

Mashiny zashumevshogo vremeni: Kak sovetskii montazh stal metodom neofitsial'noi kul'tury. By Il'ia Kukulin. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2015. 536 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Plates. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Hard bound.

Il'ia Kukulin's monographic study is an ambitious attempt to synthesize disparate treatments of the montage principle with theory and techniques in 20th century Russian culture and literature. In a way, the book itself could be defined as a meta-montage of various heterogeneous theories and artistic practices, apparent in the culture of Russian modernism, as well as connecting their successors in the unofficial culture of the later Soviet period, especially the fantastic case of the poetics of Pavel Ulitin's prose. This book is a huge conceptual attempt to unify phenomena related with practically all artistic signification of the time. Such a broad definition was Sergei Eisenstein's view on montage in the late 1930s, and it became a most important impulse for the later theoretical treatments of this notion in Soviet semiotics, too. There is an obvious tradition of montage studies from Soviet film theoreticians of Iurii Lotman's school, and the principle was mentioned even in the Tartu-Moscow Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures (1973).

Kukulin presents the classic theories of montage, both the history of the notion and the "fashionable vehicle" discussed or practiced by many of the actual contemporary authors of post-revolutionary modernism. The emergence of the montage theory in Lev Kuleshov's and Eisenstein's oeuvre is obvious in the book, but very quickly juxtaposed with various other film theoreticians, scholars, writers and thinkers. Kukulin represents the interdisciplinary approach to montage studies, often neglected by many of the film historians willing to relate the montage principle entirely with cinematic technique. Kukulin even uses definitions like "broader understanding of montage" and regularly refers to formalist Viktor Shklovskii, one of the initiators of this broader understanding.

For Shklovskii, the whole world was made of montage: "Mir montazhen!" he declared. This makes it difficult to study his understanding of montage, since the notion seems to relate to almost everything in his thinking. It is typical of various existing montage studies that the extensive use of the notion—even when the discussed authors are not explicitly referring to montage principle as such—creates a certain semantic inflation. Kukulin's understanding of montage is sometimes even broader than Shklovskii's. The relation between *ostranenie* and montage in Shklovskii's theoretic vocabulary, however, proves a very fascinating topic in Kukulin's erudite treatment.

I would have wanted to read conceptual, chronologically grounded, and immediate analyses by Kukulin, who appears to be a thorough analyst of separate works of art. One of the most fascinating episodes in the history of montage literature is the genre of so-called "literary montages" [*literaturnye montazhi*]. In Kukulin's treatment, the reader follows here an exhaustive survey of the tradition of what he calls "memory-books" [*knigi-pamiati*], starting from the documentary-based biographies of Pushkin, Tolstoi, and Chekhov, which became extremely fashionable in Russian literary scholarship during the very last years of the 1920s and the first years of the 1930s. It would have been worthwhile to analyze these volumes and the essence of the genre, since it must have left traces not only in the contemporary half-documentary prose writing, but also in Daniil Kharms's literary anecdotes on Russian writers and the famous tradition continued by Natalya Dobrokhotova and Vladimir Piatnitskii in the early 1970s. However, the author proceeds to the Holocaust remembrance Black Book [*Chernaia kniga*], to the Siege book [*Blokadnaia kniga*] and, surprisingly enough, eventually to Liudmila Ulitskaia's and Svetlana Aleksievich's prose.

The author has read exhaustively on the subject, and the bibliography is a treasure chest for any scholar or student interested in montage in principle. However, some important sources are missing. The author mentions Matthew Teitelbaum's volume *Montage and Modern Life 1919–1942*, but does not refer to its contents. Similarly not mentioned is P. Adams Sitney's *Modernist Montage: The Obscurity of Vision in Cinema and Literature*. From among Russian scholars, the most important montage theorists are mentioned. However, the bibliography should include Iurii Levin, who was probably the first Tartu scholar to have paid serious attention to montage features and processes in poetic text, as well as Roman Timenchik's work on the montage processes in Acmeist poetry. The same relates to Boris Eikhenbaum's interest in verbless poetry in Akhmatova, also a significant feature in montage poetry (mentioned by Timenchik and Viacheslav V. Ivanov in their articles) and present in the Anglo-American Imagists' oeuvre, as well as Russian Imagists, of course. However, these details do not change the fact that Kukulin has produced a major opus dedicated to the montage principle in its broadest sense in 20th century Russian literature.

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Moskovskii kontseptualizm: Nachalo. By Yurii Al'bert. Privolzhskii filial Gosudarstvennogo tsentra sovremennogo iskusstva pri poderzhki Ministerstvo kul'tury Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2014. 272 pp. Illustrations. Plates. Photographs. Hard bound.

This fascinating volume of interviews with the earliest practitioners of “Moscow conceptualism” will intrigue anyone interested in contemporary Russian culture and politics. The volume, published in conjunction with the Russian Ministry of Culture to coincide with an exhibit of conceptual art in Nizhnii Novgorod in 2012, casts new light on the beginnings of this once-underground artistic movement that has finally come into its own. Ignored in the Soviet Union as the unsanctioned activity of dubious “underground” artists, Moscow conceptualism is currently enjoying a moment in the sun. The last several Russian pavilions at the Venice biennale, for example, have been devoted exclusively to representatives of Moscow conceptualism, and the movement is now generally recognized as the most significant development in Russian art of the late twentieth century. Indeed, not too many years ago, the term “Moscow conceptualism” was serving journalists as convenient shorthand to refer to any visual work done in late- and post-Soviet art whatsoever! Artists who were once overlooked or, worse, harassed for their creative work are now the subjects of scholarly monographs, the focus of expansive retrospective exhibits, and the winners of Russia's most prestigious artistic awards. Despite these obvious improvements, however, there is still much that we do not know about Moscow conceptualism, particularly about its earliest beginnings. That curious situation motivates this engrossing volume.

One of the many oddities of the early years of Moscow conceptualism is that the artists themselves—denied museum space, artistic supplies, and free access to information about developments in the rest of the art world—had to serve as spectators, curators, critics, and archivists on their own. Most of their earliest unsanctioned exhibits were short-lived, lasting just a day or two in private apartments or the odd amateur club space. Documented, if at all, in a few black-and-white snapshots, not all of the works survived. Artists storing their creative output in crowded urban apartments could only make room for so many masterpieces. This was especially true of the so-called second generation of Moscow conceptualists, who were generally younger and