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Navigating Identity and Hybridity in Exilic Literature: A  
Comparative Study of Dubravka Ugrešić's "The Museum  
of Unconditional Surrender" and Saša Stanišić's  
"Herkunft"

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„Sada ionako više ne znam ni tko sam, ni gdje sam, niti čija sam...”

“Now I no longer know who I am, or where I am, or whose I am...”

(Dubravka Ugrešić)

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## 1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the tumultuous events of the 1990s, which witnessed the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY)<sup>1</sup> and the eruption of brutal conflicts, the exploration of themes related to memory, identity, and diasporic narratives has acquired profound resonance. The wars that ravaged the region during that decade left indelible marks on the collective consciousness of the people, leading to widespread displacement and a profound sense of dislocation. As the geopolitical landscape of the former Yugoslavia underwent radical transformations, communities were torn asunder, and individuals found themselves uprooted from their homes. This period of intense conflict resulted in large-scale migrations, forcing people to grapple with the stark realities of displacement, loss, and the complex process of identity reconfiguration. The diasporic experience, once a literary theme explored from a distance, now became an immediate and urgent reality for countless individuals and communities affected by the war. The war in Yugoslavia during the 1990s brought about profound changes in the region's population. Many individuals migrated from the Balkan region, mostly seeking new lives in Western countries, and starting afresh. Consequently, the cultural landscape of the Yugoslav successor states has been significantly shaped by substantial political, social, and economic transformations (Komnenović, 2019, p.9). Numerous artists, compelled to establish themselves elsewhere far from their homelands, have eloquently expressed their experiences through their works. Exile, a state synonymous with displacement, frequently explores themes of time, departure, memories (Levanat-Peričić, 2018, p.83), identity, and the sentiment of homelessness. Edward Said posits that exile possesses a paradoxical allure in contemplation yet proves to be a harrowing experience. It symbolizes an irreparable chasm imposed between an individual and their native land, a divide between

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of a unified state encompassing all South Slavic peoples evolved during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The inception of Yugoslavism is typically traced back to 1918, marking the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (SHS), which lasted until 1929. This entity was succeeded by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, existing from 1929 to 1941. World War II saw the fragmentation of the Kingdom into smaller regions. A pivotal moment in the reunification process occurred at the Second Session of the AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia) on November 29, 1943, leading to the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the Democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (DFY/DFJ). Subsequently, in 1946, the nation was renamed the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY/FNRJ), and in 1963, it became the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY/SFRJ). For the purposes of this thesis, the term "Yugoslavia" specifically refers to the SFRY and the subsequent disintegration period from 1991 to 1996.

oneself and their genuine home. The inherent sadness associated with exile is insurmountable, and although literature and history may depict heroic, romantic, magnificent, and even triumphant moments in the lives of exiles, these instances merely represent endeavors to overcome the debilitating sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exiles are perpetually undermined by the permanent loss of what was left behind (Said, 2000, p.180). However, anthropologists, sociologists, scientists, and artists—writers in particular—often engage with phenomena that arise during exile. These phenomena encompass alienation, otherness, hybridity, nomadism, ambivalence, and the struggle with one's own identity. It is precisely for these reasons that this thesis seeks to explore the portrayal of exile in two novels that are linear and temporally distinct from each other yet interconnected by the concept of departure from the territory of former Yugoslavia. The extensive theoretical discourse encompasses cross-border, transnational, immigrant, diasporic, and exilic literature, and art. Consequently, the literature addressing the experience of exile is referred to in various ways. It is important to note that the aim of this thesis is not to delve into the linguistic or broader theoretical background of the concepts.

In the first part of this thesis, a deeper exploration will be conducted regarding the concept of exile and Edward Said's theory, as well as Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity. Additionally, the theme of exile within the context of Yugoslavia and the writers who departed from the region will be examined. The second part of the thesis will focus specifically on the writers and their works, analyzing them through the lenses of the above-mentioned theories. Unlike many comparative analyses that encompass entire literary corpora, this research chooses to focus on a single novel from each of the chosen authors. This approach allows a more meticulous examination of the autobiographical elements embedded within their narratives. Employing a qualitative research methodology, this study engages in the close reading of *Herkunft* (2019) by Sasa Stanišić<sup>2</sup>, and *Muzej bezuvjetne predaje* (The Museum of Unconditional Surrender, 1998)<sup>3</sup> by Dubravka Ugrešić. The perspectives of these writers on exile hold particular significance for this thesis. One can argue that these two authors have been profoundly influenced by their migration experiences or experiences in exile, which have left an indelible mark on their literature, contributing to the realm of intercultural or diasporic literature. Stanišić, who left the Balkans as a child, wrote *Herkunft*, in German, considering

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<sup>2</sup> *Herkunft* has been published and translated into English as *Where You Come From*. But for this thesis I will be using the German version of the book. Therefore, the book will always be referred to as *Herkunft* in the thesis.

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this thesis the English translation of the novel's name will be used throughout the thesis.

that he grew up with that language, attended school in it, and used it daily. On the other hand, Dubravka Ugrešić, left Croatia as a young woman and wrote *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* in Croatian. The novel was translated into German in 1998 and English in 1999.

Their forced migration due to the war in Yugoslavia compelled them to learn new languages, adapt to new living conditions, and embark on new lives. Motivations for starting anew and the circumstances intertwined with their writing will be exemplified and examined through authentic and personal examples, but also through the scrutinization of language, humor, and literary devices as vehicles through which the authors convey their experiences of residing in foreign lands. This thesis spans several crucial domains of investigation. Firstly, it delves into how the authors articulate the portrayal of departure and life in foreign territories through language and humor within their selected works. Secondly, it explores the diverse literary devices employed by Stanišić and Ugrešić to convey their unique experiences of residing in foreign lands. Lastly, it undertakes an in-depth examination of the lives, perspectives, and thought processes of the authors themselves, with the aim of discerning the presence of objectivity and its application within the framework of Bhabha and Said's theoretical paradigms.

This thesis explores the multifaceted dimensions of departure, exile, and identity as portrayed in the selected novels *Herkunft* and *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*. Specifically, it examines how these novels reflect the experience of leaving the former SFR Yugoslavia and contribute to the discourse of cross-border, transnational, immigrant, diasporic, and exilic literature, and art. The study delves into the concepts of hybridity and exile, as articulated by theorists Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Said, and investigates their resonance within the narratives of these books, considering the unique experiences of the authors. Furthermore, this thesis seeks to analyze how the authors utilize language, humor, and various literary devices to express their experiences of living in foreign lands. This analysis aims to understand how these literary works challenge and reconfigure the cultural and linguistic norms of their host countries, in line with the discussions presented in the essays of Bhabha and Said. Through this exploration, the thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between individual experiences of exile and the broader context of transnational literature and cultural identity. Through this methodological approach, this thesis aspires to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between literary expression, personal narratives, and the broader sociopolitical contexts within the selected novels. It is the contention of this research that the power of postcolonial theories, as exemplified by Bhabha and Said, extends far beyond the realm of postcolonial literature. This investigation

underscores a critical point: the themes of departure, migration, non-belonging, and the complexity of identity formation are not exclusively tied to the specific circumstances of leaving a particular territory. Instead, they resonate universally, highlighting the shared human experience of grappling with the concept of departure. In addressing the themes of war in Yugoslavia and the experiences of refugees within this context, this thesis intentionally distances itself from the entanglements of national politics, focusing instead on the personal narratives and reflections of writers as presented in their literary works. This focus is particularly pertinent given the backdrop of political tensions that permeate the arts and literature of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), where questions of literary affiliations and national identity frequently surface. Such debates often revolve around the national literary identities of notable authors, including whether Ivo Andrić belongs to Croatian or Serbian literature, the association of Mehmed "Meša" Selimović with Serbian or Bosnian literature, and the Croatian identity of Miroslav Krleža, among others. These instances highlight the complexity of literary heritage in the region. Therefore, national identity will be mentioned solely as the reason for the departure of Stanišić and Ugrešić. The objective of this thesis is to extend two theories, Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity and Edward Said's theory of exile, beyond the postcolonial context, applying them to literary works created in exile as a consequence of Yugoslavia's disintegration. This study aims to transcend the methodological nationalism characterizing previous research on the literature, film, and visual art of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia, adopting a more inclusive approach that surpasses national boundaries.

## 2. Yugoslavian exile

Exile, defined as the departure from one's native land, and the experience of foreignness, is a motif deeply rooted not only in literature but also across various art forms. This phenomenon, where numerous writers and intellectuals have been compelled to leave their homelands, often arises from political turmoil, incompatible societal systems, and wars. Additionally, it is frequently a consequence of their literary creations or publicly and privately expressed viewpoints, which are met with resistance under various guises - moral, religious, social, or political. This practice of exile continues to be relevant and prevalent in contemporary times. This pattern was notably evident in the SFR Yugoslavia. The 20th century, marked by its tumultuous and often violent nature, witnessed the Yugoslav Wars <sup>4</sup> as a complex conflict resulting from longstanding issues and tensions within the region. As Milovanović (2013, p. 241) accurately observes, “Political blindness”, ideological conflicts, and the rise of militarism led to a catastrophic war that shaped the period from 1991 to 2000 in the former Yugoslavia”. Data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reveal that since the onset of Yugoslavia's disintegration in June 1991, approximately 2.3 million individuals have been displaced from their homes in the federation's six republics. <sup>5</sup> The ensuing conflict rendered many stateless, leaving them without a country to call home. The dissolution of Yugoslavia resulted in the formation of several distinct republics, each with its own borders, territories, languages, and national identities.<sup>6</sup> More than three decades post-war, the Balkans continue to grapple with its legacy, which is evident in the region's economic situation and the ongoing emigration of its youth. The 2021 national census data indicates a significant demographic shift; Croatia's population stands at 3.871.833 million, a decrease of 413.056 since 2011, marking a 9.64% decline.<sup>7</sup> The World Bank projects that, should current trends persist, Serbia's population will reduce to 5.79 million by 2050. Annually, over 50,000

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<sup>4</sup> Yugoslav wars in this context is meant the dissolution of SFRY that lasted from 1991 to 1996.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/24/world/yugoslav-refugee-crisis-europe-s-worst-since-40-s.html>

<sup>6</sup> After Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia declared independence, Serbia and Montenegro formed their own joint state on April 27, 1992, under the name Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, thus formally concluding the dissolution process of the SFRY on that day. In 2003, the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was created. It ceased to exist in 2006 after Montenegro declared independence following a referendum. Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008. Until the dissolution of SFRY the official language of the region was Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian. After the war in the 1990's each country declared their own national languages.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oegfe.at/policy-briefs/demographic-decline-of-croatia-what-is-to-be-done/?lang=en#:~:text=2021%20census%20results&text=The%201991%20census%20recorded%20Croatian,%2C%20a%20decline%20of%209.64%25.>

individuals leave Serbia, seeking opportunities elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, a group specializing in migration issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) reports that this Balkan state, still operating under a peace agreement nearly three decades old, has experienced the emigration of over 600,000 people in the past decade.<sup>9</sup> This statistic underscores the ongoing challenges and transformations within the region, highlighting the enduring impact of its historical and political context. The issue of discourse surrounding war and later the displacement of people from Yugoslavia is largely rooted in the policies pursued by those states. Following the breakup, different identities emerged, along with non-national policies that led to the creation of new mono-national states with their own languages, cultures, and peoples. After the dissolution of SFRY, states began to write their own histories, adapting them to fit their national discourses. Dijana Hadžizukić (2019) argues that the Bosnian Herzegovinian region experiences the highest degree of displacement. However, it can be contended that the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia is profoundly affected by displacement, both on a local scale within the newly formed Balkan states and globally. The question of why Bosnia and Herzegovina's displacement is particularly significant, even when discussing politics and culture, arises due to its historical legacy of religious and ethnic diversity. This country has long been a unique example of coexistence among various religious groups and, later, different nationalities. Unlike other former Yugoslav states that became mostly mono-ethnic after the breakup, Bosnia and Herzegovina remained divided among three distinct ethnic groups.<sup>10</sup>

Hadžizukić (2019) also highlights the emergence of “smaller stories” striving to become “bigger” stories and get significance amidst the postmodern upheaval and the disintegration of Yugoslavia. What can be inferred from past conflicts and the dissolution of states is that crises and the uncertainty surrounding national, cultural, and personal identities often result in a

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.undp.org/serbia/stories/why-population-serbia-keeps-declining#:~:text=February%206%2C%202020,them%20young%2C%20leave%20our%20country.>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-herzegovina-refugees-past-decade/32465844.html#:~:text=More%20Than%20600%2C000%20People%20Have%20Fled%20Bosnia%2DHerzegovina%20In%20Past%20Decade,-Mirhunisa%20Zukic%2C%20president&text=An%20umbrella%20group%20on%20migration,in%20the%20past%2010%20years>

<sup>10</sup> It is also important to emphasize that there are still smaller ethnical and national groups present in today's Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia as well as in Croatia. Still, Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only country with three constitutional peoples groups: Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats, as well as other minorities.

heightened awareness of one's own distinctiveness (Hadžizukić, 2019, p. 14). On the other hand, the people who left this region no longer know to whom they belong, as the state and passport they had until yesterday no longer exist. Moreover, it is worth noting that many refugees who would later find solace in the realm of art, akin to Saša Stanišić, who was but a child when his family fled the former Yugoslavia, only began to confront the intricate challenges of belonging and ambivalence as time unfolded. Furthermore, this can also be applied to the departure of Dubravka Ugrešić, whom I will discuss more extensively throughout this thesis. This narrative underscores the multifaceted and evolving nature of identity, especially in the context of diaspora and displacement, and how it intersects with the world of literature and artistic expression. Today, in contemporary discourse, the term “diaspora” frequently emerges. However, this raises critical inquiries regarding its implications. What constitutes the diaspora, and who exactly is encompassed within this category? Furthermore, at what point in the generational lineage of emigration does an individual transition from being identified as a member of the diaspora to being recognized as a local?

These questions are not solely confined to the realms of anthropological and sociological studies; they also resonate as prevalent themes within the sphere of artistic expression. Diaspora refers to a large group of people who may share a national or regional origin, but for a variety of reasons, are living outside of this traditional homeland. Diasporic populations are often outnumbered in their new nation of residence. Diaspora was initially used to describe the migrations of Jewish people after the fall of Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C.E. It has since been used to describe other instances of mass migration or forced relocation. Diasporic populations often have strong social and cultural ties to their homeland, but may also have multiple cultural identities. Throughout global history, there have been hundreds of migration movements, which created and continue to create diasporic populations.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the question arises: to whom do these individuals now belong? Consequently, this question permeates through art, particularly literature, where many writers search for their identity, heritage, roots and describe their memories, attempting to uncover traces of their identities without losing their essence and leaving room for new discourses. Diasporic populations often have strong social and cultural ties to their homeland, but may also have multiple cultural identities. Throughout global history, there have been hundreds of migration movements, which created and continue to create diasporic populations. Another question is to whom do

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<sup>11</sup> <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/diaspora/>

these individuals now belong? This dilemma is not just a matter of personal identity but also reflects broader socio-cultural dynamics. Many writers within the diaspora embark on a quest to explore their identity, heritage, and roots. Their works frequently delve into their memories, striving to unearth elements of their original identity while simultaneously adapting to new cultural landscapes. This process often leads to the emergence of a unique, hybrid identity, born from the fusion of their native and adopted cultures. In the countries where they have resettled, these writers and artists occupy a liminal space, belonging neither entirely to their homeland nor completely to their new country. This sense of in-betweenness often becomes a fertile ground for creative expression. Furthermore, the tumultuous, intricate, and frequently distressing events of the 20th century have been chronicled in modern literature, film, and popular culture throughout Ex-Yugoslavia countries. These works have demonstrated a progressive approach in terms of form, genre, medium, and style, reflecting and even foreshadowing global experimental trends. The hybrid approach can be seen in the multifaceted novels (Komnenović, 2019, p.9). Also, these forms of expression not only provide a window into the experiences and emotions of the diaspora but also offer insights into the complexities of cultural integration and identity formation. The increasing visibility of diasporic literature and art in global culture underscores the importance of these narratives in understanding the human condition in a world marked by mobility and change. As more individuals experience displacement and resettlement, the stories and artistic expressions of diasporic communities become crucial in shaping our collective understanding of identity, belonging, and the ongoing redefinition of home in an ever-evolving global landscape. One particularly fascinating aspect is the extensive scope of literature on Yugoslavia in exile, encompassing numerous writers who departed the region and subsequently delved into the theme of exile, providing accounts of their lives abroad. Equally intriguing is the absence of a unified narrative within the literature of Yugoslav exile, especially among contemporary writers. This observation highlights the potential for this discourse to be considered as a distinct area within the field of Slavic literary theories, adding an intriguing layer to the exploration of Yugoslav literary diaspora. Such an examination offers valuable insights into the diverse perspectives and experiences of these writers, contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities of exile and its portrayal in literature. Nenad Makuljević writes about the development of art among the Slavic peoples in the former Yugoslavia, extending up to the dissolution of Yugoslavia. He claims that the emergence and decline of the Yugoslav art concept occurred across three different historical eras: prior to the 1918 unification, within the Kingdom of SHS (Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata, Slovenaca/Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and

Slovenes), and within the socialist Yugoslav state. Diverse political circumstances influenced the development and longevity of the Yugoslav artistic concept, though they did not completely halt the ongoing processes.<sup>12</sup> Makuljević writes further:

The idea of Yugoslav art was closely connected with the rise, duration, and fall of the Yugoslav concept. From the mid-19th century onwards, there was a growing association among Yugoslav artists, leading to their organization with the aim of presenting the cultural and ethnic affinity of the Yugoslav peoples. The establishment of a common state, the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia, did not contribute to the development of a shared art and culture. Mutual cultural differences among Yugoslav peoples, as well as different political interests, weakened the idea of a common artistic identity. As a unique phenomenon, there was the emergence of integral Yugoslavs like Ivan Meštrović, who embodied the Yugoslav spirit as an artist. After the Second World War, the art of socialist Yugoslavia aimed to overcome modern artistic expression. Negative trends leading to the dissolution of the state reinforced republican and national movements. The initial ideas of creating Yugoslav national art were not realized, but the existence of a common state led to the creation of a cultural and artistic space and the formulation of Yugoslav art as a visual practice developed on Yugoslav territory.<sup>13</sup>

Agreeing that the initial dream of crafting a Yugoslav national art may have remained unfulfilled, but the shared Yugoslav territory provided a fertile ground for the emergence of a distinct cultural and artistic space. In essence, Yugoslav art became a testament to the evolving narratives and dynamics within the region, reflecting the ever-changing interplay of identities, politics, and artistic expressions. Beside the rich soil that nurtured artistic expression in the former Yugoslavia, a significant number of prominent figures, as well as those destined to become literary luminaries in the years to come, chose to depart from the Yugoslav region in pursuit of their own identities. This phenomenon unveils a captivating narrative wherein writers who remained within the confines of the former Yugoslavia were compelled, to varying degrees, to assimilate into the emerging national states. Meanwhile, those who embarked on a journey far from their homeland found themselves on a quest to forge entirely new identities, grappling with the profound reality that the state where they had previously cultivated their creativity had ceased to exist.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura\\_religija\\_txt01.html](https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura_religija_txt01.html)

<sup>13</sup> [https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura\\_religija\\_txt01.html](https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura_religija_txt01.html)

### 3. Exile (E. Said)

In German, there are two different words that signify the meaning of leaving a certain territory, namely: *fliehen* “to hastily remove oneself to seek safety from a danger; to run away from something or someone”<sup>14</sup> and *flüchten*, “to flee suddenly and very hastily; to try to escape a looming danger by fleeing”.<sup>15</sup> As one can see from these two definitions, at first these two verbs are very similar. But importantly, *fliehen* implies leaving a place or situation quickly, often due to immediate danger, threat, or fear. It can be used in a broad range of contexts, from escaping danger to avoiding an unpleasant situation. With the word *fliehen* is meant that whoever flees does so based on a decision they have made themselves. On the other hand, *flüchten* implies that one flees typically against their will, often due to being chased away or expelled. Both words, when translated into English mean to flee, but there is a difference in the circumstances on how one flees or migrates. When talking about Dubravka Ugrešić and Saša Stanišić, there was also a difference in the way that they migrated. In Ugrešić’s case, the exile was her choice, and this means that the word *fliehen* could be used to explain the way she left Croatia. In the case of Stanišić one can use the word *flüchten* to describe his way of leaving Bosnia. Furthermore, these two verbs can be applied to a wide range of people who have left a certain area, as well as to the fact that they can be applied to types of exile.

The concept of exile can be traced back to humanity's earliest written creations, from Greek mythology (Melic, 2012, p.414), Adam and Eve (Milbauer & Sutton, 2020, p. 1), to the exile of Jews in the Bible, it has also been represented in works of literature such as those by Homer, Dante, Hugo, Nabokov... This term gained its full expansion in the 20th century, that saw the phenomenon of exile take on new dimensions, creating a myth of a desire to return home and leading to the experience of living outside one's homeland as punishment and an inability to feel complete. In the 1920s, many intellectuals fled from fascist, Nazi, Stalinist, and communist regimes, and after World War II, political turmoil in the Soviet bloc, Latin America, and South America resulted in numerous exiles (Melic, 2012, p. 414). Therefore, one can see that the idea of departure, migration, and changing one's habitat is a normal occurrence that has taken place throughout history. The term exile is a linguistic symbol that carries experiential associations, which have become more concentrated in the 20th century and continue to be a defining characteristic of the 21st century (Stammen, 2008, p. 53). When discussing migration, the

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/fliehen>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/fluechten>

concept of exile frequently emerges as a common term used. The term and notion of exile have changed throughout history. From the idea that it exists in all epochs of human history to its mass prevalence in the 20th and 21st centuries, to it being considered commonplace and a fate that has befallen millions of people today. Stammen (2020) argues that exile can be perceived as a dual complex. Firstly, he approaches exile as a comprehensive historical-political experiential construct:

Exil ist ein historisch-politisches Phänomen, das ganz offensichtlich in allen Epochen und Kulturen unter wechselnden Rahmenbedingungen vorkommt und das im 20. Jahrhundert durch seine Massenhaftigkeit und Universalität zu einem kaum mehr übersehbaren weltweiten Problem geworden ist, von dem heute das Schicksal von Millionen Menschen betroffen ist. (Stammen, 2020, p.53)

Stammen also argues that it is astonishing that, even though the global importance of exile issues is indisputable and there is existing empirical research on the topic, there have been no substantial efforts to comprehensively comprehend and elucidate exile, a phenomenon of universal historical significance and global relevance, within the context of theoretical discussions. When delving into its examination, two facets are encountered: first, the empirical reality of exile at the historical level, and second, the intellectual processing and linguistic-symbolic interpretation of this multifaceted phenomenon by those who undergo it and are impacted by it (Stammen, 2020, p. 53). Stammen's insights reveal a significant gap in academic discussions, particularly in how empirical data on exile isn't fully woven into the broader tapestry of theoretical understanding. This gap suggests there might be a disconnect between the real, often harrowing experiences of those in exile and the academic frameworks we use to interpret these experiences. When we talk about the duality of the exile experience, it is crucial to consider both its tangible impact on societies and how it is personally interpreted by those who live through it. Exile isn't just a concept; it is a deeply personal journey, frequently marked by trauma, loss, and a sense of dislocation. The challenge in academic circles is to capture this breadth and depth in theoretical models. This is not just about understanding the external factors that lead to and result from exile; it is also about empathetically connecting with the internal emotional and psychological turmoil that those affected endure. In essence, to truly grasp the essence of exile, we need to bridge the gap between empirical data and theoretical analysis, ensuring that the personal narratives and emotional truths of those in exile are not lost in academic abstraction.

