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Review Of "Retracing Images: Visual Culture After Yugoslavia" Edited By D. Šuber and S. Karamanić

Sibelan E.S. Forrester

Swarthmore College, sforres1@swarthmore.edu

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Daniel Šuber and Slobodan Karamanić, eds. *Retracing Images: Visual Culture after Yugoslavia*. Balkan Studies Library, vol. 4. Leiden: Brill, 2012. List of figures. Index. xvi + 349 pp. \$176.00 (cloth).

This smart and informative volume of studies and analysis of visual culture in various regions, *Retracing Images: Visual Culture after Yugoslavia*, addresses art and images of different kinds, tending towards non-elite genres (billboards, graffiti, and posters), with references to the history, literature, and politics that form the interpretive background. For readers most interested in the breakup of Yugoslavia, some pieces refer to this period as well (Elissa Helms's "Bosnian Girl" in particular). The contributors are specialists in Anthropology, Art History, Comp Lit, Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Media and Communication, Philosophy, Political Science, and Sociology. This makes for a fertile variety of approaches to visual culture—but also to inevitable unevenness among the chapters, which sometimes contradict one another in their assumptions and assertions. The volume includes mostly European scholars, and largely scholars working outside their places of origin but well informed in Western theory, theory from the Yugoslav period, and work by Soviet scholars and postcolonial intellectuals.

The introduction by editors Šuber and Karamanić is incisive and engaging, establishing the project's importance and Cultural Studies direction. They give a positive but not sentimental or simplistic evaluation of the former socialist system—which looks quite different now that it has been replaced (as elsewhere in Eastern Europe) by nationalist plutocracies. Šuber and Karamanić assert that, "In fact, the wars in Yugoslavia resulted from the withdrawal of the socialist project" (60).

The first section concentrates on still images. Zoran Terzić's "'Image Games': Political Imagology and the Mimicry of Power," one of the best pieces in the collection, is tough and refreshingly frank in its leftist orientation, connecting politics with films, novels, and various financial discourses. Miklavž Komelj's "Function of the Signifier 'Totalitarianism' in the Constitution of the 'East Art' Field" considers the ideas that illuminate the art scene and its rhetoric all over Eastern Europe, then focuses on the situation of former Yugoslavia and its successor republics. Sezgin Boynik's "New Collectives: Art Networks and Cultural Politics in Post-Yugoslav Spaces" traces some of the new collectives that have emerged under capitalism, sometimes with aid from foreign foundations, and the different handling of management that is required. Gregor Bulc's "Spraying on Gallery Walls: Graffiti and the Art Scene in Slovenia" examines the status of graffiti, especially in Ljubljana, and the persistence of elite expectations even in galleries that now mount exhibitions of graffiti.

Opening a second section, devoted to film, Davor Beganović offers a prequel to the book's stated topic in "The Role of the Hero in Yugoslav Cinema in the Early and Late Sixties." He examines this era of film with regard to movies from the USSR and the emergence from Socialist Realism; most Yugoslav literature, famously, did not languish under that obligatory style, but film did for a few decades (as a higher-stakes, more effective vehicle for shaping public opinion?). Nejbojša Jovanović, in "*Futur Antérieur* of Yugoslav Cinema, or, Why Emir Kusturica's Legacy is Worth Fighting for," offers interesting readings of Kusturica's *When Father Was Away on Business*, problematizing Kusturica's own presentation of the import of his past movies, and objecting to scholars or viewers who now distort the meaning of *Yugoslav* cinema by referring to directors or actors, as well as films, only by the names of their current republics. This is not just an ahistorical revisionism, but also willful misreading of the way films continue to exert their influence, re-presenting the past (cityscapes, clothes, cars, political references) in the present. The mere title of Robert Alagjovovski's "The Nationalistic Turn and the Visual Response in Macedonian Art and Cinema" tacitly questions the previous article's insistence on consideration of *Yugoslav* cinema. The place of Slovenian and Macedonian cultural production in Yugoslavia raises a number of questions, and the book's introduction could have made this tension more productive.

The final section looks at images as sites of negotiation of memory and history, opening with Elissa Helms's "'Bosnian Girl': Nationalism and Innocence through Images of Women." Helms discusses billboards about Srebrenica and artists' posters in Sarajevo, though she includes no interviews with individuals in or from Bosnia about their own views of what meanings these images convey and how. Though her readings are thought-provoking, it is a shame that an anthropologist has not tapped local people's opinions about the images discussed. This objection might apply even more to the following article, "Reinventing Kosovo: *Newborn* and the *Young Europeans*," by Isabel Ströhle. It describes an advertising campaign financed by the government of Kosovo (spelled, without an explanatory note, in Serbian, not "Kosova" as in Albanian, surely the spelling used by the government she is considering since 2007) in terms of what it hopes to project versus the reality—but unsupported by interviews with anyone in or from Kosova/o. Ströhle interprets graffiti on a billboard or two featuring this ad campaign, but there is a long local tradition—not only in Kosova/o—of writing or drawing on posters and billboards, and one might argue how much graffiti or additional writing represents a widely held opinion. If the point is to read graffiti's public commentary as opinion that emerges onto the same surface as the campaign itself—out of the kitchen or some other private space—then this is not made explicit. Gal Kim's "Transformation of Memorial Sites in the Post-Yugoslav Context," limited to Croatia and especially Slovenia despite its title, is marred by the quality of the English: Kim emerges as a passionate proponent of the Partisan cause and its monuments, highly critical of memorials to anyone who might have been a fascist collaborator, but seems unable to explain his own position. Mitja Velikonja's article, "Titostalgia. On the Post-Yugoslav Cognitive Map," is a highlight of the collection, full of detail reflecting a long process of fieldwork as well as archival research. Velikonja's warm tone does justice to the humor in some of the juxtapositions he presents, but it never condemns or condescends to individuals who have created the images of Tito or provided information. The volume's final piece is written by the editors. "Symbolic Landscape, Violence and the Normalization Process in Post-Milošević Serbia" brings Serbia into the list of topics and examines violence as a component of current society, then steps back to look at the Milošević period. Here Šuber and Karamanić look at graffiti (especially that on official signage), the renaming of streets, and the mobilization of earlier "heroes" of the Serb people in attempts to compel certain kinds of behavior.

The collection is enriched with copious illustrations, essential to work on visual topics, and the list of figures itself may be read with interest. Most of the chapters, unfortunately, are badly in need of proofreading. A volume published in English should be readable as English; otherwise, we might argue, it risks implying secondary value and importance for both its scholars and its themes. Examples of awkward phrasing or even incomprehensible formulations are too numerous to cite. In contrast, Mitja Velikonja's article is clear and well-written—a credit to his translator, Olga Vuković.

The editors and publishers are to be commended for including an index, which makes it easier for scholars to use and cite this collection, as they will surely wish to do. Despite the frequent problems with language, *Retracing Images* offers a number of theoretically well-founded studies full of information and sharp analysis. It is highly recommended for scholars of the region, social scientists, and students and scholars of visual culture of all kinds.

Sibelan Forrester, Swarthmore College

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