

Isa Willinger. *Kira Muratova: Kino und Subversion (Kommunikation audiovisuell)*. [Kira Muratova: Cinema and Subversion (Audiovisual Communications)]. Konstanz, Germany: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2013. Illustrations. Appendices. Bibliography. 204 pp. Paper.

Isa Willinger's monograph on Kira Muratova provides a thorough examination of this original director's extensive output, which has found greater appreciation among critics and scholars than audiences. In the last ten years alone, half a dozen monographs on Muratova's work have been published, and another half dozen studies not focused exclusively on it—including books in English, French, Russian, Italian, and Swedish—have devoted substantial space to her films. Critics and cinephiles alike should find Willinger's work to be of particular interest, as it insight-

fully captures the essence of Muratova's films: their subversive ability both to undermine the status quo of the society they were made in and to challenge audience assumptions and value systems.

The book consists of an introduction, ten chapters organized thematically and dealing with one or a few films each, and a concluding section. The appendices include Muratova's biography, an interview with Muratova and Evgenii Golubenko conducted by the monograph's author, an annotated filmography, a bibliography, and notes. The front matter includes an explanation of the book's organization, identifying the theoretical frameworks Willinger applied in exploring the theme of subversion, among them the theory of bodily impact, subject criticism, gender and performativity, deconstruction, and Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque, as well as the physiological power of visual images. These frameworks inform close analyses of the films. Some sections of the book discuss unexplored elements of Muratova's work, providing a fresh perspective and identifying undiscovered aspects of this remarkable director. Small yet high-resolution screen shots, in color or black-and-white depending on the film, have sufficient detail and image quality to assist the reader in following the discussion of specific images or scenes. These screen shots are jarring, like Muratova's films, yet none are gratuitous as they are essential to the analyses. Not all of Muratova's films are discussed, but Willinger's selection makes sense and lends cohesion to her arguments.

The first three chapters, which make up the book's opening section, address the idea and nature of subversion and examine Muratova's earlier films, the "provincial melodramas" of the 1960s and 1970s: *Brief Encounters* (1967), *The Long Farewell* (1971), and *Getting to Know the Big, Wide World* (1979), as well as *Asthenic Syndrome* (1989). A rather emblematic fact about *The Long Farewell*, Muratova's second film and the story of the complex and changing relationship between a loving mother and maturing son, is that over the course of the sixteen years that censors prevented it from being shown to the general public it was regularly screened as a cinematic masterpiece at Moscow's famous VGIK (Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography) (35). Willinger examines irony in this film—how it satirizes and parodies the existing and accepted roles of femininity and masculinity, of motherhood, of the individual and society—and shares with the reader her insightful interpretation of why government bureaucrats banned the film at a time when experts were extolling it.

The second part of this monograph (chapters four through six) examines films from the 1980s and 1990s—*A Change of Fate* (1987), *Enthusiasms* (1994), *Three Stories* (1997)—and is organized around the topics of corpses, disappointment and death, performing bodies, and, most fascinating for the present reviewer, the grotesque. Asserting that pathos or irony are the only two possible ways to deal with corpses, the author explores the functions played by corpses or seemingly dead bodies in the above mentioned films, as well as intentional (although not always successful) murders and accidental deaths. Willinger concludes with a suggestion that corpses have a dual function in Muratova's films: on the one hand they are like puppets used to call humans' integrity into question, on the other hand they remind the viewer of death and the deadly forces that lurk not far below the surface both in the film and real life (67).

The book's final portion (chapters seven through ten) discusses Muratova's latest films: *Two in One* (2007), *Melody for an Organ Player* (2009), and *Eternal Homecoming* (2012), examining aspects of them such as sound, leitmotifs, and the director's connections with Eisenstein's montage of "attractions" (in the Eisensteinian sense of the word) and the Russian cinematic avant-garde. As far as this reviewer is aware, this is the first work to discuss Muratova's ties to Eisenstein. The director's affinity with a giant of Russian cinema at its inception is undeniably important in understanding her distinctive style and ideology (145).

The only suggestions this reviewer could make to improve this monograph would be to include an index, which would enable the reader to find material more easily, and to analyze more films. And one more observation: the concise film plot summaries provided in the chapters are

very helpful, yet it seems strange to encounter them again, reproduced almost verbatim, in the filmography at the end of the book. Perhaps it would be more logical to keep them only in the appendices and to refer to them in the body of the book. These are minor practical considerations on how the book could be improved in a subsequent edition. Even as it is, the book succeeds in achieving the goal stated in its title: discerning and analyzing Muratova's cinema as an act of subversion. It offers an original, thought-provoking and well substantiated study worth reading and regularly consulting for both specialists in film and culture studies and laymen alike. Sharing some similarities with the auteur it explores, the book is a collage offering entertainment, insights, surprises and plenty of food for thought. It would make excellent reading for anyone interested in Muratova's work.

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Constantin Parvulescu. *Orphans of the East: Postwar Eastern European Cinema and the Revolutionary Subject*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2015. Illustrations. Works cited. Index. 189 pp. Paper.

Constantin Parvulescu surveys and analyzes films of the Slavic Postwar Era (1945–1985) in *Orphans of the East*. The book concerns itself with the notion of Socialist subjectivity as expressed and dissipated through orphaned narratives in cinema. Films receiving priority in the analysis include *Somewhere in Europe* (Hungary, 1948), *Story of a Couple* (East Germany, 1953), *Dita Saxová* (Czechoslovakia, 1967), *Camera Buff* (Poland, 1979) and *Diary for My Children* (Hungary, 1984); these were directed by Géza von Radványi, Kurt Maetzig, Antonín Moskalyk, Krzysztof Kieslowski, and Márta Mészáros respectively. Other films of high historical relevance receiving consideration include Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Iron* and *Man of Marble*, Dan Pita's *Sand Dunes*, Roberto Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero*, and the prequel and two sequels of *Diary for My Children*.

Parvulescu argues that the orphan functions as a trope which represents the quest for reformed social bonds transcending those of the traditional family (3). This variant presented in the Eastern cinematic tradition contradicts the Western model of the orphan in cinema. The Western orphan, as caricatured in *The Kid* and *Annie*, reflects private conciliatory relations between economic classes in a manner much like that in which management and business kiss and make up at the conclusion of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. The Western model, therefore, upholds traditional familial expectations for the treatment of the orphan, thus sending a conservative and optimistic message to the audience while defraying any tendency towards politicization. The Eastern orphan, however, disrupts the reified or normative desire for "good cheer and tidings." While the Western orphan trope resides in apolitical private sentimentality, the Eastern orphan offers a relatively pessimistic and political alternative (4).

Within the narratives of this Eastern postwar cinema emerges the pursuit of a New Order's subjectivity as expressed through the orphan's experiences and vantage point. Parvulescu writes, "The orphans are envisioned as a malleable biopolitical substance to be molded by the discourses and social practices of the New Order" (7). Ultimately, the book analyzes how cinema invites the audience to witness the creation and development of the new revolutionary or post-revolutionary subject cast free from the shackles of market, family, and convention, in other words, how cinema as propaganda educates the public.

The author writes, "Film, the darling medium of the workers, with its capacity to show and enact for millions, narrated the biographies of these new humans referred to in Kollantai's epigraph" (3). Here Parvulescu refers to Alexandra Kollantai, a revolutionized aristocrat known for challenging Lenin. In *Communism and the Family*, Kollantai claims, "The family is ceasing to