an angry mob, he embodies the limitations of art in the face of mortality and human irrationality."¹⁰⁵ Finally, she resigns herself to the fact her and her beloved's (sexual) possession of each other is thwarted by the underworld, itself described in ironically sexual/scatological terms: 'Обладание нами навозная яркая яма, / Где кишат уплотнения памяти.' ('Possession of us is the bright manurial hole, / Where compactations of memory swarm.')

Whilst the aforesaid poems re-cover already well-trodden ground, two other poems, 'Evridei i Orfika, konechno, odno'¹⁰⁶ ('Everyday and Orphism, of course, are one', 2000) and 'Marsh protesta'¹⁰⁷ ('Protest march', 1999) address a rarer side of Orpheus, knowledge of which presupposes a deeper than usual inquiry into Orpheus' history.¹⁰⁸ 'Evridei i Orfika, konechno, odno' already signals its difference with its title (which Barskova gives to the book in which it appears, *Evridei i Orfika*). The Russian endings of Orpheus and Eurydice are transposed, to double effect: the couple is merged, with their genders switched, becoming 'Eurydeus and Orphice';¹⁰⁹ moreover, Eurydeus in Russian sounds like the English 'everyday', whilst Orphice in Russian means 'Orphism'. The poem thus conveys two layers of meaning: one about the mythical characters (Eurydeus and Orphice), one about the opposition of *byt* (everyday existence) and mysticism (Everyday and Orphism). Barskova's pun signals her awareness that the purpose of her classical reception is to transcend *byt*, in much the same way as Shvarts' classical reception (see p. 74).

The 'Eurydeus and Orphice' layer is the more muted, and makes similar statements to 'Temnokrylye bliadi na bostonskom avtovokzale': that the couple are indivisible, one will always attempt to retrieve the other from death:

¹⁰⁴ William J. Thompson, *Understanding Les Fleurs Du Mal: Critical Readings* (Vanderbilt University Press, 1997), pp. 49–59, 214–23. Baudelaire emphasised Duval's blackness: Edward J. Ahearn, 'Black Woman, White Poet: Exile and Exploitation in Baudelaire's Jeanne Duval Poems', *The French Review*, 51.2 (1977), 212–20 (pp. 215–16).

¹⁰⁵ Miles, p. 61.

¹⁰⁶ Barskova, *Evridei i Orfika*.

¹⁰⁷ Barskova, 'vse'.

¹⁰⁸ John Warden, *Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth* (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ The stories Ovid has Orpheus tell in the *Metamorphoses* "soften the hard distinctions between male and female bodies", reflecting Orpheus' switch from hetero- to homosexuality: Colin Burrow, in Philip Hardie, pp. 304–5.

Эвридей и Орфика, конечно, одно.
Раздвоение – школьный прием.
Мы толкаем себя на зеленое дно
И себя же с обрыва зовем.

Eurydeus and Orphice, of course, are one.
Bifurcation is a schoolroom move.
We push ourselves to the green bottom
And call ourselves back from the precipice.

That Orpheus will always choose the pain of pursuing Eurydice: ‘Выбираем то счастье, в котором тоска / Скрыта, как в человеке скелет’ (‘We choose that happiness, in which pain / Is hidden, like a skeleton in a person’). That Eurydice’s release will only ever be temporary: ‘Так вот нас отпускают из Царства Теней: / Как клиентов психушки в кино.’ (‘This is how they release us from the Kingdom of Shadows: / Like clients of a loony bin to the cinema.’) The final lines reflect Orpheus’ despairing drift towards death (and ensuing reunion with Eurydice, on the other side): ‘И свобода теперь: посмотреть ли в окно / Или выпрыгнуть в это окно.’ (‘And now freedom is: to look out of the window / Or to jump out of that window.’)

The ‘Everyday and Orphism’ layer expresses Orphic belief – or aspects of it known/conjectured from two-score inscribed Orphic gold tablets found in various locations across the classical world,¹¹⁰ and from the miscellaneous poems ascribed to Orpheus in antiquity. ‘Everyday’ refers to both the boredom of *byt*, and to the lifelong, mundane commitment of Orphic devotees, which Plato called “βίος Ὀρφικός” (“the ‘Orphic life’”), in *Laws* 782c; this was “a rejection of the ordinary way of living governed by the customs and hierarchies of the polis society in favor of living in accordance with the ideal of the golden age”.¹¹¹ ‘Orphism’ is more complicated, as there is little agreement on what it entails:

while ancient scholars frequently refer to poems by Orpheus or attributed to Orpheus, they seldom refer to Orphics, except in the sense of authors of Orphic books, and never to ‘Orphism’. They mention various cults and rituals that Orpheus was supposed to have founded, and they apply the adjective ‘orphyic’ to certain rites and religious practices and to an ascetic way of life. But the name of Orpheus is the only consistent unifying factor. It is a fallacy to suppose that all ‘Orphyic’ poems and rituals are related to each other or that they are to be interpreted as different manifestations of a single religious movement. [...] a poem becomes Orphyic simply by being ascribed to Orpheus. By the same token, Orphics are simply people who in their religious beliefs or practices, whatever

¹¹⁰ Radcliffe Edmonds, *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes, and the ‘Orphyic’ Gold Tablets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 29, 110.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

these may be, accord a place of honour to texts ascribed to Orpheus. There was no doctrinal criterion for ascription to Orpheus, and no copyright restriction. It was a device for conferring antiquity and authority upon a text that stood in need of them."¹¹²

However, elements of the poem can be read through the filter of what is known about Orphic belief. Barskova hints at the deceased spirits' use of knowledge from their former lives, distilled onto the Orphic gold tablets, which contained instructions for them after death:¹¹³

Мы увозим себя в тридевятую стынъ,
И оттуда, бессильно хрипя,
Из оставленных нами садов и пустынь
Наугад выкликаем себя.

We carry ourselves away to the frozen neverland,
And thence, helplessly croaking,
From the gardens and deserts we abandoned
We haphazardly call ourselves back.

The choice of happiness containing pain (quoted above) may allude to Orphic *askesis*, "conquest of desires, which in the earthly life serves to mark the separation of the initiate from the body and from worldly concerns".¹¹⁴ Her depiction of souls briefly leaving Hades parallels the Orphic belief in reincarnation.¹¹⁵ Her emphasis upon the darkness of Hades, 'эту тьму излучает Аид' ('Hades radiates this darkness'), echoes the repetition of this in several of the tablets;¹¹⁶ yet Barskova asserts that the living world and the underworld are equally dark. Here she departs from the tablets: whereas many of the tablets direct the deceased to drink from the Lake of Mnemosyne, rather than (probably) Lethe, to retain the memory of their former lives for their reincarnation,¹¹⁷ she states that forgetfulness is the healing gift Hades brings: 'уколом забвенья смиряющий' ('humbling by its injection of oblivion'). As a result, the memoryless souls are bestial: 'Вой звериный: "О-О-А". Но что в этом "О"? / В этом "А"? Мы забыли давно.' ('Animalistic howl: "O-O-A". But what's in this 'O'? / This 'A'? We forgot long ago.') Without the knowledge vouchsafed them by memory (the tablets' key message)¹¹⁸ they make the mistake of

¹¹² M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), pp. 2–3.

¹¹³ Edmonds, *Myths of the Underworld Journey*, p. 33.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 83–85, 96.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 52–54.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

bifurcating ‘Evrīdei i Orfika’, life and death, or (as quoted above) looking out, and jumping out, of the window.

In both readings ‘Evrīdei i Orfika’ symbolises life and death, which the poem asserts to be two sides of same coin, the one always present in the other. The couple embody the interchangeability of life and death,¹¹⁹ as each stood on the threshold of the underworld and ‘died’ twice; whilst Orphic belief affirms the cyclic continuity of life and death, as one gold tablet asseverates: “νυν ἐθάνες και νυν ἐγενου τρισολβιη, ἀματι τωιδε” (“now you have died and now you have come into a new state of being, thrice-blessed, on the same day”),¹²⁰ and as bone tablets from Olbia even more eloquently assert: “βίος – θάνατος – βίος” (“life – death – life”).¹²¹

In ‘Marsh protesta’ Barskova openly acknowledges her use of ‘Orphic teachings’ in imagining the underworld: ‘В образцовое царство Аида. / Там (ссылаясь на орфическое ученье) / Дом Его,¹²² а рядом — источник и кипарис.’ (‘Into the model kingdom of Hades. / There (referring to Orphic teachings) / Is His House, and next to it – a spring and cypress tree.’) In the poem Barskova pits Orphic belief against the Orpheus myth. Her phrasing ‘Дом’ (‘House/Home/Hall’) and the spring and cypress tree come directly from the Orphic gold tablets. The halls of Hades, “Αἶδο δόμους”, appear in tablets B1, B2, and B10.¹²³ The spring(s) and a white cypress appear in 11 tablets (B1-11).¹²⁴ Their configuration and effect vary:

The tablet provides instructions to navigate through this darkness to find the spring from which the deceased must drink. [...] The cypress marks the correct spring only in the shorter versions of the B tablets, where there is no choice of springs. In the longer versions, by contrast, the cypress marks the wrong spring, the spring which the deceased will first encounter but which she must carefully avoid.¹²⁵

Barskova follows the double spring narrative of the long tablets, B1, B2, B10, and B11.

¹¹⁹ Their status as opposing types is echoed in the poem’s reference to de Sade’s *Juliette* and *Justine*, who embody vice and virtue.

¹²⁰ Edmonds, *Myths of the Underworld Journey*, p. 83.

¹²¹ West, pp. 17, 19.

¹²² The capitalisation of ‘Ero’ when referring to Hades has a whiff of Christianity about it, perhaps due to Barskova’s awareness of the defunct but long-standing reading of Orphism as a precursor to Christianity. Edmonds, *Myths of the Underworld Journey*, pp. 37–38.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Most souls do not have the fortitude or the knowledge to continue past the first spring, since they feel they are dying of thirst, διψαί δ' ἡμί αὔρα καὶ ἀπόλλυμαι. As B10 and B11 have it, these ordinary souls cool themselves at the spring by the cypress, κατερχομεναί ψυχαὶ νεκῶν ψυχονται.¹²⁶

Similarly, she depicts uninitiated souls receiving oblivion from the spring by the cypress: 'И в источнике этом души онемевают, / Как дёсны от укола зубного врача.' ('And in that spring souls become numb and dumb, / Like gums from a dentist's injection.') It appears that Barskova attempts to convey something of the wordplay at work in the original Greek, which puns on souls, ψυχαί, cooling themselves, ψυχονται, by drinking from the spring;¹²⁷ she chooses a word with a dual meaning in Russian, 'онемевают': souls 'numb themselves' by drinking from the spring – and by doing so also 'render themselves speechless', a secondary meaning suited to the unwary souls' loss of memory. She references the role that the tablet itself plays in the underworld: "The soul of the deceased, who has been initiated and instructed how to act by the gold tablet, can conquer the lure of the first spring and wait until she reaches the second":¹²⁸ 'Но, начитанный в прошлой жизни, / Посетитель не станет пить оттуда!' ('But, well-read in their past life, / The visitor will not drink from there!') (Barskova uses the universal masculine form for 'well-read', rather than the feminine form found on many of the gold tablets, which were probably more commonly inscribed for women.¹²⁹) Instead, the soul will drink from the second spring, which "flows from the Lake of Mnemosyne in the long versions of the B tablets", vouchsafing them memory, bringing "not the immortal glory of epic but a personal immortality through the recollection of the self".¹³⁰ Barskova points out the potential flaw in this, listing some of the potential everyday – and not necessary elevated or pleasant – memories the soul would retain. This becomes a factor in the dead souls' decision to remain in the underworld when Barskova has Orpheus attempt to retrieve them as he did Eurydice:

И если туда к ним заявится новый Орфей,
Смутно надеясь вернуть их на пёструю Землю,
Их заклиная своим полуночным сиротством,
Им обещая поток безвозмездного счастья...
Что ж, он вернётся ни с чем.
И затаяет напрасную песнь,

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 51.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 47.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

¹²⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 65.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 52–53.

Вспоминая
Грязную брань непутёвых своих протеже.

And if a new Orpheus turns up there before them,
Vaguely hoping to return them to the dapple-hued Earth,
Adjuring them with his midnight orphanhood,
Promising them streams of happiness, gratis...
Well, he'll return empty-handed.
And spin out his futile song,
Remembering
The filthy abuse of his wayward protégés.

She implies Orpheus' sanguinity, selfishness, unwillingness to suffer for what he seeks, and self-indulgent whining when his plan fails – similar to the scornful treatment of Orpheus' story by Plato,¹³¹ and Virgil's condemnation of Orpheus' un-Roman *furor*.¹³² As in the gold tablets, the dead souls are enjoying a better afterlife and do not want to return to life:

In A1, the deceased claims, κύκλου δ' εξεπεταν βαρυπενθεος ἀργαλέοιο, I have flown out of the circle of wearying heavy grief. This circle has most often been interpreted as a cycle of rebirths undergone by the soul in the process of metempsychosis, but it may also be seen as a term for the burdens of a single lifetime.¹³³

The Orphic teachings thus defeat the mythical figure Orpheus.

In Barskova's extended receptions of Orpheus she uses him to talk about death. In 'Temnokrylye bliadi na bostonskom avtovokzale' Barskova as Orpheus is haunted by death as Eurydice (presumably her dead lover again), even in emigration, in the incongruous context of contemporary America. The theme of the lover's death is present also in the earlier poems 'Evridei i Orfika, konechno, odno' and 'Marsh protesta', but in these poems it is augmented by her knowledge of Orphic beliefs (presumably from her degree). In these poems she indicates the interchangeability of life and death, the possibility Orphism or classical reception gives to transcend *byt*, and in fact concludes that, to the dead, death is preferable to a return to *byt*. The poet cannot bring them back to life. Interestingly, Barskova does not seem to exploit the various female viewpoints offered by the Orpheus myth¹³⁴ (and further

¹³¹ *Symposium*, 179d.

¹³² *Virgil: Georgics*, ed. by Philip R. Hardie (Taylor & Francis, 1999), pp. 53, 134.

¹³³ Edmonds, *Myths of the Underworld Journey*, p. 96. For Edmonds' analysis of the deceased's possible expectations of a happy afterlife see pp. 83-5.

¹³⁴ E.g. Eurydice, or the mostly female audience for the Orphic gold tablets (mentioned above).

invited by the gender switch inherent in ‘Evridei i Orfika’): Barskova identifies exclusively with Orpheus, not Eurydice, as it is important to her to be the “agent”.¹³⁵ This is very different from Shvarts’ identification with both Orpheus and Eurydice, and her attribution of agency and poetic gifts to Eurydice (see p. 119 onwards). Perhaps the immovability of her identification with Orpheus stems from her view of herself as a bereaved poet. Her more fleeting references to Orpheus cast him purely as the archetypal poet; treating him as such is closer to Kutik’s representation of Orpheus in ‘David i Orfei’ (see p. 205).

Odysseus

Barskova couples Orpheus with another *katabasist*, Odysseus,¹³⁶ in ‘Peremeshchenie’¹³⁷ (‘Movement’, 2011), belittling their *katabases*: ‘воришкой Орфеем или лгунишкой Одиссеем, / Забравшимися в ад по нужде.’ (‘pickpocket Orpheus or fibster Odysseus, / Who had got into hell because they really needed to go.’) They are linked, too, in Barskova’s oeuvre by her use of them to express the theme of ‘parting as death’. In this, Odysseus gives Barskova greater scope for variety, as, unlike Orpheus, he is not a poet and he left many women; this leaves Barskova free to empathise with the various female characters connected to him, placing Odysseus himself on the periphery.

One poem, ‘To, gde ty teper’, nazyvaiut smert’iu’¹³⁸ (‘Where you are now is called death’, 1999), is an exception, as Barskova takes Odysseus’ place during his encounter with the Sirens in *Odyssey* 12. She describes a beach scene, a swimmer – the Siren – sunbathing and picnicking naked on a cliff, but unreachable and surrounded by ominous creatures – a fish being hunted by a bird, and a beached, spittle-like jellyfish – whose fates Barskova fears to share if she tries to swim to the

In Ovid “Orpheus is given a type of song which would ordinarily be reserved for women in the classical world: a lament for the dead.” Kathryn L. McKinley, *Reading the Ovidian Heroine: Metamorphoses Commentaries, 1100-1618*, Mnemosyne, Bibliotheca Classica Batava. Supplementum; 220 (Leiden; Boston, Mass: Brill, 2001), p. 28. Commonly, twentieth-century feminist receptions interpret Orpheus’ “desire for control – of Eurydice, of the natural world, of mortality” as “destructive masculine hubris” and “Orpheus’s music as a controlling and repressive force”. Miles, p. 72.

¹³⁵ Barskova, ‘Interview’.

¹³⁶ For a cogent argument for Odysseus’ consultation with the dead as a *katabasis* (*nekylia*) and not merely a summoning of dead spirits to above ground (*nekylomanteia*) see Raymond J. Clark, *Catabasis: Vergil and the Wisdom-Tradition* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1979), pp. 74–77.

¹³⁷ Polina Barskova, ‘Jul. 9th, 2011’, *pbarskova*, 2011

<<http://pbarskova.livejournal.com/26361.html>> [accessed 25 November 2015].

¹³⁸ Barskova, ‘vse’.

sunbather. The poem is bookended by a contradictory assessment of her likelihood of dying if she attempts to reach the sunbathing Siren, as her perception is coloured by his naked allure. The epigraph is taken not from the *Odyssey*, but from Martial's epigram 3.64: 'Говорят, что Одиссей оставил Сирен, / Весёлую погибель мореплавателей, / Ласковую смерть и горькую радость.' ('They say Odysseus left the Sirens, / Merry doom of seafarers, / Caressing death and bitter joy.') This translates mostly accurately, if incompletely, the first four lines of Martial's epigram:

Sirenas hilarem nauigantium poenam
 blandasque mortes gaudiumque crudele,
 quas nemo quondam deserebat auditas,
 fallax Vlixes dicitur reliquisse.

