

DUBRAVKA ĐURIĆ'S POETICS OF HOPE IN THE POLITICS OF HOPE (AFTER THE WAR) (2024)

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Abstract: Dubravka Đurić's collection of poetry, *The Politics of Hope (After the War)*, features a selection of works dating from 1982 to 2024. The anthology is edited and translated into English by Biljana D. Obradović, with an introductory foreword authored by Charles Bernstein. Đurić's book received prestigious recognition from the North American Society for Serbian Studies (NASSS) in 2024 for its exceptional cultural achievement, while, in his review, Mark Wallace argues that it is one of Southeast Europe's most important poetic events. Drawing mainly on poststructuralism, Đurić's poetry employs experimental structures, multilingual elements, and the interplay of poetic, prose, and visual forms to explore the fragility of form, language, names, and identities; the blurring of boundaries between diversities; and the fractures and tensions of post-Yugoslav and transnational crises. It is also a brilliant act of resistance against traditional forms and meanings, demanding focused agency from the reader. Building on the critique of conceptual and language poetry, I will address language as a locus of identity and conflict; experimental poetics as a form of political expression; art as a venue for resistance and introspection; post-Yugoslav discourse and its wider implications; and the crises of displacement and environmental degradation.

Keywords: language, poem, concept, form, identity

1. Introduction

Dubravka Đurić's poetry collection *The Politics of Hope (After the War)* traces the trajectory of her writing since her debut in 1982. It is a body of work shaped by Wittgenstein's demanding legacy and situated within Yugoslav, post-Yugoslav, and global avant-garde traditions. Đurić's poetry foregrounds the constructed nature of language and invites sustained reflection on its themes. Its conceptual orientation privileges idea over aesthetic finish, merging avant-garde procedures with contemporary technologies to stage the tension between idea and materiality (cf. Goldsmith). This generates a dense meta-poetic inquiry into the writing process, the material mediation of meaning, reflexive

entanglement with social contexts and registers, and the dynamics of reading.

When awarding *The Politics of Hope (After the War)* with the prestigious honor from the North American Society for Serbian Studies (NASSS), Nikolai Gladanac highlights that Đurić's poetry challenges imposed power structures through linguistic play. It creates a space where historical forces are present but not entirely controlling, allowing for ongoing transformation. By rejecting sovereign self-possession and emphasizing the playful nature of language, Gladanac argues, Djurić's poetry stays open and resistant to the influences of power—whether from Communism, Nationalism, or Arbitrary Monopoly Capitalism. In the process, her work, by breaking down and rearranging signs through the materiality of language, preserves “hope” that something better is inherently present. With a similar perspective, Charles Bernstein describes the book as “an act of defiance and delight: both a refusal to be caught in the ‘traps’ that are given state of things, aesthetically or politically, but also an insistence on the pleasure of possibilities [...] it's as if the cosmos is constantly coming into being in the here and now of the poems” (13).

Structured in eight parts—ranging from early cycles such as *Clouds and Shores / Clouds and Shapes* (1982–1983) and *Nature of the Moon / Nature of the Woman* (1989), through *Stretching the Frames / Slash of / Context* (1988–1990), *Traps* (1995), *Cosmopolitan Alphabet* (1995), *All Over* (1996–2004), *Ka politici nade (Nakon rata)* (2015), and concluding with *New Poems*—the collection stages a cosmos in continual transformation. Mark Wallace notes that its unifying ground is a sustained restlessness: movement between positions, tensions among languages and identities, and shifting temporalities. Rather than a fixed origin or endpoint, it offers a poetics of transformation, marked by radical hybridity at the intersection of experience (Wallace).

Biljana D. Obradović, herself a poet, achieves notable results in translating Đurić's Serbo-Croatian poetic codes into English. The process is described as “total translation” (Dojčinović 138), as both poets worked closely on intricate poetic problems, often clarifying decisions through extensive footnotes that form a substantial meta-textual, trans-poetic, interdisciplinary, and intertextual layer. These annotations elaborate inspirations, influences, allusions, dense philosophical references, structural complexity, multilingual and cultural contexts, and intersections of epistemologies, while preserving a singular voice within a multi-voiced dialogue with the reader. In this sense, the footnotes become integral to the collection's transgressive mode (cf. Dojčinović 139).

From reflection to resistance

In Đurić's poetry, the act of writing is profoundly linked to existential questions regarding the poet's agency during the creative process. Although both conceptual and language poetry emphasize the creative process over the outcome, the extended dialogue with a poem and the writing of it evolves here into a self-referential journey of drafting, redrafting, and reconsidering the fleeting nature of the poet's identity, the poem's meaning, and the mediated reality of the post-truth era (cf. Bubaš; Keyes), and the fragility of the poem's primary medium—language—leading to vague, incomplete, disrupted contemplations.

The first short poems establish the book's concept and poetic persona, grounded in reflection rather than interpretation of an unsettled reality, emphasizing, thus, sensory experience provided through the blank spaces that suggest movements in the air:

Changes
 Gray white blue
 sky
 Wind currents spread the colors. (Đurić 21)

Accentuating the artificiality of concepts, the poem "Prayer for Today" first proposes to "transform sadness into joy" and then undermines the meaning of both: "Let there be no joy/ Let there be no sadness" (22), as if suggesting that these words should be unlearned (Bernstein 262). Similarly, in the phenomenological play of the poem "I see," the blueness of the space is understood as a reflection of the perceiving subject, i.e., the intentional mind: "I see/ If the space is blue/ Let it be/ What I see is reflected" (Đurić 23). Although the submission in "Let it be" suggests that reality is accepted without any attempt at imposing a structure upon it, the reflective perception engages in a mirrored relationship with the external blue, confusing the subject and the object. Consequently, a dynamic process is started, generating an existential immediacy that is later complicated by the exploration of language and its stasis.

