

Polina Barskova's 'Daphnis and Chloe': A Russian Pastoral

Daphnis and Chloe

A Bucolic Epithalamion¹

I.

Beside a brook, tumbled down like a house of cards, Daphnis and Chloe lie purring.
They – stroking each other – are stroked by the sightless, spiteful,
Guttural celestial orb. Whom else can it stroke? Twain,
In the whole, wide waste of the world, mongst trees, water, insects –
They have tumbled and incandesced. She – a precious fragment,
An excavatable imprint, a taut scroll, a weighty impress.
He – a smiling root, a sands-effaced inscription,
Refined cuneiform. Who will decipher them? Not me?
Now she titters, like a dragonflyling in a seraglio,
Say, in an Ingres painting, kisses him and chatters,
Observing how in his beard a dragrasshopfly bustles,
And a not-Our-Ladybird (pagans!) haughtily prowls.
Chloe looks, and looks, and looks. Laughs, and laughs.

II.

A near them a lakelet

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has sprawled over the land – with islands.
Like a grey garment with pockets and furbelows
Of golden fen.
Or perhaps – like a face
with coarsely deposited features,
With gold lips,
Massive and flesh-chomping.
A comma of pared-thin moon
Hangs in the sky. Past it steal clouds
In thick column, coiling
Like the wig of the courtesan who threw off the grey garment.
The sky looks at the lake. The lake looks at the embrace
On its sloping banks. Chloe looks at Daphnis. He
Looks over her shoulder at the moon shivering
From the final breeze to breathe on them this summer.
Yet in his intoxication fear of the coming autumn is inconceivable.
He neither knows nor knows how to know what is to come, but only what is.
From the night-time chill their faces are extraordinarily clear,
As at the moment of emergence from a negative's clinging darkness
Of outlines of reality. He breathes: "You are beautiful
Today, like the lake." In response Chloe sinks back
And leans closer.
The sky advances blackly upon them,
Except at one edge, where a strip blushes longingly, shamelessly red.²

² Polina Barskova, 'dafnis i khloia', 6 June 2015. My translation. All other translations from Russian in this article are also mine. See Appendix for original.

The poem shows the titular couple alone together after their wedding, immersed in a landscape that is at once beautiful and hostile. Whilst each half of the poem presents a moment, frozen in time, both contain threats of an impending, potentially destructive future. This is an atypical pastoral – even, an anti-pastoral. The sources of its atypicality, and of its omens, are to be found in the two traditions it derives from. The first is classical pastoral; the second, the Russian reception of classical pastoral.

Polina Barskova (born in Leningrad in 1976, and currently professor of Russian literature at Hampshire College) is one of Russia's most acclaimed contemporary poets, with multiple prizes to her name, and translated collections of her work already appearing in English.³ Barskova sustains an engagement with classical antiquity which stems from her undergraduate degree in Classics at Saint Petersburg State University. Whilst she was ambivalent towards her studies, the intensive reading of classical texts in the original provoked 'games with the ancient authors' in her poetry, inspired simultaneously by 'love to and revolt against them'.⁴ This can be clearly seen in the above poem.⁵ Barskova takes the title and theme of 'Dafnis i

³ 'Polina Barskova', *Vavilon*, 2005 <<http://www.vavilon.ru/texts/prim/barskovao.html>> [accessed 22 June 2016]; 'Tupelo Press – This Lamentable City by Polina Barskova and Edited by Ilya Kaminsky' <<https://www.tupelopress.org/books/lamentable>> [accessed 30 January 2015].

⁴ Polina Barskova, Email to the author, 19 April 2015.

⁵ Her undergraduate degree is almost certainly the source of her knowledge of *Daphnis and Chloe*. However, there are various other potential sources, including: work by Mikhail Bakhtin or references by Russian poets (discussed below); Dmitrii Mitrokhin's illustrated *Dafnis i Khloia* (1917), which Barskova refers to in her article 'The Fluid Margins: Flâneurs of the Karpovka River' (Polina Barskova,

Khloia' ('Daphnis and Chloe', 2007)⁶ from the ancient Greek novel by Longus (dated to the second or third centuries A.D.⁷), commonly known by the names of its protagonists as *Daphnis and Chloe*.⁸ Whilst much of the poem's intertextuality is with Longus, she also draws upon the Russian pastoral tradition, Joseph Brodsky in particular. Informed by these two intertextual currents, Barskova creates an aesthetic in 'Dafnis i Khloia' that is unsettling, dark, ominous. This article treats first her reception of Longus, and then her reception of Russian pastoral, to show how and why Barskova's *Daphnis and Chloe* consummate their love within an anti-pastoral poem.

The intrinsic poetic qualities of *Daphnis and Chloe* facilitate Barskova's transformation of the novel into a poem:

in Olga Matich, *Petersburg/Petersburg: Novel and City, 1900-1921* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), p. 298.); Ravel's ballet *Daphnis and Chloe*, commissioned by Serge Diaghilev; or Iurii Nagibin's 1991 novel *A Daphnis and Chloe of the Era of the Cult of Personality, Voluntarism and Stagnation* and the ensuing film *Dafnis i Khloia* (1993). (Massimo Fusillo, in Tim Whitmarsh, *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 325–27.) *Daphnis and Chloe* was thus in the air and the sphere of Barskova's cultural awareness.

⁶ I refer to Barskova's poem by its Russian title throughout, to avoid confusion with Longus' novel.

⁷ Whitmarsh, p. 382; Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, ed. by J. R. Morgan, Classical Texts (Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 2004), p. 2.

⁸ The additional titles transmitted are: *Poimenika* 'Pastoral Tale', *Aipolika* 'Goatherding Tale', and *Lesbiaka* 'Lesbian Tale'. Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe. Anthia and Habrocomes*, ed. by Jeffrey Henderson, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 3, n. 1.

the language of *D&C* is rhythmical, and in particular it is the *clausulae* of sentences where certain recurrent rhythmical patterns are most marked. [...] The ornate style of *D&C* with its balanced phrases, rhymes and assonances must, at least in part, be an attempt to reproduce the characteristics of Greek bucolic poetry in which balance and antithesis are major organising principles.⁹

Whilst the rhymes and assonances within ‘Dafnis i Khloia’ are a feature standard to Barskova’s poetry (and Russian poetry in general), its pronounced play with balance and antithesis between Daphnis, Chloe, the landscape, and the two halves of the poem is clearly in response to Longus. ‘Dafnis i Khloia’ is a poetic sequel to the ‘prose poetry’¹⁰ of *Daphnis and Chloe*.

‘Dafnis i Khloia’'s subtitle, ‘*A Bucolic Epithalamion*’, points both to its setting at the very end of *Daphnis and Chloe*, and – with its classical literary terms – to the fact of the poem’s classical derivation. It echoes Longus’ description of the couple’s ‘ποιμενικούς [...] τοὺς γάμους’ (‘wedding in pastoral style’) (4.37.1).¹¹ But the poem does not follow the epithalamion described in the novel:

τότε δὲ νυκτὸς γενομένης πάντες αὐτοὺς παρέπεμπον εἰς τὸν θάλαμον, οἱ μὲν
συρίττοντες, οἱ δὲ αὐλοῦντες, οἱ δὲ δᾶδας μεγάλας ἀνίσχοντες, καὶ ἐπεὶ πλησίον
ἦσαν τῶν θυρῶν ἦδον σκληρᾶ καὶ ἀπηνεῖ τῇ φωνῇ, καθάπερ τριαίναις γῆν
ἀναρρηγνύντες, οὐχ ὑμέναιον ᾄδοντες. (4.40.1-2)

⁹ R. L. Hunter, *A Study of Daphnis & Chloe*, Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 84, 90.

¹⁰ Hunter, p. 85.

¹¹ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 140–41.

