The Post-Yugoslav War Novel: Lost Homes, Lost Cities

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[1] A broken statue of Josip Broz Tito. Photo taken in Novi Sad, Serbia in 2009 by Lea Lonza.

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction……..5

2. Crash Course in Yugoslav History and the Myths that Shaped It…………………………………………….........15

3. Enter Nostalgia…….22

4. Memory and the City………………………………………………………………………………………….……….31

5. *Nowhere Man*, 'Miss Sarajevo', and the Bosnian Blues…………………………………………………………..40

6. Bridges, Sieges, and Gramophones…………………………………………………………………………………..60

7. The War for Peace……75

8. Conclusion……..90

9. Bibliography………..97

1. Introduction

Emir Kusturica is arguably one of the greatest Yugoslav and European filmmakers ever. His fifth film – *Underground,* also known as *Once Upon a Time There Was a Country,* a surrealist black comedy about the history and breakup of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia*,* won the Palme D'Or at the 48th Cannes Film Festival in 1995. It was the director's second accolade at Cannes in ten years; Kusturica also won the coveted award for his 1985 film *When Father Was Away on Business.*

In the spring of 1995, the wars in Bosnia and Croatia were nearing their final stage. Despite the fact that the conflict was coming to its close after four long years, some of its most horrifying and atrocious chapters were yet to be written, and some of the most heinous war crimes in Europe since WWII yet to be committed. On May 25th, only three days before *Underground* was laurelled in one of the world's centres of film, amidst the jet set and glamour, 71 people were killed (mostly teenagers) and 240 were injured in the Tuzla massacre, when the Army of Republika Srpska bombed a square in the city of Tuzla, Bosnia. On July 11th, the Srebrenica massacre happened – probably the most infamous episode of the whole war, as 8,000 Muslim boys and men were slaughtered by the Bosnian Serb forces. In early August, between 150,000 and 200,000 Serbian civilians were driven out of their homes and forced to flee Croatia in the aftermath of *Operation Storm,* conducted by the Croatian army. On August 28th of the same year, the Markale market in Sarajevo was shelled for the second time in eighteen months. One of the few places where basic supplies were available during the 1,425 day long siege of the Bosnian capital city, the food market turned into a graveyard for 43 civilians on a summer morning. This list is by no means exhaustive. By the time the Dayton Agreement was signed in December 1995 by Slobodan Milošević, Franjo Tuđman, and Alija Izetbegović (political leaders of the Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks), which effectively ended the war, 140,000 people had been killed while more than four million had been displaced.

What is particularly remarkable about Kusturica's *Underground* is the fact that it offered a mediated account of the Yugoslav Wars almost in *real time*; it represented the pinnacle of what film could do as a form of art at that moment. Simultaneously with the filming process and the subsequent release, people were still dying and bitter fighting continued in the days and months to come. Since it premiered, *Underground* has gained a wide international following – hence the numerous prestigious awards – and

became ”perhaps the most scholarly scrutinized post-Yugoslav film.”[2] While some believe that the film is a politically incorrect piece of overt Serbian propaganda, others point out that the film does not take sides and actually possesses strong anti-nationalist elements.[3] Regardless of what one's political stance in relation to *Underground* is, the film's exquisite use of imagery, symbolism, music, intertextuality, and surrealist elements cannot be denied. Simply put, Kusturica here delivered a filmmaking master class.[4] As *Underground* is not the primary focus of my thesis, I will not delve deeply into the analysis of the film here; that has been done time and again by numerous cultural and film critics.[5]

The reason why I am beginning this thesis by talking about a film is because in the past two decades, *Underground* has become an example par excellence of cultural texts intervening in, or art in general positioning itself against, the current political situation. In this case the political situation also included a war, and *Underground* was filmed as an immediate response to it. It was one of the first cultural texts to tackle the war(s) in Yugoslavia, and to this day has remained the most prominent one. When describing Kusturica's oeuvre, Goran Gocić, a Serbian author, suggests that the director's cinema is "the cinema of nostalgia,"[6] as his films are usually set in the *imagined* past, and what is more, they thematically explore the nature of this imagined past.[7]*Underground* is divided into three acts: through the prism of a friendship which recalls the myth of 'brotherhood and unity' (the master narrative of the SFRY), the film explores the WWII period, followed by the post-war era, while the final act focuses on the latest conflicts in the early 1990s. Personal/familial memory is juxtaposed with collective memory, ubiquitous gypsy music with the harrowing sound of guns and explosions, weddings with death, myths with history, the Balkans with Europe. Showing the demise of Yugoslavia on screen in a spectacular fashion, the film signified the beginning of artistic representations of the former country, be it on screen, in music, or in literature. In other words, the film marked the birth of the mediated post-Yugo-sphere. The main focus of this thesis is on analysing how the shared Yugoslav past is imagined and represented in *novels*; the last two decades saw a proliferation of narratives which deal with the former country and its subsequent breakup. No matter how ideologically coloured these narratives may be, whether they

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[2] Dijana Jelača, *Dislocated Screen Memory: Narrating Trauma in Post-Yugoslav Cinema.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[3] Ibid., 168.
[4] See Bertellini for a comprehensive multi-layered analysis of the film, accompanied by an overview of critics who engaged with the film from different perspectives.
[5] Žižek, Iordanova, Bertellini, Pavičić.
[6] Goran Gocić, *Notes from the Underground: The Cinema of Emir Kustruica.* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2001), 133
[7] Jelača, *Dislocated Screen Memory,* 165.

attempt to perform historical revisionism or indulge in reminiscence about the lost home(land), narrating Yugoslavia remains to this day a prominent theme for authors who come from the seven newly formed countries.

The questions that naturally arise now: 'Why writing about literature then, if film as a medium has a proven track record in intervening in cultural memory? Is literature important in this regard at all?' An obvious answer would be that since I am a student of literature who comes from this region, books should be my primary concern – hence my interest in reading and analysing *novels* that deal with the breakup of Yugoslavia, and the decision to focus on this type of fictional texts. However, there is more to this seemingly arbitrary choice of case studies than initially apparent. One of the common characteristics of the novels I am going to explore is the fact that they are very personal; each author incorporates certain autobiographical elements in his fictional text. My primary goal in this thesis is to explore the possibilities and limits of fiction when it comes to challenging and defying current trends in memory, politics, and politics of memory; I believe that literature as a medium is a great starting point in this regard, since it enables a rapid proliferation of different voices which question dominant narratives — or in the opposite case—cordially support them. There is a sense of urgency with the texts at hand: a novel as a medium enables authors to economically channel this necessity to react to the current political situation. Unlike producing films, writing fiction does not require any funding, which means that virtually anybody with an idea and an urge to write can act through writing.

Born in October 1992 in Montenegro, I did not get to experience life in the SFRY, as it officially ceased to exist more than a year earlier. Luckily, my closest family did not experience the horrors of war either, at least not in the sense that our lives were in direct jeopardy. Montenegro was not a war zone in the early nineties[8], although Montenegrins actively participated in the siege of Dubrovnik which I shall discuss further in the fourth chapter. Nevertheless, I still quite vividly remember the 1990s and the post-war time as a period of great social instability, widespread poverty, and fierce nationalism endlessly coming from the TV. Of course, I did not fully understand what was going on at the time, but in retrospect, I remember the gloomy atmosphere that characterized the whole decade. My father is Serbian and my mother is Croatian; fortunately I have never encountered any type of nationalism at home. However, growing up in Montenegro— even though it was not physically destroyed by the war— one could not possibly avoid being affected by the conflicts' 'legacy', one way or another. It is always amusing when I mention to my peers that I have managed to live in three countries without changing my home address.

[8] Not until 1999 and the NATO bombing of Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, comprised of Serbia and Montenegro.

If I had been born 18 months earlier, I would have lived in four countries: the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, which existed from 1945 to 1991, the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (1992-2003), Serbia and Montenegro (2003-2006), and since 2006 – Montenegro. Unfortunately, the consequences of the conflicts are still present and tangible to this day. From the Montenegrin government which denies any responsibility in the abovementioned bombardment and siege of Dubrovnik, to the country's economy which still has not reached the pre-war levels due to failed privatizations and omnipresent corruption, the ghosts of the 1990s unfortunately still seem to exist. This is not just the case with Montenegro; with the exception of Slovenia (to some extent), which has always been the most developed Yugoslav republic, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo are still entangled in a myriad of ways in the war narratives, as they remain a big part of everyday life in these countries. Naturally, the artistic output as a response to such a state of affairs has been very prolific since the country's breakup. Apart from Kusturica's *Underground*, Denis Tanović's *No Man's Land* (2001) is also worth mentioning as one of the most internationally popular films that came from the region – it won an Oscar for the Best Foreign Language film in 2002. Of course, it is impossible to do justice to all the works which deserve to be listed here. I am mentioning the two films due to their international fame and easy accessibility as 'products' of memory politics. Although the novels that deal with the breakup of Yugoslavia and its consequences might not be as famous as films which deal with similar topics, there are nevertheless some works which have gained considerable prominence and are fairly well known today. *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* (1998) by Dubravka Ugrešić is the first one that comes to mind; it deals with the topics such as exile, memory, nostalgia etc. and represents one of the most widely read novels by authors that come from the former country.

Unlike the *ex*-Yugoslav writers such as Ugrešić, who were already published authors before the breakup of Yugoslavia, the three authors I engage with here would be classified as *post*-Yugoslav, as they belong to the generation who started writing after the wars. Apart from the temporal distance from the conflicts, there is also a spatial distance from the former country (or whatever is left of it), in a sense that the authors write from a migrant perspective. The main focus here will be on three novels by three post-Yugoslav writers – Aleksandar Hemon, author of *Nowhere Man* (2002), Saša Stanišić, author of *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* (2006), and Vojislav Pejović, author of *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* (2008).

Aleksandar Hemon was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia in 1964. *Nowhere Man* – originally written in English – is his second book[9] and follows Jozef Pronek, a Bosnian refugee, from his childhood in Yugoslavia to his exile in the US in the mid 1990s. Narrated by multiple narrators and incorporating Hemon's own autobiographical elements, *Nowhere Man* tells Pronek's bittersweet story through a series of vignettes which mainly take place in Sarajevo, Kiev, and Chicago. Just like the main character of his novel, Hemon himself left Sarajevo and emigrated to Chicago in 1992.

Saša Stanišić was born in Višegrad, Bosnia in 1978 and moved to Heidelberg, Germany in 1992 at the age of fourteen with his Serbian father and Bosniak[10]mother. His first novel, *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone,* was originally published in German, titled *Wie der Soldat das Grammofon repariert* in 2006; Stanišić identifies himself as Bosnian and German. The plot begins in Višegrad, Stanišić's place of birth and follows Aleksandar - the author's fictionalised literary alter-ego, a carefree teenager, in the days before and during the war. Just like Stanišić himself, Aleksandar's mother was a Muslim and his father was a Serb, which meant that her life was in danger when the army of Bosnian Serbs arrived in the city. However, they manage to flee Višegrad and leave the country. The middle section of the novel takes place in Essen, Germany, where the family lived afterwards, while the final part shows Aleksandar as a grown man back in Višegrad, during a visit fifteen years after he had left his hometown. Just like in Hemon's *Nowhere Man*, the narration in Stanišić's novel is fragmented, although the story is told by a single narrator.

The third author whose work I am going to investigate here, Vojislav Pejović, was born in 1972 in Titograd,[11] Montenegro. He left the country in 1991 and moved to the US. His debut novel, *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* was published in 2008; unlike Hemon and Stanišić, Pejović writes in his mother tongue – Serbo-Croatian. The story takes place from January to October 1991 (the beginning of the war in Croatia) in Belgrade, Podgorica, and Dubrovnik. The protagonist is Milan Junak, a student from Montenegro who finds himself in Belgrade during the political turmoil of 1991, which led to the infamous March 9 protest and the anti-regime riots that followed. Unlike Hemon's and Stanišić's novels, which take place during the war – the former observes the conflict from a safe distance while the latter is in the middle of it – Pejović focuses on the events which happened just *before* the outbreak of the war. The beginning of the attack on Dubrovnik by the Montenegrin army is tackled at the very end of the text, which emphasizes the events and the media craze that occurred prior to the outbreak of the

[9] Hemon published a short story collection titled *The Question of Bruno* in 2000.
[10] *Bosniak* or *Bosnian Muslim* (ethnic category) is not to be confused with *Bosnian* (national category).
[11] Titograd is the old name for Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro, which was used between 1946 and 1992.

conflicts. What is also different about *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* when compared to the other two novels is the conventional narration; most of the time it is linear and chronologically follows the events of 1991.

The novels I chose to discuss all have in common the characteristic that they are set in different urban areas across the former Yugoslavia, which are to this day the open wounds in the political discourse – Sarajevo, Dubrovnik, and Višegrad, among others. By 'open wounds' I mean the fact that there is still no closure. Although this episode from the Yugoslav Wars is not the focal point of this thesis, the massacre in Srebrenica is the most famous example of this lack of closure—nationalists in Republika Srpska still argue that the infamous slaughter of 8,000 men in the small Bosnian town was not a genocide but a 'regular crime.' Similarly, the siege of Dubrovnik is still a taboo topic and a great shame in the Montenegrin public discourse. When observed together, the three authors offer a 'map' of destroyed cities, which highlights the problem of local versus national memory and the dynamics between them. Adding to this, each author writes about non-Yugoslav cities as well (based on autobiographical elements) – Chicago, Essen, and Kiev play important roles in the texts, in a sense that they are indirectly compared to the cities ruined by war which subsequently adds new layers of meaning. For example, Pejović frames his novel in such a way that New Orleans, destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, is juxtaposed with war-torn Dubrovnik from 1991. Of course, the causes of destruction were completely different in these two places, but this way of positioning things highlights the similarities which occur between devastated places around the world. This potential to generate multidirectionality was one of the main criteria for assembling the corpus of novel in the thesis. There are also other post-Yugoslav novels which seek to position themselves against the current political situation—Vladimir Arsenijević's anti-war novel titled *In the Hold* is the first comes to mind. Arsenijević is a Serbian author whose debut novel won the NIN Award[12] in 1994 and instantly became very popular. However, I opted not to write about this particular work since it takes place only in Belgrade and does not have a transnational and trans-urban character like the other three novels.

The primary aim in this thesis and the first level of analysis is to explore how these particular works of fiction engage with the politics of memory in the region, i.e. to find out how these novels differ from the dominant war narratives/official histories in the newly formed nation-states and explore whether they position themselves as counter-narratives. In order to understand and explain the function of a text as a counter-narrative, it is vital to establish what represents the dominant narrative against which these

[12] Highest literary award in Serbia.

novels are set. Dubravka Ugrešić wrote in 1996 that "with the collapse of multinational Yugoslavia, the process began of confiscating the Yugoslav collective memory and its replacement by the construct of national memory". Adding to this, she suggests that:

> the new, 'post-communist', powers, taking over the knowledge of their communist predecessors or simply applying their own communist knowledge, know the great manipulative value of collective memory. For collective memory can be erased and rewritten, deconstructed, constructed, and reconstructed, confiscated and reconfiscated, proclaimed politically incorrect (in the communist language suitable or unsuitable). The political battle is a battle for the territory of collective memory.[13]

On a similar note, in an essay on post-Yugoslav artistic practices, Nikola Dedić points out that:

> this erasure of Yugoslavia from the ideological field of its present successor nation-states occurs in the name of 'democratic' European integration as well as nationalist revisionism. The concept of European integration rests on the idea of 'overcoming' socialism's supposedly totalitarian past; it is a process of 'transition,' meant to transform the former communist Yugoslav societies into liberal, democratic, and capitalist-oriented societies. In that process, Europe is a possibility only if Yugoslavia's socialist heritage is discarded, repressed, and erased.[14]

As we can see, the dominant storyline in the republics of former Yugoslavia is the one which says that the regime was oppressive, people supposedly had no freedom, patriotism (Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian…) was banned, and so on[15]. The novels I am analysing here tend to challenge this new master narrative (which replaced the myth of 'brotherhood and unity' I previously mentioned in relation to Kusturica's *Underground*) in an agonistic way; the three authors attempt to fight what Ugrešić calls "the confiscation of memory", i.e. the collective amnesia and revisionism in the post-war period. The scope of writing of the three authors at hand is the whole region and the common practice of discarding the once shared past. The mechanism which they employ for this 'fight' is the narrativisation of nostalgia through the prism of the city.

Why the city and why nostalgia?

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[13] Dubravka Ugrešić, "The Confiscation of Memory." *New Left Review* 218 (1996): 34.

[14] Nikola Dedić, "Yugoslavia in Post-Yugoslav Artistic Practices: Or, Art as…" in *Post-Yugoslav Constellations: Archive, Memory and Trauma in Contemporary Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Literature*. ed. Beronja, Vlad and Stijn Vervaet (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016): 170.

[15] I will provide more historical background in the following chapter.

In the introduction to *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* edited by John Neubauer, Marcel Cornis-Pope proposes the term 'marginocentric cities.' He writes that:

> Marginocentric cities have the tendency to challenge the hegemony of the metropolitan centers, offering an alternative to their national pull. […] The 'marginocentric cities' challenge our preconceived notions of literary and cultural topography. *Topo-graphy* (the 'writing of a place') makes the use of complex acts of naming and delineation that further relate to the politics of nationalism as they involve border demarcations and territorial appropriations. When these acts of delineation are applied to marginocentric cities that are culturally hybrid, located at the crossroads of civilizations and the interface of fiction and reality, culture and nature, they tend to break down.[16] […] The marginocentric cities represent a challenge not only to traditional modes of linear and totalizable historiography, disrupting them with their ex-centric evolutions, but also to literary representation itself.[17]

Although it could be argued that the whole Balkans region is culturally hybrid, located at the crossroads of civilizations, it is even more applicable to the microcosms in the area– the cities in which the novels at issue are set. Sarajevo, for example, perfectly illustrates the concept of marginocentric cities— the city is a hybrid of Slavic, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian culture, with a number of ethnic groups living there prior to the war. Unlike nation-states, where it is fairly easy to tell the borders which mark the territory, delineating borders between the periphery and the centre in a city becomes more challenging. Therefore, by shifting the scope of memory and narration from the national to the local level, things are further complicated and pose a challenge to the unified and homogenous nationalistic narratives I mentioned above. Rossi argues that 'a city remembers through its buildings, so the preservation of old buildings is analogous with the preservation of memories in the human mind.'[18] Urban areas were the primary locations of combat in the Yugoslav Wars, which led to the large-scale destruction of the affected cities. Having this in mind, it is easy to establish a link between the eradication of physical places with the disappearance of the memory of them as they once were.

Apart from the fact that the cities suffered severe damage, both the authors and their respective protagonists left their birthplaces. This suggests a double loss: the loss of a city as it once was due to the

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[16] Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer, eds., *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co, 2006): 9.
[17] Ibid. 10.
[18] Mark Crinson, ed., *Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City* (London: Routledge, 2005): 13.

war, as well as the sense of loss as a result of displacement. This is another feature that the novels of Hemon, Stanišić, and Pejović have in common. Longing for the lost homeland is something that is common probably for everybody who is in forced exile; what we have at stake here is the longing for *memory* of the lost homes and cities, in addition to longing for the country. This challenges the frames of remembrance (nation-state as the main framework for memory and identity) and shows the potential of nostalgia to serve as a 'tool' of counter-memory.

The shift in the scope of memory and narration calls for a different methodological approach. In *Transnational Memory,* Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney seek to offer an alternative point of view when it comes to frames of collective remembrance, and go beyond the prism of the nation-state, which has been for a long time the primary container of collective memory. One of the concepts the authors develop in this book is the concept of multiscalarity, which allows a fresh approach to observing collective memory and identity. Multiscalarity will be particularly useful for observing the shift from the nation to the city in this thesis; since it is a rather intricate concept, I will further explain it in the next chapter.

The theoretical point of departure for engaging with nostalgia will be Svetlana Boym's idea of 'the lost home(land).' A migrant herself, Boym extensively wrote about different types of nostalgia, with a special emphasis on nostalgia in exile. Furthermore, I intend to use Boym's concept for analysing the problem of the lost *hometowns*, i.e. the loss on a 'smaller' scale, since the novels are, as I mentioned, primarily focused on the disintegration of multi-ethnicity in cities and the disappearance of their microcosms during wartime (not only the disintegration of the country as a whole). Mitja Velikonja's writing about *Titostalgia* (a post-Yugoslav 'brand' of nostalgia) is a useful complement here, since Velikonja focuses on nostalgia for the former Yugoslavia and its leader Josip Broz Tito. Finally, I will tackle Boym's concepts of 'restorative' and 'reflective' nostalgia in order to show how the two variants of nostalgia clash(ed) in the Yugosphere, which may help illuminate their potentials, advantages, and disadvantages when it comes to creating narratives – be it nationalistic or narratives of counter-memory.

Finally, the pertinent question that I want to answer is: how do these novels operate in the context of international readership, i.e. what do these texts do *outside* the borders of the Yugosphere? Do they have the potential to do anything at all? Looking at the transnational dimension of the texts at hand and their reception is crucial here; without this broad additional layer of meaning and possible new connections between different cities, scales, and identities, these novels would not have much room for manoeuvre. By this I mean that if we observe them within the Yugoslav context only, the novels do not

do much more than replace one discourse with another—nationalism is replaced by nostalgia and stories about multi-ethnic unity. However, things can become considerably more complex and intriguing if we observe the novel's potential to operate in an international environment, outside the borders of their primary space of interest. The following question arises—what is actually their primary interest, that is, who is the main audience?

The main method of analysing the novels at hand will be close-reading. The reception of the novels also has to be addressed, both in the countries in which they were originally published, and more importantly, in the places the authors write about. Since the gist of the argument is that the texts interfere in politics, it is important not to approach the texts as if they are in a vacuum, detached from the "real world", but to see whether and how they actually function as "memory machines." By this term I mean the ability of a text to have an impact on the collective memory once it is begins to circulate and reach readers.

Chapters One, Two, and Three will attempt to explain in greater detail the history-narrative-city-nostalgia nexus, as it is the crucial framework for understanding how the novels at hand operate as 'memory machines'. Also, the chapters will provide more historical background and attempt to describe as briefly as possible the events and causes which lead to the outbreak of the Yugoslav Wars, as well as the shift in collective myths which occurred prior to the conflicts. Chapter Four will discuss *Nowhere Man* and the nostalgia for pre-war Sarajevo, Chapter Five will address *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* and the narrativization of the siege of Višegrad, while the Chapter Six will deal with *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* and his attempt to challenge the status quo by fictionalizing the Montenegrin attack on the Croatian city of Dubrovnik.

2. Crash Course in Yugoslav History and the Myths that Shaped it

> ''We shed a sea of blood for the brotherhood and unity of our peoples. We will not let anyone undermine and destroy our brotherhood and unity. None of our republics would be anything if we were not all together; we have to create our own history – a history of united Yugoslavia."[19]
> –Josip Broz Tito

Before discussing the causes which lead to the breakup of Yugoslavia and trying examining the consequences of the whole disintegration process today, it is vital to take a step back and explore in more detail the zeitgeist which shaped and fueled the idea of ''all Southern Slavs living in one country'', as well as the events that resulted in the formation of such a country. Since I am arguing that the novels I explore operate as counter-narratives, first the official political narratives have to be fleshed out in order to be able to talk about their antitheses. When we speak of Yugoslavia today, most of the time we think of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, which existed from 1943 to 1991. However, the first time that the Southern Slavs formed a pan-Slavic state was in 1918, when the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established in the aftermath of the First World War. The name of the state was changed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929; apart from changing the kingdom's name, Alexander I[20] abolished the constitution and dissolved the national assembly. In other words, a royal dictatorship was established, and it lasted for five years until Alexander's assassination in Marseille in 1934, after which a three member regency succeeded him and governed the country until 1941. Alexander's heir, his son Peter II, was eleven years old at the time of the assassination and thus unable to succeed the throne. The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, also called the 'second Yugoslavia' was founded in 1943 and it lasted for almost fifty years. After the breakup of the 'great' Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro formed a union which was named the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992. The country's name was changed to Serbia and Montenegro in 2003, which meant that the name Yugoslavia, "the state of the Southern Slavs," now officially became a part of history. Three years later, an independence referendum was held in Montenegro, after which Serbia and Montenegro parted ways and became independent countries, thus ending the last form of federation between the Balkan states.

[19] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7s7ldiX6lc, from Tito's speech in Split, Croatia from May 7, 1962.
[20] Also known as Alexander the Unifier, Alexander I came from the House of Karađorđević, which ruled the Kingdom of Serbia from 1903-1918 and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1918 to 1941.