The question arises: Why are testimonies of exile important? Firstly, testimonies of exile serve as vital social documents of a culture grappling with the profound experiences of displacement and exile. Furthermore, literary and critical works within the diaspora function as condensed repositories of national, ethnic, and linguistic memories. To strike a balance between the specificity of individual accounts of the exile experience and a broader existential comprehension of displacement, expatriation, and marginality, the presence of this discourse is indispensable, not only within literature but also across various forms of art. The essence of exile lies in the perpetual movement, the oscillation, between these two reference points. Whether this movement is expressed through physical, i.e., geographical, journeys between homelands or through the realms of mental, nostalgic, and imaginative voyages, such as those found in poetry, literature, art, music, or diverse intellectual explorations, it remains profoundly significant. Exile leaves an indelible imprint not only on the individual compelled to depart their place of birth but also on the societies entwined in this process (Milbauer & Sutton, 2020, p. 2). It affects both the societies left behind and those embraced as new homes by these individuals seeking to commence anew. This underscores the enduring significance of the theme of exile, especially in today's world, marked by significant population movements driven by crises, conflicts, and challenging economic conditions. It is a broad concept capable of being contextualized in numerous ways. That is precisely why exile has become one of the central motifs in literary works, not only from the perspective of describing the melancholic, sad, and misunderstood state of an individual but also as a guiding principle for many integration policies and a testimony to a particular period. To better act and shape reality, it is important to understand the past in some way. As a scholar, Andre Aciman (1999) claims exiles are in 'permanent transience', being at two or more places at the same time, not only being addicted to the lost path but always 'prospecting for a new home' (Aciman, 1999, p. 13). This ambivalent state often gives rise to new identities that exist between two worlds. It creates hybrid cultural identities that often do not align with traditional understandings of nations, borders, and state identities. In this sense, exile can also be a catalyst for social change and the spread of tolerance towards different cultures. For these reasons, the forms of the states as we have known them will be greatly changed through generations that have settled and remained in them.

Edward W. Said's concept of exile serves as the backdrop to his profound political engagement. Hailing from Palestine, his upbringing spanning from Egypt to the United States, and his 38-year tenure at Columbia University, he has emerged as a prominent figure in the Palestinian

quest for statehood. Though primarily recognized as a literary critic and theorist, his essays in *Reflections on Exile*, written between 1967 and the present, frequently delve into his familiar literary themes: the deceptive narratives imposed by colonizers upon the oppressed, the resilience of the colonized, and the societal role of higher education in literature and the humanities. However, it is essential to recognize Said as an intellectually immersed political thinker, with Palestine serving not only as a central intellectual motif but also as a rallying point for activism. While this collection doesn't encompass Said's explicitly political writings, his deep-seated concern for Palestine subtly weaves through many of these essays, shaping their perspective on culture and education.<sup>16</sup>

His insights permeate a wide array of literature exploring the theme of exile. In his 1999 memoir *Out of Place*, Edward Said delves into the autobiographical foundations of his fascination with exile, viewing it as both a political reality and a critical theory. The memoir intimates that despite Said's firm stance against religion, his understanding of exile shares similarities with the notion of a sacred space. Originally, exile meant banishment, a political act compelling an individual to leave their homeland. While distinct from being a refugee, expatriate, or a member of a diaspora, in contemporary usage, these terms often overlap, referring to individuals who are away from their original homes, regardless of whether the departure was voluntary or not. Exile is experienced as a unique way of inhabiting space, marked by a perpetual consciousness of being out of place. The exiled individual is constantly drawn to a far-off place, feeling alienated in their current residence. It is not just a spatial orientation but also a temporal one, where life is framed by the critical moment of leaving and the ongoing state of being away from one's native country. This sense of exile is inherently tied to a narrative of travel, encompassing memories of a challenging departure and aspirations of eventual return. Living in exile involves a dual sense of orientation and disorientation. While the exiled person is oriented towards something distant, there is also a sense of disorientation in their immediate surroundings, creating a complex interplay of belonging and alienation (Barbour, 2007, p.293). For Said, the state of being in exile implies a dynamic, ever-evolving nature, rather than something fixed or predetermined. His understanding of exile is closely tied to his critical capacity, embodying a 'contrapuntal' awareness that allows for simultaneous dimensions and autonomy. Said deeply values and continuously reflects on the experience of rupture, a theme he weaves through his work in various ways, connecting it to his broader

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<sup>16</sup> [https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/01/02/18/reviews/010218.18nussbat.html?\\_r=2](https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/01/02/18/reviews/010218.18nussbat.html?_r=2)

ideals. This rupture is not just a fate thrust upon him by external circumstances but is integral to his psychological, intellectual, and moral existence. Said discusses numerous forms of disruption, including separation from ancestral homes, family members, and the familiar, acknowledging the significant losses he anticipated and the symbolism he employs to express these themes (Barbour, 2007, p.300).

In the beginning of his essay *Reflections on Exile*, Said (2000) raises the question of how it is possible for exile, as a terrible experience that evokes a sense of emotional sadness, still manages to be an inexhaustible inspiration for many writers.

But the difference between earlier exiles and those of our own time is, it bears stressing, scale: our age-with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers-is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration. (Said, 2000, p.174)

Rehnuma Sazzad (2017) writes that in fact, Said's interpretation of exile is based on the idea that exile is a paradoxical state, in which on the one hand, there is loss and departure, while on the other hand, it represents a fertile ground for representation and an opportunity for reflection (Sazzad, 2017, p.18). Said then claims that Western modernity has been shaped due to works of emigres and exiles to a large extent (Said, 2000, p.173). It is important to ask how Western literature would look without the experience of all the people who came from other countries, and how people's awareness, not only in the political but also in the social context, would have been brought closer to the West, had there not been testimonies of departure. Said's use of the metaphorical condition aims to characterize the role of the 'modern intellectual'. He draws upon Gramsci's definition to elucidate the concept of an 'intellectual', which encompasses anyone working in fields related to the generation or dissemination of knowledge and undertaking specific societal functions. This includes professionals such as broadcasters, academics, computer analysts, lawyers, government advisors, and authors. He begins his essay *Reflections on Exile* with a sentence:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. (Said, 2000, p. 173)

In this quote, here are several interesting propositions for this study. Firstly, it is a fact that exile is a dreadful experience, regardless of how it is lived. Secondly, the portrayal of exile as a rift between an individual and their native place, between oneself and one's true home. This

implies that, for Said, a person in exile is always torn between two sides and carries this rift within themselves and in their existence, which they strive to fill. Further on, he goes with explaining how is it that these people try to fill this gap, or rift.

Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as a part of triumphant ideology or a restored people. The crucial thing is that a state of exile free from this triumphant ideology-designed to reassemble an exile's broken history into a new whole-is virtually unbearable, and virtually impossible in today's world. (Said, 2000, p.177)

Said further argues that the concept of nationalism emerged precisely from exile, as there was a need for scattered and dispersed communities to come together because it was 'their true way of life.' He further raises the question of exile and nationalism, in which he sees both directions as extremist. The question that is very intriguing is as follows: In addressing the profound challenge of overcoming the isolating experience of exile, the question arises: How does one navigate this predicament without succumbing to the overwhelming and overpowering discourse of national pride, shared emotions, and group affiliations? The query delves into the complex realm of reconciling personal identity with the societal pressures of belonging. It prompts a thoughtful examination of the delicate balance between maintaining a sense of individuality and resisting the gravitational pull of collective narratives. By exploring alternative paths to connection and belonging, one can strive to transcend the solitude of exile while avoiding the potential pitfalls of blind allegiance. This inquiry invites a nuanced exploration of the intricate dynamics between personal agency, social integration, and the delicate negotiation of identities in the context of exile. (Said, 2000, p. 177). On another hand, Ahmed Joudar (2020, p.6) gives us another perspective asserting that Edward Said employs the term 'exile' to delineate two distinct yet interconnected purposes: the actual and the metaphorical condition. The actual condition pertains to individuals or groups enduring unjust and dire circumstances, regardless of whether they reside in their native homeland (referred to as internal exile). Said underscores this by stating, "even the natives have become exiles in their own country" (Said 2000, p. 49), exemplifying the Palestinian predicament. Alternatively, the actual condition also encompasses those who have resettled in a new home following their expulsion (referred to as external exile), driven by various factors such as racism, minority status, famine, or religious persecution. An historical illustration of this can be seen in the forced migration of Irish Catholics to North America and Great Britain due to the famine. Such a situation, as can be seen from the example of Yugoslavia, is fertile ground for the development of nationalism. In his insightful analysis, Edward Said examines the condition of

exiles and their relationship with nationalism. But paradoxically he also emphasizes that regardless of their achievements, exiles are invariably seen as eccentrics who perceive their divergence from societal norms as a form of orphanhood. Although they may sometimes capitalize on their distinctiveness, genuine exiles consider the inclination to view estrangement in all things modern as pretentious, merely a fashionable display of attitudes. With a firm determination, exiles grasp their differences as a weapon, guarding it jealously and asserting their entitlement to reject the notion of belonging. This profound perspective sheds light on the intricate dynamics between exile, identity, and the refusal to conform, prompting an exploration of the complex interplay between these themes in the context of nationalism. (Said, 1967, p.182). It is important to note that he also points out the distinction between types of migrations. He makes a distinction among exiles, refugees, expatriates, and emigres. Said believes that exile originated from the age-old practice of banishment. When persecuted, exiles lead a miserable life marked by the stigma of existing as outsiders, as strangers, carrying with them loneliness and spirituality. On the other hand, for him, refugees are a concept that emerged in the 20th century and carries political significance, alluding to large masses of innocent people in urgent need of international assistance. (Said, 2000, p.181)

Exile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider. Refugees, on the other hand, are a creation of the twentieth century state. The word “refugee” has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas “exile” carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality. Expatriates voluntarily live in an alien country, usually for personal or social reasons. Hemingway and Fitzgerald were not forced to live in France. Expatriates may share in the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions. Émigrés enjoy an ambiguous status. Technically, an émigré is anyone who emigrates to a new country. (Said, 2000, p. 187)

According to Judith Butler (Butler, 2012 as cited in Sazzad 2017, p.27) the exilic intellectual aligns with the boundless vitality of the diaspora with the purpose of forging a program that simultaneously confronts the recurring cycle of human catastrophes and fosters a vision of cultural pluralism. This endeavor is inherently utopian, as it embodies the humanistic imagination that the exile intellectual presents, envisioning a world that has yet to materialize. Ultimately, Butler contends that the experience of exile, as understood through the lens of Edward Said, encompasses not only uprootedness but also a transformative process that nurtures possibilities for surpassing conventional notions of political entities. This perspective highlights the profound impact of exile on the intellectual's creative capacity and its potential to reimagine and transcend traditional political paradigms (Butler, 2012 as cited in Sazzad

2017, p.27). The experience of exile, as conceptualized by these intellectuals can be a powerful force for intellectual innovation and the creation of new visions for a culturally pluralistic and politically transformative future.

#### 4. Hybridity (H. Bhabha)

In order to explore the concept of Homi Bhabha's hybridity, it is imperative to first provide a comprehensive overview of the theory. This theory holds significance not only within the realm of postcolonial studies, but also across various social and natural disciplines. Throughout history, the definition of hybridity has evolved in multiple ways. The term hybridity, within the framework of diaspora and its cultural politics, warrants careful examination. It is argued that hybridity, despite its convoluted history, has been reclaimed as a means of articulating rights and asserting autonomy. The notion of the hybrid is intentionally elusive and subject to contestation, serving as a catalyst for change. It is noteworthy that a term with origins in biology and botany, later transformed into the weightier concept of syncretism, has found renewed significance in the works of scholars such as Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Iain Chambers, Homi Bhabha, and James Clifford (Hytnik, 2005, p.80). Additionally, it is important to define the concepts of identity. What exactly does identity represent, and how do the concept of hybridity and the concept of identity merge?

Individual responses to the question "Who am I?" vary widely. While some might identify themselves by their religious beliefs, others may simply refer to themselves as a human, or specify their gender... This highlights the subjective nature of identity. Psychologist Dunja Reljić posits that identity is an amalgamation of emotional and cognitive features that shape how a person perceives themselves as a unique individual, aligned with their own nature yet distinct from others. This perception is characterized by a consistent pattern in both behavior and self-awareness. The awareness of having an identity stems from both the immediate recognition of one's own continuity and the acknowledgment of that identity by others. In adulthood, identity becomes a relatively fixed construct, made up of personal characteristics, emotions, motivations, needs, attitudes, and behaviors, which sets us apart from others. Nevertheless, we each prioritize different facets of our personal identity.<sup>17</sup> Many individuals

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.danas.rs/zivot/sta-definise-nas-identitet-i-kako-se-prikazujemo-drugima/>

tend to embrace the identities that have been either inherited or adopted, often those imposed by societal norms. Consequently, it is evident that people are inclined towards the development of new identities. This inclination is largely due to our propensity to assimilate fresh insights and knowledge from our surroundings, which significantly shape our personal development. Whenever our existing cultural understanding and personal identity encounter novel and unfamiliar cultural shifts that impact our lives, there is a tendency to form what can be described as a hybrid identity. This process highlights the dynamic nature of identity formation in response to evolving cultural landscapes.

In his book *The Turbulence of Migration*, Papastergiadis tracks down the history of hybridity and presents how the contextualization of the term changed throughout the time. It is crucial to emphasize that there are various forms of hybridization. Hybridity, according to him, signifies the creation of something new, in this sense, of identity and language. He claims that the concept of hybridity found its roots in nineteenth-century discourses of scientific racism, where it primarily functioned as a metaphor highlighting the negative consequences of racial encounters (Papastergiadis, 2004, p.169). When considering these negative connotations of hybridity rooted in white supremacist ideologies, contemporary discourse predominantly focuses on its inclusive potential. The hybrid individual has frequently been stigmatized as a symbol of moral contamination, failure, and regression. In his analysis, Papastergiadis explores the association of the term hybrid with national reconciliations, where its conventional value is always juxtaposed with purity along the spectra of inclusion and exclusion. But on the other hand, it appears that hybridity has now established itself as the standard norm, lending a positive aspect to various objects, practices, and phenomena. This shift is significant, especially considering the term 'hybridity' originally derives from Latin, referred to the offspring of a domesticated sow and a wild boar, implying a mixed breed or illegitimate lineage. Consequently, the term has historically been associated with predominantly negative connotations, emphasizing its mixed or impure nature. (Michaels, 2019, p.3) Papastergiadis further examines Frey's model of hybridity, which distances the concept from the nineteenth-century theories of natural law and racial purity. Frey claims that hybrid progress is linked to a Eurocentric model of maximization, where the celebration of mixture takes place, albeit on a secondary level. Papastergiadis argues that this celebration is driven by the realization that through mixture, a new order can be achieved, one that integrates and maximizes the Eurocentric spirit. Mixture surpasses purity because it demonstrates superior performance. (Papastergiadis, 2004., p.176). Nonetheless, an important accomplishment of

post-structural theory was the emancipation of the subject from the constraints of fixed and pure origins (Papastergiadis, 2004., p.168). He claims further that, certain individuals from migrant communities gained recognition and influence “within the cultural and political circles of the dominant society” (Papastergiadis, 2000., as cited in Hutnyk, 2006, p. 80). These individuals advocated for alternative approaches of representing cultural interaction and highlighted the detrimental effects of rejecting emerging forms of cultural identity (Hutnyk, 2005, p.80). However, the term itself has gained significant acceptance in cultural theory. According to Papastergiadis when the process of identity formation is based on a strict division between ‘us’ and ‘them’, any hybrid that emerges from crossing this boundary is perceived as a source of danger, loss, and decline. However, if the boundary is established in a positive manner to encourage interaction and inclusivity, the hybrid can bring about strength and vitality. Therefore, the conventional assessment of hybridity is always relative to purity, considering the aspects of inclusion and exclusion. In certain situations, the curse of hybridity is seen as a double-edged sword (Papastergiadis, 2004, p.174). In current discussions, the term no longer signifies something dark or negative. On the contrary, it signifies the possibility of emergence and, consequently, the creation of something new. Throughout the history of racialized identity theory, the notions of purity and exclusivity have consistently played a significant role. The existence of hybridity, however, has been perceived as a potential impediment to the complete realization of one's selfhood. The positive aspect of hybridity, according to him, lies in its recognition that identity is constructed through the negotiation of differences, and the presence of fractures, gaps, and contradictions does not necessarily indicate failure. In its most radical form, Papastergiadis argues, hybridity represents a “field of different forces” (Papastergiadis, 2004., p.170) where unity is not derived from the sum of its parts but emerges through the transformative process occurring in what Homi Bhabha refers to as a *Third space* where elements encounter and mutually influence each other (Papastergiadis, 2004., p.170). One more interesting insight into the theory of hybridity comes from Johnathan Friedman. According to him, the concept of hybridity is rooted in the metaphor of purity. However, he argues that the idea of pure hybridity is contradictory in nature. This contradiction becomes apparent when hybridity is embraced as a collective or group identity. Friedman provides an example of how many Americans identify themselves using multi-ethnic genealogical terms, such as saying “I am part-Irish, part-Scot, part-Black” (Friedman, 1996, p.83). He asserts that these identities are not simply hyphenated in a social sense, as they are highly individualized, yet they still resonate with the metaphor of group identity. This does not diminish the essence of the identification itself, which is based on the passage of substance

from one generation to another, emphasizing the genealogical nature of identity (Friedman, 1996, p.83). Considering all these factors, it becomes clear that the theory of hybridity is still undergoing evolution in contemporary times. By examining urban environments and the movement of populations, a clear trend emerges showing the blending of different cultures. This phenomenon of hybridity is frequently linked to the process of migration. As Michaels claims, today, it is widely acknowledged that nothing remains 'pure'; any claims of purity are human constructs and deliberate in nature. Nations, cultures, languages, ethnicities, objects, artifacts, images, concepts, and practices (including rituals) are all interconnected and intertwined in a transcultural manner. Certain locations or spaces are particularly conducive to observing these complex forms of cultural interaction and exchange, such as metropolitan cities, border areas, marketplaces, and harbors. Additionally, specific individuals play a key role in fostering transculturality and cultural hybridity. These include cultural intermediaries or facilitators, like diplomats, missionaries, travelers, sailors, merchants, interpreters, political refugees, and migrants (Michaels, 2019, p.4).

The dual aspects of colonial discourse elucidated by Bhabha shed light on the hybrid nature of our post-colonial reality, particularly evident in minority cultures that navigate the fluidity of cultural identity. Bhabha's work prompts us to recognize the lingering, almost eerie, influence of colonialism in our contemporary post-colonial era, offering insightful theoretical frameworks to comprehend its persistent impact. David Huddart claims that a notable aspect of Bhabha's scholarship involves challenging the notion of static or predetermined identities. His own background provides a relevant backdrop for his influential theories. Bhabha was born in Mumbai, formerly Bombay, and belongs to the Parsi community. Parsis, a small global population of about 160,000, are Zoroastrians who fled from Persia to India in the eighth century to escape religious persecution. However, Bhabha's references to his heritage are not assertions of an unchangeable ethnic identity (Huddart, 2022, p.61). Huddart also believes that Bhabha is interested in the ways European discourses tend to stereotype the 'Other'. Bhabha focuses on the inevitable failure of this stereotyping process. For the colonizer, stereotypes serve the purpose of maintaining control and are thus kept distinct from the 'civilizing' justifications of the colonial project. However, Bhabha contends that these two aspects are intrinsically inseparable, with the fantasy realm of stereotypes consistently undermining the colonizer's narrative of civilization. Commonly, the issue with stereotypes is perceived as their tendency to fix identities, depriving groups of their own sense of identity and assuming to understand them based on prior, usually flawed and often racist knowledge. This issue is

certainly present in colonial discourse, which desires stereotypes to be fixed in order to justify relationships of domination. Contrary to this assumption, Bhabha argues that this fixity coexists with disorder, a fact recognized and vigilantly guarded against by the mechanisms of colonial power (Huddart, 2022, p.67). Another very interesting study is that of Anthony Easthope, who also compares Bhabha with Said. He highlights that the terms 'Orient' and 'Occident' are derived from the Latin words for sunrise (*oriens*) and sunset (*occidens*). Easthope then compares Bhabha and Said claiming that in *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said illustrates how these terms, initially representing fluid positions, were anchored in relation to a fictitious European center. Said portrays the 'Orient' as a subject of European knowledge, incapable of self-understanding. Homi Bhabha, however, identifies a critical limitation in Said's perspective, pointing out the assumption that colonial power and discourse are entirely in the hands of the colonizer. Bhabha argues that the process of Orientalism is inherently flawed, as the colonial subject embodies conflicting positions, making them a nexus of both stability and imagination. This complexity leads to an inherently fragmented, inconsistent, and thus potentially resistant process. Bhabha identifies various factors that undermine colonial control, such as fetishism and paranoia, but also sly civility. Robert Young critiques Bhabha's approach for its 'restless seriality', leaving unresolved the issue of agency. I would argue that Bhabha's approach is fundamentally oppositional, emerging from the tension between various forms of ambivalence and the rigidity he attributes to Said's framework. (Easthope, 1998, p.1) The concept of hybridity by Homi Bhabha is a highly intricate concept. In his book, *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that there exists a space within identity that lies between rigid categorizations. It should be emphasized that a detailed analysis of this book would require extensive study. Bhabha suggests that this transitional space allows for the emergence of cultural hybridity, where differences can coexist without the presumption or imposition of a hierarchical structure (Easthope, 1998,p.1). This suggests the idea that culture and identity are not static entities; rather, they are in a constant state of evolution and mutual influence, thereby creating new, hybrid forms. Bhabha explores the concept of hybridity from a multifaceted perspective. He views it as a manifestation of colonial anxiety and, simultaneously, as a form of resistance by the subaltern or colonized against the influence and domination of colonizers (Michaels, 2019, p.4). Bhabha interprets hybridity as a political term that encompasses ambivalence, mimicry, camouflage (1994: 193), and even heresy (1994: 226), all of which contribute to the hybridizing expressions in the processes of postcolonial modernity. This leads to the creation of new hybrid identities and novel forms of difference (Michaels, 2019, p.4). For Bhabha, hybridity is intricately linked to the 'process of translating and trans-valuing

cultural differences' (1994: 252). He is portraying it as more than a mere byproduct of cultural intersections. Bhabha's perspective reveals hybridity as a potent catalyst for transformation within postcolonial contexts. It emerges as a complex interplay of resistance and adaptation, challenging entrenched power dynamics and traditional notions of identity. This concept of hybridity, as Bhabha articulates, serves as a testament to the fluid and evolving nature of cultural identities, which are continually reshaped through the intermingling of diverse cultural forces. In the realm of postcolonial studies, Bhabha's insights into hybridity offer a nuanced understanding of how new, multifaceted identities are forged, transcending simplistic binary classifications, and highlighting the dynamic nature of cultural evolution.

