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ten misunderstood or interpreted in mono-perspective.

Sivac-Bryant makes an important contribution to the understanding of postconflict societies. She does so primarily through the elaboration of positive actors' roles and the potentials of returnees, including both former soldiers and civilians, and among them the highly relevant role of women. The inclusion of the author's personal history is an asset to the analysis. Importantly, despite the author's added self-referentiality in terms of refugee experience, readers are in neither for a merely subjective analysis, nor for one whose goal it is to focus on blaming the perpetrators. Sebina Sivac-Bryant might lack a more critical analysis of the returnees' perspective here and there, especially when it comes to describing the increasing differences between them; yet she has succeeded in compiling a very relevant work on postconflict societies.

Manuela Brenner (Regensburg)

Eckehard Pistrick, *Performing Nostalgia. Migration Culture and Creativity in South Albania*. London: Ashgate, 2015. 255 pp., € 82.42

This book deals with the social, artistic, and musical aspects of the large-scale Albanian migration which took place in the 1990s immediately after the socialist period. Multipart music and related aspects of its performance appear to be an appropriate vehicle with which to interpret migration, for music can indeed help us understand the impact of migration on contemporary Albania. The author focuses on lives of individual migrants and the loved ones they left behind, as well as on temporal, societal and spatial factors that mobilized music-making inspired by migration

themes. The 'South Albania' of the book's title is a reference to the fact that migration's greatest impact was in the southern part of Albania. As it reached enormous proportions after the end of the communist regime, migration became a prime source of social change, but while postcommunist migration helped Albania to open itself up to the world, it restricted its growth, too. Moreover, given that emigration from Albania continues, this book is a welcome contribution to a better understanding of the phenomenon.

Eckehard Pistrick presents a comprehensive account of the context of Albanian migration, its sources, how it proceeded, and its outcomes. He has clearly conducted outstanding ethnographic fieldwork in south Albanian towns and villages along the river Shkumbin; and one rather unusual benefit beyond the book's masterful ethnographic evidence is the collection of songs which the author has attached to the book in CD format.

As the reader proceeds through the various chapters, the richness becomes apparent of Albanian performance, memory, and emotion regarding migration and the interpretation of migration through song and related performance elements. Emotions expressed in the songs themselves and in comments provided by the author succeed in affecting the reader too. Beginning with portraits of migrants and their loved ones, or of rhapsodists or singers, each chapter explores different aspects of contemporary Albanian migration. The nine chapters cover a wide range of subjects, from songs to singing practice, to different dimensions of migratory culture, all with the aim of mirroring the mass movement of people. In the introductory chapter the author displays the methodological framework of his new interpretation of Albania's migration through sound. Songs provide a 'forum to

contemplate absence, homesickness and feelings of loss' and act as a 'bridge to re-connect' with home (12).

In the second chapter the author conceptualises the importance of multipart singing, for which migration is a stimulating and preferred theme (17). Pistrick looks mainly into the role of multipart singing in Albanian poetic performances, but notes too its value in expressing rural Albanian thoughts on contemporary events, expressly including migration. Multipart singing transmits, shares, and evokes nostalgia and expresses the different notions of migration for both migrants and their loved ones left behind (18). Migration, Pistrick concludes, having become the preferred theme for multipart singing, has had a 'decisive impact on the way this music is performed today' (17).

The author contextualizes multipart singing historically, considering the times both before and after socialism. In fact such singing has always had a political meaning, but particularly so during communism when it became a propaganda tool (26). The communist regime, rather than suppressing it tried to gear multipart singing to their own purposes. However, the music managed to maintain its original sense, succeeded in outliving communism and since 2008 has been inscribed on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage (27). It has taken on a particular value with the recent large migrations of Albanians.

In the third chapter, Pistrick uses the concept of 'absence' to illustrate how Albanian migrants perform their longing (*mall*) for their original local traditions and for the places they come from. In chapters four to eight he illustrates how singing practices were influenced by the lives of individual migrants and their loved ones. Pistrick then connects the historical context of south Albania with the feelings expressed

about migration. He mentions too the feasts organized by villages to honour migrants visiting their loved ones during the summer, and the various misfortunes experienced by migrants, including the tragedy of Otranto that led to the sinking in March 1997 of a vessel full of Albanians, of whom dozens were killed.

In his concluding remarks Pistrick summarizes his central argument, which is that contrary to what might be expected the Albanian migration and displacement did not result in socially induced silence. The displacement during the 1990s of such huge numbers of Albanians shows how instead music-making can be a fertile ground precisely for overcoming absences and silences (221). Much of the singing practice in southern Albania stems from the close local attachments of the migrants. Locality indeed proves to be highly effective in helping to articulate migratory messages in song. Pistrick concludes that Albanian singing practice as a reaction to migration is deeply embedded in emotional responses to processes of displacement, and that in fact it revitalises the links of migrants to their places of origin and their home communities (221).

The very diversity of aspects provided by the author represents both the strength and the weakness of his study. On the one hand, he has engaged in a very detailed and highly analytical manner with the latest relevant literature on both migration and ethnomusicology in general and concerning Albania in particular. He has certainly succeeded in highlighting the complexity of the contemporary wave of migration in Albania, but all the same I should have liked to read more about whether multipart singing in Albania is unique as a phenomenon connected to migration, and about whether it is to be understood as part of a continuum of broader local social prac-

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