The Sirens, lightsome bane of mariners, their beguiling death and cruel delight, whom once heard no man deserted – wily Ulysses is said to have left them.¹³⁹

By omitting the final couplet, which departs from Odysseus' story to compare the Sirens with a contemporary writer,¹⁴⁰ Barskova ignores the point of the original poem, its subjective, witty, 'surprise ending',¹⁴¹ and declines to exploit its literary slant; instead she responds purely to the epigram's unusual Homeric subject matter.¹⁴² Her poem does not imitate Martial's epigrammatic style; but it does echo Martial's pairing of antithetical words denoting pleasure and suffering, and its erotic theme is also typical of Martial, especially in its physical admiration for the male form.¹⁴³ However, 'Malen'koe liubovnoe nedorazumenie'¹⁴⁴ ('Little amatory misunderstanding', 2001) casts Barskova on the other side of the same situation, as a Siren: 'Сколько к мачте / Ты был привязан, пела я...' ('For as long as / You were tied to the mast, I sang...')

Two poems align Barskova with Odysseus' lovers. The title of 'Chez Kalipso'¹⁴⁵ ('Chez Calypso', 2001-05) suggests Barskova's address to her sleeping lover, wondering how long until daybreak takes him away from her, as the nymph's final night with

¹³⁹ Sven Lorenz, in *Flavian Poetry*, ed. by Ruurd Robijn Nauta, Harm-Jan Van Dam, and Johannes Jacobus Louis Smolenaars (Brill, 2006), p. 324.

¹⁴⁰ Lorenz, *ibid.*, pp. 324–25.

¹⁴¹ J. P. Sullivan, *Martial: The Unexpected Classic: A Literary and Historical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 223.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 232.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹⁴⁴ Barskova, *Arii*.

¹⁴⁵ In 'Zemlia Gesem', Barskova, 'Brazil'skie stseny'.

Odysseus before she has to help him leave her island in *Odyssey* 6. ‘Kalokagathia’¹⁴⁶ (‘Kalokagathia’, 2000) addresses a young man outdoing Barskova at the gym, elliptically referencing Odysseus’ stay on Circe’s island in *Odyssey* 10: ‘Ты помнишь край? Лимоны и т. д.? / Пустынный остров, нимфа, па-де-де / Свиней, пришелец с чёрной бородой.’ (‘Do you remember the place? Lemons, etc.? / Desert island, nymph, pas de deux / Of pigs, newcomer with the black beard.’) Barskova’s experience is part of her, the other side of age and unfitness: ‘Тот край во мне. И он со мной умрёт, / Как несъедобный вересковый мёд’ (‘That place is within me. And it will die with me, / Like inedible heather honey’). The honey may refer to the honey Circe puts in the potion for Odysseus’ crew (10.234); but it more suitably refers to the honey Circe instructs Odysseus to put in his libation to the dead in order to enter the underworld (10.519). Thus in this poem Barskova takes the role of Circe, losing her newly arrived lover to the underworld. The title, the Greek virtue *kalokagathia* (‘beauty and goodness’) has many potential implications: highlighting the difference between the beauty of the young man and the goodness of Barskova; between the beauty of Barskova as Circe and the goodness of her lover as Odysseus; or remembering the beauty and goodness of her dead lover.

Only one poem directly depicts Odysseus’ *katabasis*. The penultimate section of ‘NBO: Osen’ samoubiitsy’¹⁴⁷ (‘IMD [Inherited Metabolic Disease]: Autumn of a suicide’, 2011) links Odysseus’ *katabasis* in *Odyssey* 11 with a suicide. Earlier sections build up to this with references to other fatal events connected with Odysseus: first, Odysseus’ blinding of Polyphemus in *Odyssey* Book 9, which provokes Polyphemus’ curse upon Odysseus and his comrades; second, Laocoon’s death in *Aeneid* 2.199-233, brought about by his opposition to the horse manned, and in some accounts contrived, by Odysseus.¹⁴⁸ Barskova firmly casts Odysseus’ *katabasis* as a descent, and adds a description of the house of Hades absent from the *Odyssey*:

Одиссей спускается в ад
Там тени стоят

¹⁴⁶ Barskova, *Evridei i Orfika*.

¹⁴⁷ Polina Barskova, ‘NBO’, *pbarskova*, 2011

<<http://pbarskova.livejournal.com/28414.html>> [accessed 26 November 2015].

¹⁴⁸ In the *Aeneid* Odysseus is connected with the horse’s trickery by Laocoon at 2.44, in Sinon’s tale 2.77-194, and is inside it at 2.261; in *Odyssey* 8.492-5 and 11.523-5 Odysseus is cited as a major figure in the horse episode; in *Posthomerica* 12.21-47 the horse is Odysseus’ idea.

Там тени сидят
Там тени едят
Зябко и душно ему одному
В каменном чёрном Дому

Odysseus descends into hell
There shades stand
There shades sit
There shades eat
It is chilly and stuffy for him alone
In the black stone House.

Of all the spirits Odysseus meets in the underworld, Barskova includes only his mother: ‘Матери милой он видит отшедшую душу / Близ крови тихо сидит неподвижная тень и не смеет’ (‘He sees the departed soul of his dear mother / The motionless shade sits quietly near the blood and she does not dare’). This echoes *Odyssey* 11.141-3: ‘I see here the spirit of my dead mother; she sits in silence near the blood, and deigns not to look upon the face of her own son or to speak to him.’¹⁴⁹ Barskova’s version is so close to Zhukovskii’s famous translation that she does not bother to complete the citation, as though any reader would know the continuation immediately: ‘Матери милой я вижу отшедшую душу; близ крови / Тихо сидит неподвижная тень и как будто не смеет / Сыну в лицо поглядеть и завести разговор с ним.’¹⁵⁰ (‘I see the departed soul of my dear mother; The motionless shade / sits quietly near the blood and as though she does not dare / To look her son in the face and begin a conversation with him.’) Barskova condenses and merges their conversation from *Odyssey* 11.152-224: ‘Мамуся! Мамуся! Кричит он сквозь камень и воду / Что ты делаешь здесь, сладко милая жизнь? / Как почему зачем отчего ты погибла? Как погибала?’ (‘Mummy! Mummy! He cries through stone and water / What are you doing here, sweetly dear life? / How why wherefore how come you’re dead? How did you die?’). This conveys two similar elements of conversation in which each asks the other how they came to the underworld: ‘with wailing she spoke to me winged words: “My child, how didst thou come beneath the murky darkness, being still alive? Hard is it for those that live to behold these realms, for between are great rivers and dread streams’;¹⁵¹ ‘What fate of grievous death overcame thee? Was it long disease, or did the archer, Artemis, assail thee

¹⁴⁹ Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by A. T. Murray, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1974), I, p. 397.

¹⁵⁰ Vasilii Zhukovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 20 tomakh. Tom 6. Perevody iz Gomera. ‘Iliada’. ‘Odiseiia’* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul’tur, 2010), p. 167.

¹⁵¹ Homer, *The Odyssey*, I, p. 397, ll. 155-7.

with her gentle shafts, and slay thee?’¹⁵² Whilst Odysseus couches his question amidst others more important to him, Anticleia poses it before she says anything else; Barskova takes the urgency lacking in Odysseus’ speech from hers, as well as the reference to the distance between the worlds of living and dead. Barskova has Anticleia prevaricate, colloquially, in a way that does not occur in the *Odyssey* (at 11.180-203 Anticleia answers Odysseus detailedly). Yet her answer, when it comes, paraphrases the original: ‘Я скучала тебя я скучала тебе Одиссей / Поэтому я / Поэтому я здесь’ (‘I bored you I missed you Odysseus / That’s why / That’s why I’m here’) / ‘it was longing for thee, and for thy counsels, glorious Odysseus, and for thy tender-heartedness, that robbed me of honey-sweet life.’¹⁵³

Even when Barskova aligns her lyric I with Odysseus, her focus tends towards the female characters who populate his epic: Sirens, Calypso, Circe, Odysseus’ mother. This is in stark contrast with her unwavering identification with that other *katabasist*, Orpheus, whose persona is so much more attractive as the archetypal poet.

Persephone

The most prominent *katabasist* after Orpheus in Barskova’s oeuvre, Persephone, has strong links with Orpheus: aside from Persephone’s appearance in both Virgil and Ovid’s accounts as the ruler of the underworld to whom Orpheus appeals, Persephone is associated with Orpheus in Euripides’ *Rhesus* (‘she honors the kinsmen of Orpheus’¹⁵⁴); Demosthenes’ first speech against Aristogeiton associates the Eleusinian mysteries (part of the cult of Persephone and her mother Demeter) with Orpheus;¹⁵⁵ and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (about the rape of Persephone) was probably attributed to Orpheus in antiquity.¹⁵⁶

Three of Barskova’s poems allude to the Persephone myth: ‘Kidneping’¹⁵⁷ (‘Kidnapping’, c. 1989; for translation see p. 319), ‘Iz prozrachnoi papki’¹⁵⁸ (‘From a

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 399, ll. 171-3.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 401, ll. 202-3.

¹⁵⁴ Euripides, *Bacchae; Iphigenia at Aulis; Rhesus*, trans. by David Kovacs (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 451 (l. 966).

¹⁵⁵ Demosthenes, *Against Meidias, Androtion, Aristocrates, Timocrates, Aristogeiton*, trans. by J. H. Vince (London: Heinemann, 1935), p. 521.

¹⁵⁶ West, p. 24.

¹⁵⁷ Barskova, ‘vse’.

¹⁵⁸ Barskova, *Arii*.

transparent folder', 2001), and 'Nichego ne izmenitsia. Budu snotvornoe pit'¹⁵⁹ ('Nothing will change. I'll drink sleeping pills', 1993). The long poem 'Kidneping' gives an impressionistic retelling of the Rape of Persephone. Its primary source is Kun's *Legendy i mify drevnei Gretsii*, specifically the section 'Pokhishchenie Persefony Aidom' ('The abduction of Persephone by Hades'), which draws on the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. The story of Demeter's search for Persephone has narrative elements in common with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, sharing with Achilles "wrath, withdrawal, and return", and with Odysseus a "journey that brings them face-to-face with the world of death and with parts of the universe to which they are strangers".¹⁶⁰ But this heroic quest is female-oriented:

in contrast to the Homeric epics, the *Hymn* puts female experience at the center of the narrative by giving the privileged place to the point of view of the divine mother and daughter on their shared catastrophe. The (nevertheless critical) actions of the gods Zeus, Helios, and Hades occur at the periphery of the narrative and receive relatively little attention or sympathy.¹⁶¹

Barskova wrote 'Kidneping' aged 13 about women, and more specifically about herself and her mother, and still feels "continuity" with the poem, especially as she now has a daughter.¹⁶² However, female experience is not the only motivation in Barskova's treatment of Persephone; in her other sustained reception of the Persephone myth, 'Iz prozrachnoi papki', Barskova casts herself as Hades, with her male friend (perhaps Zhazhoian) as Persephone: "Как Персефона и Живов,¹⁶³ / вернусь сюда через полгода" – / сказал ты' ("Like Persephone and Zhivov, / I shall return in half a year," / you said'). Demeter is linked with California, or the world of the living: 'Как златоризная Деметра... – / калифорнийский холм и поле.' ('Like golden-robed Demeter... / Are the Californian hills and fields.') This makes Russia the underworld. 'Kidneping' displays an even greater flexibility in perspective: whilst Demeter clearly has the poet's sympathy, and is the lead protagonist, it is often unclear which of the three gods is the subject of the narrative, implying their interchangeability and inextricability.

¹⁵⁹ Barskova, *Rasa brezglivyykh*.

¹⁶⁰ Helene P. Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 93.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁶² Barskova, 'Interview'.

¹⁶³ Viktor Zhivov for 18 years until his death worked for half the year as a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and the other half of the year as Deputy Director of the Russian Academic Institute in Moscow. Sergei Ivanov, 'Viktor Markovich Zhivov (1945-2013)', *Polit.ru*, 2013 <http://polit.ru/article/2013/04/19/in_memoriam/> [accessed 27 August 2015].

Barskova signals ‘Kidneping’'s unusual take on the Persephone myth with its title, ‘Киднэпинг’, a russified form of the English word ‘Kidnapping’. It conveys the classical literary *topos* of the *raptu puella*, bringing a different tone from the technical term ‘rape’: “It is difficult to find an appropriate English word to translate Hades’ act of violent abduction. In modern usage the word rape emphasizes sexual consummation, which is uncertain in this case.”¹⁶⁴ The word used in Kun for the rape is ‘похищение’¹⁶⁵ (‘kidnapping’, ‘abduction’, ‘rape’), which Barskova translates into English, modernising the rape motif into one of child abduction and molestation, redolent of an adventure novel or newspaper setting. The poem begins with a ladder of names (for an interesting potential intertext with Shvarts, see p. 119):

Деметра.

Аид.

Персефона.

Demeter.

Hades.

Persephone.

The order of these is significant: Demeter will be the poem’s focus, whilst the narrative stems from Hades coming up from below, thrusting himself between her and her daughter, and taking Persephone to the underworld with him.

The second stanza sets the scene for the kidnapping, Demeter on the porch, Persephone playing outside. This opening emphasises the domesticity and ordinariness of Demeter and Persephone, who are updated into a Russian mum and ‘изнеженный подросток’ (‘a coddled adolescent’). A foreboding note enters the poem with the decay of the potatoes and of the year: ‘Слепой навоз картошки прошлогодней. / Агония июля предвещала / Безветрие, и засуху, и праздность.’ (‘The blind mulch of last year’s potatoes. / The agony of July presaged / Windlessness, and drought, and inactivity.’) Both themes, Demeter’s Russian-mumness and the season, repeat in the eighth stanza before Demeter discovers her daughter’s abduction:

Нарезав помидоры, лук, укроп,
 Деметра вышла на крыльцо позвать
 На ужин Персефону. Жёлтый срок

¹⁶⁴ Foley, p. 32.

¹⁶⁵ Kun.

Ещё в июле усеченных трав.

She had sliced the tomatoes, onion, dill,
So Demeter went out onto the porch to call
Persephone in for dinner.

Food preparation emphasises Demeter's nurturing qualities, both as mother and cereal goddess – something Kun's retelling of the *Hymn* draws heavily upon for the inset narrative, in which she nurses a baby boy; the food selected is typically Russian, and potatoes and tomatoes were not even known in Ancient Greece. The ordinariness of Demeter's depiction increases the pathos.

The final lines of the first stanza, in which Persephone 'Принюхивалась к быстрому течению / И кружевному облаку пыльцы' ('Sniffed at the swift flow / And lacy cloud of pollen'), presage the kidnapping through their parallel with Kun (adapting lines 6-14 of the Homeric *Hymn*). The pollen in 'Kidneping' originates in these lines: 'вырос дивный цветок в Нисейской долине; его пьянящий аромат далеко разлился во все стороны. Персефона увидала цветок; вот она протянула руку и схватила его за стебелек, вот уже сорван цветок.'¹⁶⁶ ('a marvellous flower grew in the Nisaeon valley; its intoxicating aroma poured forth far in all directions. Persephone saw the flower; she stretched out her hand and grasped it by the stalk, and already the flower was plucked.') Barskova's Persephone's sniffing of the pollen implies her imminent abduction, as the Persephone of the *Hymn* is tricked by the beautiful flower into opening a path to the upper world for Hades by picking it. This connection is already emphasised in Kun, as in the earlier description of Persephone picking flowers he presages her rape with 'Не думала Персефона, что [...] не скоро будет любоваться цветами и вдыхать их сладкий аромат.'¹⁶⁷ ('Persephone had no idea that [...] it would be a long time before she would admire flowers and inhale their sweet aroma again.')

The third stanza encodes images of decay, death, and rape.

Не пуповиной связаны, иной
Тяжелой силой прошлого обмана.
Напрасно бьётся мотылек больной
Ночная, загнивающая рана.

They are connected not by the umbilical, but by

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

Another weighty force of past deceit.
In vain struggles the sick moth,
The nightly, putrefying wound.

The umbilical implies the rupture of mother and daughter's self-sufficiency; deceit – Zeus' complicity in the rape; the moth – Persephone in the dark of the underworld, striving to attain the light of the living world. The whole stanza has undertones of rape.

After this the poem gives various scenes from the underworld. The fourth stanza seems to figure the brain as some kind of battery-operated transmitter, which is also a music box and Charon's boat, all methods via which the dead can be contacted in the underworld:

В чёрной ячейке мозга
Не разрядится мгла.
Законопачен, вместо древесного воска,
Объедками со стола
Цербера музыкальный ящик,
Где задремал Харон.
Перехрип, перешёпот, переклёкот ворон
Божественный передатчик.

In the brain's black cell
The darkness will not drain dry.
The musical box
Where Charon dozed
Is caulked with scraps from the table
Of Cerberus, instead of grafting wax.
An o'erwheeze, o'erwhisper, o'ersquawk of crows
The divine transmitter.

This suggests the impossibility of contact between Persephone and Demeter that is key to the story. The unending gloom and patching of the music box/boat with Cerberus' scraps instead of grafting wax, used for living wood, indicates the subterranean location. In Kun Persephone cries out and is heard by Demeter across a vast distance before Hades carries her underground. The significance of the voice in recovering a loved one from the underworld is reminiscent of Orpheus' story. Ovid also links the two stories: in his retelling of Orpheus and Eurydice, Orpheus appeals to Hades' empathy, comparing Hades' love for Persephone with his own for Eurydice: 'if the story of that old-time ravishment is not false, you, too, were joined by Love.'¹⁶⁸ Orpheus' lack of success and the unmusicality/unriverworthiness of the

¹⁶⁸ Ovid, II, p. 67.

music box/boat here suggests that Demeter's quest will be similarly unsuccessful, unlike the traditional accounts.

The fifth stanza compares the end of a feast with the end of life:

По окончаньи пира
Мух ожидает пир.
Это подвалы мира,
Это загробный мир.

Upon expiry of the feast
A feast awaits the flies.
These are the basements of the world,
This is the world beyond the grave.

Then she moves to a militarised depiction of Hades via a sinister image of a stump of a man's arm amidst peaches and olives:

Волосатой руки обрубок
Средь персиков и маслин.
Маршал прозрачных армий,
Жертва линялых тог,
Выпил в своей казарме
Вожделенья глоток.

