

Leniniana and Yugonostalgia: A Visual Study on Post-Socialist Identity and Cultural Memory

Leniniana ve Yugonostalji: Post-Sosyalist Kimlik ve Kültürel Bellek Üzerine Görsel Bir İnceleme

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between post-socialist identity construction and cultural memory through Leniniana and Yugonostalgia, based on an interdisciplinary visual analysis method. In the post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav periods, the figures of Lenin and Tito were reshaped through visual representations and gained different meanings in collective memory. The study rests on a theoretical framework grounded in collective memory and lieux de mémoire concepts. Leniniana, as one of the most important visual traditions of Soviet ideology, has secured a lasting place in the cultural memory of the Soviet people. However, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Lenin's public representation changed and acquired new meanings. Similarly, Yugonostalgia represents the nostalgic reshaping of the collective memory constructed under Tito's leadership after the collapse of Yugoslavia. The study is based on a qualitative case analysis of various visual materials, including propaganda posters, murals, contemporary artworks, and digital images. The selected images are evaluated in terms of their representation of post-socialist nostalgia, symbolic compensation for ideological voids, and the cultural traces of social identity quests. The interaction between visual images, nostalgia, ideology, and cultural memory is explored, focusing on how these figures have been integrated into new narratives in the post-socialist era. Particular attention is given to how these images have transformed through propaganda and popular culture. The main findings indicate that the images of Lenin and Tito demonstrate that the ideological legacy of past regimes has not been entirely erased from collective memory but rather reproduced in contemporary identity negotiations. In conclusion, the visuals of Leniniana and Yugonostalgia play a critical role in representing post-socialist identities and understanding the evolution of cultural memory, offering significant insights into how post-socialist societies relate to their past.

Keywords: Leniniana, Yugonostalgia, cultural memory, visual analysis, collective memory

Öz

Bu çalışma, Leniniana ve Yugonostalji üzerinden post-sosyalist kimlik inşası ile kültürel bellek arasındaki ilişkiyi disiplinler arası görsel analiz yöntemi temelinde incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Post-Sovyet ve post-Yugoslav dönemlerde Lenin ve Tito figürleri, görsel temsiller aracılığıyla yeniden şekillendirilmiş ve kolektif bellekte farklı anlamlar kazanmıştır. Çalışma, kolektif bellek ve hafıza mekânları kuramları ışığında teorik bir zemine oturmaktadır. Leniniana, Sovyet ideolojisinin en önemli görsel temsil geleneklerinden biri olarak Sovyet halkının kültürel belleğinde kalıcı bir yer edinmiştir. Ancak Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasıyla Lenin'in kamusal alandaki temsili farklılaşmış ve yeni anlamlar kazanmıştır. Benzer şekilde, Yugonostalji, Tito liderliğinde inşa edilen kolektif belleğin, Yugoslavya'nın çöküşü sonrasında nostaljik bir unsur olarak yeniden şekillenişini temsil etmektedir. Çalışma, posterleri, duvar resimleri, çağdaş sanat işleri ve dijital imgeler gibi çeşitli görsel materyaller üzerinden yapılan nitel bir örnek olay analizine dayanmaktadır. Seçilen imgeler, post-sosyalist nostaljinin temsili, ideolojik boşluğun sembolik telafisi ve toplumsal kimlik arayışlarının kültürel izleri açısından değerlendirilmiştir. Görsel imgelerin nostalji, ideoloji ve kültürel bellekle etkileşimi ele alınarak, bu figürlerin post-sosyalist dönemdeki yeni anlatılara nasıl eklendiği incelenmektedir. Özellikle propaganda ve popüler kültür aracılığıyla bu imgelerin nasıl dönüşüm geçirdiği de tartışılmıştır. Çalışmanın temel bulguları, Lenin ve Tito görsellerinin, geçmiş rejimlerin ideolojik mirasının kolektif bellekten tamamen silinmediğini; aksine güncel kimlik müzakerelerinde yeniden üretildiğini göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, Leniniana ve Yugonostalji'nin görselleri, post-sosyalist kimliklerin temsili ve kültürel hafızanın evrimini anlamada kritik bir rol oynamakta; post-sosyalist toplumların geçmişle kurdukları ilişkiye dair önemli ipuçları sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Leniniana, Yugonostalji, kültürel bellek, görsel analiz, kolektif bellek

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Introduction

This study examines the impact of *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia* visual representations on cultural memory and the formation of post-socialist identity. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, both Soviet and Yugoslav legacies have been reinterpreted through visual imagery and have played a significant role in the reconstruction of collective identities. *Leniniana*, a tradition referring to the continuous representation of Lenin's image and not limited solely to the cult of personality, holds a prominent place among the symbolic traces of the Soviet past and still maintains a tangible presence in many regions of Russia today. As Plamper notes, various media, including cinema, photographs, paintings, posters, sculptures, and poems, have been utilized over time in the creation of *Leniniana* (Plamper, 2010, p. 48). In the post-Soviet period, Lenin's symbolic presence in the public sphere has not entirely disappeared; on the contrary, it has been reconfigured within new contexts and functions, evolving, in Moskvina's words, into a form of "long *Leniniana*" (Moskvina, 2014, pp. 128–129). *Yugonostalgia*, as Simmons emphasizes, initially emerged as a term with negative connotations, expressing a longing for Tito's Yugoslavia and the romanticization of the ideal of "brotherhood and unity" (Simmons, 2009, p. 458). The widespread use of the term was particularly influenced by a critical article published in *Globus* magazine in 1992 and subsequent discussions in various media outlets. The layers of meaning carried by these visual and conceptual representations today are not only about remembering the past but also about interpreting current sociopolitical conditions. *Yugonostalgia* is mobilized not only as a form of nostalgia for a golden age but also as a critique of the present post-socialist realities. This study aims to reveal how the construction of identity in the past and present becomes intertwined through visual culture and to explore the effects of these images on cultural memory.

The research approaches the themes of *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia* within the context of visual culture, focusing on their role in shaping collective memory in post-socialist societies. The image of Lenin, beyond being a symbol of Soviet power, has evolved into a symbol reinterpreted through new social and political frameworks. Similarly, *Yugonostalgia*, through visual representations that recall Yugoslavia as a vanished state, has developed both as a yearning for the socialist era and as a critical stance toward its social and cultural contexts. Within this framework, the interaction between visual materials and historical narratives, as well as the reconstruction of the past through imagery, constitutes the core problem of this study. The analysis focuses on how Lenin's visual representations and the images associated with Yugoslavia's socialist past shape cultural memory and are instrumental in the reconstruction of post-socialist identities.

To analyze this relationship, Gillian Rose's method of visual analysis is employed. Rose's approach encompasses not only the formal characteristics of images—such as composition, color, and symbolism—but also the processes of content and reception. This three-dimensional analysis reveals that visual culture is not merely a representation of reality; it is also a dynamic field in which ideologies, power relations, and cultural meanings are constructed. By considering not only the formal and thematic qualities of images but also their historical and cultural contexts, the multilayered world of meaning surrounding themes such as *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia* is illuminated. At the same time, focusing on how viewers interpret these images contributes to an understanding of the active role individuals and communities play in reshaping collective memory.

The significance of *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia* in post-socialist societies lies in the transformative role these images play in shaping cultural belonging and collective identity. Lenin's image, as a powerful representation of Soviet ideology, continues to evoke social and ideological resonances even decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In post-Soviet Russia, Lenin's legacy is interpreted in various ways as part of the process of constructing a new identity. It remains, particularly for younger generations, a historical and political point of reference. Research has shown that, despite contradictory interpretations, Lenin remains regarded as an influential figure within society (Ivanova et al., 2012, p. 17). Similarly, Tito's image, a founding figure of the Yugoslav Federation, continues to be embraced as a symbol of better times for ex-Yugoslavs or as an emblem of resistance against external domination, despite the region's ethnic and national divisions (Synovitz, 2010). In this context, these images, as carriers of collective memory, recirculate the political meanings of the past within contemporary debates on identity.