Now, when night fell, everyone escorted them to their bedroom, some playing the pipes, some the flute, others brandishing huge torches. And when they were close to the door, they began to sing with rough and uncouth voices, as if they were breaking up the ground with forks rather than singing the marriage hymn.¹²

‘Dafnis i Khloia’ is not sung by a group accompanying the bride, there is no wedding chamber or bed, or indeed any mention of a wedding. The modifier ‘bucolic’, as the genre typically focuses upon pairs or small groups of shepherds alone in an idealised landscape, accounts partially for these absences. Barskova’s epithalamion, unlike that described in Longus, is intimate, lyrical, intensely immersed in landscape; much more in the style of the novel’s opening than its closing: ‘Twain, / In the whole, wide waste of the world, mongst trees, water, insects’. Barskova’s subtitle also points to the renowned epithalamic poetry of Longus’ Lesbian predecessor Sappho, from whom various epithalamia survive. References to Sappho, and Theocritus, whose eighteenth *Idyll*, whilst not one of his bucolics, is an epithalamion to Helen, appear frequently in *Daphnis and Chloe*:

The unreality of the pastoral countryside constitutes it as a space of the imagination, accessible only through the literary act. The allusions to Theokritos and Sappho with which Longus colours his Lesbos confirm that this is overtly a magic realm of poetry.¹³

Barskova echoes Longus in both practice and style: titling her poem with two technical terms drawn from Classics immediately alerts the reader to the learned, allusive framework, as Longus does through his Theocritean and Sapphic references,

¹² Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 142–43.

¹³ Morgan, in Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 6–7.

at whom Barskova likewise hints; she too then presents the reader with a world that is demonstrably fictitious and fantastic.

In both the first line and the closing lines of 'Dafnis i Khloia' Barskova emphasises the reclining positions of the protagonists, connecting the poem's beginning and ending, and alluding to the closing sentences of *Daphnis and Chloe*. This sets up a circular structure, contributing to the poem's unsettling aesthetic (further causes and ramifications whereof discussed later in the article). The first line, 'tumbled down like a house of cards', enacts destruction of a children's game as a simile for Daphnis and Chloe's lying down together. This echoes Philetas' (unhelpfully) euphemistic advice to Daphnis and Chloe to cure love by 'συγκατακλιθῆναι γυμνοῖς σώμασι' ('lying down together with naked bodies'), and embodies the ending of childhood games with which Longus euphemises Chloe losing her virginity: 'Χλόη πρῶτον ἔμαθεν ὅτι τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς ὕλης γενόμενα ἦν ποιμένων παίγνια' ('for the first time, Chloe learned that what had happened on the edge of the wood had been shepherds' games').¹⁴ Barskova's references to Longus hint that her Daphnis and Chloe's lying together is similarly sexual. The second part of 'Dafnis i Khloia' is set at night, unlike the first part, thus becoming obviously aesthetically dissimilar to the novel as a whole, which is set almost exclusively during the day, and mostly at warmer times of the year; and more similar to the epithalamion scene, which is the only time in the novel that Daphnis and Chloe spend the night together.

The epithalamic, night-time setting is crucial to an understanding of the poem's cryptic ending:

¹⁴ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 56–57, 142–43.

In response Chloe sinks back

And leans closer.

The sky advances blackly upon them,

Except at one edge, where a strip blushes wistfully, shamelessly red.

The coy averting of the narrative gaze from the lovers at the crucial moment of the (presumed) consummation of their marriage follows Longus' example:

Δάφνις δὲ καὶ Χλόη γυμνοὶ συγκατακλιθέντες περιέβαλλον ἀλλήλους καὶ
κατεφίλουν, ἀγρυπνήσαντες τῆς νυκτὸς ὅσον οὐδὲ γλαῦκες, καὶ ἔδρασέ τι Δάφνις
ὄν αὐτὸν ἐπαίδευσε Λυκαίνιον, καὶ τότε Χλόη πρῶτον ἔμαθεν ὅτι τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς ὕλης
γενόμενα ἦν ποιμένων παίγνια. (4.40.3)

Daphnis and Chloe lay together naked, embraced one another and kissed. That night they were more sleepless even than owls. Daphnis did something of what Lykainion had taught him, and then, for the first time, Chloe learned that what had happened on the edge of the wood had been shepherds' games.¹⁵

If anything, Barskova is even more cryptic at this point than Longus, the significance of whose final sentences is the subject of ongoing debate. Some see in these sentences an 'ominous tone', due to the 'attendant discord, unexplained roughness' in the preceding epithalamion, and hints during the wedding and wedding night to the 'recurring shadow of sexual violation in Chloe's education'.¹⁶ Such a view certainly accords with the ominously impending blackness of the sky above the couple in Barskova's poem. There is broad agreement that Daphnis' sexual initiation and warning by Lykainion is implied in the final scene, but not what message exactly the

¹⁵ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 142–43.

¹⁶ John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, New Ancient World (New York; London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 125, 124, 104.

reader should take from this about the nature of Chloe's experience of her own sexual initiation: whether this is Lykainion's graphic account of 'defloration as trauma – the screams, the tears, the pool of blood',¹⁷ or her explanation 'that status as a γυνή allows her to enjoy sexual penetration without difficulty (3.19.2)', making the unseen defloration instead 'a celebration of Daphnis' and Chloe's full integration into society through sexual consummation in marriage and their acceptance of – admittedly patriarchal – cultural norms.¹⁸ Barskova also alludes elliptically to Lykainion via her focus on the sky, black presumably with both night and clouds; earlier these clouds are compared with the courtesan's wig – who must represent Lykainion. In this context the reddening strip of sky alludes to her warning at 3.19 that Chloe 'αἷματι κείσεται πολλῷ' (will 'lie in a pool of blood') when Daphnis takes her virginity.¹⁹

But, again like in Longus, parallel readings are possible, and even preferable in the context of the poem's tone: this redness is presented as a contrast with the rest of the black sky. The light in the darkness may be Barskova's metatextual clue – that she is giving insight into Chloe's (and perhaps also Daphnis') feelings where Longus is most obscure. Chloe has just been compared to an element of nature – the lake – by Daphnis, so seeing her reflected in a description of the sky is not implausible, especially as lake and sky have recently been shown reflecting each other. Barskova describes it reddening 'longingly' and 'shamelessly', provoking the reader to transpose these human emotions onto one or both of the lovers beneath. Both words are related to key words for *Daphnis and Chloe*: in the novel's prologue 'πόθος', 'longing', with the latent sexual meaning 'desire', incites the narrator to begin his tale

¹⁷ Winkler, p. 124.

¹⁸ Stephen J. Epstein, 'Longus' Werewolves', *Classical Philology*, 90.1 (1995), 58–73 (pp. 70–71).

¹⁹ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 96–97.

(0.3);²⁰ whilst the opposing force to his free telling of Daphnis and Chloe’s love is σωφροσύνη, ‘soundness of mind’ or ‘discretion’: he concludes his prologue “Ἡμῖν δ’ ὁ θεὸς παράσχοι σωφρονοῦσι τὰ τῶν ἄλλων γράφειν”, (‘For ourselves, may the god grant us to remain chaste in writing the story of others’) (0.4).²¹ This also has a latent sexual meaning: “self-control’, ‘chastity’, ‘temperance’, ‘continence’”, which in the ancient polis ‘implies a political, moral and sexual control over the destabilizing forces of desire’.²² Σωφροσύνη is almost certainly the restraint Longus promises to impose upon (his) desire in the prologue that leads him (playfully) to occlude the final sex scene: ‘under the aegis of *sophrosune* as a care for propriety [Longus] manipulates the (patrolling of) relations between a subject and a text, the delights and self-regulations of reading and writing about desire’, using the terms of his ‘manipulative contract with the reader’ to extend the novel’s pattern of ‘erotic delay and fulfilment’ up to a final moment of ‘veiled voyeurism’.²³ Barskova has made no such promise, instead contracting (with her subtitle) to open up Longus’ wedding-night scene, and so defies Longus’ ‘discreet’ narrator with her ‘shameless’ sky; the ‘shameless longing’ may also be said to be hers, as narrator. Most simply, the blushing sky may reflect Chloe’s virginal blushes. Finally, its reddening may also allude to a knowing reference in Longus (as a precursor to Daphnis’ deflowering of Chloe) of a fragment of one (or more) of Sappho’s epithalamia, describing an apple reddening, ready to pluck.²⁴

²⁰ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 22–23.

²¹ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 22–23.

²² Simon Goldhill, *Foucault’s Virginité: Ancient Erotic Fiction and the History of Sexuality*, W.B. Stanford Memorial Lectures (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 3–4.

