

beauty” (115). In subsequent years, as early Russian filmmakers began experimenting with a more sophisticated cinematic language, images of female performers would undergo a significant transformation. Through a subtle and lucidly-argued analysis of a wide range of cinematic texts and their socio-historical contexts, Morley traces the metamorphosis of Russia’s first female performer-protagonist (the erstwhile object of the “male gaze” in *Stenka Razin*) to characters who acquired the ability to express a certain sense of agency.

Morley’s volume is structured thematically and (to a lesser degree) chronologically: each of the book’s seven chapters is dedicated to a specific type of a fictional female performer as portrayed in early Russian films. For example, Chapter 1 (“The Oriental Dancer”) explores the anonymous heroine of the aforementioned film *Stenka Razin*. Chapter 2 (“The Peasant Girl and the Boyar’s Ward”) discusses ways in which Russian filmmakers began shifting their films’ narrative focus to the female protagonist, thereby encouraging the viewer to identify with the heroine. Of particular interest is Morley’s compelling discussion of the 1912 film *The Incestuous Father-in-Law* (*Snokhach*, director unknown) and her comparison of this film to the earlier production, *Stenka Razin*. Like the Oriental princess in *Stenka Razin*, Lusha in *The Incestuous Father-in-Law* is a young female protagonist-dancer who suffers at the hands of the male protagonist. Unlike the Persian dancer, however, whom a vengeful male counterpart “triumphantly” murders at the end of the film, Lusha becomes an agent (of sorts) of her fate as she takes her own life rather than endure her father-in-law’s continued sexual abuse.

The volume’s remaining chapters are dedicated to female protagonists created by several influential Russian directors, including Evgenii Bauer, a key filmmaker of the early silent era. Chapter 3 offers a close reading of a fictional opera singer-protagonist in Bauer’s earliest surviving work, *Twilight of a Woman’s Soul* (1913); Chapter 4 explores images of cinematic tango-dancing women as an emblem of the “New Age” in several films released in 1914, including Bauer’s *Child of the Big City* and *Silent Witnesses*. Various forms of female dance performance remain the focal point of Chapters 5 and 6, which trace images of a dancing gypsy girl, a ballerina and a modern dancer in films by Bauer, Petr Chardynin, Iakov Protazanov, and others. Finally, Chapter 7 offers a case study of the fictional actress-protagonist in Bauer’s 1915 film *After Death*.

While discussing the theoretical framework of her study, Morley states that her preferred approach is that of “bricolage” (8). Indeed, the author punctuates her discussions with insights from a wide range of disciplines (most notably film, literary criticism, dance, and gender theories) and draws from critics’ responses and memoirs of both film directors and women dancers from the era (such as Isadora Duncan). The result of this approach is a fresh and intriguing look at pre-Revolutionary Russian cinema and its fictional female protagonists that offers useful insights for scholars and students investigating Russian cultural history, film, and gender studies.

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Storytelling in Siberia: The Olonkho Epic in a Changing World. By Robbin P. Harris. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2017. xv, 234 pp, Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Tables. Maps. \$60.00, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.356

Reading this delightful book evoked memories of the first time I heard a singer of the dramatic epics the Sakha call *olonkho*. At a Museum of Music and Folklore conference

in 1994, the star was a Sakha-Evenki woman singer-tale teller, the elderly Daria Tomskaia. As Robin Harris explains, by 2005 the Sakha government recognized her as one of two remaining “master *olonkhosuts*,” the last of the improvisation masters who made tales come alive in multiple voices, through several nights of marathon *olonkho* performance. Daria told our spell-bound audience that as a child her whole being absorbed the chanted narratives of *olonkho* singers visiting her family. She would lie in a semi-awake trance-like state in her bed, listening near the hearth in their small home crowded with guests, local kin and neighbors who had come to enjoy the rare treat of a travelling story-teller. When Daria enjoyed a tale, including obscure ones circulating in the far northern communities, by morning she could perform all the parts. Since her childhood was in the Soviet period, her amazed parents recognized and feared her powers as shamanic, and tried to discourage her.

Robin Harris’ monograph places Daria’s rocky history of talent first repressed and then valorized in context. The monograph is an analysis of the decline of the vast epic repertoire through most of the Soviet period, due to lack of appropriate traditional milieus and community encouragement, followed by their uneven role in cultural revitalization. Harris’s argument, that the epics came to be associated with Sakha identity in the post-Soviet period, is similar to my analysis of sacred *olonkho* as synecdoche for the Sakha people. Since 1986, banners at folklore concerts have proclaimed “Yakutia—Land of *Olonkho*.” This formula, as Harris demonstrates, has intensified in the past twenty-five years, with one suspiciously commercial variation including plans for an “*Olonkho*-land” Disney-like theme park. Harris explains that standardized forms of the best known epic Niurgun Bootur served as bridges between the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Examples include an art volume with Sakha and Russian translations, and multi-disc recordings by the beloved actor-singer Gavriil Kolesov, who in turn influenced younger singers such as Pyotr Tikhonov, with whom Harris worked.

