

the transnational reach of the anthology and the presence of powerful, often fierce, women's voices. In a strike against essentialism, Djurić and Obradović aspire to offer western readers ways of rethinking the stereotypes associated with Serbian culture since the wars of the 1990s, querying and complicating its reception with the wide-reaching embrace of these poets.

The first poet in the collection was born in 1941, the last, in 1981, and they are presented in the anthology by birth year. Mindful of the uncertainties of the last years of Yugoslavia, the tragic war decade, and the isolation of the first post-war years, they chose to focus on “the spectrum of thinking artists in response to the extreme circumstances filled with instability, turmoil and the ultimate fight for survival” (xiii).

Once they had settled on which to include, Djurić and Obradović realized that these poets share “a predilection for writing self-consciously about poetry itself, in *ars poetica*s; few of them name specific places or things . . .” (xv). While there are some eighty footnotes appended to various poems, at least as many annotate foreign references as explain Serbia-specific names, cultural references, toponyms, and cuisine. This paucity of local color has relevance for translation. The lack of a need to explain cultural innuendo, coupled with the fact that these poets use rhyme far less than did their predecessors, has left the translators free to attend to line, assonance, rhythm, pacing, and visual effects.

Charles Bernstein, who introduced Obradović to Djurić, wrote the preface. Obradović's introduction describes how the anthology came into being, while Djurić's develops a larger historical and theoretical framework and context for Serbian poetry. Each poet is presented in a biographic sketch and an encyclopedic bibliography of works, awards, and translations of the poet's work into other languages. There are recordings available online for many of the poems at dialogosbooks.com/serbia. The scholarly apparatus of biographies, bibliographies, and annotation gives the scholar a solid informative footing, but the book does not go beyond this to an in-depth analysis of recent Serbian poetry.

The overall impression of *Cat Painters* is not of the gem-like perfection of a single poet's distillation of experience and language. Instead, its value is in the messy, uneven cacophony of the poetic voices it brings, and with its sprawl across continents, languages, cultures, and genders, the anthology offers us a complexity of experience in an attempt to jolt English readers with its bold range and riches and to redefine what it means to be a poet of Serbia.

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Writing the Yugoslav Wars. Literature, Postmodernism, and the Ethics of Representation. By Dragana Obradović. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. viii, 219 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Index. \$55.00, hard bound.
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The Yugoslav wars, which ranged from 1991 to 2000, besides causing immense human suffering and loss, also precipitated wide scale discussion about how human suffering and cultural destruction can and should be represented. Moreover, as a conflict that was globally represented by the media—the Sarajevo siege from 1992 to 1995 has been dubbed a media spectacle—it presented authors and poets with the inescapable question of not just how to write, but also how to write in a reality saturated with media images. Therefore any new publication that seeks to tackle these issues is more

than welcome, especially if it dares to offer close readings of Dubravka Ugrešić, David Albahari, and Semezdin Mehmedinović at the heart of its critical endeavor, as does Dragana Obradović's book *Writing the Yugoslav Wars*. The book fulfills its promise of meticulous analysis of literary discourse, and deserves praise for this.

That being said, I would argue that its discussion of the key concerns—ethics, postmodernism, and literary representation—would have better fared in a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective, involving other literary cultures and media.

In the case of Dubravka Ugrešić the author focuses on the essayistic. Even though there is a profound understanding of “the pitfalls of the essay genre” (72), the choice for this genre per se rather limits the view of Ugrešić's important inventions in the blurring of genres, especially in her novel/essay/collage *Muzej bezuvjetne predaje* (The Museum of Unconditional Surrender, 1998). The discussion of Ugrešić's work also shows certain limitations of this study's understanding of postmodernism. When the author—rightly—points to Danilo Kiš as key author in defining the significance and work of the aesthetic form in former Yugoslavia, she characterizes him as a modernist writer. It has been my view that Kiš shared a mode of writing with fellow central European authors such as Péter Esterházy from Hungary, which responded to and emulated the innovations of the French nouveau roman. This mode of writing qualifies as a specific, local, central European branch of postmodernism that only becomes discernible when one takes a comparative perspective. The arrival of postmodern culture and theory in the 1980s in the then-Yugoslavia is also relevant, but more so is this earlier tradition—especially to a writer such as Ugrešić, whose work abounds with intertextual references to Kiš.