Robert Young, one of the most famous critics of Bhabha's, in his book *Colonial Desire: hybridity in theory, culture and race*, has strategically redirected the subversion of authority through hybridization to the dialogical context of colonialism. In this context, Bhabha illuminates a process that uncovers the inherent uncertainty found within conventional discussions of authority. According to Bhabha, hybridity represents a critical juncture where the discourse of colonial authority relinquishes its singular hold on meaning and becomes receptive to the influence of the other's language. This receptiveness empowers critics to discern intricate movements of unsettling otherness within the colonial text (Young, 1995, p.21). Bhabha, in his work, primarily focuses on postcolonial hybridity that emerges between the colonizer and the colonized. However, in this context, we are not discussing postcolonial theory but rather cultural hybridization. Nevertheless, Homi Bhabha introduces the concept of the *Third space* of identity formation, which is highly intriguing and interesting for this thesis. The *Third Space* traces back to Victor Turner's concept of liminality. Turner emphasizes that he borrowed this concept from Arnold Van Gennep (1960 [1908]), which in Turner's research refers to the ritual processes he observed in Central Africa (Turner, 1992, p.48). Turner believes that Van Gennep understood liminality as Rites of Passage as "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position, and age" (Turner, 1992, p.48).

According to Van Gennep, these are marked by three phases: separation, margin (limen) and reaggregation. Separation and reaggregation "detach ritual subjects from their old places in society and return them, inwardly transformed and outwardly changed, to new places". But according to Turner, the marginal or liminal phase is more interesting for the sociocultural processes. Among other things he defines limen as "a corridor almost, or a tunnel which may become a pilgrim's road, or passing from dynamics to statics, may cease to be a mere transition and become a set way of life, a state, that of the anchorite or monk" (Turner, 1992, p.4). Homi

Bhabha views the postcolonial perspective, anchored in a Turnerian model of liminal social drama, as more than just theoretical musing, simple reflection, or mere critique. Instead, he sees it as an active celebration of dynamic cultural change spaces marked by evolving identities. In Bhabha's view, theories like liminality are not just academic concepts; they are practical responses and interventions in the everyday experiences of individuals navigating the vast currents of change. Consequently, culture, in Bhabha's framework, is not understood as a holistic, static entity but rather as a process of ongoing enunciation (Kalua, 2009, p.23).

According to Young (1995), Bhabha further interprets this moment as a “hybrid displacing space” (Young, 1995, p.21) that emerges through the interaction between indigenous and colonial cultures. This interaction, Bhabha suggests, not only undermines the political authority imposed by the imperialist culture, often through violent means but also challenges its claims of authenticity. In his more recent work, Bhabha expands his concept of hybridity to encompass forms of counter authority, represented by a *Third Space* that intervenes to bring about change. For him this *Third Space* then becomes the ‘hybrid’ moment of political change. “Here the transformational value of change lies in the re-articulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One (unitary working class) nor the Other (the politics of gender) but something else besides which contests the terms and territories of both” (Bhabha, 1994, p.28). Bhabha, according to Friedman, challenges the notion of the nation and its assumed uniformity, emphasizing the significance of the migrant's position, which entails existing in two locations simultaneously and maintaining a dual perspective on reality. Bhabha's challenge to the notion of a uniform national identity resonates deeply with the Yugoslavian context. The conflict arose partly due to rigid nationalistic ideologies that sought to define 'pure' ethnic identities. Bhabha's emphasis on the fluidity of identity and the rejection of fixed cultural frameworks can provide a critical perspective on how the insistence on homogenous national identities contributed to the conflict. He employs the concept of cultural hybridity, along with assertion of counter-modernity, to argue that this is not a mere opposition but rather a form of transcendence. He contends that it is imperative not to confine the migrant within a single cultural framework, as doing so would give rise to nationalism, racism, and other negative outcomes. Instead, Bhabha highlights the presence of fluidity and an inherent instability in delineated boundaries (Friedman, 1996., p.78).

For a willingness to descend into that alien territory-where I have led you-may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but in inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. To

that end we should remember that it is the 'inter'- the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, that inbetween space-that carries the burden of meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'. And by exploring this. *Third Space*, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38)

For Bhabha, this recognition of the coexistence of multiple perspectives provides the possibility of conceptualizing an international culture that is not based solely on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the mere diversity of cultures. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and embracing the hybridity of cultures. As, Friedman writes, here we have a "total fusion of all cultures into a new heterogeneous homogeneity of the *Third Space*" (Friedman, 1996., p.79).

Bhabha claims, that in any cultural performance, the way language is used highlights the difference between the subject being discussed (the subject of enunciation) and the person speaking about it. This difference is recognized as having a disruptive impact and is influenced by culture, time, and place. To create meaning, both perspectives need to be combined in what is called a *Third Space*. This *Third Space* represents the general rules of language and the specific implications of the statement within a performative and institutional context. However, the speaker may not be fully aware of these implications on their own (Friedman, 1996., p.79).

It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37)

For Bhabha, the *Third Space* is crucial as it establishes the conditions under which meanings and symbols in culture are not fixed or unified from the start. In this perspective, the same signs can be translated, recontextualized, and interpreted in new ways, allowing for fresh readings and reinterpretations (Friedman, 1996., p.79). He claims, the 'inter', the 'in between space' or *Third Space* plays a crucial role as a site of translation and negotiation, serving as an intermediary space that bears the weight of cultural meaning. It enables the exploration of national and anti-nationalist histories, offering a means to transcend the limitations imposed by binary oppositions. By engaging with this *Third Space*, individuals can potentially evade the politics of polarity and develop a more nuanced understanding of their own identities as well as those of others (Bhabha, 1994, p. 39).

As Bill Ashcroft claims, the colonial space can be understood as an arena of conflict and tension (Ashcroft, 1995, p.9). Despite the colonized people's use of "imitation" and "mimicry" to navigate the presence of the imperial power, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is characterized by continuous, albeit implicit, contestation and opposition. In fact, this very act of mimicry becomes the site where the conflict unfolds, a "transparency" as described by Bhabha, which relies on the underlying negativity of the imperial presence it seems to replicate. According to Bhabha, "mimicry" does not imply the rejection of opposition; rather, it encompasses more than overt resistance. Opposition is not solely confined to intention but is implicit in the very exercise of dominance, where the intervention of the colonizer as a "dislocatory presence" paradoxically affirms what it displaces. The resulting hybrid expressions also challenge the notion of "pure" and "authentic", concepts often upheld in the resistance against imperialism. Hybridity, contrary to suggesting corruption or decline, as argued by Bhabha, can be seen as "be the most common and effective form of subversive opposition since it displays the 'necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination'" (Ashcroft, 1995, p.9). In his essay *Signs Taken for Wonders*, Bhabha believes that the imposed identity, or the identity of the colonizer, is always ambivalent: "Consequently, the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 107). This ambivalent existence of identity among colonizers is not only present in relation to them. Ambivalence is woven throughout the entire relationship, giving rise to the creation of hybrid identities. Satoshi Mizutani in his critical essay on Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity claims that the term is commonly associated with the blending of different races or "miscegenation". However, Homi Bhabha's formulation of the concept diverges from its racial connotations (Mizutani, 2013, p. 29). According to Mizutani, Bhabha's concept of hybridity is not intended to provide a moral foundation for promoting racial mixing in opposition to the imperialist notion of racial purity. Nor does it serve as a conceptual tool for uncovering objective sociological realities about miscegenation within colonial histories. Instead, the metaphorical understanding of mixture implied by hybridity enables postcolonial critics to disrupt the discourse of imperialism, which would otherwise remain unchanged and uninfluenced by external factors (Mizutani, 2013, p. 30).

## **5. Relationship between Hybridity and Exile in literary analysis and in the context of memory and identity development**

Hybridity and exile are both concepts associated with postcolonialism. Postcolonial theory examines the impact of colonialism on various cultures and communities, particularly after World War II, focusing on the post-independence era. This period saw significant global changes, leading to migration or exile of writers, creating cultural identity crises. The theory highlights the struggle between the colonized and the colonizer's culture, emphasizing the ongoing cultural control by the colonizer. This struggle often leads to conflicts within hybrid societies formed from migration. Colonial powers often fostered ethnic divisions, causing clashes and forced migration. The lasting effects of colonization are evident in diverse societies, where hybridity is often resisted, particularly in Asian and Arabian countries. Postcolonial times are marked by the efforts of newly independent states to establish their cultural and political identities, striving for self-determination amidst these tensions (Joudar, 2020, p.5587). Through migration and displacement of populations, the emergence of hybrid identities occurs, leading to the creation of new identities. Viewed through a postcolonial lens, the concepts of hybridity and exile are essential for grasping the impacts of both colonization and its aftermath. Cultures in colonized societies typically undergo a form of hybridization, influenced by the enforced integration of the colonizer's cultural elements. In a similar vein, themes of exile are prevalent in postcolonial literature, reflecting the struggles of individuals and communities as they confront the remnants of colonial rule and strive to forge a distinct postcolonial identity. The relationship between hybridity and exile is very close, or rather, they are mutually conditioned. Hybridity would not exist without exile, and exile, as we know it today, would not exist without hybrid identities. Both concepts have been studied in postcolonial and diaspora literature, which extensively examines identities, belonging, and displacement.

One of the most important relations between these two theories is that Hybridity is a response to the state of Exile. The experience of exile often exposes individuals or communities to novel cultures, ideas, and lifestyles, fostering the development of hybrid identities as they assimilate and adjust to their unfamiliar environments. In literary works, the emergence of hybrid identities in response to exile is frequently explored, delving into the intricate negotiation between various cultural influences. Anthony Easthope claims that Bhabha in his influential work *The Location of Culture*, argues that there exists a space “in-between the designations of identity” where cultural hybridity emerges, allowing for the embrace of difference without

hierarchical assumptions or impositions. This notion of hybridity, according to Bhabha, signifies the potential for alternative identities that transcend fixed categorizations (Easthope, 1998, p.1).

One more important bond between Exile and Hybridity in literary analysis is that hybridity can be used as a concept to go beyond limitations. As mentioned above, Bhabha challenges the idea that a nation is uniform and the same everywhere. Instead, he focuses on the position of migrants who live in two places at once and see the world from a dual perspective. Bhabha uses the concept of cultural hybridity and the idea of counter-modernity to argue that this duality is not just a contradiction, but a way to go beyond limitations. He believes it is important not to limit migrants to one culture because that can lead to nationalism, racism, and other negative consequences. Bhabha emphasizes that boundaries are not fixed and stable, but fluid and unstable. From this fluidity in literature, fertile ground is born for writing, creation, and subsequent analysis. Fluid identities, in this case hybrid ones, can be analyzed in countless ways, while fixed identities are much easier and simpler to analyze, often offering only one pattern for discussion. With hybridity, as a response to colonization and exile, this is not the case. Because it is so fluid, in motion and changeable, it offers various possibilities for interpretation.

This brings us to the third point of connection between hybridity and exile, as exile serves as a catalyst for hybridity. Exile, with its ruptures and dislocations, can create fertile ground for the emergence of hybrid identities. The experience of being uprooted from one's homeland often prompts individuals to forge connections with other exiles or diasporic communities, leading to the exchange and fusion of cultural practices and beliefs. Literature explores how exile can become a catalyst for hybridity by bringing different cultures into contact and sparking new forms of cultural expression. Alternatively, arriving at a fourth consideration, exile often acts as a catalyst for feelings of estrangement and discord among those with hybrid identities. These individuals, grappling with their new environments, commonly experience a sense of non-belonging and deeply yearn for and lament the loss of their native lands. It does not always mean that individuals will perceive the creation and shaping of their new identity through exile, or the *Third Space*, as a positive experience. In fact, many people never fully detach themselves from the country they came from, and such a situation can often lead to various difficult psychological states. Literature often explores this negative aspect of forming hybrid identities in exile. It delves into the complexities and challenges individuals face when navigating their hybrid identities in the context of exile.

Another important aspect is the potential of 'In-between spaces' for identity formation and societal transformation. Bhabha (Bhabha, 1994, p.2) claims, that we should move beyond narratives centered on original and initial subjectivities and instead direct our attention to the moments or processes that arise from the expression of cultural differences. He argues that these in-between spaces offer a platform for developing strategies of selfhood, whether individual or communal, which give rise to new signs of identity and foster innovative sites of collaboration and contention in shaping the concept of society itself: "The social articulation of difference, from minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation." (Bhabha, 1994, p.2). From this quote it can be seen that the nature of social articulation of difference aims to validate and give legitimacy to cultural hybridity that arises during moments of historical transformation. In other words, it suggests that marginalized communities navigate and assert their cultural hybridity as a response to societal shifts, challenging dominant narratives and seeking recognition for their unique identities within evolving historical contexts. For literature, this phenomenon is of great importance, not only because hybridity in this sense is used as an inevitable response to social changes, but also because dominant and decades-present narratives in literature are being re-examined. From a wider perspective, the interaction of hybridity and exile carries substantial political and social consequences. This interplay shapes the formulation of policies related to immigration, multiculturalism, and the concept of national identity. Grasping these ideas is crucial, as it guides the way societies tackle challenges related to integration, embracing cultural diversity, and fostering social unity. Consequently, both theories play a significant role in shaping literary trends and dictating narratives that permeate through literary works.

Hybridity and exile hold significant relevance in the formation of memory and identity due to multiple factors. Primarily, exile disrupts the memory of one's homeland, instigating a nuanced interplay of remembrance and oblivion. Within the realm of memory, certain distinctive moments and phenomena tend to endure, encompassing sensory elements like aromas, distinct sounds, and tastes. This process of recollection becomes an intricate negotiation, occupying an intermediate space that facilitates the emergence of fresh identities and cultural influences. Individuals strive to navigate their hybrid identities while simultaneously recalling their experiences of displacement. Consequently, this is a very fertile ground for the development of artistic works as such, because a person most deeply yearns for what he knows. And what he knows is based on an identity that is reinforced by certain memories.

Also, these two terms lead to the questioning of the individual and the development of identity. Namely, exile forces the individual to deal with the question of belonging and non-belonging, cultural heritage and self-definition. Being in exile, the individual appropriates new patterns of behavior, keeping what he brought from his home country. It is precisely in this interspace that elements from both worlds are integrated, which are key in creating identity. As Said himself claims, experience of being disconnected motivates individuals to reconstruct their fragmented lives, highlighting the transformative value of this challenging phenomenon. Consequently, self-reflection emerges as a paradoxical advantage of exile enabling individuals to gain new perspectives and insights (Sazzad, 2017, p.18). Taking into account that both concepts arise from the engagement of cultural difference throughout history, we have had the opportunity to see those engagements of cultural difference, as Bhabha himself claims, can be cooperative, but also contentious. They have the potential to disrupt our established notions of tradition and modernity, redefine the conventional divisions between the private and public realms, challenge hierarchical distinctions between high and low culture, and defy normative expectations of advancement and growth. (Bhabha, 1994, p.2). Cultural interactions prompt us to reassess and rethink our understanding and definitions of these concepts. Traditional distinctions between the private and public spheres, which determine what is viewed as personal and what is appropriate for public presentation, undergo transformation through these interactions. As a result of cultural exchange and hybridity, the lines separating these domains become less distinct.

Another important aspect is that individuals can negotiate on their belonging. In his work Edward Said claims that individual deliberately creates a sense of detachment from an unquestioning allegiance to their familiar culture, which initially stems from an instinctive and uncritical fondness for their homeland. The intellectuals, due to their geographical, physical, or metaphorical circumstances, find themselves unable to reclaim the spontaneously generated reverence for their culture, even if they desired to do so. As a result, they engage in a critical process of deliberation, determining which aspects or customs of their home cultures to relinquish while deciding which values to uphold (Said, 2000, p.182). This aspect holds great significance as it emphasizes the individual's autonomy in choosing which identities to embrace and reject. This is particularly crucial because post-colonial theory and the discourse surrounding exile often neglect the agency of individuals in making these decisions. While many decisions are imposed upon individuals, there exists a limited number of choices that they can consciously make. Recognizing and acknowledging this agency is important in understanding the complexities of identity formation and the experiences of those in exile.

## 6. Dubravka Ugrešić

Once outside the country he has abandoned, his only identity is that of a representative of that country. Although I no longer exist in Croatia as a Croatian writer, I am elsewhere labeled a Croatian writer almost without exception. Not by my choice, I have become a more Croatian Croatian writer than I would have been had I stayed in Croatia. In other words, I have become what I am not. Why does the rest of the world label me a Croatian writer? Because it simply does not know how else to label me. Everyone is someone's writer, everyone belongs to some nation, everyone writes in some language, why trouble oneself with a statistically insignificant example of the dysfunction of national identities? Behind every writer stands his homeland. (Ugrešić, 2004, p. 140)

The question of to whom Balkan writers belong is a topic of interest not only to literary critics and authors but also at national levels. Often, this issue is influenced by national states, particularly evident in the aftermath of the former Yugoslavia's disintegration, where states are now attempting to reconstruct their identities. This topic is also frequently posed to Dubravka Ugrešić, a prominent figure in this discourse. Born in 1949, amidst the aftermath of World War II, Ugrešić reflects on her upbringing, stating, "I was born into and grew up in a world that was divided into the good guys and the bad guys"<sup>18</sup>. Ugrešić, who holds degrees in Comparative and Russian Literature, spent many years at the University of Zagreb's Institute for Theory of Literature, where she simultaneously excelled as a writer and a scholar. In 1991, with the onset of war in the former Yugoslavia, Ugrešić openly opposed the war, critically analyzing the regressive nationalisms of Croatia and Serbia, as well as the absurdity and criminal nature of the conflict. This stance made her a target for nationalist media, politicians, and some fellow writers. Facing extended public exclusion and relentless media harassment, she departed from Croatia in 1993. Ugrešić identifies herself as a writer beyond national boundaries, advocating for a "transnational" or "post-national" identity. She defends the right of writers to disregard ethnic and national divisions, particularly when these are enforced by coercion, as was her experience.<sup>19</sup> As an already esteemed writer, Dubravka Ugrešić left Croatia in her forties and ventured into the world, turning her exile into emigration, a theme central to her books. Ugrešić's status as a globally recognized author paradoxically thrived outside her initial Yugoslav setting, a result of her persistent exploration of themes that nationalist regimes during the 1990s Yugoslav wars sought to suppress. These themes included patriotic violence and kitsch, the dissolution of a shared nation, misogyny, and revisionist history. Her candid newspaper essays, which critiqued the right-wing Tuđman government during a time of

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<sup>18</sup> <https://lithub.com/dubravka-ugresic-who-am-i-where-am-i-and-whose-am-i/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.dubravkaugresic.com/about/>

nationalistic fervor, led to her social marginalization in her hometown of Zagreb. This backlash ultimately resulted in her losing her university teaching role and relocating to Holland, amidst death threats. (Kovačević, 2013, p. 64). Ugrešić's scholarly pursuits compel an integrated examination of her literary works alongside her essays and autobiographical musings, which frequently shed light on the underlying conceptual frameworks and political themes prevalent in her oeuvre. Kovačević (2013) takes an example of her two early essay collections, *Have a Nice Day* (1995) and *The Culture of Lies* (1998), that delve into the suppressed grief over Yugoslavia's demise, a fate seemingly sealed by both regional nationalist aggressors and the intervention of Western media and military forces. Ugrešić incisively critiques the clichés of communist tyranny used to justify the disintegration of Yugoslavia, revealing how the emergent sovereign states increasingly succumb to insular bigotry and the imposition of intellectual uniformity. (Kovačević, 2013, p. 64) Later on in her distinctive style, Ugrešić documents the “trivialities” of daily existence, from musings on soap operas to cultural trinkets and political indoctrination, unmasking the pervasive practices and narratives that define the post-Yugoslav era. More crucially, she situates the Yugoslav catastrophe within a broader global framework, implicating Western-centric media propaganda, the worldwide proliferation of kitsch, and the commodification of intellectual thought for consumer markets.

Unlike many of her fellow intellectuals and writers, Ugrešić did not align herself with post-Yugoslav national literatures. Martha Kuhlman notes that Ugrešić was once asked, “What are you technically”, to which she replied, “a Balkan”(Kuhlman, 1999, p.425). Kuhlman recounts an incident in 1993 where a Danish critic criticized Ugresic for her book *Fording the Stream of Consciousness*. The critic mistakenly interpreted her work as a disrespectful satire about the war, accusing Ugresic of indulging in a crude form of literary escapism. In reality, Ugresic was preoccupied with more serious issues, such as the violent conflict unfolding in her homeland. (Kuhlman, 1999, p.426).

Consequently, a pertinent inquiry emerges regarding the categorization of her literary contributions, especially considering the inadequacy of both Eastern and Central European contexts in elucidating her cultural positioning. Dubravka Ugrešić, embodying the essence of postmodernism, navigates her identity as a female author. Her works, deeply entrenched in feminist discourse, boldly challenge the patriarchal underpinnings of established literary canon. Her multifaceted identity encompasses roles as a Balkan, Eastern European, and Central European writer, while also embracing the unique perspective of an expatriate author.

In addition to writing, her books have been translated into more than thirty languages.<sup>20</sup> She lectured at various universities and won numerous literary awards. Dubravka Ugrešić passed away on March 17, 2023, in Amsterdam, in the loving presence of her family and friends.

