Saleh notes that in the current system, the idea that Khomeini's brand of Islamism allows for the suppression of ethnic identities and limited recognition of religious minorities is rooted in Islamic doctrine, which is at odds with nationalism. Khomeini's ideal of creating an *umma* left no room for ethnic identity. Therefore, sanctioned religious minorities (Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians) are tolerated more than ethnic minorities and hold five designated seats in Parliament, whereas no such quotas exist for ethnicities. This was something that ethnic groups, who were initially supportive of Khomeini, did not expect when advocating for new supposedly inclusive policies during the revolutionary fervor. But now, while the ethnic groups have *de jure* linguistic and cultural rights – enshrined in articles 15 and 19 of the Iranian constitution – they are *de facto* denied of any overt expression of identity.

Furthermore, Saleh does not fully recognise how difficult it was to rid the country of the Persian-centric educational indoctrination of the youth, who eventually became the frontrunners in the Islamic revolution. The nationalist revisionism in history books that was propagated during the Pahlavid era persisted in addition to Khomeinist reconstruction of Iranian identity to focus on its Shia heritage. This coupling became more evident under the Khatami administration, whose expressions of Iranian nationalism were naturally welcomed by much of Persian society. Here, there is still a certain degree of primordialism in the concept of identity. Persian nationalism could not be shed easily. Even the most stringent adherents to Khomeinism were educated under a very nationalist rhetoric during the Shahs. Aside from these two key elements, however, Saleh's piece has currently become the definitive work comprehensively on Iran's minorities and should be required reading for all who wish to explore this subject.

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Jelena Obradović-Wochnik, *Ethnic Conflict and War Crimes in the Balkans: The Narratives of Denial in Post-conflict Serbia*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2013, 257pp. £56.50 (hbk).

Jelena Obradović-Wochnik's *Ethnic Conflict and War Crimes in the Balkans: The Narratives of Denial in Post-conflict Serbia* achieves much more than examining narratives of denial. After identifying the main aim of the book and its methodology, Obradović-Wochnik presents the chief theories she relies on, offering a historical overview and introducing the key interlocutors, before exploring narratives of denial, sickness, silence, knowledge, victimhood and conspiracy theories.

Even though she does not define explicitly what she means by narratives, the author manages to make clear how she has conceptualised them. Her implicit definition of narrative would be that they are coherent stories, plots, which people unconsciously create out of what has happened to them, in order to make meaning out of their experience. Experience and meaning-making are indeed the key words of the book: Obradović-Wochnik is demonstrating the ways in which ordinary citizens of Serbia make the troubling and ambiguous experiences of living in Serbia in the 1990s intelligible, mainly for themselves, but also for others. The book enters into critical dialogues with literature on and projects of transitional justice, arguing convincingly that they 'need to think much more broadly . . . [and] . . . should include a "from below" perspective' (p. 227): the voice of the marginalised, who have their own difficult

experience and concerns related to the Milošević-era but who have been regarded as not dealing with the(ir) past. The language of this 'silent majority' (p. 218), the author argues, may not be the one sought by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in truth and reconciliation projects, but it reflects the mechanisms, such as the narratives explored, which are tools used by these people 'to cope with, understand and make sense of that violence' (p. 44).

Obradović-Wochnik's narrative analysis is well developed, rooted in the environment it emerges from – introducing that the key informants is a proof of her ethnographic study taking context-embeddedness seriously. What she fails to take into account though is that narratives have several key elements: a complicating action, an orientation, an abstract, coda and also an element of evaluation, the first and last of which are obligatory for a sequence of clauses to be called a narrative (for more on this, see the work of William Labov). By not clearly differentiating between the complicating action (i.e. what happened) and the informants' evaluation (i.e. *what they think of* what happened), her analysis is at times obscured. This aspect of evaluation is especially important to distinguish when considering the interaction between the interviewer and her interlocutors. When speaking about such a sensitive subject such as war crimes, the background of the interviewer (a Bosnian/Serbian academic educated and living in 'the West') may significantly alter what is being said and, even more importantly, how it is being articulated.

Similarly to the notion of 'narrative', the notion of 'ordinary citizens' seems to be somewhat underdeveloped in the book. It is true that Obradović-Wochnik's informants are what often passes as textbook examples of ordinary people in academic work in the region: common inhabitants of Belgrade, retirees, teachers, workers, unemployed, refugees, 'Belgrade old-timers'. However, one wonders how the research might have developed if a larger segment of the country's population or a wider geographic reach had been a part of the scope of the project. Some questions do arise from this choice of informants: Is the ambiguity of people's positions in Serbia emphasised by the author true for them being 'ordinary citizens' as well? Is a student voluntarily working in a project on dealing with the past an ordinary citizen? Is a low-ranking NGO employee working on issues of transitional justice one?

Even though she does not include a detailed discussion of the implications of her study to social memory studies and its relevant debates, Obradović-Wochnik is very skilful in mapping the major topoi related to current debates about remembering and confronting the past in Serbia. As she herself admits, the question of guilt has proven to be the most evasive issue in her interviews and points to further study. Her work directs the reader to many other dimensions to explore, such as a deeper analysis of the construction of collective memory (How do individual memories become collective? Can the current debates about dealing with the past be considered as mnemonic battles?), an analysis of non-linguistic behaviour (e.g. attending anti- and pro-regime protests in the past; commemorative events in the present) and an exploration of the temporal dimension of narratives (Do narratives about the 1990s change, and if so, how?). Yet even without these considerations, *Ethnic Conflict and War Crimes in the Balkans* is a valuable work worth considering for academics and professionals when exploring issues of transitional justice, and its innovative approach provides an exemplary methodology for analysing experience through narratives.

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