

texts, ideas, and people. For example, as Merrill builds the case that Shklovskii developed a collective and non-elitist theory of authorship based on his understanding of the fundamental equivalence of written literature and oral folklore, she explodes the “biographical paradox” of Russian formalism. As she explores the psychological foundations of Shklovsky’s narrative theory, she offers up a brilliant reading of the last letter of *Zoo* as a “catch riddle” (one of Shklovskii’s favorite forms of erotic folklore, 142–43). Merrill’s account of the Moscow Linguistic Circle is based on meeting transcripts found in the archives—she gives voice, for example, to Brik, who is known to have shaped many of the Russian formalists’ key ideas but never to have published much of his own.

My hope is that *The Origins of Russian Literary Theory* finds its way to readers who are less familiar with “Russia” and more invested in “theory.” I might recommend that these readers start by reading the book’s conclusion, “Formalism and Philology in the Twenty-First Century,” which introduces English studies to a Russian version of “form” that is *not* defined by the opposition between intrinsic and extrinsic reading so fundamental to Anglo-American literary scholarship of the twentieth century. Merrill’s insistence on the value of the “philological paradigm” is an invitation to a larger conversation and future research: can the nineteenth- and early-twentieth century proximity of philological and psychological investigation inform a twenty-first century literary theory? How might the inclusion of folklore debunk the primacy of the written word? And how might we recuperate close reading as a technique that need not exclude the political? Not everyone will agree with Merrill’s privileging of philology, but the scholarship is sound, the prose is lucid, and the conclusions original. This book deserves to be read widely by scholars of literature and literary theory interested in the future of literary studies and the humanities; not only by those already invested in the history of Russian formalism.

ANNE DWYER
Pomona College

Global Russian Cultures. Ed. Kevin M.F. Platt. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019. xiii, 386 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Tables. \$79.95, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.272

Global Russian Cultures, edited by Kevin M.F. Platt, forms part of a wave of scholarly works seeking to place Russia in its global or transnational context. These include *Russian Culture in the Age of Globalization* (ed. Vlad Strukov and Sarah Hudspith, 2019), *Transnational Russian Studies* (ed. Andy Byford, Connor Doak, and Stephen Hutchings, 2020), and Vera Michlin-Shapir’s *Fluid Russia: Between the Global and the National in the Post-Soviet Era* (2021). Each of these volumes offer a different focus, but they are united in their departure from a methodological nationalism that insists on a unitary relationship between territory, language, and culture, and the exceptionalism that often accompanies such an approach. The transnational turn re-envisioned Russian cultures as plural, spilling across national, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries. It is, in part, a response to global political trends in the late 2010s: the rise of an inward-looking nationalism in the west—the Trump Presidency; Brexit—and to Russia’s bullish expansionism, signaled both by soft power initiatives (the Russian World) and military intervention, including the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and, most strikingly, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Platt is frank about the volume’s political commitment: “Our work stands in opposition to the bounded

and unitary conceptions of culture and identity that are most often associated with national projects in and around Russia. “In an era when some would build walls around ostensibly distinct cultures and societies and their own ‘primordial’ territories, we insist that cultures are always plural, unbounded, and polycentric” (9).

The volume is divided into two parts, each consisting of seven chapters. The first part, “The Situation of Russian Cultures,” focuses on the development of Russian cultures in different parts of the world, including the Baltics, Central Asia, Israel, Ukraine, and the United States, whereas the second, “Russian Cultures at Large,” is thematic in focus, covering areas such as Russian state policy, gender, music, and tourism. The quality of the scholarship is uniformly excellent, but space only permits me to discuss selected chapters here. For this reader, the strongest contributions were those that meditated on conceptual and methodological questions at length alongside particular case studies. For example, Maria Rubins advocates a new way of envisioning Russian cultures: “[a] polycentric, nonhierarchical model of global Russian cultures [that] may be visualized as an archipelago, a chain of islands that appear independent and isolated but in fact are interconnected in space, as well as time” (24). Rubins then illustrates how this model might work in practice through three case studies, one focused on interwar Paris, one on New York during the Cold War era, and one based on the Russophone community in contemporary Israel. Vitaly Chernetsky’s chapter on Russophone writing in Ukraine predates the 2022 invasion, but offers a valuable historical perspective and handles with sensitivity how the post-2014 conflict has thrown questions of language and identity into relief in Ukraine. Ukraine also figures prominently in Dirk Uffelmann’s thoughtful chapter that critically unpacks the Putinist construction of “Russophobia” in relation to anti-Russian statements made in the Russian language, and the performative contradictions therein.

While most of the chapters focus on Russian culture outside Russia, Ilya Kukulin’s fascinating chapter looks at how “the image of Russia’s “territorial integrity” has been made and unmade over time” (152) in Russian literature. Kukulin demonstrates particularly “how equivocation between imperial and national identification had far-reaching implications at the level of the territorial imagination” (156). His wide-ranging analysis stretches from to the eighteenth-century odic tradition to the present day, covering writers as diverse as Nikolai Nekrasov, Vasilii Aksenov, and Vladimir Sorokin. He concludes with an interpretation of contemporary writer Denis Osokin, finding that his works offer an alternative projection of Russian territory that is “centrifugal, but not expansionist, directed toward attention to the cultural models of the peripheries that subvert authoritative (‘central’) norms” (180). While Kukulin’s study impresses in its breadth of coverage, Adrian Wanner offers a fascinating portrait of one individual, the Russian-American screenwriter Michael Idov, as an example of the consummate “global Russian” (230) who “bounc[es] back and forth between continents and languages” (231). Wanner offers a sharp analysis of how Idov’s “transcultural self-fashioning” (232) switches based on whether he is addressing a Russian or American audience, noting how he transcends typical conceptions of the immigrant writer and yet remains implicated in systems of global capitalism. However, Wanner concludes with a prophetic warning that Russia’s growing nationalism may soon obstruct this vision of global Russianness, suggesting it “may ultimately be revealed as the utopian project of a brief historical interlude” (248). Indeed, after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Idov penned an editorial vowing: “[a]s long as Vladimir Putin remains in power, I will not write in Russian any more” (Idov in *Vanity Fair*, 2022). He went on to lament the failure of his attempts to build bridges between Russia and the west through his creative work: “I thought I’d built a bridge. But when they’re sending tanks over it, it’s easier to burn it and start again elsewhere” (Idov in *Vanity Fair*, 2022).

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.

CONNOR DOAK
University of Bristol

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.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.273

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