Tomi Huttunen

MONTAGE CULTURE

Introduction

The question of a montage culture means the examination of montage, the predominant montage philosophy at a certain time in a certain culture, and the montage principle discernible in various art forms and artistic texts. I will apply semiotic cultural theory to a whole that consists of different art forms (including literature, film, painting, and photography) and different kinds of texts (novels, poems, films, and photographs) [1]. Montage offers a comprehensive example of a predominant polyglotism in a culture, a mutual interaction on the sign systems, and the attitude to the culture as a whole. Montage is endemic to the culture of the first part of the 20th century, and we focus on the montage principle in Russian culture, although montage can be discerned in other cultures during the same period. In Russian, the concept "montazhnoe myshlenie" is often used, and it means montage philosophy and the montage principle - conditions for making certain kinds of art - in both the author's and the reader's minds.

Cultural semiotics examines a culture as a complicated system, which includes a multitude of different sign systems, such as the languages of film, theater, literature, politics and religion. The principal subjects of investigation are texts, "bounded culture-containing wholes that are intelligible and expressed in at least two of the culture's languages" [2]. On the basis of the text and with its aid, views about the culture's languages and its entirety can be presented. Cultural semiotics sees, between the text and the cultural entirety, a certain structural resemblance, or isomorphism [3]. Montage is an example that can shed light on this aspect, because it can be discerned simultaneously in different arts, in their systems of signs, and in many different kinds of texts.

The concept of montage is a broad one and can, for example, mean a great deal in post-Revolutionary Russian culture. I will try to identify the means

of survival for post-Revolutionary Russian culture, which proclaimed itself as new, although, at the same time, one must keep in mind the fact that nothing in a culture is entirely new, that the new is always bound up with the old and dependent on tradition. In a culture, everything is always in a continuum that produces new meanings, and never in a vacuum. From this perspective, I will examine Russian post-Revolutionary culture as a montage culture.

Montage should be understood in this connection as meaning the principle of composition of a text constructed from separable parts, a principle which is based on the alternation between the author's fragmentation and the reader's integration. This is the so-called intersemiotic interpretation of montage (that is, one that is common to different arts and sign systems). In order to speak of montage in respect of a text, it has to be fragmentary [4]; in a montage text, the elements as such carry potential meanings, and they acquire their final meaning in parallel with corresponding elements. The bestowal of the general meaning of the text occurs in the reader's mind in reconstructing the connections between the elements of the text. To put it briefly, a montage text is an apparently fragmentary (and often heterogeneous) text, which the reader brings together into a unified whole in relation to the general meaning of the text (several Russian montage theories are based on this thought, among them Sergej Ejsenstejn's communication model).

Russian Montage

The montage theory develops in post-Revolutionary Russia specifically in the hands of film theoreticians, but, simultaneously, a corresponding phenomenon becomes predominant in other arts, including literature, theater, photography, and painting. Thus there is good reason to speak of a montage philosophy, which can be seen not only in different arts, but also more broadly in cultural and social life.

The concept of montage had already appeared in art study in the middle of the 19th century, mostly in France, where it was principally connected with a combination of photography and the traditional visual arts, such as paintings to which photographic components have been attached [5]. Consequently, the crucial starting points for montage are intermediation of arts and dissimilar origination of components. In the 19th century, the combination of painted and pictorial material and the combination of different pictures into a single new picture were commonplace.

The trick films made at the turn of the century, such as Georges Melies' *The Man with a Rubber Head* (1902) [6], are classics of the montage art, but, in the art of photography, the concept of photomontage came into use only after the First World War. At that time the Berlin Dadaists [7] were seeking a name for their new technique of embedding photographs in their artworks. For the Dadaists, the combination of photographs or of their parts became the basis for the structure of a picture (understood as a text). By common consent, the Dadaists started to call their works "photomontages." They wanted to combine ideas of art and engineering in an effort to assemble ("montieren", in German) their works. John Heartfield became one of the best-known devotees of photomontage, and especially famous are his anti-Nazi montages of the 1930s [8].

In Russian culture, a completely original montage theory developed. Its starting point proved to be director Lev Kuleshov's famous experiments with reediting. Conditions in Russia formed the background for reediting: as no one in Russia could afford to make new films, directors carried on their work by editing existing films, such as those of D. W. Griffith. Kuleshov made what he considered to be a startling perception: that juxtaposing two pictures produces a kind of third one, which is not connected to either of the others. This began to be called the "Kuleshov effect" [9]. This starting point became the basis for the immense theoretical work of Sergej Ejsenstejn, undoubtedly the greatest name in Russian cinema. Juxtaposition and the new meaning produced by it are at the core of the montage theory.