²³ Goldhill, pp. 43–44.

²⁴ For a thorough analysis, see Ewen Bowie in *The Construction of the Real and the Ideal in the Ancient Novel*, ed. by Michael Paschalis and Stelios Panayotakis, Ancient Narrative. Supplementum 17

Whilst ‘Dafnis i Khloia’ takes place at the end of *Daphnis and Chloe*, it also alludes to moments from within the novel preceding the final wedding scene. Its opening words, ‘Beside a brook’, evokes the place of Chloe’s exposure: ‘ἐκ πηγῆς ὕδωρ ἀναβλύζον ρεῖθρον ἐποίει χεόμενον, ὥστε καὶ λειμῶν πάνυ γλαφυρὸς ἐκτέτατο πρὸ τοῦ ἄντρου’ (‘water bubbling up from a spring made a running brook, so that in front of the cave extended a velvety meadow’. (1.4.3)²⁵ The other elements Barskova employs at the beginning of the poem, minimally, to create the pastoral atmosphere – sun, solitude, trees, water, insects – all appear in a later passage, in which Longus prefigures the wedding night that Barskova describes:

Θερμοτέρου δὲ καθ’ ἐκάστην ἡμέραν γινομένου τοῦ ἡλίου [...] Ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐνήχετο ἐν τοῖς ποταμοῖς [...] Ὁ μὲν ἐσύριζεν ἀμιλλώμενος πρὸς τὰς πίτυς [...] Ἐθήρων ἀκρίδας λάλους, ἐλάμβανον τέττιγας ἠχοῦντας· [...] Ἦδη ποτὲ καὶ γυμνοὶ συγκατεκλίθησαν [...] καὶ ἐγένετο ἂν γυνὴ Χλόη ῥαδίως εἰ μὴ Δάφνιν ἐτάραξε τὸ αἷμα. (3.24)

As the sun grew warmer day by day [...] He swam in the rivers, she bathed in the springs. He played his pipes in competition with the pines [...] They hunted garrulous crickets, caught noisy cicadas. [...] One day they even lay down naked together [...] Chloe might easily have become a woman, had not the thought of blood scared Daphnis.²⁶

The insects from Longus reappear in ‘Dafnis i Khloia’, albeit in altered, slightly unreal forms:

Now she titters, like a dragonflyling in a seraglio,

(Eelde, *The Netherlands*: Barkhuis Publishing; Groningen, 2013), pp. 188–90.

²⁵ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 24–25.

²⁶ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 100–101.

Say, in an Ingres painting, kisses him and chatters,
Observing how in his beard a dragrasshopfly bustles,
And a not-Our-Ladybird (pagans!) haughtily prowls.
Chloe looks, and looks, and looks. Laughs, and laughs.

Barskova's particular focus on and distortion of Longus' insects is motivated in part by an intervening Russian intertext – Brodsky – as will be explored later in the article; here discussion is confined to the poem's interaction with *Daphnis and Chloe*. Crickets/locusts/grasshoppers, 'ἄκρις', and cicadas, 'τέττιξ', feature frequently early in the story. Chloe weaves a cricket-cage, an item symbolic of Theocritean pastoral poetry,²⁷ at 1.10.2 and speaks about it at 1.14.4. This representation of entrapment could be expressed in the representation of Chloe tittering 'like a dragonfly in a seraglio', whilst the sexual aspect suggests marriage as the cricket-cage. The zoomorphisation of Chloe is drawn from Longus: 'The verb denoting both Daphnis' and Chloe's speech, *laleô*, is also adopted by Longus to refer to the chirruping of crickets and cicadas'.²⁸ Barskova transposes onto her Chloe this trait more associated in Longus with Daphnis: at 1.17.4 he is compared with a cricket/locust/grasshopper, and at 1.19.1 and 1.26.3 'both the cicada and Daphnis are referred to as 'our good friend' by the narrator (*beltistos*; the only two attestations of this word in Longus).'²⁹ The poem's clearest insectoid intertext is with 1.26:

τέττιξ φεύγων χελιδόνα θηρᾶσαι θέλουσαν κατέπεσεν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τῆς Χλόης,
καὶ ἡ χελιδὼν ἐπομένη τὸν μὲν οὐκ ἠδυνήθη λαβεῖν, ταῖς δὲ πτέρυξιν ἐγγὺς διὰ τὴν

²⁷ John Morgan, in Whitmarsh, p. 222.

²⁸ Koen de Temmerman, *Crafting Characters: Heroes and Heroines in the Ancient Greek Novel* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 231.

²⁹ Temmerman, pp. 231–32.

δίωξιν γενομένη τῶν παρειῶν αὐτῆς ἤψατο. Ἡ δὲ οὐκ εἰδυῖα τὸ πραχθὲν μέγα βοήσασα τῶν ὕπνων ἐξέθορον, ἰδοῦσα δὲ καὶ τὴν χελιδόνα ἔτι πλησίον πετομένην καὶ τὸν Δάφνιν ἐπὶ τῷ δέει γελῶντα τοῦ φόβου μὲν ἐπαύσατο, τοὺς δὲ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἀπέματτεν ἔτι καθεύδειν θέλοντας, καὶ ὁ τέττιξ ἐκ τῶν κόλπων ἐπήχησεν ὅμοιον ἰκέτη χάριν ὁμολογοῦντι τῆς σωτηρίας. Πάλιν οὖν ἡ Χλόη μέγα ἀνεβόησεν, ὁ δὲ Δάφνις ἐγέλασε καὶ προφάσεως λαβόμενος καθῆκεν αὐτῆς εἰς τὰ στέρνα τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ἐξάγει τὸν βέλτιστον τέττιγα, μηδὲ ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ σιωπῶντα· ἡ δὲ ἤδετο ἰδοῦσα καὶ ἐφίλησε λαβοῦσα καὶ αὐθις ἐνέβαλε τῷ κόλπῳ λαλοῦντα.

a cicada, trying to escape from a swallow that wanted to catch it, dropped into Chloe's bosom; and as the swallow came after it, it failed to catch the cicada, but came so close in its pursuit that it brushed her cheeks with its wings. Unaware of what had happened, she started from her slumbers with a scream, but when she saw the swallow still fluttering nearby and Daphnis laughing at her fear, she stopped being afraid and rubbed her eyes, which still wanted to sleep. The cicada sang out from her bosom like a suppliant giving thanks for its life. Chloe screamed again, but Daphnis laughed and, seizing the excuse, put his hands down between her breasts and retrieved our friend the cicada, which kept up its song even in his right hand. Chloe was delighted at the sight of it, took it, kissed it, and put it back into her bosom still chirping.³⁰

Barskova takes the incident, alters it slightly, then again swaps Chloe and Daphnis around. Chloe's bosom becomes Daphnis' beard, the cicada becomes a cross between a dragonfly and a grasshopper, the swallow becomes a non-ladybird, Daphnis' laughter becomes Chloe's. Barskova retains for Chloe, however, the 'looking' which is characteristic of her, both in the section referenced, but most of all at the onset of her

³⁰ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 44–45.

desire for Daphnis: ‘ἐδόκει δὲ τῇ Χλόῃ θεωμένη καλὸς ὁ Δάφνις [...] πλέον εἰς Δάφνιν ἑώρα [...] λουόμενον εἶδε καὶ ἰδοῦσα’ (‘As Chloe watched, she found Daphnis beautiful [...] most of the time her eyes were on Daphnis [...] she watched him as he bathed, and watching’). (1.13)³¹ She even highlights Chloe’s ‘looking’ in Longus, and intensifies it, by successively repeating the verb. The emphasis on Chloe’s gaze counters the effect of her zoomorphisation, which, being applied most often to women in the ancient Greek novel, ‘empowers the (male) viewer and ‘others’ the woman’. Here the erotically objectifying gaze is, as in Longus, shared between the narrator and Chloe.³² Barskova exploits the erotic connotations contextual to these moments in *Daphnis and Chloe*, prefiguring their eventual union. It is significant that Daphnis in ‘Dafnis i Khloia’ is bearded, whereas in Book 1 it is stated in both halves of the beauty contest between Dorkon and Daphnis that he is beardless: Dorkon calls him ‘ἀγένειος ὡς γυνή’ (‘beardless like a woman’) (1.16.2), to which Daphnis counters ‘Ἀγένειός εἰμι, καὶ γὰρ ὁ Διόνυσος’ (‘I am beardless, but so is Dionysus’) (1.16.4). Having a beard is linked in the novel with sexual maturity; Dorkon is described as ‘ἀρτιγένειος μεираκίσκος καὶ εἰδὼς ἔρωτος καὶ τοῦνομα καὶ τὰ ἔργα’ (‘a lad with his beard just on his chin, who knew both the name and the deeds of love’) (1.15.1), quite unlike Daphnis at this stage in the narrative.³³ Its presence in Barskova’s epithalamion, especially in conjunction with erotic references, signifies Daphnis’ readiness for sex.

