

Reading *Global Russian Cultures* now, one is often struck by a sense of melancholy: while the volume often cautions against the kind of aggressive nationalism that underlies the Ukraine War, much has already changed irrevocably. Lara Ryazanova-Clarke's illuminating chapter, which examines Russian tourist discourse through a case study of Russian visitors to Scotland, already seems to belong to another world where a much greater degree of mobility between Russia and the west was possible. Miriam Finkelstein's chapter, which closes the book, offers particular food for thought as she examines the legacy of Russian culture abroad, looking at how writers with no familial or linguistic link to Russia—Bernardo Carvalho, Bora Ćosić, and Orhan Pamuk, among others—nevertheless engage with “Russianness as a metaphor and a performance” (319), seeking to inscribe themselves into the Russian tradition. Finkelstein concludes that one meaning of being a “Russian” author in this sense is to “resis[t] oppressive regimes and remin[d] the public of the victims of persecution, in any given national context, through the power of literature itself,” “to give a voice to the victims of violence and terror,” “to speak of and for those who would otherwise remain silent and forgotten” (328). Since Finkelstein wrote these words, the dominant conception of “Russianness” in the world has likely altered. Finkelstein's positive vision of Russian culture may be incomplete, but she does remind us that there is a powerful counter-current in Russian literature, even if it has been drowned out in the current political moment.

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Esfir Shub: Pioneer of Documentary Filmmaking. By Ilana Shub Sharp. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. xii, 334 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Filmography. Illustrations. Figures. \$130.00, hard bound. \$39.95, paperback. \$117.00, Ebook.

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This is the first monograph dedicated to Esfir' Shub's cinematic work and career to date. Eight chapters analyze Shub's montage methods, contribution to the constructivist movement, and her five major nonfiction films. Its author, Ilana Shub Sharp, is an independent scholar from Australia with a background in film and fine arts. The study aims at repositioning Shub's place in film history by reassessing her diverse contributions to the avant-garde movement and the documentary genre.

The methodology of the first two chapters provides an account of Shub's professional beginnings and her theoretical grounding. The author details Shub's work in the Meyerhold theater, her laboratory exercises with Lev Kuleshov, her editing of foreign and Soviet films that made her into a leading expert on the editing table, earning her reputation in technical excellence. Sharp illuminates Shub's pedagogical contributions to Soviet film and provides details of how some of the key figures of the 1920s and 1930s completed their first montage exercises in her editing room. Shub taught montage to Sergei Iutkevich, Sergei Eisenstein, organized workshops for the future filmmakers at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography, and served as an unofficial film advisor to Kuleshov, Eisenstein, and Aleksandr Medvedkin.

Along with her pedagogical and editing work, the author equally gives attention to Shub's pioneering efforts in establishing constructivist cinema and the first film archive. Sharp traces the earliest pre-avant-garde influences on constructivist artists to the Peredvizhniki movement, emphasizing how their distancing from academism and the privilege of imperial art institutions (36), while shifting in the direction of

bringing utilitarian-oriented art to everyday life was particularly appealing to constructivists. Shub's formative ideas developed around Aleksandr Gan, Aleksandr Rodchenko, and Varvara Stepanova, who were grounding their art in industry, technology, ideology, and minimalist abstraction à la Malevich to produce the final product of art as utilitarian object. Sharp looks for other non-Soviet sources of influence on constructivists and finds that Pablo Picasso's collage technique of including discarded and recycled objects into art made its mark on Shub. Her usage of abandoned newsreels in her first project was exactly that: "She discovered chaotic heaps of unlabeled film reels abandoned in dank basements in Leningrad and retrieved this footage for the construction of *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*" (45).

The following two chapters discuss Shub's first compilation film *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927), difficulties she encountered collecting oftentimes damaged and abandoned newsreels, Shub's discovery of Nikolai Romanov's film archive and incorporation of that private material into her project. Sharp maintains that for *The Fall of The Romanov Dynasty*, Shub utilized exclusively authentic archival newsreels and does not engage with other sources that provide different accounts on the provenance of the compilation material. Joshua Malitsky informs us that Shub had to "shoot 1,000 of the total 6,000 feet of the film" and that the government needed to purchase additional 2,000 feet of negative material abroad including footage of Vladimir Lenin (*Post-Revolution Nonfiction Film: Building the Soviet and Cuban Nations*, 2013, 164).

Sharp gives particular attention to gender representation in Shub's documentaries, focuses on figures such as Vera Figner and the woman question in the prerevolutionary era, examines proletarian women working with technology, and discusses Shub's script *Women* (1933). She also looks at Shub's own struggle to be taken seriously as a woman director, promoting a non-traditional type of cinema, and provides informative accounts of how Soviet moviegoers responded unfavorably to her nonfiction films for their lack of entertainment value. Sharp scrutinizes Shub's self-conscious silencing strategies in her last two projects that reflected contemporary political realia and hardships to get new projects approved. She details how in *K.Sh.E.* (1932), Shub had to downplay the American contribution in the budding of the Dnieper Dam project and how in *Spain* (1939) she was pressured to present the Kremlin-favored narrative on the Spanish Civil War.

As a whole, this is a valuable study of Shub's diverse contributions to cinema, however, there are segments of the monograph where the author might consider giving greater consideration to several issues in a subsequent edition. Transliteration is inconsistent and contains typographical errors (for instance, elektifikatsy, revoliutsy). The eight chapters seem to be uneven in methodology and engagement with critical sources, having the larger part of the monograph take a historical approach, while the segments that analyze Shub's oeuvre can be descriptive and, at times, repetitive. Additionally, I would have liked to see mention of Dziga Vertov's first compilation film, *The Anniversary of the Revolution* (1918), made for the first anniversary of the October Revolution. This important discovery by Nikolai Izvolov and his team in 2018 pushed back the inception of the compilation film ten years before Shub's *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*.

The author's main objective was to reach a wider readership in her "reassessment and historical recovery" (263) of Esfir' Shub and her place in film history. Despite some of its drawbacks, the first monograph on Esfir' Shub is a welcome addition to the growing scholarship on her work and should receive attention.

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