Different schools of montage theory immediately sprang up in film theory. Ejsenstejn represented the idea of the contrasting montage, while Kuleshov emphasized the syntactic nature of montage. Kuleshov's follower, Vsevolod Pudovkin, also underlined the principle of juxtaposition, but he concentrated on montage's narrative nature and on significant details, whereas Dziga Vertov emphasized montage as a rhetorical device (Vertov and Ejsenstejn quarrelled with each other, but their theories were very similar). To generalize, we can name these four schools of thought as Ejsenstejn's conflictual montage, Kuleshov's syntactic montage, Pudovkin's narrative and metonymical montage, and Vertov's rhetorical-transformative montage (we will get more fully acquainted with Vertov's montage later on).

Post-Revolutionary Russian culture has often been characterized as chaotic, which is understandable when the social frame of reference is considered.

The difficult coexistence of new and old cultures, their many clashes, caused a continuing struggle in the art world, and literature, film, and the visual arts in the 1920s handled this question in many ways. So, building from heterogeneous elements is not a surprising decision in post-Revolutionary culture.

Ejsenstejn and the Montage of Attraction

The earliest aims of Sergej Ejsenstejn's work were fairly straightforward and closely related to agitation and propaganda. He worked at first with agitprop-theater, and in his art concentrated on making the most powerful impression possible on the reader, with the help of different stimuli. He called this the montage of attraction. Ejsenstejn's theory combines two lines crucial to, and typical of, montage culture and montage philosophy of the 1920s:

- a new means of reading the artwork (in itself, a purely modernist idea about the active role of the reader in the production of a work; it is precisely the continual juxtapositions that force the reader to participate in the formation of meaning)
- the power of montage as a tool for political agitation (an attempt to shock the reader and thereby direct him or her ideologically, intellectual-emotional stimuli or "attractions" and the attitude towards the viewer/reader as material)

In early Soviet film, montage begins to mean, on the one hand, the purely technical editing of a film, its assembly from separate elements, whether they are related or not. On the other hand, it simultaneously refers to modernism, to a new kind of reception of the artwork, in which film as a new art form can show the way to other arts. According to this theory, a work of art is always a process between the author and the reader. The author, according to Ejsenstejn, has an idea, which, in his work, he breaks down into individual splintered depictions, from which the reader, on the basis of the depiction, puts together the idea that the author had in mind [communication model]. In this process the author is also able to direct the reader emotionally, intellectually, and ideologically, with the result that, after experiencing the artwork (film, painting, poster, novel, poem, or the like), the reader is no longer the same as before, but, directed by the author, draws certain conclusions. So, in montage there is a simultaneous emphasis on two ideas, the purely modernist idea of creative reading (which is already a discernible feature in Anton Chehov's plays and stories

[10]) and the idea of the reader as material that can be reworked in a certain direction. Naturally, a reader who actively participates in a work's preparation, as if he or she were a part of a collective artwork, is easier to direct than a passive reader, who takes a part from an already given whole.

Agitation and propaganda are by no means exclusive to film, even though this new art form was seen from the very beginning as a tool for a powerful propaganda machine. It could be said that there are two lines of montage: artistic (or aesthetic) and political. This contradiction is quite apparent in visual art of the 1920s. The two lines of montage art can be fruitfully compared by placing two artists side by side: Aleksandr Rodchenko, the visual arts' jack-of-all-trades best known for his paintings and photography, and Gustav Klutsis, a practitioner of montage whose starting point is similar, but whose path ultimately went in a very different direction.

Photomontage: Klutsis and Rodchenko

In the visual arts, Russian montage is best crystallized in the work of Klutsis and Rodchenko. Klutsis himself considered his own *Dynamic City* (1919) the first Russian photographic montage, and the basis for calling the work a montage is the characteristic of construction from different components. *Dynamic City* is still a fairly pure representation of the abstract avant-garde: it can be looked at from any direction, and there is no "correct" viewing angle. Nevertheless, it is his manifesto against abstract art. In this "first" [11] photomontage in Soviet culture can be seen one important feature of montage art, heterogeneity: elements of reality mixed into an abstract composition. At that time, Rodchenko was still busying himself with Cubist newspaper collage. It is also worth noting the fact that *Dynamic City* was not made to be a poster, unlike so many other outstanding works of photomontage (both by Rodchenko and Klutsis). Klutsis claimed that Rodchenko and El Lissitzky (both practitioners of photomontage, too) were mainly practising "Western advertising pictures," which had nothing to do with politically significant photomontage.

