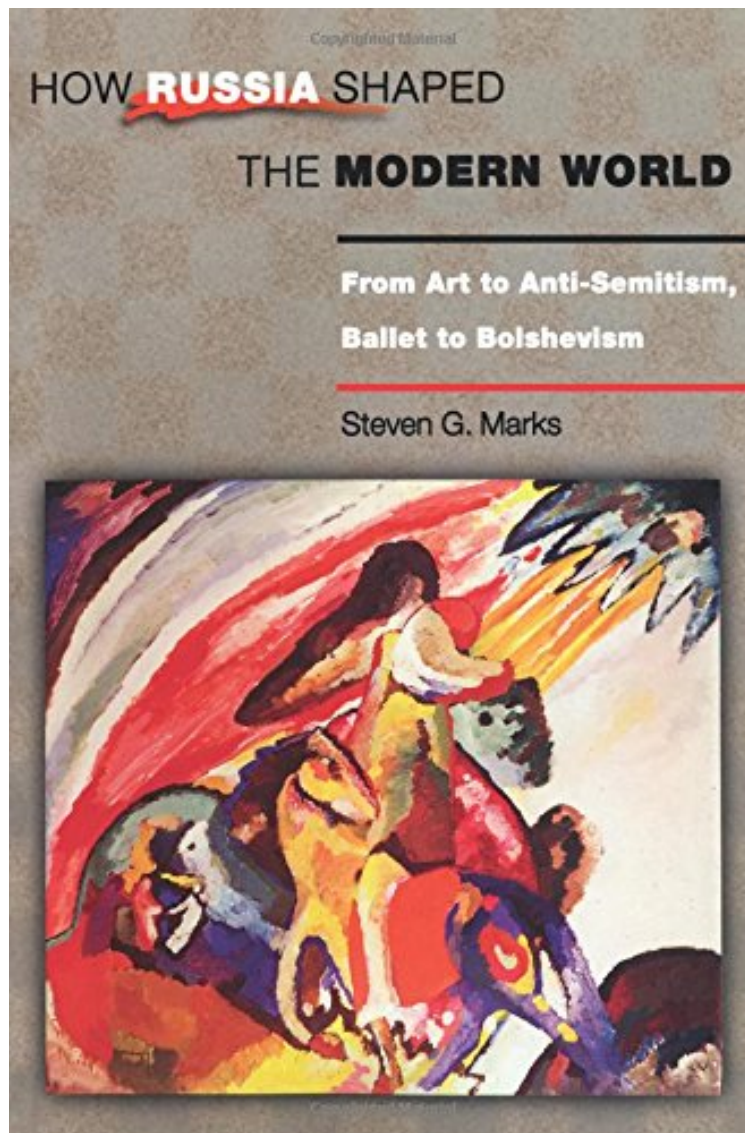


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How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism (Princeton Paperbacks)

Steven G. Marks

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#141295 in Books Princeton University Press 2004-01-25 2004-01-25 Original language: English PDF # 1
9.10 x 1.02 x 6.001, 1.25 #File Name: 0691118450408 pages | File size: 58.Mb

Steven G. Marks : How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism (Princeton Paperbacks) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism (Princeton Paperbacks):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Masterpiece. By Paul V. KATCHALOV Such an ambitious project to cover in the same book so vast and heterogenous aspects of Russia's impact on contemporary world seemed me impossible to execute. But after reading the book, I have to admit, that the author succeeded masterfully. He is laconic, but not at all boring. He is certainly a great erudite in all things Russian. Thus, I can honestly recommend this book as excellent and succinct textbook in Russian studies, or just as a good and amusing pastime for any intelligent reader. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Tara L. Tappert Wonderful book . . . used as part of an NEH Summer Institute. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Straddling the Continents By Randall L. Wilson I purchased, "How Russia Shaped the Modern World" at the New York Public Library's stunning exhibit on "Russia Engages the World." The show covered Russia primarily in the 17th and 18th century so I thought I'd take a leap forward and read this book. "Russia" covers a lot of ground including subjects ranging from anarchism to painting and shows the impact of Russian ideas on authors in the United States as well as dictators in Africa. Frequently, I found myself wanting more from a discussion about an artist or a movement but the purpose of the book is to chart influences and make connections not to detail specific movements and individuals. Russia is unique in that it brings together both European and Asian influences commingling the foreign with the familiar that is so intriguing to cultures around the world. I found the book most compelling when it looked at Russian literature, dance and painting. There are several reasons for this. First, the arts are full of hope, originality, vision and joy. Second, the story of how Russian artists influenced the rest of the world is unfamiliar to me. Third, Russia's political influence has been largely harsh, destructive, sad and all too familiar to someone who lived through the cold war. The prose style is more analytic than descriptive and incisive but not personal. I think it fits the subject matter but borders on the dry side. My biggest complaint is that the book could have been divided into two sections, one that focused on the Russian artistic contributions and the other on the political. The impact of each of those areas is different and would have benefited from separate but rigorous analysis.

In this sweeping history, Steven Marks tells the fascinating story of how Russian figures, ideas, and movements changed our world in dramatic but often unattributed ways. On Europe's periphery, Russia was an early modernizing nation whose troubles stimulated intellectuals to develop radical and utopian alternatives to Western models of modernity. These provocative ideas gave rise to cultural and political innovations that were exported and adopted worldwide. Wherever there was discontent with modern existence or traditional societies were undergoing transformation, anti-Western sentiments arose. Many people perceived the Russian soul as the antithesis of the capitalist, imperialist West and turned to Russian ideas for inspiration and even salvation. Steven Marks shows that in this turbulent atmosphere of the past century and a half, Russia's lines of influence were many and reached far. Russia gave the world new ways of writing novels. It launched cutting-edge trends in ballet, theater, and art that revolutionized contemporary cultural life. The Russian anarchist movement benignly shaped the rise of vegetarianism and environmentalism while also giving birth to the violent methods of modern terrorist organizations. Tolstoy's visions of nonviolent resistance inspired Gandhi and the U.S. Civil Rights movement at the same time that Russian anti-Semitic conspiracy theories intoxicated right-wing extremists the world over. And dictators from Mussolini and Hitler to Mao and Saddam Hussein learned from the experiments of the Soviet regime. Moving gracefully from Moscow and St. Petersburg to Beijing and Berlin, London and Luanda, Mexico and Mississippi, Marks takes us on an intellectual tour of the Russian exports that shaped the twentieth century. The result is a richly textured and stunningly original account of the extent to which Russia--as an idea and a producer of ideas--has contributed to the making of the modern world. Placing Russia in its global context, the book betters our understanding of the anti-Western strivings that have been such a prominent feature of recent history.