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Review Of "Na Trećem Trgu: Antologija Nove Kratke Priče Hrvatske, Bosne I Hercegovine I Srbije I Crne Gore" Edited By Š. Šehabović, O.S. Ivančević, And J. Angelovski

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is drunk all day. But he catches the eye of a twenty-four-year-old night manager of a homeless shelter when he is sixteen and fathers a baby with her. The relationship peters out when he smashes "to pieces" a motorbike she has bought for him. One night he forcefully enters her house, sets fire to it, and threatens to kill their son, for which he is imprisoned. But his violence continues in and out of jail. He is sent to prison again for robbing a post office. When he is finally released after four and a half years, he finds a modicum of happiness with a new girlfriend and fights to free two charity workers arrested on suspicion of allowing drugs on the premises. Thus he meets Masters, the writer who is also fighting for the same cause. When Stuart seems to be living a normal life, he is suddenly, and tragically, knocked down by a train.

The author presents the unfortunate events of Stuart's life not only in apt words but also with pictures and illustrations, taking us back to his happy-go-lucky childhood from the time he meets him. Hence the subtitle: *A Life Backwards*. It is a biography that often reads like a gothic novel—shocking, moving, and hilarious at the same time. This is not nineteenth-century England, but the Stuarts of the kingdom certainly live in "Hard Times," to use a Dickensian phrase. And Alexander Masters deserves credit for bringing that to light.

Ronny Noor
University of Texas, Brownsville

Na trećem trgu: Antologija nove kratke priče Bosne i Hercegovine, Hrvatske, Srbije i Crne Gore. Srđan Papić, project coordinator. Šelja Šehabović, Olja Savičević Ivančević, & Jelena Angelovski, eds. Belgrade/Kikinda. Narodna biblioteka "Jovan Popović" / Treći Trg. 2006. 213 pages. €8.24. ISBN 86-7378-018-7

THIS IS A SUPERB SELECTION of new authors and short stories from Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, and Serbia/Montenegro, each section compiled by an editor from that country. The afterword's stress on work in a "mutually understandable language" suggests a fertile literary scene where writers search out, admire (or detest), learn from, and react to any other artistic personalities they can understand.

The book was published in Belgrade, but it contains much more *ijekavian* than *ekavian* (or *ikavian*). The stories offer other linguistic features: Dalmatian dialect; Vlado Bulić's play with local variants in "www.i-buy.hr." Mima Simić exploits gender-marking that, like the Spanish *nosotras*, allows clear expression of lesbian sexuality. Other languages appear, especially English but also Hungarian (Andrea Pisac's "Return to Balatonszentgörgy"); references to Amsterdam and the United States evoke exile and emigration. Some stories stress violence and war (especially those of Srđan Papić), but more do not; love and sex dominate in the stories from Bosnia and Hercegovina.

The thought-provoking selection mixes more traditional styles with experimental pieces, with an average of twelve pages per author. Here is "The Visit," by Jovanka Uljarević, in its entirety:

"Good evening. Forgive me for disturbing you, but you've been doing that to us for a long time, so I had to drop in and ask



you to turn down that dreadful music."

"Oh, I'm sorry. I thought I was alone in the building. I didn't know you were living here too."

"I am not living."

"No?!"

"I'm just an apparition."

"But you rang at my door and I opened it. I see you. I can touch you if I want to."

"I think that's your problem."

Enes Halilović's "The Sock," a timeless parable on exile, is especially recommended.

The book has an unfortunate number of typographical errors, and the review copy is missing one page. Nevertheless, the approach and realization are cheering. Eight of the fourteen authors and editors are women, and any foreboding at a "former Yugoslav" anthology lifts upon seeing a Muslim name among the authors from Serbia and Montenegro. The stories are almost all of high quality, and the authors really are new, all born between 1974 and 1980. *Na trećem trgu* is very much worth reading.

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