In 1920 Klutsis made *Electrification of the Whole Country*, a work in which he showed his use of montage as a political, rather than formal, means, although elements of abstract art can still be seen in it. In this work Lenin is surrounded by the technological modernisation, in the form of the idea of construction, promised by the Bolshevik government. The background of the piece is Lenin's platform for modernisation and industrialisation, his proclamation that "Communism means Soviet government +

Electrification." Klutsis, then, wanted to make a clean break with the abstract avant-garde, with the likes of Rodchenko and El Lissitzky. Nevertheless, in *Electrification of the Whole Country*, the influence of the abstract avant-garde is still visible, unlike in his later, purely political propaganda posters. Klutsis uses round shapes familiar from his abstract work, though the shape of a building is quite apparent in this picture. For Klutsis, forgetting the Russian formalists' insistence on the question, "How should it be done?" means politicisation and bringing the artist's subject into the work, as in *We Are Fulfilling a Plan of Great Works* (1930).

Klutsis' shift from formalist to activist is clearer than Rodchenko's or El Lissitzky's, although both of them also made political montages; their political convictions were not as obvious as Klutsis'. Rodchenko's montage is more aesthetic. He participated actively in the operations of the futurist magazine of LEF (Artists' Left Front) [12], founded in 1923; for example, he prepared the magazine's covers from the very beginning and took care of its layout. LEF's editor-in-chief, and the moving spirit behind it, was Vladimir Mayakovskij, the futurist poet and visual artist, the new Soviet culture's brightest herald. The formalist Viktor Shklovskij was also active in the futurist LEF crowd.

Factographic Montage

In the first issue of the LEF magazine, the futurists stressed the necessity of the description of Soviet reality. Osip Brik proclaimed that a poet should not think up his own topics, but should instead take them from the surrounding reality and thus fulfill his socialist duty (impersonally). Later, in the days of the New LEF, begun in 1928, Brik stated his disgust with "generalisations and abstractions," because the details and precise descriptions of Soviet life should be given precedence. The magazine also emphasized the priority of the material over the author's views, because the author should be the discoverer of new material, not an inventing or creating person. And so factography, the use of elements of reality as a basis for art, becomes the best example of how art is connected to life.

Dziga Vertov, who followed a radical documentarist line, also actively pondered the relation among the description of reality, authentic material, and montage. In his film *The Man and the Movie Camera* [see V. A. Stenberg's film poster; more information], Vertov wrote his grammar of film by purely cinematic means.

Without a screenplay or on-screen texts, and with only the help of

alternating pictures, Vertov's film portrays one weekday in the land of the Soviets, and, as such, it is already a noteworthy document about life at the end of the 1920s; but, at the same time, *The Man and the Movie Camera* is a theoretical treatise on the language of film.

Montage, however, cannot mean pure documentation, because it is a rhetorical means throughout documentary montage: for instance, in Dziga Vertov's documentaries tinged with rhythmical editing. Montage is a means of creating an illusion out of reality, that is, of forming, through choice and arrangement, an image of reality in a different way from that which Vertov himself proclaims in his writings. This criticism of montage, presented by the Frenchman Andre Bazin, reveals the artistic power of montage, its core. The artist's role in a montage text is to arrange the material in the way the artist wants, and even the use of purely documentary material in this case leads to an "artistic" text (or at least one bearing the author's significant commentary). Rodchenko's work against Klutsis' agitprop-tendency, for instance, can be understood from this perspective. Rodchenko was not so interested in presenting Soviet realities; in his works can be seen a multi-level poeticism and the arrangement of elements as the expression of the author's imagination, both of which features add up to aesthetic montage. What was essential for him were surprising juxtapositions and absurd contexts for the pictorial elements. Perhaps that is why he is more easily compared with the Berlin Dadaists (such as Hanna Höch and George Grosz) than with Klutsis.

But if we consider a more problematic issue, the difference between Dadaist collage technique and Rodchenko's montage technique (or that of Soviet art in general), then we end up in a huge conceptual jungle. The difference between montage and collage is unclear: according to some, collage is one form of montage technique, while others think just the opposite. In my view, the key to this issue is in montage's heterogeneity and intertextuality - that is, in the case of a montage text we can generally speak about the general space of the text in relation to heterogeneity or otherwise distinct joints, while in collage we speak of equal and independent elements. The elements of a montage text are only relatively independent units, which await their realisation in juxtaposition with other corresponding elements. In the same way, the "intexts" or joints in a montage text, its discrete parts, carry with themselves a prior frame of reference, which is not necessary in a collage text. The presence of a joint draws attention to the elements' different origins and different starting points (polygeneticism), while in collage it is chiefly the different origins

and the composition as a whole that draw attention, not what happens to the basic condition of the text under the influence of the joint.

