

## Reviews & Critiques

### Kritike i prikazi

### Comptes rendus

#### **Fear and Culture**

On the occasion of publishing **Ivan Kovačević, Bojan Žikić i Ivan Đorđević, *Strah i kultura***. Srpski genealoški centar i Odeljenje za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta. Beograd 2008, pp.190.

The book entitled **Fear and culture** is a monography by three authors, ethnologists/anthropologists from Belgrade: Ivan Kovačević, tenure professor at the faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, Bojan Žikić, professor at the same faculty and Ivan Djordjević, a researcher of the Institute of Ethnography SANU (Serbian Academy of Science and Art). This work was published by the Ethnology library of Serbian Genealogical Center in Belgrade, as their thirty-eight book, in cooperation with the Ethnology and Anthropology departments at the Faculty of Philosophy. The authors of the book are already well known and established names both in the national and foreign socio-cultural anthropology, with a series of published monographies and works in different areas of cultural research. In this joint venture, researchers from three generations of Serbian anthropology, have approached, each through his own paradigm, the analysis of the contemporary culture domain, which is at the same time a field of mutual academic and personal interest. All three authors present throughout the book the contributions from their specific fields of interest, which they had also addressed earlier

through numerous books and papers, and now they add a supplement in the Fear and culture monography.

This book represents a studious analysis of contemporary (both national and foreign) popular and mass culture and their cultural effects in Serbia. Through 190 pages of *Fear and culture* deals with several similar phenomena of the contemporary Serbian and world reality in three central chapters: *Fear and Panic: Sociological Story about Cannibals from Šabac* (by Ivan Kovačević), *Fear, Evil, Madness* (by Bojan Žikić), and *Fear, Resistance and Identity* (by Ivan Djordjević). The analysis and conclusions in all three chapters are followed by excerpts from materials and ethnographies on which the authors relied during research. The authors open up new subjects in the already started research of elements of culture, which traditionally were not associated with anthropological examinations of society. Mutual thematic connection of all three authors is explicit in the title itself (fear), as well as the mutual researching base (culture), i.e., anthropological contextualization of the most frequently disseminating fear and/or panic in media and pop-culture. The review of this book clearly states that this work "connects focused phenomena with the broadest of contexts: mass-cultural realization of vampire-Dracula fear intermediated by mass panic and its media presentation, it is related to the social and political

spheres of society; comprehension of fear which is restricted by genre, is connected with evil and madness by establishing their relations in space made by science fiction authors; Serbian writers of "alternative" histories and dystopias are the subject of analysis in the third segment, which contextualizes them into observing the "manufacturing of tradition" and imagological studies creating one's own representation."

Ivan Kovačević analyses the media articles as a template for the creation of mass panic based on newspaper reports about the alleged emergence of a cannibalistic cult in Sremska Mitrovica and Šabac, where the mass-culturally produced spectacles about cannibalism and vampirism are seen as the foundation for building up understanding of the information that had just come in, about a construct which is labeled as a cannibalistic cult. The author lucidly connects the media emersion of the alleged cult and the public (and semi-public) narration and panic in relation to the effects of authoritarian elements from previous times, and states that it "spreads the xenophobic-autistic political package", which in conditions of the most recent transition, instead of old aggression and hate, produce fear and panic in the public.

In the second segment written by Bojan Žikić, the author considers the motive of overlapping of spatial and time displacement, which transposes on displacement in the mental and/or realistic, in the so-called genre literature (fiction, science fiction, horror, etc.). He demonstrates how the narrative outline of the analyzed works represents a construct of reality which imitates (emulates) the world that we live in (i.e. the world where the author lives), so he examines the modes of separating characters from daily life and as genre techniques, as

well as the approach of a general cultural-symbolic semantic communication. Fear which is offered to the reader through genre articles is clearly exposed in this part of the book as genre (sub-culturally) as well as symbolically (holos-culturally) conditioned and efficient.

The third part of this co-authored monography s written by Ivan Djordjević, and it brings the research of the national science fiction production from the second half of 1980s onwards, and which abandons the previous thematic and motive genre role models, and caught by the advanced re-traditionalization in the Serbian society, shows the ever more evident use of the "national" (historic) motives, which through fables and stories emanate the meaning and messages that speak primarily to those who possess the national cultural capital. The author also shows properly how the analyzed cultural SF package simultaneously loses its genre subversiveness and sends a message of identity loss fear and imaginary strategies of resistance towards the anticipated loss with narrations which speak about fear, suffering and precarious future of Serbian people.

This monography successfully synthesizes different approaches of studying similar phenomena, as well as considering a segment of social reality which has not been recognized until recently as ethnology/anthropology domain of studies. The authors show through their analysis the essential connectedness of fear and its public manifestations (denoted in media and literature production framework), with cultural conditions and social and political reality, and on the local (national) and global aspect. We advocate it for being one of the first comprehensive and complete monographies, which, after a series of individ-

ual studies, gives an overall and multi-perspective insight in the question of creating, intermediating and reception of the fear phenomena through media and pop-culture contents in Serbian ethnology/anthropology.

**Srdan Radović**

**"Event Ethnography": a Modern Approach to Anthropological Research and Writing about Christmas**

On the occasion of publishing Vesna Vučinić-Nešković, *Christmas in Boka Kotorska: anthropological essays of public firings of the Yule log in the time of post socialism*. The Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade and "Čigoja publishing". Belgrade 2008. 357 pages.

Christmas celebrations went through a specific revitalization and re-traditionalization in the time of post-socialism. Up to what extent and in which way it is celebrated in family circles or publicly in squares and churches, is a question Vesna Vučinić-Nešković, a professor at the Ethnology and anthropology department of the Philosophy faculty of Belgrade University, is facing in her new book.

The book entitled *Christmas in the Bay of Kotor: Anthropological Essays on the Public Burning of Yule Logs in the Time of Postsocialism*, is an extensive study of 357 pages in B5 format. The author is well known to both national and international scientific public as an expert in urban culture, city life styles and spatial behavior in the old town of Dubrovnik, the themes to which she dedicated her first book, *Spatial Behavior in Dubrovnik: An Anthropological Study of a City with Orthogonal Structure*,<sup>1</sup> but also as the

president of the International Association for Southeast European Anthropology, InASEA (2005-2007).

In order to satisfy her scientific curiosity and high standards of field work, which she set up for herself, Vesna Vučinić-Nešković collected comprehensive ethnographic material in the period between 1998 and 2008 in two urban centers, Kotor and Herceg Novi and their rural surroundings, Grbalj and Luštica. This book represents a testimony about anthropology in action, about how it should look like when it is practiced, a reminder to us all that a unique field work is what differentiates anthropology from other social sciences and humanities. There have been few such transparent and detailed monographs in national ethnology in the past twenty years, which in their structure, their approach to fieldwork, systematization, presentation, and analysis of the ethnographic material, represent an explicatory model for empirical research. The author was motivated, which she explicitly states in her introductory note (when making a critical retrospect on traditional and certain contemporary monographs), to apply in her research a methodological approach based on the reconstruction of events which have a precise timeline by creating a network of respondents and a very large sample questioned by a layered, detailed and clearly formulated questionnaire. Such demands required a systematic building and tending a highly diversified network of relevant institutions and respondents, who would, during ten years of research, give all the necessary information, but who would

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with *Orthogonal Structure*, Department of Ethnology and Anthropology of the School of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Belgrade 1999 (330 pages).

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<sup>1</sup> Vesna Vučinić, *Spatial Behavior in Dubrovnik: An Anthropological Study of a City*