***After the Revolution: Youth, Democracy, and the Politics of Disappointment in Serbia***. By Jessica Greenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014. ix, 235 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $27.95, paper.

What happens "after the revolution"? What becomes of the student activists trying to find a meaningful way to engage with the disappointing reality of everyday politics after the collective moment of revolutionary *communitas* is over? After every revolution, some sort of disappointment follows: the fatalistic Eurasian proverb "The dog barks, the caravan goes on" seems apropos. *After the Revolution: Youth, Democracy, and the Politics of Disappointment in Serbia* resists reading this postrevolutionary disappointment fatalistically, as a failure of democratic politics, but instead sees here the conditions for the birth of a new kind of "politics of disappointment," a politics that lives in the messy present rather than the utopian future. The book narrates the emergence of the Serbian revolution (which deposed Slobodan Milošević's regime in 2000) from the socialist and postsocialist periods and then turns its attention to what happens afterward. The revolution is often seen as the first of what would later be repackaged and rebranded as a series of shiny "color revolutions." But instead of following this misleading triumphalist narrative, a refurbished "domino theory" in which the Serbian revolution was but the first of many brightly colored dominos felling grey autocratic regimes across Eurasia, here we have a book that follows ethnographically the local aftermath. Jessica Greenberg presents Serbian student organizations' postrevolutionary political praxis as being informed by a "politics of disappointment"—a form of politics that lives in contradiction, in the gap between expectations and realities, a politics that refuses a revolutionary utopian future and instead seeks to address the mundane world of the present tense.

The book is divided into an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion, dealing in turn with the enabling categories of political practice. Chapter 1 focuses on time (youth, generations, future-oriented narratives of progress, modernity, and revolution), chapter 2 on space (the embodied "masses in the street"), and chapter 3 follows student politics coming in from the street into the university. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the "everyday semiotics" of student activities, chapter 4 dealing especially with student construction of authoritative expertise and 5 with an attempt to "purify" the "dirty" world of politics with an "apolitical" politics of proceduralism.

The narrative is enlivened throughout by a fluid interweaving of approaches. The ethnography of the postrevolutionary student politics of disappointment is presented in a deep dialogue with the historical moments leading up to, and culminating in, the 2000 revolution and the period of disappointment arising from the assassination of the prime minister in 2003. The author's equally deep ethnographic involvement across these periods permits her to draw a lively picture of these student revolutionaries' activities in the aggregate but also allows them their own stories, which show the complex individual biographical entanglements in which these activists find themselves. The result is a historically situated yet deeply ethnographic



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and anthropological narrative, enlivened by voices and stories that add color and complexity to the account of these student organizations, so that we are reminded that they, and the category of "youth," are composed of real individuals, ordinary people, the same stuff out of which history and politics and revolutions are made.

I will give just a sample of this ethnographic richness, illustrated by the people we meet in the first chapter. There is the student activist Zoran, who expresses impatience with the trust in idealized futures expressed by pieties like "It will get better"; the tragicomic everyday *Odyssey* of Alek, "a young, educated man intent on traveling the world," who as a postman is "instead doomed to a restless and circulatory journey through the streets of Niš" (30); the intergenerational role reversal found in the story of Milena and her father, wherein she assumes the role of scolding parent and he of whining child; and finally Danica, who expresses fond nostalgia for the simplicity and spirit of the street protests of the late 1990s while at the same time retaining a critical distance, moving from passion to finding in her disappointment a new form of pragmatic, postrevolutionary politics of the present. These stories are memorable ones. They are also judiciously chosen and narrated to show the complex interpersonal and intergenerational terrain of these social movements. This chapter's argument grows out of these encounters, for here we find how the abstract temporal categories that define the relation of youth and revolution are reflected and refracted by individual actors' biographical entanglements. For Zoran, it is the way that a trust in the future expressed in homilies stifles a politics of the present; for Alek, the way his projected future of cosmopolitan travel and the career promised by his education vanish into the routine, mundane quotidian travels of a postman; for Milena, the fraught relationship between generations after the revolution; and for Danica, the ironic relationship between one's own nostalgia for a simpler, future-oriented revolutionary politics of the past and the need to engage with the mundane political possibilities of the present.

The introduction and the first chapter outline the book's central theme: the emergence of a politics of disappointment, a form of political engagement that grows out of postrevolutionary disappointment—"a condition of living in contradiction, of persisting in the interstitial spaces of expectation and regret" (8). Here we see students attempt to produce a politics that can live in the ambiguities of a present defined by disappointment rather than hope for a utopian future. We also see the complex historical connections going back to the socialist period that link together the temporally (and generationally) defined category of "youth" and temporal frames of "progress" or "modernity" and narrative frameworks of "revolution." This complex cross-domain interlinking of temporal categories that permitted the "innocent" and "altruistic" youth (also discussed in chapter 5) to speak for, and represent, the social totality in the streets in the late 1990s is shown to be in part inheritances from socialist discourse, which posited "the youth" as a "social and political category that fused the social reproduction of the socialist state with the progressive logics of revolutionary society" (27). The analysis of temporality here has clear relevance to other contemporary (post)revolutionary situations elsewhere: I think immediately of the way the 2003 Georgian Rose Revolution, explicitly

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modeled on the Serbian revolution, was presented as a progressive revolution of "the youth" and eventually produced a postrevolutionary politics of intergenerational conflict. On a more abstract level, the temporal connections here between youth, progress, and revolution bear comparison to the way the Arab Spring revolutions were viewed in the western press through a progressive, modernist ideological lens that fuses generational identity to technological identity and sees inherent revolutionary potentials in both—a kind of naturalized class alliance of youth and new media, so that young people texting on their cell phones became emblematic of a new revolutionary praxis.