The idea of creating a pan-Slavic state in the Balkans reaches as far back as the beginning of the 18th century.[21] First palpable steps in this direction were taken in the 19th century, while the realization of this unifying 'project' happened in the second decade of the 20th century. Although it is impossible to give here a comprehensive outline of the political history in the region over such a long period of time, it will be useful to begin by taking a closer look at the 19th-century history of Serbo-Croatian relations from the perspective of the countries' attitudes towards the idea of Yugoslav-ness, as the early visions of Yugoslavia in the minds of the political elites in these countries laid the foundations for the Yugoslav collective memory in years to come and shaped the ways in which the country was perceived by the different peoples which constituted it. At least two political streams can be traced in this context. On the one hand, there was the Principality of Serbia, which gained its autonomy from the Ottoman Empire in 1830, and then became fully independent after the Congress of Berlin in 1878. I will borrow here from Maciej Czerwinski's summary of the Serbian version of the idea of unification of the Southern Slavs:

> After Serbian uprisings, modern political programmes began to take shape. Freedom won with their own blood, as well as mythology, cultivated in Orthodox writings and culture, created a conviction amongst the Serbs of their unmatched heroism, which predestined them to the role of the main–and in fact the only unifying factor. The explication of such a way of thinking began to be formulated in the XVIII century […] the final political shape of the programme of unification 'around Serbia' was finalised in the XIX century.[22]

The key point here is that unification in Serbia was envisioned in a way that would enable Serbia to have the leading role in the newly formed nation; this idea actually materialised in 1918, since the first Yugoslavia was very centralised and ruled by the Serbian Karađorđević dynasty. This reasoning can be explained by the fact that at the time when the idea of creating a pan-Slavic state was emerging, Serbia was an independent country, whereas Croats, Slovenes, and Bosnians were living under the rule of either the Habsburg Monarchy or the Ottoman Empire, which implied that Serbia should "lead the way" in the future. Adding to this, Serbia was on the winning side in the First World War, which meant that an opportunity to be the dominant constituent in the newly formed country was not seen only as a 'reward,' but also as the only logical sequence of events.

The Yugoslav question was treated differently in the other parts of the Balkans. This stark contrast was most evident in Croatia, where the idea of uniting *around* Serbia did not resonate with people. Unlike in

[21] http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=29667, accessed May 17, 2017.
[22] Maciej Czerwinski, "Former Yugoslavia—A Topography of Collective Memory," *Herito* 13 (2013): 53.

Serbia, where the notion of leading the future country came as a result of the idea that the Serbs were the ''chosen people“, ''heavenly people,'' which directly stemmed from the Myth of Kosovo – something I shall return to later on in this chapter– Croatia on the other hand sought a type of integration in Yugoslavia which would be *with* Serbia, not around it. This is concisely outlined in the following passage:

> Croatian unification programmes in the XIX century were less univocal, as there was no independent Croatian state at the time, so the intelligentsia acted under the Habsburgian rule. Roughly speaking, two concepts originated within Croatian culture: one Yugoslavian, […] and the other – purely Croatian, aimed at independence. The first resulted in the unification with the Serbs – in the XIX century it had more followers, although it took many forms: civic, clerical, and one stressing auto-Slavism. […] Purely Croatian independence ideology with a strong anti-Serbian accent was born at a later stage of this process – in the second half of the 19th century.[23]

Therefore, it seems that even before Yugoslavia's inception, there was an apparent discrepancy in conceptualising the ways in which the country should be organized. Pointing this out is of utmost importance, as these ideological differences would return in circles and become visible during the 20th century on numerous occasions, and would unfortunately remain omnipresent to this day. I am not trying to argue that Yugoslavia was doomed even before it began to exist; however, the way it was assembled from the political and organizational point of view opened the door for future conflicts, as the differences in imagining Yugoslavia as well as the nationalistic tendencies could not be eliminated for good, despite being successfully muzzled by Tito and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for several decades.

As I pointed out earlier, the first Yugoslavia was a centralized monarchy which, bearing in mind the divergent perspectives mentioned above, proved to be a road to disaster. There were a lot of ethnic tensions between the peoples, which eventually culminated simultaneously with the outbreak of the Second World War. If we now fast forward to this period, we can see how it shaped the future of the region during the rest of the twentieth century, since the civil war, which began shortly after the Nazi invasion, had a profound influence on the future relations between the Southern Slavs. The invasion of Yugoslavia by the Nazis happened at a time when the country was already in a difficult political situation, due to the strained relations between the monarchists and communists. As soon as the war began, the partisans started fighting against everybody, the Croatian fascists Ustaše were fighting

[23] Ibid., 54.

partisans and ethnically cleansing Serbs, Jews, Roma, while the Serbian fascists Četnici were also fighting against the partisans while killing Muslims and Croats, and so on. Apart from the partisans, everybody collaborated with the Nazis, since the communists were regarded as the common enemy. Even before the war, the Communist Party wanted to overthrow the ruling dynasty and seize power. Before the war was over, the SFRY was proclaimed on November 29, 1943, as Tito immediately became first the prime minister and then in 1953 president for life, a position he occupied until his death in 1980.

With the change of ideology (from monarchy to socialism), came the change of nation-making myths. When writing about myths and nation making, Anthony D. Smith points out that "of particular importance among the cultural components of ethnicity are myths of ethnic origin and election, and symbols of territory and community. Myths of origin and descent constitute the primary definers of the separate existence and character of particular *ethnies*."[24] Smith argues that myths are nowhere more important than in nationalism—in the case of the socialist Yugoslavia, the change of myths that occurred in the post-1945 period served as a tool of *suppressing* various regional nationalisms. The key was not in creating and perpetuating those myths which would aim at the nation's ethnic origin; in spite of all the political differences I mentioned above, the peoples of Yugoslavia were not that different from each other – the key was in creating the framework in which the notion of "brotherhood and unity" would be cherished and preserved, as it is shown in the aforementioned quote by Tito. The country was born like a phoenix from the ashes of the war, and the memory of the effort to gain freedom and defeat the enemy had to be preserved at all costs. As Tito proclaimed in the speech with which I began this chapter —"none of our republics would be anything if we were not all together." The way to combat the regional nationalisms which plagued the previous Yugoslavia was to celebrate unity of the peoples, without negating or disregarding the singularity of each and every constituent people – be it Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Bosniak, Montenegrin, or Macedonian. In other words, *e pluribus unum* policy was enforced. This was done in a number of ways. For example, as Zala Volčić shows in a paper on Yugoslav cultural memory,

> Tito managed to control various nationalistic interests through a combination of socialist ideology and personal charisma until his death in 1980. During that period, different Yugoslav rituals were manufactured, all part of the state's ideological machinery, in order to frame the creation of Yugoslav subjects. Youth Day is one such example: Every May 25 (on Tito's birthday) a relay of Yugoslav youth ran through the country with a white baton, symbolizing the country's

[24] Anthony D Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (New York. Oxford University Press, 1999), 15.

unity. This ritual, which received ongoing state media coverage, encouraged Yugoslav citizens to connect themselves across geographical space to an imagined common cultural history.[25]

As Volčič correctly claims, Tito's personal charisma was as important as socialist ideology when it came to taming nationalism(s) and imagining a shared history. His greatness in this regard is still visible today –the Slovenian cultural critic Mitja Velikonja writes about this in *Titostalgia*. Titostalgia is a specific form of Yugonostalgia that revolves around Tito and his cult of personality; I shall address this in the following section. Tito even often hosted celebrities such as Sophia Loren, Elizabeth Taylor, or Richard Burton in luxurious sea resorts along the Adriatic coast, which greatly added to the image of his being a *bon vivant*. If I go back once more to the myth of brotherhood and unity – the way it was propagated can perhaps best be seen in the film *The Battle on the Neretva River* from 1969. Starring Orson Welles and Franco Nero together with an all-star domestic cast, the film was the Yugoslav candidate for the Best Foreign Film Oscar Award; it was a western-like partisan war film, which showed the victory against the Nazis in a spectacular fashion. The film was a grandiose project; even Pablo Picasso was asked to make one of the promotional posters for the film.[26]

After several decades of prosperity, things started to change after Tito's death. Of course, this was not the only reason why Yugoslavia started to weaken; the overall political landscape in Europe was changing in the 1980s and each and every communist country faced serious challenges when it came to preserving the existing order. Some countries like Czechoslovakia managed to achieve the transition from one system to another peacefully; unfortunately this was not the case with Yugoslavia. The shift in myths which began to take place had a crucial role in destabilizing the country, as the nationalist tendencies which were kept at bay for a long time resurfaced again. Gal Kirn writes that when it comes to the arena of memory politics, "the first signs of historical revisionism date back to the mid 1980s, a time of rising socio-economic insecurity that reactivated extreme nationalism while undermining the official ideology of 'brotherhood and unity' and antifascism."[27] Therefore, triggered primarily by economic changes, the landscape of underlying narratives began to shift. For example, in Serbia, the idea of the "chosen people" saw its revival and reached its peak in 1989, at the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, the focal point of Serbian cultural memory. The battle, which Serbia lost to the

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[25] Zala Volčič, "Yugo-Nostalgia: Cultural Memory and Media in the Former Yugoslavia," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24 (2007): 23.

[26] http://www.artnit.net/paleta/item/197-pablo-pikaso-plakat-za-film-bitka-na-neretvi.html, the story goes that Picasso did not ask for anything in return, apart from twelve bottles of Yugoslav wine.

[27] Gal Kirn, "Transnationalism in Reverse: From Yugoslav to Post-Yugoslav Memorial Sites," in *Transnational Memory*, ed. Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014): 328.

Ottoman Empire, is perceived as the greatest tragedy of the Serbian people as it opened the door for five centuries of Ottoman rule. In the 1980s, the "danger" was the same. In a nutshell, the late 1980s zeitgeist in Serbia—which Slobodan Milošević very well understood and used to ascend to power— can be summed up by saying that due to other rising nationalisms in Yugoslavia, the Serbs were in danger, and it was their duty to preserve the unity of the state, at all costs. Misha Glenny, a BBC war correspondent points this out in *The Fall of Yugoslavia*:

> By 1989, powerful nationalist sentiment was stirring throughout the Yugoslav republics. In part, this was a nervous reaction to the centrifugal forces throbbing vigorously inside the Serbian vortex. But it also reflected the strength of regional and nationalist forces throughout Eastern Europe as one-party rule began to break down. In Yugoslavia, the revival of violent, intolerant nationalism had begun before the collapse of communism had been predicted elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Without question, it was Milošević who had willfully allowed the genie out of the bottle, knowing that the consequences might be dramatic and even bloody.[28]

The notion that "the genie was allowed out of the bottle" is very useful for understanding the situation at the time, as it precisely describes the accusations that were endlessly being thrown around. The Serbs accused the Croats of stirring nationalism and trying to break up the country, while the Croats claimed that this was nothing but a response to the ongoing situation in Serbia and their centralist tendencies (the question of Bosniak nationalism rose to prominence in the early 1990s). In other words, it very much resembled the "chicken or the egg" dilemma. Again, this looked a lot like the problems which had preceded and plagued the first Yugoslavia some eighty years earlier; the history was repeating itself and a "sequel" to the civil war from 1941 to 1945 was inevitable. This time, there were no foreign enemies which were to be fought back, but what followed was nevertheless an extremely bloody and violent sequence of events.

Before moving to the next chapter which will take a closer look at the conceptualizations of nostalgia and its applicability in this thesis; an explanation of the link between the ever-changing nation-making myths and their indebtedness to narratives based around nostalgia is useful. If I zoom out from the specific area which is being explored here and shift to the present day and more famous cases, the most recent example would be Donald Trump's political slogan 'Make America Great Again.' Although it is highly debatable whether America has ever been great and what exactly it should mean for a country to

[28] Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 33.

be great in the first place, that it is beside the point. The discourse here implies that in the past, which is more often imagined than real, things used to be *greater*, in a very broad sense of the word ‘great’, as this leaves space for individual interpretations which are necessary for successful spreading of such myths. Things played out the same way in Yugoslavia. For example, the myth of brotherhood and unity was slowly being replaced by one which supported the idea of making Serbia dominant again, as it once “was.” On the other hand, Croatia was supposed to become independent again, free from any form of “oppression”. As the country was slowly reaching its demise, the trans-Yugoslav-republican narrative of unity was being banished, and what came instead had inextricable links with nostalgic discourse.

3. Enter Nostalgia

Nostalgia, the "ache for home", has been extensively explored by a number of cultural critics. From Jean Baudrillard[29] and Charles Maier[30] to Fred Davis[31], scholars have approached this phenomenon from a number of different perspectives. I will primarily engage here with the writings of Svetlana Boym, a Russian-American literary theorist and cultural critic, who published her book *The Future of Nostalgia* in 2001, which has come to be considered her magnum opus. This seminal work has become a major point of reference for scholars who are interested in nostalgia and its manifestations; it is an amalgamation of a personal memoir, sociological essay, and literary criticism among other things. Boym distinguishes between two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective.[32] Before delving deeper into this topic, it would be useful to mention the origin of the word nostalgia, since Boym refers to both *nostos* and *algos* in her definitions. The former means 'home' / 'homecoming', the latter means 'pain.' Although the word 'nostalgia' is of Greek origin, it was used for the first time in the 17th century to describe the feelings of mercenaries who were fighting abroad.

Apart from the fact that Boym concerns herself with the post-socialist as well as emigrant nostalgia, she also proposes a new typology which is valuable for analysing nostalgia both as a phenomenon in society and literary image, which makes this framework a useful tool for exploring the shift in myths I previously discussed as well as the three case studies at hand. Boym's vision of nostalgia is especially applicable in connection to diaspora and those works of art that are in some way inspired by displacement and the sense of loss caused by it. Adding to this, she puts a special emphasis on the longing for home that comes as a result of emigration. Boym herself moved to the United States in the 1980s, which meant that she had first-hand experience of leaving one's country, and what is even more important, the experience of living under two different political systems – communism in the Soviet Union and capitalist democracy in the United States. This is very significant because it seems that nostalgic discourse nowadays is especially present in countries which underwent a transition from socialism to neo-liberalism in the late 1980s/early 1990s. I am not trying to argue that it does not exist elsewhere; on a personal, intimate level it has always been ubiquitous. Whether it is longing for one's childhood, the "good old days," or perhaps for bygone aesthetics, nostalgia is something that is inherent to (almost) all

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[29] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1995).
[30] Charles Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy, and Denial" in *The Collective Memory Reader,* ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[31] Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: Free Press, 1979).
[32] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

human beings, places, and eras, even though it has been argued that it is a relatively modern phenomenon when it comes to displacement. However, as a form of cultural memory on the collective level, in the post-1989 era it is usually linked to those countries where the political system has changed, and the new one is perceived as the worse option. The aforementioned Velikonja gives some of the possible reasons for this when he writes about the Yugoslav case; the explanation is equally applicable to other post-socialist countries:

> (nostalgia) in everyday life is articulated as nostalgia for minute things and products from the socialist period; on the social level it is nostalgia for former friendship and co-operation, for the welfare state and health protection […] But underneath its amorphous, amoeba-like appearance, it is possible to detect its basic structure and characteristics, which are summed up in everyday statements heard in practically all corners of post-socialist Europe: *after all, it was not so bad,* or, *we were poor but we didn't lack anything,* or , *we had nothing but we were happy.*[33]

From Soviet nostalgia and East German *Ostalgie* to Yugonostalgia and Titostalgia, the pattern seems to be similar across the board: 'once upon a time,' everything used to be better. I am deliberately borrowing this phrase which is characteristic of fairytales, since nostalgia belongs more to the realm of the imagined then the real. As Boym writes, we do not pine only for something that has actually happened in reality–even more, we desire for something that *could have happened.* In this sense, it could be said that every form of nostalgia is a very emotionally coloured state or narrative, as it primarily resides in unfulfilled hopes and potentials, be it on a micro level where a person feels that their life could have played out differently, for example, or on a macro level where there is a sense that the whole country could have taken a different 'path' and be better off than it is now under the present system.

Boym argues that:

> restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on nostos and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. […] This category of nostalgics do not think of themselves as nostalgic; they believe that their project is about truth. This kind of nostalgia characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in the anti-modern myth making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping

[33] Mitja Velikonja, *Titostalgia* (Ljubljana: Peace Institute, 2008): 33. Emphasis in the original.

> conspiracy theories. Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstruction of monuments of the past.

She also adds that:

> the past for the restorative nostalgic is a value for the present; the past is not a duration but a perfect snapshot. Moreover, the past is not supposed to reveal any signs of decay; it has to be freshly painted in its "original image" and remain eternally young."[34]

On the other hand, reflective nostalgic is defined as the type which "dwells on algia, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance. [...] It lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time. [...] Reflective nostalgia is more concerned with historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude. Restorative nostalgia evokes national past and future; reflective nostalgia is more about individual and cultural memory." Finally, ''It does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home; it is enamored of distance, not of the referent itself.[35] The two lengthy quotes encapsulate some of the basic differences between the two variants of nostalgia. The division between them is by no means strict; according to Boym, they are 'tendencies, not the absolute types.' What is more, the two nostalgias may even "overlap in their frames of reference, but do not coincide in narratives and plots of identity." They also have the same "triggers of memory and symbols, but tell different stories about it"[36]

These differences can be easily linked to the Yugoslav case and Yugonostalgia. When speaking of restorative nostalgia, it would include all the myths and narratives which call for a return to the previous state, a time when everything used to be better. As I have argued before, the infiltration of nostalgia in political discourse and the merging of the two reached its peak in the late 1980s, when every side sought to justify their current policies and arouse the masses by pointing back to an imagined state from the past. As Boym argues, the politicians did not consider themselves to be nostalgics: they were extremely serious about the return and did not attempt to take a critical distance from it whatsoever.[37]

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[34] Boym, 61.
[35] ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] As I was writing these lines, I saw an online article http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/video-intervju-ustasa-se-pozalio-indexu-o-hitleru-svi-samo-crno-pricaju/969837.aspx about the commemoration of Bleiburg repatriations https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bleiburg_repatriations, where a neo-Ustaša says that he is sad because 'everybody speaks in a bad way about Hitler today, even though the man had some good ideas and wanted to make some

On the other hand, Yugoslav variant of reflective nostalgia possesses a good dose of humour and criticism towards the old system; people are fully aware and do not expect a return to the old system. Nevertheless, the memory of it is cherished, as a way of reflecting on the shortcomings of present. This can be easily traced by examining the nostalgia for Tito and its manifestations, both material and non-material.

Mitja Velikonja argues that Titostalgia gradually become the dominant variant of nostalgia in the former Yugoslav republics. Unlike the other forms of 'red nostalgia,' where the longing for the past is usually not related to any particular politician but to past times in general, Titostalgia is inextricably tied with the former president, Josip Broz Tito, and his cult of personality. It is a variant of reflective nostalgia in Boym's terms: Titostalgia is a perfect example of "lingering on ruins, the patina of time and history." There are no serious attempts to return to the previous state, as the return would imply the resurrection of Tito —which is a highly unlikely scenario. This being said, it can be argued that Titostalgia is probably the most utopian example of reflective nostalgia, since the object of *algia* is a dead statesman. It represents Boym's concept of "dreams of another place and another time" – and I would also add "of another *leader*" – taken to the maximum.

The reason why Yugoslav nostalgia has a concrete historical figure in its centre probably has its roots in the fact that Tito's name has been synonymous with the notions of the welfare state and ethnic unity, as previously shown. He skillfully managed to steer the country between the Eastern and the Western Block, while initiating and leading the movement of the non-aligned countries. Although this is an obviously simplified description of the state of the affairs at the time, it can show why people perceive the period from the 1960s to the 1980s as an era when 'the things were finally going well,' after centuries of foreign rule and widespread poverty. The phrase which can often be heard nowadays and which nicely illustrates the attitude of people towards this period in history is that 'back in the day, we as a country *used to be important.*' Today, each of the newly formed republics has been rendered irrelevant, in a sense that their political influence and importance is nowhere near the significance and status Yugoslavia had had. Even the biggest critics of Yugoslavia today cannot deny the fact that the former country earned respect from both the East and the West. Ironically, perhaps the best illustration of the status Tito and Yugoslavia had enjoyed is the event that symbolically marked the beginning of the end – Tito's funeral in 1980. The event was attended by delegations from 123 countries; except for the

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order.' The commemorations in Bleiburg which take place every year in mid-May are a prime example of the resurgence of neo-nationalist revisionist myths and commemorations which started proliferating after 1991.

US president Jimmy Carter, virtually every country had its representative at the ceremony in Belgrade.[38]As I have shown above, it took several more years for the situation in the country to worsen beyond repair; Tito's death did not cause an immediate U-turn when it came to the country's policies. Nevertheless, it marked the end of an era –observed from today's vantage point, his death foreshadowed the demise of Yugoslavia itself.

Bearing this in mind, it is easy to understand why nostalgia for the former country flows through Tito: he was the connective tissue that kept everything in place, as Volčič suggests above. Tito is perceived as the one who managed to bridge all the differences between the peoples; metaphorically speaking, Tito is therefore inseparable from Yugoslavia, since the country failed to survive after his death. Adding to this, Tito also has a material afterlife, which brings another dimension to Titostalgia. From key chains and cigarette lighters, to busts and T-shirts, various Tito-related products are made and sold across the former Yugoslavia. Although the vast majority of items are probably originally meant as souvenirs for tourists and not for locals for the purpose of indulging in nostalgia, the very marketability of Titostalgia further illustrates how well it fits within the framework of reflective nostalgia. By buying a T-shirt with Tito's portrait printed on it, one does not necessarily expect or wish for the things to return to the previous state; it is more an example of what Boym calls "being enamored of distance:" an instant, dreamy trip to the past triggered by material objects of nostalgia.

