

Suhr, Christian and Rane Willerslev (eds.). 2013. *Transcultural Montage (afterword by George E. Marcus)*. New York, London: Berghahn Books. 300 pp. Pb.: \$49.95/£32.00. ISBN: 9780857459640.

Transcultural Montage first attracts a reader with its appearance. On the front cover is a photograph of multiple eyes, a cluster of projectors, looking at every passing visitor of an installation in Geneva's ethnographic museum. The cover is made from a smooth and soft material. The format and weight, however, make it inconvenient for travelling. The book is a dynamic collection of many perspectives about the art of montage. It offers a variety of uses of this art and critical engagements with it. The book has four parts, each having an additional thematic focus to be addressed in relation to montage: Montage as an Analytic, Montage in Writing, Montage in Film, and Montage in Museum Exhibitions. The different styles in both writings and themes make the book itself an artefact of montage of the present times.

'What is montage?' would be the first question to ask. In this volume, we learn that montage implies the joining, assembling, mounting, and displaying together different elements in a variety of combinations. There is a cinematic, museum, or design montage. All of them deal with the elements of rupture and continuity, and visible and invisible spaces. Probably the best known to all is the cinematic montage, which has a long history in filmmaking. In French, *montage* refers to film editing. It is a synonym for cutting the footage into separate sequences or shots and joining them back together into a new composition. As early as in the 1920s, the filmmakers became aware of the power of montage. We learn in the book about the American, Soviet, and British montage traditions. It was the Soviet school that emphasised dynamic, often a discontinuous juxtaposition of the sequences creating a so-called "intellectual montage". The representatives of this style were Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein, whose experiments and concepts have become a classic for many contemporary film schools. The book discusses these montage traditions together with the styles in ethnographic cinema. It compares disruptive and linear montage, challenging the ethnographic and transcultural values of the final outcomes.

It is the long takes and observational method that we became accustomed to in an ethnographic portrayal. As Alyssa Grossman writes in the eleventh chapter of the book, the long take becomes a cell in a montage. The longer is the sequence, the more disruptive it becomes. The "in-camera montage" that Grossman advocates (p. 204) provokes sensations of immediacy and distance by its ruptured continuity. We could say that 'to a certain extent, montage is already prefigured in lived experience', as Andrew Irving writes in the fourth chapter (p. 77), which means that we use the techniques of montage in our everyday lives without giving much thought to it. We frame, cut away, get a closer look at something, and we move through different sound ambiances. An ethnographic film usually shows these kinds of things without much interruption by the actual editing. An ethnographic film contains less general information, attempts to complete an action within a single shot, rather than trying to show all the scenes in short, dramatic rushes with superfluous value. The priority goes to the open interaction between the portrayed people and ethnographer. The style of long takes and in-camera montage were also known to the members of the Italian neorealism and French *cinéma vérité*. The priority in

these styles goes to the given, less rule-bound and constructive method than customarily seen in a feature or documentary films. In the thirteen chapter, Anna Grimshaw defends the observational filmmaking typical for the ethnographic style and argues that it poses 'an important challenge to existing conceptions of cinema' as well as giving 'a radically different way of thinking about and doing anthropology' (p. 235). It is doing by looking and consequently watching that we learn about the different socio-cultural domains. Montage, as Catherine Russell points out in the ninth chapter, consists of construction as well as deconstruction. A good ethnographic film balances both. She goes on to say that 'cinematic montage is more than a formal device, more than a metaphor, but an unstable cultural form in itself' (p. 180).

'The key value of cinematic montage derives', in the authors' view, 'from its capacity to disrupt the normative space of naturalistic film footage, thus allowing for a sudden burst in the experience of a multifaceted reality' (p. 6). The authors also argue that 'montage provides a technique for evoking the invisible through the orchestration of different perspectives encroaching upon one another' (p. 4). Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are two thinkers whose ideas about the invisible and otherness inspired the authors of the book to assemble a rather unusual collection. Some of the chapters contradict each other, which makes a reader 'experience a multifaceted reality' (p. 6). The volume is meant to stimulate the readers in creating their own ideas and combinations from the variety of themes. This reviewer is of the opinion that Anne Line Dalsgaard's chapter, entitled *Being a Montage*, is related to Alyssa Grossman's *Filming in the Light of Memory*. Why does this reviewer see a link between those two chapters? Both of them deal with the embodiment of lived experience. While one through the written words, the other through long takes in the film. Both are existential in their epistemological sense. This reviewer could imagine using Dalsgaard's chapter as voice over in Grossman's film about the memory.

Transcultural Montage fulfils the expectations of a reader as much with its contents as it does with its appearance. A couple of things, however, crossed this reviewer's mind when reading the book. One important topic to discuss would be film's velocity and how has the montage changed according to it throughout the past decades. Another issue would be to experience the exhibitions that are presented in the fourth part. They should be seen and felt in order to get the sense of the three-dimensional world. The concluding words in the volume belong to George E. Marcus and his afterword: *The Traffic in Montage, Then and Now*. He summarises well what montage does and this reviewer concludes this review with his words: '[M]ontage, more than other avant-garde forms of juxtaposition and editing of images, encourages thought and insight about the process of doing, of workshop, of-analogously-fieldwork and being immersed in observations-being-made-into-representations. Montage captures this labour conceptually and as process' (p. 305). The book is valuable to read for those who are interested in and deal with the contemporary montage practices across the political and cultural boundaries whether it is in a film or a museum.

DANIELA /rachel/ VÁVROVÁ
James Cook University (Australia)