The stump of a hairy arm
Amongst peaches and olives.
A marshal of transparent armies,
Victim of faded togas,
In his barracks
Drained a draught of lust.

The peaches and olives perhaps represent Persephone's virgin beauty; the combined images point to Hades' kidnapping of the girl.

The seventh stanza seems to have been influenced by the *Metamorphoses*, although evidence of her reliance on Kun remains in the epithet Barskova gives Zeus, 'громовержец' ('thunderer'), which Kun uses twice in the 'Pokhishchenie Persefony Aidom' episode. The following lines bear a striking similarity to the *Metamorphoses'* account of Hades' entrance into the underworld with Persephone:

В бесстыдном рёве недр и океана,
В густом мерцаньи сизого тумана
След катастрофы отвлекает от
Смятенного рукоплесканья вод.
Исчезла дева. Растворился крик
В стакане равнодушного пейзажа
И водорослей ласковая пряжа
Бинтом перевязала материк.

In the shameless roar of depths and ocean,
 In the thick flickering of blue-grey fog
 The trail of the catastrophe distracts from
 The waters' perturbed handclapping.
 The maiden has disappeared. The cry dissolved
 In the uncaring landscape's beaker
 And a tender yarn spun from seaweed
 Bound the mother-earth in a bandage.

The personified water, clapping its hands in perturbation, and personified land, bandaged by seaweed, refers to the Cyane episode at *Metamorphoses* 5.409-37. The water nymph tries to prevent Persephone being taken by Hades, who splits her pool and enters the underworld through the cleaved earth. 'Iz prozrachnoi papki' also refers to Cyane's desecration by Hades, casting herself as Cyane, relocating the incident to Ukraine, and quoting a famous Russian song: 'Скажнёт ли к деве небожитель / [...] я неподвижна: / ямщик не гонит, Днепр не стогнет' ('Whether the celestial being leaps towards the maiden / [...] I am motionless: / the coachman does not urge on, the Dnieper does not groan'). This parallels the russification of the characters in 'Kidneping'.

Demeter's search is encapsulated in stanza eight. Seeking Persephone, she encounters a whole list of beings, including stars, cicadas, birds; none can help her. This is a fanciful expansion upon Kun's drier account of Demeter's search: 'девять дней, ничего не сознавая, ни о чем не думая, блуждала великая богиня Деметра по земле, проливая горькие слезы. Она всюду искала Персефону, всех просила о помощи, но никто не мог помочь ей в ее горе.'¹⁶⁹ ('for nine days, perceiving nothing, thinking nothing, the great goddess Demeter wandered over the land, pouring forth bitter tears. She sought Persephone everywhere, asked everyone for help, but no one could help her in her grief.')

The opening of stanza nine, 'Похмелье одиночества' ('The hangover of loneliness') following the dawn, reflects the despairing end of Demeter's sleepless search, after she hears from Helios that Zeus had given her daughter to Hades in marriage. As a result, Barskova's Demeter scornfully reproaches the gods: "Вы, боги Греции, не в силах мне помочь. / Не потому, что я не защитила дочь: / Родство навязчиво." ('"You, gods of Greece, haven't the power to help me. / Not because I could not protect my daughter: / Bloodties nag.')

¹⁶⁹ Kun.

stated by Kun: ‘Разгневалась она на громовержца Зевса за то, что отдал он без ее согласия Персефону в жены Аиду. Она покинула богов, покинула светлый Олимп’¹⁷⁰ (‘She was furious with thunderer Zeus for giving Persephone to Hades in marriage without her permission. She left the gods, left bright Olympus’). Barskova’s Demeter’s bitter reflection upon her helplessness and genetic responsibility leads to a depiction of her as a mother whose offspring has been torn from her breast:

‘постоянно ноет грудь / Вблизи соска. Как будто капли крови / Там выступают...’ (‘my breast, too, aches constantly, / Here, at my nipple. As if drops of blood / Are exuding from it...’) This imagery occurs in Claudian’s *De raptu Proserpinae* 3.127, as one of Demeter’s ominous dreams: ‘How often does blood overflow from my breast!’¹⁷¹ The parallel with Claudian is striking, but there is no other discernible reception of him in ‘Kidnapping’ and Barskova was unlikely to have known this source as a teenager; the motif of mothers receiving omens from their breasts about the child they suckled is common in epic and tragedy,¹⁷² and may also have been gleaned from there.

Barskova indicates the failure of Demeter’s quest to reunite with her daughter (and of Persephone and Hades’ marriage) with the beginning of the tenth stanza: ‘Провалилась вновь / Смешная пьеса “Верность и любовь”’ (‘Once again the comic play / *Fidelity and Love* has flopped’). The ‘comedy’ is presumably the preceding poem, and Demeter is on stage as its major protagonist: ‘Деметра грим стирает грязной ваткой’ (‘Demeter wipes off greasepaint with a dirty cotton ball’). Persephone and Hades are in the audience, the ‘pit’ indicating their continued presence in the underworld: ‘В партере Персефона и Аид / Кичатся горечью своих обид’ (‘In the pit Persephone and Hades / Vaunt the galls of their grudges’). In the final lines one of the three gods – it is unclear which – is depicted eating a chocolate: ‘Задумчивое, злое божество / Сидит в углу, обнявшись с шоколадкой’ (‘The pensive, sullen deity / Sits in the corner, cuddling a chocolate’). This is probably a tongue-in-cheek updating of Persephone’s eating of the pomegranate seeds:¹⁷³ Hades ‘дал ей проглотить зерно плода граната, символ брака’ (‘gave her a pomegranate seed to swallow, a symbol of marriage’). Due to their “blood-red color” and “multiple seeds”, pomegranates in antiquity were “associated with blood,

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Claudian, *De raptu Proserpinae*, ed. by Claire Gruzelier, Oxford classical monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 58.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 253.

¹⁷³

death, fertility, and marriage and may have served, at least symbolically, as an aphrodisiac.”¹⁷⁴ Barskova exploits this association in ‘Nichego ne izmenitsia. Budu snotvornoe pit’’, referring to pomegranate seeds in a sexual context, one in which love and power/control appear uncertain: ‘Ничего не изменится. Буду снотворное пить. / На соленую шею нанизаны зерна граната. / Чтобы не было скучно, тебя попытаюсь любить.’ (‘Nothing will change. I’ll drink sleeping pills. / Beaded onto the salty neck are pomegranate seeds. / To fend off boredom, I shall try to love you.’) She is almost certainly alluding to herself as Persephone here. ‘Kidneping’ ends on a similar note of loneliness, applicable to Demeter as well as the discontented couple, and implies the finality of Persephone and Hades’ union, to signal the trio’s ultimate disconnection one from another. This is quite unlike Kun’s retelling of the *Hymn*, which ends with Demeter and Persephone reunited (albeit for only two thirds of the year), and shows, as does the rest of ‘Kidneping’, Barskova’s independence from her sources and her dark interpretation of classical myth even at a very young age.

Dido (and Marcellus)

Virgil’s *Aeneid* features in four of Barskova’s poems. While one of these references simply links the *Aeneid* with the *Iliad*, the other three allude to stories connected with Aeneas’ *katabasis*: that of Marcellus, encountered in the underworld in Book 6; and the tragedy of Dido, told largely in Book 4 and seen again in the underworld in Book 6. These two books have the most extensive reception history of the whole *Aeneid*.¹⁷⁵

‘Vokrug pobedonosnoe “chiv-chiv”’¹⁷⁶ (‘All around, the victorious “cheep-cheep”’, 2000), a poem beginning with the chirruping of sparrows (presumably Aphrodite’s) during a snatched moment of happiness, and closing with Penelope’s undoing of her shroud, opens with an epigraph attributed to *Aeneid* Book 6, ‘Наполните мне руки траурными лилиями’ (‘Fill my hands with funereal lilies’). The *Aeneid*’s funerary panegyric to Marcellus, Augustus’ intended successor, whose promise was cut short by his death at eighteen in 23 BC,¹⁷⁷ is an apt parallel for Barskova’s poem raging at the inadequacy of poetry to capture the beauty of life. However, the translation she

¹⁷⁴ Foley, pp. 56–57.

¹⁷⁵ Marilyn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid*, *Medieval Cultures*; v.8 (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 2.

¹⁷⁶ Barskova, *Evridei i Orfika*.

¹⁷⁷ R.D. Williams, in S. J. Harrison, *Oxford Readings in Vergil’s Aeneid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 206.

gives for ‘manibus date lilia plenis’ (l. 883) is incorrectly rendered ‘Fill my hands with funereal lilies’, rather than ‘Offer lilies with full hands’,¹⁷⁸ whether mistakenly or to figure herself (and her poetry) as Marcellus. Whichever way her translation is construed, it demonstrates Barskova’s familiarity with the text of *Aeneid* 6.

This familiarity is displayed again in ‘Iz antologii’¹⁷⁹ (‘From an anthology’, 1999; for translation see p. 321), a poem explicitly rewriting Dido’s story, beginning with her appearance in Book 6 and moving back to Book 4. Its title suggests that Barskova reworked the story from excerpts from the *Aeneid*, rather than the original epic as a whole. Virgil’s Dido has proven problematic for modern women seeking strong, classical parallels; feminist writer Hélène Cixous, searching for a historical woman’s story to fit her, rejects Dido despite sympathising with her, saying: “I am not Dido. I cannot inhabit a victim, no matter how noble.”¹⁸⁰ Accordingly, Barskova chooses to create her own, more emulable, Dido. In the first lines she contradicts *Aeneid* 6.450-76:

Дидона не встретит Энея
У входа в заплёванный Ад,
Не будет стоять, камня,
Откинув кудряшки назад.

Dido will not meet Aeneas
At the entrance to bespittled Hades,
Will not stand, frozen as stone,
Curly tresses tossed back.

Barskova’s Dido appears as *not* a modern girl waiting on the doorstep for her boyfriend. The adjective ‘заплёванный’ (‘bespittled’) conveys colloquially Virgil’s ‘lands squalid and forsaken’.¹⁸¹ Her lack of petrification reflects Virgil’s ‘She, turning away, kept her looks fixed on the ground and no more changes her countenance as he essays to speak than if she were set in hard flint or Marpesian rock.’¹⁸² Barskova then abuses Virgil for having made up Dido’s story for the sake of effect: ‘Всё это придумал Вергилий, / Любитель эффектов, ханжа’ (‘All this was dreamt up by Virgil, / Sucker for flashy effects, that old charlatan’). This accusation has foundation in fact: for his Dido Virgil took a pre-existent historical leader and founder of

¹⁷⁸ Nicholas Horsfall, *Virgil, ‘Aeneid’ 6: A Commentary*, 2 vols (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), I, p. 61.

¹⁷⁹ Barskova, ‘vse’.

¹⁸⁰ Hélène Cixous, in Desmond, p. vii.

¹⁸¹ Virgil, p. 565.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 565.

Carthage, whose story is preserved earliest in the third-second century BC Greek historian Timaeus, and superimposed onto it a tragic love affair with Aeneas, thus converting “Dido from a historical figure into an elegiac lover”.¹⁸³

The poem then turns to Aeneas’ departure from Carthage in Book 4, depicting Dido as calm, controlled, regal; and Aeneas as unworthy of her concern:

Лишь только трояне отплыли
Дидона, немного дрожа
От крепкого зимнего ветра,
Ушла, приминая песок,
К тем, кто ожидал её, к тем, кто
Был *так* без неё одинок.
И вскоре забыла Энея,
Титана с повадкой пигмея,
Царевича с сердцем раба,
Орла с прилежанием змея.

Hardly had the Trojans put to sea
When Dido, trembling slightly
From the strong winter wind,
Turned and went, treading the sand down,
To those who were waiting for her, to those
Who, without her, were so alone.
And soon forgot Aeneas,
Titan with the bearing of a pygmy,
Prince with the heart of a slave,
Eagle with the diligence of a snake.

She is very distant from Virgil’s desperate, suicidal Dido in 4.586-665; however, Aeneas the slave to fate and treacherous snake is apparent in Virgil’s account of ‘pius Aeneas’ treatment of Dido (especially: 4.305-6, 361, 393-6). Barskova picks up on the winter setting (4.52, 193, 310); and emphasises instead of Aeneas the people relying on Dido: Carthage and its people, which Virgil shows to be dependent on its queen’s disposition (contrast the rising glory of Carthage at 1.421-37 when Aeneas arrives with its stagnation at 4.86-9 when Dido falls in love, and with its panic and ruin at 4.665-71 when Dido dies); her sister Anna (who wishes to die with her at 4.672-83); and possibly even her dead husband Sychaeus (whom Dido calls her only love at 4.28-9 and who accompanies her in the underworld, as the former lines predict, at 6.473-4).

¹⁸³ Desmond, p. 24.

The next lines reverse Dido's fate at 6.440-4 on the Mourning Fields where 'even in death the pangs leave them not':¹⁸⁴ 'Завидна такая судьба: / Свободным дается забвенье, / Беспамятный несокрушим.' (Such a fate is enviable: / To the free is granted oblivion, / The forgetful are indestructible.) Barskova gives a very different spin on Aeneas' famous fate: 'Энея уносит течение, / Зовёт гимназический Рим, / Потомки ему докучают' (Aeneas is carried away by the tide, / Grammar school Rome is calling, / His descendants are pestering'). Rome as a 'gymnasium' figures Carthage and/or Aeneas' *katabasis* as a primary school from which he graduates to secondary school, or his own city. This also plays upon the link between the *Aeneid* and secondary schools (especially with Russian classical gymnasia; see pp. 18, 24, 33, 36), where it is historically taught to a male elite.¹⁸⁵ Aeneas' descendants are depicted incongruously as pestering children; this also bears the sense of the burden of his destiny, which Anchises places upon Aeneas through a throng of future Romans at 6.756-886. The final lines return to negating Dido's meeting with Aeneas in the underworld: 'А позже, в приюте теней / Его не Дидона встречает, / А праздность вины перед ней.' ('And later, in the refuge of shades / He is met not by Dido, / But by the futility of his guilt before her.') Having not met Dido in his *katabasis*, Aeneas has carried his guilt, originally expressed to her at 6.455-68 and 475-6, with him until his death, uselessly.

Barskova's rewriting is facilitated by Dido's historic flexibility in post-Virgilian literature. It is firmly within a tradition of receptions of Dido begun by Virgil's semi-contemporary Ovid:

Ovid presents a decontextualized Dido who revises her understanding of the events narrated in the *Aeneid*. In this regard, he initiates a long tradition of reading Dido; that is, a tradition of detaching Dido and her story from the *Aeneid* as a whole, thereby displacing Aeneas as the thematic focus of the text and implicitly disrupting the imperial context within which Aeneas acts. In *Heroides* 7 [...] Aeneas becomes a marginal character.¹⁸⁶

Barskova's rewriting also stands within a Russian tradition of reception that has – mostly – foregrounded Dido. In Russia this tradition was initiated by the first translation of the *Aeneid*, by Petrov, who rewrote Dido to embody and eulogise Catherine the Great, downplaying her failings and giving her "center stage" over a

¹⁸⁴ Virgil, pp. 562–63.

¹⁸⁵ Desmond, pp. 7–8.

¹⁸⁶ Desmond, p. 34.

diminished Aeneas.¹⁸⁷ Barskova has most in mind two other Russian rewritings of Dido, as her russified Dido in the opening lines suggests. The first is that of Akhmatova, ‘Shipovnik tsvetet’ (‘The wild rose is flowering’; see p. 38); the second, that of Brodskii, ‘Didona i Enei’ (‘Dido and Aeneas’; see p. 56). The major influences Brodskii cites for his poem are Akhmatova’s poem and Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*, in particular Dido’s aria ‘Remember Me’; Purcell is also connected with Akhmatova, as Brodskii owned Akhmatova’s beloved recording of the opera.¹⁸⁸ Barskova also cites Purcell’s Dido in connection with Akhmatova, in ‘Iunost’ proshla v ozhidanii smerti’¹⁸⁹ (‘Youth passed in the expectation of death’). The poem bears an epigraph from Dido’s lament, and it deals with the same major theme as ‘Shipovnik tsvetet’, parting: ‘Смерти косая сестричка разлука’ (‘Death’s squinting little sister parting’). Barskova posted it on her blog under the heading ‘veroiatno, kak-to podsoznatel’no sviazano s tem, chto segodnia den’ smerti AAA, liubivshei “Didonu...”’ (‘probably, somehow subconsciously linked with today being the deathday of AAA, who loved *Dido*...’).

All three receptions of Dido Barskova draws upon – Purcell’s, Akhmatova’s, Brodskii’s – give a very different Dido from Virgil’s: resigned and forgiving, whereas Virgil’s rages and swears revenge.

In Purcell’s opera as well as in Akhmatova’s poem, Dido is resigned to her fate and departs from the stage with no words of reproach. [...] Akhmatova’s and Purcell’s Didos [...] set a stage for Brodsky’s queen as a woman seduced and abandoned, but not powerful and most certainly not vengeful.¹⁹⁰

Barskova echoes this resignation in her Dido, but it is contemptuous rather than meek. Her Dido’s strength and carelessness makes a polemic with Brodskii, whose Dido is “completely marginalized, and the focus is primarily on the man and his mission.”¹⁹¹ Barskova prioritises Dido; she is correcting Brodskii’s depiction of Dido along with Virgil’s. Her reduction of Aeneas to a pygmy, a slave, and a snake redresses the misogyny of Brodskii’s depiction of Aeneas as a ‘great man’ while Dido is compared to a ‘fish’. This is reminiscent of Kutik’s dismissiveness towards Virgil’s Aeneas in *Epos* (see p. 209). Barskova’s infrequent reference to and evident

¹⁸⁷ Kahn, ‘Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin’, p. 756.

¹⁸⁸ Torlone, *Vergil in Russia*, pp. 203, 206.

¹⁸⁹ Polina Barskova, ‘veroiatno, kak-to podsoznatel’no sviazano s tem, chto segodnia den’ smerti AAA, liubivshei “Didonu...”’, *pbarskova*, 2009 <<http://pbarskova.livejournal.com/6145.html>> [accessed 7 August 2015].