Leniniana and *Yugonostalgia* are not merely remnants of the past but symbolic tools that actively contribute to the construction of post-socialist identities. Lenin's image functions not only as a memory of the past but also as a figure that continues to carry cultural and ideological meanings in the present. *Yugonostalgia*, likewise, is not limited to the figure of

Tito; it offers a broader visual and conceptual framework that expresses a longing for the shared past, symbols, and cultural heritage of Yugoslavia. Through visual analysis, this study demonstrates that these images possess not only aesthetic value but also shape forms of nostalgia, cultural memory, and resistance to current sociopolitical realities. The representation of Lenin continues to symbolize Soviet ideology and power. In the post-Soviet space, the legacy of Lenin is being recontextualized in various ways. On the one hand, it continues to serve as an important cultural and ideological reference point. On the other hand, it faces removal in some former Soviet republics due to processes of decommunization and desovietization. This phenomenon is often referred to as “Leninopad” (Yerköy, 2022, p. 79). In parallel, *Yugonostalgia* serves as a visual projection of the effort to reconstruct the idea of “unity” by preserving the symbols and ideals of a lost federation.

The visual representations of Lenin and Tito are not merely remnants of the past but cultural instruments that play an active role in the construction of post-socialist identities. While Lenin’s image symbolizes the ideological legacy of the Soviet Union and its symbolic power within the post-Soviet space, the visuals of Tito and Yugoslavia have become collective symbols that sustain the memory of lost unity and past ideals. These images carry aesthetic significance, yet they also exert a profound influence on processes of cultural memory, identity formation, and ideological reflection. Visual analysis reveals how the relationship with the past shapes the structure of contemporary society and how new meanings are produced through cultural memory. The figures of Lenin and Tito hold a prominent place in the collective memories of the past within post-socialist societies, and these memories directly contribute to the formation of new identities and historical narratives.

Theoretical Framework: Cultural Memory and Collective Memory

Although the concepts of cultural memory and collective memory are often used interchangeably, their meanings differ. Cultural memory refers to the totality of symbols, rituals, and meanings that societies have developed throughout history, and it plays a central role in the construction of social identity. Every culture creates a “symbolic universe” that unites individuals and connects the past with the present, thus offering a sense of orientation and trust. Culture shapes past experiences, carries images from previous eras into the present, and maintains a sense of continuity (Assmann, 2011, pp. 2–3). Pierre Nora’s concept of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) encompasses both tangible and intangible elements that preserve and transmit a society’s identity. According to Nora, these sites are simultaneously natural and artificial, material and immaterial, functional and symbolic; an archive only becomes a site of memory when imagination assigns symbolic meaning to it, and a school textbook or a veterans’ association acquires such a function only when it becomes part of a ritual (Nora, 1993, p. 14).

Collective memory, on the other hand, as emphasized by Maurice Halbwachs (1996, pp. 38–39), is a structure wherein individual memories possess the capacity to function only insofar as they are situated within and shaped by social contexts. Halbwachs expresses this idea as follows: “Memory and its frameworks are social; our thinking can recall the past only to the extent that it is embedded within these frameworks and contributes to collective memory.” This approach treats collective memory not as the mere sum of individual memories but as a construct formed, directed, and shared through social groups. Moreover, collective memory is not a directly tangible structure; rather, it is the reproduction of individual recollections within a social framework (Gedi & Elam, 1996, p. 43). While cultural memory is more closely associated with symbols and images, collective memory involves the sharing of social experiences and memories. Both concepts are critically important for the remembrance of the past and the construction of social identity.

Svetlana Boym’s (2001, pp. 41–45; pp. 49–50) concepts of “reflective” and “restorative” nostalgia, developed about cultural memory, demonstrate that longing for the past is not merely a form of individual affect but also a fundamental component of collective meaning-making. *Restorative nostalgia* idealizes the past, advocates for the restoration of a lost wholeness, and frequently contains a desire to return to a cultural or national myth of origin. In this sense, restorative nostalgia can serve as a means for the authoritarian reconstruction of collective memory. Nostalgic representations of Lenin in post-Soviet Russia, referred to as *Leniniana*, serve as a notable example of restorative nostalgia. Lenin’s statues, portraits, and popular representations do not merely commemorate a historical leader; they symbolize the ideal of socialist unity and express a desire to revive a lost historical continuity. This clearly illustrates how cultural memory can become a political tool, serving to construct national identity through selective representations of the past.

Jan Assmann’s theoretical framework on cultural memory becomes critically important at this point. Cultural memory, as a

form of memory that transcends individual recollection and becomes institutionalized and ritualized, ensures continuity across generations through rituals, symbols, narratives, and material objects. While preserving the past, this form of memory continuously reproduces it, thereby imparting meaning to social identity (Assmann, 2011, pp. 16-18; p. 111). Although the concepts of cultural memory and collective memory are often used interchangeably, their meanings differ. Every culture creates a symbolic universe that unites people and connects the past with the present, thereby providing a sense of orientation and trust. Culture shapes past experiences, transporting images from previous times into the present and maintaining continuity. The examples of *Titostalgia* and *Yugonostalgia*, which emerged after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, are concrete reflections of this concept. Symbols unique to the Tito era, such as Partisan caps, youth festivals, or commemorations held in Tito's birthplace, Kumrovec, not only commemorate a past leader but also represent a longing for the socialist Yugoslav identity and its reproduction. Similarly, the collective memories expressed within the framework of *Yugonostalgia* encompass a yearning for shared lived experiences and a desire to revive the vision of a multi-ethnic socialist state (Velikonja, 2008, p. 15; Velikonja, 2012, pp. 286-287). Through such rituals and symbols, cultural memory is both revitalized and directly involved in contemporary identity politics. This theoretical framework provides a foundational basis for analyzing how visual cultural products such as statues, Tito commemorations, and nostalgic representations contribute to the reproduction of cultural and collective memory.

Collective memory, as defined by Halbwachs (1992, pp. 137–138), is formed within social frameworks, and Svetlana Boym's concepts of nostalgia make the aesthetic and ideological dimensions of these frameworks more visible. Reflective nostalgia enables individuals to cultivate self-awareness in their relationship with the past and to question their sense of belonging. In contrast, restorative nostalgia seeks to reconstruct the past within a national unity, thereby reinforcing the fixed narratives of collective memory. As Boym (2001, p. 49) states, restorative nostalgia evokes the national past and future, while reflective nostalgia is more directed toward individual and cultural memory. Both types of nostalgia can utilize the same mnemonic triggers and symbols, but they develop distinct identity narratives and memory constructions around these symbols. For example, some representations found in *Leniniana*, particularly the idealized image of Lenin in state-supported narratives, reflect the type of nostalgia Boym defines as restorative. This form of nostalgia reconstructs the past through institutional narratives in a manner that aligns with Halbwachs's theory, which posits that social groups organize collective memory. In contrast, reflective nostalgia establishes an emotional yet distanced relationship with the past, as seen in some contemporary artworks featuring ironic or critical representations of Tito. This form of nostalgia enables individuals to develop an aesthetic critique of the fixed narratives of collective memory, allowing for more personal and pluralistic forms of remembrance.

Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) suggests that modern societies construct identity not through living, directly experienced memory, but through an understanding of the past built via symbols and modes of representation. According to Nora, these sites are symbolic spaces that replace the natural environments of memory in a world where direct recollection has disappeared. Therefore, while providing historical knowledge, they also represent either the continuity or rupture of collective belonging (Nora, 1996, p. 507). Within this framework, nostalgia for former Yugoslavia is not only a longing for a specific political system but also a symbolic reconstruction of everyday life patterns, shared rituals, social solidarity, and collective memory of that era. For example, emotional reactions in the public sphere, such as some citizens carrying Yugoslav flags during Croatia's accession to the European Union, demonstrate that this symbolic belonging to the past remains influential in contemporary identity negotiations. Similarly, the modes of representation encountered in *Leniniana* reveal how the collective memory shaped around Lenin's persona is produced on aesthetic and ideological levels. However, these sites and images can also be used to critically and creatively reinterpret the past. Ironic, critical, or melancholic representations of Lenin or Tito in contemporary art prove that these sites of memory are not static but open to transformation. Consequently, understanding cultural and collective memory requires focusing not only on what is remembered but also on how, by whom, and through which aesthetic, emotional, or ideological codes this remembering is constructed.

Methodology

This study employs Gillian Rose's method of visual analysis to examine how images associated with *Leniniana*, *Yugonostalgia*, and its subset, *Titostalgia*, are interpreted within the frameworks of collective and cultural memory. Rose conceptualizes images not merely as aesthetic objects but as material representations shaped by human labor and imagination, which serve symbolic, ideological, and political functions, engaging the viewer's visual perception (Rose, 2021, pp. 24-46). In her

approach, the process of visual analysis is organized around three contextual sites, namely the context in which the image is produced, the image itself, and the context in which it is received or interpreted. These are examined through three modalities: technological, compositional, and social, which enable a layered analysis that considers both the internal visual features and the sociohistorical conditions under which the image is created and perceived.

Aligned with Rose's theoretical framework, this study recognizes the four analytical contexts she identifies: production, the image itself, circulation, and audiencing. All of these aspects interact with technological, compositional, and social modalities. Nevertheless, for analytical clarity and coherence with the selected visual material, these four sites have been consolidated into three analytical levels: formal, content, and reception. This adjusted framework retains the theoretical depth of Rose's model while facilitating a practical and focused interpretation of the images within their respective visual and sociopolitical contexts.

Within this methodological framework, the visual materials in the study are analyzed on three levels: formal analysis, content analysis, and reception analysis. Each level is considered in connection with the contextual planes and analytical modalities outlined by Rose. The first stage, formal analysis, focuses directly on the visual content itself, its structural composition, and its compositional dimension. This includes examining how aesthetic elements such as color, perspective, light, point of view, and figure placement are arranged and what symbolic meanings they convey. For instance, in images categorized as *Leniniana*, Lenin is typically depicted in an elevated and imposing manner, accompanied by dramatic lighting and symbolic backgrounds that present him as a sacred and exalted leader. In contrast, representations of Tito often portray a more modern and approachable leader, emphasizing secular, pluralist, and independent characteristics associated with Yugoslav identity. These formal choices constitute the ideological foundations embedded within the images.

The second stage, content analysis, examines the narratives conveyed through the images, the symbols they contain, and the forms of representation they employ. This level is closely tied to both the internal structure of the visual material and the historical, political, and cultural context in which it was produced. Content analysis aims to identify the historical discourses being reproduced, the elements of collective memory being represented, and the types of ideological references being conveyed through the imagery. Representations of Lenin, strongly associated with the socialist revolution, create enduring images within Soviet memory. At the same time, depictions of Tito have become nostalgic symbols following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, reproducing a longing for the past within the framework of *Yugonostalgia*. This analysis demonstrates that the images do not merely represent the past but also act as tools that shape contemporary cultural and political discourses.

The third stage, reception analysis, focuses on the viewer's position and the social dimension of visual interpretation, examining how these images are received and reinterpreted across various contexts. This level centers on the social environment in which the image encounters its audience. Images of Lenin and Tito acquire varying meanings depending on their political and cultural surroundings, at times evoking nostalgic longing and at other times serving as critiques or instruments of idealization. For example, within the framework of *Titostalgia*, images of Tito function not merely as representations of the past but also as visual expressions of an alternative imaginary constructed in response to contemporary political disillusionment. Reception analysis reveals that visual meanings are not fixed or universal; instead, they are continuously reinterpreted based on the viewer's historical experience, identity, and cultural background. Accordingly, the visual analysis conducted within the contexts of *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia* aims to contribute to understanding how the past is constructed, remembered, and intertwined with contemporary discourses.

Results

***Leniniana*: The Representation of Lenin as a Visual and Cultural Phenomenon**

Leniniana refers to the broad cultural phenomenon encompassing the visual, literary, and artistic representations of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin in the Soviet Union. This concept explains how Lenin was presented not only as a politician but also as a symbol of Soviet ideology and how this image was reinforced through artistic production (Shefov, 1986, pp. 6–7). Moskvina describes the extension of Lenin's visual and cultural representations beyond the Soviet period into the post-Soviet era as the "Long *Leniniana*" (Долгая Лениниана) (Moskvina, 2014, pp. 128–129). This notion demonstrates that Lenin's images have undergone continuous reinterpretation across different periods and still hold a prominent place in contemporary Russian

visual culture. As Russian Marxist Anatoly Lunacharsky noted, Leniniana should be understood not only as the legacy of an individual but also as a visual and literary corpus reflecting the spirit of an entire era (Lunacharsky, 1929). Lenin's figure was continuously reproduced by artists, writers, photographers, and filmmakers as a symbol of the Soviet revolution, leaving a lasting imprint on collective memory. Following Lenin's death, his image was elevated to a kind of secular icon status and was widely depicted across various artistic disciplines, including painting, sculpture, literature, cinema, and theater.

The visual representation of Lenin became one of the central themes of Soviet art starting in 1917 and gradually evolved into a form of cult (Dubrovskiy & Karpukhin, 2022, p. 22). Throughout this process, many artists who constructed Lenin's portraits, sculptures, and revolutionary mythology emerged prominently. For example, sculptor Sergey D. Merkurov produced masks and statues immortalizing Lenin's facial features after his death, while painter Isaak I. Brodsky emphasized Lenin's revolutionary identity by creating realistic portraits. Photographers also made significant contributions to visualizing Lenin's political identity. Notably, figures such as Pyotr Otsup, Viktor Bulla, and Yakov Shteynberg documented Lenin's moments at meetings and rallies, portraying the founding leader of the Soviet Union as an active leader among the people. Lenin's promotion through cinema was also shaped as part of the Soviet propaganda apparatus, and actors portraying Lenin in films were regarded as holding some of the most prestigious roles of the era (Memorialnij Muzej Raznochinnyj Peterburg, n.d.).

Lenin's images functioned not only as artistic productions but also as ideological apparatuses. In Soviet propaganda posters, Lenin's figure was presented as a leader who enlightened the people, guided the future, and led the way to socialism. Posters from the 1920s depicted Lenin as a figure cleansing the world of capitalist "filth," while in later years, representations emphasizing his intellectual and statesmanlike qualities became more prevalent (Samoylov & Severyukhin, 2021, pp. 120–121). Lenin's classic portraits became ubiquitous throughout Soviet society, visible in educational institutions, factories, government offices, and public squares alike. In this context, *Leniniana* emerged not merely as an artistic tradition but also as a visual discourse that reinforced Soviet identity and ideology.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Lenin's images were reinterpreted in various contexts during the post-Soviet period. While many Lenin statues were removed or relocated to museums in several former Soviet republics as part of the Leninopad process, Lenin's image in Russia has persisted as both a nostalgic element of the past and an ideological legacy. As Moskvin points out, there is no settlement in Russia where Lenin's images have not been preserved. Although current social and political discourse may give the impression that the figure of the "leader of the people" is no longer necessary, the symbolic presence of Lenin in the public sphere remains unsettled (Moskvin, 2014, pp. 128–129). This observation demonstrates that Lenin's figure has left a profound mark not only physically but also socially and culturally, maintaining a significant place in collective memory. The phenomenon of *Leniniana* within this transformation necessitates an understanding of Lenin not only as a historical figure but also as an image that is continuously reproduced within shifting ideological contexts. Therefore, *Leniniana* should be regarded not merely as a phenomenon belonging to the Soviet past but also as an essential cultural reference point in the processes of post-Soviet societies confronting their histories.