Vladimir Mayakovskij's poem *Pro Eto* is a clear example of how, in montage culture, different art forms work together towards a common goal, using the same formal means. Rodchenko's photomontages ["Lovlyu ravnovesie / strashno mashu"] complement Mayakovskij's poetic world in an indispensable way and open new opportunities for interpretation, which are transmittable only in another language, the language of photographic art.

Imaginist Montage

Imaginist montage

The montage technique is used in both the prose and poetry of 1920s Russia, for not only do the different art forms follow a common principle to a great extent, but prose and poetry also come closer to one another. Prose begins to be taken over by shortened, telegraphic forms, and the texts are more fragmentary than narrative. Metaphorical prose, ornamental plotlessness and fragmentation dominate the field.

The new literature of the day is closely related to the idea of the new reality and its description in literature. 'Literature of fact' (*Literatura fakta*) was the declaration of the magazine *New Lef*, begun in 1928, that followed the above-mentioned *Lef*, the organ of the Futurists. In the *New Lef*, Brik stated his disgust with 'generalizations and abstractions', because the details and precise descriptions of Soviet life should be given precedence. The magazine also emphasized the priority of the material over the author's views, because the author should be only the discoverer of new material, not an inventive or creative person. And so factography, the use of elements of reality as a basis for art, becomes the best example of how art is connected to life. The focus on reality was taken to an extreme. Interestingly, however, the montage of 1920s literature appears to be a vehicle with a two-sided fix on reality: it both brings the elements of reality into literary texts and also underlines their literariness (*literaturnost*)[13].

In prose texts the use of the documentary material is often connected with the montage technique of composition, since it concerns the idea of heterogeneity in the surface structure of montage texts. In literature, a montage of fragments can be understood as one specific aspect of intertextuality. Most of the attention is on the correspondence between the basic or general space of the text and the textual joints, or 'intexts' (a text within a text). The double function of montage in relation to reality and fictionality can be approached from this aspect as follows: an original document that is joined to an artistic text, in correspondence with a fictional

narrative, is transformed from an icon into an index. The document becomes an artistic sign of documentation and an imitation of the original document[14].

The seemingly independent birth of montage literature and montage cinema was, in a certain way, simultaneous. Yet the cinema's subsequent influence on literature is by no means the only explanation for literature's montage principle in 1920s Russian culture. In fact, literary montage has its obvious roots in both Realistic (Lev Tolstoi) and Symbolistic (Alexei Remizov) prose. As well, fragmentary non- or half-fictional autobiographic prose (Vasilii Rozanov) had a great influence on the telegraphic development of prose in the 1920s. Naturally, when speaking about the dominance of fragmentariness in literature one cannot forget the reminiscences of Romanticism and its significant impact on Modernism[15]. And, finally, the appearance and existence of Formalist theory (especially Tynjanov, Shklovskii and Eichenbaum) is dependent on this manifold dialogue between literature and cinema.

The Russian Imaginists (1918-1924) represent a fascinating aspect of the question of montage literature in the 1920s; here I shall concentrate on two authors, Vadim Shershenevich and Anatoly Mariengof[16]. The following poem, entitled "Image Catalogue" was written in 1919 by Shershenevich.

<div align="right">

Дома –
Из железа и бетона
Скирды.
Туман –
В стакан
Одеколона
Немного воды.
Улица аршином портного
Вперегиб, вперелом.
Издалека снова
Дьякон грозы – гром.
По ладони площади – жилки ручья.
В брюхе сфинкса из кирпича
Кокарда моих глаз,
Глаз моих ушат.
С цепи в который
Собака карандаша
И зубы букв со слюною чернил в ляжку бумаги.
За окном водостоков краги,
За окошком пудами злоба
И слова в губах, как свинчатка в кулак
А семиэтажный гусар небоскреба
Шпорой подъезда звяк.

Август 1919

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In the above poem the attention is attracted by at least two features: the poem's

format and its complete lack of verbs. The typographical arrangement of the poems in the collection to which it belongs, *Loschad kak loschad*, is unusual: the verses are justified on the right side of the page, rather than on the left[17]. Shershenevich was very active in theorizing on the poetics of the Imaginist school, one of the many post-Symbolist Avant-garde movements of the post-revolutionary period.