In the poem "Searching," the "liquid surface" of language is summoned by seemingly calm coastal imagery, which, nevertheless, is in constant transformation as waves shape rocks, birds build nests, someone hears screams that traverse the pages, alongside the rain that "falls on the sea/ surface" with "[e]very drop hit[ing] the sea" (31). The phenomena of remolding and the "pure music/ of transformation" (32) are highlighted through the repetition of onomatopoeic

DRIP	DRIP	DRIP		
		DROP	DROP	DROP

Although, Place notes, “distinction between manipulation and production, object and sign, contemplation and consumption” disappears, the most mimetic words, such as “MURMUR” (32), cannot convey the fluid reality, which is here conveyed through varying indentations, repetitions, blank spaces, the absence of punctuation—“There is no period/ No comma,” the poem states in its self-reflectiveness—and the capitalization of words that imply the absence of sound:

Often I say
 the word
 SILENCE (30).

In the way that the words themselves “don’t carry experience/ the adventure” (29) but “enable” them, “[t]he sentence doesn’t have to make sense” (31), a poem asserts. The meaning is found in the poetic play “WITH THE SENSE/ OF NONSENSE” or “NONSENSE/ OF SENSE” (32), or “that fear/in front of/ NONSENSE/ OF SENSE” (34). While the sentence follows the flow of a single culturally informed mind, one might, for example, say, “the rock is covered by the sea.” However, the insistently fragmented sentences in this poem complicate the notion that “the word is covered by sense,” that sense is acquired, and that a sentence, once the guardian of meaning, is, as Silliman suggests, “merely a limit” (67). Further reflecting on the abstract, introspective exploration of language, identity, and perception, the poem insists: “The sentences don’t make sense” (Đurić 38). Yet, by inviting the reader to create meaning by “Imagin[ing] a word/ Imagin[ing] a sentence,” the poem suggests the power of language, words, and sentences to construct the world in our minds. From here, the poem conjures the physical experience of words and sentences—“Look at a word/ Look at a sentence”—underscoring the dual nature of language, which now becomes a tangible marker on a page, a conveyor of some sense. In the philosophically paradoxical continuation—“Letters appear on things/ Letters are the opposite picture of the world”—language mediates between the material and immaterial by being imposed onto the physical world, thus standing in opposition to it by abstracting it. Finally, the personal movement in the line “I walk in rain” transitions to the

external, shared world of language that produces a multifaceted reality in which “I” becomes an observed “she”: “Walks in rain/ SHE IS ME.”

Identities and realities shift and cannot neatly fit into any one language, which is why the poem insists:

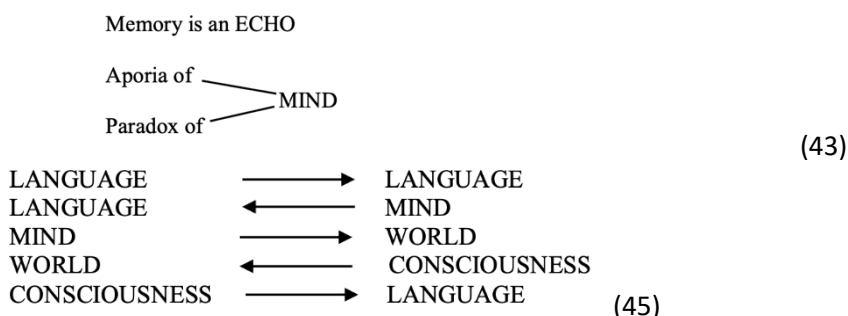
Break the rules
 BRE AK!
 WILLLL BREEE AKKKKK!
 BBBB
 RRRRRRRRR
 KKKKKKKKKKKK (39)

This compelling visual experience captures the raw energy of creation while simultaneously illustrating the disintegration of its structure, in both language and concept. The opening command clearly signifies a revolt against the constraints. The imperative is supported by a phonetic rupture that intensifies when B, R, and K are repeated, echoing the act of breaking and exposing the vulnerability of language and its traditional function. The structure has now literally exploded on the page. The elongated vowels and consonants work to transform a visual piece into sound and rhythm, eager to break free. When the boundaries of art and life are questioned by the use of letters and words, the lyrical persona proclaims, “I BELIEVE IN THE WORD” and concludes in a rapturous design:

SHE IS THE I AM SHE
 SHE IS AM SHE
 (39).

Nature of the Moon / Nature of the Woman – Nine Metapoems continues the visual dance, creating verses in circles and blocks, diagonally and horizontally, crossing over written words (“reflection”), and introducing arrows that indicate directions in which the signs should be read, but also suggesting that this poetry should be performed. As Đurić implies in conversation with Đurđević, her work is a study of “the relationship between performance and poetry” and the rhythms of language: “Movement and voice do not depend on the poem’s content;

conventional content, in a way, does not exist. I work with parataxis, which is also crucial for language poetry. In performance, movement, and voice act as media in their own right" (Đurđević). In other words, the movements of the reading voice and the body should reflect the poem's flow, which is not merely a reflection of a learned reality, but a "thread of many threads" (Đurić 43) that vanish in the void of memory. Therefore, the paradoxical interaction of language, mind, and consciousness:



Taking on the futuristic channeling of kinetic energy onto the page, this poetry at times delivers a chaotic performance. This is particularly evident when the poem adopts an abstract, philosophical direction, aligning with linguistic post-structuralist theories to examine how language, as a system of signs within a logical framework, defines and constrains experience, constructs consciousness, and shadows the multiplicity of selves. "The world is divided into many languages, many selves" (47), the poem asserts, while each fragmented "self" is portrayed as a "general self of language." The meta-linguistic assertion, "reduced language to the pure relationship/ of language and language/ of language and mind" (48), illustrates how language becomes a self-contained system, incapable of accurately reflecting reality, "reduc[ing] the language of the mind to it/itself." The recurring phrase "meta-language of the mind" suggests an infinite loop in which language reflects human consciousness while striving to comprehend itself. Now exploring poetic existentialism—"To feel the language by the language itself"—the poem depicts language as having sensory capacity, experiencing itself in its Derridean instability, becoming both a tool and an object of experience. Parentheses, dashes, slashes, and other punctuation marks highlight the disruption of flow and draw attention to the parallels of reduction and language games as inescapable aspects of the mind.