¹⁹⁰ Torlone, *Vergil in Russia*, pp. 206–7.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

disregard for Virgil is typical of her general preference for Ancient Greece over Rome (with the exception of Catullus), unlike Shvarts.

Hamlet

A significant number¹⁹² of Barskova's classically receptive poems combine classical with Shakespearian reception. Shakespeare's own classical reception is well studied, his classical learning long proven,¹⁹³ equalling (or surpassing!) Barskova's own: "Shakespeare knew – from his grammar school education and from his general reading – at least as much classical literature as many classics graduates today."¹⁹⁴ Barskova's combination of Classics and Shakespeare suggests not only her appreciation of this characteristic feature of Shakespeare's writing, but also her inclusion of Shakespeare in her pantheon of 'classics', alongside Homer et al., following a tradition of so doing in both Russia and the West.¹⁹⁵ The vast majority of the instances of Barskova's Shakespeare-focalised classical reception involve *Hamlet*.¹⁹⁶ *Hamlet* was the first Shakespeare play to enter the Russian language (in 1748).¹⁹⁷ Since then, it has been the most oft-translated¹⁹⁸ and oft-received of

¹⁹² 11: '40 laskovykh sester skhodiatsia v poedinke s 40 tysiachami brat'ev', 'Elenograd', 'Gamlet kak internatsional'nyi student', 'Iz prozrachnoi papki', 'Kak zhenshchiny tebia liubili!', 'P'eta: XIV. Iz 'Gamleta'. Myshelovka', 'P'eta: Primeta', 'Proshchanie', 'Protokol', 'Rovesniki', 'Sor'.

¹⁹³ See, e.g., Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ Wilhelm Küchelbecker, in 1824; Francis Meres, John Dryden, etc., from 1598. Eleanor Rowe, *Hamlet: A Window on Russia* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), p. 28; David Hopkins, *Conversing with Antiquity: English Poets and the Classics, from Shakespeare to Pope*, *Classical Presences* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 46–54.

¹⁹⁶ The one exception is 'Sor' ('Rubbish'), based on *Antony and Cleopatra*, into which Barskova introduces a historical inaccuracy not present in Shakespeare, relocating Cleopatra's first meeting with Antony on her barge from the 'river Cydnus' (2.2.192) to the Nile, William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. by Emrys Jones, New Penguin Shakespeare (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 90. Shakespeare based this scene very closely on Plutarch's *Life of Marcus Antonius*. Burrow, p. 208. Polina Barskova, 'sezonnou', *pbarskova*, 2011 <<http://pbarskova.livejournal.com/24522.html>> [accessed 26 November 2015].

¹⁹⁷ M. P. Alekseev, *Shespir i russkaia kul'tura* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), p. 22.

¹⁹⁸ *Hamlet*, of all Shakespeare's plays, is mentioned most often in the contents of Alekseev's thorough survey of Shakespeare in Russia up to the early twentieth century: *Ibid.*, pp. 821–23.

Shakespeare's plays in Russia,¹⁹⁹ and Hamlet is the Shakespearian figure most appropriated by Russians as their own.²⁰⁰ Barskova approaches Shakespeare mostly through Russian translations and adaptations (significantly, it is only the reference to *Antony and Cleopatra* that is made through Shakespeare's original English). She adapts quotations from Sumarokov in 'Elenograd' (1996/2010) and Pasternak in 'XIV. Iz 'Gamleta'. Myshelovka'²⁰¹ (XIV. From *Hamlet*. The Mouse-trap', 1999): 'Какой же ты холоп и негодяй' – Hamlet's 'O! what a rogue and peasant slave am I',²⁰² from between Hecuba sections; she changes 'I' to 'you'. But the majority of her *Hamlet* citations are through Lozinskii's translation. She foregrounds Lozinskii in 'Stikhi o tom, kak ia myla Eriku golovu i pena popala emu v ukho' ('Verses about the time I washed Eric's hair and foam got in his ear', 2001-05):

Lozinskii, unlike Pasternak, was a translator first and foremost, and it is his version that gives Barskova the best access to Shakespeare in Russian; Pasternak's text would certainly have given her access to Shakespeare as well, but her poem would have been just as much an engagement with Pasternak the poet as it was with the Bard. In recognition of this fact, Barskova dedicates [*Verses about the Time...*] "To M. L. Lozinskii—with gratitude" ("М. Л. Лозинскому – с благодарностью"), pointing the spotlight at the "invisible" translator who gave her a Russian Shakespearean text with which to work.²⁰³

'Proshchanie'²⁰⁴ ('Farewell', 1993) is a series of nine 'farewells' to characters from Hamlet (and, incongruously, Clio, the Muse of history), written in her late teens (but Barskova believes it anticipated her departure from Petersburg²⁰⁵). She begins each poem and the entire cycle with a 'chorus' quoted (usually exactly, or almost exactly) from Lozinskii. In having a Greek-style chorus, Barskova plays with the theatrical elements within Hamlet; she alludes to the players' 'Mouse-trap' scene in giving 'Proshchanie' the joke epigraph 'Что это: пролог или стихи для перстня?' ('Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?'²⁰⁶), which Hamlet utters before the start of the play; the 'chorus' may allude to Hamlet's interpretation of the play, which provokes

¹⁹⁹ See Rowe; Howard Allen Goldman, *Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Work of Boris Pasternak and Other Modern Russian Poets (Aleksandr Blok, Anna Akhmatova and Marina Cvetaeva)* (Thesis PhD--Indiana University, 1975).

²⁰⁰ Rowe, p. viii–x, 60.

²⁰¹ 'P'eta', Barskova, 'vse'.

²⁰² William Shakespeare, *Gamlet: izbrannye perevody* (Moscow: Raduga, 1985), p. 65 (2.2.577).

²⁰³ Dralyuk, p. 49.

²⁰⁴ Barskova, *Rasa brezgliviykh*.

²⁰⁵ Barskova, 'Interview'.

²⁰⁶ Shakespeare, *Gamlet*, p. 74 (3.2.173).

Ophelia to say 'You are as good as a chorus, my lord.'²⁰⁷ All the poems dwell upon the theme of death, like *Hamlet*. There are an equal number of farewells that do and do not make classical references: the farewells to Polonius, Ophelia, Horatio, Gertrude, and Clio do; those to the Ghost, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Laertes, and Hamlet do not. Such frequency suggests the beginning of Barskova's connection of *Hamlet* and classical antiquity.

'Proshchanie s Poloniem' shows shades of the dead 'кого поглотил ненасытный Крон' ('whom insatiable Kronos has gobbled') crawling after the dead Polonius. Kronos here has apparently been merged again with Chronos (see p. 229).

'Proshchanie s Ofeliei' mirrors the account of Ophelia's drowning, quoted in the chorus, with souls striving to immerse themselves in the Lethe. This is told in a fragmented manner echoing the chorus' description of Ophelia's mad singing,²⁰⁸ whilst 'Амур холодной давится перловкой. / Венера ощущает мягкость дёрна' ('Amor chokes on cold pearl barley. / Venus feels the softness of turf') gives a classical turn to Ophelia's earlier sexually charged songs in Act 4 Scene 5, particularly 'At his head a grass-green turf'.²⁰⁹

'Proshchanie s Goratsio' makes reference to Sappho and the disapproval of her lesbianism:

Сафо, лицом уткнувшись
В резиновые острые колени,
Шептала, как любить меня могла бы,
Когда бы не препоны естества.

Sappho, face burrowed
Into sharp rubber knees,
Whispered how she could love me,
Were it not for hindrances of naturalness.

The reference to Sappho, one of only two in Barskova's oeuvre,²¹⁰ seems to be motivated by the latent homosexuality in the fragment of Hamlet's speech to Horatio chosen for the chorus: 'Едва мой дух стал выбирать свободно / И различать

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 77 (3.2.269).

²⁰⁸ Greg Emilio, 'Review: The Zoo in Winter by Polina Barskova, Boris Dralyuk, David Stromberg', *World Literature Today*, 85.4 (2011), 71–72 (p. 71).

²⁰⁹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 94 (4.5.36).

²¹⁰ The other is the epigraph to 'Izmeny bespechnoi' ('Reckless treachery's', 1993): 'Пестро шитая шапочка' ('Brightly sewn cap'), taken from Sappho Fragment 98. Barskova, *Rasa brezgliviykh*.

людей, его избранье отметило тебя' ('Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice / And could of men distinguish, her election / Hath seal'd thee for herself'²¹¹).

'Proshchanie s Gertrudoj' makes this concluding aside: 'Кстати, вокруг зима. / Самое время перечитывать "Илиаду".' ('Incidentally, winter's all around. / Just the time to reread the *Iliad*.) Whilst *Hamlet* does not feature Helen or direct references from Homer, the Epic Cycle features in "the most extended allusion to Virgil in the Shakespearian canon after Lucrece" – the players' speech on Hecuba and the fall of Troy in Act 2 Scene 2, which Shakespeare takes from *Aeneid* 2 and Ovid's *Heroides*.²¹² This is the likely source of Barskova's association of *Hamlet* and the *Iliad*.

'Proshchanie s Klio' mentions 'на Литейном дом – памятник римским сводням' (on Liteinyi, there is a house – monument to Roman bawds), which may reference Hamlet's 'mad' interjection in the player's Hecuba speech, which is in the same scene as this poem's chorus: 'Prithee say on: he's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or / he sleeps. Say on; come to Hecuba.'²¹³ The primary reference is to the mansion on Liteinyi Prospekt of Princess Iusupova, popularly thought of as the model for the countess in Pushkin's *Queen of Spades*,²¹⁴ who recurs as a bawd in Pushkin's 'Svodnia grustno za stolom' ('The bawd sadly behind the table'). The bawds are 'Roman' either due to the the classical-style caryatids adorning the mansion, or due to the stock figure of the bawd or *lena* in Latin literature. It is also possible that this is connected to the poem's addressee, Clio, through the figure of Brodskii, with whom Barskova was obsessed as a teenager. Brodskii also lived on Liteinyi Prospekt, and wrote about Clio. His essay 'Profile of Clio' touches upon various topics pertinent to 'Proshchanie' – time, death, murder, people's continuing interest in historical (including classical) figures. Barskova's motivation for including Clio in her farewells to characters from *Hamlet* appears to be his poem 'К Урании' ('To Urania', 1981), specifically the lines 'Да и что вообще есть пространство, если / не отсутствие в каждой точке тела? / Оттого-то Урания старше Клио' ('And what really is space, if / not absence in every point of the body? / That's why Urania is older than Clio'). The first line of 'Proshchanie s Klio' engages with this statement

²¹¹ Shakespeare, *Gamlet*, p. 72 (3.2.67-9).

²¹² Burrow, pp. 64, 63.

²¹³ Shakespeare, *Gamlet*, p. 64 (2.2.525-6).

²¹⁴ Naum Sindalovskii, *Slovar' peterburzhtsa: Leksikon Severnoi stolitsy: Istoriia i sovremennost'* (St Petersburg: Litres, 2014).

(and other of Brodskii's pronouncements on the nature of poetry): 'Стих – пространство. Более ничего.' ('Verse is space. Nothing more.')

Hamlet is a very personal text for Barskova. She uses it, like the many classical figures explored in this chapter, to express aspects of both her personal, and the wider Russian, experience. 'Gamlet kak internatsional'nyi student'²¹⁵ ('Hamlet as an international student', 1999), a poem written around the time of Barskova's emigration to the US, conflates Hamlet's time studying at Wittenberg University with his exile to England, and modernises the scenario and writes from a female persona (but still purportedly as Hamlet) to express her fears about leaving home. Hamlet merges with Odysseus, the archetypal exile:

Некуда мне возвращаться и нет Итаки.
Пенелопу кремировали калеки.
С кормилицей вряд ли выйдет, ибо она слепа,
Ибо я безнога

There's nowhere I can return to and there's no Ithaca.
Penelope was cremated by cripples.
It'll hardly work out with the nurse, for she's blind,
For I'm legless.

The connection hinges on the contrast between Penelope and Gertrude, the one the epitome of faithful womanhood, as wife and mother, the other its reverse. Penelope's 'cremation' may be a return to the theme of her dead lover, linked with Odysseus elsewhere. The factors ruling out Odysseus' nurse (who recognises him by the scar on his leg) to welcome Hamlet/Odysseus/Barskova home may be due to the absence of such a figure in *Hamlet*. She updates the *Odyssey*, like *Hamlet*, contrasting the suitors' profligacy with the famines in early twentieth-century Petrograd and Ukraine:

Лепо им было во сне призывать крепостных Галатей,
грустящих на сеновале,
В свои объятия, немощные теперь, но тогда ох, черти!
Лепо им было не знать, как милые голодали
В восемнадцатом, в тридцать втором

It was nice for them to call in their sleep the serf Galateas,
sorrowing in the hayloft,
Into their embraces, powerless now, but then, oh, hell's bells!
It was nice for them not to know how the dears starved
In '18, in '32.

²¹⁵ Barskova, 'vse'.

She calls Penelope's handmaidens 'Galateas', a generalised pastoral name, but one with a connection to the *Odyssey*: Theocritus' *Idyll* 11 rereads Homer's Polyphemus, whose blinding in Book 9 begins Odysseus' odyssey, as the suitor of the nymph Galatea. Calling them 'serfs', an anachronistic and anachoristic word, prepares for the segue into the Russian/Soviet famines. These famines were man-made, caused by the Civil War and collectivization, and therefore easily connected with Ithaca, the desolation of which by the feasting suitors is portrayed, and raged against in *Odyssey* 1.144-62, 245-51 by Telemachus, the *Odyssey's* Hamlet figure.

One of Barskova's classically receptive *Hamlet* poems describes a moment from the short time Barskova spent with Elena Shvarts. 'Elenograd'²¹⁶ is a pair of poems to two poet 'Helens' of Barskova's acquaintance. The first poem, written from Elsinore in 1996, is to Elena Shvarts, with whom Barskova visited Denmark (a Hamletian context Barskova always connects Shvarts with); while the second, written from Gothenburg in 2010, is to Swedish poet Helena Eriksson.²¹⁷ The diptych was published on Barskova's blog 5 months after Shvarts' death, under the heading 'pamiati vsiakikh besed i nabliudenii – davno' ('in memory of all kinds of discussions and observations, long ago').

'Elenograd' balances an epigraph from Sumarokov's *Gamlet (Hamlet)* with an epigraph from Nabokov's 'Leningrad'.²¹⁸ These epigraphs are meaningfully juxtaposed: Barskova published an article in 2005 on Nabokov's reception of *Hamlet*.²¹⁹ The epigraph, 'Но кая тщетна мысль ещё меня бодрит? / И кая мя ещё надежда веселит?' ('But what vain thought still enlivens me? / And what hope still cheers me?'), is from a part of *Gamlet* that has nothing in common with *Hamlet*. Sumarokov intentionally diverged almost entirely from Shakespeare, and "centered the plot on the conflict in Hamlet's mind between his love of Ophelia and his duty to avenge his father's murder".²²⁰ Ophelia tells her confidante Flemina about her fears (not to be fulfilled) that she and Hamlet will not have a happy ending; Barskova takes her positive assertion of hope, albeit groundless, and renders it doubtful and desperate by changing the original exclamation marks to question marks, making

²¹⁶ Polina Barskova, 'pamiati vsiakikh besed i nabliudenii--davno', *pbarskova*, 2010 <<http://pbarskova.livejournal.com/20977.html>> [accessed 13 November 2015].

²¹⁷ Barskova, 'Interview'.

²¹⁸ Barskova gives 'Exotica' the same epigraph.

²¹⁹ Polina Barskova, 'Filial Feelings and Paternal Patterns: Transformations of Hamlet in The Gift', *Nabokov Studies*, 9.1 (2005), 191–208.

²²⁰ Rowe, pp. 6, 5.

her Sumarokov Ophelia closer to Shakespeare's. Her Hamlet is also a blend of both: whilst Sumarokov did give Hamlet a speech based upon the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy,²²¹ it does not use those simple, bold words;²²² whereas Barskova plays with them in their usual, simple form, even simplifying the question, in conjunction with the opening line of Sumarokov's Hamlet's soliloquy, 'Что делать мне теперь? Не знаю, что зачать' ('What should I do now? I know not what to commence');²²³

Так быть или не быть?
Не знаю, что зачать
Ходить или курить
Молчать или молчать
Смотреть иль не смотреть
Её, к воде склонённую

So to be or not to be?
I know not what to commence
To walk or to smoke
To be silent or to be silent
To look or not to look
At her, bent down to the water.

Shvarts is introduced into the picture as the object of Barskova/Hamlet's question, and merges with Ophelia as she looks at her reflection in the water. Barskova incorporates Shakespeare's Gertrude's description of Ophelia in the water, 'mermaid-like':²²⁴

Всю состоящую из тока злой воды,
Пленённую собой, надменную Елену,
Гадающую – где – чьи следы.

Вот этот? след людской
Вот этот? след русалий

Entirely composed of a current of evil water,
Captured by herself, proud Elena,
Guessing where are whose traces.

This one? a human trace
This one? a mermaid trace.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 9.

²²² 'Отверсть ли гроба дверь, и бедствы окончат? / Или во свете сем еще претерпевати?'... ('To open the grave's door, and miseries finish? / Or to suffer still in this world?'...) Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 563.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 104 (4.7.201).

The Ophelia-like Elena also contains traces of Helen of Troy, whose epigraph prefixes the next poem. The line containing their name suggests Helen's captivity, captivating beauty, lofty position, and nobility. The last watery lines, spoken by the Shvarts figure, 'Ну нет / Хозяина и порождателя у пены, / У пены и вонючей морской травы' ('No, there's no / Master and begetter of foam, / Of foam or stinking seaweed'), appear to reference both the sexually implicit content of Ophelia's weeds ('long purples, / That liberal shepherds give a grosser name, / But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them'²²⁵), and Aphrodite, born from foam, who is a frequent figure in Shvarts' poetry (see from p. 78) – and the originator of Helen's abduction.