My mother's words "Now I no longer know who I am, or where I am, or whose I am . . ." capture in the simplest possible way the dominant thematic preoccupation of all the books I have written since emigrating. In all my books I write about ruins, or memory, the personal and the collective, as well as about the official historical fabrications written by the victors that are included in the textbooks in order for them to become the unquestioned canon. Everything I write seeks answers to the question "who am I, where am I, and whose am I?"<sup>21</sup>

Dubravka Ugrešić's *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*, was published in 1997<sup>22</sup>, stands as a pivotal piece in the literary response to the Yugoslav War, which reached its denouement in 1996. Facing the mounting discord and turmoil of the time, Ugrešić made the poignant decision to exit the Balkans in 1993, severing ties with her once-familiar surroundings. In the wake of the war, the remnants of Yugoslavia gave birth to new sovereign states, each deeply steeped in nationalist ideologies. This intensified nationalism, intertwined with lingering hostilities, became a defining feature of daily existence in these emergent nations, shaping the broader socio-political dynamics of the region. It would be unjust not only to Dubravka Ugrešić but also to her readers to label her solely as a Croatian writer. In the Balkans, there is a recurring discussion about the national affiliation of renowned authors, particularly following the breakup of Yugoslavia. Dubravka Ugrešić, who departed from Yugoslavia in 1993 during the onset of war and conflicts, actively wrote against and opposed the war. With a significant number of people leaving Yugoslavia, Ugrešić, in her literary works after her departure, focused on themes of identity and exile, which form the thematic core of her writings. She argues that in the 20th century, marked by war, persecution, terror, genocides, revolutions, totalitarian systems, state reconfigurations, and mass migrations, writers cannot claim exclusive rights to the theme of exile. However, despite being statistically insignificant and unreliable witnesses, writers are, for Ugrešić, among the few migrants who leave indelible imprints on the cultural map of the world. (Ugrešić, 2004, p.135).

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<sup>20</sup> Ebd.

<sup>21</sup> <https://lithub.com/dubravka-ugresic-who-am-i-where-am-i-and-whose-am-i/>

<sup>22</sup> *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* initially saw its release in Dutch in 1997, followed by an English version in 1998. Despite being penned in Croatian, the novel was not published in its native language until 2002 due to tensions between the author and the Croatian authorities. For this thesis, I reference the original Croatian edition *Muzej bezuvjetne predaje* (2008).

In this novel, which can be seen as a *roman à clef* (Jovanović, 2006., p.108), Ugrešić plays with literary forms and “travels along its ragged edges, offering a haunting and much more subjective view of the shock and disorientation of exile” (Kuhlman, 1999)<sup>23</sup>. The novel reflects on a writer’s stay in Berlin and Munich in seven symmetrically arranged chapters, recalling her own childhood and youth. In a highly poetic and melancholic manner. Throughout the novel, there is a noticeable variation in writing style, transitioning between diary entries, first-person narratives, mini-stories, letters, and other forms of expression. Additionally, the protagonist finds herself in different locations as the narrative unfolds. The novel consists out of seven sections or parts. All seven of them present impressions of Germany and four of them consist of German titles: “Ich bin müde”, “Family museum”, “Guten Tag”, “Archive: six stories with the discreet motif of a departing angel”, “Was ist Kunst”, “Group photograph”, “Wo bin ich?” (Wienhold-Brokish, 2012, p.254). At the beginning of novel, the narrator introduces the readers to the contents discovered in the stomach of a walrus named Roland, which were displayed at the Berlin Zoo. Ugrešić proposes that we approach the book's content in a similar manner to how we interpret the objects found in Roland's stomach - as a compilation of seemingly unrelated archaeological discoveries that lack an immediate logical or narrative connection upon first inspection (Vervae, 2011, p. 295). The book comprises fragmented memories and pivotal moments from the author's life, intricately pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle to form a cohesive whole. Through this literary work, the author explores the intricate connection between memories, history, and their profound influence on literature. Furthermore, the book incorporates a rich tapestry of quotations from various writers, shedding light on themes such as exile, homeland, memories, and emotions. The inclusion of the word “museum” in the book's title, as asserted by Vervae himself, underscores its purpose as a medium for the preservation, conservation, and collection of memories and fragments from the past (Vervae, 2011, p. 296). Additionally, Vervae underscores that the book not only engages with the content, mechanism, and challenges associated with collective and individual memory but also delves into their complexities (Vervae, 2011, p. 296). By examining this term “museum” alone, the novel's theme can be seen, which, as Obradović points out, is inconsequential. It is deemed inconsequential because the book delves, among other things, into the topic of “cultural objects of socialism” (Obradović, 2012, p. 416), which have become obsolete in the new democratic, civic societies and the capitalist marketplace. However, these

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<sup>23</sup> <https://artmargins.com/the-culture-of-lies-the-museum-of-unconditional-surrender-dubravka-ugresics-recent-work/>

materials are presented as repositories of memories—memories of a life that no longer exists. In addition to that physical play or description of the objects or memories, Ugrešić's first-person narration undoubtedly explores the connection between the personal and the public within the political landscape, utilizing the lens of exile.

This novel is an anti-political work that serves as a literary witness to the traumas of identity resulting from the breakup of Yugoslavia and the experience of exile during the post-socialist era. It also invites readers to contemplate it as an autobiography. As Snel claims “The literary text is not only a simple act of remembering but also encourages the reader to reflect on the particular kind of remembering that it makes possible” (Snel, 2016, p.201). Nevertheless, the novel operates as a testimonial of exile, employing a dream-like structure. Through the interweaving and convergence of past, present, and future moments, it conveys the notion that exile is not solely a state stemming from particular events, but rather an intricate interplay of circumstances and destiny (Kuhlman, 1999). Dimitar Kamburov extensively describes Dubravka Ugrešić's novel, asserting that the novel lacks a precise temporal designation and timeframe. As she changes her suitcase, which serves as a metaphor for exile in the book, time and place begin to blur, fuse, and confuse (Kamburov, 2010, p.153). Knowing that the suitcase will be seen as a metaphor for exile by literary theorists, Ugrešić emphatically denies this metaphor in the book:

Kofer ne koristim kao uobičajenu metaforičku zamjenu za riječ egzil. Kofer, naime, jest moja jedina realnost. Čak ni žigovi, koji su se namnožili na stranama moga pasoša, ne uvjeravaju me dovoljno u realnost mojih putanja. Da, kofer je moja jedina čvrsta točka. Sve ostalo sanjam ili sve ostalo sanja mene, što je postalo svejedno. U koferu su neke posve besmislene stvarčice. Među njima jedna stara, požutjela, i druga prazna, škart fotografija. (Ugrešić, 2002, p.121)<sup>24</sup>

Ugrešić delves in her novel into the symbolic bereavement endured by herself and fellow individuals uprooted by the conflict. Through her fragmented storytelling, she gathers the recollections of a shattered country, lost identities, as well as severed connections with friends and family due to war. The resulting assemblage of narratives, comprising of observations, concise vignettes, and allusions to other writers, constructs a war museum. This disjointed and borrowed framework serves as a commemoration and remembrance of the displaced

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<sup>24</sup> I do not use my suitcase as a metaphorical substitute for the word ‘exile’. The suitcase is in fact my only reality. Even the stamps which have accumulated on the pages of my passport do not convince me sufficiently of the reality of my journeying. Yes, the suitcase is my one fixed point. Everything else is a dream, or perhaps I am a dream dreamed by someone else. It doesn’t matter which any more. The suitcase contains some completely senseless things. Including one old, yellowed and another blank, reject photograph. (Ugrešić, 1998, p. 204)

individuals, their identities, and the artifacts of war, with a primary focus on women. (Wienhold-Brokish, 2012, p.253).

Ugrešić's work defies a singular interpretation as she intentionally steers clear of aligning with conventional narratives or genres, especially the well-known frameworks of autobiography and war accounts (Wienhold-Brokish, 2012, p. 255). From this, we can see that the reader can perceive this book as a project and as a museum, open for all of us to interpret it as we deem appropriate.

Zamjećujem da fotografiju uvijek nosim sa sobom, kao kakvu fetišnu stvarčicu kojoj ne znam parvo značenje. Mutnožuta površina hipnotički privlači moju pažnju. Ponekad dugo zurim u nju i ne mislim ni o čemu. Ponekad se pažljivo udubljujem u zrcalne odraze triju kupaćica na vodi, u njihova lica koja gledaju pravo u moje. Uranjam u njih kao da ću odgonetnuti tajnu, otkriti neku pukotinu, skriveni prolaz (Ugrešić, 2002, p.8).<sup>25</sup>

Do we not view objects in museums in this manner? When we attend an exhibition, do we not engage in similar contemplation when faced with particular artwork? At this juncture, the author positions the museum as a building, detached from its conventional museum context, and integrates it into the fabric of everyday life, thereby transforming personal possessions into objects that evoke the past, effectively turning one's surroundings into a museum. According to Ugrešić, the museum, as such, is something that is transmitted and carried by individuals, transcending national, state, and geographical and physical boundaries. If we truly view this novel as a museum, then we can see that the concept of exile in the novel is depicted as piecing together parts of life, past, present, and future, as a constant questioning of one's identity. For Ugrešić: “Život i nije drugo do album s fotografijama. Samo to što je u albumu postoji. To čega u albumu nema, nikada nije ni postojalo kaže moj prijatelj<sup>26</sup>” (Ugrešić, 2002, p.21).

We can see that the concept of exile in the novel is described as assembling parts of life, past, present, and future, as a constant questioning of one's identity. This perspective of viewing the novel in that way could be interesting for this thesis. The writer also plays with dream-like motifs and uses dreams to show the true feelings of someone in exile. These dreams are filled

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<sup>25</sup> I always carry the photograph around with me, like a little fetisch object whose real meaning I do not know. Its matt yellow surface attracts my attention, hypnotically. Sometimes I stare at it for a long time, not thinking about anything. Sometimes I plunge attentively into the reflections of the three bathers mirrored in the water, into their faces which are looking straight at mine. I dive into them as though I am about to solve a mystery , discover a crack, a hidden passage through which I shall slip into a different space, a different time. (Ugrešić, 1998, p.6)

<sup>26</sup>Life is nothing other than a photograph album. Only what is in the album exists. What is not in the album, never happened,' says a friend of mine (Ugrešić, 1998, p. 27)

with nostalgia, a mix of past and present, and a sense of longing for home. It is like when we dream of places we have been and people we miss. By incorporating allusions within the novel, particularly regarding angels, Ugrešić “strengthens the impact of its numerous motifs” and establishes an “internal network of references and symbols” (138). Through this approach, Ugrešić questions the reader's own memory and prompts them to recall whether and where these references appear in the text. In doing so, she directly addresses the theme of memory within the novel's composition:

Egzilantu se čini da stanje egzila ima strukturu sna. Najednom se, kao u snu, pojavljuju neka lica koja je bio zaboravio, koja možda nikada nije sreo, neki prostori koje pouzdano prvi put vidi, ali mu se čini da ih odnekud zna. San je magnetsko polje koje privlači slike iz prošlosti, sadašnjosti i budućnosti. Egzilantu se najednom na javi javljaju lica, događaji i slike privučeni magnetskim poljem sna; najednom mu se čini da je njegova biografija ispisana davno prije nego što će se ispuniti, da egzil prema tome nije rezultat vanjskih okolnosti niti njegov izbor, nego koordinate koje je sudbina već odavno iscrtala za njega. Uhvaćen u tu slatku i strasnu misao egzilant počinje odgonetati smušene znakove, križiće i čvoriće i najednom mu se čini da u svemu čita tajni sklad, okruglu logiku simbola. (Ugrešić, 2002, p.12)<sup>27</sup>

The author has assembled the fragments and fragments of her recollections in a way that allows them to form their own cohesive entity. Ugrešić alludes to Russian writers Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky, and Ilya Kabakov, who were inspiration for her artistic perspective as well as her creative work. (Wienhold-Brokish, 2012, p. 259). On the one hand it could be said that these intertextual references serve to enhance significant themes, including “autobiography and Berlin” (As Simeon, 2007. p.138), while also consciously highlighting the novel as a constructed work. On the other hand, these citations of other writers in the text potentially serve as a form of “dream displacement”, allowing the narrator to express themselves by adopting the words of other writers. If we take into account that this method is “not a sign of repression, but a strategy of resistance and agency” (Wienhold-Brokish, 2012, p. 259), then we can see that this integration of dreams into her story makes the readers feel as though they're being ushered into a more intimate space within the narrative. They are not merely passive spectators; they're actively encouraged to draw their own links, interpretations, and perhaps even see

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<sup>27</sup> The exile feels that the state of exile has a structure of a dream. All at once, as in a dream, faces appear which he had forgotten, or perhaps had never met, places which he is undoubtedly seen for the first time, but that he feels he knows from somewhere. The dream is a magnetic field which attracts images from the past, present and future...Caught up in this seductive and terrifying thought, the exile begins to decipher the signs, crosses and knots and all at once seems as though he were beginning to read in it all a secret harmony, a round logic of symbols” (Ugrešić, 1998, p. 12)

reflections of their own experiences. It is as if Ugrešić is offering them a canvas and inviting them to contribute to the broader tapestry of the tale. This approach deeply resonates with many, making the reading experience truly unique. The choice to use these literary techniques as a form of protest and empowerment shows how literature can stand up to the mainstream and challenge the status quo. It gives a platform to voices that might otherwise get drowned out. Ugrešić's grit in sticking to her story, even when it goes against the grain, is truly admirable. She refuses to allow her narrative to be subsumed by official narratives (Wienhold-Brokish, 2012, p. 259). These references also encompass a wide range of concepts and authors that encountered difficulties with their respective governments during their careers, with many of them ultimately being forced into exile (Wienhold-Brokish, 2012, p. 260). It could be said that the words and characters from these authors' works as a kind of museum project, which reflects her own wartime experiences of attempting to write amidst challenging political conditions. She identifies a sense of camaraderie with this group of writers who, like herself, occupy an in-between position as displaced individuals, creating a space for writing when their connection to their homeland has been severed (Wienhold-Brokish, 2012, p. 260). But still, she writes in a way that shatters the presence of a conventional war story or genre, as nothing is in its expected framework, and there is no automatic comprehension.

## 7. Saša Stanišić

Unlike Dubravka Ugrešić, who went into an exile as an adult, Stanišić was born in 1978 in Višegrad, a small town in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1992 Stanišić's parents fled with him to an uncle in Heidelberg, who was working there as a guest worker (*Gastarbeiter*)<sup>28</sup>. His parents, like many, before fleeing to Germany, were situated in Yugoslavia. His mother was a political science professor, and his father was an economist. As they migrated to Germany, his mother found work in a laundry, while his father worked in construction. This indicates that his parents, originally belonging to the 'higher, or middle class' in Yugoslavia, transitioned into the working class or labor force in Germany, a common experience shared by many other migrants. It is also important to note that Saša Stanišić is a child of a mixed marriage, with his mother being Muslim (Bosniak) and his father being Orthodox (Serb). *Herkunft* (Where You Come From), for which he was awarded the annual German Book Award, was published in

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/nov/09/where-you-come-from-by-sasa-stanisic-review>

2019 by Luchterhand Literaturverlag, explores his heritage as a child of mixed background in a third nation. In 2004, he started to study at the German Literature Institute in Leipzig. Stanišić has received several scholarships and awards, including the Audience Award at the Ingeborg Bachmann Competition. In his earlier works, *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert* (2006) and *Vor dem Fest* (2014), Stanišić tapped into his family's past and his personal experiences, employing a narrative approach marked by humor, tangents, repetition, and various digressions, including pop culture references, all contributing to a sense of spontaneous creativity.<sup>29</sup> His experience of displacement has resulted in unique and diverse viewpoints on the war in his country, offering narratives that are intricate and multifaceted. Williams and Matthes assert that Stanišić, as an émigré and exophonic writer, primarily appeals to a German-speaking readership. Nonetheless, his narratives have traversed back to their origins through translations. This phenomenon of dual readership is not merely a significant element of Stanišić's 'new internationalism'; it also reflects a vital component of his storytelling, shaped by his geographical and linguistic displacement (Matthes & Williams, 2013, p.28). This aspect significantly enhances the appeal of Stanišić's literary work. The inquiry delves into the broader discourse of authorial identity in the context of transnational literature, examining how Stanišić's unique experiences and narrative style position him within, or perhaps across, various literary traditions and cultural landscapes. His work, embodying a blend of cultural influences, challenges traditional notions of literary ownership and cultural affiliation, thereby enriching the conversation about the evolving nature of contemporary literature in a globalized world.

Narrators in literature can be differentiated based on their role and presence within the story. This distinction is crucial in understanding how a narrative is structured and presented. According to Gérard Genette, heterodiegetic narrators are those who stand outside the story they are telling. They are not characters in the story and typically narrate in the third person, offering an external perspective on the events and characters. This type of narration is common in traditional storytelling, where the narrator is an unseen, all-knowing observer of the story's events, similar to the narrative style in realist fiction of the 19<sup>th</sup> century like Theodor Fontane, Leo Tolstoy, Charles Dickens... Homodiegetic narrators, on the other hand, are part of the story they are telling. They are characters within the narrative world and usually narrate in the first person. This type of narrator can vary in their level of involvement in the story's events. They might be the main character, a secondary character, or merely an observer of the events. The

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/nov/09/where-you-come-from-by-sasa-stanistic-review>

key aspect of homodiegetic narration is that the narrator is an integral part of the story's world. A specific subset of homodiegetic narration is autodiegetic narration. In this case, the narrator is not just a character in the story but the main character. Their first-person narration provides a deeply personal and subjective view of the story. These distinctions are not just applicable to fictional narratives but also to factual storytelling, such as in autobiographies and biographies. In an autobiography, the narration is both homodiegetic and autodiegetic, as the author is narrating their own story as the main character (Martinez, 2017, p.8). This is exactly the case that we have in *Herkunft*.

HERKUNFT ist ein Buch über den ersten Zufall unserer Biografie: irgendwo geboren werden. Und was danach kommt. HERKUNFT ist ein Buch über meine Heimen, in der Erinnerung und der Erfindung. Ein Buch über Sprache, Schwarzarbeit, die Stafette der Jugend und viele Sommer. Den Sommer, als mein Großvater meiner Großmutter beim Tanzen derart auf den Fuß trat, dass ich beinahe nie geboren worden wäre. Den Sommer, als ich fast ertrank. Den Sommer, in dem Angela Merkel die Grenzen öffnen ließ und der dem Sommer ähnlich war, als ich über viele Grenzen nach Deutschland floh. HERKUNFT ist ein Abschied von meiner dementen Großmutter. Während ich Erinnerungen sammle, verliert sie ihre. HERKUNFT ist traurig, weil Herkunft für mich zu tun hat mit dem, das nicht mehr zu haben ist. In HERKUNFT sprechen die Toten und die Schlangen, und meine Großtante Zagorka macht sich in die Sowjetunion auf, um Kosmonautin zu werden. Diese sind auch HERKUNFT: ein Flößer, ein Bremser, eine Marxismus-Professorin, die Marx vergessen hat. Ein bosnischer Polizist, der gern bestochen werden möchte. Ein Wehrmachtssoldat, der Milch mag. Eine Grundschule für drei Schüler. Ein Nationalismus. Ein Yugo. Ein Tito. Ein Eichendorff. Ein Saša Stanišić.<sup>30</sup>

The novel was published in German by Claudia Breger and in her analysis of Saša Stanišić's novel, she mentions his quote from an interview he gave for *Szene Hamburg*, saying that *Herkunft*: “is a structurally regressive, usually repressive and anti-emancipatory concept, since it is defined by way of delineating an external You from an internal We” (Breger, 2022, p. 191). Through short episodes of memories, he tells us in the first person about his life. The writer is constantly questioned about his origins, and through various episodes, he also poses the rhetorical question of where he comes from, attempting to provide his own answers through certain memories:

Komplexe Frage! Zuerst müsste geklärt werden, worauf das Woher ziele. Auf die geografische Lage des Hügels, auf dem der Kreißsaal sich befand? Auf die Landesgrenzen des Staates zum Zeitpunkt der letzten Wehe? Provenienz der Eltern? Gene, Ahnen, Dialekt? Wie man es dreht, Herkunft bleibt doch ein Konstrukt! Eine Art Kostüm, das man ewig tragen soll, nachdem es einem übergestülpt worden ist. Als

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.deutscher-buchpreis.de/archiv/jahr/2019>

solches ein Fluch! Oder mit etwas Glück ein Vermögen, das keinem Talent sich verdankt, aber Vorteile und Privilegien schafft. (Stanišić, 2019, p. 32-33)

This quote presents a profound reflection on the concept of origin and its multifaceted nature. Stanišić begins by questioning the very basis of 'where one comes from,' suggesting that the answer could depend on various factors: geographical location, national boundaries at the time of birth, parental lineage, genetics, ancestors, or dialect. This inquiry highlights the complexity and ambiguity in defining one's origin. Stanišić then asserts that origin is, in essence, a construct. This perspective challenges the notion of origin as a fixed, inherent attribute. He likens origin to a costume that is imposed upon an individual and which they are expected to wear indefinitely. This metaphor suggests that origin can be both arbitrary and externally defined, rather than an intrinsic part of one's identity. Furthermore, the writer explores the dual nature of this 'costume.' On one hand, he describes it as a curse, implying that the imposed identity of origin can be a burden, limiting and defining individuals in ways they may not choose or agree with. On the other hand, he acknowledges that it can be a fortune, not earned by talent but capable of bestowing advantages and privileges. This duality reflects the complex role of origin in shaping one's life experiences, opportunities, and societal perceptions. As it is obvious, the novel explicitly reveals its thematic essence through its title. As Kleppe Likvern (2020) observes, understanding the novel necessitates an initial exploration of the term 'Herkunft' itself. Likvern refers to two definitions from the German online dictionary *Duden* to elucidate this: The first interpretation of the word relates to the social, national, or cultural background of an individual. The second definition extends to the broader concept of the origin or source of an entity, encapsulated in the phrase "Ursprung einer Sache" (Kleppe Likvern, 2020, p.3). The novel explores the theme of origins, belonging, and identity, drawing heavily from Stanišić's personal experiences as an immigrant and his reflections on his family history. The memory fragments about growing up in Višegrad and subsequent visits by the autofictional storyteller to his father's ancestral village, combined with metatextual musings and explorations of fiction versus reality, along with envisioned interjections, serve as a basis for challenging the notion of ethnicity as an inherent and undisputed category (Rutka, 2020, p. 563). With *Herkunft* Stanišić's delves into his own journey of understanding his origins and grappling with questions of cultural identity. The novel reflects on the complex interplay between individual and collective memory. Throughout history, the ideas of national-cultural homogeneity and the significance placed on one's homeland, love for it, and the preservation of traditions have been crucial in establishing and legitimizing power. The origins and familial lineage have been intentionally woven into pre-modern founding narratives, serving the

political interests of the present time (Rutka, 2020, p.555). However, according to Maximilian Benz and Katrin Dennerlein (2016), although the importance of original spaces is crucial for political interest and modern narratives, they offer a wide range of possible interpretations, portrayals, meanings, and roles in shaping the protagonist's storyline. The representation of these origin spaces evolves over time and in relation to prevailing worldviews and literary conventions, especially those tied to genres. The intricacy deepens notably when the protagonist's place of origin is interconnected with other origin spaces related to the narrator, the author, the material, and more. This interweaving amplifies the significance of these spaces in terms of both conception and portrayal (Benz and Dennerlein, 2016, p.1). From this, origin, as a literary motif, can have multiple meanings, purposes, and can be presented in various ways. On another hand, Stanišić, reflects on the complexities and potential dangers of looking back at one's origins and homeland:

Es erschien mir rückständig, geradezu destruktiv, über meine oder unsere Herkunft zu sprechen in einer Zeit, in der Abstammung und Geburtsort wieder als Unterscheidungsmerkmale dienten, Grenzen neu befestigt wurden und sogenannte nationale Interessen auftauchten aus dem trockengelegten Sumpf der Kleinstaaterei. In einer Zeit, als Ausgrenzung programmatisch und wieder wählbar wurde. (Stanišić, 2019, p. 64)

He emphasizes that in such times, exclusion becomes a deliberate choice and gains popularity. Through this reflection, Stanišić encourages readers to critically engage with the present in relation to the past. As Martina Kumlehn (2021) explains, examining one's personal life path as a story of progress and the often considered unlikely or chance-related factors that make it possible is consistently linked with the intention of also observing contemporary socio-political changes from a sociological and literary standpoint. The narrative, stemming from an individual's experience, offers a unique vantage point on matters of social mobility, providing direct access, a richness of detail, and an authentic portrayal (Kumlehn, 2021, p.379).