Before I move on to nostalgia in literature and its potential to serve as a building block of counter-narratives in fiction, it is crucial to remain for a moment longer within the realm of the post-Yugoslav societies and elaborate further on the current situation in memory politics and peoples' attitude(s) towards Yugoslavia in general. So far I have mostly written about nostalgic discourse as a mode of remembrance; nostalgia however is by no means the only feeling people have in respect to the former country. Nostalgia is undoubtedly the dominant mode of remembrance for those who think positively about Yugoslavia today. However, it would be naïve to assume that this is the only way in which the former country is treated and stored in collective memory in the region. Those who advocated the breakup of Yugoslavia before the war nowadays tend to "erase and demonize anything connected with the name of Yugoslavia."[39]Although this practice is more common in Croatia and Slovenia, there are also people in Serbia who believe that Tito, a Croat by birth, was the enemy of the Serbian people, the main oppressor of the Serbian Orthodox Church and so on. It is impossible to measure precisely the ratio

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[38] Velikonja, 15.
[39] Kirn, 328.

between the two –both nostalgia and the hatred of Yugoslavia seem to exist together in every corner of the former country; one may be more dominant than the other in certain regions, but the opposite 'option' is never completely sidelined. In other words, the two have a yin–yang type of relationship. Kirn addresses this and argues that the positive nostalgic discourse is weaker than its nationalist antithesis:

> There is yet another discourse on the Yugoslav past that is even more dominant at the present time than that of nostalgia. This discourse, which is supported by the dominant national institutions, approaches the memory of Yugoslavia in a very negative way and can best be labeled anti-totalitarian. Anti-totalitarianism conceives history in black and white: on the one hand, there is the authoritarian bad state and the dictatorship of Tito, on the other hand, good art and true dissidents. Apart from being a simplified psychologization of complex historical processes, such an approach erases everything transnational and revolutionary in the Yugoslav past.[40]

Kirn labels this dominant discourse as anti-totalitarian; I would also add that it has foundations in nostalgia – the crucial difference is that here we have the restorative type at hand. Although antitotalitariansim is not nostalgic per se, when combined with nationalism it acquires certain characteristics of restorative nostalgia. According to Boym, the key to restorative nostalgia is that the nostalgics of this kind do not think themselves as nostalgics at all. They believe that their interpretation of history is the only one which corresponds to the truth, hence the binary, black and white perception of history and politics. People who despise the memory of Yugoslavia today are the same ones who were prior to the war enchanted by the nationalist revivals in the 1980s, which were rooted in restorative nostalgia. Therefore, the current dominant discourse that Kirn calls 'anti-totalitarian' is a continuation, an upgraded version, of the pre-war ideas which lead to the breakup of the country. In a way, the current situation with the different narratives in collective memory could be described as a battlefield of nostalgias. Of course, this label is perhaps too simplified and does not do justice to all factors that contribute to the creation of the collective memories at stake, but it can aptly illustrate the political mood in the region and its indebtedness and relationship with the past. Czerwinski points out that "today, there is no single collective memory of Yugoslavia. All the nations, which were once parts of it, worked out their own historic visions – most frequently incongruent with each other"[41] Although there is no such thing as "Serbian Empire-algia" or "Croatian Kingdom-algia," at least not in a sense that

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[40] Ibid., 328.
[41] Czerwinski, 49.

they are intricate and developed enough to be compared to Titostalgia (which is a very complex phenomenon), each and every collective narrative in the post-Yugoslav countries is in one way or another based on a belief that the past was better than the present. The difference lies in the periods of history which are taken as the gold standard and placed in the middle of these narratives. [42]

In the quote above, Kirn concludes that this approach, which presents everything in black and white (Yugoslavia is on the black/negative side of the spectrum) "erases everything transnational and revolutionary in the Yugoslav past." This– often violent–removal of virtually everything related to Yugoslavia from the public sphere is the essence of the problem. For example, a statue dedicated to Stjepan Filipović, a partisan fighter and a People's Hero of Yugoslavia, was destroyed by the Croatian authorities at the outbreak of the war in 1991, in Filipović's native Opuzen, Croatia. Filipović was hanged by the Nazis on May 22, 1942. The statue was modeled on the iconic photograph of Filipović, which showed him standing on a gallows with rope around his neck, with his fists raised in defiance. To this day, this photograph remains probably the most iconic Yugoslav image from the WWII.[43]The monument dedicated to Filipović, destroyed in July 1991, marked the beginning of the practice of removing anti-fascist monuments, which was continued throughout the 1990s.[44] I am addressing this particular case since the very act of removal of monuments in itself best illustrates how the transition from one ideology to another encompasses all spheres of society – it is not only the political system that undergoes a change, but also history gets revised and rewritten, and memory of the previous state *confiscated* - if I use Ugrešić's phrase once again. In this context, Dedić writes that "it becomes clear why erasing every memory of political entity that rested on the ideas of antifascism, antinationalism, cosmopolitanism, and class solidarity is so dear to neoliberal and nationalist elites alike.[45] Therefore, the erasure of memory of Yugoslavia happens on two distinct levels. On the one hand, there is the aforementioned nationalist discourse, which labels Yugoslavia as something inherently negative; on the other, there is the neo-liberal critique of Yugoslavia, which claims from the economic perspective that policies such as universal healthcare and free education were unsustainable, which supposedly makes the present system undeniably better. Unsurprisingly, the two go hand in hand perfectly well, since the ultimate goal is the same – to stigmatize Yugoslavia and everything the country represented in order to preserve the status quo which grants prosperity to the selected few, while the living standard for the

[42] Kirn writes that "the history of new nations is rewritten, starting most frequently in the Middle Ages (with 'national' nobilities, kingdoms) or, as in Macedonia today, even in Antiquity (Alexander the Great)."
[43] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stjepan_Filipovi%C4%87, accessed June 5, 2017.
[44] Another monument dedicated to Filipović still exists in Valjevo, Serbia, but it has been conveniently neglected.
[45] Dedić, 170.

vast majority of people went down in the 1990s and has not improved very much since. I am aware that I run the risk of sounding too political here; my intention is not to advocate socialism or any other system. However, the real tragedy lies in the fact that the inherently positive traits which had been cherished in Yugoslavia including antifascism, equality, unity between the nationalities who had a history of violence, and others, both directly and indirectly become marked as negative just because they originate in the context of Yugoslavia, that is, they are associated with Yugoslavia and therefore shown in a negative light.

What is then the role of nostalgia in the post-Yugoslav literature in preserving memory of the former country and preventing it from disappearing for good? Is literature a viable medium at all in this context?

One of the aims of this thesis is to further examine the differences between nostalgia that is present in the novels at hand and Titostalgia and Yugonostalgia as social phenomena. Nostalgia in post-Yugoslav literature would definitely be classified as a *variant* of Yugonostalgia for obvious reasons; it also corresponds to Boym's notion of reflective nostalgia in a sense that there are no expectations to make an ideological shift and actually return to the previous state of affairs. However, things get more complicated when Yugonostalgia becomes narrativised, that is, when it is used to set the tone and move the plot of a fictional text forward. I believe that a certain change occurs here – it seems that nostalgia acquires a subversive character and loses some of the utopian tone that is typical of the nostalgia that is present in everyday life. Let me further elaborate on this. So far, I have been writing about the dominant narrative(s) that are present in the region in order to establish a framework within which their counter-narratives can be discussed and explained. It has been abundantly shown how nationalism represents a common thread that runs through dominant discourses in the newly formed countries. Reflective nostalgia on the other hand is an antithesis of nationalism in the Yugoslav case; if the hatred of Yugoslavia is channeled through various regional nationalisms, then the love for the former country is inextricably linked with the this type of nostalgic discourse.

Ugrešić writes that nostalgia has an "elusive nature" by saying that "it is not subject to control, it is a subversive activity of our brain […] Nostalgia knows no hierarchy of values, the 'material' it deals with is not divided into good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable, clever and stupid" She sharply explains this by saying that

> Precisely because of the elusive nature of nostalgia, the authorities in the new states of former Yugoslavia have coined the term *Yugonostalgia* and given it an unambiguous meaning. The word is used as political and moral disqualification: the Yugonostalgic is a suspicious person, a 'public enemy', a 'traitor,' a person who regrets the collapse of Yugoslavia. […] A Yugonostalgic is the enemy of democracy. The term 'Yugonostalgia' belongs to the new terminology of war.[46]

In writing, this dichotomy seems to become more blurry; by this I mean that nostalgia and nationalism in the novels by Hemon, Stanišić, and Pejović do not exist as binary opposites, as is the case when the two are observed as social phenomena. Nostalgia is not placed in the foreground of the narrative, meaning that the novels at hand are not exclusively focused on longing for Yugoslavia and lamenting over the sad fate of the country. By placing it in the background, and not blatantly taking any sides, I argue that the texts at hand become more 'realistic,' in a sense that they tone down the utopian character which is usually found in Yugonostalgia. Therefore, the texts are not trying to imply that the things were unquestionably better in the past than they are now, and any that criticism of Yugoslavia is wrong. What they try to say can be summed up like this: it was not perfect, but it was definitely not as bad and tyrannical as it has been propagated continuously for the last twenty-five years. In other words, nostalgia in the post-Yugoslav literature has the potential to function as a 'tool' for the *de*-confiscation of memory. When the dominant discourse(s) attempt(s) to get rid of the anti-fascist heritage just because it is an inalienable part of Yugoslavia, nostalgia almost becomes a 'voice of reason.' I am not trying to argue that a pure utopian reflective nostalgia does not have the potential to generate criticism–nevertheless, it seems that by taking a step forward and abandoning the black and white / bad versus good point of view by not focusing on the utopian character of it, nostalgia in fiction becomes an even more subversive form of its sociological counterpart. This may sound like a paradox, but I believe that analysing fiction is rather interesting here, precisely because it manages to capture the 'elusive nature' of nostalgia that Ugrešić talks about. By elusive nature, she implies that as a feeling, nostalgia cannot be tamed. It exists almost separately from one's beliefs and it can occur in any place, at any time.

By reading the three novels in the following chapters, I am interested to find out how exactly nostalgia gets 'caught,' re-shaped, and re-structured to become a method of social critique in the Yugosphere; the starting point for this is to examine nostalgia for the war-torn cities, since this is the prism through which Hemon, Stanišić, and Pejović observe the situation in the Yugosphere.

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[46] Ugrešić, 36.

4. Memory and the City

The second part of the title of this thesis is "…Lost Homes, Lost Cities." In the previous section, I have discussed how the objects of desire -or longing, to be more precise - of Yugonostalgia and Titostalgia are a lost country and a former political leader, respectively. When we think of the scale on which these two variants of nostalgia occur, i.e. their scope, we can conclude that both Yugonostalgia and Titostalgia operate at national level; by this I mean that they are inseparable from the notion of the (failed) state. Even though the triggers of nostalgia such as food, music, old pieces of furniture, and other various material items which stimulate thinking about the past work on a micro, more intimate, level– meaning that they affect individuals – Yugonostalgia is primarily a mode of collective memory. Unlike other varieties of everyday nostalgia which are not as directly connected to politics, such as Americana nostalgia or nostalgia for the 1950s aesthetic, the post-socialist nostalgias are characterized by being more unified than those forms of nostalgia which are not largely indebted to the transition from one system to another. Of course, a valid point can be made by arguing that every type of reminiscence of the past is more or less the same, since the ultimate idea of each and every kind of nostalgia, regardless of the historical context or the ideological environment, conveys the similar message: the past used to be better than the present. However, one of the major factors which contribute to the utopian character of Yugonostalgia is its homogenous nature. With Yugonostalgia, there is not much room for improvisation; as it was pointed out before; the triggers may vary from person to person, but the end result is the same, since the superior past is always regarded through the prism of *state*. Non-socialist nostalgias on the other hand are manifested in a number of different ways, since they are not exclusively tied to the notion of the state. This means that there is a plethora of regional nostalgias that can also be focused on different time periods, which suggests that their scope is narrower when compared to Yugonostalgia. Again, US society is a good place to look at, for it provides a number of good examples: nostalgia for the dirty old pre-Giulinani New York City, nostalgia for the hippie movement, nostalgia for small town America, nostalgia for the 1980s gadgets, and others.

The argument that is made here is not that if there are multiple variants of nostalgia, this automatically means that they are less idealistic by default, since utopia is *conditio sine qua non* when it comes to any type of nostalgia. However, as for *fiction*, "cutting" nostalgia into smaller pieces and changing its scale from the level of nation-state to the level of city, in the Yugoslav case leads to the nostalgic discourse having the ability to transcend the usual binary framework, in which the nostalgic discourse is regarded

as wrong and assigned to 'traitors' and 'enemies of the state,' while the national one is perceived as positive and good. I am stressing here the need to move away from this binary perception of nostalgia and nationalism, because in order for nostalgia to have an impact as a counter-narrative in literature, it has to break the black-and-white mould in which it is cast in everyday life, since the utopian variant of nostalgia does not bear much potential in this regard. By this I mean that the narrativization of longing for Yugoslavia per se does not possess a lot of subversive potential, unless it is done in a new and creative way; changing the scale and focusing on city-algia is one of the possibilities for observing nostalgia from a different prism.

How does this change in locatedness of nostalgia – the shift from national to local level –occur, when we talk about fiction?

This is another passage in Ugrešić's article which I have frequently referred to throughout this chapter, which may help further illustrate my claim. Here she writes about the future of Yugonostalgia; I find particularly interesting and applicable for my case her mentioning the idea of space in relation to nostalgia:

> Whether nostalgia will one day succeed in articulating its object and determining its space is hard to predict. It is equally debatable whether such a thing, nostalgia, exists at this moment and, if it does, what is its nature. It is perfectly possible that the war has put an end to collective Yugo-memory, leaving behind only the desire for as speedy as possible oblivion.[47]

It is important to note that this article was published in 1996, almost immediately after the war. Although the fighting had already stopped at that point, the relations between the ethnic groups were at an all-time low, hence the cautious attitude when speaking of the possible rebirth of collective Yugo-memory. However, Ugrešić mentions the possibility that one day, nostalgia may "articulate its object" and "determine its space." If we observe the realization of these predictions today, it can be argued that the "object" of Yugonostalgic longing has become somewhat clearer. Simply put, it is the carefree life and a sense of social security which has become valued today, after twenty-plus years of living in capitalist countries. When we think of its space today in the sociological sense, longing for Yugoslavia has become– or perhaps remained is a better word – a ubiquitous phenomenon (both material and non-material) in everyday life as Velikonja has abundantly shown in relation to Tito and Titostalgia. Although Ugrešić does not mention here the existence of Yugonostalgia in the realm of fiction/fictional space, she

[47] Ugrešić, 36.

herself tackles this dimension of nostalgia in her novels; moreover, many other novelists and filmmakers have thematized Yugoslavia after the war. What I find most intriguing is how the *space* of nostalgia becomes renegotiated in fictional narratives, since I argue that the authors at hand employ this effective 'method' of 'empowering' and breathing new life into the nostalgic discourse when it comes to its potential to act as a method of social critique.

As I have mentioned earlier, Boym defines nostalgia as a pain for the lost homeland, which comes as a result of displacement, migration, transition, and so on. The novels at hand emphasize the loss of home and hometown in a literal sense (due to either destruction or exile), while the loss and disintegration of home-land as whole usually remains in the background. The novels are predominantly 'urban' when it comes to their setting; the Yugoslav Wars were notorious for having taken place mostly in cities. From sieges that lasted for months or even years, as is the case with Dubrovnik or Sarajevo, to the numerous cases where neighbours turned against each other as city streets became battlefields, like in Višegrad; cities across the country were places where the majority of fighting took place. Therefore, the actual physical disintegration of Yugoslavia started at a local level and later spread across the whole country; the first armed conflicts broke out between the Serbian minority and the Croatian police in Borovo Selo near Vukovar, Croatia in May 1991, which afterwards became one of the bloodiest and most widely covered events of the war. When it comes to the international media coverage, the siege of Dubrovnik probably has the most prominent spot, along with the images of refugees and internment camps. The Old City of Dubrovnik was the most famous 'brand' in Yugoslavia – known for its rich ancient past and architectural beauty, the city walls have always attracted tens of thousands of tourists every year. It is not a coincidence that shots of burning Dubrovnik became the symbol of the Yugoslav Wars.[48] Just like the aforementioned iconic photograph of the hanging of Stjepan Filipović fifty years earlier, the footage of the shelling of the besieged city became the embodiment of the reckless destruction. Simply put, the Yugoslav Wars were in large measure the wars of urban destruction. Dubrovnik is just one of the examples–if we were to establish the topography of the conflicts, the map would predominantly represent towns and cities as the most affected places, since this is where the majority of fighting and killing took place. Today, more than two decades after the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, the collective memory of the wars is channeled through memory of the war-affected cities: Vukovar, Sarajevo, Dubrovnik, Srebrenica, Knin, Višegrad, Mostar are some of the examples of cities which to this day represent the 'open wounds' in the political discourse in the region.

[48] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jogRQF1DwYw, accessed June 20, 2017

When talking about the role of cities in the collective memory, Kevin Loughran et al.[49] expand Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* by saying that "cities are ultimately sites of memory." While Nora is more focused on spaces and things that are physically smaller than entire cities, such as monuments, museums, symbols, flags, and their importance for the creation of the collective memory of a community, Loughran argues that whole cities can represent sites which occupy important places in the collective memory of a community. The abovementioned places are good examples of this –the town of Srebrenica, as a whole, represents today a synecdoche of not only the genocide that took place in and around the city in mid-July 1995, but also stands for the suffering of Bosniaks throughout the entire war. Similarly, the battle of Sarajevo is one of the especially noteworthy episodes from the war. The siege lasted for 1,425 days and like Srebrenica, the town became the epitome of the suffering of the civilians. Once again, the city itself is in the centre of the collective memory and a site of memory par excellence. Of course, this is not specific to the Yugoslav Wars; cities are destroyed in every war. Stalingrad, Warsaw, Berlin, Dresden, Rotterdam were almost annihilated in the Second World War and represent memory and history-rich sites today. Andreas Huyssen uses the term "urban palimpsests" to describe places like these, since they display layers of architecture from different historical periods on top of each other, which serves as a testimony to different times and the ever changing dynamics of a city. He points out that "built urban space–replete with monuments and museums, palaces, public spaces, and government buildings–represented the material traces of the historical past in the present."[50] This is not only characteristic of cities ravished by wars – he also talks about the changes in Buenos Aires and New York, for example. Loughran as well writes about the palimpsestic nature of cities; moreover, he suggests that "when older buildings, infrastructure, and public spaces are torn down, to be replaced with structures that are considered to be better suited to contemporary demands, a recognition of what *was* tends to remain and sometimes that past is longed for."[51] Although he does not mention the changes in cityscapes that occur as a result of war(s), I find particularly useful his claim that these architectural changes in a city can be a trigger of nostalgic longing for the past, since he stresses the idea of *'local* connection with the past,'[52] which stands in contrast to *national* connection with the past, something I shall come back to later on in greater detail.

[49] Kevin Loughran et al, "Urban Spaces, City Cultures, and Collective Memories," in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* ed. Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen (New York: Routledge: 2016), 201.
[50] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003), 1.
[51] Loughran et al. 194.
[52] Ibid., 195.

There is a significant difference between this type of nostalgia as Loughran describes it (for old buildings, for cities 'as they once were') and city-algia in the novels by Hemon, Stanišić, and Pejović. In their works, nostalgia for the pre-war Yugoslav cities is essentially nostalgia for ethnic harmony that characterised everyday life in Yugoslavia and its cities. Although the two are inseparable from each other—nostalgia for cities as they once were, in a material sense, and non-material nostalgia for a peaceful lifestyle–the latter is considerably more prominent in the three works at hand. Why nostalgia for the city then, as a frame of remembrance?

In Benedict Anderson's seminal work *Imagined Communities,* the author defines nation as an "imagined community, because the members of even the smallest nation will never know their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[53] The key word in this definition is *imagined*. Anderson argues that nation and nationalism are social constructs, since members do not know each other, which means that a sense of unity, national pride, shared past and so on are acquired through imaginative investment. I believe the situation is somewhat different at local level, if we observe communities in cities. Although even in cities–regardless of their size–it is not possible to know each and every member of community, the need for imagination when it comes to the notion of belonging is smaller, since citizens interact with each other on a daily basis; their interaction and relationships are palpable. Anderson's approach is very useful regarding Yugoslavia and its former communities, since one of the nationalist arguments that are often used to discredit Yugoslavia suggests that the former country was an artificially created entity which should not have been put together in the first place (due to historical, religious, and ethnic differences between the peoples, as discussed above). One of the ways in which the novels challenge arguments like these is to shift the scope of the debate from the level of nation to the level of city. For example: when Hemon describes childhood in Sarajevo, when Stanišić paints a picture of a blissful pre-war Višegrad, or when Pejović writes about a road trip from Titograd (present-day Podgorica) to Dubrovnik–the same route taken by the army several months later, the texts transcend the binary framework of nostalgia versus nationalism which sees the relationship between the two as a battle between good and evil, or vice versa, depending on the point of view. By writing fictional narratives that are predominantly tied to cities rather than focusing on the country as a whole, it becomes possible to capture and re-claim the "elusive nature of nostalgia," as Ugrešić calls it, since the texts do not seek to retrace the idealistic idea of "brotherhood and unity", as this idea has become almost like a dead metaphor, devoid of meaning if

[53] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006).

we go past the environment of overly-idealistic and utopian reflective nostalgia for Tito's era. Figuratively speaking, the authors "re-pack" nostalgia and attribute it to the cities at issue in small doses. By using the 'less is more' approach to narrating 'the good old past,' the cities become the focal points of the narratives when it comes to the locatedness of reflective nostalgia. The authors step away from the utopian idea of Yugoslavia and opt to approach it from the prism of nostalgia for the city. This type of nostalgia is intrinsically less utopian, for the object of longing is embedded in the city; a type of community where coexistence and a sense of unity and shared past is not achieved through imaginative investment but through lived experience.

As mentioned in the introductory paragraph, in *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe,* Cornis-Pope proposes the term "marginocentric cities.' He points out that "the multiethnic cities of East-Central Europe have often been presented fragmentarily in literary histories, from the perspective of only one national culture."[54] These cities are characterised by their multiculturality, and more importantly, their tendency to challenge the cultural hegemony of traditionally dominant centers. According to the author, examples of such a city would be Chernovtsy, Ukraine or Timişoara, Romania – provincial towns that tried to resist the "nationalistic leveling of culture" after WWI, as well as "pan-Germanic definitions of *Mitteleuropa"* by "opposing to them a polycentric concept of culture." Examples of centres that stand in juxtaposition with these marginocentric i.e. 'liminal' cities include places like Saint Petersburg, Istanbul, Prague, and others. In the case of former Yugoslavia, or the countries of the Western Balkans, as the region is called today–a prime example of such a 'marginocentric' city would be Sarajevo, today's capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Historically, Sarajevo has always been a crossroads of cultures – it stands between two centres and two former empires –Vienna and Istanbul / Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, which had had a profound impact on the city for hundreds of years. Adding a 'layer' of Slavic influence to this, Sarajevo has always been regarded as a melting pot of the Balkans, and this "palimpsestic nature" in Huyssen's sense is still visible today. Cornis-Pope conceptualizes the liminal cities from the point of view of their literary representation: due to their cultural complexity and the multitude of languages that are often present in them, he argues that representing marginocentric cities in literature poses a challenge– it requires a different "cultural topography," since the cities at hand do not fit into the "preconceived notions of literary and cultural topography."[55]

[54] Cornis-Pope, 9.
[55] Ibid.

Although the limits of literary representations of marginocentric cities due to their cultural and language diversity is not my primary interest here, I find this concept rather useful nonetheless, when it comes to rethinking the usual *spatial* frames of remembrance. The word 'marginocentric' itself is interesting in this regard, since it is an oxymoron–it combines the mutually exclusive terms 'margin' and 'centre' together to create a new meaning, as margin becomes closer to the centre and the line between the two becomes less clear. By renegotiating the fortified position of dominant cultural hubs, the usual framework of centre and margin becomes disrupted, which consequently shows once 'marginalized' cities in a new light.

But how does this system operate if we observe cities as margin and *nation* as centre? How can cities challenge– not other cities, as Cornis-Pope suggests–but even larger entities such as nation, when it comes to different modes of collective remembrance? If we observe the nation as a central 'unit' of memory, how does the city disrupt this hierarchy? In other words, "what new frames of collective remembrance have been emerging as alternatives to the nation?"[56]

This is in one of the important issues in *Transnational Memory,* edited by Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney. The edited collection of essays seeks to offer an alternative point of view when it comes to frames of collective remembrance, and go beyond the prism of the nation-state, which has been for a long time the primary container of collective memory. They explain this by pointing out that:

> the primacy of the national frame is not in itself surprising, of course, given the co-emergence of nationalism and historicism in the nineteenth century, and the subsequent importance of heritage, canonicity, narratives of liberation, and commemorative rituals to the very working and legitimization of the modern nation-state.

The authors argue that it the time to "move memory studies beyond methodological nationalism," for a number of reasons. They explain that:

> globalized communication and time-space compression, post-coloniality, transnational capitalism, large-scale migration, and regional integration: all of these mean that national frames are no longer the self-evident ones they used to be in daily life and identity formation. As

[56] De Cesari and Rigney, 2.

> a result, the national has also ceased to be the inevitable or preeminent scale for the study of collective remembrance.[57]

As a result of the changing dynamic in memory studies, one of the most innovative advancements in the field of transnational memory studies is the idea of *multi-scalarity* "of socio-cultural processes and the fundamental 'mutual construction of the local, national, and global' in the contemporary world."[58] What does this imply? De Cesari and Rigney further illustrate the term by explaining that:

> Crucially, rethinking scale also means rethinking the spatial imaginaries and imagined topographies of verticality that have shaped research practices in memory studies. Consider, for example, the common scholarly representation of 'local' or 'grassroots' memories as opposed to 'national' and 'global' memories. The former, no matter how far they reach out towards the world, are always imagined as being small-scale in scope and extremely localized, akin to a point on a map, and most importantly, as situated below the broader configurations of national or global memory that are thought of as containing and subsuming them. Moreover, we tend to imagine 'the global' in terms of a homogeneous and steadily expanding across the globe […] The transnational optics adopted in this volume allows memory to be visualized differently: not as a horizontal spread or as points or regions on a map but as a dynamic operating at multiple, interlocking scales and involving conduits, intersections, circuits, and articulations.[59]

Although this is a rather lengthy quote, it can be used to explain the spatial scale of nostalgia as a form of collective memory and its locatedness, which I touched upon in the previous chapter. In the case of this thesis, it can help explain why rethinking the locatedness of nostalgia is important, when it comes to mediated representation of life in Yugoslavia prior, during, and after the war. However, even more compelling is the transnational approach to local or grassroots memory, as it moves away from the usual understanding of local memory being contained within the borders of a nation. Instead, the idea that local memories do not exist merely on a horizontal plane, but rather as a complex dynamic, is particularly valuable in this case for explaining the connections in the novels between the former Yugoslav cities, and the cities 'abroad' in which both authors and their characters find themselves exiled.

In the introductory chapter, I have briefly mentioned the emigration aspect of the novels' plots; this is where the narratives become more complicated and challenging to analyse. In the following sections, I

[57] Ibid., 2.
[58] Ibid., 5.
[59] Ibid., 6.

will not solely focus on the usual aspects of migrant literature such as (un)translatability, the question of multiple identities, and others. Instead, I am interested to find out how the cities in the narratives move away from the “dots-on-a-map” type of representation when it comes to collective memory, as De Cesari and Rigney put it, and what exactly creates the dynamic between two places. I am not arguing that nostalgia necessarily has to be the common denominator for two cities in a novel, in order for them to be observed together. That would be a rather predictable way of analyzing the texts, since it would result in engaging with them in a one-dimensional way, exploring one trope only. Instead, I want to further explore the transnational relationship between cities, by looking at the ways in which the texts attempt to bridge the frame of national memory and create links between cities, regardless of national borders.