In their poetry and manifestos, the Imaginists proclaimed the superiority of the image. The core of poetry was, according to them, the interplay between individual images. Combining the ideas of the Italian Futurist Marinetti and the Russian Symbolist Andrei Belyi, Shershenevich forms a synthesis: "Poetry is the art of combining *autonomous words, words-images*. A poem is an uninterrupted series of images"[18]. This declaration was an attack on the Cubo-Futurists, who had first introduced the concept of the *autonomous word* in their famous manifesto, *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*. The Futurists are the main targets of Imaginists' loud manifestos, since they "spoke of the form, but thought only about the contents"[19]. Naturally, the Imaginists turned out to be the true Formalists, who "cleared the form from the dust of the contents better than the shoe-polish man on the street".[20]

According to the Imaginists, the verb becomes unnecessary in poetry. Further, they claim that the metaphor in poetry is self-oriented, and that the metaphoric nature of the Russian language can be best expressed by using nouns. As a result they end up omitting verbs in their poetic syntax. The reading of poetry without verbs challenges the reader to participate in the reconstructive action of combining juxtaposed elements and finding the predication (in the Eisensteinian sense: the third new meaning) between them. The active and expressive role of the reader is also often emphasized in the Imaginists' theoretic writings. In their first manifesto, Deklaratsija, they were expecting the new reader, the reader of the future:

> In our time of ice-cold homes only the heat of our works can warm the souls of our readers, the viewers. For them, for the receivers of our art, we are happy to donate the whole intuition of reception. We can appear even so humble that later on, when you, the still weakly talented reader, will grow up and become wiser, we shall even let you take part in a dispute with us. [21]

In their search for a position for themselves, the Imaginists declared all the other movements to be nonsense; the Imaginists were the only artists for contemporary and future Russia.

However, we can only read Shershenevich's "Image Catalogue" by trying to make up the predication, fitting verbs between the nouns in order to arrive at a unified, complete thought. This is the core of montage poetry: the reader should reconstruct

the causal connection between the images (as in film, between shots; or in photography or painting, between the separate heterogeneous elements) and should almost guess the missing verbs. Eisenstein wrote that montage corresponds to the structure of the Japanese language, in that the verbs in Japanese are produced from juxtapositions: the combination of ideas meaning water and eye produces the idea 'to cry', the combination of mouth and bird produces 'to sing', and so on[22]. The *third* element, produced by the juxtaposition of words, corresponds in montage poetry to the verb omitted by the author, and is for the reader to discover.

The Imaginist catalogue of images may be regarded as a dominant compositional device in Anatoly Mariengof's first fictional novel *Cynics* (1928)[23], the story of two "ex-people", unemployed historian Vladimir and his lover Olga. Cynics is a montage novel, and it can be treated as a collection of heterogeneous, apparently disparate and non-related fragments. It is written as the first-person narrator Vladimir's fragmentary diary from the years 1918-1924. Vladimir is a historian, so the diary consists of his own numbered notes, contemporary news items and historical documents. The narrator demonstrates the method in the entry from 1922:

> 1
>
> In the autumn of 1921 my fingers began to itch once again. Tattered scraps of paper appeared on my writing desk and sharp little black points appeared on my pencils. Each morning I fully intended to buy a notebook, and each evening I fully intended to apply my mind. But then I was beset by laziness, and I am not by habit so gauche as to resist the advances of such a charming creature.
>
> The soft sheets of paper containing my 'drafts' were impaled on the spike in the 'thinker's cell', the hard sheets were preserved. I am grateful to Olga for her squeamishness.
>
> Since I always forget to write the day of the week and the date, I am obliged to present them in chronological disorder.[24]

The "chronological disorder" described by the narrator is the core of the montage technique used by Mariengof in his first fictional novel. As any element in a montage text (and in an Imaginist poetic catalogue), the novel's fragments, when viewed in isolation, may be defined as relatively autonomous and polyvalent, carrying semantic potential. This potential can be actualized only in juxtaposition with other elements. In the actual text, which according to Eisensteinian interpretation is a result of communication between the author's fragmentation and the reader's (re) integration, these elements often turn out to be multifunctional, and capable of generating new meanings on different levels of the text. In Shershenevich's

Imaginist jargon, these elements are characterized as "pregnant word-images", meaning nouns bearing in themselves the potential image.[25] Only in Mariengof's prose are these "word-images" translated into "chapter-shots", or seemingly disparate fragments. Their actual meaning depends on discrete juxtapositions or non-discrete combinations with other fragments. The reconstruction of the correspondences is done, naturally, by the active co-author of the text, the new reader, who uses the lens of montage in his or her pensné. The next dramatic passage, where the heroine Olga tells Vladimir that she has been unfaithful to him (with his brother, the Bolshevik Sergey) is illuminative as a montage of heterogeneous fragments:

> 45
>
> One o'clock in the morning. Olga is sitting at the table, reading the interminable minutes of even more interminable meetings.
>
> The Revolution has already created grandiose departments with mighty bureaucratic bosses.
>
> I think about immortality.
>
> One of Balzac's characters once threw a coin into the air and shouted:
>
> "'Heads' for God".
>
> "Don't look!" his friend advised him, catching the coin in mid-air. "Chance is a great joker".
>
> How stupid it all is. How many more centuries must drag past before we can stop playing "heads or tails" when we think of immortality?
>
> Olga hid her papers away in her briefcase and went over to the stove. The gleaming coffee-pot was frothing over.
>
> "Would you like some coffee?"
>
> "Yes, please, I would."
>
> She poured out two cups.
>
> Fruit-drops of various colours lay on a porcelain parrot. Olga selected a sour green one.
>
> "Oh yes, Vladimir..."
>
> She placed the sweet in her mouth.
>
> "...I almost forgot to tell you..."
>
> The wind slammed the small window shut.
>
> "...I was unfaithful to you today."
>
> The snow outside the window went on falling and the fire in the stove went on cracking its nuts. Olga leapt up from her chair.
>
> "What's wrong, Vladimir?"
>
> A tiny golden coal tumbled out of the stove.
>
> Somehow I was quite unable to swallow. My throat had become a narrow bent straw.

"Nothing."

I took out a cigarette. I tried to light it, but the first three matches broke, and the head of the fourth went flying off. The coal that had tumbled out of the stove had burnt through the parquet.

"Olga, could I ask you one trifling favour?"

"Certainly."

She deftly picked up the coal.

"Would you mind taking a bath, please?"

Olga smiled.

"Certainly..."

My fifth match lit.

Outside the window the snow still went on falling and the stove went on cracking its wooden nuts.

46

Concerning the Moscow fire of 1445 the chronicler wrote:

"...the entire city was burnt, so that not a single tree was left, and the churches of stone did fall asunder and the walls of the city did fall asunder".[26]

The juxtaposed fragments contain several curiosities of montage technique. The narration in the 45th fragment is based on the succession of laconic dialogue and short descriptions, reminiscent of film narration in early cinema. This alteration creates a certain rhythm and makes it possible to find the culmination points having special tension. The first such moment is the close-up description: "She placed the sweet in her mouth".

The dominant metaphor in the passage is, of course, the fire. It functions first to direct the changing viewpoints and is transformed into a reflection of Vladimir's emotions. His reaction is not given or described; the reader must instead reconstruct it from the detailed descriptions of the stove, matches and coal, as if something was 'burning' in his heart. The iconic signs lose their iconicity and attain symbolic value with the help of repetition. Such detailed analysis could be continued, however the main purpose of the metaphor is revealed in the next fragment, which is a non-fictional document about one of the Moscow fires. After the 44th fragment is juxtaposed by the reader with the 45th, none of the colliding fragments remain as they were. They have lost their 'iconicity' as well, and only the result of their combination is left, the metaphorical synthesis about Vladimir's *true* way of experiencing Olga's unfaithfulness.

Mariengof had already underlined the active role of the reader in his article 'Buyan-Ostrov' (1920), where he claimed that the main goal of a poet is to create

maximum inner tension in the reader's mind. In an Imaginist text this is best achieved by a constant collisional juxtaposition of 'pure' and 'impure'. The author chooses the most shocking juxtapositions for metaphors in order to force the reader to participate in a reconstructive process of generating synthetic meanings. This Imaginist principle is clearly seen in the metaphors used in *Cynics*. In the mind of the narrator, nothing pure is expressed without its constant juxtaposition with something impure: love, for instance, is juxtaposed with constipation and enemas, flowers with severed heads, sentimental episodes with detailed descriptions of hygienic problems, and so on.

In his longer Imaginist poems, for instance, in *Magdalina* (1920), Mariengof uses complex heteroaccentual rhyming, with the rhyming pair being separated by an irregular number of lines. For the reader this presents the intriging challenge of reconstructing the causality of the text. The heteroaccentual rhyme is one of the main features of Mariengof's poetics, rather than just a random experiment. From the point of view of textual orchestration the focus here is on the memory of the text and the long-distance connection between textual segments.

