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tices. While every chapter is filled with rich empirical information and insightful argument on the contexts of south Albania, it is sometimes hard to reconcile the findings presented with the core thesis of the book. The book's greatest shortcoming however is in limiting its discussion of the political implications of multipart singing to socialist times. For contemporary Albania it provides only limited analysis of the political importance of singing in the context of migration. Despite those weaknesses, the book remains a valuable contribution to the scholarship on migration in southern Albania, and around the world. I would recommend it strongly to those interested in migration in general, and specifically the migration in contemporary Albania.

Islam Jusufi (Tirana)

Srećko Horvat / Igor Štiks, eds, *Welcome to the Desert of Post-Socialism. Radical Politics After Yugoslavia*, London: Verso 2015. 280 pp., ISBN 978-1-78168-620-1, € 14.00 (Paperback), € 50.00 (Hardback)

The editors of this volume have brought together leftist intellectuals concerned with the seemingly endless postsocialist transition in the former Yugoslav countries. In the introduction they sketch a research agenda that discusses critically the transition from socialism to democracy and a free-market economy. They argue that 'Eastern Europe' has become an economically semi-peripheral part of the capitalist world order, remarking on the 'availability of cheap and highly educated labour in proximity to the capitalist core, quasi-total economic dependence on the core and its multinational banks and corporation, and finally, the accumulation of debt' (2). That economic predicament emerged in concert

with the political developments in the region.

According to Horvat and Štiks the EU accession process is rooted in a neoliberal conception of transition, the disappointing results of which in the Western Balkans are frequently blamed on incomplete transition. However this book aims to show that for example corruption, one of those deficiencies of transition, is in fact the very product of 'the post-1989 neoliberal scramble for Eastern Europe' (16). Hence, Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans in particular are in an endless state of transition, leaving them in what amounts to a desert.

Studies of the transition have produced a wealth of literature about the corrupt practices of political and economic elites. They have sought also to describe how they have prolonged transition, whereas in fact they are a key feature of the kind of transition that has been facilitated by the neoliberal ideas of the West. As Horvat and Štiks argue, 'the very concept of transition as an ideological construct based on the narrative of integration of the former socialist European countries into the Western core actually hides a monumental neo-colonial transformation of the region into a dependent semi-periphery' (16). The following four parts of the book are made up of three chapters each addressing different elements of that argument.

This is a book of uneven quality. While certain chapters communicate their message aptly and highlight crucial problems of transition in the Western Balkans, others repeat dogmatic leftist assumptions without providing much evidence in support of them. Furthermore, the work's lack of coherence begs the question of how the editors coordinated the writing of the book. The structure of each chapter is different, and even more distressing, the subjects of

about half the chapters on transition are rather far-fetched.

Nonetheless, highlights of the book are Chapters two, three, and ten. Part I of the book consists mostly of attempts towards a history of self-management in Yugoslavia, before turning to 'disaster capitalism' in the successor states. Vladimir Unkovski-Korica argues in Chapter one ('Self-Management, Development, and Debt. The Rise and Fall of the "Yugoslav Experiment"') that 'the rise and fall of the Yugoslav model does not prove the unfeasibility of socialism'. On the contrary, he maintains, it shows that Yugoslav socialism was linked to the market from the beginning and failed because of that connection. Unkovski-Korica's contribution mostly provides background information, while by contrast Andreja Živković's Chapter 'From the Market ... to the Market. The Debt Economy after Yugoslavia' is of primary importance to our understanding of the role of the debt economy in the transition process. Debt creates dependence on the West's international financial institutions (IFIs), and both authors show how the monetary policy guided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has led to the debt economy, and how unsustainable trade deficits in the Western Balkans have caused the accumulation of debt which has in turn created further dependency on the IMF and other IFIs.

Marko Grdešić in Chapter three analyses the role of 'Workers and Unions After Yugoslavia', describing 'the massive ideological shift since the break-up of Yugoslavia' and how it has led to a deficient understanding of the role of blue-collar workers in society (76). Grdešić's contribution is explicit where needed and provides a realistic evaluation of the conditions in which workers and trade unions have found themselves.

