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This three-volume Russian-language collection of articles on visual anthropology, edited by Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova and Pavel Romanov, is published by the Center for Social Policy and Gender Studies (Saratov, Russia) as part of the project “Visual Representations of Social Reality: Ideologies and Everyday Life,” sup-

ported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. It consists of thirty-five total chapters written by an international team of authors, predominantly from Russia, but also from Belgium, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Lithuania, Sweden, and the United States. Each volume contains introductory methodological notes, a summary, and numerous illustrations.

Visual markers of social patterns and the sociocultural life of images are the central focus of the volumes, and three questions, basically, express their content: how sociocultural, economic, and political circumstances and transformations affect the fabrication of images; how these images as visual representations proliferate; and how they impact society, its cultural practices and social structure.<sup>1</sup>

Addressing visual practices per se complements the anthropological character of research. Visual artifacts are heavily “contaminated” with ideology, and verbal conceptualization inevitably incorporates itself into the very fabric of reality, becoming apparent (in this case literally) as its visual manifestations; nevertheless, addressing the visual dimension of reality excludes at least one layer of the verbalization and related distortions. When reality is scrutinized

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<sup>1</sup> Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova and Pavel Romanov (Eds.). *Vizual'naia antropologiiia: gorodskie karty pamiati*. Moscow, 2009. P. 11.

in its visual representations, verbal means of cognition are relatively immobilized, shunting cognitive intention onto a deeper organizational level of the phenomenon, that is, the level of social agency, unpronounced, undissected, and undistorted by the means of language. This feature of visual practices as a research subject opens up a great potential for analysis undertaken by groups of authors whose academic and personal experiences have been formatted within and by means of different languages and cultural environments, such as international academic teams. Moreover, the research team that presented the work in this publication went through the process of formatting an integrated methodological approach during distance learning courses and at summer school that had been previously organized by the Center for Social Policy and Gender Studies. This preliminary work has made the reviewed volumes a unique academic endeavor, diverse in terms of the subjects analyzed and methods used. At the same time, the publication is remarkably consistent in dealing with a rich diversity of subjects and theoretical approaches. To the authors' credit, along with stressing the powerfulness of visual methods, they recognize the inevitable limitations of these methods and attempt to adequately position them within the distinctively puzzling and yet

holistic theoretical reflection of daily life experiences.

The volume that opens the collection, *Visual Anthropology: Tuning the Lens*, examines the methodological potential of visual methods seen by the authors as a part of the phenomenological tradition that complements the positivistic approach in anthropology and sociology rather than gainsays it. The contextualization of visual representations and, therefore, the interpretative nature of their decoding is tested on subjects diverse in their fabric, practicality, and cultural rootage. Those subjects include videography as a focused ethnography (Hubert Knoblauch, Luc Pauwels); the cultural contexts of racial identification and visual markers in the process of constructing neoracism (Noa Hazan); cell-phone pictures as a means of communication that has recently entered our culture (Elena Lobova); the cognitive and psychotherapeutic potentials of the photographic image (Lilia Voronkova, Olga Sergeeva, Viktor Krutkin, Judy Weiser); the power of photographing life-cycle rites (Olga Boitsova), and, finally, the nonfinite concern of the ethnographer with a (video)camera – the ethics of picturing people (Luc Pauwels).

Visual markers of social status is a central theme in the trilogy, particularly in its first volume. Rendered as spatially remote points, differences in social standing invite grading and

valuation, thus exacerbating tensions that naturally arise in the situation of overt social disparities. A dichotomy of the low/high social statuses (also “low/low” culture) unfolds through locating social phenomena and concrete circumstances on the axis of geographic closeness/remoteness (center/periphery, capital/province), thus creating a multidimensional picture of social disproportion and incongruity. Bodily representations of social dichotomies as well as the spatial differentiation of life circumstances and availability (often spatially positioned as approachability) of basic cultural and social resources are displayed through consumer patterns, mannerisms, and other cultural codes of social standing, for example, as revealed by the appearance (body – clothes – makeup) of a “lumpen girl” from the Russian backwoods (Olga Gourova). Scrutiny of the dominant social position is analyzed through the problematization of masculinity in its social, cultural, sexual, national, and other aspects (Alexandra Tikhonova). The complex and controversial process of reconstructing collective memory is shown as a rediscovery of meanings dredged up from the Soviet past into the new sociohistorical context by encoding typical Soviet mythology into recognizable visual symbols (Maria Veits). Modes of manifesting national identity are explored by analyzing the organiza-

tion of private spaces, such as the interiors of Russian immigrants’ homes (Anna Pechurina).

