

# Watching Muratova in a Time of Social Isolation

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BY

## **Watching Muratova in a Time of Social Isolation**

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<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/566971410>

This audio essay was presented as part of an online event “Kira Muratova @ St Andrews” coordinated by Dina Iordanova and the team at the Institute for Global Cinema and Creative Culture to mark the death of the great Ukrainian director. This online celebration of Muratova’s life and work, held deep in Lockdown One in April 2020, was a bright point on the COVID-bleakened cultural landscape and an initiative I thoroughly appreciated.

The essay reads Muratova’s 1989 masterpiece *The Asthenic Syndrome* through a viral lens. It reflects on the pandemic experiences of social distancing, panic buying at local supermarkets, and glitchy Zoom calls with relatives, relating these to the thematic and aesthetic practices that mark Muratova’s oeuvre. Watching Muratova has always been a visceral experience. One cannot engage with her films in a detached, exclusively intellectual way. They are too alive; they rankle and agitate you; they creep over your skin. The pandemic too has been a deeply physical experience: the enforced isolation, immobility, the collective yearning for human connectedness. This essay is thus about Muratova and isolation, Muratova in isolation; it is a tribute to an artist and a historic moment in time.

### **Author Biography**

Victoria Donovan is a Senior Lecturer in Russian at the University of St Andrews whose work focuses on cultural memory politics, national and local identity (trans)formations, visual culture, and Soviet and post-Soviet culture and history. She has published widely in these areas in English, Russian, and Ukrainian in leading journals in the field, including *Slavic Review*, *Slavonica*, *Histor!ans.ua*, *Antropologicheskii forum* and *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*. Her monograph *Chronicles in Stone: Preservation, Patriotism and Identity in Northwest Russia* was published with Northern Illinois University Press in 2019. She is currently an AHRC Leadership Fellow on the project “Donbas in Focus: Visions of Industry in the Ukrainian East.”