

The Lady Vanishes: Soviet Censorship, Socialist Realism, and the Disappearance of Larisa Shepitko

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ON JUNE 2, 1979, the greatest Soviet director you've never heard of was killed in a car crash outside Leningrad. The tragedy opens a page of Andrei Tarkovsky's diary: "Larisa Shepitko was buried, and so were five members of her team. A car accident. All killed instantly. It was so sudden that no adrenaline was found in their blood" (qtd. in Ivan-Zadeh). Shepitko was only forty-one years old.

In the years that followed, the global film industry mourned her loss, transcending Cold War politics¹ – fast-forward to the present, however, and Shepitko becomes an unfamiliar name. Today, only two of her films are available on DVD in the United States, and, according to film critic Larushka Ivan-Zadeh, these films are "scarcely shown or known" in Russia. Yet, at the time of her death, Shepitko was "hot property on the international film circuit." Young and "strikingly attractive," the camera-ready director had just achieved a career milestone with her masterpiece *The Ascent* (*Voskhozhdenie*, 1977), which won the Golden Bear at the 1977 Berlin International Film Festival. According to Ivan-Zadeh, "she had all the live-fast-die-young glamour that would ensure instant icon status for far inferior artists."

Why, then, was Shepitko's work forgotten? Ivan-Zadeh suspects the answer lies in Lenin's declaration that "of all the arts, for us cinema is the most important," arguing that "Shepitko did not find it easy to satisfy communism's cultural commissars." Anglophone media suggests Soviet censorship is responsible for excising her creative contributions from film history; both Russian and US scholarship would appear to support this claim. Valery Golovskoy, described in academic literature as "one of the most experienced and knowledgeable sources on Soviet film in the United States" (Hecht 327), goes so far as to label Shepitko an "outsider" who engaged in a "constant fight with leadership" due to



ABOVE Figure 1. Nadezhda struggles to fit into a Matryoshka costume in *Wings* (Mosfilm, 1966)



ABOVE Figure 2. The unforgiving landscapes of *The Ascent* (Mosfilm, 1976)



BELOW Figure 3. The authoritarian Abakir in *Heat* (Kyrgyzfilm, 1963)

“official efforts to ignore and repress her work as much as possible” (Merrill 153). Others lament more broadly that Soviet cinema post-Stalin has “received relatively little attention,” overshadowed by “Russian avant-garde film of the 1920s, the cinema of Gorbachev’s perestroika, Russian pre-revolutionary film, and even Stalin-era cinema” (Prokhorov 5).² At worst, Shepitko would appear to be the victim of political vendetta; at best, she has been overlooked.

This article will address the dynamic relationship between Shepitko’s films and two contexts: how her films were shaped by, and in turn spoke to, the vicissitudes of Soviet censorship and evolving interpretations of Soviet Socialist Realism. With this article, I aim to bridge Russian and US scholarship to provide a more complete assessment of Shepitko’s career. My contention is that while contemporary texts acknowledge Shepitko as controversial, scholars and critics have yet to map out the spectrum of culturally specific transgressions that compelled her institutional suppression. In re-examining Shepitko’s aesthetic, I will argue that she be admitted into the pantheon of art cinema auteurs, taking her rightful place alongside not only Akerman and Varda as a director of women’s cinema, but also alongside Tarkovsky and Sokurov as a director deserving of praise without gendered qualifiers.

Locating the Biography of a Lost Filmmaker

Born in 1938 in the Ukrainian SSR, Larisa Shepitko moved to Moscow in her teens to attend the Soviet Union’s most prestigious – and the world’s oldest – school of cinema, Russia’s All-Union Film Institute (VGIK). At the VGIK, Shepitko was a member of what *The New York Times* named the “most prodigiously gifted generation of Soviet filmmakers since the pioneers of the 1920’s” (Kehr): Tarkovsky had graduated only a few years earlier, and her immediate contemporaries included Elem Klimov, whom she would later marry. Shepitko graduated from the institute in 1963, already having produced a feature-length film, *Heat* (*Žnoi*,

