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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust by David Shneer

Review by: William C. Brumfield

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besides (he was allowed to travel abroad the following two seasons and allowed to import a new, bright blue Ford for his personal use). This haughty attitude and his Western ties fueled his attackers' wrath when he, too, was censured, along with five other top composers, in early 1948 and labeled an "anti-people composer."

Morrison organized his book largely by genre rather than strict chronology; indeed time moves forward and backward as one turns the pages. It is sometimes difficult to recall important contextual events presented earlier. The coverage of Prokofiev's Soviet oeuvre is uneven—minor works often get more attention than major ones. But this makes sense: many of them are receiving their first analysis in English. Generally, instrumental works receive less attention than those composed for the stage or film.

The book contains no musical examples, yet the works are accorded succinct analyses that require only a rudimentary knowledge of musical terminology and theory. Many of them include clever turns of phrase that provide much needed respite from the ongoing tale of woe. Regarding the opening of the cantata *Ballad of an Unknown Boy*, Morrison writes "The march is hazily cast in A minor, with the tonic pedal briefly embellished with a rising whole-tone scale in sixteenth notes—a glint of sorcery" (p. 205). Later, he likens Prokofiev's gaudy *Ode to the End of the War* to "an overdetermined Stalinist skyscraper" (p. 292). The analyses are generally quite illuminating; however, Morrison's heavy-handed discussion of the ballet *Cinderella* begs for a full-dress rebuttal.

Most conclusions are sound—for example, "In the domain of hack work, Prokofiev relied on inconstant musical structures to compensate for static verbal content" (p. 372)—but his purported "return to Bach" near the end of the composer's life is sketchy. Also, Prokofiev would not have been happy to hear how many times he was called a neoclassicist in these pages. Just like the word "jazz," musical neoclassicism has been so broadly interpreted over the years since Stravinsky began the movement in 1923 that it has lost its original meaning. (Prokofiev ridiculed the movement in those days, and his style forever eschewed imitative counterpoint, an important component of it.)

The pioneering American Prokofiev scholar Malcolm Brown generously opened his vast personal files for Morrison's use. They include such nuggets as unpublished interviews with the composer's first wife, who was arrested and sent to Siberia in 1948, and with his younger son, Oleg. RGALI sources heretofore unreported in English include important reminiscences and interviews. Morrison also taps the latest in Russian scholars.

This is an important book; it fills many gaps and reminds us of the incompatibility of art and totalitarianism. Prokofiev certainly would have composed more—he had plans for many new works at his death. Tragically, though, his indefatigable spirit was forcibly extinguished by a system he came too late to understand.

Stephen Press, Illinois Wesleyan University

Shneer, David. *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011. xi + 283 pp. \$39.95. ISBN 978-0-8135-4884-5.

The subject of this book is both highly specific and inherently complex. The title proclaims questions of identity—Soviet, Jewish—and the way that Soviet Jewish identity relates through photography to two of the fundamental cataclysms in the history of civilization: World War II and the Holocaust. As a base for this already substantial thematic group, the book also includes material on topics such as the use of photography in prewar Soviet campaigns for accelerated development and the role of Jews in the formation of Soviet photojournalism. These related components themselves have ramifications whose discussion could extend to monographic scale. The author's ability to impose structural logic on this diversity is due in large part to a determined focus on the technical and professional aspects of photojournalism.

The book's extended introduction presents questions of modern secular Jewish identity in Russia—and the role of that identity in photography—in a manner sensitive to the biographies of

individual photographers. Part One, "When Photography was Jewish," examines the large Jewish presence in the creation of professional photography in the Soviet Union. This movement into technical professions has its origins in the development of secular culture among Jews in the Russian Empire, a process examined by Yuri Slezkine, Brian Horowitz, and Yitzhak Arad, among others. Yet the lives of the photographers in this book show distinct paths that defy broad generalizations on the meaning of Jewish identity.

Professional photography, which had flourished in prerevolutionary Russia, faced the challenges of rebuilding during the 1920s. This void provided an opening for young Jews with technical savvy and a desire for advancement in the main Soviet urban centers—Moscow, above all. The first chapter, "How a Group of Jews from the Russian Provinces Built Soviet Photojournalism," describes the beginnings of publications and professional organizations that would provide essential support for photography. Of particular interest is material on the popular publication *Ogonek*, revived by Mikhail Koltsov (born Fridlyand), who subsequently fell victim to Stalinist repression.

Situated at the intersection of art, politics, and propaganda, photojournalism was primarily intended to promote the regime's political and social agenda, guided by the principles of Socialist Realism. Ideology coexisted with technical professionalism, and in the second chapter David Shneer examines this alliance as reflected in the work of individual photographers during the 1930s. Jewish photojournalists promoted the image of Soviet identity in both culture and industrial development, yet Jewish identity had to be resolutely secular, if acknowledged at all. Nationalities existed, but the Soviet people were to be presented as transcending narrow categories of ethnic identity.

For Jewish professionals, most of whom considered themselves culturally Russian, this was a complex process fraught with ambiguities. Chapter 3, "Soviet Jews on both Sides of the Camera," touches on these complications in photojournalism. As a case study Shneer discusses the formation of a Jewish autonomous region in the eastern Siberia region of Birobidzhan. Jewish photographers were expected to present Birobidzhan (subsequently scorned as a grotesque fantasy) not only as an example of Jewish participation in Soviet development projects, but also as a new identity model for Jews themselves, actively building their own land.