The poems from *Stretching the Frames / Slash of / Context* (2020) adhere to a conceptual language while incorporating visual and prosodic forms. While exploring how language clarifies and obscures truths, Đurić performs a quest for “the bottom” of all meanings, navigating through static and dynamic states and examining familiar and elusive transformations alongside the boundaries that shape her political and aesthetic concerns. The quality of the opening section is particularly incantatory and rich with symbolic imagery of elemental forces—darkness, water, fire, and wind—that ground the human tireless search “to the bottom/ to the bottom” (60). This mantric repetition, akin to a gravitational pull, traverses various realms of consciousness, drawing upon the imagery of darkness and caves and invoking primeval habitats and the subconscious. The mention of the mythical Silen, god of the woods, reflects the poet’s desire to reach the metaphysical “bottom” but also implies the paradoxical idea that life’s actual state is chaos—woods are vibrant yet dark. As a consequence, the syntax avoids narrative unity and demands disruption. The soundscape, mirroring the physical movement of elemental forces, heightens the sense of disjunction, while the language resembles dripping water, with each line flowing horizontally down the caves, providing moments for textual breathing.

w
a d
t r f
e i r w
r p o a o
s m l f
l
s c
a
v
e
s
(56).

This comfort is abruptly disturbed by the intense alliteration of “springing up sizzling very searing and seawater,” which transitions into another “home,” indicating that these turbulent motions are intrinsic to existence and self-awareness. The nonlinear verses, such as “flows flows ----- word forwards,” imply that the ultimate meaning—the bottom—is unattainable. As the poem resists closure, it fuses the traditional binaries, the real and the symbolic, water and fire, language and physicality, thought and matter, suggesting a pre-textual or conceptual elemental unity: “water lead/ where fire and water are home to the wind.” Additionally, words are elemental themselves, as

“word breaks/ in the mouth.” In the monumental capitalized meta-linguistic declaration, “MY PATH IS THE PATH OF WORDS” (56), the speaker embraces the dynamic nature of language and recognizes its self-sustaining strength. Words may fluctuate, yet they remain steadfast, anchoring us in an unyielding pursuit.

Although the definite article in the title of the narrative poem “The Border” (Đurić 59) suggests a specific border, the poem retains the ideas of fluidity and transition. While borders serve as painful scars in contemporary life, which categorize subjects as wanted or unwanted, paradoxically, the central metaphor refers to their liminality as crossing points that initiate an irreversible change—“Nothing remains halfway which has crossed a certain path.” The border is not a static line but a permeable meeting point, an active agent of encounters, transformations, and creations. The spiraling syntax crafts a stream-of-consciousness text that seamlessly transitions into “even though the words are always there to say what cannot be said in the telling.” The language is paradoxically both present and inadequate to express the interloping movements of thoughts and the elusive image of the border as an illusory threshold. The ineffable is sought through another interplay of opposites, perhaps in an attempt at balancing or merging them: the celestial bodies symbolizing consciousness and sensuality, the natural forms of the human and non-human world—“One is the Moon’s body and the other the Sun’s body.” Cyclical movement is repetitive and, therefore, laden with memories (“guided by a forethought of consciousness or without it”) that, in a Heraclitian manner, transform the past with each traversal: “It is never identical to itself, and when it is identical, it is different in itself for itself.” The bodies, though vessels for (phenomenological) memory, can only move in a Bergsonian time. Thus, the central motif is an imprintable site because it is interconnected with all cosmic forms, always in flux, in a dialogue with a difference, generating enrichment, in the Nietzschean sense—“Traces are imprinted in the body of words, the body of bodies, of the sky and of the earth.” Therefore, identities, as the systems of meanings, can only be relational (cf. Silliman 75)—“according to that beyond itself that it gets its meaning” (Đurić 59). The recursive patterns of the poem—“And beginning again from the starting point means movement in the same or a different direction”—emphasize endless reinterpretation or transformation of the self that crosses “the border” in the Deleuzian rhizomatic cosmos the poem evokes, which can be entered from anywhere.

The poem “Disordering” (60) suggests that we define ourselves in relation to the mentioned flux. By stating, “Simply spit out name’s

names," the poem reflects an interest in meta-names, self-aware constructs layered with meanings. Spitting out suggests a physical expulsion, presenting a speaker tired of the inevitable constraints. By proclaiming, "I give myself to names," the poem acknowledges that it cannot escape language but may still disorder the Derridean signifying force of names to shape its own reality. An intentionally disruptive syntax follows this in "[n]ot apparently in words names' letters gave for names," suggesting that meanings do not derive from words constructed from letters and melancholically hinting at the existence of an intrinsic essence that evades Lacanian symbolical order. Returning to the relationality of the preceding poem, the demand in "[m]y names in you spit out" implies the spilling over of the speaker's multiple identities, as well as the anxiety surrounding these identities, articulated by external forces. It also invites a reevaluation of the possibility for both an authentic recognition and a yearning for it, especially as "names" and "words" become hypnotically repeated and rearranged, accompanied by the play of pronouns and possessives ("my names in you"). This unsteady naming terrain evokes the existential unease stirred by naming experienced as both a demonstration of power and a source of vulnerability, as the poem leaves the reader feeling that naming cannot be finished.

In its self-referentiality, the narrative poem "Shifts" (65) explains:

I glanced over the already completed / in order for the written /spoken sentences to function like a leitmotif and therefore given the rhythm to the already written text. I turned a page over in order to start a New Life over. New elements reshape the old. What's left to do is to vary the limited number of elements. That's why I placed a period. So that the new sentence could begin again. So that a New Life of words begins in the portion of the texture of the text. The meaning is the same. When it exists.