Pejović’s *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* is a good example of such practice: the narrative begins in 2005 New Orleans, destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. The story then goes fifteen years back in time and focuses on the beginning of the siege of Dubrovnik. Although the causes of the destruction of the two cities are completely different–a natural disaster and a military attack–the way the two cities are compared calls for a different way of analyzing the locatedness of memory, past the usual national frame of remembrance. Nostalgia, which is typical of the novels at hand, is not mentioned as a mode of collective memory regarding the post-Katrina New Orleans; however, the mere fact that there is a city-to-city type of relationship suggests that the traditional assessment of the spatial distribution of collective remembrance does not do justice to ever-changing processes when it comes to the creation of collective memory. The emergence of transnational memory– especially in relation to city memory–is fascinating to explore, since it sheds new light on the relationship between space and memory; moreover, it fundamentally changes the preconceived notion of border. While the nation-state is limited by its borders, the city becomes almost like a borderless space, where it seems impossible to tell where this entity begins and where it ends. This automatically challenges the idea of centre as opposed to margin, since the city is no longer regarded as a spot on the map with its epicenter and gravitational pull, but as a part of a more complex, transnational web of cities which involve “conduits, intersections, circuits, and articulations.” By using this theoretical framework, I seek to explore not only (local-)nostalgia(s), but also the ways in which other forms of localized collective memory ‘flow’ through mediated fictional accounts and narratives.

5. *Nowhere Man,* 'Miss Sarajevo,' and the Bosnian blues

In 1991, at the dawn of the Bosnian war, Sarajevo had 527,049 inhabitants. Fifty percent of them identified as Bosniak Muslims, thirty percent were Serbs, almost eleven percent declared themselves to be Yugoslavs, seven percent were Croats, while three percent belonged to other ethnic groups. Sarajevo has always been a multi-ethnic and multicultural city; between two dominant cultures, Ottoman and Middle-European, Sarajevo was the bridge between cultures which throughout history have always been poles apart. Slavic influence when it comes to the creation of the city's identity should not be neglected either: on June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by Gavrilo Princip, a member of Young Bosnia–the movement whose members fought for the establishment of Yugoslavia. The assassination set off a series of events which eventually lead to the outbreak of WWI. In the collective memory of both the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the SFRY, Princip was regarded as a hero, and the Latin Bridge–the place where the archduke was murdered– became an important site of memory.[60]

After Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence with the referendum in 1992, the army of 13,000 Bosnian Serbs encircled Sarajevo and blockaded it. The notorious siege lasted from April 5, 1992 to February 29, 1996–the longest siege in modern history. The goal was to create a state of Bosnian Serbs, which would also include those areas of Bosnia where Muslims were a majority, and to prevent the proclamation of Bosnia as an independent state. Although there were 40,000 Bosniak Muslim troops within the city limits, they were poorly equipped. During the 1,425 days in Sarajevo, almost 14 000 people were killed by shelling and sniper fire; 5,434 were civilians, 1,601 were children, both Bosniaks and Serbs.[61]The siege of Sarajevo was characterised by a lack of food, running water, electricity, heating and overall atrocious living conditions during the four years.

Fast forward to the aftermath of the siege—one of the first major cultural events that took place in Sarajevo after the war was the concert of the Irish rock band U2 on Koševo stadium on September 23, 1997.[62] 45,000 people attended the event; unlike the famous 1993 staging of *Waiting for Godot* by

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[60] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/06/gavrilo-princip-hero-villain-first-world-war-balkan-history, accessed June 15, 2017. Since the breakup of Yugoslavia, the public perception of Princip began to change; some view him as a hero, some as a terrorist.
[61] http://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/prosexp/bcs/mil-rep-tabeau030818b.pdf, accessed June 15, 2017
[62] http://www.u2gigs.com/show731.html, accessed June 16, 2017.

Susan Sontag[63], which was a small-scale performance put on in order to boost the morale of the people trapped within the city and to attract media attention for the siege of Sarajevo, the U2 concert was the first big event that took place in the city after the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in November 1995, which ended the war in Bosnia. One of the highlights of the concert was the song titled 'Miss Sarajevo', a song by Brian Eno, U2, and Luciano Pavarotti. The song is about the beauty contest that was held in the city four years earlier, at the height of the siege. U2's singer Bono has even said that 'Miss Sarajevo' is his favourite U2 song.

The story about 'Miss Sarajevo' and the 1997 concert starts with Bill Carter, one of the many journalists who spent the war years in Sarajevo. Carter decided to stay in the city, since he felt moved by the fact that Sarajevans attempted to preserve the lifestyle and unity that existed prior to the war, which meant that they did not accept being ethnically divided, with many Serbs going out to defend the city against the Serbs who were attacking Sarajevo.[64] During the days before the siege started, Sarajevans organized anti-war demonstrations, which culminated on April 5, 1992, when 40,000 people gathered to protest against the violent partition of Bosnia, knowing what happened in Vukovar, Croatia several months earlier. On that day, which is today acknowledged as the date when the siege officially started, the first civilians who lost their lives –Suada Dilberović, 24 and Olga Sučić, 34–were shot during the protest. In the following months and years, Carter was doing humanitarian work in the city and recorded a lot of raw video material in the meantime, which eventually became a documentary titled *Miss Sarajevo*. One of the most remarkable scenes in the documentary is the one after which the film was named–the beauty contest organized during the siege. Contestants held together a banner with a powerful and harrowing message – 'Don't let them kill us.' The photographs of the event became an iconic testimony to the spirit of Sarajevans. Seventeen-year-old Inela Nogić was proclaimed the winner, and her portrait is also on the cover of the U2 single. Carter managed to reach out to Bono during the war – Bono then financed and produced the film. He said that:

> The camera follows the organizers through the tunnels and cellars of the city, giving a unique insight into life during a modern war, where civilians are the targets. The film captures the dark humour of the besieged Sarajevans, their stubborn refusal to be demoralised and suggests that surrealism and Dadaism are the appropriate responses to fanaticism.[65]

[63] http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1993/10/21/godot-comes-to-sarajevo/, accessed July 1, 2017.
[64] Bill Carter, *Fools Rush In* (Tucson: Schaffner, 2005), 198.
[65] Ibid., 199.

After the film had been completed, attempts were made to organise a charity concert by U2 in Sarajevo during the siege. This proved to be impossible; not only was it impossible to transport the necessary equipment for the show to the city; the audience and the band could also be targeted by the besiegers. However, as already mentioned, the concert indeed took place in 1997, as a part of U2's PopMart tour.[66] Apart from Sarajevans, the concert was also attended by people from other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as from Zagreb and Ljubljana.

I have not started this chapter by writing about a U2 song and concert simply because I firmly believe that music has healing powers and that concerts and events of this type can somehow miraculously eliminate pain and create bridges and unite people who were until recently killing each other. Although the concert itself for Sarajevans brought an immense feeling of liberation and a genuine sense of re-connectedness with the world after several years of isolation, the event and the song 'Miss Sarajevo' are particularly interesting for another reason. The example of U2's engagement in Sarajevo, both the song and the performance, can help illustrate how artistic production has the ability to serve as a catalyst and help bring together seemingly unrelated cities by highlighting the shared experience of violence.[67]

Needless to say, 'Miss Sarajevo' is not the only song by U2 that is openly very political. 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' is especially remarkable in this regard; one of U2's most popular songs, it tells about the 1972 massacre in Derry, Northern Ireland, where the members of the British Army opened fire and killed 14 civilians who gathered to attend a protest. Although the incident in Derry and the war in Sarajevo have almost nothing in common– apart from violent death of the innocent people–something intriguing happened on that September night in Sarajevo.[68]Apart from 'Miss Sarajevo', which was one of the highlights of the show for obvious reasons (U2 were joined on stage by Brian Eno and Inela Nogić, Miss Sarajevo herself), the performance of 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' was another notable moment. Halfway through the concert, U2 guitarist Edge played an acoustic stripped down version of the song. After the powerful rendition of the song at the Sarajevo concert, the band said that they rediscovered 'Sunday Bloody Sunday;' it was played as an acoustic solo piece for the remainder of the tour. Despite the differences between the crimes in Derry and Sarajevo, the latter emerged as an inspirational place for the song about Derry to shine–the siege of Sarajevo may have not resembled the Troubles, but the

[66] Due to bad economic situation in the city, the tickets cost only 15 dollars; the concert was partly sponsored by Coca-Cola and GSM
[67] Ann Rigney, "Differential Memorability and Transnational Activism: Bloody Sunday 1887-2016" *Australian Humanities Review* 59 (2016): 88.
[68] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gb5MUcAduIw the entire concert can be watched on YouTube.

suffering of the innocent people became the connective tissue between the two cities. This is a classic example of how memory operates on different scales–in this case, the national memories of Ireland and Bosnia are less relevant and therefore bypassed, than the connection that is made from city to city, mediated through music and live performance.

This chapter analyses Aleksandar Hemon's novel titled *Nowhere Man*. This is his second fictional piece, published in 2002 in English. Partly based on Hemon's own experiences from both Sarajevo and Chicago, the novel follows the life of Josef Pronek, a Bosnian refugee in the US, before and after the breakup of Yugoslavia. The title of the novel comes from the song of the same name by the Beatles–Pronek is a man without a country, language, and above all, without a sense of direction when it comes to looking for answers to these identity questions. In other words, he represents an archetypical modern-day migrant, stuck somewhere between his old and new life. Hemon wrote *Nowhere Man* as a collection of vignettes; narrated from multiple perspectives and out of chronological order, the novel consists of three main parts. The first section focuses on Sarajevo from Pronek's birth in 1967 until the beginning of the war in 1992. The second part of the narrative deals with Pronek's brief trip to Kiev in August 1991, shortly before the breakup of the Soviet Union, while the third part of the story shows Pronek's life from the early to mid-1990s in Chicago.

Aleksandar Hemon was born in Sarajevo in 1964, to a Ukrainian-Bosnian father and Bosnian mother. A graduate from the University of Sarajevo, he started writing in the late 1980s and found himself in Chicago in 1992, right before the outbreak of the war in Bosnia. The reason for his visit was a short programme sponsored by the US government.[69] Unable to return home, Hemon took a number of jobs–from canvassing for Greenpeace to selling magazine subscriptions door to door, while simultaneously learning English to be able to write fiction in that language. In the opening chapter of this thesis, I argued that the novel as a medium is a very feasible literary form when it comes to socially-engaged writing, as it enables a quick proliferation of various narratives. Unlike producing films, writing fiction does not require any funding, which means that virtually anybody with an idea and an urge to write can act through writing. In this regard, Hemon says:

[69] http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/16/books/16hemo.html, accessed June 20, 2017.

> I was cut off from my previous life, in despair. […] I had this horrible, pressing need to write because things were happening. I needed to do it the same way I needed to eat, but I just had no language to write in. I couldn't do it, and so I thought I should enable myself to do it.[70]

The experience of migration and the state of "being cut off from previous life" had a profound influence on Hemon's oeuvre and it should not be overlooked. It directly stems from the author's personal life and his need to address these issues in literature. Although I will not rely on the author's biography to interpret the novel, certain episodes from *Nowhere Man* can be approached in this fashion since it is a very personal, socially engaged fictional narrative written as an attempt to position oneself against the dominant nationalist discourse.

The largest part of the text is narrated by an unknown narrator. The first chapter begins on April 18, 1994 in Chicago. The narrator, a Sarejevan, goes for a job interview to be an ESL teacher. There he accidentally bumps into Josef Pronek, the protagonist, who is also a migrant from Sarajevo. Pronek is in a classroom with other people who are learning English–a scene that is a reminiscent of Hemon's own exile experiences. In a room that is an embodiment of the cultural melting-pot, Pronek tries to acquire a language skill which will enable him to function in the new environment, just like Hemon had to learn English to be able to write:

> Pronek looked up straight at me. I didn't know if he could recognize me–I had changed a lot, having gone through a long and debilitating illness–but he was staring at me. I looked away, my heart thundering inside. How did he get here? Was he in Sarajevo under siege? Or was he besieging it? I hadn't talked to him in years, if ever. He leaned back in his chair, but my gaze was avoiding his. What should I say to him? What was his story? What was his life like?[71]

Apart from introducing the protagonist, this passage also hints at the complexity, or even more precisely, the absurdity of the situation in Sarajevo at the time. "Was he in Sarajevo under siege? Or was he besieging it?" the narrator asks himself. Since Pronek carries a Ukrainian surname (his father was Ukrainian-Bosnian, his mother was Bosnian like Hemon), the narrator cannot decide whether he should associate Pronek with the Bosniak Muslims who were under siege, or the Serbs who were besieging Sarajevo. A prime example of a Sarajevan of a mixed-origin, Pronek cannot be simply placed within the confinements of any ethnic group, as it would not do justice to his identity. This is a typical example of

[70] Ibid.
[71] Hemon, 25.

marginocentrism, or marginocentric cities–due to its multiethnic and multicultural nature, Sarajevo resists the nationalist way of perceiving and labeling identity. In nationalist discourses, the scale of the nation is the ultimate indicator of one's identity and belonging. On the other hand, apart from the familial scale, the only larger scale of identity that can accurately describe Pronek is the city scale. Paradoxically, even though it is smaller in size, the city is seen as more ethnically diverse than the state, that is, its complexity is real and palpable due to the lived and shared experiences of citizens, whereas on higher levels (nation/state, region and so on) the sense of belonging and the idea of a shared heritage is achieved through imagination.

In this regard, Caren Irr makes the accurate observation that

> Hemon's spatial orientation, in other words, is resolutely inter-urban rather than international in this novel because he repudiates the premises of national narratives. Throughout his travels, Pronek identifies himself as a Sarajevan, rather than a Bosnian–using the latter designator only when it offers a mild improvement over even cruder labels. "I am complicated", he responds when a potential employer asks whether he is a Serb or a Muslim: his stomach heaving feeling entrapped, he adds, "You can say I am the Bosnian."[72]

From the get-go, the author narrows down the prism through which we get to observe Pronek. He is first and foremost a Sarajevan, rather than Bosnian or Yugoslav. This way, the nationalist categories and divisions are bypassed. Shortly before the breakup of Yugoslavia, in the late 1980s, it became important to know who is what in terms of ethnicity. Metaphorically speaking, blood cells were counted, and in a typically nationalist fashion, the supranational Yugoslav identity began to fade, while the national identities took the spotlight. All of a sudden, categories such as 'real Serb', 'true Croat', or 'good Muslim' emerged. By focusing on Pronek's hometown identity instead of on his ethnicity, Hemon seeks to de-contaminate the collective memory of Yugoslavia, which was at the time when the novel takes place in a serious jeopardy-almost non-existent, as Ugrešić pointed out in her 1996 article where she wrote about the future of Yugonostalgia.[73]

The title of the thesis suggests that its focus is on the novels that are closely linked to the Yugoslav Wars. As I am arguing that the authors are engaging with the politics of (war) memory, the first step is to analyse exactly how the war is staged and presented in these texts. Of the three novels, when it comes

[72] Caren Irr, "Toward the World Novel: Genre Shifts in Twenty-First-Century Expatriate Fiction," *American Literary History* 23 (2011): 674.
[73] Ugrešić.

to spatial proximity to the conflicts, *Nowhere Man* is the furthest in terms of the distance between the events in the novel and the war events. After the peaceful 1980s in Sarajevo, the story moves to Chicago during the war years in Yugoslavia. The war is looming in the background; first the unnamed narrator[74] reads new information about it in the newspaper, then the main character Pronek also finds out about the events in Bosnia like this. No part of the novel actually takes place in the war-torn areas; the closest we as readers get to the actual siege is through the letter Pronek receives from his friend Mirza from Sarajevo in late 1995. The characters in the novel have at their disposal nothing but a mediated account of the desperate situation, both in the whole country and in their hometown. This is similar to Hemon's own experience of the war; he was already in Chicago when the conflict broke out. Both Hemon's and his characters' (lack of precise) knowledge of the ongoing war shows how incredibly complex the situation was in the field, and how difficult it was to apprehend what exactly was going on. People who until recently had lived peacefully together, took up arms and started killing each other. Even the narrator, who knows of Pronek (they are not really friends, but remember each other from Sarajevo), is not sure what to think of Pronek and how to categorise him–is he a victim or a perpetrator? Bearing this in mind, it becomes clear why it was extremely difficult to gain a good and objective insight into what was going on in the region, especially if you were a foreigner. The following illustrate how the author in the opening chapter stages the war in Bosnia by placing news headlines, followed by the narrator's (nostalgic) memories inspired by the news:

> DEFENSES COLLAPSE IN GORAZDE, a headline read. I had been in Goražde only once, only because I had vomited in the car, on our way to somewhere, and my parents stopped in Goražde to clean the mess up. All I remember was being thirsty and shivering on the front seat, as my father retched in the back seat, wiping it with a cloth: and then my father leaving my cloth-wrapped vomit by the road, and hungry, desperate little animals crawling out of the bushes to devour it.[75]
> […]
>
> There was a pile of newspapers on the table, the front page facing me: DEFENSES COLLAPSE IN GORAZDE. When I was thirteen I had spent the summer at a seaside resort for Tito's pioneers and fallen in love with a girl from Goražde. Her name was Emina, and she taught me to kiss using my

[74] The narrator is both directly involved in the narrative and an observer.
[75] Hemon, 8.

tongue, and she let me touch her breasts–she was the first girl I had ever touched who wore a bra. U.S. SEIZES BOAT CARRYING 111 IMMIGRANTS, a headline read.[76]

Two paragraphs later in the text, there is another hint at another warzone in the world, not only in Bosnia: "MASSACRES RAGE ON, a headline read. BODIES PILE UP IN RWANDA."[77]Yet later, Pronek also sees a headline: "A *Chicago Tribune* headline, behind the filthy glass of a newspaper box, read THOUSANDS KILLED IN SREBRENICA."[78]

By juxtaposing the situation in Bosnia (Goražde is a small Eastern Bosnian town) with other areas of conflict in the world, the author shows that the text will not solely be focused on one place and on one collective memory. The headlines are rather vague: we do not know exactly which army's defenses collapse in Goražde, we are not told which immigrants are caught, or how many casualties there are in Rwanda. From a Western perspective, all these events are very distant, unclear, and painted with the same brush; they are associated with the Other.[79] Although this is the only instance where the massacres in Srebrenica and Rwanda are mentioned together, it is intriguing that they are observed within the context of their (under-)representation in Western media – the newspaper here is *Chicago Tribune*. What the massacres in Rwanda in 1994 and the massacre in the small Bosnian town of Srebrenica had in common was the lack of a reaction on the part of the UN–or, to be more precise–the lack of an *appropriate* reaction from the international community, since both cases proved to be utter failures when it came to protecting the innocent civilians, resulting in large-scale crimes against humanity. Although I will not go into great detail and explain the background of the two events here, suffice it to say that both moments represent dark episodes of the late twentieth century; the world stood still as history was repeating itself, as if the lesson from WWII was not enough. The novel does not go on to explore thoroughly the culpability of the West for not preventing crimes of this type; nevertheless, by placing the two events together, the author does offer a very subtle critique of the way these crimes are perceived in the Western media, i.e. their being reduced to simple headlines. Moreover, by observing the two crimes together, the text highlights the failures of peacekeeping missions (both in Rwanda and Bosnia). Although this is the only instance where the author suggests that different genocide memories create a transnational memory that travels across borders (the concept of transnational memory in this novel is mostly shown through the prism of city-to-city memory between

[76] Hemon, 14.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 145
[79] See Todorova.

Sarajevo, Kiev, and Chicago), it is nevertheless a very powerful way of bringing up the question of memory that exceeds national borders, as this idea represents one of the cornerstones of *Nowhere Man.* The concept that traumatic collective memories, such as the holocaust memory, travel across borders and help illuminate other seemingly unrelated pasts is developed by Michael Rothberg. This concept, titled "multidirectional memory,"[80] represents one of the cornerstones of transnational memory today.

The second important point about the passage above is that nostalgia is introduced for the first time; upon reading the news, the narrator is reminded of his own childhood. Until that moment, the reader is not aware of the narrator's nationality or past. Through his memories, we learn that he is probably from somewhere in Yugoslavia, very likely from Bosnia, and that there is some relationship between him and the city of Goražde, where the 'defenses collapsed.' There narrator does not make any comments about the war that is going on, nor does he take sides. Instead, two seemingly unrelated episodes from his past are shown. Although these are not as overt as the examples of nostalgia that will come later in the novel, the narrator's memory of vomiting somewhere near Goražde and his fond memory of Emina, a girl who taught him how to kiss using his tongue, serve as a method of characterization: we get to know about both the narrator and the nature of the novel itself. In that sense, two important things can be taken from the excerpt about various news headlines and the memories triggered by them. One is that the novel is not going deal with only one geographical area and a collective memory that is exclusively tied to one particular place; the other is the migrant dimension of the narrator and the indebtedness of the present events to the past.

Ann Rigney's concept of "city to city" memory[81] fleshed out in the previous chapter and in relation to the two U2 songs discussed earlier is vital for my reading of the novel. Since the fabula begins in Sarajevo and then gradually expands to other cities (Kiev, Chicago), the idea is that city-to-city memory can exist semi-independently from memory on a larger scale. I add the prefix *semi-* since there are always many overlaps between different scales as they often share space and therefore cannot exist in a complete vacuum. For this reason, the framework of local memories is particularly useful method for understanding the intricate web of cities and city memories that Hemon compares and contrasts. As for nostalgia and the nostalgic writing tone, they are primarily linked to the section of the novel which takes place in Sarajevo. Occasionally, nostalgic moments are also present in the Chicago section, where they

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[80] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009)
[81] Rigney.

come back as flashbacks, triggered by the things – to use the broadest term possible– which briefly take both the narrator and Pronek to another place and another time, just like the abovementioned scene with news headlines and the memories they prompt.

In the previous chapters, it was argued that one of the ways of turning nostalgia into a discourse that can result in a form of social critique is to shift its scope to the level of city, which automatically makes it less utopian and more relatable due to peoples' embodied experiences. The following excerpt from the novel is a good example of this–it is a representation of Boym's reflective nostalgia in a literary form, with a special focus on pre-war Sarajevo and everything that made the city so great:

> Sarajevo in the eighties was a beautiful place to be young–I know because I was young then. I remember linden trees blooming as if they were never to bloom again, producing a smell I can feel in my nostrils now. The boys were handsome, the girls beautiful, the sports teams successful, the bands good, the streets felt as soft as a Persian carpet, and the Winter Olympics made everyone feel that *we were at the center of the world.*[82] I remember the smell of apartment-building basements where I was making out with my date, the eye of the light switch glaring at us from the darkness. Then the light would go on–a neighbor coming down the stairs– and we would pull apart.[83]

The paragraph begins with a phrase that reads almost like a cliché. Virtually everybody has fond memories of their youth–no matter how difficult it may have been. Unless there was a major personal tragedy involved, childhood is the time which is regarded as the safe, happy, and secure period of one's life. What makes the narrator really appreciate the 1980s in Sarajevo, in addition to his own personal memories, is the fact that the end of the decade marked the end of Sarajevo as he knew it- in the first half of the 1990s, the peaceful and multicultural Sarajevo as it once was, disappeared for good. Therefore, nostalgia here is not just nostalgia for one's youth that has passed irrevocably; it is also nostalgia for a city that is lost forever. Moreover, the primary object of longing is not the changing cityscape that Loughran explores, but the changing dynamic between people. The narrator explains why Sarajevo was a good place to grow up; starting from a very specific memory of the smell of linden trees, he moves on to more general things, such as handsome boys, beautiful girls, successful teams, and good bands.

[82] Emphasis added by me.
[83] Hemon, 49.

Boym suggests that fragments such as these are not perceived as absolute truths–they are "mediations on history and passage of time." They show "the irrevocability of the past, and human finitude."[84] I would also add that this string of memories is created in a self-aware way–by this I mean that the narrator does not present his memories as the ultimate truths (which would lean towards restorative nostalgia), in a way that would suggest that the past was flawless—as if there were no beautiful people and good bands today. The whole excerpt is an example of reflective nostalgia. The narrator does paint an ideal picture of Sarajevo, but it does not lack the critical aspect characteristic of restorative nostalgia:

> I also remember that a thug nicknamed Nikson sold me a brick and smacked me around in front of my girlfriend. I remember that my apartment was broken into and that there were two footprints on my parents' bed. I remember the hateful moments in crowded, smoky bars, when I could not stand to look again at the faces I had known since birth. I remember the guy in the hospital bed next to mine whose thighs and ass were all cut up after a toilet bowl fell apart under him. But I choose not to think of those as important, my memories irrevocably coated in linden syrup.[85]

After several pleasant memories, the narrator also remembers some of the less enjoyable instances from his past life in Sarajevo – being robbed and beaten in front of his girlfriend, unpleasant moments in local bars, having his apartment broken into, and so on. This is in accordance with Boym's definition of reflective nostalgia –"it can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment or critical reflection."[86] The narrator's memory of Sarajevo is not without downsides, but they are not big enough to suffocate the pleasant mental images from the city's past, as they are "coated in linden syrup".