1963), and won a grand prize at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

Notably, for eighteen months until his death, she studied directing under Alexander Dovzhenko, who served as her “greatest influence” in that he represented artistic integrity and “allegiance to film as a vehicle of conscience” despite “enormous pressure” from censors to produce a cinema in service of state ideology (Costlow 76). Little has been written about his mentorship or whether their shared Ukrainian heritage shaped her filmmaking. While nationality is said to figure prominently in Dovzhenko’s work, Shepitko’s origins remain a mystery. In contemporary western media articles, she is in turn labeled Russian, Ukrainian, and even Iranian³ – in any case a product of the Soviet Union and a member of the Moscow intellectual elite.

Soviet Censorship and Socialist Realism, from Stalin to Shepitko

In her short lifetime, Shepitko was able to complete four feature-length films, a television movie, and one segment of a filmic omnibus. Of her six total productions, three were censored to varying degrees. *Wings* (*Krylya*,

1966) was released to a limited audience and later banned (Woll 219), the omnibus segment *The Homeland of Electricity* (*Rodina elektrichestva*, 1967) was “shelved” for twenty years, and *You and Me* (*Ty i ya*, 1971) was cut to permit release to the Venice Film Festival by the Soviet government as a national production. Shepitko also began production of the film *Belorussian Station* (*Belorusskiy vokzal*, Smirnov, 1971), but when “censors heard that she planned to change the optimistic tone of the original scenario into a bleak and tragic tale, Mosfilm removed her from the project and replaced her with a less controversial director” (Lawton 72).

Paradoxically, Shepitko’s least successful work, both commercially and with censors, *Wings*, began production under Krushev’s Thaw, a time of political liberalism, while her most successful, *The Ascent*, was produced amid the cultural calcification that followed under Brezhnev.⁴ Here, Shepitko’s career presents a counterexample to most existing scholarship on Soviet cinema post-Stalin, which argues that Brezhnevian censorship placed a chokehold on innovative filmmaking and marked a return to Stalinist aesthetic dictates.⁵ A closer look at the production histories of Shepitko’s films reveals how Soviet censors, far from uniform and centralized in their oversight, were arbitrary enough to sanction some culturally transgressive films while suppressing others.

Ultimately, as Shepitko’s contemporary, Andrei Smirnov, recalls, there were “no clearly formulated rules” in the process of working with Soviet censors, where “everything depended on the particular official who said yes or no” (Sivkova). For instance, husband Elem Klimov contends that

BELOW Figure 4a. Stilling city environments and open skies in *Wings* (Mosfilm, 1966)



Soviet officials thus made explicit expectations of the role women should play in cinema – located anywhere but behind the camera.

The Ascent was shown in theaters only because the film was first screened in Belorussia, its setting. There, it was seen by Pyetr Masherov, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Belorussia (Klimov 12). According to Klimov, after the screening, Masherov “wiped away his tears and broke the crowd’s stunned silence (and official censor protocol) by speaking for forty minutes on the importance of the film” (qtd. in Merrill 153). Within several days, the film was officially accepted without a single change (Merrill 153) – this, despite the many “apprehensions” about its fate during production (Golovksoy 262). Shepitko’s film, in depicting the psychological quandaries of Soviet partisans caught by Nazi patrols, gripped the many war veterans present in the audience. Masherov himself was a veteran and a “hero of the Belorussian partisan movement,” whose mother had been executed by the Nazis for assisting guerrilla forces (Klimov 12). Yuri Klepikov, who cowrote the script with Shepitko, cites Masherov’s authority as the only reason why their story made it to the screen (Fomin 171). Circumstances were so sudden that Shepitko had not even watched her film in its entirety before her arrival in Minsk; yet with Masherov’s support, the film managed to bypass all requisite screenings by Mosfilm and Moscow’s Goskino, the central state body governing the Soviet film industry.⁶ In contrast, getting the film approved for production was a nightmare. Facing resistance from the state, Shepitko had tried