Although writing proposes a cyclical process of renewal, with each page continuing the previous one while introducing new concerns, the "new elements" that "reshape the old," again, suggest that meaning is connected to iteration. Still, the meta-narration in "what's left to do is to vary the limited number of elements," while acknowledging how language limits creativity, also shows that, despite the finite number of elements, reshaping produces novelty. This idea is further illustrated by the concept, both optimistic and ironic, of creating a New Life on a blank page. The assertion that "the meaning is the same when it exists" aligns

with earlier thoughts on how language tries to express the inexpressible. It also playfully suggests that meaning might not exist in the saturation of discourses, echoing the philosophical fears of *horror vacui* and the book's decisive insistence to reject closures, *absences*, *silences* through *continuous questioning, movement, and reconfiguration* of poetic and ideological landscapes. "Shifts" continues to explore rhythm as an organizing principle that defines boundaries and their transgression, as demonstrated by the deliberate placement of a period: "That's why I placed a period." Similar to "Disordering," where physical forces reflect linguistic dynamics, "Shifts" self-destructs while analyzing the mechanics of language.

Nevertheless, as long as we view language as striving for something beyond, "Shifts" relies on the act of writing as an inherently material process that must evolve, even when fading into nonexistence. Therefore, the insistence on materializing language through the use of punctuation, rhythm, and repetition, as seen in the segment of the narrative poem "death looked at itself into the eyes..." (70):

motion inscribes signs in arm movements and empty
paper is filled a word follows a word and already meaning is
constituted in death words speak in the world where the trace
hides a trace new layers of earth arranged on the earth
meaning leans on meaning the world empties itself when
there are no words and fills up when they are present in one
move the world gets ruined through words three meanings
don't include all possibilities reduced to one stone is dust and
the ground under the arm a trace on paper and in death's
space ashes are scattered all over the earth meaning dies till
its uncertain death

In this abstract existential narrative, the material realities of a moving arm or a stone gathering dust are paralleled with intellectual processes. The blank paper signifies potentiality, a void filled by creation, memory, and interpretation—not the horror of emptiness. The sequential nature of language forces meanings out of the void and gives rise to coherence. The metaphorical language surrounding traces of death transforms into cyclical imagery of meaning accumulating beneath time or context. While physical decay culminates in ashes, it also suggests the possibility of dispersal and, therefore, redistribution.

Resistance to maintaining a singular definition is accompanied by a series of minimalist poems supported by photographs of the poet, establishing a direct connection between the image, the representation,

and the self. In addition, the poems employ colons, slashes, equality signs, brackets, capitalized letters, fragmented syntax, and diagonally ordered phrases to create an ambiguous relationship among these elements and suggest that identity exists concurrently as personal, visual, symbolic, and performative (cf. Butler). In the poem "Identiteti" (121), the emphasis on "(mistake misreading misunderstanding)" may indicate that identities can also be misconstrued by ourselves, as suggested by the parentheses. The provocative problematization of context in "out of context = what is your context" invites the reader to consider their own frameworks for understanding, repeating the question of whether identities exist independently of a frame. The repeated references to emptiness, such as in "EMPTY PLACE," imply a void, unmarked identity, the unattainability of authenticity, or the impossibility of defining an "authentic" identity. The same idea is supported by paradoxical lines, such as: "particular context that DOESN'T exist/ SHOULD NOT exist."

The title of the poem "Poništavanje" (translated as "delete") (120), accompanied by the image of the poet waving at the camera from the edge of a beach, creates a sense of liminality and a striking contrast between presence (the beach as the threshold) and absence (the sea), through the act of unmaking, erasure, and nullification. The relentless repetition of "ništa" (nothing) suggests this void is intentional and profound. "Ništa" is repeated twelve times, six times diagonally as if to encircle the photo's space, and then vertically, presenting a linguistic void that consumes the area. This gradually descending path, although resonating with nihilism, also introduces a dynamism: as it shifts across the page, "ništa" appears alive and deliberate. When the dynamic movement gives way to the static monotony of a column, "ništa" becomes consolidated. The reader is left with a heavy absence within the bracketed ("emptiness") that concludes the poem. However, the waving in the photograph carries an ambiguously cheerful tone. It is a farewell, a greeting, or a wave at something/someone, or a fleeting presence against the tide of erasure.

Building on Charles Bernstein's poem "The Manufacture of Negative Experience," the poem "Silence Is the Only Noise Which Threatens" is a free-associative meditation on human emotions, memory, and the unsettling noise of persistent silence revealed through mundane events. "In modern times we have lost our rapport with language," Bernstein says, "ceasing to think of meaning as inhering in words and imagining instead that words have primarily psychological or social or historical or conventional meaning" (260). Thus, the ellipses in the opening lines indicate the fractured emotional landscape, "...and

she orders me... come closer and knock" (Đurić 164) which creates a pause already as the poem begins. The commands that include an invitation and a reminder that the speaker should knock contrast closeness with barriers and warmth with authority. The sudden mention of the creation of man—"Because a man was created"—alludes to the culturally construed gender roles. "I wish to let you know" is a gentle appeal in contrast to the earlier authoritative tone, expressing a desire for connection and enhancing the emotional complexity and instability. As we think that "she" was given agency in the initial lines, the thought loops introduce another voice that blends command and polite request—"...and, he orders me, I beg you nicely"—creating a triangular perspective and an effort to maintain harmony within an unresolved context of manipulation through the gendered language, internal struggle, or hesitation.

Silence is a paradoxical concept of threat and absence that amplifies the growing dissonance. Lines like "You can sing/ You can scream" highlight that attempts to fill the silence are futile, as if sound cannot occupy a void dominated by noise. Noise manifests literally through slamming doors, crying, anger, and gossip. The exploitation of fragments embodies unstable thoughts and memories while spiraling repetitions, fleeting dialogues, and scattered imagery merge surrealism with mundane details. The meta-narrative collapses the differences between experience, creation, and perception: "I moved away and thought/ I can't do anything about it. I can dream [...] Then they thought. Then they wrote..." The repetitive yet irregular rhythm, found in clauses "Then they went to the forest. Then they disappeared/ at the beach. Then they descended the staircase..." (165) mimics a childlike recounting of events while a mechanical quality in these sentences evokes the monotony of daily life. The emotional charge felt in the daily activities of running, laughing, and arguing makes them seem like failed attempts to find meaning. This opens space for fear and powerlessness—"I thought I'd collapse from shock... I can't do anything about it"—embodied through traditional images of forests, hunting, and traps. The poem's surrealist tone is enforced through ethereal images and physical sensations: "The smell of young wine/ The smell of dew/ Body odor/ It has spread all over the planet" (164). These elements emphasize how memory and experience intertwine, confuse the real and the imagined, and complicate relationships. The distance between people—"Little by little I moved away from her anger"—is reinforced by the anthropomorphized bed "making faces," the lines sounding like gossip—"She is immoral/ She is crazy," and the existential denial of

judgment—"I ask myself what your name is, what you're thinking, where you're going." Silence remains threatening.