The deft analysis in the introduction and first chapter alone would be worth the price of admission. But in the second chapter we move to an equally lucid analysis of space, the problem of bodies in the streets as a form of revolutionary praxis. Here we see the students create new genres of protest, which they call "quality protests," involving a kind of representational logic that turns its back on revolutionary populism and attempts to create a form of street protest more adequate to a postrevolutionary, neoliberal context. These quality protests are explicitly opposed to the rhetoric of authenticity predicated on the seemingly simple presence of masses of bodies in the street, blocking traffic, that characterized the revolutionary logic of previous demonstrations. While these past mass protests, with their rhetoric of "authenticity," were built on an implicit logic of "quantity citizenship," they could also be seen as emblematic of chaos, violence, and disorder, reminiscent of disordered spaces like open-air markets, completely at odds with the new, ordered, procedural approach to political praxis embraced by postrevolutionary student politics, producing as its antithesis a revolutionary form of representation that turned quantity into quality citizenship. Here the problem of "the street" as an embodied locus of politics is read against global receptions that see it as a space of chaos, materiality, and violence, everywhere opposed to the disembodied rational discourse that should characterize political deliberation of the public sphere. Greenberg's brilliant analysis resonates strongly with critiques of Jürgen Habermas's famous dismissal of "pressure in the street" as the antithesis of the calm reason of the public sphere and with the way western news agencies habitually speak of Arab public opinion under the rubric of "the Arab street."[1]

This attempt to reframe the message of "bodies in the street," a material form that can seem to index authenticity as well as disorder and chaos, from a representational logic of quantity to quality introduces us to the thematics of the logics of student politics in the last three chapters. In the third chapter, we follow the students as they come in from the street and take up a rather more directed, pragmatic, procedural politics of neoliberal university reform.

1. On these points, see Amahl Bishara, "Watching U.S. Television from the Palestinian Street: The Media, the State, and Representational Interventions," *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 3 (August 2008): 488–530; Eric Laurier and Chris Philo, "'A Parcel of Muddling Muckworms': Revisiting Habermas and the Early Modern English Coffee-Houses," *Social & Cultural Geography* 8, no. 2 (April 2007): 259–81; Paul Manning, "ROSE-COLORED GLASSES? Color Revolutions and Cartoon Chaos in Postsocialist Georgia," *Cultural Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (May 2007): 171–213; and Warren Montag, "The Pressure of the Street: Habermas's Fear of the Masses," in Mike Hill and Warren Montag, eds., *Masses, Classes, and the Public Sphere* (London, 2000), 132–45.

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In chapter 4, we see how they turn to a neoliberal rhetoric of expertise and a semiotics of branding to produce new models of political representation. The final chapter attends to the way, in the inherited context of a widespread ideology of "antipolitics," in which politics were seen as inherently "dirty" and political discourse as an inauthentic form of communication, students turned to a rhetoric of proceduralism to "purify" politics, moving from antipolitics to a politics "depoliticized."

In short, *After the Revolution* is an excellent, articulate book that presents a detailed and lively historical and ethnographic analysis of the forms of political engagement that followed the Serbian revolution. But, as I have suggested, its trenchant, illuminating analysis of the everyday semiotic categories of time, space, and praxis underlying revolutionary and postrevolutionary politics will also have broad and lasting relevance to scholars and students in many disciplines and areas.

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***Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire.*** By Joshua A. Sanborn. The Greater War. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. xii, 287 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Tables. Maps. $49.95, hard bound.

As we move on from 2014 and the centenary commemorations of the Great War's outbreak, specialists in Russian imperial and Soviet history confront a growing number of books detailing Russia's role in that war. In his contribution to this burgeoning literature, Joshua Sanborn presents Russia's experience of World War I and the 1917 Revolution as a story of decolonization. Sanborn is the author of the excellent *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905–1925* (2003) and an important article on Russia in WWI in the *Journal of Modern History.* A leading specialist on Russia in the age of WWI, he has given us a concise, engagingly written, and tightly argued book analyzing this period in light of "the Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire."

*Imperial Apocalypse*, Sanborn explains, originated as a project to relate the story of everyday life in the war zone. In the course of researching this project, however, he came to see a causal chain of "military violence, state failure, social collapse, and the end of empire" (vii). Sanborn thus sets out with two aims: to describe the lives of a wide variety of actors on the Russian front, and at the same time to analyze the manner in which the Russian empire collapsed—or, in his telling, "decolonized." He insists—rightly, I think—that one must trace the course of combat as an intrinsic part of this story. And Sanborn is forthright about his intended audience: "I have tried always to keep in mind non-specialist readers interested in enlarging their knowledge about the Great War or Russian history. . . . This accessibility does not have to come at the expense of scholarly rigor. While there are some tensions involved, I hope

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