In Chapter ten Michael G. Kraft discusses protests by workers against deindustrialization and the privatization of enterprises, and student protests against privatization of educational institutions in the Yugoslav successor states. Kraft sees them as part of the global struggle against capitalism, and the strength of his Chapter is that it discusses concrete examples and places them effectively within the narrative of postsocialist transition as outlined in the introduction. Other authors in the book attempt to do the same thing but unlike Kraft they lack examples or fail to provide evidence for how their argument can be related to transition.

Part Two begins with Maria Todorova's eloquent Chapter that places geopolitics in a leftist analytical framework ('Re-Imagining the Balkans'). However, really all she does is redraw the framework of her famous book *Imagining the Balkans* while adding some rather unsubstantiated observations about current affairs. She mentions the expansion of both NATO and the EU as a prize for the emancipatory work of East European opposition to communism during the 1980s. Todorova's argument is that expansion has led to the erosion of the Ottoman legacy in the Balkans and thereby to a decline in 'ethnic multiplicity' (93). However, such statements are too broad to gain traction. It is not that the homogenization of the region is not part of the new geopolitical regional order, but Todorova offers no answers to questions about the reasons for those developments.

In 'On the Way to Europe. EU Metaphors and Political Imagination of the Western Balkans' Tanja Petrović discusses various metaphors and discourses on the relationship between the European Union and the Western Balkans. While the EU is often described as a building, a family, or a future, the Western Balkans have increasingly

come to be placed outside such conceptualizations. Rather, they are treated like a child on a journey towards membership, guided in its progress by patronizing Western states. In his Chapter entitled 'Children of Post-Communism' Boris Buden adopts a similar approach to what he calls 'the ideology of transitology' (124). Both Petrović's and Buden's chapters are well-written, but for the most part do little more than add to the existing pile of literature on the 'false' ideology of neoliberalism. It would have been refreshing if both authors had reflected more concretely on how the theory and practice of neoliberalism diverge.

Part III is opened by Andrej Nikolaidis who has written a political essay that outlines how the interests of the capitalist West as represented by the IMF and EU are more compatible with the interests of national elites than with labour struggles. In 'The Silence of Lamb-Eaters. Transition as a Post-War Crime' he states with some cynicism that 'the democratization of our societies and membership in the EU is primarily of interest for our ex-fascist thieves: democracy will best preserve their interests', which Nikolaidis sees as exemplified by international support for the current Serbian government. While Nikolaidis at least preserves an essayistic style, Agon Hamza's deterministic Marxist presentation of Kosovo's predicament is unbearably ideologically loaded. Although in 'Kosovo. The Long Independence Day' Hamza throws together his observations and Marxist authors, he fails to connect them. Mitja Velikonja's Chapter on nostalgia for Tito ('Mapping Nostalgia of Tito. From Commemoration to Activism'), while finely researched and well structured is only vaguely related to the processes of transition. Rather, Velikonja takes the disastrous nature of transition as a given.

Part IV opens with the convincing Chapter by Kraft above-mentioned about civil protest against the neoliberal transition. It is followed by Jana Bačević's Chapter 'They Had Sex, Drugs, and Rock'n Roll; We'll Have Mini-Jobs and Loans to Pay. Transition, Social Change and Student Movements in the Post-Yugoslav Region'. Bačević concludes unconvincingly from her rather superficial analysis that 'students have managed to raise a relatively coherent voice against neoliberalisation'. In the final chapter, Ankica Čakardić uses historical materialist terms to describe women's struggles between Yugoslavia and the postsocialist 'desert' ('Women's Struggles and Political Economy. From Yugoslav Self-Management to Neoliberal Austerity').

On the whole, the research agenda that Horvat and Štiks outline in the introduction remains largely untouched. The valuable contributions by Živković, Grdešić and Kraft aside, the chapters read like political pamphlets that fail to produce much evidence for their ideologically loaded claims. The book falls a long way short of Slavoj Žižek's claim on the back cover that it takes 'a cold, analytical look'. To put it mildly it is disappointing that a good deal of the potential expressed in the introduction has not been realised. The challenge in understanding neoliberal transition lies not in formulating the predicament in ideological terms; rather, a good scholarly work would gather evidence and present it in a way that would make it possible to take stock of social change.

Geert Luteijn (Amsterdam)