In conjunction with Ophelia's drowning, the moment from *Hamlet* most frequently and flexibly received by Barskova in classical contexts is Hamlet's posthumous declaration of love for her: 'I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers / Could not, with all their quantity of love, / Make up my sum.'²²⁶ Orpheus' treatment of Eurydice and Hamlet's of Ophelia are linked subtextually in *Hamlet*: "when Hamlet, looking 'As if he had been loosed out of hell', turns 'his head over his shoulder' to gaze one last time at Ophelia before he sunders his love from her, the audience is given the pleasure of a recognition of Orpheus' glance back at Eurydice".²²⁷ Barskova exploits this connection in 'Kak zhenshchiny tebia liubili!', as the bacchantes take vengeance upon Orpheus for Ophelia's mistreatment in the name of her 'forty thousand brothers': 'за сорок тысяч, / Сильней которых ты любил / Офелию, собралась нечисть.' ('for the forty thousand, / Stronger than whom you loved / Ophelia, evil forces have amassed.') Transferring her identification of Ophelia with Eurydice to another mythical woman trapped in the underworld, 'Iz prozrachnoi papki' associates Hades and Persephone (Barskova and her interlocutor) with *Hamlet's* 'forty thousand brothers': 'собеседник мой холодный, / как сорок тысяч братьев тает / болезненно, как снег в тени.' ('my cold interlocutor, / like forty thousand brothers melts / feebly, like snow in the shade.') There are various other motivations for this classical connection: the forty thousand brothers' love is supposedly more tepid than Hamlet's (!), hence its slushlike depiction; Hamlet avowed his love for Ophelia only once she was dead, hence the link with Persephone/Hades in the underworld; the motif of polluted virginity (by both sex and death) is central in

²²⁵ Ibid. (4.7.193-5).

²²⁶ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 110 (5.1.285-7).

²²⁷ Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 201.

Persephone's abduction and present in Ophelia's story. Snow, so easily defiled, is associated with Ophelia and sex/death in Hamlet: 'If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for / thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as / snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a / nunnery' (Hamlet); 'White his shroud as the mountain snow' (Ophelia, singing).²²⁸ A major motivation for Barskova's association of Persephone with Ophelia is Tsvetaeva's connection of the two in 'Na naznachennoe svidan'e' ('To the appointed meeting'), in which Persephone is late bringing spring,²²⁹ and therefore white-haired (with snow – reinforcing Barskova's choice of this motif), and Ophelia is mentioned twice by name, with the flowers she picked in madness. Barskova signals her use of Tsvetaeva with two quoted words, 'стогнет' ('groans' – Southern Russian/Ukrainian) and 'трущобы' ('slums'), a line apart, prominently at line ends, the same positions as 'Na naznachennoe svidan'e's' 'стогны' ('squares') and 'Трущоба' ('slum').²³⁰

A great part of Barskova's affinity for Hamlet's 'Forty thousand brothers' comes from its illustrious reception history in Russian literature, as she makes clear in '40 laskovykh sester skhodiatsia v poedinke s 40 tysiachami brat'ev'²³¹ ('40 tender sisters come together in a duel with 40 thousand brothers', 2002). Other Ophelian moments – her drowning, which is recurrent in Barskova's classically receptive poetry, and the phrase 'Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remember'd' – also have extensive Russian reception histories.²³²

'40 laskovykh sester skhodiatsia v poedinke s 40 tysiachami brat'ev' creates a complex interrelation between Ophelia and Hamlet's treatment of her, the myth of the Danaids, and the reception of Ophelia by female Russian poets, to form an aetiology for 'women's poetry' in general, and Barskova's in particular. The opening line balances the *Hamlet* references of Russia's two most famous female poets. Akhmatova as Ophelia in 'Chitaia Gamleta'²³³ ('Reading Hamlet') responds to

²²⁸ Shakespeare, *Gamlet*, pp. 70, 94 (3.1.146-9, 4.5.41).

²²⁹ Goldman, p. 68.

²³⁰ Marina Tsvetaeva, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy v piati tomakh* (New York: Russica publishers, 1983), III, p. 81.

²³¹ Polina Barskova, 'Sankt-Peterburg - Berkli', in *Vavilon: Vestnik molodoi literatury*, ed. by Dmitrii Kuz'min and Danila Davydov, 9 (25) (Moscow; Tver': ARGO-RISK; Kolonna, 2002), pp. 47-56 <<http://www.vavilon.ru/metatext/vavilon9/barskova.html>> [accessed 17 November 2015].

²³² Including by Del'vig, Nekrasov, Fet, Ostrovskii, Blok, Briusov, and Pasternak. Rowe, pp. 29, 55, 114, 117, 147.

²³³ Akhmatova, I, pp. 278-80.

Hamlet's harsh speech dismissing her to a nunnery with forgiving resignation and tenderness, which draws a hint of a favourable response from her Hamlet; the source of Barskova's '40 tender sisters' is the poem's ending: 'Я люблю тебя, как сорок / Ласковых сестёр.' ('I love you, like forty / tender sisters.') Tsvetaeva remonstrates more robustly with Hamlet in her triptych of *Hamlet*-inspired poems, 'Ofeliia – Gamletu' ('Ophelia – to Hamlet'), 'Ofeliia – v zashchitu korolevy' ('Ophelia – in defence of the queen'), and 'Dialog Gamleta s sovest'iu' ('Hamlet's dialogue with his conscience'). In the dialogue, to which Barskova alludes with '40 thousand brothers' (and the combative tone of 'duel'), Tsvetaeva has Hamlet reassess his hypocritical declaration of love for Ophelia:

— Но я её любил
Как сорок тысяч...
— Меньше,
Всё ж, чем один любовник.

На дне она, где ил.
— Но я её —
(недоумённо)
— любил??

"But I loved her
As forty thousand..."
"Less,
All the same, than one lover.

She is at the bottom, where there is silt."
"But her I –
(bewilderedly)
– loved??"²³⁴

This choice of two female reactions to male mistreatment – forgiveness or blame – establishes the most fundamental of many motivations for the ensuing merging of the Danaids' myth with Ophelia's story:

40 ласковых сестёр сходятся в поединке с 40 тысячами братьев.
50 данаид берут на себя функции 50-ти египтидов –
То есть в брачную ночь погружают в них 49 кухонных ножей.
И только кровосмесительная Гипермнестра,
Забывшись-забившись в объятьях
Линкея, нарушает плавное течение мифа

²³⁴ Marina Tsvetaeva, *Posle Rossii, 1922-1925*, trans. by Michael Naydan (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1976), pp. 138–39.

[...]
И вот 49 сестёр с ковшами, кувшинами,
Фляжечками, флакончиками, тазами
Наполняют безвидную бочку
Под гогот разъятых мужей...

[...]
Данаиды взывают о том,
Что вряд ли бывают хуже
Ситуации ихней.

40 tender sisters come together in a duel with 40 thousand brothers.
50 danaids take upon themselves the functions of 50 aegyptides –
That is, on the wedding night plunge into them 49 kitchen knives.
And only consanguineous Hypermnestra,
Comatose-cowering in the embrace
Of Lynceus, ruins the smooth flow of the myth

[...]
And so 49 sisters with scoops, pitchers,
Flasks, phials, basins
Fill the inconspicuous barrel
To guffaws of sundered husbands...

[...]
Danaids cry out that there
Can hardly be worser
Situations than theirs.

Firstly, and most obviously, she parallels the numbers of siblings within the opening two lines: 40 vs. 50. Secondly, ‘Danaid’ puns on ‘Dane’. Thirdly, there was a probable Ancient Greek tradition of the Danaids as water nymphs (the Greek νύμφη meaning ‘young girl’ or ‘bride’, as well as ‘nymph’), elements of which were incorporated into the later extant literature;²³⁵ Barskova may hint at Hamlet’s ‘The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remember'd.’²³⁶ Fourthly, the Danaids’ betrayal and murder of their husbands parallels Gertrude’s murder of old King Hamlet. Fifthly, sexual violence, chastity, and female desire/love are represented in both the Danaid myth (overtly and exemplarily) and the Ophelia story (more implicitly). The rape intended by the Aegyptides against the Danaids is reversed – as Barskova points out – by the Danaids’ knives. Hypermnestra’s sparing of Lynceus is due in most accounts to either love or fear (piety),²³⁷ which Barskova reflects in the pun ‘Забывшись-забившись’ (‘forgetting herself-cowering’). These

²³⁵ Mary R. Bachvarova, ‘Suppliant Danaids and Argive Nymphs in Aeschylus’, *The Classical Journal*, 104.4 (2009), 289–310.

²³⁶ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 69 (3.1.97-8).

²³⁷ Aeschylus *Suppliants*, Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 850 ff. cite love; Horace *Odes* 3.11, Ovid *Heroides* 14 cite piety. Hyginus *Fabulae* 168 & 170 gives no reason for Hypermnestra sparing Lynceus. Only Apollodorus *Library* 2.1.5 attributes it to Lynceus respecting her virginity.

themes parallel the tensions between Hamlet's implied sexual aggression towards Ophelia ('He took me by the wrist and held me hard' (Ophelia), 'Lady, shall I lie in your lap? [...] Do you think I meant country matters?' (Hamlet)), and Ophelia's virginal status versus the implications in her singing of sexual experience ('Let in the maid, that out a maid / Never departed more', 'Quoth she, before you tumbled me, / You promised me to wed').²³⁸ Barskova was aware of this sexual/virginal tension within the play, as well as these specific moments, as her (subsequent) article shows:

Such sensual dualism reminds us of Hamlet's never-consummated affair with the ephemeral Ophelia:

Hamlet: I did love you once

Ophelia: Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Hamlet: You should not have believed me. For virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not. (3.1, 115–20).

Hamlet manages to combine his cult of purity and his famous "country matters."²³⁹

Sixthly, the Danaids' punishment in Hades, eternally pouring water, hints at Ophelia's drowning: 'Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia' (Laertes);²⁴⁰ the complaint Barskova gives the Danaids strongly implies that Ophelia's watery fate is worse even than theirs.

Barskova declares the Danaids' cries the origin of 'women's poetry': '*Вот как произошла на свет женская поэзия.*' ('*This is how women's poetry came to be.*') Due to the preceding allusions, behind this statement is a strong suggestion of Ophelia's grief-maddened singing in Hamlet, and Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva's poetry. Barskova muses upon defining herself by this term (much used in Russia, but perceived as pejorative and misogynistic): 'Поэзия – пусть будет моё первое имя. / Женская – пусть будет моё последнее имя.' ('Poetry – let that be my first name. / Women's – let that be my last name.') She concludes that poetry can be either masculine or feminine, like nouns, without any special significance, and that it is capacious enough for all kinds of poets. The crux, for her, is that poetry is 'moisture': 'Ибо слова – это влага, стекающая по левой ноге, / Правая возвышается, согнутая в колене, прикрытая простынёй.' ('For words are moisture, flowing down the left leg, / The right is raised, bent at the knee, covered

²³⁸ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, pp. 52, 73, 95 (2.1.99, 3.2.119-23, 4.5.59-60, 68-9).

²³⁹ Barskova, 'Filial Feelings and Paternal Patterns', p. 201.

²⁴⁰ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 104 (4.7.211).

with a sheet.ʼ) In the Ophelia/Danaids context, moisture could be either water, blood, or ejaculate (female or male) – all essences of life and death.

Following this digression, Barskova returns to the theme of sexual violence from the Danaids section, but this time with Ophelia’s story foregrounded and the Danaids as subtext:

Замуж за дурака, Офелия, за стены монастыря!
Кляп тебе в рот, Офелия! (Кляп – это грим убогого эвфемизма.)
Нож тебе в руку, Офелия! (Нож – то же самое.)
Пока не заря,
Нож отравленный под сосок тебе, Гамлет!

...*Пир* с парнишками по скамьям – это не пир, но тризна.

Где стол был яств аргонидский, где был чертог,
Где слова – мужские и женские – совокуплялись, стоя
У последней черты.

Married to a fool, Ophelia, get behind nunnery walls!
Here’s a gag in thy mouth, Ophelia! (Gag – that’s greasepaint on a squalid euphemism.)
Here’s a knife in thy hand, Ophelia! (Knife – ditto.)
Before it’s dawn,
Here’s a poisoned knife under thy nipple, Hamlet!

...*A feast* with the lads around the benches – that’s not a feast but a wake.

Where was the Argolid table of viands, where was a palace,
Where words – masculine and feminine – copulated, standing
On the final threshold.

The first line echoes Akhmatova echoing Hamlet. The next lines juxtapose Ophelia being gagged and Ophelia stabbing Hamlet (by implication), staging the same rape reversal as with the Danaids at the beginning. The envenomed knife in Hamlet’s breast before dawn conflates the Aegyptids’ murders with that of Hamlet in Act 5 Scene 2. The feast-turned-wake echoes the words of Prince Fortinbras following Hamlet’s death: ‘O proud death, / What feast is toward in thine eternal cell, / That thou so many princes at a shot / So bloodily hast struck?’²⁴¹ Both Ovid’s and Apollodorus’ versions have the Aegyptids killed after a feast.²⁴² The male and female copulating words take the section back to the metatextual slant of the previous section, as well as suggesting the Danaids and Aegyptids.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 120 (5.2.403-6).

²⁴² *Heroides* 14.33, *Library*, 2.1.5.

Barskova returns to Akhmatova's 'tender sisters', to whom are now added Barskova's fellow female poets: '49 сестёр ласковых: Анна, Марина, Софья, Ольга, Елена, Наталья...' (49 tender sisters: Anna [Akhmatova], Marina [Tsvetaeva], Sofia [Parnok], Ol'ga [Berggol'ts], Elena [Shvarts], Natal'ia [Gorbanevskaia]...). The number of sisters has now risen to the number of Danaids who murdered their husbands. Barskova excuses the list's incompleteness with 'Облако пепла с Везувия закрывает хвост очереди.' ('A cloud of ash from Vesuvius obscures the end of the queue.') Vesuvius represents accidents of history, burying female poets' fame, but preserving their work to be discovered by later researchers. She shows the difficulties female poets have in being taken seriously (construing the Aegyptids' wedding feast as male privilege):

Каждая – в брюках Марлены Дитрих.
 [...]
 Там был стол яств. Но там без брюк не пускают к столу
 Их мужья они же жертвы они же братья.

Each woman in the trousers of Marlene Dietrich.
 [...]
 There was the table of viands. But there without trousers they don't let you sit at
 the table
 Their husbands, aka victims, aka cousins.

Then Barskova again references Tsvetaeva, in the context of her newly acquired name, echoing Tsvetaeva's 'Imia tvoe – ptitsa v ruke' (Your name is a bird in the hand'), which also compares the name to 'бубенец во рту' ('a bell in the mouth'):²⁴³ 'Женская – имя моё – бубенец в руке.' ('Women's – my name – is a bell in the hand.') The poem ends, suitably, with the catastrophic moment (averted or not) from the women's two stories. She depicts her immersion in a foreign language (in emigration) as the rape of the Danaids and the drowning of Ophelia, ironically doing so by punning on the similarity of 'speech' and 'river' in Russian:

С типуном на уже неродном языке,
 Окаменевшем от впрыскивания семени Египтидов.
 Я плыву по речи своей,
 Как Офелия по реке.

With a plague on an already non-native tongue,
 Petrified by squirted injections of Aegyptid sperm.
 I float along my speech

²⁴³ Marina Tsvetaeva, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy v piati tomakh* (New York: Russica publishers, 1983), I, p. 227.

Like Ophelia along her stream.

In the final lines Barskova completes her Ophelian drowning: ‘Доплыву до моря –
домом моллюсков станет моя спина. / Чайка сядет на приоткрытые губы.’ (‘I
shall float to the sea – my back will become a home for molluscs. / A seagull will sit
on my parted lips.’) Thus Barskova reaffirms how vital is her Russian literary milieu,
already made clear throughout ‘40 laskovykh sester skhodiatsia v poedinke s 40
tysiachami brat’ev’ by her repeated receptions of *Hamlet* and antiquity via important
Russian female poets. This chimes with her reminiscences about Shvarts amidst
reception of *Hamlet* and antiquity in ‘Elenograd’.

Barskova’s reception of Shakespeare via earlier receptions of his work and alongside
reception of classical antiquity leads her to use Shakespearian classical references to
explore the idea of poetic permanence and inheritance, of reception itself. In ‘40
laskovykh sester skhodiatsia v poedinke s 40 tysiachami brat’ev’ the metatextual
sections show words and texts copulating (and perhaps also murdering): texts
begetting more texts and obscuring still other texts. In ‘Primeta’²⁴⁴ (‘Omen’, 2000),
in a region ‘забытом и Богом и Почтальоном’ (‘forgotten by both God and the
Postman’), Barskova imagines her correspondent receiving a letter from her when
she is already dead and ‘как Ниоба горяя’ (‘like Niobe lamenting’), which loosely
translates ‘Like Niobe, all tears’,²⁴⁵ Hamlet’s description of his mother at her
husband’s funeral. This is linked to the suggestion of betrayal – and protestations of
loyalty – that Barskova has been receiving in spider-letters. These refer to Arachne’s
weaving of tales of mortal women raped by gods, the tale immediately before Niobe’s
in *Metamorphoses* Book 6 – Ovid even writes that the two women are acquainted (ll.
103-48). Her use of this quotation from *Hamlet* that is itself a classical reference
supports Barskova’s final point that writing overcomes death, since the words of
Shakespeare and Ovid, both long dead, live on in her poem:

Но буквы – они доньше и впредь,
Как скорпион в пустыне, преодолевают Смерть
Бескрайнюю, позволяя
Хотя бы забыть о ней
На время чтенья.

But letters – they hitherto and hereafter,
Like a scorpion in the desert, vanquish Death

²⁴⁴ ‘P’eta’, Barskova, *Evridei i Orfika*.

²⁴⁵ Shakespeare, *Gamlet*, p. 37 (1.2.153).

The Boundless, permitting
At least to forget about it
Whilst reading.