Figure 1.

A Photograph from the “We Remain Loyal to Lenin’s Cause” Demonstration

Source: <https://kprf.ru/party-live/regnews/231482.html>

In line with Rose’s formal analysis stage, Figure 1 draws attention to the Lenin statue positioned centrally and elevated on a platform. This composition signifies that Lenin, both physically and symbolically above the group, continues to be represented as a guiding and exalted figure. The individuals in the figure are gathered around the leader figure, implying collective commitment and ideological alignment. The dominant red color and red flags in the composition are not merely aesthetic choices but also carry strong visual representations of Soviet ideology. The presence of Lenin and Stalin on the flags reproduces the symbolic power of these leaders. The camera angle is also significant. The low-angle perspective looking up at the Lenin statue suggests that he remains an inaccessible authority. This formal structure indicates that the figure serves not only as documentation but also as a means of ideological positioning.

At the levels of content and reception, Figure 1 exemplifies the expression of collective memory, both materially (through monuments, flags, and portraits) and socially (through gatherings and shared nostalgia). Collective memory is shaped by individuals remembering the past not only individually but also within the framework of social groups and their value systems. The gathering of elderly individuals in the figure shows that Soviet experiences from the past are reconstructed not as personal memories but within a shared collective memory. In this sense, the Lenin statue acts as a “site of memory,” and the gathering in front of it is not merely an act of remembrance but a practice of reestablishing belonging. These figures reflect nostalgia and attempt to address contemporary ideological and identity gaps from the viewer’s perspective. Thus, the figure of Lenin becomes both a historical figure and a symbol continually reproduced by collective memory and reinterpreted according to current needs.



Figure 2.

The Centennial of October and Lenin

Source: <https://m.sibkray.ru/news/1/902602/>

Upon formal analysis, the billboard design in Figure 2 prominently features Lenin at the center in a dominant position. Lenin's determined forward stride presents him not only as a historical figure but also as a visionary leader. The silhouettes in the background represent a mass popular movement, all oriented in the same direction, symbolizing collectivism and revolutionary unity. The dominant red color throughout the figure immediately evokes historical associations with revolution, class struggle, and socialist ideology. Lenin's foreground placement, in contrast to the silhouetted figures in the background, reinforces his ideological and historical leadership. Additionally, the "100 лет" (100 years) inscription in the top right corner signals that this composition commemorates an anniversary. This element creates a symbolic temporal bridge, celebrating the past while connecting it to the present.

At the content and reception levels, Figure 2 serves as both a nostalgic reminder and a tool for contemporary identity construction. Here, the figure of Lenin transcends being a historical leader in collective memory and is reproduced as a current political and ideological reference point. The presentation of the figure in a public space, such as a billboard, enables this memory to circulate not just on an individual level but within a shared public sphere. In this context, the visual not only facilitates remembrance of the past but also shapes today's social identity. The anonymity of the silhouetted figures, lacking facial details, symbolizes a collective rather than an individual subject, shifting the message from an individual to a societal discourse. Thus, the figure demonstrates that the revolutionary heritage is not merely a historical relic but a living and functional element of collective memory actively employed in current political and cultural arenas.



Figure 3.
Leniniana in Cinema: Poster of the 2019 Film "Lenin: The Inevitable"
Source: <https://www.kinopoisk.ru/film/1280594/>

The poster for Figure 3, with its vertically split composition, simultaneously directs the viewer's gaze from above and draws them into the historical movement unfolding below. In the upper portion, Lenin occupies a central position, forming the visual focal point of the composition. In the lower section, a map tracing the route from Zurich to Sweden and then to Petrograd emphasizes the historical dimension of the narrative. Accompanied by the figure of a train, this route not only physically depicts Lenin's journey but also functions metaphorically to symbolize the progression and inevitability of the revolution. The dark and dramatic tones of the background intensify the sense of historical tension, while Lenin's prominent and fixed stance asserts the visual hierarchy and symbolic power of his figure. The typography is straightforward yet sharp, foregrounding the dramatic presence of the characters without distraction. The visual balance between these elements serves to stage historical reality while simultaneously reproducing the figure of Lenin within collective memory.

At the levels of content and reception, the analysis of Figure 3 reveals the role of Lenin's figure in post-Soviet collective memory and its function in the reconstruction of contemporary identities. By narrating Lenin's journey from Switzerland to Russia, the film reflects how his ideological legacy is perceived today and how it remains vivid in the collective imagination. Such visuals do more than recall the past; they actively contribute to the construction of current identities and ideologies. In this context, cinema emerges as a domain where *Leniniana* is sustained and where collective memory is rearticulated through modern visual media.



Figure 4.

Lenin as a Literary Character

Source: <https://rus.tvnet.lv/4603915/novaya-russkaya-leniniana-lenin-zhiv-on-geniy-ili-grib>

The cover designs of Lev Danilkin's books on Lenin, featured in Figure 4, clearly illustrate the contemporary formal transformation of the *Leniniana* tradition. The figure of Lenin on the red cover is reconstructed with a graphic aesthetic, diverging from traditional iconography and approaching the visual style of a comic book character. The abstraction of facial features and his positioning in front of railway tracks recast Lenin not as a historical leader but as a narrative figure. Surrounded by symbolic elements in the background, this design presents Lenin not as an individual subject but as a vessel of historical processes and a multilayered symbol within collective memory. These formal choices reframe Lenin not merely as a figure of the past but as a cultural image accessible and relevant to today's readers.

At the level of content, the works presented in Figure 4 portray Lenin not through the lens of ideological glorification but by exploring his human flaws, intellectual contradictions, and personal dimensions. This approach introduces a new mode of reception within the *Leniniana* tradition, where Lenin is no longer only an admired leader but also a figure who can be questioned, reread, and even approached with irony. The second cover, designed in pastel tones and featuring a caricatured figure, visually reflects this ironic and personalized perspective. Through this lens, Danilkin's works do not offer a fixed image of Lenin in cultural memory; instead, they depict a constantly rewritten, evolving figure who acquires new meanings in contemporary Russian identity. Thus, *Leniniana* transforms from a static commemorative tradition into a dynamic memory practice embedded in current cultural discourse.



Figure 5.

Lenin Re-Exhibited

Source: <https://ulpressa.ru/event/2024-01-19-vystavka-lenin-vo-mhate-otkrytie/>

The exhibition poster in Figure 5 presents the figure of Lenin in a classical sculptural form, offering a nostalgic yet distanced perspective on the *Leniniana* tradition. Depicted in a contemplative pose, under soft lighting, and against a blue background, Lenin is portrayed not with revolutionary fervor but as a reflective, intellectual figure. The formal simplicity and theatrical stance reposition him more as a thinker than as an ideologue. The overall aesthetic of the poster avoids the visual

exaggerations typical of the Soviet era, inviting the viewer into a quiet atmosphere of contemplation and placing Lenin in a more personal and abstract location within cultural memory.