Having established the roles of Jewish photographers and publishers in the creation of Soviet photojournalism, the book turns in Part Two to the participation of these same photographers in propaganda campaigns to mobilize Soviet society in the struggle against Nazi Germany. In his account of photographers as participants in this total mobilization, Shneer provides a number of interesting details. For example, Lev Mekhlis (also Jewish), seen by military historians as a fanatic Stalinist and pernicious political meddler in army affairs, is here presented in a different context as an effective mobilizer of war propaganda. Jewish photojournalists were among the first to document Nazi atrocities, such as Dmitrii Baltermants's searing images of massacred bodies near Kerch. They were also at the front lines in Stalingrad (Arkady Shaykhet, Emmanuel Evzerikhin, Georgii Zelma, and others). And they were there when the remains of concentration camps such as Maidanek were uncovered.

Shneer notes that these photojournalists were confronted with the challenge of balancing an awareness of atrocities against Jews and the larger propaganda imperatives to avoid mentioning (in captions, for example) the specific Jewish identity of the victims. In part this tactic was dictated by Allied mobilization strategy, but it was also motivated by growing anti-Semitism in the Soviet regime. The book documents this process and its victims in Soviet journalism. The photographers, fortunately, survived, although a number were deprived of regular employment for several years.

The book contains a few errors in detail. On page 96 we read that one of the photographs "shows off a large mortar that, as the caption tells us, shot 'dozens of fascist planes out of the sky.'" Actually, the caption does not tell us that, nor could it. Mortars are anti-personnel weapons. They do not shoot planes from the sky. The original Russian caption (barely legible) correctly indicates an anti-aircraft battery. On page 50, Shneer gives a convincing exegesis of Zelma's iconic portrait of Stalin. However, nothing here is incidental, and Stalin is most certainly not wearing a "simple peasant coat." Given his well-known ambivalence toward the peasantry, that would be odd indeed. He is wearing a semi-military tunic, often referred to as a "french," that was widespread among

officers in World War I and subsequently adopted by political leaders (Kerensky, Trotsky—and Stalin). I would also question whether he is “applauding someone being mentioned.” This photograph is entirely about comrade Stalin. He is most likely engaging in the Soviet practice of applauding the audience that is in turn applauding the speaker.

With this book Shneer has created a worthy tribute to these courageous photojournalists and to the survival of their legacy under extraordinarily difficult conditions.

William C. Brumfield, Tulane University

Grinberg, Marat. *“I am to be read not from left to right, but in Jewish: from right to left”: The Poetics of Boris Slutsky*. Borderlines: Russian and East European Jewish Studies. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011. 482 pp. \$65.00. ISBN 978-1-934843-73-4.

According to Lev Losev, Boris Slutsky (1919–86) was a talented and original poet who was admired by Joseph Brodsky and Anatolii Naiman. While Losev claims that Slutsky created a new type of poetic that entwined the dry-eyed view of reality with simple language, Naiman highlights Slutsky’s talent to create a sense of the unexpected.

Publication of Slutsky’s works in three volumes in 1991 enabled the Russian reader to appreciate his complete poetic legacy, much of which was hitherto unpublished. Gerald Smith’s translations of Slutsky’s poetry, *Things That Happened* (1999), brought Slutsky’s poetry to the attention of anglophone readers. Grigory Roytman’s 2003 biography of Slutsky uncovered the richness of Slutsky’s poetic renderings of Russian and Yiddish traditions. Unlike Roytman, who sees Slutsky as a poet of tragedy, Marat Grinberg presents Slutsky as the Russian Judaic poet who “is able to transplant his ground onto the Russian/Soviet turf via the process of translation and hermeneutic commentary” (p. 396). Grinberg is particularly concerned with Slutsky’s ironic thinking, sobering rationality, and his unique fusion of Russian and Judaic traditions (evident in the skillful use of various biblical subtexts found in Slutsky’s poetry).

Grinberg’s study comprises an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, bibliography, index of names, and index of selective subjects and terms. It discusses Slutsky’s biography, his war poetry and his friendship with Mikhail Kul’chitsky, his post-Holocaust verse, his dialogue with David Samoilov and Ilya Sel’vinsky, and his bond with Evgeny Baratynsky and Alexander Pushkin. It also compares Slutsky’s hermeneutics to Charles Reznikoff’s objectivist poetics. In Grinberg’s view, both Slutsky and Reznikoff are poets of essence who create “historiographic and canon-oriented systems” (p. 270). Grinberg’s analysis of Slutsky’s philosophical poetry in a comparative context enables the scholar to challenge the view of Slutsky as the Soviet war poet and memoirist.

Grinberg aspires to demonstrate that, through the prism of Slutsky’s poetry, the reader is able “to grasp not only the dynamics of the Modernist heritage in the Soviet period but also the birth and development of Soviet postmodernism” (p. 18). The latter statement might be problematic, given the predominance of ethics over aesthetics in Slutsky’s works. As a result of Grinberg’s sophisticated discussion, Slutsky emerges as a transitory figure between modernist and postmodernist periods. Disappointingly, in his insightful and nuanced reading of many important poems, Grinberg focuses mainly on images, thematic clusters, intertextual links, and intonation, not paying enough attention to rhymes, stanzas, and meter. Yet Slutsky’s innovative use of stanza, meter, and free verse testifies to his conscious use of polyphony that enables him to interweave into his poetic accounts of Soviet life many dialogues with Russian and European poets of the past. Thus while Pavel Kuleshov suggests that Slutsky often uses the anapestic trimeter and pauses found in Russian seventeenth-century accentuated verse usually known as “raeshnik,” Ilya Serman compares Slutsky’s anti-odic verse to the experiments undertaken by Gavriila Derzhavin and Mikhail Lomonosov. Serman links Slutsky polystylistics to Viacheslav Ivanov’s synthesisism. Slutsky’s anti-odic verse could have been also juxtaposed to the works of Veniamin Blazhennyj (Aizenshtatd; 1921–99) whose generic integration of psalms and biblical subtexts into poetry resembles Slutsky’s poetic meditations. The