In 'Rovesniki'²⁴⁶ ('Contemporaries', 2000) Barskova imagines a line of poetry 'like a mountain' dropping a tear 'as big as an avalanche' upon her, killing her 'honorably-sweetly' with dead words 'Чтобы орал Шекспир и молчал Гораций.' ('So Shakespeare would roar and Horace would be silent.') Again, she depicts words as larger and more enduring than people, albeit still subject to natural erosion. Shakespeare's roar probably expresses Barskova's partiality for Shakespeare over Horace. The two poets are connected, and via a poem with a distinguished Russian reception tradition. Shakespeare references Horace's 'Exegi monumentum' in his own claim to poetic immortality, Sonnet 55.²⁴⁷ This is the Horatian poem that Barskova is likely to know best, from many Russian imitations (most notably Pushkin's; see p. 30); she undoubtedly thinks of it here, and implies his 'higher than the pyramids' with her 'mountain'. However, she makes no such claims for her own poetry, and Horace is eclipsed by his receiver. Shakespeare has often been used in such a way, "to suggest the persistence of literary archetypes", with poets using "moments of interaction between Shakespeare and the classics [...] to figure the processes of imitation" and situate a "locus of literary memory".²⁴⁸ Barskova shows this locus graphically – and intimidatingly – as the material text itself.

Barskova's Shakespearian reception reflects particularly upon processes of reception and poetic influence, especially within Russian literature. Thanks both to excellent Russian translations of *Hamlet*, and to famous Russian receptions of *Hamlet* particularly by female poets, Barskova responds to *Hamlet* as to a work of Russian literature. She uses it to talk about Russian history. She appropriates Hamlet to voice her concerns. She uses Ophelia to talk about the state of being a female Russian poet, in conjunction with female classical figures whose fates parallel Ophelia's.

²⁴⁶ Barskova, *Evrildei i Orfika*.

²⁴⁷ Bate, p. 94.

²⁴⁸ Sarah Annes Brown *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. by Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 281, about Keats and Eliot.

Conclusion

Thanks to her classical education, Barskova's classical reception is very diverse (more so than this short, thematic study has shown). While it represents both Greece and Rome, Greek influences are more evident; this sets her apart from Shvarts and her mostly Roman classical reception. Yet her classical education also put a barrier between her and her childhood enthusiasm for Greek mythology; during her time at university, antiquity began to appear as a negative force in her poetry, a 'dead' entity, with classical references presented as clichéd and classical learning ironised. (Although *katabasis* appears as a theme in her poetry even before university age.) Her assessment of Classics' uselessness parallels the representations by Shvarts of the death or obsolescence of classical antiquity in 'Khome musaget' and other late poems.

Personal contexts are of primary importance in Barskova's uses of classical figures as alter egos. Barskova powerfully expresses the Russian female experience of her childhood self and her mother through Persephone and Demeter. She sublimates the pain of loss, immortalises her lost loved ones, and deliberates on the role of poetry relative to death through a series of classical couples: Orpheus and Eurydice, Narcissus and Echo, Odysseus and his lovers. Whilst she varies which member of the couple she chooses as her alter ego, it tends to be the one with greater agency, as well as the one who does not die/descend to the underworld: Orpheus, Narcissus, and Circe etc. over Eurydice, Echo, and Odysseus.

Petersburg, the site of her losses, merges with Hades, and, after her emigration, lurks in the background of her classical references as a shadowy, semi-real presence. The parallel between Barskova's Hades-Petersburg and Shvarts' Rome-Petersburg highlights the fact that Barskova's use of classical reception to overcome her grief is another kind of transcendence of *byt*. The pun on *byt* in 'Evrdei i Orfika, konechno, odno' evidences Barskova's awareness that her classical reception is an escape from *byt*.

Barskova also uses classical reception to talk about Russian history, like Shvarts and Kutik, in poems such as 'Gamlet kak internatsional'nyi student', 'Iz dnevnika S.O. (1941, Leningrad)', and 'Persei', which address famines resulting from war, especially the Blockade, Barskova's academic specialism. Unlike Shvarts and Kutik, she does not use Rome to talk about the fall of the USSR, as she was a child at the time.

So death figures prominently in Barskova's antiquity for many reasons. Yet the classical comes alive again for Barskova through Russian intermediaries. She signals her indebtedness to female Russian poets, especially Tsvetaeva and Akhmatova, and also including Shvarts, in multiple poems. Another key intertext is Brodskii – whether she's evoking him in 'Dafnis i Khloia', or arguing with him about Dido. But even more influential is *Hamlet* – or *Gamlet*, as the play's many Russian receptions and translations, especially by Lozinskii, turn Shakespeare into a Russian poet for Barskova.

Death and entropy are intertwined with Barskova's idea of antiquity to an extent far surpassing this same theme in Shvarts. Despite Barskova's first-hand contact with Latin and Greek texts, her classical reception is at its most vital when, like Shvarts and Kutik, she enters into dialogue with the Russian tradition of classical reception. The Silver Age and Thaw and Stagnation eras are her main mediating sources. Where she departs from tradition is by introducing cryptic, associative settings for her classical references, and taking Shvarts and Kutik's anachronism further, occasionally to states of timelessness (e.g. 'Kidneping', 'Iz antologii', 'Marsh protesta', 'Dafnis i Khloia'). While her classical reception tends to be less immersive than Shvarts', due to the increased anachronism, she follows Shvarts in personalising and contemporising antiquity to the extremes of taboo-breaking and repulsion, but, like Shvarts, is also lyrical alongside this. Barskova's "love to and revolt against" classical antiquity is the core paradox of her classical reception.

CONCLUSION

The classical reception of Elena Shvarts, Il'ia Kutik, and Polina Barskova concerns issues of poetic tradition, Russian contemporaneity and recent history, personal narratives, and models of being a poet. Shvarts fully inhabits her classical personae, only letting the reader know through hints that she is also talking about herself, or about contemporary Russia. Kutik steps into the roles required by his chosen genre: odist, historian, epic poet, epic hero; but with the lyric 'I' obscured, his artifice foregrounded, and a level of ironic self-consciousness present. Barskova lets classical personae stand for her, for those around her, and for Russia, especially when it is too painful to speak from herself. The differences and similarities between Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova's approaches to classical reception are telling, and connected both to their individual styles and experiences, and to their respective generations and milieux.

The only one who has studied classical languages and literature formally, Barskova, is at once the most prolific and eclectic, yet also careless and dismissive, in her classical references. Kutik likes to display his erudition and cite his sources, mingling references to Classics with a wide variety of other topics. Shvarts offers far more immersive classical reception, as she tends to devote entire poems and cycles to classical subjects, and also because she occludes the learning behind her poetry.

All three choose a different classical antiquity. Shvarts leans towards Rome, Barskova towards Greece, and Kutik splits the two depending on whether he speaks as Kutik the historian or Kutik the poet. The Third Rome myth continues into Shvarts and Kutik, where it represents the fall of the Soviet Union. But it does not go beyond them into Barskova, as she was a teenager when the USSR ceased to exist, and rarely uses Rome to talk about Russia. Shvarts conflates Rome with Petersburg, her home city. For Kutik, the only non-Petersburg poet, Rome is primarily political/historical, and Troy just as easily represents Russia's vicissitudes. Petersburg merges with Hades as a city of death due to its personal and historical associations for Barskova: the deaths in her pre-emigration past, and the Blockade. Antiquity provides a safe, poetic arena in which all three poets explore national traumas, such as world and civil wars, Stalinism, and the collapse of Communism.

Shvarts and Barskova assume primarily mythical alter egos, and Kutik – primarily historical ones. However, virtually all the alter egos are connected in some way with poetry. The evident point of convergence is Orpheus, whom they all appropriate at some point. This shows that they all look to classical antiquity for possible modes of being a poet, finding models for genre, career, inspiration, and poetic immortality. They all intensify the classical poet's relevance to them personally by refracting the references through nearer, Russian intermediaries. All three interact with Pushkin, Mandel'shtam, and (arguably) Brodskii, and both Shvarts and Barskova interact with Tsvetaeva and Akhmatova.

All three combine their classical references with discordant, transgressive, 'inappropriate' elements, such as slang, crudity, or references to low/popular culture. Often this is in conjunction with anachronism and/or anachorism, serving to jolt the reader from a classical context to a modern or Russian context, in order to stimulate a comparison between the two situations. The merging of classical antiquity and *byt* usually aims to transcend the bounds of everyday life, but at times *byt* triumphs over antiquity. This tends to happen when the poet questions the relevance of classical antiquity – supposedly enduring, as the longest-established and 'best' examples of culture – to contemporary life. Just such a clash occurs between (modern) religion and antiquity. The biblical themes blended with classical subjects in Shvarts are desacralised in Kutik and absent in Barskova. Shvarts and Kutik oppose monotheism with paganism. While Kutik depicts them as equally ancient – and therefore equally consequential, Shvarts sees in Christianity the death of the pagan gods.

It is significant that both Kutik and Barskova used the word "crutch" to characterise their use of classical reception.¹ Kutik meant it as a technical crutch, Barskova – as an emotional crutch; yet these purposes are interlinked, when the poet wishes to allegorise an aspect of themselves through a classical reference. By simultaneously representing both antiquity and Russia, both public knowledge and personal experience, poets acquire critical distance on both; a certain level of irony. By estranging familiar contexts with their classical alter egos Shvarts, Kutik, and Barskova make the mundane poetic.

¹ Kutik, 'Interview'; Barskova, 'Interview'.

APPENDIX

Here I append my translations of complete poems.

1. Shvarts, 'Kinfiia'

Kinfiia

BOOK ONE

I. To a slave girl

Give me the crimson ointment
To soothe the sore on my lip,
Give me – once you've warmed the bed –
Hellebore in hot wine.

Pouring rain since morning –
Icy switches that
Cut Rome like a slave
Caught thieving.

In its cage the parrot shrieks –
Talking at last, cursed creature!
These parts lie congealed under a damp blanket,
While there – far away, in the Pyrenees –

The legions march against the Germani.
In the gorges – they're like a little finger
That twitches in agony long
After the body has grown stiff in death.

In all Rome none more volatile of temper
Than me has ever been born –
Nowadays wherever I look
Everything irritates me.

The parrot keeps jabbering –
Pitiful present of a pitiful man,
Strangle him quickly, slave girl.
The little green body will swim in tears after,
I shall curse you, but now strangle him quick as you can.

The gutters bellow – today no one –
Not thief, nor lover – will leave the house.
Vainly the inn opposite
Keeps its smoky lamps burning.

II

Again father stuck his nose in pontificating:
“You ought not,” he’s like, “to live this way, but that.”
“Fine,” I say to him, “Dad,
I’ll stop it at once, Daddy.”

I, meek, look at his grey head,
At his gnarled hands, his too-red mouth.
I say to the slaves: “This instant,
Throw the fool into the pool.”

They drag him across the marble floor,
He clings, but there’s nothing to cling to,
Blood flows over his face, and tears:
“Daughter dearest,” he cries, “forgive me, have mercy!”

No! To the hungry moray eels to eat
You’ll go, you debaucher and hypocrite.
Or I’ll imagine: a lion in the circus
Chews on the last of his liver.

“OK, OK,” I say, “I’ll mend my ways,
Oh, poor you, my poor old dad.
When a tiger had licked up even the steam from his blood –
Then I became a teensy bit sorry for him.

In my mind I punish him variously – a ton of
Times and another times a ton –
In order, one day, and for real this time,
Hammer raised – to strike his cranium...not.

III. To a slave girl

How dare you, bitch, how dare you!
I should pack you off to the countryside,
Marry you off to a Celtiberian
Who cleans his teeth with urine,
Or to an Abyssinian, to match the colour
Of your soul – but that’d be too good for you.
O, hussy! I was reciting Catullus,
Roaming quietly through the house – and a lamp
Standing in the corner lengthened my shadow.
She ran in, clomping, from the kitchen,
Lugging a mackerel on a gilt platter,
And stepped right on my – shadow –
On my head, and after that my forearm!
And my shadow is more sensitive and tender –
As she well knows! – than her leathery hide.
If you were to be fried in that pan
With that noble mackerel,
Then you would still not feel as much pain

As me – when with your hoof you ground
Into the floor – the shadow of my ringlet.

IV. To Cupid

Pain is always with you, wingèd suckler.
Though we fall out of love – parting is painful.
In your quiver are always arrows aplenty,
So why, miser,
Digging your heels into my throat,
Do you pull so hard on this arrow
To wrench it out of the dried-up wound?
Are you taking revenge, because you're no longer my master?
You'd best fire off a new one,
Don't tug this one, don't tear, don't touch –
The blood has clotted already.
So off you fly, don't be stingy, little boy.

V. To a young poet

Why, Septimus, did you harass the Muse?
In vain you elocute, in vain you flail your arms
Beating out the time. You have bored Calliope
And Euterpe to death, and Erato
Has run out of places to hide from you.
Don't go tugging at the Muse's skirts any more.
Or else, watch out – amidst a crowded square
A thunderous voice will possess you,
And, all unwilling, you will declaim to the crowd:
"Those, such as I – lucky owners of
Bare, unblushing physiognomies,
Whom the long Roman day
Drives out onto the Forum in herds,
With bird brains and long tongues –
May lust after only mortal women.
Once I pulled the Muse's shoe off,
Once I scratched her ankle.
So the goddess' anger might pass over –
Quickly, hide far, far away from me,
Good people, tablets and stylus!"

VI. To Claudia

Claudia, you won't believe who's fallen in love with me – a gladiator,
Three seasons in the circus he's not had a single defeat,
I'm already forty, and he's young still, and beautiful –
He is chaste, honest, swarthy, huge, sorrowful,
An elephant of Hannibal's bore fewer scars than he.
In the circus, he says, he always looks about for me,
But never sees me – for I don't go there.
As soon as dusk falls – he comes knocking at my door,
All evening sits there, leaning on his sharp-shining sword.
Heavily, strenuously breathing through his mouth, he gazes

Passionately and plaintively at the same time...
My lover reduces himself to tears laughing at him.
Of course, not to his face, since he – as you know – is a coward,
Unites all the vices within himself,
Scarcely glimpses the gladiator – straight out the window he jumps.
“Passion,” says the gladiator, “interferes with my fighting,
If it keeps on this way, I shall never return to Gaul,
Even now I vanquish without my former flair,
Some keen young thing will up and skewer me soon.”
What does he see in me? I look at him coldly,
At the gleam of his doe eyes and his powerful dark arms.
What can I do, Claudia, Cupid is freakish –
Wretched me, I love a bald monstrosity
Who hides like a pitiful slave behind the door,
Only to shriek afterwards: “drive that killer hence!”
But, despicably, I am loathe to drive him away –
When will another such gallant love me again?
And they’re almost upon me, the fogs of age...
Like a sated wolf wants a sheep for the winter...
I draw out his torment, but what if – wasted away from love,
He should fall in the arena – how should I live then, Claudia, tell me?

VII

How I envy you, bacchantes,
You tear lightly across the plateaux,
The whites of your eyes splinter the moonlight,
You gallop like mares on the steppe.
One time I stood on the sidelines –
A friend had brought me – we were watching –
Suddenly she succumbed and convulsed
Too in the drunken dance and rushed
After you, with me forgotten.
I watched – your mouths contorted
And your faces slipped down on one side,
Like masks on mediocre actors.
You tore a live bull to pieces
And, gobbling, gorged yourselves on his flesh
And doused yourselves with hot blood,
Tossing out all reason, as a slave girl
Sluices out an amphora with a swing.
And from the sidelines I looked on at you.
But when I get home – I see – my arms
Are all scratched – bloodied up to the elbow...
There’s your unhappy lot, Kinfiia –
On yourself you can unleash your passion,
On yourself alone, and not a speck of passion
Will you let fly outwardly – not the smallest.
You will never run after a bull naked...

VIII. To a provincial woman

Perhaps you did not know, Abderian woman –
To offend Kinfiia is a fearful thing –
Kinfiia knows such herbs,
Kinfiia has such spells...
That your face will shrivel, you'll turn black,
You will hiccup day and night,
Your Greek cook will hawk up in your soup,
Because of the curse put on you by me,
And you will be physicked by your vaunted
Egyptian doctor.

Even a drunk negro, a salty sailor,
Who all voyage long has thirsted for love,
Even he will not get into bed with you.
So, Abderian woman, you'd better
Forget Kinfiia, leave her in peace.
Besides, I wouldn't have to lift a finger,
If you do anything bad to me –
Know this: Jupiter will punish you anyway.
To offend Kinfiia – is a fearful thing.

1974

BOOK TWO

I

Our ancestors' ashes wreath in the urns – tonight is the Bacchanalia.
The Esquiline gardens are all closed to dry out,
There ever-young Dionysus froths black at the mouth.
Equinox, and in the garden's vats spring is brewing.
He exudes black mud, murk, lustre, and oblivion,
He dies, to be born again on this night.
Be you god or mortal – so long as you exist –
You will be buried under accretions of rust or lichen – under lived life,
Like sunken galleys in the far sea get buried,
Under silt, shale, and sand.
I shall learn oblivion, half-death from Dionysus.
Death alone can purify. Die together with the god,
Who, flown through the Forum, will fall into the closed garden.
Lap up black mud 'til you've drunk your fill, exude black mud,
You will rise from the grave pure, young – Zagreus will resurrect you.

II

Whoever, when strains of a distant flute drift by,
Pricks up their nose, flares their nostrils;
Whoever calls smell to the aid of hearing –
That person has a refined taste in music.
Whoever, having placed before themselves a dish,

Savours the sweet smell, the sharp smoke
By inclining towards it, slightly, one ear –
That person has a feel for things – not just food.
And whichever of the six senses
Has been found a task to work upon,
It is at once intertwined with its neighbour;
This person calls all of them to help out at once.
In this they are like the prudent Greek,
Manager of a large villa:
If it pours with rain, he puts out amphorae –
Not one, but all the ones in the house.

III

What is the attraction of remote Saratoga?
Why do you live in the backwoods of the South?
We all, it is true, huddle
In the remote backyard of the universe,
But far off – in the masters' villa
There is music, light, and song.
Through a crack, like sacrificial lambs, we
See the reflection and hear the echo,
And tremble, lest of a sudden some rude hand
Should brusquely throw the door wide open...
You will come, but too late,
You will return then to the capital,
But you will not find me, nor
Will you find my tomb, even,
Because at the gates of the world
A hairy iron fist
Is knocking.