³¹ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 30–33.

³² Helen Morales, *Vision and Narrative in Achilles Tatius’ Leucippe and Clitophon*, Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 198. On Zoomorphisation as a typical feature of Greek and Roman literature: pp. 186–7.

³³ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 34–35.

Relative to the abundance of allusions in the first part of ‘Dafnis i Khloia’, concrete references to *Daphnis and Chloe* in the second part are few. Clouds are compared to ‘the wig of the courtesan who threw off the grey garment’, recalling Lykainion, the city woman who teaches Daphnis about sex. The poem’s only direct speech, by Daphnis, is in keeping with the couple’s tendency through the first book of rationalising the other’s physical attractiveness by taking ‘*comparantia* from their immediate environment’:³⁴ “You are beautiful / Today, like the lake.” The fact that the point of comparison is a lake also references the lovers’ initial revelations of the other’s beauty, both when watching the other bathing: ‘ὅτι δὲ τότε πρῶτον αὐτῇ καλὸς ἐδόκει τὸ λουτρὸν ἐνόμιζε τοῦ κάλλους αἴτιον’ (‘because this was the first time she had found him beautiful, she thought his bath was the cause of his beauty’) (1.13.2); ‘αὐτὴ τότε πρῶτον Δάφνιδος ὀρῶντος ἐλούσατο τὸ σῶμα [...] ὁ Δάφνις χαίρειν ἔπειθε τὴν ψυχὴν, ἰδὼν τὴν Χλόην γυμνὴν καὶ τὸ πρότερον λανθάνον κάλλος ἐκκεκαλυμμένον’ (‘for the first time in view of Daphnis, she washed her own body [...] Daphnis could not convince his heart to feel happy, now he had seen Chloe naked and her hitherto secret beauty revealed.’) (1.32)³⁵ Barskova again repeats the trope of ‘looking’:

The sky looks at the lake. The lake looks at the embrace
 On its sloping banks. Chloe looks at Daphnis. He
 Looks over her shoulder at the moon shivering
 From the final breeze to breathe on them this summer.

Both the landscape and Chloe are again voyeurs; Chloe has a measure of power through her desiring, objectifying gaze: ‘The celebration of the female desiring subject is a radical innovation of [the ancient novel], even if that desire often

³⁴ Temmerman, p. 214.

³⁵ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 30–32, 48–51.

romanticises marriage, and serves an imperial and patriarchal agenda.³⁶ In *Daphnis and Chloe*, Chloe is the first to feel and act upon desire, and plays the more dominant role of the two, rescuing Daphnis from pirates in Book 1; however Chloe's agency is 'constrained by culture' in the course of the novel, as she 'is made to learn that she can only relate to Daphnis on a permanent and adult basis within a framework that dictates for her an unnatural role as pursued, weaker, and vulnerable'. As the novel progresses she gradually becomes passive and mute.³⁷ The fact that Daphnis is the sole possessor of direct speech and is portrayed looking into the unknown future, while Chloe looks only at him, expresses this power shift from Chloe to Daphnis.

One of the most appealing aspects of 'Dafnis i Khloia' is its evident awareness of itself as a work of literary reception: at certain points, such as the subtitle (discussed above), the poem lays bare its own act of reception. In two ecphrases, one in both parts of 'Dafnis i Khloia', Barskova inscribes the literariness of Daphnis and Chloe into her own depictions of the couple. By so doing she indicates her awareness of her reception of *Daphnis and Chloe* from the classical tradition, and of Longus' reception of various literatures in writing *Daphnis and Chloe*. Most of all, she responds to the self-conscious artifice of *Daphnis and Chloe*. In particular, its artifice as expressed in the prologue – Longus begins this with an ecphrasis, which 'provides the pretext for his novel, which is presented as a verbal response to the visual artefact.'³⁸ Longus'

³⁶ Helen Morales, in Whitmarsh, p. 49.

³⁷ Winkler, pp. 116–17; Katharine Haynes, *Fashioning the Feminine in the Greek Novel* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 66.

³⁸ Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2009), p. 178.

narrator describes coming across a picture in a grove depicting the story of Daphnis and Chloe; the distancing function and voyeurism of this character is taken in Barskova's poem by the sun (described in personified terms): 'They – stroking each other – are stroked by the sightless, spiteful, / Guttural celestial orb. Whom else can it stroke?' The narrator gets an expert to explain the picture to him (which 'stresses its mythical or legendary status'³⁹). Then he turns the picture into words (distinct concepts, for which Longus uses the same root, γράφειν, 'to write or draw', equating the two works more closely). The entirety of *Daphnis and Chloe* is therefore itself an ecphrasis.

In her first inscription of Daphnis and Chloe's literariness Barskova repeats Longus' ecphrasis, describing the characters as texts, specifically: written artefacts. This is because she is approaching a written work rather than a picture, as Longus presents his narrator doing; so Barskova chooses to view *Daphnis and Chloe* as a cumulation and culmination of written works. This makes the novel eligible for ecphrasis: Barskova evokes the materiality of the texts over their contents.

She – a precious fragment,
An excavatable imprint, a taut scroll, a weighty impress.
He – a smiling root, a sands-effaced inscription,
Refined cuneiform. Who will decipher them? Not me?

At this point some notes on my translation and Barskova's original are required, before analysis of the ecphrasis' effects can be fairly undertaken. There is a great deal

³⁹ Hunter, p. 46.

of ambiguity in the Russian, which I have of necessity ironed out in my translation. The words particularly at issue are Chloe's: 'Ископаемый', 'оттиск', 'завиток', and 'натиск', which I render as 'excavatable', 'imprint', 'scroll', and 'impress'. They are all deliberately vague and multivalent. 'Ископаемый' ('excavatable') bears the primary meaning 'mineral', as in 'something worth mining', with corollary meanings 'fossil' and 'ancient'. Its root is the same as and its prefix similar in effect to the verb 'excavate': 'раскопать', 'выкопать', 'откопать'. I chose 'excavatable' (over, say, 'extractable', or one of the literal translations) to convey a sense of ancientness, value, archaeology, and a connection with the textual finds at Oxyrhynchus and elsewhere. 'Оттиск' ('imprint') has the basic meaning 'impression', 'print', 'stamp', and can apply to coins, seals, casts (dental, or otherwise), as well as to paper, wax, and fabric. If it is a specific reference to ancient print techniques, it is most likely to woodblock printing,⁴⁰ first used around 220 A.D. in China on cloth.⁴¹ 'Завиток' ('scroll') basically means 'curl', or anything curled, including 'scroll'. Its most frequent sense is a curl of hair, 'ringlet'. 'Натиск' ('impress') has the same root as 'оттиск', but fewer textual connotations. Its basic meaning is 'push'. In a print context it means 'pressure' and also 'impression'. It is also worth noting that 'обломок' has the same broad applications as the English 'fragment', and is thus not necessarily exclusively textual. In Daphnis' ecphrasis, 'корень', again, like the English 'root', can mean a literal plant root, a metaphorical root ('source'), and a grammatical root ('morpheme' or 'etymon'); thus its 'textual' meaning is technically

⁴⁰ In the following history about print's beginnings in China, 'оттиск' is used throughout (often in conjunction with 'xylographic') to refer to prints from engraved woodblocks: Izdatel'stvo 'Redkaia kniga iz Sankt-Peterburga', 'Istoriia knigopechataniia', *rarebook-spb.ru*, 2012 <<http://www.rarebook-spb.ru/info/history/>> [accessed 11 December 2015].