to leverage her personal network, turning to a classmate with whom she studied at the VGIK, Gemma Firsova, to fast-track production permits. They should have been easy to come by – Shepitko’s script stuck closely to the acclaimed novella on which the film was based. But, as Firsova admitted in a 2006 article for *Isskustvo Kino*, her lies in lobbying authorities backfired, prolonging the entire filmmaking process: from casting to soundtrack, official permissions were delayed at every step. From the moment Shepitko read Vasil Bykov’s *Sotnikov*, on which her film was based, it took four years to commence production (Firsova). Shepitko’s filmography thus sheds light on how loopholes in the Soviet censorship system could simultaneously render even a single film both politically problematic and politically untouchable.

Shepitko’s very career was built on this tension.

Perhaps the same could be said of Shepitko’s very reputation. For example, relying on industry anecdote, Soviet censorship expert Valery Fomin describes Shepitko’s reputation at Goskino by 1973, the year she first looked to produce *The Ascent*, as “only that of a madwoman.” Yet according to US scholar Jason Merrill, literary and historical texts suggest that Shepitko and the completed film “enjoyed a certain level of official acceptance” (153). Indeed, in 1977, *Variety* named her one of four directors “so respected” they could “evade Soviet ‘oversight.’” The Soviet

government arguably had every political interest in promoting domestic filmmakers, especially those considered progressive: after *The Ascent* won a Golden Bear, Shepitko “was allowed to travel to film festivals in Telluride, Toronto, and again to Berlin, where she was a member of the jury in 1978” (Merrill 153) – Brezhnev’s isolationist policy notwithstanding. Although Golovskoy insists that no Soviet cinematographer, nor film studio “hurried to commemorate” Shepitko upon her death (265), the state itself awarded her a posthumous prize for her contributions to filmmaking (Merrill 153). Revisiting Shepitko’s filmography allows us to reconsider a narrow intellectual focus on the Soviet film industry that dismisses it as categorically repressive, in turn breaking down what film scholar Lilya Kaganovsky calls “the standard, totalitarian approach to Soviet cinema” that imagines its film industry – and, I would add, its censorship systems – as “monolithic” (485).

Analyses of *Heat, Wings, and The Ascent: A Culturally Specific Cinema of Subversion*

By situating Shepitko in a new historical context, we can return to her films with fresh eyes, and study her work in light of its culturally specific violations of ideological and aesthetic norms. In the analyses that follow, I will consider overlooked satire and the unorthodox formal technique that serve as the visual conduits of her narratives’ moral and psychological drama.

Shepitko’s films contain satire that is perhaps too deeply rooted culturally to be noteworthy to Russian scholars, but also too rooted to be accessible to US scholars; however, this analysis is important to clarifying the nature of Shepitko’s subversive style. With *Wings*, for instance, scholarship has not noted how Nadezhda (Maya Bulgakova), the name of the hapless protagonist, is a name unique to women that means “hope,” an irony lost on non-Russian speakers. Such details help shed light on Nadezhda’s alienation as a middle-aged female war veteran occupying a society in which she is no longer relevant, who must reconcile memories of her illustrious past as a pilot with her drab present as a school principal. Neither have scholars considered shots of Matryoshka dolls in this film as a traditional symbol of motherhood, used in a sarcastic nod to Nadezhda’s lack of biological children and

BELOW Figure 4b. Stifling city environments and open skies in *Wings* (Mosfilm, 1966)



her inability to connect with her surrogates at home and at school. This includes a school talent show, where Nadezhda volunteers to take the place of a student in whom she unwittingly provokes a nervous breakdown. The costumes are of Matryoshka dolls, in which the other girls are neatly enclosed, but which Nadezhda has to be supported by two male students as she awkwardly tries to fit inside (Figure 1). Though her precarious guise nearly topples over during the show, her performance as the mother doll convinces the state officials present in the audience.