The narrative nature of the relatively autonomous fragments and descriptive passages in *Cynics* is related to the poetics of transition described above. The repetition of certain motif-like descriptions or metaphors creates several intextual narratives within the novel. The most evident examples are the descriptions of the characters. In fact, all characters are described analogically in terms of the montage principle in cinematography. This is achieved with the help of associative details, while the formation of the character, which appears to be a narrative text within a text, is left to the reader. Every character is given a dominant detail, upon which his or her image is based, and which conveys the narrator's attitude towards the character: Bolshevik Sergey's (repulsive) face, *nepman* Dokuchaev's (aggressive) hands, heroine Olga's eyes, comrade Mamashev's rapturous saliva, etc. The following descriptions of Vladimir's maid Marfusha are typical of Mariengof's montage technique:

> Marfusha is standing barefoot on the windowsill wiping down the panes with a soapy sponge. Her naked, smooth, pink, warm, heavy calves are trembling. As though the woman has two hearts beating passionately in her legs. [27]
>
> I hear the slapping of soft bare feet along the corridor. [28]
>
> (…) there is the sound of bare feet along the corridor on the other side of the wall. [29]

The Imaginist thematics of love and revolution play an important role in *Cynics*. In

fact, Mariengof was obsessively keen on juxtaposing love and revolution in his early poems, where these two elements are connected almost without exception with the help of intertextual references to the Bible. The dominant motif is 'decapitation' (especially John the Baptist's execution), which functions as a semiotic border between intimate love passages and descriptions of the massacres of the October Revolution. The role of the Bible in this thematic triangle seems to underline Mariengof's ambivalent attitude towards the revolution. The juxtaposition of love and revolution thus becomes the main theme in *Cynics* as well. The role of several biblical allusions (related through cut-off heads) is again to reveal their interconnection. On one hand, they express the history of decapitation in Russian culture (according to the narrator of the novel), and the October Revolution appears to be just another replay of this history. On the other, they are used in romantic passages, where the narrator describes his love for the heroine.

The factographics of the novel (i.e. Mariengof's use of documentary material) present another aspect of the montage principle evident in *Cynics*. In 1928, the year *Cynics* was written, Mariengof took part in an attempt to organize a new literary association called *Literatura i byt*, focussing on the use of authentic documentary work as the main material for literary texts. The association was never given an official status. Its programme, however, is very close to the ideas discussed by *Lef*, whose notions about factographics it embraced. When approached from the point of view of factographics, the surficial structure of *Cynics* becomes more understandable.

Recognizing this post-Futurist effort is essential when trying to reconstruct the role of Imaginism in Mariengof's work at the end of the 1920s. *Cynics* appears to be in a paradoxical position between Imaginism and post-Imaginism. On one hand, it is a unique example of Imaginist prose in Russian literature, but on the other, it can be interpreted as a kind of fictional epilogue in the history of Russian Imaginism. After *Cynics*, Mariengof did not continue writing Imaginist prose, with the exception of the novel *The Shaved Man* (1930) containing certain Imaginist features. He became more interested in the factographic and historical aspects of literature and turned to autobiographical prose, memoirs and diaries.

It is obvious that the dominant idea of the post-revolutionary period – the question of cultural conflict and constant juxtaposition – is typical of Russian Imaginism and of Mariengof, as it is of most post-Symbolist literary movements in Soviet Russia in the 1920s. In fact, the Imaginists as a group could be characterized from this point of view more generally. They manifested themselves as individualists, in a society where the newly born Soviet people were living under collectivism. They declared all of the preceding movements unworthy and meaningless, even the Futurists, to

whom their poetry owed a great deal.[30] These 'dandies of the Republic' represent an illuminative example of montage culture in the post-revolutionary period, even though the word "montage" was never mentioned in their theoretical writings.

Notes

[1] The approach used in this connection presupposes the application of the Moscow-Tartu school's semiotic cultural view applied to a culture as a whole. For a more thorough treatment of this topic, see the introductory section of my article, Venäläisen kulttuurin semiotiikka: keskusta ja periferia." In semiotics, culture is understood as a hierarchical sign system, which consists of many sign subsystems, i.e. culture languages. Culture, then, is a sort of sign system of sign systems. Montage is a gratifying subject for this approach, in that montage as a phenomenon in 1920s culture has also influenced the Moscow-Tartu school's cultural view in different ways, because the concept appeared already in the school's first theses (Ivanov, Lotman, Pyatigorski, Uspenski, and Toporov 1998 [1973]) to illustrate the synergy of a culture's languages, their uniform tendencies. For more about this topic in Finnish, see Lotman 1990; Huttunen 1999.

