Georgina Barker. *SPQR in the USSR: Elena Shvarts's Classical Antiquity.*

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The title of Georgina Barker's *SPQR in the USSR* is wonderfully apt: this book is simultaneously erudite, approachable and witty, with winking turns of phrase constantly enlivening its impressive scholarship. Although the book specifically treats classical reception in the work of Elena Shvarts, Barker's engagement with Shvarts's poetics makes the book an excellent and thorough introduction to the poet's work as a whole. (This is in fact the first monograph on Shvarts to be published in English.)

The book opens with a brisk but substantial introduction to Shvarts and to the concept of classical reception in the Russian context. With reference both to Shvarts's personal biography and to Russian culture more broadly, Barker explains the origins of Shvarts's classical engagement and the reasons behind her more persistent dialogue with Roman rather than Greek classical authors. Ch. 2 addresses Shvarts's use of personas or alter egos, a major feature of her poetics: Barker suggests an intriguing division of these personas into "celestial bodies" and "katabasists" in line both with classical categories and significant preoccupations of the poet. Ch. 3 zooms in on one persistent alter ego, Cynthia (for Shvarts, Kinfiia), who appears in a long eponymous cycle, some apocrypha and a late poem. Immortalized as the beloved and muse of Propertius, Cynthia probably never existed, but this dubious status allows Shvarts to reclaim and foreground her voice and experience as a female poet. The in-depth examination of Kinfiia allows Barker to connect the dots between Shvarts's fondness for persona poems, her subtle dialogue with classical authors and the ways this dialogue slips into the spaces and concerns of life in 1970s–80s Leningrad. Barker's multilayered readings of individual poems from the "Kinfiia" cycle often reveal breathtaking formal subtleties, such as when Shvarts "writes a non-love poem in an amatory [Sapphic] metre that draws attention to the incongruity of the content . . . The poem is like its duplicitous occupants—housed within a form that conceals its intent and belies its nature" (129). Barker's illumination of these nuances is still more valuable when we consider that Shvarts was writing these poems in Russian and for a limited audience of unofficial readers.

In the book's concluding chapters, Barker discusses the impact of two coincidental and interrelated experiences on Shvarts's late work: the poet's first encounter with the real city of Rome and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The classical reception of Shvarts's later years reflects an elegiac preoccupation with the fall of empire, and the final chapter closely reads the mid-1990s cycle "Homo Musagetes" (which engages primarily with Horace) as a meditation on ageing, decline, and death both at the personal and geopolitical levels. At its end, the book includes a formidable 100-page appendix that provides Russian and English versions of all the poems discussed. This is an interesting way to free up space in the text of the monograph, and also functions as a nearly free-standing book of poetry. Many of the poems are given in English for the first time, making the appendix a useful resource for teaching Shvarts's work in English-only contexts.

Barker's impressive command of classical literature and culture makes *SPQR in the USSR* an intriguing read for classics scholars as well as scholars of Russian/late-Soviet poetry. But this is first and foremost a book about Shvarts, taking a deep dive into her artistic world, introducing previously unpublished archival material, and treating individual works and cycles with riveted

and riveting attention (including beautifully inventive work on the English translations). Barker also usefully contextualizes the works examined within Shvarts's larger oeuvre and within her biography. She also discusses significant predecessors in the Russian tradition: for Shvarts, the triad of Aleksandr Pushkin, Osip Mandel′shtam, and Marina Tsvetaeva constituted her "personal 'Russian classical antiquity'" (25). For this reader, the only missing piece was a broader contextualization of Shvarts's classical reception in the context of her own time and literary milieu—the unofficial poetry scene in Leningrad and elsewhere. Barker refers briefly to poets like Viktor Krivulin and Olga Sedakova (27–28) but could elaborate more on the ways Shvarts's classical reception was in conversation not only with "her" classical authors, but also with fellow Soviet-era poets. This observation, meanwhile, mostly demonstrates the far-reaching potential Barker's work holds for future studies of late- and post-Soviet poetry.

Mikhail Velizhev. *Chaadaevskoe delo: Ideologiia, ritorika i gosudarstvennaia vlast′ v nikolaevskoi Rossii*.

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In this meticulous work of microhistory, Mikhail Velizhev aims to overturn popular perceptions of Russian intellectual history's most famous text—Petr Chaadaev's first "Philosophical Letter," printed in 1836. Self-consciously demythologizing the text, its publication, and the ensuing scandal, Velizhev discards the typical proleptic reading of the "Letter" as the spark that ignited the mid nineteenth-century Slavophile-Westernizer debate and set the terms for arguments about Russian cultural identity to the present day. Instead, Velizhev begins retrospectively with a convincing reading of Chaadaev's text as a somewhat antiquated echo of European political and religious discourses from previous decades: emulating the witty style of Enlightenment salon literature, the "Letter" rehashes the views of French Catholic thinkers of the first third of the nineteenth century. Velizhev reveals how Chaadaev's apparent radicalism is an illusion generated not so much by his ideas as by the political and social context in which they were published. Chaadaev and his publisher Nikolai Nadezhdin put forward an argument for providential monarchism precisely when the same political theory was being imposed on public discourse as Russia's first official ideology—but in a vastly different formulation encapsulated by Sergei Uvarov's well-known *Orthodoxy-Autocracy-Nationality* triad. Chaadaev essentially rearranged and reinterpreted the prevailing conceptual system, producing an ultramonarchist essay in which both Orthodoxy and Nationality were side-lined. Yet, Velizhev demonstrates that ideas alone cannot account for the text's explosiveness: the author's and editor's self-positioning in the field of public discourse made all the difference. Chaadaev refused to disguise his foray into ideological discussions as mere antiquarian scholarship or keep it within the freer space of Muscovite salon conversations. Rather, he and Nadezhdin sought to generate support for autocracy by appealing directly to public opinion via the press: they thus bypassed the state monopoly on ideological production, which, as Velizhev argues, was only just taking shape. Chaadaev and Nadezhdin's provocation crystallized the Nikolaevan state's ideological control and simultaneously shattered it.