⁴¹ *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. by Leslie Howsam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. x.

pre- or atextual, as a linguistic root is disassociable from written forms of language both contemporary and historical. Although all Chloe's words bear multiple readings, I have chosen to emphasise their literary aspects – both because this is the one meaning they all hold in common (with Daphnis' descriptions as well), and also because the unambiguous 'расшифрер' ('decipher') suggests text (complicated only by the fact that 'decipher' may apply either to both Chloe and Daphnis or just to Daphnis; no object is specified in the Russian).

Both Chloe and Daphnis take the form of various sorts of writing technologies through which the literature of classical antiquity was transmitted. Barskova thus presents herself in the role of receptor of classical literature generally; however, the personified writing technologies do not reflect the specific transmission history of *Daphnis and Chloe*, which comes to modernity comparatively unfragmented, solely from two late manuscripts (from the 13th and 16th centuries), with no papyrus fragments found thus far.⁴² The muddle of texts and the evocation of ancientness does, however, partially reflect the reception history behind *Daphnis and Chloe*. Longus' novel is a highly literary construction, characterised by its allusions 'particularly to Theocritus, Sappho, Thucydides, Homer',⁴³ all of whom were remote in time, culture, and textual technology from Longus. The culminative effect created by all the various textual forms Chloe and Daphnis take on may be a comment upon the long history behind the apparent modernity of *Daphnis and Chloe's* form, as the novel is a genre popularly associated with the modern age rather than antiquity.

⁴² Morgan, in Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 1, 20.

⁴³ Tim Whitmarsh, in Whitmarsh, p. 77.

Barskova bestows the older writing technologies upon Daphnis. The first is not even a form of writing, but an abstract linguistic component, redolent of Proto-Indo-European extrapolated by scholars.⁴⁴ Whilst the third writing form assigned to Daphnis is evidently ancient, the second is actually starting to erode with age. The agedness of his ecphrasis is probably because Daphnis is the older of the two in the story. But it may also be because he is the older literary figure, predating Theocritus' Daphnis, the primary predecessor of Longus' Daphnis, appearing in the 6th century poet Stesichoros,⁴⁵ and with a possible ancestry in certain 'interrelated Sumerian texts', particularly Dumuzi's Dream, which 'contains much of the essential action of Longus' Greek novel *Daphnis and Chloe*'.⁴⁶ Significantly, the final writing form Barskova assigns to Daphnis is cuneiform, a writing system used by the Sumerians.⁴⁷ Whereas Chloe's character is more recent; her name was 'a cult name of Demeter', has 'associations with springtime and new growth', and appears, stripped of earlier religious connotations, in four of Horace's odes.⁴⁸ Correspondingly, the textual technologies she embodies are newer and closer to modern writing techniques: they suggest handwriting and print, and generally paper-like materials – papyrus (especially the 'fragment'), cloth or wax (especially the 'imprint'), parchment

⁴⁴ The concept of the root is fundamental to the study of historical linguistics; see Sir William Jones' use of the term 'root' in his 1786 lecture, which prompted wider study in the field: Sir William Jones, 'A Reader in Nineteenth Century Historical Indo-European Linguistics: "The Third Anniversary Discourse, On the Hindus"', 2014 <<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/books/read01.html>> [accessed 14 December 2015].

⁴⁵ Morgan, in Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Graham Anderson, *Ancient Fiction: The Novel in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 6.

⁴⁷ Jerrold Cooper, "I Have Forgotten My Burden of Former days!" Forgetting the Sumerians in Ancient Iraq', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 130.3 (2010), 327–35 (p. 328).

⁴⁸ Hunter, p. 17.

(especially the 'scroll'), and paper (especially the 'impress'). The Chloe-texts have in common their flexibility and portability, as opposed to the monumental, artefactual quality of the Daphnis-texts. Materially, they are lighter and softer than the mostly hard, stone Daphnis-texts. Yet Barskova emphasises the Chloe-texts' weight and rigidity and value, whilst the Daphnis-texts' are abstract, lost or in the process of being lost. The potential for comprehensibility and comparative familiarity inherent in the Chloe-texts contrasts with the Daphnis-texts' incomprehensibility and alienness; the one's seeming material fragility contains more influence and permanence, more ultimate technological and textual durability than the other's ostensible endurance.

Barskova's stated doubt over whether she can or should be the one to decipher these character-texts responds to the incomprehensibility of their ancient writing, particularly the Daphnis-texts. This may derive from her ambivalence about her Classics degree. She disliked her degree (as she has explained in interviews) because it was not of her choosing or suited to her temperament, and she felt Classics was irrelevant, lacked inquiry into human concerns, and dead.⁴⁹ So, a negative attitude to classical learning appears frequently in her poetry, particularly during and immediately following the period she spent at university (1993-8),⁵⁰ and when she makes classical references Barskova sometimes implies her discomfort with the

⁴⁹ Linor Goralik, 'Polina Barskova: "Mne nuzhno perekliuchenie vremeni"', *Colta.ru*, 2013
<<http://archives.colta.ru/docs/23363>> [accessed 17 July 2015].

⁵⁰ E.g. 'Zoopark zimoi', 'Bibliofilia', 'Konets moemu terpeniiu', 'Mertvechina klassitsizma i bordel' barokko'.

knowledge she is inserting,⁵¹ or makes mistakes with said knowledge.⁵² The encrypted nature of Chloe and Daphnis in this ecphrasis could also express the paradox inherent in Longus' pastoral novel: 'pastoral time never existed *except* in being regained: only literature can take us to a paradise whose happiness depends on illiteracy and ignorance.'⁵³ The life Daphnis and Chloe lead together as goatherd and shepherd is shown to be at odds with learning and literacy:

ἤχθοντο μὲν εἰ ποιμένες ἔσονται καὶ αἰπόλοι <οἱ> τύχην ἐκ σπαργάνων
ἐπαγγελλόμενοι κρείττονα, δι' ἣν αὐτοὺς καὶ τροφαῖς ἔτρεφον ἀβροτέραις καὶ
γράμματα ἐπαίδεον καὶ πάντα ὅσα καλὰ ἦν ἐπ' ἀγροικίας (1.8.1)

they were dismayed at the thought that they were to be herders of sheep and goats when since earliest childhood they had given indications of a higher station, for which reason they had been giving them a more refined upbringing, teaching them to read and write, and whatever graces were to be found in the countryside.⁵⁴

The pastoral Daphnis and Chloe should not be able to decipher the Chloe- and Daphnis-texts; why, then, (as she asks) should Barskova, when doing so entails leaving the idyll?

The second ecphrasis, from the second part of the poem, is intended as the polar(oid) opposite of the first. It is from modernity rather than antiquity; and it is pictorial (like Longus' original ecphrasis) rather than textual: 'their faces are extraordinarily clear, / As at the moment of emergence from a negative's clinging

⁵¹ E.g. 'Primechanie Mefistofelia', 'Koroliu'.

⁵² E.g. 'Progulka', 'Pis'ma o russkoi poezii. Pis'mo vtoroe'.

⁵³ Morgan, in Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 26–27.

darkness / Of outlines of reality'. The picture in the prologue of *Daphnis and Chloe* is described as very accomplished: 'κάλλιστον ὧν εἶδον', 'τέχνην ἔχουσα περιττήν' ('the most beautiful sight I have ever seen', 'outstanding technique').⁵⁵ But Barskova takes it further, choosing the most lifelike picture form possible, that of a photograph. Indeed, the words she uses to describe the picture, 'outlines of reality', first suggest drawing, but then state that the picture appearing is real. Her depiction aligns closely with ancient literary theory about ecphrasis. Greek rhetorical handbooks in the second to fourth centuries A.D. (at the time Longus wrote *Daphnis and Chloe*) taught that 'Ekphrasis is a descriptive speech that brings the thing shown vividly before the eyes'; the modern meaning of ecphrasis as a description of a work of art was merely a part of its ancient significance.⁵⁶ Central to the ancient understanding of ecphrasis were

the qualities of *enargeia* (vividness), *sapheneia* (clarity), and *phantasia* (mental image), which, taken together, aim to turn listeners (or readers) into viewers and to evoke an emotional response through an appeal to the immediacy of an imagined presence.⁵⁷

Barskova's ecphrasis conforms to this formula. *Sapheneia*: she emphasises the clarity of Daphnis and Choe's faces as the basis for the ecphrasis. *Enargeia* and *phantasia*: she vividly evokes the sensation of a picture emerging before the reader's eyes, and uses the same 'terms of approximation' used in ancient discussions of ecphrasis and *enargeia* to convey the 'illusion' inherent in the rhetorical devices.⁵⁸ Her use of a

⁵⁵ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, pp. 22–23.

