documentary realism which, however, at that time was new for Russia. While Westerners tend to admire more the avant-garde works that followed after the turn of the century, one should not forget the almost religious devotion of the crowds who used to stand in the Tret'iakov Gallery and the Russian Museum admiring the Shishkins, with their naturalistic depiction of the Russian forest.

Altogether, this is a fascinating book which, together with Our Man in Moscow, presents an excellent overall view of Soviet society as it was during the years when Ford knew it. Indeed, the type of contradictions he points to are still there today, so that one wonders whether Russia every really changes despite the obvious external upheavals.

A. Colin Wright


The seven essays in this volume, published jointly by Indiana University Press and the British Film Institute, grew out of the meetings of the Working Group on Contemporary Russian Culture, held annually from 1990 to 1993. In her introduction, Nancy Condee explains that the chapters are "concerned in one way or another with visual culture, with objects or texts that engage us in a primarily visual apprehension. These include documentary and feature film; television news, game shows, advertisements, and soap operas; billboards, painting, board games, statues, cartoons, and currency." (p. vii) What the collection aims to show is the "shift from book culture to visual culture" (p. x) that has been occurring in the former USSR since the late 1980s. The hieroglyphics of the title are visual images whose social, political and cultural significance the contributors hope to decode.

Unfortunately, the seven chapters that follow only fitfully and partially address the editor's stated goal. Condee seems to have allowed her contributors to write about anything they chose, rather than guiding them to focus on the very intriguing topic at hand. While several of the essays do provide insightful analyses of broad cultural trends, too many of them offer highly detailed examinations of particular works or figures. At the same time, numerous relevant issues—the fate of painting, the change in television programming and viewing habits, an overview of the film industry—receive no coverage. In a volume that proclaims to be "intended for both specialist and non-specialist" (p. xxv), this is a serious miscalculation.

The most useful, clearly written and focused essay in the collection is "Televorot: The Role of Television Coverage in Russia's August 1991 Coup," by Victoria E. Bonnell and Gregory Freidin. The authors provide a chronicle and description of television coverage over the course of six days, showing how cameramen, reporters and producers were able to undermine the legitimacy of the Emergency Committee and make a hero out of Boris El'tsin: "what began as a perevorot had turned into a televorot, with television occupying the front line for political struggle over legitimacy and authority." (p. 37)
Those who were in Moscow around the time of the 1991 attempted coup will always remember the dismantling of Soviet monuments which played such an important emotional and symbolic role in bringing down the Communist Party. In his essay "In the Shadow of Monuments: Notes on Iconoclasm and Time," Mikhail Yampolsky shares many provocative insights on the semiotics of monument-wrecking. In the Soviet case, monuments have acquired particularly rich and layered meaning because they were so often built on the site—and sometimes even on the pedestals—of Tsarist monuments. After the Dzerzhinskii monument on Lubianka Square was carefully hoisted away by crane (not torn down by a revolutionary mob), the pedestal remained, representing "the stability of time, a stability completely autonomous of any hero or any event, simply stability as such." (p. 106) Also fascinating are Yampolsky's reflections on the devaluation and disappearance of metal coins (remember the 5-kopeck piece used for years as a subway token?), which represent the absolute collapse of the state and the impotence of its symbols.

Not surprisingly, the loss of Soviet values and ideals is a recurring theme in recent Russian films as well. In "Aural Heiroglyphics? Some Reflections on the Role of Sound in Recent Russian Films and Its Historical Context," Katerina Clark shows convincingly how directors have used music "to present a sort of metacommentary on the failed ideals of High Stalinism, ideals to which not just 'the regime' but also, if in a different way and somewhat differently conceived, intellectuals themselves also subscribed." (p. 15) This has been accomplished through selective quotation and parody of the kind of tunes conventionally used in classic Soviet films, along with new strategies for employing light and sound.

Although this volume purports to show how visual culture has displaced literature as the dominant mode in Russia since the late 1980s, one of the longer essays is devoted to literature and the image of the heroine: "The Gendered Trinity of Russian Cultural Rhetoric Today—or The Glyph of the [H]eroine," by Helena Goscilo. As usual, Goscilo has many entertaining, witty and outrageous things to say; but her chapter (which proves, not surprisingly, that little has changed in the way Russians look at gender roles) wanders far afield from the topic. It seems rather an assortment of observations than a reasoned argument.

Those who know the films of Stanislav Govorukhin will find informative the chapter by Eric Naiman and Anne Nesbet, "Documentary Discipline: Three Interrogations of Stanislav Govorukhin." Once again, however, the essay fails to consider broader questions such as the changed role of documentaries in Russia; after all, the revelations about past abuses portrayed by dokumentalisty in the glasnost' era were enormously influential. Similarly too narrow in focus is Susan Larsen's meticulously close reading of Kira Muratova's film A Change of Fate (Peremena uchastil. Only those who know the film intimately will profit by this chapter.

I was hoping that the concluding essay in the volume, "The ABC of Russian Consumer Culture: Readings, Ratings and Real Estate" by Nancy Condee and Vladimir Padunov, would provide the focus lacking in the preceding chapters, but alas, such was not the case. Ranging haphazardly over retail outlets, inflation, the displacement of the cult of high culture, the new image of the merchant, the rising importance of real estate, attitudes towards eroticism, and other topics, their contribution is a shapeless