Translation also affects understandings of Shepitko's work. For example, on the level of language, the English translation of *Wings* overstates the centrality of men to the film. When her daughter seeks to begin a new life with her husband, Nadezhda begs her not to leave. Watching her daughter pack, Nadezhda does not plead, "you don't really love him," as the English translation states, but instead repeats an insistent, "you love me." Men are irrelevant in the choice between work and motherhood, which Nadezhda, in the wartime context, did not have – indeed, she declares to her daughter, "I worked all my life. I did not choose anything." Nadezhda decides that her daughter should "envy her" for this, judgmentally casting doubt on the significance of marriage and men entirely. Indeed, the youthful, attractive Nadezhda repeatedly shoots down interested bachelors, seeking meaning in work over male company or even the company of other women or her daughter, but failing to find gratification in any realm. So, while US scholars note that sixties Soviet films are often "centered around missing or absent men, including fathers, husbands,

and lovers," undoing the conventions of Socialist Realism (Kaganovsky 497), this film's original Russian text appears to suggest that Nadezhda's inability to connect with her children, and even other women, is just as, if not more important, to understanding how ideals of Soviet womanhood have failed the lost women of the postwar generation.

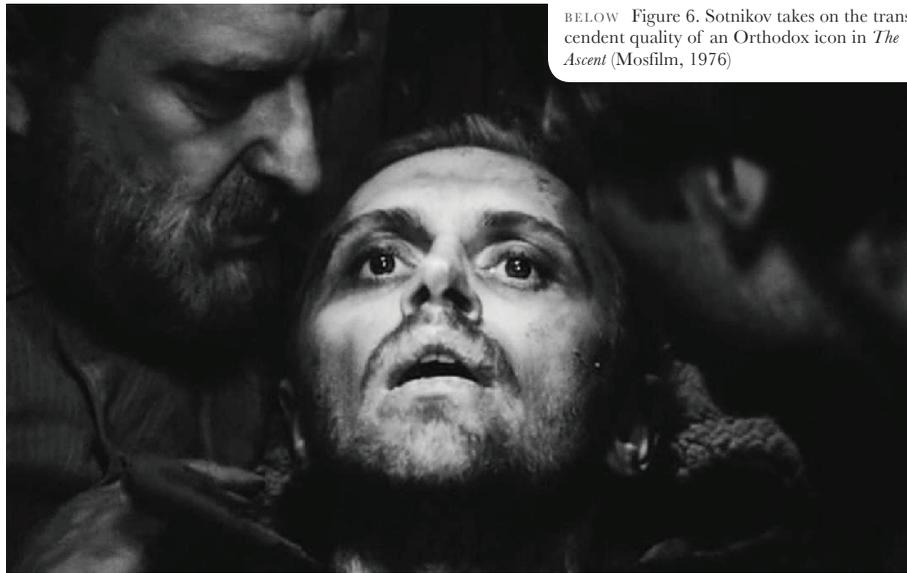
Shepitko's formal technique digs deeper into the issues her narratives raise about Soviet identity post-Stalin. Shepitko chose to shoot nearly all of her films in black and white, as if to call attention to black-and-white thinking. Her monochrome landscapes highlight competing ideologies – political, religious, gendered – that plague the Soviet Union of the 1960s and 1970s. In *The Ascent*, her camera alternates between desolate winter landscapes and tightly composed interiors while examining the consciences of two Soviet prisoners of war (Figure 2). A violently contested borderland in Nazi-occupied Belarus forms the backdrop to a story that examines the boundaries of good and evil, even as they apply to the complicity of postwar audiences who take their material comforts for granted. Barren Kyrgyzian steppes frame opposing central characters in *Heat*. This film depicts an idealistic graduate, Kemel (Bolotbek Shamshiyev), who is sent to work on a *kolkhoz* (state collective farm), only to clash with Abakir (Nurmukhan Zhanturin), its tyrannical, self-appointed leader (Figure 3). Here, Shepitko's Stalinist-populist allegory, set in an ethnically and socioeconomically marginalized community on the periphery of the Soviet Union, produces a racially and ideologically subversive film of a "subaltern" that runs counter to the white Soviet ideal. *Wings* uses landscape to contrast

