



Automatic for the Masses: The Death of the Author and the Birth of Socialist Realism

Petre M. Petrov

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At the end of the 1920s, the Modernist and avant-garde artistic programmes of the early Soviet Union were swept away by the rise of Stalinism and the dictates of Socialist Realism. Did this aesthetic transition also constitute a conceptual break, or were there unseen continuities between these two movements? In *Automatic for the Masses*, Petre M. Petrov offers a novel, theoretically informed account of that transition, tracing those connections through Modernist notions of agency and authorship.

Reading the statements and manifestos of the Formalists, Constructivists, and other Soviet avant-garde artists, Petrov argues that Socialist Realism perpetuated in a new form the Modernist “death of the author.” In interpreting this symbolic demise, he shows how the official culture of the 1930s can be seen as a perverted realization of modernism’s unrealizable project. An insightful and challenging interpretation of the era, *Automatic for the Masses* will be required reading for those interested in understanding early Soviet culture.



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