When it comes to the city collective memory, this excerpt from the novel is an example of how local patriotism is established and how the sense of connectedness with the world can stem from the city memory. "The Winter Olympic games made everyone feel that we were at the centre of the world" – the 1984 event is to this day one of the most notable events in Sarajevo's history, and it has an important place in collective memory not only for Sarajevans, but also for people who cherish the memory of Yugoslavia. Specifically for the people in Sarajevo, the Winter Olympic Games meant that

[84] Boym.
[85] Hemon, 49.
[86] Ibid.

they were the 'navel of the world,' at least for the 11 days of the event. The Olympics were held at Koševo Stadium, which was renovated and expanded for that occasion. Interestingly, the U2 concert which is said to have brought again this sense of connectedness with the world for Sarajevans, took place at the exactly same location– Koševo Stadium, thirteen years after the Olympics. During the siege, the training grounds next to the main stadium were used as a cemetery, for it was impossible to bury people elsewhere at the time, and the graves have remained there to this day. The stadium has become a site of memory par excellence; what makes it special is the combination of both positive and negative events that contributed to its establishment as a memory-rich place.

The narrator says that Sarajevans felt like they were "the centre of the world"; I have already argued that when it comes to thinking borders, we usually perceive them in terms of the borders between nation-states, since they represent clear lines on the map which separate different political entities. When it comes to the city, the existing vocabulary which is used for thinking borders sometimes does not suffice. On the one hand, a city may transcend both its own borders and the borders of the country in which it is. This occurs because certain cities do not fully fit within the confinements of a nation, due to their incompatibility with the dominant national discourse which sees the nation as a homogenous entity. Alternatively, the connections between cities are established through the similarities between their collective memories and (the troubled) past, as well as via big multicultural events such as the Olympics.

Another excerpt is interesting to look at in relation to narrating nostalgia, as it shows how nostalgia is established as an actual space:

> Pronek unexpectedly fell in love. Her name was Sabina–she beamed at him out of the crowd in front of the café bar called *Nostalgija.*[87] She gripped her drink with a sunny slice of lemon floating in it, ostensibly talking to a couple of tall potential boyfriends. When her glance first hit him, her eyes were huge and strong, blood drove out of his head to the suburbs of his body and he stood paralyzed. […]Sabina was his schoolmate–he had known she existed and had found her cute, but her gate suddenly transformed her into an obsession of Pronek's. He kept going back to *Nostalgija*, lingering in front of it for warm weeks in September 1983, hoping she would show up.[88]

[87] Emphasis in the original.
[88] Hemon, 54.

This episode shows a seventeen-year-old Pronek falling in love; teenage love affairs are an inextricable part of reminiscing about the past. Sabina is a Muslim girl*.* The choice of the name of the bar is not arbitrary; it serves as a meta-fictional moment –"he kept going back to *Nostalgija,* lingering in front of it for weeks." In addition to the whole sequence being a nostalgic episode that Pronek thinks about years later, nostalgia here also exists as an actual physical space where Pronek fell in love. I argue that this is a brilliant way of showing how nostalgia is tied to the city – it goes without saying that the *Nostalgija*[89] bar serves as a metaphor of nostalgia itself; also, nostalgia here is an actual embodied space where people return in search of something better. After the description of them falling in love, the narrator speaks again about the 1984 Olympics:

> Pronek would always remember the moment of seeing Sabina on TV, marching in the opening ceremony of the Sarajevo Olympics, in a snow-white suit, ahead of the Chinese national team, tall and lank and elegant. He could always recall the warmth and tranquility he felt at that moment, which he would understand as an epiphany of love, a moment that was to become unrepeatable once his world had collapsed.

Apart from the collective sense of connectedness with the world that is associated with the Olympics, the personal memory of seeing Sabina on TV later became an elusive moment for Pronek , filled with peacefulness, and impossible to re-capture after the 'collapse of his world,' that is, the end of his previous life in Sarajevo. Later on, we find out that Sabina lost both legs in shelling while waiting in line for bread during the siege, and that she now lives in Germany with her husband and daughters. Just like Pronek in the US, she became a migrant who left her previous life behind.

The two main parts of the novel take place in pre-war Sarajevo and Chicago in the 1990s. What creates a bridge between them is the section that takes place in Kiev, Ukraine, during August 1991. Through the Association of Bosnian Ukrainians, Pronek finds out about an open place in summer school in Kiev, where young people of Ukrainian descent would learn more about their heritage. "Pronek had no interest in heritage, as he had suffered through his father's histories, but he thought that leaving Sarajevo and the war in Croatia[90] for a month would help his mental health,"[91] the narrator says. He spends a month in the country, meeting new people his own age; he also witnesses the dissolution of

[89] Intrestingly, Svetlana Boym writes about an actual bar named Nostalgija she visited in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Among other music, they also played the Beatles.
[90] The war first began in Croatia in late 1991 and then spread to Bosnia several months later.
[91] Hemon, 69.

the USSR. Pronek's time in Kiev is set against the attempted coup and the collapse of Soviet Union– Ukraine declared its independence on August 24, 1991, after a failed coup d'état on August 19, when members of the Communist Party attempted to restore the centralised organization of the country. Pronek later jokes about this, saying that "he had gone to the USSR to fix a few things, and now, he said, he was ready to fix Yugoslavia." The idea of fixing Yugoslavia by using the experience from the Soviet Union, whose dissolution was finalised in late 1991, points to the similarities between the two states regarding the collective memory of the events that surrounded the last days of the USSR and Yugoslavia. The anti-Milošević[92] protest in Belgrade in March 1991 and the aforementioned anti-war protests in Sarajevo in 1992 did not have much in common with the August 1991 events in Kiev. When it comes to their outcome, the protests in Yugoslavia were ineffective in preventing the war whereas the coup in Ukraine failed and the country peacefully gained its independence. However, there is an interesting parallel made between the two countries and their cities, seen through the perspective of none other than the US president at the time, George H.W. Bush. Hemon uses a fictionalised version of the president's speech given on August 1, 1991 in Kiev.[93] Pronek and his friends are in the audience; after the speech, as Bush comes down the stage and walks through the crowd, Pronek finds himself in front of the president:

> So he asked Jozef, looking at the fat man, expecting him to interpret:
>
> "What is your name, young fellow?"
>
> "Jozef Pronek," Jozef answered, while the fat man was mouthing a translation of the question, spit burning in the corners of his lips.
>
> "This place is holy ground. May God bless your country, son."
>
> "It's not my country, Jozef said.
>
> "Yes, it is," Bush said, and patted Jozef on his shoulder. "You bet your life it is. It is as yours as you make it."
>
> "But I am from Bosnia…"

[92] President of Serbia throughout the 1990s, a militant nationalist.
[93] Also known as the Chicken Kiev speech, Bush cautioned against nationalism and independence, which caused outrage on the part of the majority of people who wanted independence from the Soviet Union.

> "It's all one big family, your country is. If there is a misunderstanding, you oughtta work it out." Bush nodded, heartily agreeing with himself. Jozef stood still, his body taut and his smile lingering on his face, bedazzled by the uncanniness.[94]

Just like the news headlines in the opening chapter, the commentary on the situation is made from an outsider perspective – Bush assures Pronek that *this* place is a holy land. When Pronek tries to explain that this place is not *his* place, Bush does not seem to care or know the difference, and tells Pronek that things have to be worked out. This misunderstanding highlights the different spatial scales that people use to identify themselves–even if this conversation had taken place in Bosnia, Pronek would still be a Sarajevan first, since being Bosnian or Yugoslav are less important denominators for him–the brief conversation with Bush and his perception of ethnicity leaves him utterly confused.

The whole Kiev section of the novel is narrated by Victor, a Chicago native of Bosnian origin. He is in the same summer programme as Pronek, and he falls in love with him, although he never reveals this. The two men in their early twenties have a lot in common:

> We talked about our childhoods, the friends that we had had and were now gone–except Jozef's were not gone, they were all in Sarajevo. The silly adventures in school: snorting Kool-Aid in order to sneeze in the biology class (Jozef), smoking pot in the tenth grade and then being high and afraid to climb down the rope in the PE class (me). The trite acts of rebellion which seemed revolutionary in our adolescence: saying "Fuck you, bitch!" to a nun (me); throwing a wet sponge at a Tito picture (Jozef). We compared Chicago and Sarajevo, how lovingly ugly they were, and how unlovingly parochial.[95]

'Unlovingly parochial' should not be read as a lack of love for the characters' respective cities. Nostalgia is not yet present in Pronek at this point – Sarajevo, as it once was, was still there, waiting for him to return, and its 'parochial' character would later lose its negative connotation, once the old Sarajevo disappeared. The function of bringing up the similarities between the cities is to show the similarities between the characters themselves; they are not American or a Yugoslav or Bosnian, they are a Chicagoan and a Sarajevan. Their hometowns are their primary identifiers of belonging; ethnic, religious and other possible differences are irrelevant. Although their acts of rebellion against authority are not

[94] Hemon, 106.
[95] Ibid., 90.

explicitly linked to their hometowns, they show the similarities between them; the only difference is that in Victor's case, the authority came from the nun, while for Pronek, it was Tito's picture.

The Kiev chapter ends with Pronek and other summer school students discussing the aftermath of the failed coup–they feel that they are trapped within the city. They are mostly Americans; one of them jokes that they should wait for the marines to free them, since they are not quite sure what the political atmosphere in the city is like. Eventually, they all manage to leave Kiev without any problems. The way this sequence is staged points at some similarities between Sarajevo and Kiev. Although the political situation in the two cities was completely different, the fact that Pronek says that he would use the Kiev experience to fix Sarajevo hints at possible similarities when it comes to the general mood in the cities at the time. Although there was no siege in Kiev, the students for a moment feel as if they are being held there against their will, which foreshadows the events in Sarajevo in the months and years to come. "Upon his return, Sarajevo was under a heavy cloud. Mirza, a law student at a lawless time, was working on moving to Canada, because, he said, he could not think here anymore–it was as if his brain were invaded by the Serbs and Croats, slashing each other's throats."[96] Pronek manages to escape from under this heavy cloud; in January 1992, he goes to Chicago, as he receives an invitation from the American Cultural Center who invited him to briefly visit the USA and learn more about the country, since they were sure Pronek would promote the values of freedom as a young journalist. Unfortunately, he is not able to fix either Yugoslavia or Sarajevo.

Before the novel moves to Chicago, we are shown a letter Pronek receives from Mirza, his friend who was not lucky to emigrate to Canada like he planned to. The letter is translated by Pronek, hence the occasional grammatical mistakes. The letter serves as a segue to Pronek's Chicago life; Mirza is in Sarajevo, and tells Pronek about his loneliness and the urge to talk:

[…]*I am sorry I talk too much. We in Sarajevo have nobody to talk, just each other, nobody wants to listen to these stories. I cannot talk more. You talk now. I am waiting for your letter. You must write me. Send me one book, I can read little English language, maybe one detective novel, maybe something about children. See I'm little crazy. Write me.*

Yours. Mirza

[96] Ibid., 70.

P.S. Happy New Year![97]

Mirza's "you must write (to) me" can be read in two ways. On one level, it is a heartfelt plea from a friend, who is desperate for some company. On a deeper, more metaphorical level, Mirza's request is a call for writing about Sarajevo itself; Pronek is one of Hemon's literary alter egos, and Mirza embodies the zeitgeist in Sarajevo. "Write me" is not only about writing a personal letter to a friend to offer comfort, it stands for the need to tell as an author what is going on in the city, by fictionalizing it. In other words: if Jozef Pronek could not fix Sarajevo, Aleksandar Hemon can at least try to preserve the image of Sarajevo as it once was.

In Chicago, Pronek takes up a number of jobs; among other things, he applies for a position as a private detective. His first task is to hand in a court summons to a man who has not been paying child support. The man happens to be a Bosnian Serb, also a migrant in the US.[98] His surname is Brdjanin-the literal translation of which is 'the mountain man', but it can also mean 'a hillbilly.' This is a clever wordplay–the Bosnian Serb forces shelled Sarajevo from the *hills* that surrounded the city. During the siege, the hills around Sarajevo were the limits of Sarajevans' existence, and the universe beyond them practically did not exist. Brdjanin is Pronek's antithesis; although neither of them was in or around Sarajevo during the siege, they stand as binary opposites, even when away from home. As Pronek is handing him the document, Brdjanin invites him to his house–he thinks that Pronek is Ukrainian and an 'Orthodox brother,' because of his surname. Brdjanin asks Pronek:

> "You know when bomb fell on market in Sarajevo?" Brđanin asked, frowning and refrowning, sweat collecting in the furrows. "They say hundred people die. They all dolls, *lutke*. Muslims throw bomb on market. Propaganda! Then they put dolls for television, it look bad, like many people killed."[99]

This is a reference to the Markale massacres, when a market in Sarajevo was shelled twice: on February 5, 1994, 68 civilians were killed; on August 28, 1995, another 43. Brdjanin's interpretation of the recent events is the most overt example of the blatant falsification of history in the novel–he refuses to accept

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[97] Ibid 134. The letter is sent in December, 1995. Although the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in November 1995, the siege of Sarajevo officially ended on February 29, 1996.
[98] The majority of Serbian diaspora in the US lives in the Chicago area.
[99] Ibid., 155.

that the Serbs committed the crimes and assures Pronek that the event is just Muslim propaganda.[100] This is followed by a very disturbing and expressive description of the event:

> Pronek's mother had barely missed the shell. She had just crossed the street when it landed. She wandered back, dazed, and trudged through the bloody pulp, torn limbs hanging off the still standing counters, shell-shocked people slipping on brains.[101]

Just like president Bush several years earlier, Brdjanin is wrong about Pronek's identity. He assumes that he will be a nationalist, because of his surname. As I pointed out earlier, the national scale of identity is not applicable to Pronek. He tries to fight against Brdjanin's blatant nationalism and hatred by saying that he has a friend in Sarajevo (Mirza), who was there and who saw it all. When Brdjanin asks him about his friend's ethnicity, as he needs that piece of information to be able to form an opinion of somebody and evaluate them, Pronek says: "He is not Muslim. He is from Sarajevo."[102] I argue that this observation made by Pronek is the ultimate proof of rejection of one's national identity. Although Mirza is indeed Muslim, none of this is important. He is first and foremost a Sarajevan.

This chapter began by showing how music can serve as the link between collective memories; in the novel, music also has a notable role. Apart from the title that comes from a song, Pronek is also a big music fan himself. After his brief stint as a private investigator, Pronek starts working as a canvasser for Greenpaece in the Chicago area. On his first day, he meets his colleagues, American Generation X-ers who ask him about his music taste. They wear Sonic Youth T-shirts and play Radiohead in the office; bands that are very popular at the time. Pronek says that he loves blues and the Beatles; he and Mirza used to play the Beatles' songs as a cover band back in Sarajevo. Although his taste seems passé when compared to his American peers who are up-to-date on the latest trends in music, an interesting connection is established when they ask him about the Bosnian music later in the text. Pronek is at first reluctant to sing a Bosnian song when he's asked to, but eventually accepts. He says that *sevdah* is "sad, but it is so sad that it makes you free."[103] He sings a song titled 'Snijeg pada na behar na voće' (Snow

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[100] Although he does not deny the genocide in Srebrenica, Republika Srpska PM Milorad Dodik has recently said that children in this part of Bosnia and Herzegovina will never be taught about Sarajevo and Srebrenica in school. http://www.avaz.ba/clanak/296477/dodik-nikada-se-u-rs-nece-izucavati-o-genocidu-u-srebrenici?url=clanak/296477/dodik-nikada-se-u-rs-nece-izucavati-o-genocidu-u-srebrenici published on June 6,2017

[101] Hemon 155, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhiW6gwM-Sc footage of the massacre (graphic content)

[102] Ibid., 156.

[103] Ibid., 210.

falls on early blossom trees).[104] His friends are amazed by his beautiful and emotional singing. They ask him to translate the lyrics, but he finds it difficult to explain the song, as he feels that the translation cannot properly convey the songs emotional power. Instead, he simply says: "It is the Bosnian blues."[105]

This comparison perfectly illustrates how the links between the cities are established in *Nowhere Man.* Unlike Derry and Sarajevo for example, which get connected through songs based on the shared experience of collective suffering, the bonds between Sarajevo and Chicago in the novel are much more personal; through music, the protagonist can see a piece of home in Chicago. Bosnian sevdah enables him to understand the Chicago blues, which happens to be of the most popular variants of this type of music. The relationship between Sarajevo and Kiev on the other hand is more evident, since both places are in the countries that underwent a transition from socialism to capitalism. As a result, the similar collective memories of the early 1990s events in both cities (proclamation of independence, protests, and so on) create a type of connection that is stronger than the one between the American and the Bosnian cities. Although music is indeed a part of cultural memory, the parallel between the two types of music is not enough when it comes to textual evidence that would point to the existence of city-to-city memory in the case of Chicago and Sarajevo. Nevertheless, this juxtaposition of city memories gives a distinctive flavour to the novel. By 'distinctive flavour' I mean that the novel allows reading and interpretation not only from the perspective of the former Yugoslavia and its disintegration, but also from an American point of view, since this is where the novel was first published, in English. Apart from the evident topics that are tackled in the text— the destruction of Sarajevo, lost relationships, forced exile, and so on—*Nowhere Man* is also a novel about the Generation X-ers in mid-1990s Chicago.

In the opening chapter, I pointed out that one of the questions I want to answer in this thesis is what happens when these novels are read from a point of view that that does not directly arise from the context of the Yugoslav wars. The main criterion I employed for choosing the case studies in the first place was that the novels should not deal exclusively with Yugoslavia, but also attempt to address other issues in different countries that may or may not be similar to Yugoslavia. Let me clarify this by using *Nowhere Man* as an example. If we read this novel only as a eulogy for Sarajevo as it once existed, it would seem rather one-dimensional. One would arrive at the conclusion that if the whole country had been urbanised, the war would not have happened at all, which is very unlikely, of course. Moreover, the novel would read only as a substitution for the nationalist discourses; even though it 'fights for the

[104] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0BXcPUS-8Q the song can be heard here.
[105] Hemon, 210.

right cause' and stands for values that are inherently positive, such as anti-chauvinism, focusing solely on Sarajevo would infinitely diminish the complexity of the text and render it one-dimensional and very predictable. Instead, by fictionalising certain events from Chicago and Kiev, in addition to the narrativization of childhood and adolescence in Sarajevo, Hemon allows the text to be observed from a number of perspectives. These different contexts are created by exploring the idea of multiscalarity. Pronek is simultaneously from Sarajevo *and* from Chicago. He is from Bosnia *and* from the United States. He cannot be observed from the perspective of one city or one nation-state only. Instead, he has multiple identities, which stand as the antithesis of having only one identity—national identity. The necessity of going beyond the scale of the nation-state shows the futility and danger of employing only one frame when it comes to talking about one's identity. With Pronek's multiple identities in mind, it can be argued that he is not the *Nowhere Man*—he is a man from *everywhere.*

As I have stated earlier, I will address this possibility of different interpretations and the question of reception in the final chapter of the thesis. The text itself manages to combat nationalism very successfully, in a way that it dismantles this type of discourse rather creatively and effectively, as I have throughout this chapter. However, once we arrive at the level of *reception* of the text, the crucial question is — does this success in producing an antithesis of nationalist discourses translate into the real possibility to combat nationalism, once the text begins to circulate and live its independent life?

Bridges, Sieges, and Gramophones

To say that the small Bosnian town of Višegrad is a *city* in the classical sense of the word is probably an exaggeration. In 1991, the town in Eastern Bosnia had around seven thousand inhabitants, whereas approximately twenty-one thousand lived in the whole municipality of Višegrad. Just like the capital city of Sarajevo, which is around 110 kilometers away, Višegrad has always been ethnically heterogeneous. Prior to the war, two thirds of Višegrad's population identified as Bosniak Muslims, and one third were Serbs. It may seem odd to mention Višegrad within the context of *city* memory due to the town's small size, since it probably would not be able to qualify for the status of a city. Apart from the small number of residents,[106] Višegrad does not have city walls either, which is usually one of the criteria for an urban area to be called a city. On the other hand, Višegrad does have a fortress, which suggests that the line between the town and the city in this case is not very precise. However, the distinction between the two entities is not as rigid in Serbo-Croatian as it is in English; the word *grad* is used for both cities and towns, and the difference between the two is made by using modifiers such as small, big, and so on. Even the name Višegrad has the morpheme *grad* in it, and the first part of the word *Više-* means high(er), which very likely comes from the abovementioned fortress that is located on an elevated spot above the town.

In spite of its modest size, Višegrad is featured in arguably the most famous and the most important novel ever written in Serbo-Croatian. *The Bridge over the Drina* by the Yugoslav writer Ivo Andrić is a historical novel first published in 1945, and it deals with the history of Višegrad and Bosnia from the fifteenth to the early twentieth century. When it comes to the literary representations of urban space, no other Yugoslav town or city has gained such international fame. In 1961, Andrić received the Nobel Prize in Literature for his oeuvre, and the novel that takes place in Višegrad was especially lauded—today, it is his magnum opus. Andrić still remains to this day the only recipient of the coveted award that comes from one of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. *The Bridge over the Drina* spans almost four hundred years–it begins with the Ottoman occupation of Bosnia and the construction of the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge over the Drina River, and ends during WWI when the bridge in Višegrad was almost completely destroyed by both the Austro-Hungarian and Serbian armies that were crossing the

[106] Hum, Croatia, with its 20 residents is the smallest town the world. Its medieval walls grant it the status of a town (as opposed to village).

bridge at different stages of the war. The bridge[107] was constructed in 1577 by Mimar Sinan, the chief architect of the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. This monumental building represented the pinnacle of Turkish engineering at the time; the 180 meter construction consists of 11 stone arches, and it was commissioned by Mehmed Paša, a Turkish vizier who was born in 1505 in the Višegrad area.

Andrić's novel fortified the motif of bridge as the ultimate metaphor for the flowing of time in the Balkans, the region which is also sometimes referred to as 'the powder keg of Europe.' In the novel, the bridge serves as a witness to different eras, peoples, and cultures which have passed through the region, each and every of them leaving their distinctive marks and traces forever, adding to an already incredibly heterogeneous and complex situation. The bridge connects the East and the West, Islam and Christianity, but it also stands for the divisions that have always existed between the people in the region; the bridge and the town of Višegrad itself are the perfect embodiment of this intricate relationship. A powerful symbol, the bridge stands for the best as well as the worst that religious, ethnic, and cultural differences bring out in people, and Andrić manages to capture this dual nature of the symbol incredibly well, in a very poetic way. Internationally, the visual image of the bridge in Višegrad is probably not as famous as the Old Bridge in Mostar that was also commissioned by Mehmed Paša and built 11 years before the bridge in Višegrad, in 1566. The reason for this may lie in the fact that the Old Bridge in Mostar was destroyed in 1993 by the Croats,[108] and that the footage of the demolition of the bridge immediately began to circulate and became one of the infamous symbols of the Yugoslav Wars, at least when it comes to the destruction of cities, urban areas, and monuments. Today, both the bridge in Mostar, which was fully rebuilt in 2004, and the bridge in Višegrad, are preeminent sites of memory. The former still represents the division between the Croats and the Bosniaks in this city in Herzegovina, while the latter, among other things, became the symbol of the suffering of Bosniaks in Višegrad, many of whom were executed right on the bridge and thrown in the river that flows under it.

Andrić's novel ends at the beginning of WWI, which saw bitter fighting between the Austro-Hungarian and the Serbian armies in this area, resulting in the expulsion of the Austro-Hungarians[109] in 1918 and the establishment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The narrative in *The Bridge over the Drina* comes full circle–after the Ottoman invasion and the construction of the bridge, the end of the novel shows its partial destruction in 1915. In the novel, people come and leave, states and empires emerge and vanish,

[107] http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1260 information about the bridge on the UNESCO's website.
[108] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UNswJjbzFg
[109] Austro-Hungarian Empire ruled Bosnia from 1878 (after the Congress of Berlin) until 1918.

while the monumental building stays there forever, existing (almost) completely independently of humans.