In terms of content, the exhibition centers on Lenin's relationship with the Moscow Art Theatre, illustrating how he was represented not only in political but also in artistic contexts. This approach moves Lenin beyond the role of a one-dimensional historical figure, integrating him into the processes of cultural production. Through this act of representation, the exhibition enables a rethinking of Lenin's image within post-Soviet memory. Theatrical representations of Lenin allow him to be seen not as a fixed ideological icon in the viewer's collective memory but as a figure open to interpretation and reinvention. In this way, *Leniniana* no longer functions merely as a reflection of the past but emerges as an active tool of memory in the ongoing transformation of identity.



Figure 6.

Agitation Pot with Lenin's Image

Source: <https://rodina-history.ru/2024/03/16/reg-szfo/agitacionnuu-kastriluu-1920-h-godov-pokazali-na-vystavke-v-peterburge.html>

Figure 6 features an enamel agitation pot from the 1920s displayed at the exhibition "*Leniniana. Myth and Image. In Memory of the 100th Anniversary of V. I. Lenin's Death.*" This object presents a striking example of *Leniniana*'s material projection into everyday life. The hand-painted figurative composition on the metal surface establishes a visual hierarchy with Lenin at the center and Stalin and Trotsky on either side. A gear motif links the three figures, while a globe and an open book at the bottom symbolize the universal aspirations of Soviet ideology and the centrality it assigned to knowledge. Though formally simple, the pot is laden with strong symbolic meaning, reflecting the era's aesthetic approach in which functional objects served as tools of ideological transmission. The fact that this is a kitchen utensil reveals how Soviet propaganda infiltrated the public sphere and even the private domain, including domestic kitchens.

On the content level, this object reinforces Lenin's centrality as a leadership figure, while the inclusion of Stalin and Trotsky visualizes the collective leadership narrative of the early 1920s. The use of such items in daily life demonstrates that ideological symbols were not just observed; they were also lived, becoming materially inscribed in memory. In the post-Soviet era, objects like this have acquired new significance as iconic representations that prompt reflection on collective memory. Lenin's figure is no longer just a historical leader but is reinterpreted as a cultural heritage embedded in the everyday material traces of ideology. This pot thus becomes not only a relic of the past but also a mirror of how the present relates to that past.



Figure 7.

The Legend of Lenin Is Gone, but the Art Remains

Source: <https://www.kp.ru/daily/26749/3778887/>

In Figure 7, a young individual is portrayed with eyes closed and wearing headphones, while in the background, a bust of Lenin and surrounding paintings catch the viewer's attention. The bust emphasizes Lenin's historical leadership and carries the aesthetic codes of classical Soviet iconography. The paintings that fill the background are rich in vivid colors and depict crowds, symbolizing the collective energy of the revolution and popular participation. The child's posture, appearing temporally and emotionally detached from the scene, suggests that the figure of Lenin has become a silent object of the past for contemporary individuals. This visual contrast highlights how *Leniniana* has evolved from a rigid ideological memory object into a cultural icon open to personal interpretation.

The viewer's closed eyes and withdrawal into an auditory world indicate a preference for engaging with the bust of Lenin not through direct visual confrontation but via a more internal, introspective connection. This suggests that Lenin's image is no longer perceived as a propaganda symbol imposed from outside, but rather as an object of memory open to individual meaning-making. In this sense, *Leniniana* is being reshaped in the cultural memory of new generations, distancing itself from rigid forms of representation. The young man's figure illustrates the changing relationship with the past in post-Soviet societies, characterized by both nostalgia and detachment. Figure 7 powerfully reflects how Lenin's central place in collective memory has transformed as individuals now reinterpret this legacy quietly and internally.

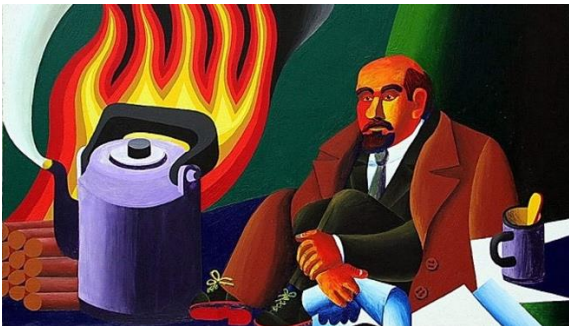


Figure 8.

Modernist Lenin

Source: <https://www.afisha.ru/exhibition/oleg-hvostov-novaya-leniniana-167787/>

Figure 8, a painting from Oleg Hvostov's *New Leniniana* series, presents an aesthetic approach that radically departs from socialist realism. Rendered with a primitivist technique, the figure of Lenin appears with distorted facial features, grotesque stylization, and vivid, almost parodic coloring. The bright yellow and red tones in the background may symbolically reflect revolutionary fervor. At the same time, everyday objects like the teapot and cup placed in front of Lenin undermine the traditional narrative of heroism. This composition ironically subverts the practice of iconization by trivializing the sanctified historical image of Lenin. By moving away from symmetry and idealized surfaces, the artist constructs a visual language of exaggeration and critique. This formal intervention reframes Lenin not as a savior or a relic of the past but as a subject open to reinterpretation and visual debate.

In terms of content, the work offers a critical perspective on perceptions of Lenin in the post-Soviet era. Surrounding Lenin with mundane household items transforms him from an ideological symbol into an ordinary component of personal memory, while the fire in the background suggests that the legacy of the Soviet revolution is still burning, though now domesticated. At the level of reception, the viewer is encouraged to see Lenin not as a historical hero but as an image repositioned within contemporary debates on post-Soviet identity. Hvostov's painting invites viewers to look at the past with both nostalgic sentiment and critical awareness. It illustrates that cultural memory is neither fixed nor sacred but rather a constantly evolving, fragmented, and reconstructed process. In this context, Lenin's figure serves not as an icon but rather as a question that invites inquiry into how collective memory functions, what is preserved, and what is overlooked.

Yugonostalgia: Traces of Unified Yugoslavia in the Visual Memory of the Past

Yugonostalgia is a concept that represents the collective longing and reevaluation process experienced by people living in the territories of the former Yugoslavia following its dissolution. However, this form of nostalgia is not merely a yearning for the past; it also functions as a powerful tool in the construction of post-socialist identities. As Milivojević (2024, p. 154) points out, the notion of *Yugonostalgia* is closely linked to other forms of nostalgia observed in post-socialist states. It is often considered an extension of the "ostalgic" phenomenon commonly found in former socialist countries of Eastern Europe. In this context, *Yugonostalgia* manifests itself through images, symbols, and cultural heritage that evoke the multiethnic, multicultural, and socially unified structure of the former Yugoslavia. At the same time, Ugrešić (1998, p. 32) notes that the term has undergone a semantic shift and was initially introduced in the early 1990s by the Croatian press as a politically pejorative label. In later years, however, this nostalgia has taken on new significance. It functions as a component of collective memory and serves as a form of counter-memory. One of its most prominent aspects is the romanticized recollection of the socialist era's achievements within the collective imagination. This sentiment reflects a longing for a political period and a yearning for a lost way of life, ideals of social equality, and cultural unity.

Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, critical approaches to the past and nationalist discourses gained increasing prominence in the public sphere. In particular, the partisan movement and the authoritarian nature of Tito's regime were reopened to debate, and revisionist perspectives on the shared memory of Yugoslavia gained traction. Efremenko and Meleshkina (2020, pp. 88–89) note that in the post-Milošević era, anti-communist and nationalist discourses have become dominant in public policy, while ideas associated with *Yugonostalgia* have received less public attention. This decline, they argue, was mainly due to the traumatic events surrounding Yugoslavia's collapse and the widespread appeal of nationalist ideologies. Velikonja (2014, pp. 58–59) describes post-Yugoslav discourses on Yugoslavia's memory as a "broad, multilayered, schizophrenic, and conflictual ideology," emphasizing the fragmented and contradictory nature of this collective memory. Yet, *Yugonostalgia* emerges as a response to these hegemonic narratives, offering a nostalgic view of socialist Yugoslavia's multicultural and unifying legacy. In this context, Kuljić (2011, pp. 123–124) argues that nostalgia for Tito today manifests in a benign, politically non-threatening manner. In contrast, Mitja Velikonja (2008, pp. 120–122) adopts a more dynamic and multidimensional approach, suggesting that Tito nostalgia has the potential to challenge existing social structures, propose alternative perspectives, and revive values such as social justice, solidarity, and collective welfare. He also distinguishes between mass media nostalgia and nostalgia disseminated through informal channels, such as the Internet, noting that while the former tends to be passive and consumption-oriented, the latter is more active, rebellious, and utopian. Within this framework, Tito is viewed as a symbol of anti-fascism, modernization, and social unity. He also represents critiques of contemporary societal issues and inspires visions of a possible alternative future.

Titostalgia, as a subcategory of the broader phenomenon of *Yugonostalgia*, refers specifically to the nostalgic sentiment centered around the figure of Josip Broz Tito. Tito was the founding leader of Yugoslavia and a potent symbol of national unity and socialist ideals. However, *Titostalgia* extends beyond the mere glorification of Tito's memory as a political leader; it also encompasses a longing for the values associated with his era, such as freedom, peace, and prosperity. Portraits, statues, propaganda posters, and even memorabilia featuring Tito play a central role in this nostalgic framework, enabling post-socialist individuals to maintain a connection to the past while simultaneously constructing their contemporary identities. The persistence of *Titostalgia* within the broader context of *Yugonostalgia* underscores the enduring influence of Tito's personal charisma and ideological legacy.

The imagined community of former Yugoslavia blurred the line between a real and an idealized past based on the fiction of

viable supranational unity. From the start, it was an unfinished project whose unity depended not on what it was but on what it could become. *Yugonostalgia* is less a longing for a real past than for desires and fantasies once possible (Volčič, 2007, p. 27). This nostalgia glorifies a leader or ideology while rediscovering the cultural unity and shared values of the Yugoslav people. Cultural elements, such as food, songs, festivals, sports, and films, convey this nostalgia, reproducing the visual memory of the past and keeping the former Yugoslavia alive in collective memory. However, *Yugonostalgia* goes beyond romanticizing the past; it reflects a search for alternatives to current economic and political issues, drawing inspiration from socialism. While idealizing the past, this nostalgia critiques the present and expresses a desire for social transformation. It plays a key role in how individuals and communities understand the past, shape the present, and influence the future.



Figure 9.

Yugonostalgia ve Tito on T-Shirts

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugo-nostalgia>

The Tito-themed t-shirts sold in the Croatian village of Kumrovec, shown in Figure 9, offer a striking example of how cultural memory is reproduced in everyday life across the post-Yugoslav space. Formally, the products are presented with bright and eye-catching designs, with Tito's portrait depicted with youthful energy. These graphic choices not only evoke nostalgic memories but also create a vibrant and contemporary aesthetic that appeals to consumers. In terms of content, the figure of Tito has shed his identity as a socialist leader and transformed into a touristic and commercialized symbol. This transformation illustrates how past symbols have been disentangled from their original ideological context and reinterpreted within today's market dynamics. These t-shirts reveal how Tito occupies a place in cultural memory not just as a statesman but also as a cultural icon. Commercialized versions offer everyday access to the leader's visual representation while simultaneously making it ordinary.

From a reception perspective, such visuals become a way for individuals to shape and express their longing for the past. Those who buy or wear these t-shirts embrace Tito not merely as a political leader but as a representative of an idealized era. Through this embrace, they define themselves as part of a specific collective memory. *Titostalgia* functions as both a form of nostalgia and an expression of post-Yugoslav identity exploration. From the standpoint of collective memory, this visual demonstrates how Tito's image, associated with values such as social justice, peace, and multiculturalism, remains a powerful and meaningful symbol within contemporary social structures. In this sense, the t-shirts transform from reminders of the political legacy of the past into an active memory practice that integrates it into today's social discourses.



Figure 10.

Traces of Tito and Yugoslavia at a Street Stall

Kaynak: <https://digitalnademokracija.com/2023/11/29/tarik-haveric-o-socijalizmu-i-kritici-bosanskog-uma/>

The street stall in Figure 10 features an array of objects that includes Tito portraits, socialist symbols, books, and memorabilia, creating a striking yet irregular aesthetic. Although the arrangement seems spontaneous, each item holds significant meaning. Tito's portrait is the focal point, surrounded by Yugoslav-era newspapers, star symbols, and slogans referencing the country's socialist heritage. Items like book covers and postcards depict Tito as both a historical figure and a symbolic leader. These artifacts serve as cultural symbols, bridging past ideals with the present. Slogans such as "Workers of the world, unite!" underscore the display's nostalgic and ideological significance, effectively reiterating political and cultural themes within a contemporary context.

From a reception perspective, such visuals and objects can be interpreted in various ways by different viewers. For tourists visiting the stall, these products may serve as exotic or nostalgic souvenirs, whereas for the local population, they represent deeper symbols of identity and historical belonging. The items surrounding Tito's figure reactivate symbols of a collective past, simultaneously recalling history and functioning as active reference points in today's identity politics. These street stalls illustrate how cultural memory is created through everyday practices and economic exchanges, in addition to academic and historical narratives. Tito's visual representations continue to circulate in post-Yugoslav societies as unifying, idealizing, and sometimes critical figures. Thus, this street scene serves as both a site of nostalgia and a tangible ground for contemporary cultural dialogue with the past, vividly illustrating the dynamic nature of collective memory.



Figure 11.

Yugonostalgia and the Tribute to Tito

Source: <https://naharnet.com/stories/en/84445-yugonostalgia-as-croatia-prepares-to-join-eu>

In Figure 11, an older woman carrying a portrait of Tito symbolizes personal memory and public commemoration. The Yugoslav flags and crowd evoke the atmosphere of socialist-era ceremonies, creating a ritualized atmosphere of remembrance. Tito's portrait reflects ideals of unity, equality, and solidarity, highlighting ongoing *Yugonostalgia* in post-Yugoslav societies. The historical context of Croatia's EU accession adds depth, as nostalgia for Yugoslavia meets skepticism about this transition. The figure conveys not just longing for the past but a desire to retain its ideals amid uncertainty, with emotional intensity expressed through colors, symbols, and participants' expressions.

In terms of content, the atmosphere created by the crowd gathered around Tito's portrait reveals how the idea of past unity is transformed into a symbol of solidarity against today's fragmented identities. For participants in such events, the connection to the past transcends simple remembrance. It seeks to revive an alternative history amid contemporary

uncertainties and identity crises. From a reception perspective, this scene can be interpreted in multiple ways: for some, it symbolizes a yearning for the lost structure of former Yugoslavia; for others, it signals a rejection of current national and global frameworks. This visual narrative illustrates how collective memory serves as a dynamic bridge between past and present. While Tito's figure is remembered as a symbol of a peaceful socialist utopia, the ritualistic practices formed around him serve as spaces of resistance within current identity struggles and social unrest. In this way, the figure makes visible both an emotional attachment to the past and the contemporary social meanings it carries.