IV. To Claudia, after visiting my sick granny

Surely she,
Who was my home,
The pillar propping up all Creation,
Hearth's heat, sheep's fleece,
Is not now
That greasy, dry insect,
Clinging to the doorjamb and following me
With sightless gaze,
Who hearing – does not hear,
And sloughs off her carapace where she stands.

V

Whilst strolling in the mountains I came across a host of multicoloured stones.
This one was rolling around in the dirt, I sniffed out that one under the earth.
This one beguiled me with its shape, I liked the colour of that one.
I toss them all into my sack, and drag it along behind me.
Perhaps, later, in the valley, their shine and colour will fall away,
In the morning light they will melt into a heap of cobblestones,

For it is easy to make mistakes, when wandering waist-deep in clouds.
All the same, I hope that when I strew them out in the taberna,
A plebeian will say: "How bright!", and a connoisseur: "How rare."

VI

They watch blood sports,
Scoff down lambs, calves, and doves –
And spin tales of my terrible cruelty.
Of this I am not in the least bit guilty.
True, I once threw scalding soup
Over an impertinent and odious little boy –
He should not grope under my tunic at lunch,
I have a right to finish eating my soup.
One time I hurled a bust of Brutus,
I think it was, at a client. I was sorry about that –
I had to throw the shards away.
Once I broke the rule of hospitality –
I tore my grandfather's pike from the wall
And rushed at my guests with it.
I don't remember why, now. I've forgotten.
And they left in deep dudgeon,
Saying that they would not come again.
And they call *me* ferocious!
But I am meek, I am meeker than anyone.
My slaves are always happy with me,
I would step around an ant,
I would take a beetle away from a child.

VII. On the beach at Baiae

The Sun is sinking in golden sores,
The gentle lamb descends from the black
Mountains.
Its fleece is matted
With burrs and thorns,
And cut in two by someone,
On the damp sand
A starfish
Shivers.
Apparently the immortal god wills this,
But even I, a mortal, am ashamed –
To be perpetually a pale pythia, fevered,
Breathing in baleful vapours
And grabbing on to the unseen, just as a dog
Grabs on to a scrap and shakes its head...
But I am obedient to the bidding of the god
Who sews golden songs with his arrow.
I walk; from my shoulders the cave
Hangs heavy like a cloak,
And the unseen city Delphi
Exhales ill omens.
My life is stewing in a brass cauldron,

Golden suns swirl through my bloodstream.
The Parcae tug at the silken threads.
Fishermen haul in the glistening nets.
Gulping for breath, I flap my gills fast,
And all around me my golden brothers
Dry out, squirming –
In mortal anguish.

VIII. Conversation

Kinfia

Greek, do you remember how much you cost me?
I bought you instead of a villa,
So that, over-endowed with years,
Stuffed full of ancient wisdom, you
Would help me to understand Plato –
Greek is not really my strong suit.
I bought you, an Alexandrian, who
Could initiate me into the Egyptian Mysteries.
But above all else, I bought you
To bring me comfort in times of affliction.
Tomorrow, as you know, I will turn forty.
What is age? Teach me.
How is it that I have turned into an old woman,
Was it not yesterday that I was lying in swaddling clothes?
How has this happened? Explain.

Greek

You yourself know, no worse than I do,
That numbers mean nothing,
And time does not flow equally for everyone.
For some it crawls, for others it gallops.
Nobody knows at what hour they will bloom,
And at forty you can be, actually, only twenty.

Kinfia

If you are going to talk drivel,
Then I will sell you or swap you
For a doctor or a cook. Think on it.

Greek

In our first lustre we are sky-blueish,
In our second, our soul grows green,
In our third, it flushes carmine,
And in the fourth – that is, at twenty eight,
It turns violet, in the fifth – yellow,
Like corn at harvest time.
And then orange, and from then on
The soul should constantly iridesce,
Go through all the colours. But when it becomes wise –
Then it will go white, and be composed of
Such colours, that the eye cannot discern.
It goes through all these transformations,

Changes, growth and modulations,
For one cannot spend one's whole life as a
Bright red, tedious flower hanging on a branch
That is bare and bleached by frosts.
Only the gods and their favourites can live thus –
Each seeks out their own colour and abides in it,
For Artemis will never grow decrepit.
And Hephaestus was never an infant.

Kinfia

Why are you going on about gods and infants?
Well, what if in a day I change my colour
A hundred times – now blue, now green?

Greek

Kinfia, your soul is a living, growing plant,
And it cannot decrease in size,
But only grows, and matures, and pulsates.
Colour holds a mysterious meaning,
Colour holds a secret significance.
Rain is snow, profoundly aged,
Yet both of them are one and the same water:
Just so, the soul remains itself in man and boy.
Even so, we need to know if it's snow or rain.

Kinfia

Snow cannot come in June all of a sudden,
Rain doesn't tip dully down in January.
What a pitiful and clumsy windbag you are.
And from all this conversing
My soul has turned completely black.

1978

FRAGMENTS

I

I walked into the hut and looked about me:
It seemed I was seeing ghosts –
In that corner I sobbed one time,
In that one I prayed...
If these spectres of the past, risen
Suddenly from the dead, became flesh and bone,
What a squeeze it would be in here –
Like at the races on a public holiday!
They would all strangle each other,
They would all bite each other,
And gals, in Spartan fashion and in silence,
Would beat up the adults with swinging punches,
Who then would howl like mollycoddled brats –
All at once I saw before me that rubbish heap,

That vat of all the life outlived by me...

But the soul, flying spark-like, would flee
From one – to another – until it found life,
Until, honing in, it flew instantly to me,
Leaving behind all the crowds of
Phantoms – fading, clothed, unclothed,
Wrathful, and merry, and sorrowing –
As though fleeing a city after the eruption
Of an indifferent and savage volcano.

II

My Propertius has returned to me again –
What luck, what joy for Kinfiia!
Scratched, mauled, bedraggled,
Balding, dirty, scrawny.
His eyes dart about so pitifully.
Why won't you look me in the eyes?
Surely you aren't ashamed in front of me?
You must be ashamed before someone else – love,
For against our will
She runs after me and you
And leads us again and again to shame and woe.
Ah, how I would like to throw you out
On your ear – only I feel sorry
For that poor little sister, love,
In a pitiful state, but alive, all the same.
Go and change your toga, this one's all stained,
See to your scratches, get washed,
Then fumigate yourself from the filth with sulphur.
Apparently, such is my fate...

III

Only yesterday I wanted
To sue a neighbour for a iuger of land –
Curly vines grow on it,
Shaggy snails crawl on it –
So now I am going to court over that iuger,
But I have, as it were, turned cold towards it.
Now I want something else entirely:
I want to get saffron dye
For my hair – saffron, with a shimmer,
I want to become ginger – like a fox in the field,
What's more, the colour sets off my green eyes.
There is always something we desire,
Now this, tomorrow some other thing.
O wishes, you are seven-league boots,
Which, taking turns, drag life along
Towards the ultimate *meta*.
You are both jockey and horses...

IV. To Morpheus

God who loves souls naked, unadorned,
God of hidden infatuations and secret fears,
You send a Vestal virgin a debaucher in her sleep,
A rapist, so it wouldn't be shameful –
Like, I didn't want to really, he made me...
A jealous man dreams he is in an iron cage
Watching his girlfriend dally with another man,
And she breaks into cruel laughter...
You do not even take pity on the pure infant,
He trembles all over and grows rigid in his sleep,
Suddenly gives a terrible cry and wakes up,
And the secret terror is in him until his dying day.
Morpheus, like night, you steal with your candle
By a traceless track into people's brains. So be warned,
If you do not send me dreams as sweet
As sea-sails – clean, and clear,
Then to spite you I will never, ever go to sleep.
All night long I will pour cold water over myself,
And I will force my slave girls to sing until dawn.
Let me, Morpheus, dream of only Nothing.

V

...Then hags came running,
Evil witches creeping up,
And they screeched: she is here,
Here, our omens tell us,
Here is where the enchantress lives.
Her spells have summoned
The dank tide, which three days, now,
Night and day, batters the city,
Floods Rome and the Globe.¹
The Praefectus came out to take a look,
And his slaves came with him;
They said: here lives an honest
Roman citizeness,
Begone, you witches, back
To your burrows, lickety split.
I squinted my mad eye,
The left one, the smaller one
(As others see it, but to me it's immense,
It encompasses even the sea,
It encompasses Rome and the Globe),
I fell to my knees,
Whispered "Dionysus!"
Let the tide arise, swirling,
In foam and howl and splash and salt,

¹ The palindrome 'рим и мир' ('Rome and the world'), like 'urbi et orbi', is significant in Russian.

Let the Globe and Rome awake!
In the roily waves, a birdfish
I will tear through the caerulean vortex.
I hear – waves are beating at the windows,
Drowned are the evil hags,
Drowned is the Square, the Forum,
Drowned is Rome and the Globe!
I swam amidst the whirlpools,
Spirits ran barefoot over the waves
And carried held low
Their torch-sticks of fuming stars
Beneath a high full moon...

VI

“Master, make me,” Pasiphae to Daedalus
Whispers quickly, “please, try to make me a heifer
Outfit, from a recent hide, in which I can make cow-eyes
At that hot hooper.”

Does she throw herself at the bull?
No: aflame, she waits, she endures.
He who bides his time in love, who bribes your slave girls,
Every last one,

He who, beating a path to you, contrives a dalliance
With your friend, so you will be jealous,
So you fall the more surely
Into the hunter’s net –

You cannot ever gauge his heart, he will be
Eternally calculating. Last winter’s snow
At the depths of his loving eyes
Will never quite melt.

VII

What threw me into the arms of Diomedes?
Let an expert in these shadowy affairs
Answer this.
Was it, perhaps, revenge, lack of love,
Self-loathing?
So, he’s bombastic, and pompous,
And stupid – so what? He’s in love with me,
And what’s more, he’s a senator and a soldier.
Even the scar along his rib,
Inflicted by an enemy spear –
If my beloved’s, how much tenderness would it elicit,
How I would kiss it!
But the scar was Diomedes’;
I scraped my fingernail along it, boredly.
No, it brought him no pleasure,
Me giving in to his pestering.

In the course of the night, even our sexes
Seemed to rub away, from lack of love.
Daybreak discovered us wolves,
Quivering with hatred,
Unfed and ferocious,
At either corner of a circus cage.

VIII

I used to love cats,
But no more – I am sick of them!
Priscus, my faithful attendant,
You old campaigner, seek them all out,
And – with your good arm, not the one you lost
In the Alps – throw them out of the house.
Yesterday my beloved took onto his lap
That ginger one with the golden eyes,
And she sprawled in rapture
Like a drunken hetaera.
He scratched her cheeks, stroked her tummy,
Gazed into her doleful eyes...
Which of them purred louder – him
Or her – I don't know. The scene swam
In a blood-red, malevolent haze of jealousy.
“Do you like that, hmm?” she asked him softly.
He replied, eyes tight shut: “Unutterably.”
So, Priscus, my faithful old attendant,
I want them out of my house today –
Especially that jowly, ginger one.
You may grab hold of them any which way,
Sling them out the doors by their tails,
And if I should hear a sudden feline yowl,
I won't send you to the galleys.

IX

I had to travel to the capital
To study something or other.
But now it's hard for the fugitive
To find her way back home.
No one here has even heard
Of our one-horse estate.
Where is our moon, our sun?
You ask – no one ever knows.
Somewhere beyond the miry gloom.
Nary a breath of news comes thence,
Except on occasion, when
A plucked bird flies in for a festival,
But her beak is invariably sealed.

X

Rosy-hued clouds are drifting over Rome.
Sedan chairs float past
The golden mile stone.
I shall turn off here to the market.

I read the letter again. Hark at this!
‘May your body, formerly so beloved,
Achingly familiar, down to the very wrinkles on your soles,
Turn to ashes
In the gold of a funeral pyre, before
I return from barbarous Lusitania.
Yes! I shall sign up as a centurion
In the Gaulish Foreign Legion² – farewell!’
The tablets smell of oysters,
Roasted wild boar, Sicilian wine, perfume.
From a stall in the market I shall buy
A string of heavy pearls
The colour of the clouds
That are now over Rome.

1980s

2. Shvarts, ‘Kinfiia’s Complaint’

Kinfiia’s Complaint

“Is the nightingale to blame, if in the epoch of forest fire
It chances to perish in the flame?
It is frightened
In its final hour,
Shutting its eyes,
To see the scrolls of its native trees
Turn to dry ashes –
As if they had never been at all.
The death of everything it knows.
The tongue of new barbarians –
So this is what fate has doomed
It should live to see.
Would I be loathe to quit this pitiful body,
If my soul lived on in its native scrolls?”

Together with this Roman complaint I span out my own,
Sitting in the Roman ruins in tears:
In the city they’ve taken up the tram tracks,
There’s nothing to trundle off to paradise on,
They’ve smeared the walls
With the odious fat of wealth.

² Legio quinta Alaudae, The Fifth ‘Larks’ Legion.

New Alaric leads the war host of his jeeps.
Poor grey mouse
Art hid cowering in a burrow,
Poetry quickly dropped dead
As if it had never lived.

Roman woman, your weeping is in vain –
In centuries to come much will revive, albeit in altered forms.
Right now, though, everything seems irrevocable,
So hopeless, to my eyes, that 'twere better
To dash this brittle glass city of poetry
Roughly to the ground.

2006

3. Shvarts, 'Homo Musagetes'

Homo Musagetes

(Winter Muses)

Vester, Camenae, Vester...
*Horatius**

I

Wind whistles outwith windowpanes
Overlooking the rear courtyard.
The wind, circling, rises,
Stirs up my innermost dregs.
Any thief
Can creep into my soul,
The basest flattery
Will buy me off.
But the heat is rising
And the choir igniting,
Light sandals' lispings blether,
A barefoot conversation.

Do not pull me, Muses, into the circle dance,
I'm tired, I'm burnt out.
There's nothing to tap my feet on –
Underfoot is a sodden, sinking raft.
I am no longer your tenth,
And it is no longer my turn.

Scent of ice, wine, and mint,
Mountain grasses in the dew.
A crucified wryneck**
Has been spun in a wheel.

The Muses spin, like beads

Multicoloured – yet more motley!
And one of them is like a hole in the ice,
Yet another is like Orpheus.
And one of them is like morphine,
Yet another is like Morpheus.
And one of them is like clinging sleep,
Yet another is a sheaf of fires.
Do not pull me, Muses, into the circle dance –
This year with us is no longer songful,
But a tone-deaf whirlpool.

Lighter than wind, darker than light,
And louder than grass.
Ah, leave mankind alone,
Call ye upon God instead.

* I am yours, Muses, I am yours... (*Horace*) (*Latin*).

** Wrynecks, crucified on a wheel, used to be brought as a sacrifice to Aphrodite.

II

Muses! Girls! Winter has truly closed in upon us.
Snow under skin – where's the flute, where's the timpani?
With the twisting blizzard you first appeared
With coals in your palms... or have you lost your way?
Vamoosed, like Pan?

The Aegean sailors on the becalmed sea
Heard a voice: "Pan is Dead!"
A breath gusted down from the mountain peak, the sun turned pale,
In a haze Olympus fell.

Only the Muses are alive, they need a tent
To join their multicoloured, drunken circle dance.
With the first dusting of snow, barefoot over frost,
With her black-red stone the first goes wandering.

III

So, the first snow has fallen.
Libating blood-red wine
Onto the snowdrifts
To honour the frozen Muses,
And burning wild poems
Over a candle,
I say to Death:
As a bee I will suck of thee.

Oh, how happy she is
When she is met
Not with snuffed-out stupidity,
Not with childish fear,
And not by a dreary shade, shuffling into the shadows,
But as a lover: with tremulousness in their eyes,

And concupiscent impatience.

The poor Camenae shifted
In the snow from foot to foot –
All the gods were dead,
They alone were left.
The others – even unto death they flit;
As they choose, so they fly,
Burning round the world tree
Like so many New Year's lights.

IV

Sprinkle some snow into a red
Cup with some heavy wine,
And perhaps I will find oblivion
In a bitterly-consoling dream.
Maybe in the dream I will see
Orpheus' head,
At sea for so long,
Prophesising and floating.
How it was pounded
By the salt, and the dark, and the waves!
How it reproached the heavens
With its black tongue
And blinded the stars
With bottomless empty pupils.

It was a boat, I think,
A sharp-nosed boat,
And I was a sailor paddling it,
The verbal calf muscle at the oars.
In front of it flew the gods –
Dionysus and Apollo.
As they flew they embraced:
He is in love with us both.
Ever since I touched
That dismembered mouth
I have been a heavy stone falling
Into salty emptiness.
Ever since I looked
The head in the eyes
I am become degenerate, indigent,
Sightless, a sister to the owls.

Mix my wine with snow,
Sprinkle some ice into my skull;
Happiness is not in languorous luxury,
But in ecstatically-strict delirium.
O snow, you keep on falling by,
Your whiteness not settling on my mind.
The nine are wheeling unseen,
Amidst flurries of snowy columns they chime.

V

Fuzzy white bees,
Skimming beneath a lamp –
I can tell them easily
Apart from these frosty ones.
From under their whiteness, these
Squint with a dark, glittering eye,
And the sharp stings of their eyelashes
Are pointed at whoever's in their sights.

Frozen eyelashes prick,
Icy eyes inspect,
You are entwined
By a heady, freezing, tear-dewed vine.
Muses, surely you are not merely
Pupils for imbibing the soul?
Nine stony³ stars,
Spinning, strike me in the temples.

VI. Pythia

She just sits, hiccups uncontrollably...
“Well, I can see that for myself.
Give her a thump on the back,
Quickly, do as I say!”
“No effect! She's hiccupping
Even more loudly and painfully.
Throw some water over her,
That'll help calm her down.”
“Look, her eyes are bulging
And froth's coming out her ears.”
“What on earth's the matter with her?
Has there been a death in the family?”