The history of the bridge in Višegrad and its fictionalisation did not by any means end with Andrić. Had he somehow lived longer,[110] he would have been able to write a new chapter in the bridge's history, since another layer of memory became carved into its stone arches during the war in Bosnia in the 1990s; the bridge became one of the places where many Bosniaks were executed by the Bosnian Serbs, after they had taken over the town during the spring of 1992. Andrić might not have had the opportunity to fictionalise the events in Višegrad during the most recent war in Bosnia, like he did with the previous four centuries of Bosnia's history by narrating the life of the bridge and employing it as a prism through which the history of the whole region is observed.

However, Saša Stanišić, a Višegrad native, continues where Andrić left off. *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone*[111] is his debut novel, published in German in 2008. Here Stanišić writes about Višegrad from the perspective of a fourteen-year-old boy named Aleksandar, his literary alter ego. Unlike in the novel by Andrić, the bridge itself is not the central character in Stanišić's work. By this I mean that that Stanišić places the bridge and the Drina River in the background, since they are not the focal points of his vision of Višegrad. Nevertheless, his fictional universe is profoundly indebted to the one created by Andrić. Both writers put Višegrad on the literary map of Europe and the world, and at times, Stanišić's narrative reads like a continuation of the renowned novel by Andrić. To be clear, I am not trying to argue that Stanišić's work lacks creativity and imagination, or that he borrows too much from the famed author. However, *The Bridge over the Drina* is so deeply embedded in the collective memory of the former Yugoslavia, that any work of fiction that deals with the history of Bosnia– especially with Višegrad's past– cannot avoid comparisons to this particular literary work. *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* is not (yet) as widely read and known as Andrić's seminal work is; nevertheless, the young Bosnian-German author embraces the literary foundations laid by Andrić and then makes a step in a completely different direction when it comes to fictionalising Višegrad and its space. Stanišić in his debut work seeks to add a new dimension to the literary representations of Višegrad, Bosnia, and the whole former Yugoslavia. While Andrić's novel has an inherently Bosnian character, in a sense that it is solely focused on one particular space over a long period of time, Stanišić attempts to fictionalise this space from a *transnational* perspective. The novel does not operate only within the context of Bosnia and its

[110] Born in 1892, died in 1975.

troubled past but also seeks to address issues that are not connected only to this town and region per se, such as immigration, questions of identity, writing in a “foreign” language and so on. As I will show later in this chapter, the author juxtaposes the protagonist’s home town with the city where he seeks exile with his family (Essen, Germany), which then sheds new light on Višegrad itself, as well as on migrant life in Germany. That is not to say that Višegrad and Essen have similar pasts or that their collective memories are similar; just like in the previous chapter, where I showed how Sarajevo and Chicago get connected through a set of individual memories, the bonds between the German city and the Bosnian town operate on a very intimate level, creating a personal narrative that exceeds national borders. In other words, Stanišić’s novel really starts to shine when observed as a bridge between cities, cultures, old and new lives, and so on. Andrić may be the undisputed master of Yugoslav literature, but when it comes to narrating Višegrad, Bosnia, and beyond—Stanišić skillfully carries the baton that has been passed to him.

Saša Stanišić was born in Višegrad, Yugoslavia in 1978, to a Serbian father and Muslim mother. Shortly after the outbreak of war in Bosnia in 1992, his family emigrated to Germany. He studied languages and Slavic studies at Heidelberg University. Just like in Hemon’s case, Stanišić’s language of literary expression is the one that he acquired after he had left his native country. His debut novel follows Aleksandar Krsmanović, a fourteen year old boy from Višegrad, and his peaceful childhood during the years before the war. Aleksandar’s father is Serbian, his mother is Muslim; all of this does not mean much to Aleksandar, since he is unaware of the ethnic differences that suddenly become important as bombs start to fall in Višegrad during the spring of 1992. After the town has been taken by the Bosnian Serb forces, Aleksandar’s family flees Višegrad, since it has become unsafe for his mother to remain there because of her “wrong name,” as the young boy puts it. They finally manage to settle in Essen, Germany. Ten years later, Aleksandar comes back to Višegrad to visit his grandmother and other people who did not leave the town during the war; Aleksandar has fond memories of them, as they are a vital part of his childhood and life in Višegrad. Now a twenty-four year old Bosnian-German, Aleksandar is a nostalgic: his return home is a search for the lost time and space, but also a search for his blissful childhood memories and his hometown as it once was, before the war. The title of the novel comes from a scene in which Aleksandar sees a soldier stealing a gramophone from a house where Bosniaks used to live before the war.

When it comes to the composition of the text and Stanišić’s writing style, Lacey suggests that: ”the novel has a chaotic structure. Stanišić fills his pages with a disorderly jumble of characters, stories, lists, ideas,

phrases, jokes, vignettes, and memories. […] This frustrated, frustrating roar of rage and regret seems like the only plausible response to such an appalling tragedy."[112] All these minute episodes create a very complex and kaleidoscopic image of Višegrad, and serve as a good example of how content dictates form. Since Aleksandar was a young boy when the war started, his earlier, pre-war memories are not always ordered in a linear way, which explains the (sometimes) chaotic structure of the text. As Aleksandar gets older and more mature, Stanišić's style becomes less fragmented and more clear and coherent. This "frustrating roar of rage and regret" has been building up in Aleksandar during his years in Essen, and his homecoming, albeit for a limited period of time, serves as an opportunity for him to set this frustration free and cleanse his personal memory of Višegrad for good.

In the previous chapter, I began the analysis by looking at the ways in which the war in Bosnia is staged in the text. *Nowhere Man* mostly takes place in Chicago during the war years, and the narrator hears about the war and reads the latest war news through various media. In *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone,* the protagonist has a completely unmediated experience of the war. Together with his family and neighbours, Aleksandar spends the first months of the war hiding in the basement of his building, which is a relatively safe space. The following excerpt shows one of the many situations where Aleksandar sees the war events with his very own eyes. Although this scene is not particularly violent or brutal when compared to some other moments from the siege of Višegrad, it quite vividly describes everyday life in the war-torn town:

> The mothers have only just called us, in a whisper, to come for supper when soldiers storm the building, asking what's on the menu; they sit down with us at the plywood tables in the cellar. They bring their own spoons, they wear gloves without fingertips. The soldiers insist on joining us, just as they insist on knowing everyone's names, they insist on shooting at the ceiling, they insist on pushing Čika Hasan and Čika Sead downstairs to the cellar and taking them over to someone who wears a headband. But he dunks bread in the pea soup, saying: we needn't insist on that just now. Come quick and sit down, soldiers, supper will get cold, was not what the mothers called. There isn't any room for rucksacks and guns and helmets on the little tables, but Zoran and I are more than ready to make way for the Kalashnikov. What are your names? We

[112]Josh Lacey, "Rage Among the Ruins," *The Guardian.* Published on July 5, 2008. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jul/05/saturdayreviewsfeatres.guardianreview12, accessed July 1, 2017.

> have good names, that's why we can wear helmets. I don't know a helmet can smell of pea soup.[113]

This passage finely illustrates the advantages of having a narrator who is not fully aware of the gravity of the situation around him, as it enables the author to subtly comment on the futility of nationalism and war by giving voice to somebody who is unspoiled by their surroundings, thus giving readers an image of the war that is as unbiased as possible. Aleksandar cannot understand the point or purpose of everything that is going on at the moment. He sees that some soldiers are entering the building. However, he does not know whose soldiers they are, nor what or who exactly they are looking for, since he does not quite understand the divisions along ethnic lines, which are fueling the conflict in the first place. He only notices small details about the soldiers, such as their gloves without fingertips or their helmets that smell of soup, as this piece of equipment is frequently used in wars as a cooking pot in addition to its original purpose. In a rather naïve way, Aleksandar notes that the soldiers "insist" on joining them at the table, the same way they "insist" on firing their guns and harassing uncle Hasan and uncle Sead, who do not have "good names." Words such as 'Serbs' or 'Muslims' are never used by him—for Aleksandar, the war is nothing but a battle of good names and bad names, although he is not sure what exactly makes a name a good name. This seemingly oversimplified version of the ongoing conflict shows the essence of (civil) wars and their absurdity. For an innocent boy, the difference between ethnicities is entirely arbitrary and random, just like the differences between Serbian and Muslim names and naming practices, which from his point of view dictate who is 'good' and who is 'bad.' Apart from the abovementioned scene in which the Serbian soldiers storm the building and search for Muslims, a crucial sequence takes place at this point in the novel. As the soldiers are entering the building, Aleksandar and his Muslim friend Asija are hiding in the stairwell. Although they are fully aware of the obvious danger that is approaching, neither of them is quite sure *why* they should be afraid:

> I hear heavy boots, and I know I have the right sort of name. And although the soldier with the yellow beard is grinning, although he doesn't smell of sweat and schnapps like the others, although he only wants us to go back into the stairwell, I shout at him: my name is Aleksandar and this is my sister Katarina, this is Katarina, she's only my sister Katarina! My granny's name can't be wrong, I'm sure of that. The soldier looks around the attic, the floorboards whimper under his boots. Out of here, you two! He speaks quietly; his fingers are working away in his beard, a thick yellow beard eating its way over his face. Asija hesitates. The soldier crouches

[113] Stanišić, 100.

down in front of her; his beard touches her cheek. She turns her head away. The soldier breathes into her face. The soldier whispers: stand up! I think: stand up, oh please, stand up! Slowly Asija stands up and goes out of the loft. I follow her, the soldier closes the door, you two don't move from this spot, understand?[114] We're in the fifth floor corridor and we don't move from the spot. Asija rubs her cheek. My mother calls my name up the stairs. Aleksandar, come down at once!

You two stay here, the soldier orders.

It's not the mothers telling us what we need to know now, it's the soldiers. I call back: Katarina is with me. Mother asks no more questions.[115]

At this point, Aleksandar has already learnt that he has the "right sort of name." The soldier who approaches them is not drunk like the other soldiers who would often disturb them. However, Aleksandar senses the danger and quickly 'christens' Asija: for the time being, her name is Katarina, since Aleksandar is sure that a grandmother's name cannot possibly be wrong, especially the name of his own grandmother. He is not aware of the difference between Serbian and Muslim names; he just assumes that Katarina is a good one because of the inherently positive traits that he associates with his grandmother. Therefore, almost accidentally, Aleksandar saves Asija's life. This moment becomes the turning point of the novel. Shortly after this incident, Aleksandar's family leaves Višegrad, as it becomes too dangerous for Aleksandar's mother to stay there any longer. Ironically, the boy's Serbian father and Muslim mother are never given names throughout the novel. He simply calls them Mom and Dad. After the family has left Višegrad, they emigrate to Essen, via Belgrade. From this point onwards, Aleksandar's second life begins. As he tries to get used to the new country, he frequently writes back home to Asija and signs his letters as 'Alekßandar.' He tells her about the German culture and customs, from the food he eats to his new cramped house which his family shares with other migrant families. Needless to say, this is all very alien to him. Before I explore this part of the novel in greater detail, I will take another look at the scene where Aleksandar and Asija are hiding from the Serbian soldier, as it is a good example of how nationalism and war are staged in the novel.

I have already pointed out that on one level of analysis in this thesis, I am interested in looking at the ways in which the novels oppose the dominant nationalist narratives. In *Nowhere Man*, nationalism is

[114] Ibid., 106.
[115] Ibid., 110.

presented in a very clear way. Brdjanin is the embodiment of a nationalist who negates crimes committed by his own people. When Pronek meets him for the first time, Brdjanin tells him that everything he hears about the crimes of the Serbs in Sarajevo is nothing but pure Muslim propaganda, i.e. "fake news," to use modern parlance. Therefore, in order to set up the stage for nationalism in his novel, Aleksandar Hemon uses telling as the dominant narrative technique, as readers are quite blatantly told that there is only one good side in the war, which is a pure example of a nationalist discourse. In *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone*, when it comes to establishing the dichotomy between nationalism and its antithesis, Stanišić uses showing instead of telling as the dominant narrative technique. The reason for this lies in Aleksandar's youth; unlike the narrator in *Nowhere Man* and Jozef Pronek who are both grownups and fully aware of the alarming political situation at the time, Aleksandar is not yet able to process everything that is happening around him. Apart from the hiding scene which is a typical example of showing instead of telling, there is a number of tiny details which further illustrate the growing nationalism on both sides shortly before the outbreak of the war, in addition to the scene which symbolically shows the beginning of the transition from socialism to capitalism. In a chapter titled 'How many deaths has Comrade Tito died,' Aleksandar notes:

> It was also an event when our Serbo-Croatian teacher climbed a ladder on the first day of the new school year and took Comrade Tito's picture down from the wall. He clutched it to himself and announced in a solemn voice to Tito's big face, Tito's epaulettes, and Tito's officer's stripes: from now on you children will stop calling me Comrade Teacher and call me Mr. Fazlagić instead. Is that clear?[116]

Although the act of removing Tito's pictures from schools is not a nationalist or anti-Yugoslav act in itself, metaphorically speaking, it is an obvious sign of things to come in the near future. The same Mr. Fazlagić later on tells the students that Turkey as a country should be taken as a good example for many things, which is a subtle hint at Muslim nationalism. Serbian nationalism is represented as well; at a family party at Aleksandar's great-grandparent's house, a friend of the boy's uncle starts firing his gun in the air, as he is outraged by the traditional Bosnian songs that are played there:

> Didn't my grandfather sacrifice his shoulder and calf for his country and his people? While we sit here the Ustashas[117] are plundering our country[118], driving our people away, murdering them.

[116] Ibid., 68.
[117] Derogatory term for the Croats. Ustashe were the army of the Independent State of Croatia, a Nazi puppet state that existed from 1941-1945.

> Didn't my grandfather fight the Ustashas too? He did, Mrs. Krsmanović, he did! I'm not having gypsies give me Ustasha songs and Turkish howling anymore! I want our own music![119]

After seeing and hearing this drunken rant, Aleksandar is utterly confused. He remembers having read in a history book in school that the partisans once defeated everybody who had something against Yugoslavia and its freedom, Ustashe and Chetniks[120] included, which meant that this fit of rage makes no sense whatsoever to him. Unfortunately, it reminds Aleksandar of an equally confusing remark that a classmate of his made at the schoolyard. Aleksandar is called a "mixture," a "half and half,"[121] with the intention of insulting his mother's background and Aleksandar himself. Later, he sadly notes that this makes him Yugoslav, and that he will start falling apart, just like Yugoslavia.

When compared to *Nowhere Man*, I argue that Stanišić's tackles different varieties of nationalism. While Hemon mainly goes against the Serbian nationalism and the consequences it had for Sarajevo, Stanišić showcases the whole palette of nationalistic tones. From 'killing' Tito once again by removing his pictures from schools, to the growing Serbian and Muslim fanaticism, the author shows from many different sides the complexity of the situation in Višegrad immediately before the war. These different instances of nationalism are not placed in any hierarchical order, in a sense that neither side is called out and labeled as guiltier than the other. For Aleksandar, the whole situation is one giant mess, and it is up to the reader to find their way out of this madness by themselves. Since Aleksandar cannot always tell the 'good guys' from 'bad guys', Stanišić offers readers everything combined together in a rather chaotic way, which creates the same image of politics an innocent teenager would have had at the time.

It has already been mentioned that the moment when Aleksandar leaves Višegrad is the turning point of both Aleksandar's life and the novel itself. On the one hand, Aleksandar is forced to abandon his old life and go with his family into the unknown. On the other, the novel from this moment onwards acquires another dimension, which is rather international and inter-urban, as the narrative is no longer confined to the context of Bosnia and Višegrad. Unfortunately, Asija never responds to Aleksandar's letters from Germany, and he is not sure if she receives them in the first place, or whether she is alive or not. Nevertheless, he continues to write to her throughout the 1990s, and from his writing, readers can see how he himself begins to change. He slowly learns German, starts listening to Nirvana, has a new

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[118] Probably a reference to the ongoing war in Croatia, which started several months before the war in Bosnia.
[119] Ibid., 48.
[120] Serbian fascists from WWII.
[121] Stanišić, 49.

favourite football club, and so on. Through the letters, his nostalgia for Višegrad becomes more and more evident and from this point becomes one of the key components of the narrative. In the first section of the novel, Aleksandar talks a lot about Višegrad, unaware that his hometown as he knows it will soon disappear. For readers, the picture of Višegrad that Aleksandar paints is nostalgic from the very first page, even though Aleksandar himself is not aware of this yet. Just like Hemon, Stanišić assigns both positive and negative traits to Višegrad—Aleksandar does not idealise his hometown, which as a result reads like an example of reflective nostalgia, which I have discussed in detail in the second chapter. From his fond memories of his grandmother's cuisine and plum-picking in his great-grandfathers village, to a slightly traumatic experience when he witnessed a pig slaughter, Aleksandar's descriptions of Višegrad cover the whole spectrum of emotions, creating a detailed, imperfect, yet lovable image of his hometown. Once Aleksandar is in Essen, he becomes aware of the nostalgic side of his character. By this I mean that he starts to turn towards the past more often. He thinks that his memories of Višegrad are beginning to fade, and he reflects upon this loss:

> Asija, I don't remember the birch trees. I feel as if one Aleksandar stayed behind in Višegrad and Veletovo by the Drina, and there's another Aleksandar living in Essen and thinking of going fishing in the Ruhr sometime. In Višegrad, back there with his unfinished pictures, there's an Aleksandar who began and never finished.

This is an excerpt from a letter to Asija, sent a year after Aleksandar left Bosnia. Since she never responds to him, this whole section of the novel reads more like an interior monologue that shows Aleksandar being torn between his old and new self. The Drina comes back here as an important motif; unlike in Andrić's novel, in which the river is assigned the central symbolic role, the Drina is in this case juxtaposed with the Ruhr, in order to show the multidimensionality of Aleksandar's personality, and what is more important, to illustrate the different scales of identity. The motif of the river is used as a mirror of personal identity, as Aleksandar finds it easier to explain this by making parallels between the two rivers then by using the usual categories such as Višegrad-ian, Bosnian, Serbian, Muslim, Yugoslav, German-Bosnian, Bosnian-German and so on. In *Nowhere Man*, the national identity becomes replaced by the urban identity. Pronek does not refer to himself as a Bosnian but as a Sarajevan, as this helps him to get away from being placed in one single category which would not do justice to the complexity of his identity. In *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone,* Aleksandar does not reject his national or hometown identity. Instead, he learns how to accept the new Aleksandar, the one who goes fishing in the Ruhr instead of in the Drina. I argue that this epiphany-like experience is not only about learning

how to accept and understand one's identity when it comes to migration and its consequences; the newly acquired migrant aspect of Aleksandar's personality also helps him understand the complexity of simultaneously possessing multiple identities and come to terms with his old self—the one who was told back in Višegrad that he is a "mixture, "half and half," a "bastard whose mother spoiled his Serbian blood,"[122] which left him bedazzled. In other words, his newly 'acquired' identity helps him understand his old identity. Metaphorically, now that he sees the Ruhr, he can better understand the Drina, and vice versa.

By adding this new dimension to Aleksandar, Stanišić suggests that the way to fight nationalism is by looking at *transnationalism*. City identity and city memory remain the main prisms through which personal identities are observed, and by creating a dynamic between these places, a new framework for rethinking and renegotiating nationalism is established. This framework goes past the borders of one particular nation, which makes it a potent tool for deconstructing nationalism, as this social construct sees the nation as the ultimate scale of identity, which is, needless to say, a flawed concept. Simply put, by going past the borders of one particular nation, it becomes easier to comprehend the borders and 'limits' of one's identity.

I argue that this idea– fighting nationalism with transnationalism– can be used to expand and push even further the concept of marginocentric cities that I have discussed in the second chapter. Cornis-Pope argues that throughout history, certain provincial places have often been represented in literature from the perspective of one culture only, and that this usually does not do justice to the complexity of ethnic and cultural identities that are present within these places. One way to challenge the cultural hegemony of centres is to oppose to them a polycentric concept of culture, that is, to represent that particular space from different angles. This results in a heterogeneous picture of these towns and cities, since they are not observed in relation to one culture and one literary tradition only. This is exactly what Andrić does, for example. He writes about the Turks, Serbs, Muslims, Roma and creates an intricate, polycentric image of Višegrad that does not exclusively belong to only one particular ethnic group. Stanišić, on the other hand, goes a step further when it comes to the narrativization of Višegrad. Not only does he present Višegrad from various angles, he also juxtaposes it with the Ruhr area, which is also a polycentric region itself; Aleksandar talks about the Germans as well as about the Turks, Hungarians, Yugoslavs, and other migrants who add to the complexity of the area. Another very important moment in the novel, albeit brief, is when Aleksandar mentions that Germany has been recently reunified, and

[122] Stanišić, 129.

that his uncle says that there is only one Germany now—the one that used to worse before the reunification.[123] This detail adds to the complexity of Aleksandar identity. He understands that his former country fell apart, while his new country recently became unified, which further expands the idea that there are two Aleksandars, the Essen and the Višegrad one. Again, I am not trying to suggest that there are some instant similarities between the two regions, just because they are observed together in a novel. My argument is that no matter how polycentric or heterogeneous the representation of one particular place may be, sometimes it is not complex enough when it comes to the proper representation of its inhabitants. Even though the complexity of Višegrad and its pre-war ethnic peace and unity indeed stand in opposition to the nationalist discourses which seek to annihilate these positive features, Aleksandar as a character has to be observed beyond the context of only one town, be it his hometown of Višegrad or his new home, Essen. Therefore, he belongs to both of them and neither of them at the same time. In other words, Aleksandar exists somewhere between the two, like a modern nomad in the space of the collective urban memory and identity.

Going back to the letter to Asija where Aleksandar says that there are two Aleksandars now, he finishes it by saying that

> I don't paint any more unfinished pictures. I'm writing stories in Granny's book about the time when everything was all right, so that later I can't complain of having forgotten it. If I were a magician who could make things possible, Asija, memories would taste the way Stela ice cream tasted back then.
>
> Do you remember me?
>
> Aleksandar

In the second part of his letter, Aleksandar says that he writes because that way, he will not be able to complain that he forgot something from his old life. This can also be read as a meta-fictional moment in the text; if Aleksandar is Stanišić's literary alter ego, one could argue that Stanišić fights against forgetting through writing fiction. By forgetting I do not mean only the disappearance of personal memories, but also against the collective forgetting of Višegrad, Bosnia, and Yugoslavia, as they were before the war. The last sentence of his letter is a quintessential example of nostalgia, as Aleksandar concludes writing to Asija by saying that he wants his memories to taste like the type ice cream which he

[123]His uncle liked Eastern Germany better, probably because it was a socialist country, just like Yugoslavia.

often used to eat. Although this comparison may sound almost like a commonplace (bringing together tastes and memories), it accurately depicts how nostalgia works. The feeling manifests itself randomly—people are usually nostalgic for small things such as smells, tastes, and sounds which cannot be invoked or suppressed at will. Aleksandar tries to hold on to memories that he has left. In his case, it is the taste of Stela ice cream.

Stela ice cream is only one of the many examples. I have already pointed out and briefly shown that the novel is rich with various descriptions of nostalgia. Instead of simply listing all the instances where nostalgia is evident in the narrative and showing examples where the characters are being reflective nostalgics, "enamored of distance, not the referent," I will take a closer look at another dimension of nostalgia, the idea of *homecoming,* as it is more intriguing in regards to my reading of the text.

When writing about nostalgia in exile, Boym says that the idea of homecoming is always present for those who are far away from home. This idea of returning home may be either imagined or real. In *Nowhere Man*, Pronek never goes back to Sarajevo, despite frequently daydreaming about it. In *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone*, homecoming is treated differently. At the beginning of this chapter, I have pointed out that the twenty-four-year-old Aleksandar is nostalgic for Višegrad. During his time in Essen, nostalgia for his hometown has been building up and it eventually prompts him to go back home, see his family, and most importantly, try to find Asija.

In relation to homecoming as a concept, Boym argues that "homecoming does not signify a recovery of identity; it does not end the journey in the virtual space of imagination. A modern nostalgic can be homesick and sick of home, at once."[124] Aleksandar's homecoming can be observed from this vantage point. As a 'modern nostalgic,' Aleksandar does not seek to recover his identity, as he is fully aware now that it does not consist only of his Višegrad self anymore, hence his short visit home is not about identity recovery. He is homesick—he is longing for the old Višegrad, but also sick of home—he knows that it will not be the same Višegrad that he remembers from before the war. Instead, I interpret this as his looking for closure. In the aforementioned letter to Asija, he says that he is not painting unfinished paintings anymore, and that he is writing about the time when everything was alright. In the final chapter of the novel, titled 'Comrade in Chief of all that is unfinished', which takes place when Aleksandar is back in Višegrad, we are given a list of random memories that Aleksandar has been assembling for years:

[124] Boym, 72.