The hybrid, vibrant piece "I Hate Narration" offers a poetic and philosophical exploration of the traditional boundaries of poetry and its interpretation, especially within a post-communist context. By fusing diverse theoretical perspectives and striking imagery, the poem contends that poetry represents a vast, transformative space that resists outside influence. The repeated confrontational statement "I HATE NARRATION" (144) underscores the poet's frustration with conventional, linear storytelling in poetry. The narration is seen as reductive and controlling—"With magnetic plates/ ideology is inscribed in every incarnation/ and every materialization, reification/ in everyone's sexuality" (146). It operates on predetermined codes that maintain established ideologies and limit artistic expression—"Critics with their (mis)understanding kill poetry" (145). In contrast, poetry ought to function as a means of resistance, exploration, and reconstruction, dismantling logocentric conventions and affirming that it "doesn't reflect, doesn't express, doesn't tell a story" (144). Conceptualized as a living entity, poetry is described as "a body, a passionate body"—metaphorical and tangible, layered, sensual, and resistant to disembodied intellectualism. As an expansive entity, it actively interacts with contemporary realities—"VR—MTV—Postcommunism" and censures the ideological hold of political orders. Their critics, referred to as "JOYFUL POLITICIANS" (145) echo authoritarian practices—such as silencing the Other—and seek to dictate the essence and form of poetry. Resistant poetry, therefore, "speaks of infinite possibilities," becoming an act of political significance, not merely aesthetic value.

Citing Russian Formalists, this political polemic rejects the idea of "one acceptable form," which stifles both contextual and formal innovations, and prefers experimental, exploratory, genre-fluid poetry, as seen in avant-garde poets such as McGann, Bernstein, Hejinian, and Perloff. The poem's fluid form mirrors this theoretical stance, evolving through a collision of philosophical vocabulary (e.g., "logocentricity," "ideology of textuality") and poetic and corporeal metaphors ("Poetry is a body, a passionate body"), along with disjointed lines that are thematically connected nonetheless. Thus, we encounter phrases like "with magnetic plates ideology is inscribed," which read like theoretical essays, alongside lines such as "the dictator's will still doesn't determine the writing/ of each individual" (146), which push the poem into the realm of politics. Referencing Lotman, the poem asserts that poetry does not merely represent a world but creates worlds: "A poem

produces meaning—it's a direct product of ideology" (147). Concurrently, the poem dismisses Lyotard's "Grand Narratives" and posits that poetry thrives in fragments, non-linear forms, and the disruption of universals through the intersections of contemporary poetic, technological, and sensual materials. The poem employs repetition to reinforce its key arguments, as seen in "Poem = politics/ Poem = ideology/ Poem = the body of the text." As the act of writing is a form of exploration, the poem becomes intensely self-reflexive, continuously questioning its medium, form, and purpose: "That's why in poetry, as in politics, the question of control/ is a question of power." Simultaneously, the elusive speaker oscillates between embodied statements—"I hate narration"—and theoretical observations: "A poem is put together from fragments of stories" (145).

"A Non-Narrative Poem of Poetry" takes its title from Gertrude Stein's "Winning His Way. A Narrative Poem of Poetry" (Đurić 185), while referencing several contemporary writers. It roots its ruminations at a specific moment in time—Podgorica Airport on October 10—as if to equate writing with a journey. This enables the development of an emotionally resonant multilingual, code-switching method. The poem merges English and South Slavic languages ("pjesma," "lacuna," "plate," etc.) to point to its hybridity, as exemplified in the question: "*Pjesmo*, where are you going?" (193). The tonal and rhythmic elements of Slavic languages enhance the emotional depth: "In the abyss—*bezdna*—I lose my footing,/ caught in a song too heavy for one tongue." Translating this emotional depth is challenging, as these terms are not merely decorative but serve as cultural touchstones. For instance, the word "pjesma" facilitates cross-linguistic dialogue, reflecting the poet's quest for self-expression. To emphasize its original context, the poem keeps the regional case system: "Think of yourself because whoever worries/ about pjesmi will ask what is important there" (192). Furthermore, the translation of these terms found in footnotes prompts readers to engage with the unfamiliar and fosters an appreciation for the multicultural reality that defies erasure. Lastly, the language switching highlights the poet and the "pjesma" as they navigate a liminal space, existing at the intersection of linguistic and cultural identities.

Drawing on meta-poetic reflections, this text personifies the poem as an autonomous being, a companion, confidant, muse, and source of solace, but also as a site of frustration, an adversary, and an entity capable of betrayal. The poem's self-awareness emphasizes its autonomy as it seeks its own space, uncertain whether it can sustain itself in a world that may not fully understand it:

Self-awareness of *pjesme* is searching for a space for itself
 It's not certain it can handle the emptiness
 of the surface (196)

At the same time, the *pjesma* is presented as a reflection of the poet's essence, making its existence inseparable from the poet's sense of self.

If I lose you, *Pjesmo*,
 I lose myself in you and tears won't touch the foundation
 of sadness
 because only the *pjesma* knows there's no exit (198)

The paradoxical phrasing suggests that while poetry is a creation, it also defines and even absorbs the creator's identity. The inability of tears to touch the "foundation of sadness" implies a deep, almost untouchable sorrow that lies beyond emotional expression. Here, the *pjesma* is depicted as the only entity capable of accessing the core truth, the chronicler of despair, and a testament to its inescapability. It offers no liberation, as suggested in the final Sartrean words.