⁵⁶ Froma I. Zeitlin, 'FIGURE: EKPHRASIS', *Greece & Rome (Second Series)*, 60.1 (2013), 17–31 (pp. 17–19).

⁵⁷ Zeitlin, p. 17.

⁵⁸ Webb, p. 104.

photograph for the ecphrasis also suggests an awareness of the ‘close association in ancient thought [between *phantasia* and] the sense perceptions stored in memory’,⁵⁹ as photography is commonly seen as a vehicle for memory. Two treatises in particular, Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* and Pseudo-Longinus’ *On the Sublime*, deal with *enargeia*. Both explain it as the effect of *phantasiai* evoked by the speaker’s words in the mind of the listener:

Quas φαντασίας Graeci uocant (nos sane uisiones appellamus), per quas imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo, ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere uideamur (Quintilian, 6.2.29-30)

What the Greeks call *phantasiai* (we shall call them ‘visions’, if you will,) are the means by which images of absent things are represented to the mind in such a way that we seem to see them with our eyes and to be in their presence.

ὅταν ἄ λέγεις ὑπ’ ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ πάθους βλέπειν [p. 84] δοκῆς καὶ ὑπ’ ὄψιν τιθῆς τοῖς ἀκούουσιν. (Pseudo-Longinus, 15.1)

under the effects of inspiration and passion, you seem to see what you are speaking about and bring it before the eyes of your listeners.⁶⁰

As an undergraduate Barskova read – at least cursorily – *On the Sublime*, as her poem ‘Bibliophilia’⁶¹ (‘Bibliophilia’) demonstrates. In it she protests having to curtail her lovemaking in order to return to the boredom of the library and the book waiting for her there. She plays with the irony of the book’s title; Barskova hints that the

⁵⁹ Webb, p. 88.

⁶⁰ Webb, pp. 95, 96.

⁶¹ Polina Barskova, ‘vse: poems around 1997-2000’, 2015. 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.

sublimity of sex, construed as paradise, is far preferable. She insults Pseudo-Longinus by emphasising the appositeness of ‘Ложный’ (‘Pseudo’), which in Russian more commonly means ‘false’, ‘deceitful’, ‘phony’.

It seemed brutal 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, Phony-Longinus.⁶²

Despite her stated dislike of Longinus, it is possible that Barskova was aware of the ancient components of ecphrasis when writing ‘Dafnis i Khloia’, and actively and informedly engaged with them.

The multiple internal echoes between the two halves of the poem, particularly its beginning and ending, give a circular structure to the poem, underscore its enclosed nature, and give it a sense of density, temporal oddness. Barskova creates the impression that her poem both continues the handful of sentences at the novel’s close and finishes within them. Time is a central concern, as the description of the ominously black sky echoes the ending of summer earlier in the poem: ‘Yet in his intoxication fear of the coming autumn is inconceivable. / He neither knows nor knows how to know what is to come, but only what is.’ Such a seasonal shift repeats

⁶² 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.

the novel's use of the seasons to structure the narrative, influence the pair's interactions, and connote the generative power of love:

Daphnis and Chloe's love runs parallel to the cycle of the natural year. It is born in spring, becomes more heated in summer, and takes its first step towards fruition in autumn, at the time of the grape harvest. Winter is a dead time, but the second spring brings rebirth, the second summer crisis, resolved by marriage in the second autumn, when the natural world is fruiting.⁶³

Fear is the appropriate response to the onset of autumn presumably due to its inevitable succession by winter, which in *Daphnis and Chloe* is construed as death: they 'looked forward to the spring season as a rebirth from death' (3.4.2).⁶⁴ The unthinkable yet inevitable ending of summer explains in part the unsettling, sinister, foreboding elements in the poem: the glowering sun, the carnivorous lakelet, the black sky. But for a fuller understanding of Barskova's ominous pastoral poetics, 'Dafnis i Khloia' must be situated not only in the context of Longus, but also in the context of Barskova's other pastoral work and the Russian pastoral tradition.

Pastoral figures in Barskova's other poetry as an escape from reality, yet one infected by time and death. This is perhaps due to the impossibility of pastoral in the modern day, which is already felt in *Daphnis and Chloe* with the various incursions into the pair's idyll, and the generic switch from pastoral to New Comedy in the final book.⁶⁵ In 'Vremia moloziva. V tsarstve boleznennoi flory'⁶⁶ ('Beestings time. In the kingdom of sickly flora') Pan, along with the pastoral atmosphere of the poem's

⁶³ Morgan, in Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, p. 11.

⁶⁴ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe. Anthia and Habrocomes*, p. 109.

⁶⁵ Anderson, p. 124.

opening couplet, is destroyed by Apollo. ‘Predvoditel’ nebesnogo voinstva’⁶⁷ (‘Commander of the heavenly host’) proposes a pastoral life as an exit from life. ‘Bukolicheskii bes, odevaisia. Pastukh, pospeshi’⁶⁸ (‘Bucolic devil, dress yourself. Shepherd, hurry’) takes as its epigraph the last line of Georgii Adamovich’s poem ‘Eshche i zhavoronkov khor’⁶⁹ (‘Still the larks’ chorus’), in which he imagines the nine Muses visiting the unlikely pastoral setting of frozen Russia: ‘Хоть и с одной струной, но греческая лира’ (‘Albeit with but one string, but a Greek lyre’). Adamovich mentions Chloe in the penultimate stanza: ‘видел я во сне / У северных берез задумчивую Хлою’ (‘I dreamt I saw / Among the northern birches Chloe, lost in thought’). ‘Bucolic devil, dress yourself. Shepherd, hurry’ responds comprehensively to Adamovich’s reference: in its opening Barskova takes refuge in pastoral, following which the poem’s setting takes elements from slavic folklore, naturalising the classical reference, just as Adamovich had blended the two landscapes. In the final couplet time – expressed as a rusting clock and greying hair – intrudes into the idyll, showing the incompatibility of ancient Greek pastoral with modern Russia. Barskova’s poem ‘Materinstvo i detstvo’⁷⁰ (‘Motherhood and childhood’) responds to *Daphnis and Chloe* in similar temporal terms to ‘Dafnis i Khloia’. Daphnis and Chloe appear as an aside imagined by Barskova to illustrate the unexpectedly pastoral beauty of Nabokov’s mother’s grave:

Where souvenirs, tourists, jostle would be explicable,

⁶⁶ Polina Barskova, *Rasa brezgliviykh*, Biblioteka molodoi literatury, 2 (Moscow: ARGO-RISK, 1993) <<http://www.vavilon.ru/texts/prim/barskova1.html>> [accessed 17 November 2015].

⁶⁷ Barskova, *Rasa brezgliviykh*.

⁶⁸ Barskova, *Rasa brezgliviykh*.

⁶⁹ Georgii Adamovich, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, Biblioteka poeta. Malaia seriia (St Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt; Izdatel’stvo ‘El’m’, 2005), p. 127.

⁷⁰ Polina Barskova, *Priamoe upravlenie* (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 2010), pp. 25–26.

There is emptiness, a stall is overgrowing with emerald ivy.

[...]

The *booring* truth about life (that it's akin to rot)

[...]

So there she lies on the outskirts of Prague, under damp pine needles.