Nadezhda's stifling quotidian experiences – marked by claustrophobic compositions and the sharp edges of Stalinist edifices – with expansive, celestial images shot from the cockpit of a war plane that represent the exhilarating freedom of her days as a pilot (Figures 4a and 4b). Shepitko's craft thus draws on a key archetype of Russian identity – the "motherland" (Costlow 75) – to raise existential questions about this land's ability to nurture and protect its citizens.

While sweeping pans and wide-angle shots of monochrome landscapes introduce sharp ideological contrasts, Shepitko's extreme close-ups force viewers to take a deeper look into these divides, tugging at audiences to search for solutions that extend beyond the polarizing perspectives depicted in the film. *Wings* opens with a credit sequence superimposed on close-ups of Nadezhda's back as a tailor measures her for her principal's suit. The next scene depicts a screen within a screen – Nadezhda on television receiving the state prize that "promoted" her from a meaningful position in the military to a dead-end job at the school, her mouth moving noiselessly to give thanks at a podium, while male students speak over her image in real time. Both scenes prime audiences to view Nadezhda as an embodiment of fragmentation, disassociation, misplaced masculinity, and a "heroic past that has no consequence in the post-war present" (Kaganovsky 491) – a sentiment rendered material when Nadezhda visits a history museum with her schoolchildren and sees her portrait on display in the exhibition (Figure 5). Shepitko also shoots long take close-ups that break the fourth wall between the character and the viewer; her camera observes with detachment protagonists undergoing severe distress, disorienting the viewer by not specifying where his sympathies should lie or how he should respond emotionally. As Jane Costlow argues with *The Ascent*, Shepitko's close-ups take on the quality of Orthodox icons (Figure 6); Shepitko appears to film not the material, but the transfigured state of man (81). I would add to Costlow's analysis that this motif can be traced throughout Shepitko's filmography (Figure 7), from the long takes in *Heat*, to shots that break the fourth wall in *Wings*, to the stylized close-ups of torture in *The Ascent* – their probing self-reflexivity calling viewers, the descendants of survivors of Stalin's reign, "to a moral accounting" (Costlow 87). Shepitko's aesthetic interventions produce a dialectical effect that pit conflicting personalities and ideologies against one another, thereby interrogating whether or not Soviet history was unfolding toward its stated goals.



ABOVE Figure 5. Nadezhda as a piece of history in *Wings* (Mosfilm, 1966)



BELOW Figure 6. Sotnikov takes on the transcendent quality of an Orthodox icon in *The Ascent* (Mosfilm, 1976)

Audiences are therefore left to appraise the moral outcome of Shepitko's films, a freedom rarely afforded to viewers of Stalinist cinema. In *Heat*, it is unclear from the final shot if the village will survive without Abakir's iron-fisted rule. In *Wings*, it is unclear from the final shot if Nadezdha, having commandeered a plane, is flying to her freedom or her death. In *The Ascent*, it is unclear from the final shot if Ryback's (Vladimir Gostyukhin) guilt over his treason has consumed him, or if he will survive both the physical war and the psychological quandaries it has generated (Figure 8). Shepitko's camerawork muddles notions of right and wrong, creating disorienting distance from the "naturalizing power of essentialist imagery" common to film that presents itself as reality (Prokhorov 23). In suggesting alternatives to the Soviet, and even the Hollywood, narrative mainstream, Shepitko produces a "counter-cinema" that invites viewers to reexamine their perceptions of Soviet society (Kaganovsky 483).