Figure 12.
Tito's Birthday Celebrations

Source: <https://balkaninsight.com/2017/03/14/yugonostalgia-as-result-of-unfinished-nation-building-processes-03-14-2017/>

Figure 12 depicts a 2015 celebration in Tivat, Montenegro, honoring Tito's birthday and serving as a visual expression of post-Yugoslav collective memory. A symbolic figure in a white uniform leads the event, while the enthusiastic crowd waves Yugoslav flags, echoing the ceremonial tone of socialist-era rituals. The prominently displayed portrait of Tito reflects how the ideals of unity and peace associated with him gain new meaning amid today's fragmented social structures. The emotional intensity conveyed through colors, symbols, and participant expressions highlights how nostalgic sentiments have evolved into a form of collective memory that informs contemporary identity-seeking. This festive atmosphere not only reproduces the aesthetic forms of a lost order but also reactivates the social and political values tied to them during current crises. Such events serve as visual practices that commemorate Tito and the ideals of solidarity and communal life integral to his legacy.

In terms of content, the crowd gathered to celebrate Tito's birthday embodies the power of collective memory in shaping social identity. The scene evokes Yugoslavia's socialist past and gains renewed significance through its connection to the present, representing a communal act of reclaiming shared values that transcend individual nostalgia. Especially in regions where nation-building processes have not fully succeeded, such events offer an alternative basis for identity, contributing to the reconstruction of regional solidarity. As historian Vjeran Pavlaković notes in the article, the prevalence of *Yugonostalgia* in certain countries points to the unfinished nature of national identity construction. From a reception perspective, this scene can be interpreted in multiple ways: for some, Tito's legacy symbolizes a peaceful shared past, while for others, it becomes a symbol of resistance to current national and global structures. Thus, the event in Tivat becomes not only a means of remembering the past but also a platform for reflecting on its meaning for the present. The collective ritual surrounding Tito serves as a memory practice that enables the revival of the past in the face of uncertainty, identity crises, and political polarization in post-Yugoslav societies.



Figure 13.

Tito's Legacy in Miss Partisan

Source: <https://voxeurop.eu/en/back-to-the-future-with-yugo-nostalgia/>

The “Miss Partisan” competition, as shown in Figure 13, offers a striking example of how the concepts of *Yugonostalgia* and *Titostalgia* are being rearticulated in contemporary cultural practices. Women posing in partisan uniforms in front of a backdrop featuring Tito’s portrait point to a theatrical staging in which symbols of the past are carefully reconstructed. This aesthetic arrangement recirculates the social values and visual codes of socialist Yugoslavia within today’s cultural memory. The partisan uniforms evoke images of collective struggle and solidarity, while Tito’s portrait underscores the centrality of the leader figure around which these ideals were historically organized. The overall composition of the figure presents a visual narrative in which historical symbols and contemporary identity quests intertwine. The scene depicted is not merely a representation of the past but also a performance space for the present-day reinterpretation of that past. This performance becomes an aesthetic reconstruction of collective memory, revealing both the emotional and political dimensions of the relationship with history.

The competition’s format integrates symbols of socialist Yugoslavia into popular culture, reshaping nostalgia as both a longing for the past and a tool in contemporary identity politics. The playful presentation of partisan attire connects historical remembrance with modern taste, fostering a social circulation of memory. Different generations in post-Yugoslav societies interpret these events in varied ways: some experience a nostalgic yearning for unity, while others critically reflect on the cultural legacy of the socialist era. This diversity indicates that collective memory is a fluid, continually renegotiated construct. The “Miss Partisan” competition serves as a memory practice that connects cultural ties to the past and seeks to rebuild regional identities. Tito’s figure and Yugoslav symbols are not just remnants of history; they actively shape today’s social imagination.



Figure 14.

Yugonostalgia in the Restaurant

Source: <https://www.011info.com/restorani-u-beogradu/klub-kafana-pavle-korcagin>

Figure 14 depicts the Korčagin restaurant in Belgrade, which, upon formal analysis, presents nostalgia not merely as an aesthetic choice but as a performative practice through which the political and cultural imagery of the past is brought into the present. The portrait of Tito on the wall, the Yugoslav flag, and various socialist-era symbols transcend their function as mere decorative elements, creating a visual setting that evokes shared historical experiences. These figures are arranged in a deliberate manner that activates collective memory, allowing visitors to recall a specific historical period. At the heart of this visual narrative lies the reinterpretation of socialist values, including peace, solidarity, and equality. This configuration of

visual memory serves as both a recollection of the past and a tool for navigating the identity crises of the present. In this regard, the restaurant serves as a time capsule that reproduces the forms of the past while recirculating them within new contemporary contexts.

In terms of content and reception, Korčagin offers a space for social interaction that reshapes both *Yugonostalgia* and *Titostalgia*. More than just a dining venue, the restaurant provides an experiential site for emotional and cultural connection to the past. The atmosphere, adorned with Tito's portrait and symbols, reactivates positive values associated with the socialist era, fostering a sense of alternative belonging amid today's social and economic challenges. It serves as a site of collective memory, blending a longing for the past with present aspirations. This spatial expression of memory leaves a nostalgic, identity-forming impact on its audience, participating in the reconstruction of the past. Thus, Korčagin represents a liminal space where individual experience intersects with collective memory, highlighting the dynamic nature of post-Yugoslav societies' relationship with their history.



Figure 15.

Tito as a Souvenir

Source: Velikonja, 2008, p. 38

Figure 15 features a stall showcasing Tito's portraits and Yugoslav symbols on various souvenirs and decorative items. From a formal perspective, these products are neatly arranged, with Tito figures prominently positioned at the center, making them the focal point of the composition. The layout and visual organization direct the viewer's attention toward Tito and Yugoslav imagery, thereby materializing collective memory. In terms of content, this visual illustrates the enduring presence of Tito in cultural memory and materializes the longing for the ideals of the socialist period. These objects transcend mere recollection of a historical political figure; they symbolically embody values such as peace, unity, and social equality. In this sense, *Titostalgia* is not only a desire to return to the past but also a framework for using that past functionally in contemporary identity formation.

From the perspective of reception, such visuals and objects evoke both aesthetic appreciation and ideological connotations among viewers. In ethnically diverse regions like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tito may be seen less as a symbol of political nostalgia and more as a representation of unity against ethnic divisions. These objects not only commemorate the past but also generate new interpretations of contemporary social and identity-related issues. *Titostalgia* transcends personal longing, becoming a publicly shared and reconstructed regime of memory. Each object activates embedded narratives in collective memory, forging an emotional and ideological bridge between past and present. Tito's symbolic presence reveals the dynamic nature of collective memory in post-Yugoslav societies and its continuous reinterpretation across various contexts.



Figure 16.

The Yugo Car and Yugonostalgia in Belgrade

Source: <https://www.dailysabah.com/life/2018/06/20/yugonostalgia-drives-iconic-yugo-car-tours>

When examined from a formal perspective, Figure 16 presents the Yugo car not merely as a means of transportation but as an object of collective memory tied to the past. The Yugoslav flag draped over the vehicle elevates it from the ordinary to one embedded with ideological and cultural symbolism. The aesthetic composition transforms the car into a time capsule, referencing the place of socialist Yugoslavia in public memory. Tourists riding in this vehicle through the streets of Belgrade engage in a performative re-engagement with everyday practices of the past. Thus, the Yugo emerges not as a frozen relic but as an active symbol within the contemporary memory landscape.