It can be perceived that in the novel, besides being a form of autobiography, there is also an element of returning to one's roots in order to discover a sense of personal identity. It becomes evident that the meanings associated with the terms “origin” and “home” are not synonymous. Nevertheless, the author establishes a direct correlation between these two concepts. Furthermore, it becomes clear that reflecting upon one's origins, ancestral ties, and the factors that contribute to their sense of self are essential components in contemplating the complex idea of “home”. Elements such as one's origins, familial relationships, and the historical narratives intertwined with them, along with the formative stories that emerge from cultural,

political, and educational contexts, all continue to play a significant role. These elements remain deeply ingrained in every new endeavor to establish a sense of belonging within various settings. They contribute significantly to the ongoing process of constructing an individual's narrative identity (Kumlehn, 2021, p.380). From this, it can be concluded that “home” is an umbrella term for roots, origin, and belonging, and it serves as a framework that unites everything that plays a role in creating identity. If one considers roots as part of defining home, and if one agrees with her idea, the question arises, where is the home of the protagonist, or the writer in this case? Narratives vividly capture the emotional complexities associated with the loss and (re)creation of homeland, blending memories, relationships, and sensory experiences. This process, reflecting both past and future perspectives, allows individuals to (re)construct their concept of home through storytelling, integrating it into their narrative identity (Kumlehn, 2021, p.380). Thus, we can see that 'Heimat' encompasses both the past and the future, with roots being just one piece of the puzzle that forms the broader picture of our identity. This is precisely the case with Saša Stanišić (cf. Kumlehn, 2021), as he himself writes:

Fiktion, wie ich sie sähe, sagte ich, bilde eine eigene Welt, statt unsere abzubilden, und die hier, ich kloppte auf den Umschlaf, sei eine Welt, in der Flüsse sprechen, und Urgroßeltern ewig leben. Fiktion wie ich sie mir denke, sagte ich, ist ein offenes System aus Erfindung, Wahrnehmung und Erinnerung, das sich am wirklich Geschehen reibt (Stanišić, 2019, p. 20)

For Stanišić, fiction, in its essence, is not merely a reflection of our reality but a realm of its own, where the impossible becomes possible and memories intertwine with imagination. It is a dynamic interplay of invention, perception, and memory, constantly challenging and interacting with actual events. Stanišić begins his book by recalling certain fragments of his childhood. Remembering specific people, things, objects he owned. He had a country that no longer exists and a war that was unimaginable. The novel defies easy classification, blending autobiography with writing experiment and self-observation, and exemplifies migration literature. Stanišić's vividly portraits a youth's quest for recognition and the struggle for resettlement and linguistic assimilation resonates particularly with young adults. Simultaneously, it is a family novel, tracing familial stories back to great-grandparents and focusing on the relationship with a dementia-stricken grandmother. The narrative juxtaposes her memory loss with the act of remembering, reconstructing life stories and identities, thereby contributing uniquely to dementia literature's exploration of lost origins and the deep-seated yearning to reclaim a forgotten home (Kumlehn, 2021, p.382). Saša often at the beginning of the novel revisit's family tales and his birthplace, Višegrad. The second part of the novel also

dives into his life in Heidelberg as a refugee with his family. Forced to leave Višegrad due to his mother's suddenly “wrong” name during war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Saša grows up in Emmertsgrund, mingling with other refugees and locals, mastering the German language, and navigating typical youthful experiences. While facing challenges, including his parents' struggles with demanding jobs, the story highlights the opportunities Saša seizes, emphasizing hope over prejudice.<sup>31</sup> “Hier ist eine Reihe von Dingen die ich hatte [...] Jugoslawien. Das aber nicht mehr lang. Der Sozialismus war müde, der Nationalismus wach. Fahnen, jeder eine eigene, im Wind, und in den Köpfen die Frage: Was bist du? [...]” (Stanišić, 2019, p.11).

In the novel, the writer's inclination towards positivity is evident right from the start when the author lists the things he possesses. Instead of dwelling on his losses, he chooses to focus on what he possessed, steering the narrative and his thoughts in a more optimistic direction. As Milenković (2021) claims further in his critic of the novel, the story seamlessly weaves between two main narratives: revisiting his hometown and his life in Heidelberg. Within concise chapters, the tale branches into intricate layers, exploring familial histories, escapades with friends, his journey into the literary world, and the hurdles faced by his parents. The writer masterfully uses humor, navigating intense emotions, bridging disparities, and presenting rejuvenated perspectives.<sup>32</sup> Stanišić's approach to the narrative is not just a straightforward recounting of events. Instead, he employs an autofictional framework, blending fact with fiction. Unlike other autobiographical works, this novel focuses on the aftermath of a significant event, the Bosnian war, rather than the mundane details of everyday life. Through this lens, he explores the complexities of memory, identity, and the lasting impact of trauma. By intertwining personal experiences with broader historical events, Stanišić offers a unique perspective on the challenges of reconciling one's past in the face of displacement and cultural upheaval. The blending of fact and fiction serves to highlight the often-blurred lines between reality and perception, emphasizing the subjective nature of memory and the stories we tell ourselves. This evident ambivalence in the author's writing and portrayal connected to the autobiographical side of the novel, where he plays with narrative times and navigates through them, truly reflects the dual nature of his existence. He had to acclimate to fresh life situations, assimilate into a different setting, and forge his identity in unfamiliar territory.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.vreme.com/kultura/blago-nemcima/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.vreme.com/kultura/blago-nemcima/>

Interestingly the book eschews a conventional conclusion, instead empowering the reader to decide how the story should end. The novel's structure itself challenges the notion of a fixed starting point of origin or a definitive endpoint of belonging, reflecting the fluidity and complexity of identity and belonging (Wutsdorff, 2023, p.246).

## 8. Two novels and Said's Exile

In the scholarly examination of exile within contemporary literature, the works of Dubravka Ugrešić and Saša Stanišić present a fertile ground for analysis, particularly when viewed through the lens of Edward Said's theoretical framework in exile. This chapter seeks to critically engage with the representation of exile in Ugrešić's *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* and Stanišić's *Herkunft*, drawing intellectual parallels to Said's conceptualization of the term. Ugrešić, in her work *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*, transcends the conventional boundaries of exile as a mere physical or political phenomenon. Her narrative is a complex tapestry, interlacing various motifs that collectively depict exile as an existential crisis, deeply entwined with the constructs of personal history and identity. This portrayal aligns with Said's perspective of exile as an intricate and multifaceted experience, one that challenges the individual's understanding of their place in the world. Ugrešić's narrative approach, thus, not only reflects but also deepens the understanding of exile, portraying it as a state of being that continuously shapes and reshapes an individual's sense of self.

Similarly, Stanišić's *Herkunft* resonates with Said's depiction of exile as a condition marked by perpetual loss and a sense of non-belonging. The narrative, rooted in Stanišić's personal experiences, explores the dichotomy of belonging to two different cultures - the one of his origin and the one he inhabits. This exploration is emblematic of Said's notion of exile as a continuous struggle for identity and belonging in an ever-shifting cultural landscape. Stanišić's work, therefore, not only mirrors Said's concept but also offers a poignant, lived perspective on the complexities of navigating and reconciling multiple cultural identities.

Through a critical synthesis of these literary works with Said's theoretical insights, this chapter argues that the portrayal of exile by Ugrešić and Stanišić extends beyond the physicality of displacement. Their narratives reveal exile as an existential condition, characterized by an ongoing negotiation of identity, memory, and belonging. This analysis posits that their works do not merely reflect Said's understanding of exile but also contribute to a deeper, more

nuanced comprehension of the exilic experience. In essence, Ugrešić and Stanišić's narratives underscore the enduring nature of exile, highlighting its profound impact on an individual's relationship with their past, their present, and their evolving sense of self.

In the works of Dubravka Ugrešić, one can identify several motifs through which the author describes the state of exile. First motive that is the motive of sound. Ugrešić foregrounds the theme of exile by delving into the acute sensitivity to auditory stimuli that characterizes the exilic experience. This auditory sensitivity serves as a conduit for the broader exploration of the dislocation and estrangement inherent in the state of exile: "Egzilantu se čini da je stanje egzila neka stalna, osobita osjetljivost na zvuk, na neku melodiju; ponekad mu se čini da egzil i nije drugo do stanje nesvjesna glazbenog prisjećanja"<sup>33</sup> (Ugrešić, 2002, p.10). Heightened sensitivity to sound can evoke memories: memories of one life and past experiences in a way that is almost involuntary or unconscious. The sounds trigger certain memories and transport them back to places associated with past. This is a reminder of separation from homeland, where exile is not just a physical displacement but also a deep emotional and psychological state.

Another motif that is very often present in the novel itself is the motif of the dream.

Egzilantu se čini da stanje egzila ima strukturu sna. Najednom se, kao u snu, pojavljuju neka lica koja je bio zaboravio, koja možda nikada nije sreo, neki prostori koje pouzdano prvi put vidi, ali mu se čini da ih odnekud zna. San je magnetsko polje koje privlači slike iz prošlosti, sadašnjosti i budućnosti. Egzilantu se najednom na javi javljaju lica, događaji i slike privučeni magnetskim poljem sna; najednom mu se čini da je njegova biografija ispisana davno prije nego što će se ispuniti, da egzil prema tome nije rezultat vanjskih okolnosti niti njegov izbor, nego koordinate koje je sudbina već odavno iscrtala za njega. Uhvaćen u tu slatku i strasnu misao egzilant počinje odgonetati smušene znakove, križiće i čvoriće i najednom mu se čini da u svemu čita tajni sklad, okruglu logiku simbola. (Ugrešić, 2002, p.11)<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> An exile feels that the state of exile is a constant, special sensitivity to sound. So, I sometimes feel that exile is nothing but a state of searching for and recollecting sound. (Ugrešić, 1998, p. 9)

<sup>34</sup> The exile feels that the state of exile has the structure of a dream. All at once, as in a dream, faces appear which he had forgotten, or perhaps had never met, places which he is undoubtedly seeing for the first time, but that he feels he knows from somewhere. The dream is a magnetic field which attracts images from the past, present and future. The exile suddenly seems in reality faces, events and images, drawn by the magnetic field of the dream; suddenly it seems as though his biography was written long before it was to be fulfilled, that his exile is therefore not the result of external circumstances nor his choice, but a jumble of coordinates which fate had long ago sketched out for him. Caught up in this seductive and terrifying thought, the exile begins to decipher the signs, crosses and knots and all at once it seems as though he were beginning to read in it all a secret harmony, a round logic of symbols. (Ugrešić, 1998, p.12)

The conclusion one might draw from this passage is that exile is experienced not just as a geographical or political reality, but as a profound existential state that challenges the very notion of personal history and identity. The exile feels as though their life story, including their state of exile, was preordained, and that their experiences are not entirely within their control but are instead part of a larger, mysterious design.

However, exile is not merely a dreamlike experience for Ugrešić. It is also a nightmare.

[...] Da je egzil povijest naših privremeno iznajmljenih stanova, prvih usamljenih jutara kada u tišini rasprostiremo mapu grada, pronalazimo na mapi ime svoje ulice ucrtavamo olovkom križić (ponavljamo povijest velikih osvajača, umjesto zastave križić). Te male čvrste činjenice, pečati u pasošu, nagomilavaju se i u jednom trenutku pretvaraju u nečitljive linije. I tek tada započinju ispisivati unutrašnju mapu, mapu imaginarnog. I tek tada precizno opisuju onaj nemjerljivi doživljaj egzila. Da, egzil je poput košmarna sna. Najednom se na javi, baš kao u snu, pojavljuju neka lica koja smo bili zaboravili, koja možda nikada nismo sreli, ali nam se čini da ih oduvijek znamo, neki prostori koje pouzdano vidimo prvi put ali nam se čini da smo tu već jednom bili. (Ugrešić, 2002, p.73)<sup>35</sup>

In both passages the writer uses metaphors in order to explain the state of exile. The metaphor is used to describe the state of exile as a “dream structure”, “magnetic field” that attracts images from the past, present, and future and as a “nightmare”. This way the author vividly conveys the complexity and elusiveness of the exile experience, comparing it to the fluid and ambiguous nature of dreams. Additionally, the metaphor of the “magnetic field of dreams” suggests the attraction and merging of different temporal and spatial elements, reflecting the intertwined and often confusing emotions and memories associated with the experience of exile.

Another important aspect, or motif, in the book is the motif of the photo album. By compiling a photo album, the writer alludes ironically with self-awareness to the novel's content. According to Michele Simeon, Ugrešić “uses the motif of albums and photographs as a physical representation of those memories that make up our personal histories” (Simeon, 2007, p.139) She also argues that the albums in the novel are significant due to the numerous details that bear a striking resemblance to the author's own experiences (Simeon, 2007, p.139). While it is challenging in this case to separate the first-person narrative of the novel from the author's

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<sup>35</sup> That exile is the history of our temporary rented apartments, the first lonely mornings as we spread out the map of the town in silence, find on the map the name of our street and mark it with a cross in pencil. (We repeat the history of great conquerors, with little crosses instead of flags.) Those little, firm facts, stamps in our passport, accumulate and at certain moment they become illegible lines. They suddenly begin to trace an inner map, the map of the unreal, the imaginary. And it is only then that they express the immeasurable experience of exile. Yes, exile is like a nightmare ... it seems to us that we have already been there. (Ugrešić, 1998, p.119)

biography, there are certain parts of the novel that are autobiographical. However, potentially, this occurrence of such narration is done by the author in a calculated manner because the diary itself, unlike the album, represents an embrace of everyday and seemingly insignificant events that shape our existence, thus making it a more authentic testimony (Simeon, 2007, p.139).

Stvari traju duže od ljudi. Albumi nadživljuju vlasnike. Produženi život skriva se u starome kaputu, u besmislenoj stvarci koja je nekome nešto značila i koja će nekome nešto još značiti. Tako putuju duše. Ovdje se sastaju izbjeglice iz Bosne. Raspituju se o dušama, tko je odakle, zna li tko za ovoga ili onoga, gdje je sada tko. Razmjenjuju vijesti. Skupljaju se prema gradovima i selima. Usput ponešto i kupe, kakvu stvarcu koja će pomoći da izbjeglička sobica izgleda kao dom. Zemlja koje više nema, Bosna, ovdje, na Gustav-Meyer-Allee, svake subote nanovo ucrtava svoju mapu u zrak. Mapa nakratko bljesne i iščezava poput mjehurića od sapunice. (Ugrešić, 2002, p.141)

Ugrešić here plays with the personification in the way that inanimate objects, such as albums and old coats, are endowed with human characteristics and abilities, such as enduring and outliving their owners, and thus harboring a “prolonged life”. This figure of speech allows the author to convey the idea of the permanence and significance of objects emotionally and vividly in contrast to the transience of human life. Additionally, personification is used in the description of a map that “flashes and vanishes like a soap bubble”, giving it a temporary, almost living presence. Said in the beginning of his book writes that exile is: “an unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home” (Said, 200, p. 173), it can be seen that Ugrešić had a similar experience in exile. Writing “Živjela sam u egzilu, ili kako se to već zove, mijenjala sam zemlje kao cipele.” (Ugrešić, 2002, p.73)<sup>36</sup> The text implies that the name or label given to the state of existence or being in exile is not important to the author because it is unpleasant to her. Regardless of how someone might label it, she focuses on the feelings that this state evokes within her. As the quote further states, it evokes a sense of change and adaptation, which is reflected in small details such as passport stamps. Physical evidence of travel fades and disappears over time, while new maps emerge within a person, defining them based on their experience of living in exile. It signifies the internalization of their displaced state and the blending of reality and imagination.

Something similar can be found in the work of Stanišić. He begins his book with the chapter “AN DIE AUSLANDSBEHÖRDE”, describing his birth in a hospital that no longer exists

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<sup>36</sup> I was living in exile, or whatever it's called. I was changing countries like shoes. (Ugrešić, 1998, p.118)

(Stanišić, 2019, p.8) in a country that no longer exists and the journey to his arrival in Germany. He writes: “Man will gelegentlich von mir wissen, ob ich in Deutschland zu Hause sei. Ich sage abwechselnd ja und nein. Die Leute meinen es selten ausgrenzend. Sie sichern sich ab. Sie sagen: ‘Verstehen Sie mich bitte nicht falsch, meine Cousine hat einen Tschechen geheiratet’”. (Stanišić, 2019, p.36). The writer’s exploration of identity and belonging, as depicted in his book, underscores the complexities of defining home:

...Ich habe Wasser aus dem Brunnen meines Urgroßvaters getrunken und schreibe darüber auf Deutsch. Das Wasser hat nach der Last dieser Berge geschmeckt, die ich nie tragen musste, und nach der beschwerlichen Leichtigkeit der Behauptung, dass einem so etwas gehört. Nein. Das Wasser war kalt und hatte wie Wasser geschmeckt. Ich entscheide, ich. “Woher kommst du Junge?” Jetzt also auch von hier? Oskoruša. (Stanišić, 2019, p.35).

Stanišić also uses the metaphor in the description of water that “Das Wasser hat nach der Last dieser Berge geschmeckt, die ich nie tragen musste”, and „der beschwerlichen Leichtigkeit der Behauptung, dass einem so etwas gehört”. Here, water is used as a metaphor for the weight and complexity of heritage and identity. This stylistic expression allows the author to vividly convey feelings and experiences related to his connection with the place and his roots, as well as the complexity of the sense of belonging and identity. By juxtaposing the transient nature of physical places, like the hospital and country of his birth, with the ever-evolving perceptions and expectations of society, he delves into the intricate dance between personal history and societal acceptance. He extends the meaning of the concept of home from referring to geographical or physical spaces to the emotional and psychological spaces we inhabit within society. Society always pushes us to fit in, but Stanišić goes against that, asserting that he can be ambivalent and be both Yugoslav and German at the same time. He is writing about the ice-cold water in Oskoruša on German. Just as Said (2001) claims, he is torn between where he is from and where he has arrived (Stanišić, 2019, p.36). The oscillation between affirming and negating his sense of belonging in Germany reflects the broader struggle many immigrants face: the quest for acceptance and the challenge of reconciling past and present identities.

One important aspect of Said’s view on exile is: his understanding of exile is rooted in the notion that it is a contradictory condition. On the one hand, it involves experiencing loss and separation, while on the other hand, it serves as a fertile environment for artistic expression and contemplation. (Sazzad, 2017, p.18). This is highly significant for Dubravka Ugrešić’s work, given the fact that her creative output can be divided into before and after exile (Hawkesworth, 2001, p.271). Prior to exile, Ugrešić played with different genres and forms of

literature in her literary prose, exploring the nature of writing and literature and contrasting popular culture with high literature. It is only later, after leaving Croatia and living in exile, that the author begins to engage with this theme.

Pa ipak, iste te godine kada su se promijenili nazivi ulica, kada se promijenio jezik i zemlja i zastave i simboli; kada su se promijenili nazivi ustanova, škola, vlakova i aviona; kada je kriva strana postala prava, a prava naglo kriva; kada su se jedni pobojali vlastitih imena, kada ih se drugi prvi put nisu bojali; kada su kasapili jedni druge, kada su jedni kasapili druge; kada su prokuljale vojske s različitim oznakama, kada je prokuljala najjača da sve zatre s lica svoje zemlje. (Ugrešić, 2002, p.20)<sup>37</sup>

In this passage, Ugrešić uses the antithesis. It is evident in contrasts such as “when the wrong side became right, and the right suddenly wrong”, and in the juxtaposition of different states and situations. This figure of speech creates a strong visual and emotional contrast, highlighting the changes and conflicts that have occurred. The use of antithesis serves to emphasize the drama and paradox of the situations described in the text, particularly in the context of social and political transformations. It can be said that exile was a fertile ground for Saša Stanišić as well, however, a distinction must be made between the departures of Dubravka Ugrešić and Saša Stanišić. It is important to note again that Ugrešić left her country as an educated and established woman, while Stanišić left as a refugee, fleeing from war. Nevertheless, both authors have successfully established themselves as writers through their descriptions of this state. Said (2001) claims that exile is a human-created phenomenon inflicted upon fellow human beings. Just like the fact that from the above mentioned quote, some people chose to express their nationalism, change their language, symbols and flags. Ugrešić also emphasizes that people have made choices. This means that Said's claim, that exile is a condition created by humans themselves, is confirmed. Indeed, people have choices, and they often turn out to be bad. Said's perspective on exile suggests going beyond those boundaries and focusing on the experiences of the masses of people who have emigrated.