Shepitko's formal technique, like that of Tarkovsky and other members of the "Soviet New Wave" or "Poetic School," serves to mark the presence of the cinematic apparatus. The camera is made visible as a self-reflexive gesture, actively reminding viewers they are witnessing a production. Flashbacks, freeze frames, and dream sequences break from Stalinist linearity in narratives where time no longer flows "toward a clear utopian future" (*Post-Memory* 237); protagonists "explode Soviet clichés" (Woll 218); motifs of "flowers, sunlight, bodies, youth, flight, industry, and new technology" traditional to Socialist Realism are implemented (Overy 355), but only to ironic effect. For these directors, art was foremost "a means of moral expression reflecting the responsibility of an artist to himself, to his

talent, and to his calling" (Marshall 176) – a sense of duty that Shepitko took with her to her grave. Filming, for her, was "almost a physical need": *The Ascent* in particular was the "only material" with which she felt she could transmit her "views on life, on the meaning of life," despite the punishing physical conditions on set that landed her in the hospital while shooting (*Larisa*). Distinct from Tarkovsky and other New Wave or Poetic directors, Shepitko stands out for her humanism, in stories of survival and transcendence that mirror her own efforts to keep her personal vision, and those of other Soviet artists, alive. She deserves recognition for her integrity, and further study as a catalyst of artistic talent,⁷ for what Russian scholars have dubbed her moral "maximalism,"⁸ and perhaps for the perspective that she offers as a woman in the Soviet film industry.

Why Have There Been No Great Women Film Directors?

The Soviet Union was the first world power to declare women equal to men, at the same time that cinema emerged as its newest and most popular form of entertainment (Attwood). Given equal interest, the Soviet Union should have produced equal numbers of male and female filmmakers – yet its film industry remained a boy's club. Why? In 1971, Linda Nochlin asked this question of the fine arts in her article, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" She concluded that women are poorly represented in the western canon of visual culture because of institutional – as opposed to individual – obstacles. Women did not fit the mold of artistic "genius" as developed and defined by men, and so, these women are not remembered as great artists.

Extrapolating Nochlin's conclusions to film, I wonder if it is coincidental, for instance, that Shepitko's least commercially successful production centers on a female protagonist, one struggling to find contentment in her domestic life – or that her most successful was her most violent and masculine.

An examination of Soviet institutions reveals the additional hurdles that Shepitko had to overcome in an industry that sometimes worked to inhibit not only her films' existence, but also her own. Shepitko noted in a 1978 interview with *Écran* that there had been very few women in Soviet cinema, and that her own class at the VGIK had zero women filmmakers (qtd. in Kaganovsky 498). The few female students enrolled attended "women's faculties" of economics and film criticism (Attwood 216). In fact, in her application interview to the VGIK, board members tried to talk Shepitko



ABOVE Figure 7. Shepitko's use of the close-up can be traced throughout her filmography, including *Heat* (Kyrgyzfilm, 1963)



ABOVE Figure 8. Frames from the ambiguous ending sequences of *Wings* (Mosfilm, 1966), *Heat* (Kyrgyzfilm, 1963), and *The Ascent* (Mosfilm, 1976)

out of directing, stressing that her good looks would lend themselves better to a career in acting (Attwood 83). Soviet cultural officials thus made explicit expectations of the role women should play in cinema – located anywhere but behind the camera.

One trend in contemporary literature has been to treat Shepitko's work, especially *Wings*, as an example of Soviet "women's cinema," yet it is difficult to say how one should understand this notion given Shepitko's apparent disdain for the concept of "women's cinema," which she rejected as humiliating (Kaganovsky 230). While Western scholars focus on her role as a woman in the industry, the Soviet consensus – of film critics and industry members alike – is that Shepitko was in "no way" a maker of "woman's film" (qtd. in Attwood 232). After all, they point out, only one of her films features a female protagonist. Soviet critics lauded her for directing in a "severe, non-womanly way," and for never demanding so-called "female privileges" for herself, praising her for demonstrating attributes of the opposite sex (Attwood 225). Paying what he assumed would be a compliment after the premiere of *Wings*, director Mikhail Romm suggested that the film shows a "masculine touch," which Shepitko made fun of: "I make my films as a woman," she said, "but there's real cinema and there's feminine dabbling. Ninety per cent

of our cinema is feminine dabbling—and men are its main practitioners" (qtd. in Kaganovsky 498). Comparing Russian and US perspectives raises the question of how "women's film" is defined in the first place, and whether or not these labels, rather than make room for women in cinema, subsume their productions as secondary to those of male directors.

