

Faster, Higher, Stronger, Comrades! Sports, Art and Ideology in Late Russian and Early Soviet Culture. By Tim Harte. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2020. xvi, 297 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photos. Plates. \$ 79.95, hard bound.
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The monograph under review is a multidisciplinary study that investigates the theme of sports in poetry and prose, paintings and posters, and in photography and film. Tim Harte offers a unique and detailed analysis that examines how sports and its popularity became established in late imperial Russia, and how, underpinned by ideology, sports and *fizkul'tura* became prominent in early Soviet culture. Harte focuses on the artistic reflection of major aesthetic and ideological shifts and the emergence of the idea of the “New” Soviet Person that engendered the development of athletics in Russia and the USSR. The book features an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, and coda all supported by in-text black-and-white illustrations and color plates.

The first and second chapters examine the growing popularity of wrestling and athletics in Russia before the revolution of 1917. Aleksandr Kuprin, Anton Chekhov, Konstantin Stanislavskii, Maxim Gor'kii, and Nikolai Breshko-Breshkovskii found inspiration in wrestling. Artists such as Aristarkh Lentulov expressed “Russia’s unique Neoprimitivist amalgamation of peasant culture and urban modernity” (46), and Symbolist poets envisioned transforming themselves and their worldview through athletics. Valerii Briusov was fascinated with horseracing and soccer, while Acmeists Nikolai Gumilev and Osip Mandel'shtam “embraced everyday sports and their physical essence” (76) and reflected on tennis and soccer in their poetry.

Chapter 3 delves into the early Soviet avant-garde art of Natalia Goncharova, Ilya Mashkov, David Burliuk, Kazimir Malevich, and others with an emphasis on the futurist opera *Victory Over the Sun* (1913). The development of themes of sports and wrestling in particular continued into post-Revolutionary Russia and appeared in the art of Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova. They produced the 1920 series devoted to wrestling, which was portrayed as “a colorful, international show of exhilarating action” (110), with wrestlers who emerged as precursors to the “New Soviet Man.” In the 1920s, the center of art production shifted to Vitebsk, where the theme of athletics was evolving in Malevich, El Lissitzky, and Vera Ermolaeva’s art works, which were being expressed through the prism of Suprematism. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the designs of sport clothing created by the Constructivist designers Stepanova, Aleksandra Ekster, and Liubov' Popova.

In Chapter 4, the author turns to early silent cinema. Dziga Vertov, one of the most innovative Soviet filmmakers, and his brother Mikhail Kaufman explored a “wide range of germane social issues, including the institutionalization of Soviet sports” (127) and *fizkul'tura* in *Kino-Pravda* newsreels. Harte explores Vertov’s masterpiece *Man with the Movie Camera* (1929) as one of the earliest filmic explorations of sports. Popular Soviet cinema employed the theme of sports with Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Komarov, and Boris Barnet’s films in the focus. The fifth chapter is devoted to early Soviet photography and photomontage. The author points out that “still photography offered artists the

ability to capture dramatic moments of athletic action and hold them fast” (162). Presaging early film editing, “photomontage proved a useful tool in the hands of the Russian Constructivists” (166). Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Gustav Klutss, and others celebrated Soviet athletics in photography; by playing with unusual angles, unexpected positions, and unconventional visual perspectives they thereby influenced avant-garde art and visual culture.

Chapter 6 explores Socialist Realist art and sports as its subject matter. In Socialist Realism, the power of athletics and the importance of *fizkul'tura* that was accentuated in early Soviet art took a new turn setting up an unattainable ideal of the “New” athletic person. In this chapter, Harte centers on two prominent figures, the writer Yury Olesha and painter Aleksandr Deyneka, who explored athletics in their works. The book ends with coda that surveys the theme of sports in Vladimir Nabokov’s writings.

The book emphasizes male sports, masculinity, and the aesthetics of the “New Man.” Even though women, both women creators and the portrayals of female athletes, are mentioned in this monograph, it remains unclear at what point in history they became involved in both sports and artwork production devoted to this theme. Gender, masculinity and femininity, and bodily practices reflected in different art forms are clearly present in the images, and this reader would appreciate a discussion of women’s sports and their appearance in athletics and therefore in art creation. Bringing gender issues to the fore would be definitely helpful for generating a more inclusive picture of society. In addition, more contextual information on athletics and its role in the real life in the Soviet Union would better facilitate this book’s use in the classroom.

Well-written and well-supported, with images and detailed textual and visual analyses, this interdisciplinary monograph is an excellent source for teaching Russian and Slavic studies, especially the thematic explorations of the ideas of health and bodily practices. It would also be useful for specific courses centered on visual culture and film studies. This study sets a high bar for future explorations and definitely inspires the new research devoted to Soviet athletic culture.

HANNA CHUCHVAHA
University of Calgary

Revolution Rekindled: The Writers and Readers of Late Soviet Biography. By Polly Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. xii, 320 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. £78.00, hard bound.
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Polly Jones’s latest monograph picks up almost seamlessly from where her previous edited volume on the history of Russian biographical writing, *Writing Russian Lives: The Poetics and Politics of Biography in Modern Russian Culture* (2018), left off. Where *Writing Russian Lives* ambitiously spans almost two centuries, *Revolution Rekindled* offers a microscopic exploration over roughly two decades (late 1960s to 1990) of intense activity centered around the biographical ‘Fiery Revolutionaries’ (*Plamennye revoliutsionery*) series. Jones’s