[2] The semiotic approach presupposes a broad understanding of "languages" and "texts." The issue is not only natural languages (such as Finnish, Swedish, English, or Russian), but also other languages of a culture (such as political, religious, legal, literary, cinematic, and theatrical). Correspondingly, composed expressions in these languages are called "texts," including, not only oral or written texts, but also any coherent wholes composed in two languages. About the concept of the text in cultural semiotics, see Göran Sonesson's article in Sign Systems Studies 26.

[3] This idea of structural similarity also serves as the starting point for the central idea of Lotman's later work, the semiospheric theory. Culture, which consists of structurally similar phenomena, is in this way a "semiosphere of numerous semiospheres."

[4] Fragmentariness in this connection means the same as discreteness, the elements' clear distinctiveness. For us to be able to speak of a montage text, the text's significatory units have to be distinguishable from one another, in order to make possible the perception of the mutual relationship between them - which forms the basis of montage's effect.

[5] One of the undisputed early classics of photomontage is the work of a Swedish artist, Oscar G. Rejlander, a work called Two Ways of Life" (1867), which is about a young man's moral choice, and which caused a sensation in its time. Over 30 separate negatives were used in making it. See also the German postcard from 1902.

[6] See a still picture from Melies' film The Man with a Rubber Head (1902).

[7] The best known of the Berlin Dadaists are Raoul Hausmann, George Grosz, John Heartfield (see further herein) and Hanna Höch (see Untitled," from 1921).

[8] A few examples of Heartfield's anti-Nazi photographs: Adolf Superman Swallows Gold and Spouts Rubbish (1932); He Who Reads Bourgeois Papers Goes Blind and Deaf (1930); The Hitler Salute's Hidden Meaning: A Little Man Demands Large Bribes. Motto: Millions are Behind Me (1932).

[9] Kuleshov juxtaposed the same picture of the actor Mozzhuhin's face with different pictures of a soup bowl, a woman in a coffin, and a playing child. Depending on the juxtaposition, viewers saw the face's expressed emotions as hunger, sorrow, or tenderness. See an illustration of the "Kuleshov effect" on the Internetix campus. See also Jukka Tikkanen's article about the topic.

[10] See Bulgakova 1988.

[11] Thus, Klutsis himself proclaimed Dynamic City the first Russian photomontage. See Aradhana Goel's three-dimensional visual study of Dynamic City.

[12] See LEF magazine's contents on the SovLit pages.

[13.1] The New LEF can also be found on the SovLit pages.

[13] P.A. Jensen, 'Art-Artifact-Fact: the set on "reality" in the prose of the 1920s'. In: N.Å. Nilsson (ed.), The Slavic Literatures and Modernism. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell 1987, 117-123.

[14] See Lotman, Izbrannye stat'i, II, 180.

[15] The Romantic fragment was cultivated by post-revolutionary culture, in both poetry and prose. See M.F. Greenleaf, 'Tynjanov, Pushkin and the Fragment: through the lens of montage'. In: B. Gasparov et al. (eds.), Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: from the golden age to the silver age. Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1993, 268-269.

[16] In addition to Shershenevich and Mariengof, the key figures of Imaginism included Sergei Esenin and Ryurik Ivnev, and also such artists as Georgii Jakulov and Boris Erdman. See Poety-Imazhinisty. Sankt-Peterburg: Peterburgskii pisatel' 1997.

[17] See A. Lawton, Vadim Shershenevich: from Futurism to Imaginism. Ann Arbor: Ardis 1981, 36. According to Anna Lawton, it is probably meant to attract attention to the ends of the verses and to underline the orchestration of rhymes and assonances. This is easy to understand considering Shershenevich's theories of assonance.

[18] Ibid., 33. Italics mine.

[19] Cf. Poety-Imazhinisty, 8.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid, 10.

[22] See Eizenshtein, Izbrannye stat'i, T.2, 285.

[23] The novel was written in 1928, the Russian text was published the same year in Berlin. Mariengof was attacked after the publication by the All-Russian Union of Soviet Writers (VSSP), the novel was labeled an "anti-social proclamation", and it was not published in the Soviet Union until 1988.

[24] A. Mariengof, Cynics, In: Glas. New Russian Writing, 1, 1991, 68.

[25] V. Shershenevich, 2x2=5: Listy imazhinista. Moskva: Imazhinizm 1920, 39.

[26] Mariengof, Cynics, 33-35.

[27] Ibid., 27.

[28] Ibid., 50.

[29] Ibid, 61.

[30] Shershenevich is a former Ego-Futurist, and the early Mariengof is simply pretending to be another Mayakovskii. As a matter of fact, the very idea of montage in their poetry is in many ways closely related to Mayakovskii and other Futurists, although neither the Imaginists nor the Futurists would have approved of such interrelations.

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