These and so many other exiled poets and writers lend dignity to a condition legislated to deny dignity—to deny an identity to people. From them, it is apparent that, to concentrate on exile as a contemporary political punishment, you must therefore map territories of experience beyond those mapped by the literature of exile itself. You must

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<sup>37</sup> But, nevertheless, that same year when the names of the streets changed, when the language and the country and the flags and the symbols all changed, when the wrong side became right, and the right side was suddenly wrong; when some people were afraid of their own name, when others apparently, for the first time weren't afraid of theirs; when people were butchering each other, when someone was butchering others; when armies with different insignia sprang up on all sides, when the strongest set out to obliterate everything from the face of their own country. (Ugrešić, 1998, p.25)

first set aside Joyce and Nabokov and think instead of the uncountable masses for whom UN agencies have been created. You must think of the refugee-peasants with no prospect of ever returning home, armed only with a ration card and an agency number. Paris may be a capital famous for cosmopolitan exiles, but it is also a city where unknown men and women have spent years of miserable loneliness. [...] the hopelessly large numbers, the compounded misery of “undocumented” people suddenly lost, without a tellable history. (Said, 2001, p. 176)

The task of understanding and finding meaning in the tangible remnants of one's life, whether they are real or imagined, becomes challenging when society as a whole decides to reinterpret history. In such cases, there is a demand to erase certain memories and dismiss the values and experiences of an entire generation or even multiple generations as worthless. This is precisely what occurred with regards to the recollections of ordinary life in the former Yugoslavia. (Varvaet, 2011, p. 298). Which factors are instrumental in shaping an individual's identity? Furthermore, how does the conceptualization of identity demarcate the boundaries between belonging and non-belonging? Stanišić states: “Heimat, sagt der Weltenbummler Mo, ist dort, wo man sich am wenigstens vornehmen muss” (Stanišić, 2019, p.64). Indeed, he delves into his own identity, reflecting on both his country of origin and his current place of residence in his writings. Even when he goes to Oskoruša, the protagonist feels like he doesn't belong there. He is an outsider there, a German. When he goes to Germany, he is likewise an outsider, a Yugo.

Said (2001) also emphasizes that exiles often have a dual perspective - viewing the world both from the perspective of their homeland and from the perspective of where they currently reside: “Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that-to borrow a phrase from music-is contrapuntal.” (Said, 2001, p.191). Stanišić's narrative therefore often oscillates between memories of Bosnia and experiences in Germany, giving the reader insight into both worlds. The writer gives the readers insight into both worlds, through a change in narration tenses. He jumps into different periods of his past, as well as the present. Playing with tenses and jumping through the years, the writer in the book describes his upbringing, as well as the time he spent in the village of Oskoruša (Stanišić, 2019, pp. 25, 27). The novel is multifaceted and characterized by its fluidity in time, with the past and present constantly intermingling. This is evident when Stanišić after writing about “poskok” (Horned viper) episode in his village Oskorusa he mentions: “Heute ist 25.

September 2017. Ich sitze in der S-Bahn in Hamburg, Neben mir unterhalten sich zwei Mittvierziger über Pokémon...” (Stanišić, 2019, p. 29). Said also writes about this saying:

Is it not true that the views of exile in literature, and moreover, in religion obscure what is truly horrendous: that exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical; that it is produces by human beings for other human beings; and that, like death but without death’s ultimate mercy it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family and geography (Said, 2001, p. 174).

*Museum of Unconditional Surrender* tells a fragmented and personal story of one individual, whereas Said's concept of exile is a theoretical exploration of the broader implications and meanings of exile. Ugrešić delves into individual experiences within the context of a specific historical event, while the latter provides a theoretical framework for understanding the psychological and cultural aspects of exile. However, one important aspect that Said points out in his essay is that “exiles feel, therefore an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as a part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people.” (Said, 2011, p. 177). In terms of the “triumphant ideology” aspect, it seems that we cannot find it in Dubravka Ugrešić's work. In fact, she seems to have relinquished any ideology. However, by writing this work and engaging with literature in exile in general, we can say that she, like many other writers, had a need for the “reconstruction of their broken lives” (Said, 2011, p. 177). By creating a museum through dreams, memories, and objects described in the book, she attempted to reconstruct her past, classify it, and primarily understand it. “Pamćenje sadrži upravo detalje, a ne cjelovite slike; sinopsis, a ne potpunu predodžbu. Uvjerenje da mi na neki način pamtimo stvari u cjelini, to uvjerenje koje nam pomaže da preživimo, neosnovano je.” (Ugrešić, 2002, p. 38)<sup>38</sup>. From this quote one can see that, according to Ugrešić quoting Brodsky, memory is not capable of capturing the entirety of an event or providing a complete picture; instead, it retains specific details or highlights. The notion that we possess comprehensive and all-encompassing memories is unsupported. Nevertheless, it is this very conviction that enables humanity to carry on with their lives. Our memories are constrained and biased, and we should acknowledge that we may not remember the complete truth or the entirety of an experience.

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<sup>38</sup> Memory contains precise details, not the whole picture; highlights if you will, not the entire show. The conviction that we are somehow remembering the whole thing in a blanket fashion, the very conviction that allows the species to go on with its life, is groundless. (Ugrešić, 1998, p.55)

Stanišić's characters are denied the stability of a fixed cultural and geographical identity. However, through his storytelling, he attempts to restore a sense of dignity and identity to their experiences, much like the exiled writers mentioned by Said. His narrative expands the understanding of exile beyond conventional literary representations. By delving into the personal histories, memories, and emotions of his characters, he creates a broader and more nuanced depiction of the exile experience. He goes beyond the literary canon that may focus on well-known exiled writers and explores the lives of ordinary people affected by displacement. The portrayal of various characters, including refugees and displaced individuals, aligns with Said's call to consider the vast numbers of people who are affected by exile and displacement. Characters in *Herkunft* are not cosmopolitan exiles but rather individuals who navigate the challenges of uncertain futures and the loss of their original homes.

1998 mussten meine Eltern das Land verlassen...[...] Ich bin ein egoistisches Fragment. Ich habe mich mehr um mich selbst gekümmert als um Familie und ihren Zusammenhalt. Literatur ist ein schwacher Kitt. [...] Ich beschwöre das Heile und überbrücke das Kaputte, beschreibe das Leben vor und nach der Erschütterung, und in Wirklichkeit vergesse ich Geburtstage und nehme Einladungen zu Hochzeiten nicht wahr. Ich muss nachdenken, um mich zu erinnern, wie die Kinder meiner Cousinsen heißen. An den Gräbern meiner Großeltern mütterlicherseits habe ich noch kein einziges Mal eine Kerze angezündet. (Stanišić, 2019, p.217)

The paradox used in this passage represents the presentation of contradictory and seemingly opposing ideas by the author, which simultaneously reflect the complexity of his experience and identity. This figure of speech enables the author to highlight internal conflicts and contradictions in his feelings and behaviors, particularly in the context of family relationships and personal identity. Also, from the excerpt, the author demonstrates a skillful manipulation of autofiction, skillfully transitioning to the first-person narrator perspective. This perspective reveals the narrator's self-perceived selfishness and prioritization of personal well-being over familial unity. Consequently, literature assumes the role of a conduit or intermediary mechanism linking the narrator and his family. Yet, a fundamental inquiry emerges: can families forcibly displaced due to conflict and scattered globally ever be authentically reunited? In Stanišić's narrative, literature functions as a form of "healing agent," facilitating his comprehension of historical contexts: "[...] Ich schreibe nicht dem Krieg und der Entfernung die Schuld zu für meine Entfremdung von meiner Familie. Ich schiebe Geschichten als Übersprungshandlungen zwischen uns." (Stanišić, 2019, p.217).

However, this deviates from Said's approach in discussing Nabokov and Joyce, instead focusing on a historical backdrop wherein Stanišić and his family are integral to the larger wave of emigration from their homeland that Said talks about. While Said does not extensively focus on the reconstruction of memories in his essay, he does mention the compensatory aspect of exile. He states that "Much of exile's life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule. It is not surprising that so many exiles seem to be novelists, chess players, political activists, and intellectuals" (Said, 2001, p.181). He then refers to Lukács, who argued that the European novel is based on the contrasting experience of security, simplicity, and the unchanging nature of life. It revolves around middle-class heroes or heroines who "seek to construct a new world that somewhat resembles an old one left behind forever" (Said, 2001, p.181). Regarding Saša Stanišić, it cannot be said that he constructs the past through certain segments, like Ugrešić. Instead, Stanišić reconstructs and assembles events in his mind through memories, trauma and present. Given that Edward Said often associates exile with wartime actions, or traumatic experiences, we can say that the one of the novel themes and Said's concepts coincide in this case. In the novel, Stanišić frequently revisits the impact of the war, reflecting on what it did to him and his family, and the role it played in shaping his identity.

Meine Familie lebt über die ganze Welt verstreut. Wir sind mit Jugoslawien auseinandergebrochen und haben uns nicht mehr zusammensetzen können. Was ich über Herkunft erzählen möchte, hat auch zu tun mit dieser Disparatheit, die über Jahre mitbestimmt hat, wo ich bin: so gut wie niemals dort, wo Familie ist. [...] Herkunft sind die süß-bitteren Zufälle, die uns hierhin, dorthin getragen haben. Sie ist Zugehörigkeit, zu der man nichts beigesteuert hat. [...] Herkunft ist Krieg. Das war er für uns. (Stanišić, 2019, p.67)

In the passage, several stylistic devices are employed to enhance the emotional depth and complexity of the text. The use of metaphor is evident in the phrase "Wir sind mit Jugoslawien auseinandergebrochen" where the disintegration of Yugoslavia is compared to the fragmentation of his family, highlighting the impact of political and social events on personal lives. Antithesis is visible in "süß-bitteren Zufälle", juxtaposing sweetness and bitterness to symbolize the complexity and contradictory feelings associated with family and origin. Next to that personification is used in "Herkunft ist Krieg" (Origin is war), attributing the characteristics of war to the abstract concept of origin, intensifying the drama and emotional impact of heritage on the author's life. A paradox is presented in "so gut wie niemals dort, wo Familie ist", expressing a sense of separation and isolation from the family, contrary to the usual notion of family being synonymous with home. But the repetition of the word 'Herkunft'

(origin) at the beginning and end of the passage emphasizes the theme of origin and its significance in the author's life. Together, these stylistic figures create a powerful emotional impression and highlight the complexity of the experience of displacement, identity, and belonging in the context of the Balkan wars and their aftermath. Among other things, this quote from the book underscores the involuntary nature of separation. The family, like the country, was torn apart by forces beyond their control. He also emphasizes the involuntary nature of one's origin. People don't choose where they're born or the circumstances of their birth, yet these factors play a significant role in shaping their lives. The concluding lines "Herkunft ist Krieg. Das war er für uns" (Stanišić, 2019, p.67) are particularly poignant. They encapsulate the central theme of the quote: for many, especially those from war-torn regions, their heritage and identity are inextricably linked to conflict. War becomes a defining aspect of their origin story.

Ugrešić conveys a sense of detachment from a stable physical space and a nomadic existence, where personal belongings are limited to what can be carried in a suitcase: "Nakon nekog vremena vidjela sam rijeke ljudi koje su prolazile televizijskim ekranima, nešto kasnije sretala sam iste ili slične ljude putujući po svijetu. Ja, naime, ne živim više u svome zagrebačkom stanu. Niti je moj stan više moj. Jedino što danas posjedujem je kofer" (Ugrešić, 2002, p. 121)<sup>39</sup>. The usage of anticlimax in this passage allows the author to emphasize the change in her life and status, transitioning from a broader social context to the personal situation of losing her home and reducing her possessions to just a suitcase. This stylistic device serves to highlight the contrast between her former life and current reality, accentuating the sense of loss and isolation that accompanies the experience of exile. According to Anastasova's thorough analysis of the novel, she contends that the protagonist Buba no longer has a home and has essentially become homeless. While her physical dwelling has been destroyed, she persists in residing temporarily in the realm between the concept of home and her temporary exile residence. (Anastasova, 2007, p. 307) Therefore exile, according to Said, encompasses a sense of longing and the absence of a familiar sense of belonging, which arises from the inherent nature of leaving one's native place: "Exile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and bond with, one's native place; what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both." (Said, 2001, p.185). Said suggests that in

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<sup>39</sup> Some time later I saw rivers of people crossing the television screen, after a while I began meeting those same or similar people as I travelled through the world. That is to say I no longer live in my Zagreb flat. Nor is my Zagreb flat mine any longer. All I possess now is a suitcase. (Ugrešić, 1998, p.204)

exile, the sense of home and the love for one's homeland are not necessarily lost but rather intrinsically tied to the experience of loss itself.

On the other hand, for Ugrešić, exile is, as Anastasova (2007) claims, “a journey from home-into the outside, a condition of starting again and leaving your ‘own’ country, crossing into a new post-communist reality. Exile is the little eye that helps refresh the identity, which is passing, which passes by” (Atanasova, 2007, p. 303). The protagonist in this book grapples with the challenge of identifying both herself and other national groups. She articulates her uncertainty, stating: “Sada ionako više ne znam ni tko sam, ni gdje sam, niti čija sam” (Ugrešić, 2002, p.39).<sup>40</sup> Ugrešić, an intellectual, finds herself amidst a war characterized by pervasive hatred and intolerance, which she cannot accept. Struggling within this environment, she ultimately makes the decision to depart, leaving behind her country, language, and everything she once knew. The book delves into the exploration of these very identities—specifically, the experiences of an intellectual who consciously chooses to abandon her homeland. Anastasova's perspective suggests that the first-person narrative is influenced and connected to identities and names associated with borders. These “border” identities and border names establish a link between the individual's sense of self and belonging within a group or community, or conversely, highlight a feeling of not belonging. In other words, the way the protagonist perceives and presents her identity is shaped by her relationship to these border identities and names, which play a role in defining their sense of belonging or lack thereof. (Anastasova, 2007, p.307)

Through his book, Stanišić also challenges these fixed identity categories, especially in the context of the Balkans where national identities were often a source of conflict. As Anna Rutka (2020) claims, the book uses satire and inquiry to challenge the reasoning and validity of national-ethnic classifications and the resulting connection to a homeland based on nationality. The protagonist has been embracing the freeing potential of fiction in relation to his heritage since he was a child. When asked about his real origins, he often resorts to fabricating stories. In this context, the refugee child employs the migrant approach of reducing stigma by altering their identity and playfully adjusting their life story serving to mock the nonsensical aspects of ethnic-national concepts and establishing the idea of an open society that transcends territorial boundaries. (Rutka, 2020, p.566)

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<sup>40</sup> Now I no longer know who I am, or where I am, or whose I am (Ugrešić, 1998, p.58).

Befragt nach meiner Herkunft sage ich mal ‘Višegrad’, mal ‘Europe’, mal ‘Kurpfalz’. [...] Ich sagte, meine Eltern seien Geisteswissenschaftler. Ich sagte mein Großvater sei Jäger, Aussiedler aus Danzig. Ich sagte meine Mütter seien Lesbierinnen. Ich sagte, Herkunft ist Zufall, immer mal wieder, auch ungefragt. (Stanišić, 2019, p.182)

Interestingly polysyndeton used in this passage in the repetition of “Ich sagte” creates a rhythm and emphasizes the different aspects of the author's identity and background he chooses to reveal. His usage of irony and paradox in this passage serves to question and deconstruct traditional notions of origin and identity. He portrays these concepts as multifaceted, dynamic, and subject to individual interpretation and expression, rather than being fixed and unchangeable. In Stanišić's work, the religious aspect is explicitly scrutinized as a criterion for stigmatization during wartime.<sup>41</sup> Yet, the novel subtly presents religious hermeneutic elements that indirectly encourage further inquiry and perhaps even alternative narratives reflecting one's own tradition. (Kumlehn, 2021, p.382). In the chapter titled “NÄHER AM NORDPOL”, Stanišić offers an exploration of nationalism's presence, even within the confines of children's classrooms at school. However, he concludes the episode by illustrating the experiences of a family residing in Višegrad, situated on Tito Street no less. Notably, during a census, this family humorously identified themselves as an Eskimo family, a jest that carried a weight of its own. Yet, as the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that during the wartime period, the father once again recorded the family as Eskimos in an official capacity, with a distinctly different response from those around them. Presently, as conveyed by Stanišić, this family resides in Sweden, a location that genuinely positions them in proximity to the North Pole. This episode serves as a poignant reflection on the multi-faceted impacts of nationalism and identity in the intricate tapestry of lived experiences. (Stanišić, 2019, p.115) Laughter in this case appears to be employed more as a mechanism for self-defense and to create a buffer from personal terror. It is at these moments that Stanišić succeeds in bridging the gap between the text and its readers. He does this by resonating with the experiences of those who have endured similar situations, thereby heightening awareness about the insensitivity, harm, and frequent racism in the remarks and actions of the cultural majority, for whom such phrases are mere jests rather than reflections of lived experiences. In doing so, he illuminates the existing boundaries (Klueppel, 2020, p.2).

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<sup>41</sup> In the Balkan region, it is important to recognize the deep interconnection between religion and national identity. For example, identifying someone as Croatian typically implies a Catholic background, while Bosniaks are generally associated with Islam, and Serbs are linked to the Orthodox Christian faith. Consequently, when we speak of “Serbs living in Bosnia”, we are referring to the Orthodox Christian community within Bosnia.

Said in his essay also criticizes nationalism and fixed identity categories. Nationalism is portrayed as the affirmation of belonging to a specific place, people, and heritage. It represents a collective bond formed through shared language, culture, and customs, essentially creating a sense of home that opposes and counteracts the experience of exile (Said, 2001, p.182). He acknowledges the complexity of discussing exile and nationalism independently, as both concepts encompass a wide range of collective sentiments and personal emotions. For Said, exiles are acutely aware that in a world characterized by secularism and uncertainty, the concept of home is inherently temporary. The very borders and barriers that provide a sense of security within familiar territory can also confine and restrict. Often, these boundaries are fiercely defended without justifiable reason. Exiles, however, defy such limitations by transcending borders and shattering the barriers of thought and experience. “Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience”. (Said, 2001, p.185). Further on Said extensively explores the notion of national or group affiliation. He posits that nationalism can be understood as the active affirmation of one's connection to a specific location, a particular community, and a shared cultural legacy. This perspective leads to the crucial question of how individuals can transcend the feelings of isolation experienced during exile while avoiding the potential pitfalls of “language as a national pride, collective sentiments, group passions” (Said, 2001, p.177). He asks an important question: What is there worth saving and holding on to between the extremes of exile on the one hand, and the often bloody-minded affirmations of nationalism on the other? Moreover, according to his perspective, exiles commonly experience a sense of obligation to rebuild their broken lives, often by perceiving themselves as aligned with a triumphant ideology or as individuals undergoing renewal (Said, 2001, p.177).

The issue of nationalism in relation to *Herkunft* can be reflected in the very title of the book. The word “Herkunft” itself evokes memories of the past and can be viewed in the context of national-cultural homogeneity and the emphasis on homeland (and love of homeland) and tradition in terms of national-state origin and familial-genealogical descent. Such concepts have always played a foundational and power-legitimizing role in the past. Origin and provenance have already served the function of intentional purposive narratives in the service of current political interests in pre-modern founding stories (Rutka, 2020, p. 555). With this title, it can be said that Stanišić expresses an antithesis. “Herkunft” in this context is not associated with nationalism, but its meaning is inverted to signify ideas that are contrary to nationalism, such as multiculturalism, globalism, or an individual identity that transcends national boundaries. This usage creates strong contrast and emphasizes the idea that identity

can be much more than belonging to one nation or culture. This thesis holds significant interest when applied to the work of Dubravka Ugrešić, as she has pursued various approaches except for reconstructing her shattered life through the framework of belonging. Quite the opposite, having grown up in the socialist system of former Yugoslavia, she struggled to comprehend the new system that imposed the reconstruction of history and national pride within her own country. Ugrešić appears to support the idea of surpassing her conventional literary background, utilizing her displaced existence as an exile to explore the intricate condition of non-belonging. This theme becomes a prevalent and significant focus in her broader post-Yugoslav body of work. (Schellenberg, 2020, p.105).

Within the novel, there is a profound exploration of the challenge of constructing a coherent narrative that can illuminate one's personal identity and origins, especially when the fundamental markers of identity have been obliterated. The novel posits that memory serves as the foundation of identity, a potent yet formidable force that can provide a reference point or, in its absence, leave behind a void of oblivion (Simeon, 2007, p. 138).

For an exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally. There is a unique pleasure in this sort of apprehension, especially if the exile is conscious of other contrapuntal juxtapositions that diminish orthodox judgment and elevate appreciative sympathy (Said, 2001, p.186).

Another important aspect is Said's quote: "Exile is a jealous state" (Said, 2001, p.178). In her essay *The Writer in Exile*, published in 2008, Ugrešić comments precisely on this quote from Said. She explores different perceptions and expectations society has towards writers in exile. She believes that it is completely acceptable for a "Western writer" to be in exile in a Western country. However, a writer from Eastern Europe is always expected to return to where they came from because if they live in a Western country without a clear political goal, they are considered suspicious. Furthermore, she emphasizes that society uses exiles as a projection of their own visions of exile (Ugrešić, 2008, p. 139). "He is welcome as someone who has suffered, as a victim of the regime, a fighter for democracy, a lover of freedom who couldn't stand oppression in the country he left" (Ugrešić, 2008, p. 139). Every time that person steps out of these stereotypes, they become undesirable. Additionally, a writer in exile constantly feels like they are on a racetrack, having to fulfill everything society expects from them and meet the expectations of their surroundings. "But nobody asks how the exile earns his freedom and what price he pays for it. Because the exile is someone else's projection. As well as his

own” (Ugrešić, 2008, p. 139). “Bin das ich?“ (Stanišić, 2019, p.297), asks the writer at the end of his novel.

## 9. Two Novels and Bhabha’s Hybridity

This chapter will examine the intersection of personal narratives and theoretical frameworks in understanding identity, displacement, and cultural hybridity. The focus is on the above-mentioned novels that provide personal narratives exploring the experiences of their characters in new and often challenging environments. These narratives offer insights into the emotional and psychological aspects of displacement and the search for identity in the context of exile. In contrast, Bhabha's *Third Space* provides a theoretical framework that helps in understanding the complexities of cultural encounters and the formation of new identities. This concept is particularly useful in analyzing how the characters in the novels navigate and negotiate their cultural identities in the face of displacement. The aim of this chapter is to analyze how these different approaches - the personal and the theoretical - complement each other in providing a deeper understanding of the themes of identity and displacement in exile literature. By examining the novels through the lens of Bhabha's theory, one can gain a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in the experiences of the characters and, by extension, in the experiences of real individuals facing similar situations. Nonetheless, there is even more at stake in exile literature because authors employ an additional creative strategy to cope with the trauma of enforced assimilation. They bring their native language and culture into the new environment, which in turn challenges, unsettles, and makes unfamiliar the new language and culture by incorporating them into fresh trans-local connections and transnational partnerships (Seyhan, 2000, as cited in Biti, 2016, p.46). This approach proves to be particularly effective when the exilic work is crafted in the host language, as is the situation with the authors analyzed in this thesis.

