be celebrated because it was democratic as it was orally transmitted in the past and contained elements of satire against khans; it should not be celebrated because it was aristocratic and worked as an instrument of traditional rule. With taking an oppositional stand being far from politically expedient, even with such minor adjustments as necessity for further research into the epic at a time when it was against the party line, the cultural sphere became a depoliticized avenue that "preserved livelihoods, and kept venues for social advancement open" (171). It is in this sphere that Buryats excelled, becoming one the Soviet-era highest-achieving ethnic groups in terms of the education and formation of professional elites. Chakar acknowledges this as partially due to the value of learning that predated the Soviet era and was rooted in early 20th-century reformist Buddhism.

But this venue is not sufficiently pursued in this otherwise thorough study. Modernity is understood on purely secular terms, with the "Soviet" sometimes slipping into generic "western" (6). But religion is not merely a missing component for a longer term perspective incorporating both pre-Stalinist and post-Soviet periods into the picture (Anya Bernstein, 2013; Ivan Sablin, 2016). I wonder if some important aspects of Buryat *Soviet* modernity are overlooked, given that both Buryat Buddhism and shamanism are not monotheistic. They are not built on the presumption of the singularity of truth, and thus do not imply a related singularity of choice between the religious and the Soviet. The book's secular material prompts questions not just about modernity's pragmatics but also its cosmology, which require further theorization.

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Voices of the Soviet Space Program: Cosmonauts, Soldiers, and Engineers Who Took the USSR into Space. By Slava Gerovitch. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 305 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. $90.00, hard bound.

This is a book with one author and many authors. Slava Gerovitch, one of America's premier spaceflight historians who teaches the history of science and technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has assembled here a vibrant collection of thirteen interviews that he conducted with Russian space personalities in the U.S. and Russia between 2002 and 2010. In a telling example of the eventual plight of the Soviet space program, five of the interviews were conducted with emigres, including Nikita Khrushchev's son, Sergei. The others took place in Russia, several at Star City near Moscow, or by e-mail. The author's questions are probing and balanced, sometimes general but more often quite specific, delving into various controversies, or unknowns, or specific technical questions. This is all a rare and welcome achievement in the literature. It is a signal contribution now that the first generation of spaceflight pioneers is passing away and the Putin regime is closing access to Russian archives and sources. We are lucky to be able to hear most of these voices for the first time.

The book's first section is the shortest, with two interviews of military specialists, a commanding officer and construction engineer, and with details about a Katyusha rocket battalion on the Eastern Front and the transition from German to Soviet rocketry after 1945. A second section on a variety of engineers is the longest, with six interviews. Several touch on the author's own interests in computing and human-machine interaction. These relate well to broader threads in the book about human-versus-robotic exploration, the Soviet program's preference for automated systems over piloted controls, and its setbacks with computerization and miniaturization. The

chapter on engineer Anatolii Daron is rich with original details about advances in liquid propellant rocketry, leading up to the partial achievements and overall failure of the infamous N-1 moon rocket. The third section rounds out the book with five interviews of a variety of cosmonauts and one medical doctor. The keynote chapter, in which space historian Asif Siddiqi participated, spotlights the exploits of cosmonaut Vladimir Shatalov, offering his experiences flying (and sometimes not) in the Soiuz missions between 1969 and 1971, and later serving as assistant chief for spaceflight in the Air Force. Also of special interest is the chapter on Valentina L. Ponomareva, who was the second backup to the first woman in space, and Valentina Tereshkova, who became a leading spaceflight historian in her own right. Ponomareva offers a fascinating perspective on the inner workings and fault-lines of the Soviet system (some of which continue to this day), including how it censored free speech, discriminated against women, and planned recklessly with human interests and lives.

In sum, this excellent book reveals new facts and insights on the personal, institutional, technical, and political facets of Soviet rocketry and spaceflight policies and practices between the Second World War and the end of the Cold War. We confirm old patterns, and we learn new ones, about the storied relations between the chief designers S.P. Korolev, V.P. Glushko, and V.N. Chelomei, among others. We also learn about myriad technical successes and disappointments, and the nagging poverty and destructive compartmentalization within the Soviet authoritarian system. Military priorities, and the raising of defense over consumer needs, are another common theme, proof again that the USSR could keep pace in the Cold War but, without free markets and values, could not win it. There are moments that are more hopeful also, regarding technological enthusiasm, material rewards, and spiritual kinship of the various teams. Gerovitch's Introduction also offers an informed study of the varied historical contexts, as well as helpful cautions about the rewards and perils of oral history. The notes cite both relevant Russian-language and English-language monographs for further reading on associated topics. The author's translations are fluid and engaging, especially with regard to the difficult technical terms and the nuances of individual tone and character. This was a significant labor of time and energy and talents. In time, perhaps the author will be able to post the original Russian transcripts online, especially for the audiences back home who are in serious need of such honest and poignant interpretations of their spaceflight history.

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Valerii Pereleshin: Life of a Silkworm. By Olga Bakich. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. xxiv, 391 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. $ 85.00, hard bound.

The poet Valerii Pereleshin (pseudonym of Valerii Frantsevich Salatko-Petrishche) is not a household name even among Slavic scholars. Born in Irkutsk in 1913, Pereleshin moved with his mother to Harbin, China, in 1920. He remained in China for the next thirty-two years, living in Harbin and later in Beijing and Shanghai. In 1950, he made an unsuccessful attempt to immigrate to the US, but was deported by the INS because of his Soviet citizenship. In 1953, he settled in Brazil, where he remained until his death in 1992. Pereleshin is the author of thirteen books of poetry, most of them self-published, and one volume of poems in Portuguese. A significant portion of his oeuvre has not (yet) appeared in print. Pereleshin was also a prolific translator from Chinese and Portuguese into Russian, as well as from Russian into Portuguese.