Volume 2, *Visual Anthropology: Urban Memory Maps*, assembles studies on visual manifestations of the urban environment. Urban areas produce highly organized forms of routine practices to ensure smooth human coexistence amid dense population. With a critically high level of concentration of human activity, mental energy (in terms of social emotions and cognitive habits), symbolic nodes, and so on in a spatially restricted area, the urban environment provides researchers with an endless source of material, even when its simplest cell is in question. The urban environment is represented in the volume as a facilitator of cognitive and emotional tensions and disproportions, such as the “choreography” of crowds in spatially frustrating public places (Oksana Zaporozhets and Ekaterina Lavrinets), or the “colonization” and regimentation of urban daily life by the comprehensive planning of it on every level of its existence, and by its verbal anti-interpretation (Elena Trubina). Mapping a city is also introduced as the process of prescribing patterns of normative perception (Victoria Semenova), while the multimodal exploration of urban space is seen as a complex decoding of cultural meanings and values (Andrei Vozianov). Positional

superiority in urban environments and the semiotics of urban lifestyles are illustrated through the examples of the political concept of Culture-Led Regeneration in Great Britain (Jonathan Vickery), the museum at the crossroads of cultural industry (Tatiana Kuzmina), and of the city as an object of historic excursion (Boris Stepanov). In its turn, the intense politicization of Russian cities in the 1920s is portrayed through the visualization of ideology and development of a system of its visual markers (Svetlana Malyshева and Alla Sanikova). Genres of documentary and feature films are scrutinized in relation to the representation of nostalgic sentiments of Soviet reality and the multiformity of images of the city of St. Petersburg (Roman Abramov, Anastasia Kincharova). Visualized characteristics of the urban environment, such as images of public transportation routes (Natalia Sorokina), the world of library and bookstore as a quintessence of the urban lifestyle (Pavel Romanov), trajectories of the “semiotic baggage” and social changes displayed in fashion (Olga Gurova), and infantilism as a product and condition of excessively commercialized consumption and its visualized (style) performance (Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova, Galina Karpova, and Maria Voronova) are other captivating topics presented in this volume.

Volume 3, *Visual Anthropology: Regimes of Visibility Under Socialism*, addresses the visual lexicon of the Soviet epoch as it was embodied in the visual production of idealized and tendentious cultural politics, and the reconstruction of the microcontexts and ideological modes of daily life in which and by which visual images were generated under the Soviet regime. This volume is a notable response to the “visual turn” within social sciences and humanities in addressing the past. The depth in disclosing specific visual communicative tools of the Soviet epoch and their latest ideological and sociocultural permutations was achieved by the researchers partly due to drastic developments in the very subject under investigation, and the value of this volume is determined by a combination of two factors peculiar to the subject. The first factor is the proximity and even actual presence of many, if not all, aspects of the Soviet existence that have survived their post-Soviet ideological regeneration. Many of those artifacts that currently compose the spatial and tangible surroundings in post-Soviet societies, such as architecture, furniture, infrastructure, books, and so on, were created, manufactured, and endowed with their symbolic value decades ago, during the Soviet times. The intangible body of symbols granted then to those artifacts still evokes vivid

emotional responses, both positive and negative, among people who lived through the Soviet era. Thus, Soviet culture is not a distant past but a real and quite “thick” layer in the cultural environment in post-Soviet Russia and can still provide a researcher with vivid and up-to-date empirical material. Another factor is the ideological alienation of Soviet culture. This alienation allows unrestricted theoretical access to those aspects of social functioning that are typically very sensitive, for they are directly related to national ideology and to a set of supporting mythologies. Dominant culture and its agencies rarely invite or allow an intense theoretical analysis to scrutinize the foundations of their dominance; they are, by definition, protected from rational reflection, “invisible” to the critical glance of the investigator. The case of Soviet culture, therefore, one that is gone and alive simultaneously, is a unique theoretical opportunity to freely address the issue of ideological and social dominance.