In terms of content and reception, the Yugo car stands out as a key symbol of *Yugonostalgia*, evoking a longing for the ideals and unity of the former Yugoslavia. This nostalgia goes beyond mere romanticization of the past; it serves as a tool in current identity negotiations. Tourists do not see the car solely as a historical artifact but as a medium to engage with the past on both personal and collective levels. Thus, the Yugo offers an aestheticized practice of remembrance, becoming a vehicle for identity formation within consumer culture. Depending on geographic and social context, this symbol is interpreted in varying ways, allowing for deeper analysis of collective memory dynamics following the dissolution of Yugoslavia and how post-Yugoslav societies relate to their past.



Figure 17.

Serbs: The Most Faithful to Yugonostalgia

Source: <https://fakti.bg/en/world/924408-strongest-yugoslavian-nostalgia-felt-by-serbs>

In Figure 17, the statue of Tito and the crowd gathered around it form a powerful picture of collective memory from a formal perspective. The placement of the statue and the people facing it reflect the continuing respect for Tito in the public sphere, where he functions as a symbol of belonging. The presence of Yugoslav flags enriches the scene not only with national symbols but also with representations of past unity. In terms of content, the visual conveys a sense of an idealized past, positioned as a refuge from present-day societal fragmentation. The period of relative peace and prosperity experienced under Tito's leadership is remembered in collective memory as a time that felt safer and more meaningful compared to the current crises. This figure conveys both the political structure of the former Yugoslavia and its enduring public resonance in the present day.

On the level of reception, such figures evoke a sense of longing for the past and contribute to the reconstruction of a nostalgic vision of history within contemporary identity formation. Especially in Serbia, where there is strong support for the Tito era among certain social groups, the scene in the image becomes a symbol of a “lost utopia.” According to a *Gallup* poll, nostalgia for Yugoslavia is highest in Serbia, suggesting that this sentiment is not merely personal but embedded within a broader emotional regime shaped by collective memory. This form of *Yugonostalgia*, intertwined with *Titostalgia*, is continuously reproduced through visual symbols and collective narratives, seeking to compensate for present identity fractures with the unity of the past. The figure does not simply represent a historical moment; it makes a collective narrative visible. This narrative aims to address contemporary identity needs through emotional and symbolic connections to the past.

Discussion

The visual representations of *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia* serve as nostalgic images that evoke the past while also functioning as practical tools for identity construction in post-socialist societies. These images reveal that cultural memory is not fixed but constantly restructured and reinterpreted in response to social and political needs. Lenin’s figure, in the post-Soviet context, emerges not merely as a historical leader but as a functionalized symbol within various aesthetic and ideological frameworks. Similarly, the image of Tito extends beyond the memory of a head of state, circulating as a representation of a multicultural, secular, and socialist past. In this context, Svetlana Boym’s distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia provides a valuable framework for interpreting the findings. While restorative nostalgia is frequently observed in *Leniniana*, seeking to reconstruct a sense of historical continuity, reflective nostalgia found in contemporary expressions of *Yugonostalgia* develops a more critical, distanced, and individual engagement with the past.

The visual analysis suggests that the figures of Lenin and Tito are not mere remnants of former regimes but have gained renewed significance in response to current identity crises and ideological vacuums. The continued public presence of Lenin statues or the commercialization of Tito’s image as a tourist icon offers concrete examples of how cultural memory is reproduced at both institutional and everyday levels. This phenomenon aligns with Pierre Nora’s concept of *lieux de mémoire*, as these representations transform physical and symbolic spaces into sites of reconstructed collective belonging. Ultimately, the reception of these figures highlights the active role of the viewer in the reconstruction of memory. Rather than conveying fixed meanings, the representations of Lenin and Tito generate multilayered narratives that are interpreted differently across social groups. Their glorification in some contexts and critical or ironic reinterpretation in others reveals that these figures function as dynamic agents in ongoing identity negotiations and memory politics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship between post-socialist identity construction and cultural memory through visual analysis of the concepts of *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia*. While *Leniniana* examines how visual representations of Lenin were reinterpreted and recontextualized in collective memory after the collapse of the Soviet Union, *Yugonostalgia* explores the longing for Tito and the socialist period that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia and its reflection in collective memory. Both phenomena provide significant insights into how contemporary identities are shaped through visual representations of the past. They demonstrate that the past is not merely something remembered but also a tool actively shaping today’s political, cultural, and social realities. In this regard, the study’s findings reveal the symbolic and ideological functions of Lenin’s and Tito’s visual portrayals in current debates on identity.

Leniniana initially emerged as a visual expression of Soviet ideology, but in the post-socialist period, the meanings of these representations have evolved. Lenin’s statues, portraits, and related imagery have maintained a strong presence in collective memory even after the fall of the Soviet Union. In Russia, in particular, Lenin’s image has been redefined not just as a nostalgic symbol but as a cultural and ideological legacy. His visual representations serve as a bridge between the Soviet past and present, reinforcing the emotional and ideological connections to a lost era. These figures also highlight the enduring influence of the past on contemporary political discourse and the formation of identity. The findings suggest that Lenin’s imagery functions not only as an aesthetic remnant but also as a social marker, evoking memories of former ideological bonds and national unity.

Yugonostalgia emerged as a form of collective memory after the breakup of Yugoslavia, reviving the identity shaped under

Tito's leadership. It goes beyond admiration for Tito, encompassing socialist ideals, cultural unity, and the region's multicultural fabric. While it romanticizes the past, it also reflects a search for alternatives to today's political and economic challenges. In this context, *Yugonostalgia* is not only a longing but also a critique of the present. The findings show that both Tito and Yugoslavia have become symbols of unity and justice amid today's fragmented identities.

The visual analysis method has proven to be a valuable tool in understanding the place of *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia* within collective memory. Gillian Rose's framework facilitated a comprehensive examination of the formal, content-related, and interpretive dimensions of these figures, shedding light on the connections between past and present. The visual representations of Lenin and Tito functioned not only as aesthetic elements but also as carriers of ideological and cultural significance. These figures have shaped collective memory and played a crucial role in the construction of post-socialist identities. The findings reveal that visual representations actively participate in reconstructing memory and influence identity formation through diverse modes of reception. Visual analysis has thus offered a window into how past and present identities are interconnected while also revealing the cultural and ideological frameworks within which these relationships are negotiated.

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are proposed;

- The study confirms the value of visual analysis as a key tool in research on cultural memory and identity. Future studies may focus on the following areas:
 - Regional variations: Examine how *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia* are interpreted in various post-socialist contexts, particularly across Eastern Europe.
 - Media and popular culture: Explore how visual representations of Lenin and Tito are reproduced and consumed in today's popular culture.
 - Digital memory and visual culture: Examine how social media and digital platforms recirculate and reshape images of the past.
 - Public space and monuments: Analyze the role of Lenin and Tito monuments in today's public spaces and the social interactions they generate.
 - Visuality in identity formation: Use visual analysis to understand better how identity is shaped not only by memory but also through current visual culture.

In conclusion, *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia* play a crucial role in understanding how post-socialist societies engage with their past. These phenomena help keep collective memory alive through visual representations and shape contemporary identities. The figures of Lenin and Tito evoke nostalgic longing and symbolize the enduring connection between the ideological and cultural legacies of the past and present realities. This study reveals that the ideological context of these visuals has a significant influence on the formation of current identities. Visual analysis reveals how representations of the past contribute to the construction of collective memory and identity. These figures are not merely aesthetic artifacts; they carry substantial cultural, ideological, and political functions. The analysis highlights the significance of visuals as key tools for examining memory and identity dynamics in post-socialist contexts. *Leniniana* and *Yugonostalgia* facilitate a deeper understanding of contemporary social and political dynamics, serving as reminders of history and reference points in today's cultural struggles. Thus, the visual analysis method used is validated as a practical approach for examining relations between identity and memory in both historical and contemporary contexts.

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