Exiled writers challenge the established traditions and norms of their new language, highlighting its roots, clarifying its structure, expanding its meanings, and also transforming and enriching its usage and experiences. (Biti, 2016, p.46)

If we take into the account that Bhabha challenges the conventional understanding of the nation as a uniform entity, highlighting the importance of the migrant's position, which involves simultaneously existing in two places and maintaining a dual perspective on reality, we can

actually see that this concept can be used in the analysis of *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*. Bhabha, according to Friedman (1997) employs the concepts of cultural hybridity and counter-modernity to assert that this duality is not simply an opposition but a form of transcendence. He emphasizes the need to avoid confining migrants within a single cultural framework, as this can lead to negative consequences such as nationalism and racism. (Friedman, 1997, 78).

In the chapter “Family Museum”, the writer describes a scene where her new roommate at the university swallowed a handful of pills. One evening, she approached her unexpectedly and wanted to talk to the protagonist about the act she had committed. In her “poor English”, she explained how she felt and why she wanted to take her own life:

Strani jezik pomogao joj je da izbaci grudicu boli zaostalu u grlu. Unutrašnji osjećaj dobrog ukusa nije joj dopustio da priču ispriča na materinjem jeziku. Bila je banalna (za drugoga, za slušaoca), a osim toga prepričavanjem bi uništila razlog svoje boli. Ovako je, izvodeći kompliciran jezički i psihološki obrat, ispričala bol na stranom jeziku (riješila se) i istodobno bol sačuvala ne uništivši njezinu jezgru. (Ugrešić, 2002, p.25)<sup>42</sup>

This quote illustrates the presence of dual identities. An exile often finds it easier to articulate their emotions in an unfamiliar language. By distancing themselves from their personal identity through the use of a foreign language, they find a closer connection to expressing their innermost feelings. A rich tapestry of stylistic devices is used to explore the intricate relationship between language, emotion, and the art of expression. Usage of metaphor, is particularly poignant in the depiction of the protagonist utilizing a foreign language to metaphorically “da izbaci grudicu boli zaostalu u grlu”. It serves as an illustration of the cathartic release achieved through articulating emotions in a non-native tongue, emphasizing the therapeutic potential of language. Irony also plays here a significant role in the narrative, particularly in how the protagonist perceives her story's banality in her mother tongue, contrasting sharply with its profound personal resonance when expressed in a foreign language. This irony sheds light on the subjective nature of storytelling, underscoring the profound emotional significance that different languages can hold for an individual. Next to that, just as we can see in *Herkunft* the narrative also skillfully employs paradox, especially in the notion

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<sup>42</sup> The foreign language helped her to cough up the little lump of pain that was stuck in her throat. An inner sense of good taste prevented her from telling the story in her own language. It was a banal tale (for the outsider, the audience), besides, by telling it she would have destroyed the reason for her pain. As it was, carrying out a complicated linguistic and psychological convolution, she told her pain in a foreign tongue and at the same time preserved it by not destroying its nucleus. (Ugrešić, 1998, p.35)

that narrating her painful story in a foreign language allows the protagonist to simultaneously liberate herself from her pain while preserving its core essence. This paradox captures the complex dynamics between language and emotion, highlighting how expression can be both a means of release and a method of safeguarding personal experiences. Furthermore, the use of juxtaposition is skillfully employed, contrasting the protagonist's internal sense of propriety with the perceived banality of her story by others. This juxtaposition brings into focus the internal conflict experienced by the protagonist, torn between her own perception of her narrative and its potential reception by others.

Joseph Brodsky's choice to write autobiographical passages about his parents in English, as suggested by Ugrišić, highlights this paradoxical phenomenon:

Čini se da bol, kao i psovku, s lakoćom možemo izreći samo na jeziku koji nije naš. Isti razlog, kao i moja tiha znanica, imao je pretpostavljam i ruski pjesnik Josif Brodski ispisujući autobiografske stranice o svojim roditeljima na engleskom jeziku. Razlog dijelom leži i u dobrom ukusu: žanrovski nepobjediva nostalgija prošavši kroz filtere tuđeg jezika dobila je umjesto mokre finu, suhu kvalitetu". (Ugrišić, 2002, p.25)<sup>43</sup>

Language, as Bhabha believes, can double the desire for Otherness by creating a distinction between oneself and the Other, so that both positions are partial.

Stanišić's writing is examined through a literary lens as the concept of an elusive or rejected distinct individual identity and a traceable ancestral background (Rutka, 2020, p. 573). Bhabha's theory of hybridity can also be applied to the linguistic aspect of the novel *Herkunft*, that among other things, explores how language can change and adapt during migrations and changes in environment. The characters in the novel often express themselves through linguistic hybrids, mixing their native language with the language of their new surroundings. This linguistic hybridity can symbolize the process of creating a new identity through language. Language is a crucial component in Stanišić's novel. Between two languages and two cultures, the author depicts his experiences of encountering him and his family with the new language in several parts of the novel.

Die neue Sprache lässt sich einigermaßen gut packen, aber ganz schlecht transportieren. Du verstehst mehr, als du sagen kannst. [...] Die Wochentage und die Monate hast du

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<sup>43</sup> It seems we can only easily express pain, and curses, in a language which is not our own. It was, I suppose, the same good reason as that of my quiet fellow-student, that drove the Russian poet Josef Brodsky to write his autobiographical pages about his parents in English. The reason lies partly also in good taste: passing through the filter of a foreign language, the invincible nostalgia of the genre acquired, instead of wetness, a fine, dry quality (Ugrišić, 1998, p.35).

längst gepackt, es vergehen allerdings einige, bis du Freunde hast. [...] Der Geographielehrer fragt mich, was die Hauptstadt meines Heimatlandes sei, und ich sage: `Belgrad und Sarajevo und Berlin`. (Stanišić, 2019, p.134)

In this passage, the use of metaphor, personification, and symbolism richly conveys the protagonist's journey with language and identity. The new language is metaphorically depicted as an item that can be packed but is challenging to transport, a creative way to show the difficulties in not just learning but truly assimilating a new language. The protagonist's grasp of the days of the week and months, referred to as 'packed', symbolizes the foundational knowledge they have acquired in the new language. Furthermore, the protagonist's answer "Belgrad und Sarajevo und Berlin" when asked about the capital of their homeland by a geography teacher poignantly reflects a complex, layered identity. This response is not just a list of cities; it is a tapestry of diverse cultures and histories, representing the protagonist's multifaceted sense of self. Through these linguistic techniques, Stanišić effectively captures the subtle intricacies of adapting to a new culture and the depth of a multi-dimensional identity. This quote reflects a nuanced exploration of language, identity, and cultural hybridity. The narrator illustrates the challenge of language acquisition and its impact on communication. He recognizes that while they can grasp the new language to some extent, conveying thoughts and experiences accurately remains difficult. This struggle to fully transport meaning echoes the complexities of cultural hybridity, where elements from different cultures are understood but might not be easily expressed. The narrator's experience of understanding more than they can articulate aligns with Bhabha's notion that hybrid identities exist in a liminal space, neither fully one nor the other. The tension between the old and new languages, and the challenge of expressing oneself authentically, mirrors the negotiation of identities in a hybrid cultural context. In the last part of the quote, in which the narrator mentions three cities as the capitals of the countries of his origin, he precisely witnesses the merging of geographical and personal identity. It is through this that we can see the hybrid nature of the narrator's belonging. Stanišić weaves together grammatical concepts with his own life story, using his family and personal encounters within German culture as illustrative instances for the grammatical terms. This further underscores the reflection upon language itself (Kleppe Likvern, 2020, p.17).

Stanišić, along with his family, had to live with the sensation and presence of being a stranger, and that strangeness was usually expressed by language itself:

Meine Eltern unterhielten sich im öffentlichen Raum auf Serbokroatisch ohnehin schon vorbeugend leise. Wer sich an Regeln hielt, auch an solche, die gar keine waren, dem

könnte man, so unser Eindruck, das Migrantendasein eher verzeihen. Und mit jeder Regel, an die man uns erinnerte, erinnerte man uns auch daran: Ihr seid fremd hier. (Stanišić, 2019, p.155)

The quote “Wer sich an Regeln hielt, auch an solche, die gar keine waren” uses metaphorical language to depict migrants' compliance with both real and fictitious rules, underscoring their eagerness to blend in and steer clear of disputes. Assimilation as a form of conflict avoidance, bowing one's head and blending in are merely aspects of the narrative that numerous migrant families and individuals must endure to be a part of a specific society. Frequently, out of fear of bureaucracy, a system that stands against the individual, and certain policies, these people are suppressed and, in some manner, exploited. This is for Stanišić and his family, as well for many others the way of existing and living in another country. The experience of being a foreigner has strongly influenced the narrator. He did not want to be seen as a “Yugo” or a refugee. In the analysis presented by Szurawitzki (2022), he references Klueppel's insights, noting distinct stages in Saša Stanišić's self-awareness within his book *Herkunft*. Initially, Stanišić, mirroring his parents' experience, confronts a profound linguistic void. Szurawitzki highlights how Stanišić overcomes this challenge by embracing German, the language of his new country, a pivotal step in his evolution as a writer. The role of language in shaping the emotional contours of migration is emphasized, with Stanišić articulating the struggles of languagelessness, the slow pace of communication, and the resultant shame and guilt regarding his parents' limited German proficiency. Yet, Stanišić transcends these challenges, driven by the desire to improve his German and ease the discomfort of others who struggled to conceal their impatience with him. Further, Szurawitzki cites Klueppel's (2020) interpretation of *Herkunft* as not just a narrative of linguistic adaptation in Germany, but also as a means to surmount linguistic powerlessness or inferiority. Additionally, Szurawitzki draws upon Zink's (2021) analysis, which connects *Herkunft* to Freud's Signorelli story, particularly in the context of suppressing traumatic memories and psychoanalysis. Zink observes the fragmented structure of *Herkunft*, positing that this form is reflective of the very essence of origin. According to Szurawitzki's reading of Zink, the book's structure, comprising various small chapters, each contributing to the overarching narrative of origin, underscores the importance of context in understanding the text. Each segment, whether it delves into family history, personal experiences, or geographical settings, integrates into a larger tapestry of origin stories.

Zu neuen Bekanntschaften sagte ich also dann und wann, ich käme aus Slowenien. Die Alpenrepublik war am wenigstens in den Schlagzeilen gewesen, ich würde eher als Skifahrer denn als Opfer gesehen, hoffte ich. [...] “Ich seufzte und sagte: Ich vermis-

die Alpen". Das Vermissen der Alpen, lernte ich, kommt in Deutschland extrem gut an. (Stanišić, 2019, p.151)

In this passage, there are several stylistic devices that the author uses to express the state of exile. Specifically, the fact that he is a skier suggests the very stereotypical image that people might have about certain nationalities. On the other hand, the missing Alps can be interpreted as a motif of longing for a country that does not exist. And through humor and irony, the author highlights adaptation to a new culture using stereotypes. We can presume that the narrator has experienced or observed negative stereotypes of prejudices associated with migration and being a refugee. By claiming to be from Slovenia, a less stigmatized or stereotyped country, the narrator may be trying to avoid being associated with certain negative perceptions or assumptions. He might be navigating the complexities of integrating into a new culture or society, where their true origin could be a source of tension or misunderstanding. This is a very interesting observation, but in that sense, it cannot be said that it applies to all the writers from the former Yugoslavia, as identity formation in that region is different. Nationality is, as mentioned above, often linked to religion, and there is not a strong sense of multi-ethnicity, but rather a focus on mono-ethnicity. Although there was a collective term for identities in Yugoslavia, which encompassed Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, Macedonians, Slovenians and Montenegrins, and included all these nations, there was no need to highlight and say "Serb from Yugoslavia". The term "Jugosloven" (Yugoslav) was sufficient to categorize an individual within a certain region. If geographical mapping was required, one would specify, for instance, "Jugosloven from Zagreb". It was only in the 1990s, with the breakup of Yugoslavia, that emphasis was placed on nationality, and these terms ceased to be used in that sense, as the country no longer existed. Instead, national designations for the newly formed republics, such as Croat, Serb, Bosniak, and Montenegrin, started to be used. Taking this into account, in this case, we have the concept of hybridity in language, as the disintegration of Yugoslavia led to the emergence of mono-national languages which were previously all under the umbrella of Serbo-Croatian. Suddenly, there was a call from nations to the ancient history of our region, claiming that these languages had already existed. In Yugoslavia, there were dialects and vernaculars, but the language was defined as one. Now, with the modernization of language, each small state in the Balkans begins to make its language increasingly different from the other languages of the Balkan region by introducing its own rules. However, after the breakup of Yugoslavia, it is important to note that when leaving the country, people commonly said they spoke "our" language (naš jezik). The phrase "naš" was used because by saying this, people distanced themselves from any nationalist claims, assumptions, and possibilities for

alignment. This is also a form of creating a hybrid identity: "Ein Land, dessen Sprache man versteht, ist nicht zwingend mehr dein Land, es ist aber weniger relativ" (Stanišić, 2020, p.135). For Stanišić, language is indeed important for a person to feel connected to that country; however, it is not the determining aspect of belonging or identity. According to him, there are additional factors that shape our sense of belonging, such as culture, customs, and personal experiences. Identity is complex and multifactorial. In his collection of essays titled *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that there exists a space that lies between the established categorizations of identity. According to him, this intermediary realm, known as the "interstitial passage", presents an opportunity for cultural hybridity to emerge. Importantly, this hybridity embraces and celebrates differences without imposing a predetermined or hierarchical structure. In essence, Bhabha proposes that this liminal space allows for the coexistence and mutual influence of diverse cultural elements, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of identity. (Easthope, 2008, p.341).

In the chapter titled "Family Museum", Ugrešić recounts an incident during her visit to America where she spends time with a friend. This friend has a house decorated in a European style but also embraces American traditions like Thanksgiving, drives her children to school, plays tennis, and even incorporates American flags into her children's cakes. This reflects a common experience for many in exile, where adapting to the host country's customs is a part of their new identity and can be seen as a dual allegiance that is a hallmark of the exilic experience, where individuals often maintain strong ties to their cultural roots while also embracing aspects of their new environment. Ugrešić goes on in the narrative where during a conversation with her American friend, they reminisce about a person named Mirek who left a lasting impression on her friend's memory. According to their recollection, Mirek was a tall, strong, blue-eyed man with whom her friend had spent time in Zagreb. However, in reality, Mirek had small brown eyes and a face marked with pockmarks. Despite this disparity, Mirek's image shone brightly in her friend's memory photo album, even from across the ocean. The difference between Mirek's real looks and his image in the friend's memory indicates a propensity to glorify or romanticize past experiences, a common occurrence in situations of exile. Such idealization may serve as a way to cope, with homeland memories being enhanced or modified to offer solace or sustain a link with a departed home. Also, there is a certain sense of nostalgia that can be a powerful force in maintaining a connection to one's roots and in shaping one's sense of self in a new environment. Ugrešić's entire novel is filled with refugees, each of whom has their own story. Berlin, as one of the main locations of the narrative, is not

only a city of ruins and museums but also a city of refugees who exist between a state that no longer exists and the state they have come to. Ugrešić's narrator preserves the life narratives of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, rescuing them from being forgotten (Varvaet, 2011, p.298). And what better way to gather memories and recollections of moments and things from migrants than in none other than the symbolic Berlin.

On another side one can say that Stanišić, with his testimonies, also operates in a similar manner. His characters also exist between two worlds, and the autobiographical parts of the novel serve as testimonies of a certain time. In the book, characters like Stanišić's mother, a pivotal figure, embody the experience of exile. She is portrayed as someone earnestly trying to preserve her ties to her homeland, while at the same time navigating the complexities of her new life in Germany. This duality highlights the theme of hybridity, as she blends elements of her original and adopted cultures. Similarly, Stanišić's father features prominently in his recollections, illustrating the personal adjustments and challenges he faces in the context of exile. The character of Stanišić's grandmother stands out as well, offering a bridge to the past and linking narratives across generations. Her stories and memories significantly contribute to Stanišić's journey in understanding his identity, further underscoring the interplay of exile and hybridity. Considering Bhabha's concept of hybridity, it suggests that through interaction with the *Third Space*, individuals might avoid the dynamics of binary oppositions and cultivate a deeper, more complex comprehension of both their own identities and those of others (Bhabha, 1994, p. 3). This exemplifies the formation of a hybrid identity that emerges from the interplay between different cultural contexts. On one hand, in Ugrešić's novel we see the memories of life in Zagreb, which now appear idyllic, while on the other hand, we have life in America and an identity that has fully adapted to that way of life and external culture. However, the memories represent a kind of non-adaptation, a part of one's personality that remains rooted in where they came from. Varvaet (2011) examines the usage of the term "rubbish" in the novel to represent objects that hold no value to the narrator's mother. The narrator, places distinct value on this discarded rubbish (Varvaet, 2011, p.299). By ascribing significance to these disregarded remnants, Dubravka Ugrešić highlights the importance of memories that have been deemed worthless. This interpretation can be approached from multiple perspectives. Firstly, it effectively captivates readers' attention by evoking memories. Secondly, it emphasizes the selectiveness of our memories and our ability to shape and recall them (Varvaet, 2011, p.301). To truly comprehend our identity, it may be necessary to explore these less favorable memories that can offer profound insights into our character. Viewing rubbish as something that eludes

the mechanisms of control such as official historiography, museums, memory politics, elite art, autobiography, and private archives like photograph albums, the act of “elevating rubbish to the level of art becomes a way of creating a counter-memory” (Varvaet, 2011, p. 302). As Foucault (1971) states, the ‘true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference’ (Tello, 2022, p. 386). Ugrešić’s act of collecting such ‘garbage’ and objects serves as a way for her to detach from mono nationalist politics and the familiar discourses associated with them. Instead, she becomes intrigued by the ordinary, everyday lives of individuals and individuals in exile. Considering that hybrid identities are formed by assimilating a fragment from the forsaken world and integrating a new fragment from the world we enter, it raises the question: what precisely is embraced and what is discarded from the identities we carry within ourselves? The author directs her attention to minutiae, the overlooked details that impact the formation of our personalities. She delves into her childhood experiences with Western art and its influence. The mention of the word “Sorbonne” (Ugrešić, 2002, p.55) holds a special meaning for her, evoking a sense of fascination despite its vague connotations which suggests the narrator's exposure to French literature began at a young age, nurturing her interest in the arts:

Nešto kasnije pojavile su se gume za žvakanje sa sličicama filmskih glumaca. Jednom sam (od jedne starije djevojčice, koja je odlučila da odraste) dobila u nasljedstvo pravo blago: album sa sličicama glumaca iz guma za žvakanje. Razgledavala sam album, a mama je uz svaku sličicu znala isprići priču (Ugrešić, 2002, p.55).<sup>44</sup>

Her mother subscribed to a magazine called *Film World* that wrote about the lives of “filmskih glumaca, o njihovim skandalima, vjenčanjima, razvodima, o njihovim flertovima, pijanstvima, nesrećama. Gutala je te priče i sve ih znala napamet” (Ugrešić, 2002, p.55)<sup>45</sup>. The mother becomes engrossed in these stories, absorbing them to the point of memorization. The narrator's memories of this album and her mother come to mind while watching the movie *How Green Was My Valley* in the cinema (Ugrešić, 2002, p.56). The fragments and glimpses of memories from the narrator's childhood shed light on the process through which the narrator's current adult self has emerged. The narrator's cultural background, upbringing, and growth exert influence on the individual's formation, shaped by various life factors. But at the same time,

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<sup>44</sup> Somewhat later came chewing-gum packets with little pictures of film stars in them. Once I inherited (from and older child, who had decided to grow up) a real treasure: an album with pictures of actors from chewing-gum packets. I examined the album, and Mother knew a story to go with each of the pictures (Ugrešić, 1998, p.89).

<sup>45</sup> ...famous film stars, scandals, marriages, divorces, affairs, drunkenness, unhappiness. She devoured these stories until she knew them all by heart (Ugrešić, 1998, p.89).

Stanišić and Ugrešić utilize fragmentation as a stylistic device in both their works, aiming to depict the intricate and scattered nature of identities. The fragmented writing style serves to highlight the notion that identities are multifaceted and unpredictable, continually molded and transformed through various influences. By employing this style, both authors express the idea that identities are not static but rather in constant flux, susceptible to alteration. From the example, it can be observed that the narrator's mother, who lives within a socialist system and engages in socialist life, also consumed the opposite of socialism, namely Western art.

Still, connecting Stanišić and Bhabha in this context can be done by examining how Stanišić's characters in the novel navigate identities and relationships between different cultural spaces. Stanišić describes the hybridity of his characters in several ways, which evolve through changes in place, time, and existence. The state of departure from everything you know, as Saša Stanišić himself claims throughout the entire novel, is very challenging. In the chapter "GROßMUTTER UND DIE FERNBEDIENUNG" he writes about a time when his grandmother is watching tv and in one moment asks the narrator: "'Wann kann ich nach Hause?' 'Du bist zu Hause, Oma'" (Stanišić, 2019, p.173).

The dementia experienced by the grandmother, as portrayed by the book's narration, can be construed in dual ways. Firstly, it reflects her genuine inability to recognize the house in Višegrad due to her ailment. Secondly, it can serve as a metaphor representing broader societal changes in more contemporary times. Her once-familiar house no longer retains its original essence, and Višegrad itself has evolved beyond her recognition. These temporal shifts have left her ensnared in a different era, within a nation that has since undergone transformation and no longer exists in its prior form. "Ich glaube, dass es wenig Schlimmeres gibt, als zu wissen wo man hingehört, aber dort nicht sein zu können" (Stanišić, 2019, p.174). The writer juxtaposes the stereotypes with the reality of the situation, highlighting their desire to return to their hometown if it were possible. This stark contrast leaves a strong impression on the reader and facilitates a deeper comprehension of the emotions associated with being unfairly judged based on their ethnicity. (Kleppe Likvern, 2020, p.13)

Stanišić explores the complex experiences of individuals who straddle multiple cultural and geographical spaces. The characters in the novel often find themselves in-between two worlds: their country of origin and their adopted country or the place of migration. These characters, like Stanišić himself, can be seen as existing in a *Third Space* where their identities are not strictly tied to one culture or location. Stanišić's exploration of the intricate experiences of individuals navigating multiple cultural and geographical realms finds resonance in the

portrayal of the grandmother's dementia in the novel. The characters in the story frequently inhabit the liminal space between two worlds: their country of origin and their adopted homeland or the location of their migration. In a similar vein, the grandmother's dementia can be viewed as a reflection of this in-between existence. She grapples with the disorientation of not recognizing her familiar surroundings in Višegrad, which once constituted her home, mirroring the characters' own struggles to reconcile their past and present, their sense of belonging, and the transformation of their cultural and geographical identities. An interesting example is also his grandfather Muhamed. After he tells his dentist about how his grandfather is struggling in Germany, and is the least happy member of the entire family, the dentist, that the boy was visiting in Heidelberg, invites the boy and his grandfather to go fishing.