VII

Muses (you're frozen!) – have the white flies*
Enticed you here?
“The world, the deaf water, has pushed us out
Into Hyperborea.
Long had we slipt through the grey-haired gloom
Over the White Sea,
We glimpse – a sparrow, alive, on an ice flow,
Frozen through.
So we warmed him with ourselves,
With blue tongues
Of living lightning, then we tore onwards

³ The Russian word 'stony' puns upon its similarity with 'Camēnae', the Roman muses; so, 'petrean/pierian'.

To daylight.
And he floats there and sings
In nine languages,
With blue fire in his icy head,
Imperceptible in his eyes.
When he rode a wave-crest
Upon a flake from the fragmenting ice floe,
In the basements of Erebus the heart
Of hoary-headed Proserpina broke in two.”

* Goethe has the poem ‘Die Musageten’. He believes that musagetes are flies, as both of them appear in summer.
Here, flies are also musagetes, but winter ones – ‘white flies’.

VIII. Encomium of each other before Nikol’skii Cathedral

The yellow arcades, paint peeling in patches, of the Nikol’skii Market,
Where they make enamelware with little flowers
On it – there, down the long flute the wind
Blows through the night hours.

There the pigeon coos, the postman whistles,
And carelessly girded, barefoot,
Like peripatetics, maidens wander
In the dead, deaf night.

“You have a sheaf of lightning at your belt, Erato,
Without you neither hymn nor song will take shape,
If you approach closer, bestow a glance – the blood rushes
Faster through the words.”

“As for you, Polyhymnia, be not so modest, maiden,
You direct the singer’s gaze towards the sky,
Without you he would crawl o’er the earth, squirming
Like a quav’ring beast.”

“Without you, Melpomene, without you, Clio...”
Thus they vied in singing each other’s praises,
And, as they danced, they merged into a darkly-bright
Crown of woven thorns.

Ah, to whom are we nine, oh, poor maidens!,
To bequeath our power of song,
Ah, whom are we to intoxicate with Castalian water,
Entwine with hop vines?

By the Nikolsky’s belltower, they see,
A beggar is huddled, hunched over.
In his sleep he reaches out his hand to heaven,
Sleeps standing, hapless.

At once they fell upon him –
Started turning, whispering, whirling him.

He set to mewling, tormented by the sweet
Pain of songfulness.

With both hands he slapped his sides resoundingly,
And, overflowing with weighty rapture,
He went and threw himself into the fairly shallow
Kriukov Canal.

IX. Muses before the Icon

Around Nikolsky Cathedral
They race in snowstorm circle dance,
Feeling cold, and kind of guilty,
Form a chain strung out at the entrance.

In order of precedence, before the Virgin of the Three Hands
They make her – and to the side – a brief bow.
Through the hands of the unearthly Icon
They slip one by one, like rosary beads.

“All our kindred died long ago.”
They flickered, candles in their hands.
And of their own accord, alone,
They commissioned a requiem mass.

November 1994

4. Kutik, 'Cats' July'

Cats' July

For N. L. Trauberg

Bearers of the name 'cat', you, who
abandoned yourselves to the comforts of sleep,
inhale, without stirring a whisker,
rusty summer from atop your warmed ledge.
Mousy dreams scamper as mounds under your fur,
like muscles on an athlete.

July – the month of the pilgrim's caresses
of the Egyptian pussycat, her caterwauling and huffs,
and claws on red cushions, and wax
melted in the much-loving lap,
and the noisy ides of cattish March...
Did you see it, sleepyheads?

But mind you don't give any of it away,
not by look or word, not even to an honest dream.
What do you care for Don Juanish repute,
indecorous passions, old-age pension's coin
from the sun – rays stroking skin, or
all the pusses of Egypt?

Silence is the gold of your deserts,
fertile in sand and the labour of water-pumps,
whose speech is a gurgling in the midday shade,
while yours is a rumbling when you catch
a substanceless sunbeam off Venus' compact mirror
in your slumber.

Tomcats, pray tell, who of you recalls
the martial songs of luxurious Rome?
It's not to their tune that you now break into dance,
whirling a sweet wrapper round the room;
they have been supplanted by the drowse of Buddha
and blind Chinaman's buff.

But if a rainstorm should stew you in your window,
lazybones, gorged on sleep and dreams
in which the mollycoddled cat reminisces
about rich and sweet fish's flesh,
your golden fur shall shine out as the swords
of iron Mars.

And into your dream will break the struggle of galleys,
letting fly shining grappling claws into each other's sides,
and up will flare a green haze in the whites of your eyes,
the fire of implacable zeal and valorous
fleet-footedness. Antonys of jealousy, sleep,
doze...doze...

5. Kutik, 'The Wasp in the Hour'

The Wasp in the Hour

Wasp, o glass-polisheress,
what manner of goad drove you
under the puppet cupola of the Hour
to immure yourself, buzzing?

You sting like phosphorus stone,
but all the while its
deaf cuckooing amen
pummels pell-mell the nocturnal dial.

And in the cuckoo's beak, in the very cleft,
you shiver like the contour zero
between the two hands
blindly scything away the circle, when

right on time, mindful of the end,
they enter the final quarter,
to warm the Hour's cold seed
in minute embraces.

But suddenly concerning yourself with future
motion, tell me, won't you with your
buzzing rewinding bring
into movement all their latin?

Not the latin, in which the shields tolled
at the skirmish when Flaccus
threw his to the ground, and its pitiful,
brassy feartiness –

but that unearthly latin,
resembling, if a shield,
then one all pocked with light
and stitched with a seam of seconds.

2.

What name do you give a thread
that with ease and condescension
insinuates itself past all the girders
of a classical ceiling?

Oh, how Danae groaned
when that double thread slipped
between her maidenly legs
and a knot caught in her lap!

And how was she supposed to know
whose seed had left this mark,
but at the moment of conception
she suddenly seemed to hear – like

the wasp, in the Hour's tortuous confinement,
running round and round, contorting herself
pitifully on the axis of impatience,
until she unwinds entirely –

the buzzing of Cronides' spindle,
its golden-housed thread
striving to exact revenge a hundredfold
on the father for his offspring's injuries.

And the dial is no more, nor yet
its remotest boundaries,
and the hands stick out of the yarn
that has been woven, like knitting needles.

3.

Ah! tout est bu! Bathylle, as-tu fini de rire?
Paul Verlaine

The wasp's stripy socks,
donned for a mad football kick,
will not boot the warmed ball
of leaden seed in the crotch.

This sphere will answer every kick with a tock,
since the past for the future
is shackled by craving, hung-over
by the charmed chalice of zero.

We are poured the selfsame glasses,
we drink from wide-open zeros.
Bathyllus, the Gauls are drawing nearer,
but just you keep the wet stuff flowing.

We aren't versed in latin,
but disdain power and evil,
like the golden tsars of the ciphers,
we rule at a round table.

And the dial is no longer above us,
we ourselves are our own celestial spheres,
but should we drink – up to our lips
shall float the drowned wasp.

6. Kutik, 'Last Letter'

Last Letter

Yes, I write little. Evidently little...

Little? – without my family, and without my dog, as I was in Malmo,

Without shaggy Misha, who was blown away by the wind,
for whom the lamentation was as that for the sparrow – Catullus'.

Well, here, in Chicago, I'm also, as it turns out, a) without my family, and b) without
you, my cat.

Though I knew exceedingly little of your childhood
(you had a different 'father', I – a different 'son'),

but, having lived to see your grey golden years,
you ogled Hungarian suet,

crusted in red pepper.
Not that it was a salacious stare,

but your eyes burn, eat
into the very core...

Then again, what can a cat
know about Catullus...

1997, Madison

7. Kutik, 'In Memory of Anton and Allen'

In Memory of Anton and Allen

(March-April 1997)

You were silly like us...

*W. H. Auden*⁴

1

It happened in March, at the very end.
I was driving to Wisconsin,
in a panic lest I be blown away like sand,
like one of the Sephardim
in the desert – my windscreen wipers had jammed.
I pulled off the highway at a filling station, till I felt less panicky.
A snowy stone without a head, like Nike,
covered the side windows with her letter K
wings as she lay on the roof. The folds of her tunic
snagged my wipers, made them stick.
Like James Bond
with a statue on the roof,⁵ I hit the road and a wall of snow.
Not a crown of roses, but a ribbon-
figure of 8 in the headlights grimaced with shadow.
I understood that something had ended and an ellipsis was begun.
When I drove into Madison that night the snowstorm
had stopped, in a coat I was even too warm.
I switched off the headlights and got out, not knowing he was dead – Anton.

He died that very night. Suddenly – as it stopped snowing.
He died not knowing
I was on my way. In my absence they interred the cat
in the frozen Wisconsin earth in his best blue coat.
He was – I repeat! – a persian blue cat,
brought with me from Sweden to the USA.
He died, and I don't know what happened to him after that,
where his soul was fitted to stay.

2

Ten days later Ginsberg died as well – Allen.
From these two demises I was utterly downfallen.
I restored myself gradually. I am not Tallinn.⁶
I held firm, like we were taught by Kun.⁷
Anton was youthful, but not entirely a Iurkun.⁸

⁴ Kutik pays homage to the obituary poems of Auden for W. B. Yeats and Brodskii for T. S. Eliot.

⁵ In GoldenEye.

⁶ The medieval city of Tallinn has been preserved virtually undamaged and is listed by UNESCO.

⁷ Nikolai Kun, author of *Legends and Myths of Ancient Greece*. Also, one of the largest breeds of cat: Maine Coon.

⁸ Iurii Iurkun (1895-1938), bisexual artist and writer, the boyfriend of Mikhail Kuzmin from 1913 until Kuzmin's death in 1936. (The original Russian *iurok*, 'nimble', may refer to

Allen was a Kuzmin,⁹ but on a piano he couldn't pick out a tune.

Before Allen declared to himself: It's my time to go,
we met once upon a time in the (late) republic of Geo...¹⁰
He didn't like pork, preferred persimmon,
sang me blues and Blake, quoted – ravingly – *The Raven*;
he knew that – whatever gets howled in concert halls –
a poet is Homer, and not of the common chorus.

No, for all that, not all of us, surely, will pass awa...
You, Anton and Allen, began with the letter A,
like the ladder of a house-painter,
who – forgetting their wallpaper –
said “*Instanter*, make them blue!”
and painted the both of you.

In the New York subway, like epaulette stripes,
in the stray blue car¹¹ you travel side by side:
not phantoms, only sleeping dormice.
Although one of you was wrapped in lianas by orangutans,
and the other was dispersed somewhere over the cloudy Ganges,
you have both now lived up to karma, nirvana, paradise.

The persian was grey and the jew was gay.¹²
The Buddha's wheel is harsher than the British yardarm:
there, when you hang, you won't die, but chances are
you'll be left dangling, fluttering aloft,
until you become a flower, or a moth,
the jew will become a persian and the cat a jew.

3
But still, albeit
there's no mandala
or pontoon in Buddha,
only Charon's fleet? –

Then where's your skiff
moored, Allen?
What's the wheat
crop like there, Iosif?¹³

What icon
must you supplicate,

Iurkun's bisexuality; my translation 'youthful' could apply to the age difference between him and Kuzmin, as he was 17 when he and the 40-year-old Kuzmin met.)

⁹ Mikhail Kuzmin (1872-1936), turn-of-the-century gay writer, poet, composer, and pianist. He wrote *Wings*, Russia's first gay novel.

¹⁰ Kutik and Ginsberg met in Georgia, when it was still part of the Soviet Union.

¹¹ Probably a reference to the song 'Goluboi vagon' ('Blue carriage') from the Soviet cartoon *Cheburashka*.

¹² The Russian pun is closer: *goluboi* means both 'blue' and 'gay'.

¹³ Brodskii, who died the year before Ginsberg.

horses, dogs, cats,
to become akin

to human beings?
Will spit fly in the Vatican
when I touch upon
a candle for Anton?

What shall come to pass
if you go to Saint Nicholas?
What sayeth Saint Blaise,
shepherd of all passions

which go on four legs?¹⁴ –
that the point of privilege
is that it's not for the many?
that only a piebald pony

foaming from victory
is worth the fee?
That in the Third Rome¹⁵
being blue – being homo –

is a great sin?
If so, does it mean there isn't
a countenance you saints
can countenance me placin'

this candle in front
of without affront?
Then, at no risk,
we'll go to Francis –

the saintly vicar
who loved all critters
and the gay, blue yonder –
there, above us.

His "Lord saves!"
above their graves
will call: "We'll ope
the gates to you both!"

¹⁴ Saint Blaise (d. 316) was said to hold services for animals, whom he blessed and healed.

¹⁵ Moscow (and by synecdoche, Russia) has been known as the Third Rome since a declaration by the Pskovan monk Filofei in 1522, following the fall in 1453 of Byzantium, inheritor of the Roman Empire.

8. Kutik, 'David and Orpheus'

David and Orpheus

On his simple harp he sings praise to Him,
Who created us. His voice trembles from uncertainty
in himself, but not in Him, the Only, the Formidable – no escape.

Over his Apollonian lyre, having left behind the gloom
of Hades, he runs his fingers, not knowing amongst this scenery
which god to sing his song for in the present forest landscape:

of that oak? of that there pine? of that river? which to?
Again – the problems of Paris? He'll play for any o' youse
easily, even in the rain. But for which one ought he?

David, now, sits under a tree. From soul rupture
after the Anointing – life is like the branches
his ancestors have hung their harps on ever since captivity.

~

Harp, you are like the cheekbone
of cubism, you are like an icon-
precipice falling down,
and alongside – a saint and his mount.

Lyre, your sides
are incurved so like lips,
that Pan says to Apollo: "I
knew not of such a tulip."

9. Barskova, 'Kidnapping'

Kidnapping

Demeter.

Hades.

Persephone.

Demeter, head propped on her hand,
Sat on the porch.

Picked through
The blind mulch of last year's potatoes.
The agony of July presaged
Windlessness, and drought, and inactivity.
Her child, a coddled adolescent,
Darling of animals and servants,
Sniffed at the swift flow
And lacy cloud of pollen.

Their feelings were wound into a ball
And time grew rampant over them in their drawer.
The habit of shaving mons pubis in the bath,
Of being truly thankful to nature
For russula mushrooms, porcini,
And their mimicry of the line of fate.

They are connected not by the umbilical, but by
Another weighty force of past deceit.
In vain struggles the sick moth,
The nightly, putrefying wound.

In the brain's black cell
The darkness will not drain dry.
The musical box
Where Charon dozed
Is caulked with scraps from the table
Of Cerberus, instead of grafting wax.
An o'erwheeze, o'erwhisper, o'ersquawk of crows
The divine transmitter.

Upon expiry of the feast
A feast awaits the flies.
These are the basements of the world,
This is the world beyond the grave.
A pink pearl in white,
Long eyelashes. Sob.
Neck's severe bend.
Soon the goblet will shiver, chilled,
From multicoloured wines.
The stump of a hairy arm
Amongst peaches and olives.

A marshal of transparent armies,
Victim of faded togas,
In his barracks
Drained a draught of lust.

Heavenly love is deaf and dumb,
Empty, like the conclusion of a letter.
“O Persephone, milky stream!
O Persephone, wintry dawn!
In my madness I wounded my heart
On this cup’s sharp rim.”

A kitten with a curlicue on its side
Is dashed against a rock by the frenzied wind.
And lightning bolts are drawn through the sky
By the shaking hand of the thunderer.
In the shameless roar of depths and ocean,
In the thick flickering of blue-grey fog
The trail of the catastrophe distracts from
The waters’ perturbed handclapping.
The maiden has disappeared. The cry dissolved
In the uncaring landscape’s beaker
And a tender yarn spun from seaweed
Bound the mother-earth in a bandage.

She had sliced the tomatoes, onion, dill,
So Demeter went out onto the porch to call
Persephone in for dinner. It was still
The yellow time, in July, of cut grass.
Bold gadflies with aztec masks.
A cockerel absentmindedly crowed
And went back into the hencoop.
Where are you, Persephone?
A roll call of sleepy stars,
A fortune-telling of cicadas.
The little boy waterfall
Pokes at the crabby bridge.
The mother groans wildly
In the burdock at the roadside.
She wakes the dazed birds.
Stops us from sleeping.
Tomorrow will be a new day,
Work awaits us.
What does this shade seek here,
And whom does she call?
The world, cosy-small,
Is enveloped in indifference.
People sleep and gods sleep
In blankets’ paws.

The hangover of loneliness comes
With the off-white snuffle of an awkward dawn.
All that last night seemed inconsolable

Becomes diminutive and despicable.
From her hand Demeter licks the crumbs,
Blessed, blissful traces of memories,
And sneers at her midnight hopes.
“You, gods of Greece, haven’t the power to help me.
Not because I could not protect my daughter:
Bloodties nag. Weakness is that spectre,
There, not letting me forget myself in sleep.
And then my breast, too, aches constantly,
Here, at my nipple. As if drops of blood
Are exuding from it...”

Once again the comic play
Fidelity and Love has flopped,
And the audience jeers, indefatigable.
In the pit Persephone and Hades
Vaunt the galls of their grudges,
Demeter wipes off greasepaint with a dirty cotton ball.
Are you expecting an aphorism? There isn’t one.
The pensive, sullen deity
Sits in the corner, cuddling a chocolate.

10. Barskova, ‘From an Anthology’

From an Anthology

Dido will not meet Aeneas
At the door of bespittled Hades,
Will not stand, frozen as stone,
Curly tresses tossed back.
All this was dreamt up by Virgil,
Sucker for flashy effects, that old charlatan:
Hardly had the Trojans put to sea
When Dido, trembling slightly
From the strong winter wind,
Turned and went, treading the sand down,
To those who were waiting for her, to those
Who, without her, were *so* alone.
And soon forgot Aeneas,
Titan with the bearing of a pygmy,
Prince with the heart of a slave,
Eagle with the diligence of a snake.
Such a fate is enviable:
To the free is granted oblivion,
The forgetful are indestructible.
Aeneas is carried away by the tide,
Grammar school Rome is calling,
His descendants are pestering,
And later, in the refuge of shades
He is met not by Dido,
But by the futility of his guilt before her.

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