It's so dark and quiet. I think Daphnis and Chloe

Would have abandoned themselves to their frolics unbridled

On the resin-fragranced, living, rusted carpet.⁷¹

Whilst the reference to Daphnis and Chloe is incidental here – it is even excised from the English translation of the poem⁷² – it dovetails with the poem's wider themes: the graveyard as (unusual) *locus amoenus*; its fertility, both for nature and Barskova; Nabokov's 'erotic' image of his mother;⁷³ the proximity of life and death. The graveyard setting parallels the ecphrases in 'Dafnis i Khloia', exposing the paradox of Daphnis and Chloe's youthful yet ancient love: the fact of *Daphnis and Chloe* being

⁷¹ Где были бы объяснимы сувениры, туристы, давка,

Там пустота, изумрудным плющом зарастает лавка.

[...]

Скушной правды о жизни (она-де подобна гною)

[...]

Вот лежит на окраине Праги, под влажной хвоей.

Так темно и тихо. Я думаю, Дафнис с Хлоей

Беспрпятственно здесь предались бы своим забавам

На ковре смолисто-душистом, живом и ржавом.

⁷² Polina Barskova, 'Poems by Polina Barskova', trans. by Katie Farris and Ilya Kaminsky,

InTranslation, 2011 <<http://intranslation.brooklynrail.org/russian/poems-by-polina-barskova>>

[accessed 20 July 2015].

⁷³ Lori Wilson, 'New Voices from Eastern Europe', *The Women's Review of Books*, 28.1 (2011), 28–29

(p. 28).

such an apparently modern, relatable specimen of classical literature, which is nevertheless almost two millennia old. In ‘Motherhood and childhood’, like in ‘Daphnis i Khloia’, Daphnis and Chloe are staged as a counterpoint to a verdant landscape, a piquant reminder of the impermanence of life, in a pastoral world enclosed from reality yet encroached upon by time and decay, a decay which is omnipresent in the lines surrounding their appearance.

Barskova’s persistent threats of decay in her pastorals are consistent with the Russian pastoral tradition. Russian pastorals tend to be vulnerable, ‘contaminated’ by the ‘mundane’ or the ‘squalid’, beset by ‘strife’ and ‘death’ – closer, in fact, to ‘anti-pastorals’.⁷⁴ This idiosyncrasy of Russian pastoral developed soon after pastoral’s introduction to Russia in the eighteenth century, when it was received according to (European) Renaissance understandings of the genre as an allegorical form (Daphnis appears in the first published Russian idyll, Lomonosov’s ‘Polidor. Idilliia’ (‘Polydorus. An Idyll’, 1750), as an allegorical figure for the poet himself). In the late eighteenth century Sumarokov introduced elegiac tendencies into his pastorals, which were picked up by Karamzin (whose ‘Otvstavka’ (‘Retirement’, 1796) features Chloe). Pastoral with this elegiac component was transmitted from Karamzin to Batiushkov to Pushkin.⁷⁵ Despite an avowed dislike of pastoral, Pushkin used

⁷⁴ Thomas Newlin, Rachel Platonov, in Zara Martirosova Torlone, *Vergil in Russia: National Identity and Classical Reception*, Classical Presences (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 186–87.

⁷⁵ Nathan Klausner, ‘Et in Arcadia Ego: Toward a Historical Analysis of the Russian Pastoral Mode’, *Russian Literature*, 72.1 (2012), 109–132 (pp. 113–19, 121–22). Ivan Dmitriev’s (a contemporary of Karamzin) poem ‘Vesna’ features both Daphnis and Chloe as a couple, and opens its enthusiastic hymn to young love with the phrase ‘Под розово-серебристым небом, / Возжженным лучезарным Фебом’ (‘Under the rosy-silvery sky, / Ignited by effulgent Phoebus’), which is a potential inspiration

Horatian/Batiushkovian themes of idealised rural retreat, especially in his early poetry (his schoolfriend Kiukhel’beker in ‘K Pushkinu iz ego netoplennoi komnaty’ (‘To Pushkin from his unheated room’, 1819) teased Pushkin, naming Chloe amongst his lovers⁷⁶), but especially in his later works gave them an elegiac and ironic twist.⁷⁷ This pastoral tradition as transmitted by Pushkin was especially influential upon poets of the twentieth century, when its elegiac tendencies were heightened as ‘rapid urbanization and indifferent destruction of natural environments that accompanied the Soviet Union’s rush to industrialization rendered the pastoral mode increasingly implausible’.⁷⁸ Prominent among these is Brodsky.⁷⁹ Brodsky has four eclogues, ‘Polevaia ekloga’ (‘Field Eclogue’, 1963), ‘Ekloga 4-ia (zimniaia)’ (‘Fourth (Winter) Eclogue’, 1977), ‘Ekloga 5-ia (letniaia)’ (‘Fifth (Summer) Eclogue’, 1981), and ‘Ekloga VI vesenniaia’ (‘Sixth (Spring) Eclogue’, publ. 2011), all of which display discordant, ‘anti-pastoral’ elements typical of Russian pastoral.⁸⁰

for Barskova’s cruelly blazing sun. Ivan Ivanovich Dmitriev, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, Biblioteka poeta. Bol’shaia seria (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1967), pp. 281–82.

⁷⁶ L. I. Savel’eva, *Antichnost’ v russkoi poezii kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka* (Kazan’: Izdatel’stvo Kazanskogo universiteta, 1980), pp. 112–13.

⁷⁷ Klausner, pp. 109–11, 126.

⁷⁸ Stephanie Sandler, in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature*, ed. by Evgeny Dobrenko and Marina Balina (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 124.

⁷⁹ For readings of Brodsky’s pastoral in dialogue with Karamzin and Pushkin, see Tatjana Kudrjavitseva and Timothy Saunders, ‘Finding Space for a Winter Eclogue: Joseph Brodsky and “Eclogue 4”’, *Russian Literature*, 59.1 (2006), 97–111 (p. 109); Jennifer J. Day, ‘The Optics of Memory in Brodsky’s “Fifth Eclogue”’, *Russian Literature*, 62.1 (2007), 23–48 (p. 28).

⁸⁰ Torlone, pp. 186, 188, 194, 220 n. 58.

Barskova cites Brodsky, 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.⁸¹ It is no wonder, therefore, that her pastoral mode should show definite influence from his. Traces of Brodsky’s ‘Field’ and ‘Spring’ eclogues are negligible: the former is less directly influenced by ancient pastoral, and falls outside Brodsky’s own definition of pastoral, ‘an exchange between two or more characters in a rural setting, returning often to that perennial subject, love’, which may be ‘dark’⁸² (to which ‘Dafnis i Khloia’ conforms); whilst the latter was published after Barskova wrote ‘Dafnis i Khloia’.⁸³ However, influence from Brodsky’s ‘Winter’ and ‘Summer’ eclogues is apparent.

Parallels between ‘Dafnis i Khloia’ and the ‘Fifth (Summer) Eclogue’ are particularly pronounced. Appropriately so, for not only is Brodsky’s poem set likewise in summer, it is also based (exceedingly loosely) on Virgil’s fifth eclogue, which in turn is based on Theocritus’ first *Idyll*, both of which concern the death of

⁸¹ Igor’ Petrov, ‘Polina Barskova: Ot Brodskizma k rabotorgovle’, *Vechernii Gondol’er*, 2001 <<http://gondolier.ru/023/23lab.html>> [accessed 21 July 2015].

⁸² Torlone, p. 181; Joseph Brodsky, *On Grief and Reason: Essays* (Penguin, 1995), p. 234.

⁸³ The ‘Spring Eclogue’’s parallels with ‘Dafnis i Khloia’, such as Brodsky’s comparison of spring trees to various forms of writing, and the phrase (developing the same thought) ‘Взгляни в окно: / написано больше, чем расшифрано’ (‘Look out the window: / there is more written, than deciphered’), could point to Barskova’s acquaintance with the unpublished text, but are also themes found widely in Brodsky’s writing, and in his other eclogues. Joseph Brodsky, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, ed. by Lev Losev and Aleksandr Kushner, *Novaia biblioteka poeta* (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii dom, 2011), ii, pp. 392, 394.