This dominance is analyzed, first of all, as the politicization of every aspect of public and personal life, for example, in the study of the fashion objectification in the GUM’s demonstration hall (Sergei Zhuravlev) and of the “regimes of visibility” in “the good/the bad” dichotomy of the

“people’s enemy” and the “Communist party member” (Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov). Analysis of art-based narratives of daily life (Elizabeth Hemby), ideology (Galina Iankovskaia), and Soviet mythologies (Victoria E. Bonnell, Svetlana Bykova) are complemented by addressing visual discourses in the poster genre concerning gender and sex (Victoria Bonnell, Frances L. Bernshtein), orphanages (Mariia Minina), and disability (Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova and Pavel Romanov). The latter work particularly emphasizes blindness as it functions in the space organized by visual practices and in the situation of the expansion of the visual component of culture, characteristic for the Soviet project of modernization (Galina Orlova).<sup>2</sup> Cinema certainly holds a great research potential for visual anthropology, and is represented by an examination of the evolution of visual patterns, styles, and subjects in Soviet and post-Soviet films (Ekaterina Salnikova, Tatiana Dashkova, Ivan Suslov). This is supplemented by a masterpiece analysis of the comedy “The Girls” (Almira Ousmanova), and by the examination of the phenomenon of childhood in Soviet ideology as revealed in the documentary films of the 1940s–1960s (Iulia Gradskova).

The structure of the publication deserves special notice. The vol-

<sup>2</sup> Iarskaia-Smirnova and Romanov (Eds.). *Vizual’naia antropologiia: rezhymy vidimosti pri sotsializme*. Moscow, 2009. P. 8.

umes' titles are reasonably metaphoric and accurately reflect the methodological and theoretical substance of the collections. However, the empirical focus of the research is not clear at first glance as there are no references in the volumes' titles either to the regions or to the time frames of the cultural phenomena examined therein. This would not be a difficulty if either various regions and time frames were addressed proportionally through the collection, or if the volumes' subject matters were more uniform. The vast majority of the articles, however, scrutinize the ideological and daily life patterns of culture in Soviet Russia through their visual representations from the 1930s through the perestroika period of the 1980s. Noticeably fewer articles address the later period up through the 2000s. Here again, the focus is on Russia with a heavy overrepresentation of topics related to St. Petersburg. These two groups of articles (on Soviet and post-Soviet Russia) draw an exhaustive picture of the region in its sociocultural continuity through several temporal and ideological zones. This evokes a feeling of structural completeness, and demonstrates that the issues related to Soviet and post-Soviet Russia are the "center of gravity" in the collection. If those articles that address the same region at different times and ideological periods consolidate and clarify the cultural

changes through which the region has gone, the articles with different subject matter seem rather isolated and alienated despite their undoubted methodological relevance to their neighboring chapters.

That Russia is the obvious focal point in the trilogy is understandable and justified by the composition of the (predominantly Russian) research team, but certainly was a challenge for the editors. They have done a great job, however, combining under the same "roof" an empirically heterogeneous collection and simultaneously developing a persuasive and thought-provoking structure through each volume and throughout the entire publication. It is not accidental that the chapters penned by foreign authors have been so naturally integrated into the body of the volumes. Unique patterns of human existence are discovered and shown beyond the front-stage political, economic, and social layers that constitute the collection's analytical foci, while the adequacy of the theoretical depiction of those patterns' uniqueness is safely preserved by a holistic comprehension of human diversity.

Overall, the trilogy is a brilliant collection of subjects, ideas, and methodological findings. These are well-written, carefully structured, and intellectually polished books. It is a valuable resource for those interested in visual representations

of culture in the Soviet Union as well as the societies that emerged after its dissolution, in historical and contemporary visual manifestations of urban culture, as well as in the methodological and ethical issues of visual anthropology involving different technical and analytical research tools. Considering the high scholarly level of this work and the ample references to Western literature on visual modality within the social, emotional, and intellectual experiences it incorporates, one could expect an intense interest in this trilogy from the international reader if an English translation becomes available.



## **Илья ГЕРАСИМОВ**

Людмила Новикова. Провинциальная “контрреволюция”: Белое движение и Гражданская война на русском Севере, 1917–1920. Москва: Новое литературное обозрение, 2011. 377 с., илл. Именной указатель. ISBN: 978-5-86793-897-0.

Это одна из самых хороших исторических книг, которые я читал в последнее время. Помимо того что это высокопрофессиональное историческое исследование (о чем пойдет речь в рецензии), оно написано умным и внимательным человеком и явно в результате многолетних размышлений. Причем это второе обстоятельство кажется мне особенно важным. В основе исследования – обширная работа с источниками из архивов Архангельска (включая архив местного управления ФСБ), Москвы, Мурманска и Гуверовского института; автор к месту и неформально использует обширную историографию на нескольких языках и четко структурирует текст. Однако главная ценность книги Новиковой в том, что здесь профессиональное ремесло сочетается с глубоким историческим мышлением, которое проявляется даже в мелочах: автору кажется важным отметить погодные условия, в которых разворачивается