Fragt mich jemand, was mir Heimat bedeutet, erzähle ich vom freundlichen Grüßen eines Nachbarn über die Straße hinweg. Ich erzähle, wie Dr. Heimat meinen Großvater und mich zum Angeln an den Neckar eingeladen hat. Wie er Brote geschmiert und sowohl Saft als auch Bier dabei hatte, weil man ja nie weiß. Wie wir Stunden nebeneinander am Neckar standen, ein Zahnarzt aus Schlesien, ein alter Bremser aus Jugoslawien und ein fünfzehnjähriger Schüler ohne Karies, und wie wir alle drei ein paar Stunden lang vor nichts auf der Welt Angst hatten. (Stanišić, 2019, p. 177)

In this excerpt, the shared activity of fishing is metaphorically depicted as a symbol of unity and a sense of belonging. It brings together diverse characters - a Silesian dentist, a Yugoslavian brakeman, and a young student - illustrating how they transcend their distinct backgrounds. Similarly to how Berlin is portrayed as a melting pot for migrants in Ugrešić's narrative, the Neckar River here symbolizes a steady, unifying element that gathers varied individuals in one place, creating an environment where their differences are overlooked. Additionally, the passage subtly hints at the deeper fears and uncertainties these characters may encounter in their lives, which seem to vanish as they come together in this shared riverside setting.

Describing his mother, the narrator says: "Meine Mutter erlebt und verarbeitet die Dissonanz noch eine Spur intensiver. In Višegrad ist sie eine andere Person. Schreckhafter und launischer und albern nie. Mutter schläft schlecht, Mutter kichert nicht mehr in Višegrad" (Stanišić, 2019, p.197). This passage illuminates the challenges his mother faces when contemplating a return to Višegrad, the town she and her family had to escape during the war to secure a safer and improved life for her children. Even though it represents the backdrop of the majority of her

life's experiences, revisiting this geographic locale rekindles adverse emotions, evoking the complex sentiments associated with leaving one's place of birth.

Vielleicht weinte Mutter, weil sie mich zum ersten Mal in einem öffentlichen Kontext beobachten konnte. Nicht zu Hause. Nicht unter Jugos. [...] Vielleicht aber auch einfach, weil sie traurig war, dass all das überhaupt eine Bedeutung und Tragweite hatte in unserem Leben, in dem so wenig selbstverständlich war. (Stanišić, 2019, p.215)

Several possible meanings are implied here: one is that his mother may have been worried about how her child was adapting to a new environment or how he was perceived by others outside their familiar cultural or social circle. It also alludes to a sense of displacement and the challenges of adapting to a new cultural and social environment. The mention of “Jugos” suggests that there is a familiarity and comfort associated with their native culture, and being outside of that context may have been disorienting or unsettling for the mother and the narrator. The narrator reflects on how their lives lack certainty as people who needed to leave their old lives behind for new, foreign and unclear futures. This could imply that their experiences as immigrants or individuals from a culturally diverse background are marked by a sense of unpredictability, where even seemingly small moments, like the child's public appearance, carry significant meaning and weight in their lives.

While Bhabha's concept of the *Third Space* emphasizes the idea that individuals can develop a more nuanced understanding of their own identities and those of others by inhabiting this space, the characters in Stanišić's work still ponder these questions: Where do they come from? Where have they arrived? Who have they become? Where is their house? And finally, where is their home? Saša Stanišić's autobiographical elements serve as testimonies of a specific time and place. These testimonies reflect the hybrid nature of his own identity, as well as the identities of the characters in the novel. By engaging with the *Third Space*, both the author and the characters in the novel are able to move beyond simplistic, polarized notions of identity and nationality.

Ich nahm die sozialen Unterschiede wahr, die Flucht nicht ausradieren konnte und hielt mich für etwas Besseres. Es ist schäbig, wie opportunistisch ich mein Vertrauen verteilte, um im selben Atemzug die Ungleichbehandlung zu verurteilen, der wir als Geflüchtete unterschiedslos in Deutschland ausgesetzt waren. (Stanišić, 2019, p. 202)

This quotation exemplifies the narrative of the first-person protagonist who finds themselves straddling two cultures, a condition often described as having 'one foot in two cultures' (Espinoza-Herold & Contini, 2017, p. 177 In Kleppe Likvern, 2020, p.17). This dual cultural identity introduces a degree of ambivalence concerning their ethnic identity. They identify with

both cultures, and they activate one or the other facet of their identity depending on the social context. This adaptability is evident in their interactions within both their ethnic subculture or minority and, interestingly, within the larger ethnic majority. Notably, the protagonist self-critically recognizes their own biases, even as they perceive themselves as superior, despite having experienced injustice as a refugee. These oscillations and introspective moments suggest a potential transformation of self or identity. It is plausible that these fluctuations are a consequence of negotiating cultural values inherited from their family's country of origin while engaging with the values of German society (Kleppe Likvern, 2020, p.15). Among various immigrant groups and within different nations, the integration strategy, characterized by a fusion of favorable attitudes towards both ethnic and national cultures, is frequently associated with improved psychological well-being and effective socio-cultural adjustment. (Berry, 2023, p.xv). Right here, we can once again see confirmation of Homi Bhabha's theory, which posits that by merging two identities, a new identity is created as a *Third Space* of existence”.

## 10. Conclusion

From the analysis of the chapters above, it becomes evident that postcolonial theory is not exclusively limited to the analysis that deals with questions of identity and conditions of life. These theories primarily focus on exploring identity, especially understanding the changes that identity undergoes when an individual faces a change in their usual environment or leaves their “roots”. Homi Bhabha, for example, highlights the fluidity of identity, emphasizing their susceptibility to change under various factors. When people leave their countries and arrive in new territories, they encounter new cultures and languages, thus creating an “interstitial space” of identity. However, it is important to distinguish between colonization and its later effects, namely postcolonization, from migrations that have arisen due to wars unrelated to colonization. Colonization is characterized by the imposition of a new identity, culture, and language on a certain territory, where the dominant group imposes its identity on the indigenous peoples. In the case of the dissolution of the SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), one cannot speak of the imposition of a new identity by an external factor, but rather of internal unrest and political errors that culminated in a civil war. Yugoslavia was not colonized in the period from 1991 to 1996; its crisis was exclusively a result of internal factors. Nevertheless, Yugoslavia and Yugoslavian conflict produced numerous writers who departed this region and delved into the problems of exile, providing accounts of their lives abroad.

Observation of the realities which are always multifarious highlight the potential for this discourse to be considered as a distinct area within the field of Slavic literary studies, adding an intriguing layer to the exploration of the Yugoslav literary diaspora. In examining the aftermath of the Yugoslav conflict and the subsequent disintegration of Yugoslavia, a noteworthy phenomenon emerges: the exodus of a considerable number of writers from the region. These writers, in their literary endeavors, have extensively explored the theme of exile, providing intricate and diverse accounts of their experiences in foreign lands. Their narratives offer a profound insight into the complexities of adapting to new cultural and social environments, and the reformation of identity in the context of displacement. The literature produced by these exiled Yugoslav authors, particularly those from the contemporary era, is characterized by diversity. This diversity in storytelling and perspective is not merely an observation but a significant indicator of the varied individual and collective experiences encapsulated within the Yugoslav diaspora. Each author's unique voice and experience contributes to a rich, multifaceted portrayal of life in exile, thereby enriching the understanding of the cultural and historical nuances of the Yugoslav region. This diversity and richness in the literature of Yugoslav exiles suggest its potential for recognition as a distinct area within Slavic literary studies. Acknowledging this body of work within academic discourse would not only enhance our understanding of Yugoslav literary diaspora but also contribute to the broader field of study concerning displacement and cultural identity. The exploration of these narratives, with their intersecting themes of identity, memory, and belonging, offers a valuable perspective on the experiences of the Yugoslav diaspora and its impact on cultural and historical narratives. Moreover, the inclusion of Yugoslav exile literature in Slavic literary history could provide critical insights into the phenomenon of literary diasporas at large. It would facilitate an understanding of how experiences of displacement and migration influence literary creation and how these literary works, in turn, shape the cultural identity of diasporic communities. This area of study is poised to reveal the dynamic and multifaceted nature of exile literature, highlighting its role not only as a medium reflecting personal and collective histories but also as a significant contributor to the evolving landscape of global literature. Anyone who has changed their place of residence, whether due to political, self-imposed, religious, cultural or intellectual, economic, war, legal or internal exile, faces the creation of some form of “hybrid” identity. This is confirmed through the analysis of two books, *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* by Dubravka Ugrešić and *Herkunft* by Saša Stanišić. Although their narratives and writing styles differ, both works are connected by the theme of exile, further confirming the complexity and universality of postcolonial theory. In the academic exploration of exile within

contemporary literature, the works of Dubravka Ugrešić and Saša Stanišić offer a profound insight into the exilic condition, resonating with Edward Said's and Homi Bhabha's theoretical perspectives. Ugrešić, through her work transcends the traditional view of exile as a merely physical or political state. Her portrayal of exile as an existential crisis interwoven with personal history and identity aligns with Said's view of exile as a complex and multifaceted experience. This alignment not only reflects but also enriches the understanding of exile, depicting it as a state that continually reshapes an individual's sense of self. Similarly, Stanišić's *Herkunft* echoes Said's depiction of exile as a perpetual state of loss and non-belonging. Rooted in Stanišić's personal experiences, the narrative explores the dichotomy of belonging to two different cultures, embodying Said's notion of exile as a continuous struggle for identity in a shifting cultural landscape. Stanišić's literary contributions significantly mirror and offer an authentic perspective on the intricate challenges involved in juggling multiple cultural identities. His work is a testament to the lived experiences of those navigating this complex terrain. Although the thesis emphasizes that the nature of departure, the manner of leaving, and the lives of these two authors differ significantly, and that their creative outputs are distinct, there are certain common motifs that unify both novels. Utilizing techniques of reminiscence and retrospection, Ugrešić, through dreams, sounds, and scents, as well as memories, and Stanišić, through descriptions of past events, both authors effectively depict the state of exile. For example, sounds, in Ugrešić's narrative, become powerful triggers, involuntarily stirring up memories and underscoring the profound sense of separation from one's native land. This depiction in her work brings to the forefront the idea that exile is not merely a matter of physical dislocation but encompasses a deep-seated emotional and psychological journey. Moreover, Ugrešić's exploration of dreams as a motif adds another layer to our understanding of exile. In her portrayal, exile is likened to a dreamlike state where the lines between past, present, and future become indistinct, and one's life story appears to be preordained. This perspective elevates the experience of exile beyond the simple confines of geographical or political contexts, venturing into a more existential sphere where personal history and identity are in a state of constant flux and reevaluation. Conversely, Ugrešić does not shy away from depicting exile as a nightmarish reality, characterized by a succession of temporary dwellings and an ongoing internal struggle to reconcile one's imagined world with reality. This juxtaposition of dream and nightmare within her narrative effectively captures the multifaceted and often paradoxical nature of the exilic experience. Furthermore, Ugrešić's incorporation of the photo album motif in her storytelling is a clever and self-reflective nod to the content of her novel. Michele Simeon observes that Ugrešić uses albums and photographs as tangible

representations of personal histories, a point he elaborates on in his 2007 work (Simeon, 2007, p.139). This narrative technique does more than just mirror the author's personal experiences; it transcends traditional depictions of exile. It aligns with Edward Said's perspective of exile as a complex and layered experience. By intertwining the physical with the emotional, Ugrešić's narrative demonstrates a profound and nuanced understanding of exile as a dynamic state that continually reshapes an individual's sense of self and identity. Similarly, Stanišić's narrative resonates with Said's depiction of exile as a perpetual state of loss and non-belonging. His exploration of identity and belonging, particularly the complexities of defining 'home,' reflects the broader struggle many immigrants face in reconciling past and present identities. Stanišić's work, beginning with his birth in a now-nonexistent hospital in a country that has dissolved, delves into the intricate relationship between personal history and societal acceptance. His narrative transcends the mere geographical notion of 'home,' exploring the emotional and psychological spaces within society. This exploration aligns with Said's view of exile as a contradictory condition, involving both loss and separation, and serving as a fertile ground for artistic expression. Stanišić's oscillation between affirming and negating his sense of belonging in Germany reflects the broader immigrant struggle of reconciling past and present identities. His narrative underscores the complexities of defining 'home' and belonging, resonating with Said's claim that exile is a human-created phenomenon, marked by choices that often lead to challenging consequences.

Just like Stanišić, Ugrešić's work, particularly after her exile, engages deeply with themes of displacement and identity. Her creative output, divided into before and after her exile, reveals a significant shift in her literary focus. The changes in her homeland, marked by altered street names, languages, and symbols, mirror the transformation in her writing, emphasizing the impact of exile on her artistic expression. Ugrešić's narrative, reflecting on the choices that lead to exile, confirms Said's perspective that exile is not just a physical displacement but also a condition shaped by human decisions and actions. Both authors, through their narratives, underscore the enduring nature of exile, highlighting its profound impact on an individual's relationship with their past, present, and evolving sense of self. Said's understanding of exile as a contradictory condition, involving loss and separation yet serving as a fertile environment for artistic expression, is evident in the works of both Ugrešić and Stanišić. Their experiences of exile, though differing in circumstances, have significantly shaped their creative output, confirming Said's notion that exile is a human-created phenomenon with profound personal and collective implications. To conclude these claims, one can say that both writers view exile as a complex and multifaceted experience, transcending mere physical displacement. Ugrešić

and Stanišić, like Said, highlight the emotional and psychological impact of exile on personal identity. On the one hand, Ugrešić uses tangible symbols and Stanišić's focuses on the emotional aspects of "home" align with Said's emphasis on the deeper existential implications of exile. The theme of non-belonging and the struggle to define home or belonging are common across both perspectives. Taking into account that Said's view on exile claims that the state of exile can be a fertile ground for artistic creation, both Ugrešić and Stanišić illustrate the paradoxical nature of exile, resonating with Said's view of exile as involving both loss and the potential for creativity.

One of the central themes in Ugrešić's work is the coexistence of dual identities, often expressed with the usage of foreign languages. She portrays the challenges faced by individuals who find themselves straddling two cultures, embodying what Homi Bhabha refers to as having "one foot in two cultures". This dual cultural identity introduces a sense of ambivalence about one's ethnic identity, and characters in her novel activate different facets of their identity depending on the social context. The use of foreign languages as a means of articulating emotions and the distancing of oneself from personal identity through language are notable features in Ugrešić's work. She demonstrates the coexistence of two identities and the utilization of these identities in diverse life situations. Furthermore, Ugrešić's work resonates with Homi Bhabha's concept of the *Third Space*. Bhabha challenges conventional understandings of nationhood and identity by emphasizing the importance of the migrant's position-simultaneously existing in two places and maintaining a dual perspective on reality. Ugrešić's portrayal of her characters' experiences aligns with this concept, as they navigate the complexities of cultural encounters and the emergence of new identities. In contrast, Saša Stanišić's *Herkunft* explores similar themes of identity and displacement but takes a different approach. His narrative is deeply rooted in familial and cultural contexts, with autobiographical elements serving as testimonies of a specific time and place. Stanišić's characters often find themselves in-between multiple cultural and geographical spaces, mirroring the complexities of identity formation in a globalized world. Stanišić's novel places a strong emphasis on the interplay between language, cultural adaptation, and familial experiences. The linguistic aspect of the novel is a central theme, highlighting how language can change and adapt during migrations and shifts in environment. Characters in the novel often express themselves through linguistic hybrids, mixing their native language with the language of their new surroundings. This linguistic hybridity symbolizes the process of creating a new identity through language, aligning with Bhabha's idea of cultural hybridity. This struggle to fully transport meaning echoes the complexities of cultural hybridity, where elements from different cultures are

understood but might not be easily expressed. The tension between old and new languages, and the challenge of expressing oneself authentically, mirrors the negotiation of identities in a hybrid cultural context. Stanišić's characters grapple with questions of where they come from, where they belong, and who they have become, mirroring Bhabha's call for a more nuanced understanding of identity beyond simplistic categories. The autobiographical elements in *Herkunft* serve as testimonies of a specific time and place, highlighting the hybrid nature of identity as individuals engage with the *Third Space*.

While Dubravka Ugrešić and Saša Stanišić both explore themes of identity, displacement, and cultural hybridity in their works through the usage of the autobiographical elements, they do so through distinct narrative approaches. Ugrešić's introspective and fragmented style delves into the coexistence of dual identities, often expressed through language. Stanišić, on the other hand, focuses on familial and cultural contexts, emphasizing the interplay between language, adaptation, and identity. It can be concluded that both authors underscore the coexistence of multiple cultural identities, yet their approaches to this theme diverge in significant ways. Ugrešić's narrative delves into the internal conflict and ambivalence inherent in dual identities, employing language as a pivotal tool for both expressing and distancing these identities. Her characters cleverly navigate Bhabha's *Third Space*, skillfully adapting their identities to varying social contexts, thereby embodying the fluidity and complexity of cultural hybridity. Conversely, Stanišić anchors his narrative in a more autobiographical and familial realm, placing a pronounced emphasis on linguistic hybridity as a vehicle for identity formation. His engagement with the *Third Space* is intricately tied to his personal journey and the linguistic nuances of identity negotiation. Collectively, Ugrešić and Stanišić illuminate the intricate dynamics involved in balancing and blending diverse cultural influences. Their narratives resonate profoundly with Bhabha's advocacy for a nuanced, multifaceted understanding of identity, transcending simplistic categorizations and highlighting the rich tapestry of hybrid cultural identities.

In their distinct and diverse approaches, both books under analysis reveal the underlying commonalities between two disparate historical epochs: the era of colonization and the period marking the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). This comparison illuminates the universal nature of departure and migration, regardless of the specific historical context. While the circumstances surrounding the departure of both authors from the Balkans, and their subsequent processes of naturalization and integration, differ markedly, a fundamental truth emerges: the act of leaving one's birthplace is a universal phenomenon, imbued with a set of experiences that resonate across different lives and times.

In the narratives of Dubravka Ugrešić and Saša Stanišić, this universal experience of departure is not only acknowledged but also transformed into a catalyst for positive outcomes, particularly in the realm of literary creation. Their works delve into the trauma often associated with departure, especially when it occurs in the tumultuous context of war. This trauma, however, serves as a fertile ground for the emergence of new, hybrid identities that straddle the line between the past and the present, the old and the new. These hybrid identities, characteristic of individuals who have undergone the experience of migration, reflect a complex process of adaptation. To assimilate into a new environment, individuals often face the challenge of balancing the retention of their original cultural identity with the adoption of new customs, knowledge, and identities. This balancing act often involves a degree of discarding or reconfiguring elements of one's original identity to better fit into the new context. However, as evidenced in the works of Ugrešić and Stanišić, this process does not necessarily entail a complete forsaking of one's roots. Instead, it can lead to the creation of a 'third identity'—one that harmoniously integrates aspects of the original identity with elements of the new cultural milieu. This third identity is not a mere amalgamation of two cultures but a dynamic, evolving construct that reflects the complexities and nuances of living between worlds.

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## Navigieren durch Hybridität und Exil: Erinnerung und Identität in Saša Stanišićs „Herkunft“ und Dubravka Ugrešićs „Das Museum der bedingungslosen Kapitulation“

Diese Masterarbeit unternimmt eine tiefgreifende Untersuchung des Zusammenspiels von Erinnerung, Identität und diasporischen Erzählungen, mit einem Fokus auf den literarischen Werken zweier prominenter exilierter Autoren, Saša Stanišić und Dubravka Ugrešić. Basierend auf den theoretischen Rahmenwerken der Hybriditätstheorie von Homi Bhabha und den Überlegungen zum Exil von Edward Said, führe ich eine vergleichende Analyse der literarischen Oeuvres der Autoren durch. Mein Ziel ist es, die komplexen Verbindungen zwischen narrativen Strategien, hybriden Identitäten und den Erfahrungen von Verdrängung zu beleuchten. Der einleitende Abschnitt legt die theoretischen Grundlagen der Theorien Bhabhas und Saims fest und bereitet den Boden für eine vertiefte Exploration der ausgewählten literarischen Werke. Durch eine Untersuchung jedes Romans – Stanišićs „Herkunft“ und Ugrešićs „Das Museum der bedingungslosen Kapitulation“ – strebt diese Forschung danach, aufzudecken, wie die Autoren mit den vielschichtigen Dimensionen von Hybridität und Exil in ihren Darstellungen von Erinnerung und Identitätsentwicklung ringen. Indem ich mich auf einen einzelnen Roman jedes ausgewählten Autors konzentriere, statt ihr gesamtes literarisches Korpus zu analysieren, wendet diese Studie eine qualitative Forschungsmethodik an, die in den autofiktionalen Elementen verwurzelt ist. Der analytische Ansatz beinhaltet eine interne Inhaltsanalyse der Romane, mit dem primären Ziel, die kontextuellen Aspekte dieser literarischen Werke vor dem Hintergrund postkolonialer Theorien und historischer Kontexte zu kontrastieren. Die Forschungsfrage konzentriert sich auf mehrere Schlüsselbereiche der Untersuchung: Erstens geht sie darauf ein, wie die Darstellung von Abreise und Leben in fremden Territorien durch Sprache und Humor in den ausgewählten Büchern artikuliert wird. Zweitens erforscht sie die vielfältigen literarischen Mittel, die von den Autoren verwendet werden, um ihre Erfahrungen des Lebens in fremden Ländern zu vermitteln. Der dritte Aspekt basiert auf der Tatsache, dass beide Romane Elemente der Autofiktion enthalten, ich interessiere mich für die Erforschung der Exilerfahrung und den Vergleich der in diesen Romanen beschriebenen Erfahrungen und Emotionen. Durch diesen methodologischen Ansatz zielt diese Thesis darauf ab, zu einem nuancierten Verständnis des komplexen Zusammenspiels zwischen literarischem Ausdruck, persönlichen Erzählungen und den breiteren soziopolitischen Kontexten innerhalb der ausgewählten Romane beizutragen. Die aus der Analyse dieser beiden Werke gezogene Schlussfolgerung unterstreicht einen kritischen Punkt: Postkoloniale Theorien müssen nicht ausschließlich auf postkoloniale Literatur beschränkt sein.