

self-critical statements, as Grzegorz Wołowicz maintains in “The Ambiguous Charm of Self-Criticism.” The instrumentalization of the classics of Polish literature, argue Zbigniew Jarosiński and John M. Bates in “Censorship in the Stalinist Era,” failed not for lack of trying but due to the impossibility of bridging the contradictory demands on writers and their texts. In explaining the mechanisms and the actors who applied them, *Studies on Socialist Realism: The Polish View* shows the utopianism of Poland’s Socialist Realist interlude.

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***Cat Painters: An Anthology of Contemporary Serbian Poetry.*** Ed. Biljana D. Obradović and Dubravka Djurić. Trans. Biljana D. Obradović, New Orleans: Lavender Ink/Diálogos Press, 2016. xliii, 450 pp. Appendix. Index. Photographs. Figures. \$29.95, paper.  
doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.38

Translation lies at the heart of *Cat Painters*. Most of the 340 poems by seventy-one poets are, of course, translations from Serbian into English. This is the first anthology of this size, breadth, and inclusivity to feature recent Serbian poetry; the poets come from a rich variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, faiths, secularities, geographies, and one-half of the poets are women.

Biljana D. Obradović took great care in translating the poems—hers being the lion’s share of the translations—joined by thirty other translators. It is worth noting that the anthology also translates in ways other than language. The wars of the 1990s moved some of the poets from Croatia, Montenegro, and Bosnia to Serbia, while others represented here, after starting out in Serbia, moved, during those same wars, to France, Italy, Scandinavia, Germany, Canada, Hungary, and the United States. Each has a connection to Serbia, but they are not all Serbs, nor do all of them live in Serbia today or even write their poetry in Serbian. Indeed one of them hails from Japan. Likewise, thirteen of the thirty-one translators were born elsewhere and learned their Serbian either as Slavic scholars or while living, temporarily or permanently, in Serbia, while the rest are Serbs, some living now in Serbia, others living in the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, the United States, and/or France.

The editors of the anthology, too, personify the intercontinental tie. While Dubravka Djurić, a poet, theorist, and editor, writes in Serbian and lives in Belgrade, Obradović has lived for over twenty-eight years in the United States, where she teaches at Xavier University in New Orleans and publishes her poetry in English.

Even the art used for the cover of the book is, in a sense, a transatlantic translation. The editors approached Belgrade artist Mileta Prodanović to ask if he would allow them to use one of his paintings for the book’s jacket. He suggested *Cat Painter*, a painting referencing the 1942 horror movie, *The Cat People*, in which a poor Serbian artist, while living in New York, supports herself by drafting for fashion journals. The female characters in the film turn into beautiful, ferocious panthers. It was probably based on the life of Serbian-Italian artist Milena Barilli (1909–45). Inspired by the film, Prodanović painted his own version of Barilli’s iconic self-portrait by superimposing the head of a panther on Barilli’s figure. Inspired by his painting, the editors chose *Cat Painters* as the title for the anthology, and used the image as emblematic of their own reading of the stance of poets over the last seventy years: fierce but “beautiful, gentle artists who struggle for survival, for existence” (xvii). The image of the panther-woman artist is also emblematic of

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](http://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.  
doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.39

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