The question of why Shepitko was forgotten remains unanswered, and though the answer is likely a mix of factors, gender is one worth investigating. Male directors, under similar circumstances, have managed to garner lasting acclaim. Tarkovsky's films were also subject to censorship – he was banned from filmmaking for six years following the release of *Andrei Rublev* (1966) due to its excessive religious symbolism (Sivkova). Why is he remembered as a master of world cinema? Why was Shepitko forgotten? Perhaps a career cut short by untimely death is to blame – how does one then explain the posthumous legacy of Jean Vigo? Vigo, who also faced considerable censorship, also died young at twenty-nine, and, like Shepitko, also only completed four feature-length films, is cemented as an icon of global art cinema. Perhaps it is a matter of distance. Vigo passed away eighty-three years ago; Shepitko, thirty-eight. Given time, the world might yearn for work that is timeless – with three retrospectives dedicated to Shepitko in the past fifteen years, it already might be taking note.⁹

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Notes

1. From France to Cuba, stateside and in the USSR, industry magazines repeatedly named Shepitko a "top director," of one of the "finest" working in Soviet cinema (Holloway 4). See *Écran*, *Cine Cubano*, *Variety*, and *Iskusstvo Kino* for examples.
2. In the last twenty years, scholarship in both the US and Russia has begun to revisit Thaw cinema. In film, "more than in any other mode of cultural production," the sixties "revived economic and stylistic experimentation after the film famine of the last years of Stalinist rule" (Prokhorov 7). Drawing attention to its overlooked artistic merit, US scholars have described the sixties as a "cultural renaissance" comparable to Eisenstein's 1920s (Lawton 2), in which a Soviet "New Wave" developed alongside European movements (Prokhorov 7). Russian scholar Mikhail Bleiman alternately titled the New Wave's loosely associated group of directors the "Poetic School," comprised of "heirs of Dovzhenko" who tended "toward lyricism and a highly metaphorical style" (Lawton 32).
3. Shepitko was born to a Ukrainian mother and, possibly, an Iranian father (Ivan-Zadeh). Identification with her father is unlikely, seeing as she "never forgave" him for abandoning her family at an early age (Klimov 13). Another source

of ambiguity is her surname, which is Ukrainian, not Iranian, but also does not belong to her mother. Much work remains in auditing existing biographies, which rely heavily on anecdotes, for historical accuracy.

4. Only about eight million viewers saw *Wings* in 1966 upon its limited release, prior to its outright ban a year later, making the film not only Shepitko's least commercially successful, but also her least successful against Soviet censors (Woll 219). In contrast, *The Ascent* "received generally positive reviews in major Soviet film publications, interviews with Shepitko concerning the film were published, and the film was screened in Soviet theaters," albeit also with limited distribution (Merrill 153).

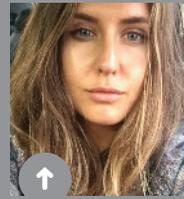
5. Soviet sixties cinema positions itself "counter to the cinema of Stalinism, its utopian musical comedies, grand historical films, vicious traitors, and its epic battles for the victory of the Soviet Union" (*Post-memory* 236). Stalin intended with his Socialist Realism to depict the ideal Soviet society, expecting artists to serve as "engineers of souls," who existed to demonstrate how standards of living had improved after the revolution (Overy 354). Shepitko's films in particular signal ambivalence toward these ideals, skepticism of "improved" living standards, and anxiety over material comforts won by victimizing millions in war and regime.