The dynamic interplay between creation and creator, materiality and transcendence, reflects a broader creative struggle: the poet's simultaneous reverence for the craft and frustration with its inadequacy in capturing experience or emotion (cf. Bernstein 261). The poem continually interrogates itself—what it means to be a poem or engage with one. Recurring lines like "If the poem has written itself" (191) challenge the concept of authorship and agency, and the author rebels: "If the poem writes itself, it writes itself/ If a poem enters a dialogue with *pjesma*/ I want to retreat." The speaker forms a tender yet complicated relationship with the poem, which establishes a tense circular concept: "The poem writes itself, in spite of the rage and sadness [...] I have not moved because the circle has been closed." The poet appears ensnared in a loop, unable to seek meaning or relief outside the poem. The poem also positions itself in liminal spaces—between writing and silence, presence and disappearance, material and immaterial, as seen in the lines: "If the poem abandons me, stupidity increases" (195) and "If I part from you, it'll be such a great misfortune" (197). This liminality enables abstract thoughts to connect to tangible objects, enhancing the contrast between the two realms:

The poem doesn't wish to write itself when I want it to
 The poem writes itself when I close my eyes

The poem writes itself when the book
closes/opens
Don't tell me about that
how the heart is beating when the book
closes/the heart opens (187)

Additionally, this alternately playful and cruel dialogue is embodied in the poem's rhythmic irregularity, variations in indents, and sudden shifts from anger to affection: "Pjesmo, I don't love you, because poetry/ is insufficient" (193) and "*Pjesmo*, I love you passionately, don't leave me" (197).

The poem's emotional foundation revolves around the repeated theme of stupidity, or self-doubt. It juxtaposes vulnerability with insight, complicating the poet's relationship with their art: "Stupid pjesma is in the power of reason, I am not" (194). While these repetitions may come across as excessive—repeating the same idea without further exploring it—they could detract from the poem's overall effect. Nonetheless, whether the poem actively fights against the poet or simply remains apathetic, the deliberate redundancy illustrates how the poem occupies the poet's mind and signifies a stifled creative advance: "If sadness is stupidity, pjesma stumbles" (195), or

There isn't that poem which would cancel
sadness
of stupidity
If stupidity spawns in a poem, I'll
leave it
Poem, *Pjesmo* enlighten me
If you enlighten me with stupidity, Poem
I'll die again

In conceptual poetry, redundancy is a concept, not an accident. The concept halts progression to emphasize the dynamics between the poet and the poem. It serves as a meta-commentary on what it entails for a poem to create and sustain the poet's identity. Yet, when read as a piece of language poetry that destabilizes conventional expectations of meaning-making, redundancy is not a weakness but a demonstration of language as an inescapable system. Although the poem is anthropomorphized, the question remains: Can the poem—still an abstract entity—truly “know” or “be lost”? In this scenario, the words circle meaning without capturing it, as evident in the repetition—“If I lose you, *Pjesmo*.” This becomes particularly intriguing when the

emotional weight of the dialogue (the poet's dependency on *pjesma*) intertwines with its conceptual weight (*pjesma* as a language construct) to show how the poet and the poetic construct are elevated and hindered by their mutual dependability.

From resistance to hope

Yugoslavia's civil war takes up approximately one-third of the book, coinciding roughly with one-third of the poet's life. This poetry inspires rethinking, as Wallace suggests:

How can poetry that resists naivety about the limitations of language confront war and the human and material destructiveness that comes with it? How can one deal with the brutal idea that some groups of people should be "cleansed" of the existence of culturally different others? How can poetry that emphasizes the contested nature of language, rather than the belief that the direct physicality of experience is supposedly not mediated by language, respond to the problem of political brutality?

Reflecting the fragmentation of a once-coherent world, "Messenger of embers" stands as a trans-poetic summons of various texts. It acts as an expansive allegory and a reflection of historical sorrow, interlacing metaphor and discord to express the era's chaos and brutality. It illustrates the fierce battles, ruin, and losses, building abundant imagery of destruction—"graves," "graveyards," and "smashed fragile towers." The recurrence of the word "death" among discordant voices, representing death as a physical and metaphysical concept, is self-explanatory and culminates in the lines "death, death; death/sings a song" (81). A cultural landscape stripped of meaning appears in the lines "Steeple of hell, fields of darkness" and "shapes-shades [...] mounted on the ground." Wars burn libraries, desecrate monuments, and rewrite histories, invalidating truths for the new identities forged at the expense of countless lives. The lines "Hatred flares, lighting the maze cages" (77) and "Crucify, fructify, vivid divots of homes" condense the cycles of violence and the endless self-perpetuation of destruction. The poem now sarcastically laughs at the "liberty from Hades" (78) and through the invocation of "new epics."

The breakdown of shared spaces and communities (physical and symbolic structures of order) is supported by the abrupt shifts in tone and subject of this chaotic poetic structure, with lines leaping unpredictably, filled with jarring contrasts ("*Lines, knives, doors, merry-*

go-rounds”), neologisms (“*stamen-haven*,” “*flaming-amen*”) to echo the cacophony of the disjointed community. Frustrated by the war, the poem cannot help the brimming references to the political creation of hatred, othering, and malice—“*veils of malice/ and fines*” (78)—evoking the propaganda that fueled ethnic animosities. The politicization of language into “*bipolar, three-polar language*” (79) and “*notations of soundlessness flow in the ether*” echo the creation of splintered linguistic variations codified to enforce divisions: “*Fights between words narrate/ ‘Words in freedom’ submit to new meters/ killers*” (77). The poignant concept of a “*hermaphrodite*” language denotes the ruin of communication when “milk” becomes “*mlijeko*” or “*mleko*” to mark national exclusion. The line “*opponent-slogans fall alive into graves*” captures the rhetoric as deadly and observes that hatred loves to perpetuate itself: “*Round dances make the world go round.*” The image evokes numerous absurdist artworks, yet it also ironically alludes to the Balkan round dance *kolo*, created as a symbol of unity.