The most significant stimulus for epic revival, putting cultural revitalization in global perspective, is the 2005 designation by UNESCO of *olonkho* as a “monument of intangible cultural heritage.” Harris’s detailed chapter on how the designation was achieved is itself a daunting tale, involving near-miss timing, ethnomusicologist diligence, and begrudging Russian Ministry of Culture signatures. Republic authorities, using the prestige and support derived from international recognition, declared 2005–15 “The Decade of *Olonkho*” and enabled the establishment of an Institute of *Olonkho*. Support for youth programs and for digital archives has flourished, as have creative expressions of the epics in non-traditional forms, including folk rock, multi-genre theater, and mass-scale danced enactments of heroic epic battles between good and evil at annual summer solstice festivals. As Harris correctly worries, however, “festivalization” of epics, new creative channels, school programs with elders, and youth competitions featuring set epic fragments cannot mask the politics of neo-colonialism and the lack of a social milieu for the rekindling of full scale epics sung on the basis of improvisation within traditional rules and performance standards.

Harris’s admirable presentation includes strategic comparisons with the epic traditions of Koreans and Kyrgyz. Theoretical literature in ethnomusicology and linguistics is selected to show precedents for the importance of keeping alive improvisational arts for changing times. A website features epic excerpts and interviews discussing singer biographies and epic diversity (www.press.uillinois.edu/books/harris/storytelling). Fuller flavor of various epic storylines, beyond their moral education functions, and more extensive translated samples of the power of the Turkic language Sakha epic poetry, would make the book even better.

Harris and I differ in our analyses of the significance of *olonkho* with regard to Sakha shamanic world views, perhaps due to her Christian background, the reason

her family came to the republic. Harris notes her interviews demonstrate “widely varying opinions at the grassroots level regarding the questions of whether olonkho connects to uniquely shamanist beliefs or merely presents a broadly spiritual view of reality” (17). For me, shamanic cosmology and practice, far from unique or narrow, provided the culturally-saturated basis of inspirational poetry that poured from masters like Daria Tomskaia. This shamanic spiritual view has enjoyed a remarkable post-Soviet revival, nourishing the cultural renaissance that has been led by, among others, the Sakha Minister of Culture and theater director, Andrei Borisov, whose “theater of olonkho” is one of the best hopes for the viability of the epics for new generations in new forms.

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Beyond the Monastery Walls: The Ascetic Revolution in Russian Orthodox Thought, 1814–1914. By Patrick Lally Michelson. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017. xi, 291 pp. Notes. Index. \$69.95, hard bound.

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Historians of Russian Orthodoxy (notably Scott Kenworthy, *Heart of Russia: Trinity-Sergius, Monasticism, and Society after 1825*, 2010) have reconfirmed for us the central role of monastic institutions in modern Russian history. Seeking to add intellectual context to this monastic renewal in late Imperial Russia, Patrick Michelson in *Beyond the Monastery Walls* addresses the much broader “discourse of asceticism” that not only inspired the nineteenth-century monastic revival but came “to occupy a central place in Russian Orthodox thought” (20). His book is both a history of how this ascetic turn, or “ascetic revolution,” developed and an exploration into the diverse intellectual and cultural worlds of those who framed the asceticism discourse.

The 1814 start date corresponds to the year of the official charter reforming Russia’s theological academies and seminaries. Michelson is less interested in the academies as institutions, rather focusing on their new journals, which became sites for early translation into Russian of foundational patristic texts. These ascetic texts not only informed ecclesiastical education, but reached beyond the academies to a lay audience preconditioned to accept such discourse owing to the late eighteenth-century monastic revival associated with Paisii Velichkovskii, Tikhon of Zadonsk, and Serafim of Sarov. As in the case of the translations of Isaac the Syrian, the ascetic texts offered a neopatristic theology that combined ascetic feats with simple Christian virtues relevant for a post-Napoleonic Russian Orthodox world.

Elsewhere, Michelson shows how this asceticism discourse was incorporated into Slavophile writings, which in turn built on the later writings of Petr Chaadaev, introducing a Russian exceptionalism that effectively inoculated Russian thought against alleged heretical forces from the west. According to Michelson, among the more interesting ideologies utilizing this asceticism discourse was that of the radical nihilists, notably N.G. Chernyshevskii, whose figure Rakhmetov in *What is to be Done?* reflects a materialist “secularization of the asceticism discourse” (96). Michelson shows how this asceticism rewrite spawned refutations in support of “Orthodox asceticism” (44) by such figures as Kievan philosophy professor Pamfil Iurkevich (1827–74), whose “From the Science of the Human Spirit” was catapulted to prominence with support from Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) and the publicist Mikhail Katkov.

Ultimately, Michelson finds some of the clearest expressions of Orthodox asceticism in Russian *starchestvo*, notably in the figure of Father Zosima in Fedor