> A hawk diving through the air. Our Yugo[125] on the road to Veletovo without its exhaust. Yugoslavia with Slovenia and Croatia. Grandpa Rafik without a cognac bottle. Tito in a T shirt. Veletovo graveyard without Grandpa Slavko's gravestone. Statue of Ivo Andrić with Ivo Andrić's head still on it. Uncle Bora, slim. Ten sleeping soldiers. Moment of peace. A burek[126], uneaten. Gramophone without soldiers dancing around it. When everything was alright. Asija.[127]

The list goes on for five pages and it represents the culmination of Aleksandar's nostalgia. He did not come back home to 'fix' Višegrad or recover his own identity. His homecoming is an act against forgetting, as it enables him to finally let out and write down everything that has been both bothering him and making him happy for years. On a personal level, the list is Aleksandar's way of remembering Višegrad, but it can also be read as a snapshot of the whole town, aimed towards the collective remembrance of it. The closing line of the novel, "Yes, I am here," is Asija's. Although it is not clear whether she really answers Aleksandar's call, or he is dreaming, it shows that on a personal level, there is a sense of closure for Aleksandar in the end. Although Višegrad's diversity may have been damaged beyond repair, for a brief second, Aleksandar is at peace with himself and his memory of the town.

The reason why I am talking about the idea of homecoming here is not only because I want to show that Boym's concept of nostalgia as such can be used in a variety of contexts. When I was discussing Aleksandar's complex identity and its indebtedness to Višegrad and Essen, I argued that he can be observed as a nomad who travels between the two places, both mentally (through memories) and physically (through his actual visit to Višegrad). Davor Beganović[128] also talks about nomadism in relation to the novel and Aleksandar's identity. Borrowing from Deleuze, he differentiates between the nomadic space and the space of the state. He argues that unlike the space of the state, which is limited by its borders, the nomadic space knows no limits. It is local, but not limited by any concrete borders or lines on the map. In Aleksandar's case, this means that his travels, both mental and physical, have to be observed outside the confinements of national and state frames. Therefore, his nostalgic homecoming is not solely about his crossing the imagined limits that exist between his 'old' and 'new' life, it is also about his existing in a transnational *borderless* space. Both Višegrad and Essen are key places when it comes to establishing this borderless space for Aleksandar; although the German city and the Bosnian town are hundreds of miles away from each other, the borders between them slowly fade as Aleksandar

[125] Yugoslav made car, notorious for its bad quality.
[126] Bosnian-Turkish national delicacy.
[127] Stanišić, 293.
[128] Beganović, 130.

returns home, riding a wave of nostalgia. Metaphorically speaking, once he is back, it becomes virtually impossible to tell where one stops and the other one begins.

To conclude this chapter, I will zoom out and briefly look at how *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* functions as a medium in a transnational environment, instead of solely looking at its main character. Like Hemon's *Nowhere Man,* Stanišić's novel starts to display its real quality and potential to operate as a 'memory machine' only when observed from more than one point of view. Bearing in mind that claiming that a novel should be observed from many different perspectives does not sound very inventive or effective, I will attempt to salvage this claim by further explaining it.

In the previous chapter, I argued that Hemon replaces the scale of nation by the scale of city when it comes to observing the identities of characters. In this way, through the prism of nostalgia for the city, the author creates a narrative that serves as the antithesis of nationalist discourses. I have also argued that making this shift from the nation to the city is not enough unless the text is observed from a perspective that allows different readings and interpretations in regards to different contexts—Sarajevo, Kiev, Chicago, and so on.

How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone should also be approached in a similar way. The shift from the nation to the city when it comes to narrativising space and different scales of identity is not as obvious in this case as it is in Hemon's novel. However, Stanišić still addresses the idea of belonging to the city, although in a different way. While Hemon focuses on the idea of belonging to a city instead of belonging to a nation, Stanišić explores the idea of being a part of multiple cities simultaneously, without overtly bypassing the scale of nation. This results in a novel that can be read in two ways. On the one hand, it is a war story about a lost Bosnian childhood; on the other, it is also a German novel about migration and migrant identities set against the backdrop of the reunification of Germany, which stands in contrast to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. As I have stated in the previous chapter, I will take a closer look the question of audience and reception in the final chapter and push the analysis further in this direction, looking at the three novels together in order to find out what happens when these texts begin to circulate and establish connections with the audience in different environments.

The War for Peace

Of the three works of literature I opted to analyse in this thesis, Vojislav Pejović's debut novel *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* is the one that is least well-known outside the Serbo-Croatian speaking world. It was published in the Serbo-Croatian language in Podgorica, Montenegro in 2008. So far, no translation has been published. Vojislav Pejović's primary occupation is neurobiology; born in 1972 in Podgorica (then Titograd), Montenegro, Pejović left Yugoslavia in 1991 and moved to the United States, where he works as a neuroscientist and an instructor at the University of Chicago. After *The Life and Death of Milan Junak*[129], Pejović published a short story collection in 2015, titled *American Sfumato.* His debut novel is not particularly lengthy—the one hundred and fifty page text is somewhere between a novel and a novella. Moreover, its tone is considerably less nostalgic when compared to the other two fictional works I analyse in this thesis.

The question which then occurs is why write about Pejović, since he is not a 'full-time' author, and his books have been published only in one language, which made them available only to a very limited audience.

In the introductory chapter, I pointed out that there is a sense of urgency with every case study in this thesis. By this I mean that the writers tackle certain chapters from the Yugoslav wars that are especially problematic, such as the siege of Sarajevo or the massacres in the Višegrad area. Because of their brutality, these particular episodes from the war are deeply embedded in the collective memory of the 1990s events, and as a result of this, serve as a fruitful source of inspiration when it comes to the fictionalisation of the Yugoslav Wars. The siege of Sarajevo is still a hot topic in the political discourse of Bosnia, and at the time when *Nowhere Man* was written, there was an absolute need to start talking about this episode from the Bosnian war through fiction and art in general, in order to help the ongoing process of reconciliation between the people in Bosnia. The same can be said about Stanišić's novel set in Višegrad. I am not claiming that producing fiction instantly makes things better and erases the troubled past. However, in the long run, using dark moments from the past as an inspiration for art definitely helps us observe these problematic episodes from different angles, which can eventually lead to a better understanding of these complex historical events.

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[129] All the excerpts from the novel in this chapter are translated by me.

At the beginning of my research for this thesis, *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* was the first novel I came across. It deals with the Montenegrin siege of the ancient Croatian city of Dubrovnik, which lasted from October 1991 until May 1992. Although only the beginning of the war in Dubrovnik is depicted in the novel, the attack on the city still represents the central theme of the text. The anti-war narrative follows Milan Junak, a Montenegrin student, from December 1990 until October 1991 (the beginning of the war). Through the description of Junak's life immediately before the war, readers get a glimpse of the tense atmosphere and mood that was present in Montenegro and Serbia, during the last days of Yugoslavia. In the previous chapters, I have shown how the war events are staged differently in each novel. For example, Hemon observes the war from a safe distance, as the narrator and the protagonist are in Chicago during the siege of Sarajevo. Stanišić writes from the perspective of a boy who is first in Bosnia and then in Germany. In Pejović's novel, we barely get to see the war events at all. Readers are mostly shown the events that *preceded* the Montenegrin attack on Dubrovnik, which is in this case even more effective. Instead of solely focusing on the occupation of the Dubrovnik area and the shelling of the Old Town of Dubrovnik, the author builds up the tension by focusing on the media craze and nationalism that were omnipresent in Montenegro and Serbia. This shows how it affected people who eventually either volunteered for the army, or were conscripted, just like the protagonist Milan Junak was. Therefore, the author suggests that the breakup of Yugoslavia began months before the first shots were fired, and that it was fueled by the politicians who did everything in their power to create hostility between people. Before I with explain the historical background against which the novel is set, and begin with the analysis of the novel itself, I will go back to the question that I brought up at the beginning of this chapter—why write about *The Life and Death of Milan Junak?*

Although it may sound almost surreal, this novel is the *only* work of fiction, across all media (literature, film, and so on) that thematises the attack on Dubrovnik from the Montenegrin perspective, i.e. the only work of fiction about the attack on Dubrovnik that comes from a Montenegrin writer.[130] Even without knowing this, it is clear that the attack on Dubrovnik is one of the most problematic chapters in Montenegro's recent history. The fact that (almost) everybody is silent across the board when it comes to showing Montenegro's responsibility for this is very telling of how the Dubrovnik campaign represents a painful, almost taboo topic in present-day Montenegro. One may say that this war episode may have lost its relevance today, since it is not prominent in the public discourse, nor does it get represented in fiction. However, the truth is that the same people and the same political party who

[130] There are several fictional Croatian-made works that deal with the Montenegrin attack on Dubrovnik. The latest is the soap opera titled *Dubrovnik's Dawn.*

cordially supported the attack and the subsequent siege of Dubrovnik in 1991 constitute the government and rule Montenegro today. Again, this may seem unreal, but the Democratic Party of Socialists (successor of the League of Communists of Montenegro) has been continuously ruling the country since the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991. Although the DPS made several ideological shifts throughout its history (in the early 1990s, the leadership of the party admired and followed Slobodan Milošević and the nationalist idea of Great Serbia, while nowadays they present themselves as pro-European centre-leftists), this cannot hide the fact that people such as Milo Đukanović (Prime Minister at the time, today the president of the ruling party and de facto leader of the country), who wholeheartedly supported and advocated the invasion on Dubrovnik, are still around, and their political careers are alive and kicking. When it comes to the question of responsibility for the killing of civilians in Dubrovnik and inflicting major material damage on the city, which was completely unnecessary from the strategic standpoint, the answer that the Montenegrin government gives today is always the same. They blame everything on Milošević and his politics, as if the leadership of Montenegro was not on the same page with the Serbian president when it came to nationalist politics in the early 1990s.[131] Although the Prime Minister Đukanović broke away from Milošević in 1996 and made a shift towards politics that would result in the independence of Montenegro in 2006 by referendum, this does not absolve the political leadership of Montenegro from responsibility for the early 1990s events, no matter how hard they try to present these particular events as a thing of the past that should not be addressed anymore nowadays. Instead, the government does everything that is in its power for these events to be forgotten.

With this in mind, it becomes clear why a book such as *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* was bound to be written at some point, and that moment came in 2008. It may seem that this is a long time after the actual events, but since this is the very first (and only) piece of fiction that deals with the attack on Dubrovnik and breaks the silence of taboo on the subject of Montenegro's responsibility for this military operation, by no means did this novel arrive too late. If we take into account that Montenegro got its independence in 2006, and that the novel was written at a time when half of the nation was still celebrating the referendum victory, *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* was published at the moment when Montenegro was starting to re-establish its national identity and attempting to leave the troubled past for good. In the eyes of the government, the Dubrovnik episode definitely belonged to the past, and there was no need to carry it into the country's bright future.

[131] Pavlović.

For this reason, it is insisted on saying that it feels like this book absolutely had to be written. Since the primary aim of this thesis is to see how fiction positions itself against the dominant political discourses, this novel represents a prime example of literature aiming to operate as a counter-narrative. At the beginning of this chapter, it was mentioned that Vojislav Pejović's primary occupation is not writing. Of course, there is no such thing as an 'occasional writer.' As soon as somebody writes and publishes a critically acclaimed novel, they become a writer and no premodifiers are necessary. However, the fact that this particular story was written by somebody who comes from a non-literary background, strengthens my claim that sooner or later the question of collective remembrance of the attack on Dubrovnik would eventually be addressed. In other words— if the Montenegrin writers and other artists did not do it themselves, it was up to a migrant neurobiologist based in the US to point to the existence of this issue in the country where he spent his youth.

Before I begin with the analysis of the novel, I will further explain the background of the attack on Dubrovnik. Although I have written extensively throughout this thesis about the events that lead to the breakout of the war, this particular episode of the Yugoslav wars requires additional explanations due to the specificity of the events immediately before and during the attack on this Croatian city. Since Pejović deals with only one particular segment of the war in Croatia, it is important to fully understand the background of the war operation he talks about. This way, it becomes easier to trace how this war episode is treated in *The Life and Death of Milan Junak,* and if the novel differs from the dominant narrative that is present in Montenegro today, and if so, how.

The first armed battle during the war in Croatia was the Battle of Vukovar, which began in August 1991. Even before the battle started, the media in Serbia and Montenegro were spinning stories of how the Serb minority in Croatia was in great jeopardy, and that Croat military and paramilitary forces and mercenaries are arming themselves and preparing to invade both countries. Milo Đukanović, the Prime Minister of Montenegro, said that the southern borders of Croatia had to be revised, while one of the colonels of the Yugoslav People's Army, Pavle Strugar even said that 30,000 Croatian soldiers and 7,000 Kurdish terrorist mercenaries were ready to attack Montenegro and the Bay of Kotor, which is close to the Croatian border.[132] None of these claims were true. Nevertheless, during the month of September 1991, the Yugoslav People's Army, aided by the Territorial Defense (military reserve force, which had many volunteers) began with the attacks on the Croatian villages that were close to the Montenegrin border and slowly proceeded towards Dubrovnik, which is located around forty kilometers away from

[132] Rat za Mir; Pavlović.

the Croatian border with Montenegro. The resistance was almost non-existent; the whole city of Dubrovnik, which had around 50,000 inhabitants at the time, was defended by less than 1,000 poorly equipped soldiers and civilians. On the other hand, the Serbian and Montenegrin forces number around 10,000 soldiers. The army never entered the Old Town, but it kept constantly shelling Dubrovnik from the surrounding hills. The eight-month siege was finally lifted on May 31, 1992. The Battle of Dubrovnik was not the bloodiest battle of the Yugoslav wars: the Yugoslav army lost 165 soldiers, while the other side lost around 280 soldiers and civilians. Moreover, 16,000 people were displaced from the villages around Dubrovnik. Even though this battle did not take as many lives as the siege of Sarajevo did, for example, the images of the burning Old Town of Dubrovnik[133] became one of the most notorious symbols of the Yugoslav wars, especially in Western media. Immeasurable material damage was inflicted on the city, which has been on UNESCO's world heritage sites list since 1974. Tito and Dubrovnik once used to be the most famous 'brands' of Yugoslavia. Tito died a decade earlier, and now Dubrovnik was engulfed in flames. As I pointed out earlier, the siege of Dubrovnik had no strategic importance and the city was almost defenseless. Tens of thousands of soldiers and terrorists that were supposedly ready to attack Montenegro were nowhere to be found once the attack on Dubrovnik began—the supposed victim became the perpetrator. The whole Dubrovnik operation was named the "War for Peace" in the Montenegrin media, as there was a widespread belief that the attack on the southernmost Croatian city would help preserve the unity of Yugoslavia. Of course, this proved to be completely false. Not only did this not keep Yugoslavia together, but the operation brought the attention of the world to bear upon the war in Croatia. Srđa Pavlović points out that:

> The events surrounding the earlier destruction of Vukovar by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and various Serbian paramilitary groups, coupled with the long-lasting and seemingly absurd attack on Dubrovnik, helped redefine the perception of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.[134]

Instead of "liberating" (the perception in Montenegro at the time was that Dubrovnik had to be liberated from the Croats themselves) the Dubrovnik area and the city itself, Montenegrin and Serbian soldiers burned down thousands of houses around Dubrovnik, after stealing valuables from civilians. In a nutshell, the War for Peace was nothing but an orgy of looting, torturing, and killing of the innocent people.

However, not everybody in Montenegro supported the attack on Dubrovnik. Pavlović suggests that:

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[133] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmR6gOVxBlM
[134] Pavlović.

> From the outset of the Yugoslav crisis, Montenegro was a divided society. In the early 1990s the lines of division within Montenegro were drawn not only by the political views and party affiliation of its citizens but also by their attitude towards the Dubrovnik campaign. A numerically small but vocal minority that rallied around the *Citizens' Forum of Montenegro* and the magazines *Monitor* and *Liberal* opposed the campaign. The structures of power in Montenegro treated them as not only traitors and enemies of the state, but also as individuals who were not worthy of calling themselves Montenegrin. […] Revisiting the issue of the 1991 siege of Dubrovnik is, therefore, crucial for a number of reasons. Above all, it is important in the context of the much-needed process of a multi-leveled reconciliation in the region: within Montenegro, and between Montenegrins and their Croat neighbors.[135]

Although Milo Đukanović apologised to the Croatian President Stjepan Mesić in 2000 for the Dubrovnik campaign, no further steps were taken in this direction after the brief apology, and this issue completely disappeared from public discourse. As Pavlović points out, the process of reconciliation is important both on the international level between Croatia and Montenegro and on the national level in Montenegro, as the country will sooner or later have to face its own problematic recent past. Vojislav Pejović's *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* aims to pave the way in this direction.

The narrative of the novel begins in New Orleans in August 2005, during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which left the city devastated. The unnamed narrator (who later turns out to be the author himself) works as a surgeon in a New Orleans hospital, helping the victims of this natural disaster. At one point, Milan Junak, whose surname means 'hero' in Serbo-Croatian, is admitted to the hospital. He has gunshot wounds and is HIV positive. The narrator and Junak realise that they both come from Montenegro; several hours later, Junak dies, and the narrator is left with Junak's only possession, a bag with his diary in it. From this point onwards, the main narrative begins. The narrator uses Junak's old writings from the early 1990s, and puts together the narrative about the then twenty-four-year old student and his life in Belgrade, Podgorica and Dubrovnik during 1991, shortly before the war. Junak stops studying chemistry, applies to film school, travels across Yugoslavia with his girlfriend and friends, attempts to write a detective novel, and so on. All these events are set against the unstable political situation, which Junak chooses to ignore on purpose, as if this will make it go away. In September 1991, he is drafted for the Dubrovnik campaign. His best friend, Vojin, who is a seaman, offers to go instead of him. The two friends look very similar, and Vojin wants to make sure that his grandparents who are from

[135] Ibid.

a village near Dubrovnik are alright. Milan Junak takes Vojin's job on a transatlantic ship and leaves for the USA. As the ship casts off, he listens to a Montenegrin radio station and hears about the casualties the army has sustained. Later, he learns that Vojin is among the first victims of the Dubrovnik campaign—he was killed by his fellow soldiers, as he was trying to prevent them from pillaging his grandparents' house.

As in the previous two chapters, I will begin this analysis by looking at the ways in which the war is framed in the text. I have already pointed out that Hemon predominantly employs telling, while Stanišić uses showing, in order to present the war events and the nationalist discourse(s) against which their texts attempt to position themselves. Pejović's employs both methods, and readers get to know about the public opinion of the inevitable war and the overall mood at the time both through the words and actions of certain characters. They quite often overtly comment on the situation, thus giving insight into the situation in Montenegro immediately before the breakup of Yugoslavia. For example, during a taxi ride, the driver all of a sudden starts talking to Milan Junak about the ongoing situation in Croatia, prompted by the radio news:

> "Good news, huh? We are fucking them up big time over there in Pakrac!" Milan now realises the radio is on and that they're listening to the news from Slavonija, Croatia. He cannot open his mouth. *"They are slaying our children, sonny. Kids, younger than you."*[136] The taxi driver is very well informed. He claims that we cannot lose this war. "Look, for example, if something happens to Milošević—god forbid—and if the opposition seizes the power, if this Vuk Drašković[137] guy comes—they are even crazier, man. They would mess up everything!" Milan cannot say anything. He pays for the ride and leaves a tip. As he's leaving, he can hear the driver saying: "Only Unity Saves the Serbs!"[138] [139]

The driver in this scene is a typical example of an individual brainwashed by the national media. As soon as he starts speaking, it sounds like typical nationalist Serbian propaganda. Croatian news at the time were not much different, either—as if the both sides were attempting to demonise the other side more, regardless of the veracity of the news that were ceaselessly spread. Milan Junak does not know what to say, because all of this sounds very alien to him; at one point, his sister Mirjana says that he is politically

[136] Emphasis added by me.
[137] Leader of the opposition in Serbia at the time.
[138] Patriotic Serbian slogan.
[139] Pejović, 58.

and ideologically autistic. As the time passes, the situation gets more and more tense. The episode with the nationalist taxi driver takes palce in March. A few months later, it becomes even more serious:

> On June 25, Slovena and Croatia proclaim their independence. The army is ordered to protect the borders of the country. Milan is depressed and watches the TV all the time. He almost longs for the days when *Operation Desert Storm* was on TV, instead of this. His sister Mirjana is beside herself with rage. She came to Belgrade for a day and did not manage to see him. Milan knows that he should be worried about everything that is going on. Mr. Jauković pulled a gun on a postman who has a Croatian surname; the postman ran away screaming. If the war really breaks out, Milan plans to volunteer and kill Mr. Jauković in his sleep. […] The army starts with the intervention in Slovenia.[140] His dad says that all of this is ''just a part of a big conspiracy in order to destroy one big and proud country'' His mom tells him to stay in Belgrade and not to come home to Montenegro, because the army does not have his Belgrade address.[141]

I opted for this particular excerpt from the novel because it shows the whole spectrum of attitudes that people had towards the possible disintegration of Yugoslavia. On the one hand, there are Milan, his sister Mirjana, and their mother. From the very first moment when we see her in the novel, Mirjana is fully aware of what is going to happen in the next couple of months, and she keeps telling this to Milan all the time, even though he decides to ignore her for as long as possible. His mother is also afraid, and tells him to stay away from home, so that he cannot be drafted. As the narrative develops, Milan himself becomes more and more aware that the war in Croatia will become reality. Nevertheless, his way of fighting his fears is by not thinking about them, until the very moment when he is actually drafted. On the other side of the spectrum, Milan's father is a prototypical example of somebody whose perception of the situation in the early 1990s has slightly nationalist undertones, as he believes that everything that is going on is a part of a shady conspiracy created in order to take down Yugoslavia. He is not able to explain who exactly and why wants to destroy the country, so he blames it on the Slovenes and Croats. Finally, Mr. Jauković, father of Milan's ex-girlfriend, stands for those who in the 1990s became filled with bitter hatred for the other nationalities in Yugoslavia, just because of their ethnicity. For that reason, Milan, who is otherwise a pacifist, thinks that Jauković is the first person who should be killed if the war really begins.

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[140] The war in Slovenia, also known as the Ten Day War, lasted from June 27, 1991, to July 7, 1991.
[141] Pejović, 101.

Just as in the previous two novels I analysed, when it comes to fighting nationalism, nostalgia is the default tool in Pejović's novel. At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that the tone of the text is considerably less nostalgic if compared to the other two novels. In *Nowhere Man*, the narrator looks back on 1970s and 1980s Sarajevo, which gives readers a nostalgic image of the Bosnian capital. In *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone*, the narrator is a boy, and because of the choice of language the author uses to describe Višegrad, the narrative is a very nostalgic one when observed from today's perspective, twenty-five years after the beginning of the war in Bosnia. However, this does not mean that nostalgia is nonexistent in Pejović's novel—I argue that it is employed in a different manner. First of all, it is important to note that there is a difference between *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* and the previous two novels in a sense that in this novel, the narrator's hometown does *not* get attacked or destroyed. Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro, was not a battlefield during the Yugoslav wars, and for this reason, nostalgia for the city is not used in the same way as it is in the other two novels since Podgorica did not change a lot during the 1990s, apart from the fact that its name was changed from Titograd to Podgorica in 1991. Nostalgia in this novel is still employed as a tool for framing the counter-narrative like in the previous two novels, although it is not strictly used through the prism of the narrator's (destroyed) hometown. For example, in a scene when Milan and his friends are discussing the possibility of a war, he drunkenly dismisses this option:

> "What war?!" He's slurring his words; he remembers his stint in the army,[142] he remembers the common room in a military barrack in Kurševac,[143] when twenty of them were chanting "YU-GO-SLA-VI-A, YU-GO-SLA-VI-A" while Cibona was destroying Sabonis and his Žalgiris team.[144] Also, Milan remembers that in Split,[145] only six months ago, Snežana Pajkić[146] won a gold medal, and how the whole stadium was also chanting "YU-GO-SLA-VI-A," (while his father, with a tear in his eye and a glass of wine in his hand, whispered to himself in front of the TV—"stop this madness and make peace, for fuck's sake"[147] [148]

[142] 12 month army service was mandatory for every male citizen of Yugoslavia.
[143] A city in Serbia.
[144] Croatian basketball club Cibona Zagreb became the champion of Europe for the second time in 1986; this is one of the brightest moments in the history of Yugoslav sport.
[145] The city in Croatia where the 1990 European Athleics Championships were held.
[146] A Serbian runner and professional athlete.
[147] Already in 1990, there were some indications that the war in Croatia might happen. For further information about this, see the second chapter.
[148] Pejović, 28.