Poets witness and chronicle ruination, becoming “messenger[s] of embers,” while also serving as mediators of hidden truths, “poets of veil” (77), revealing significances obscured to unpoetic minds. Thus, while the poem translates destruction, it also reflects the collapse of logic—“gigantic, wild, stray [...] I am your servant, Oh, Word” (81)—and attempts at self-destruction: “I destroy words, I destroy rhymes, I destroy rhythms.” The disorder of the real world is invoked by the phrase “Oh, Word/ Let the blood bleed” (81). This wording suggests an ironic reverence for language, seen as both a savior and destroyer, a carrier of suffering and judgment. The glimpses of regeneration that emerge through chaos—“New suns/ New dawns/ New stars” (80)—are fleeting, as someone’s dawn turns into someone else’s “twilight of nightmares” (77). The hope glimmering in the tension between destruction and creation, as in the line “Crucify, fructify,” remains sardonic, equating real hope with mere advertisement. The omnipresent death—“Smashed fragile towers/ stamen-haven/ flaming-amen/ crushed” (77)—challenges accepted morality and proposed redemption. Instead, the poem advocates for utter purification, reminiscent of Eliot’s “Fire Sermon”—“Purify yourself in the white flame of the snowstorm” (78), “Burn the face, picture of the self”—to heal the wounded, fragmented identity, as chaotic times demand collective reconstruction of disparate shards. The plea in “Give amnesty! Bestow indulgences/ to the simple death!” (82) crushes the futile vengeance reflected in Christian forgiveness. Death is anything but simple. Yet, there may be a yearning for death that is not violent but natural and peaceful. Thus, the last verse may implore humanity to reclaim its

dignity by accepting universal, inevitable death, unadorned by cultural or religious connotations.

The mix of drama, poetic monologue, dialogue, and prose in “My Love of Narrative Is Satisfied by Television Series” reflects conceptual poetry concerned with ideas more than aesthetic cohesion. The poem is overtly self-referential and comments on its boundaries: “*Does it belong to poetry [...] or does it border nonfiction essay?*” (204). The poem concurrently explores cultural production and fragmented political climate as they intersect in post-Yugoslav contexts: discontinuous identities, histories, and cultural frameworks; conversational and ideological disputes in public and private spaces. The “*first character’s*” question epitomizes the political rifts: “*why would the Latin alphabet be our alphabet*” (202). The clash between Cyrillic script, associated with Serbian cultural heritage, and Latin, perceived as dangerously foreign, foregrounds tensions in cultural self-definition. The “*third character*” explores various layers of “*yugonostalgia*”: yearning for youth, idealizing socialism, critiquing mononationalism, and dismantling identity constructions in newly established states. Yet, this discomfort concerning the “new identifying matrices” is equally dubious. Moreover, the poem comments on how the proposal that the term “*post-Yugoslavian*” should be replaced with seemingly pacifying “*South Slavic space*” throws another “ideological veil” over artificial political realities—hyperpoliticizing the situation. The “*fourth character*” mocks attempts to strip this space of its Yugoslavian ideological and cultural memory, pointing out the contradictions in simultaneously rejecting and continuing those legacies. A juxtaposition with nationalist discourses of division is found in the reality of art, in the example of actress Branka Petrić’s performance in Albanian in Belgrade. Yet, when the selected audience celebrates this demonstration of how art can transcend political divides to rekindle collective memory, does it, perhaps, attempt to adopt someone else’s heritage?

Now, the poem addresses ideological conformity, “*denouncement*” of dissent, and “*deceitful self-censorship*” (204) to comment on the autonomy of art, education, and public discourse, suggesting that cultural spaces are still constrained by nationalist and neoliberal pressures. The manual’s satirical directives—“*Actors should perform as many gags as possible [...] audience wants hilarious laughter*” (203)—denounce the self-proclaimed depoliticized art, pointing to the ways art production is influenced by economic and political demands. Lines like “*my love toward the narrative is satisfied by television series*” (202) are repeated verbatim, creating a rhythmic yet mechanical tone of passive television consumption. The appearance of the chorus chanting “*WE*

WANT TO HAVE FUN" (203) functions as a satire of the anti-intellectualism of the hyper-commercialized entertainment industry. The poem's declaration that "*depoliticization IS actually HYPER-POLITICIZATION*" confronts how entertainment and anti-intellectualism mask political control. Nationalism and neoliberal ideologies permeate culture subtly and pervasively. In her conversation with Đurđević, Đurić explains:

the system of literature is being transformed globally—the fact that poetry has entered the public sphere is part of the neoliberal processes of monetization and commodification of all areas of human production, including finally poetry. The genre system was transformed by the neoliberal principle of hybridization, with which the once rigid boundaries between genres, especially poetry and prose, became porous. In the new regime, in order to reach an audience, poetry must be easily understood, which is the imperative of the times.

When personal exhaustion as a form of resistance blurs with political commentary, "I'm searching for a female critic" (139) emerges as a bold quest for a critic attuned to contemporary shifts in discourse—one who embraces the complexities of identity and expression. The repetition of the title line signals that this search is urgent because female and non-binary voices continue to be marginalized. The absence of acknowledgment for "a newly liberated language of poetry" is lamented in the phrase that this critic "doesn't exist." This new language of feminism, hybridity, and destabilized norms "uncovers" and "discloses" truths buried beneath traditional constructs—"the norms of representation" and "the norms of a heightened poetic language." "Media images," which saturate visual culture and impact identities, are contrasted with "hybrid identities" of an increasingly intersectional world. Consequently, this female critic will actively strive to deconstruct and reshape these biases by "manipulating with them/ using them as their own primary language," which suggests a subversion of constraining structures and their retooling into new modes of representation. "Feminism" is now linked with "the universal language," implying inclusivity and broader humanistic relevance. The poem equally rejects the gendering of poetry and criticism by acknowledging "female and male voices" as interconnected and rich when liberated through innovation with sensitivity.

