

Multilingual Literature in Conflict Zones
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Warring Words: Post-Yugoslav Conflict Narratives in Translation

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The disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s introduced a new euphemism into the English language—“ethnic cleansing”. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this compound term is “modelled on a Serbian and Croatian lexical item”.

Building on Rebecca Walkowitz’s notion of “born translated literature”, I argue that the term “ethnic cleansing” is born translated; it was invented to legitimize an illegitimate political project for an English-speaking audience by appealing to a supposedly authentic Balkan phenomenon.

In this talk, to explore the usage of the term “ethnic cleansing” and the ramifications of its ideological framework, I read two post-Yugoslav conflict narratives – Téa Obreht’s *The Tiger’s Wife* (2011) and Lana Bastašić’s *Uhvati zeca* [Catch the Rabbit] (2018).

Both novels have been praised by English-language critics as authentic representations of the Yugoslav Wars, largely due to the translingual backgrounds of their authors. I examine these examples of translingual literature by a new generation of post-Yugoslav authors in order to problematize this notion of authenticity.