Here, sporting events are presented as something that helped keep the people of Yugoslavia together. From rooting for the Croatian clubs in Serbia, to celebrating Serbian athletes in the heart of Croatia, these victories in sports were proof for Milan Junak that nothing could possibly go wrong. When he starts to sense that things might go wrong, these memories begin to represent instances of nostalgia for the times when the relationship between different ethnicities in Yugoslavia used to be normal and peaceful.

In addition to this, nostalgia in this novel operates on one more level. I have argued in the previous two chapters that in the novels by Hemon and Stanišić nostalgia takes the form of longing for the ethnic unity and peace that existed prior to the war. Both Sarajevo and Višegrad have always been multiethnic places, and the real tragedy of the Yugoslav wars in these places is not only the material destruction but also the actual loss of lives and multiethnic and cultural richness. The situation in Dubrovnik prior to the war was somewhat different than the one in Sarajevo and Višegrad. The city has an incredibly rich and complex history—since the Middle Ages, it has been an independent city-state, then in the 19th century it became a part of Austro-Hungarian Empire, and finally in 1918, it became a part of Yugoslavia. Bearing this in mind, Dubrovnik can be observed through the prism of marginocentric cities, as the city has always stood between different empires and cultures. However, when compared to the two abovementioned Bosnian cities, Dubrovnik is ethnically homogenous, since Croats represented around eighty-five percent of the total population of the city in 1991. In that sense, nostalgia for Dubrovnik in this novel cannot be observed as longing for a multiethnic Dubrovnik 'as it once was,' since the city did not change a lot in the years after the war. However, nostalgia in this novel is still present—Milan Junak ponders his joyous trip to Dubrovnik that happened several months before the same roads from Montenegro to Croatia were used by the army to attack the city, and realises that this opportunity to wander across Yugoslavia may soon vanish forever. When we observe his descriptions from today's perspective, almost twenty-six years after the beginning of the Dubrovnik campaign— Milan Junak's reminiscence about his time in Dubrovnik as well as his memory of the various sporting events that united the country feel like nostalgia for the lost potential futures, about which both Velikonja and Boym write. I argue that these possible futures can serve as building blocks for producing a counter narrative, since they are the exact opposite of present-day reality, which is often tainted by nationalism. The idea of possible futures is significant here, as nostalgia includes yearning both for past and for unrealised future. Although the government of Montenegro nowadays attempts to distance itself as much as possible from the events surrounding the siege of Dubrovnik, deny its nationalist past, and come off as progressive and forward-thinking, the fact that the same people who whole-heartedly

supported the Dubrovnik campaign 'run the show' in Montenegro today means that that these efforts are nothing more than an attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of the public, without thoroughly addressing the problem.

Nostalgia is not the only aspect of *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* that is treated differently if we compare this novel to Hemon's and Stanišić's works. In their novels, the idea of city-to-city memory is shown through personal connections that the protagonists make once they leave their country and find their new homes in exile. Through the juxtapositions of Sarajevo and Chicago and Essen and Višegrad, which are established through personal memories of the main characters, for a brief moment these cities become very similar and the symbolic distance between them is reduced. For example, by looking at sevdah and blues together, a new dynamic is created between the Bosnian and the American city, and the borders between the countries where these cities are located for a moment cease to exist. In Pejović's novel, the connection between the cities is also established through personal stories and memories of the characters in the novel which are in one way or another related to New Orleans and Dubrovnik. However, in addition to this, there are certain similarities between the collective city memories of the 2005 and 1991 events in the two places, which invite further comparison between the American and the Croatian cities.

As mentioned earlier, the first scene of Pejović's novel begins in New Orleans, during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The narrator meets Milan Junak who soon dies from gunshot wounds, and his murder remains unsolved. Junak was shot during the lootings that happened shortly after the hurricane destroyed the city. After this, the story shifts back fifteen years. At the very end of the novel, Junak's friend Vojin dies; in the last scene of the novel he is shot by the members of the Yugoslav army while he is trying to save his grandparents' house from getting destroyed. This is the first example of how the two cities are brought together. By using the two deaths that take place in New Orleans in 2005 and in Dubrovnik in 1991 as the beginning and the end of the narrative, the author subtly points at the possible similarities between the two cities. What is even more interesting is that since Milan Junak was drafted, *he* should have been the one in Dubrovnik had Vojin not offered to go in his place. This way, Vojin gave up his job on the ship and never returned to New Orleans, from where he used to send letters to Milan,[149] describing how beautiful it is. Before taking a closer look at his description of New Orleans and its significance for the story's framing, I will return to the scene where Vojin dies near Dubrovnik at the

[149]Readers learn about Vojin only through the letters he sends to Milan. He disembarks from the ship and appears in person in the narrative only in the last chapter.

hand of the Yugoslav army. Just as Milan Junak's murder is never solved, it is very clear from the description of Vojin's murder that its true circumstances are going to be covered up. Milan learns about Vojin's death from the radio news that comes directly from the front:

> The Yugoslav Army dispersed the Ustaše bandits from Konavli,[150] our warriors are taking out various artifacts from their houses—I apologise—they are taking out ham that these savages stashed away in their houses preparing for a long siege. What's this, there are some martyred heroes here, in front of this stone house, everybody has been killed, everybody has a hole in their forehead. Dear listeners, let us pay our respects to those who were slain by Tuđman's[151] beasts, let us pay our respects to this young man in the Yugoslav Army uniform who tried to help them. There he is, beautiful like an angel, lying dead, they shot him in the back.[152]

The circumstances under which Milan and Vojin die are eerily similar. Although their deaths happen on different continents fourteen years apart from each other, the similar conditions under which they occur allow a comparison between the places where they happen. At the beginning of the novel, we are shown the atrocious conditions in New Orleans in 2005. The very end of the text shows a similar situation in Dubrovnik in 1991. I argue that this is a very clever way of subtly pointing at the futility of the Dubrovnik campaign—by observing it through the prism of the New Orleans lootings, Pejović shows that this chapter of the war in Croatia was nothing but a reckless orgy of stealing the property of civilians who were either killed or banished from their houses.[153] Although the background of the destruction of the two cities is completely different—one was damaged by the war's events and the other by a natural disaster—the events that followed the initial destruction are very comparable and enable these cities to be observed together. This is a good example of Rothberg's concept of multidirectionality. The cities' pasts and the events that lead to the creation of their collective urban memories are entirely different. However, one collective memory may help illuminate the other; by looking at New Orleans in 2005, once can understand the 1991 events in Dubrovnik better.

This is not the only instance in the text where Dubrovnik and New Orleans are juxtaposed. In one of his letters from abroad, Vojin writes to Milan and says that "New Orleans looks a little bit like the

[150] Village near Dubrovnik
[151] The President of Croatia
[152] Pejović, 143.
[153] Apart from stealing household appliances and artifacts from civilians, the materials and equipment from the Dubrovnik Airport were also stolen and 'donated' to the two airports in Montenegro.

Mediterranean cities and it's full of tourists."[154] Although it is not specified which Mediterranean city New Orleans resembles, at this point in the novel it is clear that it has to be Dubrovnik—this Croatian coastal town is always full of tourists, and this is where Vojin's father is from. Of course, Dubrovnik is not the only touristy Mediterranean city, so I am not basing my argument solely on this. However, it is significant that when Milan Junak receives Vojin's letter from New Orleans, the attack on Dubrovnik is already looming in the background, even though Milan refuses to accept this. For this reason, it becomes evident that this is another moment in the novel when the two cities are observed together.

Apart from these connections between New Orleans and Dubrovnik that are established through the characters' personal stories, letters, deaths, and so on, there are also certain similarities between the *collective* memories of destruction in the two cities that are not explicitly addressed. Although the question of similarity of the collective urban memories is not overtly explored by the author, the way he opts to frame the story suggests that there is a new kind of dynamic taking place between the two cities, which does not necessarily require looking at the collective memory of Croatia and the US. The scale of national memory is bypassed, and the city memory takes the spotlight.

After Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, the city did not get sufficient aid on time.[155] This resulted in a sense of betrayal, as if the lives and property of people of New Orleans were not important. When it comes to the collective remembrance of the siege of Dubrovnik, some believe that the city was purposefully poorly defended in the beginning of the siege, so that the images of the burning Old Town would resonate with the Western powers, thus attracting their military and political support for Croatia in the later stages of the war.[156] In other words, that Dubrovnik was left for some time to defend itself without any substantial help resembles the situation that occurred in New Orleans fourteen years later. Although the causes of the suffering are poles apart, the sense of being abandoned is what brings the collective memories of these two cities together.

From all the urban collective memories that are discussed in this thesis, Dubrovnik's and New Orleans's have the most in common. For this reason I pointed out that the issue of city-to-city memory is approached differently in this particular work then in the other two novels at hand. In Stanišić's novel for example the connection between Višegrad and Essen is established through Aleksandar's *personal* memories. Even though the cities' pasts are not comparable from the standpoint of collective city

[154] Pejović. 90.
[155] http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/09/0914_050914_katrina_timeline_2.html
[156] Pavlović.

memory, through the narrator's own perception of the similarities between the two cities, readers get to experience them as well. In the case of *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* however*,* the collective memories of New Orleans and Dubrovnik are observed together and the juxtaposition is based on their shared experience of suffering. Although the obvious existence of collective memory of Hurricane Katrina is not spelled out in the novel, the author addresses this question by making numerous transitions in the narrative from New Orleans to Dubrovnik and back.

It goes without saying that the collective memory of the Dubrovnik campaign is different in Montenegro and the city of Dubrovnik itself. In Montenegro, it represents one of the darkest chapters in recent memory, while in Dubrovnik and Croatia the lifting of the siege and the liberation of the city signify major steps towards the independence of Croatia.

By adding the New Orleans dimension to the novel, Pejović makes this narrative infinitely more complex. Just as in the previous two novels that are analysed, by looking at different cities (the cities that are abroad, not only in the countries of the former Yugoslavia), the author allows the text to generate multidirectionality. The role of New Orleans in the novel is twofold: on the one hand, by looking at the events that occurred immediately after the natural disaster in 2005 and comparing them to the events that surrounded the ''War for Peace'' in Dubrovnik (lootings, thefts, and other criminal activities), the author employs another multi-layered 'tool' (in addition to nostalgia) for tackling the nationalist narratives that originate from the early 1990s. On the other hand, the role of New Orleans in this novel is also to point at the existence of various similar collective memories that are primarily tied to the cities, instead of the whole nations. Although the causes of the 'trouble' in Dubrovnik and New Orleans have virtually nothing in common, it is the aftermath of the two episodes that help establish a bond between these two cities. Again, this is an example of multidirectionality: the aftermath of the natural disaster illuminates the aftermath of the siege, while simultaneously, the existence of collective memory of the siege points to the existence of collective memory of the hurricane.

Finally, *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* does not seek only to combat the existing nationalist narratives by fictionalising the events that have the potential to serve as a counter-narrative. More than anything, the novel aims to bring the attention of the public to the very existence of this problem. Unlike in Bosnia where one part of the public still quite proudly negates the genocide in Srebrenica, the leadership of Montenegro today wants everybody to forget that nationalism and hatred were not so long ago major constituents of the public discourse in the country. Pejović's novel therefore has a dual nature when it comes to positioning itself against the current politics: on the one hand, it is a critique of

the irredentist nationalism that led to the breakup of Yugoslavia. On the other, it is a compelling narrative that serves as reminder that in this day and age, politicians and governments must not be allowed to deal with the troublesome past by neglecting their part in it.

8. Conclusion

I write these lines, having recently heard on the Croatian national television that the Marshal Tito Square in Zagreb is soon to have its name changed;[157] it is set to be renamed Republic of Croatia Square. It will not bear anymore the name of arguably the greatest modern Croatian and Yugoslav politician, since the Croatian authorities believe that it is high time that the memory of Yugoslavia is sent to oblivion once and for all. This is just one of the examples of how the former Yugoslavia and the events that were surrounding its violent breakup still represent today an important part of the public discourse in the countries that were formed after the civil wars. The collective memory of the former country is divisive to say the least, and will undoubtedly continue to polarize the public in the years to come. I started this thesis by referring to Kusturica's 1995 award-winning film *Underground*, as it sets the gold standard when it comes to fiction positioning itself against the current political situation in this region. Just like the events which are tackled in the film—the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia—the film continues to divide opinion and spark debates about the 1990s events in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, and Montenegro.

Since the Yugoslav Wars represented such a great swerve in the course of the region's history, it is not surprising that the artistic reaction to them has been very extensive. The corpus examined in this thesis consists of three novels written after the wars had been over for several years. Unlike Kusturica's *Underground*, which was filmed while the bombs were still falling in Croatia and Bosnia, *Nowhere Man, How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone,* and *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* were all written in the 21st century, several years after the conflicts were over and the reconciliation process was underway. Moreover, the novels were written by authors who all left Yugoslavia and found their new homes abroad. The main questions that this thesis seeks to answer are: How are the Yugoslav Wars represented in post-Yugoslav literature? Does the representation of the wars in these narratives differ from the official histories that are promoted by the respective governments of the newly-formed republics, and if so, how? What does this say about the potential of literature and fiction in general to generate stories that have the ability to operate as counter-narratives? How do these novels contribute to the collective memory of Yugoslavia and what is left of it today?

[157] http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/foto-desnicari-skinuli-plocu-s-trga-marsala-tita-i-bacili-je-u-smece/979764.aspx

The toolkit that was employed for answering these complex questions consists of two main parts. Firstly, the thesis looks at how nostalgia is represented in these works of fiction. Nostalgia for the former Yugoslavia is one of the two dominant modes of collective memory that exist in the region today—the other being hatred of Yugoslavia. When writing about nostalgia in relation to politics, Svetlana Boym potently points out that "nostalgia works as a double-edged sword: it seems to be an emotional antidote to politics, and thus remains the best political tool."[158] In the case of Yugoslavia, the thesis approaches nostalgia from two different perspectives. On the one hand, I looked at how the authorities immediately after the war attempted to tame and eventually eliminate the potential of nostalgia to serve as an "emotional antidote to current politics," by forcefully eradicating the memory of Yugoslavia from the public sphere. This is what Dubravka Ugrešić calls the "confiscation of memory"—an attempt by the power structures to artificially tailor the memory of Yugoslavia so that it fits the needs of the current (nationalist) political agenda. On the other hand, the thesis explored how this process works in the opposite direction. Apart from observing how politicians manipulate nostalgia by labeling it as bad or retrograde, I also analysed how nostalgia can become a tool for 'fighting' politics when it is employed in fictional narratives which attempt to position themselves against the current political trends.

The second key component of the analysis is exploring how the cities are narrativised and represented in the novels at hand. Since the Yugoslav Wars took place mostly in various urban areas, the three case studies involve depictions of cities and towns that were affected by the war events—Sarajevo, Višegrad, and Dubrovnik. Adding to this, the thesis examined the connections between nostalgia and the city from the perspective of nostalgia's locatedness and indebtedness to various urban spaces. I argued that when nostalgia is observed from the prism of the city, it becomes a potent method of social critique. Unlike nostalgia for Yugoslavia i.e. Yugonostalgia which sometimes tends to be too utopian and therefore not very effective when it comes to challenging the status quo, city-alga's object of longing is more real, since it is focused on the embedded experiences of life in the city. Yugonostalgia is the longing for the lost imagined socialist community; nostalgia for the Yugoslav cities is nostalgia for the ethnic peace and unity that once used to exist in these places. Therefore, the 'imagined' component in its object of longing is not as overtly displayed.

Nostalgia is not the only context in which the cities in the three novels are observed. When it comes to the literary representations of Sarajevo, Višegrad, and Dubrovnik, the thesis attempts to situate them within the concept of marginocentric cities. This concept, which was developed in relation to various

[158] Boym, 69.

cities in Eastern and Central Europe, shows that certain cities due to their rich history and cultural complexity challenge the usual literary representations which tend to observe these places from the perspective of one culture only. Although this concept cannot be applied in equal measure to the three case studies in this thesis (because of their different pasts), the concept of marginocentric cities prompted me to think about the notion of the centre versus the margin/periphery in relation to the city and the nation-state. Marginocentric cities tend to challenge the boundaries of the nation-state within which they are situated by transcending its borders, which comes as a result of the cultural diversity of these places and the impossibility of looking at them from the point of view of only one political entity. Consequently, literary representations of these cities have the ability to renegotiate the concept of limited space and call for rethinking the scales of collective memory and identity. Unlike nation-states, which are always limited by the lines on a map, cities are places where the boundary between centre and periphery becomes blurred; the space of a city is simultaneously local and not limited by any borders.

The thesis insists upon the importance of rethinking cities and their borders since they are inseparable from urban identities and collective city memories. By looking at the representations of different cities in the novels at hand, it becomes possible to explore the various scales of identity which are used to describe their protagonists. For example, the scale of the nation may be completely bypassed and only the city scale employed, or in other cases, multiple city identities (which are not in any hierarchical order) have to be used in order to accurately describe one's identity and their sense of belonging.

When it comes to the various scales of memory, the novels at hand do not focus solely on the scales and identities that are present within the context of the former Yugoslavia—some of these scales include being a member of a city–for example Sarajevo, one of the republics – Bosnia, or the whole federation–Yugoslavia. One of the common characteristics of the novels that are explored in this thesis is that they all raise the question of the existence of transnational memory. As its name suggests, writing about and dealing with this type of collective memory requires going past the confinements of methodological nationalism, and calls for an alternative approach to scales of memory and identity. The authors do not write only about Sarajevo, Višegrad, and Dubrovnik and their collective memories; these former Yugoslav cities are juxtaposed with Chicago, Kiev, Essen, and Dubrovnik, which then creates numerous intricate connections between these cities. Apart from the fact that this results in narratives that are not one-dimensional and infinitely more complex, it also suggests that when it comes to producing counter-narratives in order to fight nationalism and its negative effects, one has to go beyond

the scale of the nation-state. Bypassing this scale can be done by going local—by narrativising nostalgia for the city, or alternatively, by zooming out and employing an approach that is transnational and trans-urban. These novels do both.

So far, possible blind spots of the novels by Hemon, Stanišić, and Pejović, as well as this thesis's potential weaknesses have not been thoroughly addressed. The main question of the thesis is based on the premise that art and fiction have the potential to challenge and eventually change politics and the politics of memory of a particular country. In order for any medium to be successful in this regard, it has to circulate and be available to a great number of people, otherwise it cannot bring about any changes no matter how well-written the text itself may be. Therefore, it is vital to ask the following question: Are these books being read at all, and if so, by whom?

Although it is very difficult to answer this question precisely, the novels' reception definitely has to be addressed. One of the ways of tackling this issue is by looking at the publishing houses which distributed the novels. Aleksandar Hemon's *Nowhere Man* was published by a division of Random House in the United States in 2002, and then by Picador in Great Britain the following year. Hemon's third novel, *The Lazarus Project,* was shortlisted for the National Book Award in 2008, which makes it safe to say that Hemon is not an unknown figure in the international literary community. The same goes for Saša Stanišić—*How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* was originally published in German also by a division of Random House, and it was shortlisted for the German Book Prize in 2006. Its English translation was also critically acclaimed; the novel was translated by Anthea Bell, who also translated W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz.* Her translation of Stanišić's novel received the Oxford-Weidenfeld Translation Prize. Finally, Vojislav Pejović's *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* has not (yet) come to such international prominence. Unlike the other two authors who write in English and German, Pejović writes in his mother tongue. The author lives and works in the US and his debut novel was published in 2008 in his native Montenegro in the Serbo-Croatian language; the book was distributed by a small publishing company and only 1,000 copies were made. Although this is not a particularly large number, it is not completely negligible having in mind Montenegro's miniature size and population, which suggests that the text is relevant and has the potential to resonate with the target audience.

Apart from the publishers and the awards, I also looked at the school curricula in each of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, since the books that are read in school are an important part of creation of a collective memory. In my own personal experience, the Yugoslav Wars are not featured in any books that are a part of the compulsory reading list in the Montenegrin educational system. Although the wars

are indeed mentioned in history classes, they are non-existent when it comes to the teaching of literature. The situation is very similar in the other former Yugoslav countries; it seems that works that are written in the post-1991 period (those that are written by post-Yugoslav authors, not the international writers), still have to find their way to school systems in the region and reach a wider audience, regardless of the authors' stance towards the former country. The authors at hand are indeed well-known in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, although to a fairly limited audience. Therefore, fame and omnipresence of their novels in the collective memory of the region is not yet near the levels of the older generation of writers, whose best representative is the aforementioned Ivo Andrić and his magnum opus *The Bridge over Drina.*

However, it is also important to note that people who read a particular text are by no means a homogenous group, in a sense that not every reader is the same. Ideally, when it comes to the narratives that seek to engage with the politics of memory and position themselves against a dominant political discourse, these texts can immediately find their way to decision makers, that is, the politicians who are open to literature and have the ability and power to make changes. Needless to say, this is rarely the case. This does not mean that other people who encounter these novels cannot attempt to bring about a change. Teachers are the first group that comes to mind, especially at the university level; if a text finds its way to an instructor who can recognize its significance and potential to serve as a counter-narrative, it means that this text will instantly be further 'distributed' and its audience multiplied, once it starts circulating among students. Finally, reception on the micro level should not be ignored either. For example, if somebody in Bosnia and Herzegovina reads a novel about an episode from the country's troubled past, and if this novel manages to change their perspective, this suggests that these texts are fulfilling their 'purpose.' Although this may be only a small step towards the ultimate goal, it must not be completely neglected.

The thesis also points out that the novels at hand can be read and analysed from different perspectives. The three novels are undoubtedly first and foremost post-Yugoslav; their primary focus is on the events that preceded, surrounded, and followed the breakup of Yugoslavia. However, they can also be read as the narratives about Chicago in the 1990s, the fall of socialism in Ukraine, immigrant life in Germany, the devastating consequences of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and so on. Apart from the fact that these juxtapositions of the various cities and their collective memories make the texts more layered and infinitely more complex, they also make them more appealing to a wider audience. By talking about Yugoslavia from a point of view that is not exclusively Yugoslav or post-Yugoslav, the authors produce

stories of Yugoslavia which clearly have the potential to resonate with the international readership. Paradoxically, it appears that Hemon's and Stanišić's novels are more popular abroad than in the former Yugoslavia, which suggests that the topic of Yugoslavia and the Yugosphere have not been exhausted by any means, at least when it comes to the international interest for these themes. Pejović's novel is slightly different, in that it has not reached yet the international audience. Although there are numerous possible explanations for such an outcome and all of them are rather difficult to pinpoint,[159] I argue that the reason for this may lie in the fact that *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* attempts to position itself against a very specific episode from the past. This is not to say that the novel is poorly written or one-dimensional. Just as in the previous two novels, the author here also uses the trope of the city in an incredibly imaginative way that brings two completely different collective city memories together, and allows them to be observed from a fresh perspective. However, when compared to Hemon's and Stanišić's novels, commenting and passing judgment on the war events in *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* is done in a more overt way, which as a result renders the novel perhaps too emotionally coloured at times and therefore limits it reach. Although the corpus of novels in this thesis is not comprehensive, it appears that the most effective way of addressing the wars in Yugoslavia is by tackling them from a number of different perspectives, instead of directly writing about them. By 'effective' I mean that the narratives are structured in a way which allows them to resonate with audiences from different backgrounds, which are unrelated to the Yugoslav Wars and the Yugosphere. This way, these anti-war narratives have more 'breathing space' and more potential generate multidirectionality, outside the context of Yugoslavia only. They are not written solely for the audience that comes from the Balkans i.e. for 'the wild and violent Balkan tribespeople.' Although the authors primarily deal with the Balkans, when it comes to the questions of audience and reception of their texts, they undoubtedly seek to go beyond this particular region. The texts at hand explore some of the ugliest episodes in the history of the region; at the same time, they attempt to show the people of the former Yugoslavia from various perspectives and go beyond the typical Western way of imagining the Balkans, which is usually one-dimensional and tends to depict the former Yugoslavs as excessively violent and militant people.

Going back to the recurring question in this thesis—can fiction change political reality? Perhaps this question was formulated too ambitiously; the process of changing or even slightly affecting the collective memory of a region is so incredibly complex, that this matter cannot be answered by simply saying yes or no. However, the novels analysed here undoubtedly pave the way towards the full

[159] Inability to find a foreign publisher could be a major obstacle.

reconciliation which is desperately needed between the people in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Even though it is impossible to precisely measure their effect in this regard, and the steps that are made by *Nowhere Man, How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone,* and *The Life and Death of Milan Junak* may seem very small from today's perspective, time will tell whether these narratives will create a large-scale trend, fulfill their creators' expectations and decontaminate the memory of Yugoslavia in hope for a better and more peaceful future in the region.

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