The poem "Migrants [Bodies-in-Motion]" concludes the collection by identifying human and nonhuman loss through violence,

displacement, dehumanization, and environmental destruction. It employs a fragmented, experimental structure, irregular syntax, repeated phrases, and unstable punctuation to reflect the prevailing apprehension. The enjambment and scattered repetitions—"barbed wire" (224), "wires wires," "garbage, garbage, garbage"—create a relentless, suffocating rhythm of emotional exhaustion and physical entrapment. The integration of multilingual elements employed in the original Serbo-Croat cases, such as "dekama" (blankets), mirrors the transnational experiences of migrants and emphasizes language's role in portraying displacement. The denigration of control begins with images of migrants being objectified as moving hazards rather than humans seeking safety. The term "migrant bodies [bodies-in-motion]" (224) reduces individuals to mere physical entities stripped of agency and individuality. *Society's "hysterical indifference" (226) is seen in targeting migrants as "dangerous others," while the phrase "migrant men-migrant women are dangerous others—move around like/ viruses—run away from them" reflects historical xenophobia and the stigmatization surrounding migration, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis.* The recurring imagery of "barbed wire" symbolizes division, exclusion, and hostility. Borders are depicted not as protections but as zones of death and desolation, "which separate and cannot be crossed"—therefore, "you can banish them." The images of "bodies-in-motion [...] running away" convey both resilience and endless uncertainty in a continuous uprooting. *Systemic exploitation is further highlighted by the imagery of polar bears losing their habitats to melting glaciers, paralleling the loss of homes amid "demolished cities." This relationship boldly suggests that the violence inflicted on nonhuman entities is reflected in the normalization of violence against marginalized humans: "you can beat them without impunity, abuse them, you can kill them." The capitalist hands in this scenario are seen in the images of "garbage," "robbery," and "economic borders." The migration, therefore, is depicted as a global crisis of displacement caused by systemic inequalities, environmental degradation, and political violence: "migrant men and women are on the move/ from continent to continent" (225).*

En guise de conclusion

Đurić's poem "The End of Language" summons this amazing collection's meta-poetic reflection on artistic categorization, the fluidity of post-Yugoslav identity, the resistance to rigid definitions, and its working within the language that does not exist. Political on the level of form, this poem works with disjunction, fragmentation, and the

conceptualization of the sign system. Challenging traditional narrating, this language poem employs fragmented syntax, abrupt thematic shifts, and layers of diverse imagery to emphasize the materiality and autonomy of language and put an end to the rotting reference—"THE END OF REFERENCE" (84). The self-reflective repetitions, such as "while I was writing" (85) and "I have finished that," mark a meta-poetic attention to the artifice of composition. When these commentaries are blended with urban imagery, the poem places language at the heart of human experience. The post-structuralist argument, "Language is not the instrument of expression, but the substance" (86), proclaims language as an agent in structuring the world rather than a vehicle for conveying meaning. Derridean utterances, such as "neither beginning nor end" (85) and "shifting directions," hint that the meaning is delayed due to the mutability and multidimensionality of language. Language opens battlegrounds for reimagining systems, "[r]eorganizing and replicating the existing structures" (86), while its physical presence in words transversing pages—"words were flying," "all these on my forehead words are/ seen"—confuses the distinction between the symbol and the tangible experience. The specificities of the urban landscape seen through impressionistic lenses—"the island of the City" (84), "beautiful square," "intervals and bridges," "tall miters"—collapse through flux into a dreamlike movement in "ALL MOVE FROM EAST TO WEST" (85). The disorientation thus built is mirrored by temporal ambiguity. Nonlinear time blends reflections, such as in "Was it a vision or a waking dream?" (84) and "Over and back/ Over and back," pointing to an important identification of the speaker with the transformative power of words, exactly when the poem says: "I am responsible for Utopia in my very desire" (86). This responsibility creates tension in the poem, as the fragmented persona, depicted through the repeated "I," grapples with the intersections of material existence, abstract thought, and multiplying identities: "Your you is also You, though You might be Them to you" (86). Đurić's Whitmanesque "I" recognized by the NASSS Committee, contains multitudes. Those are not only the migrants who are othered into dangerous "them," but the self is always deferred (Derrida), a projection of a symbolic order (Lacan), performed through social norms (Butler). The destabilized structures, even in this poem that resists categorizations, cannot but yearn for a Utopian renewal through the potentialities of language. The poem, thus, remains open.

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**POETIKA NADE DUBRAVKE ĐURIĆ – U POLITICI ANDE (POSILIJE RATA)
(2024)**

Zbirka Dubravke Đurić *Politika nade (Poslije rata)* (2024) sakuplja pjesme pisane od 1982. do 2024. godine. Knjigu je prevela na engleski jezik i priredila Biljana D. Obradović, a predgovor za nju napisao je Čarls Bernstein, jedna od vodećih ličnosti u razvoju jezičke poezije. Za svoje jedinstveno kulturno postignuće, ova knjiga dobila je prestižno priznanje Sjevernoameričkog društva

za srpske studije (North American Society for Serbian Studies, NASSS), koje je ističe kao jedan od najznačajnijih pjesničkih događaja u Jugoistočnoj Evropi. Inspirisana poststrukturalizmom, poezija Dubravke Đurić koristi eksperimentalne strukture, višejezične elemente i međuigru između poetskih, proznih i vizuelnih oblika kako bi istražila krhkost forme, jezika, imena i identiteta, magljenja granica, te postjugoslovenske napetosti i transnacionalne krize. Svi zajedno proizveli su briljantan čin otpora tradicionalnim oblicima i značenjskim sistemim, zahtjevajući od čitaoca koncentrisanu integraciju u kreiranju novih značenja. Polazeći od kritike konceptualne i jezične poezije, u ovom radu raspravljam o nekoliko tema: jeziku kao mjestu identiteta i sukoba, eksperimentalnoj poetici kao političkom izrazu, umjetnosti kao prostoru otpora i razmišljanja, postjugoslovenskom diskursu i njegovim rezonancama, te krizi raseljavanja i ekološkoj propasti.

Ključne riječi: jezik, pjesma, koncept, forma, identitet.