All of the writers discussed here beg to be discussed in a comparative context, not just for their literary affinities, but also because they are all writing for, or against, or with at least two implied audiences, perhaps even realities: home (whatever that may be after the dissolution of the Yugoslav commonwealth), and the exile environment. Take, for instance, the different versions of Ugrešić's novel *Ministarstvo boli* (The Ministry of Pain, 2005): the original version contains large quotations from Miroslav Krleža's key modernistic novel *Povratak Filipa Latinovicz* (The Return of Filip Latinovicz, 1932); the Dutch (Ugrešić resides in Amsterdam), and perhaps also other translations have omitted these. Is this rewriting also a token of postmodernity—of the open-endedness of literary form?

Moreover, there is more relevant rewriting going on. The discussion of Semezdin Mehmedinović's *Sarajevo Blues* (1995) fails to mention that there consist three versions of the text. It seems that this lucid, brilliant, and moving text was rewritten and re-ordered each time the author changed places—and finally went into exile. What was at stake each time was a quest for definitive form. For instance, if one agrees to discern religious motives in *Sarajevo Blues*, then these almost disappear in the later, English translation (the editing of which was condoned by the author).

Furthermore, the central ethical issue of *Writing the Yugoslav Wars*—how postmodernist literature can represent human suffering—would have yielded different insights in a comparative context. Now, Susan Sontag's visits to Sarajevo under siege are described as “Eurocentric” (144) and “celebrity activism,” but doesn't Judith Butler's notion of the precariousness of human life—rightly mentioned in this book—call for a more nuanced, gradual distinction as to who was insider and who was outsider? In fact, Mehmedinović calls for this in a more recent exchange of letters with fellow writer Miljenko Jergović (*Transatlantic Mail*, 2009).

Arguably, if one wishes to discuss—as the author proposes in a brief conclusion—the relative anonymity of these authors (perhaps with the exception of Ugrešić) on the global market of culture (“geolitical deathworlds” [161], the phrase from Debjani

Ganguly), then other names from other media come to mind. Director Danis Tanović received an Academy Award for his film *Ničija Zemlja* (No Man's Land, 2002), and there is the towering success of conceptual and performance artist Marina Abramović, for instance for her performance *Balkan Baroque* (1997).

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Practicing Islam: Knowledge, Experience, and Social Navigation in Kyrgyzstan.

By David W. Montgomery. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016. xix, 219 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$28.95, paper.
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This carefully composed book by David Montgomery reflects his extensive research and thinking on the diverse categories of everyday Islamic experience and knowledge and their social roles in Kyrgyzstan. Through exploring the religious lives of a large number of Kyrgyzstanis, mostly Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, Montgomery divides everyday religious life into a number of dichotomies with varying significance in people's lives. In addition to the experiential and scripturalist divide, which he parallels to phronesis (practical knowledge) and mimesis (represented, abstract knowledge) as discussed by Aristotle, Montgomery finds that Islamic practice in Kyrgyzstan can be divided into worship at mosques or sacred sites, life in valleys or mountains, and Uzbek or Kyrgyz ethnic culture.

These dichotomies emerge from Montgomery's effort to characterize Islamic practice widely in Kyrgyzstan. He chose to work primarily in sites in the mountainous Naryn and Ferghana valley regions, with one foothill site in between, Shangkol (11). He finds most villages are mono-ethnically Kyrgyz or Uzbek, while people are divided into ethnic neighborhoods in larger towns (12). As an example of mountain religious practice he presents Tolkun, a woman from Naryn in the north who fries *borsok* (dough) for the ancestors on Thursdays and visits *mazars* (sacred sites such as springs or tombs) to pray (20–22). In contrast, Azarmat, a Kyrgyz man from Osh in the south represents the opposite end of the religious spectrum, a strong Muslim “re-traditionalist” who prays five times a day. He meets friends daily for Qur'an study (22). Tolkun considers him more Uzbek than Kyrgyz (26). “Most people in Kyrgyzstan” are neither Tolkun nor Arzamat “but a combination of the two in varying degrees” (22). Both learned religion through experiential transmission: Tolkun through participation in the variety of family and local practices, while Azarmat learned a more transnationally-identified Islam through studies, text, and observation. “Tolkun can take him seriously, but he cannot take her seriously” (51).

Montgomery discusses the range of political problems emerging from people's efforts to improve their lives through political, religious, and economic changes. Radical Islam is one ideology seeking to create better society, but also stimulates fears and stereotypes about groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir. In addition, people protesting for political change led to violence in both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Such events, along with the war in Tajikistan in the 1990s, have led outsiders to see Central Asia as generally unstable and rife with radical Islamists (29–34).

Montgomery ends this chapter by recapitulating the contrasts of Kyrgyz-Uzbek, mountain-valley, heterodoxy-orthodoxy, and how these shape experience, knowledge, practice, and choices, and suggests they lead to violence (47–49). He amplifies