6. Generally, studios on the margins of the Soviet empire tended to produce more controversial films, challenging the dominance of central production studios (Golovskoy and Rimberg 44). Shepitko herself traveled to Kyrgyzstan to make her first picture, *Heat*, which scholar Alexander Prokhorov argues is "no coincidence" (21). Moreover, each Soviet republic had its own commanding Goskino independent of the Moscow headquarters, totaling fifteen Goskino institutions that could censor, exhibit, and distribute each other's films at will.

7. Nearly all of Shepitko's films were (her own) adaptations of literary texts. These adaptations resulted in screen debuts, awards, and lifelong careers for nascent writers and formerly unknown actors, notably Chinghiz Aitmatov with the source text for *Heat*, Maya Bulgakova for her acting in *Wings*, and Boris Plotnikov's in *The Ascent*. Although *Wings* fared poorly, film critics nearly unanimously chose Bulgakova as best actress of 1966 (Woll 219).

8. See Kruglova and Litovskaya's work on conformism.

9. Three major retrospectives of Shepitko's work have been held in the past decade, one in 2005 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, and two in 2015, at the Festival Lumière, and at the 50th Karlovy Vary IFF, where Shepitko's cinematic debut, *Heat*, came full circle in a screening marking the beginning of a tribute to the director and her legacy.



Author Biography

Anastasia Sorokina is a recent graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, where she majored in Comparative Arts and International and Area Studies. Born in Russia and educated in the US, Sorokina enjoys cultural connections that inform her study of Soviet cinema.



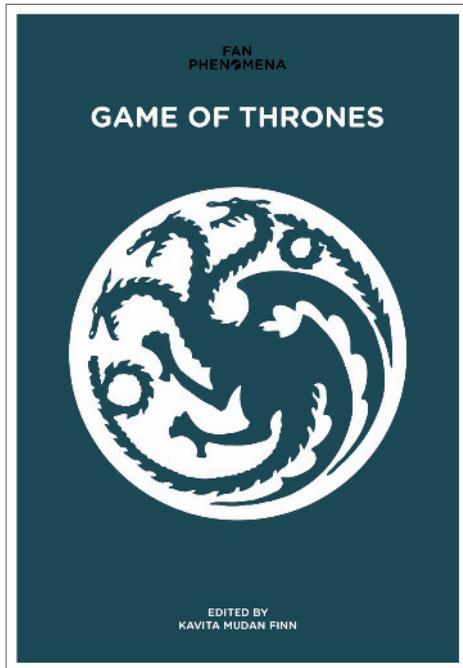
Mentor Biography

Colin Burnett, Assistant Professor of Film and Media Studies at Washington University in St. Louis, is the author of *The Invention of Robert Bresson: The Auteur and His Market* (Indiana University Press, 2017). He is currently working on a second book, *Serial Bonds: The Multimedia Life of 007*.

 Washington University in St. Louis

Department Overview

The Program in Film and Media Studies at Washington University in St. Louis examines film, television, radio, and other electronic media as aesthetic and cultural forms. Research for this article began in a course titled Global Art Cinema.



Fan Phenomena: Game of Thrones

Edited by Kavita Mudan Finn



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Winter is coming. Every Sunday night, millions of fans gather around their televisions (or computers) to take in the spectacle that is a new episode of *Game of Thrones*. Much is made of who will be gruesomely murdered each week on the hit show, though sometimes the question is really who won't die a fiery death. The show, based on the *Song of Fire and Ice* series written by George R. R. Martin, is a truly global phenomenon.

Fan Phenomena: Game of Thrones is an exciting new addition to the Intellect series, bringing together academics and fans of Martin's universe to consider not just the content of the books and HBO series, but fan responses to both. From trivia nights dedicated to minutiae to forums speculating on plot twists to academics trying to make sense of the bizarre climate of Westeros, everyone is talking about *Game of Thrones*. Edited by **Kavita Mudan Finn**, the book focuses on the communities created by the books and television series and how these communities envision themselves as consumers, critics and even creators of fanworks in a wide variety of media, including fiction, art, fancasting and cosplay.



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