Daphnis⁸⁴ – a precursor of Longus’ Daphnis. The two halves of ‘Dafnis i Khloia’ are built around water sources, which Brodsky apostrophises as a fundamental aspect of summer: ‘О, водоемы лета!’ (‘O, the bodies of water of summer!’).⁸⁵ Brodsky’s closure of his ‘Summer Eclogue’, especially its love scene, in twilight (following Virgil),⁸⁶ may have motivated Barskova’s setting the second half of her bucolic epithalamion at night; whilst the ‘chill’ implying the inevitable end of summer evokes the defining assertion of the ‘Winter Eclogue’, ‘Время есть холод.’ (‘Time is cold.’)⁸⁷ Barskova’s ecphrasis of Daphnis and Chloe as written artifacts is Brodskian – his conception of poetry is founded upon ‘the brain, and ink. Literary work and not pythic raptures’.⁸⁸ In the ‘Summer Eclogue’ he compares a body (of either a fly or a human) to an ‘alphabet’, and, later, foliage to ‘cuneiform’, the meaning of which someone struggles to unravel. The concluding stanza of the ‘Winter Eclogue’ uses the relatively recent script Cyrillic to embody the future, contrasting with the obsolescence of Virgil’s Cumaean Sibyl; this is similar and opposite to Barskova’s use of ancient writing technologies to convey the age of her characters. The personified, muddle-specied insects of Barskova (‘dragonflyling’, ‘dragrasshopfly’, and ‘not-Our-Ladybird’) reflect the insects which fill the ‘Summer Eclogue’. 12 different kinds (by my count) are featured, most of which are personified: ‘комариная песня’ (‘mosquito song’), ‘Потные муравьи’ (‘Sweaty ants’), ‘гусениц’ (‘caterpillars’),

⁸⁴ Barry Scherr, ‘Two Versions of Pastoral: Brodsky’s Eclogues’, *Russian Literature*, 37.2 (1995), 365–375 (p. 366).

⁸⁵ All quotations from ‘Ekloga 5-ia (letniaia)’ from Brodsky, ii, pp. 76–81.

⁸⁶ Scherr, p. 373.

⁸⁷ All quotations from ‘Ekloga 4-ia (zimniaia)’ from Brodsky, ii, pp. 72–76.

⁸⁸ Ol’ga Sedakova, in Valentina Polukhina, *Brodsky Through the Eyes of His Contemporaries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p. 248.

‘пожилого / богомола’ (‘elderly / praying mantis’), ‘паук, как рыбачка’ (‘spider, like a fisherwoman’), ‘бездомный мотыль’ (‘homeless bloodworm’), ‘кузнечик в погоне за балериной / капустницы, как герой былинный’ (‘grasshopper in pursuit of a cabbage white / butterfly ballerina, like a Russian epic hero’), ‘мухи’ (‘fly’), ‘бабочки’ (‘butterflies’), ‘шаптающий, как Христос, по синей / глади жук-плавунец’ (‘water boatman [lit. ‘diving beetle’] striding, like Christ, over the smooth blue / surface’), ‘сталин или хрущев последних / тонущих в треске цикад известий’ (‘a stalin or khrushchev of the latest / tidings sinking in the rattle of cicadas’). The Soviet sibilance of Brodsky’s cicadas are an ‘anti-pastoral’ element emblematic of the ‘corruption’ of his pastoral, manifest at the end and immanent since the beginning.⁸⁹ Another such element is the abandoned bicycles in the grass, which represent ‘что-то от будущего, от века / Европы, железных дорог’ (‘something of the future, of the era / of Europe, railways’). Barskova’s introduction of the photograph echoes Brodsky’s bicycles, as part of a trajectory that is similar to that of Brodsky’s eclogues: ‘Dafnis i Khloia’ moves from ominous notes at the start, towards a threatening future.

The intrusion of time and decay into ‘Dafnis i Khloia’ stems not only from Brodsky’s pastoral poetics, preoccupied as they are by time and its effects, but also from Bakhtin. His essay ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’ explores the representation of time in *Daphnis and Chloe*:

⁸⁹ Andrew Kahn, in *New Studies in Modern Russian Literature and Culture: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. Rabinowitz*, ed. by Catherine Ciepiela and Lazar’ Fleishman (Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 2014), ii, pp. 319, 315.

bucolic-pastoral-idyllic chronotope [...] a blend of natural time (cyclic) and the everyday time of the more or less pastoral [...] This is a dense and fragrant time, like honey, a time of intimate lovers' scenes and lyric outpourings, a time saturated with its own strictly limited, sealed-off segment of nature's space, stylized through and through [...] In the Greek romance [...] nothing of this chronotope remains. A single exception exists [...]: Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*. At its center we have a pastoral-idyllic chronotope, but a chronotope riddled with decay, its compact isolation and self-imposed limits destroyed, surrounded on all sides by an alien world and itself already half-alien; natural-idyllic time is no longer as dense, it is cut through by shafts of adventure-time.⁹⁰

Its characterisation of Longus' narrative style is extremely pertinent to the aesthetic Barskova creates in her poem; moreover, Barskova has written on Bakhtin in an academic capacity, so it is conceivable that 'Dafnis i Khloia' was directly influenced by Bakhtin's interpretation.⁹¹

The threat time poses to pastoral life is the ultimate source of 'Dafnis i Khloia's' ominous aesthetic, expressed in the couple's ecphrasis as ancient (and vulnerable) texts, and in the coming of autumn and modernity. Barskova's 'anti-pastoral' pastoral aesthetic is inherited from Brodsky and the Russian pastoral tradition, but it is also inherent in Longus' original text, as Bakhtin points out. The still greater

⁹⁰ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 103.

⁹¹ Polina Barskova, 'Nikolai Bakhtin ili Pafos Rasstoianiiia', *Novaia Russkaia Kniga*, 2002 <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nrk/2002/2/bars.html>> [accessed 16 December 2015]. The article is more about Mikhail Bakhtin's brother Nikolai, although it of course also addresses Mikhail; large parts of it are devoted to Nikolai Bakhtin's classical influences.

concentration of anti-pastoral elements in Longus makes *Daphnis and Chloe* ideally suited to her anti-pastoral style. So, just as Brodsky chose Virgil as his pastoral model over Theocritus because of the *Eclogues*' 'reflection of reality' and 'emphasis on time' and entropy⁹² – their anti-pastoral features – so Barskova chose Longus' pastoral to make into a poetic microcosm beset by decay.

⁹² Torlone, p. 189; Scherr, p. 371.

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Appendix

Дафнис и Хлоя

Буколическая Эпиталама

I.

Над ручьём, развалившись как карточный домик, мурлыкают Дафнис и Хлоя.

Их – друг друга ласкающих – ласкает безглазое, злое,

Горловое светило. Кого же ласкать ему? Двое

В целом мире пустом, меж деревьев, воды, насекомых, –

Развалились они, раскалились. Она – драгоценный обломок,

Ископаемый оттиск, тугой завиток, тяжкий натиск.

Он – улыбчивый корень, песками затёртая надпись,

Изощрённая клинопись. Кто расшифрует: не я ли?

Вот она усмехается, словно стрекозка в серале,

Предположим у Ингра, целует его и бормочет,

Наблюдая: в его бороде стрекузнечик хлопочет,

И коровка не-божья (язычники!) важно крадётся.

Хлоя смотрит, и смотрит, и смотрит. Смеётся, смеётся.

II.

Подле них озерцо

разлеглось по земле – с островами.

Словно серое платье с кармашками и рукавами
Золотистых болотец.
А может быть – словно лицо
С нанесёнными крупно чертами,
С золотыми губами,
Огромными и плотоядными.
В небе висит запятая
Усечённого месяца. Рядом крадёт густая
Череда облаков завитая,
Как парик куртизанки, что сбросила серое платье.
Небо смотрит на озеро. Озеро смотрит объятье
На прибрежном холме. Хлоя смотрит на Дафниса. Этот
Смотрит как над плечом её морщится месяц
От последнего ветра, что дышит на них этим летом.
Впрочем, страх наступающей осени ему в упоенье неведом.
Он не знает и знать не умеет, что будет, но только – что длится.
От прохлады ночной удивительно ясны их лица,
Как в момент выплыванья из тягостной тьмы негатива
Очертаний реальности. Он выдыхает: «Красива
Ты сегодня, как озеро.» Хлоя в ответ тяжелеет
И склоняется.
Небо чёрным на них надвигается.
Только сбоку полоска тоскливо бесстыдно алеет.